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## NEW RELIGIONS AMONG THE DELAWARE INDIANS, 1600-1900<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

SEQUENTIAL ANALYSIS of the successive religious movements which members of one society may support during an extended period of time can, even in fragmentary data, reveal some regular associations between type of belief and social circumstance. Such intra-societal associations may be useful in the search for the "origin" of religious movements, which is normally made difficult by the uncertainty of the identification of comparable variables in cross-cultural research.<sup>2</sup> Although the search for "origins" is sometimes deplored as an antiquarian avocation, when the phenomenon is not conceived to have originated once but many times, the search for origins is equivalent to the search for "laws" describing the conditions under which the phenomenon occurs. "New religions" are a type of phenomenon which is recurrent, and about which many hypotheses have been spawned. In this study we shall be particularly concerned with three aspects of the problem: the frequency, on an order-of-magnitude basis, with which new religions are accepted by some members of a given society; the association, if any, between social acceptance of a new religion and what has been termed, rather vaguely, "social deprivation" of the acceptors; and the logical fitness of the new belief to

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on research performed under Research Grants M-883 and M-1106 of the National Institute of Mental Health, United States Public Health Service. An abbreviated version was read at a meeting of the Archaeological Society of Delaware, 22 June 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the discussion of the difficulty of identifying cross-culturally reliable variables in the report of the Social Science Research Council's Conference on Cross-Cultural Studies of Personality Development, by M. Brewster Smith (*Items*, vol. 9, pp. 27-31, 1955). It might also be asked whether, in effect, the "same" society at two different times is really the "same" society at all; if it is not (and often it is demonstrably different in almost every respect save name), then the cross-cultural problem applies not only to spatial but also to temporal comparisons.

the circumstances of the acceptors, as they are seen by an historically-informed anthropologist.

The Delaware religious history illustrates also the importance of what may be called "non-acculturative adaptive change": the development of new cultural forms, in response to situational demands, which are neither acculturative nor contra-acculturative, but simply adaptive innovations which do not result in any approximation of a foreign culture. The Big House ceremony, frequently and incorrectly attributed to the Delaware aboriginal culture, is the best example of this in the Delaware religious series. Herein we may see the danger of attributing an ethnographically observed "native" or non-acculturative form or pattern to an aboriginal past, when in fact it may have been developed only a few years before the arrival of the field worker, and centuries after contact. (The reverse danger — of assuming that any formal similarity to foreign custom, observed after contact, must be the result of acculturation — is less easy to demonstrate, because for most sorts of data the historical record stops at the contact date.)

The Algonkian-speaking Delaware, aboriginally of the Middle Atlantic states, and currently placed on several reservations in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Ontario, offer themselves as a laboratory for a study in what might be called the epidemiology of religious movements. The Delaware have been the subject of periodic description by good observers for about three hundred years, and in particular have attracted the interest of missionary authors and ethnologists interested in primitive religion. In the relative completeness and relevance of the materials, therefore, they are well suited for the type of sequential analysis which is desired. In this paper the Canadian bands (which split off from the group who migrated west across the Mississippi, around 1800) will be excluded from analysis so that one continuous line of cultural heredity will run back from Oklahoma, to Indiana, to Ohio, to Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

#### THE CHRONICLE OF DELAWARE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The Delaware were a people whose culture combined hunting and horticultural systems. There were family hunting territories, as in the circumboreal north; and the politically autonomous community was small, consisting of the several dozen to several hundred people who summered in the same village. Sib and lineage affiliation were matrilineal, and the women cared for the corn plots. The Delaware "tribe," at contact, was an ethnic group rather than a political unit.<sup>3</sup> Traditional Delaware religion was in part a private matter; favored individuals experienced a vision of a guardian spirit ("manito"), sometimes at adolescence, occasionally

<sup>3</sup> See Wallace, 1949.

earlier, and sometimes in later life. The Green Corn ceremony, in the early fall, was the high point of the annual festival calendar.<sup>4</sup> The cosmology was elaborate and philosophical; but the relationship between the visionary and his guardian spirit seems to have been the preëminent theme to laymen and shamans alike.<sup>5</sup>

Dutch fur traders established permanent commercial settlements on the Hudson River in 1609 and on the Delaware Bay in 1623, after several years of exploratory (and profitable) trading ventures up the local rivers. Thereafter the 8,000 or so Delaware Indians then resident in what are now the states of Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania remained in close and continually intensifying contact with Europeans (Dutch, Swedes, and English). These Europeans were, at first, chiefly interested in bartering goods for skins and furs; later they also became interested in exchanging goods and money for land.

