

The Regeneration of Time: Indian Prophets and Frontier Pressures, 1760-1820

by
Donald P. St. John

Between the years 1760 and 1810 a number of Lenape (Delaware) and Shawnee prophets arose along the frontier west of the Alleghenies. In one way or another and to one degree or another these prophets influenced Moravian history and were influenced by it. Some of them are known almost solely through Moravian sources, such as the "Old Priest" reported by Hays and Post at Assinisk on the Allegheny in 1760(1); Wangomen, a Lenape who listened to and argued with Zeisberger at Goschgoschink in 1767(2); and the Munsee prophetess, Beade, operating on the White River, Indiana, in 1805.(3) While others, such as the Delaware Prophet, Neolin, in the 1760s and the Shawnee prophet, Tenskwatawa, in the 1800s, are known through a variety of sources, such knowledge would be much poorer were it not for the likes of Zeisberger, Heckewelder, and the brothers at White River.(4)

Prophets and missionaries shared a turbulent unpredictable period marked by French, British and colonial antagonisms, the ineluctable march of voracious settlers, and the slow, frustrating and painful decline of Indian power. Both prophets and missionaries struggled for the hearts and minds of the Indians. Their radically different understanding of the situation and its resolution made them wary and suspicious of each other.

In the end, both prophets and missionaries became victims of historical forces which they could not control. Nevertheless, they have left a legacy that belongs to all of us. If we whites, especially, are going to appreciate that legacy and be enriched by it, then we must look beneath and beyond the traditional clichés and hasty judgments concerning these prophets. What they proclaimed as divine revelation was quite intelligible when understood in terms of their traditional religious worldview, and rightly able to elicit strong loyalty.

The prophets, as spokespersons for the traditional religious world, used its categories to interpret the current situation and to present

a plan for its resolution. But since the traditional religion of the Indians permeated and guided all facets of life, a return of this world would involve concrete changes in the economic, political and social orders. Let us look briefly at the traditional sacred Cosmos shared by Eastern Woodland Indians.

Religious life was made up at the bottom of a web of relationships with the sacred beings and forces of earth and sky. Through a myriad of rituals and ceremonies people enacted, celebrated and dealt with these beings, including the spirits of various animal species, the medicinal and nourishing powers of plants, and the guardian spirit won through fasting and prayer associated with an initiation ritual. These spirits and others would appear to individuals in a dream, giving them guidance and power. Thus, human life unfolded amidst and as a part of larger and sacred life system that was the Cosmos.

This Cosmos, moreover, operated in a cyclical manner. There was the annual cycle of the seasons, the monthly lunar cycle marking human time, the cycle of plants - and for coastal peoples the tidal cycles. Human activity also was understood in terms of cycles, whether one speaks of the annual hunting seasons, the cycle of planting and harvesting, or the larger human cycle from birth to death. These mysteries of personal, economic, and social life were marked by rituals. Rituals taught the correct attitude and method to use in approaching these mysteries and the sacred beings and forces dynamizing them. Rituals allowed one to cope with the anxieties in the human cycle through rites of passage as well as with unexpected diseases and disasters. Shamans and medicine men and women helped in the latter situations.

For most tribes the Master of Life, or Great Manitto, had created all and had given duties to the lesser Manitto who filled the universe. Myths related how various objects, customs, institutions and rituals began. Human life was lived in accordance with patterns established long ago by these sacred beings or by cultural heroes. Rarely was it the case that tradition could not deal with the unexpected - even if it was after the fact.

As the prophets looked around at late eighteenth century America they saw their traditional World splitting apart, under intense pressure caused by the diseases, armies, settlements and religions of the Europeans. Large tracts of Mother Earth no longer belonged to her original children; the herds of buffalo and deer that shared the Eastern Woodlands were disappearing and the beavers were few in number. And the prophets saw how their own people had conspired in the selling of land, of furs and pelts to the whites for clothes, tools, guns, powder, adornments and, worst of all, whiskey. The spirits of earth and sky no longer seemed so close and the rituals that had empowered existence were falling into disuse. Certainly, they thought,

we must learn to live again as a part of and vitally related to this sacred universe. Their visions and teachings centered on the theme of the return of that world, the return of Paradise.

