

## THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THE WRITINGS OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

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FOR TEILHARD DE CHARDIN modern man's most pressing psychological need is an assurance that some successful outcome exists for that progress on earth for which he knows himself to be responsible. Unless such guarantee is given, that is to say, unless the prospect of a total death ahead can be eliminated, then there is serious danger that progress will founder and the whole human enterprise come to a halt. Teilhard's life's work is an effort to elaborate such a guarantee, and he does so on the three levels of science, philosophy, and theology. His first assurance to modern man is to point to the pattern of the past which he has uncovered through his "hyperphysics," or phenomenological analysis of evolution. Through his law of complexity-consciousness he believes he has shown that up till now there has been not simply change in the cosmos, but genesis, which for Teilhard means that the universe has been pursuing an aim, that a single pattern has been running through the whole, and that this pattern has been oriented toward man. Man is the key to the whole biological process, since it was through man that evolution crossed the threshold of reflection into the "noosphere," the mysterious realm of the person. "How could we imagine a cosmogenesis reaching right up to mind without being thereby confronted with a noogenesis?"<sup>1</sup>

Teilhard's second assurance is to point to the fact that in the noosphere this law of complexity-consciousness must operate on the level of spirit, and consequently, because of the steady growth of human socialization, there is reason to believe that the law itself will eventually be transformed by man's freedom into a law of growing amorization. For in Teilhard's system it is the free circulation of love energy between persons which is alone capable of totalizing humanity

<sup>1</sup> *Le phénomène humain* (1938-40), *Oeuvres de Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* 1 (Paris, 1955) 244; Eng. tr., *The Phenomenon of Man* (London, 1959) p. 221 (hereafter cited as *PH*). It should be noted that the French word *genèse* is much wider in meaning and more common in usage than the English *genesis*. It applies to any form of production involving successive stages and oriented toward some goal.

and of centering it upon that ultimate Pole of convergence called Omega. For this to happen, however, for modern man freely to foster this union with other men through love, it is first necessary to believe that this Center of centers is a present reality, and above all that it is personal, "loving and lovable at this very moment." In other words, man must believe in a divine Omega, here and now engaged in drawing human persons to Himself by radiating and activating the love energy of the world. Omega is thus the Prime Mover ahead who began the evolutionary process in time and who is Himself the guarantee of its ultimate successful conclusion.

But there is a third assurance, on the level not of natural reason but of supernatural faith, and it is this third assurance which gives rise to what Teilhard sees as the modern Christological problem. For Omega in his system of thought is reached only by extrapolation from phenomena; it remains of its nature an assumption and a conjecture, and cannot in the end provide the necessary guarantee for cosmogenesis. Consequently Teilhard appeals to Christian revelation in order to bridge this gap between a philosophical hypothesis and historical fact. He identifies the Christ of revelation with the Omega of evolution, and by so doing gives to cosmogenesis, "in place of the vague focus of convergence . . . the well-defined reality of the Incarnate Word, in whom all things hold together."<sup>2</sup> He thereby postulates a connection between the natural evolutionary process and the supernatural consummation of mankind, and it is this postulate which explains the frequent references to the Parousia in much of his religious writing. The problem, however, goes deeper than this. For if there is to be a connection between cosmogenesis and the Person of Christ, then not only the Parousia but all the great Christological events must be able to be spoken of in terms of *genèse*. Hence the term "Christogenesis," which Teilhard coined to indicate not only the problem but also the line of approach he would take in seeking a solution.

Such a solution, however, presupposes a very close connection between one's outlook on the world and one's method of dealing with the data of revelation. Of itself this data is transcendent and limited to no specific human culture. A theology, on the other hand, which is man's reflection upon this data, his attempt to understand it as an organized

<sup>2</sup> *Hérédité social et progrès* (1938), *Oeuvres* 5 (Paris, 1959) 51.

whole, is necessarily linked to the culture in which it was born, since it depends for its expression on the resources of human philosophy, and these in turn are always inspired by the *Weltanschauung* of any given historical period. In an article published in 1939 Teilhard made this point clearly:

By the Incarnation God entered into nature to give it supernatural life and lead it back to Himself: that is the substance of Christian dogma. Of itself this dogma can be accommodated to any number of images of the experimental world. For example, while the human spirit saw in the universe only a fixed arrangement of finished elements, the Christian found no serious difficulty in situating within this static order the mysterious process of his sanctification. But was this not to some extent a makeshift accommodation? Is a fundamental cosmic immobility really the most favorable setting one could think of for the great spiritual metamorphosis represented by the coming of the kingdom of God? . . . A universe whose structure evolves—as long as one correctly understands the direction of such a movement—could well be, after all, the milieu most favorable for developing a great and homogeneous understanding of the Incarnation. Christianity found itself stifled by materialistic evolution. But within the large perspectives which are developing of a universe being drawn upward toward spirit, does it not find a most suitable climate? What better than an ascending anthropogenesis to serve as a background and foundation for the descending illuminations of a Christogenesis?<sup>3</sup>

To what extent, then, is it legitimate, while remaining faithful to the sources of revelation, to speak of a genesis which is Christic as well as one which is cosmic? And to what extent can the two movements be considered one and the same? While the term “Christogenesis” was not coined until 1939, the relationship it expresses between Christ and the evolutionary process had always been one of Teilhard’s master ideas. Hence it is not surprising to find that, long before the development of his own system enabled him to formulate the problem so precisely, he was already laying the foundation of an answer. This foundation gradually crystallized itself into the assertion that the Body of Christ forms a physical Center for mankind and the whole material world. It is this fundamental assertion of Teilhard’s nascent Christology which is the subject of this present article.

Significantly enough, the relationship between Christ and the universe was a preoccupation of his first theological essay in 1916. The following passage is interesting for a number of reasons and it will

<sup>3</sup> *La mystique de la science* (1939), *Oeuvres* 6 (Paris, 1962) 220–22.

serve well as our point of departure:

Minds who are timid in their conceptions or filled with individualistic prejudice, who try always to see relations between beings as moral and logical, are quite content to think of the Body of Christ by analogy with aggregates of men. For them it is much more like a social assembly than a natural organism. These minds dangerously weaken scriptural thought and render it incomprehensible or banal to people enthused over interconnections that are physical and relationships properly cosmic. They unduly diminish Christ as well as the profoundly realistic mystery of His flesh. No, the Body of Christ must be understood boldly, as it was seen and loved by St. John, St. Paul, and the Fathers. It forms in nature a world which is new, an organism moving and alive in which we are all united physically, *biologically*. . . .

It is first by the Incarnation and next by the Eucharist that [Christ] organizes us for Himself and imposes Himself upon us. . . . Although He has come above all for souls, uniquely for souls, He could not join them together and bring them life without assuming and animating along with them all the rest of the world. By His Incarnation He inserted Himself not just into humanity but into the universe which supports humanity, and He did so not simply as another connected element, but with the dignity and function of a directing principle, of a Center toward which everything converges in harmony and in love.<sup>4</sup>

Teilhard's appeal to Scripture in the above passage is not unusual. Frequently in his theological writings he repeats that what he is doing is simply transposing into an evolutionary framework the great cosmic affirmations of St. Paul regarding the Person of Christ. Perhaps, therefore, we can best disengage the various elements in Teilhard's approach to the Body of Christ by first treating his thought on the Incarnation and the Eucharist, and then trying to determine the extent to which this thought can be supported by the teaching of St. Paul. Teilhard's appeal to St. John and the Fathers will have to be considered at some other time, for to add even the briefest treatment of these two large areas would hopelessly lengthen the present study and render it more than justifiably superficial.

#### INCARNATION AND EUCHARIST

Teilhard's central affirmations regarding the Body of Christ may be reduced to three, namely, that it is the Body-Person of Jesus of

<sup>4</sup> *La vie cosmique* (1916) pp. 24-25, 30. References to unpublished writings cannot always be accurate due to differences in pagination between various typed or mimeographed copies.

Nazareth, that it here and now forms a personal Center for mankind and the material world, and that this personal Center is a "physical" Center. His understanding of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist serves to clarify and bring into sharper focus the meaning of "physical" and consequently to underline again both the organic and the personal aspects of his thought. In this first part of our study we shall consider in turn each of these four points.

*Body-Person of Jesus of Nazareth*

That the Body of Christ is the Body-Person of Jesus of Nazareth who lived and died at a certain point in history, is a truth which is essential to Teilhard's whole theological enquiry. Christ for him is always the Person of Jesus. The impression continues to persist, however, that he somehow looked upon Christ as an idealistic symbol for humanity. Usually the reason for this is a simple misunderstanding of the radically incomplete presentation of the subject in *The Phenomenon of Man*. Another reason, however, is the fact that for Teilhard the historical Incarnation had always the aspect of a *beginning*, and beginnings of any type at all had far less interest for him than developments and terminations. Consequently, while the Christ of whom he is speaking is always the Christ of the Gospels, it is rare that His life *in* the Gospels ever becomes a subject of discussion. Limiting oneself intellectually and spiritually to the daily life of Christ on earth, Teilhard felt, was not the way to understand the Incarnation or grasp its ultimate meaning. "Not a single thing in our changing world is really understandable except in so far as it has reached its terminus. . . . Hence, if we want to form a correct idea of the Incarnation, it is not at its beginnings that we must situate ourselves (Annunciation, Nativity, even the Passion), but as far as possible at its definitive terminus."<sup>5</sup>

A number of texts from various periods in Teilhard's life will bring this outlook into relief. "Christianity," he writes in *The Divine Milieu*, "unveils to our eyes and hearts the reality of the historical Christ in whom the exemplary life of an individual man conceals this mysterious drama: the Master of the world leading, like an element of the world, not only an elemental life, but (in addition to this and because of it)

