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**THE STRANGE FAITH
OF
TEILHARD DE CHARDIN
By
HENRI RAMBAUD**

'If by consequence of some internal upheaval, I came to lose successively my faith in Christ, my faith in a personal God, my faith in the Spirit, it seems to me that I should continue to believe in the World. The World (the value, the infallibility and the goodness of the World), such in the final analysis is the first and the only thing in which I believe. It is by this faith that I live, and it is to this faith, I feel, that at the moment or dying I shall above all doubts, abandon myself (...) To this confused faith in a World, One and infallible, I abandon myself, wherever it may lead me.'

Comment je crois, by Teilhard de Chardin, 1934.

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Translated by G A Lawman

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Nearly two years ago, at the public *viva voce* examination at which Mme Barthelemy-Madaule defended her doctoral thesis on *Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin*, Professor Henri Gouhier, chairman of the Board of examiners, used a particularly striking formula when he referred to '*that extraordinary social phenomenon, Teilhard de Chardin*'. Seldom has a more important truth been expressed in so few words; for whatever one may think of Teilhard, one can hardly deny that Teilhardism is a fact, a fact above all else, and a very important fact indeed. And not only is it an important fact, but very much an out-of-the-ordinary one. The very speed with which it has spread (about 12 years), together with the fervor it inspires, amounting almost to a cult, all underline the extraordinary nature of the phenomenon. One may add that at the Council itself no fewer than four Council Fathers have sung Teilhard's praises, one from each corner of the globe – S Africa, East Germany, North and South America – while only two Benedictines have spoken against him.

However, Professor Gouhier's formula is not explicit enough. Teilhardism is not only an 'extraordinary social phenomenon'. It is also a specifically religious phenomenon; it could even prove to be, with Marxism, which it resembles in some of its aspects, the outstanding religious phenomenon of our time, just as the Reformation (do not object to this comparison; we are not the first to make, it?), was the outstanding religious phenomenon of the 16th century.

Of course, as at the time of the Reformation, Catholics are divided and many, it seems, have not yet understood (any more than their forbears of the 16th century) that what is now at stake is no less important than what was at stake then.

We cannot blame this on the indecision or silence of the religious authorities, for the Church has spoken. The *Monitum* issued by the Holy Office on 30 June 1962 declared that Teilhard de Chardin's works '*teem with [scatere] ambiguities or, to be more precise [immo], with errors so grave that they offend against Catholic doctrine*'. It is true that the *Monitum* did not decree any disciplinary action to be taken, and merely urged bishops and superiors of religious orders '*to protect effectively the minds – in particular those of youth – against the dangers presented by the works of Teilhard and those, of his followers.*' This is no vaguely phrased warning.

We all know what happened to it. The Holy Office's exhortation has in fact remained a dead letter.

This judgment on Teilhard's works has proved most useful in confirming opponents, of his thought in their opinion, but it does not seem to have convinced many of his supporters, nor has it made them less ready to speak and write, in his defence and furtherance. Far from it; the *Monitum*'s most obvious result has been to arouse a general protest in those ecclesiastical circles who pride themselves on their intelligence, and in the first place, at least in France, in those who up to then had seemed most trustworthy, in view of their protestations of fidelity to the Holy See. Thus we saw eminent ecclesiastics reviving (without admitting the fact – perhaps even unaware that they were doing so) – the old distinction between **right and fact** invented in the 17th century by the

Jansenists¹ (history does sometimes repeat itself), and humorously expressing their gratitude to the Holy Office for the encouragement the *Monitum* had given to read Teilhard more accurately, i.e., without attributing to him erroneous views that he never held. At the same time propaganda in Teilhard's favour increased enormously. Those of the French Jesuits who do not share Teilhard's views (after all, there must be some!) kept silent or were prevented from speaking, whilst the others were feverishly producing books, articles and lectures on Teilhard.

This battle is still raging, so much so that in the autumn of 1964 a Catholic publisher, with splendid impartiality, simultaneously published two books, one hostile to Teilhard: *Rome et Teilhard de Chardin*, by the Rev Fr Philippe de la Trinité, adviser to the Holy Office; and one favourable to him: *La prière du Père Teilhard de Chardin*, by the Rev Henri de Lubac, SJ, expert at the Council. Thus it is not only the uninitiated laymen who do not agree about Teilhard; even the experts themselves are at loggerheads. Hence the opinion very common among Catholics, that all this is after all only a quarrel between theologians splitting hairs. Such Catholics have no wish to be disloyal to the Church; in fact they are certain they are not. But equally they see no reason to pay more than a token respect to the Holy Office; and they certainly see no reason for fighting against the dangers of Teilhardism, as the Holy Office has asked them to do. As far as they are concerned, both the Holy Office and the Society of Jesus represent high authorities; it would be presumptuous of mere laymen to attempt to judge between them, and until such time as the very highest authority has pronounced its verdict (as though the Holy Office had not already spoken in the name of the Church!) prudence and fairness require them to lend an ear to each or the two parties to the dispute.

In fact, the opposing forces are far from evenly balanced, and Teilhard's supporters distinctly have the upper hand. There are many reasons for this. For one thing, even submissiveness has its dangers, and when torn between two conflicting authorities, timid people tend to yield more readily to the nearer of the two than to the higher one. A further reason is that, in the atmosphere of our time, anything which emanates from the Roman Curia or which is suspected of 'integrist' has been subtly brought into disrepute. But above all, Teilhard's reputation as a scientist and as a difficult author to understand has meant that most people have only read snippets of his works. And yet, in spite of this or even because of it he has come to enjoy so widespread a prestige, that in the estimation of our intellectuals (or those who lay claim to be intellectuals - for it is an article of faith that anti-Teilhardists do not think) anyone who is not a Teilhardist is *ipso facto* not intellectually respectable.

A few years ago, a leading Catholic journalist declared in a conversation, '*Teilhardism will be the heresy of the future*'. And when urged to write an article on the subject he replied, '*My dear chap, if I said this in print I would lose all the credit I enjoy*'.

However, since it must be becoming obvious by now, I will come out into the open and admit that I am not a Teilhardist. And since I have no credit to lose, I shall avail myself of the fact, (no mean advantage, this), to re-open Teilhard's case at one of its most revealing pages, and to submit the personal beliefs of today's most famous Jesuit to a closer examination than it usually receives.

But first of all, what basically is Teilhardism, and where does it stand in relation to common Catholic faith?

¹ The Jansenists, when challenged by the Hierarchy, argued their case by making a distinction between what they called the '*question de fait*' (could the alleged erroneous statements be in fact found in Jansenius's writings?) and the '*question de droit*' (supposing that the statements had in fact been made by Jansenius, was he right or wrong to have made them? Was he orthodox or heretical?). Translator's note.

Faith in Christ and Faith in the World

Fundamentally the question is a very simple one, and it is the scholars who have quite gratuitously and wantonly made it seem complicated.

If we see as the basis of Teilhard's thought that double faith which he permanently confessed from 1916 up to his death - i.e. '*An unbounded faith in Our Lord, animator of the World, and an unconfoundable faith in the world (especially the human world) animated by God*'², we should not be misrepresenting his thought but simply reducing it to its essence. The first of these propositions would not have caused him any difficulty had it stood by itself. All the problems with which he was beset come from the second proposition, whose exigencies led him to a re-thinking of his Christian belief itself, as is clearly shown by his description of Christ as '*animator of the world*'.