Before the end of the seventeenth century Europeans (particularly the Swedes) had begun more or less active missionary work among the Delaware. Between 1642 and 1648, the Swedish Lutheran evangelist, John Campanius Holm, learned the local native language, preached to the Indians on Delaware Bay, and translated the Lutheran catechism into Delaware. He made a few converts among the natives settled in the neighborhood of the White settlements, and his later successors (after an interval of nearly fifty years) made other Lutheran converts between 1696 and 1723. The net effect of the Lutheran evangelism was slight, however, and the venerable John Campanius' grandson, evaluating the religious status of the Delaware, remarked that they were not easy to convert and were generally "unacquainted with the true worship of God."<sup>6</sup> These early Lutheran converts seem to have been few in number, and to have included only those who had already developed a personal attachment (for economic or other reasons) to Europeans. It is noteworthy also that up to about 1700, the relations between the Delaware and the Europeans had by and large been friendly. Land cessions had been relatively orderly and limited in area, and trade relations had been mutually profitable. The wholesale massacres and territorial dispossessions which were so salient a feature of Puritan

<sup>4</sup> See Witthoft, 1949. Witthoft in his study of Green Corn ceremonialism in the eastern woodlands found that the Green Corn dance, rather than the Big House ceremony, was the ritual described by observers of the Delaware in early contact times. This view agrees with my own opinion, as developed later in this paper, that the Big House was a "new religion" dating from 1805. Speck (1941) and Harrington (1921), however, seem to imply that the Big House as it is seen on twentieth-century reservations is identical with the earlier reported versions of the Green Corn. As a later section of this paper argues, the Big House ceremony probably was a reorganized form of the Green Corn, with innovations both in ritual detail and in over-all pattern.

<sup>5</sup> See particularly Lindestrom [1656], 1925.

<sup>6</sup> Holm [1702], 1834, pp. 63-75, 139-141; Fisher, 1935.

New England's Indian history had no counterpart in the bulk of the Delaware country.

Spiritual concern for the Delaware was, in the case of the Quakers, expressed less in evangelical preaching than in generally honest and friendly dealings. Although a few Quakers were moved to carry the word of God to the natives of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the visits of Quaker preachers were sporadic and such preaching as there was most frequently was a matter of individual impulse. George Fox had preached to a number of Indians, possibly including the Delaware, during the seventeenth century; Penn had a brief message interpreted to the Indians at the treaty in 1701. It is reported that an Indian friend of Penn's was once inclined toward Christianity.<sup>7</sup> John Richardson, possibly addressing Delawares, early in the eighteenth century, excoriated a crowd of natives for their propensity to drunkenness, adultery, murder, brawling, theft, and divorce; ". . . they wept, and Tears ran down their naked Bodies, and they smote their Hands upon their Breasts. . . ." Quaker philanthropy, later in the century and during the nineteenth, led Friends to perform many good offices, and to exhort the Indians to a more Christian-like spiritual life. But Quakerism never was offered to the Delaware as an organized religion, with a definite ritual and dogma, and with opportunity of organizational affiliation for Indians; very few if any Indians ever became Friends in the sense of membership in a Meeting. Evangelism was so diffused in practices of diplomacy, commerce, and philanthropy that Quakerism never became a "new religion" to more than a few individuals, even in later times when the Delaware were flocking to new standards.<sup>8</sup>

The full impact of the White invasion struck the Delaware Indians in the decade 1730-1740. The Delaware of southern New Jersey had by then lost their lands and for the most part were refugees west of the river of their name; a few hung on in New Jersey as beggars among their White neighbors. In Pennsylvania, the 1730's saw the cession of the Schuylkill lands and the execution of the hotly resented Walking Purchase. By 1740, the Delaware had lost most of their own territory, and were forced to live on the lands of their haughty uncles, the Six Nations, or on the lands of equally haughty Europeans. Their condition was pitiful: drunken, disillusioned, dependent, and hostile, they were a people in limbo.

Presbyterian David Brainerd seems to have been the first missionary to devote himself wholly to the spiritual improvement of the demoralized Delaware. He was active at Crosswicks and Cranberry, in New Jersey, and in the Forks of Delaware,

from June 1744 until his death in October 1747. Brainerd, a somber, intensely devoted man who suffered under an almost continuous sense of melancholy and guilt, preached passionately to the Indians of sin and redemption. He worked remarkable conversions. At Crosswicks, in July 1745, after a year in the field, he had made only about eleven converts, but, preaching to sixty-five Indians on the afternoon of August 8th, on a text (Luke 14:16-23) dealing with those who refuse to heed the call, he produced a state of mass hysteria very similar to what Whitefield and Wesley were effecting among the White folks. Men, women, and children broke down, wept, and prayed for mercy; many could neither walk nor stand. Even a few White people, who had come to scoff, were caught up by the "swelling deluge," as Brainerd described the phenomenon of religious passion which seized the assembly. And in the same month he made a convert, in the Forks of Delaware, of one Moses Tattamy (who was to have a long career as an interpreter to the province of Pennsylvania). Tattamy for a time had suffered under a miserable sense of sin, believing that he had "never done one good thing," and that both he and the world around him were in danger of perishing. But at last, and suddenly, the word came to him, "There is hope; there is hope." He was hereafter, according to Brainerd, a "new man." Some of these conversions, apparently, were deep enough to maintain an effect on belief and behavior for years, if not for life.

