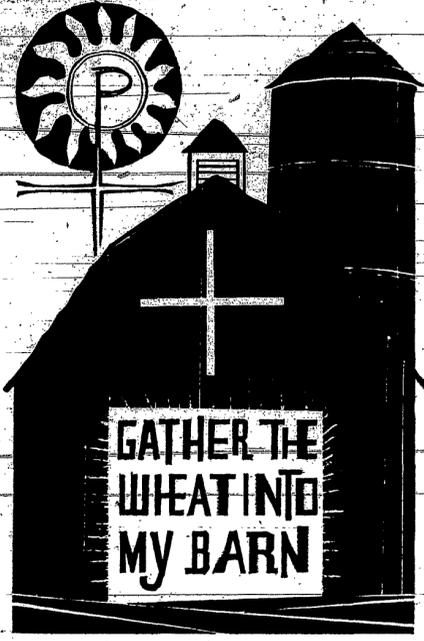


Human Will Power Paves Way to Brighter Future



Symbol and text of the fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

So Many Changes, Chaos or Duty?

"I thought the Catholic Church was the same everywhere and always!"

That's a frequent comment these days as the Catholic Church sweeps away ancient cobwebs.

A Kansas Catholic woman, when she saw two Ursuline nuns in an experimental new garb of jumper and normal length dress, commented, "I might as well stop going to Mass if the Church is coming to this!"

Converts to the Catholic Church also report a bit of bewilderment. Many were told that hymn-singing, scripture-reading services were more emotional than theological and that the Catholic quiet Latin Mass was more devotional and "the way our Lord arranged it." Now the Catholic Mass is a hymn-singing, scripture-reading event, "far more devotional" and "the way our Lord originally arranged it."

And really who does know exactly when to stand or sit, sing or be silent?

The good old days have given way, it seems, to chaos.

The complaint from Kansas is understandable.

But it also reveals the long, long way we all have to go before we catch up with the Catholic Church, so often pronounced dead and obsolete by its critics of previous generations. Now it's so far ahead it's own members have difficulty keeping up with it.

Just what is the Church trying to do?

The Church in our time seeks to obey the command of its Lord to "go into the whole world" to preach His gospel to every tribe and nation, to every person of whatever rank or status.

Quite obviously, the Church has to speak so these people can understand the message, the Church must speak in their language — not just in Japanese or Swahili, Hindi or Hebrew or Arabic but with that wider language, the customs and music, the garb and the art of these people.

And many of "these people" are not just off in distant lands, they are our neighbors who cannot understand a Church which speaks in ways some of its own members have difficulty in understanding — in styles of art and music and dress that stamp the Church as medieval rather than forever contemporary.

These customs and rites, a symbol of a continuing heritage through the centuries, have an eloquence to those who are already within the Church and need to be preserved for those of us who are of the household of the faith.

But we can never forget the others who are not within the fold, those to whom we are sent to call them in a voice they can hear and recognize. We call them not just to the Church of the Middle Ages nor the Church of the Martyrs nor even to the Church of Today but to the one Church of Christ.

The current changes which disturb so many are but efforts of the Church to fulfill its essential duty. Far from causing disturbance, such efforts should justify our greatest confidence that indeed the Church has preserved, as Pope Paul recently described it, "the total truth that comes from Christ" and with anxious heart seeks to share this truth with others.

—Father Henry Atwell

Lazy Need Renewal Too

Mexico City (NC)— Archbishop Octaviano Marquez Toriz of Puebla, president of the Mexican Bishops' Conference, told delegates at the first national assembly of Catholic Action leaders that their organizations must be renewed continually along with the Church if they hope to attract new followers.

Speaking at the opening meeting of the week-long conference, the archbishop said the lay apostolic groups should devote particular attention to the poor, "those who lack food and live in squalid dwellings; many who are illiterate and who must be lifted out of lethargy."

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Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who was quite unknown ten years ago and is now world-famous, has won his place as one of the outstanding thinkers of the age in record time. His main work, "The Human Phenomenon," which Sir Julian Huxley introduced to the English-speaking world, was hailed as "The Book of the Year."

Whenever a reference is made to Teilhard before an audience of European Catholics, the speaker's voice is immediately drowned in thunderous applause. African statesmen draw on Teilhard's theories for help in the task of building up their new countries. One of them, Leopold Senghor, President of Senegal, has even claimed that his acquaintance with Teilhard de Chardin's thought helped him withstand the temptations of communism during his fight against colonial domination.