The belief that this Paradise would return rested on a cyclical view of time - a view sometimes called the myth of eternal return, or, the regeneration of time. The events of human experience, whether personal or social, were to be interpreted accordingly. Thus the events of the recent past that brought so much pain and anxiety to Indian life did not reflect the inevitable decline of Indian culture as whites insisted. Rather, they symbolized the state of chaos before Creation or the painful experience of initiation before the passage to a higher state of being. Time *could* be regenerated and the vision received by the prophets promised such regeneration if the Indians would but follow these revelations.

Let us look at some of the teachings of the prophets and relate them to this return of Paradise and the regeneration of time.

1. *Return of the Animals*

The Moravians at White River Mission report that they had heard that the "Schwano" teacher "assured the Indians that God had shown him the deer were half a tree's length under the ground and that these would soon appear again on earth if the Indians did what he told them to do, and then there would be an abundance of deer once more."⁽⁸⁾ E.A. Kendall heard a similar remark by the prophet.⁽⁹⁾

Tenskwatawa, therefore, called for an end to sales to the whites of skins and furs. In addition, Indians must give back to the whites all cattle, clothes and cats.⁽¹⁰⁾ The Delaware prophet had also forbidden any trade with the whites and admonished the Indians to return to their forefathers' way of clothing and providing for themselves. Through the Delaware prophet, the Great Spirit had proclaimed:⁽¹¹⁾

Before those whom you call your brothers had arrived, did not your bow and arrow maintain you? You needed neither gun, powder, nor any other object. The flesh of animals was your food, their skins your raiment. But when I saw you inclined to evil, I removed the animals into the depths of the forests, that you might depend on your brothers for your necessities, for your clothing. Again become good and do my will, and I will send animals for your sustenance. Do not sell to your brothers that which I have placed on the earth as food.

What led to the depletion of game according to the prophets? First, of course, was the easy acceptance of the white presence on this continent.⁽¹²⁾ Second, however, was the neglect of sacrifices and rituals. Over and over again the prophets speak of the ingratitude of

the Indians for their land and animals reflected in their abandoning of many ancient ceremonies.(13) These sacrifices and rituals were not superfluous adornments of a purely economic enterprise. In traditional Indian thought hunting was a holy occupation that involved rituals of respect and regret as well as feasts of thanksgiving. As anthropologist Irving Goldman puts it:(14)

The encounter between the chiefly hunter and his prey seems to involve a vital interchange. The animal yields its life for the welfare of the hunter and of his community. The hunter dedicates himself in turn to the rituals of maintaining the continuity of the life cycle for all.

The Shawnee prophet's claim that the Great Spirit was holding the souls of the animals underground may also refer to the widespread belief that the animals, if treated harshly, will withhold themselves from the hunters. Certainly the decimation of the herds of deer and the populations of beavers from New York, Pennsylvania and now Ohio symbolized a serious abuse of traditional customs. This theme of the return of the animals and hence the abundance of food as indicative of Paradise is universal. As Mircea Eliade points out(15):

A whole series of religious relationships between man and the Cosmos can be deduced from the acts by which he seeks, obtains or produces his food. For the religious man, to exist necessarily means to have a place in ... a Cosmos that is alive, strong, fruitful and capable of periodical renewal. But ... to renew the world is equivalent to re consecrating it ... a return to the paradisiacal stage of the world.

2. *The Return of the Dead*

Both the Moravians at White River(16) and E.A. Kendall(17) refer to the prophet's promise that if people followed his teachings, the dead would return to life. One must understand this against two backgrounds, one historical and the other, archetypal or mythical.

The interminable wars, the strains of migration and the frequent attack of white diseases had taken a heavy toll on the population of Lenape and other tribes. Few families had not experienced pain and grief over the loss of a loved one. Catastrophe on such a scale had not been known before.

However, such a catastrophe could be given meaning within the context of a new Creation, a regeneration of the Paradise situation existing before contact with the whites.

Both the return of the members of the animal tribes and the return of the members of the Indian tribes were to be signs of this new age. As in the Melanesian cargo cults, "the coming of the dead is taken as a sign of cosmic renewal."(18) The experience of loss

and pain was itself a negative sign pointing forward to a positive experience of new life and joy.

3. *Crisis and Cosmos*

How the traditional world linked chaos and a new Cosmos can be seen in the efforts of the Munsee prophetess Beade to revitalize the traditional universe.

