The Spirit of the Great Lakes Native Confederacy, 1805-1813

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THE SPIRIT OF THE GREAT LAKES NATIVE CONFEDERACY, 
1805-1813

by

Timothy D. Willig

A Thesis 
Submitted to the 
Faculty of The Graduate College 
in partial fulfillment of the 
requirements for the 
Degree of Master of Arts 
Department of History

Western Michigan University 
Kalamazoo, Michigan 
August 1997
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to several people for helping to make this thesis a reality. First, I am grateful to the members of my committee, Dr. Donald Fixico, Dr. Benjamin Wilson, and Dr. Linda Borish. Not only has this group doubled as my M.A. exam committee, but seven of the courses I have taken at Western Michigan University were taught by members of this illustrious group. Furthermore, they have cheerfully written a combined amount of nearly 20 references for me this past two and-a-half years --even when I dropped the requests on their doorsteps as they vainly attempted to escape for the holidays. Together, this group has accomplished the monumental task of preparing a former math and physics student for doctoral work in history!

Second, I would like to thank Mrs. Elizabeth Rieth, a personal friend from my hometown of Goshen, Indiana, where her son John and I were high school cronies and have been best friends ever since. Having known me since my youth, Mrs. Rieth has witnessed many changes in my life as my goals and pursuits have shifted several times. Despite these vicissitudes she has graciously and unhesitatingly assisted me financially. Without her support, I
could never have begun graduate school.

Next, I want to recognize the individuals at the various libraries and archival institutions to whom I owe thanks. At Fort Malden in Amherstburg, Ontario, it was a pleasure to work with Bob Garcia, as he located several sources pertinent to my topic. His service is greatly appreciated, and his insight was invaluable as we mulled over a heap of correspondence by British officers. I am grateful to the staff at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, specifically Tom Hyry, Karen Jania, and Greg Kinney. Also with the University of Michigan, Rob Cox and John Harriman at the Clements Historical Library accommodated me in every way as they allowed me virtually unlimited access to the numerous fragile documents in their Lewis Cass Collection. I also owe thanks to Minnie Headdy at the Glenn Black Laboratory of Archaeology at Indiana University. Finally, I am indebted to some of my own colleagues and friends here at Western Michigan. Sharon Carlson and her staff at the University Archives have assisted me not merely on this thesis, but also on many of my other projects during my years as a graduate student at Western. Lastly, I am grateful to my fellow graduate student Eric Owen, whose
Acknowledgements--Continued

word-processing expertise put the finishing touches on this project.

I am also thankful for my family’s support and encouragement. Notwithstanding the fact that I was several years out of college and sought to enter a field in which I possessed little formal training, not once did my parents or siblings attempt to dissuade me from starting graduate school. My brother, perhaps without realizing it, exhibited the greatest confidence in me by frequently commenting that I should have gone to Cambridge.

Finally, I thank the Lord, who, in His infinite wisdom and grace, permitted me to attend graduate school and attain a Master’s degree at this not-so-young age. After working in another field for several years, I had nearly given up on my pursuits towards a career in history when He made it possible for me to study at Western Michigan and to write this thesis on my favorite subject.

Timothy D. Willig
Native American resistance to American expansion during the War of 1812 occurred in the wake of a significant spiritual revitalization movement in the Native community. The extent to which this spiritual movement prompted Native resistance has never been fully explored or developed. Traditional theories maintain that once the revitalization ended, a secular resistance movement began—one that was fueled by British support. The objective in this thesis is not only to establish the connection between the Natives' religion and their efforts to resist, but it is also to determine what factors initially gave rise to the revitalization movement.

My findings indicate that no dichotomy existed between the Indians' spiritual goals and their war effort. Moreover, this revitalization movement came about from Native opposition to the spiritual teachings of white missionaries. The revitalization movement provided the basis for the pan-Indian alliance, and the confederacy viewed the War of 1812 as a holy war, one fought for spiritual goals and under supernatural guidance.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The day before Labor Day in 1992, my parents and I left Crawfordsville, Indiana after our softball team suffered an earlier-than-expected elimination. As we made our way back to Goshen, I convinced them that the best consolation for an early defeat was to stop at the Tippecanoe Battlefield, just Northeast of Lafayette. Though I had visited the sacred site on three previous occasions, it was a first-time experience for my parents.

Towards the end of our visit, as my mom searched through the limitless treasures of the gift shop, my dad and I waited outside on a park bench, near the edge of what had been the perimeter of the American army's campsite on the night of November 6, 1811. After several moments of reflective thought, my dad marveled at the irony of history. Where an advanced guard of Native warriors once crawled through the cold and wet grass on that November night, now stood a store in which books, toys, and gifts were sold. No book or souvenir could ever adequately convey an understanding of the desperation felt by the Indians that night. Crawling through the grass on a suicide mission as the Indians' "forlorn
hope," these warriors dutifully obeyed their leader, the Shawnee Prophet, who told them that the Great Manitou, their Supreme Being, would only grant victory if they killed the American leader at the battle's outset.¹

Like my dad on that day at Tippecanoe, I often ponder the lives, beliefs, and circumstances of the indigenous peoples who once lived in the Great Lakes region and Wabash River valley. How did they respond to the drastic changes brought by the whites during the period of their own territorial dispossession, 1750-1840? Did the Natives generally try to accept the changes, or did this upheaval tend to cause the majority of Natives to resist? Of those who resisted, how did they attempt to preserve their cultures?

Regardless of how they opposed the whites, resistance required quick action; the rate at which white

¹The Algonquin-speaking nations referred to the deities in their pantheon as "manitous." Their expression for the Supreme Being include: "Master of Life," "Great Spirit" (or "Great Manitou"), and "Creator." The Creeks (Muscogees) called this God the "Maker of Breath." These expressions all refer to the most high God, and I have interchangeably used these terms throughout this writing. Also, the Shawnees (meaning "southerners") lived in the Ohio and Cumberland Valleys about 1650 but were driven into South Carolina, Georgia, and Illinois by Iroquois incursions during the latter seventeenth century. In the early eighteenth century the Shawnee people moved into western Pennsylvania before being forced into Ohio by white settlers. For the best ethnography on the Shawnees, see James H. Howard, Shawnee! The Ceremonialism of a Native American Tribe and its Cultural Background (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981).
culture swept away the Natives and their way of life is staggering. In a couple of decades the Indians of the Old Northwest experienced changes that reduced them from a state of dominance to a near-extinct civilization.² On November 4, 1791, near the headwaters of the Wabash River (present-day western Ohio), the Miami war leader Little Turtle and his army of inter-tribal confederated warriors annihilated an American regiment commanded by Arthur St. Clair, giving the young nation its worst drubbing ever at the hands of the Indians (before or since). This greatest of Indian victories claimed the lives of 634 American men and women and wounded a couple of hundred more -only a few dozen Americans emerged unscathed.³ Nearly 20 years to the day after St. Clair's defeat, William Henry Harrison and his army -roughly the size of St. Clair's- also made their camp near the Wabash River, roughly 100 miles downstream from where St. Clair had made his camp.⁴

² The Old Northwest included the present-day regions of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and parts of Minnesota.

³ St. Clair's Defeat occurred at present-day Fort Recovery, Ohio; though Little Turtle's confederation consisted of warriors from many Algonquin-speaking nations, the Miami, Delaware, and Shawnee provided the largest contingents.

⁴ William Henry Harrison, the commander of the American troops at Tippecanoe, also considered the upcoming anniversary of St. Clair's Defeat. On November 2, 1811, two days prior to the twentieth anniversary, Harrison wrote to William Eustis, Secretary
Harrison's men likely weighed heavily in their minds the fate of St. Clair's army, as they themselves now camped only a short mile from the largest Native village ever known to have existed in the Old Northwest. Despite coming off of a long day's march, even the most stout-hearted soldier under Harrison's command likely did not sleep that night. Perhaps this explains why the soldiers so quickly sprang to their feet when the Prophet's warriors struck shortly before dawn on November 7.

On the night before the attack, though Harrison's soldiers remembered St. Clair and pondered their own fate, they could still take heart. Not only were they commanded by a competent leader, experienced in Indian warfare, but their enemy's illustrious war leader, Tecumseh, was conspicuously absent. Furthermore, the situation in the Northwest had changed dramatically in 20 years. The advantages that Little Turtle enjoyed in the thrashing of St. Clair's forces had seemingly been reversed. Though sent into the Northwest to conquer Little Turtle's confederacy, St. Clair's men fought for their lives. Now in 1811, with Native culture facing its death

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Of War: "Should we be attacked on that day I hope to alter the Color with which it has been marked by our calender [sic.] for the last twenty years." Harrison to Eustis, 2 November 1811, Logan Esarey, ed., Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison, vol. 1, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 607.
knell, warriors of the Prophet's forlorn hope silently crept toward the American lines, expecting to sacrifice themselves for their people's plight. The Americans had gained the initiative.

The differences in the Native approach to the two battles are symbolic of the changes that occurred in the Old Northwest between 1791 and 1811. A shift in power between the Indians and the Americans during this period had lowered the Natives from their position of confidence and authority to one of despair. The Indians' contrasting auroras at the beginning and end of the twenty-year interval indicate what happened in between. In 1791 only a handful of white settlements existed west of the Appalachian Mountains; by 1811, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio had entered the Union, and Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan were under territorial governments that anticipated statehood. Moreover, in the expanse stretching from the Appalachians to the Mississippi River, white population outnumbered the Natives by a ratio of seven-to-one by 1812. Without inter-tribal cooperation and a collective resistance among the indigenous nations, their cultures would soon vanish.

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The Indians' predicament after the turn of the nineteenth century largely resulted from the American Revolution. In the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the British peace commissioners ceded all of their North American possessions east of the Mississippi and south of the Great Lakes to the Americans. Stunned and in disbelief, the Indians of the Northwest, though never having been defeated by an American army, learned that their red-coated "allies" had dealt away their homes to the Americans. In a peace council transpiring in a distant country across the great water—a conference to which the Native leaders were never invited—, their British father gave away their lands to the Americans with a pen-stroke!

The tragedy of the land cessions made at the Paris Peace Conference was just one more British blunder—the culmination of an entire series of bunglings made throughout the war. Although the Americans may have fought bravely, the real question of the Revolution was not so much how the Americans could have done so well (which is yet debatable), but rather, how the British could have performed so pitifully. Despite the poor British showing in the conflict, Lord George Germain, His

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6 This included everything east of the Mississippi except for Florida, which went back to Spain. Spain had ceded Florida to Britain only twenty years earlier in the first Peace of Paris in 1763.
Majesty's Secretary of War and overseer of military operations in America, should have seen the prudence in preserving the lives and homes of the King's faithful Indian allies.

The British and Indians both held interests in keeping the Americans pinned to the east coast. Similar to the French strategy 30 years earlier, the British could have insured themselves future control of the fur trade by shutting out the Americans. Thus at Paris they should have only granted independence to the original 13 colonies, nothing more. Since the strategy also favored British interests, an ever-fickle Parliament would certainly have approved of a brief continuation of the war, since they seemed predisposed to continue the conflict even after the defeat at Yorktown. As it was, the short-sighted liberals had to work excessively hard to finally gain a majority in the House of Commons to terminate the war.\(^7\)

\(^7\) Although an entire British army capitulated at the Battle of Yorktown (October, 1781), in two subsequent votes, the House of Commons elected to continue the war. However, the King's cabinet, headed by Frederick Lord North, was forced to resign in March, 1782 due to the way in which the war was conducted, not the fact that Lord North was in favor of a continued war effort. Though the King also wanted to continue the war, its popularity began to wane. The new ministry headed by the Marquis of Rockingham informed George III that a precondition for their continued service as Prime Minister and Cabinet required that "The King must not give a Veto to the Independence of America." After British war efforts in
Though the Americans had no stronger claims to the western country than the British at the war's end, American peace commissioner Benjamin Franklin not only asked the British to cede all of their territory between the Atlantic and Mississippi, but the aged diplomat asked for Canada as well. Always sagacious and business-minded, Franklin correctly reasoned that by initially making an extravagant request, he could bargain downward until an agreement was made with terms more favorable towards America than anyone ever imagined. Hence, his country came away with far more than they deserved. Contrary to traditional American historical belief, the British did not feel compelled to give away all of the western country because of a few meaningless forays on the lower Wabash and lower Ohio Rivers by George Rogers Clark. Rather, the British ministry in power at the time sought to extricate themselves from an irrelevant American war.

India, Gibraltar, and the West Indies again turned favorable, many leaders in London were not inclined to grant an American peace. However, fortunately for the Americans, the Cabinet heads, Lord Rockingham and Lord Shelburne, sent liberal peace commissioners to Paris. Not until March, 1783 did the Commons narrowly accept the terms of peace with America, 224-208. See Conor Cruise O'Brien, The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography of Edmund Burke (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 220-34. In short, the war did not end at Yorktown, and the Americans did not force the British to accept Yankee terms. The western regions should not have been ceded; these could have been retained with minor political jockeying.
and channel their dwindling resources into the three remaining wars that really mattered—with France, Spain, and Holland.

The truth of the matter is, despite Britain's other embroilsments, America needed peace worse than the British did. With factions of the Continental Army already beginning to mutiny by 1781, the situation became desperate when American soldiers walked away in droves because the Continental Congress could no longer pay them. Without French intervention, American independence would have remained nothing more than an impossible dream. In short, Britain made an unnecessary, foolish, and hasty decision in ceding the western territories.

Nonetheless, in 1783 the British gave away the Indians' lands and left their recent allies hanging in the lurch. A fledgling republic, barely able to handle their own affairs, believed they had conquered the West. Yet, the title which changed hands in Paris meant nothing to the Natives. Despite Euro-American governments claiming they had "defeated" the western Indians several times in the latter half of the eighteenth century, these western tribes remained resilient. When would the Indi-

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8 The western tribes continued to resist after the French and Indian War (1756-1763), Pontiac's Conspiracy (1763-1765), the American Revolution (1775-1783), and the Wars of the Old Northwest (1790-1795).
ans understand they were "conquered?" The Americans soon discovered that a conquest entailed more than a parchment saying so; it would require military victories and cultural assimilation—or "civilization"—of the indigenous tribes.

After Little Turtle handily defeated two American armies in 1790 and 1791, Anthony Wayne's "Legion" decisively defeated the confederacy at the battle of Fallen Timbers in August, 1794, giving his government the victory they longed for. After the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 in which the Indians agreed to relinquish most of Ohio, white surveyors, land speculators, fur-traders, missionaries, and settlers flooded the region. Many of these newcomers seemed "confused" about where the boundary-line fell which separated Natives and whites, and hordes of Americans spilled onto Indian lands, killing most of the remaining game.

On the heels of the army, but at the forefront of the expansion of white civilization, missionaries came into the Old Northwest, hoping to supplant Native religion with Christianity. Soon after 1800, missions of Moravians, Quakers, Baptists, and Presbyterians dotted

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9 Little Turtle did not lead the confederacy against Wayne; he realized that Wayne possessed the discipline, patience, resources, and a large enough army to insure success—things earlier American commanders did not have.
the frontier. After the turn of the century, Christian activity grew ever stronger as the young American nation would soon experience their Second Great Awakening. The former Calvinistic doctrines of pre-destination held by the Congregational (formerly Puritan) and Presbyterian churches of the eighteenth century began to crumble in the face of new ideas from which Americans believed that they could control their spiritual destinies.\textsuperscript{10} Some, known as millennialists, even strove to usher in God's kingdom by intense efforts to bring about moral reform throughout society. Though Protestant zealots on the eve of the Second Great Awakening mainly targeted their own communities, the frontier missions indicate the importance they placed in converting and uplifting the Indians. In their natural state the Natives presented an obstacle to God's plan. This spiritual invasion would be the most difficult for the Natives to accept, and it fueled a spiritual resistance movement among the nations of the Old Northwest which preceded their last major war with the Americans.

Already forced to accept military defeat and the loss of their food supply, the poverty-ridden Natives that Wayne had subdued were now asked to abandon their

culture and adopt white ways, including Christianity. What should the Indians do? Should they resist with all of their resolve, or should they succumb to what many believed to be the inevitable? Their responses to this question caused an irreparable split within each Native community. Those who cooperated with the missionaries and sought white aid were hated by their nationalistic kinspeople who insisted on maintaining the old ways and the religion of their forefathers to bring deliverance from their deprivation.

The latter group, which I will refer to as "nativists" in this writing, believed that the Great Manitou would yet deliver them from their enemies. They viewed themselves living in an apocalyptic age in which the Master of Life spoke to them through prophets who He appointed to warn them of their pending doom. To avert disaster, the nativists strictly obeyed the will of the Great Manitou, who required them to shun the whites and Christianity. Moreover, the nativists believed that the evil manitou created the whites, and some missionaries

11 Since the Native community was divided between cultural conservatives and assimilationists (those who wanted to adopt white ways), I sometimes need to specify which group I am referring to; the terms "Indian," "Native," or "Native American" are too general. The expression "nativist" appropriately describes the cultural conservatives, since this group resisted any contact with outside cultures in an effort to purify their own.
were even believed to be sorcerers who wanted to destroy the Natives. For protection, the nativists not only looked to the Supreme Being, but they also sought the spiritual aid of the lesser deities—or manitous.

The spiritual activity among the nativists increased in direct proportion to the heightened efforts of missionaries. Natives always attempted to gain spiritual power in order to meet their adversaries on a spiritual level. Hence, entire societies partook in "revitalization movements," or efforts by members of a community to improve their society through an increase in spiritual power.12 None more than Native warriors understood the importance of spiritual strength; this far outweighed the significance of physical strength in combat. As nativists attempted to resist white culture and religion through spiritual means, wars often paralleled, or followed in the wake of revitalization movements.13

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13 In this writing the term "religion" not only refers to a form of worship, but it also includes any human efforts—rituals, prayers, incantations, and sacrifices—practiced by its adherents in order to gain spiritual power. Religion is also a set of metaphysical beliefs which determine and affect the motivations and actions of the members of a particular culture. For a definition of religion as a cultural system, see Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90.
As the War of 1812 drew near, Americans could not grasp the significance and depth of the Indian revitalization movement. Instead they viewed the Native Confederation as the product of a conspiracy, one replete with British intrigue and manipulation. If the Natives openly resisted the benevolent offerings of the U.S. government, it never even occurred to American leaders that the Indians simply were not interested in assimilating to white society. American political and religious leaders inherently believed that once Indians had been exposed to the benefits of white civilization, they would gladly embrace it and renounce their entire culture. Hence, they interpreted Native rebuffs as clear signs of British influence in their efforts to prevent American geographic advancement and dominate the fur trade. American leaders were so cocksure of this that these sentiments even went all the way to the top of their political hierarchy. On June 1, 1812, President James Madison asked Congress for a declaration of war against Great Britain, listing five reasons; part of the fifth read, "our attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on one our extensive frontiers."

14 President Madison to Congress, 1 June 1812; quoted in Wesley Turner, *The War of 1812: The War that Both Sides Won* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 33. The best sources in determining British relations with the Natives in Upper Canada are located at the Fort Malden Archives.
Despite American allegations of British intrigue, the nativists, facing the brink of their destruction, urgently became practicing adherents of the greatest revitalization movement ever in the Old Northwest. This period—the eve of the War of 1812—is the most pivotal point in the history of the Old Northwest. On a three-pronged cultural-collision course, the British, American, and Native cultures struggled for the last time in the region, as these three societies converged in this apex of history. Never again after this epic struggle would a European nation officially support the Natives in their struggle against the Americans. A generation before the War of 1812, hardly any whites lived in the Old Northwest; a generation after, the territory was comprised almost solely of farms.

This period of rapid change produced the most widespread resistance movement in the history of the Old

in Amherstburg, Ontario. These include: British Military Correspondence, Series C, 1789-1807; Indian Department File and Correspondence; Indian Affairs Branch Records, Record Group 10; John Marsh Papers, Series 1, Subseries C. Also see Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, vol. 15 (Lansing: Darius D. Thorp, State Printer and Binder, 1889); War of 1812 Papers of the Department of State, 1789-1815 (Washington: National Archives, 1964, microfilm), Reel 7; Colin G. Calloway, Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), and Robert S. Allen, His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774-1815 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992).
Northwest. In this thesis I argue that the nativist resistance movement, which became the basis of opposition against the Americans in the War of 1812, had its roots in Native attempts to resist Christianity. Secondly, those who fought the Americans in the war were spiritually-motivated. Only the "Master of Life" could grant victory and restore them to a lifestyle reminiscent of happier times. Thus the Indians who fought the Americans in the War of 1812 viewed the struggle as a holy war. Conversely, those who became friendly to the American government and accommodated the missionaries had rejected the Great Spirit's will and abandoned their people's reverence for the manitous.

