

## TEILHARD AND THE PROBLEM OF CREATION

ROBERT NORTH, S.J.

*Marquette University*

WE WISH to take up the basic problem of Teilhard de Chardin's attitude toward the primeval origin of matter. Attitude rather than doctrine is the proper word. He guardedly indicates his faith in the dogma of free creation, as a thing outside the focus of his own research competence.<sup>1</sup> His mature writings drop no single passing word to describe the fact and characteristics of creation—neither in terms of Genesis nor in any other terms whatsoever. He tries to remain faithful to his declared intention of describing only those phenomena which science observes.

### A PALEONTOLOGIST UNCONCERNED ABOUT THE PAST

Teilhard's assessors in general seem willing to admit that he fully accepted the free and sovereign divine creative act as the origin of matter. Rare is the voice raised to claim that his creation is necessary and not gratuitous.<sup>2</sup> "Creation is so little brought out that the reader is left with the impression that matter is eternal in itself" is a nuanced comment.<sup>3</sup>

A basic paradox is that Teilhard frankly acknowledges himself not interested in the past.<sup>4</sup> His substantive renown is as a discoverer of fossils. His major work is characterized by him as a study of the genesis of the cosmos. His ecclesiastical status is as the provoking cause of the Church's most firm authorization of evolution. Admiration felt for him centers largely on his use of the data on planetary origins. Yet he avows himself totally uninterested in the past.

All this makes sense as an expression of his forward-looking optimism. More deeply, it can be regarded as the very nature of any

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1961) p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Cognet, *Le père Teilhard de Chardin et la pensée contemporaine* (Paris: Flammarion, 1952) p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> Michelangelo Alessandri, "Il pensiero di Pierre Teilhard de Chardin," *Divinitas* 3 (1959) 342.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of Jan. 18, 1936: Claude Cuénot, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Club des Editeurs, 1958) p. 257. Cuénot's is the most adequate biography.

scientific charting of past phenomena. The graph determined by recorded points along the past trajectory of a missile already of itself determines the future course. The fossilized remains of the past suffice to establish a pattern which can be completed in both directions, forward and back. Teilhard unhesitatingly and zestfully completes the pattern toward the future, with no thought that he is thereby exceeding the range of observed phenomena. This is that extrapolation which is a favorite target of his opponents.

Why does he never take the more obvious step of completing the pattern toward the past? Never is perhaps too strong a word. In some earliest writings (1916-20) he did commit himself to some assertions about creation. According to one of his most competent defenders, this was the only deliberate advance toward metaphysics in his whole academic career.<sup>5</sup>

The young Teilhard propounded a theory that creation is an act of uniting, *l'union créatrice*. Statements of this type are deplored by de Lubac as implying pre-existent matter. Yet the article entitled "L'Union créatrice" had said: "There where is found complete disunion of the cosmic stuff (at an infinite distance from Omega) there is *nothing*." And in a mature refocusing of his youthful views he writes that it is wrong to imagine that the act of union can be exercised only on a pre-existing substrate.<sup>6</sup>

#### CHAOS IN SCRIPTURE AND IN REASONING

From these citations it would seem clear that Teilhard did not *mean* to affirm or suppose a chaos or pre-existing matter prior to God's creative act. Maybe it will turn out that for him matter comes too much rather than too little from within God. But let us first dwell on the notion of a primeval chaos in the sources of revelation.

In refusing to essay the slightest correlation between the imagery of Genesis and the ultimates of geology or the concrete traits of paleontological man, Teilhard is irreproachably faithful to the hard-won insights of the best present-day exegesis.

<sup>5</sup> Henri de Lubac, *La pensée religieuse du père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Aubier, 1962) pp. 287, 281; on p. 286, see Teilhard's note of Dec. 21, 1919, on creative transformation, apropos of Maurice de la Taille, "L'Oraison contemplative," *Recherches de science religieuse* 9 (1919) 273-92.

<sup>6</sup> Teilhard, "Comment je vois," §26, cited by de Lubac, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

Genesis has nothing to tell us about the structure of the universe or the processes of its development. The author had no thought of inquiring whether the setting he designed for his religious teaching corresponded or not with objective reality; this aspect of the question did not figure in the religious plan he had conceived. . . . There is no error when nothing is asserted, or when an assertion is true except from a standpoint wholly foreign to the meaning a writer intends to convey and to the expectation of the readers to whom he addresses his words. [If God *had* intended to reveal geogony] what words could he have found? Would he have employed a scientific terminology such as is current among astronomers, chemists, and physicists of today? What could his readers have made of all this?<sup>7</sup>

The Genesis redactor, in merely juxtaposing two separate creation narratives without any concern for harmonizing them, "thereby informs us, after his fashion, that neither of these popular narratives can lay claim to a rigorous objectivity and that consequently he himself was not making each of the details of these accounts the object of an affirmation."<sup>8</sup>

Gn 1-3, by its carefully chosen and expurgated Babylonian imagery, conveys three incalculably valuable truths about the fact and manner of creation. God's is a creative activity utterly unhampered by the three *bêtes noires* of the Babylonian account: resistance of the material, intrigues of rival divinities, false starts of His own. This teaching is in no way weakened by controversies as to whether or not Genesis leaves open the question of a "chaos" there in advance, upon which the creative activity of God is exercised. Père de Vaux reasons that the terms "chaos," "darkness," and "water" are symbolic representations of three successive stages of nothingness.<sup>9</sup> John McKenzie thinks this "chaos" may have been the nearest the biblical writer could come to grasping the notion of "absolute nothingness," which is by no means as primitive a concept as it seems.<sup>10</sup>

Others may prefer to say that the biblical author unguardedly uses terms which had been coined in a mentality where a pre-existing and material chaos was vaguely assumed; yet he does not *assert* such a

<sup>7</sup> Cyril Vollert, "The Bible and Evolution," in B. Boelen, *Symposium on Evolution* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ., 1959) p. 92; cf. p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> Gustave Lambert, "L'Encyclique 'Humani generis' et l'Écriture sainte," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 73 (1951) 242; cf. "Le drame du jardin d'Éden," *ibid.* 76 (1954) 917-48, 1044-72.

<sup>9</sup> Roland de Vaux, *La Genèse* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1951) p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> John L. McKenzie, *The Two-edged Sword* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1956) p. 84.

chaos, and the things which he does assert about God's utterly unhampered activity warrant the theological conclusion that the chaos itself must ultimately owe to God's *free* act whatever of existence and reality it possessed.

#### ALLEGED INCOMPLETENESS OF CREATIVE ACT

One of Teilhard's most convinced defenders discusses how the view of creation portrayed in "L'Union créatrice" is made out to be indefensible.<sup>11</sup> The concept of a positive nothingness, subject of creation, raises grave objections. The Thing dissociated by nature, required for the action of creative union ("To create, following our appearances, is to unify"), means that the Creator has found outside Himself a *point d'appui* or at least a reaction. It insinuates also that creation was not absolutely gratuitous but represents a work of almost absolute interest.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, Tresmontant contends that Teilhard has performed a valuable service in clarifying the notions of creation and omnipotence.<sup>13</sup> We used to admit at least implicitly that God had the freedom

<sup>11</sup> Claude Tresmontant, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: His Thought* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1959); *Introduction à la pensée de Teilhard* (Paris: Seuil, 1956) pp. 113 f.

