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**A New Look at Louis Riel
Through his Visionary Experiences**

By

Elizabeth Fuller-Tarbox, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research**

**In partial fulfillment of
The requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts**

In Anthropology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

September 28, 2001

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Abstract:

Louis Riel is an integral part of Canada's identity and its heritage. As the leader of the Metis people, he led two rebellions against the Canadian government over their language, religious, and land claims rights. Since his execution for treason in 1885, Louis Riel has been given various labels ranging from traitor and madman to a Father of Confederation and yet there is still much mystery and controversy surrounding this man.

In December of 1875, Riel claimed to have begun experiencing a series of 'visionary experiences' that he believed were direct communications from his God. Shortly thereafter he declared himself a "Prophet of the New World". These experiences became the determining factor in this man's actions for the remainder of his life.

What this thesis will explore is the possibility that components of these experiences clearly showed that Riel was engaged in prophetic behaviour. It will also seek evidence that the same visionary experiences might well have been part of a revitalization movement much in the same manner as Handsome Lake and the Iroquois. The purpose is to give further insight into Louis Riel and the events surrounding his life.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the product of an overwhelming interest in the mystery surrounding Louis Riel. I became familiar with this historical figure during my undergraduate studies in Native cultures and have pursued research of his life for the past four years. Since that time, many people have given me both encouragement and advice in this research project. I would like to state that the conclusions I have made concerning Louis Riel and his visionary experiences are mine alone.

I would like to begin by thanking Susan Stebbins, Steven Marquisse, and John Omohundro from Potsdam State University for their belief in my ability to continue my research at a graduate level. I would also like to thank certain people from the North-Eastern Anthropological Association for their interest and their advice. Such people as Karen Szala-Meniok who always sought me out at each conference and allowed me to converse on several aspects of my research. I would also like to thank Charles Bishop for always attending each of my talks and giving me invaluable insight. Of course, last but not least I would like to thank both Brian Given and Bruce Cox for constantly making me work at my best, which continually encouraged me to keep going.

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Chapter 1

An Introduction

**"My wife encompasses my life. My nation encompasses my way of life
My army, the army which God has given me, encompasses the life I lead
My family has no other life than mine. The Church follows my example
And is good to the same extent that I am good."**

Louis Riel, May 5, 1885

As a well-known historical figure, Louis Riel is an integral part of both Canada's identity and its heritage. He was a man who played a principal role in the formation of the province of Manitoba as well as being a central figure in the political activities of Western Canada in the 19th century. As a leader of the Metis, he organized and led two rebellions¹ against the Canadian government over the language, religious, and land claim rights of the Metis people. Riel was banished from Canada for a period of five years for his part in the first rebellion. The second rebellion culminated in defeat at the Battle of Batouche with Riel surrendering to General Middleton (Beal & MacLeod 1994: 276) and being taken to Regina where he was tried for High treason. There he was found guilty, lost his appeals and was executed on November 16, 1885 (Flanagan 1983: 176).

¹ The first was known as the Red River Rebellion and the second was called the North-West Rebellion.

Subsequently, Louis Riel has been considered everything from a traitorous lunatic to a Father of Confederation.

During the latter half of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st, more than 110 years after his execution, Louis Riel still exemplifies the continuing tensions surrounding the ideas of East vs. West, French vs. English, White vs. Indian, and Catholic vs. Protestant. These distinctions, still present within Canadian society, manifest themselves within the critique surrounding continued efforts to exonerate him of the crime of treason or to grant him a pardon. One such example, of these prevailing tensions, can be seen in a recent introduction of a private members bill to exonerate Riel of the crime of treason and declare him a Father of Confederation. Senator Thelma Chalifoux, the first Metis to sit in the upper chamber of Parliament, hopes to, in her words, 'right a wrong'. She states that, "The only problem we will have is from the Orangemen [sic]²," adding that she didn't know if any members of this Protestant group once a fixture of rural Ontario, were left in the Senate (Aubrey 2000: 1). In his book Orangeism: The Canadian Phase author Hereward Senior states: "A pardon for Riel would have been hazardous for any government dependent on the Orange vote." This statement may well explain Senator Chalifoux's concern over the presence of

² The Orange lodge, whose members were known as Orange Men, was a secret society and became a tradition in Britain from 1688, the time of the English Revolution, when the Catholic King James II was driven from England (Senior 1972: 2). This society upheld the tenets of Protestantism and was known to be anti-Catholic. When Britain began settling North America, the Orange Order followed and found favourable ground in Upper Anglo Canada. There its goal was to maintain the Protestant tradition, wishing to successfully transplant the spirit of the Old World to the New World (Senior 1972:1). The Orange Order has often been depicted as staunch and unyielding Protestant Loyalists whose goal was to limit the growth of Catholicism in Canada and protect Canadian soil against Republicanism (Senior 1972:vii).

Orange men still within the Parliament and the present strength of the Orange Lodge's influence in twenty-first century Canada.

Although many aspects of Louis Riel and the rebellions he led have been studied repeatedly throughout the 20th century, his life and his actions still seem to be shrouded in both mystery and controversy. An initial investigation into previous studies will reveal a wealth of research conducted on both the Red River Rebellion and the Rebellion of 1885 by such historians as J.M. Bumstead (1998, 1996), George Stanley (1960), Bob Beal and Rod MacLeod (1994), Joseph Howard Kinsey (1952) and Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser (1997). The most popular published research done on Louis Riel has been by Thomas Flanagan. He has written biographical material, translated Riel's diaries, and investigated the political aspects of both Riel and his religious aspirations. There has also been much ink spilled on the issue of insanity (Knox 1988), which surrounded Riel, as well as an analysis of his trial (Goulet 1999) and many personal accounts of the rebellions (Boulton 1886).

Can we ever understand who this man was and what he was attempting to accomplish? Maybe not completely, but it is my belief that there is a relatively untapped body of data which may be analyzed to develop further insight into Riel. This body of data encompasses Louis Riel's professed 'visionary experiences'³ and has been subjected to very little analysis. It is my contention that a thorough investigation of this body of data could conceivably yield further

³ The term 'visionary experiences' will be used throughout this work to denote a series of events, which Riel claimed to have undergone including "visions", "revelations", "prophesies", and "admonitions from God".

insights into Riel and the events surrounding his life. An investigation of these visionary experiences will allow us to go beyond the assumption of “insanity” and engage in other possibilities. It is my belief that investigating these data I have labelled ‘visionary experiences’ creates new windows of understanding into how the events surrounding his life helped to create Canada's new sense of identity.

These visions mentioned above first began in December of 1875⁴ while he was in Washington, D.C. involved in secret meetings with the President of the United States in an attempt to garner American support for the rights of the Metis in the event of an American plan for annexation of the Canadian West (Siggins 1994: 255; Flanagan 1983: 47-48). During this time Riel was under a banishment order from the Canadian government for what was termed ‘his part in the Rebellion of 1869’⁵ which led to the death of one Thomas Scott⁶, a valid member of the Orange Lodge and an opponent to the Metis cause (Flanagan 1983: 29). Riel had lost his seat in Parliament and was traveling in the United States giving public talks to further Metis claims to religious, language and land claim rights (Siggins 1994: 230; 243).

Riel was never secretive about his visionary experiences. He communicated the contents of his visions to friends, family and associates (Flanagan 1983: 51-53). The visions seemed to display a new religious fervour and those close to him became concerned that Riel was taking leave of his senses. He was literally

⁴ The initial event manifested itself at St. Patrick's Church, December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

⁵ Otherwise known as the Red River Rebellion

⁶ Most particularly the role Riel played in that execution

moved from friend to friend and eventually he was taken to his uncle's⁷ home in Montreal, Quebec⁸. Unable or unwilling to believe that his nephew's visionary experiences were anything but insanity, he had him committed to an insane asylum in Longue Pointe, Quebec in 1876 under the name Louis R. David. In 1877, Louis was transferred to St. Michael-Archange asylum at Beauport, Quebec under the name LaRochelle (Flanagan 1979:56-66). During Riel's entire committal he continually insisted that he was not mad but, rather, that he was experiencing visions from God. He also raised great concern over continually being addressed by a name other than his own, insisting always that he was Louis Riel.

In late 1877 Riel's mental health, according to his doctor Francois-Elzear Roy, so greatly improved that they began to prepare Riel for release, which came about in January of 1878 (Siggins 1994: 270; Knox 1988:190)). Upon his release, he was rushed to the American border since the officials of the asylum did not want any part of the possible scandal that could or would arise if it were learned that Riel had been living in Canada illegally while confined to both asylums (Siggins 1994: 270-71).

In the words of Thomas Flanagan (1983:50), "Riel claimed afterward that December 1875 was the commencement of his mission, of his new revelation. In Riel's words: 'There God anointed me with his divine gifts and fruits of his Spirit, as prophet of the New Word'."

⁷ John Lee, was the husband of Riel's paternal aunt

⁸ It should be remembered that Louis Riel was still under the Canadian Government's order of banishment from Canada for a period of five years. This order of banishment was his punishment for the role he played in the Red River Rebellion and the death of Thomas Scott.

He believed that these “visions” were a sign from God anointing him as a New World prophet. This belief of Riel’s raises many questions, and puts his visionary experiences in a new light. For example: Was Riel a prophet in an established tradition of prophecy? Could these visionary experiences have resulted from his deeply devout home life and religious training? On the other hand, were these experiences a politically motivated strategy created by Riel as the leader of the Metis people, to address their eminent struggle for cultural survival?

Yet, there is one other possibility, one that addresses the idea of identity for both Riel and his people. The Metis believed themselves a distinct culture within the larger society known as Canada. Riel and his people did not believe themselves only members of the Native population, nor only members of the French-Canadian population but a combination of the two that had become a separate and distinct culture of its own with its own history and traditions.

Anthony F. C. Wallace has addressed the question of cultural identity with his research in religion and his extensive work on the Iroquois prophet Handsome Lake and his people, the Seneca. Wallace (1966:212-213) explains “revitalization movements” as a process in which a society or a particular group within that society perceives itself caught in a struggle for identity realization. Wallace states: “Revitalization is a process whereby a society tries to construct a more satisfying identity” (Wallace 1966:212). This redefinition must create enough of a satisfying image to enable the group to believe they have the ability to stand on their own without the need for alliances in their struggle to save their

cultural distinction and as a distinct culture to establish the Metis Nation within Canada. Could Riel's visions be part of a revitalization movement much in the same manner as Handsome Lake of the Iroquois? The questions that I have raised concerning issues surrounding Riel's visionary experiences must be included in any investigation involving those experiences.

I have chosen the term 'visionary experiences' carefully because I believe that it best describes a variety of events that Riel claimed to have undergone. The phrase 'visionary experiences' will be designated as a category heading and will include the various types of such episodes that Riel recorded. These "visionary experiences" include four different types: visions, revelations, prophecies, and prophetic admonitions. The term *vision* applies only to those events where Riel experienced "supernatural" mental images possibly brought about by Riel's intense religious belief and what he believed to be divine inspiration, while *prophecies* will indicate predictions for the future through the same divine inspiration. *Revelations* denote the expounding of "truth" and/or the presentation of what Riel believed to be a perception from God.⁹ Finally, *prophetic admonitions* are instructions and warnings again from whom Riel believed to be his God.

Methodology-

It must be stated that the experiences collected may not be a complete compilation as other visionary experiences may exist but were not found.

⁹ As such, the concept of "revelation" includes both active and passive components.

Those that I located came from the following sources: Thomas Flanagan's biography entitled Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World, and also from The Diaries of Louis Riel edited by Thomas Flanagan. The other important sources were The Collected Writings of Louis Riel volume 2 1875-1883, edited by Giles Martel and volume 3 1884-1885, edited by Thomas Flanagan.

Once the data were located and collected, some of the material required translation. I arranged all the reported experiences in chronological order. These visionary experiences have been recorded in their entirety in an appendix at the end of this thesis. Analytical comments appear in bold print and are added throughout the body of each visionary experience. The prophetic admonitions, prophecies, and revelations¹⁰ have been arranged under their own headings and in chronological order with analytical commentary in bolded parenthetical phrases.

Many experiences Riel called 'revelations' were recorded during his committal in the asylums in Quebec, although, these were not the only revelations that he experienced and recorded within his diaries. There were a small series of revelations he put down in his diaries while awaiting execution in Regina during the fall of 1885 (Flanagan 1976: 143-170). These revelations are not recorded in their entirety in this thesis, as they are extensive. They have been arranged by theme for the purposes of study. Those revelations that occurred during Riel's committal are separated and designated as taking place during that period of his life. Certain visionary experiences revealed during and

¹⁰ These have been arranged by theme as many of them are 10 pages and longer.

after the second rebellion include what could be labelled as divine warnings, possible battle instructions, and what seem to be predictions concerning future events surrounding both the rebellion and the Metis people. The prevailing themes within his prophetic admonitions centre on health instructions. Many of the prophetic admonitions and prophecies that Riel claimed to have experienced took place after he was asked to return to Canada in 1883, to aid the Metis people in their latest problems with Sir John A. Macdonald's Government, while others manifested themselves during the time of the 1885 Rebellion.

As stated earlier in this chapter, I compiled this material and arranged them in the manner described above with the belief that this relatively untapped data set can give us new insight into the enigma of Louis Riel. Therefore, the purpose of collecting and translating these visionary experiences is an attempt to formulate links between Riel and aspects of his life, Riel and his cultural identity with the Metis people and finally Riel and the rebellion of 1885.

With reference to studies in the fields of prophecy, religion and revitalization movements, this thesis will attempt to make connections between those models and Riel's visionary experiences in an effort to answer these questions: did Louis Riel engage in prophet-like behaviour? Were his prophecies interpreted by him or his followers as "divine warnings and instructions" concerning the Rebellion of 1885? Could one argue that his visionary experiences were part of a revitalization movement for the future survival of his people analogous to the visions of Handsome Lake and the movement those visions inspired?

By engaging in this analytical process, I hope to be able to bring further insight and understanding to Riel's life and these visionary experiences he claimed became the driving force of his actions. Louis Riel's visionary experiences were completely intertwined with his life-long efforts to secure the cultural, religious, and political survival of his people. Therefore, it is my belief that to engage in an analysis of these experiences is crucial to understanding not only the driving force behind Riel's actions but also the possible reasons why Anglo-Canada saw this as evidence of insanity, the Cree people believed it gave Riel authority to lead and the Metis believed he was divinely inspired to secure their survival.

In the subsequent chapters I will examine the possibility of Riel and his visionary experiences fitting within the profile of a prophet or at least adhering to models of prophetic activity. I will also explore the idea of Riel's activities being characteristic of nativistic and/or revitalistic movements in both nature and purpose.

Chapter 2

Historical Evidence Concerning 'Visionary Experience'

This chapter will not argue the religious or medical status of such phenomena as visions, visionary experiences and prophecies. I will attempt to illustrate that Louis Riel's visionary experiences were consistent with historical traditions of prophecy. This chapter will show historical evidence that such phenomena as Riel claimed to have experienced have manifested themselves throughout the history of humankind.¹¹ This evidence will also demonstrate how these events tended to appear at times of need and crisis in several different cultures throughout time.

Of course, the most accepted examples of visions and prophecies in Christianity come from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. Of the 39 books of the Old Testament, 17¹² of them are considered books of either major or minor prophets (American Bible Society 1989:Appendices p.5). These prophetic books speak of God's judgement on such things as cruelty and complacency. They speak out against rich leaders but they also contained words of forgiveness, comfort, hope and peace (American Bible Society 1989 Appendices pp. 6-7).

¹¹ Consider, by way of example, the copious records of visionary experiences in both the old and new testaments (e.g. the Book of Revelation).

¹² These books are as follows: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The Book of Habakkuk contained a dialogue with God on suffering and justice (American Bible Society 1989 Appendices pp. 6-7). Other prophetic themes centred on new covenants with God, visions, the never ceasing love of God, and a glorious future (American Bible Society 1989: Appendices pp.6-7). One other book of the Old Testament, Exodus, tells of the prophet Moses, whose visions from God held instructions for Moses that helped free the Hebrews from Egypt (American Bible Society 1989: Appendices pp.6-7).

