Six Nations’ authority over other native peoples and to keep European colonists at arm’s length. No wonder Onondaga refused to go along with his scheme. ... It was to be a land of lines dividing Indians from Europeans, not a place where lines blurred and peoples came together.

That Anglo-American colonists had no intention of living in “the woods” or becoming one Indian with Indians is clear enough. Less well known is the Indians’ own resistance to such an idea. Beneath the metaphors of harmony and unity that decorated the treaty minutes—the talk of becoming one people with one body, one heart, and one mind—ran a chorus of dissonance and dissent. During a council at Lancaster in 1744, an Iroquois speaker informed his audience: “The World at the first was made on the other side of the Great water different from what it is on this side, as may be known from the different colour of Our Skin and of Our Flesh. ... You have your Laws and Customs and so have we.” “You know I am not as you are,” an Onondaga from the upper Susquehanna reminded Pennsylvania officials in 1762. “I am of a quite different Nature from you.

Not only were natives different, but they wanted to stay that way. “We are Indians,” one Susquehanna headman replied when a missionary broached the subject of conversion, “and don’t wish to be transformed into white men. The English are our Brethren, but we never promised to become what they are. As little as we desire the preacher to become Indian, so little ought he to desire the Indians to become preachers.”

In the years to come, Susquehanna peoples, native American and Euro-American alike, would scrawl in blood the epitaph for Montour’s dream by using knowledge acquired during a generation of peaceful intercourse to kill each other without mercy. “Be still we wont hurt you,” an Indian warrior herding German children together a month after Penn’s Creek said in “High Dutch”—before burying a hatchet in their mother’s head, stepping on her neck to tear off her scalp, and joining his companions to cut down the fleeing boys and girls.

In the Susquehanna Valley eight years later, the tables were turned when some troops from Paxton came upon three Indians. “Dont shoot brothers, dont shoot,” the three cried; they proclaimed their friendship for Pennsylvania, and, personifying it, one was even “named George Allen.” A Paxton man recalled, “after the George Allen that was with us.” Blind to such signs of attachment, the soldiers took the Indians prisoner and, after ordering them to walk on ahead, shot them in the back. George Allen (the Indian), wounded in the arm, played dead while they scalped him; then, as the killers began to strip his leggings off, he jumped up and escaped, even though “the skin of his face, the scalp being off, came down over his eyes so that he couldn’t see.” This George Allen, recovering his vision and his health, lived to talk of gaining revenge on his namesake.

In a world where George Allen shot George Allen, where Indians spoke German while killing Germans, where was Montour to fit? He had set about defining himself as a denizen of this debatable land. Only after Montour had made it his life’s ambition to become the leading citizen of the territory between the woods and the inhabited parts, only then did he discover that he had pitched his camp, had pitched his life, in a no-man’s-land.

Montour was not completely alone, of course. Besides his extended family, besides those peoples on the east side of the Susquehanna living together amicably enough (or so it seemed to Weiser), a few others did articulate this search for a meeting of minds, hearts, and souls that, in Indian metaphor, bound societies one to the other. Among the Iroquois in 1750, the Moravian bishop John Christian Frederick Cammerrhoff misused that he “sometimes felt like saying to myself: ‘I am dwelling among my own people[,] and when I shall be able to say that in its true meaning, my heart will rejoice.’” But Cammerrhoff never saw that happy day; indeed, virtually no one did. Although many crossed the cultural divide between Indians and Europeans, few really felt at home on the far side. Croggan, Weiser, the Onondagas Schickelamy and Scaurayady—these and the other go-betweens of the Pennsylvania theater were firmly anchored on one side of the frontier or the other. Like Thomas Gist, a frontiersman whom the Wyandots in 1758 captured, stripped, shaved, painted, and adopted, European colonists in the Indian countries were only “acting the part of an Indian.” “I could do [this acting] very well,” Gist boasted after he—“determined to be what I really was”—made good his escape.

... It is as hard to read the man now as it was 250 years ago. What can be said is that Montour was never able to borrow or to fashion a vocabulary that would define him as neither Indian nor European but something new, something else altogether. Lackng that working vocabulary, Montour spent his life maintaining his credentials as both an Indian and a European. ... Trying to be both Indian and European, Montour ended up being neither. The life that he made for himself, the path he traveled, turned out to be a dead end in English America, not an avenue to some new social order. There was no place in between, there were no words to describe the sort of person he was, there was no critical mass of people like himself sufficient to weave new social patterns from the fraying edges of the old.