<sup>12</sup> Philippe de la Trinité, "Teilhard de Chardin: Synthèse ou confusion?" *Divinitas* 3 (1959) 219-364. This essay is "hypothetically" held to be the source of an explanatory article allegedly communicated unofficially along with the Holy Office *Monitum*, according to Anastasio Gomes, "A New Monitum," in the Kerala (India) *Eucharist and Priest* 68 (1962) 246-49. A Spanish version of the Holy Office "rider" seems to be printed in the Jesuit *Noticias de la Provincia de México Meridional* 292 (1962) 272-82; it bears as author Manlio Lugaesi, but with no indication of whether the article was translated from the Italian or communicated in Spanish by the Holy Office. The article is entitled "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin y su pensamiento filosófico y religioso," and is stated to have appeared in *Osservatore romano* "1-71-1962" (*sic*); nevertheless, the text bears at its top the caption "Holy Office, June 30, 1962, Sebastian Masala, Secretary." This Spanish article on p. 273 cites Teilhard's view of "creatable nothingness" as "a plea for being," and notes Teilhard as deploring the manner in which classic philosophy and theology regards creation as "an arbitrary gesture of the first cause. In a sense there would be no God without creation. . . . It is a sort of replica of Trinitization, filling a blank somehow, fitting into its place." P. 279 admits that the nature of distinction between matter and spirit has never been explicitly defined, but refers to *Humani generis* (DB 2323, 2318).—It cannot fail to cause anguish, ignorance, and error when responsible ecclesiastical organs either issue or print declarations whose attribution seems deliberately formulated to obscure whether they are of authoritative or private character.

<sup>13</sup> Claude Tresmontant, *Etudes de métaphysique biblique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1955) p. 126. His *Study of Hebrew Thought* (New York: Desclée, 1960) is the translation of an earlier work, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque* (*Lectio divina* 12; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1953).

and capability to make participated being arise in any state of perfection and association at all. This seemed to Teilhard a fantasy incompatible with the deepest conditions of being as manifested by our experience. In this he is said to have been anticipated by a saying of Irenaeus: "God of Himself could have created man 'done' (*teleion*), but man's nature is incapable of such an operation."

To create, according to Teilhard and his interpreters, must not be taken by us after the fashion of an instantaneous act, even on the part of omnipotence. If God leaves us to suffer, to sin, to doubt, it is because He could not, now and at one stroke, heal us and show Himself. Our doubts, as our evils, are the price and conditioning of a universal perfecting.<sup>14</sup>

Thus far Tresmontant. He is a layman who has been enjoying a doubtless deserved vogue for his skill in restoring the validity of Old Testament categories of thought in a milieu dominated by Greek speculative patterns. Perhaps he is here on the track of a vindication of literalness in some biblical expressions that have been too readily dismissed as anthropomorphisms.

But for my part, I cannot see that the basic disturbing originality in Teilhard's view of creation either consists in the union/chaos correlation, or is remedied by admitting the completableness of the creative act. It would seem more relevant, exciting, and sinister to pursue further the question of why a professional paleontologist should be so eloquent about the future and so taciturn about the past.

#### HOW MAN'S ARRIVAL ALTERED EVOLUTION

With majestic convincingness, Teilhard shows how fossil data are already sufficient to indicate that with the emergence of man an essentially different direction of evolution has set in. Orthogenesis, hominization, and, planetization name what is basically the same phenomenon.

Before man appeared, all minerals, plants, and animals had evolved centrifugally. There was an ever-greater diversification and diffusion away from their point of origin. Nevertheless, in this proliferation of

<sup>14</sup> This thought is attributed to Teilhard via Louis Bernaert, "Temps et croissance spirituelle," *Construire* (1943).

species, nature was somehow, implausibly but inexorably, coming ever closer to the ideal complexification.<sup>15</sup>

What characterizes this resistless tendency is at one and the same time blind unlikely chance, and inescapable destiny toward a goal. These contradictory qualities constitute what Teilhard means by orthogenesis.<sup>16</sup> It is no wonder that he always exhibits embarrassment when forced to define or defend this concept. Let us say that for him it is a sort of natural mystery. Tenaciously defying the scorn of his fellow scientists, he holds to the *purposiveness* of evolution. Purposiveness implies plan and mind in the agent who set the procedure going. Here we have the roots of Teilhard's ineradicable conviction of creation.

Orthogenesis, from another point of view, is the "boiling point" or threshold at which the continuing inflow of identical energies no longer produces quantitative alteration, but qualitative. Because of some innate directive force, the same external causes which had previously made some unvarying qualities increase in *degree*, now alter the qualities themselves. The alteration may even be called substantial, since it results in a new reality of a higher order.

This process is hominization. In the emergence of man, two essential characteristics of evolution are radically altered. Speciation ceases, and the direction becomes centripetal.<sup>17</sup>

*Speciation ceases.* It has been due to the diversification of bodily form called forth by the environmental milieu. Depending on where they found themselves, various animals thrive by the hyperdevelopment of beak, tusk, tail, or arm web. As the unfit died off, new species arose, and older species sometimes became extinct. But from the moment humanity appeared, no human group has perceptibly altered its physical characteristics in order to profit better by its environment. Instead, it produces for this purpose tools identical in function: shovel, saw, boat, airplane.<sup>18</sup> These are as truly prolongations of man's

<sup>15</sup> On the "implausibility" or degree of improbability of what has actually been realized in nature, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, 1957) pp. 113-23.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. R. North, "Creation, Orthogenesis, and Lamarck," to appear shortly.

<sup>17</sup> Teilhard's planetization, with hesitations and correctives, is taken as the goal of M. C. D'Arcy, *Meaning and Matter of History* (New York: Farrar, 1959) pp. 255-80.

<sup>18</sup> Teilhard, "L'Hominisation" (1924), unpublished until *La vision du passé* (Paris: Seuil, 1957) p. 84.

physical organs as in the case of the altering animal species; but they are due to intelligence and leave corporal structure intact. This is a unique new direction in evolution.

*Dissipation ceases.* Before man, each separate species had a relatively limited geographical extension. As it moved farther from its origin, it also moved farther from its nature. The world was covered by living things but not united by them, because as they got farther apart they also became different in species. Then man appeared. In the perspective of geological billions of years, he attained with relative instantaneity his diffusion over the whole habitable globe. Then, since there was nowhere else to go, the human race turned back and in inexorably upon itself—not necessarily with hostility, but unifyingly even where there was hostility. “The weapons which each people forges desperately to defend and separate itself become immediately the property of all the others, and are transformed into bonds augmenting human solidarity.”<sup>19</sup>

The arrow of evolution has thus become centripetal instead of centrifugal. Its graph, perceptible under a foliage of outbranching curlicues, had been a V with top-points ever more separated. With man’s coming, the top-points while continuing upward turn inward once again. The graph takes the form of a diamond.<sup>20</sup> Teilhard does not seem to hint that the trajectory ought to be smoothed off in the form of an appropriate parabolic curve; at any rate, he would demand that the four points of the diamond mark resolute breaks in continuity.