As one compares the themes from these prophetic books to the themes from some of Riel's visionary experiences similarities can be found. The most obvious comparison is Riel's vision of December 15th, which claims that God revealed himself in the same manner as he was revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:2). Riel had great admiration for Moses and the Hebrews to the point of proposing the adoption of parts of Mosaic Law within his own religious reformation efforts (Flanagan 1983: 82-83). A part of Riel's interest in Mosaic Law stemmed from what he describes in his own words as the Mosaic laws being: "conservative, a bulwark against liberalism"(Flanagan 1983:84); and that "liberalism was actually synonymous with evil itself " (Flanagan 1983: 94).

This abhorrence Riel felt for liberalism was shared with the Ultramontane Movement, a movement that Riel was initially exposed to as a child through the Oblate Fathers¹³, who adhered to the Ultramontane variety of Quebec Catholicism (Huel 1996:XIX). The term "Ultramontane" comes from Latin, meaning "beyond the mountains"; in this case it specifically refers to the Alps in

¹³ The Oblate Fathers created the mission schools that taught the young children of the Red River settlement, including Louis Riel.

the fact that Rome lies “over the mountains” (Benigni 1999:1). This term designates the Roman Catholic belief (particularly the Society of Jesus, commonly known as Jesuits) of papal infallibility in concerns of faith and morals and it significantly adhered to the principle of papal superiority over King and council (Tackett 1999:1).

He became involved with this movement during his years in Montreal (Siggins 1994: 226; Flanagan 1983: 39-42). There he took to heart the Quebec Ultramontane ideology: loyalty to the pope, control of the state by the church, ecclesiastical intervention in party politics, and the special religious mission of the French- Canadian nation (Flanagan 1979: 134)

Ultramontanism actually originated in Europe during the Middle Ages, a time when the papacy was attempting to increase its power and free itself from secular control, this was sometimes known as “Old Ultramontanism”(Benigni: 1999:1). A resurgence of the Ultramontane ideology was seen in France at about the time of the French Revolution to counter the ideas of Enlightenment rationalism and the influence of secular government within church affairs (Benigni 1999:1). In its most basic terms this international Catholic-European movement adhered not only to the ideology of papal infallibility and Church supremacy over civil authority but also to a strict Catholic dogma that would condone no tenets of modern thought unless they originated with or were approved by the Pope (Siggins 1994: 246)

When this movement travelled across the ocean and took root in French Quebec, it took on a completely different form. Ultramontanism became the

prominent force of French-Canadian nationalist Catholics in their struggle for survival against the more dominant Anglo-Protestant culture (Flanagan 1983: 40). That survival would now depend on a powerful clergy that controlled every aspect of Quebec life including their traditions, their language, their education, and most especially their religion. This control would penetrate even politics to the point that the Church chose for their parishioners those candidates that would best serve the Church, this was usually someone from the Conservative party. Parish priests went so far as to reprimand those within their parish who voted 'Rouge' rather than "Bleu' (Siggins 1994: 247).

In the words of Riel biographer Maggie Siggins (1994: 247): "Ultramontanist seeped into Quebec society and would remain a force until the late 1950's, when the Quiet Revolution and the council of Vatican II finally undermined its ideology."

Considering Riel's links¹⁴ to the conservative ideology of the Ultramontane movement, we see one explanation as to why he would choose to re-establish Mosaic Law within what has been deemed his 'new religion'. Another reason for his interest in Mosaic Law stems from his belief that the Metis people were actually descended from one of the lost tribes of the Hebrews that had crossed the ocean, which according to Riel this concept was revealed to him by God (Flanagan 1992: 12). Riel also found fault with St. Paul the Apostle who chose to depart from the Old Law of Moses and the Old Testament to enhance his ability

¹⁴ The above mentioned links are Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal, The Sulpician Fathers of the College de Montreal, members of the Masson family who were Riel's patrons while at college and the Oblate Fathers of the Red River Settlement.

to convert the Gentiles to Christianity and believed it was time to re-establish the Mosaic Law in the New World (Flanagan 1992: 12).

Other illustrations of prophetic activity within the Christian religion include such persons as Bridget of Sweden¹⁵ and Joan of Arc. Both of these persons of faith experienced visions and these visions became the central focus of their lives. Bridget of Sweden's visions were aimed at creating reform within certain aspects of the Church, while Joan of Arc eventually found herself being censured by the Church and finally burned as a heretic for her visions (Thurston 1999: 4-6). The following section highlights the lives of these two visionaries in conjunction with their visionary experiences and how they acted upon those visions. Some parallels to Louis Riel's visionary experiences are seen within these examples and will be expounded on throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Since childhood Bridget of Sweden had been given proper religious training and showed signs of religious illuminations (Hirsch 1999: 1). She had reported most of her life having experienced visions and after the death of her husband these incidences were reported as becoming more frequent. Thereafter she led a life of poverty and prayer. At one point, she related these visions to the prior of Alvastra Abbey (Hirsch 1999:1). In one of her visions, God instructed Bridget to found a strict religious order¹⁶. According to God, this new order would be

¹⁵ It is interesting that as Riel began to disclose his secret doctrines to his closest associates, he mentions a book he claims to have written 7 years ago (the year 1878) labelled "The prophecies of St. Bridget".

¹⁶ The Bridgettine Order of Sisters

instrumental in the reformation of monastic life. She moved to Rome in 1349 and continually worked for ecclesiastical reform. She received papal confirmation of her order in 1370 (Hirsch 1999:2)

Bridget of Sweden's life and visions are historic examples of attempts at reform within the Church. Like Bridget of Sweden, Riel's attempts at reforming the Church also came from visions he believed originated from God. By creating a new church, which he identified as the *eglise catholique, apostolique et vitale des Montagnes Lumineuses*¹⁷ Riel demonstrates his attempts to reform what he believed had become a church that had moved away from the early Christian practices through a form of liberalism created to attract converts to Christianity (Flanagan 1983: 84). He believed that Pius IX and Leo XIII¹⁸ had become too liberal (Flanagan 1992:12). Riel felt that his reformed church should return to the Old Law and revive such practices as Saturday Sabbath, married clergy and male circumcision

The next example I will offer in this chapter is that of Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King didn't necessarily have a vision or a dream in the same religious sense as the above examples experienced. What he did have is a need to see his

¹⁷ This phrase is translated as catholic, apostolic and vital church of the Great Mountains. It should be noted that while searching for the exact title of Riel's new church I located an explanation from Thomas Flanagan (noted researcher on Louis Riel) for the word *vitale* in the title. It seems to me that he begins by assuming that Riel is copying the Roman Catholic Church's full title (The One Catholic, Apostolic and Living Church) with the additional phrase Great Mountains added. Flanagan explains that the French word for 'living' is *vivante*. Therefore Flanagan posits the idea that *vitale* is referring to St. Vital, the proposed home of Riel's new church. Yet, through further investigation into the French language, an argument can be made for the fact that the word *vital (e)* is translated as 'vital' and because the word *eglise* (church) is of the feminine gender the word *vital* must have an 'e' added to the end. Usually adjectives follow the noun in French as is the case in this example and if *Vitale* denoted a town or city would come at the end of the phrase and be preceded by the pronoun either 'de or a'.

¹⁸ Both Roman Popes: Pius IX reigned from 1846-1878 and Leo XIII reigned from 1878-1903.

people receive equal treatment and rights under the law. As Dr. King immersed himself in that struggle, he wrote a speech entitled "I Have A Dream..." Whether he actually had a dream or not is irrelevant for my purpose here. What is relevant is this speech united a group of people in a political struggles, by linking charisma, religion and political actions.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King, Jr. a Baptist minister was best known as a leader of the civil-rights movement in the United States. For his achievements in civil rights reform, Dr. King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was assassinated in 1968 (Norrell 2001:7).

Dr. King's vocation came from a family heritage located within the ministry, as both his father and grandfather were Baptist preachers. During his years of study to become a Baptist Minister, Dr. King was introduced to Mohandas Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent social protest (Norrell 2001: 2). While in India in 1959, he was able to meet with Gandhi's followers and became convinced that non-violent resistance was the most potent weapon available (Norrell 2001: 2).

Accepting his first pastorate in Montgomery, Dr. King was well aware of the treatment of Blacks in that city especially by the city bus system. Many were forced to sit at the back of the bus or give up their seats to white passengers (Norrell 2001:3). This problem came to the forefront in 1955 when a black woman named Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white passenger, for which she was arrested (Norrell 2001: 3). This event stirred a citywide protest with Martin Luther King Jr. as its leader.

Martin Luther King Jr. began a series of civil protest campaigns early in the 1960's beginning in Alabama. Arrested many times but gaining national support for his non-violent form of social protest through protest marches and sit-ins, Dr. King succeeds in putting civil rights on the national agenda. He then organizes, along with other black leaders, a march on Washington, D.C. (Norrell 2001:7). On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to thousands of civil rights supporters, Dr. King delivered the famous speech "I Have A Dream"¹⁹(Norrell 2001: 7). These events resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Aspects of this Act included the prohibition of segregated public accommodations and the prohibition of discrimination in both education and employment (Norrell 2001:7).

Dr. King's next mission was the reformation of voting-rights for his people. What began as a peaceful march of black citizens from Selma, Alabama to the state capital in Montgomery to create national attention on the problem became one of the blackest²⁰ days in Alabama history. Police interrupted the march and began to beat and tear-gas the marchers (Norrell 2001:8). The end result was the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which prevented by law the use of literacy tests and other forms of voter qualification tests to prevent blacks from registering to vote (Norrell 2001:8).

Throughout the remainder of his life Dr. King championed such causes as economic rights and issues and the war in Vietnam. These issues lost a great

¹⁹ One of the most memorable excerpts from the speech is as follows: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'...I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." (Martin Luther King Jr. August 28, 1963)

²⁰ Known in United States history as 'Black Sunday'

champion when on April 4, 1968 while on the balcony of his hotel room in Memphis, Tennessee a sniper shot and killed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Norrell 2001: 8).

Although Dr. King did not have visions in the same sense as Louis Riel claimed, yet, he did have a dream, a dream to see his people on an equal level with all other Americans. He dreamed that all Black people would some day have the same opportunities in education and employment as guaranteed in the Bill of Rights for all American citizens. Blacks in the United States at the time of Martin Luther King Jr. were not part of the dominant culture and therefore marginalized within American society. As with the Black people of the United States, the Metis people were continually discriminated against by the dominant culture. Martin Luther King used his dream, as Louis Riel used his visionary experiences to unite his people behind a common cause for both their survival and their betterment.

I chose to use Dr. Martin Luther King as a historical example for the simple reason that, like Louis Riel, Dr. King knew and understood the values and symbol systems of two different peoples existing within the boundaries of one nation. Using his speech "I have a Dream..." Dr. King was able to successfully unite African-Americans in the struggle for civil rights in America. In a similar manner I believe that Louis Riel used his visionary experiences to unite the Metis in their struggle for language, religious, and land claim rights as well as for their cultural survival.

This chapter has attempted to illustrate through several examples of visionary and/or prophetic activity that Louis Riel's experiences were not isolated events. Nor were they necessarily the ravings of a lunatic. Each of these examples shows an overriding concern for the plight of their people. Each example also shows a society in crisis.

It must be stated that there are documented examples of prophetic activity in cultures with traditions other than the Judeo-Christian, such as Mohammad from the Islamic cultures and several examples within the North American Aboriginal cultures such as Handsome Lake and Black Eagle to name only a few. Therefore in no way does this chapter wish to convey the idea that prophetic activity manifests itself exclusively within Judeo-Christian tradition.

Chapter 3

The Prophet Louis Riel?

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:1-2

Louis Riel led a life very different from most Metis of that era. A life that began in very modest circumstances but eventually projected itself onto the Canadian national and even the international scene and finally ended in tragedy.

To begin, he came from an extremely religious background. In fact he comments on that background with this personal observation:

"My earliest years were scented with the sweet perfume of faith, for my Beloved father permitted no one to speak evil in my presence. Family prayers and the rosary were always before my eyes. They were part of my nature like the air I breathe" (Flanagan 1983:5).

He was educated beyond the local Catholic mission schools when he was awarded a scholarship to attend a university²¹ in Montreal to study for the priesthood²² (Flanagan 1983:5-6). After leaving school and the idea of becoming a priest, he worked in a law office in Montreal and eventually went back home and became involved in the local unrest (Flanagan 1983: 26-27). Finally, we

²¹ The Seminary of the Gentlemen of St. Sulpice

²² Riel abandoned this vocation when he found himself in love.

know that in attempts to secure the survival of his people, Louis Riel led two rebellions against the Canadian government.

In December of the year 1875 Riel's life drastically changed, as this marked the beginning of his experiencing a series of "supernatural" events I have chosen to label 'visionary experiences'. Although I have coined the term 'visionary experiences' as a category heading incorporating multiple types of events, the actual sub-categories: visions, revelations, prophecies, and prophetic admonitions were not of my making but were those created and posted by Riel in his own diaries and journals (Flanagan 1976: 30; Flanagan 1985, Martel 1985). As these events continued, Riel not only began to believe himself a prophet [of the New World] but in 1877 he started to add this title to his signature (Flanagan 1983:74).

In many instances, prophetic figures tend to emerge in times of crisis and social stress (Overholt 1989:113; Wallace; Weber). At these times societal collapse seems imminent and humans believe they are at their most vulnerable and are least in control of the circumstances around them (Overholt 1989:113). Therefore, when prophetic activity does emerge at those times of societal crisis, Thomas Overholt suggests, "The prime function of prophets is to address this situation with words and/or deeds to which the audience will respond." (1989: 81)

One must now ask the question: did Riel's prophecies emerge in a time of crisis? It is necessary to examine the historical situation of the Metis and if it did, to fully understand the circumstances it created for these people. During Riel's times, The Metis people were witnessing the disappearance of their traditional

economy of buffalo hunting, fur trapping and trading (Flanagan 1992: 14). Those that had attempted farming had experienced two consecutive years of bad crops in the early 1880's (Flanagan 1983:123), which led to depressed conditions for these people (Siggins 1994:96)

Canada had only acquired dominion status seven years before Riel's visionary experiences began²³ (Bumstead 1998: 186). At this time, Riel and the Metis people voiced concern about entering a dominion that had not included them in the initial negotiations to purchase Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company, a sale that would bring them into the Dominion (Bumstead 1998: 188-189; Siggins 1996: 90). They also voiced concern over a dominion that showed little interest in allowing a people to maintain their cultural heritage along with their language and their religious traditions (Flanagan 1983: 28-29). Riel organized his people and attempted to negotiate with the Canadian government; when these negotiations failed Riel and the Metis took control of Ft. Garry and created a provisional government (Bumstead 1998: 191). Negotiations with Ottawa immediately reconvened and culminated in the Manitoba Bill. This bill provided for provincial status incorporating provisions to preserve the Metis' language and religious heritage, but this respite from crisis proved to be only temporary (Bumstead 1998: 191).

Less than twenty years later, the Metis again find themselves threatened with land claim issues with the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad right through the middle of their territory (Flanagan 1983: 121-125). In attempts to link Atlantic

²³ Canada acquired Dominion status July 1, 1967.

Canada with the Pacific, Sir John A. Macdonald²⁴ believed he could create a strong central government and a nation securely linked from one coast to the other through the railroad (Bumstead 1998: 196-98).

These are a people that had become inconsequential in a nation dreaming of coast-to-coast expansion. A people with a French, Aboriginal and Catholic heritage that now, more than ever, find themselves surrounded by a hostile Anglo-protestant Canada that only wanted these “half-breeds” out of the way. This most certainly describes a people in crisis, a people whose way of life is in danger of eminent collapse. The Metis are again a people seeking a leader in their struggle for survival. Riel was once successful in dealing with Ottawa, could he not be successful again? This is a man, who has continually concerned himself with the plight of his family and his people and now he was needed again. The above historical synopsis indicates societal distress the Metis people were experiencing at the time Riel’s visionary events were manifesting themselves.