The Indians’ Great Awakening

GREGORY E. DOWD

A nativist movement that would last a generation to become the religious underpinning of militant pan-Indianism first developed most clearly in the polyglot communities on the Upper Susquehanna. Refugees from earlier disposessions in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, these peoples began again to fall back before the Anglo-American advance of the 1750s and 1760s. The movement accompanied refugees as they fled northwest and then west from the Susquehanna to the headwaters of the Allegheny, from whence it descended upon the Ohio country. Here it found inviting souls among the already established refugees who inhabited the polyglot villages ... Laid low during the Seven Years’ War, the Indians provided the movement with deep basins of support. The Ohio River issued from mountain springs, snows, and rains. The currents of nativism issued from the reckonings of the several thousand souls, and from the many prophets who gave those souls voice. Because the movement roughly coincided with British America’s Christian revival, I have chosen to call it the Indians’ Great Awakening. But it was not a “revival” of

a religious spirit that had lain, somehow, dormant. In its most important aspect, it was an "awakening" to the idea that, despite all the boundaries defined by politics, language, kinship, and geography, Indians did indeed share much in the way of their past and their present. It was an awakening to the notion that Indians shared a conflict with Anglo-America, and that they, as Indians, could and must take hold of their destiny by regaining sacred power.

Between 1737 and 1775, a time of economic dislocation and much warfare in the Susquehanna and Ohio valleys, a cluster of men and women came into direct contact with the usually remote Master of Life. Styled "prophets" by the least hostile of their Christian observers and "impostors" by others, these people differed from the more common shamans or conjurers only in the level of their experience. Although their spiritual encounters may have represented departures from, or elaborations upon, more ordinary shamanistic experiences, they were not new phenomena in the mid-eighteenth century. Over a full century before, Hurons reported spiritual encounters that led them to perform new ceremonies. Indian myths, moreover, are replete with similar journeys to the sky world.

In its mid-eighteenth-century manifestations prophetic nativism first appears, mildly, in the 1737 journals of Pennsylvania's Indian agent, Conrad Weiser. Weiser found starving Shawnees and Onondaga Iroquois at the Susquehanna River town of Otseengo discussing the recent visions of "one of their seers." In "a vision of God," the seer learned that God had "driven the wild animals out of the country" in punishment for the crime of killing game for trade in alcohol. The seer convinced his listeners that if they did not stop trading skins for English rum, God would wipe them "from the earth." Weiser did not dwell on the matter; we do not learn of any ensuing reformation. But by 1744, the Susquehanna Valley, increasingly populated by polyglot refugees from dispossession in the East, swelled again with prophecy.

That year, lower down the river, the Presbyterian missionary David Brainerd encountered religious nativists among the Delawares and Shawnees. He reported that "they now seem resolved to retain their pagan notions and persist in their idolatrous practices." Beset by disease, the Indians looked to the sacred powers "to find out why they were then so sickly." Among the inhabitants of one Delaware town Brainerd met "a devout and zealous reformer, or rather restorer of what he supposed was the ancient religion of the Indians." Like the seer at Otseengo, the holy man claimed that his people "were grown very degenerate and corrupt," and he emphatically denounced alcohol. But he also claimed that his people must revive what he believed were the ceremonies of their ancestors. Although the sight of the Delaware holy man stirred "imagery of terror" in Brainerd's mind, the shaman did not reveal any hostility toward Anglo-Americans, and Brainerd admitted that "there was something in his temper and disposition that looked more like true religion than anything I ever observed amongst other heathens."

Neither Weiser's "seer" nor Brainerd's "reformer" mounted a political challenge discernible in the record. They did stand against the alcohol trade and therefore against a most visible and physical form of dependence upon Europeans. That is all.

The first of the prophets to mount a political challenge was a young Delaware woman. Noted in 1751 by Brainerd's younger brother, John, she lived in the increasingly militant Susquehanna River town of Wyoming, which was choked with refugees. We know little of her, not even her name; indeed the Indians "seemed somewhat backward to tell" John Brainerd about her at all. But the scanty evidence is tantalizing. Her vision "was a confirmation of some revelations they had had before." She had been told by the "Great Power that they should destroy the poison from among them." The woman worried about the sickness and death of so many of her people and blamed it on that "poison," probably a witch bundle, allegedly held by "their old and principal men." The evidence, though thin, suggests a challenge to the local leadership of the town of Wyoming, a leadership bound to the powerful Six Nations Iroquois to the north and, through their cooperation, to the British colonies. Her people would attack that bondage openly and violently during the Seven Years' War.