The new direction of evolution guides not only man himself but the whole of material and animal reality. True, the subhuman species continue to proliferate and apparently to disperse. But such further spasmodic gestures, after once an ultimate goal has been attained, are merely those decadences and failures which, like male tits or human tail-bones, are a normal residue of the general forward-moving success of evolution.

<sup>19</sup> Teilhard, “Les unités humaines naturelles,” *Etudes* 240 (1939) 25; *La vision du passé*, p. 245.

<sup>20</sup> Teilhard, “La structure phylétique du groupe humain,” and “Les singularités de l’espèce humaine,” *Annales de paléontologie* 41 (1955), both reprinted in *L’Apparition de l’homme* (Paris: Seuil, 1956) pp. 185–234, 293–374; diagram, p. 323.

## PLANETIZATION

Long ago Emerson is said to have declared: "Our civilization and these ideas are reducing the earth to a brain. See how by telegraph and steam the earth is anthropolized."<sup>21</sup> This finds a remarkable echo in one of Teilhard's earliest and most fascinating oracles:

The envelope woven by humanity about the terrestrial globe is not formed of elements grossly juxtaposed or irregularly distributed, but it tends to form a network in which a common vitality circulates. . . . Our view of life is obscured and inhibited by the absolute barrier which we persistently set between Natural and Artificial. Because of having laid down as a principle that nothing artificial is natural (and this means failing to recognize that the artificial is the humanized natural), we overlook vital analogies as clear as between bird and aeroplane, fish and submarine. Under the influence of this same abominable principle, we have been for years uncomprehendingly watching, as it forms itself before our eyes, the astonishing system of land-sea-air routes, mails, wires, cables, air waves, daily more and more closing in the face of the earth. . . . This represents the creation of a veritable nervous system of humanity: the development of a common consciousness. On a higher level, and with other means, we are thereby continuing the uninterrupted work of biological evolution.<sup>22</sup>

To decide at what point mankind now is on its curve of species life, we must notice that the other species have had a moment of maximum socialization, successful in varying degree. Not only technology, but also the politico-economic ferment of our day, shows how the human race is nearing a "boiling point" of unification.

"Man originally lived in little units. Then links were established, first between tribes. . . . From neolithic times onward, has not the parcel of land remained the symbol and shelter of freedom under its original form? But now under the eyes of our century, a transformation has been irresistibly taking place. In the 'totalitarian' political systems, whose excesses will certainly be corrected by the future but only in order to accentuate their basic tendencies or intuitions, the citizen sees his center of gravity transferred little by little, or at least pivoted upon that of the national or ethnic group to which he belongs. . . . An organizing trend, based on the findings of science, geometrizes the masses and tends to impose a specialized function on

<sup>21</sup> Cited without reference by Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, 1961) p. 567.

<sup>22</sup> Teilhard, "L'Hominisation" (1924), in *La vision du passé*, pp. 87 f.



each individual"—just as each organ of skeletal structure had to become more completely specialized before the animal was at the threshold of being transformed into the human.<sup>23</sup>

In these facts unfold the three steps of a "great option" now confronting mankind. First is the choice of optimism instead of pessimism. Second is the choice of an optimism of evolution instead of an optimism of evasion. Third is the choice of a unified instead of a pluralized evolution.

I am overmastered by these complex impressions that the earth is too small and that this straitness is nevertheless the condition of our centeredness and of our human compenetration, then too perhaps of our "evasion" or ecstasy. . . . While this [whole human layer] is formed and welded together by the very impossibility of spreading out any farther, we experience that our domain is ridiculously restricted, and we feel arising an anxiety about finding the way out. Nothing but the earth—it's too little! Anyway, I'd like to express the psychology (the mingled sentiments of pride, hope, disappointment, expectation) of the man who regards himself [1926] no longer as French or Chinese but as Earthan. The farther I go, the more I feel determined to live above all political and national concerns whatever, and say openly what I think without caring for what others have said.<sup>24</sup>

"The moment has come [1936] to rip the old cloth. Fascism, communism, democracy mean nothing any more. I dream of . . . Universalism, Futurism, Personalism."<sup>25</sup> This noble and somewhat alarming antichauvinism gains piquancy from Teilhard's paradoxical lack of interest in learning the language of the people among whom his mature life was set, and from his unconcealed conviction that neither all men nor all races were created equal. "He cavalierly dismisses the history of Chinese civilization as too 'neolithic' and that of India as 'too passive and detached' to contribute much to the noosphere."<sup>26</sup> His 1947 memorandum to UNESCO along these lines aroused no sympathy.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps by a sort of compensation, at the end of his life

<sup>23</sup> Teilhard, "La grande option" (1935), *Cahiers du monde nouveau* 1/3 (1945); *L'Avenir de l'homme* (Paris: Seuil, 1959) p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> Letter of Sept. 1, 1926 from Tsientsin; *Lettres de voyage* (edited by his cousin, Marguerite Teilhard-Chambon [sic] under the pseudonym Claude Aragonnès) 1 (Paris: Grasset, 1956) 97. Alternative translation in *Letters from a Traveller* (London: Collins, 1962) pp. 132 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Letter of April, 1936; *Lettres de voyage* 1, 206; *Letters from a Traveller*, p. 224.

<sup>26</sup> *Time*, Dec. 14, 1959, p. 60; N. Corte (= L. Cristiani), *Teilhard* (New York: Macmillan, 1957) p. 55.

<sup>27</sup> Teilhard, *L'Avenir de l'homme* (Paris: Seuil, 1959) pp. 245-49.

he exhibited an almost feverish interest in Africa as the ultimate origin of all human culture.<sup>28</sup>

#### A SECOND BOILING POINT FOR MAN?

We cannot here pursue the beckoning perspectives of Teilhard's outlook vis-à-vis Marxism and existentialism. His resolve to "say openly what he thinks without caring for what others have said," if not merely a vaunted unacquaintance with the history of thought, is the very touchstone of the existentialists.<sup>29</sup> But his radiant optimism found their *Angst* intolerable. Any system of optimism and progress would inevitably be more congenial to him than pessimism and frustration. "In communism, at any rate in its origins, faith in a universal human organism reached a magnificent state of exaltation. The temptation of Russian Neo-Marxism for the elite consists far less in its humanitarian gospel than in its vision of a totalitarian civilization strongly linked with the cosmic powers of matter. The true name of communism would be 'terrenism.'"<sup>30</sup> But at present all we are concerned with is Teilhard's claim that mankind is entering upon a new unifying phase of its evolution.

