TECUMSEH, TORAHS, AND CHRISTS

THE DATA OF TRADITIONS

Theology, its detractors say, has little to do with "real" life. The categories of theological analysis seem connected to the world we observe, whether commonly or through our several disciplines of specialized inquiry, only vaguely and haphazardly if at all. Theology, on this view, does not inform the concrete, "empirical" dimensions of our lives, nor does it show much evidence of being informed by them.

This charge can be countered in several ways. For one thing, the concrete modes of existence to which specific theologies relate are frequently unknown to outside observers. More traditional theologies, such as those that reflect the hierarchy of medieval Europe or the social differentiation of Islam, may appear to us disconnected from life simply because we are unaware of the life to which they are connected. Second, a theology may seem divorced from experiential "givens" because its critics have a different view of what is given. Thus, the language of Protestant Christians about sin and guilt will to the Confucian seem hopelessly removed from experience, as removed as Confucian talk of "li" will seem to the Protestant. Third, sometimes theological talk is thought inapplicable to

observable realities because its application is not made clear. Theological discussions of the reality of God, for example, might in the final analysis be efforts to ask whether our brief lives have any significance or meaning that abides irrevocably, but if so that point is not always stated. And finally, the charge that theology is irrelevant may be rooted in self-deceit. Theology that grows from a yearning to be free, for example, is said to be hopelessly unrealistic by many of those whose social and economic hegemony is challenged in such yearning, but this kind of theology may be more relevant than its privileged critics care to admit.

Theology, however, is sometimes accused of being removed from empirical realities because it is. The ignored or distorted realities, and the particular theologies that so mistreat them, are varied. Contemporary creationist theologies purport to speak of the physical universe, but they exhibit only the most tortured connections with the best available evidence regarding the earth's age and origin. The historic Christian understanding of sin as pride, although it was said to relate to all human experience, is painfully disconnected from and insensitive to the experience of that vast majority of persons and groups who, because of systemic oppression, have had too little pride. Classic doctrines of revelation, to give a third example, make claims about a knowledge of God possessed by people everywhere, but these claims are not easily squared with the evident pluralism and relativism of human cultures. Something can be said in defense of even these theological constructs. Creationist theories may express a resistance to the ascendancy of scientism in our culture. The doctrine of sin as pride may effectively unmask the hubris of power. Revelation talk might be a way of asserting the pervasiveness of grace in human experience. Still, whatever their possible insight, theological claims are severely weakened if they sharply contradict, or are hopelessly removed from, the reflective experience of, and the disciplined conclusions about, the concrete lived realities about which they supposedly speak.

If they are to be credible, as I argued in the Introduction, Christian theological claims must be defended in relation to the varied arenas of contemporary knowledge and experience.

The social sciences, especially those that reflect an openness to the influence of humanistic studies, offer particularly valuable resources and testing grounds for theology. To be sure, their conclusions are as faulty, selective, biased, and therefore subject to criticism as are those of any other form of disciplined human knowledge, including theological knowledge. That, however, only underscores the importance of interdisciplinary conversation, for the best guard against the fallibility of any field is its broadest possible exposure to others. The disciplines of cultural anthropology and history of religions, for example, offer information about concrete expressions of religion, Christian and otherwise, that can both challenge and contribute to the formulation of theological claims. Their data may on occasion provide models of interpretation that will prove suggestive for theological construction. But, certainly, their findings will establish restraints that discipline theological claims and, sometimes, effectively (even if never finally) accredit or discredit them. Theology that seeks to be defensible in our contemporary arenas of evaluative discourse cannot ignore these kinds of data.[1]

A theology's obligation to attend to empirical studies is especially apparent when its topic is tradition; here, in particular, theology will require and benefit from interaction with social scientific inquiry (broadly conceived) into the nature of concrete traditions. Theological interpretations of a religious tradition that identify it in terms of some "essence" will, at a minimum, be pressed to further reflection if that essence is shown historically to be seldom present in the tradition supposedly being interpreted. Similarly, theologies that dismiss talk of essence altogether may avoid a good deal of vacuity if they confront the pervasive attention to questions of continuing identity that the social scientist in fact finds in religious traditions. Theological considerations of continuity and change, limitation

and creativity, the character of authority, the formative force of tradition, and so forth will also profit from exposure to the data of social and historical studies. This exposure will never enable us to pronounce a particular theory or theology of tradition to be absolutely adequate, but without it we cannot justifiably assume such constructs to be adequate at all.