The people of this Delaware village asserted their Indian identity. They drew distinctions that separated Indians from blacks and whites. The distinctions, they felt, were God-given. Rejecting Presbyterian attempts to establish a mission among them, they explained, "God first made three men and three women, viz: the Indians, the negro, and the white man." Because Europeans were produced last, "the white people ought not to think themselves better than the Indians." Moreover, the Bible was for Europeans alone; since God gave no such book "to the Indian or negro, and therefore it could not be right for them to have a book, or be any way concerned with that way of worship."

This idea of the separate creation of Indians, blacks, and whites, an idea that sanctioned separate forms of worship, was widely reported in the Susquehanna and Ohio regions, where it became commonplace. On the eve of the American Revolution, it would be shared as well by the southern Indians, who described it to Anglo-Americans. The notion of the separate creation gave legitimacy to the Indians' way of life. It explicitly challenged not only those Indians who had converted to Christianity but also those few who had grown too close to the Anglo-Americans. It played in harmony with the Wyoming woman's dissent from the accommodating leadership of her village. Claiming that only Indian ways could lead Indians to salvation, the theology of separation implicitly attacked Indian clients of the Anglo-Americans.

The notion had radical implications for Indian identity. Attachments to the older, local, linguistic, and lineage-oriented conceptions of one's people now competed with a decidedly innovative pan-Indianism. The notion reflected the growing cooperation of militant factions from different peoples in political efforts to unite Indians against the Anglo-American menace. It also reflected the heightening of local tensions, as Indians who rejected nativism and urged accommodation with the British found themselves accused of abomination.

The year after the younger Brainerd first encountered this separatist theology, a group of Munsee Delawares settled a new town some seventy miles up the winding Susquehanna. Munsees increasingly identified with their Unami Delaware-speaking cousins, and like many Unamis they had maintained friendly relations with the Moravians and Quakers. This particular group of Munsees displayed a marked ambivalence toward both Christianity and nativism. Its leader, Papooanan, had once been "a drunken Indian." At the age of about forty-five he "underwent a sorrowful period of reformation, including a solitude sojourn in the woods & a vision following the death of his father." Like other Indian prophets, Papooanan emerged from the
vision with a message of love and reformation. He preached against the use of alcohol, as would most prophets, and he preached that the Master of Life, angered by the sins of the Indians, had met them with punishing visitations.

Unlike many of the other prophets, Papoan refused to countenance war—a stand he may have absorbed from the Moravians and Quakers. The prophet once told a Pennsylvanian that in his heart he knew “the Quakers are Right.” He and his followers remained at peace with Pennsylvania throughout the 1750s, and toward the end of the war they sought out Quakers to mediate their talks with the suspicious British authorities.

But even sincere protestations of friendship and interest in Christianity could not mask Papoan’s frustration with the social changes wrought by the Indian-English trade. Recognizing the increasing importance in Indian society of access to British trade goods, Papoan aimed his message primarily at the greedy. His own people, he warned, “grow proud & Covetous, which causes God to be Angry & to send dry & hot Summers & hard Winters, & also Sickness among the People.” He also aimed the message at Anglo-Americans, telling the Pennsylvania Provincial Council that their raising of the prices of manufactured goods created tensions:

“You alter the price that you say you will give for our Skins, which can never be right; God cannot be pleased to see the prices of one & the same thing so often altered & Changed.” While challenging the greed of British colonists, Papoan, like other prophets, urged his followers to purify themselves of similar greed by “adhering to the ancient Customs & manners of their Forefathers.” He and his followers resisted, for a time, Christian efforts to establish missions among them, for they were “much afraid of being seduced & [brought] off from their ways by the White People.”

In spite of its attempt to live in peace, Papoan’s community could not escape the massive troubles that surrounded it. Christian Frederick Post found the villagers troubled and quarrelsome in 1760. The town still existed as a native, non-Christian religious community the following year, but as Pontiac’s War of 1763 embroiled the region, Papoan, who held to the peace, lost influence. British colonial lynch mobs, having killed neutral Indians in the Paxton Massacre, forced Papoan to flee with others to the safety of barracks under Quaker protection in Philadelphia. At the war’s end, he was there numbered among the “Christian Indians.” Some among his followers invited the Moravian missionaries to come among them. Others went off to join the nativist communities that were, by then, abundant on the Upper Ohio. It would not be the last failure of studied neutrality.