Communist intellectuals, who are both alarmed and fascinated by Teilhard's novel thought, are already trying to bring it into line with dialectical materialism.

As for the Vatican...

Mention of the Vatican brings us at once to Teilhard's personal drama. He was both scientist and priest, paleontologist and Jesuit. As a scientist, he took part in the excavations at Shu-Kien in China, and discovered one of the most ancient human fossils, the Peking Man, a being halfway between the ape and homo sapiens.

He taught at the Dawn University in Peking, and later became director of the laboratory of applied geology for the study of the origins of man at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris. A disciple of Lamarck and Darwin, he based all his theories on transformation, which holds that the different living species, man included, are the outcome of a series of evolutionary developments away from a single, original form. While the Church authorizes the use of transformation as a "working hypothesis," it has not so far given permission for it to be presented as a certainty, which would involve a revision of the traditional interpretation of the Bible on the question of Man's appearance in the world.

However, in Teilhard's work, transformation is put forward not as a hypothesis but as a certainty, and this is why his writings never received the official imprimatur. As a priest, Teilhard bowed to this decision and published nothing during his lifetime; only a few mimeographed copies of extracts from his works were circulated among a very limited number of scientists.

Triumph came only with his death. His heirs came into possession of his manuscripts, and had them published with the backing of a committee of scientists and intellectuals, including such distinguished figures as Sir Julian Huxley, Arnold Toynbee, Robert Oppenheimer and Andre Malraux. But what are the reasons for his posthumous triumph? How has so difficult a thinker become so universally popular?

The first explanation lies in his optimism. Taking the findings of modern science as his starting-point, Teilhard demonstrates that Man is moving forward into an increasingly brighter future. In exact opposition to existentialist arguments, Teilhard proves that the universe, far from being absurd from the human point of view, is, on the contrary, coherent, meaningful and exciting. Going beyond Marxist dialectical materialism, he proves that God, far from being an epiphenomenon connected with a given phase of human history, is a necessary principle if the theory of evolution is to be made thoroughly coherent.

Of course, Teilhard does not claim to prove the existence of God with the help of modern science, since that would be absurd. But by asserting that God is necessary to confirm the findings of science, he completely reverses the view of the world that has been current since the Renaissance.

Each new scientific discovery, from the time of Copernicus to that of Darwin, has appeared to make God — and Man himself — less necessary. By removing the earth from its privileged position at the centre of creation, Copernicus and his successors seemed to deprive Man of every shred of cosmic importance, and overthrow the medieval conception of Man's relationship to God. Later, mechanistic theories were to reduce God's role to that of a mere switch which set in motion the vast machinery of the universe.

A century after Newton, even the idea of a "Prime Mover" became unnecessary. When Laplace presented his "Treatise on Celestial Mechanics" to Napoleon, the then-First Consul expressed surprise at the fact that it contained no mention of God. "The hypothesis of God was not necessary for my purpose," Laplace replied. Then came Darwin who, in describing the tree of life as it appeared to him in the light of his discoveries, presented Man as an insignificant, subordinate offshoot of the vertebrate branch, with no right to be considered more necessary in the scheme of things than dogs, birds or snakes. Teilhard, however, maintains that the tree of life does have an axis, and that this axis runs through Man to reach its climax in God.

The stream of life through millions of years, the stream of human lives through countless centuries. Evil, death and dearth, sacrifice and love — what do they mean in such a perspective? Reason tells me that I am bound to seek my own good, seek to gratify my desires, win power for myself and admiration from others. And yet I 'know' — know without knowing — that, in such a perspective, nothing could be less important. A vision in which God is. — Dag Hammarskjold in Markings. Jesuit Father Teilhard de Chardin probed the mystery of that stream of life, 'I' and God. The accompanying article is a summary of his life-long study.

To understand this point of view we have to realize that Teilhard's thought is rooted in awareness of "the third infinite." In addition to the infinitely great and the infinitely small, there is a third infinite, which is the infinitely complex. The further we go up the scale of matter, from minerals to animals, the clearer it becomes that the corpuscles that compose matter (atomic nuclei, electrons and so on) tend to group themselves in such a way as to form ever more complex compound bodies.

A molecule is more complex than an atom, a cell more complex than a molecule. This complexity is something more than mere conglomeration. A body is complex when it is composed of differentiated corpuscles which are closely related to each other and which interact one with the other, while at the same time having to play a specific part that individualizes it in relationship to the others and makes it indispensable to the whole.