Not all Indian religious enthusiasts were inspired by Christian sermons, however. In May of 1745, Brainerd met an Indian prophet, probably a Delaware (to judge from his ritual garb) some distance up the Susquehanna. This man, far from attempting to imitate Christianity, sought to revive what he supposed was the ancient religion of the Indians. Brainerd was terrified by the appearance of this reformer, who appeared in a

coat of bear skins, dressed with the hair on, and hanging down to his toes; a pair of bear skin stockings; and a great wooden face painted, the one half black, the other half tawny, about the colour of an Indian's skin, with an extravagant mouth, cut very much awry; the face fastened to a bear skin cap, which was drawn over his head. He advanced towards me with the instrument in his hand, which he used for music in his idolatrous worship; which was a dry tortoise shell with some corn in it, and the neck of it drawn on to a piece of wood, which made a very convenient handle. As he came forward, he beat his tune with the rattle, and danced with all his might, but did not suffer any part of his body, not so much as his fingers, to be seen. . . . He had a house consecrated to religious uses, with divers images cut upon the several parts of it. I went in, and found the ground beat almost as hard as a rock, with their frequent dancing upon it.

But Brainerd was very much impressed by his discourse, and sympathized with him as much as he could with a pagan.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, p. 135.

<sup>8</sup> See Kelsey, 1917, for a general account of Friends and Indians.

He told me that God had taught him his religion, and that he never would turn from it; but wanted to find some who would join heartily with him in it; for the Indians, he said, were grown very degenerate and corrupt. He had thoughts, he said, of leaving all his friends, and travelling abroad, in order to find some who would join with him; for he believed that God had some good people some where, who felt as he did. He had not always, he said, felt as he now did; but had formerly been like the rest of the Indians, until about four or five years before that time. Then, he said, his heart was very much distressed, so that he could not live among the Indians, but got away into the woods, and lived alone for some months. At length, he says, God comforted his heart, and showed him what he should do; and since that time he had known God, and tried to serve him; and loved all men, be they who they would, so as he never did before. He treated me with uncommon courtesy, and seemed to be hearty in it. I was told by the Indians, that he opposed their drinking strong liquor with all his power; and that, if at any time he could not dissuade them from it by all he could say, he would leave them, and go crying into the woods. It was manifest that he had a set of religious notions which he had examined for himself, and not taken for granted, upon bare tradition; and he relished or disrelished whatever was spoken of a religious nature, as it either agreed or disagreed with his standard. While I was discoursing, he would sometimes say, "Now that I like; so God has taught me;" etc., and some of his sentiments seemed very just. Yet he utterly denied the existence of a devil, and declared there was no such creature known among the Indians of old times, whose religion he supposed he was attempting to revive. He likewise told me, that departed souls all went southward, and that the difference between the good and the bad, was this: that the former were admitted into a beautiful town with spiritual walls; and that the latter would forever hover around these walls, in vain attempts to get in. He seemed to be sincere, honest, and conscientious in his own religious notions; which was more than I ever saw in any other Pagan. I perceived that he was looked upon and derided among most of the Indians, as a precise zealot, who made a needless noise about religious matters; but I must say that there was something in his temper and disposition, which looked more like true religion, than anything I ever observed amongst other heathens.<sup>9</sup>

Brainerd's missionary activities were ended by his death in 1747; but the Moravians took up the mission to the Delaware, and carried it forward vigorously for the next three generations, until the bulk of the Delaware had migrated west of the Mississippi and north of the Great Lakes. The story of Moravian evangelism among the Delaware, so dramatic and so tragic, has been often told and is one of the more familiar chapters of American frontier history. I shall only briefly recite its outline here. In 1744, the mission of the Brethren among the Mahican at Shekomoko, in New York, was abandoned because of persecution by hostile Whites. In 1745 the missionaries and many of their Mahican converts came down to found Gnadenhuetten, a new mission settlement a few miles north of Bethlehem. A number of Delaware converts, including the famous Teedyuscung, joined the *Unitas*

<sup>9</sup> Brainerd, 1822, pp. 210-215, 218-220, 237-239.

*Fratrum* in the period 1745 to 1755. But the successful little community was burned by French Indians in November, 1755, ten of the missionaries killed, and the several hundred Indian converts dispersed.

After the war, in 1765 David Zeisberger reestablished the mission at Frieden-shuetten, far up the Susquehanna, at the mouth of the Wyalusing. Many more converts were made at this place, but land disputes among the White people made the location untenable. In response to the invitation of the council of the Delaware in the Ohio, therefore, in 1772 several hundred Moravian Delaware converts moved with their missionaries again, this time to the Tuscarawas branch of the Muskingum. Their three settlements here were called Schoenbrunn, Gnadenhuetten, and Lichtenau. But the Revolutionary War ruined this work too: after some moving of towns and the apostasy of many converts, there occurred the notorious massacre at Gnadenhuetten of over ninety Christian Indians by White frontiersmen.

After the war, the Moravians tried again. In 1792 the settlement at Fairfield was established in Canada on the Thames River, and in 1798 the town of Goshen on the Tuscarawas. But the vigor of the convert faction among the Delaware had been weakened; many had left the faith, and others looked askance at the Christians, accusing them of trying to "tame" the Indians so as to make them easier to kill. Zeisberger planned a mission on the White River in Indiana, where the great council was situated; but this mission failed. By this time the Delaware had turned to native prophets for guidance.

