

The Great Turning

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"Turn, turn again," cried the prophet priest
"Give thanks to the salmon who gives us life
Thanks to the roots from our Mother Earth
Do not plow her breast - she will feel the knife

"Give thanks to the Sun and our Brother Moon
Beat the drums for the rising of the Star in the North
Turn from the ways of the white man's greed
Honor Washat - true wisdom's source

"Dance for the dead who'll return again
Dance for the end of our sorrows here
Dance for the turning soon to come
When the Sacred Island disappears

"Old men will dream dreams, and the young men dance
The women sing songs, soon comes the Great Turning"
In nineteen and seven the old priest died
And some beat the drum for his return
The Earth Keeper's people watch and pray
That the ancient ways may still be learned

In nineteen and sixty a dam arose
And all came to pass as the prophet feared
The waters soon covered Priest Rapid's rocks
And the Sacred Island disappeared.

Who'll sing the song of Smohalla now?
Who'll dance the dance to appease the wind?
Earth Keeper's fires by the water's edge
Rise up to turn the world over again. CHORUS

Smohalla, a Wanapum Indian, was the greatest of the Columbia River prophet priests. As David Buerge said in the *Washingtonians*, "Smohalla kept the flickering candle of an ancient heritage alive in a hurricane". He prophesied the sacred island, Chalwash Chilni, would drown beneath Columbia's waters, and that when that happened, the Great Turning over of the world was at hand. As the song relates, the island was covered in 1960. Smohalla died in 1907, buried in Satus, Washington.