<sup>5</sup> *Pantheisme et christianisme* (1923) p. 8.

leading the total life of the universe, which He has shouldered and assimilated by experiencing it Himself."<sup>6</sup> If the historical reality of Christ is suppressed, then the divine omnipresence would become uncertain, vague, and conventional. "The Mystical Christ, the Universal Christ of St. Paul, has neither meaning nor value in our eyes except as an expansion of the Christ who was born of Mary and who died on the cross. . . . However far we may be drawn into the divine spaces opened to us by Christian mysticism, we never depart from the Jesus of the Gospels."<sup>7</sup>

These last lines were written in 1927. In 1934 Teilhard is again insisting that "the Universal Christ, where my personal faith finds satisfaction, is nothing else than an authentic expression of the Christ of the Gospels."<sup>8</sup> Ten years later there is the same insistence:

Concretely and historically it is incontestable that the living and conquering idea of the Universal Christ appeared and developed in the Christian consciousness when Jesus the Man was recognized and adored as God. It is the same today. To suppress the historicity of Christ (i.e., the divinity of the historical Christ [*sic*]) would be to make disappear into the unreal all the mystic energy accumulated for two thousand years in the Christian phylum. Christ born of the Virgin and Christ risen from the dead: the two form one single inseparable block.<sup>9</sup>

Teilhard was in fact continually answering the objection that the human reality of Jesus seemed to be disappearing in his effort to link the data of revelation with that of scientific research. Frequently the root of such a misunderstanding is the common practice of modern intellectual disciplines to speak separately of the human body and the human person. A discussion of one does not usually involve or even imply a discussion of the other. When Teilhard speaks of man, however, it is always concrete man, a body-person. Just as he never uses the word "spirit" in the metaphysical sense of "pure spirit" but always in relation to the matter it animates, so his use of the word "body" when applied to man always includes the idea of "person." Consequently, when he speaks of the Body of Christ, he always means the

<sup>6</sup> *Le milieu divin* (1927), *Oeuvres* 6 (Paris, 1957) 117; Eng. tr., *The Divine Milieu* (London, 1960) p. 86 (hereafter cited as *MD*).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140-41; Eng. tr., pp. 104-5. Cf. letter of Dec. 31, 1926, to Fr. Auguste Valensin: "Without a historical revelation our Lord evaporates."

<sup>8</sup> *Comment je crois* (1934) pp. 24-25.    <sup>9</sup> *Introduction à la vie chrétienne* (1944) p. 5.

concrete Body-Person of the historical Jesus. "The more I reflect upon the profound laws of evolution, the more I am convinced that the Universal Christ would be unable to appear at the end of time at the world's summit, unless He had previously inserted Himself into the course of the world's movement *by way of birth* in the form of an *element*. If it is really by Christ-Omega that the world is held in movement, then, for our own experience, it is from His concrete source, the Man of Nazareth, that Christ-Omega draws (theoretically and historically) His whole stability."<sup>10</sup> Five years before his death he is still making the same point: "Because of those very characteristics which would seem at first to particularize Him too much, *a God incarnate historically* is the only one who can satisfy the inflexible laws of a universe where nothing is produced or appears except *by way of birth*."<sup>11</sup>

#### *Personal Center for Mankind and Material World*

It is Jesus of Nazareth, therefore, whom Teilhard has always in mind when he identifies the Christ of revelation with the Omega of evolution. Such an identification, however, leads him to his second affirmation concerning the Body of Christ, namely, that it forms a personal Center for mankind and the whole material world. Here again we should note carefully that Teilhard's dialectic is continually making use of two sources of knowledge. From reason comes his hypothesis of a converging universe, which demands the existence of a transcendent personal Center capable of drawing evolution to its ultimate conclusion by here and now activating the love energy of the world. From Christian revelation, especially (as we shall see) from the letters of St. Paul, comes belief in a cosmic function for the Person of Christ by which He is Lord over all of creation. While Teilhard is well aware that the data of one source of knowledge is not the data of the other, he is likewise convinced that the two lines of thought are ultimately dealing with one and the same reality. Hence his conclusion that in the present concrete order, granting of course his hypothesis of a converging universe, Christ must fulfil the function of Omega, which is to be a per-

<sup>10</sup> *Christianisme et évolution* (1945) pp. 6-7. Cf. *Esquisse d'une dialectique de l'esprit* (1946), *Oeuvres* 7 (Paris, 1963) 157-58: "For a mind *already Christian* it is positively difficult to think of Omega . . . without perceiving that its collective, unifying function implies as a consequence that it be in one way or another partially involved in the world."

<sup>11</sup> *Le coeur de la matière* (1950) p. 30.

sonal Center radiating its influence upon the whole evolutionary process.

In bringing home this second affirmation, moreover, Teilhard is not only eager to keep separate these two sources of knowledge but also to safeguard the gratuity of the present supernatural order. Two early essays show his concern in this matter. "Christ is, of course," he wrote in 1917, "not the Center which all things here below could *naturally* aim at embracing. Being destined for Christ is a favor of the Creator, unexpected and gratuitous. It nonetheless remains true that the Incarnation has so *recast* the universe in the supernatural that, *concretely* speaking, we are no longer able either to seek or imagine the center toward which the elements of this world would gravitate without the elevation of grace."<sup>12</sup> This concern of his comes to the fore again in 1924: "In any hypothesis the world has to be centered in order to be thinkable. Consequently the presence of an Omega at its head has nothing to do with its 'supernatural elevation.' What gives the character of 'gratuity' to the world is precisely the fact that the function of universal Center has not been given to some supreme intermediary between God and the universe, but has been assumed by God Himself, who in this way has introduced us into the depths of His immanent Trinitarian action. I say this to clarify my theological position."<sup>13</sup>

Consequently it would be an error to distinguish in man as he exists in the present concrete order two distinct attractions, "one toward a hypothetical natural end for the cosmos, the other toward an end which was supernatural." There is in the universe "*one Center only*, at the same time natural and supernatural, which activates the whole of creation along one and the same line, first toward the greatest possible consciousness, then toward the highest degree of sanctity, and this Center is Christ Jesus, personal as well as cosmic."<sup>14</sup> In 1920 he wrote to a close friend of the "impossibility of understanding a Christ who would be organically *central* in the supernatural universe and physically *juxtaposed* in the natural universe." And in a letter to Maurice Blondel during the same period: "The supernatural Plenitude of Christ receives support from the natural plenitude of the world, . . . the supernatural is continually being formed by a new creation of the natural

<sup>12</sup> *L'Union créatrice* (1917) p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Mon univers* (1924) p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> *Forma Christi* (1918) p. 5.

.... Christ gives Himself to us through a world which is to reach completion *even on the natural level* by reason of its relationship to Him."<sup>15</sup>

Hence what Teilhard is insisting upon in this second affirmation is that, in this concrete supernatural order, created reality has been elevated in its entirety and that whatever God has brought into being, whether natural or supernatural, has been destined to constitute a single unity whose Center is the Incarnate Word. The distinction, therefore, between "natural" and "supernatural" cannot mean that something has been created which is unconnected with the supernatural destiny of mankind and which would be without reference to the final Plenitude of Christ. "The world can no more have two summits than a circumference can have two centers."<sup>16</sup> This sentence from *The Divine Milieu* is echoed in 1933: "Concretely speaking, there is only a single process of synthesis going on *from the top to the bottom* of the universe," and "no element or movement could exist at any stage of the world outside of the 'informing' action of the principal Center of everything."<sup>17</sup> Ten years later there is the same insistence: "You can turn things around again and again as you like, but the universe cannot have two heads—it cannot be 'bicephalous'.... A Christic Center for the universe fixed by theology, a cosmic center postulated by anthropogenesis: in the end these two foci necessarily coincide (or at least overlap) in the historical order in which we find ourselves. Christ would not be the sole moving force, the unique outcome for the universe, if the universe in some way, even at a lower level, could gather itself together independently of Him."<sup>18</sup>

#### *Physical Center*

From this second affirmation concerning the Body of Christ there immediately follows the third. In the present supernatural order, Teilhard has just said, Christ must correspond to Omega and fulfil the function of personal Center for the universe, for all that is natural and all that is supernatural. What he now adds and insists upon in his third affirmation is that, as a consequence, Christ must somehow be a

<sup>15</sup> Letter of Jan. 10, 1920, to Fr. Auguste Valensin; letter of Dec. 12, 1919, in *Archives de philosophie* 24 (1961) 139-40.

<sup>16</sup> *MD*, pp. 200-210; Eng. tr., p. 151.      <sup>17</sup> *Christologie et évolution* (1933) p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Super-humanité, super-Christ, super-charité* (1943) p. 9.

*physical* Center. "Christ is an organic Center for the whole universe: *organic Center*, i.e., on whom all development, even what is natural, is suspended finally and physically."<sup>19</sup> The use of the word "physical" in this context, as well as its synonym "organic," may strike one as strange at first, though it is a perfectly logical conclusion from Teilhard's understanding of the evolutionary process and its significance. Within his system of thought one *should* be able to say that Christ is in some sense a physical Center. Yes, but in what sense?