The Moravians at White River Mission, Indiana, noted in 1805 an increase in visions among the Lenape calling for a renewal of sacrifices. A woman prophet, Beade, who had been baptized at Friedenshutzen as a young girl but had moved to Indiana and taken up the traditional ways there, was especially effective in getting people excited. At the core of her teachings was the call for the renewal and elaboration of traditional rituals.(19) The Moravian Brother, Luckenbach, at the end of April, 1805, witnessed a ceremony "in accordance with an appearance recently given" and describes it in his autobiography.(20) It is strikingly similar to the Big House ceremony later described by Speck.(21) Anthony F.C. Wallace, the noted anthropologist and historian, suggests that "the Munsee prophetess revealed the final and organized form of the Big House ceremony which has been preserved until recent times."(22)

What is of significance for our present discussion is the myth of the origin of the Big House ceremony and the cosmic symbolism involved. The story of its origins as reported to Speck has its setting in a crisis period. "There was a quaking of the earth throughout where the Delawares lived, ... everyone was greatly disturbed of mind ... even the animals were terrified; they say even the animals prayed." It continues, "The Delaware ought to pray, for it would seem that we have very seriously angered the Great Manitou."(23) Then, in a dream, it is revealed to them how they should build the Big House and what should be done in the twelve nights of ritual (each night symbolizing 1 lunar month). It is obvious that the Big House is a microcosm. The roof is the sky, the floor, the earth, the four walls the four directions, the twelve masks within are the twelve Manitto and the center pole represents the Creator as well as the *axis mundi* linking Heaven and Earth. The Big House ceremony in the Fall of the year celebrates the end of the old year and the beginning of a New Year, a New Creation. Prayers are offered that the coming year will be good to the people and that it will unfold its blessings as it should.(24)

Each night is filled with the recitation of guardian spirit dreams, a reminder of the closeness and care of the spirit beings. Dreams were the primary mode of revelation and power, both for common people and for prophets. Relationships with the game animals are

reenacted from the fourth to the seventh day when the hunters are ceremonially sent forth and then greeted on their return.(25)

A new fire is also lit, representing a yearly purification of people and Cosmos and the power of new life. In this regard it should be noted that both the Delaware prophet, Neolin, and the Shawnee prophet, Tenskwatawa, placed great emphasis on "pure" fire, one made from rubbing sticks together as in olden days rather than by the use of the whites' flint.(26)

Having seen in the myth and construction of the Big House how crisis is resolved by a New Creation, let us turn our attention to the symbolic purity of individual and community preparing one for this transition. Let us begin with the concept of Purification.

In application to personal purification, David Zeisberger, referring to prophets he knew, reports as follows:(27)

They declared to the Indians that God had commanded their cleansing from sin and to this end they gave them twelve different kinds of Beson to drink, supposed by causing vomiting to free them of sinful taint. ...

Other teachers pretended that stripes were the most effective means to purge away sin. They advised their hearers to suffer themselves to be beaten with twelve different sticks from the soles of their feet to their necks, that their sins might pass from them through their throats.

Both the emetic and striking methods revolve around the number twelve, the most sacred number to the Delaware. There are twelve major Manitto worshipped in the Big House ceremony, the major spirit forces of the universe. Purifying oneself with twelve different emetics or twelve different sticks symbolizes a purification of the Cosmos and a total self-purification that brings one into proper harmony with the Cosmos. Also, in getting rid of sins, one is getting rid primarily of impurities caused by contact with and dependency on the whites and returns in spirit to the pristine condition of the beginning or the Paradise situation. This reference to religious purification is central to moral teachings proclaimed by the prophets.

What were these "sins" manifesting the crisis faced and denounced by the prophets? The most common were drunkenness caused by the whites' whiskey, sexual promiscuity caused by the breakdown of traditions, in-fighting and family violence (often exacerbated by alcohol and frustration over powerlessness), and witchcraft practiced by those who had aligned themselves with the evil forces (Great Serpent or evil Manitto) and also supported the white attack on the Indians.