The present examination of the nature of tradition, accordingly, begins with three case studies. These are not the only empirical resources to be employed in the discussion of this book, nor do they raise all of the "descriptive" issues that must be considered about the behavior of religious traditions, nor are they unchallenged.[2] They do, however, bring up a number of possibilities that deserve reflection at the outset of our examination, possibilities frequently neglected in theological discussions. In the concluding section of this chapter these will be identified as tentative conclusions and hypotheses, preparatory to the more theoretical discussion of subsequent chapters.

TECUMSEH'S REPOSE

On the afternoon of August 14, 1810, Tecumseh, the great Shawnee leader, arrived with his warriors to meet General William Henry Harrison at Grouseland, the governor's new mansion at Vincennes in what is now the state of Indiana. The meeting was prompted by a treaty Harrison had managed to conclude one year earlier with representatives of a number of other tribes in the area. The treaty gave 3 million acres of land along the river to the U.S. Government in exchange for $10,000. Tecumseh denounced the treaty when he heard of it, threatening to kill the Indian signatories and vowing to fight until the treaty was revoked. Harrison, wanting to avoid war if possible, requested the meeting at Grouseland; and Tecumseh agreed to attend. As one of Harrison's own men informed the general in advance of the meeting, Tecumseh was coming to say that "the Great Spirit intended [this land] as the common prop-

erty of all the tribes, [and, therefore, it cannot] be sold without the consent of all."

When Tecumseh arrived he was ushered to an arbor adjoining a veranda at the side of the mansion. The general had covered the arbor with a canopy, and he had placed at its center a number of chairs for the principal negotiators and invited observers. According to an account published in 1825, at one point in the meeting General Harrison offered Tecumseh a chair, to which Tecumseh replied ". . . the *Earth* is my mother, and on *her* bosom I will repose" and then he "sat down suddenly" on the ground. These words of Tecumseh have become for many the classic statement of the American Indian belief in Mother Earth—in the earth as divinity, as goddess.

In his book *Mother Earth*, Sam D. Gill challenges what he says is the virtually universal assumption that American Indians have held a unitary belief in the earth as goddess.[3] Instead, Gill says, belief in Mother Earth emerged in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An evaluation of Gill's thesis, which is widely acclaimed and denounced, is beyond the competence of this inquirer and unnecessary for the purposes of this study.[4] Gill's work is important in this context because his hypothesis about the emergence of belief in Mother Earth illustrates a more general claim about the behavior of vital religious traditions.

One strand of Gill's analysis has to do with the Tecumseh tradition. The first reports on the 1810 meeting were an extensive series of letters written by Harrison himself; they contain no mention of the Tecumseh statement. In fact, the earliest written mention of either the statement or Tecumseh's action (his sudden sitting upon the ground) did not appear until 1921, after which both the statement and the action were reported with rapidly increasing frequency and expansiveness. Two different traditions seem to have emerged, one following the 1825 account mentioned already and the other following the first published account, appearing in 1821, according to which

Tecumseh also referred to the earth as nourisher—"the earth is my mother; she gives me nourishment, and I repose upon her bosom." Gill also notes the quite varied interpretations of the intent of Tecumseh's statement in these reports. Some view Tecumseh's words as evidence of recalcitrance, some as a comment on the arrangements of the meeting, some as proof of Tecumseh's eloquence. Only in an account of the Tecumseh-Harrison meeting published in 1844 is Tecumseh's statement interpreted, for the first time, as a religious claim that the earth is a goddess. In sum, the meeting occurred in 1810; the statement was first attributed to Tecumseh in 1821; a religious interpretation of the statement was first offered in 1844.

Gill examines three other alleged examples of the American Indian beliefs in Mother Earth—those of Smohalla, the Zuni, and the Luiseno. In each case, he concludes, there is no basis for saying that the Indians in question held "a belief in a creator-goddess named Mother Earth or anything that might translate closely to this."[5] How, then, did the belief arise?