In the second chapter I observe the early spiritual strivings of what became the basis of the eventual inter-tribal alliance of nations in the Old Northwest during the war. As a reaction to white pressure and Christianity, the teachings of the Shawnee Prophet (Tenskwatawa) offered relief from despair and hope for the future. To the nativists the most formidable outside threat came from spiritual forces and religious teachers of non-Native religions, prompting the purgings, or "witch-hunts" -the nativist effort to eliminate the sorcerers influenced by the Moravian Christians.
Without Tenskwatawa's spiritual movement, the union of confederated tribes who fought the Americans in the War of 1812 many not have ever existed. Not only did the Shawnee Prophet conduct the witchhunts among the Delawares, but he also personally oversaw a similar affair among the Wyandots shortly thereafter. The extent of the Prophet's influence and the impact of his teachings are illustrated by the widespread purgings of pro-American and Christian Indians between 1806 and 1810. In his Life of Tecumseh (1841), Benjamin Drake, despite offering a skewed perspective in favor of Tecumseh, grudgingly conceded the Prophet's role in the formation of the confederacy when he wrote what he intended to be a complement to the shaman:

Whatever may have been his [Tenskwatawa's] original object, in the promulgation of his new code of ethics, there is enough, we think, in the character and conduct of this individual to warrant the opinion that he was really desirous of doing good to his race; and, that with many foibles and positive vices, he was not destitute of benevolent and generous feelings....It so happened, that the adoption of his doctrines was calculated to promote harmony among the tribes; and this was the very foundation of the grand confederacy,...

While Drake could not fully comprehend the Prophet or his role, he vaguely understood the holy man's significance to the confederacy.

In Chapter III, I analyze the community of Prophetstown, the central location of Tenskwatawa's revitalization movement from April, 1808 to November, 1811 (when Harrison's army burned the village the day after the Battle of Tippecanoe). Here the Shawnee brothers, Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh, struggled to rebuild a threatened culture by consolidating the remnants of the strife-ridden and destitute groups of Natives dispersed throughout the Northwest. At Prophetstown the Shawnee brothers offered a new beginning to all those who came to learn of the Great Spirit's will and would obey Him by heeding the words of the Shawnee Prophet. Though the site initially served as a place of religious gathering for people of several different nations throughout the Northwest, it took on other meanings for its inhabitants, primarily a political capital and a bastion of resistance to white culture. I attempt to examine a few of the aspects and problems the diverse groups (as many as 15 nations) faced in this multi-dimensional community.

Despite the nativist setback at Tippecanoe and the destruction of Prophetstown on November 7-8, 1811, the nativists fought the War of 1812 for cultural and reli-
igious reasons, not merely for physical boundaries. In Chapter IV, I demonstrate that, despite the loss of faith in the Shawnee Prophet after Tippecanoe, the nativist war leaders attempted to gain victory by spiritual means. An understanding of the Native warrior's perception of spiritual beings and their role in warfare and in everyday life are essential to understanding the Native propensity for warfare. Though the chapter focuses on Tecumseh and his spiritual leadership, Black Hawk and Main Poc are also featured as spiritually-minded war leaders.

Also in Chapter IV, I discuss the nativist interpretation of the natural phenomena occurring just prior to the war. Nativist followers in the North and numerous Muscogees (Creeks) in the South both believed that their leaders possessed power to either control or influence the elements and natural phenomena. Tecumseh's visit to the Creeks was preceded by a bright comet - the Shawnee leader's very name means "shooting star" -, while it was succeeded by the largest known earthquake in the history of North America. The great war leader purport-

16 The New Madrid Earthquake sporadically shook most of the eastern United States between December, 1811 and March, 1812. Experts estimate that it would have registered approximately 8.2 on the Richter Scale, clearly the largest known earthquake in North American history. Concerning Tecumseh's name, in addition to "shooting star," it also referred to a "crouching panther" prepar-
edly predicted both events; though the British could have conceivably given Tecumseh foreknowledge of the comet, his prediction of the earthquake is more difficult to explain. Tecumseh's followers believed that the manitous of the upper world - those who controlled the elements - endowed their leader with certain powers. By following Tecumseh, a leader chosen by the Great Spirit and favored by the manitous, defeat seemed impossible.

Before beginning, it should be understood that it is not my desire to find fault with the early leaders of the American republic. With radically-different cultures coming into contact, a certain amount of conflict was inevitable. Though criticized for their Indian policies, the early Americans lived in an age of conquest. Moreover, few other conquerors have attempted to compensate and improve the lot of the vanquished. Though falling short of the mark, the government's efforts speak volumes for the nation's goodwill and altruism. Judging by other conflicts and conquests in ancient and early-modern times, I have always been mildly surprised that the U.S. bothered to make treaties with the Indians. In 1817 future President Andrew Jackson wrote to President-elect

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ing to leap. For the best discussion on the meaning of Tecumseh's name, see Bil Gilbert, *God Gave Us This Country: Tekamthi and the First American Civil War* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1989), 10-1.
James Monroe that he had "long viewed treaties with the Indians an absurdity." Fortunately the government sought a more humane approach. Though Jackson favored a policy of removing Indians who would not assimilate (and even those who did), the government continued to make treaties long after his own tenure as President had ended.

Admittedly the early government made mistakes and sometimes pursued policies that caused an unnecessary loss of life. They did not possess the understanding that we do in retrospect. Rather than attempting to find fault with the conquerors, one of my goals here is to bring a better understanding to their descendants.

Instead of concluding that the British encouraged the Indians to make war against the Americans, or blaming power-seeking Native religious zealots for introducing cults among their people, the reader of this thesis will better understand the core of the Native resistance movement in the War of 1812. Religious teachings of Christian missionaries initially compelled the Natives to resist through sacred strength and to attempt to preserve their culture. The renewal of spiritual power resulting

from this pre-war revitalization movement formed the basis of the nativist war effort. Serving under war leaders who were also thought to possess supernatural powers, the warriors of the Old Northwest entered the War of 1812 viewing it as a holy war, one in which the Master of Life would preserve their faith and culture.
CHAPTER II

SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS ON THE WHITE RIVER

By the end of Thomas Jefferson's Presidency (1809) many new religious affiliations had emerged in the young American republic. Most of these, persisting as Protestant, emerged as splintered factions or sects from the remnants of the Anglican, Puritan, or Quaker faiths of pre-Revolutionary America. However, what has thus far been largely overlooked is that this era has also marked a period of spiritual "awakenings" or "revivals" within Native religions among many Indian nations who still dwelt in vast regions of the quickly-evaporating frontier. In fact, the entire half-century between 1763 and 1813 marked an era of Native revitalization movements. Ironically, the increase of Native spirituality often came about as a direct response to the influence of white religion and white culture, whether the Indians resisted or embraced the tenets of the newcomers.

In 1805 a great religious phenomenon began in the Old Northwest that has never been paralleled in that region before or since. A 30 year-old Shawnee holy man named Tenskwatawa, having been endowed with "revelations" from the "Master of Life," burst from obscurity to become
an inter-tribal religious leader among the surrounding Indian nations. Soon this "prophet" found himself at the pinnacle of the Native revitalization movement which was the precursor to the western resistance the United States would encounter in the War of 1812.

The Americans could not understand that a spiritual revitalization movement was spreading throughout the Great Lakes and Wabash Valley. Whites remained oblivious to Native efforts at cultural preservation, since they viewed their own culture as superior. If the Natives resisted cultural change, then whites could only conclude that the sinister intrigue of an outside influence was to blame. Unknown to whites, this movement began within the Native community due to increasing outside (white) pressure for Indian land and resources. Hence, this religious revival preceded resistance but did not cause it. While accusing the British, the Americans were blinded to the reality that their own obtrusions would soon foment an uprising.

If this rationale is correct, and the movement had its roots from within the community, what did prompt this internal revitalization? The revival actually originated along the White River in Indiana (near present-day Anderson). This great phenomenon can be traced to an evening in April of 1805 when a Shawnee outcast name Lalawethika
(meaning "noisemaker") experienced a vision. The Shawnee pariah collapsed, apparently dead. The following morning, with Lalawethika still not breathing or showing any vital signs, the villagers decided to begin preparing the body for burial. Suddenly Lalawethika revived and explained to his eager listeners that the "Master of Life" had taken his soul from his body and carefully instructed him on what the Indians must do for the Master of Life to restore them to prosperity.¹

Hence, Lalawethika, previously known amongst his people as a coward and a drunk, began preaching the message of cultural purification that the Master of Life had revealed to him. He soon moved to Greenville, Ohio, near the headwaters of the Wabash River, where he could preach to members of nearly every nation in the Old Northwest who came to Fort Greenville to receive their annuity goods distributed by the American government. Rapidly attracting hundreds of followers, the upstart Shawnee became known as "Tenskwatawa," which meant "the Open Door" (He was also simply known as "the Prophet.").²


² Alameda McCollough, ed., The Battle of Tippecanoe: Conflict of Cultures (Lafayette, IN: Tippecanoe County Historical Society, 1973; reprint, 1991), 19. Many Native American prophets existed in Tenskwatawa's time. A few of these were: Handsome Lake (Seneca), Le
Since he had gained an audience with the Master of Life, the once-disgraced Shawnee in a matter of months had risen to an exalted position among several of the Indian nations who looked to him for spiritual guidance. Fulfilling this role for the next six years, the Shawnee holy man would soon find himself at the forefront of the final Native revitalization movement in the Old Northwest.

Tenskwatawa's power and influence did not emanate from standard hierarchies of tribal authority, nor did the proper leaders sanction it. Moreover, Tenskwatawa remained a holy man who could never become a war leader, since the fearful Prophet always kept at a safe distance during battles.\(^3\) Despite his trepidity, Tenskwatawa belonged to a family of exalted warriors, not the least of whom was his brother Tecumseh. Unfortunately this family's division of the Shawnee -the Kispokotha band- did not possess any hereditary claims to positions of tribal power.\(^4\) Hence, the Prophet's entire claim of

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Maigouis, or the "the Trout" (Ottawa), Josiah Francis (a mixed-blood Creek), and Beade (a Delaware prophetess). Later, during the Black Hawk War (1832), the Sauk leader Black Hawk drew his inspiration from Wabokieshiek, a Winnebago prophet. A prophet was thought to receive direct revelations from the Master of Life and could foretell the future. Possessing less power, shamans could heal, change the weather, and cast spells, but could not foretell events.

\(^3\) Gilbert, 270.
authority rested solely on his ability to receive and interpret revelations from the Master of Life. Though this later proved to be a very fragile power structure, it was the means for drawing warriors together from more than a dozen various Indian nations. Thus what eventually became the pan-Indian confederation opposing the United States in the War of 1812 originated in the religion of the Shawnee Prophet.

Not realizing this, William Henry Harrison, Governor of the Indiana Territory, proclaimed in 1807:

...; for who does not know that the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage are always employed as instruments of British vengeance. At this moment fellow citizens, as I sincerely believe, their agents are organizing a combination amongst the Indians within our limits, for the purposes of assassination and murder;...\(^4\)

\(^4\) Since the Kispokotha was generally considered a "war division," the Shawnee nation at large drew only temporary, non-hereditary war leaders from this division. These men usually did not have the all-encompassing power over the Shawnee nation like the hereditary "peace chiefs," or civil leaders which emerged from the Chalagawtha or Thawegila divisions. Other Shawnee divisions include the Pekowitha and Mekoche.

\(^5\) Harrison's Speech to the Indiana Legislature, 18 August 1807, Esarey, vol. 1, 236; for biographical information on William Henry Harrison, see Esarey, vol. 1, pp 5-10, and Dorothy Burne Goebel, \textit{William Henry Harrison: A Political Biography} (Indianapolis: Historical Bureau of the Indiana Library and Historical Department, 1926). William Henry Harrison fought with distinction at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, was elected to both Houses of Congress, served as a diplomat to Colombia, South America, and became the nation's ninth President in 1840. Harrison's ancestry includes one of Oliver Cromwell's generals, his father signed the
Harrison, who had honorably served with Anthony Wayne's Legion in the conquest of Ohio (1793-1795), must have wondered if his days as a soldier were over. In 1810 he wrote to William Eustis, Secretary of War:

...the British are the real authors of these movements on the part of the Indians and I think it probable that if our differences are speedily arranged with that power [Britain]...that we shall have no Indian War... 6

Though the Governor believed he had good reason to suspect British involvement, in another year and-a-half it would become painfully clear that this Native resistance was more than simply a British-induced Indian uprising. Certainly Harrison must have pondered this when some of his finest officers fell at Tippecanoe on November 7, 1811.

Like Harrison, most Americans believed that the British were the source of their frontier woes. Great Britain certainly walked a thin line with her Native policies by attempting to prevent war while simultaneously courting the Indians' favor in case war ensued. This

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Declaration of Independence and briefly served as Virginia's governor (1782-1784), and his grandson Benjamin became the twenty-third U.S. President. Though the lifetime arch-enemy of Tecumseh, Harrison lamented the warrior's death after the Battle of Moraviantown on October 5, 1813, according to a British prisoner.

6 Harrison to Eustis, 14 June 1810, ibid., 425.
appeared to be a double standard, and the Indians often saw it as such.

Despite American allegations, the British Lion was preoccupied with a European war and could ill afford a North American conflict. Initially the British had nothing to do with this Indian resistance movement. In fact, as late as November of 1807 (three months after Harrison's speech to the Indiana Legislature, from which he is quoted above), British officials were as bewildered by Tenskwatawa's revitalization movement as the Americans. Some even thought that the Prophet was a French agent. Moreover, as late as February of 1811, Sir James Craig, Governor-General of Canada, officially declared British neutrality in the developing hostility between the Indians and their American adversaries. Despite British ambivalence and eventual support, Native resistance was well under way, with or without British aid,

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8 Ibid.
9 Sir James Craig, Governor-General to Brigadier Isaac Brock, 2 February 1811, Carl F. Klinck, ed. *Tecumseh* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), 113. This neutrality, however, did not stop the Indian agents from giving weapons to their soon-to-be allies. Craig was also soon replaced (due to health reasons) by the more liberal-minded George Prevost.
prior to any formal alliance.¹⁰

Then why did this nativist movement, turn so hostile towards the United States? The reasons begin with what had been revealed to Tenskwatawa in his visions. The Master of Life purportedly informed him that

...the Americans I did not make. They are not my children but the children of the Evil Spirit. They grew from the scum of the great water when it was troubled by the Evil Spirit and the froth was driven into the woods by a strong east wind. They are very numerous but I hate them.¹¹

With revelations like this one, coupled with the Prophet's influence, a growing anti-white sentiment occurred among the Native listeners. At the zenith of his movement, his converts probably numbered more than 3,000.¹²


¹¹ Speech by the Ottawa Prophet Le Maigouis ("the Trout"), 4 May 1807, repeating what the Shawnee Prophet had told him; quoted in Allen, 109, and Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 1983, 38.

¹² Harrison to Eustis, 14 June 1810, Esarey, vol. 1, 425. The figure of 3,000 may have even been conservative. In this letter to Eustis, Harrison writes that there are "about 3,000 men within 30 miles of the Prophets Town,..." Within the Wabash village itself there probably existed at least this many people if one includes women, children, and aged people in their calculations. On November 7, 1811 the Prophet mustered approximately 700 to 800 warriors to oppose Harrison. Hence
Yet, why did so many Natives follow the Prophet's teachings? After all, Tenskwatawa had been held in low esteem by his people; they literally considered him an outcast. Much of the reason for his sudden popularity lies in the tremendous strain, both physical and emotional, that had been placed on the Shawnee and many other tribes of the Old Northwest as early as Pontiac in 1763. Since the Greenville Treaty of 1795 the Americans had been making extraordinary impositions on these people. These included major adjustments in language, religion, agriculture, and an escalated fur trade (hence, a loss of wildlife coupled with an increase in the distribution of liquor among the tribes). Thus the Indians, while watching their food supply dwindle and their resources evaporate, had become desperate. Although some made the transition to an agrarian lifestyle and a market economy, the majority did not. Even if most could have been assimilated into white culture, these drastic changes had occurred simply too rapidly. Furthermore, the Shawnee, one of the most traditional and conservative tribes in the Old Northwest, tended to resist change.13 Living in a

there may have been more than 3,000 inhabitants overall. Harrison’s informant, who had visited Prophetstown, was the fur trader, Michael Brouillette.

state of cultural confusion, virtual starvation, and sometimes drunkenness, several of the Shawnee and numerous members of surrounding tribes welcomed the prophecies of Tenskwatawa.

The tenets of the Prophet's religion indicate the nativist opposition to the Americans. According to Thomas Forsyth, one-time Indian agent at St. Louis and Peoria, these included:

1st) Spirituous liquor was not to be tasted by any Indians.
2nd) No Indian was to take more than one wife in the future, but those who now had two[,] three or more wives might keep them,...
3rd) No Indian was to be running after the women; if a man was single let him take a wife.
4th) If any married woman was to behave ill by not paying attention to her work etc. the husband had a right to punish her with a rod, and as soon as the punishment was over, both husband and wife was [sic.] to look each other in the face and laugh, and to bear no ill will to each other for what had passed.
5th) All Indian women who were living with White men was [sic.] to be brought home to their friends and relations, and their children to be left with their fathers...
6th) All medicine bags, and all kind[s] of medicine dances and song, were to exist no more; the medicine bags were to be destroyed...
7th) No Indian was to sell any of their provision to any white people,...
8th) No Indian was to eat any victuals that was cooked by a white person, or to eat any provisions raised by white people, as bread, beef, pork, fowls, etc., etc.
9th) No Indian must offer skins or furs or any thing else for sale, but ask to exchange them for such articles that they may want.
10th) Every Indian was to consider the French, English, and Spanish as their Father or friends,..., but they were not to know the Americans on any account,...
11th) All kinds of white people's dress, such as hats, coats, etc. were to be given to the first white man they met,...
12th) The Indians were to endeavor to do without any merchandise as much as possible, by which means the game would become plenty, and then by means of bows and arrows, they could hunt and kill game as in former days, and live independent of all white people...
13th) All Indians who refused to follow these regulations were to be considered as bad people, and not worthy to live, and must be put to death...
14th) The Indians in their prayers prayed to the earth, to be fruitful, also to the fish to be plenty, to the fire and the Sun etc., etc..., those prayers were repeated morning and evening, and they were taught that a deviation [sic.] from these duties would offend the Great Spirit.  

Though one can indeed see the anti-white sentiment manifested either directly or indirectly in several of these principles, the Prophet strove primarily to rejuvenate his followers' diminishing culture. The seventh, ninth, and twelfth tenets in Forsyth's list indicate an attempt to remain independent of whites by severing economic ties with them. Tenskwatawa was keenly aware of how the fur trade impoverished his people. As the Indians bartered furs and pelts for manufactured goods, their subsistent lifestyles were overtaken by a market economy; in order to trade furs, natives and whites alike overhunted, causing a vast reduction in the Indians' commodities and food supply. As a result of the impositions

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brought by this powerful foreign economy, Tenskwatawa and his followers witnessed the near-total demoralization of their once-proud peoples in the few years since Wayne's (Greenville) treaty.\textsuperscript{15} Destitute and on the brink of starvation, the downtrodden Natives were often compelled to deal away the precious land once bestowed to them by the Master of Life in order to eke out a survival on a government annuity. President Thomas Jefferson, realizing that the debt-ridden Indians possessed only land as an asset, attempted to expedite American land acquisitions by escalating the fur trade. In 1803, the President instructed Indiana Governor Harrison to

\begin{quote}
...push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Like Jefferson, Tenskwatawa's brother Tecumseh also understood the outcome of Native reliance on white trade goods. At Vincennes in 1810, the illustrious Shawnee exclaimed to Harrison, "By taking goods from you, you

\textsuperscript{15} Richard White argues that in several cases the common occurrence by which Indians were reduced to a state of dependency on whites was not military defeat, but rather "the attempt...by whites to bring Indian resources into the market." Richard White, \textit{The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), xv.

\textsuperscript{16} Jefferson to Harrison, 27 February 1803, Esarey, vol. 1, 71.
will hereafter say that with them you purchased another piece of land from us."¹⁷ When Tenskwatawa's followers broke off contact with the Americans, they hoped to avoid this pitfall; no longer would they hunt the Creator's bounty for profit. If they obeyed these tenets, the Great Spirit would replenish the waning animal population and restore the affluence the Indians once knew.

