

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA

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ONE OF the most obvious questions which can arise for one acquainted with the thought of Teilhard de Chardin is the question of the applicability of his principles of evolution to the problem of the evolution of dogma. As yet no one seems to have explored this question. One could ask various questions about the relationship of Teilhard's principles to the evolution of dogma: what influence his teaching might have on future formulations; whether his principles square with the present formulation of Catholic dogma; to what extent his principles can be used to formulate a theory of development of dogma. It is the last form of the question which concerns us.¹

From his writing it is evident that Teilhard did not want his theory to remain in an academic laboratory. He wanted to recast the whole of theology, especially Christology, in the light of his evolutionary principles. In one of his letters he wrote:

Lately I have once more become aware that the whole nucleus of my interior outlook depends entirely upon and can be reduced to a simple transposition into dimensions of "cosmogogenesis" of the vision which is traditionally expressed in terms of "cosmos." Creation, spirit, evil, God (and, more specifically, original sin, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Parousia, charity . . .), all these ideas, transferred to the dimension of "genesis," become coherent and clear in a way which is astounding.²

For Teilhard, the idea of *genèse* is the dimension from which all the doctrines of the Church, especially the Christological doctrines, must be reviewed in order to see them in their fulness with the relevance which fits the outlook of modern man.

Before we attempt to apply Teilhard's principles of evolution to the development of dogma, there are a few preliminary ideas which we must recall concerning the meaning of dogmatic development. Our presentation will proceed in two steps. First, we shall briefly review the meaning of dogmatic development, with a comment on some of the answers which have been given to this problem, in order to situate Teil-

¹ The substance of this article formed the contents of a paper delivered at a symposium on Teilhard held at Marquette University on the weekend of November 1, 1968.

² Quoted from Christopher F. Mooney, S.J., *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ* (New York, 1966) p. 62.

hard's own answer within this continuum; second, we shall try to apply Teilhard's principles as an answer to the problem.

THE MEANING OF DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

To begin, let us recall that we are speaking of the evolution of dogma or doctrine, not of the evolution of theology.³ This distinction contains many assumptions which we cannot justify here. It assumes, among other things, that there is a distinction between the way in which the mystery of the faith grasps the person and reciprocally the way in which the person enters into the mystery through faith, and, on the other hand, the way in which the human mind, under the light of faith, applies itself to the study of this mystery. This is not an easy distinction to clarify; but it is necessary to make an attempt if we are to understand the meaning of development of dogma, as contrasted with development of theology.

When we speak of the knowledge which belongs to the faithful response to God's revealing act, we are speaking of the reality which has to do with grace, election, covenant, presence, communion with the divine Persons. This knowledge is both a knowing and being known, a grasping and a being grasped. It is both communion in life and an expression of that communion in judgments which we form to express the communion in life. These judgments or propositions are proposed to us by the teaching authority of the Church (another assumption which we cannot take time to justify here). They are not, however, *mere* intellectual judgments or propositions. They are like the face through which we come in contact with the person. They are the visible or intellectual face of the mystery of communion with Christ. They are the intellectual contour of the mystery itself. They have an *immediate* relationship with the mystery of Christ and of God. Theology is thinking *about* the mystery, whereas those judgments which express the content of the mystery are not simply judgments *about* the mystery. They share in the life of the mystery, while they throw into bold relief the deployment of that mystery in the judgmental power of the human mind.

Besides this distinction between theology and faith, that is, between those judgments which are *about* the mystery and those judgments which *are* the mystery, there is a further distinction: between the limited dogmatic declaration of the mystery of Christ and the unlimited total mystery of Christ.

Not all of the mystery which is communicated to the Church finds an

³ Among many possible references, cf. Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., *A History of Theology* (New York, 1968) pp. 25-36.

expression in a dogmatic declaration. The total truth of the mystery, of course, corresponds to the total mystery itself. Here a philosophical adage is applicable: *Ens et verum convertuntur*. Fundamentally, what is to be known is coextensive with the reality of the total mystery. The truth which is expressed in propositional form does not exhaust the total truth of the mystery. Strictly speaking, dogmatic teaching is that aspect of the mystery which is declared by the Church as substantive to the faith, though the propositional formulation does not exhaust the reality of the faith. In fact, with each declaration of the faith there is a further realization of the ineffability of the total mystery. Just as the space probes relay to us something of the visibility of the universe and at the same time they give us a sense of the immensity of that which cannot be seen, similarly each declaration concerning the faith is only a probing into the vast mystery of God and man. While it renders visible an aspect of the truth, it also conveys a sense of the immensity of the mystery which is not expressed.