As Riel had proclaimed himself a prophet [of the New World] and since that is a major focus of this work, it is important to explore the theoretical discourse surrounding prophets. Miller, Van Esterik and Van Esterik (2001:321) define the word prophet as “specialists who convey divine revelations usually gained through visions and dreams. They often possess charisma (a specially attractive and powerful personality) and may be able to perform miracles.” For Thomas Overholt a prophet is a “ person whose prophesies has some source of

²⁴ Sir John A. Macdonald was Prime Minister of Canada from 1867-1873 and 1878-1891.

information or insight unavailable to the majority of the audience” (1989: 1).

Sociologist Max Weber in The Sociology of Religion (1968: 46) states, “We shall understand “prophet” to mean a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment” Weber argues (1968: 47) that the prophet’s claim of authority stems entirely from personal revelation and charisma.

Whether one is a member of the Western Christian tradition, the Orthodox Christian tradition, an Eastern Religious tradition²⁵, or an Aboriginal Religious tradition, certain characteristics are common to prophetic activity. First, prophecy is a social phenomenon (Overholt 1989:17), meaning prophecy must occur within a group of people sharing common characteristics including traditions and culture. Secondly, visionaries/prophets have a “source of insight” not available to others (Overholt 1989:1). Lastly, for a prophet to have any significance within his society the prophecies must adhere to certain characteristics that are imbedded within that culture. It is Overholt’s opinion that prophecies should including the following: First, visions must maintain a significant value within that particular society that can be understood within that society, secondly, the context of those visions will most likely be culturally appropriate to the society of which the visionary is a member (Overholt 1986:13-14).

Therefore, if Thomas Overholt is correct, then we must look for these phenomena within that society, for example visions and prophecies are an integral part of that society’s religious practices, in which the visionary or the

²⁵ Examples of Eastern Religious Traditions: Hinduism, Bhuddism, and Islam

prophet is a member. In the case of Riel and his visions, we are addressing a mixed religious heritage of French-Canadian Catholicism and Plains Aboriginal religions; both peoples' religion is at the centre of their existence.

Thomas E. Mails tells us, "The Plains Indians have always been a profoundly religious people, in which all they owned and every act of their lives was bound up with their religion" (Mails 1995:90). These people believed in an eternal creative power that was sensitive, all-powerful and always present (Mails 1995: 90). It is important to note that the Plains Indian cultures placed great importance on visions because they believed these visions were a gift from their God (Mails 1995:129).

Thomas Overholt (1989: 24-25) has suggested that certain elements should be contained in what he terms as any "prophetlike activity". He believes that for someone to engage in this type of endeavour that person must make a claim to having past and/or present contact with a deity that may involve ecstatic²⁶ behaviour. It is also necessary, according to Overholt, that any action or conduct as a result of this contact be recognizable as prophetic behaviour by its audience and contains methods of rectifying the current crisis situation. He includes the idea that these "intermediaries" are often active over a period of time and believe that they are in constant contact with their deity. Audience feedback is also an element that Overholt uses to measure activity but he states that this feedback can be positive, negative, or simply indifferent. Finally, Overholt informs us that

²⁶ This term is defined as being in a state of ecstasy, which may indicate a state of trance, frenzy, or rapture, associated with mystic or prophetic exaltation (The American Heritage College Dictionary, third edition 1993).

some descriptions of the prophetic accounts tend to validate and strengthen people's convictions of the prophet's authenticity.

We know that 1875 marks the year Riel claimed his visionary experiences began and that this same year coincides with the time he first proclaimed himself a prophet. I would now like to address this self-proclamation. I will not investigate Riel's claim from a theological standpoint. Yet, he did proclaim himself a "Prophet of the New World" and believed himself to be a prophet. Although the French and Anglo-Christian faction of Canada believed these 'visionary experiences' indicative of insanity, the Metis considered Riel as their religious and political leader (Flanagan 1983: 139).

Beginning with the year these experiences first manifested themselves; I will use Overholt's elements of prophetic activity to explore the idea that his 'visionary experiences' do contain elements contained in Overholt's model. It is my intention to explore more than just the first year's experiences in this exercise. It is my belief that these elements, if found in Riel's visionary experiences, demonstrate characteristics that would be recognizable to a Metis as prophetic activity. What is important to understand is that the culture these people built was a blending of traditions and customs from two significantly different worlds. As we have mentioned before these people created a distinct culture from the blending of Christian and Aboriginal belief systems. Riel created a bridge between these two belief systems by indigenising the Oblate priest's Christian message in a way that could be understood by the Metis and the surrounding plains aboriginals.

At this time, I shall present, in their entirety, the visionary experiences that Riel claimed to have undergone at the end of the year 1875²⁷. These accounts will then be followed by an analysis of each experience in conjunction with Thomas Overholt's model.

First Experience dated December 8, 1875

"I suddenly felt in my heart a joy which took such possession of me that to hide from my neighbours the smile on my face I had to unfold my handkerchief and hold it with my hand over my mouth and cheeks. In spite of my precautions a young boy about 10 years old, who was a little in front of me, saw my joy. After these consolations had made me rejoice about 2 minutes, I was immediately struck by an immense sadness of spirit and if it had not been for the great efforts I made to restrain my sighs, my tears and cries would have made a terrible noise within the church. I prudently bore in silence the almost insupportable sadness I was experiencing in my soul but the great pain, as great as my joy, passed away in just a short time and in my spirit remained this thought- Are the joys and pains of man short on this earth?" (Flanagan 1983: 50).

Analysis:

This particular event is in the form of an ecstatic encounter. The word ecstatic denotes intense emotion that carries one beyond rational thought and

²⁷ A reminder that this is the year Riel began having visions.

behaviour. This event recounts an intense emotional experience of an inward sense of joy, which was immediately followed by an all-encompassing sense of sadness. It has been documented that Riel placed great significance on this particular event, designating it as the beginning of his mission²⁸ (Flanagan 1983:50) and that this event signified in his words: "There God anointed him with his divine gifts and fruits of his Spirit, as prophet of the New World" (Flanagan 1983:50). Although there is no evidence as to what the Metis reaction to this event was, there is evidence that his French-Canadian and American friends and associates feared that this and subsequent visions were signs that Riel was taking leave of his senses. I can say that there were future visionary experiences and that these events occurred throughout the remainder of his life with many addressing circumstances present in his life. I cannot say with any authority that every element of Overholt's "prophet-like activity" is represented within this event.

The next three episodes took place in the same month and in Washington, D.C., as was the initial event. These events will be analysed together and are first listed in their entirety and in chronological order.

Second Experience December 14, 1875

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the spirit of God comes upon him, fills his body and soul of his divine light and essence; transports him to the fourth heaven

²⁸ It should be stated that at this point in time Riel was not revealing what that mission was.

and instructs him about the nations of the earth, speaking to him at least an hour and a half (Flanagan 1983: 51)

Third Experience December 15, 1875

“The same spirit that appeared to Moses in the midst of clouds of flame appeared to me in the same manner. I was astonished. I was dumbfounded. It was said to me ‘Rise, Louis ‘David’ Riel, you have a mission to accomplish for the benefit of humanity.’ The words spoken in Latin were addressed to me ‘first-formulate, second- respect age.’ I received my divine notification with uplifted arms and bowed head” (Flanagan 1982: 51).

Fourth Experience (Date Unknown)

Riel had come to visit the Major and not finding him at home had let himself into his study. There, while working on a petition he saw a virgin, she appeared to him alone; then at his (Riel's) request, she appeared with her child (i.e. the infant Jesus) [Stated in a note to Riel's friend Mallet]. (Flanagan 1983: 51-52).

Applying Thomas Overholt's Model for Prophet-like Activity

Did these proclaimed visionary occurrences of Louis Riel's show that he had experienced direct contact with a deity? In the first of these events, he claims that “the spirit of God comes upon him”, the second recounts how the same spirit that appeared to Moses appears to Riel, as in Exodus 3:2 “And the angel of the

Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

The third episode tells of a visitation from the Virgin.

The second element requires that the professed activity be recognizable as prophetic by others. It can contain both words and nonverbal behaviour. The majority of his audience was French-Canadian Catholic Metis; therefore any reference to God, the Spirit of God, The Virgin and/or Moses as contained in these episodes would naturally be recognizable to these people through the missionary work of the Oblate Fathers²⁹. For the most part, these events are verbally related but descriptions of nonverbal aspects in the manifestations can be seen. The vision dated December 15th in which the contents alone can easily be equated with prophet-like behaviour particularly since this vision contains a spiritual message informing Riel of a mission to be performed which will benefit mankind. To Louis, this spiritual confirmation was the ultimate culmination of a message he had been receiving most of his life. In his biography of Riel, Thomas Flanagan reports that Bishop Tache informed the young Louis that he had a mission ahead of him, which he must not falter in performing³⁰ (Flanagan 1983: 6). Riel's astonishment and dumbfoundedness along with the manner in

²⁹ This order of Catholic priests was actually known as The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and was the dominant Catholic clergy of western Canada (Huel 1996:XI). According to Huel: "Originally created in 1815 by abbe Charles-Joseph-Eugene de Mazenod and named *La Societe des Missionnaires de Provence*, the congregation's initial goal was to evangelize the poor and lower classes and reanimate a moribund Catholicism in southern France (1996:1). Originally, the Oblate Order confined their missionary work to Provence, France but by 1831 members of this order expressed a desire to carry their work beyond these borders to non-Christian Aboriginal populations (Huel 1996:5).

³⁰ The mission Bishop Tache was referring to in this statement was to study to become a priest and return to the Red River Settlement as the first Metis missionary but he never conveyed that to the young Louis.

which he receives his divine notification (Flanagan 1983: 51) create the non-verbal aspects of prophetic activity required in Overholt's model (1989: 24-25).

The third element to be investigated is audience reaction. This element is sometimes difficult to measure. Through investigation into previous research, I have found several negative reactions. One such example depicts the reaction of the Oblate Missionaries of the Red River area and is as follows:

"The success of Riel, the prophet alarmed the Oblates who, as a result of their orthodox convictions, were unable to recognize or accept his prophetic role as a supplementary and legitimate expression of the Catholic faith. To traditionalist Oblates, Riel was a threatening religious outsider and he was accordingly denounced in no uncertain terms. Riel was described as an apostate³¹, a heretic, a fiendish instrument of Satan who deceived and deluded the gullible Metis. Riel's religiosity was denounced as theatrics and many Oblates convinced themselves that Riel was insane. Insanity proved to be a convenient Oblate explanation for Riel because it was unequivocal and could be comprehended readily by all. Insanity made it possible for the Church to readmit Riel to the fold because he had not been responsible for his actions during the Rebellion. More important to the Oblates, however, was the fact that as an interpretation insanity relegated Riel's religiosity to the rank of an inadvertent and temporary aberration from the one true Catholic faith (Huel 1996: 211)"

As Riel began to act upon these visions, The Roman Catholic Church also turned against him and his actions (Siggins 1994:352). In the book Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Metis, author Raymond Huel explains: "In assuming the mantle of prophet Riel presented a direct challenge to the legitimacy and function of the Oblates as the authoritative representatives of the Church (1996: 211)." He goes on to say:

³¹ According to the American Heritage College Dictionary, the word *apostate* is defined as: one who abandons his beliefs, as in a religion.

" more significant than the challenge which Riel may have presented to the Oblates and their ministry was the fact that his creative doctrines had succeeded in indigenising the Christian message and presenting it in a form that was meaningful and relevant to the Metis and the crisis their society was facing." ³²

Further negative response to Riel's prophecies can be seen in the belief of his friends and family that these episodes could only be signs of insanity. Towards that end he was shifted from friend to friend and eventually wound up at his uncle's, who had him committed to an insane asylum.

As to positive response, our evidence does not lie so much in the content of these three visions but in the support and the followers Riel acquired. One of Louis' staunchest supporters and a believer that he was truly inspired by God was Gabriel Dumont (Flanagan 1983:139). The provisional government established by the Riel and the Metis had by a unanimous vote declared Riel "official prophet of the movement"³³ (Flanagan 1983:139)

One thing that is known is that Riel believed that these experiences were communications from God through his diary entries and recounting those experiences to friends, family and associates. Flanagan comments in his

³² This statement also gives evidence to some belief within the religious community that these manifestations are genuine or at least the idea that they could be genuine.

³³ The motion passed was as follows: " That the French-Canadian Metis Exovadate recognize Louis 'David' Riel as a prophet in the service of Jesus Christ the Son of God and the only redeemer of the world; as a prophet at the feet of Mary Immaculate under the powerful and most favourable protection of the Virgin Mother of Christ; as a prophet under the visible and most comforting protection of St. Joseph; the chosen patron of the Metis, the patron of the universal church. As a prophet humbly imitating in many ways St. John the Baptist, the glorious patron of the French Canadians and the French-Canadian Metis." (Flanagan 1983:139; Archdiocese of St. Boniface)

biography that Riel daily brought new revelations to the Exovedate³⁴ and Gabriel Dumont believed that Riel was truly inspired by God (Flanagan 1983:139).

Fifth Experience- Christmas Eve (Being taken to stay with Father Richer in Suncook, N.H., a description of the trip and Riel's 'madness' by Ferdenand Gagnon)

"Riel's madness consisted of believing himself called to regenerate the world. He belonged to a trilogy: Comte de Chambord, Don Carlos, and Louis Riel. In his imagination he represented these 3 figures by 3 bulls: a white, that of Chambord; a black, that of Don Carlos; a red, that of Louis Riel. Sometimes the poor Riel bellowed like a bull and it took a great effort of persuasion to make him be quiet." (Flanagan 1983: 54)

An Analysis

This particular account has been retold by a companion who was travelling with a group taking Riel to New Hampshire to stay with a friend. As I am using the elements of Overholt's model for prophetic activity as guidelines, I must point out that this particular experience does not demonstrate any communication or contact with a deity. Our audience reaction is obvious in the words: "Riel's

³⁴ This was the name of the provisional government that Riel and the Metis (although they considered it a self-defence council not actually a provisional government) established when Riel returned to Canada to aid in the Metis' struggle against the Canadian government in the 1880's. Riel from the Latin ex- 'from' and ovile- flock of sheep coined the name; therefore an exovedate was 'one of a flock of sheep' (Flanagan 1983:138).

madness..." and "sometimes the poor Riel..." shows a definite contempt or a lack of sympathy with Riel's visionary experiences and professed mission.

The heart of this incident shows that Riel has created a trilogy between himself, the Comte de Chambord³⁵, Don Carlos³⁶. The account describes Riel believing himself and these two royalist pretenders³⁷ to be divinely authorized rulers (Flanagan 1983:54). Each member of this trilogy he represents by a bull. Could he be referring to a bull buffalo? Certainly to the buffalo-hunting Metis this would be an understandable representation. Each member of this trilogy is also assigned a colour. The colours he assigns each member of the trilogy (white, black and red) carry significance within many Aboriginal cultures including the surrounding Cree (Grey Wolf 1998:50, 66). The nativistic significance of these three colours lends an interesting aspect to Riel's belief in his mission to secure the survival of his people. The colour red signifies strength and success in Plains Native cultures (Mooney 1996:399). I would like to suggest that Riel may have assigned these particular colours to depict ethnic origin; red for Riel's aboriginal mixed heritage, white for Chambord's European heritage, and black for Don Carlos' Mediterranean heritage.

I have devoted this chapter to bringing further insight to the earlier asked question of Riel's claim as a prophet. It is my belief that any conclusions should not be based solely on the first year's visionary experiences. In my search I was

³⁵ A pretender to the French throne

³⁶ A pretender to the Spanish throne that subsequently caused the Carlist Wars in Spain, which Riel could have read about in the papers as it was a contemporary action.

³⁷ Support for royalist pretenders was a popular practice of Ultramontanists.

able to locate 57 experiences³⁸ excluding those Riel labelled prophetic admonitions. Therefore continuing to explore the remaining experiences, I found 39 of them have actual statements introducing them as communications from a deity. Most of these revelations/prophecies begin with statements such as 'God showed me, God made me see, the spirit of God showed me, relating the source of these events. Again, measuring audience reaction is the most difficult aspect of this model. Add to this a small series of events in which Riel claims to have experienced sightings, which took place between the months of March and May of 1885. Considering the wording of the bulk of these events one may interpret them as either prophetic warnings or the telling of future events. One such example manifested itself on April 19, 1885 as follows:

"I hear the voice of the Indian. He comes to join me; he is coming from the North. He is in the mood for war." (Flanagan 1976:66)

This is an example of the foretelling of future events as Riel had been negotiating with the Cree Nation to join them in their fight against Ottawa for recognition of their rights. Some Cree did finally join with the Metis and they were in the mood for war.

