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### **Jesus in the Washat**

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JESUS IN THE WASHAT

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We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

  
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To Tracy, and Taylor

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the history and theology of the Washat religion. The indigenous Native American peoples along the mid-Columbia River and Cascade Range of Washington and Oregon have a rich, intriguing, spirituality connecting them strongly with the Creator. This thesis assumes a disconnection for most of American Christianity with regard to the worship of the Creator (from now on, Creator and God will be used synonymously) in connection with the earth, something that the Washat give supreme priority. American Christianity can learn much from a spirituality that takes stewardship of the earth, along with many other aspects overlooked in American Christianity, so seriously. Worship need not be relegated to the confines of church walls. American Christianity has come a long way in this sense, but more can be learned. The Washat have much to offer in this regard.

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S. N. Ceddia

Madras, 2006

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Problem

The Christian journey is one that can be defined in terms of relationship with God. Some relationships are more complete, or well-rounded than others. A well-rounded relationship with God, from the individual human perspective, is one that considers all aspects in this life in which God chooses to reveal Self. For example, a relationship with God based primarily on prayer and little else is not so complete as one which adds good works, care for the poor, stewardship of the land, etc.

In this light, this thesis assumes that American Christianity has overlooked some important aspects of relationship with God, which when neglected or under-nourished deprive it of a richer, more abundant relationship with God. Ultimately, this thesis examines what American Christianity can learn from the Washat religion, with the hope of revival concerning Earth-connected worship of God, other aspects of spirituality, and perhaps even more importantly, the establishment of a new relationship with Native Americans which has thus far been defined in terms of distrust, hostility, and oppression. This thesis attempts to do this by answering question, *how is Jesus manifest in the Washat religion?*

#### B. Methodology

In addition to the problem stated above, the *Introduction* of this thesis will include a very brief overview of the Washat religion and its adherents (with more thorough

coverage throughout). Also, an introduction to matters of natural revelation, syncretism, contextualization, a special note on *Missio Dei*, and a brief overview of the method used in this thesis for comparing religions, which are all necessary for a study of this sort, will be included. Such matters will be constantly addressed throughout, either explicitly or implicitly, but more importantly, the reader should constantly be aware of these issues as they are foundational to discussions that consider the existence of Christ-centered religions outside of Christianity proper (i.e., how Americans typically understand and experience it).

The body of the thesis will include chapters discussing Washat theology and history, Washat Christology with specific attention given to theory, and an additional chapter on Washat Christology emphasizing worship. The aim is for the reader to discover Jesus in the Washat throughout the process of reading this thesis. Finally, the conclusion will recap the teachings and synthesize the evidence of Jesus in the Washat and how American Christians can then use that knowledge to both draw nearer to God in terms of a more well-rounded spiritual relationship, and nearer to neighbor in terms of finding commonality rather than division with the Native brothers and sisters with whom we share this great land.

It must be noted that there is not a great deal of written material to be found concerning the Washat.<sup>1</sup> So, this thesis takes information from whatever scant written evidence is available along with information gathered from personal interviews with those who know and practice the Washat.

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<sup>1</sup>George Sr. Aguilar, *When the River Ran Wild* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005).

### C. Brief Overview of the Washat Religion and Its Adherents

The Washat religion (synonymously, Seven Drums-used interchangeably throughout) was founded by Smohalla (c. 1815?-1907), a prophet and chief of the Native American Wanapum tribe of the Columbia River Valley in the Pacific Northwest United States. His hope was to revitalize a lost way of life for his people as a result of expanding American colonization and industry. His religion was to be based on a return to Native ways of life and modes of living. The “*Dreamers*” his followers were not violent but were typically “difficult” with regard to following government policy relegating Native Americans to reservation living.<sup>2</sup>

### D. Natural Revelation

Natural revelation addresses the fact that God has revealed Self in nature to all cultures and to the same extent, the people of the Washat included. “The implication is that man, as God created him, may enjoy the knowledge of God without the special revelation attested in Scripture. It is the Triune God who is revealed, for both Christ and the Holy Spirit were active in creation as well as the Father.”<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Scripture attests to this very theory. The created order is a testament to God’s existence (Ps. 19:1-6).<sup>4</sup> It is God who created the universe (Gen. 1:1). Any serious contemplation about the universe and its origins must concede to, at the very least, the possibility of the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing supernatural being to bring about that existence. In this regard, the Apostle Paul asserts that all of humanity is without excuse, and therefore has

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<sup>2</sup>Click Relander, *Drummers and Dreamers* (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Revelation, Natural,” in *Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Carl F. Henry (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 456.

<sup>4</sup>The New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible will be used throughout.

no grounds for which to deny the existence of God or to assert that nothing can be known of God by the observable created order (my paraphrase, Rom. 1:20).

However, many argue that natural revelation is limited in its capacity to reveal God in full. It is merely a starting point for faith which ultimately needs an understanding of, and faith in Jesus and his works.<sup>5</sup> On a more positive note is the assertion that, through natural revelation, God desires to be known to all peoples, disclosing even the person and works of Christ, in the created order. Relationship with God can be established through recognition of God's role in the natural created order. This thesis provides evidence of that relationship between the Washat and God through their worship of Creator and their reverence for the land and cosmos without flirting with the idolatry Paul had in mind in Romans 1.<sup>6</sup>

#### **E. Syncretism**

Webster's defines syncretism as "the combination of different forms of belief or practice." Syncretism in religious studies addresses the fact that when one religion is introduced to another, a synthesis of sorts results. The synthesis is not necessarily the total combination of every aspect of both, but rather a manifestation of a new belief system that has been built on desired segments of each. So, if a teaching (or several teachings) from the introduced religion is embraced by the established religion, it is likely infused or absorbed, resulting in a new religion.<sup>7</sup>

A strong example of syncretism exists in the Indian Shaker religion. It is a combination of Christian and American Indian teachings. The Indian Shakers (unrelated to New England Shakers) originally rejected the Bible arguing that the Gospel could be

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<sup>5</sup>James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>6</sup>G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). 444.

<sup>7</sup>Believe, <http://mb-soft.com/believe/indexaz.html>. See article "syncretism."

heard without reading the Bible. The “shaking” had healing powers and was associated with the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> The Indian Shakers also have held onto their traditional beliefs including ceremonies, feasts, dances, etc. Syncretism will be an important issue for the reader of this thesis. Some Christians acknowledge the legitimacy of religions that have embraced Christianity while not totally abandoning the religious teachings of their heritage and culture. These Christians have no problem extending the hand of fellowship and embracing those as fellow followers of Christ. For other Christians, the syncretized by-product religion flirts too closely with paganism, and therefore fellowship is not seen as an option. The Washat have certainly undergone a degree of syncretism, but this thesis will more emphasize the veiled Christianity always present in the Washat. Indeed for many Native Americans, “Christ is in the Washat.”<sup>9</sup>

#### **F. Contextualization**

Contextualization, or contextual theology, addresses the fact that different cultures will ultimately view the Christian Gospel through the lens of their existing customs, beliefs, traditions, and general way of life. It is imperative to understand that unless a culture can in some way have a sense of ownership over a theology, it will likely never truly grasp nor feel the relevance of a theology.<sup>10</sup> In simplest terms, and regarding this thesis, the Washat perception of God “should be somewhat different from those of a Christian New Yorker or of a philosophically oriented Indian Christian.” while remaining consistent with a Christian world view.<sup>11</sup> It is an idea that takes some open-mindedness

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<sup>8</sup>Relander. See chapter xiii for an excellent summary of the Indian Shaker religion.

<sup>9</sup>John GrosVenor, telephone interview by author, telephone interview, Madras, Or. , 23 July 2006. John resides in the Colville Indian Reservation, Nespelem, Wa.

<sup>10</sup>Charles H. Kraft, and Tom N. Wisley, eds. *Readings in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979), 255.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, 256.

on the part of many Christians (American in particular with regard to this thesis) in order to realize, first of all, that we, too, understand the Christian message through the lens of our own such traditions. After all, Jesus walked the earth two-thousand years ago in a land and culture vastly different than ours. This simple understanding and acknowledgement will go a long way in the effort to embrace Christian theology within each individual cultural context. Second, when considering the Christian message in the realm of contextual theology, it is important to understand that the pursuant should not only acknowledge the above stated, but also realize that there is much to *learn* from a culture viewing the Gospel of Christ through a different lens. Furthermore, there is a third issue, which is perhaps the most important. While the first two points suggest a conciliatory attitude and stance toward acknowledging the Christian message in other cultures (i.e., in the sense that it is a fresh approach), the third takes a much more offensive stance. By realizing that God is God of the entire universe, and therefore the God of every people and culture, and with the assumption that God loves all people, one needs to understand “contextual theology as a theological imperative.”<sup>12</sup> It “is part of the very nature of theology itself.”<sup>13</sup> To disregard its importance in coming to a better understanding of the Christian message is irresponsible. Expanding on this idea further, is the idea that a contextual approach to theology has precedence in scripture and should be considered foundational when discussing, cross-culturally, truths about God.<sup>14</sup>

With this in mind, an accurate and thorough definition of contextual theology is in order. Stephen Bevans says, “Contextual theology can be defined as a way of doing

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<sup>12</sup>Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992). 1.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980), 291. The author suggests that *dynamic-equivalence theologizing* is the reproducing in contemporary cultural contexts of the theologizing process that Paul and other scriptural authors exemplify.

theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the Gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change in that culture”<sup>15</sup>

### **G. *Missio Dei***

*Missio Dei*, God’s mission, is a concept that argues for God’s proactivity in missions, not humanity’s. God is the revealer of truth, Godself. It is a “departure from a western ecclesiocentric focus to a trinitarian focus. According to Richard Twiss:

The *Missio Dei* concept has immeasurable possibilities that can alter the course of mission history for First Nations/indigenous communities worldwide. It reorients mission from human activity to divine activity with humans invited to participate. It relocates missions from the West to the Body of Christ. It calls for radical community in the midst of remarkable diversity and provides a “place” of ultimate belonging for our [Native Americans-my clarification] people.<sup>16</sup>

*Missio Dei*, with regard to this thesis, illuminates an important issue relating to natural revelation. It asserts that the created order reveals the triune God of the Bible, without having to read a single passage of the Bible.<sup>17</sup> This is significant because it is often argued that knowledge of God through mere natural revelation is not enough for salvation. However, if Christ is by definition part of the *Missio Dei* process, it can be argued that salvation is possible through means of natural revelation.

Also, the benefits of Trinitarian based *Missio Dei* emphasize aspects of community, and solidarity, as well as instilling a feeling of belonging.<sup>18</sup> This is significant to this thesis with regard to the community building necessary for a healthy relationship between American Christians and Native Americans practicing Washat.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Richard Twiss, “*Missio Dei*-a Place for Indigenous People.” Unpublished research paper, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2005, 1.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. My interpretation. Twiss references Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder *Constants in Context. A Theology of Mission for Today*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Furthermore, *Missio Dei* highlights the interconnectedness of everything in the created order.<sup>19</sup> This is significant because it reconnects American Christianity with the holistic nature of Hebrew thought as found in the creation account. In doing so, it opens the eyes of the American Christian in the sense of being more understanding and sensitive to the Washat worldview which highlights the oneness in the created order.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, an understanding of *Missio Dei* invites the American Christian to embrace different worldviews, not exclude them, by introducing a paradigm shift in thought.<sup>20</sup> That is, American Christians tend to approach unfamiliar cultures and religions with the prime motivation of saving their souls.<sup>21</sup> The *Missio Dei* suggests that such cultures and religions (while not promoting Universalism) may already have a relationship with Christ as they embrace the Triune God of the universe through the gift of natural revelation.<sup>22</sup> Just an understanding of this theory on the part of American Christians would go a long way toward reparations of broken relationships with Native Americans, those of the Washat included.

## H. Model for Comparing Religions

This thesis uses the format suggested by Pinnock and Brow when comparing religions.<sup>23</sup> There are four basic criteria: 1) *How does the religion discuss the nature of the ultimate?* The thesis will move beyond the cursory acknowledgement, as already established above, that the ultimate for both Christianity and the Washat share the characteristic of creator of the universe. 2) *How may the human predicament best be*

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>21</sup>Richard Twiss, "*Missio Dei* – a Place for Indigenous People, 2005," research paper. 6.

<sup>22</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John indicates that since Jesus is part of the Trinity Community, salvation is possible through means of natural revelation.

<sup>23</sup>Clark Pinnock and Robert Brow, *Unbounded Love* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1994), 16.

*described? 3) What is the character of salvation? 4) How is salvation appropriated?*

This will essentially be a compare/contrast process throughout offering further insight when even the issue of natural revelation doesn't adequately address any major discrepancies. Comparison of the Washat and Christianity is an essential step when attempting to answer the question *how is Jesus manifest in the Washat religion?* The argument that Jesus, as a member of the Trinity, is manifest in natural revelation to all cultures was established briefly above. The issue from this point on is how the theology and worship practices of the Washat reflect the image of Christ via an acknowledgement and belief in the Triune God unveiled in the natural order.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **WASHAT HISTORY AND GENERAL THEOLOGY**

As stated previously, the Washat religion was instituted by Smohalla to revitalize the way of life for the Wanapum tribe and to help reconnect them with their spiritual roots. Since the Washat is a religion connected so closely with the daily lives of the Wanapum (and the many other tribes of the area), it is wise to have a basic understanding of what day to day life looked like for this people of the Columbia River Valley of the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, to say that the theology and teachings of the Washat are unique to the Wanapum is to miss the mark. Native American theology and aspects of daily life, of that time and place, are very similar. Also, since Smohalla attempted to “revive” the way of life represented by the Washat, it would be incorrect to say that he is the originator of such beliefs and customs. As Native Americans of the region say, this way of life and its belief system have existed, “from time immemorial.”

So, the reader should keep in mind that much of the information in this section is not unique to Washat or the Wanapum in particular, but can be safely applied to the other tribes of that region as well. This thesis will discuss each piece of information in terms of both history and theology as deemed relevant.