Witchcraft also was of major concern when it came to the purifi-

cation of the Community as an entity. Indeed, perhaps the most controversial injunctions of the prophets were those against medicine bundles and witchcraft. The use of medicine bundles and other forms of magico-religious power was widespread among male and female Indians. The dividing line between the beneficial use of such power and its maleficent use was not always clear. Equally unclear, therefore, was how someone was labeled a "witch" as distinct from someone who merely used bundles or other rituals for multiple purposes. Innocent people were unjustly condemned. But, as one ethnologist points out, such obsession with witchcraft and rallying against its dangers is not coincidental(28):

... When cultures are undergoing extreme stress, as Shawnee culture was in the early nineteenth century, witchcraft tends to burgeon, and witchcraft has always been but a hair removed from ordinary Indian medicines and its practitioners, and therefore difficult to detect. For this reason the Prophet was compelled to proscribe *all* medicine bags and medicine rites.

Apart from the obvious and routine aches and pains of life, tradition interpreted suffering as a result of malevolent forces. These forces could only be countered with more powerful spiritual methods. While the recent and widespread setbacks of the Indians caused so-called witchcraft to sprout, it was proving ineffectual not only in dealing with these problems but in dealing with the larger issues underlying their misfortunes. The adequacy of their traditional religious universe as a source for explanations which gave meaning to suffering was itself now in question.

Seen from a comparative religion perspective, a pattern becomes apparent. When desperate situations arise, people turn to the High God, But "only as a last resort when every address to gods, demons, and sorcerers to the end of banishing suffering ... has failed."(29) It is therefore of interest to note that the prophets usually received their revelations from the Master of Life, or Great Manitto, rather than from a lesser spirit being or a guardian spirit. The Creator was, in a sense, the guardian spirit of the whole community and concerned with overall welfare. A revelation from the Great Spirit, as Eliade observes, usually involved demands for a recognition of guilt and an increase in sacrifices, because the High God was punishing the people for their faults. Rather than explaining events in terms of malevolent forces, they were now explained in terms of the displeasure of the Great Spirit.(30)

In this context it should also be pointed out that Tenskwatawa himself had been a medicine man prior to his becoming a prophet and had failed to stem the epidemic his people experienced in the winter of 1804-1805. Out of and in response to his personal anguish

may have come the recognition that something more fundamental was at the root of these problems.(31)

Prophets demand acceptance of their authority if their people are to overcome the crisis on hand. This is reflective of the conviction that other ways of dealing with the given situation have not worked and only present obstacles to the regeneration willed by the Great Spirit and advocated by the prophets.

This brings us to eschatology. A consideration of the use of the imagery of Heaven and Hell by the prophets (The "Old Priest", the Delaware Prophet, Wangomend, and Tenskwatawa) is revealing. Although there were traditional beliefs concerning "Heaven" and even a place outside of Heaven for unworthy Indians, it was, as Zeisberger notes, undoubtedly their contact with white missionaries that hastened and shaped this aspect of the prophets' teachings.(32) Details of their teachings differ, but, in general, the prophets taught that a happy afterlife could no longer be assured. Their moral depravity prohibited their automatic acceptance of many by the Creator or Great Spirit. Both the whites and the evil Manitto, or devil, conspired to drive Indians to Hell.

The Delaware Prophet pictured Heaven in a traditional way as a land of rich game and happy people. But the whites had blocked easy access to it. After their death, Indians now had to go on a longer and very dangerous route to get to this Happy Hunting Ground. And even when they got close, they still faced a great gulf between them and heaven where the devil was waiting to snatch them away and take them to his land, a land marked by humans whom the devil had changed into starving, gaunt animals. The only hope for reopening the easy road to Heaven was through divine help in driving the whites from Indian land.(33)

This vivid imagery of what would happen to bad Indians after death is probably borrowed from missionaries. It seems to have had a powerful effect on the Indians. As the prophets very skillfully linked the present condition on earth with the condition in the other world, the perception of heavenly paradise became almost identical with the image of an earthly paradise that would return if the renewal called for by the prophets was successful.

In this sense, then, we can say that their encounter with the Europeans and Americans was for the Indians a "Fall" into history. But this history as such was not to be redeemed as was the case with the Biblical Fall from Paradise. It was to be overcome. In the act of overcoming would lie the return of Paradise on earth as well as the reopening of Heaven.

