

The Religious Experience of an American Indian

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Eranos Jahrbuch, vol. 18, pp. 249-290, 1950

1. Introduction

Although the religions of the American Indians have now been the object of investigation for almost two generations, very little attention has ever been paid to what must, in many ways, be regarded as the core of every religion, namely the religious experience itself. The reasons for this apparent neglect are, of course, quite understandable. How, indeed, was an authentic account of this experience to be obtained by an outsider? Clearly only an Indian, only a highly articulate Indian, and then only an Indian with a very particular type of temperament and mentality could describe it. Moreover such an account would only possess full value and significance when seen in the larger context of a man's whole life. Given in isolation, too much was left out to make it the concrete and complete record absolutely imperative for an examination of so subjective and intricate an experience as that involved here. For this reason, namely, the absence of such a record, the many excellent accounts of fasting-experience which have been published are only of secondary [250] importance, valuable as they are for the light they throw on the formalized content of this experience.

It is thus a life history that is essential if the religious experience of an American Indian, of any individual, is to be properly and fully understood and if it is to acquire its true perspective. But few persons in any culture, it goes without saying, are endowed with the gift of composing an autobiography. In aboriginal communities their number is unquestionably much smaller than in our own. But not only that. There, the conditions even for those who possess the necessary gifts, militate strongly against such gifts being exercised. No person is likely to compose an autobiography unless he has some assurance that an audience exists willing to listen to it. Such an audience rarely exists among aboriginal peoples when their culture is fully functioning.

It is consequently no accident that autobiographies of Indians were not obtained until the Indian culture had broken down. The first substantial one was obtained by myself¹. Since then a large number of them have appeared, the last one by A. H. Leighton and D. C. Leighton².

Until the appearance of the monograph by the Leightons none of these autobiographies were accompanied by analyses of the individuals involved. Unfortunately the Leightons were not specifically examining the religious experience of the Indian they were describing as such, nor was the Indian himself for that matter very articulate about this experience. At least he did not give that detail which, I feel, is absolutely required for an analysis of the problem with which I am specifically concerned here. Let me add here, that much [251] more is necessary for such a study than the mere enumeration by an individual of

the experience he has had. Ideally speaking, what one wants is not only such a description in the greatest and most circumstantial detail possible, but, likewise, an objective evaluation of one's life and more particularly, of the conditions under which the experience has taken place. Only then the analysis and interpretation of the investigator should begin.

As I have indicated above, it is only when a culture is breaking down, that is, only when crises, cultural and personal, are present that, generally speaking, an individual is prone to compose an autobiography and become sufficiently objective to examine the presuppositions, particularly the religious presuppositions, on which his culture has been built. It is only at such times that real fundamental questions are likely to be asked by him and that disturbing doubts and fears arise. For that reason it is generally at such times that we catch a real glimpse into the nature of a personal religious experience and see it in all its multiform interconnecting aspects and varieties.

It is with the religious experience of a particular Indian, a Winnebago named John Rave, at just such a period of personal crisis, that I shall deal here. Many of the different types of information necessary for a fruitful examination of such an experience are fortunately present here. Not all, unfortunately, nor ever in the detail I would have preferred. Let me stress what these are: authentic and adequate statements, in the original, from the individual whose experience is being described; adequate information about him and his experience from other members of his tribe, adequate personal acquaintance of the outside investigator with the man himself and with his culture. However, before we can [252] profitably turn our attention to John Rave himself a few words about the state of the Winnebago culture of his time are necessary.

The Winnebago have been in contact with European civilization since the second quarter of the seventeenth century. Like every other American Indian culture they met the threats to their way of life which this contact presented in a number of different ways: either rejecting it in toto; compromising with it; or accepting it in toto. The vast majority in any tribe belonged, as always, to the second group. One of the consequences of this division of the tribe into factions disagreeing, often violently, upon so fundamental and vital an issue as to how the tribe was to survive as a distinct cultural entity, was, of course, a tremendous increase in personal frustrations. Cultural and personal demoralization in all its many aspects soon set in. This demoralization was markedly intensified when, from the middle of the eighteenth century on, white settlers spread in ever-increasing numbers throughout the area inhabited by the Winnebago. By the middle of the nineteenth century what remained of the tribe had been forced into a restricted area in Wisconsin. In the early sixties of the nineteenth century one half of the tribe was forcibly removed to eastern Nebraska, that is, to surroundings completely different from those to which they had always been connected and with which all their traditions had been interwoven.

Winnebago culture had, by that time, completely lost its economic basis, and its political structure, particularly its clan organisation, was moribund. However, the ideological structures, the religion, the rituals, the mythology, the multiple customs and beliefs, which had been reared upon them and in connection with them, these all functioned fully and [253] naturally. Men still sought visionary experiences, and all the numerous ceremonies and rituals still flourished vigorously. In fact it can be said that these ideological superstructures functioned redundantly, that a hypertrophy of religious rituals and visionary experiences existed. Yet since, after all, for the Winnebago, for all other Indians,

indeed for all aboriginal peoples, religion was in so large a degree a validation of reality, there were some who were bound to ask themselves what reality, what way of life, the visionary experiences and the other practises of the old Winnebago religion to which they were so tenaciously adhering, were supposed to validate. Obviously not the drab, wretched and impoverished existence the Winnebago were being compelled by circumstances to lead between, let us say, 1860 to 1890. Thus it became increasingly difficult for essentially religious natures, for individuals who were not content to be mere formalists, to establish a satisfactory relationship between themselves and their deities. Yet it goes without saying that these were the ones who most needed the contact with a deity which was normally obtained in a visionary experience and all this implied if they were to save themselves from inward psychical disintegration and attain some measure of inward security.

2. John Rave's Early Life

Now it was in the sixties of the nineteenth century that John Rave was born in Wisconsin. When I first met him, in 1910, he was so engrossed and wrapped up in the new religion, that is, the Peyote Religion which he had brought back with him from Oklahoma and which he had completely [254] reinterpreted and remodelled, that it was very difficult to extract from him any connected and coherent picture of his early life. He was too little of an exhibitionist, too inherently modest, to compose anything in the nature of an autobiography. However certain facts about his early life emerged clearly. He had, for instance, not succeeded in obtaining a visionary experience in his childhood although he had sought it, and he had never become a member of the most important ritual society, the Medicine Rite. In short, he had failed to make any satisfactory adjustment to those aspects of Winnebago culture which demanded, ideally speaking, full acceptance of the religious conceptions of the old Winnebago way of life. Yet other aspects of that way of life he apparently had had no difficulty in accepting. His father had been one of the outstanding members of the community, the chief³ of the bear clan, the second in importance of all the Winnebago clans. Rave himself was unusually well-versed in everything that pertained to the old political and ceremonial structure of the tribe, more particularly to that of his own clan. The information he gave me and the texts⁴ he dictated to me prove clearly that he must have accepted much of the older culture.

Why, despite of all this, we must now ask, did he not obtain the proper visionary experience in his childhood? That he had been expected to do so we know from his own statements. He described the circumstances to me briefly. He and two other children were, as custom demanded, taken at dark to a comparatively isolated place, there to begin their fast and to wait for some deity to manifest himself to [255] them. But he and those with him were thoroughly frightened, so he said, at being left alone and to forget their fears they played with each other and laughed all night. When dawn was about to break Rave suddenly realized that the elders in charge of their fasting would soon come to inquire about their success. He knew that they would have to indicate, in some fashion, that they had at least made some attempt to appeal to the deities. Now it was the custom when seeing visionary experiences for the faces of the suppliants to be blackened with charcoal and for the appeal to the deities to be made with outstretched hands and weeping. The streaks made by their tears on the childrens' charcoal-blackened faces was then the clearest evidence of the intensity of their appeals and prayers. But Rave and his youthful companions had not wept, so to protect themselves from being taken sharply to task and

scolded, they took some saliva and ran it over their faces!