#### **A. Smohalla**

Smohalla’s role was to re-establish an almost forgotten way of life. Since the practices and beliefs pre-dated Smohalla (“from time immemorial”), it is best to emphasize those. However, a cursory history of Smohalla is beneficial. Toward the mid-

nineteenth century, Native Americans of the Northwest Pacific were feeling the pressures of Euro-American colonization ignited by Lewis and Clarke's journey at the beginning of that century. Smohalla, a former shaman (a doctor with great spiritual powers, the Washat typically refer to such a person as "medicine man," or "medicine woman"/"holy man," or "holy woman"), procured status of Prophet (and Chief) as a result of his "trance-induced, other-worldly experiences."<sup>1</sup> The Euro-Americans called such Prophets "Dreamers."<sup>2</sup> Such Prophets would arise throughout the recent history of Native American peoples in similar times of turmoil<sup>3</sup> in order to encourage the people to endure and that a time of utopia awaits once the shackles of the white man were removed.<sup>4</sup> Smohalla believed that white men brought sinful ways with them and when many of his people began following those ways, it was seen as apostasy in the eyes of Creator.<sup>5</sup> Washat teaches that Sa'ghalee Tyee, the Great Chief above (Washat term for Creator), used Smohalla to get them to repent.<sup>6</sup> Their primary sins were violations of the laws of nature and ignoring the precepts of their ancestors.<sup>7</sup> It is within this back-drop that Smohalla rallied his people, the Wanapum, living near the "Big Bend" of the Columbia River to hold fast for better times.<sup>8</sup> Smohalla resisted while many of his Native contemporaries embraced (to differing degrees) Christianity, sparking a movement in the Pacific Northwest that would lead to a religious system that combined Christianity and

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Ruby & John Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. For an excellent treatment of earlier Native American Prophets see pages 4-6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Aguilar. 144.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

Native American traditionalism.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, though, even the Washat began to embrace Christianity more and more as years went by. This is evident in the diversity of Washat beliefs today, some reflect a more “recognizable” form while others place emphasis on traditional Washat teachings, depending on who is leading the worship. This will be discussed in greater detail later on.

Some general observations must be made here concerning the comparison of Christianity and the Washat in areas regarding the human condition and the *Missio Dei*. Both surface when one compares Smohalla’s story with that of the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt (see the book of Exodus). In both cases God raises up a Prophet to address the oppression of a people. The significance here is that God reveals Self, in both situations, by hearing the cries of humanity and responding. Second, the human predicament is similar in the sense that, in both cases, humanity despises oppression and seeks divine guidance.

## **B. A History of Daily Life**

This section addresses Washat history in terms of daily life of Native American tribes along the Mid-Columbia River. A glimpse of language, household, village economy, and social structures will be provided.

The people of the region spoke the Sahaptin language which contains as many as fourteen dialects divided among tribes living in three regions: Northwest; Northeast; and Columbia River Clusters.<sup>10</sup> Family living arrangements were quite different from those of Euro-American tradition. Living arrangements were very much a communal situation with anywhere from four to six family units (typically five or so per unit) per one

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Eugene Hunn, *Nch'i-Wana* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990). 61.

“longhouse”<sup>11</sup> often made of split cedar planks.<sup>12</sup> There were doors at each end of the longhouse.<sup>13</sup> Longhouses were built parallel to the stream or river.<sup>14</sup>, <sup>15</sup> Each family procured a section of the house,<sup>16</sup> typically one in each of the four corners, and depending upon the length of the house, up to two more occupying the space along the length of the house.<sup>17</sup> Each family kept to its own section with the exception of playtimes for children, storytelling, common recreation, and the like.<sup>18</sup> Such activities took place along a long corridor that ran the length of the house. Each family unit had a fire pit for cooking and heating in their section of the home along the common corridor.<sup>19</sup> The fire pits of each family were arranged in close proximity to each other.<sup>20</sup> Despite the communal arrangement, privacy was still honored among the inhabitants, and was of major importance.<sup>21</sup> Sleeping beds, drying racks, and storage were anchored to the walls in order to maximize floor space.<sup>22</sup>

Family units differed as well. They often included more than parents and children, but extended to widowed relatives, even unmarried couples.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>11</sup>Peter Smith, *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes* (Gloucester: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963). 6.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John indicates that some longhouses, especially ones in Nespelem, are built East-to-West. Furthermore and with respect to form of longhouse ceremony (discussed later), he states that bell ringers, and drummers sit at the East end, while men sit at the South, and women at the North.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. 34. Note the discussion of “the round” where certain tribes would move (nomadic existence) depending on the seasons and proximity to food sources available at differing times of year. Many times the longhouses would be disassembled and rebuilt upon return the following year. Other dwellings were thule mat lodges (i.e., teepees) made of animal hide, and were easily disassembled and carried from place to place.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. 6

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. 7.

when addressing the issue of what constituted “family” in the region, Eugene Hunn suggests:

In Columbia River Indian society children not only have “mothers” (*pca-Sahaptin spelling, my clarification*) and “fathers” (*psit*), but also four kinds of “grandparents,” six basic kinds of siblings, six categories each of “uncles” and “aunts” and of “nephews” and “nieces,” and nine types of in-laws; a total of over forty kinds of relatives. Most English speakers, by comparison, recognize about thirty.<sup>24</sup>

This gives the reader a better understanding of what a family unit may have looked like for this people.<sup>25</sup>

The roles of family members were typical of hunter-gatherer societies.<sup>26</sup> Men were charged with the role of hunting game and catching fish,<sup>27</sup> warring, making tools and weapons, making canoes, and building houses.<sup>28</sup> Men who were too old to hunt performed tasks requiring skilled craftsmanship, such as stonework, etc.<sup>29</sup> Women gathered berries, roots, vegetables, fruits.<sup>30</sup> They dried meats and fish, tanned skins, made clothing.<sup>31</sup> The men never did the jobs of women, and vice-versa, something Larry Cebula calls a “gender specific system of labor.”<sup>32</sup> Each family unit within the household was responsible for its own subsistence,<sup>33</sup> yet tasks were efficiently coordinated as an entire household unit especially when there were individuals who specialized in certain skills thus enabling them to provide for an entire household in a manner efficient in terms

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<sup>24</sup>Hunn. 201.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. 202 for an excellent overview “kin” terms Sahaptin speaking society.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. 206.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Larry Cebula, “Religious Change and Plateau Indians” (1999). 25.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Hunn.

<sup>31</sup>Cebula. 25.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Smith. 11.

of “manpower” and time.<sup>34</sup> For example, a skilled deer hunter may have been able to provide deer meat for the entire household while the other males were free to do the more general, less skilled task of catching fish, “something common to all family units.”<sup>35</sup> Some of the “male” skills were raised to the rank of “profession” which enabled them to focus specifically on a particular trade, such as canoe-making, paddle-making, tool making, etc., without having to worry about any other tasks.<sup>36</sup> This is contrary to a woman with special skills who not only performed her “specialized” duty, such as basket-making, but the other routine tasks performed by women as well.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes a family unit would “detach” one of its own in order to work with one of the other family units living in the same household if he or she preferred to do so.<sup>38</sup> Within a given household was a position of leadership reserved for a man, a title referred to as “man who came first.”<sup>39</sup>

For the tribes of the Mid-Columbia, and for Native Americans in general, the community approach to the household, and, as will be portrayed soon, village economics, represents a microcosm of how they view the ultimate. They pattern the core aspects of their lifestyle after the Creator whose very nature can be defined in terms of community.<sup>40</sup>

Moving outside of the individual household, it is helpful to catch a glimpse of local and distant community dynamics, as well as an overview of socio-economic structures. A “village” consisting of one to three longhouses, would occupy its own

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Smith, 12.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Smith, 11.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Twiss. 3.

particular area along the Columbia.<sup>41</sup> Individual villages were spaced far enough away from one another so that the particular piece of land and waterway could sustain the village indefinitely, an intelligent use of the resources available. Yet, villages were close enough together so that long journeys were not necessary when one village sought trade or communication with another.<sup>42</sup> Eugene Hunn gives a great summary of Mid-Columbia Plateau Indian society, “It is best understood as a network of ties among individuals and families forged of two strands, a warp of kinship and a weft of exchange.”<sup>43</sup> Travel from one village to another was typically accomplished by canoe on the river or stream system, sometimes by horse.<sup>44</sup> Often times Native Americans were referred to as either “horse-Indians” or “canoe-Indians,” depending upon their preferred mode of travel.<sup>45</sup>

Each village government operated autonomously from the next.<sup>46</sup> Each village had a chief (leader/an elected position) who coordinated family activities within the village. This was a male, often of mature age who demonstrated wisdom, possessed a favorable temper,<sup>47</sup> and spirit-power.<sup>48</sup> He was typically just, far-seeing, a diplomat, counselor of human relations, and conciliator.<sup>49</sup> One of his more important roles was to settle issues regarding the behavior of the warriors in the village.<sup>50</sup> An out of control warrior could disrupt village harmony.

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<sup>41</sup>Smith. 4.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. 5.

<sup>43</sup>Hunn. 217.

<sup>44</sup>Smith.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. 22.

<sup>46</sup>Cebula. 30.

<sup>47</sup>Smith. 12.

<sup>48</sup>Cebula. 31.

<sup>49</sup>Smith. 12.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

The village warrior specialized in aggression, an expert in war. Though lower than chief in status, the warrior took charge in situations of hostility.<sup>51</sup> He was ill-tempered, belligerent, and usually received what he asked for.<sup>52</sup> A village would typically have a shaman, a doctor with tremendous spiritual powers in healing and other realms (discussed later).<sup>53</sup> With a general history of the Washat (via a general history of the indigenous peoples of the Mid-Columbia) having been covered, it is now necessary to get a general understanding of their theology.

Slavery was a reality in some of the Mid-Columbia tribes.<sup>54</sup> There are differences of opinion as to whether or not slavery was an institution always practiced or whether it was one that was introduced as a result of the White man's presence. Needless to say, slaves were taken from opposing tribes as spoils of war. They served numerous purposes, from caretakers of children, to performing the more menial tasks of daily life. Most agree that slaves held by Mid-Columbia River tribes were of "non-Plateau nativity." There are differing accounts of the treatment of slaves, some were treated very well, while others very harshly.<sup>55</sup>

### **C. Theology**

This section will present a general overview of theology, while the following chapters will go into detail about the theory behind Washat Christology, Washat Christology as defined by their worship, and Washat Christology in terms of ecology. In those chapters (three through five), this thesis will address more explicitly those topics

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. 15.

<sup>54</sup>See Hunn. 225-227. for a brief overview of the subject.

<sup>55</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John indicates that some down in the Southeast and the Tlingit took Haida for slaves. Yet, according to some of his friends, who are Tlingit and Haida, the Haida were treated pretty well.

with regard to the issues of natural revelation, syncretism, contextualization, *Missio Dei*, and when appropriate, comparing religions as outlined in the Introduction. For now, it is sufficient to address the Washat theology within the general topics of creation, Creator, animism, salvation, and the dynamics of individual and community spirituality. An understanding of these three subjects is imperative to begin to see more clearly the Washat world view.

According to Smohalla:

Once the world was all water, and God lived alone; he was lonesome, he had no place to put his foot; so he scratched the sand up from the bottom, and made the land and he made rocks, and he made trees, and he made a man, and the man was winged and could go anywhere. The man was lonesome, and God made a woman. They ate fish from the water, and God made the deer and other animals, and he sent the man to hunt, and told the woman to cook the meat and to dress the skins. Many more men and women grew up, and they lived on the banks of the great river whose waters were full of salmon. The mountains contained much game, and there were buffalo on the plains. There were so many people that the stronger sometimes oppressed the weak and drove them from the best fisheries, which they claimed as their own. They fought, and nearly all were killed, and their bones are to be seen in the sand hills yet. God was very angry at this, and he took away their wings and commanded that the lands and fisheries should be common to all who lived upon them.<sup>56</sup>

Certainly, there is a syncretistic aspect of Smohalla's creation, and origins of man accounts.<sup>57</sup> The specific reference to land, trees and rocks are certainly elements of Native American theology that fit well within the larger, biblical account, and were probably emphasized because of their presence in the physical landscape of life along the Columbia. The same can be said with respect to the mention of salmon, buffalo, deer, banks of the river, plains, and fisheries. These were all staples of Native American existence. Even more so, is the reference to "great river," a name given to the Columbia

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<sup>56</sup>Ruby and Brown, 35.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

River by Native Americans.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps the greatest evidence of syncretism in the story is where the man is described as having wings and can go anywhere. This is certainly language more connected with Native American accounts where animal spirits have played a large role in man's development in the creation process. However, there is enough similarity between the biblical accounts and the many Native American accounts to argue for something greater than mere syncretism. After all, many of the Native American accounts are specific to their people having been passed down from numerous generations, while not being influenced by outsiders. Furthermore, other creation accounts throughout the world have striking similarities to the biblical account.<sup>59</sup> That being said, it is reasonable to argue for the knowledge of similar creation accounts being the result of God's desire to reveal Self through *Missio Dei*.

The Washat and the indigenous peoples of the Mid-Columbia, and Native Americans as a whole understand the "ultimate" in terms of "Creator" often referred to as "Great Spirit."<sup>60</sup> The Creator is a personal being, and it is not hard for one to acknowledge the similarity, in terms of the ultimate, when comparing Washat and Christian theology. After all, one does not have to read very far in the Bible in order to see that the Christian God is described in terms of His role in creation. (See the creation account of Gen. 1 and 2). Also, the Christian God is often referred to as Creator also (e.g., Isa. 40: 28; 43: 15; Rom. 1:25; Col. 3:10; I Pet. 4: 19). They worship and understand Creator primarily in terms of how the Creator sustains their way of life. For example they worship the Creator in thanksgiving for provision of food, not only on a

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<sup>58</sup>Hunn. Nch'i-Wana, the title of his book, means "the Big River."

<sup>59</sup>Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), See chapter entitled "Genesis."

<sup>60</sup>David A. Rausch and Blair Schlepp, *Native American Voices* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 53. Cf. Cebula's titles for Creator i.e., "Old One"/ "Ancient One"/ "Father Mystery"/ "Old Chief."

daily basis but seasonally through the celebration of large feast gatherings (discussed thoroughly in chapter 3). This is certainly consistent with Christian practices (e.g., I Jn. 6: 11, 23; Ex. 5: 1), and an indication of natural revelation and *Missio Dei* at work.

Furthermore, the Creator is worshipped in terms of how the people of the Washat revere the land. Endearingly referred to as “Mother Earth,” the people of the Washat (and Native Americans as a whole) see her as perhaps the Creator’s greatest gift. Even in modern times, Euro-Americans cannot grasp why many Native Americans on reservation lands seem to “underuse” this natural resource. This is certainly a contextual issue. Connectedness with land is something that the Jewish people certainly understood. The initial promises of God to the Jewish race, through Abraham, involved a close relationship with the land (cf. Gen. 12: 6,7, and Gen. 15: 18-21). Bernhard Anderson insists that, “the language is that of a formal, legal grant.”<sup>61</sup> That is an important point, for a couple reasons. First, as a contextual issue, it points to American Christianity’s inability to comprehend the importance of land to Native Americans as it relates to theology and worship of God. Second, it brings to the surface, in terms of natural revelation, the character of God revealed in God’s reverence for land. For example, even without knowledge of the Bible, Native Americans understand the Ultimate in terms of connectedness to land. Also, the contract language mentioned by Anderson should pierce the heart of American Christians. In that light, the actions of the United States government in the past two hundred years is inexcusable regarding the treatment of Native Americans and their land. Furthermore, *Missio Dei*, suggests that God has revealed the importance of the land to the Native Americans. Certainly, for the Euro-

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<sup>61</sup>Bernhard Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999). 102.