It is no secret that there is great antagonism to the very idea that faith can be expressed in dogmatic statements. For many, the unveiling of the mystery of Christianity through rational declarations amounts to a desecration. Nothing profane can enter into that holy of holies. In a special way rational statements about the faith, or rather rational statements which express the faith, are seen to rend that curtain separating the holy of holies from the profane world of reason and judgment. Many reduce contact with the mystery to those forms which have to do with instinct, appetite, intuition, experience, and would see rational statements expressing the faith only in the way that the shadowy existence in Sheol resembles a person in some eviscerated way. It is necessary, then, to comment on the reasons why such statements are both possible and necessary.

They are possible, first, because the word of God has come to us in the words of men—which means that the total vital mystery of the divine presence through grace is deployed into various avenues corresponding to those avenues in us which open to reality: the avenue of knowing, loving, hearing, seeing, touching. This means that the mystery itself reaches us through these avenues, not some facsimile of the mystery or some substitute for it. Through those statements which express the content of faith the mystery is deployed into our whole reality through the avenue of the understanding; through our love the mystery enters into the very center of our being; through the sacraments the mystery enters into us through the avenues of seeing and touching and feeling. Statements expressing the faith, and sharing in the mystery of the faith, are therefore possible because of the many avenues of open-

ness in man through which the whole mystery must be deployed in order to transform the whole man.

Such statements are not only possible; they are necessary. They are necessary not only to separate what is true from what is false; we need them to express the content of the word of God positively. The word of God does not lie alongside or above history in some kind of static or uninvolved way. It lies in what could be called a polar relationship with every reality of history. The word of God is not like a dead voice echoing down the canyons of time with a sameness which sounds more hollow with each succeeding moment; it unfolds its own meaning by answering the question of meaning as it is posed by each period of history. Such propositions expressing the content of the faith are necessary, further, because our faith is not only a matter of experiencing the unique mystery of God. Our faith comes *ex auditu*. It is a faith to be transmitted, not only an experience to be shared. This can be done only through transmitting judgments about the faith.

We have to recall one more point before we go on to comment on the answers given to the problem of development of dogma, and in particular to an application of Teilhard's principles to this problem. Catholic theology affirms that the fulness of revelation was given to the apostles and that there can be no new revelation which is not contained seminally in this revelation. This fact cannot be accounted for simply by speaking of the influence of Christ on His apostles, if we think of this influence only in the way in which any teacher has an influence on his disciples. Rather, we are in the presence of a sacramental reality. This means that the total reality of Christ was embodied in matter, not inert matter but in the flesh (in the scriptural sense of the term) of the apostles.

Humanly speaking every teacher makes an impression on his disciples. But there is always a remainder, because obviously he cannot give the whole of himself. Further, the capacity of the disciples to receive is a limited one. In the gift of Christ to the apostles, however, and through them to the Church, there is no remainder, and the natural limitations of their human spirit are enlarged by the gift of the Holy Spirit to the point where they are given the capacity to receive the whole of Christ.

The total reality of Christ is, therefore, communicated through the gift of the Spirit of Christ. However, though the total reality is communicated, the total reality is not expressed in words. The reality, so to speak, overflows the words used to express it, much in the way that the mystery of the Incarnation overflows the flesh of Christ in which the mystery is embodied. The words become precipitates of the reality it-

self. This means that there is room for development as the mystery unfolds and is expressed through human language. We see such developments even within Scripture itself: for example, the development of the Logos theology of St. John and the wisdom theology of St. Paul, both of which express the unfolding of the mystery of Christ. These developments are gigantic steps over the Gospel message as we find it in the Synoptics.

With these preliminary remarks in mind, we can formulate the problem of the development of dogma. First, in its widest problematic aspect, it is a form of the perennial philosophical problem expressed in many ways: permanence within change, the one and the many, sameness and difference. In particular, it is the problem of the one revelation given to the apostles and the emergence of many revealed truths which are not contained propositionally in the initial revelation.

Of course, there can be no problem of development if one denies one or other datum of the problem. If one denies that there is an objective correlative to our subjective faith, or that the whole of the reality of Christ was communicated to the apostles in such a way that nothing could be added, or if one denies that there really are new truths of the faith, or that the Church has a divinely given authority to declare these truths—then there is really no problem. But for all those Christians who accept the credal formulation of their faith as we have it in the early councils of the Church, there is a problem, because there are statements proposed there for our faith which are not explicitly in Scripture.