In respect of complexity, a living body is superior to an inanimate body, since an arrangement of cells is much more complex than an arrangement of molecules. An ant is therefore superior to the sun, since it is much more complex. The evolution of the universe, and consequently of the earth, is governed by a law of increasing complexity. And the climax of complexity is reached in one being — Man. Throughout the universe so far explored by science, there is no more complex organism than the human brain, according to the neurologists. It contains fourteen thousand million interconnected cells. Therefore, in the last resort, it is of little importance that the earth revolves around the sun.

In the scale of values of the third infinite, the earth is of a higher order than the sun, and Man, by virtue of the complexity of his brain, ranks above other terrestrial creatures. So, by means of increasing complexity, Teilhard reintroduces the concept of quality into the quantitative universe of science; at the same time he introduces a hierarchical pattern (depending on the degree of development of the nervous system) into the Darwinian tree of life. Since Man has the most highly developed nervous system and the most complex brain of all living creatures, he is not a subordinate offshoot of the tree of life, but the radiant top of that tree.

As such, Man is endowed with a unique quality: he is the only terrestrial creature capable of reflective thought. Whereas animals only know, Man knows that he knows. May the purpose of evolution not be, then, to bring about the total development of reflective thought and, thereby, the gradual predominance of mental over physical phenomena?

According to Teilhard, the process of evolution on the earth has been marked by two great, decisive mutations: the movement from inanimate matter to living creatures, and from the instinctive to the reflective. The change from the inanimate

to the living was made by way of a change in degree, such as proteins and viruses, which are very near to being cells; the change from the instinctive to the reflective was made by way of one of the great anthropoids. In each case, what happened was that a new pattern reached a critical stage, and gave rise to a sudden mutation.

There is a point beyond which a change in degree becomes a change in kind: for instance, when water is heated beyond a certain temperature it changes from a liquid to a gas. The change-over from the inanimate to the animate, or from instinct to reflection, occurred as a sudden metamorphosis after a long, slow, preparatory process of evolution. It should be mentioned, incidentally, that in Teilhard's view Man is not descended from the anthropoid as it exists today, but from a much more highly evolved primate, whose offspring split up into two branches: one, stunted and degenerate, has given the present-day ape, while the other, Man, is still in the process of evolving.

But how can matter have given rise to reflective thought? How can the mental develop from the physical? To explain this phenomenon, Teilhard appeals to principles very similar to those which made possible the discovery of radioactivity.

It is now known that all bodies are more or less radioactive. But only the discovery of the most radioactive body of all, radium, brought scientists to the gradual realization that radioactivity was characteristic to a greater or lesser extent of all bodies. When we see life in plants, instincts in animals and thought in Man, we are led to suppose that these qualities must have existed in a primitive, undeveloped, potential form in the earlier states. This is precisely Teilhard's view: everything is latent in inanimate nature, but matter has to be organized with ever-increasing complexity for there to be first life, then instinct, then thought.

The energy behind this process has two complementary aspects. Teilhard distinguishes between "tangential" (or physical) energy and "radial" (or mental) energy. The first links a given element to all others of the same kind, while the second draws it forward to a state of ever-increasing complexity. On the level of inanimate matter, only tangential energy is observable. With the appearance of life, radial energy can be detected. And the further up the scale of life one goes in the direction of the higher mammals, the more obvious is the relative importance of radial, as compared with tangential, energy.

With Man, the predominance of the mental over the physical is finally established. And this implies a new and striking evolutionary leap forward. It is a matter of little importance, from then on, that the tangential energy of the terrestrial world should be lost during each new operation through the giving off of heat (the phenomenon known as entropy). The essential process of evolu-



Jesuit Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, noted scientist, rooted his optimism in evolution of man from harsh, primitive conditions to an ever improving situation.

tion is no longer carried on by what Teilhard calls the Outside of Matter (that is, the physical world) but by its Inside (mental energy). The earth was gradually covered in the first place by a layer of living plants and creatures (the biosphere). Now it is being covered by an ever denser layer of thought (what Teilhard calls "the noosphere"), and it is in this noosphere that the fruitful mutations on which the future depends will occur.

During its initial stage, the noosphere developed in the same way as the biosphere. The human race, which probably first emerged in Africa south of the Equator, spread over the entire surface of the globe. But once this had been accomplished, a phenomenon occurred which created a clear distinction between the biosphere and the noosphere. In the latter, branches stemming from the same parent trunk first of all diverged so markedly as to become different species incapable of fertilizing each other.