American, the Native American community could prosper financially if it would only build business on the land, creating commerce, and thereby escape the poverty that defines most Native American communities on reservation lands. The Euro-American does not grasp and has never grasped the depth of connectedness Native Americans have with the Creator through the gift of the land. Smohalla's doctrine is a direct response to the United States government which tried to pacify him with ideas of financial success by farming the land:

You ask me to plough the ground! Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's bosom? Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to rest. You ask me to dig for stone! Shall I dig under her skin for her bones? Then when I die I cannot enter her body to be born again. You ask me to cut grass and make hay, and be rich like white men, how dare I cut off my mother's hair?<sup>62</sup>

Also, for Native Americans in general, to talk about creation is more than a historical recounting of how things and people came to be, it is one of respect. To respect all created things, by giving thanks for their provision, and by recognizing the interconnectedness and of all in the created order, is to acknowledge one's rightful, humble position on Earth as Creator had intended. Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker state this idea well:

Respect, then, is a key word in American Indian cultural context, respect for a tree, for all life, for each other, and for all of what Euro-Christians would call "Creation." Perhaps even more important is the notion that underlies the moral emphasis on respect, a notion we might call reciprocity. The prayers and the offering of tobacco are reciprocal acts of giving something back to the earth and to all of creation in order to maintain balance even as we disrupt the balance by cutting down this tree. . . . The great varieties of stories told in Indian communities about "beginnings" always have the intention of helping those communities to live in the world, not just with each other but with all of the rest of the created realm. Creation, then, is about balance and the respect and reciprocity necessary to maintain balance in the world around us.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Aguilar. 145.

<sup>63</sup>Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, George E. "Tink" Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 34.

All Native American theology is rooted in the idea that all created things are spiritual entities separable from the material body.<sup>64</sup> However, this is the trademark understanding of animism. Eugene Hunn suggests that the heart of animistic religious belief involves a depth and understanding that the above definition reaches for yet does not sufficiently grasp. He says, “People, animals, plants, and other forces of nature-sun, earth, wind, and rock-are animated by spirit. As such, they share with human kind intelligence and will, and thus have moral rights and obligations as PERSONS.”<sup>65</sup>

For American Christians any attempt at reconciling animism with Christian theology flirts with the danger of somehow embracing paganism while at the same time losing identity as Christians. For the Christian, animism often conjures up ideas of idolatry. After all, when Moses went up to Mt. Sinai, he came down to a scene of apostasy and idolatry where the Israelites were worshipping a golden calf due to Moses’ long absence (Ex. 32). The idolatry of the ancient middle east often manifested itself in the human worship of man-made images representing animal life (cf. Ex. 20:4-6). Even Paul, had to deal with idolatrous propensities of the greater Mediterranean world whose object of worship took the form of the created rather than the Creator (see Rom. 1: 23). These are the biblical references and images many Christians recall when merely considering animism as a belief system potentially compatible and non-threatening towards the Christian world view. Care needs to be taken to understand that while the Native American typically views animal, and all other created things, as beings with

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<sup>64</sup>Hunn. 230. Hunn borrows this definition (which I’ve paraphrased in the text) from the nineteenth-century anthropologist theorist, Sir Edward B. Taylor.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid. Cf. *Native Americans: The First Peoples* (El Dorado Hills: 100% Productions), video/dvd. discussions on animism.

spirits, they are not objects of worship.<sup>66</sup> Hunn, states it well, “Animism does not make gods of animals.<sup>67</sup> Plateau people [referring specifically to the Washat] do not worship nature in that way.”<sup>68</sup> More closely related are the biblical references where the entire created order is viewed as having personality, will, or spirit. The Apostle Paul says:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8: 18-23).

For Paul, all of creation, not only human beings (but as well as human beings), experiences the same longings with regard to a future glorious state.

Native Americans see animism in forces of nature as well, such as wind, fire, earthquakes, etc. This is another possible way to see the two world views in commonality. For example, God introduced Self to Moses through a burning bush (Ex. 3: 2-6). Also when Elijah fled from Jezebel, God drew him from the cave with the promise of revealing Self in order to restore Elijah’s confidence. God paraded wind, earthquake, and fire (natural events often understood in terms of God demonstrating God’s power) by Elijah, yet ultimately revealed Self in “sheer silence” (I Kgs. 19: 11-12).

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<sup>66</sup>Charles R. Taber and Tetsunao Yamamori, eds., *Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1975), For an excellent example of nature worship in contrast to the animism of Native Americans, see the autobiographical account of “Juan” (a pseudonym) a leader of a small peasant village in an undisclosed area of the world. Though Juan’s world view is one with attributes of animism, there is certainly a difference between worshipping the “sun” (as depicted in Juan’s story) and merely seeing the sun as a created entity with a spirit all the while acknowledging only the Creator as an object of worship. See 20, 21.

<sup>67</sup>Gerhard M. Schmutterer, *Tomahawk and Cross* (Freeman: Pine Hill Press, 1989). 189. Schmutterer notes that for some Native Americans the sun is “so large and high above all else that it is considered divine” and they venerate (not the same as worship) it.

<sup>68</sup>Hunn. 235.

So, an effort must be made on the part of American Christians to see the animistic beliefs of Native Americans more in terms of natural revelation, and *Missio Dei* as opposed to those of pagan idolatry, thus placing the emphasis on creation connectedness. Once this is understood, unity and fellowship between the two groups become a greater possibility.

Salvation is an important topic in a discussion like this. Salvation is the subject of two of the four discussion questions that Pinnock and Brow use to compare religions (see above) and, for all intents and purposes, discover if a religion is at the very least compatible with Christianity, but more to the point, if it is to be considered Christian at all. This is one point where the issue of indigenous Christianity or Christopaganism<sup>69</sup> rises to the forefront. Can a religion be categorized as Christian when it denies what are considered essential truths of the Christian faith (e.g., bodily resurrection of Christ, the atonement of Christ, Trinity, etc.)? This is where some serious difficulties begin to arise when considering claims that Jesus is in the Washat or that Washat can be considered an indigenous Christian religion. After all, Christianity is based on the nature and works of Jesus. As discussed above, one can reasonably conclude that the Washat's perspective of Creator is strongly community-centric.<sup>70</sup> Hence, there is room to consider Creator in Triune terms thus "making room" for the personalities of the Holy Spirit and the Son. However, the crux of the matter is this, the Washat (as representative of Native American theology) does not acknowledge the existence of "hell" and therefore there is no need for salvation. As John GrosVenor indicates:

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<sup>69</sup>Taber and Yamamori, Phrase borrowed from the book's title.

<sup>70</sup>Cebula. 10. Cf. the creation account where "Old One" and "Coyote" are active in creation, all the while insisting there is one Creator.

The teaching of washat as I understand it is that there is no “hell”. All religions are good. They come from the same rope extended from “Heaven.” Then as the rope is hanging from “Heaven” it begins to unravel and forms different strands. Each strand is a “religion.” All lead to “Heaven.” Thus, all teachings are good. As I understand it..... “Jesus” fits into the Washat. There are some songs that have the “son” in them. Yet, Gerri and I know Washat who also believe in Jesus as savior and Lord. Sometimes.....the teachings are flexible ... depending on the local leader(s). At funerals..... some words are said that lead one to believe that “being good” and “doing good” are enough.<sup>71</sup>

This is a problem because for Christians, salvation is necessary, and Jesus is necessary for salvation. Apart from him there is no hope for an eternity in God’s presence. Being good is not good enough. All religions do not lead to heaven because Jesus, himself said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6) and “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). Furthermore, even if Christ is recognized via natural revelation or *Missio Dei*, there is a lack of recognition concerning His death on a cross. It begs the question, what is so important about Jesus? Once that question is even posited, how can one seriously argue the legitimacy of the Washat as an indigenous Christian belief system instead of merely a Christopagan syncretism (thereby not really Christian at all). An interesting side note to all of this is the fact that while there is no belief in “hell” or in the need for salvation, the idea of an afterlife still exists. Smohalla insisted, “All the dead men will come to life again; their spirits will come to their bodies again.”<sup>72</sup> This statement seems to resemble most closely a theology of Universalism in the sense that there is a heavenly (my assumption) afterlife.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>John GrosVenor, interview by author, email correspondence, Madras, Or. , 08 August 2006.

<sup>72</sup>Ruby and Brown, 3.

<sup>73</sup>Schmutterer. 188.

The first step could be recognizing the Washat as developing in theology with the faith that the Holy Spirit will bring to fruition a more complete and accurate view of the Son and His salvific work on the cross. So to dismiss the Washat at this point as a Christopagan syncretism is an extreme that should be avoided. A more positive view, one taken by this author, is the idea that the Holy Spirit will continue His work, as evident in those who currently have a saving relationship in Christ, with the people of the Washat in order to establish a true indigenous Christianity. For now, it may be wise to consider the Washat in a developmental stage.

The second step, closely related to the first, is considering the witness of the individual over that of the whole. As John Grosvenor said, “. . . Gerri and I know Washat who also believe in Jesus as savior and Lord.” So, somehow there are certain folks of the Washat who have a personal relationship with Christ and acknowledge His saving work for humanity on the cross. Determining the source of revelation for such individuals is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, one of the options that must be considered is the Holy Spirit’s role in the revelation of Christ’s role of Savior. It is a *Missio Dei* in progress as suggested by Twiss.<sup>74</sup>

The dynamics of individual and community spirituality is a subject that needs to be addressed. For Native Americans the recognition of the spiritual realm and its role in every aspect of life was a constant. George Aguilar states:

Before Christianity and other religious beliefs were introduced into Indian culture, the belief in personal guardian spirits was the most marked characteristics of Indian religious life. Guardian spirits were presumed to bring strength, cunning, eloquent speech, success in war, acquisition of wealth, prestige, rank, and recognition in tribal affairs.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Twiss. 18.

<sup>75</sup>Aguilar. 131.

The best place to start is the vision quest. Depending on tribal customs, children aged five to ten are sent out on a vision quest in order to receive his or her medicine or guardian spirit and spirit song.<sup>76, 77</sup> For the Washat, the young individual is sent away to spend a time of solitude fasting<sup>78</sup> in the hills or another specific location<sup>79</sup> until he or she received supernatural power as a result of learning the song.<sup>80</sup> The spirit is called Yuhl-mah or Shukwat.<sup>81</sup> As a result, each individual journeys through life with his or her own personal guardian spirit.<sup>82</sup> George Aguilar says, “The manifested god or guardian spirit was usually something like an animal, a bird, or thunder, and it remained with the individual the rest of his or her life.”<sup>83</sup> Each Yuhl-mah possesses specific powers.<sup>84</sup> The Yuhl-mah enables the individual to use such powers when deemed necessary. Some of the basic “powers” categories are healing, divination by dreams, warrior, orator, prophets, sanctioned root diggers, hunters, fisherman, handlers of dead people, etc.<sup>85</sup> The latter,

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John indicates that his Nez Perce mentors said that young men went out to seek their *wayakin*.

<sup>78</sup>Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 64. The author states, “. . . these ceremonies have much in common with the suffering of Jesus in the Christian gospels, because the individual undertaking the ceremony willingly undergoes a discipline of suffering on behalf of the people. This is even true in the case of the Rite of Vigil, often called the “vision quest” in the literature. While there are particularly individual benefits that can accrue from engaging in this ceremony of fasting and prayer, even the eventual benefits are enjoyed by the individual for the sake of the community as a whole.” The relevance lies in its relation to *Missio Dei* in the sense that God reveals the idea of vicarious atonement through the vision quest ritual with the hope of the indigenous group grasping God’s ultimate gift to human kind via Jesus’ suffering on the cross.

<sup>79</sup>Aguilar. 132. Many no longer practice this because it violates laws of the land concerning child neglect.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. The individual was then considered to be possessed with what is now known as a Tamanwas.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Hunn. 239. Today there is a decline of spirit power possession due to non-practice of the vision quest by many people of the Washat today but for other reasons as well, “What spoils young people is being baptized. That chases Indian spirits away. Young folks can’t get a spirit now.”; “These kids don’t have a feeling for the woods or the mountains. They might inherit a power now, but they can’t find one.”; “It’s eatin’ that white food. It spoils them inside; then they can’t get a power.”; “School killed my power. Maybe if I don’t talk white way, I’d know things ahead.” (Schuster 1975: 118).

<sup>83</sup>Aguilar.

<sup>84</sup>Smith. 15. Cf. vision quest of Native Americans of Puget Sound region.

<sup>85</sup>Aguilar. 133.

sometimes called bone cleaners or raisers of the dead, were said to be able to converse with the departed.<sup>86</sup> Some spirits are more powerful than others and depending on the nature of the individual, the spirit can be used to bring about harm to others. This is the very reason that within every (ancient) Native American tribal community there was an aura of suspicion and uneasiness in every personal interaction.<sup>87</sup> Men and women were equally spiritual. For example, besides her Yuhl-mah powers, a menstruating woman was imbued with uncontrollable, dangerous powers which men avoided because the menstrual blood had a weakening effect on their own powers.<sup>88</sup>

The shaman, previously mentioned, was not only a village doctor with special healing powers, but he also had greater powers than the average individual, and would often spiritually “attack” others whom offended him.<sup>89</sup> A harmonious relationship with a shaman was always desirable, for the shaman not only had the power to cure illnesses, but he had the power to cause them as well.<sup>90</sup> This was such a prevalent belief that any case of illness in the village caused the shaman to attract the suspicions of the people.<sup>91</sup> Often times, one village shaman would spiritually “duel” another for superiority often resulting in the death of the weaker.<sup>92</sup> Concerning medical procedures and healings, the shaman often performed with the aid of his Yuhl-mah, the source of his healing powers.<sup>93</sup> However, since he was spiritually more powerful than others, he had at his grasp as well, the powers of other individuals’ Yuhl-mah to aide in such procedures. So perhaps even more accurate a description of the shaman’s role in village life was that of controller of

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Smith. 15.

<sup>88</sup>Cebula. 28.

<sup>89</sup>Smith. 15.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. 16.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Aguilar. 132.

spirits.<sup>94</sup> Typically, for the Washat, illnesses are the result of a physical ailment or an “underlying spiritual disorder.”<sup>95</sup> If the former, well-known medicines derived from plants could be used by anyone in particular. If the latter, a trip to the shaman was in order.<sup>96</sup> Though shamanism is not widely practiced today, it certainly is not obsolete.

George Aguilar comments:

Some of the elders of the Warm Springs-both Wasco and Sahaptin-have become disturbed by a few Caucasians who are practicing the old Shamanistic ways of Itohiul, or Indian Doctoring. The practice does not belong to a specific person, tribe, or ethnic group, however, and can be had by anyone who wishes to pay the price. To dabble in the supernatural world has its consequences. The price is death-specifically spiritual death.<sup>97</sup>

As one can see, the spiritual realm had the capability of wreaking havoc among Native American communities, not only in terms of personal relationships but in terms of relationships with nature and the Creator. So it is understandable why “harmony” was so important to Native Americans. Individuals were always careful not to “offend” another in any way because repercussions could surface in terms of personal harm, sickness, even death. Although, there were always certain individuals with confrontational natures who would often stir up grievances as tests of prowess. The result was “incredible suspicion and constant surveillance in all human relationships.”<sup>98</sup> There were no accidents. Whatever befell the individual, good or bad, was a result of spirit power influences.<sup>99</sup>

The Native American’s appreciation and respect for the spirit realm is enviable, but what can the American Christian take from it? Certainly many are familiar with biblical passages addressing the activities of spiritual beings. After all, God is a spiritual

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Hunn. 193.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Aguilar.

<sup>98</sup>Smith. 15.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

being. Angels are spiritual beings prevalent in Scripture. However, when the average American Christian tries to understand the spiritual realm of Native Americans as described above, the tendency (in this author's opinion) is to think of the whole system in terms of "evil" spirituality, and in no way reconcilable with the all-loving, all-powerful Christian God of the Bible.

Perhaps a common ground is to see Native American spirituality more in terms of an affirmation of the reality of the spiritual realm, an idea certainly compatible with the Christian world view. In modern American Christianity, many seem to dismiss the spiritual realm to the point of indifference. Furthermore, there is the understanding (addressed above in *Missio Dei* discussions) that the Holy Spirit is continually revealing Himself as a Spirit of peace, one that frees an individual from the fears of other spiritual powers. This again could be seen as part of the continuing mission of the Holy Spirit.

At this point, it is helpful to revisit the thesis question, "*How is Jesus manifest in the Washat?*" in order to refocus the reader. The issue is not to determine the Christian orthodoxy of the Washat, but rather to determine what can be learned from the Washat despite any perceived short-comings in orthodoxy. While Christ's works, especially his salvific endeavors, should never be discussed in terms of "hair splitting" (as they are essential matters) they should nevertheless be open to discussion in terms of how those works are revealed. The possibility certainly exists that the written Word is not the sole means of revealing such truths. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit would have much less on the "to do list."

### CHAPTER THREE

#### WASHAT CHRISTOLOGY: THEORY

Thus far, this thesis has addressed some history, customs, and general theology of the Washat, at times through the broader lens of the larger Native American community, in order to acquaint the reader with an overview of the Washat world view. The remainder of this thesis narrows in scope to address the specific question at hand, *how is Jesus manifest in the Washat religion?* It will attempt to do so in terms of Christology. As will be shown, the traditional approach to Christology via Creed and scriptural hermeneutics simply will not do. Another approach to Christology will be considered, one grounded in *Missio Dei*, natural revelation, and contextual theology. Often times, these methods are deemed faulty because they do not explicitly illuminate the nature and works of Jesus when compared to the concise, explicit model depicted in the special revelation of Scripture. As will be seen, a broken relationship between two colliding cultures has all but precluded the use of Scripture concerning its role in revealing Jesus. So, if Jesus is believed to be manifest *through* the Washat, the argument can be made that he was made known to them via other means. In essence, the logical starting point must be that the Washat already knew Jesus. The Christological “theory” topics in this chapter will include issues of atonement, sin and incarnation, deity of Christ, and eschatology.

Perhaps one of the stronger, yet more concise, words to describe the history of the past five-hundred years is “distrust.” Native Americans have been subject to a myriad of

broken treaties, dispossession, mistreatment, acculturation, assimilation,<sup>1</sup> relocation, etc., etc.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, one of the topics that falls under the category of “distrust” (from the Native American perspective) is the Good News of Jesus. Until the two cultures collided, Native Americans were not familiar with the Christian Gospel as depicted in the Bible. With a relationship defined by “distrust,” it is no wonder that many Native Americans resisted the Gospel message as purported by the Euro-Americans. Certainly, many did “convert” to the Euro-American version of the Jesus story, but many others struggled to hold onto their aboriginal beliefs by either merely going through the motions in order to appease their new “teachers,” or by indiscriminately continuing to practice traditional worship customs.<sup>3</sup> The result for many of the Native Americans was a syncretistic religion combining the beliefs of the two. The Euro-Americans did all they could to completely rid the Native Americans of their “pagan beliefs.”<sup>4</sup> So, unfortunately, Native Americans are often suspicious of Christianity because it is perceived as the White man’s religion.<sup>5</sup>

Suspicion and distrust are some significant hurdles to overcome. Thus, one cannot reasonably expect the Native American to accept the White man’s views on the nature and works of Christ on face-value alone. Certainly, the Holy Spirit has a role to play in this. After all, the Holy Spirit can work in the hearts of all human beings, regardless of cultural background, in order to reveal the absolute truths of Christ. This is

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<sup>1</sup>Francis P. Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976). 265. The reader should recognize the role that Christian missionaries played in the assimilation, and acculturation of the American Indian through mission school curriculum.

<sup>2</sup>*The Nations Within* (St. Louis: International Center), video tape/dvd.

<sup>3</sup>Information taken from Mission Schools exhibit at Museum at Warm Springs, Warm Springs Reservation, near Madras, Oregon.

<sup>4</sup>*The Nations Within*.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*.

the argument of Washat Christians who, while suspicious of the White-man's Christology, are confident that an accurate and true Christology has indeed been revealed to them through the workings of the Holy Spirit. This can be argued in terms of *Missio Dei*, natural revelation, and contextual theology.

### **A. Atonement**

At the heart of Jesus Christ's work was his vicarious suffering on a cross in order to reconcile humanity with God. For a culture that had never been exposed to the written Scriptures, and yet contends that this all important message was inherently known, the question arises, *how*? How can their possibly be knowledge of Christ's atonement outside of the special revelation of Scripture? George "Tink" Tinker provides some insight:

What can the death of a man 2000 years ago possibly have to do with people who live today? This serious theological question was posed by a man who had been raised a Christian Indian, but had begun incorporating traditional spiritual practices, including the Sun Dance, back into his life for several years. For the moment, however, there was an answer for him that slowed him down even if only temporarily. "Why do you dance?" was the question asked in return. Sometimes the deepest theological discussions are very short and to the point. His only reply was, "Oh! . . . Yeah." No more words were needed, since both Indians knew full well the vicarious suffering aspect of Indian spiritual commitments at Sun Dance, the Rite of Vigil, and the Purification Ceremony (called sweat lodge in English, by some).<sup>6</sup>

This is a wonderful example of how specific *Missio Dei* can be. As stated previously, God desires to reveal Godself. God's desire to self-reveal is not restricted to the knowledge of God's creative attributes, something rather "general" when compared to the "specific" revelation of God's Son and His vicarious atonement on the cross as evidenced by the events mentioned in the quote above.

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<sup>6</sup>Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 62.

Something else needs to be mentioned regarding what may be called a hierarchy of revelation. Typically, many Christians will subscribe to the idea that special revelation should be given more weight than general revelation when defending truth. For example, when contemplating the existence of God, the Christian is more likely to defend his or her position on the basis of Scripture rather than by engaging in a philosophical/theoretical/scientific approach that considers the physical evidence at hand, i.e., the order in the universe, and the “mere” fact that it exists. In this regard, the response of the dancing Indian is truly relevant. He grew up as a Christian, likely familiar with Christianity 101 which addresses the atonement of Christ. The argument can be made that his understanding of Christ’s atonement was not complete, in his own heart and mind, until he realized the connection between his Sun Dance and Jesus, the Son of God. This is a strong argument for *Missio Dei*, natural revelation, and contextual theology all in one short theologically precise answer . . . “Oh! . . . Yeah.”

Another thing is significant. The Holy Spirit was working in this individual not only that he should come to a greater understanding of Christ’s atonement, but in the sense of personal identity. The Holy Spirit was revealing to this individual the importance of his Native American culture, heritage, and methods of worship. The Holy Spirit realized a craving in the heart of this individual, even though he may not have realized it himself, to worship in the way the Creator had created him to do so.

The ceremonies themselves reveal an inherent understanding of vicarious suffering, and “have much in common with the suffering of Jesus in the Christian gospels.”<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that these ceremonies and dances are not performed for merely recreational purposes but are worship connected. It is a horrible thing to think

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 64.

that the American government, in partnership with the Church at the time,<sup>8</sup> forbade the practice of such ceremonies because they were considered pagan and idolatrous and even more explicitly perceived as devil worship.<sup>9</sup> It should be considered a more than reasonable possibility that at the source of Native American fortitude to hold fast to such customs and worship practices, and to establish revival of such in the hearts of those who had been totally disconnected with such, was none other than the Triune God of the universe.

Also, Native Americans are familiar with the concept of grace as the dances and ceremonies inherently speak of God's grace. Certainly, knowledge of God's grace via such expressions can be deemed too general in scope to point to Jesus. However, this need not be the case when one sees the worship practices through Native American eyes like the authors of *A Native American Theology* suggest, "Because of their understanding of vicarious suffering in such ceremonial contexts, Indian people have an inherent insight into the Christian concept of grace that precedes the arrival of the missionaries. We could even go so far as to insist that we already had the Gospel."<sup>10</sup> In this light, Jesus' death on a cross can be viewed as an act of God which can be communicated to a people in different ways, not relegated to the written word.<sup>11</sup> Also, just because it is not communicated through such does not mean the message is any less concise. This is

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<sup>8</sup>Prucha, see the discussion addressing a time when the United States government subsidized various churches and charged them with the duty of educating Native Americans. This was practiced until the end of the nineteenth century when legislation proscribed a shift from Church-led education of Native Americans to government-led education of Native Americans. 283.

<sup>9</sup>Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 63.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 64

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 79. Native American oral tradition, revealed in the stories of "Corn Mother" and "White Buffalo Calf Woman," points to an inherent knowledge of atonement. Both stories, "recount a salvific moment in the community's past, yet both continue to function to bring some element of "salvation" and wholeness to the peoples who honor the stories today." Some people of the Washat argue that such stories act to reveal the human Jesus, and His atoning work on the cross.

comforting, especially to a group of people who still pass on traditions and beliefs via ceremony and oral transmission.

Concerning the above approach which addresses an inherent knowledge of Jesus' atonement and the idea of God's grace through vicarious suffering, Native American Christians provide some philosophical and hermeneutical evidence to support their claims. The need to do so is not for their own justification. It is more of an appeal to the missionary to be open to the idea of Christ's revelation through alternate means, not only as recorded in Scripture. Specific attention will be given to the beginning of John's Gospel which recounts the role and identity of the pre-incarnate Jesus (see Jn. 1:1-3, 14). For many Native American scholars of the Bible, a distinction is made between the human Jesus and the Logos/Christ. The Native American tends to see a disconnect between the human Jesus, and the Logos/Christ in the sense that, as a human being, Jesus had a beginning and an end.<sup>12</sup> He was born and he died. For the Native American, what happened in the interim, between creation and Jesus' first advent, is of special concern.<sup>13</sup> The crux of the argument is that the Logos/Christ was all the while about the business of conveying the grace of God through vicarious suffering, the same mission continued by Jesus in the earthly mode of existence. While Scripture does not mention anything about the specific role of the pre-incarnate Son, it is not unrealistic to give credence to such a claim.<sup>14</sup> This is good news for Native American Christians who love Jesus but at the

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<sup>12</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John suggests that Jesus (Y'Shua) was not eternal or pre-incarnate, but the logos/word (the Anointed or Pre-destined One) was pre-incarnate. Thus, when the logos became human, he was named Y'Shua.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 76-79. See treatment of Jesus and Christ/Logos.

<sup>14</sup>*Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology*, ed. E. F. Harrison, Bromiley, G. W., Henry, C. F. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000). S. v. "theophany." The author points to a strong connection between the Old Testament theophanies and Jesus. This suggests that one of the roles of the pre-incarnate Christ was to reveal God in the flesh sporadically throughout human history, with the ultimate expression in the form of Jesus of Nazareth.

same time feel a sense of loyalty toward their traditional roots. For too long they have been told by Euro-American Christian missionaries that they need to choose one or the other because the two world views are incompatible.<sup>15</sup> This allows them the freedom and confidence to embrace Jesus and their traditions, all the while having within their grasp an “apologetic” which will serve them when confronted with the ignorant, but well-meaning, conversion strategies of Euro-American missionaries. This is also good news for the Euro-American Christian evangelizers to Native Americans. It is a fresh way to view the Gospel. It can also serve as a “common ground/starting point” on which to base attempts at repairing a broken relationship with the indigenous peoples of this great land. Taking the initiative (referring to Euro-American missionaries) might go a long way in the eyes of Native Americans in acknowledging a genuine attempt to establish a new-found trust between the groups. Also, such an approach to the above passage should serve as a reminder to any Christian missionary group seeking conversion of an indigenous people that, “the Gospel is never naked, it is always culturally clothed.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, one could even argue against the need at all for Euro-American evangelism to Native Americans.<sup>17</sup>

The main task of this thesis, however, is not to argue for total reconciliation between the Washat religion and Christianity; the cultural differences seem to make that an impossibility. It is to recognize how Jesus is manifest in the Washat apart from any

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<sup>15</sup>John GrosVenor, interview by author, email correspondence, Madras, Or. , 23 July 2006. John addressed the issue like this, “further more.... today when a seven drum (synonym for Washat-my clarification) leader spoke at a funeral.... he told of the Nez Perce given the choice back in the late 1800's to be "Christian" and go to Lapwai or be "Nez Perce and traditional" and go to Nespelem. This is the kind of thing I fight against~~~to be Christian OR be Indian. I'm opposed to that and have been for a life time !!!”

<sup>16</sup>Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker, 113.

<sup>17</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. Particularly if these Euro-Americans still persist in the old paradigm and prejudice.

human efforts to evangelize. So the question is, what can American Christianity learn from the Washat?

So, in terms of atonement, perhaps it is best to understand that the idea of vicarious suffering is not a foreign idea for those of cultures not familiar with the Good News. The argument can be made that it is indeed a unique concept. That being said, the revelation of such a concept by God to indigenous peoples throughout the world is not an unreasonable possibility. Therefore, neither is the idea that the specificity of Christ's atonement is beyond the capacity of God to reveal to all humanity of God's own accord. This idea can help the American Christian embrace more the idea of global community, the idea that all groups have insights to God and Jesus. It can help in the success of missions, which is often hindered by attitudes of superiority<sup>18</sup> which, when perceived by the recipient group, can be detrimental to the spreading of the Gospel.