In seeking our answer we should note three facts. First of all, there is Teilhard's conviction that the word "physical" is absolutely necessary. While his training in experimental science is an obvious explanation for this, a deeper reason is the strongly emotional reaction he experienced against the "juridical" approach to Christology to which he was exposed as a seminarian in the early part of the century. These early studies left their mark, and in 1934 his feelings are still strong. "As long as the Incarnation is described and discussed in juridical terms, it appears as a simple phenomenon, superimposable upon any type of world at all. Whether the universe be big or small, static or evolving, it is just as simple for God to *give* it to His Son, since the only thing involved is a declaration." The whole situation changes, however, as soon as the Incarnation is looked upon from an organic point of view, since now "in order to be Saviour and Life of souls in their supernatural prolongation, Christ first has to satisfy certain conditions vis-à-vis the world considered in its natural and experimental reality."<sup>20</sup> A decade later he wrote a criticism which is quite unfair to many theologians of the period as well as to a whole segment of Christian tradition, but which emphasizes again Teilhard's unchanging point of view:

In spite of the repeated affirmations of St. Paul and the Greek Fathers, the universal power of Christ over creation has been considered by theologians up to now chiefly under an aspect that is extrinsic and juridical. "Jesus is King of the world because His Father has *declared* Him to be such. He is master of all because all has been given to Him." . . . With the exception of the mystery of "sanctifying grace," the organic side of the Incarnation and therefore the physical conditions to be presupposed have been left in the dark—all the more readily since the recent

<sup>19</sup> *Note sur le Christ universel* (1920) p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Comment je crois* (1934) p. 23 and note 1.

and frightening enlargement of the universe around us (in volume, direction, and number) would seem to render quite unimaginable any physical control by the Person of Christ over the totality of the cosmos.<sup>21</sup>

The second fact to note is that, though Teilhard insists upon the word "physical," he had continual difficulty in giving it a positive content when he applied it to the relationship between the universe and the Body of Christ. The ambiguity of his early essays prompted Maurice Blondel to remark in a 1919 letter that "a supernaturalism which is purely physical is nonsense." Teilhard accepted this criticism and several letters later brought their brief correspondence to a close with the admission that "in regard to the extent to which the divine fire is 'physical' and the precise mode of its transforming action, I am conscious of having again broached this difficult problem without really coming to grips with it. . . . I too speak with the greatest hesitation, especially in giving my opinion on this final point which separates us."<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, there are two texts from this early period which are significant in the light of what Teilhard will say later on. The first is from 1917; it describes the cosmic Body of Christ, "whose principal attributes are sketched by St. Paul," as "the *point* toward which [beings] converge or just as equally the *milieu* in which they are immersed."<sup>23</sup> The second text, written a year later, is the following:

There is nothing strange about there being a universal physical element in Christ. *Each one of us*, if we but reflect, is enveloped, *aureoled*, by an extension of his being as vast as the universe. What we are aware of is only the nucleus which is ourselves. But the interaction of monads would be incomprehensible if an "aura" did not extend from one to the other, i.e., something proper to each one and common to all. How, then, are we to imagine the constitution of Christ as cosmic Center of creation? Simply as an extension, a transformation, brought about in the humanity of Jesus, of that "aura" which surrounds every human monad.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever meaning "physical" is to have, therefore, it will have to be situated in the realm of the human and the personal. Teilhard is not going to "confuse naively the planes of reality and make of Christ a physical agent of *the same order* as organic life or the ether. That is

<sup>21</sup> *Super-humanité, super-Christ, super-charité* (1943) pp. 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> Letter of Dec. 29, 1919, in *Archives de philosophie* 24 (1961) 156. A brief summary of this exchange of letters may be found in Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., "Blondel and Teilhard de Chardin," *Thought* 37 (1962) 543-62.

<sup>23</sup> *L'Union créatrice* (1917) p. 15.      <sup>24</sup> *Forma Christi* (1918) p. 3.

what is blameable and ridiculous.”<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, in 1924, Christ’s “supremely physical influence over the total reality of the cosmos” begins for the first time explicitly to assume in his mind the aspect of a *personal presence*. “The presence of the Word Incarnate penetrates everything as a universal Element. At the heart of all things it shines as a Center infinitely intimate and yet at the same time (because it coincides with the consummation of the universe) infinitely far away. . . . Everything around us is physically ‘Christified’ and can become so more and more.” Some pages later, in a footnote, he takes pains to be precise: “The only difference, but an essential one, between these considerations and the usual speculation which is current concerning the presence of God, is that, from the point of view adopted here, the presence of God reaches the elements of the world *only through (and in) the Body of Christ*.”<sup>26</sup>

It is not, however, until *The Divine Milieu* three years later that “Body of Christ,” “physical Center,” and “personal presence” become definitively united and dealt with at length. “Omnipresence” is indeed the central theme of the whole work, and the title itself is a synonym for the presence of Christ, who “through His humanity” is the active Center radiating all those energies which lead the universe back to God. In this divine Milieu “we recognize an omnipresence which acts upon us by assimilating us to itself *in unitate corporis Christi*. As a consequence of the Incarnation, the divine immensity has transformed itself for us into an *omnipresence of Christification*. All the good that I can do, *opus et operatio*, is physically gathered together, by something of itself, into the reality of the consummated Christ.” The great mystery of Christianity is not exactly the appearance, but the transference, of God in the universe: “not only your Epiphany, Jesus, but your diaphany.” This is why at the end of time “the presence of Christ” will have “silently grown in things.”<sup>27</sup> For by His Incarnation He “became coextensive with the physical immensities of duration and space, without losing the preciseness of His humanity.”<sup>28</sup>

It is important to note here that at the time he wrote *The Divine Milieu* Teilhard was beginning to develop the paramount role which

<sup>25</sup> Letter of May 25, 1923, to Fr. Auguste Valensin.

<sup>26</sup> *Mon univers* (1924) pp. 24–25, 26, 49 note 1.

<sup>27</sup> *MD*, pp. 150, 162, 196; Eng. tr., pp. 112, 121, 147.

<sup>28</sup> *Esquisse d'un univers personnel* (1936), *Oeuvres*, 6, 113.

the human person was to play in his own distinctive system of thought. This explains why even now he is explicitly trying "to avoid the perverse pantheism and materialism which lie in wait for our thought whenever it applies to its mystical concepts the powerful but dangerous resources of analogies drawn from organic life." The physical relationship, therefore, between mankind and the Incarnate Word must be affirmed "without rejecting anything of the forces of freedom and of consciousness which form the natural endowment proper to the human soul." Union with the Body of Christ must preserve in harmony "all that is most flexible in human combinations and all that is most intransigent in organic structures." To designate such a union, he wishes to retain the term "mystical," but only on condition that it "mean the strengthening and purification of what is contained really and immediately in the most powerful connections which we see in every order of the physical and human world."<sup>29</sup>

#### *Mystery of the Eucharist*

Besides Teilhard's insistence upon the word "physical" and his difficulty in giving it a positive content, there is also a third fact to note. What eventually brings some measure of clarity to the meaning of "physical Center" is a line of thought which seems to have begun independently of the problem we are now discussing. This new line of thought is Teilhard's approach to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. For him the Eucharist Presence is the symbol and concrete sign that Christ's "kenosis into matter," as he called the historical Incarnation,<sup>30</sup> is in fact extended throughout the universe and so constitutes a promise of its eventual transfiguration. But here again we find development. Until 1923 the concept explicitly linked to the Eucharist is not "physical Center" but "*universal Center*." In a poetic meditation on the Blessed Sacrament written at the Front in 1916 and running eighteen pages in the published text, the word "physical" does not occur once. Teilhard's emphasis falls upon the "mysterious expansion of the Host" by which "the world had become incandescent, resembling in its totality a single great Host. . . . A transformation was going on in the sphere of love, expanding, purifying, capturing all the power of loving contained in the universe."<sup>31</sup> The same thought appears in another

<sup>29</sup> *MD*, pp. 43-44; Eng. tr., pp. 28-29.      <sup>30</sup> *Mon univers* (1924) p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> *Le Christ dans la matière* (1916), in *Hymne de l'univers* (Paris, 1961) p. 50 (hereafter cited as *HU*).

essay the following year,<sup>22</sup> and two years later it completely dominates a highly devotional prose poem called *The Priest*. Here Teilhard sees Christ prolonging His Incarnation when He descends to replace the bread and wine at Mass, but without restricting His action to the material species alone. "The transubstantiation is aureoled by a real though limited divinization of the whole universe. From the cosmic element into which He inserts Himself, the Word acts to subjugate all else and assimilate it to Himself."<sup>23</sup>

Early in the year 1923 the word "physical" begins to be linked for the first time to this "universal presence" of Christ in the Eucharist. Teilhard writes that when Christ comes sacramentally to each of the faithful, "it is not only to hold conversation with him. It is to join him more and more to Himself, physically, and to all other faithful in the growing unity of the world. When He says through the priest 'This is my Body,' . . . the priestly action extends beyond the transubstantiated Host to the cosmos itself, which the still unfinished Incarnation gradually transforms in the course of the passing centuries."<sup>24</sup> In the summer of the same year, on a scientific expedition to the Ordos desert in China, Teilhard found it impossible to say Mass, and this occasioned the composition of the beautiful *Mass on the Altar of the World*, one of the finest examples of his spiritual writing. Again the universe is "an immense Host" and Christ is "the physical focus of creation," as well as "an Energy *quae possit sibi omnia subijcere*," "an influence secretly present in the depths of matter and a dazzling Center."<sup>25</sup> A year later Teilhard is once more speaking of these "real physical extensions of the Eucharistic presence." While the "*primary Body* of Christ is limited to the species of bread and wine," still Christ can find "His organic fulness only by assimilating all that surrounds Him in a way that is mystical (a term which we said must have the sense of hyperphysical)." The Body of Christ is "nourished by the whole universe."<sup>26</sup>

It is *The Divine Milieu*, however, which in 1927 finally presents a synthesis between this thought on the Eucharist and that other block of speculation which has revolved around the terms "physical Center"

<sup>22</sup> *Le milieu mystique* (1917) p. 23: "From the moment that you said 'This is my Body,' not only the bread and wine on the altar but to a certain extent everything in the universe became yours which nourishes in our souls the life of grace and the spirit."

<sup>23</sup> *Le prêtre* (1918) p. 2.      <sup>24</sup> *Panthéisme et christianisme* (1923) p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> *La messe sur le monde* (1923), in *HU*, pp. 23, 24, 34, 36.

<sup>26</sup> *Mon univers* (1924) pp. 33-34, 48.

and "omnipresence." Some readers may feel, says Teilhard, that the explanation he has given of the physical presence of Christ strains in too realistic a sense the meaning of Body of Christ—"in spite of the decisive expressions of St. Paul." Actually what he has done, he continues, is simply to take "another path to rejoin the great highway opened up in the Church by the cult of the Holy Eucharist." From the beginning of the Messianic preparation up to the Parousia, passing through the historic manifestation of Jesus and the phases of growth of His Church, "a single event has been developing in the world: the Incarnation, realized in each individual through the Eucharist. . . . All the communions of all men, present, past, and future, are one communion. Have we ever sufficiently considered the physical immensity of man, and his extraordinary relations with the universe, in order to realize in our minds the formidable implications of this elementary truth?"<sup>87</sup> He then goes on to spell out some of these implications, and it will be worth our while to hear him out at length.

If, then, the Eucharist is a sovereign influence upon our human natures, then its energy necessarily extends, owing to the effects of continuity, into the less luminous regions that sustain us. . . . At every moment the Eucharistic Center controls—from the point of view of the organization of the *Pleroma* (which is the only true point of view from which the world can be understood)—the whole movement of the universe: Christ *per quem omnia, Domine, semper creas, vivificas et praestas nobis*.

The control of which we are speaking is, at the minimum, a final refinement, a final purification, a final harnessing, of all the elements which can be used in the construction of the New Earth. But how can we avoid going further and believing that the sacramental action of Christ, *precisely because it sanctifies matter*, extends its influence, on this side of the pure supernatural, over all that makes up the internal and external environment of the faithful, that is to say that it sets its mark upon everything which we call "our Providence"?

If this is the case, then we find ourselves (by simply having followed the "extensions" of the Eucharist) plunged once again precisely into our divine *Milieu*. . . . Christ is discovered in every single reality around us, and shines like *an ultimate determination*, like a Center, one might almost say like a universal Element. Through our humanity assimilating the material world and the Host assimilating our humanity, the Eucharist transformation goes beyond and completes the transubstantiation of the bread on the altar. . . . In a secondary and generalized sense, but a true sense, the sacramental species are formed by the totality of the world

<sup>87</sup> *MD*, pp. 150-52; Eng. tr., pp. 112-13.

and the duration of creation is needed for its consecration. *In Christo vivimus, movemur et sumus.*<sup>28</sup>

The above passage brings to a close the intellectual effort of a decade. In it Teilhard comes as close as he ever will to giving a positive content to his concept of Christ as "physical Center," a concept which in the end he is never able fully to clarify. Yet he does indicate clearly, without perhaps realizing it at the time, why such an understanding of the Incarnation is essential if the mystery of Christ is to be rethought in terms of *genèse*. We may summarize his thought briefly as follows. He has come to see the Body of Christ as a physical Center for mankind and the material world, not in the primary sense in which Christ is present in the Eucharist, but in the second and generalized sense in which each individual man, as a body-person, is a center for his own limited environment. In the case of Christ, however, the environment is beyond limitation, since He is able through the Eucharist to unite Himself as a Body-Person to all the faithful in any time and place. This particular mode of omnipresence enables Christ likewise to be present to all persons and things which make up the internal and external environment of the faithful. Christ thus becomes "physically" a *universal* Element, a Milieu and a Center who controls in and through the extension of His Eucharistic presence the whole movement of the universe. Ultimately the purpose of such control is the salvation of mankind, that is, the gradual organization of Christ's supernatural Pleroma at the end of time and the construction of a New Earth. Yet in exercising this control Christ must at the same time and in some way sanctify matter itself, and in so doing bring to it a promise of eventual transfiguration.

In Teilhard's system of thought all created reality is "physical" and "organic," and he applies these words equally, though analogously, to the material and the personal as well as to the natural and the supernatural. Their application to the omnipresence of Christ, far from excluding a personal and hence supernatural influence, really presupposes it, since it is precisely in and through His Body that the Person of the Word unites Himself to His creation. The nature of Omega, moreover, as well as the dominant role of the personal in Teilhard's thinking, makes it quite impossible for him to conceive the influence of Christ on

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153-54; Eng. tr., pp. 114-15.

the universe in any other than personalistic terms. Perhaps the closest equivalent to Teilhard's "physical" in current theological usage is the word "ontological," which may be applied to whatever has existence in the present concrete order of things. "Physical" is thus opposed to all that is juridical, abstract, extrinsic to reality. This is what is meant by saying that, as a consequence of the Incarnation, the divine immensity transforms itself into a *physical* "omnipresence of Christification." For Teilhard such omnipresence is a *real* prolonging of Eucharistic transubstantiation, and this is why he can say, "in a secondary and generalized but true sense," that the sacramental species are formed by the totality of the world and that the duration of creation is needed for its consecration.

Years later, in *The Phenomenon of Man*, when Teilhard calls the Incarnation "a prodigious biological operation," it is precisely his own understanding of "physical" that he has in the back of his mind. Here once more we find that weaving together, in an "organic" context, of material and personal, natural and supernatural.

As early as in St. Paul and St. John we read that to create, to fulfill and to purify the world is, for God, to unify it by uniting it organically with Himself. How does He unify it? By partially immersing Himself in things, by becoming an "element" and then, from this vantage point in the heart of matter, assuming control and leadership of what we now call evolution. Christ, principle of universal vitality because sprung up as man among men, put Himself in the position (maintained ever since) to subdue under Himself, to purify, to direct and to give supernatural life to the general ascent of consciousness into which He inserted Himself. By a continual act of communion and sublimation, He incorporates into Himself the total psychism of the earth.<sup>30</sup>

After 1927 Teilhard writes only twice of the Eucharist, once in 1944 and again in 1955. Both texts are significant because they explicitly link the Eucharist with what Teilhard has now come to designate as "Christogenesis." All the sacraments, he says in the first essay, are ultimately referred to the Eucharist, because "through it passes directly the axis of the Incarnation, that is to say, the axis of creation." In its ultimate operation the Eucharist "is but the expression and manifestation of the divine unifying energy applying itself little by

<sup>30</sup> *PH*, pp. 327-28; Eng. tr., pp. 293-94.

little to every spiritual atom of the universe. To unite ourselves to Christ in the Eucharist, therefore, is *ipso facto* inevitably to incorporate ourselves little by little into a Christogenesis which is itself the soul of universal cosmogenesis."<sup>40</sup> The second mention of the Eucharist occurs in an essay written only a few weeks before his death, and here, significantly enough, the emphasis falls again upon that early theme of Christ's presence extended to the whole of creation through a prolonging of transubstantiation:

Supposing Christ to be identified with the Omega of evolution, it becomes conceivable that He should radiate *physically* over the bewildering totality of things; but still more is it inevitable that such radiation should reach a maximum of penetration and activation. Raised up to be the Prime Mover of the evolving movement of complexity-consciousness, the cosmic Christ . . . *ipso facto* acquires and develops in the fullest sense a real *omnipresence of transformation*. . . . And here it is precisely the Eucharistic mystery itself which, before the astonished gaze of the believer, extends itself into the infinite through a truly universal "transubstantiation," where the words of consecration fall not only upon the sacrificial bread and wine, but also on the totality of joys and sorrows occasioned in the course of progress by the convergence of the world.<sup>41</sup>

It will not be out of place to note once more, by way of conclusion, that the designation of Christ as "physical Center" becomes necessary, in Teilhard's mind, as soon as the universe is seen to be in the state of genesis and to be converging upon an ultimate Pole of attraction. In a static universe, so he believed, the question of Christ as physical Center would never arise at all, since His primacy over creation would be sufficiently established by declarations of a juridical nature. It is therefore modern man's understanding of the world in which he lives which demands a re-examination of the organic relationship between Christ, mankind, and the material world. "Is the Christ of the Gospels," Teilhard once asked, "imagined and loved within the dimensions of a Mediterranean world, still capable of embracing and centering our prodigiously expanded universe? . . . Without daring, perhaps, to admit to this anxiety yet, there are many (as I know from having come across them all over the world) who nevertheless feel it deep within them. It is for those that I am writing."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Introduction à la vie chrétienne* (1944) p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> *Le Christique* (1955) pp. 8-9.

<sup>42</sup> *MD*, p. 24, Eng. tr., p. 14.

## TEILHARD'S BODY OF CHRIST AND ST. PAUL

Teilhard's Christological enterprise is, as we have seen, an effort to explain how the Christ of revelation may be identified with the Omega of evolution—or, to use his own terminology, how there can be a Christogenesis as well as a cosmogenesis. His foundation and point of departure for such a Christology is his assertion that Jesus of Nazareth forms a physical Center for both mankind and the material world, an assertion which he insists is simply another way of expressing the cosmic function attributed to Christ in the epistles of St. Paul. Indeed, his appeals to St. Paul are so frequent and insistent that they tend to create the impression that he is quite illegitimately projecting into the data of revelation the elements of his own cosmological system. Such a facile concordism was, in fact, far from Teilhard's mind. Yet, in spite of his clear affirmations to the contrary, the impression remains and continues to be a source of criticism and confusion.<sup>48</sup>

There are two reasons for such a misunderstanding. The first is that, in speaking of St. Paul, Teilhard almost always neglects to state explicitly one of the steps in his reasoning process. For example, he will say that what is important for him is Paul's assertion of "the universal domination of the Incarnate Word over the cosmos," then add that such supremacy corresponds exactly to the function of Omega in his own system of thought. But since this system is founded upon the key concept of cosmogenesis, he is naturally led to discuss Christ's domination over evolution and to use such expressions as "the Christogenesis of St. Paul." At this point, however, he usually neglects to inform the reader that what he is now dealing with is no longer the thought of St. Paul, but the thought of St. Paul incorporated into his own hypothesis of a converging universe. In other words, he is again making simultaneous use of two sources of knowledge, one from phenomena and the other from revelation, without bothering to distinguish between them. In his mind this is a perfectly legitimate thing for the Christian

<sup>48</sup> A recent example of a lengthy and well-reasoned refutation of a position which Teilhard never held is Leo Scheffczyk's "Die 'Christogenese' Teilhard de Chardins und der kosmische Christus bei Paulus," *Tübinger theologische Quartalschrift* 143 (1963) 136-74. Scheffczyk seems to interpret the "physical" relationship of Christ to the universe as an immanence which is wholly natural and which therefore would exclude all that is personal and supernatural. He then goes on to show without difficulty that such a relationship is nowhere to be found in St. Paul.

to do. Reality is one as well as our knowledge of it, since faith and reason exist in the same intellect, and Teilhard's interest in any case is centered always upon the object of knowledge and not its psychological process. As for Paul, Teilhard would be the last to claim that the Apostle ever thought of Christ's dominion over the cosmos in present-day scientific categories, or could have had the least inkling of modern man's knowledge of a universe in the process of change.

But there is a second reason, deeper and more fundamental, for misunderstanding these appeals to St. Paul. What Teilhard is seeking to do is to incorporate into his own system an aspect of Paul's thought which itself has received relatively little attention and almost no development since the time of the Greek Fathers. The whole question of the relationship between Christ and the cosmos, while never denied, was in the course of time relegated to the background of Western theological tradition, and it is only in recent years that the so-called "cosmic texts" of St. Paul have emerged as subjects of discussion and debate.<sup>44</sup> Teilhard, moreover, compounds the problem by simply referring to these texts, often rather vaguely, with little or no exegesis and hardly a mention of the psychological barrier awaiting someone unacquainted with their cosmic implications. Because such implications are usually presupposed, the unwary reader may well find himself suddenly being led without further ado from one unknown into another unknown, from an aspect of Paul's thought of which he may be ignorant or ill informed, into an explanation of its relationship to Teilhard's own system, which itself can be as difficult as it is totally new. Consequently it is necessary that we ask at this point what these cosmic texts of Paul can mean and to what extent they support Teilhard's understanding of Christ as physical Center of the universe. Consider, for example, the following passage, which is not only typical of Teilhard's approach to Scripture, but is also unusually explicit in the citation of texts. The year is 1924, when the concept of "physical Center" was receiving its first clarification.

The Christ of revelation is quite simply Omega. To demonstrate this fundamental proposition, I need only refer to the long series of Johannine and especially

<sup>44</sup> A thorough summary of both the Greek and Latin traditions on this question may be found in Emile Mersch, S.J., *Le corps mystique du Christ: Etudes de théologie historique* (3rd ed.; Brussels, 1951); Eng. tr., *The Whole Christ* (Milwaukee, 1938).

Pauline texts where the physical supremacy of Christ over the universe is affirmed in terms which are magnificent.<sup>45</sup> I cannot enumerate them here. They all come down to these two essential affirmations: "In eo omnia constant" (Col 1:17) and "Ipse est qui replet omnia" (Col 2:10; cf. Eph 4:9), so that "Omnia in omnibus Christus" (Col 3:11). There we have the very definition of Omega.<sup>46</sup>

The significance of this passage is that it clearly underlines the two main points upon which Teilhard bases his *rapprochement* between Scripture and his hypothesis of a converging universe, namely, that in Paul's thought there exists a relationship between Christ and mankind which is "physical," and that Paul extends such a relationship to the whole of creation, including therefore all that is material. Let us briefly examine these two central affirmations.

### *Physical Relationship between Christ and Mankind*

Paul's thought on the "physical" relationship between Christ and mankind has received increased attention in recent years due to the modern trend toward a strong realism in explaining his use of the term "Body of Christ." Far from interpreting it as a metaphor signifying the collectivity of Christians as an organization, Pauline scholars, Catholic and Protestant alike, explain it as a literal designation of the risen Christ in all His concrete reality. Lucien Cerfaux affirms again and again that for Paul the faithful do not belong to a "moral body," "a mystical Christ," but rather belong to the real organism of His risen Person. Essentially the same position is held by Pierre Benoit, J. A. T. Robinson, and many others.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the only objection today to this realistic thesis seems to be from those who argue not from

<sup>45</sup> Teilhard has the following footnote to this sentence: "See especially in St. Paul: Rom 8:18 ff., 14:7-9; 1 Cor 4:22, 6:15 ff., 10:16, 12:12 ff., 15:23-29, 39 ff.; 2 Cor 3:18, 4:11, 5:4, 19; Gal 3:27-28; Eph 1:10, 19-23, 2:5, 10, 13-14, 3:6, 18, 4:9, 12-13, 16; Phil 2:10, 3:10-11, 20-21; Col 1:15-20, 28, 2:9-10, 12, 19, 3:10; 1 Th 4:17; Heb 2:7-8."

<sup>46</sup> *Mon univers* (1924) pp. 20-21. The texts which appear most frequently in Teilhard's writings: Col 1:17, "and in Him all things subsist," cited six times, always in its Latin translation; and 1 Cor 15:28, "so that God may be all in all," cited thirteen times, usually in the Greek original, *en pasi panta Theos*. Other favorite texts are Acts 17:28, "In Him we live and move and have our being," and Rom 8:22, "The whole of nature has been groaning until now in an agony of birth."

<sup>47</sup> Lucien Cerfaux, *La théologie de l'église suivant saint Paul* (2nd ed.; Paris, 1948) pp. 206, 209, 210, 212, 254, 259; Eng. tr., *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York, 1959) pp. 265, 269, 270, 274, 337, 344; Pierre Benoit, O.P., "Corps, tête et plérôme dans les épîtres de la captivité," *Revue biblique* 63 (1956) 7-11, 20-21; J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London, 1952) pp. 49-83.

exegesis but from the apparent lack of harmony between such an understanding of Paul and the fuller theological development in some of the Fathers and especially in the Encyclical *Mystici corporis*. These objections, however, seem to be an example of what has already occurred often enough, a simple misunderstanding on the part of theologians of thought patterns discovered by the exegetes.<sup>48</sup>

There are three sources for this realistic thinking of Paul. First of all, because he is a Hebrew writing on religious themes, Paul uses the word "body" not as a neutral element in the body-soul composite of Greek anthropology, but rather as an animated and corporeal person, whose thoughts and desires are contained and revealed under the sensible aspect of bodily experience. Or, to look at it from another viewpoint, because Paul is a Hebrew, "he cannot imagine a man without his body, and therefore associates the body with the whole work of man's ultimate salvation."<sup>49</sup> Using the word "body" in a religious context, the Hebrew mentality includes in that term the whole person, with emphasis on what is sensible and somatic.

The second concept influencing Paul's thought, one quite familiar to the Old Testament, is that of the corporate personality. It is now generally accepted that the Semites conceived their nation or community, including its past, present, and future members, as a single individual, who could be represented in turn by any one member of the nation. As a result, there was frequently a natural oscillation in speech between group and individual, as can be seen, for example, in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah. Originating most probably from the role of the chief in Israel's tribal life, this concept is most important for understanding Paul's presentation of Christ as the new Adam who died and rose again with vicarious efficacy.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> For example, Th. Zapelena, "Vos estis corpus Christi," *Verbum domini* 37 (1959) 78-95, 162-70. A clear reply to Zapelena, as well as an excellent statement of the relationship between Paul and *Mystici corporis*, has been given by J. Havet, "La doctrine paulinienne du 'Corps du Christ': Essai de mise au point," *Littérature et théologie pauliniennes* (Louvain, 1950) pp. 186-216. On the same problem see also P. Erbrich, "Mystischer oder auferstandener Leib Christi," *Orientierung* 23 (1959) 193-95, 204-7.

<sup>49</sup> Benoit, *art. cit.*, p. 18; Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-28. In his monumental study, *Gnosis: La connaissance religieuse dans les épîtres de saint Paul* (Louvain, 1949), Jacques Dupont, O.S.B., after weighing all the evidence, concludes that Paul's primary influence in developing "Body of Christ" was Semitic and not Hellenistic (pp. 440-50).

<sup>50</sup> H. W. Robinson, "The Hebrew Concept of the Corporate Personality," in *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments*, ed. J. Hempel (Berlin, 1936) pp. 58 ff. See also Jean de

Finally, there is the influence upon Paul's thought from the Eucharistic Body of Christ. In 1 Cor 10:17 he directly grounds the unity of the faithful on the Eucharist: "The one bread makes us one body, though we are many in number, because we all partake of the same bread." A realistic interpretation would understand Paul to say here that in so far as the community *feeds* on the Eucharist, it actually *becomes* the glorified Body of the risen and ascended Christ. Such a jump from "feeding on" to "becoming" is taken by no other New Testament writer, all of whom must have been as familiar with the words of institution as Paul himself, and it would therefore seem to demand some prior experience on Paul's part. One exegete has speculated that this experience must have been the encounter on the Damascus road. "The appearance on which Paul's whole faith and apostleship was founded was the revelation of the resurrection Body of Christ, not as an individual but as the Christian community."<sup>51</sup>

Along with this wide agreement on the realism of Paul's thought regarding the Body of Christ, there is also general acceptance of the fact that this thought itself underwent a significant development between the time he wrote the Letter to the Romans, probably in the winter of 57-58, and his arrival in Rome in the spring of 61, where he was to write the captivity epistles. At the end of the major epistles, says Lucien Cerfaux, the thought of Paul is that all Christians as a group, in so far as they are a spiritual organism, are mystically identified with the Body of Christ. It would go beyond the bounds of Paul's thought in these letters, he continues, either to identify this organism with the Person of Christ or to speak of a "Mystical Body." In the key texts of 1 Cor 12 and Rom 12, Paul concentrates on the fact that every Christian is united really and corporally to the risen Body of Christ. Within this limited thought pattern Paul can only say that all Christians together must be the Body of Christ. How this is possible is simply not his concern at this point.<sup>52</sup> In the captivity epistles, how-

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Fraine, S.J., *Adam et son lignage: Etudes sur la notion de "personnalité corporative" dans la Bible* (Bruges, 1959).