The thirteenth element in the above list, the most chilling of the Prophet's stipulation's, served more as a warning than it did a tenet. Consequently, some who followed Tenskwatawa may have done so more out of fear than faith—a desire for self-preservation rather than a genuine confidence that the holy man would bring about a new utopia. Nonetheless, in order to purify and revitalize his threatened culture, the Prophet deemed it necessary to ferret out his enemies. His record proves that his thirteenth condition was no idle threat, as he and his followers conducted "witchhunts," hoping to destroy those who wielded spiritual power to the detriment of the Native community. Among others these incidents include:

1806 - The Delaware burned four of their tribesmen at their village on the White River (present-day Muncie, Indiana).¹⁸

¹⁷ Tecumseh's Speech at Vincennes, 20 or 21 August 1810, Klinck, 72; Esarey, vol. 1, 466.

¹⁸ R. David Edmunds, "Tecumseh, the Shawnee Prophet, and American History: A Reassessment," Western Histori-
1807 - Near Wapakoneta (Ohio), the Prophet's followers assassinated two Shawnees who were loyal to the Americans.  

1809 - A Kickapoo man was also burned by his people.  

1810 - In a Wyandot village, two old women and a chief were put to death.

All of these victims had been friendly to the United States, and some were Christians. Anyone not in harmony with Tenskwatawa's teachings underwent severe scrutiny, surveillance, and sometimes death. The sphere and longevity of Tenskwatawa's influence is evidenced by the widespread and continuing nature of the executions. These killings alone indicate the intertribal impact of the revitalization movement and that the Prophet had followers in several regions. Furthermore, the duration of the movement lasted for several years.

Though the Prophet instituted these nativistic principles to shield his culture from the defilements of

cal Quarterly 14 (3) 1983: 269; Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, 1983, 43-7. Also see Jay Miller, "The 1806 Purge Among the Indiana Delaware: Sorcery, Gender, Boundaries, and Legitimacy," Ethnohistory 41(2) (Spring 1994): 254-62. The Prophet personally oversaw the Delaware executions; the victims were either Christians or heavily influenced by Moravian missionaries.


whites, his doctrines fostered a specific hatred toward Americans. So much so that Americans before, during, and after the War of 1812 insisted that this was no religion at all, but merely an excuse for gathering warriors. After the war, American Colonel M.C. Armmen certainly felt this way when he wrote, "destruction against the whites was preached up under the cloak of religion: -for the Prophet pretended to inundiate [sic.] inspiration from heaven." Similar to William Henry Harrison before him, Armmen could not comprehend the nativist movement. Although Tenskwatawa and his followers hated the Americans, nowhere did Forsyth's list contain tenets that implored the Indians to attack the Americans. Undoubtedly the Prophet's followers certainly had a conflict of interest with the Americans, thus precipitating war.

As the early Americans spilled onto the frontier, they possessed similar spiritual goals for the future based on a common understanding of their mission to the "heathen." Even Americans who did not believe in a personal, Christian God, advocated a sort of "religion of the Republic," in which the Deity held high moral expec-

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22 Colonel M.C. Armmen's letter printed in The Georgetown Castigator (Georgetown, OH), 12 June 1832, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 2YY5.
tations of those in the young nation. The newcomers' mindset compelled the Indians to seek their own spiritual renewal, creating a conflict of cultures. The tenacious attempts to assimilate the Natives into white culture existed most prominently in the number of missionaries dotting the Old Northwest in the early nineteenth century. These included Moravians, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Quakers.

The Moravians had worked among the Delawares since the mid-eighteenth century and had patiently followed their parish westward until finally establishing a mission near the Delaware villages along the White River (in what is now Indiana) in 1799. The "Blackcoats," as their Delaware congregation affectionately referred to them, met with remarkable success considering their small numbers. These brave German missionaries preached a very simple message of a God who forgives sins through the blood of His son Jesus Christ. To the Moravians, Christ's deity was fundamental, and this God-incarnate,

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through His sacrifice on the cross, provided atonement for the sins of those who asked Him for forgiveness.  

Although the Moravians considered spiritual salvation and eternal life for all heathen to be their primary objective, they involuntarily found themselves at the forefront of a cultural attack upon the Natives that loomed as a greater threat than any American militia ever could have been. Moreover, the Moravian teaching was very pointed; it rejected any religion that did not contain the doctrines of the deity of the man Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death. This is borne out in a conversation between a White River missionary and a local Shawnee. When the Moravian asked the Indian if Tenskwatawa's teaching included the doctrine of Christ's sacrificial death, the Shawnee emphatically replied, "No! Of that I heard nothing. That is not our teaching." The missionary, remaining adamant, exclaimed, "That shows that your teaching is of man and not of God." This narrow acceptance, coupled with the realization that traditional Native religion is intertwined with every

25 Ibid., 98 & 159.


27 Ibid.
facet of life—war, hunting, marriage, birth, death, visions, and so forth—caused every Indian who had encountered the Moravians to be faced with a prodigious decision. Converting to Christianity became much more than spiritual regeneration; it also included a cultural transformation, the surrender of a way of life. Bearing this in mind, it is staggering to consider the sacrifices made by the Christian Delaware. To their everlasting credit, these saints courageously relinquished all they had ever known, including the world of their people by becoming Christians. Nevertheless, the Moravians would consider these temporal sacrifices minuscule when compared to eternity; God would duly reward them.

Most importantly, how did the Indians themselves generally perceive the image of Christ and the teachings of fundamental Christianity? Resoundingly, the consensus among Natives appears to have been an attempt to turn the arguments of Christianity against the missionaries themselves. The nativists became perplexed concerning the Moravians' constant rejoicing over the death of Jesus. In a vision, the Seneca Prophet Handsome Lake (from the region of upstate New York) claimed to have met Jesus. Bloodied by a spear wound and bearing nail scars indicative of a crucifixion, Jesus confirmed the Indians'

belief by describing himself as "a man upon the earth who was slain by his own people." 29

Yet, ironically, as the nativists attempted to denounce Christianity by holding the whites responsible for Christ's death, they remarkably seemed to be upholding the most fundamental Christian tenet. 30 In 1810, as Tecumseh harangued Harrison's council, he passionately accused them while simultaneously supporting a Christian creed: "When Jesus Christ came on earth, you killed him and nailed him on a cross. You thought he was dead, but you were mistaken." 31 Similarly, when Black Beard (not Black Hoof), a Shawnee, met with Secretary of War Henry Dearborn and President Jefferson three years earlier, he too seemed to acknowledge Christ's deity while denouncing the whites. While in Dearborn's office, the Shawnee

29 Excerpt from Handsome Lake's vision, ibid., 142; also quoted in Anthony F.C. Wallace, The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca: The History and Culture of the Great Iroquois Nation. Their Destruction and Demoralization, and their Cultural Revival at the Hands of the Indian Visionary, Handsome Lake (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 244. In Handsome Lake's vision, Jesus instructed the Seneca prophet to "tell your people that they will become lost when they follow the ways of the white people."

30 The Seneca Cornplanter perhaps acknowledged Christian claims in a conversation with Henry Simmons by stating, "it was the white people who kill'd our saviour;" quoted in Dowd, A Spirited Resistance, 1992, 141, and Wallace, 1970, 247.

31 Tecumseh's Speech at Vincennes, August 20 or 21, 1810, Klinck, 72; Esarey, vol. 1, 467.
exclaimed, "God made all things in six days,..., the white people killed him, but the third day he went up to heaven, and sees every action of us here below."³²

Paradoxically, this led the Natives to a dilemma. In an attempt to illustrate the hypocrisy of the whites and to cast off Christianity, these Native religious leaders found themselves confirming precisely what the Moravians would have had them believe. On the other hand, if the Indians wholeheartedly accepted Christianity without doubts or reservations, then, due in part to the Moravian insistence upon the erroneous nature of all nativist creeds, they found that they would be expected to relinquish their own traditional beliefs, including much of their culture. By continually persisting to denounce whites, while never expressly denying Christ's deity, death, and resurrection, the Indians, including Tenskwatawa's nativists, never actually resolved the paradox.

Rather than to deny the possible truth of Christ's claims (including His claims to be God), the nativists attempted to resolve this by seeking to remove themselves from the accountability of their own sins, something

which the Moravians had so ardently preached. By viewing themselves as exempt from the need of a Savior, the Prophet's followers could actually agree with the notion of Christ's deity, with the understanding that the sacrifice of the God-man was for the salvation and restoration of those who really needed to be forgiven, namely white people. When a Moravian missionary carefully explained to an Indian "that the Saviour had died for the sins of the Indians also," his Native visitor, after pondering a moment, responded, "The white people are more wicked than the Indians."³³ Although not denying the potential truth to the missionary's gospel message, the same Indian also concluded, "Granted that what you [Moravians] say is true, He [Christ] did not die in Indian land but among the white people."³⁴ Hence, while the nativists may have viewed Christianity as a valid religion for the whites, they preferred a religion preached by a Shawnee prophet, one that sought to preserve their culture. After Tenskwatawa began preaching in 1805, the White River Moravians gained few new converts.

Near this Moravian mission Tenskwatawa received his first revelation and began his career as the Prophet. It

³³ Diary of the White River Mission, 1806, Gipson, 438.
³⁴ Ibid.
may seem ironic that the largest spiritual confederation of Great Lakes and Wabash Natives ever assembled could trace its origins to such a close proximity to the Moravian camp. On the contrary however, it is precisely the spiritual and cultural presence of the Moravians that likely helped to precipitate the Native resistance. The nativists' movement, being spiritual in nature, met its earliest adversaries in this White River mission. Furthermore, it is also not coincidental that this area became the center of inquisition in 1806 when many Indian "witches" were purged; this was spiritual warfare!

The Prophet and his followers had hated the Moravians from the inception of their nativist revival. For the Moravians proclaimed the nativists as "the superstitious people, among whom Satan had his special instruments, to carry out his wicked designs." For their part, the nativists "suspected...all teachers of the believing [Christian] Indians of taking away the poison" of these converts and using "it to put the [remaining, non-Christian] Indians to death." The battle lines of a spiritual war had been drawn. The Delaware and their interloping Shawnee counterparts found themselves either

36 Diary of the White River Mission, 1806, Ibid., 417.
as Christians or as members of the nativists who had arisen to oppose them. With such a sharp dichotomy, no middle ground could exist in this frontier environment.

Despite many doctrinal differences in the theologies of the nativists and their Moravian adversaries, it appears that the Prophet did borrow certain elements from the Christians. A creed of eternal punishment for the wicked became a part of his teachings; this had not been taught in traditional Native cosmology.  

Now believing that the afterlife included a place of torment to be shunned, many Indians became much more motivated to follow the Prophet's call. From what he saw in his vision, the Shawnee holy man named this horrible place "eternity." Only virtuous tribesmen would avoid this judgment. Though Tenskwatawa hated the Moravians, their notion of a horrible place of post-life, eternal punishment appealed to him, as he found it convenient for his purposes.

Despite Tenskwatawa's growing popularity, he encountered the stiff opposition of numerous Native leaders who remained loyal to the Americans and permitted the mis-


sionaries to teach their people. Since many of the greatest leaders among the Indians had signed the Treaty of Greenville, these former war-leaders became advocates for a white-assimilated way of life among their tribes. Included in this group were the illustrious Little Turtle of the Miamis and the Shawnee, Black Hoof, both of whom benefitted greatly from the annuities and status which the American government bestowed upon them. The Prophet and his followers, who hoped to preserve their culture, rebuked all government Indian leaders as traitors that had abandoned their own people in order to benefit from American annuities and gifts.

Because of growing discontent within the Native communities, Tenskwatawa and his followers had been able to drive a wedge between the government-favored leaders and their tribesmen. As far as their young warriors were concerned, the former headmen had abdicated their authority by supporting the Americans.⁴⁰ Although many of the arch-government chiefs like Little Turtle, Black Hoof, and Five Medals (a Potawatomi) remained too powerful for the Prophet to condemn and have executed as witches, they were equally helpless in preventing him from spreading his teachings throughout the Old Northwest. An incident

on the Mississinewa River in April of 1808 left no doubt as to who held the greater sway. In a face-to-face encounter, Little Turtle threatened to kill Tenskwatawa if he and his people proceeded to move to a new village near the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers. The Shawnee holy man merely laughed and audaciously denounced all of the government chiefs who had sold out their people's interests in dealing with the Americans.\(^{41}\) For the nativists viewed land cessions as the first step towards poverty and virtual slavery; dispossession of their land spelled not only the end of their freedom, but also their culture.

Tenskwatawa's hostility towards the government chiefs also manifested itself in his perception of Black Hoof's peaceful community at Wapakoneta. Although Black Hoof and most of his fellow-Shawnee villagers abstained from alcohol, the Prophet still despised them, because they had adopted American culture and were under the teaching of a Quaker.\(^{42}\) Tenskwatawa accused Black Hoof and his followers at Wapakoneta of asking the government to "appoint masters over them to make them work...making


\(^{42}\) The Quaker who oversaw the agricultural development and attempted to develop a mission at Wapakoneta was William Kirk.
women of the Indians. " Hence, the essential key to the struggle centered on cultural preservation, not necessarily the observance of any particular tenets. It must be understood that the Prophet did not ban alcohol for the sake of virtue, but rather, to save his people's culture. Not only was the practice of purchasing whiskey on credit driving the Indians deeper into debt, but the vice literally killed many of them. In 1802, the Moravians wrote,

> A drunken bout never takes place among the heathen without one or the other losing his life or being at least terribly maltreated. Many of them drink themselves to death,...The guzzling of whisky [sic.] among these heathen is so dreadful that no one can imagine it.  

Both, the Prophet and Black Hoof understood this. Nevertheless, despite the abstinence practiced by Black Hoof's people, this Shawnee group at Wapakoneta had preempted the Prophet's purposes by adopting American lifestyles, and Tenskwatawa despised them for it.

Many American leaders believed that Tenskwatawa was merely a charlatan, and thought that it would only be a matter of time before the Prophet erred and his followers lost faith in him. Harrison attempted to hasten the

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44 Diary of the White River Mission, 18 May 1802, Gipson, 165.
Prophet's demise by challenging him in a speech to the Delawares in 1806. The Governor emphatically urged them to

Demand of him some proofs at least of his being the messenger of the Deity... If he is really a prophet, ask of him to cause the sun to stand still - the moon to alter its course - the rivers to cease to flow - or the dead to rise from their graves. If he does these things, you may then believe that he was sent from God.\(^45\)

Ironically the challenge played into the Prophet's hands, and it injected new life into the nativist movement. Having ascertained prior knowledge of a solar eclipse on June 16, 1806, Tenskwatawa "prophesied" the event and took credit for the "miracle."\(^46\) As news of the incident spread, previously-agnostic Natives quickly became believers and threw in with the Prophet.\(^47\) The event is critical and significant. To his adversaries it confirmed that the Prophet was merely a charlatan, while in the Native mind the incident removed all reasons to doubt Tenskwatawa.

With regard to his prophetic claims and religious ideas, how did Tenskwatawa perceive himself? - as a proph-

\(^{45}\) Harrison's Speech to the Delawares, early 1806, Esarey, vol. 1, 183.


et or a pretender? One should not think that his successful ruse is any indication that Tenskwatawa saw himself as less of a holy man. To be sure, Harrison's challenge was not humanly possible, and the Governor knew it. This made it all the more disastrous when Tenskwatawa seemingly overcame the challenge. During the years of his vocation as a prophet, Tenskwatawa clearly believed that the Master of Life had selected him to deliver the Indians from their state of suffering and restore the prosperity of their former lifestyles. Tenskwatawa's sincerity in his belief is nowhere better displayed than the air of confidence he projected on the eve of the Battle of Tippecanoe. To him and his followers, defeat was not possible; the Master of Life had always protected them in the past. As Tenskwatawa prophesied for the last time at the Wabash village, neither he nor his warriors had any reason to doubt it.

Until recently, historians have allotted nearly all of the fame to Tecumseh for having developed the final Native confederation of resistance in the Old Northwest.  


49 Gilbert, 271.

50 Prior to R. David Edmunds' works on Tecumseh and the Prophet, three of the best authors concerning Tecumseh did not give a properly-balanced perspective on the Prophet. These include: Drake's Life of Tecumseh (1841); Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., The Patriot Chiefs (New
Perhaps one reason for this is the inability of whites to grasp the religious undertones and spiritual saturation characterizing every aspect of Native life. The Native resistance effort originated with Tenskwatawa's revitalization movement. Moreover, this came about in opposition to white religion — primarily the teachings of the Moravians on the White River and only slightly less so, the Quakers at Wapakoneta. Rather than Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh dividing sacred and secular tasks, both leaders advocated a spiritual movement from its inception — a movement that would not be fully extinguished until the end of the War of 1812.


CHAPTER III

PROPHETSTOWN OF THE WABASH

After the Shawnee brothers left the White River in 1805, they moved to the vicinity of Fort Greenville (Ohio). Here the Prophet could preach to the thousands of Natives from other Algonquin-speaking nations of the Old Northwest who gathered at Greenville to receive their annuity goods from the U.S. government. As Tenskwatawa gained followers from these groups of sojourners, his spiritual movement became inter-tribal. News quickly spread of the Shawnee holy man and his prophecies which promised a restoration of Native prosperity and dominance.

By 1808, due to food shortages and the American presence, it was no longer feasible for the Prophet's nativists to remain at Greenville. Thus Tenskwatawa and his brother brought their followers to a new village near the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers in

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1 Portions of this chapter were presented at the Annual Meeting of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters on March 1, 1996 at Alma College in Alma, Michigan.

2 The government made these annuity distributions in accordance to Anthony Wayne's Treaty of Greenville, August, 1795.
Indiana, which ultimately became the largest Indian community ever assembled in the Great Lakes territories.\(^3\) Having undertaken this migration, the Prophet's followers established their village (of about 3,000 people) for religious purposes. Since Tenskwatawa's followers gathered there, whites came to know the village simply as "Prophetstown." As this revival grew into a resistance movement, Prophetstown, due to its religious origins, became the center of a spiritual defense. Though Prophetstown suffered its destruction at the beginning of the War of 1812, the warriors of the confederacy would continue their quest for victory through spiritual means, with precepts taught at Prophetstown and Greenville years earlier.

Though now little more than a rural midwest shantytown, at its peak in the early 1800's this once-thriving community held the interests of nations' leaders - both in Washington and Upper Canada (modern-day Ontario). Yet

\(^3\) It is believed that at least 3,000 people lived at the Wabash village known as Prophetstown during the peak of its prosperity. See Harrison to Eustis, 14 June 1810, Esarey, vol. 1, 425. The only known case which could have rivalled Prophetstown in size (in the Old Northwest) would have been the combined populations of the seven villages in close proximity at the mouth of the Auglaize River (present-day Defiance, Ohio) from 1792 to 1794. However, the total number of inhabitants of these Miami, Shawnee, and Delaware villages is estimated to have only been 2,000 souls. See Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Glaize in 1792: A Composite Indian Community," *Ethnohistory* 25(1) Winter, 1978: 15-39.
today, were it not for the average passerby noticing the towering battlefield monument protruding through the trees at Battleground, Indiana, followed by a stop at the adjacent Tippecanoe Battlefield visitor center (nearly a mile from where Prophetstown once stood), they would likely remain oblivious that any Native village ever existed at this quiet little hamlet. The purpose here is to attempt to reconstruct the pan-Indian site in its many meanings and forms. To understand the historical importance of Prophetstown and gain an appreciation of what the community meant to its inhabitants, the aspects of the community's leadership, geographic importance, spiritual struggle, and destruction must be explored.

How did the inhabitants of Prophetstown perceive their community? Why did so many migrate there? The place took on several meanings to the groups living there. First and foremost Prophetstown was a religious stronghold; its builders intended for it to be the center of purification of a religion that was being phased out by white influence. The site became the focal point of a spiritual revitalization movement—an effort to improve a society through an increase in spiritual power among its members. Therefore, this religious aggregation, with Prophetstown as its gathering place, served to unite the dispersed groups of Natives throughout the Old Northwest.
That the village was located deep in the hinterland says much about the community and its inhabitants. Not only did the Natives find it convenient to access, but more important, the area surrounding this pan-Indian city enabled them to continue their former lifestyles. This would include thriving on a subsistence economy, maintaining previous customs and standards of dress, and abstaining from any participation in a market or barter economy. Thus the village's location temporarily permitted its inhabitants to maintain their culture by providing a setting which enabled them to carry on their former lifestyles.