Further up the Susquehanna, not far from what is now New York State, Wangoond, or the Assissingk Prophet, experienced his first visions in the early 1750s, probably in 1752, the year Papoan settled his new town. Unlike Papoan, this Munsee showed open hostility toward the British. Indeed his message closely resembles the separatist beliefs of the Unami Delaware woman downstream at Wyoming who received her visions the previous year. The Assissingk Prophet encouraged the Indians to abandon British ways, emphatically denouncing rum drinking, . . .

Wangoond, like other Susquehanna country prophets, introduced or reintroduced ceremonies in an effort to gain power. Post reported that the prophet had revivied “an Old quarterly Meeting,” during which the participants recalled the “Dreams and Revelations everyone had from his Infancy, & what Strength and Power they had received thereby.” The meeting, which lasted all day and all night, involved walking, singing, dancing, and, finally, cathartic weeping. . . .

Following the Seven Years’ War, refugee Munsee and Unami Delawares fled the Susquehanna for the Ohio, and the Assissingk Prophet was among them. There he undoubtedly encountered, if he had not done so previously, the thoroughly compatible teachings of another advocate of Indian separation from Britain, the Delaware Prophet, Neolin. The Ottawa warrior Pontiac would claim inspiration from Neolin for his siege of Detroit in 1763, and Neolin would rapidly emerge as the spiritual leader of a militant movement with political overtones. But it is important to recall that he neither invented nor was solely responsible for the spiritual quest for unity.

The Delaware Prophet, Neolin

One night in the eighteen months or so of only relative calm that followed the French evacuation of the Upper Ohio Valley, Neolin sat alone by his fire, “musing and greatly concerned about the evil ways he saw prevailing among the Indians.” Strangely, a man appeared and “told him these things he was thinking of were right” and proceeded to instruct him in religion. By the fall of 1751 Neolin had gained a considerable following as he relayed the will of the Master of Life to the Delawares. . . . Neolin drew a path from earth to heaven, along “which their forefathers used to ascend to Hapiness.” The path, however, was now blocked by a symbol “representing the White People.” Along the right side of the chart were many “Strokes” representing the vices brought by Europeans. Through these strokes the Indians now “must go, ye Good Road being Stop’d.” Hell was also close at hand, and “there they are Led irrevocably.” The programs offered by the Assissingk Prophet and Neolin were identical in many particulars. Each preached strenuously against the use of rum, chief among “ye vices which ye Indians have learned from ye White people,” and which each depicted on his chart as strokes through which the difficult way to heaven now led.

One day Neolin drew a cosmographic distinction between Anglo-Americans and Indians, he preached a rejection of dependence on the British through the avoidance of trade, the elaboration of ritual, and the gradual (not the immediate) abandonment of European-made goods. In 1763, Delaware councils agreed to train their boys in the traditional arts of warfare, and to adopt, for seven years, a ritual diet that included the frequent consumption of an herbal emetic, after which they would be purified of the “White people’s ways and Nature.” The ritual burning, drinking, and vomiting of this tea became a regular feature of Ohio Valley nativism in the 1760s. . . . The practice repelled missionaries and other visitors to the Ohio country. Shawnees drank and swore the beverage with such literal enthusiasm that one of their towns, Wakatomica, was known to traders in the late 1760s as “vomit town.” Wakatomics became a center of resistance to Anglo-American expansion and cultural influence. Here is where the Delaware Prophet took refuge, in fact, when British troops threatened to invade his homestead on the Tuscarora River in 1764.

Neolin’s message clearly entailed armed resistance to Anglo-American expansion. As early as 1761, Neolin predicted that “there will be Two or Three Good Talks and then War.” Neolin’s words struck a chord among Indians who suffered from or looked with foreboding upon three major threats to their economies: the
disappearance of game, land encroachments by settlers . . . , and the British abandonment of the customary presentations of gunpowder to the Indians . . . Neolin explained the expropriation of the deer herds as the Great Spirit’s punishment for the Indians’ embrace of Anglo-American vices. He berated Indians for allowing the colonists to establish settlements west of the Appalachians and for the Indians’ humiliating dependence: “Can ye not live without them?” And he threatened continued disaster if they did not both reform and revolt: “If you suffer the English among you, you are dead men. Sickness, smallpox, and their poison will destroy you entirely.” 