Considering this additional evidence can we still make a legitimate argument for Louis Riel, the prophet? First, we can state that more than three quarters of the visionary experiences located fill at least three to four of Overholt's elements necessary for prophetic activity. Our ability to discern the remainder of the

³⁸ See Appendix A for complete listing of all visionary experiences located.

elements within his model largely depends on the availability of data and this whole process must take place within a particular cultural and historical context. Working within the realm of Overholt's model and the fact that three quarters of Riel's visionary experiences adhere to elements of that model, we are able to state with a certain amount of assurance that Louis Riel demonstrated prophetic activity.

As we proceed with the idea that Riel was actually demonstrating what seems to be prophetic behaviour, we should consider the work of Max Weber. The Sociology of Religion (1968: 46-59) devotes an entire chapter to the subject of prophets. Earlier we used his basic definition of a prophet. What we will concern ourselves with in this chapter is the fact that he separates prophets into different categories: the prophet as a legislator, a giver of law; the prophet as a teacher; the prophet as a mystagogue, and the prophet as an exemplary.

What does Weber mean by these terms? The prophet as a legislator becomes the purveyor of God's will and commands. God's will is communicated through one of his choosing who will transmit these divine commandments to the world and will carry out these divine instructions as God would wish or has instructed it to be done (Weber 1968: 49-51).

Then there is the prophet as a teacher instructing society on issues of ethics and modes of living in a righteous manner. This prophet has been given to understand the divine message and impart it to those around him. This type of prophet usually attracts disciples. He counsels them and trains them to aid in spreading the message (Weber 1968: 52-53).

Weber's third category of prophet explains a prophet as a mystagogue; according to Weber this category of prophet is the "performer of sacraments". One whose "magical actions contain the boons of salvation". One could state that this type of prophet substantiates his authority as a prophet through his actions (Weber 1968: 55-56).

Lastly, Weber classifies the prophet as an exemplary. This can be best understood as one whose life is an ideal example to those around him. Through his own personal example, he exhibits to those around him the way to redemption (Weber 1968: 58-59)

Through Weber's classification system, he presents four separate types of prophets and gives a definition for each category. Throughout this chapter I have presented the idea of Riel as a prophet. Are we now able to utilize Weber's classification system as one more tool in this exploration?

The classification of the prophet as a legislator, a giver of the law, the communicator of God's will and his commands best fits Riel's visionary experiences. This type of prophet can most obviously be exemplified by the life of Moses. Moses conveyed God's command to the Pharaoh of Egypt and then to the Hebrews when they were let free from Egypt. Using examples from Riel's visionary experiences, I find similar types of events that certainly communicate God's will as revealed to Riel through his revelations³⁹. A few examples are as follows:

³⁹ See Appendix A for further examples of his revelations and visions.

April 22, 1885: "The Spirit of God told me: "You are right. Protect Your families, protect them in the things of this world and of the Hereafter

October 17-18, 1885: "God wants each season of the year to begin with the solemn celebration of the feasts of the four Evangelists. Saint Luke's feast should be the first day of autumn, Saint John's the first day of winter, Saint Mark's the first day of spring, Saint Matthew's the first day of summer" (Flanagan 1976:161).

October 1885: "It is the will of God that the name of the sun be changed to a shorter, holier, more beautiful and more majestic name (Flanagan 1976:163).

The above examples illustrate Riel communicating what he believed to be God's will as it was revealed to him in various revelations and prophecies. This having been said, it would seem that Riel could be placed within the category of a prophet as a lawgiver. Therefore, Weber's categorization of prophets has allowed me to take one further step in my exploration concerning Louis Riel having some of the qualities historically attributed to prophets.

In summary, within these pages I have attempted to address the question "Was Riel prophetic?" To that end I have presented Thomas Overholt's model of prophetic activity and Max Weber's set of prophetic categories in an attempt to determine whether or not Riel's visionary experiences would meet the criteria set forth in both models.

I found that his visions and prophecies included references to at least the three most important elements of Thomas Overholt's prophetic like activity model. I argued that this was a society in crisis, which was an important contributing factor to the rise of prophetic activity. Through the inspection of Riel's revelations and prophecies in conjunction with Max Weber's discussion of a prophet, it was learned that he could well be classified as a prophet in the

sense of a legislator or giver of laws. In my estimation, the results of these exercises indicate that there was enough evidence to state that Riel was in fact engaged in prophet like activity and may well have been as he described "A prophet of the New World."

We must understand that this was a man preconditioned from childhood to believe that his life was extraordinary, that he was destined to have a mission for the benefit of mankind that must be carried out. We must also understand that this was a man constantly concerned for the plight of his people, continually negotiating and speaking out for their rights. This was also a man, who from his earliest childhood memories lived a devoutly religious life, whose entire family heritage was steeped within the Church and within their religion. His father had begun studies for the priesthood, his mother desired to become a nun, his beloved sister Sara had become a nun and he also studied for the priesthood. These circumstances certainly appear to have contributed to setting the stage for Louis Riel to experience visions.

Chapter 4

Cultural Identity

"And mere farmers or storekeepers they would never be. The Metis were the descendents of their Indian mothers whose tribes had freely roamed the West, who had lived on the land and were rulers of it. They were also descended from their fur trader fathers who had come to the plains with the Hudson Bay Company or the North Western Company to open trading posts and trade or trap for furs. This combination, the Metis, knew made them something special, a race apart, a people who had the right to live as they wished, free, strong and the Lords of their country."

Rosemary Neering 1977

As I have put forth a case that Louis Riel was a prophet or at the least engaged in prophet like activity, I would now like to address whether those visionary experiences were part of a revitalization movement of the Metis Nation. According to Anthony F. C. Wallace (1966: 30) "Revitalization Movements can be simply defined as any conscious, organized effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." Again we find a connection between this model and societal or cultural stress (Wallace 1966:30). At a time when those societies may well turn to their religion for protection, security and comfort and when those religious institutions and their myths and rituals no longer bring that protection, security and comfort, conscious efforts to create systems that will serve as coherent guides to revitalize a society may well arise.

Wallace (1966:158) explains that when a society is subjected to the erosion of their values causing social and cultural instability it provides the fertile ground in which a new religious movement may develop; a prophet who has undergone an ecstatic revelation usually leads such movements. This new movement's goal will be to create new and more effective rituals of salvation and the creation of a new and more satisfying culture.

To that end, Anthony Wallace has formulated a model to demonstrate the course a revitalization movement normally follows. In his words a "successful revitalization" includes:

- ↓ The Steady State- This is a period of equilibrium, although cultural change may occur it usually is relatively slow. Societal stress levels vary (Wallace 1966:158).
- ↓ Period of Increased Individual Stress- The socio-cultural system is being forced slowly out of equilibrium by different forces, for example: war, disease, climatic changes, or acculturation. Therefore large numbers of individuals are placed under what they believe to be intolerable stress because the system is failing to meet their needs. Disillusionment becomes widespread and their culture is seen as being disorganized and inadequate (Wallace 1966:159).
- ↓ The Period of Cultural Distortion- Some attempt to restore personal equilibrium is made by adopting socially dysfunctional characteristics such as alcoholism, 'black market', breaches of sexual and kinship mores and other similar behaviours. Although in preceding periods these behaviours were considered deviances, they now become institutionalized in an effort to

circumvent the evil of the system, usually these changes are unable to reduce the impact of the forces that have pushed society out of equilibrium (Wallace 1966:159)

✚ The Period of Revitalization- Once severe cultural distortion has occurred it is difficult for the society to return to a steady state without the institution of a revitalization process. Without this process the society is apt to disintegrate as a system: the population will either die off, splinter into autonomous groups, or be absorbed into another, more stable society (Wallace 1966:159-160).

Accordingly, Anthony Wallace informs us that while in the period of revitalization, its successful completion depends on the following functions:

✚ Formulation of a code- a group of individuals construct a new utopian image of socio-cultural organization; this model is a blueprint of an ideal society. Connecting the 'existing' culture and 'goal' culture is a transfer culture-a system of operations that will transform the existing culture into the goal culture. Failure to institute the transfer operations will result in either the perpetuation of the existing misery or the ultimate destruction of the society. Frequently, this new code is formulated by an individual through his/her revelations and these prophetic experiences tend to launch religiously orientated movements (Wallace 1966:160).

This function in the revitalization movement was fulfilled through Louis Riel and his visionary experiences. Some of his visions revealed aspects of this new ideal society. Examples of that new society were revealed in a vision Riel experienced in October of 1885 and are as follows:

"God wants Pope Leo XIII to adopt Montreal or Ville-Marie as his favourite city in the New World. He should try to come spend several months there".

"God revealed to me that Leo XIII cannot make a choice more pleasing to the Saviour of the world than to choose the Archbishop of St. Boniface, Monseigneur Alexandre-Antonin Tache, as Greater Pontiff of the continent".
(Flanagan 1976:162-170)

✚ Communication- The code is preached in an evangelistic style with the intent to convert. "The code is offered as a means of spiritual salvation for the individual and of cultural salvation for the society." Benefits need not be material but can encompass identification with a more and higher organized system. "Religious codes offer spiritual salvation, identification with God, elect status; political codes offer honour, fame, the respect of society for sacrifices made in its interest." (Wallace 1966:160)

I have related in earlier chapters that Riel did not hide his visionary experiences and spoke of them to family, friends and associates. I have also learned through my research that upon his return to Canada in the early 1880's he began preaching his new religious doctrine that centred on a new Metis Nation that will live a pious and faithful life according to the ancient Laws of Moses, many of which Riel had adopted into this new religion. Much of this religious doctrine, Riel communicated freely to the Metis. Those revelations he experienced after his return to Canada were communicated to the Exovedate, which was comprised of many of Riel's close Metis associates (Flanagan 1983:125).

✚ Organization- As the group of converts enlarges they usually divide

into two distinct groups, a set of disciples and a set of mass followers. The disciples became the executive organization, which is economically supported by the masses (Wallace 1966:161).

When Riel returned to Canada in the 1880's at the request of the Metis he created a provisional council that he designated as the 'Exovadate' comprised of those who were his closest followers including Gabriel Dumont. There were also those Metis who supported Riel and his efforts toward gaining their rights and they became part of the army, which would eventually fight in the rebellion.

↓ Adaptation- since the movement is a revolutionary organization, it threatens the interests of any group that obtains advantage from maintaining the status quo. The Code is still full of inconsistencies and weaknesses and must constantly be reworked. "The general tendency is for codes to harden gradually and for the tone of the movement to become increasingly militant, nativistic and hostile both toward non-participating fellow members eventually labelled as traitors and toward outsiders who are the enemy (Wallace 1966:161-162).

I would question the status quo aspect of this step in the revitalization process but certainly there are factions in Canada such as the federal government who would benefit from the subjugation of the Metis. As to this movement becoming more militant and hostile towards non-participating members, there is evidence that one of the members of the council a Charles Nolan wanted nothing to do with the revolt and claimed that he only joined the council on threat of death (Flanagan 1983:147)

✚ **Routinization**- if the preceding functions are satisfactorily accomplished then the reasons for the movement's existence as an innovative force disappear and the transfer culture shifts from the role of innovation to the role of maintenance. If religious, its legacy is a cult or church, which preserves and reworks the code and maintains through ritual and myth the public awareness of the history and values brought forth in the new culture. If political, its organization is routinized into various stable bodies such as administrative, police, military whose functions are to make decisions and to maintain morale and order (Wallace 1966:162).

Routinization can never take place, as Louis Riel and the Metis people are defeated in a three-day battle at Batouche. As the movement became increasingly militant, violence finally broke out at Duck Lake in March of 1885. I would like to further explore the question of whether Riel's visions were part of a revitalization movement by exploring the possibility that parallels may exist between Louis Riel's life and visionary experiences and the Iroquois prophet Handsome Lake, who led a successful movement towards revitalization in the late eighteenth century. Both societies were deep in crisis when the visions began. The Iroquois had supported the British during the American war for independence. The consequences of that support were the loss of their traditional homeland and confinement to small reservations that were scattered among new white settlements. Riel and the Metis experienced the fear of losing their traditional land when Canada became a dominion and the Hudson Bay

Company sold that huge tract of land to Canada, which saw an opportunity to bring in white settlers to this area and create a farming community.

Both of these men had experienced a serious problem with their health.

Handsome Lake had a battle with alcohol and in 1799 he fell gravely ill from the effects of alcohol and appeared to die. After being prepared for burial, Handsome Lake revived and informed his people he had experienced a vision instructing him to reveal the Creator's will (Overholt 1989:61). Louis Riel fought a constant battle with his health and in the 1870's he suffered a near fatal case of rheumatic fever and upon his recovery his life seemed forever changed (Siggins 1994:200). Each of these experiences creates the image of death and rebirth followed by their experiencing visions from their creator. It would seem that the death of their old life and a rebirth to a life of prophecy was a significant and even symbolic component to the role of prophecy.

As I explore the possibility of parallels in both these men's prophetic activity I found that Handsome Lake's first visions told of the four great wrongs which he referred to as the drinking of whiskey, practising witchcraft, using 'compelling charms', and the use of abortion (Overholt 1986:103); while Riel's first visions spoke of God's anointing him with a mission he must accomplish for the benefit of humanity. Handsome Lake related the words of these Heavenly messengers, the Iroquois were to end their destructive practices such as drunkenness and lead pure and upright lives (Wallace 1966:32). In essence, Handsome Lake's visions laid down a plan that would secure their survival within the Seneca reservation system of New York State where they were now forced to live

(Wallace 1966:32). His visions told of abandoning the self-destruction and adopting certain aspects of the now dominant White culture such as learning to speak as well as read and write the English language, to take up agriculture and become farm families but to also retain such cultural traditions as the annual cycle of traditional religious ceremonies (Wallace 1966:32).

Riel believed that his mission was to bring the Metis people out of the crisis they were immersed in to Metis fulfillment (Flanagan 1983:89). He would institute the ideal world, a world where ethnic groups would be free of the evils of liberalism persistent in Anglo-Canadian society. He believed that his revelations were a message from God to combat this evil, which had even permeated the Roman Church. A break with Rome and the establishment of a new church comprised of its own organization, theology, and moral code including the re-establishment of Mosaic Law (Flanagan 1983:73) is what Riel now believed was his divine mission.

Within only a few months of his return to Canada to aid in their Metis struggle Riel began informing those around him of his divine plan. The plan that would create a new world in the Northwest Territory and the Metis were now the chosen people and would inherit this new world. A world free of liberalism and self-indulgence, now there would be a returning to a time of the faithful living in a united leadership of God (church) and state on earth (Flanagan 1983:95).

Riel organized his new order into a provisional government that contained his most trusted followers. An army was gathered to take up arms, if that became necessary. Drawing those closest to him together, He then proceeded to write

an oath proclaiming their desire to live a holy life and to defend their 'country'⁴⁰ against its enemy 'the wicked government'⁴¹. (Flanagan 1976:54). As many believed that Riel's words were the voice of God, he is able to maintain his authority throughout this movement.

The parallel between these two men, their visions and their mission was to accomplish the survival of their people in a time when cultural destruction seemed imminent. Handsome Lake and his people were facing life within the confinement of governmental reservation system. At this time in history, the Iroquois, confined on reservations, wished to retain a sense of dignity but only knowing the old ways of life that no longer led to dignity, only to poverty (Wallace 1966:31). Handsome Lake's visions laid out a plan to adopt those characteristics of White society, such as the White man's form of agriculture, which would insure the survival of the Iroquois people. Handsome Lake's visions continued addressing Iroquois survival by abandoning their own self-destructive behaviours of drinking and witchcraft and to continue practicing their own ceremonial rituals (Wallace 1966:32).