By "planetization" or noösphere, Teilhard means that the world-embracing electronic and jet networks are to the human race what neurocerebral complexification is to the individual. They are the organs of welding a single collective consciousness and of reducing the whole planet to a single Super-Person. This new boiling point is expressly asserted to *transform without denying* the separate human individuality.<sup>31</sup>

In a certain sense his metaphors could be regarded as no more than an expression of *Gemeinschaft* replacing *Gesellschaft*, except that for Tönnies this is seen as the reconquest of a more primitive and desirable state.<sup>32</sup> Yet, trained philosophers are apt to take "collective consciousness" and "Super-Person" as something much more ominous.

<sup>28</sup> Teilhard, *L'Apparition de l'homme* (Paris: Seuil, 1956) pp. 235-374.

<sup>29</sup> James Collins, *The Existentialists* (Chicago: Regnery, 1959).

<sup>30</sup> Teilhard, polyglot *Building the Earth* (Paris: Seuil, 1958) p. 51: "Democracy has emancipated instead of liberating . . . disastrous equalitarianism."

<sup>31</sup> Further in *L'Apparition de l'homme*, p. 208; *L'Avenir de l'homme*, p. 169.

<sup>32</sup> Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, tr. C. Loomis (East Lansing: Michigan State Univ., 1957) pp. 34, 37, 167. An earlier translation had appeared in 1940 under the title *Fundamental Concepts of Sociology*. The German work appeared in 1887.

Even warm friend de Lubac reserves for this planetization his only severe dissent: at the very least, Teilhard's "unity by co-reflection" would include only that *branch* of humanity which had by free option stayed tending toward its proper goal.<sup>33</sup> It seems premature and ill-advised to bog down here in a digression on Bossuet's debatable "Small Number of the Elect." For St. Paul, "the many" means "the community, whatever its number." So "people" means for Teilhard "those who act like people." If some men want to act like beasts, and if indeed our open-eyed gaze leads us to fear that many are so doing, is not this ultimately a question of the number of the predestined? This is a deeply mysterious secret of God's justice and goodness, on which we have no dogmatic assurance. Whether there will be more than a single soul in hell for all eternity, is at least a problem remote from our present concern.

#### OMEGA, CHRIST, AND GOD

The insight which many Catholics find most reassuring in Teilhard's system, many others find most disturbing. The point of the inverted V toward which all reality under the leadership of man is now tending, is called Omega Point. This terminus is placed in a relation of intimacy amounting to virtual identity with Christ or God. Before trying to seize what exactly Teilhard meant, it may be instructive to notice how some lines penned a hundred years before him reflect in a general way the edifying and Pauline notion that the Incarnate God is the crown of His creation.

The truths of geology appear destined to exercise in the future no inconsiderable influence on natural theology. . . . Of that long and stately march of creation with which the records of the stony science bring us acquainted, the distinguishing characteristic is progress. . . . The existing scene of things is not destined to be the last. . . . Revelation and the implanted instincts of our nature alike teach us to anticipate a glorious *terminal* dynasty . . . the 'kingdom'—not of glorified man made in the image of God, but of God Himself in the form of man. [In the] dynasty of Him, in whom the natures are united, we find that required progression beyond which progress cannot go. Creation and the Creator meet at one point, and in one person. The long ascending line from dead matter to man has been a progress Godwards . . . destined from the beginning to furnish a point of union. . . . It is, as urged by the Apostle, the especial glory of our race, that it should have furnished that point of contact at which Godhead has united himself, not to man

<sup>33</sup> Henri de Lubac, *La pensée religieuse de Teilhard*, pp. 302, 308.

only, but also, through man, to His own Universe—to the Universe of Matter and of Mind.<sup>34</sup>

These clairvoyant anticipations of the most cherished Teilhardisms would seem uncanny, unless they were more immediately recognizable as a simple optimistic formulation of the basic gospel belief in God Incarnate.

But popularized echoes or overtones are one thing, and the concise language of scholarly accuracy is another. It must be presumed that Teilhard had in mind some theory of Omega which was neither poetry nor mysticism. While steering clear of the domain of either philosophy or revelation, he was endeavoring to formulate the observable phenomenon in surgically-accurate, science-minded terms. And so it seems fair and inescapable to force from him an answer: "Is the Omega Point ultimately God, or Christ, or neither?"

The profound and defensive study by Père de Lubac in at least four contexts admits that Teilhard's terminology about "Christ the term of growth" is deplorably imprecise. But unfortunately he does not—as he often commendably does on other aspects of Teilhard's thought—cite examples of the offending formulas. And he does not show whether the "imprecision" affects also such Teilhardisms as the following: "Science alone cannot reveal Christ—but Christ fulfils the yearnings that the school of science rouses in our heart."<sup>35</sup> Nor does de Lubac indicate exactly what relation *he* thinks the Omega Point bore to Christ in the mind of Teilhard.

A Protestant pastor who has devoted himself enthusiastically to the Teilhard spirituality concludes that the Omega Point is in the *Phenomenon* presented as "related" to Christ. But in Teilhard's unpublished brochure called *Superhumanity*, Christ is *identified* with the Omega Point. The body of Christ is humanity united biologically here on earth, in a fashion which must be called Gnostic.<sup>36</sup> The continuer of Mounier's "personalist" movement united in sympathy to Teilhard deplores: "At the very moment when he stresses the distinction of the

<sup>34</sup> Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1859) pp. 381 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Teilhard, "La science et le Christ" (1921), in H. de Lubac, *Pensée religieuse*, p. 101; see further pp. 174, 181, 196, 202.

<sup>36</sup> Georges Crespy, "Le Christ du P. Teilhard de Chardin," *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 9 (1959) 305, 310.

biological and the moral, Teilhard causes a fatal deviation of his conceptualization by insisting on their fusion, by prolonging the biological and its laws even into the heart of human history and the formation of the Mystical Body of Christ."<sup>37</sup> Teilhard's counterpoise to entropy is ultimately Christogenesis, but his literary genre is "witness" rather than instruction.<sup>38</sup> Surpassing even Ignatius, and in the spirit justified by *Mater et magistra*, Teilhard's Christocentrism is said to afford "a more concrete or comprehensible sense of the glory which man is to give to God."<sup>39</sup>

Trained Catholic theologians naturally find great scandal in Teilhard's claim that Christ is a part of evolution. His "redemptive evolution" was the target of a violent attack, which by its cloak of anonymity renounced hope of being taken seriously.<sup>40</sup> It was emphatically denounced by Teilhard as a distortion of his true meaning: "Even the title insinuates that I ascribe a properly salvific virtue to the cosmic process. On the contrary, my constant preoccupation has been to have radiate from a transcendent personal Christ the 'redemptive' qualities of the pain engendered by evolution."<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, it is easy to see how more responsible and sympathetic theologians are forced to the conclusion that the gravest of all dangers in Teilhard's system is the apparent destruction of the abyss between the natural and supernatural orders.<sup>42</sup>

When Teilhard writes: "The Christ of revelation is nothing other than the Omega of evolution," and "Let us in fact identify (at least by its 'natural' face) the cosmic Christ of faith with the Omega Point of science—all becomes clear, simple, harmonized in our perceptions," he understandably provokes the expostulation: "On the most important points, on which the whole structure depends, as for example

<sup>37</sup> Jean-Marie Domenach, "Le personnalisme de Teilhard de Chardin," *Esprit* 31 (1963) 359, ascribing this judgment also to C. Journet, *Nova et vetera*, Oct., 1962.