Without any possible doubt, Teilhard very firmly believed in Christ, in His divine and His human nature. But equally, his belief in the rightness of his own ideas was utterly unshakeable, so great and so pathological was the force of his conviction. Easy-going as he seems to have been in everyday life, nothing was capable of shaking his belief in Evolution as the supreme law of the Universe; it was, to him, much more than a conviction, it was literally a 'faith'. His attachment to dogmas was more flexible; he accepted them, but reserved the right to interpret them. He did not repudiate the 'old sayings', but he thought that '*with the discovery of major units and the vast energies of the cosmos*', the time had come to understand them in a new way, since the meaning which our forefathers attached to them was linked to an age of mankind now irrevocably gone, and thus was due to be superseded by a new and more satisfactory meaning, one made necessary by the 'modern scientific and industrial phase'.³

The result was that when some conflict broke out between his faith in the World and his personal faith in traditional Christianity, he repeatedly solved such conflicts by submitting the latter to the former, the latter being the weaker of the two. He retained the dogmatic definition of Catholicism and made it express what his faith in the World inspired in him, for he was convinced that, in a more or less distant future, that faith in the World would become everybody's faith, if indeed he did not take it for granted that this had already happened. Strong in his '*experience of Christianity*', he, even, as early as 1936, claimed the right to '*make this solemn declaration*':

*'Whatever the formulae that still hold their ground, the transformation to which I refer has already taken place in the most lively parts of the Catholic organism. Behind a surface of pessimism, individualism and juridicism, Christ the King is today **already worshipped by the faithful as the God of Progress and of Evolution.**'*⁴

Where on earth could he have seen this? The emphasis is not even ours but his, as if the alleged fact being obviously a figment of his imagination, he felt he had to emphasise his statement.

It is easy to see to what innovations such an interpretation of dogmatic formulae in the light of modern science (or what passed for modern science in his eyes) could lead. It would be superfluous to list them here.⁵ Not the least disturbing, in this connection, is his conception of

² *Lettres de voyage*, 107 (August 7, 1927)

³ *Esquisse d'un univers personnel*, May 4, 193, (*Oeuvres*, vol VI, p 113). Cf. extract from the letter quoted by Fr Philippe de la Trinité, in *Rome et Teilhard*, p. 47: '*I am, at times, slightly frightened when I think of the transposition to which I have to subject the common notions of creation, inspiration, miracle, original sin, resurrection, etc., within myself, before I am able to accept them.*' (17-12-1922).

Was Teilhard aware that his system was in blatant contradiction with one of the decrees of the first Vatican Council? '*Si quis dixerit fieri posse ut dogmatibus ab Ecclesia propositis aliquando secundum progressum scientiae sensus tribuendus sit alius ab eo quem intellexit et intelligit Ecclesia, anathema sit.*' (Denz. 1818).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Students may care to refer to Fr Calmel's articles in *Itinéraires*, (4, rue Garanciere, Paris VI), and in particular to his

Christ. No doubt Christ still remains the Redeemer for him, but since he does not believe that evil was introduced into the world by the 'accident' traditionally called original sin, and since he prefers to see evil as a statistical necessity in a '*Universe in process of unification in God*'⁶, it can no longer be from Adam's sin that Christ redeems us, and His role as Redeemer - though still acknowledged - becomes in fact obliterated by His role as Motive Force and End-product of Evolution.

It is particularly disturbing that Christ, in Teilhard's writings, is always the Cosmic Christ (and, from 1924 onwards, the Omega- Christ) and never the Jesus of the Gospels or the Second Person of the Trinity. Teilhard would of course answer that, to him, there is only one Christ, who is at one and the same time Omega, Jesus and Second Person. But the first aspect, which is only a creation of Teilhard's own mind, takes such precedence over the other two that it seems to be the only one in which he is interested. It makes one wonder whether Catholic doctrine, which he seems to accept sincerely, is not in fact - without his being aware of it - serving as a cover, so to speak, for his real faith, which is no longer a faith in the Jesus of the New Testament, but in a God postulated by his system - not the God of the Catholic Faith of today, but of that of the future.

Résumé aide-mémoire d'un Christianisme sans la Foi, in the November 1964 number of that review. The list of Teilhard's 'novelties' given there is neither systematic nor exhaustive, but those which are listed are reproduced most accurately. It is most instructive to see the parallel Fr Calmel established on precise points, between 'progressism' and 'traditional doctrine'.

⁶ It is certain that Teilhard had ended by no longer believing in original sin, as is shown by his letter of April 8, 1955 (two days before his death) to Fr Andre Ravier: '*In the Universe of Cosmogogenesis, in which Evil is no longer catastrophic (i.e. no longer the result of an accident) but evolutive (i.e. the statistically unavoidable by-product of a universe in course of Unification in God)...*' (quoted in *Janus*, no 4, December 1964, p 32). We fail to see how it would be possible to reconcile this text with the '*per unum hominem peccatum intravit in mundum*' (Rom V,12) to which the Council of Trent referred specifically when formulating its decree on original sin: '*Si quis non confitetur primum hominem Adam, cum mandatum Dei in paradiso fuisset transgressus, statim sanctitatem et justitiam, in qua constitutus fuerat amisisse, (etc ..) anathema sit.*' (Denz., 788 and 789).

It seems that very early, Teilhard had begun to interpret this in a way which retained only the label of the dogma, since as early as 1920, he lists original sin among the '*common notions*' which he had to '*transpose in order to be able to accept them*'.

As early as 1924 he was already experiencing difficulties with Rome, as he himself tells Fr August Valensin in a letter dated November 13: '*One of my papers (in which I expound three possible lines of my search for a way of representing original sin) has been sent to Rome. I do not know how. The censor is naturally astounded. I have got off with the comment that I am "heretical" or that I "have a screw loose" - I leave it to you to choose which*'. The rest of the story is even more edifying. Fr d'Ouince writes that in order '*to cut the ground from under the accusation, Fr Ledochowski asked Teilhard to sign a text setting out the doctrine of original sin in traditional terms, a text which he (Fr Ledochowski) has drawn up. Teilhard signed the document. Thus his faith could no longer be questioned.*' And Fr d'Ouince adds in a footnote: '*The correspondence between Teilhard and Valensin reveals not the slightest hesitation in accepting dogma, but simply Teilhard's wish to retain the right to pursue his research, and the possibility of advising the many nonplussed and worried people who wrote to him.*' (René d'Ouince, *L'Épreuve de l'obéissance dans la vie du Père Teilhard de Chardin*, in *L'Homme devant Dieu*, III, 335)

We are perfectly willing to believe that Teilhard gave his signature without '*the slightest hesitation*', but we are not so sure as Fr d'Ouince that this signature vindicates Teilhard's faith. He was within his rights in retaining the right to pursue his research within the limits of defined dogma. It is by no means certain however that he did not reserve the right to stretch those limits beyond the clear meaning of the Council's definition.

However, we are inclined to believe that, in 1924, his intention to remain entirely faithful to the Church must have been stronger than his urge towards innovation.

A New Modernism

By now readers will probably be less surprised when we say that the question of Teilhard's faith does not seem a very difficult problem to us.

It is impossible to maintain that Teilhard's faith, as he expresses it in his writings, is the unadulterated Catholic faith, since he thinks that the present age of mankind requires that Christ's Revelation take to itself a new and essential element, a faith in the world - one never mentioned in the Gospels but which occupies in fact the first place in Teilhard's thought.

One may even wonder whether Teilhard's faith (as revealed in his writings,) being thus the resultant of two distinct faiths - of which the preponderant one is not Catholic - has any right to claim that it is Christian. It undoubtedly includes elements which come from the teaching of Christ; but the additions Teilhard has brought in, play such a vital part that it would be franker to call it a new faith which merely claims to be the Catholic Faith.

It is not, in any case, the faith of the Catholic Church, and it is small wonder that, through the Holy Office, the organ qualified to speak in her name, the Church has thought it necessary to declare that she does not recognise herself in Teilhard's writings.

In fact, Teilhard's religion is unmistakably a Modernism, though it is not the Modernism of the 1900's, for which he had little time, uninterested as he was in problems of exegesis. But a Modernism it is nevertheless, if by Modernism we understand the preservation of the formulae of doctrine emptied of their meaning, in order to adapt the Faith of the Church to the so-called requirements of modern science.

When we have isolated the essence of Teilhardism, another problem remains to be solved; did Teilhard know or did he not know that his faith was not that of the Church? There do exist such things as saving illusions, and if ever a man was prone to illusions, Teilhard was; it is not impossible that, whilst thinking in fact differently from the Church, he was not conscious of the fact and believed that he could remain in her without dishonesty. The unanimous testimony of those who knew him personally shows that he was submissive in an exemplary manner to his superiors. To what extent did this external submission reflect a submission of his inner self? Was it entirely sincere, half sincere or not sincere at all? This is the question we now intend to consider in the light of one of Teilhard's letters which is as important as it is little known. We shall be considered ruthless for so doing. But Father Teilhard has acquired too much authority over the minds of so many people, and this authority depends too closely on his sincerity as a believer for any consideration to prevail over the search for truth.