Riel's visions told of living a more devout life and ridding themselves of the lasting effects of the liberal Canadian government. Here it must be remembered that Riel and the Metis were a combination of two different heritages, and were a people who were neither entirely French-Canadian nor entirely aboriginal but a blending of the two. Therefore, Riel's message had to combine two completely

⁴⁰ Referring to this new Metis Nation that Riel was formulating

⁴¹ Actual wording contained in the oath

different symbol systems into one system that not only could be understood but also would have meaning for the Metis. To this end, Riel's visions spoke to the Metis sense of independence and distinctiveness by naming them as their God's chosen people and the idea of creating a new existence that would secure their land claims as well as their religious and language rights. His visions also spoke of creating a new society free of Canadian liberalism and interference and returning to the Laws of Moses that were given to the chosen people.

In our exploration of The Metis undergoing a revitalization movement it must be understood that these people had gone from an independent and distinct society to a people fighting desperately for the survival of their culture, their religious and language rights and their land claims. A temporary respite came as a result of the Red River Rebellion and the passage of the Manitoba Act, which granted protection of their land claims, as well as their religious and language rights. Less than twenty years later, the struggle for survival resurfaces, this time in the Saskatchewan valley.

Louis Riel had been able to successfully negotiate for Metis rights in 1870, could he be successful again? A delegation was sent to the United States⁴² to implore him to return to Canada and aid in their fight for survival. What does any of this have to do with a revitalization movement? Wallace informs us that revitalization movements are fostered by societies in crisis (Wallace 1966:157).

⁴² Riel was living in Montana and teaching at the St. Joseph's Mission school at this time

Applying the steps that Wallace has laid out constituting the phases of a revitalization movement to the events surrounding Riel's return to Canada answers the question: Was Riel's prophetic activity part of a revitalization movement?

It should be understood that as a new Dominion, Canada was experiencing growing pains and the Metis were in the way. This land the Metis claimed as theirs now belonged to Canada according to the government, not to the Metis. Land was needed for the building of a railroad that would unite both coasts of Canada and create new opportunities for growth and expansion. This was no time to deal with rebels...no time to deal with grievances. To this end, the government takes militant steps to suppress both Riel and the Metis people. The Metis' willingness to resort to violent force to secure their survival became a reality and open rebellion ensued.

Initially, the Metis took the upper hand with victories at the Battle of Duck Lake and Fish Creek. Riel believed their success was imminent and began instituting aspects of his new world. New prayers were offered and the names of the days of the week were changed (Flanagan 1983:144-145). Ultimately, the end result of the Metis' open rebellion was a resounding defeat in a three-day battle at Batouche in May of 1885. Three days later, Riel gave himself up to General Middleton and was taken to Regina, where he stood trial for High Treason, was found guilty and was executed in November of that year.

The attempt to establish a new Metis nation had ended in defeat. The Metis were now without a leader, destitute and disorganized, hungry and suffering from

the ravages of rebellion and soldiers who wanted revenge. One account given by a reporter of the *Toronto Mail* filed an account of the plundering that took place in the days immediately following the Battle of Batouche (Siggins 199:407).

Were Riel's prophecies a part of a revitalization movement, a question I initially presented at the beginning of this chapter? It would seem that Riel's attempt to establish a new Metis Nation was meant to be a process of revitalization as described by Anthony Wallace. The course of events that occurred immediately following Riel's return to the Saskatchewan Valley does correspond with Wallace's model.

In demonstrating the possibility of the events leading up to and surrounding the Rebellion of 1885 on the preceding pages we have shown that a new society had been formulated and communicated to the Metis people. This movement gained followers, was injurious to those with opposing goals, and ultimately the Metis were willing to exert force to defend their right to survival. Their eventual defeat put an end to the process of revitalization.

What must be understood is that even though Riel and the Metis were defeated we cannot dismiss the idea that this action was most likely a movement toward revitalization. For the Metis people, this defeat was a great blow as this was their second and final attempt to establish a Metis

Chapter 5

Prophecy in Action

"Leader of the Manitobans! You know that God is with the Metis; be meek and humble of heart. Be grateful to God in complete repentance. Jesus Christ wants to repay you for your labours. That is why He is leading you gradually along His way of the cross. Mortify yourself. Live as a saint, die as one of the elect."

Louis Riel, June 2, 1884

The preceding chapters have advanced the idea that Louis Riel's visionary experiences were definite signs of prophetic activity and furthered the possibility that these events were part of a revitalization movement. Riel recorded a series of revelations in the spring of the year 1885, which appear to take the form of battle instructions or possibly even warnings from a divine source. I will explore this series of visions in conjunction with the events of the rebellion to determine whether they linked with the historical events.

At this period of time Riel and the Metis people were again immersed in a struggle for survival with the Government in Ottawa. This time the struggle was taking place in Saskatchewan. Again a provisional government was formed and men were recruited to form a militia with Gabriel Dumont as its leader. The struggle began when a series of attempts at negotiation failed. Riel hesitantly

agreed to a set of acts of sabotage against the establishment. The violence escalated from this point.

It is the intention of this chapter to investigate the possible linkage between the series of prophecies recorded below and actual events of the North-west Rebellion in order to show examples of what Riel labelled divine instructions. Throughout this investigation of his visionary experiences I have attempted to answer various questions regarding these events and their purpose. This chapter will explore the idea that a portion of these visionary events gave Riel and his people guidance in the ensuing military encounter with the Canadian government.

Each event recorded below will be followed with historical links, the question being, is there evidence that these recorded events were the type historically understood as divine warnings and instructions?

This series of revelations has been recorded as having taken place between the months of March and May of 1885. These dates actually encompass the time between the first encounter at Duck Lake and the final three- day battle at Batouche. There is one noteworthy excerpt Riel records that may well be significant as a prelude to forthcoming events. It is as follows:

“But today, February 13, 1885, the Spirit of God speaks to me at daybreak. And transporting me in an instant to St. Vital, he was pleased to let me see and understand what is about to happen.”
(Flanagan 1976:51)

March-May, 1885

"The Spirit of God informed me that a battle had taken place about two miles this side of Duck Lake. This was not told to me in words, but was communicated to my spirit in a more tangible way than is usually the case with a simple thought. The divine communication ended more precisely, saying, "You will give Tchekikam⁴³ whatever he asks of you." (Flanagan 1976:57)

Thomas Flanagan makes mention of this particular revelation in his commentary remarks within Riel's diaries. He believes that this entry in no way refers to the famous Battle of Duck Lake, as Riel was present at that engagement. It is known that on the day before this famous battle a small skirmish near Duck Lake did take place to which Riel was not in attendance and this may well be the reference in his diary (Flanagan 1976:57).

As Riel was attempting to convince Poundmaker⁴⁴ to join them this reference to giving Tchekikam what he may ask of you may have been what Riel and his followers perceived as divine confirmation of Riel's plans.

"The Spirit of God spoke to me about the police. My God deigned to tell me: "If you miss them by that road," (The Holy One pointed to the road which runs in front of St. Anthony's Church and then rises), "you will still have time to catch them. You will just have to take them on the hill." (The Spirit of God showed me the hill above Batouche) (Flanagan 1976:58)

This revelation could be referring to the fact that the Mounted Police were being sent to the community of Duck Lake in order to stop Riel and his general, Gabriel Dumont. This particular event

⁴³ Probably the Cree Indian, identified at Riel's trial as 'Chiicum' who brought Poundmaker a letter from Riel, written after the battle of Duck Lake, requesting help in the rebellion

⁴⁴ Poundmaker was one of the important chiefs of the Cree that Riel had been in continual communication with to join the Metis in their struggle against Ottawa

may be a divine reference as to where the Metis could find this force (Beal & Macleod 1994: 153-154).

“ The Spirit of God made me hear the voice of the recruits, who were telling me, ‘Shoot first; we have never yet fired on the enemy’.” (Flanagan 1976:58)

No particular reference within the historical accounts could be found concerning this revelation. One point to impart is the fact that Duck Lake was the first outbreak of violence by the Metis and the government forces and up to this point the Metis had not fired on anyone first.

“The Spirit of God made me see that I could get to the battlefield ahead of time by myself. I was off to one side. I had some equipment brought to the field under cover. The Spirit of God warned me that the enemy planned to make an effort to take me prisoner.

The Spirit of God made me see a crate full of merchandise. On the bottom were written the words, “The Heart of the North.” (Flanagan 1976:58).

No reference to this revelation could be found. It is true that the governmental forces had every intention of squelching this rebellion and capturing Louis Riel

“The Spirit of God showed me the place where I would be wounded: the first joint of the ring finger” (Flanagan 1976:59).

No reference to Riel being wounded in this rebellion was found.

“The Spirit of God said to me, ‘The enemy has arrived in Prince Albert’.” (Flanagan 1976:59).

These revelations have no particular date only that they encompass the time frame of March to May 1885. There is a report that the NWMP arrived at the Hoodoo Mail Station and hearing of 500 'rebels' ready to attack, the police decided not to stay but push on into Prince Albert on the 23rd of March of that year (Beal & MacLeod 1994: 149)

The Spirit of God told me, "Our people are not numerous. They must be carefully placed." (Flanagan 1976:60).

Here is sound military advice that could be placed within any one of the battles in this rebellion.

The Spirit of God conversed with me about the events of the battle. The volunteers were all courageous; everything went well. (Flanagan 1976:62)

Again, this could refer to any one of the battles within this rebellion.

I see a troop of forty or fifty men camped on a hill; they are keeping watch. They are the pickets of the enemy army. They are not far away. They are northeast of here. They are pickets who are looking for bread. They are made of dead and dry wood (Flanagan 1976:63)

Flanagan comments that in choosing 'picket' meaning either a military sentry or a wooden stake. Continuing he states that Riel was equating the enemy soldiers as 'dead and dry wood' showing that this is a lost cause (1974:64). This is an interesting interpretation. As this entry seems to carry hidden meaning locating historical reference may well be impossible.

April 19, 1885

"I see five horsemen coming down the hill. They are riding at an angle to the river. They are on the south branch on the east side. There are two in front, then comes one by himself; his horse is spotted, light-coloured, almost piebald. The last two are side by side. I think they are hiding. These riders are Metis, judging by their horses. I see a large number of Indians; they are on the other side of the river. They are single file, they are following our path, most of them are in a hurry. Every day new Indians come to increase their number, they have the same purpose as we do. Courage, my people, courage" (Flanagan 1976:66-67).

The actual events of the beginning of the Battle of Fish Creek (April 25th) are as follows: Dumont stationed some men to hide among the poplar trees between the trail and the river awaiting the advance guard to pass and then attack from the rear. Unfortunately, Dumont's plan did not succeed as one of the advance guard spotted the Metis amongst the tree and began to ride to warn the others but was taken by Dumont and his men (Beal & Macleod 1994:230). Interestingly, the details of the beginnings of this battle and Riel's revelation seem to match.

"I hear the voice of the Indian. He comes to join me; he is coming from the North. He is in the mood for war" (Flanagan 1976:66).

This reference speaks to the efforts of Riel and his Metis to gain the Indian's support in their cause and struggle against the Canadian government. The book Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-west Rebellion by Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser deals with the issues surrounding the alliance with the Metis. (Stonechild and Waiser 1997: 58, 65-66, 69-70, 77, 84, 90, 129-30)

April 24, 1885

"The Spirit of God showed me the upper road. It is open, it is clear, it is wide. I do not see any sign favourable to the enemy. The upper road is a fine road. It is the road of the Metis who are marching toward victories here below. It is also the heavenly route, which leads the souls of those whom the Lord has chosen on the battlefield to Paradise" (Flanagan 1976:71)

The above revelation manifested itself the day before the Battle at Fish Creek. In reports of the terrain around the Fish Creek area there was an upper road and the Canadian forces had taken position below (Beal & Macleod 1994:224)

April 25, 1885

"The Spirit of God showed me Middleton's cannon; it is overturned. It is evil because it directs its fire against the throne of God. The carriage is separated from the barrel. The barrel itself is broken in two. Middleton's gun is broken into three pieces. However, the three pieces are still holding together. But it does not take much to split them completely apart, the first from the second and the second from the third. It does not take much effort to remove the carriage from Middleton's cannon for good and to break the barrel of Middleton's fine gun into two separate pieces, completely apart from one another" (Flanagan 1976:71).

No references could be found telling of artillery cannons being sabotaged by Metis fighters or of Middleton's cannons being in pieces. There is reference to their uselessness in the Fish Creek battle as " the guns trajectory was too flat to drop their shells into the ravine (the Metis' position in this battle). In desperation the gunner tried pushing their weapons to the edge of the coulee so they could be pointed down at the enemy. This manoeuvre silhouetted them against the sky, making them ideal targets and resulting in heavy casualties" (Beal & Macleod 1994:231).

There is a report concerning the battle at Cut Knife (May 2nd) that one of the seven-pounder field guns was disabled with a rotten carriage falling apart. The other seven-pounder's carriage was severely cracked with the gun itself lashed to the carriage and each time it was fired the gun jumped out of the trunnion (a pin with two small projections on a cannon forming an axis on which it pivots) holes, which interestingly began a race between the gun and the gunners who found themselves having to jump back each time the cannon discharged follow it and carry it back to the carriage (Beal & Macleod 1994: 250)

April 29, 1885

"The Spirit of God made me see that I was going to the battlefield. I saw that some of my men were late; they were lagging behind. I let myself be held up. I was concerned about my wife. Without my advice, she had gone to stay in the house, which was furthest removed from the fighting. I suspected that she might encounter bad company there. Oh, how hard it is to wage war! Oh my God! Guide me; help me in war, that I may have the good fortune to conclude a peace in accord with your intentions, an honourable peace before God and men" (Flanagan 1976:77).

Two battles were fought after this date, one at Battleford and one at Batouche. In reference to being held up, during the battle at Batouche Riel entered the field of fire, stood with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross and prayed. After a time two strong men aided in holding his tired arms up much the same as Moses in the battle with the Amalekites (Flanagan 1983:141)

It is also known that many of the Metis wives stayed near their husbands, taking refuge in nearby homes and it is possible that Riel's wife followed suit. There is a reference to Riel led the women in a rosary during the fighting at Batouche and it can be surmised that one of those women could very well have been his wife (Flanagan 1983:141)

May 9, 1885

“The Spirit of God made me see two Metis, two dark men. They were about to be shot dead in the battle, but God has allowed Himself to be moved by fasting and prayer. They were only wounded” (Flanagan 1976:87).

This date refers to the first day in the battle of Batouche. Was Riel stating that through his intercession with prayer and fasting he was responsible for changing God's heart and allowing these men to live?

The preceding pages depict the visionary experiences that may be characterized as divine warning and instructions followed by any historical references to actual events of the rebellion of 1885. I must admit that I was unable to link every visionary experience in this warnings and instructions category with a historical reference but for those visions where some connection to actual events could be made, it was not always an exact match and some conjecture was offered. One aspect of those visions in which corroborating evidence was located was the fact that each occurred before the date of the particular event they referred to, which in my opinion makes them more creditable.

In addition to the statements made above concerning the credibility and validity of Riel's prophecies I would like to add a few further thoughts. First, throughout Riel's professed mission there were his closest associates but there was no myth-making apparatus in place that would have possibly aggrandized Riel, his visionary experiences, and/or his mission. Today, standing over 100 years beyond the events of Riel's life and visionary experiences, certainly the

myths surrounding this man are easy to see but the one thing that we do have as researchers of Riel and his visions are the actual events themselves written down in his own words in recovered diaries and volumes of collected writings. These writings and diary pages can now be studied and analysed in conjunction with today's theoretical models to discern their validity.

In my judgement, there is a certain amount of evidence to uphold the idea that these 'visions' are actually warnings and instructions given to Riel from what he believed to be his God. I also believe that to be able to make this statement with absolute assurance, it would be wise to seek out more of these divine warnings and connect them with actual events.

While the ability to link these particular visionary experiences with historical references may help to establish possible credibility, I feel exploring how the Metis received and reacted to these 'divine warnings and instructions' and to Riel's religious doctrine is an important aspect of this investigation. I do know that Thomas Flanagan's biographical research revealed that Riel was informing the Exovedate⁴⁵ and the people at large of new revelations on a daily basis (Flanagan 1983:139). There was some contention within the Exovedate over Riel's religious leadership. Some, such as Gabriel Dumont, truly believed Riel was inspired while others had no interest in his religious activities but believed in his leadership ability to gain their rights from the Canadian government (Flanagan 1983:146-148). Although it is interesting to note that when the

⁴⁵ The name of the provisional council/government

Exovedate voted on making Riel an official prophet there was not one dissenting vote (Flanagan 1983:148).