We would like to comment briefly on the direction which the answers have taken in the past before we take up Teilhard. If we can find some viable theory of doctrinal development in Teilhard, it will be useful to see how his answer compares with the answers proposed by earlier theologians. We will bypass the answers given throughout history and content ourselves with a few remarks on the answers proposed during the last few centuries.

There are those who would simply deny that there is such a problem, because they deny that there is anything like development, at least in the sense that the Catholic theologian understands it. There are many who reduce the meaning of Christianity to a subjective experience, whose so-called faith formulations are entirely relative to the historical situation and are only epiphenomena expressing the religious phenomenon common to all men.

To take one example, Paul Tillich speaks of credal statements as symbols pointing to the mystery of faith, whose value is conditioned by the flux of time and history. When the current of reality has taken a differ-

ent shape, then the symbol which lives off the reality loses its value and has to be "broken" to make way for another symbol which expresses the current contour of the reality. For example, a symbolic statement such as the Virgin Birth no longer says anything to modern man and has to be broken.⁴ Dogmas, including the dogma of the teaching authority of the Church, are merely cultural phenomena, which rise and fall with the waves of thought. In reality, there is no dogma. In place of dogma, there is hermeneutics, the science of interpretation; and in place of ecclesiastical authority, there is the authority of theologians.

Among those who admit the data of the problem, there are mainly two answers.⁵ One solution emphasizes the propositional content of revelation and sees evolution of dogma mainly as a logical or intellectual process. The other solution emphasizes the fact that the dogmas flow from and are rooted in the Church's constant experience of the mystery of Christ. In both cases the authority of the Church to declare the meaning of the mystery of Christ is ultimately the norm of distinguishing whether a development is a matter of faith or simply a development of theological formulation.

Among the theories which emphasize the development of dogma as the unfolding of a vital experience the theory of Cardinal Newman, described in his work *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, has a pre-eminent place. He describes the development of doctrine in terms analogous to the development of a living idea. The expression "living idea" has a technical meaning for him. We could describe it by saying that it means "the total re-presentation of the complete reality of an object in a thinking subject." The object he is speaking of is too rich in its total reality to be grasped all at once. It only emerges through a long process of action and interaction. Such living ideas are, for example, the idea of human dignity, freedom, love, the human person. As the object emerges, the subject begins to see aspects which were hidden and in time begins to see the object in its totality. The circumstances of history become a medium of disclosure, of uncovering the total truth which was there, but waiting for its season to come forth and blossom. This is the way Newman sees Christianity and the development of doctrine. It means a progressively conscious awareness of the whole of the mystery of Christ as this mystery emerges in history.

⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology 2: Existence and the Christ* (Chicago, 1957) *passim*, especially pp. 107 ff., 152 ff.

⁵ The literature on the development of dogma is enormous. For a good treatment and bibliography, cf. the article by J. H. Walgrave, "Development of Doctrine," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 4 (Washington, D.C., 1967) 940-44; also the article by Candido Pozo, "Development of Dogma," in *Sacramentum mundi* 2 (New York, 1968) 98-102.

TEILHARD'S PRINCIPLES OF EVOLUTION AND THEIR APPLICABILITY

We come to the main point we wanted to discuss: Is it possible to provide an answer to the problem of development of dogma from Teilhard's evolutionary principles? He himself, while recognizing such developments, never alluded to a theory of development based on his principles. This should be, however, a corollary to his thought. The Christian phenomenon, if Teilhard's principles have the universal validity he wanted to attribute to them, must obey the same laws which govern the human phenomenon. In Teilhard's thinking we are not dealing with some particular mode of being—e.g., biological life—or with the hominized form of this life. We are dealing with an ontology which embraces the whole movement of becoming. His phenomenology is really an ontology. Since this is the case, his principles have validity (if they are true) for every aspect of the phenomenon of becoming. This means, then, that they have validity for the Christian phenomenon, and in particular for the phenomenon which we call the development of dogma.

To avoid any misunderstanding in applying his principles to the evolution of dogma, we should recall two things: first, Teilhard sees the Christian phenomenon as part of the total human phenomenon; second, he does so without confusing the orders of nature and grace, of faith and reason, or the animation which comes from natural dynamisms and the suranimation which comes from grace. We shall refer to a few passages in which these two points are brought out.