Besides, even after the revelation of this secret aspect of Teilhard, the answer to our questions will not by a long way be easy to formulate.

The Document 'hidden under a bushel'

The document which follows is not an unpublished one. It can be found on pages 196-198 of *'Le Concile et Teilhard, L'Eternel et l' Humain*, a book by Maxime Gorde, published by Editions Henri Messeiller, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, dated 1963 without any further details. But nowadays even more than in the days of Brunetière, a truly unknown text is often one that is already in print, and it is a fact that, however important it may be, or perhaps because of its very importance, this published letter has remained discreetly in the obscurity to which pudenda are usually relegated by the respectable.

However, to be perfectly honest, we should say that, even before its publication, at least one person other than the addressees had had knowledge of this letter. M Claude Cuénot, on page 331 of his book *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, les grandes étapes de son évolution*, published in 1958 quoted three lines from it which, separated as they unfortunately are from their context, tend in the book to give a completely false impression of Teilhard's attitude.

Better still, the episode is told by Fr Pierre d'Ouince in his essay *L'Épreuve de l'obéissance dans la vie du Père Teilhard de Chardin*, to be found in *L'Homme devant Dieu*, III, pp 332-346, published on February 25, 1964; but if Fr d'Ouince knows that this letter exists, the manner in which he speaks about it shows that he has not read it, either because it had not yet been published at the time when he wrote his essay or because he had not been able to lay hands on it.

His testimony is nevertheless useful, and all the more so both by what it adds to Teilhard's letter and, ironically, by the discrepancies which exist between this testimony and the letter itself.

An incriminating letter

We must imagine ourselves at no 15, rue Monsieur, in the majestic residence of *Études*⁷ where Teilhard then lived with Fr d'Ouince as his Superior. At the end of September 1950, or maybe in the very first days of October (the encyclical *Humani Generis* having appeared on the preceding 12 August), Teilhard received a letter from a certain Fr G an ex-Dominican who had broken with his Order and left the Church. This person, 'guessing his difficulties', according to Fr. d'Ouince, (for *Humani Generis*, though it did not name Chardin, was clearly directed against him), invited Teilhard to follow his example and join him in the small dissident community of the 'Old Catholics', who reject papal infallibility. At once Teilhard went to see Fr d'Ouince, who had never seen him in such a state: he was *'beside himself, positively scandalised'*. *'How could G have thought of such a thing!'*

Teilhard, adds Fr d'Ouince, sent Fr G *'a long and clearly indignant letter, in which he explained that the "Roman phylum alone bore, in his view, the future of the world"'*⁸. It is this reply from Teilhard, dated 4 October, that we are about to transcribe in full in the original French. We shall then successively quote each of its four paragraphs in translation, adding such comments as are necessary for the understanding of the text.

Teilhard's Letter.

"Hier, je vous ai envoyé trois petits essais, pour vous expliquer ma position présente (Le Cœur du Problème est un mémoire effectivement envoyé à Rome sans résultat naturellement..., donc pas d'illusions).

"Essentiellement, je considère comme vous que l'Eglise (comme toute réalité vivante au bout d'un certain temps) arrive à une période de "mue" ou "réforme nécessaire". Au bout de deux mille ans, c'est inévitable. L'humanité est en train de muer. Comment le christianisme ne devrait-il pas le faire. Plus précisément, je considère que la Réforme en question (beaucoup plus profonde que celle du XVIème siècle) n'est plus une simple affaire d'institution et de mœurs, mais de foi. En quelque façon, notre image de Dieu s'est dédoublée: transversalement (si je puis dire) au Dieu traditionnel et transcendant de l'En Haut, une sorte de Dieu de l'En-Avant surgit pour nous, depuis un siècle, en direction de quelque "Ultra humain". A mon avis tout est là. Il s'agit pour l'Homme de repenser Dieu en termes, non plus de Cosmos, mais de Cosmogénèse: un Dieu qui ne s'adore et ne s'atteint qu'à travers l'achèvement d'un Univers qu'il illumine et amorise (et irréversibilise) du dedans. Oui, l'En-Haut et l'En-Avant se synthétisant dans un Au-dedans.

"Or, ce geste fondamental de l'enfantement d'une nouvelle Foi pour la Terre (Foi en l'En-Haut combinée avec la Foi en l'En-Avant), seul, je crois (et j'imagine que vous êtes de mon avis), seul le christianisme peut le faire, à partir de l'étonnante réalité de son "Christ-Ressuscité": non pas entité abstraite, mais objet d'un large courant mystique, extraordinairement adaptatif et vivace, j'en suis convaincue c'est d'une Christologie nouvelle étendue aux dimensions organiques de notre nouvel

⁷ *Études* — an intellectual monthly review edited by the French Jesuits.

⁸ *L'Homme devant Dieu*, vol III, pp 342-343

Univers que s'apprête à sortir la Religion de demain.

"Ceci posé (et c'est là que nous différons: mais la Vie ne procède-t-elle pas par bonnes volontés tâtonnantes?), ceci posé, je ne vois toujours pas de meilleur moyen pour moi de promouvoir ce que j'anticipe que de travailler à la réforme (comme définie ci-dessus) **du dedans**: c'est-à-dire en attachement sincère au "phylum" dont j'attends le développement. Très sincèrement (et sans vouloir critiquer votre geste!) je ne vois que dans la tige romaine, prise **dans son intégralité**, le support biologique assez vaste et assez différencié pour opérer et supporter la transformation attendue. Et ceci n'est pas pure spéculation. Depuis cinquante ans, j'ai vu de trop près autour de moi se revitaliser la pensée et la vie chrétienne — malgré toute Encyclique — pour ne pas avoir une immense confiance dans les puissances de réanimation de la vieille tige romaine. Travaillons chacun de notre côté. Tout ce qui monte converge. Bien cordialement vôtre. Teilhard de Ch."

First paragraph

'Yesterday, I sent you three short essays to explain my present position (Le Coeur du Problème is a memo which I in fact sent to Rome but without any result, naturally....so let us have no illusions).'

Le Coeur du Problème, dated September 8 1949, and to be found in VolV of his Oeuvres, p 337-349, is one of Teilhard's writings in which his doctrine of the two faiths is expressed with most force and clarity. There is even a graph for those too slow to understand:

0 y, Catholic Faith, ascensional in a personal Upwards transcendary; 0 x Faith in man, propulsive Forwards, in the ultra-human; OR (Is it necessary to explain that this constitutes the bisectrix $y = x$), "rectified" (i.e. "explicited") Catholic Faith solving the problem: Salvation (the way out) is at the same time Upwards and Forwards, in a Christ Who is Saviour and Motor, not only of human individuals, but also of the whole Anthropogenesis.

This is not very intricate, as we can see and, in fact, the thesis of *Le Coeur du Problème* is disarming in its simplicity. Teilhard thinks that in view of the 'new immensity of the Universe', the God offered to contemporary man has become too small. Having failed to keep in step with the development of mankind, Catholicism has lost its attraction for modern man whilst another, more attractive faith shows him salvation not Upwards but Forwards, 'prolonging the immanent forces of Evolution'.

However, 'taken by itself, this faith in the World is not enough to move the Earth Forward, any more than the Catholic Faith in its old explicitation was enough to lift the World Upwards.' We must., therefore 'find means of combining the two' and 'Faith in God, assimilating and sublimating in its own essence the essence of the faith in the World, will regain its full power to attract and convert' this 'host of spiritually displaced persons', which is increasing so tragically, these beings torn between a Marxism which revolts them by its depersonalising action and a Christianity which sickens them by its human tepidness. For it is because it lacks the necessary dose of 'human faith and hope' that Christianity today seems such an 'insipid, cold and inassimilable' faith. But 'if, on the contrary, it becomes possible (and this is already and ineluctably beginning to take place, under the pressure of opposing forces) to believe⁹ simultaneously and completely both in God and the World, and to believe in each in and through the other, then it is certain that a huge flame will enkindle all things; a Faith will be born, or at least re-born, containing and summing up all other faiths and because it is inevitably the strongest Faith it will sooner or later end up by possessing the earth.'

