NOTES

TEILHARD'S EUCHARIST: A REFLECTION

It seems generally agreed that the Eucharist plays an important, indeed central and necessary, role in the thought of Teilhard de Chardin.[1] Georges Crespy describes the action of the cosmic Christ precisely as "eucharistisation, that is, the movement by which the Host assimilates to itself humanity and the entire universe."[2] Following Crespy, Ernst Benz notes, complementarily, that Teilhardian evolution is "identical with the *eucharistisation* of the universe, the transformation of the cosmos into the body of Christ."[3] It therefore comes as something of a surprise when the enquirer discovers that in the whole Teilhardian corpus relatively few pages are devoted to specifically eucharistic reflection. It would seem that, as regards eucharistic theology, Teilhard was willing to take a very great deal for granted, or at least that he did not feel compelled to put in writing important elements of his personal spiritual life. It is not that Teilhard fails to tell the reader how important the Eucharist is: no problem there. It is rather that he omits to tell, in what would seem to be appropriate detail, how it works.

In other words, here, as elsewhere in Teilhard's thought, one senses a certain absence of dialogue between theological tradition and science-inspired religious reappraisal, between the evolution of religious thought and the gospel of universal evolution. It would seem that an all-encompassing theory of evolution should have more to say about what has traditionally been known as "the development of doctrine"—particularly when the Eucharist, the most intense "handing on" of the Christian word, is also made out to be the most striking indicator of universal evolution. In short, in the broad evolutionary sweep from the Peking Man to the present, it ought to be possible to find how the Eucharist of, say, the Council of Trent evolves into that of Teilhard de Chardin. More seriously, what did Teilhard add to the teaching of Trent, and what did he subtract from it, or better, reinterpret? Allowing that, as Kierkegaard pointed out, it is the fate of every great religious thinker

[1] Cf. H. de Lubac, S.J., *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. R. Hague (New York, 1967) pp. 64-68; E. Rideau, *The Thought of Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. R. Hague (New York, 1967) pp. 205-7; P. Smulders, S.J., *The Design of Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. A. Gibson (Westminster, Md., 1967) pp. 235-56; D. Gray, *The One and the Many: Teilhard de Chardin's Vision of Unity* (New York, 1969) pp. 140-44; and esp. C. Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ* (New York, 1966) pp. 67-103.

[2] G. Crespy, *La pensée théologique de Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1961) p. 85, n. 12.

[3] E. Benz, *Evolution and Christian Hope*, tr. H. Frank (Garden City, N.Y., 1966) p. 225.

to fall into the hands of commentators, it may still not be out of place to draw out certain implications of Teilhard's eucharistic vision.

I

Toward that end, attention must first be directed to the principal eucharistic passages in Teilhard's writings: (*a*) "La messe sur le monde" (1923), (*b*) section II-c of "Mon univers" (1924), (*c*) section III-2 of *Le milieu divin* (1927), and (*d*) section III-7 of "Introduction au christianisme" (1944).[4]

"La messe sur le monde" can be viewed as a kind of transition between Teilhard's early, more amply poetic meditations on the meaning of the Eucharist and such eucharistic theology as he eventually worked out.[5] The point of departure of the piece is the priest-paleontologist's finding himself, in the course of a scientific expedition, unable to say Mass. Making a virtue of necessity, he determines to apply the structure of the Mass liturgy to the world at large.