Assuredly this is not the complete story nor even a substantial part of it. But it brings out two facts that are very important for an understanding of Rave's psychology; his marked susceptibility to fears and his unwillingness to pretend that he had experienced something when he had not. Young fasters were given the most circumstantial details as to what they were to expect during their puberty fasts, so that it was really a simple matter to obtain a satisfactory "experience" and quite a number of Winnebago children brought back to their elders what they knew these elders wanted them to bring back. Ideally a faster and suppliant was expected to have an inward awareness of the presence of a deity and to put himself into a condition approximating to religious ecstasy. However the elders of the tribe had no illusions about the rarity of religious ecstasy [256] and were quite content if the young faster-suppliants followed the instructions and information given to them. Indeed an individual who insisted too strongly upon a true inward awareness of the presence of a deity as the *conditio sine qua non*, often presented a considerable problem to them.

My own surmise would be that it was not simply recalcitrance on young Rave's part, no mere negativeness which brought his puberty-fasting to an end but, rather, his insistence upon an inward awareness of the presence of a deity which did not come to him. All his life, we shall see, he was to seek for just such an awareness and he was to attain it when he ate the peyote. Of his life, apart from this brief description of his unsuccessful fasting, he told me only a few unimportant snatches. But some facts can be gleaned from the account he gave of his conversion to the peyote religion which I am discussing in this paper and from two accounts given by other members of the tribe, that of Oliver Lamere and that of John Baptiste.

Lamere had joined the peyote cult about 1908. He possessed some historical sense and knew a good deal about Rave, because he was married to Rave's niece. I shall quote only part of this account:

"John Rave belongs to the Bear clan... He and his ancestors used to be in charge of the special lodge to which all malefactors were brought for punishment.

Although he belonged to this highly respected family, Rave was a wicked, man. He participated in all the Winnebago ceremonies, the Medicine Rite alone excepted. Up to 1901 he was a heavy drinker. In that year⁵ he went to Oklahoma and while there ate the peyote. He had been married many times... [257]

There was not much religion connected with it in the beginning and the only reason people drank it, i. e. the peyote infusion, was because of the peculiar effects it had upon them. Nevertheless these peyote people preached good things and gradually lost all desire for intoxicating drinks or for participating in the old Winnebago ceremonies. Then Rave began to do away with the old Indian customs. About four years ago ... the Bible was introduced by A. H.⁶"

Baptiste's account adds some more details. It runs as follows:

"Among the Winnebago there is a man named Little Redbird (i. e. John Rave). When he reached middle age he began to travel around the world and to learn different languages. He used to travel inland (i. e. the United States) too. Once he joined a circus and crossed the ocean. He felt so ill while crossing that he wanted to die. Suddenly a wind came up and he got very frightened. He did not know what to do. Then he prayed to Earthmaker... When he came back to his own people he told them that on the other side of the ocean the Thunderbirds did not thunder. All they did was to drizzle. There was no lightning either. As he crossed the ocean on his return it thundered and lightened.

When he came back home he was very glad to see his relatives and he offered tobacco in thanksgiving.

Shortly after his return he began to travel again and he visited a tribe of Indians who were eating peyote. Now it was his custom to try everything whenever he visited people. So he ate this medicine. He did not realize what he was doing when he took it but he ate it nevertheless. After he had partaken of it he suddenly began to think about the manner of life he was leading and he felt that it was wrong. He remembered all the evil things that he had done. Then he prayed to God. Suddenly it occurred to him, 'Perhaps I am the only one doing this'. But when he looked around and watched the others, he saw that they were all praying in this manner⁷. [258]

Not long after that he came home, taking with him some of the medicine (peyote). He knew it was holy. At home he offered tobacco to it and kept on eating it. Soon it cured him of a disease which he had. Then he tried to induce some other Winnebago to eat it but they refused. But, after a while, a few tried it and the peyote-eating began to spread. All the old customs which they had been accustomed to observe were abandoned. They gave up the Medicine Rite and all the ceremonies connected with the clans. For that reason, consequently, the conservative people hated the peyote-eaters, even the brothers and sisters of the peyote people hated them for they had abandoned matters that had always been considered holy."

To complete the picture let me now add the brief statement Rave himself makes, in retrospect, about these years. It relates exclusively to his psychological state⁸.

"It is now twenty-three years since I first ate peyote and I am still doing it. Before that time my heart was filled with murderous thoughts. I wanted to kill my brother and my sister. It seemed to me that my heart would not feel good until I killed one of them. All my thoughts were fixed on the warpath. This is all I thought of.

Today I know that I was in that condition because some evil spirit possessed me. I was suffering from a disease. I even desired to kill myself. I did not care to live. This feeling, too, was caused by this evil spirit living within me.

Then I ate this medicine (peyote) and everything changed. The brother and sister whom I wanted to kill, to them I now became deeply attached. I wanted them to live. This, the medicine had accomplished for me."

From the above narrative two facts seem to emerge clearly, first the nature of his early religion and his attitude to the old Winnebago background and, secondly, the nature of the life he led before he ate the peyote. It seems clear that until middle age, Rave, as we have already pointed out, was a reasonably devout believer in certain aspects of the old Winnebago way of life, making offerings of tobacco to the spirits, etc. In view of his later hatred of tobacco because of its old associations, it is interesting to point out that Baptiste represents Rave as offering tobacco to the peyote in the early days of its worship. Apparently, then, the old religious-ritualistic implications of tobacco were not repudiated by Rave until some time after his conversion.

All this makes it so much the more necessary to stress the facts of his inability to obtain the customary visionary experience in childhood.

With regard to the second fact, the marked deterioration of his character, about this there can be little question. The external side of that demoralization, his murder phantasies, his fears, his restlessness, his wandering, these have been vividly depicted by Lamere, Baptiste and by Rave himself. However the internal side of his behaviour is not so easily detected. What was it that was driving him to the psychical disintegration, to the murder phantasies he describes? And thus we are brought directly to the narrative concerning his

conversion, to the peyote religion which he dictated to me in 1911. I shall divide this narrative into three parts and then discuss each part. The first part deals with the visions he had immediately after eating peyote, the second with its sacred nature and curative power and the third consists of a series of exhortations extolling its virtues.

3. Rave's Narrative: Part I

I was in Oklahoma with the Peyote-eaters during 1893-1894.

In the middle of the night⁹ we were to eat peyote. Since the other people present ate it I did too. Now it was just during the middle of the night that [259] I got frightened, for a living object seemed to have entered me. Then I thought to myself, 'why did I do this? I should never have done it, for now at the very beginning (of my visit) I have injured myself. I should not have done it! I am certain that it will injure me!' Surely the best thing I can do will be to vomit it up. 'Yes, exactly', (so I thought to myself) 'now you have really done something to yourself! You have been going around trying everything and now you have finally done something that has really harmed you'."

"But what is it?", It seems to be an object that is alive and moving around in my stomach.

If only some of my own people were here! That would be better. Now no one will know what happened to me. I have killed myself!

Just then the object within me seemed about ready to come out. Indeed it seemed just about out, so I put my hand (in my throat) to feel it but it slipped right back again.

O my, I should never have done this (the eating of peyote), never have started at all! Never again will I do it! Now I am most certainly going to die!

And thus we continued until it became day. Then we laughed. Before, I had not been able to laugh.

On the following night preparations were again made to eat peyote. Then I thought to myself, "Last night I almost injured myself". Yet when those (gathered around) said, "Let us do it again", then I answered, "Good, I'll try it too!" So there we all ate seven peyote apiece.