## **B. Sin and Incarnation**

However, placing all this emphasis on the role of the pre-incarnate Logos/Christ seems to diminish the importance of the human Jesus. After all, there is significance in His humanity. Jesus came to earth to deal with humanity's sins. An adequate Christology must address the subject of sin. The fundamental understanding that human beings are by nature sinful beings, and an understanding that Jesus remedies the problem of sin for humanity is of primary concern when discerning whether or not a religious system is to be considered Christian. Therefore, an understanding of Washat beliefs in terms of sin and incarnation is in order.

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<sup>18</sup>*The Nations Within*. There is a discussion about perceived attitudes of superiority which was considered at times to be the ultimate factor concerning resistance to the White man's Gospel.

The Native American understanding of sin is quite different from the Euro-American Christian understanding. The Euro-American Christian sees sin in terms of willful acts of disobedience. The Native American has difficulty with this because life is always an attempt to maintain harmony with everything in the created order and with the Creator. Each individual's will is aimed at accomplishing this.<sup>19</sup> Sin for them would be an obscene attempt to disrupt that harmony, and thus is quite foreign. How then does one address this issue in terms of Jesus and His dealings with sin?

First of all, the issue can be addressed by differentiating between the outward physical actions and the more inward spiritual actions. The Native Americans' physical actions, which demonstrate a high regard for creation and subsequently reflect a love for the creator, certainly would not draw attention to an inherent sinfulness. Care for the land, appropriate use of resources, and constant thanksgiving to the Creator for such indicates a healthy relationship as far as those things are concerned. However, interpersonal relationships, especially with regard to the spiritual, reveal the need for healing. As mentioned in Chapter Two, individuals are constantly suspicious of others, afraid that an offense might bring about bad fortune because of "warring" constantly occurring in the spiritual realm between the spiritual personalities which are part of each individual. Certainly, the Native American should understand this as sin because it does not promote harmony. Since everything in the created order is interconnected, the spiritual "warring" between only two people would cause disruption to the whole. For

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<sup>19</sup>Ruby & Brown, 202-203. This is not to say that Native Americans always choose right over wrong. This reference to a conversation with a contemporary representative of the Brule Teton Sioux, a tribe which practices the Ghost Dance religion (very similar to the teachings of the Washat), communicates the confession process an individual undergoes when personally convicted of his or her own sin. While this does not specifically deal with the role of Christ's atoning work in dealing with humanity's sins, it does give helpful insight concerning the individuals response to sin.

the Washat, this is evidence for the need of Christ and His forgiveness of sins. His forgiveness restores order and harmony to the whole.

What about the Incarnation, though? Traditional Native American theology does not seem to address such an understanding of Jesus. However, an individual's faith transcends mere understanding of a traditional belief system, thus enabling an individual to believe truths about God without fully understanding them cognitively. This can be demonstrated in Cornelius' reception of the Holy Spirit *during* Peter's witness of the incarnate Christ, "While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word." (Acts 10: 44). The significance lies in the fact that while Peter was still conveying the message, the group received the Holy Spirit, suggesting that something beyond mere mental assent concerning Jesus, His incarnation, and His works are necessary to inwardly grasp truths about Jesus. After all, Cornelius and his household's traditional religious system did not acknowledge Jesus. Certainly Peter played a role, but a topic of debate could be, *what did his role entail?* Was he there by necessity to convey the message of Jesus' Good News (including the entirety of His nature and works, e.g., His incarnation, etc)? Was he there to witness God's revelation of the incarnate Christ, a *Missio Dei* in specificity, with the charge of sharing with the greater Christian community (upon his return to Jerusalem, perhaps) that specific truths about Jesus can be revealed by Godself apart from any human effort? The latter is more appealing concerning this thesis. Perhaps this is a way to see the Great Commission as something other than anthro-centric, but rather as a mission carried out by God and humans in a combined effort to proclaim the Good News.

### C. Deity of Christ

“But who do you say that I am?” (Mt. 16: 15, cf. Mk. 8: 29; Lk. 9:20). Jesus went to great lengths to reveal His true nature to all he encountered, via miracles, self proclamation (Jn. 8: 58), and identifying with the Father (Jn. 10:30). Acknowledging Christ’s deity is central to the Gospel message and to an individual’s salvation (Jn. 8: 24). What in Washat theology, if anything, points to such an understanding? Furthermore, how can such a pertinent and specific truth begin to be addressed in terms of natural revelation, *Missio Dei*, and context theology. It is at this point that they have seemed to reach their limits. Such specific truths must be conveyed explicitly through evangelizing efforts.

So, how does Washat theology account for this all-important Christ claim, if indeed it does? To say that it is addressed in the ceremonies that illustrate vicarious suffering (addressed earlier in this chapter), or the “Corn Mother,” and “White Buffalo Calf Woman” stories (see page 32 of this thesis, footnote 11 for explanation) is to miss the mark. While they may suggest an inherent understanding of atonement, they fall short of demonstrating knowledge of Christ’s deity. Perhaps the closest concept that can be established via natural revelation, *Missio Dei*, and context theology is the Washat understanding of the duality of the human existence. Established in Chapter Two is the notion that central to Native American theology is that in addition to a physical body, each individual (more accurately, every created thing) has a separate spiritual identity. This is a great way to open dialogue about the deity of Christ. It is a point of common ground. After all, discussions about the deity of Christ throughout church history have been addressed in terms of Christ’s dual nature, i.e., how his divine and human natures

function with regard to one another.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the best way to summarize the discussion is that while an explicit knowledge of Christ's deity is not part of the indigenous Washat theology, the readiness to receive the idea is not a huge hurdle to overcome.

It seems there is always a hesitancy or unwillingness on the part of Christians to learn from a world view that is not congruent in every aspect with the traditional teachings of the Church. For example, even though Scripture, in certain passages, suggests an interconnectedness of all creation, many Christians will shy away from discussions that suggest other world views (i.e., those based on monistic or pantheistic views of the ultimate) have something to offer in the sense that they contain certain truths. For many, this seems to be for fear of losing Christian identity, or for fear of deemphasizing the role of Christ by merely acknowledging truths about other religions. However, this need not be the case when viewing various world views through the lens of *Missio Dei*. God's desire to reveal Self is evident by the similarities or common truths found from religion to religion. Therefore, the emphasis should be placed on the commonality rather than the differences. The hope of *Missio Dei* is the constant Self-revelation of God to all peoples so that the truths about Christ will be evident to all. Again, it is a work in progress by an ever-patient God.

That being said, what can be learned from the Washat concerning the Deity of Christ, the topic of sin, and the Incarnation? Because of their emphasis on and their thorough understanding of the spiritual "side" of the individual (see discussion in Chapter Two), perhaps light can be shed onto the subjects of Christ's deity and the Incarnation, subjects of continual interest throughout church history, up to and including today.

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<sup>20</sup>Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1998). See treatment in Chapter Six: The Incarnation.

Concerning sin, perhaps it lies in the notion that the Washat point to our need to more consistently acknowledge the sins that we, as American Christians, are guilty of regarding treatment of the land and food resources (e.g., toxic dumping, depletion of forests, over-hunting, over-fishing, etc.).

#### **D. Eschatology**

Even a basic familiarity with Revelation will cause one to immediately notice similarities with eschatological teachings of Native Americans. Common to both are catastrophic events which eventually give way to a new beginning, a time of peace and harmony, a time free of sin. Consider the following eschatological teachings from two Native American tribes which are representative of the majority of Native American teachings on the subject.

1)“Tribal leaders of the Hopi tribe, such as Dan Evehama, Thomas Banyaca and Martin Gashwaseoma prophesy that the coming of the white man signals the end times, along with a strange beast “like a buffalo but with great horns that would overrun the land” (i.e. cattle). It is prophesized that during the end times the earth would be crossed by iron snakes and stone rivers, (i.e. railroads), and the land would be criss-crossed by a giant spider's web (i.e. freeways), and seas will turn black(i.e.,oilspills).

Another prophecy indicates that a “great dwelling place” in the heavens shall fall with great crash. It will appear as a blue star, and the earth will rock to and fro. White men would then battle people in other lands, with those who possess wisdom of their presence. There would then be smoke in the deserts, and the signs that great destruction is near.

Many would then die, but those who understand the prophecies shall live in the places of the Hopi people and be safe. The Pahana or "True White Brother" would then return to plant the seeds of wisdom in people's hearts, and thus usher in the dawn of the Fifth World.”

2) Sioux. “According to an Ogalala - or Sioux medicine man – “darkness would descend over the tribe...the world would be out of balance. Floods, fires and earthquakes would then ensue.” A “White Buffalo Calf Woman” will then purify the world. She will then bring back harmony and spiritual balance. A white

buffalo was born in 1994, and another in 1995. Many tribal leaders thus feel that the prophecy is being fulfilled.”<sup>21</sup>

Three things will be noted at this point concerning the similarities between the apocalyptic language<sup>22</sup> of the Native American and the Bible, all in terms of *Missio Dei*. First of all, it can be argued that God is revealing Self in both because of similarities in the form of apocalyptic language. The language is very symbolic, especially regarding, “the development of increasingly cosmic imagery to depict God’s intervention in judgment and salvation.”<sup>23</sup> in both Native American accounts and Bible accounts (cf. Revelation; Mt. 24). This is a common trait of the apocalyptic in general.

Second, it can be argued that because of their strong connection to the spiritual realm, the Native American apocalyptic was transmitted from God to the man via a supernatural agent, similar to the typical transmittal process suggested by other apocalyptic.<sup>24</sup> So again, this consistency suggests *Missio Dei* at work.

Third, the role of prophet is important in both for a couple of similar reasons. First, the prophet’s role is to communicate the message received from God via the intermediary. After all, the duty of a prophet is to proclaim a message. Second, the message has a two-fold purpose. The first aim is to warn the recipient people of difficult times ahead. The second is to encourage the people to hold fast because after the catastrophic events pass, a time of peace and harmony awaits them where there will be no

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<sup>21</sup>The Global Oneness Commitment, [http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Eschatology\\_-\\_Native\\_American/id/1289859](http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Eschatology_-_Native_American/id/1289859)

<sup>22</sup>I Howard Marshall, Stephen Travis, and Ian Paul, *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Letters and Revelation*, vol. Two (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), see thorough treatment of apocalyptic literature in Section D Apocalyptic Literature/Chapter 21: The Revelation to John, 305-328.

<sup>23</sup>Marshall, Travis, and Paul, 306.

<sup>24</sup>Ralph P. Martin, and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s.v. “Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism.”

more tears and pain. Ultimately, eschatological apocalyptic seeks to comfort people in a time of great distress.

So, what can be learned from this aspect of apocalyptic eschatology of the Washat? It has been shown that eschatological apocalyptic seems to transcend culture. Whether Native American, or Middle Eastern, the similarities in all aspects of the genre are striking.<sup>25</sup> It also seems to transcend time. It can be argued that such ideas were borrowed from the White man's Bible, but this is difficult to corroborate because the crux of theological teaching was focused more on the works and nature of Christ.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the recognition of *Missio Dei* in this additional realm can do nothing but help in terms of establishing community.

Another interesting aspect of eschatology, somewhat unique to the Washat, was the idea that a "Millennial Day" would soon come where the world would be reverted to all the Indians upon their resurrection.<sup>27</sup>

[They believe that] very soon now their dead ancestors will all come to life, every stone becoming a living Indian, that all the whites will be killed off, and their property go to the Indians, and further that the great Smohalla, will establish numberless great stores filled with all manner of fine goods, where all Indians can go and help themselves. They believe that if they will continue faithful to the old habits and beliefs of their ancestors, that the Great Spirit will in the near future suddenly bring to life all Indians who have died for the last thousand years or more, and will enable the Indians to at once expel or exterminate all the whites and have the whole country to themselves the same as before the white man came.

There are several points of interest here. The first thing to be noted is the connection with land in their eschatology. Their hearts reveal a desire to be part of the land as they once new, a yearning for re-establishment of an age old friendship. This

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<sup>25</sup>Marshall, Travis, and Paul, 306-307.

<sup>26</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John suggests that this is based upon the faulty presupposition that God could not have spoken to Native Americans directly.

<sup>27</sup>Ruby and Brown, 30.

language of land and eschatology certainly is not foreign to the Christian. Speaking within the context of eschatological realms, Jesus, Himself, said, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Mt. 5: 5).

Second, there is reference to a general resurrection in the sense that “all Indians” will come back to life. Again the specific goal of this resurrection seems to be land connected in the sense that Indians will have returned to them the land which the white man had taken. However, absent is the idea that some will be destined to a place of torment (cf. Rev. 20: 15), notice that the white man is exterminated.

Another similarity, though not so explicitly demonstrated, is the idea that this life after death will be one of peace and free of danger from evildoers (i.e., the white man). The Indian will be restored to the land and will be provided everything he needs. Things will be restored as they once were before the coming of the white man.

Furthermore, there is a conditional aspect in the sense that this resurrection will only take place if Indians remain faithful to their customs. This is very interesting because this is central to and unique to Smohalla’s doctrine as mentioned earlier. It is not unreasonable to associate this conditional aspect of eschatology with the Christian aspect that assures salvation to those who believe in Jesus, while those who do not are relegated to hell.

Certainly unique to Smohalla’s account is the idea that the stones will be resurrected as living Indians. While such a transformation is strange for the Christian, perhaps it is better understood in symbolic terms. For example, knowing the importance of spirituality in all created things for the Native American, perhaps the Christian can see this as a renewal of elements of the earth and cosmos as suggested in such language as,

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (Rev. 21: 1) and, “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God . . .” (Rom. 8: 19). Furthermore, Paul certainly draws upon the inter-connectedness of humans and the rest of the created order when talks about matters of reconciliation to God.

So, the “Millennial Day” aspect of Washat eschatology resembles in many ways certain aspects of biblical eschatology. Perhaps the best thing the American Christian can take from the Washat is the emphasis on a holistic or cosmic reconciliation to God in the eschaton, rather than a mere individualistic or human-centered approach. After all, with the emphasis that Paul places on reconciliation in Romans in terms of the entire created order (cf. Rom. 1 and 8), this would be a great approach.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WASHAT CHRISTOLOGY: WORSHIP

Not much has been written regarding the specific nature of Washat worship. So, much of the information found in this chapter comes from personal interviews of people who practice the Washat,<sup>1</sup> or from first hand experience of Washat longhouse services. The services described and information provided relate particularly to the Washat of Warm Springs reservation near Madras, Oregon. It must be noted that all Washat services differ to some degree depending on the officiator (pastor) and particular tribal customs. This can be likened to different worship practices among various denominations of Christianity. Also, it must be noted that while many Washat still practice weekly services, some gather less often. This, in part, may be due to the death of tribal elders who, while living, conveyed the importance of carrying on weekly meetings. Unfortunately, that sense of urgency did not seem to survive them. It may also be because of increasing logistical difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

Another, unfortunate, piece of information must be conveyed. Many tribal elders, those who officiate and/or are integral to the Washat services were reluctant to respond to this author's inquiries. This is certainly understandable in light of the distrust and

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<sup>1</sup>The bulk of information from personal interviews comes from two sources, Butch David, a friend and co-worker who lives in Simnasho on the Warm Springs reservation near Madras, Oregon, and John GrosVenor, a friend from Colville Reservation, Nespelem, Washington.