> Since ... I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world.[6]

What Teilhard means to offer, more precisely, is all the day's advance in the evolution of the earth. As the sun's fire begins to rise on the horizon,

> the living surface of the earth wakes and trembles, and once again begins its fearful travail. I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labour. Into my chalice I shall pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits.[7]

[4] "La messe sur le monde," in *Hymme de l'univers* (Paris, 1961) pp. 17–37: Eng. tr. by S. Bartholomew, *Hymn of the Universe* (New York, 1965) pp. 19–37; "Mon univers," in *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1955 ff.) Vol. 9, 88–94: Eng. tr. by R. Hague, *Science and Christ* (New York, 1968) pp. 60–66; *Le milieu divin* = *Oeuvres* 4, of which cf. pp. 147–58: Eng. tr., *The Divine Milieu* (New York, 1960) pp. 121–28; "Introduction au christianisme," *Oeuvres* 10, 193–95: Eng. tr. by R. Hague, *Christianity and Evolution* (New York, 1971) pp. 165–67. There is at least one more noteworthy eucharistic passage, that from the as yet unpublished "Le Christique" (1955), which is quoted in translation by Mooney (*op. cit.*, pp. 86–87). Mooney states (p. 86) that the eucharistic passages from the "Introduction" and "Le Christique" are "the only occasions after 1927 when Teilhard writes of the subject."

[5] Of the early works, cf. "Le Christ dans la matière: Trois histoires comme Benson" (1916) and "Le prêtre" (1918), in *Ecrits du temps de la guerre* (Paris, 1965) pp. 85–107, 281–302: Eng. tr. by R. Hague, *Writings in Time of War* (New York, 1968).

[6] *Hymn of the Universe*, p. 19.

[7] *Ibid.*

Just as in the Mass liturgy, Teilhard calls down upon this offering a divine consecration:

> Over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day say again the words: This is my Body. And over every death-force which waits in readiness to corrode, to wither, to cut down, speak again the commanding words which express the supreme mystery of faith: This is my Blood.[8]

What results is that "mysteriously and in very truth, at the touch of the supersubstantial Word the immense host which is the universe is made flesh." It is important to note, however, that it is not Teilhard's priestly prayer that fundamentally effects this consecration. That the world is a "sacrament" is due to the Incarnation itself: "Through your own incarnation, my God, all matter is henceforth incarnate."[9] Teilhard's prayer expresses his comprehension of what has already taken place and effectively continues. The desired consecration is *already there*; Teilhard's quasi-liturgical prayer makes what is already there *there for him*, for his consciousness.

> We are all of us together carried in the one world-womb; yet each of us is our own little microcosm in which the Incarnation is wrought independently with degrees of intensity, and shades that are incommunicable. And that is why, in our prayer at the altar, we ask that the consecration may be brought about *for us: Ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiat. . . .*[10]

The words of consecration proclaim for each individual the radical consecration already bestowed on all things:

> If I firmly believe that everything around me is the body and blood of the Word, then for me (and in one sense for me alone) is brought about that marvellous "diaphany" which causes the luminous warmth of a single life to be objectively discernible in and to shine forth from the depths of every event, every element.[11]

Teilhard's cosmic Mass brings it about that the individual consciousness becomes more fully "at one" with the actual situation of the cosmos. That is, from offertory and consecration there follows communion. Consciousness must and does yield to the truth of things, see more clearly the "single life" that enlivens all things, and more freely admit into itself "the Fire that has come down into the heart of the world." "What I must do, when I have taken part with all my energies in the consecration which causes its flames to leap forth, is to consent to the communion which will enable it to find in me the food it has come. . . to seek."[12] Evidently, here, communion is not a matter of

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 23. [9] *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 26. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 28. [11] *Ibid.* [12] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

having one's own little parcel of divinity, but of yielding oneself to the ongoing divine purpose. Teilhard acknowledges to his Lord that the total earthly-evolutionary "bread," "in which you have planted the seed of all that is to develop in the future, I recognize as containing the source and the secret of that destiny you have chosen for me."[13] But in order that that destiny may be realized, the individual consciousness must comprehend its true nature, must "pass through an agonizing phase of diminution." If true personal fulfilment is to be achieved, communion in the bread cannot be separated from communion in bitter wine. "That is why, pouring into my chalice the bitterness of all separations, of all limitations, and of all sterile fallings away, you then hold it out to me. 'Drink ye all of this.'"[14] Yes, there will be bitterness, but that bitterness is at root the shock of the divine force that empowers evolving earth:

> The man who is filled with an impassioned love for Jesus hidden in the forces which bring death to the earth, him the earth will clasp in the immensity of her arms as her strength fails, and with her he will awaken in the bosom of God.[15]

With her: incarnate divine fire consecrates, not only liturgical bread and wine, but with these the whole earth and, when man is open to the possibility, the human consciousness as well. The liturgical structure of the Mass—offertory, consecration, and communion—is the very structure of man's self-comprehension, the structure of reality and truth.

In "Mon univers" Teilhard attempts, albeit very briefly, to relate this expanded sense of the meaning of the Eucharist to traditional Roman Catholic teaching.[16]

The place and role of the Eucharist in the Teilhardian universe is founded upon a principle that seems at first to be more Teilhardian than traditionally Roman Catholic: "Like the Creation (of which it is the visible aspect) the Incarnation is an act co-extensive with the duration of the world." But "the influence of the universal Christ" is "transmitted to us" by the Eucharist—provided, of course, that the Eucharist be understood "in its universal power and realism."

We must enquire, then, what the universal power and realism of the Eucharist might amount to. Teilhard is not at all satisfied with what was, in 1924, the customary eucharistic catechesis of the Roman Church. The eucharistic presence of Christ was said to perdure in

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 30. [14] *Ibid.*, p. 31. [15] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[16] All quotations from "Mon univers" are to be found in pp. 64–68 of *Science and Christ*. There is, of course, a Pauline and Johannine basis for Teilhard's views, as Mooney shows, *op. cit.*, pp. 90 ff.

the communicant as long as the communicant's digestive processes left the symbolic bread and wine intact. This foolish excursus into science fiction, says Teilhard, in no way satisfies the religious yearning of the true Christian; in effect, it places him in a permanent state of exile from his Lord and Beloved. Rather,

> if we are to meet the legitimate demands of those who, because they love Christ, cannot bear to be for one moment excluded from him, then I believe we must accord an important place in Christian thought and prayer to the real, and physical, extensions of the Eucharistic Presence.[17]

The question is, then, how does one relate the universal power and realism, or the real and physical extensions, of Christ's eucharistic presence to Catholic Tridentine dogma? Teilhard's answer is, in effect, that "transubstantiation" is an analogous term. The prime analogate of transubstantiation is the liturgical bread and wine. "The Host, it is true, is in the first place, and primarily, the fragment of matter to which, through transubstantiation, the Presence of the Incarnate Word attaches itself among us, that is to say in the human zone of the universe." That is, "When the phrase 'Hoc est Corpus meum' is produced, 'hoc' means 'primario' the bread; but 'secundario,' in a second phase occurring in nature, the matter of the sacrament is the world, throughout which there spreads, so to complete itself, the superhuman presence of the universal Christ." So far, so good. But now, it seems to this observer, Teilhard rather confuses things: the erstwhile secondary analogate turns out to be, really, the prime analogate.

> The world is the final, and the real, Host into which Christ gradually descends, until his time is fulfilled. Since all time a single word and a single act have been filling the universality of things: "Hoc est corpus meum." Nothing is at work in creation except in order to assist, from near at hand or from afar, in the consecration of the universe.

It would seem that for basic Christian catechesis the prime analogate of transubstantiation truly is the liturgical elements, though for what one might term Christian "gnosis" the prime analogate is actually the entire universe as subject to the power of Christ, the "universal element." The liturgical bread and wine are the gates through which the unenlightened must pass, but, as a matter of fact, the more fully one knows Christ, the better one grasps the full implications of Christ's presence in the world. "Traditional" Roman Catholic catechetical and

[17] Teilhard was always somewhat at a loss for words when it was a matter of describing the "really real." Regarding the use of such terms as "physical" and "biological," cf. Mooney, *op. cit.*, pp. 78–79, 84–85, 126.

liturgical language is thus in no sense a religious ultimate, the last word that can be uttered this side of heaven about its celestial referent. Granted that the liturgical bread is Christ's "primary body,"

> can Christ . . . remain contained in this primary Body? Clearly, he cannot. Since he is above all omega, that is, the universal "form" of the world, he can attain his organic balance and plenitude only by mystically . . . assimilating all that surrounds him. The Host is like a blazing hearth from which flames spread their radiance.[18]

The traditional doctrine about the oneness of Calvary and the Mass is thus recast here in a surprising new form:

> In the course of centuries, the sacramental Host—for there is but one Host, ever growing greater in the hands of a long succession of priests—the Host of bread, I mean, is continually being encircled more closely by another, infinitely larger, Host, which is nothing less than the universe itself—the universe gradually being absorbed by the universal element.

Churchly teaching about the *liturgical* Eucharist, then, is just that—and no more. What the Church should be doing, on the other hand, is developing its doctrinal inheritance relative to "another, infinitely larger Host." Teilhard's expanded sense of the meaning of the Eucharist is related to traditional teaching, therefore, not as a substitute, but as a necessary complement, background, and justification—somewhat in the way, one surmises, that the physics of Einstein is related to that of Newton. In fact, Teilhard suggests briefly the natural-scientific basis for his rethinking of the Eucharist:

> The centre of Christ's personal energy is really situated in the Host. And, just as we rightly give the name of "our body" to the local centre of our spiritual radiation (though that does not perhaps necessarily mean that our flesh is more ours than is any other matter) we must say that the initial Body of Christ, his *primary Body*, is confined to the species of bread and wine.

Matter has a certain oneness; what the formal mind discovers is that it has—or is—a certain point of purchase relative to that material continuum.

Interesting, but the above-mentioned problem of analogy is never really solved in "Mon univers." It is unquestionably true that what I call "my body" is the point of departure for the expansion of my consciousness. Only, what about Jesus Christ? Do the same rules apply? If the Incarnation is coextensive with the duration of the world, and if Christ is the universal form of the world, then, quite simply,

[18] Regarding the sense of "mystical" here, cf. *Science and Christ*, pp. 55–56.

Christ's body is the world. If, in other words, Christ's divine-human consciousness is the form of the world, it seems illogical to say that "the centre of Christ's personal energy is really situated in the Host," or that Christ *gradually* assimilates to Himself, or descends into, the world. There is here a certain confusion of perspectives. Whereas it is entirely correct for *me* to speak of starting out from my body to discover the world and Christ, it is decidedly odd to speak of *Christ*, the universal element, as if He, too, had to discover the world. It may well be that the world-soul, the Logos, has been made specially *manifest to man* in the body-person Jesus and in the liturgical bread and wine; that is another matter. In actual causal execution, or evolution, the final cause, or omega, comes *first*. Christ's body, the world, may grow to its full stature, but in the line of form, or the pattern of evolution, or immanent teleology, there is no room to speak of gradualness: either the form-pattern-goal is there or is not there. What is, of course, gradual is my personal discovery of what obtains, of what the world and Christ can be *for me*. Again, in the Tridentine chapters and canons on the Eucharist there is no room for gradualness: the liturgical bread and wine are transubstantiated and the rest of the world is not and never will be. One has to choose, or better, become aware of, one's perspective, one's prime analogate: either the "transubstantiation" integral to divine creativity active through the Logos or the transubstantiation staked out by the Fathers of Trent. "Mon univers" beautifully suggests the dimensions of the problem, but it assumes no clear perspective. Very likely the forty-three-year-old Teilhard had a personally satisfying intuitive grasp of the matters discussed here; our problem is that he was unwilling or unable to write it down.

Our problem is enlarged by the fact that in the two pages of "Mon univers" considered above Teilhard apparently says all that he is ever going to say about eucharistic theology. In subsequent documents there are certain refinements of language, but no substantial effort to reformulate the question. In *Le milieu divin* Teilhard reiterates the themes of Christ as form of the world, of the cosmic outreach of *Hoc est corpus meum*, and of the consequent oneness of all sacramental communions. He does, however, present a somewhat clearer statement of how the Eucharist fits into the cosmic movement toward omega. "As our humanity assimilates the material world, and as the Host assimilates our humanity, the eucharistic transformation goes beyond and completes the transformation of the bread on the altar."[19] An organic chain of causality and transformation is made explicit. As the sub-

[19] *The Divine Milieu*, p. 125. Regarding the oneness of matter, cf. *The Phenomenon of Man*, chap. 1.

human world "comes alive" in man, so does man achieve anticipatory fulfilment in Christ. As a result, that subhuman world, which is, after all, the field of man's sensory experience, is transvalued: it becomes the "divine milieu." What is noteworthy here is that the medium of the divinization of both matter and man is man's consciousness.

In his "Introduction au christianisme," finally, Teilhard once again states the assimilation and oneness-of-all-communions themes.[20] Once again, as well, there are some interesting refinements of language. Teilhard stresses the ontological realism of Catholic Christianity: the sacraments are not mere symbolic rites; rather, they operate "biologically." The primacy of the Eucharist among the sacraments results from the fact that "the *axis* of the Incarnation, that is to say of creation, runs directly through the Eucharist." Now the humanity that God creates is fundamentally one, so that Christians who communicate "make up, in mankind and in God, but one whole, organically linked in a common super-life." Hence,

> all the communions of all men of all times, taken as one great whole, also add up to but one single and even vaster communion, co-extensive in this case with the history of mankind. This amounts to saying that when the Eucharist is considered in the complete effecting of its operation, it is simply the expression and manifestation of God's unifying energy applied individually to each spiritual atom of the universe.

In what is possibly Teilhard's best and most evocative summing up of eucharistic doctrine, we find the foregoing insights set in relation to some of the basic concepts of Teilhard's later world view:

> to adhere to Christ in the Eucharist is inevitably and *ipso facto* to incorporate ourselves a little more fully on each occasion in a Christogenesis, which itself (and it is in this, as we have seen, that the essence of Christian faith consists) is none other than the soul of universal cosmogenesis.

When a Christian "who had understood this profound economy" receives the Host, "he realizes that he is in contact with the very heart of evolution." Reciprocally, he grasps that if he would "come into contact with the heart of the Host," he must, by appropriate activity and passivity, "communicate ... with ... the whole body of the world in evolution."

The fundamental dogma of Teilhardianism is, of course, that cosmogenesis is Christogenesis. And now we are told that the role of the Eucharist in the Teilhardian world view is this: by the Eucharist

[20] Eucharistic quotations from the "Introduction" are to be found in pp. 165–67 of *Christianity and Evolution.*

we are gradually incorporated into Christogenesis. In other words, cosmo-Christogenesis is one process. But then, if that is the case, and we are already, obviously, caught up in cosmogenesis, what need is there for the Eucharist? Is it not, in effect, a kind of symbolic tautology? If not, the inescapable conclusion is that the proper zone of operation of eucharistic symbolism is, precisely, man's consciousness.[21] Man's body is already integrated with evolution; the role of the Eucharist must therefore be to illuminate and nourish the noösphere. If matter awakens in mind, and mind awakens to and in Christ, then, perhaps, it does make sense to speak of a gradual assimilation of the world by Christ; for, evidently, man's awakening is, individually and collectively, a gradual process, a "genesis."

For all that, however, the above-mentioned confusion of perspectives still remains. There is no question but that, with respect to us, there can be such a thing as Christogenesis. But can there be with respect to Christ? Here one must distinguish. True, to the extent that we really, or "biologically," become more at one with Christ, it is possible to speak of Christ's "genesis." But can genesis be located in the most fundamental or innermost region of *Christ's* consciousness? Apparently not; for then we should be living, in effect, in an aleatory world: not even Christ could reveal to us the meaning, or *telos*, of our existence. Even in so spacious a universe as Teilhard's, "the buck has to stop somewhere"; and where it stops is the consciousness of Christ, whatever that may turn out to be. The antinomy inherent in Teilhard's eucharistic thought calls for at least a brief reflection on his Christology.