In the Epilogue to the *Phenomenon of Man* he speaks of the Christian phenomenon. His remarks there will help us appreciate the fact that the Christian phenomenon cannot be separated from the human phenomenon. We see also that the Christian phenomenon exhibits the characteristics of growth that belong to the human phenomenon.

Now let us sum up the situation:

i. Considered objectively as a phenomenon, the Christian movement, through its rootedness in the past and ceaseless developments, exhibits the characteristics of a *phylum*.⁶

ii. Reset in an evolution interpreted as an ascent of consciousness, this phylum, in its trend towards a synthesis based on love, progresses precisely in the direction presumed for the leading-shoot of biogenesis.

iii. In the impetus which guides and sustains its advance, this rising shoot implies essentially *the consciousness of being in actual relationship* with a spiritual and transcendent pole of universal convergence.⁷

⁶ For Teilhard, a phylum is a living unit made up of many living units having the same degree and the same kind of centeredness.

⁷ *Phenomenon of Man* (2nd ed.; New York, 1965) p. 298.

In a footnote he adds that this ultimate point of union, which is source, presence, and term of the whole process, is one that is supernatural. He is careful to point out that this term is in line with the whole process, while at the same time it has a supergratuitousness to which man can lay no claim by virtue of his nature alone.⁸ Then in terms which verge on poetry he describes the meaning of the Christian phenomenon which is at the heart of the social phenomenon.

To confirm the presence at the summit of the world of what we have called Omega Point, do we not find here the very cross-check we were waiting for? Here surely is the ray of sunshine striking through the clouds, the reflection onto what is ascending of that which is already on high, the rupture of our solitude. The palpable influence on our world of *an other* and supreme Someone. . . . Is not the Christian phenomenon, which rises upwards at the heart of the social phenomenon, precisely that?⁹

Teilhard, therefore, sees the Christian phenomenon at the heart of the whole social phenomenon. If this is so, it must also exhibit in its own way the evolutionary qualities which belong to the whole phenomenon.

We stressed that this does not mean for Teilhard a blurring of distinctions between the orders of nature and grace. Let us quote one passage to illustrate this.

The earthly undertaking which is beyond all parallel is the physical incorporation of the faithful into Christ and therefore into God. And this supreme work is carried out with the exactitude and the harmony of a natural process of evolution.

At the inception of the undertaking there had to be a transcendent act which, in accordance with mysterious but physically regulated conditions, should graft the person of God into the human cosmos. This was the Incarnation: *Et Verbum Caro Factum Est*. And from this first, basic contact of God with our human race, and precisely by virtue of this penetration of the divine into our human nature, a new life was born: that unforeseeable aggrandizement and "obediential" expansion of our natural capacities which we call "grace." Now grace is the sap which, rising in the one trunk, spreads through all the veins in obedience to the pulsations of the one heart; it is the nerve-impulse flowing through all the members at the command of the one brain; and the radiant Head, the mighty Heart, the fruitful Tree are, of necessity, Christ.

The Incarnation means the renewal, the restoration, of all the energies and powers of the universe: Christ is the instrument, the Centre and the End of all

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

creation, animate and material; through him everything is created, hallowed, quickened.¹⁰

The fundamental impetus for the development of the whole universe comes from the Incarnation, which grafts the life of the Second Person of the Trinity to the energies of the world. What would be simply a genesis of the universe, if there were no Christ, becomes through the Incarnation a genesis of Christ. All of the energy of the world is drawn obedientially into another energy which comes from the Incarnation of the divine energy of love. Through His resurrection Christ becomes the very center of this whole movement of love. Teilhard, then, while he sees the Christian phenomenon as rooted in the Incarnation, sees it as articulated in the human phenomenon. At the same time the Christian phenomenon sustains, superanimates, and directs the human phenomenon to the center which is the risen Christ. Teilhard's vision is one of union and subordination, not of blending and confusion. He sees the Christian phenomenon in terms of the Incarnation, not as some phenomenological counterpart of the heresy of Monophysitism, in which the orders of the divine and the human lose their identity.

We come to the main part of our reflection, for which the foregoing remarks provide a necessary prelude. Is it possible to apply Teilhard's principles of evolution to the Christian phenomenon in such a way that we can form a theory of doctrinal development? As we have said, this seems to be a corollary of his thought. If the Christian phenomenon is itself a phylum, the laws which characterize the development of phyletic life should be applicable to it also. Let us attempt to make this application.