Another important aspect of Prophetstown entails how it became a center of political and military unity. Once the community became threatened by external forces, it was ultimately compelled to seek measures of resistance other than spiritual renewal or continual migration. The inhabitants considered the Wabash as the final barrier separating them from the whites; from here they would retreat no further. Because of its military strength, the United States government came to consider Prophetstown a threat.⁴

⁴ Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, 1983, 86-7. Harrison understood the danger Prophetstown posed to Vincennes. He wrote to the Secretary of War: "It is just so far off as to be removed from our immediate observation and yet so near as to enable him to strike us
Despite the community's many dimensions, the government and the pro-government Native leaders viewed it solely as a seat of armed rebellion against legitimate tribal authority. Viewed as renegades who usurped power from their proper leaders—namely Black Hoof, Five Medals, and Little Turtle—the Prophet and his brother, Tecumseh, established a breakaway state at Prophetstown. By 1811, Americans at Fort Wayne and Vincennes ascribed the expressions "banditti," "desperadoes," and "vagabonds" to those living there. Since the nativists at Prophetstown did not obey the authority of their rightful

when the water is high in 24 hours and even when it is low their light canoes will come fully as fast as the journey could be performed on horseback." Harrison to William Eustis, 10 July 1811, Esarey, vol. 1, 533.

Furthermore, ever since the summer of 1810, the Prophet possibly had access to inside information at Vincennes, causing the Americans even greater concern. See Michael Brouillette's deposition before Harrison, 30 June 1810, Esarey, vol. 1, 437. Finally, the Americans also deemed Prophetstown a threat, because they believed that the British were behind the nativist movement. A council of the citizens wrote to President Madison: "the combination which has been formed on the Wabash, is a British scheme; and it is equally certain that this banditti is now about to be let loose upon us,..." See Vincennes' Petition to President James Madison, 31 July 1811, Esarey, vol. 1, 538-42, and Territorial Papers of the United States Senate, 1789-1873, reel 4, 25-9 (Washington, DC: United States National Archives, 1951, microfilm).

leaders or recognize the latter's land sales to the U.S. government, their enemies deemed them outlaws. After the Battle of Tippecanoe, John Johnston, Fort Wayne's Indian Factor, reaffirmed the necessity of chastising this recalcitrant faction when he informed the Secretary of War, "there was not in all his [the Prophet's] party a single ancient respectable chief" at the skirmish.6

Under these circumstances, the Shawnee brothers did not need to follow their own tribal traditions, since the Shawnee group at Prophetstown represented only a small minority. After "they separated from the authority of the [Shawnee] nation," the brothers answered to no one.7 Similarly, their followers from other nations also defied their proper hierarchies of authority by selecting the Prophet in lieu of their own leaders.

Regarding the leadership at Prophetstown, a significant, but previously misunderstood element of the community on the Wabash concerns the Prophet's vaunted brother, Tecumseh. Which brother actually held supreme power at Prophetstown? Though Tenskwatawa's preaching originally attracted the nativist followers, Tecumseh gradual-

6 Johnston to Eustis, 28 November 1811, Record Group 107, J-30(6) (National Archives).

7 Colonel M.C. Arm Jenny's letter printed in The Georgetown Castigator (Georgetown, OH), 12 June 1832, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 2YY5.
ly became the paramount leader of the confederation.\textsuperscript{8} The Fort Wayne Treaty of 1809 was largely the reason for Tecumseh's ascent.\textsuperscript{9} This treaty's provisions even included cessions of lands west of the Wabash; it had become increasingly clear that simply observing the Prophet's tenets would not stem the tide of the American advance and rapid westward extension of the frontier. Only a policy of defense with teeth in it would have any hopes of success. Thus as the revitalization movement on the Wabash turned to one of resistance, the importance of Tecumseh's role increased accordingly.

However, this does not suggest that Tecumseh's rise lessened or eclipsed Tenskwatawa's authority. Despite Tecumseh's surge to power, he neither forsook Tenskwatawa nor his brother's teachings. At Prophetstown the two ruled jointly between the times of the Treaty of 1809 and the Battle of Tippecanoe in November, 1811. By the time the War of 1812 commenced, the nativists' British allies still viewed Tecumseh in association to his brother. Even after Tecumseh aided Major-General Isaac Brock in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{8} White, 1991, 514.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Edmunds, 1984, 124-5; White, 1991, 515.
\end{itemize}
the capture of Detroit, the latter still referred to the eminent Shawnee as the "brother to the Prophet."\(^{10}\)

Tenskwatawa originally possessed the most vital role in uniting the various nations at Prophetstown. Tecumseh's greatness notwithstanding, both brothers' influence would have likely remained minimal without the nativists' sincere belief in Tenskwatawa's prophecies. The community of Prophetstown was a loose confederation of Native communities held together by the Prophet and his teachings. As long as Tenskwatawa prospered, so went the community; if he faltered, so would the confederacy. The common link of religion would ultimately prove volatile, but until then the Prophet occupied the authority over all the tribes that was created when the government-favored leaders "abdicated," thereby creating a power vacuum. The name of the village itself suggests Tenskwatawa's supreme authority. Even after Tecumseh apparently gained authority, Tenskwatawa (in Tecumseh's absence), though never having been a warrior, made every decision

\(^{10}\) Major-General Isaac Brock to the Earl of Liverpool, 29 August 1812, Klinck, 141. Brock commanded the British Right Division (the forces in Upper Canada) in North America; the British could not have had a better leader in the right place at the right time. Brock's boldness and Native support saved Upper Canada. He fell at Queenston Heights in October, 1812.
in the defense against Harrison's invasion in November, 1811.\textsuperscript{11}

Not only did Tenskwatawa benefit from Tecumseh's support in the development of Prophetstown, but the holy man was also aided by another war leader—the Potawatomi Main Poc.\textsuperscript{12} As an aggressive and influential shaman from the Kankakee River in Illinois, the Potawatomi considered the region of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers as part of his domain. Though Main Poc apparently never converted to Tenskwatawa's religion, he befriended the Prophet late in 1807 and generously invited Tenskwatawa's entire parish to move to the future site of Prophetstown.

Tenskwatawa and his brother agreed with Main Poc's suggestion that the Shawnee brothers and their followers move to the new site on the Wabash. Due to their numbers, most of Tenskwatawa's followers could no longer be adequately fed. Not only did Indiana still contain more game than Ohio, but its lakes and rivers also held large bounties of fish. Other reasons also prompted the move. Tribes from Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin could more

\textsuperscript{11} Edmunds, \textit{The Shawnee Prophet}, 1983, 105-11; Gilbert, 268-71.

easily be induced to visit and listen to the Prophet's overtures. Moreover, the move west put a greater distance between Tenskwatawa's followers and the corrupting influence of the leaders influenced by the government and enabled the revitalization movement to grow without the constant surveillance of Americans from the fort at Greenville.\textsuperscript{13} Hence, political and spiritual reasons and the need for basic sustenance had made the move necessary.

In addition to these reasons, the new geographic location would make it much more feasible for Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh to defend the remnant of their disappearing homeland. An Indian agent observed that the warriors of Prophetstown, "would be able to watch the Boundary Line between the Indians and the white people - and if a white man put his foot over it that the warriors could easily put him back."\textsuperscript{14} There could be no further retreat. This is evidenced by a statement Tecumseh had made in a speech that the Ottawa Noonday recalled more than a quarter-century later: "This land belongs to the red warriors and the Americans would rob us of this and

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 110-1.

send us beyond the Wabash."\textsuperscript{15} The Native perception of
the Wabash as the final boundary is also borne out in
their response to the Fort Wayne Treaty of 1809 in which
Governor Harrison negotiated a U.S. government purchase
of nearly three million acres, part of which extended
west of the lower Wabash, from the government chiefs of
the Delaware, Miami, and Potawatomi tribes.\textsuperscript{16} After
Tenskwatawa and his followers spoke out against this
cession, they agreed amongst themselves that they would
not permit the Americans to survey the portion of land
lying northwest of the Wabash.\textsuperscript{17}

The selected site for Prophetstown also impressed
William Henry Harrison. The Governor, certainly no
stranger to frontier logistics, admired his adversary
Tecumseh, for his choice of ground for Prophetstown. In
1811, the Governor wrote,

\ldots, it is impossible that a more favorable situa-
tion could have been chosen, than the one he [Tecum-
seh] occupies: it is just so far off as to be re-
moved from immediate observation, and yet so near as

\textsuperscript{15} Darius B. Cook, \textit{Six Months Among the Indians in
the Forests of Allegan County, Mich., in the Winter of
1839 and 1840} (Niles, MI: Niles Mirror Office, 1889;
reprint, Berrien Springs, MI: Hardscrabble Books, 1974),
78.

\textsuperscript{16} "Treaty With the Delawares, etc., 1809" at Fort
Wayne, September 30, 1809, in \textit{Indian Affairs: Laws and
Treaties}, vol. 2, ed. Charles J. Kappler, (Washington:

\textsuperscript{17} Dowd, \textit{A Spirited Resistance}, 1992, 140.
to enable him to strike us [at Vincennes], .... It is nearly central with regard to the tribes which he wishes to unite .... It is immediately in the centre of the back line of that fine country which he wishes to prevent us from settling - and above all, he has immediately in his rear a country that has been but little explored, consisting principally of barren thickets, interspersed with swamps and lakes, into which our cavalry could not penetrate, and our infantry, only by slow laborious efforts. 18

Although Harrison has credited Tecumseh for the choice of the location of Prophetstown, it is more likely that Main Poc had already chosen the site when he invited the Shawnee brothers to move there in 1807. In accordance with the above statements, Harrison placed his army to the north of Prophetstown on the night of November 6, 1811, hoping to prevent the inhabitants' escape.

After the migration to Prophetstown in 1808, Natives throughout the Old Northwest gathered there in multitudes. These included Shawnees, Potawatomis, Kickapoos, Winnebagoes, Sauks, Ojibwas, Ottawas, Wyandots, and Iowas. 19 As the community grew, one could also have found Weas, Piankashaws, Foxes, and even a few Creeks living at the Wabash village. This of course was unprecedented. During Pontiac's Conspiracy nearly a half-century before, it had not been necessary for the various tribes to move

18 Harrison to Eustis, 10 July 1811, Klinck, 85-6.

to a specific, shared location. To the Algonquin-speaking nations in the continent's interior, the prospect of capturing a handful of British forts in 1763 proved much simpler than stemming the advance of white civilization in 1811. With game in abundance and the white frontier barely into the Alleghenies, the necessity of cohabitation by various tribes would not become evident until the early nineteenth century. Before then the culture was not yet facing its death knell, a prospect which would eventually emerge and cause the desperation felt by the Shawnee brothers and their followers.

Despite his success in attracting hordes of Natives to Prophetstown, Tenskwatawa, like at Greenville, once again faced logistical problems. How does one continually feed 3,000 people for an indefinite and extended period? If enough game existed in the Old Northwest to actually feed all the disaffected Indians, it would not have all been found in the vicinity of Prophetstown. Now that the community was no longer near Greenville, the American annuities could no longer be depended upon. Moreover, the people of Prophetstown had become reluctant to receive anything (including food) from the Americans. In 1810 Tecumseh exclaimed to Harrison, "By taking goods

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from you, you will hereafter say that with them you purchased another piece of land from us." 21 Though some goods were procured from the British at Malden, most inhabitants of Prophetstown had to fend for themselves. This severely hampered the growth potential of the community. Knowing this, Harrison bided his time. 22 The Governor could calmly train his militia and send dispatches to the Secretary of War, requesting the support of U.S. Army regulars, while the Natives of Prophetstown struggled to survive, let alone prepare for war.

Not only the community's corporeal difficulties, but shifting social norms also forced Prophetstown's inhabitants to undergo changes. Though the Shawnee brothers maintained a traditional gendered division of labor, they deprived women of any form of ruling power. Formerly, Shawnee culture included a type of auxiliary of women leaders whose resolutions in areas of diplomacy, peace, and war held an equal significance with those of their male counterparts. 23 At Prophetstown this quickly changed. The Prophet created a gender system in which women were subordinate to men, and important decisions no

21 Tecumseh's Speech at Vincennes, 20 or 21 August 1810, Klinck, 72; Esarey, vol. 1, 466.


23 Clark, 36.
longer depended upon the resolutions of the community's women.\textsuperscript{24} Even the Prophet's wife, who apparently held a certain amount of power and influence over the other women at Prophetstown, could easily be overruled by either her husband or Tecumseh. An excerpt taken from \textit{Judge Law's History of Vincennes} illustrated this:

\textit{...}, she [the Prophet's wife] possessed an influence over the female portion of the tribe not less potent than her husband's...The Queen and females of the tribe assembled, and resolved that the messengers General [Walter] Wilson and [Joseph] Barron should be retained, and their lives sacrificed; but Tecumseh over-ruled this determination...\textsuperscript{25}

Despite any influence the Prophet's wife had over the other women at Prophetstown, any impact that the women may have had in governmental policy or administrative action was of little consequence.

As in temporal affairs, Tenskwatawa also denied women authoritative roles in spiritual matters. Ever since the 1806 witchhunts among the Delawares when a Delaware prophetess oversaw the initial stages of the purgings (that ended with the executions of the four Christian Delawares), women no longer possessed roles of

\textsuperscript{24} White, 1991, 508.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Judge Law's History of Vincennes}, 100-1; quoted in Draper's notes, Tecumseh Papers, \textit{Draper Manuscripts} vol. 3YY110-1.
celestial leadership in the prophetic movement. After Tenskwatawa took control of the tribunal early in the proceedings at the 1806 witchhunts, never again would a woman assume a leadership position in the revitalization movement which culminated at Prophetstown. Moreover, the Shawnee holy man believed that the Master of Life would continue to work solely through male prophets and shamans for several generations to come. According to Tenskwatawa, "there would come a time when a woman would prophesy," but the Prophet warned that this phenomenon foreshadowed "the end of the world." Hence, with his spiritual authority, the Prophet enjoyed a self-imposed, autocratic rule that his followers never would have tolerated under normal conditions.

Yet, by 1808, the desperate condition of the Prophet's followers was far from normal, as Tenskwatawa benefited from the fact that he held authority over people from several different Indian nations, each of whom

26 Dowd, A Spirited Resistance, 1992, 128; White, 1991, 504, 508; The Delaware prophetess was named "Beade." For information concerning her visions, see Gipson, 333-4, 339-40, 402-3, 553.


recognized him as their common link with the others. Comprised of these different groups, the community at Prophetstown did not seem to function as a single unit. Even in the day-to-day tasks slight differences must have existed among the various tribes. A letter from British Colonel Matthew Elliott (of the Indian Department) to Brock hints at such tensions. After the Battle of Tippecanoe, Elliott's Indian informant indicated that "The Americans burned the Prophets village and all the Corn of the Shawanees [sic.], but the Kikapoos [sic.] saved theirs by having had it buried."²⁹ Perhaps if the community had existed for a couple of decades, it would have eventually merged into a single unit. Since it never had the opportunity to do that, it probably never became more than a collection of separate entities. Tenskwatawa was the common link of a very fragile union.

Thus the heterogeneous groups at Prophetstown had to overcome their differences. Some likely resented the arbitrary Shawnee leadership. Many of these had only moved to Prophetstown on the premise that Tenskwatawa was actually the Prophet he professed to be. The individual tribes did not want to lose their own identities in the process of joining this confederation. Merely faith in the Prophet and his religion bound these people together.

²⁹ Elliott to Brock, 12 January 1812, Klinck, 103.
Incidents at Prophetstown after the first winter (1808-09) illustrate the fragility of this union. An epidemic which swept through the community claimed the lives of more than 160 Ottawas and Ojibwas, in contrast to only five Shawnees. This calamity was naturally doubly bad for the Prophet. First, his inability to ward off the sickness brought into question the potency of his power. If the Master of Life truly favored and empowered him, then how could this have happened? Was this not the same shaman who brought about the black sun less than three years before? Secondly, the disproportionate number of deaths among the Ottawas and Ojibwas seemed too high for coincidence in the minds of their surviving kinsmen. If Tenskwatawa did have any power over sickness at all (whether preventing or fomenting), then why had the disease been so selective in singling out the Ottawas and Ojibwas? Either way, whether the Prophet had power or not, many of the Ottawas and Ojibwas concluded that it would not be in their best interests to remain at Prophetstown. These shortly thereafter returned to their villages in Michigan.

Not being completely certain that Tenskwatawa was powerless, these disaffected groups from the north decid-

ed to test him. Earlier he had warned that no blood ever be spilled at Prophetstown and promised that the Master of Life would destroy any perpetrator who defied this. Anxious to know the truth, a war party of Ottawas and Ojibwas secretly returned to Prophetstown, where, under cover of darkness, they tomahawked two unsuspecting Shawnees—a woman and her child. Unable to detect any afflictions which may have resulted from Tenskwatawa's retaliatory power, the murderers triumphantly returned to Michigan. The barbaric "experiment" had succeeded! The Michigan Natives felt they had uncovered a fraud. A year later (1810), when Tenskwatawa sent messengers to summon these dissidents back to Prophetstown, they flatly refused. As a consequence, some Ottawas and Ojibwas remained neutral during the War of 1812; others belatedly entered the contest against the Americans at the request of their British Father, not out of loyalty to the prophetic movement on the Wabash. Hence, the overtures of

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32 Ibid., 77.

33 Ibid., 82.

34 If not for the intervention of Michigan's territorial governor William Hull, the Michigan Natives would have sent a full-scale invasionary force to wipe out the entire community on the Wabash. See Hull to William Eustis, Secretary of War, 16 June 1809, Record Group 153, B-1 (Washington, DC: United States National Archives).
Tenskwatawa had nothing to do with their eventual involvement in the war.\footnote{John Tanner, a 30-year captive among the Ottawas and Ojibwas, recalled his captors' rejection of the Prophet: "...the impression [new religion] was obliterated, medicine bags, flints, and steels were resumed, dogs were raised [The Prophet had preached against keeping domesticated animals.], women and children were beaten as before, and the Shawnee Prophet was despised. At this day [1830] he is looked upon by the Indians as an imposter and a bad man; Edwin James, ed., \textit{A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America}, (1830), (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1956), 147; also quoted in Howard, 209.}

As Tenskwatawa's power came into question, causing many to defect from Prophetstown, the desperation of those who remained becomes apparent. Helplessly seeing their way of life vanish away and with few alternatives, they continued to stake everything on their leader. This was a last-gasp effort at preserving a vanishing lifestyle. These groups made extreme sacrifices by trusting in the Prophet. The Shawnee holy man had insisted that "All medicine bags...were to be destroyed."\footnote{See Forsyth's list of the Prophet's tenets in Chapter Two. This is the sixth tenet on the list. Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, 15 January 1827, Thomas Forsyth Papers, \textit{Draper Manuscripts}, vol. 9T52-3.} The Winnebago and Fox tribes would have felt that this invited disaster. The Winnebagoes considered their war bundles to be their "most sacred objects."\footnote{William C. Sturtevant and Bruce G. Trigger, editors, \textit{Handbook of North American Indians}, vol. 15, (Wash-}
great importance on their medicine bundles. In fact, they claimed to have never used shields, since they believed the power of their bundles could protect them more than shields could.\(^{38}\) These two tribes were probably not alone in having to make adjustments in their sacred credences and practices at Prophetstown. This naturally placed tremendous pressure on Tenskwatawa and left little margin for error in his prophecies. Moreover he had compelled Prophetstown's warriors to abandon their medicine bags when facing imminent warfare with the Americans.

In the Fall of 1811, as Tecumseh travelled through the South attempting to gain converts and build an army, Tenskwatawa possessed sole command of Prophetstown. Harrison seized the opportunity! At the head of a make-shift army consisting of the 4th U.S. Infantry and various militias, the Governor began a northward march from Vincennes towards Prophetstown on September 27. While Tenskwatawa's scouts kept him informed of the Americans' movements, the Prophet, not having a shred of military experience, hesitated. Although his brother had admonished him to avoid an engagement, Tecumseh certainly did

not expect Harrison to attack during peacetime. As the
Long Knives edged ever nearer to Prophetstown, the Proph-
et's loyal followers, who were more adept at warfare,
undecidedly looked on. Should they continue to obey the
Shawnee holy man, or should they defy Tenskwatawa and
prudently attack the Americans? The Prophet's power had
seemingly worked in the past, and none of the warriors
wished to incur the wrath of the Master of Life, so they
continued to trust Tenskwatawa. The indecisive Shawnee
leader forfeited several opportunities to strike the
American army, as Harrison's troops first forded the
Wabash and Vermilion Rivers and then Pine Creek. Any
major skirmish far from Prophetstown -whether a victory,
defeat, or stalemate- may have impeded the army's prog-
ress just enough to preserve the village for another
season, or at least until Tecumseh's longed-for return.
By November 6 the Americans had pushed to within a mile
of the city, and like never before, the warriors of
Prophetstown looked to their leader for spiritual power
and supernatural intervention.