<sup>38</sup> Heimo Dolch, "Erwägungen über die Aussage Teilhards de Chardin," *Catholica* 16 (1962) 96, 100.

<sup>39</sup> Celestino Solaguren, "La cristología del P. Teilhard de Chardin y el Principio y Fundamento de san Ignacio," *Manresa* 35 (1963) 14-22; "El cristocentrismo cósmico de Teilhard de Chardin," *Verdad y vida* 7 (1961) 131-43.

<sup>40</sup> *L'Évolution rédemptrice du P. Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Cèdre, 1950).

<sup>41</sup> Teilhard, *Études* 266 (1950) 284.

<sup>42</sup> Aldo Locatelli, "Il punto Omega di Teilhard de Chardin," *Scuola cattolica* 90 (1962) 112.

'the two faces of Omega' . . . the reader is invited to rest content with images. A loyal effort of intense metaphysical concentration would be needed even to pose these questions, to say nothing of solving them. To replace this by play of imagination is movie-trickery."<sup>43</sup>

Theologians to whose wisdom I feel myself both indebted and inferior have chosen to defend Teilhard here on the ground that his expectations relate merely to what data-observation itself would suggest: "the unity prophesied by Teilhard is still on the phenomenal plane and does not compromise the gratuity of grace."<sup>44</sup>

Another defense is: "Just because God has gratuitously engaged himself in the universe, a true phenomenology is bound to be up to a point a theophany."<sup>45</sup> The ambiguity of this term forces on our attention a dilemma which neither Teilhard nor his critics stressed. If the Omega is to be identified with God, then it can well be regarded as part of the natural order. God as creator and term of finite being is not "supernatural" but indispensable to the natural order and *revealed* within it (Rom 1:20). The Christ-fact, however, is wholly supernatural and beyond the exigencies of the natural order.

#### PAUL'S COSMIC CHRIST

A more appropriate evaluation of Teilhard is to juxtapose his formulas beside those of inspired Scripture and see how they differ whether in statement or in implication. At the outset of his career, he wrote with a pardonably pouting expression: "*Tout de même*, we have the right to speak like St. Paul."<sup>46</sup>

"He resolutely reaffirms the biblical truth that the redemption of man is also the redemption of the cosmos."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> M. L. Guérard des Lauriers, "La démarche du P. Teilhard de Chardin: Réflexions d'ordre épistémologique," *Divinitas* 3 (1959) 232, citing Teilhard's "Christianisme et évolution" (1945, p. 8) and "Le Christique" (1955, p. 8).

<sup>44</sup> Cyril Vollert, "Toward Omega: Man in the Vision of Teilhard de Chardin," *Month* 23 (1960) 265. This article is reprinted in *Catholic Mind* 58 (1960) 402-9, and summarized in *Theology Digest* 8 (1960) 133-36.

<sup>45</sup> William Donnelly, "The Thought of Teilhard de Chardin," *Clergy Review* 45 (1960) 335, with the further observation that the Pauline vision commands Teilhard's outlook but does not determine the movement of his dialectic.

<sup>46</sup> Teilhard, Letter of Dec. 17, 1922; cited in H. de Lubac, *Pensée religieuse de Teilhard*, p. 227.

<sup>47</sup> John L. McKenzie, review of *The Divine Milieu*, in *Critic*, Jan., 1961, pp. 29 f.

Paul says in Rom 8:18: "The sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (19) The expectation of the creation points toward the revealing of the sons of God. (20) Creation itself has been frustrated, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who permitted this (21) in view of creation's eventual deliverance from the slavery of corruptibility into the glorious freedom of God's children. (22) We recognize that there is a groan and an anguish throughout the whole of creation up to now. (23) It is not merely the material creation, but ourselves also, who groan at the deferral of (sonly) redemption of our body."

Parallels to this passage have been suggested in the "new heavens and new earth" of Is 65:17; 66:22; Acts 3:21; 2 Pt 3:13; and Ap 21:1—except that Romans envisions a liberation rather than a renovation of existing nature. "The various speculations on the way in which nature will eventually obtain her freedom from the curse of Gn 3:17 cannot claim the authority of St. Paul. It is one of the mysteries not revealed to us."<sup>48</sup>

A recent analysis of "creation's expectation" finds that *ktisis* is "all creation including men," though many notable exegetes opt for either material creation excluding men, or men exclusively. The "frustration" to which creation has been subjected is not (a) fallen man, who dominates the lower creation, nor (b) merely the disequilibrium announced in Gn 1:28, but rather (c) "the Evil Power." And the "unwillingness" of this subjection implies that it was effected either (a) by God, or (b) by Satan, or preferably (c) by Adam. "It is clear how close appears the solidarity of the creation here mentioned with the sons of God and via them with the Son of God Himself."<sup>49</sup>

The Romans passage in a later phrase (8:29) links the "redemption of material creation" with the Christological title of "first-born," on which the acumen of theologians has been considerably exercised.

<sup>48</sup> A. Theissen, "Romans," in B. Orchard, *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (New York: Nelson, 1953) p. 1065, citing Pesch, *Prælectiones* 3, proposition 54; Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* 3, 840-47.

<sup>49</sup> A. Viard, "Expectatio creaturae (Rom. VIII, 19-22)," *Revue biblique* 59 (1952) 340; cf. 337-54. There are further studies of this passage by Sagnard in *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 26 (1950) 504-8, and by Michl in *Tübinger theologische Quartalsschrift* 128 (1948) 442.

THE FIRST-BORN OF *PASA KTISIS*

To the Colossians Paul writes that God the Father (1:12) "brought us together to share the splendid inheritance of the saints, (13) delivered us out of the power of darkness over into the kingdom of His beloved Son, (14) in whom we have a redemption consisting in the forgiveness of our sins. (15) This Son is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of *pasa ktisis* (all creation, or every creature); (17) He is before all things, and in Him all things consist . . . , (19) and it was decreed that in Him the whole *plērōma* should dwell, (20) to serve as principle of unification of all things whether upon the earth or in the sky."

Eph 1:10 declares that it was God's design "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the sky and the things on earth," and (22) "submit to Him all things, in making Him head over all in the bodily unity of His Church, (23) the *plērōma*."