Suddenly I saw a large snake. I was very much frightened. Then another snake (appeared) and came crawling over me. "O my! Where are these coming from?" Then I felt something behind me and I looked around and I saw a snake about to swallow me completely. It had legs and arms and a long tail and the end of its tail was like a spear.

"O my, O my! Now I am surely going to die", I thought.

Then I looked around again and there in a different place, I saw a man with horns and long claws and with a spear in his hand. He jumped toward me so I threw myself on the ground. He missed me. Then I looked back at him and he appeared to be going back. Yet it seemed to me nevertheless that he was directing his spear at me. Again I threw myself on the ground and again he missed me. Yet there seemed to be no possible escape for me.

Then, suddenly¹⁰ the thought ran through me "Perhaps - yes,¹¹ it is this peyote that is doing this to me?" [261]

"Help me, o medicine, help me! It is you who are doing this! You are holy. It is not these fear-inspiring visions that are causing this!"

"I should have known that you were doing this! Help me!"

"Then my suffering stopped."

"As long as the earth shall last, so long will I make use of you¹²."

This (i. e. these sufferings and the release from them) had lasted a night and a day. For one whole night I had not slept at all.

Then we all breakfasted. When we were through it was I who said, "Let us eat peyote again tonight".

That evening I ate eight peyote.

In the middle of the night I saw God. To God, living above, our father, to him I prayed. "Have mercy upon me! Give me knowledge that I may not say or do evil things. Do thou, O Son of God, help me too.

"This religion let me know! Help me, O grandfather, help me! Let me know this religion."

Thus I spoke and sat very quiet.

Soon I beheld the morning star and it was good to look upon. The light was good to look upon. Indeed, as the light appeared, it seemed to me that nothing would be invisible to me. I seemed to see everything clearly.

Then I thought of my home (in Nebraska). No sooner had I done so then, looking behind me, I saw the house in which I lived among the Winnebago, quite close to me. There, at the window, I saw my children playing.

Soon I saw a man making his way to the house carrying a jug of whiskey. He gave my people something to drink. Then he who had brought the whiskey got drunk and began annoying my family. Finally he ran away.

"So that is what they are doing", I thought to myself.

Then I saw my wife come out and stand outside the door of the house wearing a red blanket. She was thinking of going to the Flagpole's and was wondering which of the two roads she should take. "If I take this road I am likely to meet some people (who might annoy me) but if I take the other road I am not likely to meet anyone."

"Indeed, it is good. They are all well - my brother, my sister, my father, my mother. I felt very good indeed.

"O medicine, grandfather, most assuredly you are holy. All that is connected with you, that I would like to know and that I would like to understand! [262]

"Help me! I give myself up to you completely!"

For three days and three nights I had not slept.

Throughout all the years that I had lived on earth, I now realized that I had never known anything holy. Now, for the first time, I knew something holy.

"O, would that some of the other Winnebago might also learn about it!"

4. Commentary on Part I

In trying to determine the meaning of the document we have before us we must, of course, bear in mind that it could not have been composed in one piece. Rave, in short, did not put into a coherent whole immediately the experiences he had on these first dreadful nights, but is speaking of them in retrospect and after many years had elapsed and the account of his conversion had taken on a definite pattern, and had become something in the nature of a "creed" for all members of the peyote religion and ritual. We cannot be absolutely certain, consequently, that the succession of the visions themselves, for that matter, represents what actually took place. But the precise form and succession of the visions is not really of any great consequence here. The important matter is that he had hallucinatory visions and that they appeared in a specific order in time and in intensification.

In the long description given by S. B. of the visions he had after eating peyote, we find these same phenomena illustrated, namely a specific type of succession and intensification¹⁴.

But before discussing the visions as such, let us turn to the setting in which they appear. Rave is among strangers [263] and is participating in a rite quite alien to Winnebago rites and beliefs, and it is the middle of the night. In addition, he is eating peyote for a variety of reasons; first, to be civil and, secondly, because, for reasons which will shortly be clear to us, he liked to experiment everything must have been strange and new to him here except the fact that the ceremony was taking place in the middle of the night. However the only Winnebago ceremony which can be said to have begun in the middle of the night was the puberty-fasting rite. Now for Rave, we know, this rite had multiple associations, none of them pleasant. Just as during his puberty-fast so here once again, he is frightened.

At his puberty-fasting he was frightened at being alone, and, probably, also, at what those in charge of his fasting had told him. For a person of his temperament and makeup the mere expectation of establishing any type of contact with the spirit-deities must have held elements of terror in it¹⁵.

However, whether what he was told was terrifying or not, he was at least given a traditional pattern to expect.

Here at this, his first participation in the peyote religion, however, he had no such traditional pattern. Thus he was delivered over to his innate fears and whatever patterns rose up from his unconscious memories.

His first sensation is that a living object has entered him. But what is this object? This is a question he puts to himself as soon as his initial fears have abated, only to repeat [264] what he has already said, namely that this object is alive and is moving about in his body. There can be little question but that he is describing here, fairly accurately, the physiological effects of the peyote as it manifested itself to him. That these physiological effects are different in different individuals we know. Yet there appears to be considerable agreement upon two points among those Winnebago who described these physiological effects; first, that something had "entered" them and, secondly, that this object inside them was strangling¹⁶ them.

Rave in his description, stresses not only the fact that the object inside him was choking him, but that it was trying to come out. We may possibly be dealing here also with the physiological effect of the peyote.

Rave is thus experiencing something entirely new here. It is, therefore, quite illuminating and significant to see how quickly he has analyzed and coordinated this new material. I think this must have been done immediately after he had this first experience, i. e. after the first night. I am strongly of the opinion that Part I must have constituted a unit by itself at first which was subsequently, and then only secondarily, and certainly much later, brought into connection with the visions obtained after the second eating of the peyote. All the stylistic considerations favor such an interpretation. In fact the first vision is tacitly abandoned when the peyote is suddenly recognized as the real instigator of the visions.

All this makes Rave's retention and stressing of his first peyote induced experience and the manner in which he coordinated and reinterpreted the events within it the more [265] significant. The general physiological effects of the peyote are, we see, all unified and they are attributed to an object, not as yet identified, that has lodged itself in the body and is causing great physical suffering. Rave speaks of his attempt to vomit it up, then, of the object trying to come out of its own accord, of his attempt to aid it in emerging and of its finally slipping back. It never actually comes out. Nevertheless, in spite of this harrowing experience, as morning comes, everything seems to be forgotten. If he stresses the fact that he could laugh again that is in order to make the contrast between the fears that the night engenders for him and the release which daylight brings all the more marked. This welcoming of the light of day is repeated, in intensified form, later on even after he has had his culminating vision of God. In that first vision he breaks out almost into a paean: "I beheld the morning star and it was good to look upon. The light was good to look upon."

Clearly this object which comes from nowhere, that fastens itself on him so tenaciously, and from which he tries so desperately to release himself, and this darkness-night that is dispelled by the light of day, these must have had a symbolical significance for him. As I see it, in that symbolism the object represents, basically, a concretization of his life-long struggle to maintain psychical equilibrium, to escape complete deterioration. In his demoralized state he offers the most desperate resistance to taking the bitter medicine which will cure him. Here, in this resistance, we find the real meaning of his repeated and frantic outcries that he has injured himself, that he has killed himself. It is the struggle of

his evil self against the new life that is to bring him psychical unity and health; it is this drama that he is unconsciously portraying. That is why it was so easy for him [266] and his followers, all of them completely demoralized and disoriented individuals, to clothe the physiological effects of the peyote so easily in psychological-moralistic and Christian terms and to accept the peyote either as something in the nature of a divinity or as something through which alone divinity could manifest himself. The state of euphoria and release from tensions which the peyote frequently brought about was accordingly interpreted as willingness to give up one's evil ways, as a sign of true repentance. "If a person is truly repentant", so one of the peyote members said, "even if he is eating peyote for the first time, he will not suffer, but if he is bullheaded ... he is likely to suffer a good deal¹⁷." Another one states that although he wished to give up his old ways, he could not get himself to do so and this unwillingness caused the peyote he was eating to strangle him¹⁸.