<sup>2</sup>Butch David, interview by author, personal interview, Madras, Or., 17 August 2006. Butch said that interest dropped off because of the time and effort required on the part of congregants to volunteer and prepare food for the gatherings. A large part of the worship service was table fellowship, and apparently there has been a lack of volunteers recently.

suspensions that many Native Americans still feel toward the White man because of unfair treatment, past and present.<sup>3</sup> These are unfortunate circumstances which reflect, to this day, strained relations between the two cultures.

This chapter will explore Washat Christology in terms of worship practices. The aim will be to see how Jesus is manifest in Washat worship in order to determine what American Christianity can learn from it. Specific topics to be discussed will be prayer, physical setting, form, and ceremonies (Huckleberry and Root Feasts, funerals, and name-giving), each followed by a brief discussion addressing what can be learned and how it may be applied to American Christian worship.

#### **A. Prayer**

Individual prayer for a person of the Washat is similar to that of a Christian. While a Christian may begin prayer by addressing, “God/Father/Lord/Jesus,” the person of the Washat typically addresses, “Creator.” Individual prayer is a matter of personal preference concerning how often, subject, etc. There are not necessarily designated times of prayer throughout the day. Prayers take the form of thanksgiving, specific requests in time of need, provision of food and shelter, confession, protection of family/friends, etc. A somewhat unique aspect of prayer was conveyed by a Washat friend, Butch David, who told me:

I was going through a very difficult time in my life and I went to a secluded place to pray. I was in great distress and the only thing I could pray was a song/prayer that my father had passed on to me. My father would always pray this prayer song and I learned it at a young age. It gave me great comfort to know that I had

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<sup>3</sup>John GrosVenor, interview by author, telephone interview, Madras, Or. , 23 July 2006. John informed me of a prevailing attitude of “suspicion” on the part of Native Americans when they encounter a White man seeking information about Native American ways. He gave the example that if someone were gathering information to write a book or make a movie about Native ways, there would be an expectation to share in some of the profits. According to John, Native Americans claim (by and large) that they never receive any proceeds. Cf. Butch David’s response which pointed to the fact that much of the information gathered has resulted in the exploitation of Native Americans in the media.

this song with me always when I can't find the words of my own to cry out to Creator (my paraphrase).

This author discovered another intriguing aspect of personal prayer for the Washat during a longhouse ceremony<sup>4</sup> when an elder female recounted a story about when she was a child. Her people were picking huckleberries for the upcoming Huckleberry Feast. As she was picking the berries she was tantalized by the alluring taste and ate one. This is a no-no for the Washat because proper ceremonial thanks had not been given. Convicted of a guilty conscience she prayed to Creator for forgiveness. Upon arriving at home, she felt the need also to confess of her sin to her mother who absolved her with gentle words of wisdom and understanding.

A couple observations are noteworthy. First, as a little girl (she indicated she was around eight), she was acutely aware that she had sinned. Keep in mind, she had merely eaten a single berry! A personal conviction of that sin led her to seek Creator in prayer for forgiveness. Also, she recognized her sin as not only a violation of the Creator's Harvest Festival laws, but in terms of breaking relationship with the land, a worthy relative deserving of dignified treatment.

Second, she felt the need to confess her sin to another person. It has been said, "Confession is good for the soul." Likely, she and her people were unaware of this saying and it is a reasonable argument to suggest the need to do so is a result of *Missio Dei* in the sense that God reveals Self in terms of the desire to restore relationships.

The American Christian should hear in the words of Butch, the need to seek a place of solitude in order to spiritually address his situation and clearly hear the voice of God. He realized the best place to do this lay in the stillness, peace, and quiet of nature (Ps. 46: 10). He knew it was a place where Creator would meet him. The American

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<sup>4</sup>A Huckleberry Feast at the HeHe Longhouse at Warm Springs, in August, 2006.

Christian today seems to have many distractions and depending on where one lives, a limited access to the stillness of nature. Whichever the case, one would do well to actively seek out a personal place of solitude where one can “meet with God.”

Also, the importance of confessing to other human beings is a powerful lesson to come away with. This inherent desire, even need, is often overlooked, especially in Protestant Christianity, where the individual recognizes the ability (and rightly so) to go directly to God in needs of confession. In this way confession addresses a spiritual need to make things right with God, but also connects with the physical realm in terms of communication with other human beings. “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.” (Jam. 5: 16).

Finally, the connection with the created order cannot be overlooked. By realizing she had broken relationship with the transcendent Creator, as well as her relative in the natural order (the land), the little girl invites American Christians to treat with dignity everything that God has made.

## **B. Physical Setting**

The physical place of worship for the Washat, the longhouse, is a building that reflects the basic style of living quarter for several families who would have lived along the Middle Columbia, as addressed in Chapter One. It must be noted that the Washat express their spirituality more in terms of daily living than in terms of formal worship in a building that might only take place once every few months during the seasonal feasts

(described later), if in fact weekly worship is not practiced.<sup>5</sup> This is reinforced by the fact that the Washat “have no formal creed or methods of instruction.”<sup>6</sup> Also, in addition to general worship gatherings, the longhouse may be used for various events such as name giving ceremonies, first fruit observances, salmon feasts, and dedication of projects.<sup>7</sup> The longhouse is a modest structure with a large open space designated for worship, capable of accommodating the several dancers who are integral to the worship. There are benches for people to sit around the perimeter. Traditionally, males sit on ones side while females sit on the other. The officiator and the seven drummers are located at the west end of the building facing the east door. They each have their own personal chair to sit in.

According to Butch David, Washat worship is ever mindful of the East as it is the direction of the rising sun. It represents a new day and is significant in virtually every ceremony of the Washat. People always enter the longhouse through the east door. There is a kitchen area adjacent to the worship space where food preparations for the various feasts occur.

It is perhaps more helpful to describe the physical setting of the longhouse in terms of what it does not have. There is no altar, or podium for the officiator (pastor). There are no icons, no statues, no paintings, and no crucifixes on the walls. There are no Bibles, no liturgical guides, and no overhead projectors to facilitate singing. There is no plush carpeting or elaborate interior design of any sort, just simple hardwood floors and

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<sup>5</sup>*The Nations Within*. Cf. A discussion with John Grosvenor in July, 2006, where he states that the Washat and Native Americans in general don’t think of worship in terms of getting together in a building once per week. It is lived out daily. (My paraphrase).

<sup>6</sup>Aguillar, 146.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. 148.

fluorescent lighting above. It is a no frills approach to community worship, four walls, people, and traditional worship handed down from generation to generation.

While it seems there is not much to be gained from this knowledge of the physical setting of Washat worship, its simplicity is quite refreshing. Many Christian churches invite people to “come as you are.” This is good, but many times people feel the need to dress up because “dressing down” in the atmosphere of a beautiful church setting might cause feelings of unworthiness. This is perhaps a bit dramatic, but not entirely untrue. With longhouse worship, you know that will not be an issue.

Furthermore, the frills of materialism in a worship setting may be a distraction to the object of and reason for worship. To be distracted by beautiful imagery, and fancy clothing is detrimental to the worship experience where God should be the focal point and community worship the emphasis. This is not an argument to rid churches of their material beauty, rather a reminder as to the true purpose of community worship as demonstrated in the longhouse setting.

### **C. Form**

While the physical setting is understated, the form of worship is dynamic. The worship service may last from one to several hours depending on the officiator and the ceremony at hand. In simplest terms, the service can be described as a repetitious orchestration involving drumming, dancing, and singing. The form of worship will be discussed in the following terms: the officiator, the drummers/bell-ringer, the dancers, congregation, and general etiquette.

The officiator is similar to a pastor. This person can be male or female, and his or her role is to preside over the worship, maintaining flow and directing the different

aspects of the service. However, rather than using verbal cues, the officiator uses a bell to direct the service. The officiator's bell will call the service to order by ringing three times followed by an elaborate drum procession involving all seven drummers. The congregants then know to enter the longhouse and be seated. A subsequent bell-ringing will initiate the first drummer. After a succession of seven drummers, the officiator will ring the bell signaling the start of congregational singing. Finally, the officiator will signal the end of the service by ringing his or her bell, again followed by an elaborate procession by the seven drummers, just like the beginning of the service.

There are seven drummers who hold individual drums in one hand, and a drum stick in the other. There is also a bell-ringer whose bell-tones accompany the drum-playing. The drums are similar in size to that of a tambourine. The significance of the number seven is debated among the Washat. When asked about the significance of the number seven, John Grosvenor said, "Some claim Smohalla went on the mountain and was to be there 4 days. But, he remained 7 days. Some say... there are seven days in a week. Some say there are Seven Directions . . .?"<sup>8</sup> The drummer on the end will initiate the "first seven."<sup>9</sup> He or she begins by lightly playing the drum, a sort of preparatory signal for what follows. He or she then begins singing a song while simultaneously playing the drum. The song chosen may be a traditional worship song passed down from earlier generations. When Butch David drums, he says he sings the song his father taught him, a song that has always comforted him and helped him through tough times. The song also may be the actual spirit song of the individual playing the drum. This spirit

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<sup>8</sup>John Grosvenor, interview by author, email correspondence, Madras, Or. , 10 August 2006.

<sup>9</sup>Indicating the first time through that all seven drummers play in succession.

song is the song taught by the Yuhl-mah<sup>10</sup> to the individual when embarking on his or her vision quest (discussed in Chapter One). At a certain point in the drumming/singing, the drummer raises the drum high while simultaneously singing in a higher octave. This signals the dancers to begin their dance (described in greater detail later in this chapter) in the large open space of the longhouse. When the dancers have circled once, the first drummer's part comes to an end and a smooth transition to the second drummer takes place. Also signaling the transition is a congregational response "Aiii." This is equivalent to an "Amen" in Christian churches. The second drummer continues the pattern, but with his or her own song, until all seven drummers have had a turn. A typical Washat service will have "three sevens" or three times each for all seven drummers. Between each "seven" is a series of songs that the whole congregation takes part in singing.

The dancers are an integral part of the service. Throughout the entire service the dancers are assembled in the open space of the longhouse, simply standing-by, waiting for the cue to dance. A dance, consisting of one circling around the open space, occurs once during each individual drummer's procession. The cue to begin is the elevated drum and octave level of the drummer accompanied by the congregational response, "Aiii." Additional dancing occurs after each "seven," when three congregational songs are sung accompanied by dancing.

Male dancers, boys and men, are assembled in a row on one side of the open space. They are dressed in colorful, "ribbon shirts," an expression of traditional dress. The female dancers, girls and women, are assembled in a row facing the males on the

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<sup>10</sup>Aguillar, 131. An individual's spirit, or guardian song (sometimes referred to as a medicine song) is unique to the individual. No other person or tribe can learn the song. Traditionally, the spirit song was believed to imbue the individual with magical, supernatural powers upon its being sung.

opposite side of the open space. They are dressed in beautiful, traditional Indian dresses, very vibrant and colorful. Both males and females wear moccasins, the traditional footwear of Native Americans.

Any individual may take part in the dancing. Throughout the service, individual dancers “come out” or “go in” as they please, because services can last for a long time. They simply do the traditional counterclockwise spin (the significance will be described shortly when discussing “etiquette”), once around, and either enter or leave the procession.

The dances are performed counterclockwise and resemble a side hopping motion. The dancers make one full circle around the open space and end up in the same place as they started. At certain times the dancing becomes more personal where the individual may dance more freely. However, the footwork is always in sync with the constant, steady, rhythmic pounding of the drum. It must be remembered that the longhouse is indeed long and one trip around the open space certainly gets the heart beating. It is quite a site to see dancers, young and old alike, sweating and breathing heavily. It really makes one appreciate the effort that goes into that type of worship. Furthermore, this type of dancing is very hard on the lower leg, the front and back of the calf area. It is a common occurrence for this author to hear that some of his Native American students are either absent from school or are excused from excessive physical activity because their legs are so sore.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Many of this author's middle school students are dancers. Typically students are not too sore after a typical worship service like the one just described. However, at ceremonies where much more dancing occurs, both in terms of rigor and duration, such as funerals or pow wows, students often miss school to rest and heal.

Worship, in the form of dancing, is certainly not prevalent in American Christianity, so the most obvious lesson to learn is the implementation of dancing within the American Christian worship service. There is something to be said about the joy and passion to be seen in the countenance of the Washat dancer, and that is not to diminish its importance by suggesting it is merely fun and games. There is purpose to it. Its style is selfless. The individual dancer is undergoing a certain amount of physical suffering, in the sense that the dance requires much endurance and puts tremendous strain on the body. There are theological lessons to be taken from this and they are not creedal or in written form. They are lessons about Creator in terms of selflessness and suffering, and yet encompassing the joy and passion of physical worship, something the American Christian can tremendously learn from. Certainly worship in the form of dance has its precedent in Scripture (see Ex. 15: 20; I Sam. 18: 6; II Sam. 6: 5, 16). The dance of the Washat helps this author better grasp scriptures exhortation to, “Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.” (Psa. 149: 3).

The congregation takes part in the singing, especially in the three songs that occur after each “seven” is completed. However, if the individual drummer is singing a traditional song, the congregation will accompany him or her in singing. However, if it is a personal, spirit song being sung (details of which were mentioned previously) the congregation remains silent. There is also a point in the service during which congregants greet each other. These are informal greetings, hugs, exchanges of pleasantries, etc., not unlike greeting times that occur during Christian services.

There are matters of etiquette in the Washat service, three of which will be highlighted here. First, is the, “Aiii,” or “Amen” previously mentioned. The “Aiii”

occurs at the end of each individual drummer's song as well as at the end of each of the three songs following each seven. The signal for the timing of the "Aiii" is a ringing of the bell, and all drums raised to an elevated position.

Second, congregants will typically (though not mandated to do so), throughout the playing of music, make a "repetitive fist to chest movement."<sup>12</sup> Upon closer examination, it looks most like a small figure eight-type movement with the right hand. The right hand is about chest (heart) level. When congregants make the movement with an open hand, they are agreeing in prayer, while the same movement, with a closed palm, suggests the sending-up of prayers.<sup>13</sup> The movement is made to stay in beat with the steady-beating drums. The significance lies in the representation of the hand as a heart beating in unison with the Creator's.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, spinning, or turning in a counterclockwise direction is a hallmark of congregational behavior. The significance of spinning counterclockwise lies in the representation of the direction of earth's rotation and of its orbit around the sun. Depending on the situation, congregants are to spin around either one time or three times. For example, upon entering or leaving the longhouse, or upon joining or leaving the dancers in worship, the individual is to spin around one time. In the case of a funeral (discussed later in greater detail), the casket is spun around three times prior to entering the longhouse.