The Law of Complexity-Consciousness

According to Teilhard, the fundamental law of evolution is the law of complexity-consciousness.¹¹ This law states that the evolutionary movement is marked by an increase of consciousness which comes about in conjunction with increased complexity in the structure. In the *Phenomenon of Man* he speaks of consciousness as the "within" of things, and complexity as the "without." Everything, every unit of energy, has both a "within," a certain germinal interiority, and also a "without," a

¹⁰ *Hymn of the Universe* (New York, 1965) pp. 143-45. Cf. other passages in the same collection: pp. 95, 111, 133; also Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* (New York, 1967) pp. 127, 128.

¹¹ It is not necessary to give detailed references to works which treat this subject. All the standard works on Teilhard (Mooney, Faricy, Smulders, de Lubac, etc.) have ample descriptions of the meaning of this law.

structure through which it enters into association with other units of energy. There is a proportion between the degree of interiority and the degree of complexity of the "without." In the evolutionary process various phyla are formed, that is, "bundles" of those units which have an affinity with each other and unite to form a common current of evolution. He sees the Christian phenomenon as one of these phyla.

If this law of complexity-consciousness is of universal validity, then it must be applicable also to the development of dogma. In applying it we see that dogmatic propositions correspond to the "without." The deeper faith-perception, on the other hand, corresponds to the "within." We have to be careful, of course, not to take these terms, "without" and "within," either simply as metaphorical expressions for the same thing or as terms used to describe separate things. They describe, rather, distinct principles of one and the same energy of growth.

The dogmas of the Christian faith grow out of the consciousness, out of the "within," through various stimuli which activate this consciousness. They live in this consciousness, flow from it, while at the same time they give this consciousness a certain intellectual "shape" and allow this content to be the subject of human discourse.

There are certain thresholds which are passed in the development of human consciousness. For Teilhard, the main thresholds are those from nonlife to the biosphere, from the biosphere to the noösphere, from the noösphere to a point of ultrahominization, and finally the point of maturation which comes when the last threshold is crossed, the last metamorphosis takes place, which occurs at the second coming of Christ. This whole process is irreversible. Once a threshold has been crossed, it is not possible for the process to reverse itself.

There is something analogous here to the development of dogma. Each development is a threshold. There is a new and original insight, or development, which maintains a certain continuity with the previous stage, but in its newness manifests also a discontinuity. This comes from the fact that Christian consciousness has crossed a threshold. The hidden pulsations of Christian consciousness have surfaced and taken a visible shape which is irreversible.

Irreversibility is the property of dogmatic development, not of theological development—at least not in the same way or in the same degree. In a way, we might compare theological development to the eddies within the movement of the irreversible current of dogma. There is development both in dogma and in theology, but they do not have the same degree of definitive emergence.

This movement of complexity-consciousness, as Teilhard describes it, is both conservative of the consciousness of the past and also produces a

new depth of consciousness at each state of the movement. It is both conservative and creative. These characteristics also belong to the development of dogma. Such development conserves the past developments, while at the same time it moves towards greater integration of the past developments into the progressive insights coming from deeper consciousness. Development does not simply reproduce or rearrange old truths in a new form. It is truly a creative process.

What emerges, therefore, from the creative process is not simply new wine in the old skins. Rather, there is a progressive unfolding of an initial unity, perceived through greater consciousness, and expressed in a context of greater complexity. For Teilhard, to create is to unite. The crossing of thresholds is a process of creative union. The emergence of new dogmas in the consciousness of the Church has all of the characteristics of creative union, as it follows the law of complexity-consciousness which is the ontological structure of every vital movement.

Complexity, it is hardly necessary to point out, is not the complexity of confusion, but the complexity which comes from particularization and synthesis of that which was obscure, general, less well defined. There is a certain proportion between growth in consciousness of the faith and the particularization or specification of this consciousness through explicit formulation.

This does not mean that there has to be new formulation to match each step in deeper consciousness. Consciousness of the faith is not the same as the formulation of the faith; or, in the terms we are using, the "within" is not the same as the "without." The two are, however, related. In past history explicit formulations have come about through various exigencies of history—either from the inherent need to formulate in propositional form the ripening consciousness of the faith, as we find for example in the dogmas concerning Mary, or from the need to refute errors concerning the faith, as we see in the Christological dogmas.

It seems, therefore, that Teilhard's law of complexity-consciousness can very aptly be applied to the development of dogma. It explains the unfolding nature of the dogma, its conservation of the past, its converging to greater unity, the symbiotic relation of formulation of the faith to consciousness of the faith, and the irreversibility of the movement as it passes through those definitive thresholds which we call dogmatic statements.