Conclusion

There were not two worlds colliding in early America, that of the Biblical World and that of the Native American World. There were three Worlds. The third was represented by the entrepreneurs and political figures of the British and then American Empires. These three visions of America still struggle for our hearts and minds. In many ways, the Moravian missionaries and the Indian prophets were closer to each other than either is to the commercial secularized world of the Empire.

The missionaries and the prophets both held that life is meaningless without some transcendent frame of reference. That the health of a people cannot be measured by its G.N.P. or technological expertise but by those ideals that transcend computer printouts or market trends. Both would be taken aback by what has happened to the American Earth, although I feel that the prophet would more immediately recognize its religious significance. American Christians are just beginning to develop the ecological insights in their traditions.

What separated the two visions of Indian and Christian that we have discussed was their evaluation of the "natural" condition of humankind. The traditional Indians were children of nature, the Christian missionaries children of history. The latter had left homeland and place, to wander as pilgrims and messengers of a Heavenly home. The former were sometime migrants only by force and were more tied to the spirit beings of place, land, animals and plants.

For the prophets, humans are a part of a sacred universe and find their deepest fulfillment in relating properly to it. To lose this universe is to "Fall" into meaninglessness, symbolized by "sin". For the missionaries, humans are already Fallen and cannot find spiritual fulfillment except in the blood of a Savior, being washed from their sinful condition and becoming a member of a community not organized by kinship or geographical place but by their condition of being saved. One may be born a Delaware but that is not enough. One must be baptized as a Christian.

However that may be, it is time for Christians and all people of good will to protect, encourage and nourish those movements and peoples who want to return to or maintain this traditional religious universe. We continue to meet Indian prophets in the American Indian Movement and in a host of less radical but equally valid expressions of Native American traditions. Any serious student of Native American religions cannot come away without the realization that he or she has met a tradition as profound, enriching and meaningful as any of the world's religions. If we reject the prophets of America, what do we say of the prophets of Israel? If we reject the visions of Tenskwatawa, are we not calling into question the vision of Isaiah?

Endnotes

- 1) William A. Hunter, ed. "John Hays' Diary and Journal of 1760", *Pennsylvania Archaeologist* 24(2): 63-84.
- 2) John Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations ...* (Philodelpha: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1876), pp. 291-295.
- 3) Lawrence Henry Gipson, ed., *The Moravian Indian Mission on White River* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1938), pp. 333-355, "Autobiography of Brother Luckenbach", *Ibid.*, pp. 612-617.
- 4) A summary of the teachings of the prophets of the Lenape is provided in Archer B. Hulbert, ed. *David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indians* (Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1910), pp. 133-136. Heckewelder comments on the Delaware Prophet and in *op. cit.*, 291-293; the brothers at White River give us a firsthand account of the events surrounding Tenskwatawa's early prophetic career in *op. cit.*, pp. 392-420.
- 5) James H. Howard, *Shawnee!: The Ceremonialism of a Native American Tribe and Its Cultural Background* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), pp. 204-207
- 6) Oliver LeMere in *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.
- 7) Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 51-53, 85-86.
- 8) Gipson, *op. cit.*, p. 392.
- 9) Cited in Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
- 10) Letter by Thomas Forsyth to General William Clarke dated 23 December 1812, quoted in Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
- 11) Pontiac's version from an unknown recorder, in Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Algic Researches* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1839), pp. 246-247.
- 12) Delaware Prophet, in Heckewelder, *op. cit.*, p. 292.
- 13) These were the teachings of all the prophets. See Zersberger, Heckewelder, Gipson, Howard.
- 14) Quoted in J. Donald Hughes, *American Indian Ecology* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1983), p. 25.
- 15) Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One* (New York: A Harper Torchbook, Harper & Row Rub. Inc., 1965), p. 158.
- 16) Gipson, *op. cit.*, p. 392.
- 17) Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
- 18) Eliade, *The Two and the One*, p. 137.
- 19) Gipson, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-355.
- 20) *Ibid.*, p. 611-615.
- 21) Frank G. Speck, *Study of the Delaware Indian Big House Cere-*