The American Christian can clearly appreciate the concept of the Washat "Aiii" as it corresponds to the more familiar "Amen." What may be helpful is that, whichever word is used here, it implies a certain characteristic nature of the object of worship. That

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<sup>12</sup>Aguillar, 146.

<sup>13</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

is to say that both groups would understand the ultimate being in terms of a personal, loving being who wishes to provide for creation. The “Aiii” should indicate to the Christian that God certainly has revealed Self through the desires of the individual human heart to give praise and to worship through a simple word which expresses the depth and breadth of the human need to totally rely and trust in God for all of life’s provisions.

American Christians who raise their hands in worship can certainly appreciate the “hand drumming” to the chest. It is a way to physically engage in worship. It is a way to put all of self in connection with God, not merely on a spiritual plane, but it somehow enables the individual to connect physically in worship by envisioning a common heart beat with Creator. The heart beating in unison with God would be somewhat of a unique concept for American Christians, yet might easily be received and embraced by those who already worship in more physical ways.

Finally, American Christians would do well to learn from the spinning ritual of the Washat. Many American Christians give lip service to being good stewards of God’s creation (while many others certainly do a wonderful job of this). Perhaps the reason better care of the earth is not at the forefront of the average Christian’s journey is because it gets relatively little emphasis on a weekly basis during church services. This little act of spinning illuminates in the individual Washat the importance of caring for creation each time it is performed. Certainly for some American Christians, particularly Roman Catholics, who dip fingers in holy water upon entering the church or kneel before sliding into the pew, this wouldn’t be a hard thing to grasp. Furthermore, by spinning, the individual Washat is constantly reminded that he or she is one with all of creation, and

that worship in community with all of creation, not just human, is a more complete form of worship.

#### **D. Ceremonies**

The various ceremonies of the Washat are central to their worship. The ceremonies that will be highlighted are the root, and huckleberry feasts, funerals, and sweat lodge ceremonies.

Feasts will differ from tribe to tribe depending on customs and type of food that was prevalent in the region. For example, the Washat on the Warm Springs Reservation near Madras, Oregon celebrate two feasts; root feast (typically celebrated in April), and huckleberry feast (celebrated in early August).<sup>15</sup> By contrast, Washat who reside close to Celilo Falls will celebrate a salmon feast because of their proximity to Salmon migration.<sup>16</sup> In times past, trading would occur between villages to acquire desired foods and goods not accessible to a particular tribe.<sup>17</sup>

For the Washat at Warm Springs, the feasts are an elaborate ritual combining the partaking of food and worship of Creator. The ultimate significance is thanksgiving to Creator for the provision of foods for the sustenance of life. A brief description of the feast ritual is described below. No distinction between the root, and huckleberry feasts is provided as both are very similar.

The feast itself features a variety of foods called “first foods.”<sup>18</sup> These are foods that are staples of the Washat diet. These feasts are sacred meals.<sup>19</sup> These foods are sacred and should be distinguished from the many other foods that might serve as

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<sup>15</sup>Butch David, interview by author, personal interview, Madras, Or. , 24 August 2006.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Aguillar, 22.

<sup>19</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006.

medicines.<sup>20</sup> They include deer meat, elk meat, a variety of roots (e.g., potatoes, and other vegetables), and huckleberries. The Washat gather the foods themselves. Often the gathering of roots and picking of berries can be accomplished on the day of the feast while the other foods may be stored in preparation for the ceremony.

Once the foods have been gathered, the meats are cooked and the foods are displayed by category in an orderly manner. The Salmon is first. Once every person has Salmon<sup>21</sup> in hand, thanks is given to Creator, and they simultaneously take a bite. Immediately after that, all do what is called “choos.”<sup>22</sup> Choosing is drinking a small amount of water, and is representative of the thanksgiving aspect of the ritual as water is key to sustaining all life. Then another food is sampled, followed by another choos and so on. The whole feast is a wonderful expression of community-centered worship emphasizing thanksgiving to the Creator for the foods and water provided to sustain life.<sup>23</sup>

For the American Christian, the idea of worship in connection with feast is not a foreign concept. Images of the Lord’s Supper, perhaps even a Seder feast come to mind. An intriguing similarity between the Washat feasts and a Seder meal is the emphasis on orderliness. Seder means “order.” In this light, it is not difficult to see how God has decided to reveal Self in a way tangible, and recognizable for all of humanity i.e., in the

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Relander, 28.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John paints a wonderful picture of the meal which reveals undeniable elements of atonement and selflessness embedded in Washat theology. The foods are gifts from Creator, and they give themselves up as the women dig them. A prayer is said before they are harvested, and only a small enough hole is dug (in the four directions) around the root. The whole is covered up. This is so Mother Earth is not greatly disturbed in the process. Foods are placed on a table, in a certain order. Once the bell-ringer announces the name of the food, the food is eaten quickly.

simplicity of feasting within a community setting. This seems to be something all people can relate to.

Furthermore, the Washat seem to have a true grasp of what it means to worship with feasting. The emphasis is so evidently placed on Creator and community that it leaves the American Christian (in this author's opinion) wanting for direction on the issue. For this author, the Washat feasts more resemble the descriptions of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament than the partaking of communion in the typical Sunday church service of today. The Washat have grasped the idea of celebration through community feasting and worship, a concept American Christians can learn to re-implement by observing the Washat.

Furthermore, there is an aspect of the Washat feast that closely reflects Paul's vision of what the Lord's Supper was to truly be. In contrast to the situation at Corinth (see I Cor. 11: 17-34), the Washat would likely have Paul's approval concerning an appropriate focus on worship within community, and not selfish indulgence.<sup>24</sup>

There is a world of difference between the Euro-American Christian funeral and the funeral of the Washat. First of all, when an individual dies, all formal business ceases,<sup>25</sup> children stay home from school to attend the funeral,<sup>26</sup> and seemingly everybody on the reservation attends. This is because "An individual's kindred includes a substantial fraction of the surviving Plateau Indian population."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin and Daniel Reid, ed., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993). S.v. "Lord's Supper." (esp. 571-573).

<sup>25</sup>Hunn, 262.

<sup>26</sup>Teachers at Jefferson County Middle School (where this author is employed) in Madras, Oregon are instructed to be mindful of Native American children who may miss school for an entire week for a funeral. Special considerations are encouraged to be made with regard to grading leniency, and demand of physical activity as much dancing occurs at funerals, and thus students may still be quite sore upon return. Native American children tend to miss much school due to funerals.

<sup>27</sup>Hunn, 262.

Second, funeral ceremonies last several days.<sup>28</sup> Great care is taken to prepare the body for burial. The body is handled with great respect for, as long as it remains above ground, it is considered living.<sup>29</sup> The deceased individual's family will partake in the "dressing" ceremony, an elaborate ceremony where the body is prepared in the "finest buckskin clothing,"<sup>30</sup> jewelry, and "with eagle feathers attached to the right arm."<sup>31</sup>

The body is displayed in the longhouse for three days, during which time the "life" remains in the body.<sup>32</sup> The body enters the longhouse facing the east and is spun around clockwise three times prior to passing through the longhouse door.<sup>33</sup> Dancing occurs throughout the several days of the funeral but not in the immediate vicinity of the body, as this is considered disrespectful.<sup>34</sup>

The deceased's closest relatives will hold a "giveaway" in which the dead individual's belongings will be given away.<sup>35</sup> This ceremony of generosity is meant to be a reflection of the individual's generosity during his or her life.<sup>36</sup> All manner of things are given away: beds, couches, utensils, blankets, anything that reminded somebody of that particular deceased individual.<sup>37</sup> There is a selflessness here that can be appreciated in the sense that even in death, the individual is continually giving of himself or herself. There is a Christ-lesson to be learned here, perhaps a fresh understanding of atonement.

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Butch David, interview by author, personal interview, Madras, Or. , 17 August 2006.

<sup>34</sup>Hunn, 263.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

When the body is ready to leave the longhouse and to be put into the ground, it is spun around counterclockwise three times and carried out of the longhouse's east entry.<sup>38</sup> The Indian cemetery is typically not well-groomed. They are not irrigated, "Just bare earth and sere bunch grasses, bent before the winds."<sup>39</sup> The body is buried with feet pointed toward the east<sup>40</sup> in a graveyard set on a "prominence from which the ancestral lands may be broadly surveyed."<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the point of emphasis here for the American Christian is the lesson that even in death, the connection with the land and a oneness with it is never broken.

A typical Washat service will be held, like the one described above, during the funeral ceremony.<sup>42</sup> Like many American Christian funerals, there is a time where individuals may speak about his or her relationship with the deceased. Eugene Hunn illuminates some of the differences and similarities in the Washat version:

If a person wanted to talk, he'd get up in front of the bellman, to the right and dance. . . . And when his song was over, he'd interpret what was in his mind. Maybe he was pretty bad and he wanted to relieve himself of these bad feelings to the Creator. So he'd send a message through this man or woman whose body is lying there and whose life is waiting. They say that as long as the body is lying on top [of the ground] its life does not leave it. But as soon as the body goes into the ground its life leaves it. So a person would get up and speak about how he felt. If he didn't, he might get sick. (James Selam, personal communication, 10 March 1986).<sup>43</sup>

There are some great lessons here for the American Christian. First, the individual who wanted to express feelings about the deceased initially did so through dance. It was only after that when he would interpret his thoughts to others. It is as if a

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<sup>38</sup>Butch David, interview by author, personal interview, Madras, Or. , 17 August 2006.

<sup>39</sup>Hunn, 263.

<sup>40</sup>Butch David, interview by author, personal interview, Madras, Or. , 17 August 2006.

<sup>41</sup>Hunn, 263.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 262.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 263.

more concise representation of his feeling is established through the physical act of dancing. For the grieving individual, clarity has come through physical worship.

Second, and something perhaps not so familiar to American Christian custom, is the idea of community counseling during the funeral itself. For all people, death of a loved one or friend is difficult to deal with. Expressing feelings of guilt or other issues within a community is a powerful way to heal and worship. It is a way to let others in on pain and allow them to help carry the burden of it. The more immediately one can deal with a loved one's death, the more quickly the healing process begins. In many cases, people will delay or suppress feelings eventually causing deeper pain. The Washat offer a great way to deal with this issue.

There is also an element of confession and forgiveness, which is both community centered, and Creator-centered. This is similar to the counseling peace above, but it has a distinction. It is a way to ask forgiveness and repair a relationship that was perhaps still damaged at the time of the deceased's passing. The confession and forgiveness process before community and God simultaneously can prove to be very healing, both for the individual and the community.

This author feels the need at this point to offer a side note, one that addresses the Washats' ability (both individually and as a community) to deal with death. When one of this author's seventh-grade students died in a home accident, counselors and administration went through the "protocol" of dealing with such an event so that student needs would be met and counseling could be given. Students made cards, and traversed the school having everybody they could find sign. Students consoled each other and some of the teachers as well. The interesting part was this: while the student who died

was a “white” student, the students who initiated most of the counseling and card signing activities were predominantly Native American. Because of the nature of their funeral ritual, these students know how to deal with death in a healthy way at a young age. Their role in this individual circumstance was tremendous. Native Americans, statistically speaking, deal with disproportionately high occurrences of deaths and suicides in reservation life as a result of poverty and alcohol abuse. It is a testament to their resiliency as to how they deal with death in such a healthy manner. Hunn says it well, “Death defines more than any single event the life of the Indian community today.”<sup>44</sup>

The sweat lodge, or sweat house, is a staple of Washat ceremonial worship.<sup>45</sup> Essentially the sweat lodge is a homemade, outdoor steam room, and is always built by a river or stream.<sup>46</sup> If the area is susceptible to excessive muddying of feet, then a plank walkway will be built from the entrance of the sweat lodge to the entry point of the river or stream.<sup>47</sup> Also, there may be plank benches for comfort while waiting to enter the sweat lodge.<sup>48</sup> It is typically a semi-spherical hut-like enclosure built with carefully arranged tree branches serving as the structural foundation. The branches are covered with thule mats, earth, blankets, or canvas.<sup>49</sup> The inside of the lodge, usually with a capacity to seat three to five people, has an earthen floor covered with fir boughs which provide a pleasing balsam scent<sup>50</sup> and serve as comfort from the hard earthen floor. Just inside the single opening of the sweat lodge, which always faces east,<sup>51</sup> is a pit which

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 262.

<sup>45</sup>John GrosVenor, email correspondence by author, Madras, Or. , 20 September, 2006. John suggests different forms of sweats as well: power sweat, morning sweat, spirit sweat, social sweat.

<sup>46</sup>Aguillar, 14.

<sup>47</sup>Hunn, 265.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Aguillar, 14.

<sup>50</sup>Hunn, 266.

<sup>51</sup>Aguillar, 14.

holds the heated rocks.<sup>52</sup> The pit, a one-foot deep by eighteen to twenty-four inch diameter hole,<sup>53</sup> is lined with stones to keep the dirt from collapsing in on the heated rocks when installed.<sup>54</sup> A heavy blanket is used as a door<sup>55</sup> and is draped over the opening once every one is inside in order to keep heat from escaping. Once the “door” is in place, it is very dark inside except for daylight that may creep in through openings in the structure.<sup>56</sup> There is a bowl of water inside the lodge used to sprinkle the rocks when more steam is desired. Outside of the sweat lodge is a rock heating area where wood is stacked in a criss-cross fashion about two feet high.<sup>57</sup> Rocks from the water, or shore are placed on top and the wood is burned, thus heating the rocks. Once the wood is reduced to white hot coals, the rocks are considered heated to the proper temperature.<sup>58</sup> With a pitch fork-type tool, the rocks are placed in the pit inside the lodge.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, there is typically a large rain barrel<sup>60</sup> filled with water and treated with herbs outside of the sweat lodge where individuals can take a pre-bath before entering the sweat lodge. Once the rocks are in place, an initial amount of water is poured on the rocks in order to wash down any debris which might make breathing difficult,<sup>61</sup> with the door-blanket open, in order to bring up the temperature of the sweat lodge gradually, so it is not too hot upon entering. The logic is to increase the heat once inside if desired.

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Hunn, 266.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Aguillar, 14.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Hunn, 266.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Aguillar, 14.