The Antientropic Nature of Evolution

Another characteristic of evolution, as Teilhard sees it, is its antientropic nature. In maintaining this (which is consistent with his whole system) he disagrees with the view of most scientists. They hold, in con-

formity with the second law of thermodynamics, that the universe is in the process of universal entropy, a process of running down. Teilhard says this expresses only one aspect of the total energy of the universe. It is only the tangential component of this energy. He says that scientists have taken into consideration only this component of energy. There is another component, radial energy. It is this energy which provides the whole movement with an antientropic drive, moving the whole process towards greater and greater unity according to the law of complexity-consciousness.

This principle can also be applied to the development of doctrine. The antientropic nature of doctrinal development does not come merely from natural principles, or from what is radial energy in a natural sense. There is a transformation, elevation, suranimation of this radial energy by the antientropic energy coming from the gratuitous love of God which we call charity. We were careful to point out in our preliminary remarks above that Teilhard does not confuse the radial energy which comes from the Spirit of God and that which comes from the spirit of man.

This whole movement upwards towards greater unity through closer convergence is activated and sustained by the presence of the Omega, which is the risen Christ, who is the Center, the Evolver, drawing all things to Himself. Through His power, through the stamp which He impresses on all things, the basic natural radial energy is transformed through an energy which is gratuitous, and the power of love to unite becomes antientropic in an absolute way.

The antientropic nature of the movement goes by another name in the traditional terminology. It is called infallibility. It is that property which belongs to the Church as a whole. It is the power which belongs to the basic God-given energy of the Church, which guarantees it against the law of entropy which affects all thought, all institutions, and all endeavors which are merely human.

The development of dogma is an evidence of the basic antientropic nature of the Church. What happens to those individuals or groups who separate themselves from this basic storehouse of energy in the Church can be seen from history. The antientropic nature of the faith is diminished. Instead of progressive convergence, there is progressive fragmentation, seeking not for the union which goes along with movement towards a center, but the kind of union which Teilhard calls an "aggregation," which is for the most part juxtaposition rather than organic oneness. Any movement which separates itself from the axis of energy is bound to succumb in some degree to the law of entropy which

belongs to all vital processes where the radial energies are not suranimated by the total reality of the mystery of Christ.

The development of dogma is a sign of the antientropic nature of the Church. It is the emergence of something new. At the same time it is a victory, an overcoming, where the life-giving power of the risen Christ manifests itself in the Church through overcoming the various aspects of entropy—sin, concupiscence, diabolical onslaughts, death, suffering, and the process of aging which belongs to time itself. The development of dogma is only one aspect of the total antientropic energy which belongs to the Church. It manifests the fact that while human thought has its seasons, its winter, spring, summer, and fall, the consciousness of the Church, while it shares in the seasons of human thought, is always basically in the springtime of its existence. The words of the Book of Revelation which apply to the whole of creation are in a particular way appropriate to the development of dogma: "Then the One sitting on the throne spoke: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new' " (Ap 21 : 5).

The Power to See

Another fundamental principle in Teilhard is that there is a correlation between the power to see and the unfolding of what there is to be seen. He sums up the purpose of his work in terms of the meaning of seeing.

Seeing. We might say that the whole of life lies in that verb—if not ultimately, at least essentially. Fuller being is closer union: such is the kernel and conclusion of this book. But let us emphasize the point: union increases only through an increase in consciousness, that is to say in vision. And that, doubtless, is why the history of the living world can be summarized as the elaboration of ever more perfect eyes within a cosmos in which there is always something more to be seen. . . . *To see or to perish* is the very condition laid upon everything that makes up the universe, by reason of the mysterious gift of existence. And this, in superior measure, is man's condition. . . . Object and subject marry and mutually transform each other in the act of knowledge.¹²

The perfection of seeing takes place in man. His primacy in the world of seeing comes from the fact, first of all, that he is the very center of perspective of the universe. All things are arranged in the hierarchy of life in relationship to him. He is, further, the center and source of the construction of the universe.

Teilhard's ideas on seeing can be applied to a theory of development

¹² *Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 31, 32.

of dogma. He points out that while there is a distinction between the power to see and that which is seen, there is also a twofold relationship. There is, first, the relationship of codevelopment. Elaboration of more perfect powers to see goes hand in hand with elaboration of more objects to be seen. Further, the very act of seeing is a unifying act, really not only an act of gazing but an act of amorization. Seeing is a form of loving, because it effects greater union.