The Moravian missions were a successful experiment in cross-cultural education. Although the Brethren sought to make converts, they also sought to teach a new way of life. The mission settlements were apparently small communal enterprises, on the utopian plan popular in that day, with the Brethren supplying capital goods and teaching the Indians European methods of farming and animal husbandry, spinning and weaving, carpentry, smithwork, and other necessary technical knowledge. Economically valuable ethics — sobriety, punctuality, performance of contract — and the provision of European *materiel* and know-how made these Moravian Indian settlements objects of admiration (and of suspicion) among frontier Whites and Indians alike. Their ultimate failure was the result of outside hostility rather than of internal deficiency; and even if, in the end, few Delaware remained Christians, many of the ideas, values, and skills so sedulously taught by the *Unitas Fratrum* came to be shared at the last by pagan Indians who consciously professed only contempt for Christianity.

The first successful nativistic revivals of the old time religion, with auxiliary promulgations of new doctrine, did not come until fifteen years after the mission-

aries had begun to work. (Brainerd's "reformer" was not a popularly accepted leader.) During the decade 1760-1770, no less than four, and perhaps more, new prophets arose among the Delaware along the Susquehanna and on the branches of the Ohio, and they continued to preach and to make converts (and to subvert the efforts of the *Unitas Fratrum*) until almost the end of the century.

The prophets, in Delaware custom (and also in conformity with the manner of prophets of other times and places), achieved their revelations by means of a vision which came to them in a period of hardship. Papoonan, for instance, held a long conversation with a Quaker during a trip to Philadelphia.

He was formerly a Drunken man [recorded the Quaker] but the Death of his Father bringing sorrow over his Mind, he fell into a thoughtfull Melancholy State, in which state his Eyes, were turned to behold the Earth, and to consider and to consider [sic] the things that are thereon, and Seeing the folly and wickedness that prevailed his Sorrows increased. But it was given to him to believe that there was a great Power that had Created all those things. After this his Mind was turned from beholding this Lower world to look towards him who had Created it; and strong Desires were begot in his heart for a further Knowledge of his Creator: nevertheless the Almighty was not pleased to be found of him, but his Desires increasing he forsook the town and went to the Woods in great Bitterness of Spirit: the other Indians missing him and fearing Evil had befallen him went from the town in Search of him but could not find him. But at the end of five days it pleased God to appear to him to his Comfort and to give him a sight of his own inward State, and also an acquaintance into the Works of Nature — for he apprehended a sence was given him of the Virtues, and Natures, of Several herbs, Roots, Plants, and trees, and the Differant, Relation they had one to another, and he was made Sensible that Man stood in the nearest relation to God of any Part of the Creation. It was also at this time he was made Sensible of his Duty to God and he came home Rejoicing and Endeavoured to Put in Practice what he apprehended was required of him.<sup>10</sup>

Papoonan's town on the upper Susquehanna, after the prophet began to preach in 1758, was an orderly place, with well-constructed communal houses, and ample supplies of corn. The Indians at this town did not drink, disbelieved in war and in quarrelsomeness, and sought earnestly "the way" to the "Place of Happiness." Although they were not Christian and did not wish to be Europeanized, they were not hostile to Christianity itself, because they believed that good was found in many revelations; and so they listened attentively to Quaker and Moravian teachings. Papoonan became a friend of the Quaker evangelist John Woolman and visited Friends in Philadelphia. In fact, they listened so attentively that in 1763 the village council decided to jettison Papoonan and to accept the first Christian missionary who came to the place. David Zeisberger, the Moravian, arrived first and got the

<sup>10</sup> Papoonan's Revelation in Friends Historical Society collection.

job, and established the Friedenshuetten mission, which survived until the emigration of 1772.

Meanwhile at Assinink another prophet was promoting another, more ecstatic religious revival. "The old Preast" who was the author of this new religion "hase A Book of Pickters whish he Maid him Self and there is Heaven and Hell and Rum and Swan hak [White men] and Indians and Ride Strokes for Rum. . . ." The old man read from his book "Like Mad" every morning and would sing to the rising sun. He, like Papoonan, preached against liquor. He apparently was making elaborate ritual innovations, and the rituals which he promoted included a dream-recitation rite at a spring thanksgiving festival by spectacularly painted and flower-bedecked men and women, night-long dances (at the conclusion of which many Indians wept), prayers to the Sun at dawn, and first-fruits offerings. The fate of this revitalization at Assinink is not known.<sup>11</sup>

About the same time on the Cuyahoga River south of Lake Erie, a third Delaware was preaching the Indians to repentance. This was the celebrated "Delaware Prophet," or Neolin, "The Enlightened." Like Papoonan and the unnamed "old priest" at Assinink, he was against rum. He was also opposed to European ways, and urged the Indians in the Ohio country to return to the simple, pure manners of their ancestors. Neolin was taken into the presence of God, the Master of Life, and from Him obtained instructions on the proper course of the Indian life, and on the mode of worship most acceptable to him. If the Indians would abandon guns, powder, and all other White appurtenances, He would send back the vanishing game. The Indians were to drive off the Whites who were encroaching on their lands; they were to recite, morning and evening, a written prayer, and were to live chaste and friendly lives. The Prophet made a chart of the path to heaven, showing obstacles placed by White men, by their rum, and by the Indians' own forsaking of primitive virtue, in the way of entry. He made many converts, not only among the Delaware, but also among the Shawnee, Ottawa, and other tribal populations in the Ohio valley. Among those impressed by his words was Pontiac, who rationalized his assault on Detroit by reference to the Prophet's message.<sup>12</sup>