All participants enter naked.<sup>62</sup> The first one in is typically the sweat lodge “officiator.”<sup>63</sup> He is the one who controls the temperature once inside the lodge. He should be considerate of the others with him in terms of how sensitive they are to the heat. Increasing the heat too much in a show of “machismo” is frowned upon because it shows disrespect to the sweat lodge<sup>64</sup> and its ceremonial purposes (discussed in greater detail later). If one feels too hot, he may put water on the sensitive areas or lie closer to the ground where the heat is not so intense.<sup>65</sup>

The Washat sweat lodge differs from the typical steam room in the sense that it is a ceremony steeped in spiritual relevance. Upon entering there is an initial time of silence for meditation and individual prayer.<sup>66</sup> Then the officiator will say a prayer of greeting to the sweat lodge, which is considered a powerful spirit person and typically referred to as paternal grandfather.<sup>67</sup> This is a difficulty for American Christians who would like to learn from or partake in the sweat lodge experience as it seems to be at the very least, border-line idolatry. It is important at this point to remember the Native Americans connection with the rest of the natural world as merely Creators co-created. That is to say that the rocks, the thule mats, the fir boughs, the earth, and the branches which all make up the structure of the sweat lodge are spirit beings as well and thus are deserving of respect and dignity. In this light, the prayer of greeting does not have to be seen in terms of worship of the sweat lodge itself, just merely an affirmation of its significance in the ceremony.

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<sup>62</sup>Hunn, 266.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Hunn, 268.

<sup>65</sup>Aguillar, 14.

<sup>66</sup>Hunn, 266.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

Once the officiator has determined enough time has been spent inside the sweat lodge, he sprinkles the rocks with water causing a whistling noise<sup>68</sup> due to the boiling water caught in the pores of the rocks, and strikes the rocks five times.<sup>69</sup> This procedure is followed by the command, “Now!” at which time the rug is raised over the opening of the door and everyone inside rushes out and plunges into the river nearby.<sup>70</sup> This is a significant aspect of the ceremony as it represents approaching the Creator and all aspects of daily life with a clean and healthy spiritual life.<sup>71</sup> The similarity with baptism is certainly striking in the sense that the cleansing of sins or spiritual impurities is common to each.

The sweat lodge is a unique worship ceremony that encompasses all the aspects of spirituality so important to the Washat. Eugene Hunn puts it well when he says:

I believe the Indian sweat lodge represents most clearly the special quality of Indian religious practice: a personal encounter marked by the natural rhythm of daybreak; a conjunction of natural forces of water and fire.<sup>72</sup> A spiritual force personified in everyday objects and events; spiritual and physical cleansing indivisible. Daily life is a form of worship, as if our morning shower were a prayer to life.<sup>73</sup>

The sweat lodge ceremony offers some great insight concerning facets of worship that often are neglected (in this author’s opinion). Traditionally done every morning, the sweat lodge incorporates a physical aspect of worship on a daily basis, something not typical for the American Christian. This practice is beneficial as it helps a person more fully grasp that the entirety of life should be lived in connection with worship of Creator.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid, 268.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Aguillar, 65.

<sup>72</sup>The Nations Within (video tape). There is an excerpt which shows the importance of some basic elements of the natural world in the spirituality of Native Americans. Lightning, thunder, and rain are other natural forces to be revered.

<sup>73</sup>Hunn, 268.

The Creator is central to every aspect of life. Being mindful of God at every moment can have profound effects in terms of healthy relationships: people to people; people to creation: people to God.

Also, sweat lodge addresses two more facets of worship. First, it provides the opportunity for regular community worship (daily) in a small group setting. Certainly, the notion of small group worship is prevalent in American Christianity, but sweat lodge offers a refreshing alternative. Furthermore, if done alone, the sweat lodge provides a place of getaway, and peace and quiet, a place to, “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth” (Psa. 46: 10).

The sweat lodge ceremony has some practical, and therapeutic uses as well. The Washat would typically take part in the sweat lodge ceremony for five days in a row prior to a hunt.<sup>74</sup> The repeated sweats rid the body of impurities as well as scent, an effective precaution when considering the acute sense of smell of the wild game to be hunted.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, while in the sweat lodge, individuals would rub their entire bodies thus removing any dead skin.<sup>76</sup> This worked as an excellent exfoliating technique resulting in healthy skin. Furthermore, done each day, the sweat lodge ceremony provides a time of relaxation and freedom from daily stresses, “After you’ve sweated, the day stretches clear out ahead of you; your body feels suspended and your mind is clear . . . .”<sup>77</sup> While traditionally done every morning, many Washat today partake of the sweat lodge ceremony at night because of pressing work schedules.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Butch David, interview by author, personal interview, Madras, Or. , 17 August 2006.

<sup>77</sup>Hunn, 268.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid, 267.

The Washat name-giving ceremony is quite elaborate and its thorough description is beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>79</sup> However, the heart of the ceremony conveys the importance of names in maintaining not only individual but communal identity as well. George Aguillar puts it well when he says, “The giving of an Indian name . . . is to establish a genealogical identity for a child, to honor the previous holder of that name, and to preserve the posterity of the family. The Indian name is not for casual use but functions like a title.”<sup>80</sup>

The name given has attached to it historical significance, and it becomes the duty of the recipient to learn the history and pass it on to others.<sup>81</sup> In this way the recipient has a sense of identity and purpose within his or her community.

There is something to be learned from such a formal ceremony. Nowadays, the name-selection process for American Christians seems to be based more on whim than concern for ancestral connection, history, and sense of identity. It certainly hasn’t always been that way. Scripture suggests a depth of importance in the name-giving process, suggesting a strong connection to character<sup>82</sup> (also see Gen. 16: 11; 17: 19; 30: 13; 35: 10). Also, each name can be understood as a small theological lesson. The naming of Jesus is a prime example of this, as the reader is told, “ ‘and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means, ‘God is with us.’ ” (see Mat. 1: 23). A carefully selected name is a constant reminder to a child of his or her significance in the world. He or she has a constant charge to live up to the character defined by the name, both in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of the parents. Furthermore, it can function as a gateway back to the

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<sup>79</sup>Aguillar, 183-204. This is an excellent summary of all facets pertaining to the name-giving ceremony, including matters of historical significance, and the form of the ceremony.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, 183.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>J. A. Thompson, *Handbook of Life in Bible Times* (Carmel: Guideposts, 1986), 80-1.

Scriptures in the sense that when the background of a given name is studied in connection with the Bible, a child can progress through life reading Scripture as though God has him or her personally in mind with each passage. Careful name-giving as learned from the Washat has the ability to build strong relationships between the individual, family, and God.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The thesis question posed in this paper was *how is Jesus manifest in the Washat religion?* The question was not meant to argue for the Washat in strict compliance with Christian orthodoxy. Rather, it was to investigate whether or not one could see Jesus at all in the Washat, and if so, where and how? Furthermore, if Jesus is indeed manifest in the Washat, then what can American Christianity learn about Jesus from this fresh new view? This therefore assumes that there is room for improvement in the relationship between American Christianity and God.

Also, the thesis assumed some short-comings in American Christian worship and spirituality, particularly in the areas of inter-connectedness with the rest of creation and stewardship of the land, Earth, and Cosmos. So, hopefully the Washat might provide some helpful lessons in this regard.

The first step was to place the Washat and Christianity side-by-side and determine how large the “gap” was between the theological structures. This was done by discussing in each the nature of the ultimate, the human predicament, and the character and appropriation of salvation. Furthermore, exploring, recognizing, and uncovering commonalities (in this case the person of Jesus) between two world views (concepts of God) separated by such a large degree in terms of culture and history is difficult. Therefore, a basic understanding of contextual theology, natural revelation, *Missio Dei*,

and syncretism is needed and was provided. The concluding remarks will consider these issues as they address the thesis question *how is Jesus manifest in the Washat religion?* on a chapter-by-chapter basis. The issue of what American Christianity can learn from the Washat will not be covered in the conclusion as ample consideration has been given in the body.

## **Chapter Two: Washat History and General Theology conclusions**

The first conclusion that one must come to when comparing the Christian and Washat concepts of God is the fact that both fall into the category of theistic religions which view the ultimate in terms of a personal, transcendent, caring being who interacts with creation.<sup>1</sup> It is incorrect to categorize the Washat as a naturalistic religion because of its animistic beliefs. It has been established that while they recognize a spiritual nature in all things (trees, animals, rocks, earth, etc.), they do not worship such things. Only Creator is worshipped. This provides the foundation for seeing Jesus in the Washat.

Also, the ultimate being for the Washat is most often referred to as Creator. The evidence has shown that the Washat believe the Creator is the source of everything in existence. This is certainly consistent with the biblical view.

Furthermore, the Washat understand Creator in terms of community as demonstrated by their daily activities and reverence for the whole of creation. This is an argument for *Missio Dei* in the sense that not only is God capable of revealing Self in the more general theistic terms above, but more succinctly in terms of Triunity by way of natural revelation and contextual theology. So while the Washat have not a concise creed on the “exact” nature of Creator, the possibility certainly exists that Christ has made Himself known in the Washat understanding of a community-centered God.

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<sup>1</sup>Pinnock and Brow, 17.

The Washat have tremendous respect for the land and their inter-connectedness with everything else in creation. A contextual theological approach allows one to see Jesus in the sense that His role in the Triunity of Creator is manifest in the community oneness of all creation. A simple analogy might be, as Jesus is one with Creator, humanity is one with creation.

### **Chapter Three: Washat Christology: Theory conclusions**

The evidence showed a strong understanding of atonement and vicarious suffering on the part of the Washat. This is an important issue when determining a religion's ability to reflect Jesus Christ, who's work on the cross is central to the Christian message. While there is a disconnect between the human Jesus and the Christ/Logos for the Washat, the Christ/Logos is believed to have been continually about the business of revealing Self through concepts of atonement and vicarious suffering suggested in ceremonial worship, and dances. So in essence, the message of Jesus' atonement comes across. At first glance this seems like a stretch, but only when one considers the tensions and differences between the two cultures, can one fully appreciate the magnificence of *Missio Dei* regarding an ability to reveal the work of Jesus on the cross. Simply put, God and not human beings carried out the Great Commission regarding the Washat, something of a necessity when considering the broken relationship between the two cultures.

The Deity of Christ is a foreign concept for the Washat. The evidence showed an understanding of the dual nature of every individual in terms of a physical aspect and a spiritual aspect. While this certainly leaves room for discussion on issues of Incarnation

and Deity of Christ, it is too much of a stretch to say that Jesus is revealed by the Washat in such ways.

The evidence showed many similarities between Christian and Washat eschatologies. However, the reader would have difficulty concluding that Jesus is specifically manifest in Washat eschatology. Perhaps, in certain areas of specificity regarding Jesus' nature and works, there is a limit to what *Missio Dei*, and matters of contextual theology can adequately address.

The Washat can reveal Jesus in their understanding of sin in the sense that they always desire harmonious relationships with Creator, other people, and the rest of creation. This is perhaps an area in which Jesus is revealed more clearly by the Washat because the rest of creation enters the equation. Poor stewardship of the earth is sin against God.

#### **Chapter Four: Washat Christology: Worship conclusions**

Jesus is manifest in Washat worship through their prayer. The maintenance of a healthy, harmonious relationship with Creator is always at the heart of prayer life. If they sin, they seek reconciliation through prayer. Their prayers are steeped in thanksgiving to Creator. After all, Jesus desired to reconcile sinful humanity with God and Jesus thanked God in His own prayers (see Mt. 11: 25; Jn. 11: 41). Furthermore, the Washat see confession as an important aspect of prayer life, something Jesus would admire.

It is a difficult thing to determine whether or not Jesus can be revealed in the physical setting of Washat worship. There are no crucifixes or icons, but perhaps even more telling is the idea that Jesus is written on their hearts (cf. Jer. 31: 33). However, since the Washat live out their faith and find communion with God more through their

daily activities than through formal worship, it can be argued that the evidence suggests Jesus is revealed in their reverence of nature and desire to connect with God through the things of the created order. In essence their physical place of worship is the land and all of creation that surrounds them. This seems to be a healthy view of Jesus in the sense that the Washat are more cognizant of God in everything around them, and not merely relegated within the confines of a church building.

The formal Washat worship is beautiful. The emphasis on dancing (especially), drumming, and singing points to a physical element of worship not prevalent in many American Christian worship settings. Certainly this type of worship is reminiscent of Old Testament worship and thus qualifies as Christ revealing.

The Washat feasts reveal Jesus by way of *Missio Dei* and contextual theology in a sense comparable to the Jewish feasts in the Old Testament. The evidence is overwhelming when one considers the emphasis on feasting in worship of God<sup>2</sup> for both the Washat and the Israelites. “Through appointed feasts and seasons Israelites were constantly reminded that they were God’s holy people.”<sup>3</sup> This is a tremendous argument for Christ’s revealing of self through *Missio Dei* when one observes not only the similarities of feast worship but also in the sense that Jesus, as Messiah, is often the point of such feasts.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the orderliness of the Washat feasts, and the orderliness of the Lord’s Supper or a Cedar Feast offers additional evidence of God’s desire to reveal Self as Christ.

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<sup>2</sup>Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, fourth edition ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1980). See an excellent treatment of Israelite appointed feasts, 68-73.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. See especially the treatment of the Passover Feast and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 70-1.

The Washat funeral ceremonies emphasize great respect for the body. There is an understanding that a day will come when body and spirit will be reunited, certainly an area of similarity between the two religious systems, and a strong argument for the revealing of the specific nature of Christ's death and subsequent resurrection where His spirit is reunited with His body on the third day.

The sweat lodge ceremony offers insight concerning the need for baptism and cleansing of sin. The ceremonial use of water in each ritual suggests God's desire to reveal a necessity on the part of human beings to be renewed spiritually. Therefore the case can be made on a contextual level, through *Missio Dei*, and via natural revelation that the Washat have always understood the work of Jesus (or in their eyes the work of the Logos/Christ) in terms of baptism.

So, the evidence shows that Jesus is manifest in the Washat religion in the following ways, and with regard for *Missio Dei*, contextual theology, and natural revelation: issues of creation and Creator (both with regard to community); atonement; eschatology; sin; prayer; physical worship (dancing in particular); feasts; funerals; and sweat lodge ceremonies. Certainly, *Missio Dei*, contextual theology, and natural revelation play huge roles, and without their considerations, such conclusions just may be unsubstantiated. As long as the American Christian is willing to allow for the possibilities of such to effectively spread the Good News apart from human effort, Jesus certainly can be found in the Washat.

Finally, perhaps two points of further illumination are in order. First, one can reasonably assume that, prior to Christ's incarnation, God revealed Self thoroughly enough in terms of character and function to the Israelites, so as to illuminate the works

of the Christ-to-come, resulting in a right relationship with God. This is further revealed by the various theophanies/christophanies recorded in Scripture (see treatment in Chapter Three, page 34, footnote 14). Second, when one considers the passage, “Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the LORD. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?” one must conclude that God has always been active among all nations and capable of revealing Self despite any obstacle. In this sense, it is certainly possible for God to reveal Self in terms of the Son, Jesus to the Washat, apart from any human effort. Therefore, credence should be given to those Native Americans who stand by their claim that, “Jesus is in the Washat.”

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