It is also true that there was some opposition amongst Riel's followers to his new religion; some even opposed the idea of a revolt against the government. Probably the most famous dissenter of Riel's religious preaching was Isidore Dumont⁴⁶ telling him: " If we fight it's not for religion but for our rights." (Flanagan 1983:148). It is known that those Metis that disagreed with Riel's doctrine and the idea of a revolt escaped to Prince Albert (Flanagan 1983:147). According to Flanagan (1983:148-149) it is almost impossible to know how much dissention there actually was amongst the Metis, yet, it seems that most followed Riel willingly.

The above evidence clearly shows that there was some dissention amongst the Metis at both levels, but by the same manner there was also support and belief in Riel and his visionary experiences.

There is one other example of what I have labelled 'prophecy in action' that should be brought forth. In the fall of 1885, while awaiting execution for High Treason, Louis Riel experienced a number of revelations⁴⁷ from what he believed to be his God that gave instructions on such matters as changing the names of planets, continents, oceans and seas, zodiac signs, months and days of the week.

Listed below are excerpts from these October 1885 revelations

⁴⁶ The father of the famous Gabriel Dumont, Louis Riel's general during the 1885 rebellion

⁴⁷ See Appendix A for a listing of these revelation that were located within the allotted search time, again this may not be a complete listing.

"God wants the zodiac to be known as the Lord's Crown and the signs no longer termed as signs but as diamonds." (Flanagan 1985: 3-184).

"God wants the days of the week to be Christauror (Monday), Viergeauror (Tuesday), Josephaub (Wednesday), Divauror (Thursday) Deuilauror(Friday), Calmauror (Saturday), and Vivaauror (Sunday)"⁴⁸ (Flanagan 1985:3-183)

"God wants the Pacific Ocean to bear the name of the chief of the Apostles and to be called "the Simon-Peter" (Flanagan 1976:163)

"God wants the moon to bear the name of Saint Michael the Archangel and to be called "the Holy Archangel" (Flanagan 1976:163)

"It is the will of God that the name of the sun be changed to a shorter, holier, more beautiful and more majestic name" (Flanagan 1976:164)

"God wants Europe to let its old pagan name to fall into disuse, and to be called "Napoleononia" in honour of Napoleon because he rebuilt the altars of the "Eldest Daughter"(Flanagan 1976:165)

⁴⁸ Further explanation in reference to the meaning of these names are as follows: the *auror* at the end of each name means daybreak; the first three day names are references to the Holy Family; the name for Friday (*deuil*) means mourning and could refer to the crucifixion of Christ.

What clearly appears within these excerpts of visions that manifested themselves in October of 1885 is a set of name changes. This is a theme centred on changing the names of certain things such as the planets, geographical locations, signs of the zodiac and names of the days of the week from what Riel believed were pagan name associations to associations with those concepts deemed to be more closely associated with the 'faithful'. These instructions from what Riel believed to be his God appear to fall within Riel's religious reformation efforts and one could make the conjecture that certainly Riel would favour ridding the world of its pagan associations, the reminders that the early church embraced a more liberal attitude, would be an important element of those efforts and of his visionary experiences.

To best understand these revelations and not discount them as the ravings of a madman, one has to look at them within the context of Riel's professed mission to humanity. He sincerely believed that his visions were from his God and were instructing him to create a world in which the Metis people would be able to survive and prosper. Thus far in this chapter I have presented two examples of what I am referring to as 'prophecy in action'. What must be examined, at this point, is the how all these pieces fit together within the constructs of 19th century Canada and the people involved.

The second half of the 19th century saw Canada become a new dominion and the Hudson Bay Company selling 116,000 acres of the Northwest Territory to Canada. This was land that the Metis had traditionally considered their homeland and now it was being invaded and settled by Anglo White Euro-

Canadians and the first to arrive were “Canadian Firsters” as they called themselves. These were members of the Orange Lodge and did not want to see the recognized establishment of another Catholic territory in Canada ruled in their minds by the ‘hand of Rome’. There was already one province of Catholics and they would not hesitate to fight to prevent the establishment of another. In their minds Louis Riel was a dangerous pawn of the Roman Catholic Church. To exemplify that statement I offer this quote from a Grand Master of Ontario West Orange Lodge concerning his interpretation of the rebellion: “I have no doubt that when the secret history of the rebellion is written, should it ever be, that the Romish church was the power behind the throne and Riel the instrument only.” (Senior 1972:78). Therefore, to these people and to the rest of Anglo-Canada, who sought the expansion of Canada, interpreting Riel’s visions as a sign of madness would further their own agenda.

The neighbouring aboriginal peoples, most particularly the Cree nation, were suffering some of the same consequences as the Metis. Riel had approached the Cree people to join him and the Metis in their struggle against the Ottawa government for their rights (Stonechild 1997:58). The Cree leaders were hesitant to join the Metis but eventually did become involved in the rebellion. The Cree religion placed great significance on visions and vision quests and placed great authority on those who experience visions. It is my belief that when Chiefs Big Bear and Poundmaker of the Cree people learned of Riel’s visions, they believed that this gave him the authority to lead and may be a significant reason behind their decision to join the Metis in their struggle against the Canadian government.

For the Metis people, Riel had successfully negotiated their rights in Manitoba and now they needed his help again. These were a people whose heritage was a mixture of aboriginal culture and beliefs and French-Canadian Catholicism. Each of these heritages places considerable relevance on visions and visionaries. Riel returns to aid his people in their struggle preaching what he terms as a divine doctrine, one in which he informs the Metis that they are the chosen people of God, one in which his visions tell of a new world in which the Metis will play an integral part, one in which their enemy, the Canadian government, will finally be defeated. Certainly to a people who have been marginalized by the dominant culture these visions were a welcome change.

I have attempted to give some explanation to the question as to why and how these visionary experiences would have been received by the three principal parties involved in these events in Canadian history. It is plain that there were political interests for all parties and heritage was an important aspect of the Metis and Cree acceptance of Riel's visionary experiences as presented in the above paragraphs.

At this point I would like to summarize what I believe is a very important point, Why was it that the Euro-Canadians did not comprehend the message contained in Louis Riel's visionary experiences and yet the Metis did? I believe the answer to that question was simply that Riel indigenised his message, in other words, he created a message of survival and cultural renewal that combined the symbol systems of a blended culture, one that was the result of European colonialism. Euro-Canadians came from an Anglo-Christian heritage and the Metis and

Aboriginals culture was based mainly on a blended heritage of French Catholicism and Native religious belief systems. Possibly the reason the Euro-Canadians didn't "get it" was that they never took the time to understand the Aboriginal cultures including the Metis nor their symbol systems.

Chapter 6

Conclusion with a Historical Example

The purpose of this work has been to use Louis Riel's visionary experiences to gain insight into the nature of Louis Riel's mission. Some believe he was a madman, others a prophet. Accused of a desire for greatness and self-aggrandisement, yet continually concerned over the plight of his people, this man has, throughout history, been shrouded in controversy. As I began my research on Riel's visionary experiences, it seemed as though during his life there was a need to vilify Riel by insisting that he was a madman and that his professed visions could only be a product of that insanity. Euro-Canadians of the modern world could only accept prophets and prophecies as coming from the Old Testament, it was not in the realm of their understanding or belief that prophecy and prophets could arise in a modern age. Therefore, to them this could only be a sign of insanity. It has been my hope since I first began researching this historical figure to be able to shed more understanding on the complexity, mystery and controversy that surrounded Louis Riel.

When I first began to discover these visionary experiences amongst his writings, I believed that they were another key to understanding this historical figure. I realize that 115 years after his execution we will never have the

definitive answers as to whom he was and what he was attempting to accomplish, but it has been my belief that to ignore this body of data I have labelled visionary experiences is to deprive ourselves of the opportunity to explain a portion of that mystery. Therefore, the goal of this research has been to explore the contents of these visionary experiences in hopes to contribute new understanding and to dispel some of the mystery about this Metis hero. I believe that I have, at the very least, raised new questions concerning the role of these experiences in the history of Western Canada and most particularly the Metis people.

Riel had labelled himself 'the prophet of the new world' but was he actually a prophet? By the very definition of the word, a prophet must be one whose words are of divine inspiration expressing the will of God. Therefore, the first step was to investigate the concept of Riel as a prophet. Thomas Overholt had set forth a series of elements that should be present in prophetic activity, which were useful in my attempts to explore the role of Riel as a prophet. When I compared the elements of Overholt's model to elements contained in the visionary experiences I collected, I found that many of those elements were found in the majority of the collected visionary experiences. I learned that the majority of Riel's visions contained some sort of communication from what he believed to be his God, that for many of the Metis these experiences were considered prophetic behaviour and addressed the crisis within their society and included steps to rectify that crisis. Considering this, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that indeed Riel was engaging in prophet-like behaviour. With the aid of Weber's taxonomy

of prophets, I was able to determine that Riel's prophetic behaviour was most characteristic of the "prophet as a legislator", a giver of God's commands.

My next question was whether his prophetic activity was part of a revitalization movement. As Anthony F. C. Wallace has done comprehensive work in this area, his model of a successful revitalization movement was compared to the events surrounding the Rebellion of 1885, including Riel's involvement and proclaimed divine mission. I learned that these events followed the same criteria and progression as Wallace's model. Yet, Riel and the Metis' attempt at revitalization were ultimately unsuccessful. Although their progression through the process of revitalization followed each step set down in Wallace's model, their defeat at the Battle of Batouche ended the possibility of successfully implementing this new Metis Nation, the final step in a revitalization movement.

During the process of locating and compiling Riel's visionary experiences, a set of those experiences looked as though they were battle instructions and/or divine warnings, which took place between March and May of 1885⁴⁹. I became interested in whether the contents of this series of revelations could actually be connected to the historical events of the rebellion. Therefore, my next chapter seeks to establish the possibility of links between this series of battle instructions and warnings with the historical events of this time period.

I found that several of these revelations could be coordinated with historical fact. When I found that the date of the revelation preceded the date of the actual

⁴⁹ These dates coordinate exactly with the beginning and end of the 1885 rebellion.

events portrayed and when there was historical information that linked both the revelation and the historical event, I concluded that this certainly lent more significance to the contents of the revelation being classified as prophetic activity.

What conclusions can be drawn from this newly acquired information about Louis Riel? By the scale of evidence linking him to prophetic activity I believe that I have presented a viable argument that Louis Riel was engaging in prophetic activity much in the same manner as other indigenous prophets whose visionary experiences came at a time when their people were fighting to survive the effects of acculturation and possibly even annihilation.

Interestingly, noted political scientist Thomas Flanagan deemed Louis Riel a millenarian leader. It can be conceded that there are characteristics similar to both millenarianism and to revitalization movements; both concepts are associated with a prophet and prophesy. These two concepts are differentiated because millenarianism is normally associated with a thousand year period of holiness and most importantly the second coming of Jesus from the Book of Revelation, whereas Wallace's concept of revitalization begins with a society in crisis that desires a better life but chooses to create that new society from its own concept of utopia. In my opinion, Riel's prophecies were part of a revitalization movement, not a millenarian movement. Through my investigation of Anthony Wallace's model for a successful revitalization movement, I found that the majority of Riel's prophecies were consistent with that model. Also, It should be pointed out that millenarianism is normally a Christian movement based on the

second coming of Christ whereas Wallace's concept is ecumenical and bases its concept on the reformation of cultural norms.

In his time Louis Riel could very well have been considered a political reactionary. He was continually involved in the political and religious scene of his time. His visionary experiences were a major component of that involvement. Yet, he was not the only historical figure that fell victim to the political attitudes of his day. One such example that suffered some of the same consequences for her political actions was Joan of Arc.

Joan of Arc was born in 1412 in Champagne France. She was the youngest of five children born to a peasant farm family. In the year 1425, Joan became aware of certain manifestations she would come to label her 'voices' (Thurston 1999: 1). Within three years Joan was fully aware that her voices were bidding her to come to the aid of the future Charles the VII⁵⁰. Through great odds she made the journey to Chinon and two days after her arrival she was allowed an audience (Thurston 1999: 2). There she revealed her mission to set the Dauphin on the throne of France and to rid France of the English, as the voices had instructed her but before being allowed to carry out her mission she would be sent to Poitiers, where she was examined by a committee of learned Bishops of the Church (Thurston 1999: 2). The outcome of this examination was a declaration that the Bishops could find no signs of heresy within Joan's divine guidance. Therefore she was allowed to begin her mission and given troops to

⁵⁰ At that time he was the Dauphin of France.

command. Dressed in armour and at the head of her army, she led them in a decisive victory against the English at Orleans (Thurston 1999: 3).

Joan had successfully united the French behind Charles and her victory at Orleans assured his ascension to the French throne and ended the aspirations of English dominance over France (Thurston 1999: 3). Once crowned Charles began to oppose any future campaigns against England; therefore when Joan engaged the British at Compiègne near Paris it was without royal support. During the above campaign, Burgundian soldiers captured Joan. They sold her to the English, who turned her over to an ecclesiastical court at Rouen where she was to be tried for heresy (Thurston 1999: 4).

Although the court, which would try Joan, convened in January of 1431, she was not called to appear until the 21st of February nor was she ever allowed an advocate. After a gruelling 14 months of interrogation, Joan of Arc was accused of wearing male attire, which was not acting with the decency that befitted her sex (Guillemin 1972:159) and of heresy for her belief that she was directly responsible to God rather than to the Roman Catholic Church (Thurston 1999: 4). It was found that Joan's voices and visions were false and she was subsequently condemned to death. Joan finally consented to sign a retraction but limited it in so far as it was God's will (Thurston 1999:5). She was then returned to her cell and a few days later Joan was found to again break the laws of decency by

wearing male attire⁵¹ (Guillemen 1972:167). On May 29, 1431 it was decided that by donning male clothing again, Joan was to be treated as a relapsed heretic and the sentence of death was to be carried out the very next day (Thurston 1999: 5).

Both Riel and the young maid of France began their journey with the support of the Church and both saw their support vanish and that same institution become their adversary when their visions took them beyond the political goals of the Roman Catholic Church. Joan of Arc and Louis Riel's visions led them to become involved in the political tensions of their time. These were two people who believed their visions instructed them to carry out God's wishes concerning their fellow countrymen. In this manner Joan of Arc and Louis Riel followed a parallel course in history.

Louis Riel is a fascinating figure in Canadian history. It has been over a century since his execution for High Treason and yet, he is still able to evoke controversy in the 21st century. I found it interesting that throughout my research most people, especially in Canada, had an opinion about some aspect of his life and were willing to voice that opinion. Although there is really no possibility of completely understanding Riel's life or the motives for his actions, he did believe that he was in constant communication with his God and that he had a divine mission to accomplish for the benefit of humanity.

⁵¹ It has been reported that certain factions who sought her destruction, entered her cell, beat her and stripped her of her female attire leaving her only male attire to cover her nakedness (Thurston 1999: 5).

APPENDIX A

A Compilation of 'Visionary Experiences'

These pages are the compilation of all the visionary experiences that I was able to locate for this project. They have been separated into the different types of episodes Louis Riel claimed to have experienced. Each episode is preceded by the date and location, when recorded, of that experience. I have interjected portions of analytical commentary in bolded parenthetical phrases throughout this appendix.

December 8, 1875

Washington, D. C.

"I suddenly felt in my heart a joy which took such possession of me that to hide from my neighbours that smile on my face I had to unfold my handkerchief and hold it with my hand over my mouth and cheeks. In spite of my precautions a young boy about 10 years old, who was a little in front of me, saw my joy. After these consolations had made me rejoice about 2 minutes I was immediately struck by an immense sadness of spirit and if it had not been for the great efforts I made to restrain my sighs, my tears and cries would have made a terrible noise within the church. I prudently bore in silence the almost insupportable sadness I was experiencing in my soul but the great pain, as great as my joy, passed away

in just a short time and in my spirit remained this thought- Are the joys and pains of man short on this earth?" (Flanagan 1979:50).