⁹ In a Christ perceived no longer as merely the Saviour of individual souls, but (precisely because he is a Redeemer in the full sense of the word) as 'the ultimate Motor of Anthropogenesis'. (Teilhard's own footnote)

The page is not lacking in eloquence. The reader, however, will hardly be surprised that Rome answered that she *'failed to see the advantage or the soundness of an apologetic based on faith in man; for the Church the only firm value for the future is eternal Life.'*¹⁰ But let us return to the text of Teilhard's letter.

Second paragraph

'Basically I consider - as you do - that the Church (like any living reality after a certain time) reaches a period of "mutation" or "necessary reformation" after two thousand years, it is unavoidable. Mankind is undergoing a mutation, how could Catholicism not do the same? To be more precise, I consider that the reformation in question (much more profound a one than that of the 16th century) is no longer a simple matter of institutions and ethics but a matter of faith. Somehow our image of God has become two-fold. At right angles (so to speak) to the traditional and transcendent "Upward" God, a kind of "Forward" God has, in the last century, been springing forth for us, moving in the direction of the "Ultra-human". In my opinion, this is the crux of the matter. Man now has to rethink God not in terms of Cosmos, but in terms of Cosmogogenesis: a God who can be adored and attained only through the elaboration of the Universe which he illuminates and amorises (and renders irreversible) from within. Yes, the Upward and the Forward together form a synthesis, and this is the Inward.'

The last two lines of this paragraph only repeat the thesis already stated in *Le Coeur du Problème*. But the first lines add elucidations which Teilhard, (it is easy to see why), had not sent to Rome; for he was not quite as candid¹¹ as he would like to have us believe.

Compared with our extracts from *Le Coeur du Problème*, and with our summing-up of this essay, the present paragraph goes much further. The essay spoke of a *'rectified, explicated, re-born Catholic faith'*; the present letter looks forward to a mutation of Catholicism, a mutation which chiefly concerns faith and the next paragraph will mention the *'birth of a new faith'*. In the essay, therefore, the reference is to the traditional Catholic Faith - only to one that has become better understood and that has been restored to its original purity. But in the letter, the reference is to a faith that is not yet born, a substantially new faith. The difference is very noticeable and nobody will reproach us with unfairness if we look for the true Teilhard in the letter rather than in the essay. In a letter written to a dissident priest, he had no reason for making his thought appear less orthodox than it was, whereas he had many reasons for not revealing the whole of his thought in a text *ad usum infidelium*, if one may thus describe the theologians at Rome. He knew full well that they would never accept his attack against the dogma of the immutability of the Faith.

Two conclusions derive from this. The first is that Teilhard was quite capable of varying the frankness with which he unveiled his thought according to the identity of his correspondent. It is true that calculated cunning, conscious insincerity was foreign to his basic character. But we should be painting him as more naive than he really was, and actually misunderstanding him, if we asserted (dare we say 'candidly?') that he never made any 'concessions' or took any 'precautions'¹² in his writings. In fact, the audacity of his thesis was such that in his dealings with Rome he was obliged to present them with enough clarity for them to make their impact, and yet to dress them up sufficiently skilfully for them to have some chance of not being suppressed at first sight.

¹⁰ Claude Cuénot, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Les grandes étapes*, p 328.

¹¹ Cf. *Oeuvres*, col V, pp. 339-340: *'For the use of those who, better placed than I am, have the responsibility for leading the Church, directly or indirectly, I should like to say candidly in the following pages...'* etc. And further on: *'Candidly, I insist. Not that I am giving a lesson: this would be pretentious on my part. Far less am I criticising; for it is not my place to do so. I only wish to give an account of my life...'* etc.

¹² Henri de Lubac, *La pensée religieuse du Père Teilhard de Chardin*, p 18.

Three years later, Teilhard admits this practice in *The Stuff of the Universe*, one of his most revealing essays, written to tell 'the story, the strength and the joy of an existence that is now drawing to its end.' Here we find the revelatory phrase: 'I write for once without worrying about the orthodoxy (scientific or religious) of what I write...' ¹³ In other words, he usually did care which would be commendable if it were not restricted to the mere outward expression.

Is there any reason to think that it was only in his dealings with Rome that he kept a watch over his pen and tongue? The situation was not so very different when he was dealing with his fellows in religion. Consequently it seems to me that instead of lauding Teilhard's 'total' frankness ¹⁴ to the skies, his fellow clerics would be better advised to remember La Rochefoucauld's maxim that 'however sceptical we may be of the sincerity of those who speak to us, we are always sure they are more truthful to us than to others.' It might well be, after all, that they have simply been too credulous.

Our second conclusion is far more important since it calls Teilhard's very faith itself in question. Yet we have to do this if we are going to be honest. Once we have read his letter we can no longer see Teilhard's intentions as a mere 'ressourcement' (as people would say nowadays) – a revitalisation of the Faith by a return to the purer inspiration of its origins. In any case such a return is incompatible with the irreversible forward surge of Evolution. No, what Teilhard is looking forward to is quite a different thing. It is nothing less than a 'mutation' which he might just as well have called in his jargon 'the crossing of a critical threshold' a mutation moreover which will affect not only the institutions and ethics of the Faith (fields in which changes on some points may well be conceived as possible and desirable), but one which will affect the Faith itself, a mutation on the whole 'much more profound than that of the 16th century'. And when we say that he looks forward to this, the time-lag is not for him but only for others. For it is a matter of faith, a faith which in a near future, the Church will inevitably come to profess; therefore Teilhard himself **already** believes in it firmly. For him personally, the mutation has **already** taken place.

But the first Reformation was called a heresy by the Church; how can Teilhard's Reformation escape a similar charge?

However, only recently, Fr de Lubac has guaranteed Teilhard's 'absolute loyalty to Catholicism'. According to the former, Teilhard's wording might well offend orthodoxy here and there – but then all theologians run this risk – but he never had any intention of offending against orthodoxy. 'Fr Teilhard has always been careful to remain, in his inner self and in his writings, theologically and traditionally in agreement with the Faith of the Church,' ¹⁵ Fr de Lubac's authority is great, and we cannot help but be touched by this defence of one who can no longer speak for himself by one who feels it his duty to speak in his name. But precisely because Fr de Lubac's authority is so great, it behoves us, at whatever cost, to make it absolutely clear that his friendship for Teilhard, praiseworthy in itself, has misled him and is misleading countless trusting readers to the point where they prefer to base their judgment on Teilhard on the books of such a learned scholar rather than on the biased judgment and narrow-minded attitude of the Holy Office! Why ever do such readers not complete their reading of de Lubac's two books by reading Teilhard himself? They would discover a Catholic very different from the one described by Fr de Lubac, and they would probably find the severity of Rome more understandable.

Indeed, how can one reconcile Teilhard's two attitudes — his desire to remain loyal to the faith of the Church, and his profession (in a private letter, it is true) of a new Christian faith, and one that he declares to be more profoundly new than the Lutheran or Calvinist faiths which the Church has

¹³ *Oeuvres*, VII, pp 397-398

¹⁴ Henri de Lubac, *La Prière du Père Teilhard de Chardin*

¹⁵ *La Prière du Père Teilhard de Chardin* p 185 and note 4.

declared heretical? No logic, no argument however subtle can harmonise these two attitudes in one mind at one time. Are we to consider Teilhard's innovation as the outcome of a momentary error? But this is ruled out by the many pages in his writings which tend to the same conclusion, though less openly¹⁶. In fact, the only exceptional feature of the present letter is its frankness. It is invaluable inasmuch as it casts a glaring light upon Teilhard's thought, but it is hardly the first source to reveal it. It merely confirms in an unmistakable way what was already more than a probability before the letter was published.