The same laws present in the human phenomenon govern the Christian phenomenon, the Church. It must continually progress in its power to see or succumb to the universal law of entropy. At the same time there is more and more to see. What was implicit in consciousness becomes more and more explicit. The object of faith is unfolded. This is not the unfolding of something inanimate, or even of something animate in merely a natural sense. Rather, it is the unfolding of a subject, a person, Christ, who has suranimated the Church with His life.

This objective unfolding of Christ goes hand in hand with a developing power to see into the mystery of Christ more deeply. The new power to see unites with the new aspect to be seen, and a new unity is formed. "Object and subject marry and mutually transform each other in the act of knowledge." The seeing power of the Church and the dogmas through which faith is made partially but increasingly visible are united in the act of faith.

There will always be more to be seen. The Church's experience of Christ cannot be exhausted by any number of dogmas. Yet this real but invisible experience is made increasingly visible and articulate through the union of "more perfect eyes within a cosmos in which there is always something more to be seen."

Doctrinal development in the Church is, then, a manifestation of the universal law of development where the power to see unites with the objects to be seen in a crescendo of ever-increasing union.

The Phyletic Nature of Evolution

Finally, there is the phyletic nature of the whole process of evolution. The law of complexity-consciousness does not lead simply to the formation of individuals but of "bundles," that is, of groups which have a common structure, direction, and consciousness. In the process of evolution many phyla are formed. In the phylum of man, however, the process reaches its culmination. Man becomes the arrow leading the whole evolutionary process. Everything that existed on previous levels now becomes hominized in man. Man is the phylum of hominized energy, energy in which the power to see what is there has become

the power to see the subject itself, that is, where the power to see has become the power to know and to know that one knows.

When Teilhard applies his evolutionary theory to the Christian phenomenon, he sees that the phylum of Christianity is the phylum which leads the whole process of evolution. Within this phylum the Catholic Church is the arrow leading the whole process. The Church is both the center of the power to see and also the center of the power to construct the universe through the energies given it by Christ. In the Catholic Church Teilhard finds the religious and spiritual counterpart of that which he saw in the whole process of evolution.¹¹

He found verified in the Church his own principles of evolution, in particular the law of complexity-consciousness. He saw a special manifestation of this in the form which authority takes in the Church. The authority found in the college of bishops and in a special way in the pope is simply the religious counterpart of the law of increasing cephalization.

But there is another side to this mysterious phylum of suranimated life which is the Church. It reproduces not only the pattern of Christ's life but also of His death. It is not only the risen life which is squarely planted in the heart of the Church. The Golgotha of the world is also found there. What Paul says of himself personally belongs to the whole Church: "All I want is to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and to share His sufferings by reproducing the pattern of His death" (Phil 3:10).

It is not possible to go into Teilhard's ideas concerning the cross, evil, and redemption. These ideas are sufficiently explored in the standard works. We simply want to point out here that he saw the Church not only as the locus of life but also as the locus of Christ's own passion in time.

To belong to the Church did not free one from the diminishments which belong to the process of growth; in fact, it could sometimes even increase them, as happened in Teilhard's relationship with ecclesiastical authority. But his life was consistent with his thought. He saw that diminishments, even in the service of Christ, can be taken up into a higher unity and further the whole process of the universe as it converges on Christ.

Teilhard never confused ecumenism with homogenization of the meaning of faith. Increasing differentiation is not the same as increasing

¹¹ For a good treatment of the meaning of the Church in the thought of Teilhard, cf. Robert L. Faricy, S.J., *Teilhard de Chardin's Theology of the Christian in the World* (New York, 1967).

division. On the other hand, sameness does not mean unity. Differentiation is a necessary produce of love. To reduce differentiation is to reduce union, for all union differentiates. Love is unity in difference, where difference means a power to give to another that which the other does not possess, and thus to draw the other to deeper union. Division comes from the coexistence of selves, without the cohesive power coming from love and the desire to give that which the other does not have.

He realized, of course, that there are many holy people who are non-Catholic and non-Christian, and that there are many Catholics who are such in name only. But he is concerned with the phylum itself, not with the individuals in the phylum. The Church is like the head of the arrow which is leading the progress of the world towards Omega. But he does not say that the head of the arrow is the whole of the arrow. The head is the medium through which life is mediated to the whole of the phylum of man and to the world. The Church condenses the redemptive value of Christ's suffering, sacramentalizes the reality of Christ, while at the same time it releases this energy to the world. At the same time the Church shares in a special way in the diminishments of Christ Himself, representing both the pattern of His death and His resurrection.