Early the next morning, this fragile power structure
collapsed when Harrison's army routed the warriors of
Prophetstown in warding off an Indian surprise attack
against the Governor's campsite. For the Indians, the
attack went badly from the start. An advanced guard of
warriors crawled through the grass, hoping to infiltrate the American perimeter before the main attack commenced. A keen-eyed American sentry who spotted a warrior moving towards the camp, managed to get off a shot before being killed. As the Americans scrambled to their feet, the attackers unleashed a volley of musket fire into the camp as they rushed forward. Occurring much sooner than the Indians had planned, this initial action alerted the Americans before the Prophet's army was completely in place. As the battle transpired, the Natives attacked the camp from three sides, but at different times. Though the attackers twice broke through the enemy lines, the Americans beat them back both times. Had the three prongs of the attack occurred simultaneously, perhaps the Indians would have overrun the camp.

Too young to have fought Anthony Wayne's Legion 17 years earlier, most of Prophetstown's warriors experienced their first action at Tippecanoe; their inexperience showed. Would there have been a different outcome if Tecumseh had led them? Harrison's conscious decision to invade in Tecumseh's absence leads one to believe that the experienced Shawnee war leader likely would have made a difference in the battle.

Tenskwatawa may have only suffered a temporary setback had he not prophesied an Indian victory, promised by
the Master of Life. With the exception of less than a hundred loyal followers (mostly Shawnee), this shattered any confidence the nativists had in him, breaking the weak link of the confederation. Robert McAfee, an American veteran of the War of 1812 and early historian of that epoch, noted that the Indians employed a different strategy at Tippecanoe. In contrast to their usual precaution, a significant number of warriors, particularly Winnebago, had been killed at close range due to frontal assaults. McAfee wrote,

Their conduct on this occasion, so different from what it usually is, was attributed to the confidence of success, with which their prophet had inspired them, and to the bravery of the Winnebago warriors.\textsuperscript{39}

After sustaining heavy losses in the battle, the Winnebagoes wanted to kill the hapless shaman.\textsuperscript{40} In maintaining their faith in the Prophet, not only did they likely fight the battle without their medicine bundles, but the Prophet had promised them that they "should be shielded from all harm - none should be killed in battle."\textsuperscript{41} Perhaps out of fear and respect for Tecumseh, they spared

\textsuperscript{39} Robert Breckinridge McAfee, History of the Late War in the Western Country (Lexington: Worsley & Smith, 1816; reprint, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), 34.

\textsuperscript{40} Gilbert, 271.

\textsuperscript{41} James W. Drake to Draper, 11 May 1887, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 8YY1.6.
Tenskwatawa. Although the Americans scattered their foe, burned Prophetstown, and carried away the village provisions, the most stinging aspect of the defeat was that "All the confederated tribes had abandoned their faith in the Prophet." After six and-a-half years, the Shawnee holy man's reign had abruptly ended.

As usual, the Americans and British both missed this significance in reassessing the battle's outcome. Harrison claimed "a complete and decisive victory." Though this has been disputed, Harrison was right in claiming his victory; his troops, despite ultimately losing 62 men, met the expedition's objective of "the disposition of the Prophets force." However, in spite of his success, Harrison was oblivious to the Native loss of spir-

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43 Harrison to Eustis, 8 November 1811, ibid., 614.

44 Harrison to Charles Scott, Governor of Kentucky, 13 December 1811, ibid., 669. Those who question Harrison's victory point to the high American casualties and attempt to report the battle as inconclusive. Yet, most sources indicate that the two sides' casualties were comparable. These historians also claim that this attack merely fostered an increase in Indian raids throughout the Old Northwest. However, these raids had already been going on, particularly in Illinois. The Governor did not know how many warriors Tecumseh would be bringing back with him from his southern recruiting mission (perhaps more than a thousand; no one knew). Harrison therefore wanted to throw the northern alliance into disarray before Tecumseh could double or triple his strength. This he successfully did.
tual confidence. Shabonee, an Ottawa who helped lead the Indian coalition in their ill-fated attack, illustrated the dual significance by acknowledging Harrison's victory, while he also spoke of the spiritual impact of the battle, something the Long Knives could not grasp:

I think that I could have shot him [Harrison], but I could not lift my gun. The Great Spirit held it down. I knew that the great white chief was not to be killed, and I knew that the red men were doomed...It was a terrible defeat. Our men all scattered and tried to get away. The white horsemen chased them and cut them down with long knives...The Indians were defeated. The great barrier was broken.  

This indicates the helplessness and psychological devastation felt by the Indians. According to the Prophet, the Great Spirit had destined the Indians to win; according to Shabonee, the Prophet had been proven wrong.

Receiving information from exaggerating informants, the British displayed much naivety and optimism concerning the battle's outcome:

Twenty five Indians only are killed;...their loss [the Americans'] must have been considerable, not less than one hundred. The Prophet and his people do not appear as a vanquished enemy; they re-occupy their former ground...P.S. - The Indian Forces consisted of from 250 to 300 and not more than 100 were ever engaged.

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45 "Shabonee's Account" in McCollough, 9; Perhaps Shabonee's "great barrier" refers to the Native confederation.

46 Elliott to Brock, 12 January 1812, Klinck, 103-4.
The only thing remotely true within these statements is that some of the initial confederation did regather at Prophetstown. Yet things could never be the same; a sacred link had been broken in the confederation and its chain of command. The British, like the Americans, also did not grasp the spiritual significance of the defeat. Knowing that the Battle of Tippecanoe marked the beginning of a new Indian war for the United States, British officials viewed the confrontation on the Wabash positively, since it guaranteed them an ally in their own upcoming war with the young republic.

By January of 1812 Tecumseh had returned from his recruiting journey through the south on which he had unsuccessfully attempted to augment the number of supporters of the pan-Indian alliance. Perhaps reminiscent of his days as a youth in Ohio, he found his village in ashes and his brother ostracized by the remnants of the waning confederacy. Like the numerous times in the 1780's and 1790's when the Long Knives turned the Shawnee villages of Chillicothe, Piqua, and finally the Glaize to embers, Tecumseh would once again bring his people together in the wake of tragedy. Tecumseh, not the Prophet, summoned the scattered tribes back to Prophetstown in a vain attempt to rebuild the confederation.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Edmonds, 1984, 164.
After much of the Prophet's retinue left the Wabash region, the disgraced Shawnee holy man did little more than tag along behind Tecumseh through the War of 1812, albeit safely out of harm's way. Events that transpired during the War indicate how little he meant to the Native resistance cause. When Darius Cook published his diary containing the accounts (from 1839 and 1840) of the Ottawas, Noonday, Saginaw, and Gosa, these men told of their exploits with Tecumseh without ever mentioning the Prophet but once - the time he had to endure Tecumseh's wrath for being the cause of the debacle against Harrison at Tippecanoe. Although the Prophet retained a small remnant of followers (probably never more than a hundred), most of his former entourage no longer took him seriously. Not only would Tenskwatawa never regain his former glory, he also would never even rise above the status of Tecumseh's squire in the war that followed. Tecumseh, not Tenskwatawa, gave his life in an effort to preserve his culture and country. Ironically, the forlorn Prophet, who initially began the resistance movement, lived out his days, first as a pensioner of the British Crown, then later as an annuitant of the American government, as a virtual exile hundreds of miles from where Prophetstown once stood.

48 Cook, 90.
Beginning on Indiana's White River and moving to Greenville before ultimately suffering its demise on the banks of the Wabash on November 7, 1811, the final Native American revitalization movement in the Old Northwest had run its course. Unlike the similar episode of Pontiac and Neolin (the Delaware Prophet) nearly a half-century earlier, this one ended in tragedy. Whereas Pontiac's Conspiracy had briefly checked the expansionistic policies of the British in the 1760's, the Native defeat at Tippecanoe simply encouraged an escalation of American expansion. Though the revitalization movement had all but vanished, the war had just begun, and for the British the timing could not have been more perfect. Now, rather than simply practice a religion of hope and restoration, the scattered warriors of the Wabash would have to fight for their lives. Thus Tecumseh managed to pull together a remnant of the confederacy that had once been his brother's spiritual union.

At its pinnacle Prophetstown represented a center of religious purification, a place of cultural preservation, a political capital, a military base of operations, and simply a bastion of freedom. The community's religion bound the inhabitants together, with their high priest occupying the top of the religious and political hierarchy. Though the Americans gained a military victory at
Prophetstown, the main significance of this was the loss of the Natives' religious faith as preached by Tenskwatawa.

Tecumseh and Main Poc both continued to recruit warriors under the premise that the Great Spirit would bring victory, but the task became more difficult; several of the disillusioned warriors who had witnessed the false prophecy at Tippecanoe remained skeptical and claimed "neutrality" until the Great Spirit's will became manifest by His provision of military victories. Even then, however, this was bolstered by British support, and the theater of war had shifted closer to the Great Lakes, nearer to the British center of operations. The few Natives who had remained on the Wabash were permanently driven off by a second American invasion in November of 1812. Prophetstown, with its many religious, cultural, political, and military dimensions had passed from existence.

By 1840 the Indiana landscape had undergone numerous changes. Most of the Indians had recently moved west as newly-arriving settlers scrambled to purchase the last available parcels of land. In October of that pivotal year the English artist George Winter managed to visit Prophetstown. Nature had already hidden most traces of the once-thriving village with a "dense undergrowth of
Hiram Shaw, the owner of the property, had his son lead Winter to a few points of interest. After briefly sketching the over-grown landscape, the artist made the following entries in his journal:

A wild Cherry tree stands at the extremity or outward eastern line of the circle upon which the wigwam of Tecumseh existed. This tree has grown up spontaneously - near the hearth stones of the wigwam....

... here are the remains of a blacksmith's shop - visible, though no distinct relic of the building itself exists- but the charred wood and ashes are quite unmistakable and stamps the locality....

The Indian burial ground is a special object of interest - here is the telling tale of the corroding hand of time. Some mounds of earth of slight elevation - and scattering debris of decayed bark....

Like Winter, today's visitors will soon be able to stroll along the paths of Prophetstown, since a major project is under way to preserve the area, erect a visitor center, and create a memorial. While walking in the footsteps of the Shawnee brothers, standing near the site of the great council house, seeing the shadows of the towering oaks, and listening as the gentle current of the passing Wabash strokes the riverbanks, one begins to understand why the warriors and their families loved it.


50 Ibid.
so much and would sacrifice everything for a chance to remain along the Wabash.
CHAPTER IV

THE SPIRITUALITY OF TECUMSEH AND HIS WAR LEADERS

After the fall of Prophetstown in November of 1811, the Shawnee Prophet's influence waned, and his revitalization movement rapidly declined. Though Tecumseh has been credited with the formation of a solely secular military alliance in the wake of his brother's demise, nothing could be further from the truth. Despite the Prophet's declining popularity, the warriors of the confederacy, more than ever before, sought harmony with the Great Manitou. How could the Master of Life, in all of his love, permit his children to be overrun and destroyed by a foreign invader, particularly an enemy who descended from "Motshee Monitoo," or the evil manitou?¹

¹ In 1824, the Shawnee Prophet informed C. C. Trowbridge that the Great Manitou warned the ancient Shawnees that the whites were "not made by himself but by another spirit who made and governed the whites & over whom or whose subjects he [the Great Spirit] had no controul." Furthermore this other "spirit would endeavor to thwart his designs." Vernon Kinietz and Erminie W. Voegelin, editors, Shawnee Traditions: C. C. Trowbridge's Account (1824), Occasional Contributions From the Museum of Anthropology of the University of Michigan, No. 9 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1939), 3. Seventeen years earlier (1807) the Shawnee Prophet claimed that the Master of Life imparted to him in a vision that "the Americans I did not make. They are not my children but the children of the Evil Spirit .... They are very numerous but I hate them;" Quoted in Allen, 109, and
Not only was the prospect unthinkable, but the nativists who had once followed Tenskwatawa still believed that by submitting to the will of the Master of Life, they would yet be delivered from their enemies. Ever since the whites had come into their country, the Indians suffered from disease, starvation, and poverty. Furthermore, as the Long Knives began to assert their territorial claims with formidable armies, it became increasingly clear that only supernatural aid through an increase in spiritual power could bring deliverance. All other efforts -- war, peace, and diplomacy -- had failed.

Evidence suggests that the key nativist leaders who opposed the United States during the War of 1812 sought victory through spiritual means. The more prominent of these included Main Poc, Shabonee, Tecumseh, and Black Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, 1983, 38.

2 The diseases brought by the Euro-Americans may have swept away more than half of the Native populations in eastern North America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The worst of these diseases included smallpox, measles, influenza, and scarlet fever. See Joseph L. Peyser, translator and editor, Letters From New France: The Upper Country, 1686-1783 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 25.

Hawk in the North and the half-blood Josiah Francis in the South. Leaders such as these (excepting Francis) descended from Algonquin-speaking nations whose warriors envisioned themselves in tandem with spiritual beings, in a sacred realm where power could be gained or lost through the favor or displeasure of a pantheon of deities—manitous—, all subordinate to the Master of Life.\(^4\)

Indian agent Henry Rowe Schoolcraft considered this as a form of "mental slavery in which they live, under the fear of an invisible agency," while Moravian missionary John Heckewelder referred to the belief as the American Indian's "one weak side, which sinks him down to the level of the most fearful and timid being."\(^5\)

The two observant Americans had correctly perceived Native cosmology but had failed to consider the Native perspective on the matter. Far from viewing their position as a curse, the warriors claimed to gain power

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\(^5\) Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *The Indian in His Wigwam* (New York: W. H. Graham, 1848), 211; Heckewelder, 239.
through the blessings of their manitous. Not only did this power protect them from disease, but it helped them to overcome the elements, endure torture, and brought success in hunting and war. The Shawnee Prophet even claimed that a warrior's "medicine," or spiritual power, could potentially make him invisible to his enemies.

Though the peoples of the various tribes in the Old Northwest did generally fear and respect an evil sorcerer's power, they could ordinarily rely on protection from their own spirit guardians; if necessary, they turned to the power of a friendly shaman, enabling them to ward off evil spirits and avoid the condition Schoolcraft considered "mental slavery." Mystic warriors lived each day to jockey for power in the spiritual realm. For them the significance of the spiritual world far outweighed the temporal, since they clearly understood that their spirits would live on in some sort of eternal state after

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6 Kinietz and Voegelin, 40-3.
7 Ibid., 22.
their physical deaths. Thus not only would they have scoffed at being dubbed "superstitious," "weak," or "subjected to mental slavery," but they knew that the life of the spiritually-minded individual was the only way to live.

Among the numerous deities in the Shawnee pantheon are the Master of Life, the evil spirit, Thunderbirds, the celestial bodies – sun, moon, and stars – and other lesser deities. Though the Master of Life was certainly the most powerful, the other manitous enjoyed much latitude, particularly when meddling in human affairs. Therefore, respecting the power of the evil one, Shawnee warriors also directed their prayers to him on the eve of a battle. This spirit of the underworld was thought to take on the form of a great serpent who could ascend to the earth's surface through oceans, lakes, and rivers, where it snatched unsuspecting victims.

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9 Howard, 172-3; Kinietz and Voegelin, 41-2; Edmunds, 1978, 20; Joel W. Martin, Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 106-7. According to anthropologist Sam Gill, Indians did not fear death in old age, but considered it "the goal in life," or the "passage" to a better existence in the next world. Premature deaths, however, could interrupt this process and hinder the deceased's journey to their natural destiny; 110.

10 Kinietz and Voegelin, 41-2; Howard, 172-3.

Though the evil manitou took on other forms and could traverse land, the Shawnee associated him with water—the link to the underworld. As a sacrifice, travelling warriors left small quantities of tobacco near springs from which they drank, praying to the inhabiting spirit for protection.\textsuperscript{12} The Potawatomis of northern Indiana insisted that they had often seen the evil manitou in a lake they appropriately named "Manitou" (at present-day Rochester, Indiana). Believing that the evil one dwelt there, the terrified Potawatomis refused to go near the water. Later, reputable whites also reported sightings of an enormous creature in the lake, whose head was estimated at "three feet across the frontal bone."\textsuperscript{13}

Fearing the power of the evil manitou, the Natives believed that the Master of Life would allow him to destroy them if they departed from the Master of Life's will. In fact, the Shawnee and several of the other nations believed that this had already begun with the advent of whites, who they believed were the creation of

\textsuperscript{12} Kinietz and Voegelin, 41-2; Howard, 172-3.

\textsuperscript{13} Cooke and Ramadhyani, 124-5. The reported sightings were by carpenters (who were building a mill near the lake at the time) employed by a General Milroy and by one Mr. Lindsey, who saw the creature for several minutes. George Winter refers to the serpent as "the Leviathan."
the evil spirit.\textsuperscript{14} What could be done about the "spawn of the serpent?" Only by purifying themselves before the Master of Life by breaking off all contact with the Americans - refusing to intermarry with them, disengaging in the fur trade, abstaining from drinking alcohol - and by properly worshipping the manitous like their fathers and ancestors, could the people hope for deliverance.

The manitous who lived in the upper world were generally thought to be good and waged continual, spiritual warfare against those in the lower world. These manitous - the celestial bodies and Thunderbirds - possessed power over the elements and could cause natural phenomena.\textsuperscript{15} The Thunderbirds served the Master of Life as His gatekeepers of heaven and patrons of war. By flapping their wings, Thunderbirds created thunder, and storms occurred when these manitous battled their adversaries in the lower world.\textsuperscript{16}

During the War of 1812 the nativist faction in the North and a number of Creeks in the South believed that at least two war leaders, Main Poe and Tecumseh, had

\textsuperscript{14} Edmunds, \textit{The Shawnee Prophet}, 1983, 38; Kinietz and Voegelin, 3.

\textsuperscript{15} Natural phenomena could include storms, tornadoes, earthquakes, eclipses, shooting stars, northern lights, floods, and so forth.

\textsuperscript{16} Howard, 176.
gained the favor of these manitous in the upper world and therefore could control, or at least influence, the natural elements. As noted in the preceding chapter, Main Poc, while never joining the Tenskwatawa's revitalization movement, invited the Prophet and his followers to live along the Wabash. Despite Main Poc's reluctance to join the Prophetstown group, the Potawatomi wabeno wielded much spiritual power in his own right.¹⁷

Main Poc's followers claimed that their leader "was not born of a woman but that he was got by the Great Spirit and sprang out of the ground."¹⁸ The Potawatomi leader never had any fingers or thumb on his left hand but was a huge and muscular man. Main Poc regularly waged war against other tribes, particularly the Osage.¹⁹

¹⁷ Main Poc most likely wanted the nativists to live at Prophetstown to create a line of resistance separating him from the Americans. Hence the overzealous Potawatomi could carry on his mischief against both, the white settlements of southern Illinois and the Osage simultaneously with less fear of molestation. If Main Poc was fortunate enough, the Wabash village would even be blamed for his doings. This in fact happened in 1811 when John Conner and William Wells went to Prophetstown seeking recourse for raids actually conducted by Main Poc in southern Illinois; see Edmunds, 1984, 139. Main Poc did not want to come under Tenskwatawa's authority, but he wanted to use the Prophet's movement to his own advantage, including the possibility of military support from Prophetstown.

¹⁸ Draper's notes, 1882, taken from Thomas Forsyth's notes, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 8YY57.2.

¹⁹ Although Forsyth did not include this with his list of Tenskwatawa's tenets (see Chapter Two for this
Sporting a belt of human scalps, the chieftain claimed that the Great Spirit had granted him special powers which would be revoked if he should stop warring against his enemies, both Native and white.\textsuperscript{20} In addition to continual warfare, the Great Spirit also required that Main Poc maintain his habit of drinking spirituous liquors (blatantly violating Tenskwatawa's first tenet) in order to prevent himself from becoming "a common man in his nation."\textsuperscript{21} In his drunken stupors he had "been known to be intoxicated three and four days at a time."\textsuperscript{22} He also pursued women to no end, "and would in his drunken frolicks [sic.] attempt to force the first woman he met."\textsuperscript{23} After remaining secluded in a solitary lodge deep in the woods for days at a time, the shaman would return to his village to inform his followers of his latest revelations. As a wabeno, Main Poc could allegedly change the weather.\textsuperscript{24} By 1808 William Wells sensed that

\textsuperscript{20} Before the War of 1812, Main Poc led numerous raids against the Osage nation across the Mississippi, into the present-day regions of Missouri and Iowa.