In these passages it is less obvious, but to some extent suggested, that the *material* creation finds the term of its existence in Christ. "Neither theology nor exegesis has as yet given a sufficiently clear explanation of the doctrine [of Col 1:15 on *plērōma*]. How theologically valid is this concept which places Christ at the heart of cosmic history? Over forty years after the plea of [Teilhard's] letters for a broader Christology, we still have no satisfactory answer."<sup>50</sup>

The title "first-born" occurs not only in Romans and Colossians, but in 1 Cor 15:20, and especially in Heb 1:6, where it has been studied by Vitti. He concludes that it refers to the Incarnation and/or Nativity, not to the Second Coming or any event envisioned as *future* to the time of writing the epistle.<sup>51</sup>

One of Teilhard's associates in the Jesuit theology course at Hastings firmly dismisses Christ's primogeniture as a metaphor for sovereignty. *Prōtōtokos pasēs ktiseōs* is claimed to have probably meant to Paul, as

<sup>50</sup> Christopher F. Mooney, "Blondel and Teilhard de Chardin: An Exchange of Letters," *Thought* 37 (1962) 555, based on Valensin's publication in *Archives de philosophie* 24 (1961) 123-56; adding reference to K. Rahner, "Probleme der Christologie von heute," in *Schriften zur Theologie* 1 (Einsiedeln, 1954) 187 f.

<sup>51</sup> A. M. Vitti, "Et cum iterum introducit Primogenitum in orbem terrae," *Verbum Domini* 14 (1934) 306-12, 368-74; 15 (1935) 15-21.



it certainly meant to the Jewish Messianic tradition, "sovereign of the whole world" as man and as mediator.<sup>52</sup>

Others, referring Christ's primogeniture rather to His divine nature, have found in it a parallel to pre-existent creative Wisdom.<sup>53</sup> A Benedictine study of this position concludes: (a) Wisdom is *not*, in Proverbs, an agent of creation; (b) Wisdom is nowhere in Paul a hypostasis; (c) Colossians has no echo of any Old Testament sapiential book.<sup>54</sup> Further insight into "the creative role of the Word" as paralleling "the cosmic Christ" is sought from Jn 1:3.<sup>55</sup>

Again, there is seen to be an antithesis between first-born and "invisible," which in Paul always means God the triune rather than father. Hence, Christ as man is meant; He is first-born not "of all creation" but "of *each* creature," meaning that each is a sort of younger brother to Him—though the "birth" in question is Christ's incarnation, in relation to which "there neither are nor could be any actual *secundogeniti*."<sup>56</sup>

Three important studies of Père Benoit, along with important relevant articles cited by him, cast only an oblique light upon our problem. He finds that the term "adoption" is both textually and exegetically to be expunged in the phrase of Rom 8:23, "we sigh, awaiting (adoption) the liberation of our body."<sup>57</sup> The term *plērōma* or "fulness" in Col 1:19 was rightly seen by Theodore of Mopsuestia to mean neither (exactly) the Church nor the divine nature, but rather the cosmic extension of the work of Christ, as distinct from

<sup>52</sup> Alfred Durand, "Le Christ 'premier-né,'" *Recherches de science religieuse* 1 (1910) 56-66.

<sup>53</sup> H. Windisch, "Die göttliche Weisheit der Juden und die paulinische Christologie," *Neutestamentliche Studien G. Heinrich* (Leipzig, 1914) 220-34; C. E. Burney, "Christ As the archē of Creation," *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1925-26) 160-77.

<sup>54</sup> D. B. Botte, "La sagesse et les origines de la christologie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 21 (1932) 54-67.

<sup>55</sup> M.-E. Boismard, *Saint John's Prologue* (London: Blackfriars, 1957) 112; *Prologue de saint Jean (Lectio divina* 11; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1953) 141. A reference to Viard is suppressed in the English.

<sup>56</sup> Ugo Lattanzi, *Il primato universale di Cristo secondo le s. Scritture* (Rome: Lateran, 1937) pp. 106, 84.

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Benoit, "Nous gémissons, attendant la délivrance de notre corps," *Recherches de science religieuse* 39 (*Mélanges Lebreton* 1, 1951-52) 267-80; *Exégèse et théologie* 2 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961) 41-52.

Christ's (mystical) "body," which always means *men* as saved, or the Church, a figure borrowed not from pagan or Gnostic images but from Hebrew corporate solidarity.<sup>58</sup> For Gnosticism, "the whole cosmos is a great 'body,' and this is even its primary sense."<sup>59</sup> Mussner's failure to find a cosmic nuance in *plērōma* is called by Benoit "too timid, not to say inexact."<sup>60</sup> There is cogency in Goguel's claim that Eph 1:10, 22 depicts "a restoration" in Christ which engulfs the whole universe, so that redemption is no longer merely personal but cosmic.<sup>61</sup> However, Benoit adds that "recapitulation" is a more accurate term than restoration, and "the redemption of the [infra-human] creation is not primary but in spite of itself. . . . In Ephesians one is conscious of penetrating, at the side of the truly Pauline idea of vanquishment of the celestial powers in a redemptive triumph, to the new concept of a redemption engulfing them in a vast cosmic salvation of which human salvation is [an aspect]."<sup>62</sup>

The most adequate study of the "first-born of creation" seems to be Cerny's. He shows how the opinions both in the first five centuries and today are pretty well divided between the Word as divine Pre-existent and as Incarnate. How the Pre-existent is "first-born" finds again three varying explanations: as generated by the Father, as prior to creation, and as first in dignity.

<sup>58</sup> Benoit, "Corps, tête et plérôme dans les épîtres de la captivité," *Revue biblique* 63 (1956) 5-44; *Exégèse et théologie* 2, 136; 107-53. On p. 131, Benoit finds exaggerated the claim that even among Old Testament and Hellenistic sources "head" implies salvation: José M. González Ruiz, "Sentido soteriológico de *kephalē* en la cristología de san Pablo," *Anthologica annua* 1 (Rome, 1953) 185-224; see now E. Schweizer, "The Church As the Missionary Body of Christ," *New Testament Studies* 8 (1961) 1-11.

<sup>59</sup> J. Dupont, *Gnosis* (Louvain, 1949) 431-35; see further L. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959) pp. 151, 172.

<sup>60</sup> Franz Mussner, *Christus, das All und die Kirche: Studien zur Theologie des Epheserbriefes* (Trierer theologische Studien 5; Trier: Paulus-Verlag, 1955); Benoit, *Exégèse et théologie* 2, 164. See further J. Gewiss, "Die Begriffe *plērōn* und *plērōma* im Kol- und Eph-Brief," *Festschrift M. Meinerts: Vom Wort des Lebens* (1951) pp. 128-41; S. Aalen, "Begrepet *plērōma*," *Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 23 (1952) 49-67; Gerhard Delling, "*plērōn*," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1959) 283-309.

<sup>61</sup> M. Goguel, "L'Élément cosmologique dans le paulinisme," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 15 (1935) 337; "Esquisse d'une solution nouvelle du problème de l'épître aux Ephésiens," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 111 (1935) 254-84; 112 (1935) 73-99: holding the imitations of Colossians in Ephesians are an interpolation rather than, as Benoit claims, a development within the Pauline corpus.

<sup>62</sup> P. Benoit, "L'Horizon paulinien de l'épître aux Ephésiens," *Revue biblique* 46 (1937) 342-61, 506-25; *Exégèse et théologie* 2, 62; 2, 53-96.