Only in this light can Rave's interpretation of his first peyote-induced experience be fully understood. That this interpretation came much later than his organization of the sensations he felt, of this there can be little doubt. This implies that the emphasis upon his acute sufferings represents, in part, a later addition. And this brings up the further question of whether, originally, Rave actually postulated the presence of an object in him. If we could eliminate this object as part of the contents of his first experience, then the sensations he describes would be more in consonance with the frequent initial physiological effects of the peyote. The effects of the peyote upon Rave could then be arranged in the following order: first, the actual sensation felt, with probably some vague hallucinatory images; secondly, the [267] vision of snakes and of a figure that is evidently a merging of the old Winnebago Waterspirit and the Christian devil and, thirdly, the vision of God.

But to return to the symbolism of darkness and light. This contrast is an old one in Winnebago religion and religious rituals. There, light had developed the secondary meaning of life, and darkness, by implication, that of death. For Rave, too, we have seen, darkness had always had the most sinister implications, in his childhood, when crossing the ocean and here in Oklahoma as he sat lonely among strangers, participating in an alien ceremony. The light of daylight had saved him in his childhood when he was fasting and it saves him after he has eaten his first peyote. It serves as the harbinger of the new life and of happiness after he has had his vision of God.

Let us now proceed to the effects of the peyote upon Rave during the second night. Why they should have been so different from those of the first night it is difficult to say.

That the first true vision he has is that of a snake is very significant. He had good reason to be thoroughly frightened, for to have a vision of a snake in the old puberty-fasts, in fact at any ritual-fast, meant death. It is therefore quite understandable that he should exclaim in fear, "Now I am going to die!" However this snake is not like the ordinary one that appeared to Winnebago in their visions. This snake is not a divine being. It is a monster-snake and has come to attack and devour Rave. As the latter describes it, it has the traits of two famous mythical animals, first, of the enormous snakes whom the Twins, in the well known Winnebago myth encounter and overcome and, secondly, of the man-devouring sea-monster who swallows Hare as told in the Hare Cycle. One new element appears here, name[268]ly, the legs, arms and the long tail with a spear at the end of it. This, I feel, can only be a distorted description of a Winnebago waterspirit. Now to have combined snake and waterspirit into one being, particularly where snake means so many things,

indicates the intensity with which he sensed that death was all around him.

The image of the "snake" disappears and its place is taken by that of the devil who throws his spear at him. What is important to remember here is the contrast in the behaviour of the snake and the devil toward Rave. While the snake threatens Rave he is never represented as actually attacking him. Rave does not run away in order to save himself. But the devil attacks and Rave has to dodge his spear and to throw himself to the ground. The struggle between the two, then, increases in intensity. Rave for a time protects himself successfully but he realizes that ultimately there is no escape for him. The phrase he uses to describe his desperate situation is strangely reminiscent of that used by the Twins¹⁹ when they are being pursued by Rushewe at the direction of Earthmaker. Then when he has resigned himself to death, he is saved.

Now this situation, that of being saved when all seems lost is an old Winnebago religious-literary cliché. The saviour in such myths is always some spirit-deity. Here in Rave's narrative we also have a "saviour" but he is of a very special type. Rave is saved from destruction by his sudden recognition - a recognition that comes in a flash - that his suffering is being caused by the peyote. It is the recognition of this fact, that constitutes Rave's conversion as the prayer which immediately follows, clearly indicates.

On the face of it, it is extremely difficult to believe that [269] his conversion could possibly have taken place in this fashion. Something must have taken place within him at that particular moment that he has omitted. The most minute examination of the meaning and implications of the text, beginning with the vision of the devil to the end of Part I, and all supplementary material procurable are, consequently, necessary in any attempt to try to understand what it must have been which induced him to ponder about the cause for his sufferings and to have this sudden revelation.

Rave, of course, knew very well what a vision was and he undoubtedly must have been told by some of the peyote people he was visiting that eating the peyote produced visions. Actually, therefore, the revelation he receives is not at all in answer to his inward question "who is doing this to me?". The revelation consists in his sudden illumination that the peyote is holy. This illumination comes after a long search. All his life had been an attempt to establish contact with the supernatural, with the holy, as he clearly says at the end of Part I. Now he has found it. The question we must now ask, accordingly, why did he find it just then? Such questions are not easy to answer. But let us try.

I shall begin with the vision of the snakes. That, of all the spirit-deities, just these should have appeared to him, makes us wonder whether they had not appeared to him before, appeared to him in his crucial puberty-fast. That, of course, would have brought his fast to an abrupt termination. Had he had such an ill-omened vision then, Rave, I feel quite certain, would never have spoken about it again. I am throwing this out simply as a suggestion. If true, it would help to explain not only the vision of the snake but the peculiarities they possessed and the fact that one of [270] them took on the form of that other death-dealing Winnebago deity, the waterspirit. Rave's snake crawls over him and is ready to swallow him whole; one of the traits of the waterspirit was, that he destroyed man by submerging him in water and devouring him.

However, we do not need any hypothesis of an earlier snake-vision to realize that death here is in active pursuit. After all, we have the progression: strangling object, man-

swallowing "snake", spear-throwing devil. Further on in his narrative, Rave states that he wished to die, that he even contemplated suicide. Yet despite this, here he is terrified at the prospect of death. To understand this ambivalence we must turn to his anguished cry, "Help me, O medicine, help me!" Help him from what? one asks. Help him from a death that meant complete annihilation. Such a type of death all Winnebago dreaded. It is interesting to know that this is the accusation which the old conservative Winnebago hurled against the peyote-people. In one of the few statements that I was able to obtain from the old conservative Winnebago about the peyote-people, it was just this fact, namely annihilation after death, that was stressed²⁰.

But Rave here is not thinking only of physical extermination. He is thinking of psychical extermination, thinking of that in fact primarily. The snake and waterspirit are, for him, the agents which have brought about the deterioration of his personality. They are the symbols of his psychical [271] disunity. When, therefore, he is terrified by them, this terror is something quite distinct from that which a Winnebago would feel if a snake, or what the Winnebago termed an evil waterspirit, appeared to him in a vision-quest. Undoubtedly the vision of the snake accentuated Rave's fears. But no more. That the devil should appear after the snakewaterspirit is clear. He was the great punisher, the great exterminator who is summoned when all other attempts to destroy a victim have failed.

We have the right to assume from Rave's wording and silence about any overt attack upon him by the snake-waterspirit that he has succeeded in warding them off. That much psychical strength and unity he still possessed. From this success he has gained the courage to meet the new and far more dangerous threat represented by the devil. But courage is not enough; willingness to fight is not enough. To achieve the new psychical integration he is so desperately seeking, he must abandon his old way of life and all its implications. He must realize that his sufferings have a specific significance, that they do not simply represent extreme physical discomfort. They are not injuring him, on the contrary, they represent something positive. To put it in the language subsequently developed, they are the evils within a man that are seeking to leave him. O. L. one of the most consistent members of the peyote-rite claimed that he threw up a bull-dog before he could become converted, the bull-dog being the concrete symbol for his greatest vice, his stubbornness.

Thus we have one more element to aid us in trying to understand why Rave is so concerned with finding out what is causing his sufferings. He wishes to be clear about one thing in particular, namely, that his visions are not produ[272]cing this suffering. To accept that would be tantamount to admitting that the old Winnebago visions were efficacious. But these latter had never functioned for him or, if they had, they had done so only in a life-destroying fashion.