The prophet’s message spread among the nations. When the French commander of Fort Chartres (Illinois) learned of the prophet late in 1763, he wrote that Neolin “has had no difficulty in convincing all his own people, and in turn all red men, that God had appeared to him.” Commandant Néron de Villiers was “perfectly convinced that God had appeared to him.” In 1764, the Wyandots of the northeast and the Shawnee and Delaware, Sandusky, militiamen who associated closely with the Shawnees and Delawares, and the inhabitants of Sandusky declared that they had no fear of English and Wyandot warriors. Of the English they claimed that one Indian was “as good as a thousand of ours.” The prophet’s message spread among the Miami, Menewa, Otsalians, Chipewa, and beyond. 

In 1765, smallpox—deliberately disseminated in hospital blankets by Fort Pitt’s British officers—broke out among the Ohio peoples, and when British columns marched within striking distance of Indian towns, the military unity of the Indians temporarily collapsed and the war ended. But neither prophet nor nativist nor the idea of unity collapsed with it. Prophets and diplomats grew more active . . . . Paradoxically, it was the . . . divisions that permitted the survival of the nativist movement for unity. Nationalism depended upon its Indian opponents. It extended the life of the movement. Nativists could attribute the failure of Native American arms not to British numbers, technology, or organization, but to the improper behavior of the accommodating Indians. As long as nativists faced serious opposition within their own communities, they could explain Indian defeat as the consequence of other Indians’ mistakes . . . .

With every twenty-eighth March, Delaware attending to the Moravian Brethren and with others attending to the Niantic of Western Pennsylvania, a new spirit of national unity and self-sacrifice spread among the Delawares. The Indian clearly wanted that to worship in the Christian manner was to violate the cosmic order. Another Indian, claiming to be a literate ex-Christian, told his townsperson “that he has read the Bible from beginning to end and that it is not

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written in it that the Indians should live like white people, or that they should change their lives.” The nativists of Kuskuski never threatened the mission with violence, but they worried at its success and sought to convince the Christian converts to return to the native fold. One nativistic “new preacher” used images of Anglo-American society as the symbols of danger to Indians, declaring that the Moravians sought to have the Indians “transported as slaves, where they would be harnessed to the plough, and whipped to work.”

The nativist conviction that Indians were one people under God, at least equal to but quite different from Anglo-Americans, had serious diplomatic consequences. It certainly provided a measure of unity during Pontiac’s War, and it continued to influence Indians even beyond their defeat in that struggle. For militants who sought to oppose Anglo-American expansion with armed resistance, it provided justification in their struggles against leaders who cooperated with the British. It also gave an opportunity, through cooperation with the militants of other Indian peoples, to nullify the authority of leading advocates of accommodation. The popularity of the doctrine meant that dissenters from one village or people could find a ready home among the nativists of another.

**Further Reading**


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**Chapter 14**

**Colonial America at Mid-Century**

By the middle of the eighteenth century, with France officially out of North America from 1763, new possibilities loomed for England’s colonies. Americans of European descent saw the rich interior opening before them, presenting an opportunity that dispossessed Indians had already taken up. Settlers assumed a new style of life and comfort and saw themselves assuming a more prominent role in international commerce. On the British side leaders also looked for fuller participation by Americans; in particular they wanted the colonists to pay their share of the costs of empire. The royal government’s Proclamation of 1763, forbidding settlement in the lands beyond the mountains until a government had been designed for that mixed and turbulent region, was an ominous sign that the interests of both sides might not always be identical.

Colonial styles of life achieved new standards. Among the wealthy, imported fine furniture and china dishes found places in newly elegant homes. Whereas even the most successful seventeenth-century colonist had lived in a structure that was basically a large farmhouse, eighteenth-century elite homes began to be built around a central hall flanked by large rooms. The new house plan provided a setting for entertaining on a grand scale; at the same time it fostered a new emphasis on privacy in family life. Formerly guests walked through the front door directly into the living space; now family activities were hidden away and only selected individuals were admitted to it. Similar shifts occurred at all levels of society, as prices of imported English goods fell after 1740 and the volume of imports went up. Most families replaced wooden tables with pottery, and added chairs to their homes. Literacy grew as education was more widely available.

Many Americans, even those from other parts of Europe, were beginning to think of themselves as English in various new ways. Not only did they increasingly use products from across the Atlantic in their daily lives, but their newspapers and reprinted articles from English newspapers and the sons of wealthy planters went to England for their educations. Travel and contact with the thirteen colonies, on the other hand, accentuated notions of differences among the colonial regions. Few would have predicted that they would irrevocably throw in their lots together a little over a decade after the end of the French and Indian War; fewer still would have foreseen that they could form a national government that would actually forge a single American nation. The failure of delegates to consider seriously Benjamin