We are not saying that Teilhard was not sincere: he obviously believed himself to be right. We are not saying that he did not have the faith; he certainly believed in Jesus Christ. What we are saying is simply that his faith was not that of the Catholic Church, and that he knew it. After all, he had studied enough to know that the Faith of the Church is a faith in the words of Jesus Christ and that consequently this faith cannot change substantially. He knew that it is the privilege of the *Magisterium* (i.e. the succession of the Roman pontiffs from St Peter to Pius XII, since the letter was written in 1950) to determine the meaning of that faith. He must have known, therefore, that he was doubly at variance with the Church's faith. By his misunderstanding (wilful or not) of the nature of Revelation, he was calling for a renewal of the substance of the Faith, contrary to defined dogma. And he was guilty of disobedience to the *Magisterium* in reproaching the Church with not realising that the Faith she teaches is out-of-date.

It must be added that this disagreement with the Church did not worry him much. He was far too sure of what he 'saw', as he liked to put it. The *Magisterium* was sensible, sooner or later it would see its mistake and agreement would be reached by the 'ineluctable' conversion of the Church of Rome, 'under the pressure of opposing forces', to the faith required by our times, that faith of which he, Fr Teilhard de Chardin, was called by 'special vocation'¹⁷ to be the prophet. In this second sense he was perfectly sincere in calling himself a Christian and even a Roman Catholic since, in his own eyes, the only disagreement between himself and the Church arose from the fact that he was already thinking then what the Church did not yet know she would be thinking shortly. He was not unfaithful to the Church, he was ahead of her, and consequently, was more representative of the Church than the elderly men who were her official representatives and who, owing to their great age, sometimes 'nodded' like Old Homer. The old leaders had forgotten to wind up the Church's clock; Teilhard's watch shows the right time, the time shown on the dial of Humanity itself.

Third paragraph

'This fundamental act, the birth of a new faith for the world (faith in the 'Upward' combined with faith in the 'Forward'), I believe that only Christianity, (and I imagine that you will agree, with me), only Christianity can carry it out, starting from the wonderful reality of its 'resurrected' Christ, seen not as an abstract entity but as the objective of a vast mystical trend which is astonishingly adaptable and full of life. I am convinced of it: The religion of the future is on the point of springing forth from a new Christology stretched to the organic dimensions of our new universe.'

¹⁶ To say the least of it! The last pages of *The Stuff of the Universe* (*Oeuvres*, vol VII; pp 404-406 go pretty far in this direction.

¹⁷ Retreat of 1940: 'Grace (in sense of) following my light, my special vocation,' *La Prière du Père Teilhard de Chardin*, p 96 note 3.

The leading idea of the second paragraph was the dual aspect of our image of God as required by the present age of mankind. The third paragraph entrusts Christianity (in fact Catholicism) with the carrying out of the operation. Why? Here Teilhard's mental processes are worth close attention.

Note first of all that what he considers as 'fundamental' is not the message of Christ; it is the 'birth of a new faith for the world (faith in the 'Upward' combined with faith in the 'Forward'), because, as we have seen him explain in *The Heart of the Problem*, without this fusion, each faith by itself remains powerless. Taken by itself, faith in the Forward cannot succeed in making the World progress, nor can faith in the Upward succeed in uplifting it. Both lack an essential element, each of them needs the other as a vital complement. In other words, this 'new faith' is nothing but a means to an end; what Teilhard really believes in is something far beyond it, namely Evolution, considered in its two-fold dogmatic and ethical aspect. Evolution is above all the certitude implies, for man, the duty to contribute both to the material and spiritual progress of the World. Thus religions have vis-à-vis Evolution, only a subordinate role to play, though this role is indispensable; they are the Motive Force which makes the engine work, they provide man with the energy required by that 'Anthropogenesis in full stride'¹⁸ which is taking place in our time. And since experience shows that neither faith in the 'Upward' nor faith in the 'Forward' are sufficient if taken separately, Teilhard concludes that the two must be brought into synthesis.

It is Catholic Christianity alone which can bring about this synthesis, according to Teilhard, because the Catholic Faith, 'rooted in the notion of Incarnation, has always, in its structure, attached great importance to the tangible values of the World and of matter.'¹⁹

There would be nothing to object to in this way of reaching Catholicism, provided Catholicism was indeed the goal. It is no more objectionable than it would be to start from moral conscience to arrive at the conclusion that this implies the existence of God as its basis. Yet even here, it would be necessary, once one had arrived at God as the basis of ethics, not to make one's idea of God depend on the ethics which one had (quite legitimately) used as one's starting-point, and which might have to undergo some corrections in order to become fully the Moral Law established by God. Teilhard is thus perfectly entitled to reach Revelation through his belief in Evolution, even if the procedure may seem somewhat unusual. But, once he has reached Revelation, it would clearly be unjustifiable on his part to claim that Revelation must be tailored to fit within the limits of his belief in Evolution. It would mean that he believes more firmly in Evolution than in Jesus Christ; it would mean that he prefers his own personal opinion to God's very word.

Yet that is what he does when he asks for 'a new Christology stretched to the organic dimensions of our new Universe'. The only Christ he will accept is one who fits into his system. This could of course be due just to Teilhard's inability to understand anything outside his own highly personal way of thinking – a common weakness, and one to which we are all prone. We could excuse him if that were all. What is serious is the incredible self-assurance with which Teilhard sets up this Christology of the future against that taught by the *Magisterium* to the point where he claims that from it will spring a religion so different from the Catholicism of the Popes and the Councils that he calls it 'the Religion of the Future'.

If anyone feels we are distorting the sense of Teilhard's statement, our answer is that three years later, in *Stuff of the Universe* the unhappy man made no secret of the amount of Christian doctrine he was prepared to throw overboard in order (as he expressed it) to 'pay for' the vision he needed as urgently as a drug-addict craves his drug. And it emerged that it was nothing less than the

¹⁸ *Le goût de vivre*, November, 1950; (*Œuvres*, vol VII, p 247), On the same theme, see also: *Réflexions sur la probabilité scientifique et les conséquences religieuses d'un Ultra-Humain*, March 25, 1951 (*Œuvres*, vol VII, pp 279-291).

¹⁹ *The Heart of the Problem*, *Oeuvres*, vol V, p. 347.

'definitive' element the very core of dogma that was to be 'reshaped':

'I have come to the conclusion that, in order to pay for a drastic valorization and amorisation of the substance of things, a whole series of reshapings of certain representations or attitudes which seem to us definitely fixed by Catholic dogma has become necessary if we sincerely wish to Christify Evolution. Seen thus, and because of ineluctable necessity, one could say that a hitherto unknown form of religion (a religion hitherto unimaginable and indescribable, since until now the Universe has not been large enough or organic enough to contain it) is gradually germinating in the heart of modern Man, in the furrow opened by the idea of Evolution.'

The reader will see now that we have not exaggerated anything. *'Far from feeling my faith perturbed by such a profound change (he goes on), it is with hope and overflowing joy that I welcome the rise of this new mystique, and foresee its inevitable triumph'*.²⁰ This is sheer delirium, He believes in Revelation but, by an extraordinary alteration of course, he does not so much submit to It as use It for his own purposes. For the object of his enthusiasm is not the 'good tidings' revealed by Christ, but the unexpected and marvellous illumination which his religion will receive from 'the idea of Evolution'. Rarely has Catholicism been more boldly emptied of its substance under pretext of expanding it.

One cannot see much room in this new Christology for the person of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. It is true that Teilhard believes in His historical authenticity. It is nevertheless strange that he proclaims the reality of 'Christ Resurrected' and yet he turns towards Him not because Christ loved us first, but only because He is the source and goal of the 'mystical trend' best able to adapt to the new conditions in which mankind finds itself. He would not express himself differently if the 'Resurrected Christ' were in his eyes no more than a particularly useful myth.

But the last paragraph of his letter is even more revealing. We must remember that Teilhard is writing to a priest. We must also remember that Fr d'Ouince, relating his conversation with Teilhard, wrote that the letter was *'an obviously indignant one'*. Obviously? Let us take a look at this indignation in the text.

Fourth paragraph

'Having stated my views (and it is here that we differ: but it is surely thus that life advances, by the groping of men of goodwill?), having stated my views, I still do not see any better means of bringing about what I anticipate than to work towards the reformation (as defined above) from within: that is, by remaining sincerely attached to the 'phylum' whose development I expect to see. In all sincerity (and without any attempt to criticise the step you have taken), I find that only the Roman stem, taken in its entirety, can provide a biological support vast enough and varied enough to carry out and underpin the transformation to which I look forward'²¹. And this is not pure speculation. In the course of the last fifty years I have watched the revitalisation of Catholic thought and life taking place around me - in spite of all the

²⁰ *Oeuvres*, vol VII, pp 405-406.

²¹ The sentence is the one quoted by M Claude Cuénot in his *Père Teilhard de Chardin, les grandes étapes*, p 331, in the following form; '(...) *I find that only the Roman stem, taken in its integrity ('prise dans son intégrité')* can provide a biological support vast enough and varied enough to carry out and underpin the transformation to which I look forward.' This quotation was copied by Fr de Lubac in his *Pensée religieuse*, p 340, note 4, without the suspension marks but with the same faulty reading ('intégrité' instead of 'Intégralité'). Fr de Lubac moreover adds an explanatory parenthesis *'...the transformation (of Mankind) to which I look forward.'* This is wrong; the context (which, it would seem, Lubac had not read) shows that it is the transformation of **Catholicism** which Teilhard meant, as is already clearly shown by the words 'carry out'.

encyclicals - too closely not to have an unbounded confidence in the ability of the old Roman stem to revivify itself. Let us work each of us in our separate spheres. All upward movements converge.

Yours very sincerely

Teilhard de Ch.'

That is all, absolutely all. We have suppressed nothing. Are we to believe that Teilhard had so exhausted his indignation in his talk with Fr d'Ouince that he had none left when he wrote his letter?

However, the gist of this paragraph is obviously the profession of 'sincere attachment' to the old 'Roman stem', by which Teilhard makes more explicit what he had written about Christianity in the preceding paragraph, giving the species after the genus, according to the traditional order in apologetics.

One word in this text has no doubt surprised readers who are not necessarily conversant with *The Phenomenon of Man*. 'What an idea (they probably think to call Catholicism a *phylum*! Why can't these scientists talk like everyone else? But to do this it would be necessary for Teilhard to think like everyone else? And this this he is so far from doing. Teilhard does not call Catholicism a *phylum* out of pedantry or for stylistic effect. He calls it a *phylum*, because he means *phylum*, because *phylum* is the exact term to express what he means.

For those who do not know it already – and there would be no shame in this – a *phylum*²² in Teilhard's language, is an 'evolutive group of forces' endowed with its own power and its own law of autonomous development.²³ To call Catholicism a *phylum* amounts therefore to considering it under two aspects, as an institution 'rooted in the Past and yet in incessant evolution'.²⁴ Does this amount in other words, to an interest in the History of the Church? Not quite, for Teilhard is strangely enough, not interested in History or in any subject where study will yield a certain amount of reliable exact knowledge; he only likes vast imaginative syntheses. What he is doing when he calls the Church a *phylum* is researching into the genesis of Catholicism, in the same way as he enquires into Cosmogogenesis, Biogenesis, Noogenesis and all other 'geneses'; he is thinking Catholicism not in terms of Church history but in terms of Evolution. And here of course, in the Teilhardian context, is where things go wrong.

For his terminology, which at first sight seems just out-of-the-way, fundamentally transforms the religious problem and at the same time shows us how Modernist is Teilhard's mode of thought, placing as it does the search for Life before the search for Truth. The question used to be, 'Which is the true religion?' Now the question is, 'Which is the religion whose *phylum* is in line with 'the main axis of Evolution'?'²⁵ And if you doubt whether the difference is of any importance, read again the reason given by Teilhard for his attachment to the Church. Is it because the Church has received a promise from Jesus Christ? Not at all. It is because She has received promises from Evolution, because She alone provides a 'support vast enough and varied enough to...' etc. It is still, if you like, attachment to a Church whose supernatural nature (though Teilhard does not of course deny it) is

²² *Phylum* - in biology the term is used in classification to designate a principal sub-division of a kingdom thus, the vertebrates constitute a phylum within the animal kingdom.

²³ *Le Phénomène humain, Oeuvres*, vol I, p. 123 (page 326 in the English Fontana version of *Phenomenon of Man*).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p 332

²⁵ *Le Phénomène humain, Œuvres*, col I p. 332 (English Fontana edition p. 326).

no longer present in his mind.

Let us now consider not what Teilhard says, but what he does. Why does he not accept his correspondent's suggestion? Was it so very silly of Father G to invite Teilhard to abandon a Church whose faith he no longer shared? What are the reasons Teilhard gives for his illogical attitude?

We have already given his chief reason instead of being in agreement with the Church of today, he is in agreement with the Church of tomorrow, since Life cannot fail to prove stronger than Encyclicals, and in particular stronger than *Humani Generis*, the one that was aimed at him. No last-ditch resistance will hold up the progress of the world and, just as man has become the growing-point of physical Evolution, the Church will remain the privileged *phylum* through which passes the axis of Christogenesis. Why should he leave Her?

One can see a possible reason. Teilhard is 'anticipating', as he himself says, and his conscience might not feel at ease in this position. It is true that he feels that the Church and he will come to agree on fundamentals one day – this for him is certain. But he is also sure that this agreement has not yet been signed. Has he, therefore, any right to behave as if it had? Would it not have been more honest, so long as the disagreement lasted, to wait outside the Church for the moment when She would catch him up and at last do him justice?

This certainly would seem to have been the most upright course of action. It would have been painful, but it would at least have respected the truths of both parties. Teilhard would not have had to sacrifice any of his convictions or practise any deceit. Why did he not choose this solution?

He did not choose it for a reason which his letter states without the slightest ambiguity. He did not leave the Church because he felt he could work more effectively for 'the Reformation (as defined above)', i.e. a Reformation 'far more profound than that of the 16th century', '**from within**'.

This amounts to saying that Teilhard remained within the Church in order to spread more easily views which he knew the Church (let us say, to please him, the 'Church of today') could not help but call a heresy.

Epilogue

The story does not stop here. According to Fr d'Ouince, who obviously heard it from Teilhard, Fr G's reply to Teilhard was a brief note 'saying that he (Fr G) had evidently jumped to the wrong conclusion and asking him (Teilhard) to forgive him'. However, two months later, Fr G is alleged 'to have tried to interpret' Teilhard's letter 'in his own favour'. No doubt Teilhard got to hear of it. He was worried. He no longer had the text of his letter to hand, he might in the heat of his conviction have said too much in it, and he was likely to get into considerable trouble if the document were read by the wrong persons. He thought it wise to forestall the danger.

We can never be grateful enough to Fr d'Ouince for publishing the note, dated 21 December 1950, that Teilhard sent him for this purpose. Read in the context of the letter to Fr G, Fr d'Ouince himself will be even better able to appreciate the full flavour of the note. It is a little masterpiece, not too inaccurate, and well calculated to give anyone who does not have the first letter to hand exactly the impression Teilhard wants him to have. We can recommend the comparison of the two letters to any Teilhard addict as a first-class exercise in textual analysis:

'Really G has gone too far. He sent me a long letter in September, to which I replied "as from one priest to another", admitting certain present difficulties, hoping that one day we may converge, but maintaining what I believe from the bottom of my heart: namely that the only possible rallying - point is on the Roman axis. Of course I do not remember the exact phrases I used. But, if G has used my letter, he has committed "a breach of confidence". In any case, I have quickly stopped this dialogue, which could not lead anywhere: G. does not belong to the same intellectual "species" as myself...I apologise for adding to your worries. May the Lord give us His faith (that is the one He

wishes to give us): “*Dominus meus et Deus meus.*”²⁶

(Vraiment G abuse. A une longue lettre de lui en septembre, j’ai répondu “de prêtre à prêtre”, reconnaissant certaines difficultés présentes, espérant la convergence, mais maintenant ce que je crois du fond du cœur: à savoir que rein ne peut se grouper que sur l’axe romain. – Je ne me rappelle naturellement pas mes phrases. Mais si G. s’en est servi, c’est un « abus de confiance ». J’ai du reste arrêté rapidement une conversation qui ne pouvait mener à rien : G. n’étant pas de mon « espèce » intellectuelle... Pardon de vous créer des ennuis de plus. Et que le Seigneur nous donne sa foi (celle qu’il désire nous donner) : « Dominus meus et deus meus. »)

The reader may well rub his eyes in astonishment! Was the letter we have transcribed really a letter ‘from priest to priest’? But we must not be too severe. The phrase, in Teilhard’s mind, is probably not a lie. It is probably only a very strong ‘mental reservation’; he had his own idea about what a priest ought to be, and he was conscious of no insincerity in using in his own sense a term which Fr d’Ouinice would interpret differently. The final parenthesis is a moving prayer: the faith which the Lord wishes to give us! Nothing could be more orthodox than this formula. But how disturbing it is to see it used here with the implication that Teilhard does not know which faith it is and consequently, doubts whether it is the faith of the Church....