The Church is, then, the head of the arrow. But there is something further. The very tip or point of the arrow is the Eucharist. Teilhard sees the unifying grace of Christ passing through the axis of the Eucharist into the Church, radiating from there to the whole world.

Perhaps we seem to have strayed from the main point we are concerned with—the question of the development of dogma. This question cannot be answered independently of a Church which teaches with a God-given authority what is to be believed. In the last analysis the only clear indication we have that we have passed from the threshold of one dogma to another, and not simply from the threshold of our private thought to another idea, is the teaching authority of the Church. The very meaning of the Church is to perpetuate the power to see, that same power to see which belonged to the most perfect eyes ever to appear in the cosmos, and at the same time to unfold Him to the eyes of others—in other words, to transmit Christ both as Seer and as seen.

This fits in with Teilhard's whole idea of an "issue" for the world. This was his deepest concern, to show that, in spite of the diminishments that affected the various parts of the movement, the movement of evolution as a whole would succeed. The over-all outcome would be life, not death. The ultimate guarantee for this issue for the world is the fact that the arrow, through the suranimating power of the Spirit, is infallibly weighted to the risen Christ. The concentration of weight

is in the head of the arrow, the Church. Infallibility is not given to the Church simply for the sake of the Church. It is given to assure the passage of the *whole* of the arrow, and through the arrow the whole phylum of man, and through man the whole of the universe, to the point of union with Christ.

The infallibility of the Church is the ultimate source of hope for the world. Teilhard was very concerned with the prevailing pessimism, despair, aimlessness of the modern world. He wanted to provide mankind with the guarantee of an issue, an outlet, for the world. He found, in the scientific theory that everything which rises must converge, corroboration for the message of hope given through the gospel. But Christian hope, and the hope of the whole world, is based mainly on the assurance divinely given by Christ to the Church, that the gates of death would not prevail against it. The word "it" in this passage means the Church. But for Teilhard the pronoun takes on cosmic proportions. It is a promise given *to* the Church but *for* the world. The extent of the promises takes on cosmic dimensions. The words of Christ, "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly," become the promise of an issue for the world far beyond our fondest hopes, what Scripture calls "The things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9).

CONCLUSION

In our preliminary remarks we reviewed the data which enter into the problem of the development of dogma and commented briefly on the two main lines the traditional answers take, one of which emphasizes the logical connections in the development, the other the organic relationship among the dogmas which emerge. Obviously, a theory based on Teilhard's principles would fit in with the second emphasis, while it would expand such an emphasis and stamp it with Teilhard's own particular orientation.

To provide a viable theory for the explanation of the development of dogma, one has to satisfy the data of the problem, which can be set down in different ways: the problem of permanence within change, of identity and difference, discontinuity and continuity, newness and oldness, all the while remembering that we are not dealing with the development of an idea but with the unfolding of a gift, the gift of Christ to the Church through His Spirit. Ultimately the problem of development cannot be answered unless the teaching role of the Church is seen to be part of the total gift of Christ to mankind.

It seems that the principles of Teilhard satisfy the elements of the

problem and provide us with a viable theory of the development of dogma. The principle of complexity-consciousness explains the reciprocal relationship which exists between deeper consciousness of the faith and the propositional formulation which accompanies it. The anti-entropic nature of the process is seen in the power of the radial energy to break through successive thresholds, emerging always in a form which shows greater interiority and complexity. Using Teilhard's emphasis on the power to see, the whole process of development can be described as an expanding power to see in a world of revealed truth where there is constantly more to be seen, where the act of seeing and the truth which is seen unite and re-enforce one another in a new synthesis.

Finally, we considered the role of the Church in the process. Teilhard sees in the Church the phylum which incorporates the suranimating principles of the risen Christ and transmits the life of Christ to the world. In particular, he sees authority in the Church as the manifestation of the evolutionary law of cephalization, where the power to unify becomes more and more concentrated in order to effect greater unity. If development of dogma is a process of rising and convergence, a process which is both creative and unitive, ultimately the final thrust which completes the convergence can come only from the center of unity, which is the teaching authority of the Church.

This attempt to apply Teilhard's principles to the development of dogma is provisional and sketchy. It is hoped that they might serve as an impetus to others for further research along these lines.