<sup>51</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 58. See also the extended treatment of the relation between the Eucharist and Paul's theology of the Body by A. E. J. Rawlinson, "Corpus Christi," in *Mysterium Christi*, ed. G. Bell and A. Deissmann (Berlin, 1931) pp. 275-96.

<sup>52</sup> Cerfaux, *op. cit.*, p. 215; Eng. tr., p. 277. This is also the conclusion of Benoit, *art. cit.*, pp. 13-18. See the excellent study of the major epistles by Barnabas Ahern, O.P., "The Christian's Union with the Body of Christ in Cor., Gal. and Rom.," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961) 199-209.

ever, there appear quite suddenly two new dimensions. First, there is the use of the word "Church" to designate all those united to the Body of Christ, and secondly, there is an emphasis upon their collective unity which Paul begins to vest more and more with the attributes of a living person.

Until now the word "Church" has served almost always as a designation for local communities. In the major epistles it had almost never appeared in the ecumenical meaning we take for granted today, that of universal Church, the entire assembly of Christians.<sup>53</sup> Originally linked in Paul's mind with the Old Testament concept of "God's People," the term "Church of God" had gradually been applied by him to the individual churches he had founded. Not until Col 1:18 did it suddenly take on a strong ecumenical sense, and it did so there as a result of a synthesis of the themes of Head and Body which seem hitherto to have undergone separate developments in Paul's mind.

The Head theme, for example, when it appeared in 1 Cor 11:2-4, was used to express not the union of Christians with or in Christ but a certain hierarchy of subordination: "head" in the sense of "superior." Thus in 1 Cor 12:21 the "head" is simply a member of the body and is not identified with Christ at all. The Body theme, on the other hand, had always been used to express the idea of unity which was central to Paul's concept of salvation. Through physical contact with the physical Body-Person of Christ in baptism and the Eucharist, the Christian received as through a channel the life of the Spirit, and so in a very real sense became Christ, His members, His Body. The linking of these two themes of Head and Body, therefore, was natural enough when it occurred for the first time in Col 1:18. Paul was emphasizing the superiority of Christ as Head of the heavenly powers, and there was an easy passage from the use of "head" in the sense of "superior" to its use in the physical sense as Christ Himself, Head of His Body the Church. The word "head," moreover, when applied to the body, already contained the idea of vital principle and source of nourishment.<sup>54</sup>

It is in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, however, that one finds the

<sup>53</sup> Cerfaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-57 (Eng. tr., pp. 187-206), gives a full treatment of texts. Some commentators find the ecumenical meaning weakly asserted in three or four early passages, especially 1 Cor 12:27 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Benoit, *art. cit.*, pp. 23-29. Cf. 1 Cor 6:15, 10:17, 12:7-11, and Rom 12:6-8, for previous use of the Body theme.

full implications of this linking of the three concepts of Head, Body, and Church. At the start of the chapter Paul affirms the collective unity of Christians along with their organic diversity (vv. 3–11), followed by an emphasis on the new idea that the Body of Christ grows and perfects itself. What enables Paul to assert this is precisely his identifying Christ not with the Body but with the Head. The Head does not grow, yet it is from the fulness of perfection already present in Him that there comes the vital energy responsible for the Body's growth (vv. 12–16). This distinction between Christ as Head and His Church as Body had never before been made so strongly.

Nevertheless, the intense realism of the Pauline concept of Body of Christ is in no way lessened. He can still affirm without hesitation that the universal Church is identified with the physical Body of Christ in heaven.<sup>55</sup> This he can do because the ontological distinction which he now sees in no way excludes a "mystical" identification at one and the same time. The physical Body of Christ pours out its life on Christians and these become His Body in the sense that the mystically present cause is attributed to the effect. The Church quite literally is Christ's Body, because she is composed of all Christians who in their material personality are united to the risen Body-Person of Christ and receive through Him the new life of the Spirit. It would be vain, says Pierre Benoit, even false, to force Paul's terminology here to mean exclusively either Christ's physical Body and Spirit, or His Body the Church, which is His Spirit communicated to men. In Ephesians Paul means both together, indissolubly united: the individual Body of Christ grown to include all Christians united to Him in their own bodies, with the fulness of the Spirit flowing from the Head down through all the members.<sup>56</sup>

From this very cursory summary of a modern exegetical trend, we may conclude that Teilhard's thought is much closer to the earlier

<sup>55</sup> Eph 1:23 is explicit, while Eph 5:23 is implicit from the use of "Church" and "Body" in a parallelism.

<sup>56</sup> Benoit, *art. cit.*, p. 21; Cerfaux, *op. cit.*, p. 259; Eng. tr., p. 344. "To say that the Church is the body of Christ because the life of grace and the life of Christ are alike is not enough. To say that there is an identity of life and therefore an identity of the Church and the Body is too much" (*ibid.*, p. 258 note 4; Eng. tr., p. 343 note 35). A fuller development of the above analysis may be found in Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., "Paul's Vision of the Church in Ephesians," *Scripture* 15 (1963) 33–43.

and less precise meaning which Paul gave to "Body of Christ." Teilhard's emphasis falls always upon the simple fact of the Christian's physical union with the Body-Person of Christ, and he remains unconcerned at this point with the Church's own distinctive collective unity precisely as "Church." This is not to say that the phenomenon of the Church had no interest for him. On the contrary, it occupies a central place in his Christology as the point of contact, already in time, between the world in evolution and mankind's destiny at the Parousia. But in this context it is not to Paul's concept "Body of Christ" that Teilhard links the Church, but to "phylum of salvation," "axis of progress," and "Christified part of the world," concepts drawn from his own particular system of thought. Moreover, whereas the concept "Body of Christ" is always linked in Paul's mind to Christ's redemptive death and resurrection and only implicitly to the Incarnation, the same concept in Teilhard is almost synonymous with the Incarnation and hence closer to the Greek Fathers, whose theology developed at length the Incarnation's role in God's plan of salvation.<sup>57</sup> It is because of this difference in emphasis that Teilhard finds it quite easy to reach the cosmos directly through "Body of Christ," without mention of the Church at all. For the same reason it is not Christ's relationship to His Church which he associates with the Eucharist, but rather, as we have seen, Christ's relationship to the cosmos. This fact now puts us in a position to ask our second question regarding Teilhard's appeal to St. Paul. To what extent can Paul be said to extend the physical relationship between Christ and mankind to the whole of creation, including therefore all that is material?

### *Christ, Mankind, and the Cosmos*

The literature dealing directly with an answer to this second question is relatively limited. The three so-called "cosmic texts" of St. Paul (Rom 8:19-23, Col 1:15-20, and Eph 1:9-10, 22-23) have

<sup>57</sup> Cerfaux is of the opinion that for Paul the Incarnation had no salvific value at all and that the Greek Fathers corrected his too rigid synthesis; see *Le Christ dans la théologie de saint Paul* (Paris, 1951) pp. 130, 132, 135; Eng. tr., *Christ in the Theology of Saint Paul* (New York, 1959) pp. 166, 168, 172. Others favor the view that in Paul's mind the whole of Jesus' life is redemptive, including therefore the Incarnation; see, e.g., Joseph Bonsirven, S.J., *L'Évangile de Paul* (Paris, 1948) pp. 157-59; Felix Malmberg, S.J., *Ein Leib-Ein Geist* (Freiburg, 1960) pp. 239-41; Benoit, *art. cit.*, p. 38.

usually not been approached by exegetes with the precise aim of determining Christ's relationship to the material world. Speaking of the passage in Colossians, Henri Bouillard has remarked that in his opinion neither theology nor exegesis has as yet given any satisfactory explanation of what Paul means when he places Christ in relationship to the whole of the cosmos.<sup>58</sup> Consequently what we shall attempt here is merely to indicate a direction now being taken by a number of authors currently aware of the problem. We may begin with the earliest of the texts to be considered, Rom 8:19-23. The context is a presentation of the motives for hope possessed by the Christian in the face of suffering and death. Paul has just said that if we suffer with Christ we shall share His glory and that this glory with Christ will more than make up for the sorrows of this life. He then continues:

For creation is waiting with eager longing for the revelation of the sons of God: if it has been condemned to frustration—not through its own fault but because of him who so condemned it—it also has hope of being set free in its turn from the bondage of decay and of entering into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know indeed that the whole of creation has been groaning until now in an agony of birth. More than that, we ourselves who already possess in the Spirit a foretaste of the future, groan also in our hearts, waiting for the redemption of our bodies.

What is important for us here is first of all Paul's insistence that it is the *whole* of creation, man therefore included, which is the object of redemption, and secondly that it is precisely through the bodies of men that redemption extends to the rest of creation. The use of the Greek word *ktisis* to designate all things created is quite common both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, and is so used by Paul himself in Rom 1:25. Following this interpretation, the relationship between "creation" and "sons of God" would be that of the whole to the part, the hope of mankind already being included in the hope of creation. In verse 23, therefore, Paul would be moving from the general to the particular, and asserting in his own way what all biblical authors maintained, that man is the summit of creation and that somehow his own salvation effects the whole of the universe. This is further substantiated by the Greek word *phithora* in verse 21, which means

<sup>58</sup> Henri Bouillard, S.J., *Blondel et le christianisme* (Paris, 1961) pp. 164-65.

“*physical decay*” and which not only emphasizes the material solidarity of man and nature in the first Adam’s sin, but also implies an ontological effect upon the whole of creation from the second Adam’s work of redemption. Hence the significance of the word “glory,” which in this eschatological context denotes the active and visible presence of God Himself, already communicated to the humanity of Christ through the Resurrection and Ascension, and destined to be communicated to humanity as a whole at the general resurrection of the body. This “glory” of God will then radiate from the Body of Christ and the bodies of men to the universe in its entirety, “so that God may be all in all.”<sup>59</sup>

This restoration of the entire universe in Christ, barely hinted at in the above passage from Romans, became a few years later a dominant theme of Colossians and Ephesians, both written while Paul was captive in Rome. The occasion for the first letter was a threat to the Church at Colossae, which began to be troubled by dangerous speculations on the heavenly powers, basically Jewish in origin but highly colored by Hellenistic philosophy. So much importance was being attributed to these “powers” in their control of the universe and the course of events that the supremacy of Christ seemed to be compromised. The reaction of Paul was instantaneous, almost belligerent. His letter to Colossae asserts with vigor the supremacy of Christ as *Kyrios*, Lord and Master, over the whole universe. In the famous two-strophied hymn of Col 1:15–20, Paul goes back to the pre-existence of Christ with the Father, in whose image He is the source as well as the instrument and final end of creation. The Incarnation, crowned by the triumph of the Resurrection, is seen as placing the human nature of Christ at the head not only of the whole human race but also of the entire created universe, the latter indirectly concerned in the salvation of man as it had been in his fall.

He is the image of the unseen God, born before every creation.  
In Him were all things created,  
Heavenly and earthly, the seen and the unseen,

<sup>59</sup> 1 Cor 15:28. The explanation as well as the translation of the Romans text has been taken from Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., “La rédemption de l’univers,” *Lumière et vie* 9 (1960) 41–62; A. Viard, O.P., “Expectatio creaturae (Rom. VIII, 19–22),” *Revue biblique* 59 (1952) 337–54; and Paul Henry, S.J., *Philosophie religieuse de l’Épître aux Romains* (Paris, manuscript) chap. 7, 7–9.

Thrones, dominions, principdoms, and powers—  
 All things were created through Him and for Him.  
 He takes precedence over all and in Him all things subsist.

He is also Head of His Body the Church;  
 For He is the beginning, first-born from among the dead,  
 That He might come to stand first in everything.  
 It was God's good pleasure to make reside in Him all the Plenitude  
 And to win back all things through Him and for Him, on earth and in heaven,  
 Making peace with them through His blood shed on the cross.

For many exegetes today the "Plenitude" of Christ in this extraordinary text, His Pleroma, represents in Paul's mind the extension of Christ's work of redemption to the whole cosmos, the whole of creation. The term itself was quite common in the Stoic vocabulary of the time, and designated God's penetration and envelopment of the material world. In Colossians and Ephesians Paul strips it of its Stoic pantheism and gives it a content familiar to the Old Testament, that of the cosmos filled with the creative presence of God. The "fulness" which resides in Christ, therefore, is "the plenitude of being," including both the fulness of divinity and the fulness of the universe. Christ is God, and through His work of redemption He unites to Himself not only redeemed humanity, for which Paul reserves the term "Body," but also the whole of the cosmos which is humanity's dwelling place.<sup>60</sup>

In the above text, moreover, as well as in the corresponding passage in Ephesians to be seen in a moment, the multiplication of prepositional phrases ("through Him, in Him, for Him") and the repetition of "all things" emphasize again that the dependence of the universe on Christ is universal and absolute. Joseph Huby, in his commentary on Colossians, has accurately summarized this all-inclusiveness of Christ's Lordship: "In Him all has been created as in a supreme Center of unity, harmony, and cohesion, which gives to the world its sense, its

<sup>60</sup> Benoit, *art. cit.*, pp. 31-40; Dupont, *op. cit.*, pp. 453-576. The same opinion is developed with slight differences by Victor Warnach, O.S.B., "Kirche und Kosmos," in *Enkainia*, ed. Hilarius Emonds, O.S.B. (Düsseldorf, 1956) pp. 184-96, and by Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (3rd ed.; Düsseldorf, 1962) pp. 96-98. For the Old Testament concept of God's creative presence, see the references in Benoit (pp. 36-37) and the lengthy treatment of André Feuillet, "L'Eglise plérôme du Christ d'après *Eph.*," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 78 (1956) 446-72, 596-610.

value, and therefore its reality. Or, to use another metaphor, He is the focus, the 'meeting point' as Lightfoot puts it, where all the fibres and generative energies of the universe are organized and gathered together. Were someone to see the whole of the universe, past, present, and future, in a single instantaneous glimpse, he would see all beings ontologically suspended from Christ and completely unintelligible apart from Him."<sup>61</sup> These very pointed remarks bring us now to our third text, Eph 1:9-10, 22-23:

It was [God's] loving design, centered in Christ, to re-establish all things in Him when the fulness of time should come, all that is in heaven, all that is on earth, summed up in Him. . . . [God] has put all things under His feet and made Him the indisputable Head of the Church which is His Body, the Plenitude of Him who is everywhere and in all things complete.

In this brief passage some commentators see a remarkable development in Paul's thought. There is at the very start a description of God's plan of salvation as a "re-establishment," a "summing up" of all things in Christ, which is unusual and striking because the root meaning of the Greek word *anakephalaioomai* is "to head up." This is the word responsible for the "recapitulation" theory of Greek theology as well as for the oft-quoted Latin translation *instaurare omnia in Christo*. It is quite possible from the context that Paul's intention here is to situate squarely within a cosmic framework his Body-of-Christ theme, and at the same time to present the relationship between Christ and the cosmos as an extension of the physical and sacramental relationship between Christ and the members of His Church. Not only is Christ Lord of the universe, He is also its "Head." This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the verses that follow, in which the Church, as the risen Body of Christ, becomes extended as it were, swelled in Paul's mind, and equated with the dimensions of the Pleroma, "the Plenitude of Him who is everywhere and in all things complete." Moreover, the "fulness of time" in which this Plenitude is to be realized refers most probably to *both* comings of Christ, His Incarnation and work of redemption in time and His Parousia at the end of time. Thus, in Eph 3:19 the Plenitude is seen to be ultimately the Plenitude of

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Huby, S.J., *Les épîtres de la captivité* (Paris, 1935) p. 40. There is the same strong affirmation on this point in E. Percy, *Die Probleme der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe* (Lund, 1946) p. 313.

God, into which the love of Christ will eventually bring both cosmos and Church in the final and definitive achievement of cosmic as well as salvation history.<sup>62</sup>

At this point it should be recalled that the purpose of our brief study of St. Paul has been to inquire not into the development of Teilhard's Christology but into its starting point. The interpretations we have followed are in no sense universally accepted,<sup>63</sup> but they are representative of a direction in exegesis well established today among both Catholics and Protestants.<sup>64</sup> It seems certain that Paul saw some type of physical relationship between Christ and the members of His Body-Person. To what extent he also believed that through man this relationship was extended to the whole of creation is still an open question. Yet, in the context in which they were made, it is extremely difficult to give his affirmations of Christ's Lordship over the Pleroma a meaning which is juridical and purely extrinsic. The source of the whole difficulty here is, of course, that Paul's message is a message of salvation. He interests himself in the world of nature only in so far as it has religious meaning. He has no desire to elaborate a cosmology as such, and hence no intention whatsoever of explaining *how* Christ is Lord of the cosmos. For Teilhard, on the other hand, a cosmology is at the heart of his whole system, and his appeals to St. Paul are made with the precise purpose of explaining this "how" and of using the Apostle's thought as a point of departure for his own vision of the world. "All the same," he once protested to a close friend, "I have the right to speak like St. Paul!"<sup>65</sup> What is being emphasized here is simply the

<sup>62</sup> The interpretation given here is based on the following: Heinrich Schlier, "Kephale, Anakephalaioomai," in Gerhard Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 3 (Stuttgart, 1938) 681-82; *id.*, "Die Kirche nach dem Briefe an die Epheser," in *Die Zeit der Kirche* (Freiburg, 1956) pp. 171-72; Cerfaux, *Le Christ*, pp. 318-19 (Eng. tr., pp. 424-25); Warnach, *art. cit.*, pp. 189-90; Benoit, *art. cit.*, pp. 40-44; Dupont, *op. cit.*, pp. 425-26.

<sup>63</sup> In a lengthy study Franz Mussner has vigorously contested many of the interpretations given here: *Christus, das All und die Kirche* (Trier, 1955). See also the article by Leo Scheffczyk cited in footnote 43.

<sup>64</sup> Besides those mentioned already, see the works of the following Protestant theologians: L. S. Thornton, *The Incarnate Lord* (London, 1928) pp. 28-110; E. C. Rust, *Nature and Man in Biblical Thought* (London, 1953) pp. 197-303; Allan D. Galloway, *The Cosmic Christ* (London, 1951) pp. 3-56; E. L. Mascall, *Christian Theology and Natural Science* (London, 1956) pp. 36-46; Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ* (London, 1955) pp. 83-159.