Yet though this element in the old Winnebago religion had never meant anything to him, other elements in that culture had meant very much, at least formally. Probably before coming to Oklahoma and eating peyote, he would not have denied that other Winnebago had received power from the spirit deities in their puberty vision quest. When, consequently, he arrives at the conclusion that, as he says, "it is not these fear-inspiring visions that are causing this (his sufferings)", he is then in fact, without his realizing it at the time, renouncing the whole old Winnebago religion in all its ramifications. It had failed him in his hour of need.

But here another question obtrudes itself. What made him feel that the peyote would help him? The only satisfactory answer would seem to be that, suddenly, for the first time in his life, he has had an ecstatic experience and been overwhelmed by all those sensations and affects that make up what we call holy. The ecstatic experience has made him one with himself, the inward knowledge of the holy has enlarged and reintegrated him. Both together have enabled him to substitute love and humility for hatred and arrogance. That this should have been ascribed to the peyote is an historical accident. In short, Rave does not know that the peyote is going to help him. All he knows is that the peyote was being worshipped when he happened to have his first experience of the holy.

It is very interesting to see how, at the very moment that he has renounced Winnebago culture, he falls back in his [273] new prayer upon the old ritualistic terminology which he knew so well. Yet the prayer itself, apart from the last sentence, is a purely individual one, devised by Rave for his own needs. Take the phrase "have pity upon me", for instance. He has substituted for it the words, "Help me." No spirit-deity had to be told he was holy. Nor should there ever have been any doubt in the suppliant's mind of who was bestowing "blessings" upon him. What this prayer then actually means is this: "through you, O peyote, I have at last felt and recognized a holy thing, a knowledge which I should have obtained many years ago."

Perhaps a few words are in place here about the phrase that was to mean so much and to be so frequently employed by subsequent converts, namely: "Then my sufferings stopped." Rave's sufferings were, we know, of a double nature, the external ones caused by the effect of the peyote and the internal ones connected with his psychical disunity. However there may also be an echo of the old fasting experiences in his stressing of suffering, for there, too, a person had to suffer and to be willing to suffer in order to gain the "blessings" of the spirits. Like Rave's sufferings they, likewise, stopped when the "blessings" had been obtained.

Stylistically, and this is important in the study of a document like the one before us, the phrase "my sufferings stopped", represents a full stop. It is clearly an oversight on Rave's part that the sentence beginning with "As long as etc." follows it. We may then say that we have three stops connected with Part I; one after each experience, each having a different function and different implications. Let me enumerate them:

"Then we laughed. Before I had been unable to laugh." (End of first night.) [274]

"Then my sufferings stopped." (End of the second night.)

"I sat very quiet." (End of third night.)

We are now prepared to deal with the third vision, that of God.

Rave indicates the completeness of the change that has come over him when he says, preliminary to this vision, "It was I who said, let us eat peyote again". On the previous occasions it will be remembered, this eating of the peyote had to be suggested to him.

Formally and in content, the vision he has on the third night is a strange and subtle compound of old Winnebago and Christian beliefs. It is an old Winnebago belief that the spirit-deity appears during the middle of the night. It is not Winnebago, however, to say "I saw God". It should have been, "God saw me". The sentence that then follows is traditional old Winnebago phraseology - thus one addressed Earthmaker - except for one

important and fundamental point, the word employed for "pray". In the old religion the word used meant, "Here I stand in a pitiable condition".

Here the word used means "I mention your name". The next sentence is, of course, Christian but the phrase "to have mercy upon" is but a slight variation, i. e. in the original Winnebago, of the old "to have pity upon". The two sentences following that are purely Christian. The second paragraph with the exception of the word "help" is traditional Winnebago.

The word used for "quiet" in the next sentence is revealing. It signifies "to be at rest after turmoil", and it describes admirably the semi-euphoria which Rave had now attained. He was never to suffer again and he was always to remain, in fact, in a mild state of euphoria. [275]

What follows now is truly amazing. Having, at last, attained his long-delayed experience and knowledge of the holy, all of this outside the Winnebago religion, he suddenly relapses into the latter again. It was, for instance, the custom for all ceremonies to stop as soon as the morning-star became visible and a special person stood outside the ceremonial lodge to watch for it. Here we have the same thing except that here Rave himself is watching for it. Not to announce it to those about him, however, let me add, but in order to do something, quite original with himself, to combine the appearance of the morning-star and the light that was now diffused over the sky with an old Winnebago belief specially connected, I believe, only with membership in the Medicine-Rite, although generally known to the whole community. According to this belief, membership in the Medicine-Rite gave a man the gift of foreseeing things and events many days ahead and, likewise, of seeing through space. This latter power could, however, be obtained in other ways as well²¹.

When Rave now says "Nothing would be invisible", this is good old Winnebago doctrine. When, however, he adds, "I seemed to see everything clearly", this is also old Winnebago doctrine but here he is also talking about the inward change which has taken place within him²². But to what use does he put this newly acquired gift? He thinks of his home and his relatives and he describes what he sees in two [276] vividly-drawn pictures, each pointing a moral. The first picture stresses the evil of alcohol and how it leads to disunion and strife. His comment in the next sentence should really have read, "So, that's what I have been doing", for he was a heavy drinker and frequently drunk, before he ate the peyote. The second picture gives us the ideal of a virtuous married woman which, incidentally, his wife very definitely was not. The picture of the wife hesitating as to which road to take and the predicating of two roads, this represents the transference of an incident taken from the myth of the journey of the soul to spirit-land. That there are also secondary Christian implications involved here is very likely. Moreover I suspect that both of these pictures are very late interpolations and that what Rave saw was simply his home and his family.

In the next paragraph we have an expression of the love he feels for his blood relatives. That he mentions his brother and sister first is no accident for it is against them, we have seen, that his murder phantasies had been directed.

A prayer to the peyote now follows which is mentally in the old Winnebago pattern. His reiteration of the phrase, "O, medicine, grandfather, assuredly you are holy", can be taken

in two senses. Either it is simply an expression of his intense gratitude or it represents something in the nature of bewilderment in the presence of the new experience through which he has just passed.

I think it is worth while to compare, in this connection, the bewilderment which is so manifest in S. B.'s description of his conversion. He tells us that, after he had eaten a number of the peyote²³, he was looking at the small peyote which the leader of the ceremony had placed in front of [277] himself. "... I looked and there stood an eagle with outspread wings... The eagle stood looking at me. I looked around thinking that perhaps there was something the matter with my sight... (But) it was really there., I then looked in a different direction and it disappeared. Only the small peyote remained. I looked around at the other people but they all had their heads bowed and were singing. I was very much surprised." - Other visions follow, traditional Winnebago ones, in fact, and which S. B. unquestionably must have recognised as such. Yet he says, "I was very much surprised indeed".

The final sentence of the prayer, "I give myself up completely", constitutes as complete a renunciation of the old Winnebago religion as did the sentence "It is not these fear-inspiring visions that are causing (these sufferings)" In the old Winnebago prayers the formula was "Here, humble and pitiable, I stand". One never surrendered one's person to the spirit-deity to do with as he wished. Yet I doubt very much, whether Rave understood then or at any time of his life the full implications of this Christian doctrine. Later members of the peyote cult did, especially when it became overwhelmed by the Christian beliefs introduced by a partially christianized Indian named Hensley²⁴.

In the next to the last paragraph of this, the first part of Rave's narrative, he recapitulates what it is he has now acquired. Apparently this torn and disoriented soul had to reiterate, again and again, for his own benefit and for the benefit of others, "Come, look, behold, I have at last found and come into the presence of a holy thing". He cannot contain his joy and excitement. It spills over in all directions. It is, therefore, not at all strange that he should end [278] the narrative of his conversion with a fervent prayer that the happiness which he has attained be brought to his fellow Winnebago.