Gill's analysis focuses on two creative subjects in the emergence of belief in Mother Earth, the scholars and the Indians. The context for understanding the process of scholarly interpretation is the radically changed perception of the Indian after the beginning of the nineteenth century. Once the futility of the Indian cause had become apparent to Euro-Americans, the Indian, seen in the previous century as the savage hunter, was now said to be noble, brave, and eloquent. For example, after his death in 1813 Tecumseh himself, whom Harrison had called "insolent" and "arrogant," quickly became a Euro-American folk hero. The form of this adulation of the Indian, Gill claims, derived from a pre-1776, European myth of America and the Indian as a feminine benevolence, a kind of Pocahontas, closely associated with the primordial land. This earlier myth, recovered in the nineteenth century, provided a convenient framework for the self-definition and legitimation of the Euro-American project in the northern new world. Scholars of

the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Tylor, Frazer, Eliade, Hultkranz, and others) extracted from the earlier myth their own myth about Indian belief in Mother Earth, despite a paucity of evidence for it.

The other creative subject in the emergence of Mother Earth, according to Gill, is the dynamic of Indian self-understanding in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[6] The context of this dynamic is the white robbery of Indian land and the destruction of the Indian way of living with the land. The elevation of the earth to the status of deity in the Indian worldview would give the hundreds of Indian tribes a unified ideology on the basis of which to oppose White aggression. It would do so, moreover, in a manner that raised the stakes to the highest level and in terms that Euro-Americans—predisposed to value deity and already inclined to think of Indians as believers in the earth as deity—could not readily dismiss.[7]

The source of the Indian dynamic is the native traditions themselves. Gill's analysis is clear that the creation of Mother Earth, of the earth as deity, is a faithful extension of historic Indian sensibilities. There is ample evidence that many tribes had long considered the earth to be feminine, though in quite varied ways, and a few had in fact considered "the earth to be the personification of a female [figure] variously understood as mother or as goddess."[8] Perhaps more important is the well-documented Indian attitude toward the land, expressed in the widespread Native American practice of referring to the earth metaphorically in "personal and kinship terms."[9] Thus Mother Earth had long been implicit in Indian experience far more powerfully and pervasively than she was in the explicit myths of the Europeans. If, as Gill contends, she was invented as a "reasoned, sophisticated, and well-articulated" response to White conquest and destruction,[10] his analysis shows, too, that belief in Mother Earth was an innovation "continuous with" the metaphor, ritual, and experience of the Indian past.[11] If Mother Earth was a conjoint creation of Whites and Indians within the

past century or so, she was also, in a sense, an Indian given. She was already powerfully if diffusely present as nourisher of the Indian soul. But still, according to Gill, a belief in Mother Earth as deity is something new in the traditions of the American Indians.

TORAH'S CONCLUSION

From sunrise until high noon during the Festival of Booths in either 458 or 398 BCE (the date is not certain), Ezra stood in the Water Gate Square in Jerusalem reading the Torah aloud to all who passed by.[12] The immediate response among those who heard was open weeping. The eventual response was the creation of Judaism as a single community scattered though it was across the world. The significant thing, for our study, is the shape of the Torah Ezra read, especially its terminus.

Torah means authoritative tradition and, though we are accustomed to thinking of it as a code of laws, *Torah* refers fundamentally to the narrative of the origins of ancient Israel. To speak of the Torah as "canon," or as the center of the Hebrew canon, is to refer to its character as authority.

Until the sixth century BCE, in all of its tellings, the Torah story included God's call to Abraham to move from Mesopotamia to Canaan, God's promise there that Abraham would become the patriarch of a mighty people, the eventual exile of the family into Egypt due to famine, the escape of the clan from Egypt over four centuries later led by Moses, the wanderings of these people in the Sinai Desert where they established a covenant with the God of Moses, and following Joshua their return to and gradual conquest of the land of Canaan, an achievement cemented in a military conference at Shechem, the place where Abraham received God's promise in the first place centuries before. Actually, that is the short version of the story; the ending of a longer version extends the conquest account through David's capture of Jerusalem. But in all of its

recitals the original Torah always included the conquest of the land.

According to James Sanders's book, *Torah and Canon*, the Torah story that Ezra read aloud, that caused those who heard to weep and those who followed to become a single people throughout the world, had a strikingly different ending![13] What was the change, and why did it occur?