II

For all the talk of theological reformulation in terms of evolution and genesis, there remains at the center of Teilhard's thought an irreducible deposit of quite traditional orthodoxy, namely, his belief in the divinity of the historical Jesus. To his credit, Teilhard was not afraid to face the problem created by his fundamental orthodoxy. In the 1944

[21] Transubstantiation is not mentioned in this 1944 text; given the character and brevity of the text, it seems pointless to attach much significance to the omission. In the 1955 fragment given by Mooney (cf. n. 4 above), transubstantiation *is* mentioned, but with the suggestion, less of primary and secondary applications of the term, than of a certain parity among the referents of the term: "The cosmic Christ ... acquires and develops in the fullest sense a real omnipresence of transformation .... The eucharistic mystery ... extends itself into the infinite through a truly universal 'transubstantiation' ...." But in the absence of *Oeuvres* 11–12, i.e., the full text along with possible supporting documents, it would be premature to conclude anything much from these lines.

"Introduction" he notes that his vision of a cosmic Christ is, for apologetic purposes, very appealing "to our modern way of thinking."[22] On the other hand, "we find it much more difficult... to accept that this cosmic-Christ could be localized at one moment in history in the form of a human person in space and time." In response to this difficulty Teilhard suggests two lines of reflection.

In the first place, Teilhard admits that "in the abstract, perhaps, we can dream of a universal-Christ who could succeed in standing on his own in Christian consciousness ... without the support ... of a God-man who becomes more and more lost and more and more difficult to 'check' in the growing dimness of the past." Be that as it may, it cannot be shown that such a dream necessarily "conforms biologically to the structure of things." The only way for God "to be incarnate in a world in evolution means *to be born in it;* and how can he be born in it except by starting from an individual?" In the second place, there is the actual history, continuing into the present, not only of the Christian Church, but of the very idea of a universal Christ. One can scarcely overlook the genesis of one's own ideas and motivation:

> Abandonment of the historical character of Christ (that is, the divinity of the historic Christ) would mean the instant dismissal into the unreal of all the mystical energy accumulated in the Christian phylum during the last two thousand years. Christ born of the Virgin, and Christ risen from the dead: the two are one inseparable whole.

Confronted, then, with "this *factual* situation," Teilhard suggests the following provisional statement of belief in the divinity of Jesus:

> Subject to every reservation about the often uncritical way in which pious writers have tried to describe the psychology of the God-man, I believe in the divinity of the Child of Bethlehem *because, in so far as,* and *in the form in which* that divinity is historically and biologically included in the reality of the universal Christ to whom my faith and my worship are more directly attached.

This position, adds Teilhard, both "respects and accepts all the implications of what is known for certain" as well as leaves room for "the future progress of humano-Christian thought."

I cannot put aside the thought that the traditional historical Jesus, intellectually at least, was something of an embarrassment to Teilhard. Moreover, Teilhard's apologetical considerations do not seem very convincing. If it is true that the universal Christ is universal as a form,

[22] Christological quotations from the "Introduction" are to be found in *Oeuvres* 10, 186–87, and *Christianity and Evolution,* pp. 158–59.