\textsuperscript{21} Draper's notes, 1882, taken from Thomas Forsyth's notes, Tecumseh Papers, \textit{Draper Manuscripts}, vol. 8YY54.2.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., vol. 8YY57.3.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} Edmunds, 1986, 21; Edmunds, 1978, 20.
the key to good relations with the western tribes depended on the government's dealings with Main Poc. The Fort Wayne Indian agent considered the Potawatomi "the greatest warrior in the west...the pivot on which the minds of all the Western Indians turned..., [he] has more influence than any other Indian."\(^{25}\)

It is difficult to understand clearly the Prophet's relationship with Main Poc; the sources tend to differ. Main Poc's lifestyle defied Tenskwatawa's religion in almost every area. Despite any element of hypocrisy, Tenskwatawa attempted to add Main Poc to his entourage, for the belligerent Potawatomi held considerable influence over most of the tribes situated between the Wabash and Mississippi Rivers. Though Main Poc responded congenially to the Prophet, he neither rejected nor wholeheartedly accepted the Prophet's overtures. Thomas Forsyth indicated that Main Poc was jealous of Tenskwatawa:

> The Main Poque [Poc] well knew, that if he listened to the Shawnee Prophet, he would be inferior to him, and therefore jealous of his standing as a man of consequence among the Indian nations.\(^{26}\)

\(^{25}\) Wells to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, 20 April 1808, Carter, vol. 7, 556; Wells to Dearborn, 7 January 1808; quoted in Edmunds, 1986, 25.

\(^{26}\) Draper's notes, 1882, taken from Thomas Forsyth's notes, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 8YY54.3.
Main Poe feared the loss of influence among his people, since he likely thought that the Prophet was more powerful than he. Although Main Poe held the status of a "wabeno," or the most powerful sort of shaman, a shaman's power generally fell short of that of a prophet, particularly in knowing future events.

Though very different from Main Poe, Tecumseh also led by spiritual means. Numerous testimonies coming from both, Natives and whites indicated that Tecumseh was among the greatest of orators and, even William Henry Harrison concluded that Tecumseh was "one of those uncommon geniuses" who could potentially "be the founder of an Empire." Why did the multitudes follow Tecumseh? Was it merely his rhetoric and style? Though whites may have thought this, Tecumseh's followers believed that the Great Spirit favored the eminent Shawnee and had endowed him with certain powers. Not only did many Creeks view Tecumseh as a shaman, but modern-day Shawnees remember him as one of their "greatest prophets." Earlier histo-

27 Harrison to William Eustis, Secretary of War, 7 August 1811, Esarey, vol. 1, 549.

28 It is likely that the Shawnees and Creeks believed that such a successful warrior as Tecumseh had been blessed and endowed with powers by the Master of Life. For reference to such abilities see Dowd, A Spirited Resistance, 1992, 146, 197; Dowd, "Thinking and Believing: Nativism and Unity in the Ages of Pontiac and Tecumseh," 1992, 329; Howard, 211.
rians have seemingly erred in drawing a dichotomy of sacred and secular roles for Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh, respectively.

In order to dispute the notion that Tecumseh merely concerned himself with secular affairs, one must determine how Tecumseh viewed Tenskwatawa and his revitalization movement. Did the great Shawnee warrior adhere to, or repudiate the faith of his younger brother? The answer to this question not only helps to determine the extent of the Prophet's role in building the confederation, but it also clarifies whether or not it was truly based on a religious union. Past generations have lauded Tecumseh for his ability to employ his brother as a tool under the "cloak of religion" for the purpose of recruiting an inter-tribal military alliance. Yet historical evidence suggests otherwise. J. M. Ruddell, the son of a white captive who lived much of his life among the Shawnees, revealed the essence of the relationship between Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa:

My father said that the Prophet had an unbounded influence over Tecumtha [Tecumseh] - and that Tecumtha looked upon him as prophesying Supernatural Powers- ...father tried to convince him that revelations from the Great Spirit had closed- Tecumtha's answer would be it may be closed to the white man but not to the Indian and so he Tecumtha fully believed all the extravagant sayings of the Prophet
...and so my father was of [the] opinion that Tecumtha was the tool of the Prophet.  

Ruddell's brother Stephen concurred when he wrote, "Tecumseh would have been a greater and better man only for the influence his brother the Prophet had over him."  

Despite what the Prophet may or may not have been, Tecumseh viewed him and his religion as genuine, and he believed in them. As Tecumseh campaigned for support on his recruiting journeys among the southern Indian nations just prior to the War of 1812, his speeches must have been heavily laced with spiritual rhetoric. The Creeks later regretted that they did not wholeheartedly heed his words.  

Several incidents occurred on Tecumseh's southern tour which clarify why numerous Creeks considered him a prophet. For the southern nations to embrace the nativist cause, they would need to be persuaded that the Great Spirit also favored it. Hence, the 25-man delegation that accompanied Tecumseh included a Creek prophet known as "Sikaboo" who testified that his Shawnee companion was truly an emissary sent by the "Maker of Breath" - the name  

29 J. M. Ruddell to Lyman Draper, 15 November 1884, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 8YY43-43.2.  

30 Stephen Ruddell to Draper, 5 August 1884, ibid., vol. 8YY29.  

the Creeks gave to the Master of Life. A great comet also hailed the arrival of Tecumseh whose very name carries the dual meaning of "shooting star" and "crouching panther."32 While Tecumseh visited the Creeks, the comet reached its peak visibility, causing several to believe him and join his cause in the upcoming war.33 With Tecumseh's influence among the manitous of the upper world, defeat seemed impossible. The Creeks who believed Tecumseh, viewed the war as a holy war, fought under the guidance of the Maker of Breath.

Each time Tecumseh and his Shawnee delegation addressed an audience they performed certain rituals, lending credence to Tecumseh's speeches. Years later, in 1883, Tustenuckochee of the Seminole nation recalled Tecumseh's visit:

32 According to Howard (p. 179), the Shawnees conceptualize a meteor as a leaping panther. Also, the extended Shawnee phrase "nila ni tekamthi, manetuwisipessi" refers to a spiritual being, crouched as a panther, "who lies waiting to cross the path of living creatures." Hence, Tecumseh's name referred to a "Celestial Panther" which possessed a certain metaphysical understanding; Gilbert, 11. One historian also maintains that Tecumseh's mother and her midwives witnessed a shooting star the night of his birth; William H. Van Hoose, *Tecumseh: An Indian Moses* (Canton, OH: Daring Books, 1984), 1.

33 John Sugden, "Early Pan-Indianism: Tecumseh's Tour of Indian Country, 1811-1812," *American Indian Quarterly* 10(4) (Fall 1986), 289; Benson J. Lossing to Lyman Draper, 30 August 1882, Tecumseh Papers, *Draper Manuscripts*, vol. 4YY54-54.1.
In his [Tecumseh's] travels he frequently showed the Creeks his power to deal with the evil spirit as no man possessed or dared to do.... In his speech he warned the Muscogees [Creeks] not to attempt anything they had seen him do lest thereby they bring ill fate to themselves, for he himself only was able to do that which they saw him do.34

Unfortunately the aged Seminole (who was 15 years old at the time of Tecumseh's visit) did not divulge what miracle he saw Tecumseh perform. Another Seminole, John Jumper, gave a similar account:

He [Tecumseh] had a red stick or wand with which he professed to be able to work wonderful effects.... Tecumseh told them that this red wand and a knowledge of the use of it would enable them to overcome all their enemies;.... He then with his warriors performed a dance with the wand and went through a number of incantations etc. He warned them not to attempt to use this stick... until the time [war perhaps?] should come.35

Tecumseh's alleged use of this red "stick" or "wand" forms a theory as to why his Creek proselytes were dubbed "Redsticks." Not only did this group become the United States' southern adversary in the War of 1812, but they also fought a civil war, or "sacred revolt" against their countrymen who refused to join the movement begun by Tecumseh.36

34 Tustenuckochee to Lyman Draper, 22 August 1883, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 4YY2.

35 John Jumper to Lyman Draper, 11 January 1882, ibid., vol. 4YY16-16.1.

36 "Sacred Revolt" is also the phrase used for the title of the recent book publication (1991) by Joel Martin.
Observers of the above-mentioned Shawnee war dance remember it primarily for its horrible nature. Two dozen of the most athletic Shawnee men had stripped naked, except for a breech cloth, painted their bodies black, and performed battle simulations with their tomahawks and scalping knives. They did this to invoke the power of the Thunderbirds, the Great Spirit's patrons of war.\textsuperscript{37}

The Shawnee delegation taught this dance to the Creek warriors who became the Redstick faction; when Tecumseh returned to the North, the Creek prophet Sikaboo remained in the South to continue to teach and influence Creek allies to fight under the Maker of Breath's banner in the upcoming struggle.\textsuperscript{38}

Though Tecumseh left the Creeks late in the Fall of 1811, his greatest miracle had yet to occur. Though it is conceivable that the British had given Tecumseh foreknowledge of the comet, none could explain his prophecy of the earthquake which shook North America three different times between December and February, 1811-1812.\textsuperscript{39} In

\textsuperscript{37} Howard, 176.

\textsuperscript{38} Martin, 1991, 147; Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "Prophet of War: Josiah Francis and the Creek War," \textit{American Indian Quarterly} 9(3) (Summer 1985), 277.

\textsuperscript{39} This series of earthquakes, known as the New Madrid Earthquake, is estimated to have measured as high as 8.2 on the Richter Scale, the largest known earthquake in North American history. See Joel Martin, "The Creek Prophetic Movement," \textit{Alabama Heritage} 23 (Winter 1992),
what manner did Tecumseh actually foretell the event? Some remembered Tecumseh's predicted earthquake as merely his signal to his southern allies, informing them that the war had begun; others recall the earthquakes as his retribution to Big Warrior and the other Creek leaders who rejected his overtures. Tecumseh scorned Big Warrior by charging him,

Your blood is white. You have taken my talk, ... but you do not mean to fight. I know the reason. You do not believe the Great Spirit has sent me. You shall know. I leave Tuckhabatchee [the largest Creek village] directly—and shall go straight to Detroit. When I arrive there, I will stamp the ground with my foot, and shake down every house in Tuckhabatchee. ^40 ^

Needless to say, Tuckhabatchee was virtually destroyed. Many in the West, both Native and white alike, believed that the Supreme Being was angry, regardless of whether or not they knew of Tecumseh's predictions; the world seemed to be coming to an end. Though most agreed that God was angry, multiple interpretations arose. Backslidden Christians throughout the frontier renewed their faith and asked for God's mercy and forgiveness. ^41 ^

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^40^ Tecumseh's speech to Big Warrior and the Creeks at Tuckhabatchee, October 1811, Klinck, 98; Tustenuckochee's statement in I. G. Vore to Lyman Draper, 16 August 1886, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 4YY1.1, and Tustenuckochee to Draper, 22 August 1883, ibid., vol. 4YY2-2.1.

No doubt numerous Creeks and Choctaws feared that the Master of Life was angry with them for allowing the whites to corrupt them and for ignoring the words of His messenger Tecumseh. Could Tecumseh have been right after all? Still others believed that the earthquakes represented the Great Spirit's wrath toward whites, since He held them responsible for preventing His children from living the way He intended them to.\(^42\) The Master of Life certainly seemed vexed—but at whom?

At least one small group of Creeks—a hunting party led by Little Warrior—did not interpret the numerous tremors as the Great Spirit's wrath, but merely understood them as Tecumseh's signal that the war had begun. Little Warrior and his zealous band murdered seven white families in what they intended as an act of war.\(^43\) Probably expecting a hero's welcome, the handful of warriors triumphantly returned home only to find that their nation was not at war; the Creek leaders still deliberated on the meaning of the recent earthquakes. Even worse, U.S. Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins demanded justice for the deaths of the seven families; Hawkins threatened the Creeks with reprisals from the federal government if the

\(^{42}\) Sugden, 1986, 290, 294.

\(^{43}\) Tustenuckochee to Lyman Draper, 22 August 1883, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, vol. 4YY2.1; Martin, 1992, 10; Owsley, 277.
Creek national council did not extract justice from the perpetrators. The Creek council tracked down and uncere-
oniously executed Little Warrior and his band; some of these killings were little more than assassinations. Several of the condemned Creeks cried out to Tecumseh for deliverance immediately prior to their deaths. These killings prompted murmurings among the prophets through­out the Creek nation, and soon the Muscogee people were embroiled in a civil war. Led by yet another prophet - the mixed blood Josiah Francis- the Redsticks believed Tecumseh and commenced their sacred revolt.

Both in the North and in the South, Tecumseh's followers revered him as a true prophet and an apostle of the Great Spirit. The nativists relied heavily on Tecum­seh, hoping he could garner the spiritual power necessary to restore them to their former lives before the Ameri­cans came. Even William Henry Harrison perhaps sensed that Tecumseh's followers viewed their leader in this manner when he wrote that Tecumseh "is the great man of the party" and "the Moses of the family." By predicting the earthquake, Tecumseh had far outdone his brother's


45 Harrison to William Eustis, Secretary of War, 22 August 1810 and 6 August 1810, Esarey, vol. 1, 460, 456, respectively.
feat of the black sun (solar eclipse) five and-a-half years earlier. Believing that the Master of Life had endowed Tecumseh with nearly absolute power, the condemned Creeks of Little Warrior's band cried to him for their deliverance—not to the manitous. As an instrument of the Master of Life and protected by Him, Tecumseh's followers believed that he was indestructible, unless of course the Great Spirit permitted his demise. The Winnebagoes, a key element in the confederacy, later remembered Tecumseh as invincible long after the Shawnee's death. In his narrative of 1887, Spoon Decorah, an aging Winnebago, stated, "our old people talk much about Tecumseh....Tecumseh's skin was bullet-proof....The Bullets shot at him would go through his shirt, and fall harmless inside." While Tecumseh's death—caused by gunfire—at Moraviantown, October 5, 1813, seemingly undermines this notion, the nativists would argue that the Great Spirit, angered over His people's disobedience, withdrew His protection of Tecumseh. When the artist George Catlin interviewed Tenskwatawa in 1833, the former prophet informed him that only Tecumseh's premature death kept the nativists from total victory, by shattering the

Shawnee leader's "grand plan....to embody all the Indian tribes in a grand confederacy." 47

Thus under the supervision of a handful of prophets, the nativists entered the War of 1812 relying on their manitous to provide victory; the resistance effort did not suddenly become secular after Prophetstown fell. This is hardly surprising when one considers that Native spirituality and warfare have always been intertwined. In the tradition of the Algonquin-speaking nations of the Old Northwest, the adult male's whole purpose was to serve his family as protector and provider. Lewis Cass, Governor of Michigan Territory, wrote, "There are but two serious occupations, connected with the ordinary business of life, to which an Indian willingly devotes himself. These are war and hunting." 48 In 1808, as Governor Harrison (of Indiana Territory) attempted to determine the intentions of the Shawnee Prophet, his remarks indicate that he did not grasp the fundamental link between Native spirituality and warfare:

I have lately conversed with an intelligent man who passed (a few weeks ago) through some of the villages of the Potawatimies [sic.] that are under the Prophet's influence. He says that they are con-


stantly engaged in what they term religious duties. But that their prayers are always succeeded by or intermixed with warlike sports, shooting with the bow, throwing the tomahawk or wielding the war club. This combination of Religious and warlike exercise and the choice of weapons of their own manufacture sufficiently indicates the designs of their author.⁴⁹

Though Harrison had sufficient cause for alarm, he did not realize that nothing could have been more natural for these Potawatomi warriors than to blend their religious ceremonies with the arts of war.

The true warrior deemed his spiritual power, or "medicine," much more vital than his physical strength. This could mean the difference between victory and death. Before battle, rather than looking to their war leaders for guidance, warriors turned to their shamans and clan totems for protection and empowerment. Despite sometimes travelling hundreds of miles to battle an enemy, a legion of warriors would immediately stop and reverse their course if a prophet instructed it. Henry Schoolcraft wrote, "An entire army will retrace its steps if the dreams of the officiating priest are unfavorable."⁵⁰

Though war leaders would have to yield to the overriding command of a spiritual leader, the northern nativists in

⁵⁰ Schoolcraft, 1857, 660.
the War of 1812 conveniently had at least two leaders who fulfilled both roles -Main Poc and Tecumseh.51

Warriors not only sought to gain power but also to maintain it by faithfully carrying out the Great Spirit's will. As previously stated, Main Poc even had to make continuous war to sustain his medicine. So much so, that the Potawatomi once lifted the scalp of an already-dead allied British soldier (in the wake of a battle at the Canard River new Fort Malden) when no American stragglers presented themselves.52 Regardless of the means, warriors shared the common goal in preserving the favor of their manitous and the blessings of the Master of Life. Similar to Main Poc, Black Hawk also depended on the Great Spirit through the vicissitudes of his life and thanked Him for His protection.53 Like all war leaders of an Algonquin heritage, the lives of Main Poc and Black

51 Twenty years later, long after the deaths of Main Poc and Tecumseh, Black Hawk once again rallied his people against the Americans, and as always, under the supervision of a prophet; Jackson, 100, 112; Dowd, A Spirited Resistance, 1992, 193; Catlin, 56, 338.

52 Edmunds, 1986, 28, and Statement by Robert Reynolds, commissary to the British forces on the northwestern border, July, 1812, Klinck, 136; Recognizing the bright red hair of their fallen comrade, the British threatened to kill Main Poc and "gave him a good thrashing for his pains."

53 Jackson, 75, 123, 144-5, & 154.
Hawk were akin to a quest for determining the Master of Life's will.

Perhaps even more so than his fellow leaders, Tecumseh also sought to fulfill the Great Spirit's design. On separate occasions, he and his brother both informed Harrison that their people's move to the Wabash was not of their choosing, but the "great spirit order'd" it.\(^54\) Tecumseh's trek through the South can also be likened to a missionary journey, as he claimed he was sent by the Maker of Breath. His entourage in the North viewed him in the same fashion. In the presence of 40 of his closest followers - including leaders of the Wyandot, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Winnebago nations - Tecumseh exclaimed to Harrison in 1810 that "The Great Spirit has inspired me."\(^55\) These leaders of the various nations who accompanied Tecumseh all vowed to the governor that they would join the confederacy of the illustrious Shawnee. This intertribal infrastructure had begun to view Tecumseh as both, a spiritual and a secular leader. Even until the end, the Shawnee chieftain viewed himself as carrying out the Master of Life's will. In his famous speech in which he rebuked General Henry Procter and the

\(^{54}\) Harrison to William Eustis, Secretary of War, 4 July 1810, and 6 August 1810, Esarey, vol. 1, 439, 457.

\(^{55}\) Tecumseh's Speech at Vincennes, 20 or 21 August 1810, Klinck, 72; Drake, 128.
retreating British, Tecumseh exclaimed, "Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it be his will, we wish to leave our bones upon them."\textsuperscript{56}

The Natives fought their wars not only in the physical world, but also in the spiritual realm. All of their behavior, though often barbaric, was spiritually-motivated and was carried out for a specific purpose. Two of the necessary practices of Native spiritual warfare, revenge and torture, helped earn them the reputation of ruthless barbarians. Whites could not understand Indian notions of warfare and their treatment of enemies. Anglo-Americans did not attach spiritual implications to their wars, and from a secular perspective, they tended to attribute Native conduct to maliciousness.

The Natives sought blood revenge to appease the spirits of their deceased kin, particularly those warriors who fell at the hands of an enemy. Potawatomis, Shawnees, Creeks, and Senecas all (and likely most other Native American groups) feared the souls of their deceased relatives and comrades and went to great lengths to facilitate the "spirit journeys" of their loved ones.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} Tecumseh's Speech at Fort Malden, 18 September 1813, Drake, 189.