And thus he launches out as a prophet and as the proclaimer of a new faith. How he proved his new faith and how it was disseminated we can best learn from the second and third parts of his story.

5. Rave's Narrative: Part II

"Many years ago I had been sick. It looked as if this illness was going to kill me. I tried all the Winnebago medicine-practitioners and then I tried all the white man's medicines. They were all of no avail. "I am doomed, (I said to myself) I wonder whether I will be alive next year?" Such were the thoughts that came to me.

As soon as I ate the peyote I got over my sickness. After that I was not sick again.

My wife was suffering from the same disease. I told her that if she ate this medicine, it would unquestionably cure her. But she was afraid although she had never seen it before. She knew that I used it but, nevertheless, she was afraid. Her sickness however was

getting worse so, one day, I said to her, "You are sick. It is going to be very difficult (to cure you) but try this medicine anyhow. It will ease your (pains)." Finally she ate some peyote. I told her to eat some, then to wash her face and comb her hair, and then she would get well. I painted her face, took my gourd-rattle and began singing²⁵. After a while I stopped. "Indeed, you are right", she said, "for now, I feel well." Now she is quite well. In fact from the time she ate the peyote to the present day she has been well. Today she is very happy.

A man named Black Waterspirit was having a hemorrhage at about that time, and I wanted him to eat the peyote. "Eat this medicine", I told him, "and then you will soon be cured." Before this time consumptives had never been cured. Now, for the first time, one was cured. Black Waterspirit is living today and he is very well.

Now again. There was a man named Walking-Priest. He was very fond of [279] whiskey; he chewed and he smoked tobacco; he gambled; he was very fond of women. He did everything that was bad. I gave him some of the peyote. He ate it and, soon after, gave up all the evil things he was doing. Actually he was suffering from a very dangerous disease. He had even had murder in his heart. But today he is living a good life. Such is his desire.

Whosoever has any evil thoughts, if he but eats this peyote, he will get rid of them and abandon all his evil ways. This medicine is a cure for everything evil.

Today the Winnebago say that only God is holy. One of the Winnebago told me, "Truly, the life I used to lead was a very evil one. Never again will I lead such a life. This medicine is good and I will always use it."

John Harrison and Squeaking Wings were prominent members of the Medicine-Bite. They thought much of themselves as did all the members of the Medicine-Rite. These two knew everything connected with this Bite. Both of them were gamblers and were rich because they had won very much in gambling. Their parents had acquired great possessions by giving medicine to the people. They were rich and they believed they had a right to be selfish with their possessions.

Then they ate peyote and ever since that time they have been followers of this medicine. These men were actually very ill and now they have been cured of their illness.

If there existed any men who might be taken as examples for the effects of the peyote, it is these two. Even if a man were blind and only heard about (their conversion), he would realize that if any true medicine exists it is this one. It is a cure for all evil.

Before (eating the peyote) I thought I had knowledge but I really had none, it is only now that I have acquired it. In my former life I was like one blind and deaf. My heart ached when I thought of what I had been doing. Never again will I do it. This medicine alone is holy and has made me good and rid me of all evil.

The one whom they call God has given me this (knowledge). I know this positively. [280]

6. Rave's Narrative: Part III

Let them all come here, men and women. Let them bring with them all they desire. Let them bring with them all their diseases. If they come here they will get well. This is all true; it is entirely true.

Bring what devesires you possess along with you. Then come and eat and drink this medicine. This is life: this is the only life. Here you will learn something about yourself, so come!

But even if you are not told anything about yourself, you will nevertheless learn something about yourself. Come with your disease for this medicine will cure it! Whatever you have, come and eat this medicine and then you will obtain true knowledge, once and for all. Learn about this medicine personally, through actual experience. If you just hear about it you are not likely to try it. If you desire true knowledge concerning it, try it yourself. But you will learn of things that you had never known before. In no other way will you ever be happy.

I know that all sorts of excuses will run through your head for not partaking of it. Yet if you wish to learn about something really good you had better try it.

Perhaps you will think to yourself that it will be too difficult for you and this will be your excuse for not trying it. Now why should you behave like that? If you partake of it, even if you feel some uncertainty about it's accomplishing all the good that has been claimed for this medicine, I know you will nevertheless say to yourself, "Well, this life is good enough".

After you have eaten the peyote for the first time it will seem as if a grave had been dug for you and that you are about to die. You will not want to take it again. "It is bad (injurious)" you will say to yourself. You will believe that you are going to die and will wonder what then will happen to you. The coffin will be set before you and there you will see your body. If then you desire to make further inquiries as to where you are going, you will learn something you had not known before, namely, that there are two roads, that one leads to a hole in the ground, that the other extends up above. It is here that you will learn something you had not known before. Of the two roads one is dark and the other is light. You must chose one of these while you are still alive, and you must decide whether you wish to continue in your evil ways or whether you will abandon them.

These then are two roads. The peyote people see both. They claim that only if you weep and repent will you be able to obtain true knowledge. [281]

Do not, as I said before, listen to others talking about this medicine. Try it yourself. This is the only way to find out. No other medicine can accomplish what this one has. If, consequently, you make use of it you will live.

After people have eaten peyote they throw aside all the evil ceremonies they had been accustomed to perform before. Only by eating the peyote will you learn what is truly holy (not through the old ceremonies). That is what I am trying to learn myself²⁶.

7. Commentary on Parts II and III

The second part of the narrative is taken up primarily with accounts of the cures of disease which the peyote effected. As far as Rave was concerned that was enough. But the holiness of the peyote would be immeasurably enhanced if it would do for others what it had done for him. Like so many religious converts and organizers Rave was a practical man and an excellent psychologist. He wished to bring happiness and new life to his demoralized fellow-Winnebago. Although he knew from his own experience that any psychical reintegration would have to come from within, he realized that it was only common sense to bring the new dispensation to his fellow-tribesmen in a form that would not antagonize them and in a form where the effects of the eating of the peyote would be most immediate and most easily discernible. He consequently equated it, whether consciously or unconsciously it would be difficult to decide, with the medicines of which there were very many among the Winnebago.

It is therefore not surprising to see that in this part of his narrative the peyote is really only a medicine that effects [282] cures. Only in the next to the last paragraph does he speak of its being holy.

But if the peyote was a medicine competing with the great medicines²⁷ of the conservative Winnebago, it would have to be accompanied by the same type of ritual observances. And so we see Rave having his wife wash and comb herself and then he himself painting her face and singing to the accompaniment of his gourd-rattle.

Nor can we discount the resemblances between the cures claimed for the peyote and those made for the Stench-earth medicine. It probably is not an accident that the first person Rave mentions as having been cured by the peyote, i. e. apart from himself and his wife, was a consumptive. Compare Rave's description of Black Waterspirit with the beginning of the account of the Stench-Earth medicine. "There once was a man", so it begins, "who had consumption and who knew that he was going to die soon... He decided to go out into the wilderness and die there. He went to the top of a hill and lay down. He noticed many birds of prey hovering around... (they) told him, however, that they had come to cure not to destroy him²⁸."

However it is in the militant opposition of the peyote people to the Stench-Earth medicine and in the nature of their condemnation that we have the best indication of the essential resemblance between the two. For example, in an aside by the Winnebago who described the Stench-Earth medicine and who was a devout peyote-man, we find the following: "The Stench-Earth medicine could undoubtedly cure the sick but it was also used to poison people... These [283] people cured the body but they killed the soul. It would have been much better had they saved their souls. They were really working for the devil. It is from him they got all the bad medicines... The Indians were destroying their own souls, so Earthmaker decided to give them a new medicine (i. e. the peyote)²⁹."