perhaps as a consciousness—but certainly not as a materially extended object—is it really necessary for this "universal element" to be born as a single human individual? On Teilhard's own principles, I fail to see why. Why does he who rules and attracts precisely in and through "Mind" need the "support" of a particular human existence? It would seem, rather, that such particularity would stand in the way of universality. (That a particular human being, so to say, "caught on" to the truth of man and his world, that there has been, therefore, a "Christological moment" in human history, is quite another matter, and not Teilhard's view.[23]) In like manner, there seems to be no reason why any particular stage in the development of the Christian Church should acquire normative force. True, I am necessarily a product of my past, as is the whole Church, but what is to prevent us from better understanding, perhaps demythologizing, our inheritance? Did Teilhard sense the weakness of these arguments? Perhaps: he states quite plainly that his faith and worship are more directly attached to the universal Christ than the historical Jesus. The latter, increasingly lost in the growing dimness of the past, is to be thought divine only to the extent that He is included in the reality of the former. Apparently we cannot find out the extent of that inclusion, for in the text under discussion it is just the customary ecclesiastical proclamation of Jesus that is being scrutinized. Nor, apparently, does it greatly matter.

It is evident, then, that there can be eucharistically mediated Christogenesis relative to us, and encompassing us at the conscious level. On the other hand, it is difficult to speak of genesis within the consciousness of Christ, because, on its divine side, that consciousness is already universal and, on its human side, it is lost either in the dust of history or the imprecision of popular Christianity. What remains as the referent of Christian dogma is, then, a twofold reality: the universal Christ and the universe, which last includes matter and us. The universal Christ is the form and *telos*, the universal element, the world soul of the evolving universe. The highest stage yet attained by that evolution is the process by which our souls, or minds, and in them the world of matter, are united to and in the universal element, or soul, or Mind. As a result, there is no longer any room for the historical Jesus, or, homologously, the Eucharist, to have an independent ontological status apart from the process of cosmo-Christogenesis. The truth complementary to saying that the Child of Bethlehem is divine to the extent that He is included in the universal Christ is, of course: So are all

[23] It is hard to escape feeling that for Christian theology, if not for biological evolution, Hegel had already done what Teilhard set out to do, and had done it more elegantly. Cf., e.g., *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 3 (London, 1895) 132–33.

other men. It becomes impossible to predicate divinity in such a way that Jesus is divine and, contrariwise, other men are not. The same pattern obtains with the Eucharist. Transubstantiation cannot really be an analogous term; it is simply another way of stating the relationship of matter—all matter—to the universal element. It becomes impossible to predicate divinity of the eucharistic elements in such a way that other earthly elements are not divinized.

One is inclined to conclude that the real function of the Eucharist in the Teilhardian world, whatever the vagaries of Teilhard's language, is simply and solely to communicate meaning to the human consciousness: in a word, it is a variety of what has been called "transignification." Some further explanation is in order.

Teilhard's subordination of the historical Jesus to the universal Christ makes it clear, if there was any doubt, that an analogous subordination must be the case as regards the Eucharist. The world, quite simply, is the body of Christ. If Christ is said to be specially present here or there—whether in the body-person Jesus or in the bread and wine, it does not matter—that presence cannot abrogate the presence of Christ the universal element to the universe, of the world soul to its body. But presence is a relative term: something or someone is present to someone else. If the universal Christ is totally present to the universe, the only way in which it can still make sense to speak of a here-and-not-there presence of Christ is in relation to man's consciousness. Christ is present *to man* where man finds Him, and not so present where man has not yet found Him. In terms of Tridentine eucharistic theology, transubstantiation is how, inspired by the gospel narrative, man first finds the risen, universal Christ. But—and this is the main point—transubstantiation, as structure and doctrine, is relative *only* to man's consciousness. Transubstantiation means Christ present, not in an as yet unfathomed universe, but for me. But then, a presence that is not an impersonal structure or category but a living relation to me, to my consciousness, is a presence of meaning, of significance; for the coin of consciousness is not unknown, unconscious undergirding, but what emerges, shines out, in the light of living knowledge. My late-twentieth-century consciousness knows sensoria and explanatory words, not substances. To say that the liturgical bread and wine come alive for me by a special explanatory word means, therefore, that I receive a new infusion of meaning, or significance.[24] Modern physics

[24] I should like to think that these lines represent a development of D. Gray's impression of the Teilhardian Eucharist (*loc. cit.*). Perhaps Prof. Gray would not follow me in regarding Teilhard as a Hegelian *manqué:* be that as it may, I would add to Gray's reflections only a certain additional emphasis on the fact that the theatre wherein the

ineluctably mediates the development of transubstantiation into transignification.