By not paying heed to proper burial rituals, the deceased's family would bring calamity upon themselves. Moreover, an unavenged death would surely cause a spirit to linger, especially if a dream or vision revealed that the death must be avenged.\textsuperscript{58} Here lies the answer as to why a warrior would travel hundreds of miles and endure any hardship merely to take a single enemy scalp. In the 1770's the British Indian trader James Adair marvelled,

\begin{quote}
I have known the Indians to go a thousand miles, for the purpose of revenge, in pathless woods; over hills and mountains; through large cane swamps, full of grapevines and briars; over broad lakes, rapid rivers, and deep creeks; and all the way endangered by poisonous snakes, if not the rambling and lurking enemy, while at the same time they were exposed to the extremities of heat and cold...hunger and thirst...[which are all considered] as imaginary trifles, if they are so happy as to get the scalp of the murderer, or enemy, to satisfy the supposed craving ghosts of their deceased relations.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

More than simply a way to get even, revenge served to liberate spirits and free the living of their most sacred obligation. Furthermore, a warrior could even improve his own standing in the next world by killing a significant number of the enemy in the current one. According to Father Pierre de Charlevoix, the warrior's eternal status in paradise depended on his record in warfare and


\textsuperscript{59} Adair, 158.
hunting. After living among several nations in the Great Lakes, the eighteenth-century French priest and ethnographer informed his superiors,

...to have been a good hunter, brave in war, fortunate in all one's enterprises, to have killed and burned a great number of enemies, are the sole merits which entitle them to paradise,...  

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By the early nineteenth century, nativist leaders still deemed revenge as important as their forefathers had. In his autobiography, Black Hawk recalled when he came upon a dying friend, whose teen-aged son had been murdered by two white men. Since there were no other family members to carry out the revenge, Black Hawk promised his grieving friend that he would avenge the boy.  

61 Knowing that only proper revenge could quell the dead youth's restless soul, the Sauk leader took on the role of the boy's father. Black Hawk even considered the young victim as his adopted son.  

62 Tecumseh also viewed revenge as a spiritual necessity, and like Black Hawk, the Shawnee understood the importance of accepting the responsibility when no family members could carry out the task. After the people of


61 Jackson, 70; The incident occurred in 1813.

62 Ibid., 73.
Prophetstown—including the families of the warriors killed at Tippecanoe—fled to their distant homes in November, 1811, Tecumseh returned from the South in January. Walking through the ruins of Prophetstown, the great warrior exclaimed,

> I stood upon the ashes of my own home, where my own wigwam had sent up its fire to the Great Spirit, and there I summoned the spirits of the braves who had fallen in their vain attempt to protect their homes from the grasping invader, and as I snuffed up the smell of their blood from the ground I swore once more eternal hatred—the hatred of an avenger.  

In keeping with Shawnee creed, Tecumseh's words indicate that he believed the spirits of the fallen warriors continued to linger at Prophetstown and would need to be avenged before making their journey to the next world. Far more than simply wanting to settle the score with Harrison and the Long Knives, the eminent Shawnee had taken upon himself an enormous spiritual obligation.

Though whites may not have understood Native tenacity and a warrior's predilection for revenge, Indians, conversely, were equally perplexed by Euro-American standards of warfare. How could the white leaders suddenly stop fighting, become friends, eat at the same table, and drink each other's wine? What would become of the families of the dead soldiers whose souls would wander forever unavenged? As one would guess, a warri-

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63 Tucker, 230; McCollough, 18.
or's psyche made peace anomalous, and wars between indigenous nations lasted indefinitely. Charlevoix observed that every war is everlasting among the Indians, .... Thus a treaty of peace is very little to be depended upon, whilst any of the parties are capable of molesting or giving uneasiness to the other. 64

A century later (1826) U.S. Indian agent Thomas Forsyth concurred when he stated, "I never heard of any peace having been made between two nations of Indians (when war had properly commenced) except when the government of the United States interfered." 65

Except for those who lived with the Indians, whites generally could not grasp the metaphysical purposes behind the Natives' conduct in war. From the time of the earliest Native-European contact in the Great Lakes region, missionaries attempted to deter Indians from their habits in warfare, torture, and revenge. Naturally all of a warrior's actions were ruled by his conceptions of the manitous, the spirit world, and the afterlife. By asking him to discontinue these, the missionaries were asking that he forsake his most basic beliefs, including the gods he worshipped. Thus Christian leaders did not

64 Charlevoix, 380.

meet with great success; their doctrines ran counter to the Native creeds. From the French period (1650-1760) through the War of 1812, Native religious conservatism and its resistance to Christianity formed the basis of the cultural resistance and the resulting revitalization movements during this era.

Though missionaries, both in the North and South, had stepped up their efforts to convert the Natives after the Greenville Treaty, their labors had a reverse effect. Rather than making inroads, they only fostered an increase in the opposition's revitalization movements. The Creeks continued to practice religious ceremonies in accordance with their traditional notions of how to gain spiritual power; based on this conservatism, they resisted Christianity until the 1820's. More than other southern nations, the Creeks heeded Tecumseh's words and were primed for a sacred revolt. Like their northern allies, they too had rejected Christianity.

Why did the nativists, led by Tecumseh and his war leaders, so adamantly oppose Christianity? First it must be understood that the Indians never meant any offense to the Christian God. They believed that the evil spirit had created the helpless and wretched whites, and that,

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out of necessity, a separate, subordinate deity now ruled over them. The Indians likely associated the separate deity with the figure of Jesus Christ, perhaps believing the Master of Life appointed Him to redeem the white people. If the Christians' claims of Christ's sacrifice and offer of salvation were true, then the whites certainly needed it! Furthermore, white people learned of their God in a sacred book, but the Great Manitou had spoken to his own people through dreams, visions, and prophets since the beginning of time. Why would the Master of Life suddenly require his people to learn a foreign language and read a book in order to know about Him?

The adherents of Christianity appeared to have no regard for the spirit world and paid no heed to the manitous. Though the missionaries genuinely wanted the Indians to assimilate in order to ease the Natives' cultural transition, their agrarian proposals at the mission stations clashed with the will of the Master of Life. Ironically the Quakers, who once discouraged their legislators in Pennsylvania from pursuing a policy of acquiring land from the Indians, now worked closely with

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67 For references concerning a separate creation see Dowd, "Thinking and Believing," 1992, 312; Allen, 109, and Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, 1983, 38; for the separate deity see Kinietz and Voegelin, 41, and Howard, 171.
the government to transform the western Indians into farmers. The nativists insisted the Great Spirit had ordained for the men to fulfill the dual role of a hunter-warrior; if they obeyed Him, He would provide for them. Even worse than losing their livelihood as hunters, the former warriors who worked in the fields took on the role which their Creator had set aside for women. The Prophet accused Black Hoof and his followers at Wapakoneta of asking the government to "appoint masters [missionaries] over them to make them work...making women of the Indians." Since colonial times, Euro-American land schemes had proven disastrous to Native culture. Viewing land as a commodity to be bought and sold, whites naturally strove to increase their acreage as they accumulated wealth. Furthermore, livestock required large pastures, which prompted the settlers to clear away once-forested areas covering several times the expanse needed to simply plant crops. As a result, eco-systems drastically changed, and environments could no longer sustain the Natives' sub-


69 Cass, 1827, 373.

70 William Wells to Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War, 23 April 1808, Carter, vol.7, 560.
sistent lifestyles. To survive, Indians usually retreated deeper into the hinterland, leaving the border regions to opportunistic white squatters. Tecumseh and the nativists hoped to reverse this, but missionaries now aggravated the situation by attempting to transform Indian methods of subsistence while supplanting Native religion with Christianity.

By tilling the fields, the nativists envisioned themselves as being drawn into a life of virtual slavery. In 1811, in his address to the 5,000 Creeks at Tuckabatchee, Tecumseh ranted,

Accursed be the race that has seized our country, and made women of our warriors! Our fathers, from their tombs, reproach us as slaves and cowards; I hear them now in the wailing winds.

On the same journey, the Shawnee proselytizer also exhorted the Choctaw people:


72 Tecumseh's Speech at Tuckabatchee, October 1811, Klinck, 96.
Are we not being stripped day by day of the little that remains of our ancient liberty? Do they not even now kick and strike us as they do their black-faces? How long will it before they will tie us to a post and whip us, and make us work for them in their corn fields as they do them?  

This prospect of losing their liberty by living an agrarian lifestyle - one in which they viewed themselves as lackeys to white men - weighed heavily on the nativists and compelled them to join Tecumseh and the Prophet. John Johnston, longtime Indian agent at Fort Wayne and Piqua, Ohio, recalled an incident in 1807 after the Potawatomi Five Medals - a government-favored leader - had invited the Quakers to establish an agricultural mission station near his village on the Elkhart River in northern Indiana Territory. When a caravan of wagons loaded with equipment and supplies neared Five Medals' village, a group of warriors intercepted the Quakers "and warned the men on their peril not to proceed."  

Despite Five Medals' wishes, the Indians begged their agent, William Wells to recall the Quaker entourage, stating, "a waggon [sic.] recalls to our minds that we are to be no more Indians but slaves to white men."  

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73 Tecumseh's Speech to the Choctaw Council, 1811, ibid., 92.

74 John Johnston to Benjamin Drake, 24 September 1840, Tecumseh Papers, Draper Manuscripts, 11YY22.2.

75 Ibid.
their request and ordered the Quakers to stay out of Potawatomi territory. Intensive husbandry breached the Great Spirit's will.

By demonstrating the incongruity between Five Medals' intentions and his villagers' actions, the Quaker incident indicated that the growing schism between the government-favored chiefs and their younger warriors had reached a breaking point by 1807. Knowing that the government chiefs were destroying the people by inviting the missionaries to teach them, the younger warriors became followers of Tecumseh and his brother; they first made the pilgrimage to Greenville to hear Tenskwatawa preach, then, after 1808, they resided with the Shawnee brothers at Prophetstown. Not only did the nativists no longer recognize the authority of the government-favored leaders, but they grew to hate them even more than they did the whites. In addition to being viewed as traitors for selling land to the U.S. government, Five Medals, Black Hoof, Little Turtle, Tarhe, and others had betrayed the Master of Life when they began to fraternize with missionaries. Worse than white people who were helplessly naive and inept concerning spiritual matters, the government-favored leaders knew the truth but had forsaken their manitous. In his speech at Vincennes in 1810, Tecumseh informed Harrison that he and his followers
intended "to kill all the chiefs that sold you the land."  

Tecumseh and Black Hoof both wanted to save their people from destruction, but the two Shawnee leaders held diametrically-different notions on how to go about it. While one believed that only a strict obedience of the Great Spirit would restore prosperity, the other viewed cultural compromise as the only option. The difference in the spiritual pursuits of the two men became the most divisive aspect of this dichotomy. While Tecumseh sought a revitalization of his people's faith, Black Hoof looked to outside religious leaders.

Tecumseh's rejection of Christianity is hinted at in the results of his contacts with two whites, the same ones who likely taught him English. The first, Stephen Ruddell, spent his boyhood years with the Shawnees after they captured him as a youth. Though Ruddell and Tecumseh grew up as close friends during the former's captivity, the Shawnees liberated Ruddell who became a Baptist minister after returning to his people about 1795. In 1810, when Tecumseh journeyed to the Shawnee villages near the Auglaize River to summon the warriors there to join the new religious movement at Prophetstown, he found

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76 Tecumseh's Speech at Vincennes, 20 or 21 August 1810, Klinck, 71; Esarey, vol. 1, 466.
his former friend teaching Christianity and working with his arch-enemy Black Hoof. As Tecumseh addressed an audience of young Shawnee men, Ruddell intervened and foiled the speaker's attempts to draw his parishioners away. After a heated discussion, Ruddell presented a letter from William Henry Harrison, illustrating the government's goodwill toward the Natives and support for the missions. Tecumseh snatched the letter from Ruddell and threw it into the fire, exclaiming that he would do the same to the Governor if he were there! Not having convinced the Shawnees at the Auglaize to abandon Ruddell and Black Hoof, Tecumseh angrily left.

The termination of another of Tecumseh's relationships also suggests a spiritual schism between him and his white friends. Between 1796 and 1798, Tecumseh apparently had developed close ties with the family of ex-Indian fighter James Galloway who had settled near present-day Xenia, Ohio. Though subject to scrutiny, Galloway family tradition maintains that James Galloway's beautiful daughter Rebecca not only improved Tecumseh's

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77 Gilbert, 252-3; Edmunds, 1984, 126; Drake, 115.
78 Drake, 115; Edmunds, 1984, 126.
79 When living in Kentucky during the 1780's, Galloway had participated on expeditions with George Rogers Clark, when the Long Knives raided the Shawnee villages of Ohio.
English and gave him a rudimentary education, but also developed a brief romance with the Shawnee.\textsuperscript{80} Rebecca purportedly read to Tecumseh from Shakespeare and the Bible; Hamlet and Moses became his favorite personas.\textsuperscript{81} When the Shawnee warrior proposed to Rebecca, she gave him a conditional response: if Tecumseh renounced his life as an Indian and lived like a white man, she would marry him. Not able to part with his lifestyle, Tecumseh sadly left Ohio to live on Indiana's White River. Here he remained with Tenskwatawa until both moved to Green ville in 1805 after the Prophet's first visions.

Though the story of Tecumseh's romance with Rebecca is at best dubious, enough is known of his brief time near the white settlements of Ohio to glean elements to support a strong theory as to not only why he left so suddenly, but also the reason he chose to return to a former lifestyle. Tecumseh had become close friends with Rebecca's father and other settlers in the region like Abner Barrett.\textsuperscript{82} Accounts indicate that most everyone in the entire community seemed to like him. Moreover, the Galloways and Barretts enjoyed Tecumseh's company so much


\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Drake, 84-6; Gilbert, 194-6; Drake based much of his biography of Tecumseh on James Galloway's accounts.
that both households had extended to him an open invitation to come and go as he pleased; Tecumseh had become like a member of their families. During this close association with these families, the Shawnee most certainly learned of their faith in God. Whether Rebecca actually read the Bible to him or not, Tecumseh later displayed a knowledge of Christianity's basic tenet when he disparaged whites in a speech to William Henry Harrison in 1810:

> How can we have confidence in white people? When Jesus Christ came on earth, you killed him and nailed him on a cross. You thought he was dead but you were mistaken.  

Why did Tecumseh suddenly part with his friends and their way of life? He seems to have developed the necessary ties leading to a prosperous future, not to mention the possible love of a beautiful woman. Once again the answer lay in Tecumseh's spiritual outlook, not his temporal desires. Tecumseh knew that the Great Manitou had ordained for him to live as a hunter and warrior. He therefore returned to the forest where he could again come under the guidance of his spirit guardian and commune with the Master of Life. Unlike the cadre of pro-government leaders like Five Medals, Black Hoof, Little Turtle, and others who had forsaken their manitous,

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83 Tecumseh's Speech at Vincennes, 20 or 21 August 1810, Klinck, 72; Esarey, vol. 1, 467.
Tecumseh had rejected Christianity. Once Rebecca informed him that she could not live in the Shawnee world, Tecumseh had no reason to remain; any further fraternization would only displease the Great Spirit.

Three generations later, Rebecca's great-great-nephew William Galloway suggested that a union between Tecumseh and Rebecca could have averted the next Indian war. This naive and reductionist view gives full credit to Tecumseh for the resistance movement and ignores the spiritual reasons behind the conflict. Even if Tecumseh had betrayed his beliefs and remained with the Galloways, the Natives who remained faithful—though minus a great leader—still would have resisted the obtrusions of white culture and religion. To the nativists who followed Tecumseh, the War of 1812 was a holy war.

The nativists, like Tecumseh, opposed Christianity for numerous reasons. Those presented in this writing include:

1) The nativists neither considered themselves sinners nor responsible to a Christian God.
2) They believed whites were created by the evil spirit in opposition to the Great Spirit's will.
3) The Christians overhunted and lived agrarian lifestyles, contrary to the Master of Life's volition.
4) The nativists deemed the Christians—especially the Moravians— to be sorcerers who plotted against them, poisoned them, and brought de-

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84 Gilbert, 195-6.
struction to their lives and communities. Inherent conflicts of interest caused the clash between Native religion and Christianity. By closely associating with the whites and not adhering to the Great Spirit's will, nativists believed that they would incur His wrath. In fact, as early as the revitalization movements of the mid-eighteenth century, shamans and prophets had been warning their people that the Great Spirit was angry and would soon punish them.85

For half-a-century (1763-1813) the Indians brooded over this prospect, hoping for some sort of divine deliverance. They believed that they were living in an apocalyptic age during which the Master of Life, in His benevolence, spoke through the prophets to warn His people of their impending doom. The nativists viewed the Shawnee brothers' revitalization movement at Prophetstown as a last-ditch effort to regain spiritual power and the final attempt to influence the Great Spirit to intervene on their behalf. By the War of 1812 Tenskwatawa had been deemed a false prophet, and the nativists' hopes turned to desperation.

During the war, all hopes shifted to Tecumseh. Through the powerful Shawnee leader, the Master of Life could yet restore the nativists to their happy condition

of earlier times. Under the Great Spirit's protection as the chosen leader of His people, Tecumseh was thought to be indestructible. No harm could come to him unless the sovereign Master of Life permitted it. This confidence showed at Moraviantown on October 5, 1813, where Tecumseh's nativists put up a stubborn resistance, despite being outnumbered at least three-to-one by the Long Knives.  

Like at Tippecanoe, the Indians anticipated divine intervention. As the beaten and starving British of the 41st Regiment wisely surrendered or ran within the first ten minutes of the encounter, Tecumseh's abandoned warriors stood and fought for another half-hour, expecting a reversal of fortunes.

After the Indians successfully withstood the first charge of a Kentucky mounted infantry, the Americans swarmed through, and fierce fighting ensued. After some time, Tecumseh's voice could no longer be heard in the confusion. When Tecumseh fell, his followers lost all hope. Black Hawk recalled,

> As soon as the Indians discovered that he was killed, a sudden fear came over them, and thinking the Great Spirit was angry, they fought no longer, and were quickly put to flight.

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88 Drake, 202; Klinck, 209.
It must be understood that the Indians' "sudden fear" remembered by Black Hawk does not refer to a fear of American bullets or bayonets. No true warrior feared death; to die bravely brought much honor in the next world. Furthermore, if they feared dying, then they would not have been with Tecumseh to begin with, especially when facing such a superior number of Long Knives. Rather, Tecumseh's followers who saw him die realized that their cause was entirely lost, since the Master of Life no longer protected them. All of the spiritual power they could muster—whether through the manitous, spirit guardians, medicine bundles, or good words of their prophets—could not overcome the Great Spirit's verdict. The nativists never conceded that the whites may have possessed stronger spiritual power or might have been more highly favored by the Great Spirit. Rather, they believed that the Great Spirit removed His protection to punish them for allowing themselves to be corrupted by a wicked and foreign race during the last one and-a-half centuries. Similar to the great Jehovah of Old Testament lore who delivered His chosen people into the hands of the Assyrians (722 B.C.), the Great Spirit had abandoned the nativists, leaving them to their fate against the conquering Americans.
Black Hoof, who sought acculturation for his people, and had sided with the Americans in the war, probably thought that his followers would fare better in the post-war years than Tecumseh's nativists. Born about 1730, Black Hoof fought the British in the French & Indian War (1754-1760), fought them again in Pontiac's Conspiracy (1763-1765), sided with the British in the American Revolution (1777-1782), and did so again in the Wars of the Old Northwest (1790-1795). Finally, at age 83, the great Shawnee deemed it best for the future of his people to offer his scouting services to the Americans during the War of 1812. On an expedition during this struggle, a nervous American sentry, mistaking Black Hoof for a "hostile" Indian, shot the old man through the throat. Miraculously the rugged old Shawnee survived!

In 1831, despite Black Hoof's years of cooperation and sacrifice, U.S. government officials informed the 101-year old leader that he and his people would need to move west. His dream for his people to retain a small portion of land near their ancient home of Wapakoneta was shattered; his cooperation with the missionaries -William Kirk and Stephen Ruddell- had failed. Perhaps the aged leader could faintly remember the desperate overtures of Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh nearly a quarter-century earli-

89 Miriani, 44.
er, pleading with him and his people to join the confederacy at the Great Spirit's beckoning. The nativists had tried to warn him then of the Americans' intentions, but now it was too late. Prior to moving west, Black Hoof mercifully died in December, 1831.\(^{90}\)

By the 1830's, Tenskwatawa, Black Hawk, Shabonee, and other surviving nativists from the pre-war days could reflect on the past 30 years and perhaps conclude that the Prophet and Tecumseh had been right. Although those who compromised with the whites did so to try to preserve their culture, like the nativists, they also lost their land and cultural freedoms. In retrospect, the nativists could only conclude that had the traitors obeyed the Master of Life by joining the confederacy, perhaps the Great Manitou would have withheld his wrath. Would Tecumseh's sacred power --that which produced miracles, united the tribes (after 1811), and brought victories-- have remained intact? One can only speculate. Yet one thing is certain: Tecumseh relied on spiritual strength and divine intervention to bring victory. At all times, -whether addressing the southern nations, holding a council with Harrison, or speaking to his closest friends the night before his death-, the Shawnee war leader regarded himself as the instrument of the Great Manitou.