Until 722 the heirs of those who had conquered Canaan following Joshua lived and ruled throughout Palestine. In that fateful year, however, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, captured the northern region and carried the ten tribes of Israel who lived there into historical obscurity, except for a remnant that escaped south. Next Sennacherib's armies moved south, occupying more and more of the land until finally only Jerusalem was left, surrounded and without reasonable hope. The inhabitants of the city of David, site of the Solomonic Temple, believed, however, that God would preserve the land for them. Thus in the year 701 when Sennacherib's army suddenly withdrew (to deal with difficulties at home), those who had believed God would save them, their land, and their Temple felt joyously vindicated. In the relatively long time of freedom that followed this miracle they purged themselves of the cultural and religious vestiges of Assyrian hegemony and infiltrations of Canaanitic cult practices, guided in particular by a legal code discovered in 621 during the reign of Josiah.

But the miracle of 701, celebrated for over a century, only made it all the more incredible that in 587 BCE Jerusalem was again threatened and this time subdued. Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, the new regional power, conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and took all but the weakest of the inhabitants of the land into Babylon. Those whose Torah story culminated in the conquest of Canaan were now conquered and, worse yet, made to live far from their divinely promised land. Eventually they were scattered in communities across the Mediterranean world. How could they live as the children of

Abraham and David apart from their land? How could they take
their identity from a Torah that ended in, and thus presupposed,
the possession of their land? That was the question with which
the heirs of Israel struggled in their Babylonian exile.

Then, a century and a half or perhaps nearly two centuries
later, Cyrus, king of Persia, offered to let the exiles return.
Among the few who did eventually straggle back to Jerusalem
was Ezra. What Ezra brought with him was the Torah, but,
according to Sanders, this Torah story had a new ending. It had
been refashioned by the Jews in exile so that it could provide
them with an identity for living, if necessary, away from the
land. The Torah that Ezra read, Sanders says, was approximately
what we now call the Pentateuch. In this version of the forma-
tive story of Israel the conquest of the land was deleted! In its
place was a new ending, Deuteronomy, the legal code discov-
ered in 621. The original Torah story had been split; the
account of the conquest and monarchy at Jerusalem had been
moved and made secondary. The Torah story now culminated
not in David and the land, but in the Mosaic law. The new end-
ing would henceforth define the people of Israel, the Jews. The
authoritative tradition had been changed.

The legal material that concluded the revised Torah, though
never part of the original, was undoubtedly rooted in a long his-
tory. Elements of it were likely a part of the oral tradition for
hundreds of years, remaining unwritten for the most part in
accord with the common treatment of this kind of material in
the ancient Near Eastern world. It may have been recorded
finally by a priestly group who wished to exorcise vestiges of
alien practice from Hebraic life, the reform that finally was
accomplished under Josiah. But during the exile in Babylon,
this material came to play another role; now it became the con-
clusion of Torah.

The elevation of this legal material to the point of culmina-
tion, and thus centrality, in the Torah story was reasonable, for,
as we have said, the material was old and honored. More impor-

tant, its new placement was astute because the law, unlike the land, could be carried into the diaspora. But excluding the conquest from the Torah, and giving the story a new ending, had one other undeniable consequence: It made the Torah story something different. The authoritative tradition was new, and human choice had made it so.

CHRISTS AND CHRISTIANITIES

If one were to divide European history into four approximate quincentenaries, and divide the last again into two, one would find five quite different cultural periods each confronting a distinctive problematic, according to William A. Clebsch in his book *Christianity in European History*.[14] More than that, Clebsch says, the same periodization would present at least ten distinct types of Christianity, for, generally speaking, at the beginning of each epoch Christianity related to the cultural problematic in one way and toward the end it related in another. Obviously, throughout all five periods (or ten, if earlier and later in each is separated) Christians held something in common—Jesus Christ as savior and model of righteousness. But the Jesus who endured throughout appeared in such varied roles amidst such diverse experiences that Clebsch says one should really speak of different "Christs" and different "Christianities."[15]

In the first period of European history (to 476), the cultural situation was a struggle between unity and particularity, dictated by the Roman desire to create one world out of disparate cultures. In this period the Christian task was to determine and maintain properly a double citizenship, to Christ and to Rome.

Until 313 in this first period the problem for Christians was their suspicioned status due to their overriding allegiance to Christ. The Christian strategy in this setting was to declare "true" allegiance to the established earthly order without compromising the higher allegiance appropriate alone to Christ. The earthly exemplar of this was the martyr who was loyal to

the empire, who never sought death, but who accepted it if necessary to keep the boundaries clear. The ideal was courage. The spiritual exemplar, the canonical model, for the Christian was the Christ who died sacrificially and in whose death all, not simply the actual martyrs, participated through the eucharist.