Rave himself makes no mention of any of the resemblances between the things he taught and the old Winnebago cultural heritage. He must certainly have known about them. But he was concerned with helping his fellow-Winnebago in their struggles against outward and inward demoralization, in nothing else. At the beginning, he would unquestionably have had no objection to a retention of old Winnebago customs if that helped in the struggle and the power of the peyote was acknowledged. Later on he seems to have come to the conclusion that the whole Winnebago heritage was an obstacle in their rehabilitation and must therefore be abandoned. But that did not mean for him the

adoption of Christianity or of the white man's ways, as it ultimately did for many of his followers.

But from these general remarks let us now turn to a more specific examination of parts II and III, to see what light they can throw upon Rave's psychology, upon the enlargement of the religious experience which he had attained and upon the development of his doctrine.

He begins, as in Part I, with the theme of doom and approaching death. He does not describe the specific physical illness of either himself or his wife because theirs was fundamentally a disease of the soul. Only in the case of Black- Waterspirit is a physical ailment mentioned by name and there he has probably been influenced by the descrip[284]tion of the origin of the Stench-Earth medicine. The diseases which the peyote cured were not physical, even though some of them had physical manifestations. What they were he enumerates for the three converts specifically mentioned: Whiskey-drinking, smoking, gambling, conceit, selfishness, avariciousness and, finally, evil thoughts and murder phantasies.

These can be divided into three groups. The first two are those introduced by the white man like whiskey and those resulting, he would have contended, from the drinking of whiskey, like the deterioration of one's personality. Here he would place violence, evil thoughts and murder phantasies. The third includes the use of tobacco, gambling, sexual debauchery, conceit, selfishness and avariciousness.

Against the evils flowing from the use of whiskey he, of course, was not the first one to preach. Its disruptive effects had always been recognized. But whereas the conservatives had always condemned it because it disrupted the old Winnebago culture, Rave condemned it because it disrupted a man's personality. As far as the "diseases" in the third group are concerned, with the exception of the use of tobacco, they were condemned specifically in the old Winnebago culture³⁰, Rave was here therefore following strictly in the footsteps of all enlightened old conservative members of his tribe. In short, in none of these matters, was he a radical or a reformer.

His condemnation of tobacco in all its uses is another matter, however. The conservatives would have gone along with him as far as its non-religious use was concerned. But Rave, of course, did not stop there. Why, it is somewhat difficult to understand. It was not necessary. The Winnebago were not even in 1910 great smokers. That his re[285]jection of all tobacco was of slow growth we know. His antagonism toward it can best be explained as part of his total rejection of Winnebago culture, particularly of Winnebago religion where tobacco played so fundamental a role.

It is not easy to follow Rave in the evolution and transformation of his ideas, especially in his relation to the old Winnebago culture and to the Christian ideas largely introduced, as previously indicated by A. H. - A. H. quarrelled with Rave and subsequently seceded from Rave's group and formed one of his own. He, however, had few followers and soon disappeared from view. Nevertheless the strictly Christian elements he introduced into the Winnebago peyote³¹ cult remained. Rave's attitude toward the innovations of A. H. had always been purely passive and external. As an example let us take Rave's statement in the paragraph preceding the account of John Harrison's conversion, namely, that, "Today, the Winnebago say that only God is holy", or the one of the very end of Part II, namely,

that, "The one whom they call God has given me this knowledge". He makes no other references to God in Parts II and III and seems to be wavering as to whether he is here giving his own attitude or that of his followers. In Part I, it is true, he has a vision of God and he offers up a prayer to God, and to the Son of God, But this is, apparently, simply a verbal acceptance (cf., however, p.279 of this paper), particularly the second half of it. His vision of God may very well be little more than a remodelling of a famous fasting-experience that every Winnebago knew very well, called How Wegishega Tried To See Earthmakers³². At no [286] time did Rave ever think of God, either the Christian God or the old Winnebago Earthmaker, as the source of his new life and dispensation or as responsible for his recognition of the holy. That came only from one source, the divine peyote.

It is very important, consequently, not to regard Rave's tolerance of Christian elements as an indication that they meant very much to him, and one must be very careful not to confuse the interpretations of Rave's statements made by his followers with the statements, etc. that Rave actually made. Let me give two examples. According to O. L. Rave baptized individuals "by dipping his hand into... (the) peyote and ... saying", "I baptize thee in the name of God, the Son, and the holy Ghost, which is called God's holiness." But this is a basically erroneous translation of what Rave actually said. What he said was simply: "God, his holiness." To Rave Holy Ghost meant nothing. First of all he would not have thought of a ghost as holy and, secondly, for him a deity could not die and, therefore, could have no ghost. The next example refers to O. L.'s statement that Rave began the peyote ceremonies with a prayer alled "Turning oneself over to the care of the Trinity". This is simply a rendering of Rave's phrase, "I give myself up to you entirely", probably reinterpreted in this Christian sense by A. H.

The same tolerance that he exhibited toward the introduction of Christian beliefs and dogmas as long as they did not interfere with the one cardinal dogma that man was made whole again by eating the peyote and acknowledging its efficacy, that same toleration he exhibited toward those who ate the peyote and who attempted to throw over their evil ways. Since he insisted that the peyote could only function completely if an individual permitted it to do so, ample room was left for those who wished to obtain bene[287]fits of the new religion and retain those of the old. The case of a Winnebago named G. is very instructive here. G., a member of the Thunderbird clan, believed that he was living his second life on earth, that he was invulnerable and that, when he was tired of living among human beings, he could return to the Thunderbirds. "For that reason", he states, "when I ate peyote I still held on to these beliefs for a long time, thinking that when I returned to the Thunderbirds inasmuch as they dwell above it would be the same thing as going to everlasting life³³, as the peyote people said. Finally, one night, at a peyote meeting, in thinking all these matters over I resolved to give them up. I could, nevertheless, not bring myself to do it. Then the peyote began to strangle me. At least I thought so³⁴."

At times Rave, the organizer of a new cult, had to compromise with Rave, the devoutly religious man and the moralist, for the sake of spreading the new religion and gaining prestige for it. One can well imagine the joy with which he welcomed leaders of the Medicine Rite like Harrison and Squeaking Wings into the fold. But he had to pay the price. Harrison remained selfish and avaricious and continued the pursuit of women, married and unmarried, and Squeaking Wings remained the religious sceptic he had always been. Membership in the Medicine Rite in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and after that, did not always imply any deep faith. It was, frequently, practically inherited.

It seems almost incredible that with Christian influences coming to him from all directions he should have been so little touched by them. But it remains an undisputable fact that this was so. Actually, as might have been expected, he was [288] more at home in certain aspects of his old Winnebago cultural background than he realized. Thus the peyote-cult was organized in the same fashion as were the old Winnebago societies based on blessings from the spirit deities.

Similarly he introduced the feathered crooks which were the insignia of office in the Bear clan and the small earth-mound used in the Buffalo ceremony without the slightest hesitation and he had no objections to their being interpreted as the shepherds crooks or Mount Sinai. While his attitude to A. H.'s additions were, as I have indicated, passive he must have welcomed A. H.'s attempt at giving the peyote a proper Origin Myth. This myth is so important for the religious syncretism we are discussing here that I shall quote most of it:

Once in the south an Indian belonging to the tribe called Mescalero Apache was roaming ... in Mexico ... and got lost... He was about to die of thirst but finally reached the foot of the hill... It was with the greatest difficulty he reached it... There he desired to die... He fell over on his back and lay thus with his body stretched toward the south, his head pillowed on an object. He extended his right arm to the east, and as he did this, he felt something cool touch his hands. "What is it... ?", he thought to himself... There was water in it and it also contained food... Then as he lay on the ground a holy spirit entered him and taking the spirit of the Indian carried it away to the regions above. There he saw a man who spoke to him. "I have caused you to go through this suffering, for had I not done it, you never would have heard of the proper religion. It was for that reason that I placed holiness in what you have eaten. My Father gave it to me and I was permitted to place it on the earth...