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 45.
CHAPTER V

PROLOGUE TO TECUMSEH AND THE PROPHET

Though 184 years have passed since Tecumseh's death, only recently have historians begun to better understand the warrior, his brother, and the spiritual aspect of the confederacy. The authors of the earlier classic works on Tecumseh --Benjamin Drake, John Oskison, Glenn Tucker, and Alvin Josephy-- neglected the spiritual side of Tecumseh and the resistance movement. In doing so, they have romanticized and over-glorified the Shawnee leader while simultaneously deemphasizing the Prophet or condemning him as an opportunistic charlatan.

In his *Life of Tecumseh* (1841), Drake hinted at why historians have brushed the Prophet aside:

> Few men, in any age of the world, have risen more rapidly into extended notoriety; wielded, for the time being, a more extraordinary degree of moral influence, or sunk more suddenly into obscurity, than the Prophet.¹

Hence, Tenskwatawa, due to a single false prophecy, reverted into obscurity as quickly as he had burst from it. Not having the laurels of a warrior's glory on which to rely, the Prophet once again became an outcast, caus-

¹ Drake, 224.
ing members of both races to later view him as a charla-
tan. Furthermore, Tenskwatawa's reputation withers in
comparison to Tecumseh's, as historians have bestowed to
Tecumseh the status of immortality ever since his gallant
death. Can one therefore discount the holy man's revi-
talization movement and deny it as the foundation of the
resistance movement leading into the War of 1812? Was
Tenskwatawa's influence impertinent to the framing of the
confederacy merely because his personal prestige was
temporary? Since the shaman's influence diminished after
Tippecanoe, does it then follow that Tecumseh was the
real leader of a mere secular alliance?

Like Drake, even those who seemed to understand the
nativist intentions and concede the Prophet's importance
could not grasp the confederacy's spiritual phase. By
1818, an aging Thomas Jefferson fervently labored in his
efforts to develop a course curriculum for the soon-to-be
University of Virginia. In a preliminary report the
former President wrote,

What, but education, has advanced us beyond the
condition of our indigenous neighbors? And what
chains them to their present state of barbarism and
wretchedness, but a bigotted [sic.] veneration for
the supposed superlative wisdom of their fathers,
and the preposterous idea that they are to look
backward for better things, and not forward, long-
ing, as it should seem, to return to the days of
eating acorns and roots, rather than indulge in the
degeneracies of civilization?²

There can be no doubt that Jefferson directed this gibe
towards the Prophet and his nativists, who had emerged to
become one of the young government's greatest annoyances
by the end of the Jefferson Administration. In his
denunciation of Native culture, the eminent republican
prudently focused his attack using an argument condemning
a lack of education in his adversaries, not religion.

Similar to Jefferson, most American leaders promoted
a gradual system of cultural assimilation for the Na-
tives. If the Indians refused these offers, then the
Americans blamed other factors -namely British intrigue-
for these rebuffs. Over a dozen years after the War of
1812 ended, Lewis Cass, Michigan's territorial Governor
and overseer of Indian affairs, wrote an article entitled
"Service of Indians in Civilized Warfare." In his dia-

tribe against Great Britain, Cass shamed the island
nation and claimed that history would not soon forget -or
forgive- their tactics of terror in resorting to the use
of Indians against another civilized nation -the United

² Thomas Jefferson, "Report of the Commissioners for
the University of Virginia," 4 August 1818, in Jefferson:
Public and Private Papers, intro. by Tom Wicker, (New
States. In an emotional condemnation, the Governor wrote,

The nation which authorizes it [an Indian alliance], should be arraigned at the tribunal of Christendom. It is a force which will not be controlled....And 'allies,' as the Indians may be, it is an alliance, to which posterity will look back with grief and indignation, and which will tarnish the brightest jewel in the crown of the Defender of the Faith.

In the end, terrorist tactics and "war crimes" could never prevail against a civilized nation. Perhaps this aspect baffled the Americans the most. Why would the British degrade themselves, especially if "savagery" could never succeed against "civilization?"

Furthermore, the British not only disgraced themselves, but Great Britain, the envy of the civilized world, also did a great disservice to their Indian allies. In their dealings with the Natives, the British

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3 Cass, 1827, 375. Cass continued to suspect British intrigue at work among the Indians well into the 1820's. More concerning his views on British-Indian relations can be found in his records of personal correspondence in the Lewis Cass Papers at the Clements Library and the Lewis Cass Papers at the Bentley Historical Library. Though the titles of these collections are identical, they constitute different sets of correspondence; both research facilities are located at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

4 Though whites have viewed Native Americans in numerous ways over the past five centuries, the past perceptions can loosely be categorized into a single dichotomy: "savagery" versus "civilization." Since Americans believed that civilization would ultimately triumph over savagery, then Native culture would eventually be phased out through either warfare or assimilation. Hence Indians could either be categorized as savages -those who resisted- or assimilationists. See Berkhofer, 30.
government made no effort to improve the lot of their allies. Americans viewed the British as delaying the inevitable task of preparing the Indians for the civilized world. Not only would it be necessary to eventually teach the Indians how to live, but their land and resources must also be put to "higher uses." Under British influence, these Indians had to do without schools, intensive agriculture, the fine arts, government annuities, and did not have "a permanent residence [reservation]" to prevent them from having to needlessly wander in search of food. Due to British irresponsibility, His Majesty's Indian allies were destined to tragically live out their lives as "wandering savages." Cass surmised,

Not a vestige remains of any permanent advantage derived by the Indians from the cessions or sacrifices they made. Their actual relations with the British government may be emphatically stated in few words. They were useful, and were used, in war to fight, and in peace to trade.

As much as anyone, Cass sincerely wanted to improve the lives of the Indian wards in his territory and preserve their diminishing race. Yet, the words of the American statesman ironically hinged on an unintended and

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5 Ibid., 113.
6 Cass, 1827, 370.
7 Ibid., 369.
subtle truth, which Cass remarkably overlooked. The British enjoyed positive relations with the Indians only because they pursued an Indian policy opposite to the Americans. Rather than trying to change the Indians, the British government wanted nothing more than allies in war and partners in trade, desires dovetailing with those of the Natives. Had they ever tried to "civilize" the Natives the way Cass suggested, another Pontiac's Conspiracy would have likely bloodied Upper Canada. Hence, British policy had an effect on the Natives opposite to what the Governor claimed. By not fulfilling their responsibility as a civilized nation, Britain gained the friendship (or at least the cooperation) of the Indians, whereas American assimilationist attempts gave impetus to Native resistance.

Britain certainly would not have objected to any "improvements" in their allies' cultures, but they valued good Indian relations far more highly than "proper living" for the Indians. In Upper Canada, British leaders never protested the presence of Christian missionaries, but they never pressured the Natives to accept those beliefs either. After British-led Indians captured Moravian missionaries from Ohio in 1781—who were suspected of spying for the Americans—, they resettled these
missionaries in Upper Canada near the Thames River.\textsuperscript{8} Thirty years later, the aging British Indian agent Matthew Elliott, one of those involved in raiding the Ohio missions, helped to facilitate the ministry of the Canadian Moravians.\textsuperscript{9}

Like other Euro-American nations, Britain has often been vilified as a nation which exploited the Native peoples who stood in the way of their empire. What is often overlooked, particularly in the case of Upper Canada and the Great Lakes territories at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Natives were every bit as self-serving and Machiavellian as the whites. Just as much as any ethnocentric culture, they did not want to adopt another culture's lifestyles and standards; most of all they did not want another religion. They did not seek another culture's way of life, because they believed their own superior lifestyle to be the greatest in the world. Rather, they merely wanted a British wartime alliance, a peacetime trading partner, and gifts all the time, during both war and peace. To Britain's credit, they more often than not met these requests without making cultural impositions. The very reasons for which

\textsuperscript{8} Dowd, \textit{A Spirited Resistance}, 1992, 83-9. British suspicions of the Moravians' involvement in spying for the Americans were correct.

\textsuperscript{9} Autobiography of Abraham Luckenbach, Gipson, 631.
Cass condemned the British appealed to the Indians, who never asked to have their lives interfered with or altered.

Regardless of the accusations by Cass, several British leaders, namely those in the Indian Department, expressed a deeper commitment to their allies than merely matters of trade and war. If the Great Lakes Natives accepted the British for nothing more than trade and weapons, it is not so much due to Britain's lack of responsibility as a civilized power, but more because Britain did not attempt to compel the Natives to accept things they did not want. If they did not place cultural and religious constraints on the Natives, the British found they could peacefully coexist with them, whereas the Americans' intensive efforts of acculturation and spiritual conversion gave rise to a religious revitalization movement within the Native community.

It is no wonder that the Natives attempted to rejuvenate their perishing culture through a spiritual revitalization movement. As spiritually-minded people, they based their entire way of life—creeds, philosophies, and inspirations—on a perception of themselves existing in a sacred world which consisted of two realms—physical and spiritual. In tandem with other spiritual beings, Natives maneuvered for power, attempting to gain the favor
of the manitous. They based their entire culture and world-view on their religion. By asking the Indians to make cultural changes, whites wanted them to forsake their religion, thus their cultural identity. When the missionaries came, it made perfect sense for the Natives to resist through spiritual means, a recommitment to the religion of their fathers. This explains why revitalization movements were common occurrences when cultures came into contact and why they were often followed by wars.

For the Natives, the loss of land was a secondary concern to the prospect of losing their religion and culture. They would not have minded a peaceful coexistence with the whites had the whites not tried to destroy their culture. In 1805, the Seneca leader Red Jacket complained to a missionary from Massachusetts:

Brother, our seats were once large, and yours were very 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....We do not understand these things;...We also have a religion which was given to our forefathers.... Brother, we do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own.¹⁰

Treaties with whites and their corresponding land cessions always brought missionaries and other teachers who interfered with Native culture, compelling Tecumseh's

nativists to forcefully prevent any further land cessions, despite their efforts to accomplish temporal goals through spiritual means.

Like Red Jacket, Tecumseh could not bear to relinquish his sacred beliefs. Though briefly living among the whites as a young man in his late twenties (1796-1798), Tecumseh could never fully depart from his faith in the manitous and the religion of his people. For the next 15 years after leaving the community of his white friends (who lived near the Little Miami River in Ohio), Tecumseh vigorously tried to preserve his people and their culture. Despite his efforts and initial successes during the war, the Shawnee leader began to sense that his people would soon vanish. In early May, 1813, after Tecumseh's warriors began to massacre their American prisoners near Fort Meigs (present-day Toledo), Tecumseh angrily intervened, saving hundreds of American lives. After the Shawnee condemned those who massacred the Americans, and rebuked the British for allowing it to happen, the misty-eyed leader exclaimed, "Oh! what will
become of my Indians."¹¹ Tecumseh's words illustrate his foreboding and despair.

By October 4, 1813, with the American army in close pursuit of the rapidly-retreating allied British-Indian forces through Upper Canada, Tecumseh realized that all hope was lost. Some of his closest friends later remembered that Tecumseh experienced premonitions of his imminent death the night before his last battle with the Long Knives, on October 5. He uttered, "we are now about to enter into an engagement from which I shall never come out --my body will remain on the field of battle."¹²

Some view Tecumseh's foreknowledge of his own death as a direct prophecy from the Great Spirit, while others view the warrior's premonitions as mere intuition which

¹¹ Drake, 182. Also see Larry L. Nelson, *Men of Patriotism, Courage, & Enterprise: Fort Meigs in the War of 1812* (Canton, OH: Daring Books, 1985), 77-8, 90. The Indians killed about 40 American prisoners, including the American commander, Lieutenant-Colonel William Dudley, before Tecumseh stopped the massacre. The entire affair transpired in the presence of the British commanders, who would not-or could not-put an end to the butchery. One British soldier who attempted to save an American was shot through the heart.

¹² Drake, 193; Edmunds, 1984, 210; Sugden, 1985, 113-21; Howard 210-211. Then Tecumseh unbuckled his British sword and handed it to one of his friends, instructing him to give it to his son someday: "when my son becomes a noted warrior, and able to wield a sword, give this to him."
he chose to fulfill. Either way, like Lord Nelson at Trafalgar and Wolfe at Quebec, the Shawnee's prescience came true. Whether or not the reader is disposed to believe in Tecumseh's prophetic powers, one thing is certain: The great Shawnee had become more reflective; he resolved never to live under the yoke of a conqueror who destroyed his religion and culture. Just before the Battle of Moraviantown commenced, Tecumseh, as if to say farewell, "pressed the hand of each [British] officer as he passed, made some remark in Shawnee,...and then passed away forever from our view." 

If Tecumseh could have only adapted to white ways—something he could never do—he would have been spared. The Americans demonstrated their ability to forgive when they lavished gifts upon Little Turtle. The great Miami leader, despite defeating one American army and annihilating another (1790 and 1791, respectively), later saw the error in his ways, or at least realized the Americans would handsomely reward him for his cooperation. After signing the Treaty of Greenville, Little Turtle worked to

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13 Howard 210-1, and Sugden, 1985, 113-21. Howard tends to support the notion of Tecumseh's premonitions as prophecy, while Sugden views them as merely Tecumseh's defiance and refusal to yield in the face of assured defeat.

14 Excerpt from Major John Richardson's War of 1812, pp 124-6; quoted in Klinck, 201.
establish Quaker missions and agricultural training stations among his people. When he died in July, 1812 the American military personnel at Fort Wayne buried him with full military honors. American leaders rewarded Little Turtle for his betrayal of Native culture.

Tecumseh met quite a different end. Though the American army should not be reviled for Tecumseh's death -since it constituted an act of war-, what occurred after the warrior's death is one of the more shameful acts in American military history. Symbolic of the soldiers' differing feelings toward Indians who could make the transition to white ways, versus those who could not, the Americans at Moraviantown treated Tecumseh's fallen body (or one they thought was his) much differently than they did Little Turtle's 15 months earlier. The day after the battle, several American soldiers who apparently wanted "a piece of Tecumseh" as a trophy, stripped the skin from Tecumseh's (supposed) corpse and disfigured the body.

Charles Poinsatte, Outpost in the Wilderness: 1706-1828 (Fort Wayne: Allen County Historical Society, 1976), 61. Little Turtle was buried on the farm of his adopted white son and one-time Indian agent at Fort Wayne, William Wells. A discovery of what was believed to be Little Turtle's grave was made exactly a century later (1912) at the residence of Dr. George Gillie. A few weeks after Little Turtle's death, Wells was murdered by Potawatomis at the Fort Dearborn (Chicago) massacre, when he attempted to help evacuate the hapless garrison and their families.
beyond recognition. Far from the honor bestowed on Little Turtle, Tecumseh paid the price for his "savage­ry." It is ironic that men who believed themselves to be of a higher culture would commit such a barbaric act, particular when their intended victim, though supposedly a savage, was likely far more talented and possessed a higher intellect than any of his assailants.

Why did the whites harbor such a hatred for Tecum­seh? After all, as evidenced by his time near the white settlements in Ohio, Tecumseh did not inherently hate them -only those who came to destroy his people and their culture did he disdain. Furthermore, Tecumseh always tried to spare Americans who were taken prisoner during the war. Americans loathed Tecumseh because they feared him above all other Natives. They could not comprehend this illustrious figure; a savage was not supposed to

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16 The Indians later claimed that though Tecumseh was killed, the soldiers mutilated the wrong body; the Na­tives had purportedly pulled Tecumseh's body from the fray when he fell. Of course no one will ever know, since those who were acquainted with Tecumseh never had a chance to identify the body -Harrison was "mortified & irritated;" this suggests that low-ranking army wretches did the deed without the knowledge of their officers. In Tecumseh's Last Stand (1985), author John Sugden builds a strong case that the Americans actually did mutilate Tecumseh's body (pp 168-181), but I believe the Indian accounts. Also see "Richardson's Account;" quoted in Klinck, 202, and Harrison to Tipton, 2 May 1834, Esarey, vol. 2, 751. Other information concerning Tecumseh's last days can be found in the Tecumseh File at the Fort Malden Archives in Amherstburg, Ontario.
have the intellectual powers, oratory skills, and leadership capabilities which Tecumseh possessed. All whites who heard him speak remained mesmerized by his words, and Harrison believed that under different circumstances, this "uncommon genius" could have founded "an Empire."\footnote{Harrison to Secretary of War William Eustis, 7 August 1811, Esarey, vol. 1, 549.} Considering all of Tecumseh's sagacity, Americans believed that this great leader should have been wise enough to know that he came from an inferior culture. Unlike Little Turtle of the Miamis, Tecumseh chose to resist rather than accept the benefits of a "higher" civilization. He should have known better. In the light of his superior wisdom, not only did his decision to resist the advent of what whites deemed as a better culture suggest a malicious character flaw, but it also made the powerful Shawnee doubly dangerous.

Tecumseh, or "The Panther in the Sky," was truly "the Moses" of his people.\footnote{Harrison to Eustis, 6 August 1810, Esarey, vol. 1, 456.} Americans could not understand why the Natives blindly followed Tecumseh; it made them uneasy. The great influence which Tecumseh held among the northern and southern tribes stemmed from his followers' perception of him as a spiritual war leader who was endowed with supernatural gifts. Believing their
leader to have been sent by the Great Spirit, the Indians staked their last hopes on him.

The Americans could have prevented much grief and loss of life if they had only taken a slightly different approach toward the Indians. They should not have sought new land acquisitions after the Treaty of Greenville (1795)—a treaty the Indians peacefully recognized after their defeat at Fallen Timbers (1794). By reducing pressure the Americans would not have so quickly threatened Native culture, nor would the Indians have seen the need for religious revitalization. This in turn would have averted the next Indian war, since religion fueled resistance.

A better approach for the American government would have been to back off the Natives for awhile. By promising the indigenous peoples all of the Great Lakes, northern Indiana, and Wisconsin if they never again took up arms against the Americans, the U.S. would have purchased an ally, or at least permanent Indian neutrality in future wars. The British would not have stood a prayer in their attempts to defend Canada without their Indian allies. After the War of 1812, America would have possessed all of Canada, thereby eliminating any confidence the Natives placed in playing off one white government against another. If the U.S. could acquire all of North
America, granting the Indians a chunk of the Old Northwest was a small price to pay.

If Americans had the patience to opt for this plan, the fur trade would have soon eliminated the Native food supply, and with the British gone and themselves on the brink of starvation, the Natives may have eagerly entered into land negotiations with the Americans. However, if the Indians prospered like the Five Civilized Tribes had in the South, then the Americans needed to be prepared to honor their earlier pledges, unlike the cases of the forced removals of tribes (primarily in the South) which had become a prosperous and industrious element of the American nation. Missionaries, teachers, and agrarians would only have been permitted in Indian territory at the owners' request. In all likelihood, this strategy would have gradually brought about a peaceful merging of the races. Without feeling compelled to resist, numerous Indians would have certainly accepted the advantageous aspects of white culture.

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19 The expression "The Five Civilized Tribes" has traditionally referred to the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations. These peoples once inhabited parts of Tennessee, the Carolinas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida before falling victim to the Indian Removal Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1830. Despite the advanced degree of assimilating to white culture—particularly the Cherokees—the government forcibly removed these groups to "Indian Territory," (Oklahoma) during the 1830's and 1840's. See Berkhofer, 162-4.
During Tecumseh's time, many Natives already accepted white ways, causing a great gulf between his nativists and those who continued to follow the hereditary leaders. As great as Tecumseh was, his plan was impractical. Even if at first successful, he could never shut out white culture forever. Only through self-imposed tyrannical rule could he hope to prevent all of his followers from ever having any future contact with the whites. The active fur trade and the disposition of the peace chiefs after Greenville indicate that many Natives already welcomed white culture. Without any advancements, Tecumseh's proposed pan-Indian state could never have succeeded in its pure form. Though unforeseen, the differences in the cultures would have become astronomical when the industrial revolution came to the former frontiers of the Old Northwest.

If only the U.S. government could have realized that they did not have to push for such drastic land acquisitions to bring about their preferred order. Pride and arrogance prevented this, since they viewed themselves as conquerors ever since the British needlessly ceded the western regions in the Treaty of Paris in 1783. They escalated their efforts to acquire Indian lands, and sent missionaries to convert, civilize, and pacify the Natives. Desperately trying to preserve their culture, the
Natives had no other alternative than to renew their faith in the Great Manitou, and seek His assistance as they fought their holy war.
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