After the collapse of the Indians in the series of wars initiated by Pontiac, still another Delaware prophet, Wangomend by name, rose among the Ohio bands. This Munsee pagan preacher began his evangelical career in 1766. When a Moravian mission town was built in 1768 along the Allegheny River, he sought edification from the Brethren; but after a time he broke with them. Wangomend

<sup>11</sup> Post, 1760; Hays, 1760.

<sup>12</sup> Heckewelder, 1876, pp. 291-293; Peckham, 1947, pp. 98-100; Schoolcraft, 1839, pp. 239-248.

claimed that he had been chosen of God to reveal the true way of salvation to the Indians, and he was critical and suspicious of many White customs, condemning for instance the enslavement of Negroes, and prohibiting the drinking of the rum brought to them from the White settlements. He was very much exercised over a supposed conspiracy of witches, and in 1775 proposed a general witch-hunt, which at the last moment the Delaware council declined, for fear of the social disorganization it would entail. Wangomend continued to preach — to the great annoyance of David Zeisberger, who regarded him as a professional rival — into the 1790's.<sup>13</sup>

The next wave of religious enthusiasm broke over the Delaware in the decade 1800-1810. A major part of the tribe, together with some Nanticoke and Mahican, had been settled along the White River in Indiana since the 1790's, as co-owners with the Miami, the original proprietors; here was their chiefs' council; here was the heart of the nation. Although the Delaware now had a central tribal council which was attempting to collect the scattered population and reorganize their collective life, the condition of these emigrants from, successively, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, was deplorable: they were half-drowned in whiskey, swept by plagues, and chronically hungry. During the hard months from February to early summer, 1805, a Munsee Indian woman, an apostate from Friedenshuetten, had a series of visions, in which angels enjoined her to tell the Indians many things: that at the ceremonies there was too much juggling and not enough sacrifice and prayer; that they would have to live as in the olden times, and love one another sincerely, or a terrible storm would come to kill them all. The words of the female prophet created a "state of revolution" which appalled the unhappy Moravian missionaries who witnessed it. In accordance with her revelation, a "large house [was] newly built for the sacrifice," and in it was performed the ritual which Speck has described in detail in his study of the Delaware Indian Big House ceremony. It is difficult to learn how much of innovation there was in the Munsee woman's ritual prescriptions. The focus of the ceremony prescribed by the female prophet was the recitation of guardian spirit visions; this was the main thing in the Big House ceremony as Speck described it, and was also the point emphasized by the "old priest" at Assinink; and the guardian spirit theme has been important in Delaware religion from aboriginal times to the present day. There already existed a Green Corn ceremony incorporating some of the Big House elements; this ceremony was performed in the early fall. It would seem, however, that the Munsee prophetess revealed the final and organized form of the Big House ceremony which has been preserved until recent times.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Heckewelder, 1876, pp. 293-295; Zeisberger, 1910, pp. 133-136.

<sup>14</sup> Gipson, 1938, pp. 333-355; Speck, 1941. See fn. 4.

For a time, however, the Big House movement was eclipsed by the rise of the notorious Shawnee Prophet, Tenskatawa, Tecumseh's brother. He began to gain Delaware converts along the White River in December of 1805. His doctrine, like that of the other prophets, was a blend of moral injunction, cultural reform, and ritual innovation, based on direct revelation from God. The moral doctrine was hardly one that the Christian missionaries could criticize: no alcohol, sexual chastity, love thy neighbor, and similar injunctions. The cultural reforms, like those of the Delaware prophets of forty years before, centered about rejection of European customs and a return to the ancestral Indian ways. What made the Shawnee Prophet a terror to the missionaries was his preoccupation with witchcraft. In the spring of 1806, he visited the White River Towns and had two civil chiefs, Brother Joshua (the Moravian convert), and several others tomahawked and burned, on suspicion of being witches. One of the chiefs was burned in the Moravian mission village. The missionaries, who had with them wives and children, were so horrified that they abandoned the mission a few months later.<sup>15</sup>

The War of 1812 ended the widespread influence of the Shawnee Prophet, and with the sale of the White River lands in Indiana in 1817, and of the remaining reservations in Ohio in 1829, the bulk of the Delaware moved west of the Mississippi, where they continued the Big House ritual, while the Green Corn Dance — before 1805 the major traditional ritual — fell into abeyance.