After 313 the problem became the confused status of Christianity now that it had been endorsed by the emperor. What now was the boundary, the mark of Christian distinctiveness? The Christian answer was represented in the vocation of the monk who withdrew from the established order, that is, who experienced martyrdom without bloodshed, a dying daily. That to which the Christian died was the demonic passions of the flesh. The human ideal, thus, was discipline, so the canonical ideal was Christ victorious over temptation.

In the second period of about 500 years (476–962) the cultural situation was the calamity and chaos accompanying the demise of Roman rule in the West. Tribalism replaced ecumenism, agrarian culture supplanted urban culture, and Germanic values succeeded the values of Greece and Rome. The problem—both Christian and imperial, for now they were one—was accounting for this catastrophe and replacing the lost earthly order, if necessary with one in heaven.

In the first half of this period (until Gregory the Great, in about 590) the problem of social and cultural chaos was addressed by theodicy, as, for example, in the work of Boethius. The answer Boethius provided was an assertion of a divine providence that somehow remains compatible with human responsibility. The ground of his confidence was "Lady Philosophy," at once a combination of classical wisdom and the third person of the trinity, now merged with the universal logos. In this way the Christian canon became Christ the logos, who "was the simultaneous, perfect embodiment in one person of divine reason and human reason, divine order and human order."[16]

During the time from Gregory through Charlemagne, Christians addressed the problem of cultural chaos through ecclesiastical organization, i.e., through development of the papacy as the vehicle of order after the end of imperial rule. The source of this solution was Pope Gregory's idea that the ruler must be divinely called, authorized through Peter, and bound by religiously grounded (Benedictine) rules for ruling. The ideal was a Christian ruler whose governance was based on conformity to Christ's standards. The canonical image, then, was Christ the King, the Ruler.

In the third of the five periods of European history (962–1556) the cultural context was the growing distinction of temporal and spiritual rulers, a problem appearing for the first time since the "maturation" of Christianity into the established religion during the fourth century. This distinction was addressed theologically in the assertion that "grace perfects nature." The two realms are neither equal nor opposite; the religious realm is superior to, yet continuous with and brings to perfection, the secular realm. This solution took two forms, that of the mystic and that of the theologian.

The mystic's approach, rooted in the practice of penance, sought to demonstrate the unity of the temporal and the spiritual in the soul's disciplined ascent to Christ, the culmination of which was a mystical union commonly described in sensual, even erotic terms. The canonical image was that of Christ the lover. The theologian's approach, grounded in the recovery of ancient philosophy, tried to show the unity of the temporal and spiritual in terms of reason's disciplined ascent to God. The culmination of this ascent was universal knowledge of God and all things in relation to God, a knowledge available independent of revelation and faith. The canonical image was Christ the teacher. The fact that both Christ the lover and Christ the teacher were deemed to be at one with the very human crucified Christ was itself a representation of the union of temporal

and spiritual that the mystics and the theologians believed they had achieved.

In the fourth period of Western Christian history (1556–1806) the cultural problem was the breakup of Christendom. The general solution was to reestablish the unity of Christians through the cultivation of the religious faculties. The two forms of this effort were those of the moralists and the pietists.

The moralists said the religious faculty or capacity is expressed fundamentally through moral behavior. Thus their aim was to draw from Christ's life on earth the precepts that would ground a moral mode of living that transcended other Christian differences. The Christian ideal was the imitation of Jesus, so the canonical image was Jesus as model of moral behavior.

The pietists believed the religious faculty to be expressed fundamentally through pious feelings. Their aim was attainment of an affective mode that transcended other Christian differences. The Christian ideal was the achievement of a warm heart. Hence the canonical image was that of Jesus the friend, the human, crucified Christ with whom a transforming oneness could be realized

The cultural context, and for Christians the problem, of the fifth cultural period in European history (1806–1945) was the emergence of autonomous humanity. It was a time, as Clebsch put it, when "Europeans singly and collectively became their own do-it-yourself deities."[17] Clebsch continues:

> Moderns have employed their personal and cultural autonomy in a wide variety of responses to their Christian heritage. Some challenged the tradition at its roots. Others erected new schemes of religious authority to replace crumbling ones. Still others adapted the religion to the modern spirit. The adaptations made by activists and apologists involved a religious invention whose bold-

ness becomes clear only when it is set against the other options.[18]

Those whom Clebsch calls the activists and the apologists chose to bring "Christianity to terms with modernity" by transforming modernity in a christianly fashion.