"At present this religion exists in the south but I wish to have it extended to the north... Long ago I sent this gospel (knowledge) across the ocean but you did not recognize it. Now I am going to teach you to understand it." Then he led him to a lodge where they were eating peyote. There he taught him ... all that belonged to this ceremony... "Now go ... teach all that I have told you. I have placed my holiness in this that you eat³⁵." [289]

In this narrative we see how skillfully a Winnebago could keep within the old forms, for this is a typical old origin myth, introduce Christian beliefs and phraseology and yet use the latter exclusively for purposes utterly alien to Christianity, namely, to glorify and "deify" the peyote. For Rave this was the only purpose that Christianity could serve. "We would all join the Christian Church", he is reported as once telling a missionary, "if you would simply accept the peyote³⁶."

The third part of Rave's narrative consists of exhortations. They are essentially miniature sermons. There is no need for commenting upon them specifically. They explain themselves and where they do not, they repeat ideas that we have already discussed at some length. A few words however are in order about their style and the insights they give us into John Rave, the man.

Rave was in no sense a literary artist nor, before his conversion, did he have any reputation as an orator. His style in the narratives he dictated to me was quite uneven, choppy and somewhat disconnected. Nor did he seem to possess any sense for plot elaboration, the narrative of his conversion always excepted. But in one thing he was

always interested, namely the depiction of emotions and states of mind. There he was a master. I know of no other one of my fairly numerous Winnebago informants who could remotely equal him. S. B. in his autobiography comes closest. This psycho[290]logical interest is manifest everywhere and it is particularly evident, of course, in the narrative we have analyzed here.

All his stylistic inadequacies disappear, however, when he is talking about his own conversion and attempting to convert others. The narrative of his conversion is amazingly well-constructed and never loses its dramatic quality. All the sincerity, all the intensity and persuasiveness of the man - he converted half the tribe to his peyote faith in something like seventeen years - all this fairly leaps at us in these exhortations. What made him so convincing to so many of his fellow-Winnebago was the clarity with which he understood and analyzed what had happened to him and the skill and insight with which he conveyed to others, who were in as much need of psychical integration as himself, that the same miracle could and would happen to them.

When I first met him in 1910 it was hard to believe that this mild, gentle, outgoing, self-disciplined and manifestly well-integrated man had ever been a completely torn and disoriented individual. It would have been equally difficult to believe that he had founded a new religion.

Notes

- 1) Published under the title of: *The Autobiography of an American Indian*, in *Univ. Calif. Am. Arch. Ethn.*, Berkeley 1920, and, with supplementary material, as *Crashing Thunder*, New York 1926.
- 2) Gregorio, *The Hand-Trembler*, Cambridge, Mass., 1949.
- 3) My informants were not all agreed on this point.
- 4) Cf. "The Two Friends Who Became Reincarnated", in *The Culture of The Winnebago as Told by Themselves*, in *International Journal of American Linguistics*, pp. 12-41. Bloomington, md., 1949.
- 5) Cf. however, the date given by Rave himself, this paper p. 259.
- 6) *An. Rep. fur Americ. Ethn.*, vol. 37, p. 394. Washington 1923.
- 7) What Baptiste meant here is that, at first, Rave thought that he alone was being affected by the Peyote but that then he saw that everyone was being affected in the same way. It was because the peyote had this influence not upon one person hut upon everyone that it was so holy. This is one of the cardinal points in Rave's theology. We shall see him stressing it again and again in his conversion narrative. Although Rave does not mention this detail in his own narrative, it must have been something which he had actually said because it occurs in the conversion account of a number of Indians.
- 8) *An. Rep. fur Americ. Ethn.* vol. 31, p. 394.
- 9) I am underlining those words and phrases which I am discussing specifically in the

comments that follow the three sections into which I have divided Rave's narrative.

10) The Winnebago word here really has the force of in the "twinkling-of-an-eye".

11) The Winnebago here use an affix implying certain probability.

12) "Make use of" here means worship.

13) A place on the Winnebago reservation in Nebraska, where celebrations like the fourth of July took place and some exoteric Winnebago dances were given.

14) Cf. *Autobiography, etc.*, in *Univ. Calif. Publ. Am. Arch. Ethn.*, pp. 440-441.

15) Among the Winnebago few of the fasting experiences contain any element of terror. S. B. however, who belonged to the Thunderbird clan, the clan specifically connected with war and warfare, states in his autobiography that he was told that he would be surrounded by spirits who could be heard whispering and whistling outside of his fasting place; that he would thoroughly frightened and ill at ease; that he would be molested, one night, by fearsome looking monsters and, another night, by ghosts, etc. It may well be that Rave who belonged to the clan entrusted with all the disciplinary functions in the tribe, may also have been told to expect some fear-provoking visions.

16) Rave does not use the actual term "strangling" in his narrative but he frequently employed it when speaking about it and practically all members of the peyote-rite employed it and attributed it to Rave.

17) *An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn.*, vol. 31, p. 395.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 301.

19) Cf. P. Radin, *The Twin Myth of the American Indians*. *Eranos XVII*.

20) "This medicine (peyote)", so runs his statement, "is one of the four spirits from below, and for that reason it is a bad thing. These spirits have always longed for human beings and now they are getting ahold of them. These who use this medicine claim that when they die they will only be going on a long journey. But that is not the truth, for when they eat peyote they destroy their spirits (i. e. the immortal part of themselves) and death for them will mean extermination. If I spit upon the floor, the sputum will soon dry up and nothing will remain of it. So death will be for them." *An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn.*, vol. 31, p. 46.

21) S. B. in his autobiography does the same thing and, I think, quite independently. This is what he says, "All of us sitting there, we had altogether one spirit of soul... I instantly became ... their spirit or soul. Whatever they thought of I immediately knew ... Then I thought of a certain place, far away, and immediately knew... Then I thought of a certain place, far away, and immediately I was there; I was my thought". Cf. *Univ. Calif. Publ. Am. Arch. Ethn.*, pages 441-442.

22) It should also be remembered that this seeing of things clearly and vividly is one of the effects of the peyote. Generally, however, this clearness is associated with color-

visions. S. B. gives an excellent description of both in his Autobiography.

23) Autobiography, p. 440.

24) Cf. An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn., vol. 37, p. 397ff.

25) He has forgotten, probably, that he also offered up some tobacco.

26) For the final section of Part III, cf. p. 258 of this paper.

27) The two most important ones were these called the Stench-Earth medicine and the Black-Root medicine. For a description of the former: Cf. An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn., vol. 31, pp. 259-270.

28) Op. cit., pp. 259-260.

29) Op. cit., pp. 264-265.

30) Cf. the second part of S. B.'s Autobiography.

31) The description given by O. L. of a peyote meeting as given in my Winnebago monograph, pp. 394-396, represents the cult when A. H. was still an active member of Rave's group.

32) An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn., vol. 37, pp. 290-293.

33) The italics are mine.

34) An. Rep. Bur. Amer. Ethn., vol. 31, p. 301.

35) An. Rep. Amer. Ethn. vol. 37, pp. 398-399.

36) Even A. H. who was soaked in Christian ideas had no doubts about that. "This is the true religion", he exclaims indignantly. "The peyote is fulfilling God, and the Son of God. When the Son of God came to the earth he was poor, yet people spoke of him (despite this). He was abused. It is the same with the peyote. The plant itself is not much of a growth, yet everyone is speaking about it. They are abusing it. They are trying to stop its use. When the Son of God came to earth the preachers of that day were called Pharisees and Scribes. They doubted what the Son at God said and claimed that he was an ordinary man. So it is today with the Christian Church. They are ... the doubters ... they are toxicant but that is a lie." Op. cit. p. 400.