In other words, the change that occurs in the liturgical bread and wine is a matter, not of religious ontology—to speak in Neo-Thomist and perhaps Tridentine terms—but of religious epistemology. And yet, be it noted, there is no sacrifice of truth or realism, a sacrifice abhorrent to Teilhard and his Roman Catholic coreligionists. When man, through belief in the Eucharist, "catches on" to cosmo-Christogenesis, what man discovers is not a new modality of consciousness merely, but the full amplitude of the Word of God. Transignification, here, means not merely that man changes his mind about some element of his experience, but that he discovers, in what was once opaque to him, the great deeds of God. "This is my body" means, in effect, "Begin here." "Do this in remembrance of me" means, in effect, "So act that you will *remember* whence you and all things come." No one has yet been able to figure out with what reading, "after hours," Teilhard occupied his mind.[25] No matter: if they bear witness to anything, Teilhard's eucharistic fragments evidence, in and through the negativities of both decadent scholasticism and modern technology, an anguished yet joyful reinvention of a species of eucharistic Platonism.[26]

How, then, "in detail," does the Teilhardian Eucharist work? This is an unanswerable question, really, for a Platonic Eucharist does not work "in detail." Such a Eucharist is rather an element in, perhaps even the vantage point for, a cosmic vision. In *Augustine the Bishop* F. van der

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relationship between universe and Eucharist becomes known is, of course, the Christian consciousness. An interesting parallel to Gray's remarks may be found in Calvin's *Institutes*, 4, 14, 18 and 4, 17, 14; in the latter passage Calvin writes: "Perit nobis mysterii huius veritas, nisi verus panis verum Christi corpus repraesentet."

[25] Of major importance is Teilhard's collaboration with Edouard LeRoy: cf. M. Barthélemy-Madaule, *Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris, 1963) pp. 655–59; C. Cuénot, *Teilhard de Chardin*, tr. V. Colimore (Baltimore, 1965) pp. 58–59; R. Speaight, *The Life of Teilhard de Chardin* (New York, 1967) pp. 117–20. While Teilhard was still a seminarian, LeRoy had published (and been put on the Index for) the essentials of what is uncritically attributed to Teilhard. An astonishing amount of "Teilhard's thought" can be found in LeRoy's too little appreciated *Dogme et critique* (Paris, 1907); cf. esp. pp. 242–47. Did LeRoy prefigure Teilhard, or did Teilhard, in effect, popularize LeRoy? The question remains open.

[26] To stand in the truth is to participate in the universally determining Mind. Cf. F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, tr. B. Battershaw and C. Lamb (New York, 1961) *passim*, but esp. chap. 10, pp. 277–316. In *Sermon 252* (van der Meer, p. 373) Augustine tells the newly baptized: "When you were baptized you were wetted into a dough, and when you received the fire of the Holy Ghost you were baked. Be, therefore, what you are, and receive what you are." One could scarcely better epitomize the Teilhardian Eucharist.

Meer writes of that best of eucharistic Platonists that

> the actual sacraments, as we use the term, appear, in Augustine's writings, as a number of particularly holy and effective allegories of the process of salvation, but they do so in the company of a thousand others that are not sacraments at all, but mere signs and indications. All boundaries become blurred and the whole of creation is transformed into a mystical ladder into heaven which is erected within the narrow scene of a man's own soul.[27]

The "detail" of a Platonic Eucharist is none other than the detail of the whole world. All is symbol. As regards the Eucharist, the achievement of Teilhard would seem to be the addition of a horizontal dimension to the Platonic-Augustinian mystical ladder.

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[27] Van der Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 304.