The earliest apologists, especially Justin, explained the Son as begotten or born for the sake of bringing creation into being. Indeed, eventually *prōtotos*, "first-born," was reserved for this function with respect to creation, whereas *monogenēs*, "sole-born," was the term applied to the Divine Word in Its own nature. Against the Arian claim that the Son was "first among the *creatures*," a defensive apologetics naturally tended to see in Paul's *prōtotos* an expression of Christ's manhood. The marvel is that the older view managed to hold respect, and even regain favor after the Arian scare had passed.

*Prōtokistos* is distinguished from *prōtotos* by Didymus the Blind (313–98), who was writing in Alexandria during the twenty-five years before and the twenty-five years after the death of Athanasius. Christ was not "created" (*ktistos*) first; he was "born (of the Holy Virgin but) in the divine foreknowledge" first. As an alternative view linked with Prv 8:22, Didymus admits the remote possibility of the interpretation "*salvation* was predetermined before the ages." Really he ends up preferring "first-born of every creature *reborn by baptism*." Cerny concludes that Didymus' view of God's advance-decree making Christ first-born is identical with the significant theologoumenon which has come to be linked with the name of Scotus.<sup>63</sup>

#### SCOTIST CISREDEMPTIVE INCARNATION

Franciscan theologians have always held, without the slightest whisper of unorthodoxy, that the Incarnation would have taken place apart from any need for the redemption of mankind. This doctrine of Duns Scotus is recognizably traceable to the Pauline passages discussed above. "Those who held the thesis common in Franciscan schools that the Eternal Word would have become incarnate even if men had not sinned, explain . . . [that] the decree regarding the Incarnation preceded the decree of creation, and 'firstborn of every creature' is understood in the ideal order, in the sense of priority."<sup>64</sup> In this view, Christ as *man* is seen to be "born *before* any creature."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Edward A. Cerny, *Firstborn of Every Creature* (Baltimore: St. Mary's University, 1938) 61; Didymus, *De trinitate* 3, 3 f. (PG 39, 827).

<sup>64</sup> Cerny, *Firstborn*, p. xix, citing Bernardinus a S. Joanne Rotundo, in *Collectanea Franciscana* 4 (1934) 551; also Suárez, *Opera* 17 (Paris, 1866) 649.

<sup>65</sup> Joannes M. Bissen, "De primatu Christi absoluto apud Col 1, 13–20," *Antonianum* 11 (1936) 3–26; 4; 16. This article mostly polemizes against Ferdinand Prat, *Theology of Saint Paul* 1 (London: Burns Oates, 1933) 289.

It had been concluded from very earnest researches that there was no trace of this Scotist opinion in theological literature before the twelfth century.<sup>66</sup> But in 1909 there was edited a seventh-century treatise by Isaac of Nineveh on *Religious Perfection*, which contained a categorical affirmation that the Incarnation would have happened even if there had been no sin.<sup>67</sup> Strangely, this portion is omitted from a published English translation.<sup>68</sup>

Scotus deals with the final cause of the hypostatic union in his most mature work, the *Reportata Parisiensia* 3, 7, 4–6, dated about 1307, and in the longer *Oxford Fourth Sentences* 3, 7, 3 of 1302. It seems inaccurate to say that he ever posed the question “Would the Word have become incarnate even if man had not sinned?” He limits himself to the order of what has actually taken place, permissively willed by God; but in this framework he is convinced that the primary motive of the Incarnation is not and cannot be Adam’s sin.<sup>69</sup>

It is rather a loaded question which he poses in Pauline terms: “Was Christ predestined to be Son of God?” Among the innumerable possible combinations, God from eternity chose a determinate system in which Jesus has a primacy. The proper object of God’s choice, apart from loving Himself both in Himself and in others, is “to be loved by another who can love Him supremely,” and thus “He foresees the [hypostatic] union of that nature which must love Him supremely even if there were to be no Fall” (*Reportata* 3, 7, 5).

This predestination of Christ is independent of the predestination of other creatures. He did not enter into the system of either the natural or the supernatural world “by accident,” that is to say, on occasion of some incidental event that might not and indeed *should* not have happened. “God’s sovereign work could not have been thus the result of an occasion.”<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Adhémar d’Alès, *Prima lineamenta tractatus dogmatici de Verbo incarnato* (Paris, 1930) p. 357.

<sup>67</sup> Isaac de Ninive, *De perfectione religiosa*, ed. Paul Bedjan, C.M. (Paris, 1909) pp. 583–86; analysis and comments by Irénée Hausherr, “Un précurseur de la théorie scotiste sur la fin de l’incarnation,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 22 (1932) 316–20.

<sup>68</sup> A. J. Wensinck, *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Niniveh* (Amsterdam, 1923).

<sup>69</sup> P. Raymond, “Duns Scot,” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 4 (Paris, 1939) 1891.

<sup>70</sup> Some older works: Risi, *Sul motivo primario dell’Incarnazione del Verbo* (Brescia, 1898); anonymous, *Le motif de l’incarnation* (Tours, 1921).

Without pretending to evaluate, and much less either to recommend or to disapprove, the Scotist system, we must recognize both its legitimacy and the affinity it bears to Teilhard's thought. If the Incarnation is seen as destined to have taken place apart from any sin of man or need of redemption, then it is in some sense a part of the creative plan itself. But if it is any part at all, then it can only be a "first-born" part. Everything else exists for the sake of Christ rather than vice versa.

Scotus would undoubtedly have insisted upon the gratuity of the Incarnation and of the whole supernatural order. So also does Teilhard, explicitly. If Teilhard's critics have good reason to fear that "just saying it doesn't make it so," when it involves a contradiction with the remainder of his system, then they are obliged to face up to the question of how on this point Teilhard's affirmations fall short of the irreproachable orthodoxy of the Scotist school.<sup>71</sup> Not every theological speculation which diverges seriously and radically from St. Thomas Aquinas is *eo ipso* a denial of revealed truth, not even in those cases in which we agree that the explanation afforded by St. Thomas is the best or even the only one compatible with sound metaphysics.

#### ALPHA IN THE LIGHT OF OMEGA

A recent Franciscan statement, without mentioning either Scotus or Teilhard, puts significantly their view:

Universe and history are seen to have the same starting-point, and to be converging towards the same end: the whole work is opened with the same alpha, and is closed with the same omega.