Teilhard's alarm proved unnecessary. We do not know much more about his relationship with Fr G. but we have every reason to think that, either on his own accord or at Teilhard's request, Fr G behaved like a gentleman and did not commit the dreaded breach of confidence. There are few things indeed which escape the notice of the Society of Jesus; we should find it hard to believe that they would have defended Teilhard as strongly as they are doing if a text showing their great man in so unflattering a light were in circulation. Besides, since Teilhard's death, the rare Teilhardists who know of its existence have, as we have seen, carefully kept it hidden 'under a bushel'.

Attempt at an explanation

One might well think, in view of the surprising importance of Teilhard in current Catholic thought and his friends' tendency to depict him as a model of all the virtues, that quite a different 'breach of confidence' had been committed, not at Teilhard's expense but at that of the rest of us. But if honesty compels us to bring such a revealing document as Teilhard's letter to the attention of a wider public, we are also bound in honesty not to draw unfair conclusions from it. For the letter makes Teilhard look like a heretic who has camouflaged himself as a faithful Christian in order to spread heresy more effectively; and this, we believe, is how one must see the facts if one is to see them as they are. Nevertheless, the problem has other aspects, and when we take these into account it is difficult to maintain that Teilhard was at bottom quite as black as we have painted him. Could he really have been such a traitor – a Turmel or a Jury²⁷ - when for all their unmistakable precautions his writings do not show the slightest sign of perfidiousness? And even if we do not necessarily accept the testimony of his brother Jesuits at their face value, it would be just as wrong to brush that testimony aside.

How can we explain the obvious contradiction between the reality of Teilhard’s thoughts and

²⁶ *L'Homme devant Dieu, Oeuvres*, col III PP 343 and note 16.

²⁷ This refers to two priests who remained within the Church after losing their faith with the deliberate intention of propagating their viewpoints more effectively without openly revealing their unbelief.

Joseph Turmel: (1859-1943) who published many writings against the Church under various pseudonyms, was finally excommunicated in 1930. For details, students may refer to Emile Poulat, *Histoire, dogme et critique dans la crise moderniste*, Casterman, 1962, pp 327-332.

Paul Jury (1978-1953), ordained priest in 1903, lost faith in 1928. Students may refer to his *Journal d'un prêtre*, Gallimard, 1956, which leaves his hatred of the Church and his desire to harm it in no doubt. (Translator's note)

actions and his apparent loyalty to everything the Church required of him, if all we know of his character rules out sheer hypocrisy as a solution?

Our answer is that there is a certain duplicity in Teilhard. But this does not lie in the difference between the public '*persona*' he assumed and the real Teilhard he knew himself to be and wanted to be. This would have been conscious deceit. The duplicity lies more in an alteration, or vacillation, between the two aspects of his innermost personality (thus making him a particularly striking case of "schizophrenia").

We must always remember the 14-year-old boy from Auvergne whom Henri Bremond taught in his language and literature classes at the College de Mongré: '*Very intelligent, top of his form in all subjects, but desperately quiet. It was impossible to arouse the slightest gleam in his eyes, for he was living in another world, utterly absorbed in one overpowering passion.*'²⁸ This is the first piece of evidence we have about Teilhard's essentially two-fold nature. On one side there is the quiet boy who does everything he is told, who a year later becomes Prefect of the school branch of the Congregation, and receives at the end of his studies the First Prize for his all-round academic performance and Second Prize for good conduct - in short, a model pupil of the Society of Jesus, well on the way to becoming the perfect Jesuit. But on the other hand there is the visionary for whom nothing exists save the dream that he is obsessively pursuing.

This 'overpowering passion' was his interest in stones. Then follow the three years 1916, 1917 and 1918, the crucial years of his existence, the years of his conversion in the religious sense of the word, the years of his 'second birth', and from then on his passion becomes an ambition to integrate within the Church what before his time had commonly been called 'the religion of Progress' (for this is really all that Teilhardism is in essence). Only for him Progress has widened to take in a very generalised theory of Evolution.

We have seen to what lengths this 'hobby' was finally to lead him. It led him in the end to conceive the absurd chimaera of a Catholicism thoroughly new in its substance, a Catholicism that so attracted him that his first tentative glimpse of it in 1919 made his former religious life seem 'childish' to him. He did not realise that in his blinding enthusiasm to '*share the preoccupations, hopes, activities which made the elite of today's mankind, natural mankind, live*'²⁹, he was rejecting not a 'childishness', but just the religion of the humble and of the Saints, the simple piety of Saint Bernadette and the Cure d'Ars, the 'little way' of Saint Therese of Lisieux.

This may not be the ultimate truth about Teilhard (for only God can know his real nature), but at least it is Teilhard as we see him at his most deliberate and international level in his writings — it is the Teilhard of 'Teilhardism'. Basically he is a **reformer**, and alongside his characteristic obstinacy, one who was most richly endowed with the cardinal virtue of all reformers and founders of religions, i.e. not intelligence but faith. His faith is the sort that moves mountains, and this is one of the reasons for his success. But, at the same time, behind all the insane day-dreams, the quiet child remains, and although more reassuring, this other face of Teilhard is not just a mask — it corresponds to that docility of behaviour which is just as essentially part of his nature as his indomitable faith in his own ideas. Thus it is not out of hypocrisy that Teilhard subscribes to dogmas and goes through the motions of a Christian; it is just that he has put the object of his real preoccupations into another compartment of his mind.

The reader is now in a better position to understand why Teilhard rejected Fr G's suggestion.

²⁸ Quoted by Claude Cuénot in *Les Grandes Étapes*, p. 16.

²⁹ *Notes pour servir à l'évangélisation des temps nouveaux* (*Cahiers- Teilhard de Chardin*, IV, p. 14) Our emphasis.

Teilhard himself gave two reasons for this refusal, but there was a third and stronger reason, and a more honourable one, moreover: namely that he belonged to the Church (that Church that he slandered and misunderstood so lightly and so unjustly) with every fibre of his being. He could never see himself as a dissident priest; to him it would have been a shameful desertion. No one could maintain, least of all himself, that his attempt to reconcile his beliefs with his behaviour as a Catholic had much intellectual coherence in it, but he had been living so long in a position that anyone else would have found false that he had almost stopped suffering from its falseness. He was quite ready to admit the possibility of others choosing, like Fr G, the opposite solution, and the reason he gives for this underlines yet again the essential Modernism of his thinking, by the precedence it gives 'Life' over against truth. What does it matter whether one belongs or does not belong to the true religion when 'all upward movements converge' and when, whether one is inside or outside, one can still do worthwhile work, that is, move in the direction Evolution is taking.

Two things must however be said.

The first is that it is laughable - and the best jokes are the shortest ones - to present Teilhard as a paragon of obedience. He is exactly the opposite, the very type of the irreducible rebel under the outward guise of submissiveness. Rome tells him again and again that he is mistaken, but he does not change one single feature of his mental universe. No one would have asked him to renounce the whole of his thinking at one go. Such things cannot be done to order. But he could at least have made an effort, examined himself, sought a way of reconciling his vision or what he thought was his vision with what Rome was telling him. This he never made the slightest attempt to do. It is only too clear that if Rome and he are in disagreement, the fault, for him, must clearly lie with Rome. At bottom he was not prepared to receive the words of life from the Church, but to offer them to Her. His whole dream is to act as the Churches midwife and to help the old Mother to bring to birth the new faith She is unwittingly carrying in her womb and which tomorrow will be the religion of all Mankind.