The activists, responding to modernity as it was manifest concretely in the Industrial Revolution, sought to transform modernity socially and politically by serving the advance of justice and human well-being. The apologists, confronting modernity as it was expressed conceptually in scientific materialism, sought to transform it intellectually by demonstrating that the modern spirit harbored conundrums that only Christianity could resolve. Clebsch gives Lamennais and Bonhoeffer as examples of European Catholic and Protestant activists, and Newman, Kierkegaard, and Ritschl as varied examples of the apologists' strategy. The Christ of the former group is expressed by Bonhoeffer's phrase, *the man for others*. The Christ of the apologists is not so easily stated, given the variety of their approaches, but for them all Christ was somehow the autonomous unity of deity and humanity, what Kierkegaard called the *god-man*.

This schematic account does little justice to Clebsch's complex analysis and even less to the history that is his subject. Alternatives examples in each age and alternative schema for the whole can be offered.[19] This, however, only confirms the point to be made about Clebsch's book insofar as it is germane to this discussion. When we look at the actual history of that stream known as Christianity, as distinct from what our theologies may say that we ought to see, we are astonished that Christianities and their Christs appear in such an apparently irreducible diversity.

TWO CONCLUSIONS, TEN HYPOTHESES

The two obvious conclusions to be drawn from the above cases are commonly accepted among students of religious traditions. The first is that religions change quite significantly as they course through time with the result that their histories exhibit enormous variety. Clebsch's particular "Christs" and "Christianities" may be debatable, but the claim that Christianity and all other religions exhibit this kind of radical diversity is not disputed in the disciplines of religious studies and the history of religions. Yet Clebsch's own way of portraying the changing character of Christianity introduces, as well, the second fundamental conclusion: traditions also exhibit apparent constancies. It would seem, after all, that the Christianities Clebsch identifies are precisely that, "Christianities"; that is, pluralizations that are somehow related. Moreover, the ways they display their differences, that is, in terms of "Christs" who function as a "canon" of righteousness, appear to share something in common.

Continuity and change, then, are the primary categories to emerge in the case studies we have considered and the primary categories somehow to be accommodated by an adequate theory of tradition. The difficult question is how they are to be accommodated, and that, really, is a series of questions. Among them are these: What is relatively continuous, and what, if anything, is constant? How is identity over time (constancy or continuity or both) accomplished? What social and personal functions are served by preserving the identities of traditions? What changes? What motivates change, what are its most effective resources, how is it accomplished, and what, if anything, validates it? Finally, there is the broader question: What are the dynamics of traditions, whether in continuation or in change? In other words, where is the power of religious traditions located, and how do traditions exercise their power?

The ten hypotheses that follow all relate to the phenomena of change, or continuity, or both, and therefore to the questions

raised by our two broad conclusions. Although these hypotheses are systematized only minimally, appearing instead for the most part as they seem to arise from the case studies, they are not, of course, represented as straightforward "readings" of the data. They are offered as propositions that the data, the case studies considered previously, may plausibly be said to suggest. The hypotheses are these:

1. Novelty or change emerges in religious traditions intentionally as well as unintentionally. Like Mother Earth, novelty grows quite naturally out of inherited resources as a reasonable response to new challenges. But we should not exclude the possibility that change also comes with a measure of conscious intentionality. Is it likely that the oral traditions of Indian peoples were so poorly remembered in the nineteenth century that those who birthed Mother Earth did so ignorant of their own creative contribution to the change? Is it conceivable that those who revised their written Torah never knew or simply forgot its earlier scope? In sum, novelty arises in tradition, and it is at least possible that this novelty, though often as unintended as a development in nature, is also sometimes as conscious as a human choice.

2. Novelty appears to be largely incremental and variegated. The developing version of the Harrison-Tecumseh meeting in the tradition about Tecumseh parallels on a smaller scale the incremental development of new ways of thinking about Jesus in the New Testament. Change builds in small steps with the presumable result that at each point continuity greatly outweighs what is new. But the small steps of change are also variegated at each point and the variety is not necessarily consistent, as the diverse interpretations of Tecumseh's intent demonstrate. The claims that Tecumseh was expressing his arrogance, commenting on the protocols of the meeting, and

articulating a religious conviction are not easily synthe-sized into a single account of Tecumseh's response to Harrison. The emergence of novelty, therefore, seems largely to be incremental but unstable in the sense that the contrasts internal to novelty may threaten one another.