This account appears to be more of a deep emotional experience than an actual vision...

Yet, Louis Riel places great significance on this particular experience. He claims it to be the new revelation and the commencement of his mission.

December 14, 1875

Washington, D.C.

"At one o'clock in the afternoon, the spirit of God comes upon him, fills his body and soul of his divine light and essence; transports him to the fourth heaven and instructs him about the nations of the earth, speaking to him at least an hour and a half." (Flanagan 1979:51)\

The first two components can be seen as references to his deeply religious background and faith.

December 15, 1875

Hilltop outside Washington, D.C.

"The same spirit that appeared to Moses in the midst of clouds of flame appeared to me in the same manner. I was astonished. I was dumbfounded. It was said to me 'Rise, Louis 'David' Riel, you have a mission to accomplish for

the benefit of humanity.' The words spoken in Latin were addressed to me 'first-formulate, second-respect age.' I received my divine notification with uplifted arms and bowed head." (Flanagan 1979:51).

This reference to Moses is found in Exodus 3:2 "There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush." This reference can again come from his religious upbringing or his religious training in college. Riel also had a great interest in Moses and Mosaic Law.

It is reported that Bishop Tache told Louis at his confirmation that he was a boy with a mission to accomplish; and the Ultramontane movement believed that they were people with a special mission and related that to Louis.

Date Unknown

(believed the same year)

Riel had come to visit the Major and not finding at home had then let himself into his study. There, while working on a petition he saw a virgin, she appeared to him alone; at his (Riel's) request, she appeared with her child (i.e. the infant Jesus). [Stated in a note to Riel's friend Mallet] (Flanagan 1979:52)

The petition could be a reference to the letter he wrote to President Grant requesting help for his people.

Reference to the virgin and child may be symbolic of the Advent season.

Christmas Eve 1875

(Being taken to stay with Father Richer in Suncook, N.H., a description of the trip and Riel's 'madness' by Ferdenand Gagnon)

"Riel's madness consisted of believing himself called to regenerate the world. He belonged to a trilogy: Comte de Chambord, Don Carlos, Louis Riel. In his imagination he represented these 3 figures by 3 bulls; a white, that of Chambord; a black, that of Don Carlos; a red, that of Louis Riel. Sometimes the poor Riel bellowed like a bull and it took a great effort of persuasion to make him be quiet." (Flanagan 1979:54)

Support of royalist pretenders was an important aspect of Ultramontanism, especially the Comte de Chambord (a movement in Quebec that Riel became involved in while attending college in Montreal). Comte de Chambord: pretender to the French throne; Don Carlos: a pretender to the Spanish throne and removed from the throne by a coup d'etat- daily newspaper accounts of the Carlist Civil War in 1874. Colours are significant in native cultures.

October 1885

Vision:

I saw the moon in its first quarter. The weather was neither clear nor cloudy but overcast, I would say. It was not night but daytime. It was calm.

I did not see anything out of the ordinary during that phase of the moon. Nevertheless, I cannot fail to mention the joy, which the first quarter of the moon brought with it. As well as I could see to predict, " It is a joy which will last about three days, I think."

Blessed be God, the author of that joy. It is a joy, which comes from on high, a joy that must be regarded as celestial. Its reflection will last a long time that joy will be celebrated for three days, but I see it increase even beyond that. At first it does not seem so splendid. But while you gaze, it increases in intensity. In a relatively short space of time it has broken all bounds and has spread far and wide.

Am I mistaken? No, this joy will take possession of all countries. It is the joy of the whole world!

God spoke to me of the blessing given to me by my mother. Who could count all the intimate, miraculous and splendid graces which my mother's blessing brings? The blessing of the gentle heart of my mother is wonderful in all its consequences.

Above all, Saint Paul excelled in his understanding of the mentality of his own age.

He was a great genius. His devotion to Jesus Christ could not have been greater. He died for the love of the Saviour. Nevertheless, although he knew how to win the hearts of men as a missionary, he was not so pleasing to God as a minister of the liturgy. Today, we cannot imagine the prodigious ascendancy Saint Paul exercised over the faithful during his lifetime. If you want further

details of the revelations given to me about the "Apostle of the Gentiles," go ask the Reverend Father J.B. Primeau.⁵² He is the one to whom I entrusted a substantial part of my writings, in which I mention Saint Paul. When the time comes, the world will see what one must think of Saint Paul in order to please God.

(Riel believed that Saint Paul was too liberal in his efforts to convert the Gentiles. Riel strongly believed that movements away from the Laws of Moses were a mistake as these were also the Laws Jesus Christ followed in his life on Earth.)

The Lord wants the pagan name of the Atlantic to be discarded and replaced by that of "Saint-Paul." If nations and navigators will adopt this glorious name, the ocean will be less stormy, says the Lord. Storms will cause fewer shipwrecks. And those who cross the ocean while commending themselves to the intercession of Saint Paul will suffer less seasickness.

God wants the Pacific Ocean to bear the name of the chief of the Apostles and to be called "the Simon-Peter."

God wants the moon to bear the name of Saint Michael the Archangel and to be called "the Holy Archangel."

It is the will of God that the name of the sun be changed to a shorter, holier, more beautiful and more majestic name.

⁵² To this point I have not found these papers, but I am still looking as I believe they are important to research efforts surrounding Louis Riel

The names which the stars have today have almost all been sullied by idolatry. They are displeasing to God. And if the human race agrees to reject these profane names, to replace them with names more suitable to the harmonious relationships that ought to exist between man and his creator, with names cloaked in the grace of redemption, fewer misfortunes will strike the universe. Benedictions will descend on us from on high like the dew of heaven.

God wants the planet Venus to change its name and be called "Maria."

God wants the planet Mercury to be called "Anna."

God wants the planet Mars to be called "Julia."

God wants the planet Jupiter to be called "Marguerite-Marie."

God wants Neptune to be called "Catherine-Aurelie."

God wants the planet Uranus to be called "Josepha."

God wants the Big Dipper to be called the "Fabien Barnabe."

God wants the North Star to be called "Henrietta."

God wants the planet Saturn to be called "Sophia."

God wants the Morning Star to be called "Damase-Carriere."

God wants the galaxy to be called "the galaxy of the Grey Sisters." In everyday speech, when one refers to the galaxy, one should say, "the Grey Sisters."

God wants the sun to bear the name of "Jean" for the sake of the angelic forerunner, of Saint John the Evangelist, of Saint John Chrysostom and of the other great saints who have borne this illustrious name. But in order to give the pronunciation of this name a greatness equal to its glory, God inspires me to put

an acute accent on the letter “e” in the word “Jean.” God wants “Jean,” pronounced “Jean,” to be the name of the most glorious of the stars. This name should only be given to the star of the day. Instead of saying “the sun rises,” etc., one should say, “the Jean rises,” etc.

The Holy Spirit does not want the name of “Jean” to be pronounced or written with an acute accent when it is used as a baptismal name, as the name of a person or of anything other than the sun. And if anyone intentionally disobeys His desire, that disobedience will be punished. You will see the punishment.

(The changing of names as demonstrated above and some below these references can be seen as Riel's religious reformation efforts. Although attempts were made to find a common theme in these name changes the only theme that appeared was changing from pagan association to an association with those Riel deemed to be among the ‘faithful’)

The Indians of the northern part of this continent are of Jewish origin.

The Indians of the south of this continent are Egyptians.

A ship of Egyptian merchants, with some Hebrew slaves on board, went astray around the time when the children of Jacob were wandering in the desert under the leadership of Moses.

That lost ship discovered this continent.

The Egyptian masters, less numerous than their slaves, could no longer control them; once on dry land, they had to give them their freedom. The only condition was that the masters chose to settle in the south, while they gave the Jews the opportunity to move north.

The Egyptians, with their civilization, formed empires like those of Montezuma and of Peru.

But the uneducated Hebrews, newly emerged from oppression, could only lead a very primitive and simple life.

This is what the Holy Spirit revealed to me in the month of February 1876, when I was staying with my uncle John Lee in Montreal, in St. Jean-Baptiste Village.

(This reference could be traced to common beliefs on the origins of indigenous populations on this continent)

God wants Asia to be called "Xavieria" in honour of Saint Francis Xavier.

God wants Africa to be called "Zabulonia" in honour of Zabulon, one of the children of Jacob.

God wants Europe to let its old pagan name fall into disuse, and to be called "Napoleonism" in honour of Napoleon, because he rebuilt the altars of the "Eldest Daughter"⁵³.

God does not like the present name of our continent. It is not Americo who planted the cross on the soil of the New World, But Christopher Columbus. And the divine will is that this continent be called "Beautiful Columbia" in honour of the good Christian and great man who discovered it.

God want Oceania to be called "Provencheria" in honour of Bishop Norbert Provencher, who is a great saint in Paradise.

⁵³ The term 'Eldest Daughter' refers to France, which was known as the 'Eldest Daughter of the Church' due to the fact that the Franks were the first Germanic nation to adopt Roman Catholicism (Flanagan; p. 165).

God revealed to me that Adam and Eve did not leave Purgatory until December 8, 1875.

God revealed to me that the great Henry IV is lost, that his soul is in the abyss for not having been sincere and because his conduct was immoral.

God revealed to me that Bolivar is in Paradise as well as Moreno.

God revealed to me that Archbishop Ignace Bourget is almost a thousand times holier than Saint Ignatius Loyola. And yet Saint Ignatius Loyola is one of the greatest saints in Paradise.

The Roman emperor Augustus is not in hell.

Louis XIV is in Paradise, but he was in Purgatory a long time. God wants him to be known as "the Great King of the Rosary."

God revealed to me that Charlemagne is one of the greatest saints in heaven.

The results of his career are incalculable. Above all due to the breadth of his views, due to the care which that great man exercised for the future, France will multiply herself by two in the New World.

Two and a half centuries from now, the New France of today will have a population of thirty-five million people. And she will be called the "House of Charlemagne."

Manitoba will become totally French-Canadian Metis. Five hundred years from now, her Metis population will number forty million souls. And in her turn she also will bear the joyous name of the "House of Charlemagne."

God wants Pope Leo XIII to adopt Montreal or Ville-Marie as his favourite city in the New World. He should try to come spend several months there. It will not

make his health worse; on the contrary, the fatigue of the voyage and the crossing will have a salutary effect upon the personal well being of the Servant of the Servants of Jesus Christ.

God wants Leo XIII to choose Ville-Marie for his second city. He should come to stay there as long as possible.

God wishes Leo XIII to come live in New France to hold in Montreal an ecumenical council of all bishops of the New World.

Today's large-scale immigration brings with it the strife of the Old World. The church of this continent is now entering the arena in earnest. Gigantic combats are in store for her. She requires a powerful organization suited to her needs. That is why the presence of Leo XIII is such an absolute necessity in our midst. His hand must set the ranks of the episcopacy in order; his gaze must pass in review over the ecclesiastical legions; his words must inspire the great army of the Christians of this continent with the spirit of wisdom, as he cries "Well done! Well done!"

God wants Leo XIII to establish the societies of the New World on an unshakeable foundation. Let him designate sixty or seventy-two archbishops, bishops, archpriests, priests, deacons and laymen of solid and recognized piety. These men of enlightened religion, of sure and tested virtue, should have the mission of watching over the general condition of the Church; of spreading faith, hope and charity; and of defending the interests of the Holy Father, the sovereign pontiff of Rome, along with those of the Eternal City.

But in order that this organization may have its own head in the New World, God also wants Leo XIII to delegate to one of the prelates of this continent the responsibility of being his agent to supervise the progress of religious affairs and of all matters of interest to the Church, and to report as best he can to the Holy Father, the sovereign pontiff of Rome, for the glory of God, for the salvation of souls and the welfare of society.

God wants Leo XIII to confer upon this prelate the title of "Greater Pontiff of the New World." This "Greater Pontiff" should always be loyal to the Holy Father. Let him live and die working for the Eternal City, Rome.

God revealed to me that Leo XIII cannot make a choice more pleasing to the Saviour of the world than to choose the Archbishop of St. Boniface, Monseigneur Alexandre-Antonin Tache, as Greater Pontiff of the continent.

God revealed to me that the Church of "Beautiful Columbia" will enjoy all kinds of prosperity for 2333 years, counting from December 8, 1875.

God revealed to me that after Archbishop Tache dies, the Greater Pontificate of the New World should be located at Ville-Marie in New France, and that it will remain there by the will of the Holy Father of the Eternal City, the pontiff of Rome, for 457 years, counting from December 8, 1875. The Greater Pontificate in the city of Montreal will be majestic and magnificent. It will uphold the honour of the Holy Father and of the Eternal City.

God revealed to me that at the end of these fifteen generations, the Holy Father of the Eternal City, the Pontiff of Rome, will return to confer the Greater Pontificate of the New World upon the successor of Archbishop Alexandre-

Antonin Tache in Manitoba. He will reign there in the splendour and glory of Tabor for 1876 years⁵⁴.

(Riel placed great significance on this time line that is presented above. Is it possible he was creating a geneology for his prophecy?)

God revealed to me that Leo XIII will cover himself with undying glory if he devotes himself to founding a New Italy in the North-West, on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. If Leo XIII really interested himself in the construction of a New Ireland, a New Bavaria, a New Poland in the huge Territory whose capital today is Regina; if Leo XIII agrees to support the foundation of a New Belgium on Vancouver Island as well as the French-Canadian Metis colonization of Manitoba, God reveals to me that He will console his old age, that He will prolong his days and that He will make his reign forever remembered in both hemispheres. And the brilliance of his career will dazzle the whole Church.

God revealed to me that, in the designs of Providence, He has chosen the United States to protect New France and the North-West against the malevolent powers who would like to rule them.

God revealed to me that the United States are destined one day to inherit all the power and prosperity, which Great Britain now possesses.

God revealed to me that the government of the United States is going to become extraordinarily powerful. Providence will use it to chastise the countries of Latin America, after their continual wars render them guilty of great sins. Then

⁵⁴ Further explanation and coordinating chart in Appendix B

the armies of the United States will return victorious from the distant lands of the equator, loaded with wealth, a colossal glory marching with them, the wind of heaven hardly sufficing to deploy the majesty of their banners.

God revealed to me that the Spanish in the New World are like the French in "Napoleonia."

God revealed to me that the Spanish nations of our continent have the divine mission of lending a strong hand to the Greater Pontificate in New France and in Manitoba.

God showed me the grandeur of the empires, which will arise, on both sides of the equator.

God let me observe the cities, the towns, the states and the vast lands of the Spanish nations. Only the telescope used for the observation of the stars could have helped me discover the extent of their power. The undulations of the Spanish land were filled with glory as the waves of the ocean are filled with light when their whitecaps sparkle in the rays of the sun.

Today, if England adopts a policy of clemency, God will leave her power intact.

God revealed to me that he would be pleased to see the two England's enter into a legislative union to further their interests in commerce and world affairs.

God wants them to try the project of imperial union, at least for the limited time of one generation, with the initial understanding that the union may be peacefully dissolved in case the two countries should not succeed in making laws sufficiently general and sufficiently stable to establish harmony.

God revealed to me that disastrous wars were about to break out against England. If she doubles her strength by uniting with the United States, she will escape from many problems.

God revealed to me, on the other hand, that this sort of union with Great Britain would, more than anything else, help the United States to strengthen their trade in all parts of the world. God revealed to me that in thus uniting with the Great Republic, England could easily give Ireland more freedom; and in uniting with Great Britain, the United States would find themselves in a better position to contribute to the happiness of Ireland (Pp. 162-170).