Man, therefore, by contemplating the gradual organization of the cosmos, can have some inkling of what is to be his own destiny, and the various aspects of the great act of creation will appear to him as the splendid prelude to the history of his salvation. . . . The inspired writers never evoked the creation for its own sake, independently of the Covenant which Yahweh had concluded with his people. The first page of Genesis, which always comes to mind when creation is mentioned, does not in fact claim to do more than suggest the great themes on which rests the whole history of Israel: the progress towards the light, the search for a refuge which the storms of the proud and raging sea will no longer smite. This is the first image with which the Bible opens, and it will be the last, when darkness and chaos will have at last given way to the mountain of peace where

<sup>71</sup> N. M. Wildiers, *Teilhard* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) p. 92.

night is unknown (Apoc. 22.5), to the new land which will have no ocean to threaten its stability (Apoc. 21.1). Are the Christians of to-day truly aware that their faith implies this definite vision of the universe which encompasses them? [God is not merely a remote] agent who gave things their initial flick into existence; he is the master who, with the same gesture, in the pursuance of a single plan and the fulfilment of a single word, guides at one and the same time the universe and the course of history.<sup>72</sup>

We are chiefly concerned here with the words "opened with the same alpha and closed with the same omega." As we have seen, the Omega Point envisioned by Teilhard is not unequivocally identical with Christ; even if it were, his terminology would no more exclude an orthodox interpretation than does that of Scotus or Paul. The Teilhard position involves two points: the eventual absorption of all reality in God, and the inevitability of this absorption. Neither the absorption nor its inevitability excludes sin and failure in the cosmic process, but the aim of nature is seen to be attained on a massive scale despite massive frustrations. The aim toward which nature itself is inexorably tending is seen to be "in" or "with" God.

Now if the point toward which the whole of Teilhard's evolution tends is a point of utter and divine unity at the top of the diamond, then to such an apex inescapably corresponds an Alpha Point at the bottom.

This Alpha Point must have exhibited a millionfold more intensely that "complexity latent in simplicity" which every ovum exhibits. Moreover, this Alpha Point must, like Omega, possess some special identifiability with Christ or God.

To one reflecting sympathetically on the rich horizons opened out by planetization, the conclusion which Teilhard would have drawn if he had consented to turn his gaze backward toward the moment of creation seems inescapable. The Alpha Point is no less inexorable and no less identified with divinity than Omega.

If this be so, how can we escape some sort of emanationism? Just as inevitably as the creation tends toward absorption in divinity, just so inevitably must it have arisen by a sort of sifting out from divinity. Or, at the very least, the "creation" by God would seem to be as

<sup>72</sup> Evode Beaucamp, *The Bible and the Universe: Israel and the Theology of History* (London: Burns Oates, 1962) pp. 100, 99; *Vie spirituelle*, April, 1958.

necessary and inevitable as its eventual absorption in Him. True, one might say that God was utterly free either to set or not to set the first material particle in existence outside Himself, even though once it was set, the inevitability of its inner structure would carry it toward reabsorption in divinity. But if with Teilhard we try to put down the data in a sort of physicist's graph, we should rather conclude that to the forward terminus of the graph there corresponds an outset point of equal inevitableness.

Not that Teilhard *taught* emanationism or the necessity of creation. He categorically denied pantheism. Perhaps his defenders should be more audacious in admitting that his position left him with some unanswered questions, or even some unsolved dilemmas. The presence of paradox or apparent contradiction is a factor we have had to learn to live with, not only in a revealed religion based on mystery, but even in the "natural mysteries" of science itself.

#### SCHOLARSHIP AS A SERVICE OF BEING

Ultimately, one of these mysteries, even for clear-thinking rational Aquinas, is the communication of Being itself. The partial identity between Being and beings cannot be definitively formulated in terms devoid of paradox. Our cherished "analogy of being" is a confession that we do not know what is going on inside God. Hence, we should hesitate to claim that our certitudes are so univocal as to prevent a qualified expert from experimenting. It is just possible that from the microscopic or outer-space universe some genius may yet derive a more up-to-date framework for our awareness of the transfer of Being from God to things and its consummation again in Him.

It is unlikely that this Aquinas of the future will be any scientist not formed to philosophy—least of all one of Teilhard's relatively limited breadth of reading and competence. His originality is ultimately no greater than that of simple biology or astronomy manuals, though it strikes many as marvelous because it so outspokenly links together what science and theology have been refusing to communicate upon. If he has succeeded in asking even *wrong* questions about Being, or has given answers which an "adversary mentality" will conclude have to be condemned, his merit will be even greater for

forcing on twentieth-century attention the fact that there *are* some questions to be answered which have not yet even been asked rightly.<sup>73</sup>

We can appreciate Teilhard's "virile unswerving gaze" while lamenting his inadequacies of formulation.<sup>74</sup> His imperturbable eschatological optimism has been instructively compared to the "final apotheosis" of Origen.

Misunderstood, attacked, exiled, it is of him that Teilhard instinctively makes us think. . . . Origen has been a battlefield just like Teilhard. . . . The Church was disturbed and vexed by Origenism as she is now, under our very eyes, by Teilhardism. And yet Origen . . . has remained one of the glories of Christian thought. His errors have not prevented us doing him justice and continuing to hold him in tender regard. We believe the same will be true of Teilhard . . . he will still be dear to our hearts because of his fine spiritual ambitions, his vast syntheses, his original ideas, and above all—for this above all he will survive—his *cosmic sense*.<sup>75</sup>

With perhaps less of tenderness and more of scholastically-surgical incisiveness, we might now sum up.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Undeniably, Teilhard would have given up his cosmic vision rather than admit it entailed emanationism.

But what has he ultimately attained by refusing to face the question?

He has expanded in vivid detail the *future* of a cosmos which he claims to be able to read without extrapolation in the charted graph of the present phenomenon.

He has refused to tell us in equal detail what relation between God and the Alpha Point of creation is implied by completing the same graph backwards.

This refusal is the more surprising and intolerable in a paleontologist. He knew far more about human and planetary origins than the

<sup>73</sup> "If anyone doesn't like Teilhard, let him do better," is the challenge of Dominican O. Rabut, *Dialogue avec Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1958) p. 207. And D. Dubarle, "A propos du 'phénomène humain' du P. Teilhard de Chardin," *Vie intellectuelle* 27 (1956) 22: even if he does not escape eventual ecclesiastical censure, this will not deprive him of the merit of having posed a question which had to be posed.

<sup>74</sup> Edouard Boné, "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.," *Revue des questions scientifiques* 17 (1956) 90-104.

<sup>75</sup> N. Corte, *Teilhard* (New York: Macmillan, 1957) p. 114.



rest of us priests who are called upon imperatively to display a firm view of what creation really consisted in.

We cannot, therefore, dismiss as prejudiced or unfair the verdict of those critics cited above who claim "the concept of creation is so little brought out that the reader is left with the impression that matter is eternal in itself," or at least necessary—however little we may subscribe to the exuberant creationism by which such authors feel the mystery of Being can ultimately best be explained.

Just as unwarranted would it be to doubt the sincerity of Teilhard's disclaimer of emanationism or pantheism in his system. Perhaps—probably—wrong in considering his "Super-Physics" immune from philosophizing, he is in fact groping for light on the manner in which Being is communicated. On this mystery we should welcome from *any* source not only genuine light but even new gropings which may set us free from chains of convention and preconception.

Cardinal Koenig of Vienna declared on July 27, 1961: "Teilhard has gone further than anyone else in dedicating himself to the task of positive evidence of agreement between science and religion. Would it not be worth while for groups to follow up his basic ideas?"<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Address cited on the dust jacket of Robert T. Francoeur, *The World of Teilhard* (New York: Helicon, 1961).