<sup>65</sup> Letter of Dec. 17, 1922, to Fr. Auguste Valensin.

fact that, as far as the texts of St. Paul are concerned, the way he speaks is legitimate.

Teilhard's understanding of Christ as physical Center is put forward, therefore, as a plausible explanation of what Paul's thought can mean when confronted with modern man's knowledge of the universe in which he lives. Fundamental to his whole effort is the elemental concept of a world in which all things participate in a single physical and organic unity, a unity embracing the natural and the supernatural, the spiritual as well as the material. "Let us return to Paul," said Teilhard in a 1930 lecture. "Let us remember that the supernatural nourishes itself on everything, and let us accept fully those magnificent perspectives according to which the Christ of St. Paul appears to us as He in whom all has been created and He in whom the whole world finds its stability, with all its height and depth, its grandeur and greatness, with all that is material and all that is spiritual." This in turn means seeing everything "from the point of view of the organization of the Pleroma (which is the only true point of view from which the world can be understood)."<sup>66</sup> The Body-Person of Christ thus becomes the Pole of unity toward which all converges, the Milieu within which this convergence takes place, and the physical Center holding in existence all the radii of creation.

#### CONCLUSION

It would not be too much to say, by way of conclusion, that this physical influence of Christ over the whole of cosmic reality provides a master key to the many-chambered edifice of Teilhard's Christology. Essentially, such an influence is an extension and further explicitation, within a different system of thought, of traditional teaching concerning the Body of Christ as physical instrumental cause of grace. If all grace is the grace of Christ, of which His Body is physical instrumental cause, then it follows that all grace has its effect upon men (and indirectly upon the material world) through the physical mediation of Christ's Body-Person. St. Thomas, interestingly enough, while clearly teaching such physical instrumental causality,<sup>67</sup> tended to shy away

<sup>66</sup> *Essai d'intégration de l'homme dans l'univers* (1930), Lecture 4, p. 12; *MD*, p. 153; Eng. tr., p. 114.

<sup>67</sup> *Commentarium in 4 Sent.* 3, d. 5, q. 1, a. 2, ad 6m: "Another reason [that the flesh of

from the above conclusion, apparently because he felt unable to explain how Christ could actually come into physical contact with all men in every time and place. The Body of Christ, he said, by reason of its union with the Godhead, possesses a spiritual power which operates not through physical but through "spiritual contact."<sup>68</sup>

Yet such a distinction hardly solves the difficulty. From the fact that contact with Christ must be spiritual, it does not follow that physical contact is rendered unnecessary, for it is precisely with a Body-Person that such spiritual contact is made. St. Thomas himself implied as much when he said in another context that all grace is somehow conferred in virtue of the Holy Eucharist.<sup>69</sup> One theologian has suggested that in the case of Christ spiritual contact should rather be considered as a *mode* of physical contact, and he cites as an example of this the encounter in the Gospels between Christ and the woman with the issue of blood. Her spiritual contact with Christ consisted in an intensification of her physical contact in and through an act of supernatural faith.<sup>70</sup>

What St. Thomas lacked in dealing with this question was modern scientific data on the physical interdependence of every element in the universe. Such an interdependence is always in the forefront of Teilhard's mind,<sup>71</sup> though he himself was equipped neither as a philosopher nor as a theologian to handle satisfactorily the metaphysical implications of this fact. Indeed, Maurice Blondel is one of the few philosophers, and Karl Rahner one of the few theologians, to have dealt with the subject at all. Blondel wrote a whole philosophical treatise in which he tried to explain how Christ is the substantial "bond" linking

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Christ is said to be divinized] is that it is a quasi instrument through which the divine power works out our salvation; for it was by touching the leper with His flesh that He cured him through the power of Divinity, and it was by dying in the flesh that He conquered death through the power of Divinity. But the power of the agent is somehow in the instrument by means of which it acts."

<sup>68</sup> *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 48, a. 6, ad 2m.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* 3, q. 79, a. 1, ad 1m: "This sacrament has power to confer grace of itself; nor does anyone have grace prior to the reception of this sacrament, except by reason of some *voluntum* for it."

<sup>70</sup> Ladislaus Boros, S.J., *Mysterium mortis: Der Mensch in der letzten Entscheidung* (Freiburg, 1962) pp. 154-56. Cf. Mk 5:25-34; Lk 9:43-48.

<sup>71</sup> Cf., e.g., the text cited above in footnote 24, and the lengthy development of the whole subject in *The Phenomenon of Man*.

together the universe and giving life to all creation.<sup>73</sup> He complained a number of times of the extreme deficiency of the notions of body and matter current in the early part of the century. Not only did he believe that all men depended upon each other, but that there is even in one sense interpenetration.

We are literally made of one another without ceasing to be individual personalities. . . . The problem of the Incarnation appears to me (perhaps even antecedently to every other philosophical question) as the touchstone of a true cosmology, of an integral metaphysics. . . . I share the ideas and the sentiments of Father Teilhard de Chardin in the face of the Christological problem. Before the broader horizons created by science we cannot, without betraying Catholicism, remain satisfied with a feeble and limited Christology, in which Christ appears almost as an accident of history, isolated like a stranger amid the crushing and hostile immensity of the universe.<sup>74</sup>

Fifty years after Blondel, Karl Rahner has broached the same problem in a number of different theological contexts. Writing on the meaning of death, he says that

the soul as united to the body must also have some relationship to that "whole" of which the body is part, i.e., to that wholeness which constitutes the unity of the material universe. The unity of the world is certainly not to be conceived as a mere summarizing abstraction, resulting from the process of human thought; nor does it reside merely in the mutual extrinsic actions and reactions of individual things upon each other. No metaphysics (we have in mind the Scholastic metaphysics of prime matter and of the analogous concept of individual material beings) could accept such a superficial view. Yet it is impossible, within the framework of such concepts, to penetrate the problem of this real ontological unity of the universe . . . that basic oneness of the world, so difficult to grasp, yet so very real,

<sup>73</sup> Maurice Blondel, *Une énigme historique: Le "Vinculum substantiale" d'après Leibniz et l'ébauche d'un réalisme supérieur* (Paris, 1930); this is a French adaptation of his Latin thesis of 1893. See especially pp. 105-6, where in speaking of Christ as the *Vinculum*, he appeals to the Eucharist as an illustration of his theory. Cf. also the remarks of Yves de Montcheuil, S.J., "Les problèmes du 'Vinculum' Leibnizien d'après M. Blondel," in *Mélanges théologiques* (Paris, 1946) p. 294. Teilhard said himself that he was strongly influenced by Blondel's "Panchristism," and it is quite possible that he came in contact very early with Blondel's original Latin thesis through Fr. Auguste Valensin, who was a close mutual friend; but there is no record to this effect.

<sup>74</sup> Letter of Dec. 15, 1919, in *Archives de philosophie* 24 (1961) 129. Cf. Blondel's *Lettre sur l'apologétique de 1896*, in *Les premiers écrits de Maurice Blondel* 2 (Paris, 1956) 80-81, for a development of these same ideas. On the nature of Blondel's "Panchristism," see Bouillard, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-65, and Jean Rimaud, S.J., "Vie spirituelle et philosophie: Maurice Blondel," *Christus* 9 (1962) 272-88.

by which all things in the world are related and communicate anteriorly to any mutual influence upon each other.<sup>74</sup>

He exhibits the same preoccupation in discussing the unity between creation and redemption:

Man cannot fulfil his spiritual or indeed his supernatural life without embodying this fulfilment in material reality, without a turning toward the world, an infusing of the spiritual into the material. Hence the world is really a unity, one thing. The actual interdependence of one thing upon everything else corresponds to the original creative will of God, and objectifies itself in the fundamental mutual relationship based on the essence of individual things themselves.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, there is a passage from one of Rahner's essays on Christology which will provide an appropriate ending to this present study:

The Incarnation of the Logos (however much we must insist on the fact that it is itself an historical, unique event in an essentially historical world) appears *ontologically* (not merely "morally" and *a posteriori*) as the unambiguous goal of the movement of creation as a whole, in relation to which everything prior is merely a preparation of scenery. It appears as oriented from the very first to this point in which God achieves once and for all both the greatest proximity to and distance from what is other than He (while at the same time giving it being). . . . Here we must remember that the world is a unity in which everything is linked together with everything else. When anyone grasps a portion of the world for his own life's history, at one and the same time he takes upon himself the world as a whole for his personal environment. Thus it would not be extravagant, as long as it was done with prudence, to conceive the evolution of the world as an orientation *toward Christ*, and to represent the various stages of this ascending movement as culminating in Him as their apex. The only danger to be avoided is the suggestion that such evolution is an ascent which the world accomplishes by forces which are wholly its own. If what St. Paul says in *Colossians* 1:15 is true and not softened by some moralistic interpretation, if furthermore the world as a whole, including therefore its physical reality, is actually in process of reaching in and through Christ that final state in which God is all in all, then the line of thought we are developing here cannot be entirely false.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Karl Rahner, S.J., *Zur Theologie des Todes* (Freiburg, 1958) pp. 19-20; Eng. tr., *On the Theology of Death* (London, 1961) pp. 26-27.

<sup>75</sup> *Id.*, *Sendung und Gnade* (Innsbruck, 1959) p. 61; Eng. tr., *Mission and Grace* 1 (London, 1963) 73.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*, "Probleme der Christologie von heute," *Schriften zur Theologie* 1 (Einsiedeln, 1958) 187-88; Eng. tr., *Theological Investigations* 1 (London, 1960) 165. We might note here a rare theological essay on the cosmic dimensions of the Eucharist by Ladislav Boros, S.J., "Meditationen über die Eucharistie," *Orientierung* 27 (1963) 117-19, 134-36.