- mony (Harrisburg: Publications of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission 2.).
- 22) "New Religions Among the Delaware Indians, 1600-1900", *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 12(1) (Spring, 1956): 10.
 - 23) Elisabeth Tooker, ed. *The Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands. The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 105.
 - 24) *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 - 25) *Ibid.*, p. 109-121.
 - 26) McCullough's Narrative in Archibald Loudon, *A Selection of Some of the Most Interesting Narratives of Outrages ...* 2 vols. (Carlisle, 1808, 1811), I, 321-322 cited in Howard H. Pedham, - *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Chicago, Phoenix Books, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 99. cf. also Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
 - 27) Hulbert, *op. cit.*, p. 133-134.
 - 28) Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
 - 29) Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, p. 97.
 - 30) *Ibid.*
 - 31) R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. 28-41.
 - 32) In Hulbert, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 134.
 - 33) Heckewelder, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-292.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Erneuerung der Zeit

Indianische Propheten und die Notlage im Grenzgebiet. 1760-1820

Die Jahre vor und nach der amerikanischen Revolution waren für die Indianer entlang der Nordwestgrenze (besonders im Gebiet des Ohio Valley) eine Zeit großer Unruhe und eines tiefgreifenden kulturellen Wandels. Das Auftreten einer Reihe von "nativistischen" Propheten, die sich für die Wiederbelebung der einheimischen Kultur einsetzten, war eine Reaktion auf die erfahrenen Veränderungen, die das soziale Gefüge der Indianer schwächten. Diese Propheten verkündigten neue Offenbarungen vom Großen Manitto, die eine Wiederherstellung ihres angestammten Landes und ihrer alten Lebensweise verhiessen.

Unter den zahlreichen Quellen, die über diese Ereignisse berichten, sind die Beiträge der Herrnhuter von zentraler Bedeutung für unser Verständnis der Vorgänge. Herrnhuter Brüder wie Zeisberger und Heckewelder, aber auch Angehörige der White River-Mission im frü-

hen 18. Jahrhundert, waren ebenso wie die einheimischen Amerikaner von dem Umbruch jener Zeit betroffen. Sie beschreiben ihre Kontakte zu den "Delawaren-Propheten" Wangomed, Tenskwatawa (Bruder des Tecumseh) und zu "anderen Propheten. Unser heutiger Kenntnisstand von den Glaubensvorstellungen und religiösen Bräuchen der einheimischen Amerikaner ermöglicht es, die Botschaft dieser Propheten oder "Lehrer" in den Zusammenhang ihrer eigenen Kultur zu stellen und so ihre wirkliche Bedeutung und Überzeugungskraft zu erhellen.

Das Grundthema ihrer Lehren war die Rückkehr des Paradieses durch die Erneuerung der Zeit. Sie betrachteten die damalige Notlage der Indianer als eine Folge der Aufnahme der Europäer und des Kontaktes mit ihnen. Dieser Kontakt habe sowohl zu einem Zusammenbruch ihrer moralischen Normen und ihrer religiösen Riten geführt als auch zum Verlust ihres Landes, das eng mit ihrer kulturellen Stabilität verbunden war. Um diese Entwicklung rückgängig zu machen, müßten sich die Indianer einer Reinigung unterziehen und zu ihren traditionellen Zeremonien und Lebensweisen zurückkehren. Der Große Manitto werde ihnen zu einer Rückkehr in die paradiesischen Verhältnisse verhelfen, die vor dem Kontakt mit den Europäer bestanden hätten. Die sinnentleerte, chaotische und religionslose Zeit, in die sie "gefallen" seien, werde sich ins Gegenteil wenden und die heilige Zeit mit einem Leben in der ertümlichen Welt wiederhergestellt werden. Die geschichtliche Zeit, "gefallene" Zeit, werde nicht erlöst, sondern beseitigt.

Auf diesem Hintergrund können Verheißungen wie die Wiederauffüllung der Jagdgründe mit Tieren und die Wiederbelebung von toten Verwandten als "Zeichen" dieser neuen Schöpfung gedeutet werden. Gleichermaßen sei auch die Abschaffung der Zauberei, die große Verwirrung unter den Indianern stiftete, nötig, um den Einfluß des Bösen Manitto auszuschalten, der auch die Weißen zu ihren Angriffen auf die Indianer anstifte. Wie das Paradies auf der Erde wiederhergestellt werde, so werde sich auch wieder der Himmel für die Seelen der Verstorbenen öffnen. Der Verfall der indianischen Kultur und das Gespür für den bedrängenden Charakter des Zeitgeschehens trugen dazu bei, daß diese Lehren von vielen begeistert aufgenommen wurden.