3. Change is generally produced by the interaction, usually conflictual, between a religious tradition and its socio-political environment. Mother Earth was a response to the theft of Indian territory. The revision of Torah was a response to the Babylonian exile. Each of the new Christian emergents that Clebsch describes arose as a response to, and in interaction with, a broader cultural cir-cumstance. An important inference to be drawn from this interaction is that the borders separating a religious tradi-tion from its milieu are usually, perhaps always, exceed-ingly porous. The achievement and preservation of identity and continuity in a tradition apparently do not require the effective exclusion of determinative influences from the environment.

4. Change, though often provoked from outside, is accomplished primarily by the recovery and re-formation of elements internal to the tradition. In Gills's account, the scholars responded to the Indians and the broader socio-political situation by drawing upon elements of European mythology that appeared to shadow comparable elements in Native American sensibilities. More important, the Indians drew out indigenous motifs that countered the challenges of their intellectual and political interlocutors. It is true that the emergence of Mother Earth may have involved the introduction of an alien element, that is, the conception of deity, but this element was a formal frame-work into which ancient internal sensibilities and their verbal expression were cast. The point is that even when changes are provoked externally, they seem to be most effectively accomplished by recovering and emphasizing

previously subordinated elements within the tradition rather than appropriating material elements from the outside.

5. Apparently traditions are efficacious, whether in continuation or transformation, throughout the continuum of human responsiveness, from abstract analysis to the affective dimensions that we commonly refer to as "feeling," but traditions appear to operate more powerfully through the more affective side of this continuum. Indeed, beliefs themselves seem to be most powerful as they are expressed through myth and action rather than through abstract analysis alone. In the story of Tecumseh, both his statement, "the earth is my mother," and his repose effectively communicated the relevant past to his present situation, and neither was a disquisition. Myth (of Mother Earth, for example), not genealogy or theology, offers unity to Indians today, and the complex of nurturing sensibilities, stories, and rituals drew Native Americans together in the nineteenth century. The legend of Pocahontas contributed far more to change Euro-American attitudes than did abstract theories. The Sinai narrative, and the ritual actions to which this narrative gives rise, define Jews today. Theory, we may assume, influences and helps to focus and legitimate or challenge the processes of a tradition, but theory may be efficacious only to the degree that it is integrated into cultic practice and mythic representation. The power of a tradition, in sum, is more in affection than analysis.

6. The behavior of traditions is pragmatic and has to do with survival, power, and legitimation. The survival potential of traditions is abundantly evident in Gill's interpretation of Mother Earth and Sanders's interpretation of the revision of Torah. Both developments occurred as efforts to sustain relatively powerless people in the face of external threats of extinction. The Euro-American story

described in Gill's work, however, suggests that the exploits of the powerful are also tied to mythic transformations of traditions. In this case the "savage warrior" image was replaced with a symbolic complex that integrated the Indian into a "feminized" understanding of the land. Clebsch's account represents this pragmatic function of change on a much broader, larger scale.

7. The pragmatic behavior of traditions takes the form of creating, sustaining, and recreating viable communal and individual identities. In Clebsch's work, the successive images of Christ are always the baseline for understanding successive forms of life, ways Christians are to be in the world. Each Christ is a model of individual and collective identity. If Gill is correct, the emergence of Mother Earth parallels the development of pan-Indian self-consciousness. According to Sanders, a Torah that ends in the conquest of the land is no longer a feasible guide to the identity of a people perhaps forever separated from that land. The end of Torah is changed from the land to the law to provide a new, viable communal identity.

8. The vehicle for authoring identity is frequently a canon, an authoritative locus. Torah, we have seen, is the canon whereby Jewish identity after the exile is re-created and sustained. In Clebsch's view, the Christian canon throughout history is the model of Christ in its successive manifestations. The Native American case, however, makes it evident that a canon, an authoritative locus, is not necessarily textual or theological in character. Canons can be complexes of ritual, mythic, or narratival frameworks. The body of coyote stories, for example, may arguably function as the canon of certain tribal traditions. Whether the Mother Earth mythos is or will become a canon for a pan-Indian identity today is an open question.

9. The creation and re-creation of identity in a tradition occurs both as a rearrangement within its canon, and