The decade 1830-1840 saw a wave of Christian missionary efforts among the Delaware newly placed in the trans-Mississippi country. In addition to the Moravians, who followed their remaining charges westward, Mormons, Methodists, and Baptists all sought to bring Christian enlightenment to the tribe. Mormon emissaries in 1830, only six months after the organization of the Mormon Church, aroused much interest; the Delaware even agreed to build a council house for Mormon use. But the local Indian agent ordered the Latter Day Saints out of the territory.<sup>16</sup> The Methodists and Baptists were more successful, both entering the field in 1832; the Methodists went on to establish a manual training school for Indian children, and the Baptists printed religious and elementary school books in the Delaware language.<sup>17</sup> The pressure of Christian evangelism was thus maintained, and no doubt has been ever since; but to what degree of success it attained during the nineteenth century, we do not know.

About 1880, the Delaware received peyote. The prophet in this event was John Wilson, an Oklahoma Indian, part Caddo and part Delaware. Wilson learned

<sup>15</sup> Gipson, 1938, pp. 392-422.

<sup>16</sup> Foreman, 1946, p. 58 fn. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, 1951, p. 149.

about peyote from the Comanche, and during two or three weeks of seclusion, when he was experimenting with the drug, he experienced a series of visions in which a complete system of belief, ritual, and ethics was revealed to him. Peyotism, in Wilson's system, was a syncretism of Christianity (Christ was a major divinity) and traditional Delaware religion (the Big House ceremony was endorsed, and other elements of the old ceremonial calendar), united under the agency of the peyote. The ethical recommendations were standard: sobriety, chastity, marital fidelity, peacefulness, honesty; he abhorred and attacked witchcraft. Peyotism has remained a living religion among the Delaware: there has even been a major splinter-cult, led by Elk Hair, and a variety of minor variant rituals have developed.<sup>18</sup>

The Ghost Dance temporarily interrupted the development of the peyote movement, however, as the Shawnee Prophet had interrupted the development of the Big House. Beginning with the vision of Wovoka, about 1887 or 1888, this ecstatic new religion — also a blend of Christian and Indian beliefs, with some interesting affinities to Mormon teachings, but with emphasis on an apocalyptic world's end in which the Whites would be destroyed and the spirits of the dead would return — reached the Delaware in Oklahoma and was for a time accepted by part of them. Apparently the same John Wilson, who had earlier brought peyote to the Delaware, was now the leader of the Ghost Dance among them. Mooney visited him in 1893, and found him then chiefly identified as a Caddo and as the local Ghost Dance prophet; but he noted that he was half-Delaware, and "also prominent in the mescal rite, which has recently come to his tribe from the Kiowa and Comanche."<sup>19</sup>

Although the Ghost Dance has faded away, peyotism remains among many Oklahoma Delaware today, and other "pagan" rituals among many Canadian Delaware, despite the continuing efforts of Christian missionaries. There is no reason to suppose that there is any final end-point for the evolution of Delaware religion, for even should peyotism and every vestige of the "traditional" Delaware religions disappear, new Christian denominations and revivals will constantly present themselves, as well perhaps as other, secular, social movements which have a religious spirit.

#### ANALYTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The foregoing outline of data on Delaware religious movements lends itself to analysis from several points of view.

<sup>18</sup> For studies of Delaware peyotism, see Petrullo, 1934, and Speck, 1933.

<sup>19</sup> Mooney, 1896, 903-905.

*Frequency.* Over a period of three hundred years, some Delaware Indians in the Oklahoma line participated, as converts or innovators, in varying numbers and with varying enthusiasm, in no less than fifteen separate *new* religious movements. This is a minimum number; there were almost certainly other movements which I have failed to include. Even with the minimum number, however, the *average* rate of new-religion-acceptance by a noticeable part of the population was once every twenty years.

There is, however, a clustering of the inception-times of the movements into five decades: 1740-1749 (3 cases), 1760-1769 (4 cases), 1800-1809 (2 cases), 1830-1839 (3 cases), and 1880-1890 (2 cases). Fourteen out of the fifteen are first reported during these fifty years. This suggests (if one accepts the data as a representative time series) that the rate of inception of religious movements is neither constant, nor randomly variant about a normal rate, but rather sharply clustered. Two possible general explanations offer themselves: (1) that variation in external circumstances affecting the society as a whole controls the rate (e.g., the higher the degree of situationally determined stress, the higher the rate of acceptance of new religions); (2) that the occurrence of one movement in itself is a stimulus for the occurrence of others (e.g., a process of suggestion or intra-societal stimulus diffusion is at work). Both explanations may be valid, since both processes could operate simultaneously (environmentally produced stress could stimulate several independent religious inventions, and also generally increase the degree of suggestibility of the population, allowing both direct conversion and stimulus diffusion within the society to operate more easily).