Then these species reached an optimum stage of development, were stabilized in consolidated forms, proved unable to adapt themselves to new conditions, and finally declined and died through internal weakening or external competition. This is how so many animal species have disappeared in the past, and why others are disappearing today.

Man on the other hand, despite subdivisions into different races, has never diverged to the point of splitting up into different species. There was, it is true, a phase of expansion and divergence, but it never caused a final break between the different branches. Such a break can now no longer occur, because the different branches of mankind — thanks to the impetus of evolution, are re-establishing closer links with each other every day, as if the globe were surrounded by a network of ever finer and ever more numerous interconnections. On the human level, evolution no longer expresses itself through the divergence of forms, but has moved into a second stage which is that of convergence.

At this very moment, we are experiencing the change-over from divergence to convergence. We are precisely at that point in human evolution where the different branches, after fanning out, have come together again to form a cone. But a cone must have a peak. To what peak is human evolution tending?

The first point to be noted is that we are witnessing the gradual unification of the whole world. Men are tending to associate in ever greater groups. Tribes were superseded by nations, and nations are now being superseded by great economic or ideological blocs. In addition, through the development of industry and professional specialization, each individual and each group is becoming more and more dependent on others. This explains the terrible temptation to see progress as the swallowing up of the individual by the collective, that is, the temptation of totalitarianism.

It is true that the collective, as such, is becoming progressively more important. But it would be a grave misunderstanding of the law of increasing complexity to suppose that the trend of evolution can be reduced to the development of a collective consciousness. The characteristic of a truly complex body, as we have already seen, is that each cell, while subordinating its single centre, plays its full part as an irreplaceable individual. The growth of the collective consciousness should, therefore, go hand in hand with that of individual consciousness.

The total development of Man consists in giving oneself completely to others, at the same time as one preserves one's individuality, and vice versa. Only through love, which is the highest form of mental energy, can this apparent paradox be made workable.

The tip of the cone, to which Teilhard gives the name Omega, must therefore be a supreme form of consciousness: it enfolds all individual consciousnesses within itself, without annihilating them — on the contrary, it favours their maximum development. This is only possible if Omega, too, possesses an independent consciousness. If this were not so, the point of convergence of the human race would be qualitatively inferior to the individual consciousnesses rising towards it, which would make nonsense of the biosphere. (And so, for "everything has gone to pieces" that evolution is not absurd.) Omega itself must therefore possess Man's most precious attribute: it must be a person, "a distinct Centre glowing at the heart of a system of centres."

Such a formulation, however, does not go far enough. From the point at which (with the emergence of Man) evolution moved into the phase of reflective thought, it was no longer passively undergone, as by plants and animals, but could be rejected or consciously advanced by man.

Human evolution can only continue if there is a will to carry it on. If Man is to go on evolving, he must be conscious that he is moving forward into a desirable future.

It follows that Omega must be desirable. And since the highest form of communication between human beings is love, Omega must be able to love and be loved. But love is only possible between beings existing at the same time. Therefore, we can only love Omega if Omega is already in existence. "Since the noosphere is real here and now, its centre must be real here and now," Omega is radiating over the earth at each moment of the earth's evolution.

This is Omega's third attribute. There is a fourth: we are constantly trying to establish a link with something greater and more permanent than ourselves — our ancestry, our culture, or mankind as a whole, all of them products of human effort. We wish the best part of ourselves to survive us after death. If Omega is to be the culminating point of this tendency, it has to be a principle of immortality.

It so happens that these attributes of Omega are precisely those that Christianity recognizes in God: He is a personal, animating the world; capable of love, and a pledge of immortality. Moreover, through the incarnation of Christ, God entered, in part, into matter in order to ensure the unification of the world. "Having thus established Himself at the heart of matter, He takes over the direction of evolution. When He has gathered everything in, He will close in again upon Himself and on His conquest."

Such is the great vision contained in Teilhard's work. It has been the subject of passionate comment, argument and criticism on the part of scientists, philosophers and theologians, but it already undoubtedly ranks among the outstanding monuments of human thought. It may be accepted or rejected, but anyone who ignores it is inevitably shutting his eyes to the great growth of our age.

—Tenneguy de Quinlan
(In Realities, August, 1963)



Replica of skulls of early man, including the Peking Man, are shown on display at the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences.