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From two
1812 letters
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+
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The Prophet with all his brothers are pure Indians of the Shawanoe nation, and when a boy, was a perfect vagabond and as he grew up he w^d not hunt and became a great drunkard. While he lived near Greenville in the State of Ohio, where spirituous liquor are plenty he was continually intoxicated; having observed some preachers¹⁰¹ who lived in the vicinity of Greenville a preaching or rather the motions, etc., in preaching (as he cannot understand a word of English) it had such an effect on him, that one night he dremt that the Great Spirit found fault with his way of living, that he must leave of [f] drinking, and lead a new life, and also instruct all the red people the proper way of living. He immediately refrained from drinking any kind of spirituous liquor, and recommended it strongly to all the Indians far and near to follow his example, and laid down certain laws that was to guide the red people in future. I shall here give you as many of those laws or regulations as I can now remember, but I know I have forgot many.

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start here

Folklore



SHAWNEE PROPHET

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6th All medicine bags, and all kinds of medicine dances and songs were to exist no more; the medicine bags were to be destroyed in *presens* of the whole of the people collected for that purpose, and at the destroying of such medicine, etc., every one was to make open ¹⁰² confesion to the Great Spirit in a loud voice of all the bad deeds that he or she had committed during their lifetime, and beg for forgiveness as the Great Spirit was too good to refuse.

7th No Indian was to sell any of their provision to any white people, they might give a little as a present, as they were sure of getting in return the full value in something else.

8th No Indian was to eat any victuals that was cooked by a White person, or to eat any provisions raised by White people, as bread, beef, pork, fowls, etc.

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10th Every Indian was to consider the French, English, and Spaniards, as their fathers or friends, and to give them their hand, but they were not to know the Americans on any account, but to keep them at a distance.

11th All kind of white people's drefs, such as hats, coats, etc., were to be given to the first whiteman they met as also all dogs not of their own breed, and all cats were to be given back to white people.

12th The Indians were to endeavour to do without buying any merchandise as much as possible, by which means the game would become plenty, and then by means of bows and arrows, they could hunt and kill game as in former days, and live independent of all white people.

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14th The Indians in their prayers prayed to the earth, to be fruitful, also to the fish to be plenty, to the fire and sun, etc., and a certain dance was introduced simply for amusement, those prayers were repeated morning and evening, and they were taught that a deviation from these duties would offend the Great Spirit. There were many more regulations but I now have forgot them, but those above mentioned are the principal ones.

The Prophet had his disciples among every nation of Indians, from Detroit in Michigan Territory, to the Indians on the Mississippi and [I] have since been informed, that, there were disciples of the Prophet, among all the Indians of the Missouri and as far north as Hudson Bay (see Tanner's narrative) always reserving the supreme authority to himself, viz, that he (the Prophet) might be considered the head of the whole of the different nations of Indians, as he only, could see and converse with the Great Spirit. As every nation was to have but one village, by which means they would be always together in case of danger. The Pottawatimie Indians in the course of one season got tired of this strict way of living, and declared off, and joined the main poque,¹⁰³ as he never would acknowledge the Prophet as his superiour, seeing perfectly that he the Prophet was seeking enfluence among the different Indian nations. Many Indians still follow the dictates of the Prophet in a great measure. The Prophet's plan in the first instance was to collect by fair means all the Indians he could, to live in the same village with him, and when he thought his party sufficiently strong, he would oblige the others to come into measures by force, and when so assembled in great numbers, that he would be able to give laws to the white people. Tecumseh¹⁰⁴ has been heard to say,

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