*The adaptive nature of religious change.* The sequence of historical situations of Delaware society can be conveniently divided into five stages, each of them marked by a characteristic style of religious innovation, and by a characteristic situational problem faced by the tribe. The data can be conveniently presented in tabular form.

| Stage | Period    | New Religions  | Historical Situation  | Nature of Religious Adaptation   |
|-------|-----------|--|---|--|
| I     | 1600-1670 | Mildly evangelistic Dutch (Lutheran), Swedish (Lutheran), and English (Quaker) missionaries make a few converts among natives domiciled near | The Delaware are for the most part undisplaced geographically, and their political sovereignty is unimpaired. Acculturation is selective and con- | The individual converts are (probably) motivated by personal friendships, politeness, and desire for closer commercial ties. Conversion may be a |



| Stage | Period    | New Religions   | Historical Situation  | Nature of Religious Adaptation  |
|-------|-----------|---|---|---|
|       |           | White settlements. Conversions are made individually rather than in the mass.   | trolled by Delaware society. Intercultural contacts are largely amicable and symbiotic. Delaware morale remains high except in neighborhood of White settlements toward the end of the period.  | matter of lip-service, or of the maintenance of two separate religious systems. There is no felt need to reconcile logical conflicts between the two religions. Most Delaware follow traditional religious forms. |
| II    | 1670-1740 | None are recorded, beyond a few possible individual conversions of the tepid variety characteristic of the previous period. | Although intercultural relations remain superficially peaceful and friendly, the Delaware by 1740 have sold almost all their lands and are mostly living as displaced persons on Iroquois territory north of the Alleghenies, along the Susquehanna and Ohio rivers. A few reservations and remnant groups remain behind. White material culture extensively replaces the aboriginal. "Race prejudice" against Indians develops among the Whites. Delaware morale disintegrates rapidly, and hunting for the trade tends to become more, and agriculture less, important. | Traditional religious forms are maintained, but (probably) with declining confidence as morale generally declines.  |

| Stage | Period    | New Religions  | Historical Situation  | Nature of Religious Adaptation  |
|-------|-----------|--|---|---|
| III   | 1740-1760 | Brainerd (Presbyterian) and Moravian missionaries make mass conversions, Brainerd producing "camp-meeting" hysterics. The Moravians develop utopian interracial communities. A revivalistic prophet arises but has little success. | The cold war between France and England over the control of the Ohio valley develops, and there are two hot wars (1744-1748 and 1754-1760), interrupting the trade and forcing the Delaware to choose sides (choice depending largely on locality). Migrations are necessary; horticulture and hunting are disrupted; relations with Whites become confused and sharply ambivalent.   | Whole Delaware communities are converted to Christianity, particularly remnant groups resident near Whites. A few Delaware in the Indian country become concerned to revivify the ancient religion.   |
| IV    | 1760-1800 | Moravian convert communities maintain themselves for a time but largely die out by 1800, except for a Canadian band. Four more or less revivalistic cults develop in the 1760's and one at least continues up to 1800.             | Relations with Whites deteriorate rapidly. British Indian policy becomes punitive and restrictive, trade languishes. Delaware participate in the disastrous Pontiac Wars. During the Revolution, they are divided into American and British factions. During and after the Revolution, they are displaced from Pennsylvania and much of Ohio. The Battle of Fallen Timbers (1794) and the Treaty of Greenville (1795) mean the collapse of Indian resist- | Two distinct tendencies of religious adaptation emerge during this crisis: (1) to identify with White Christianity; (2) to revitalize, with some innovations, an "Indian" type of religion, often with strong nativistic elements. The nativistic, revivalistic tendency becomes more prevalent, and Christian identifications peter out, particularly after the Americans massacre the peaceable Moravian Indian community in 1782. Both |

| Stage | Period    | New Religions                                   | Historical Situation  | Nature of Religious Adaptation  |
|-------|-----------|---|---|---|
|       |           |   | ance to White encroachment west of the Ohio. Delaware are losing confidence both in themselves and in all White people.   | Christian and revivalistic movements (including the severely nativistic) are much concerned with moral codes, particularly opposing alcoholic indulgence, witchcraft, and sexual promiscuity.   |
| V     | 1800-1820 | The Big House movement and the Shawnee Prophet. | The Ohio Indians (including the Delaware), following the collapse of their resistance to the United States' expansion west of the Ohio River, find themselves confined to large reservations. The Delaware chiefs' council attempts to unite the tribe and to initiate cultural reforms, but drunkenness and other disorderly behavior interfere. Pressure (religious, political, territorial) from Whites is severe; faith in Whites is gone almost completely. The Shawnee Prophet's movement is associated with the second Indian effort to reestablish the Ohio River Line, during the War of 1812; this too fails. | Both the Big House movement, and the Shawnee Prophet's doctrine which temporarily interrupts it, are revivalistic and extremely nativistic. Christian missionaries, for the first time, meet with open hostility from almost everyone except old converts, and many of these "slide-back" into the new paganisms. |

| Stage | Period    | New Religions  | Historical Situation   | Nature of Religious Adaptation  |
|-------|-----------|--|--|---|
| VI    | 1820-1900 | Mormon, Methodist, and Baptist missions; Peyotism and the Ghost Dance. | The reservation period. Following the collapse of the Indian confederacy after the War of 1812, the United States intensifies its efforts to acquire Indian lands. The Delaware, by 1840 are all on reservations west of the Mississippi, in Kansas and in the Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Relations with Whites are generally peaceful but not cordial, and the reservation system becomes stabilized as a way of life. | The Christian missions apparently achieve a measure of success in the period immediately after removal. Later the Ghost Dance and peyotism attempt to synthesize certain elements of Christian and traditional native belief. Although the apocalyptic and revivalistic aspects of the Ghost Dance emphasize its nativistic component, other elements of the Ghost Dance religion emphasize compliance with White culture until the millenium, and Jesus is invoked as the Indian Messiah. The philosophy of peyotism is one of passivity and withdrawal, and it too appeals to the divinity of Jesus. The Ghost Dance (short-lived) and peyote thus are a syncretism of nativistic and accommodation tendencies, with peyote, the less nativistic and more passive faith, surviving. |