Revelations

Riel's revelation titles will be grouped according to common theme. Three themes appeared within these revelations. First there was a political theme, which included the following revelations:

Three writings entitled "Revelation against Beauport" all written on May 22, 1876

"Revelation about the Men of 1810" written on May 22, 1876

"Revelation about Beauport" written on May 23, 1876

"Revelation about the Power of England" written on May 24, 1876

"Revelation against John A. Macdonald" written on May 24, 1876

Another theme that appeared centered around religion:

**“Revelation referring to the Basilica of Saint Peter” written on April 29,
1877**

“Revelation referring to the Nations of the Land” date unknown

**“Revelation that Jesus Christ Condescended to Make Louis ‘David’ Riel
his Poor**

and Useless Servant” written sometime 1876 and 1878

**“Revelation referring to the Laws of the Old Testament” written sometime
between 1876 and 1878**

**The third theme that emerged was centered around his role as Prophet of the
New World and it’s establishment:**

**“Revelation referring to the Church of the New World” written October 3,
1885**

“Revelation referring to France” written October 5 or 7, 1885

“Revelation about the Flood” written October or November 1885

**“Revelation Changing the Name of Mount Vesuvius and of Mount Aetna”
written**

in October or November 1885

**“Revelation Changing the Name of the Days of the Week” written in
October or November 1885**

**“Revelation Renaming the Signs of the Zodiac, etc.” written in October or
November 1885**

Prophetic Admonitions

Pp.44-45

You eat a third too much.

Do not be too sure of yourself

When you eat, do not take any sweetbreads.⁵⁵ I use this word (sweetbread) to designate everything the Holy Spirit wants to tell you.

You have medicines with you that you bought without getting proper advice. Do not use them very much. I warn you: if you continue to take them, you will be sick when you get where you are going.

Adopt a regimen. Regulate your way of life.

Eat blood cooked into a good broth. Take it clear. Be careful. Your stomach is weak. Do not eat heavily before you go to bed. Control your appetite when you eat. In the middle of the day, have a good meal of foods suited to your state of health. When you have breakfast, only eat about two-thirds as much as you would like.

Never go out without a hat, whether it's hot or cold.

I think that bean soup is excellent for a person who is run down.

Ripe peas, well prepared, are good for a weakened constitution.

Corn is a dish that persons whose nervous system has been disturbed should never forget to have on their table.

⁵⁵ The French word for sweetbreads *les ris* can also be translated as first person for to laugh.

If you're weak, for whatever reason. Procure whatever fruit is in season and nourish yourself with it and you will feel better. Eat currants in currant season, raspberries in raspberry season and so forth.

If you can get it, eat sheep's blood for one week, followed for another week by the blood of a cow which has not calved, then a week of kid's blood, finally a week of poultry blood.

Drink rich milk: sometimes cow's milk, sometimes ewe's milk, sometimes mare's milk, sometimes milk from a she-ass. And if you take care of yourself, you will recover your health, with the help of God.

Pp.47-48

Do not waste anything.

Riel! Try to provide for your own support. For I do not have the means to see to your livelihood.

Riel! Do not be afraid. Do not compromise the cause of good. And God will lead you as if by the hand.

You will lack nothing; if necessary, angels will come to feed you while you sleep. Pray. Have great confidence in Jesus Christ.

And you will never lack anything necessary, until you succeed. And then you will enter into abundance.

Riel! God instructs you about many things. But although you are unusually wise and far-sighted, and even if your intelligence is far above any

other, pay attention, be careful. You must absolutely pray and go to confession as if you were going to die today. Implore the Virgin Mary to send you the kind of confessor you need; preferably, you should confess to a French-Canadian Metis priest. Because Metis priests are good-hearted, because they are meek and humble before God and man, they are admirably suited to their vocation. All Metis priests are pleasing to God. Pray for them, suffer together with them, but above all follow the guidance of a French-Canadian Metis priest. Metis priests of other origin will not take offence, for they are not envious. It is a command of Providence; they know it, and they are so desirous of seeing the cause of good succeed that in offering you their religious services and in helping you with their money, they themselves will advise you to obtain a French-Canadian Metis priest as spiritual advisor.

(This could be considered concerns for his health manifested through instructions from God)

Prophecies and Divine Perceivings

P.51: But today, February 13, 1885, the Spirit of God speaks to me at daybreak. And transporting me in an instant to St. Vital, he was pleased to let me see and understand what is about to happen.

MARCH-MAY 1885

P.57: The Spirit of God informed me that a battle had taken place about two miles this side of Duck Lake. This was not told to me in words, but was communicated to my spirit in a more tangible way than is usually the case with a simple thought. The divine communication ended more precisely, saying, "You will give Tchekekam whatever he asks of you⁵⁶."

P.58: The Spirit of God spoke to me about the police. My God deigned to tell me: "If you miss them by that road," (The Holy One pointed to the road which runs in front of St. Anthony's Church and then rises), "you will still have time to catch them. You will just have to take them on the hill." (The Spirit of God showed me the hill above Batouche.).

P.58: The Spirit of God made me hear the voice of the recruits, who were telling me, "Shoot first; we have never yet fired on the enemy."

P.58: The Spirit of God made me see that I could get to the battlefield ahead of time by myself. I was off to one side. I had some equipment brought to the field under cover. The Spirit of God warned me that the enemy planned to make an effort to take me prisoner.

⁵⁶ It is evident that this revelation does not refer to the famous Battle of Duck Lake, as Riel was present during that particular skirmish. The day before there was a small skirmish near Duck Lake which Riel was not present for and this reference could refer to that event.

The Spirit of God made me see a crate full of merchandise. On the bottom were written the words, "The heart of the North."

P.59: The Spirit of God made me see Father Andre. He was very small. He turned his back on me. He wanted to get away from me, but he could not. He was very narrow-minded.

P.59: The Spirit of God showed me the place where I would be wounded: the first joint of the ring finger.

P.59: The Spirit of God said to me, " The enemy has arrived in Prince Albert."

P. 59: I saw a flight of dark geese. They seemed to soar; but in reality they were motionless in the sky. I saw them divided, as if in two groups. The leading goose, who, with the others, was heading west, suddenly turned left and went east. The geese were in the sunshine, but they did not reflect the light. They were covered with darkness. You warriors who fight for the sake of evil principles, you are like the black geese. God will halt you in mid-flight. And in spite of everything, you will lose your way. Hear, pay attention, obey: and you will escape from the setbacks, the defeats and the shame that weigh you down. I saw Gabriel Dumont. He was troubled and ashamed. He wasn't looking at me. He was looking at his table, which was completely bare.

P.60: The Spirit of God told me, "Our people are not numerous. They must be carefully placed."

P.60: The Spirit of God made me see seven or eight young Metis who came running towards me. They wore no coats. Their shirts were of clean, blue and white striped cotton. The one in front ran at full speed. They are earning their salvation; they are concerned with their salvation.

P.62: The Spirit of God conversed with me about the events of the battle. The volunteers were all courageous; everything went well.

P.62: While I was praying, the Spirit of God showed me a small boat on the south branch of the Saskatchewan. There were two or three men in it. One of them wore a red toque. They were going down the river, keeping near the left bank. At the same time, or a little later, the cable of the ferry looked to me as if it were broken in two. It seemed also that the police were coming from Troy. Be careful at the crossing: set up a close watch, both day and night.

P.62: On April 6, during the night the Spirit of God appeared to me. In eight days Taillefer, the noble captain of the Eternal City, will present arms at Sainte-Therese. And twenty-four hours later, he will be at Montreal, at nine o'clock in the morning. The Spirit of God let me know by means of His Angel that the

appearance of Captain Taillefer was an act of providence to celebrate the installation of Ignace Pierre Bourget as bishop of universal jurisdiction.

P.63: I see a troop of forty or fifty men camped on a hill; they are keeping watch. They are the pickets of the enemy army. They are not far away. They are northeast of here. They are pickets who are looking for bread. They are made of dead and dry wood.

P.64: I see people, horses and wagons that are leaving the Saskatchewan country; they are heading east. I see people, oxen and wagons making for Fort Lacorne. They are Indians who are leaving us. I see a large herd of domestic animals. They are all red and piebald and light in colour. They are being hastily driven towards Prince Albert.

APRIL 19, 1885

Pp.66-67: I see five horsemen coming down the hill. They are riding at an angle to the river. They are on the south branch on the east side. There are two in front, then comes one by himself; his horse is spotted, light-coloured, almost piebald. The last two are side by side. I think they are hiding. These riders are Metis, judging by their horses. I see a large number of Indians; they are on the other side of the river. They are single file, they are following our path, most of

them are in a hurry. Every day new Indians come to increase their number, they have the same purpose as we do. Courage, my people, courage.

P.66: I hear the voice of the Indian. He comes to join me; he is coming from the north. He is in the mood for war.

APRIL 21, 1885

Pp. 68-69: I have seen the giant; he is coming, he is hideous. It is Goliath.⁵⁷ He will not get to the place that he intends to occupy. I see him: he is losing his body; he is losing all his men. Nothing but his head remains. Because he will not humble himself, his head is cut off.

APRIL 22, 1885

P.70: The Spirit of God told me: "You are right. Protect your families, protect them in the things of this world and of the hereafter."

APRIL 24, 1885

P. 71: The Spirit of God showed me the upper road. It is open, it is clear, it is wide. I do not see any sign favourable to the enemy. The upper road is a fine road. It is the road of the Metis who are marching toward victories here below. It

⁵⁷ "Not surprisingly Riel, who had adopted the name 'David', saw the enemy as 'Goliath' (Flanagan; p. 61).

is also the heavenly route, which leads the souls of those whom the Lord has chosen on the battlefield to Paradise.

APRIL 25, 1885

The Spirit of God showed me Middleton's cannon; it is overturned. It is evil because it directs its fire against the throne of God. The carriage is separated from the barrel. The barrel itself is broken in two. Middleton's gun is broken into three pieces. However, the three pieces are still holding together. But it does not take much to split them completely apart, the first from the second and the second from the third. It does not take much effort to remove the carriage from Middleton's cannon for good and to break the barrel of Middleton's fine gun into two separate pieces, completely apart from one another.

APRIL 26, 1885

P.72: I saw the Touronds above me. Several of them are wounded. I said to them: "You too? Take courage! You are playing an important role. God will make use of you and your children."

P.73: Speaking of the Metis nation, the Spirit of God told me: "I am going to get angry with them, for they are too negligent. They are not vigilant and obedient enough."

P.73: The Spirit of God showed me the enemy tents. I saw no one around.

Middleton's tents were beginning to appear on the hilltops. Where are those who have set them up? Are they sleeping? Are they hiding? Have they run away?

APRIL 28, 1885

Pp.74-75: The Spirit of God who is infinitely good and to whom I continually give thanks told me something consoling. I cannot remember the exact words He used, but I can announce the good news for Him; for help is coming to us. The Spirit of the Good Lord even condescended to let me know that He was rushing this help to us. The Spirit of God told me, "When the Crees arrive, be sure to stay away from their women." ⁵⁸

P.75: The Spirit of God made me see that the Metis wanted to go home chiefly because of their wives. And this pure and grand Spirit of love inspired me to speak to them man to man: "Your wives are no dearer to you than mine is to me."

The Spirit of God made me see a passing shadow that disappeared before my eyes.

⁵⁸ Riel had been notified that the Cree with Poundmaker as their leader had agreed to support the Metis in their efforts

APRIL 29, 1885

Pp.75-76: The Spirit of God made me see the Metis Nation in the likeness of Jenevieve Arcand. She was not quite as tall as Jenevieve. Her face was anything but attractive. One could read there the unmistakable signs of sensual over-indulgence. She loved the pleasures of the flesh; the thoughts, the desires; the considerations of the flesh were what occupied her most. But she was travelling in the path of justice. She did not want to stray from it. She purposely went to great lengths to convince me of her love of justice. And when she was able to show me her great attachment to the truth, she was satisfied. She was genuinely proud of showing me how much she cared about right reason. But she was still horribly disfigured by her liking for carnal pleasures.

Suddenly I saw her transformed. She had kept herself much too far away from me for a long time. Oh, how glad I was to see her come back to me! She faced me squarely. She grew; in a moment she acquired the most remarkable strength and stature. At the same time her face was re-shaped. Although it could not yet be called pretty, it was much better.

P.77: The Spirit of God made me see that I was going to the battlefield. I saw that some of my men were late; they were lagging behind. I let myself be held up. I was concerned about my wife. Without my advice, she had gone to stay in the house, which was furthest removed from the fighting. I suspected that she might encounter bad company there. Oh, how hard it is to wage war! O my God!

Guide me; help me in war, that I may have the good fortune to conclude a peace in accord with your intentions, a honourable peace before God and men.

APRIL 30, 1885

P.78: The Spirit of God told me to foresee a mutiny.

Pp.78-79: The Spirit of God made me know that a delegation was arriving. It was composed of three men in whom I did not have confidence. Tom Mackey was part of it. The members of the delegation displeased me. I did not like the three men of which it was composed.

MAY 2, 1885

P.79: I saw men dressed in dark blue cloth. They did not seem to be armed. They were coming down from the height of their finesse (meaning obscure). The first one came down alone, and then they came two by two. Are they soldiers? No, they are students. I see the masts and rigging of a boat, which is going, down the river; it is going fairly quickly.

P.79: The Spirit of God has made me sense that my righteous actions were mixed with certain feelings, certain views which tarnished the whiteness and innocence of my soul.

MAY 8, 1885 FOUR IN THE AFTERNOON

P.86: The Spirit of God made me see how arrogant England is, and how she behaves when she does not want to accede to a request. She does everything possible to assure victory over those she does not like; and when she has the upper hand, she cries out in rage, "No, I won't do it."

MAY 9, 1885

P.87: I saw the purple biretta; it disappeared. I saw the purple surplice disappear; it took some time to fade away. I saw the purple robe of the postulant nuns disappear.

P.87: The Spirit of god made me see two Metis, two dark men. They were about to be shot dead in the battle, but God has allowed Himself to be moved by fasting and prayer. They were only wounded.

OCTOBER 2, 1885

P.144: God made me see that I was climbing the holy mountain step by step. Mankind was to help me ascend it. The things men were doing on my behalf put me in a joyful and encouraging state of mind. Although I was walking carefully, I was serene, not anxious. Gigantic forces were going ahead of me. Without appearing to do so, I was guiding them. They were clearing my path without intending to. These powers were continually treading on some infernal plot or other. They passed by hearths of diabolical conspiracy, which fortunately lost

their fires almost as soon as I noticed them. My path was the same as the path of the friendly powers; and that path was narrow, hardly wide enough for my two feet. Almighty God had things in His keeping. "I am coming to the end of my trials. Blessed be the French-Canadian. Blessed be the French-speaking Italian in the United States. It is they who make me escape from my difficulties and distress." It is the hand of God, which has led me up the path around the holy mountain, climbing step by step! Now that I have my bearings, the virtuous Italian and the French-Canadian are helping me travel through the valleys and lowlands of humanity. It is the Church, which speaks through me. The humble and virtuous Italian is admirably kind and simple. He can lead me to a glorious peace. The French-Canadian is a man of God.

OCTOBER 14-15, 1885

P.149: On February 24, 1885, the Spirit of God revealed something consoling to me. He said: "In three or four years, you will have your lands."

APPENDIX B

Riel's View of Religious History

Mission of Ezra	Birth of Christ	Riel's Mission Begins	Transfer of Papacy	Second Coming
457 B.C.	0	1876 A.D.	2333 A.D.	4209 A.D.
457 years	1876 years	457 years	1876 years	
Jewish Preparation	Roman fulfilment	Fr-Canadian Preparation	Metis Fulfillment	
2333 years		2333 years		
Cycle 1		Cycle 2		
Religion of the Old World		Religion in the New World		

(Flanagan 1983: 89)

This depiction in chart form is to help understand aspects of the October 1885 vision. According to Flanagan (1976: 168-169): "These two periods of 457 and 1876 years are not arbitrarily chosen. Riel had an overall view of history, which divided it into two great cycles of religious attainment. The first was the Judaeo-Christian era, extending from 457 B.C. (revival of Judaism under Ezra) to 1876 A.D. (the beginning of Riel's public mission). That period was itself divided into two sections, the time of Jewish preparation (457 B.C. to the birth of Christ), and the era of Christian fulfillment (the birth of Christ to 1876 A.D.). The second great historical period, internally sub-divided like the first, begins in 1876 A.D. with Riel's revelation and extends forward for 457 years while papacy resides in

Montreal, then another 1876 years when the papacy will be in St. Vital. This extended period represents God's promise and fulfillment to the new chosen people, the Metis, just as the first period represented God's promise and fulfillment to the first people, the Jews."

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