Reviewing the series of modes of religious adaptation, it becomes apparent that, over a period of three hundred years, new religions among the Delaware represent successively different patterns of reaction to situational pressures. The first new religion is Christianity, accepted in friendly fashion by a few Delaware, closely associated with Whites, who probably did not abandon native beliefs at all; the bulk of the society remained undisturbed in their faith. This was the period of maximum good-feeling between Whites and Indians, and of mutual and profitable acculturation without cultural distortion. The aboriginal lands were lost in the second period, during which little religious change occurred. In the third period, as the economic situation deteriorated, and the culture began to disintegrate, two opposed tendencies in new religions developed: a panic-stricken attempt to identify with the Whites in religion; and an equally panic-stricken effort to revive the traditional religious culture, but without any particularly nativistic attitudes. In the fourth period, when wars with the Whites occurred, interest in a new White-oriented religious identification continued for some, but more and more the emphasis lay on nativism and revival of the old-time religion, with various modifications. In the fifth period, faith in the Whites was completely broken, and the Christian converts began to backslide, few new converts were made, and the new religions were violently nativistic. In the sixth period, after an initial flurry of interest in Christianity, there followed two generations of resentful but peaceful relations with Whites. The reservation system was accepted, and the new religions toward the end of the period deliberately combined a mild nativism with appeals to a Christian God, either putting off violence and noncoöperation with Whites to a day of judgment, or else rejecting violence and noncoöperation entirely.

It is worth noting that the nativistic, violently anti-White type of response is neither the initial, nor the prevailing, nor the last mode of adaptation, but rather occurs only during a transitional phase between acceptance of and trust in the Whites as friends, and acceptance of them as the fundamentally hostile powers that be. The most enduring tendency is that of identification with the Whites, which is notably present to some degree under all circumstances except those of the most extreme provocation and disillusionment (and, if one examines the data closely, it is present even then in details of doctrine).

*The deprivation hypothesis.* Although this is not the place to examine at length the deprivation hypothesis, advanced frequently as the explanation for religious and other revitalization movements,<sup>20</sup> it is apparent that "deprivation" of one kind

<sup>20</sup> See Barber, 1941, Mooney, 1896, and Nash, 1955, for varying statements of the deprivation hypothesis.

or another seems to have some association with the Delaware series. As a matter of fact, however, the decades during which the Delaware experienced the onset of their new religions were not the decades of maximum "objective" deprivation at all. The periods of maximum hardship for groups who ultimately accepted new religions were 1730-1740 (loss of lands and geographical displacement), 1754-1760 (the French and Indian Wars), 1775-1795 (the Revolution and the war for the Northwest Territory), and 1810-1830 (the War of 1812, the loss of reservations in Ohio and Indiana, and displacement west of the Mississippi). The five decades of new religious acceptance followed some years after the years of impact of disaster, and they were not so much adaptations to the disaster itself as to the derivative, long-term cultural distortions which the disaster revealed and induced. Thus the 1740-50 religions aimed not at restoring or rationalizing the loss of the land, but at restoring moral order and defining group identity (as either "White" or "Indian"). The 1760-70 religions were concerned less with the issues of the war and the economic hardship it brought than, again, with morality, morale, and group identification. The 1800-1810 religions, among the Delaware, emphasized a policy of nativism which, in the Shawnee Prophet's case, envisaged the recovery of lost lands, but again much of the concern was over morality (particularly witchcraft), morale, and a re-acceptance of an Indian way of life. The re-acceptance of Christian missions in 1830-40 followed the wars, land sales, and migrations of the preceding two decades. The final decade of religious innovation (1880-1890) came along after the reservation system had for the Delaware pretty well stabilized itself economically and militarily.

In other words, if one wishes to speak of deprivations, it is loss of confidence in a familiar and expectedly reliable pattern of social relations, rather than deprivation of food, shelter, and other economic wants, that stimulates the innovation or acceptance of new religions. Although economic or military stresses may precipitate the social disorder, the social disorder itself develops slowly and does not achieve impact until some years after the economic or other situational stress has been applied.

This formulation of the concept of deprivation is similar to Nash's reformulation of the material dealing with differential responses to the Ghost Dance on the Klamath reservation. Nash remarked: "Participants in the revival were people who in some measure had failed to derive the satisfactions they anticipated in following a particular course of action. In this sense they were deprived. . . ."<sup>21</sup> Barber likewise employs a somewhat generalized concept, similar to the Durkheim-

<sup>21</sup> Nash, 1955.

Merton concept of anomie.<sup>22</sup> The only essential modification of these concepts suggested on the basis of the Delaware material here recited is the postulation that it is the awareness of specifically social disappointments that constitutes the psychologically determinant deprivation, and that these are apt to achieve impact some years after the economic and military disasters which appear as the more "objective" indices of deprivation.

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