Even at the level of action one cannot call his docility perfect. It is true that in the matter of formal obedience he accepted without a complaint sacrifices which cost him dear. But he never in any way renounced pursuing with all his strength a goal that Rome had condemned. To do so would have been to betray the mission he felt he had been given (as Renan might have said) '*by a specific decree of Eternal God, naming him*'. It must be said in his favour here that he seems to have been encouraged in this course by not a few of his friends, even within the Society of Jesus, which as early as this was already beginning to oppose what is now called 'integrisms'.

The second point we must make is that this deliberate dissociation of behaviour from thought, (a characteristic feature of Modernism), is not as comfortable an attitude as it seems, and inevitably entails frequent lapses from straightforwardness. We do not say that these have been more frequent in Teilhard's life than in others' (we do not know enough about him to say), but we have the evidence here that some undoubtedly occurred (*vis-à-vis* Rome, Fr d'Ouince). They cannot have been the only lapses, for it was in the nature of his situation that he was not always able to reconcile his words and his thought.

His friends are making a great mistake in not admitting the existence of these blemishes. Saint Bernadette liked best those lives of Saints where the authors were not afraid of mentioning their defects; she liked them all the more for this. Teilhard is admittedly not a saint, but even so he would gain in being shown as he really was. People would then realise that he is above all an exceptional 'case', and people would bear his peculiar mental make-up in mind as an extenuating circumstance. However submissive he appeared outwardly, he cared so little about whether his judgment accorded with the mind of the Church that we cannot consider him submissive in Spirit. But despite this insubordination in his conscious thinking he seems to have retained at a deeper level of his being quite a high level of personal spirituality (at least at certain periods of his life), and we feel

that it would be a calumny to say that the attachment he professed for Jesus Christ was insincere. Who knows whether his stubbornness in error is perhaps to be ascribed to a really invincible blindness? It is not forbidden to hope so, particularly when confronted with the moving pages in which he speaks of his spiritual life.

It is a pity, all the same, that the faith of a man of such good faith was not the true Faith!

Saint Pius X, Prophet

The real scandal does not lie in the fact that Teilhard is Teilhard. The scandal is that Teilhardians exist, and that among them are eminent priests.

Many of them, no doubt, have not read his books, and that is their excuse. But others have read them, and these we do not understand. We do not accuse them of sharing Teilhard's unbalanced vision. But how could they defend it?

It is not that they have not been warned, and warned most solemnly. They have been warned by the voice of a man whose authority was unquestionable above all others at the time when he was addressing the whole of Christendom, even if it had not been enhanced when he was subsequently canonised.. Listen to the portrait he drew of certain innovators who, as he said, *'in intimate contact with the consciences of the faithful'*, claim *'to know their needs better than anyone else, and certainly better than the ecclesiastical authorities'*.

'The authorities may reprimand them as much as they like: these innovators have a clear conscience that they are right, and possess an intimate conviction which tells them with absolute certitude that it is praise and not blame that is due to them. Then they reflect that progress has always had its ups and downs and its victims. If they are to be victims, then they are only following in the steps of the prophets and of Christ himself. They have no bitterness against the authority that ill-treats them; it is after all only doing its duty as an authority. But they cannot help but deplore authority's deafness to their appeals, for while it does so the obstacles are piling up in the path of souls striving towards the ideal. But the time will come, will surely come when delaying tactics will no longer be possible; one can delay evolution but one cannot stop it. And so they follow their own way; despite reprimands and condemnations, they continue, concealing their boundless audacity behind a deceitful appearance of submissiveness. They hypocritically bow their heads while all the time all their thoughts and all their energies are devoted to pursuing their set goal more boldly than ever.'

This was how St Pius X expressed himself on September 8, 1907 in his Encyclical *PASCENDI DOMINICI GREGIS*. Coming from a Pope whom many, while they must admit that he was venerable and pious, since the Church has raised him to its altars, consider to be quite out-of-date, this statement is not lacking in foresight! Indeed the resemblance to Teilhard and his supporters is so striking that we should have hesitated in transcribing this prophetic text, but for the fact that, when he called the Modernists *'the worst enemies of the Church, all the more dangerous in that they are preparing to ruin her from within'*, St Pius X had not taken care *'to keep their intentions separate (from their activities), and to leave it to God to judge the former'*.

HENRI RAMBAUD

MONITUM OF THE HOLY OFFICE

of 30 June 1962

Monitum – Quaedam vulgantur opera, e etiam post auctoris obitum edita, Patris Petri Teilhard de Chardin, quae non parvum favorem consequuntur.

Praetermisso iudicio de his quae ad scientias positivias pertinent, in materia philosophica ac theologica satis patet praefata opera talibus scatere ambiguitatibus, immo etiam gravibus erroribus, ut catholicam doctrinam offendant.

Quapropter Emi ac Revmi Supremae Sacre Congregationis S. Officii Ordinarios omnes necnon Superiores Institutorum religiosorum, Rectores Seminariorum atque Universitatum Praesides exhortantur ut animos, praesertim juvenum, contra operum Patris Teilhard de Chardin ejusque asseclarum pericula efficaciter tutentur.

Datum Romae
Ex Aedibus S Officii
die, 30 junii 1962

MONITUM OF THE HOLY OFFICE

OF 30 JUNE 1962

Warning — Certain works, even posthumous ones, of Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin are spreading and are having no little success.

Leaving aside my judgment in so far as the positive sciences are concerned, it is sufficiently manifest that in the matter of philosophy and theology the aforementioned works are full of such ambiguities, or rather grave errors, as to offend Catholic doctrine.

For this reason the Most Eminent and Most Reverend Fathers of the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office exhort all Ordinaries and also the Superiors of religious Institutes, Rectors of Seminaries and Principals of Universities effectively to safeguard the minds, especially of the young, against the dangers of the works of Father Teilhard de Chardin and of his supporters.

ROME
Holy Office
30 June 1962

'Galahads, of course, need no guidelines; they alone are the best judges of what they write and when to publish it. Authority in these matters is not for them. They justify their stand in terms of what they call the right of conscience. In their case, this is not so. What they are suffering from is the anarchy of private judgment warped by pride. Long ago, Luther experienced the same thing. I was reading only the other day that Hans Kung wants the Church to declare him no longer a heretic. Soon, I suppose, we will be invited by our dissident popularisers to pray for his canonization – in the interests, I imagine, of unity. Meanwhile, the English Martyrs, who represented a unifying principle as Luther never did, are well and truly out in the cold. They never yielded. That is why permissive Catholic dissidents are against their canonization.'

Rev Paul Crane SJ
in CHRISTIAN ORDER
June 1966

'Modernists and their admirers should remember the proposition condemned by Pius IX: "The method and principles which have served the doctors of scholasticism when treating of theology no longer correspond with the exigencies of our time or the progress of science (Syll. Prop. 13) "They exercise all their ingenuity the force and falsifying the character of tradition, so as to rob it of all its weight. But for Catholics the second Council of Nicea will always have the force of law, where it "condemns those who dare after the impious fashion of heretics, to deride the ecclesiastical traditions, to invent novelties of some kind...or endeavour by malice or craft to overthrow any one of the legitimate traditions of Church"; and Catholics will hold for law, also, the profession of the fourth Council of Constantinople: "We therefore to conserve and guard the rules bequeathed to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church by the Holy and most illustrious Apostles, by the Orthodox Councils, both general and local, and by every one of those divine interpreters the Fathers and Doctors of the Church".'

Pope St Pius X in PASCENDI

'... can anybody who takes a survey of the whole system be surprised that We, should define it [Modernism] as the synthesis of all heresies? "Were one to attempt the task of collecting together all the errors that have been broached against the faith and to concentrate the sap and substance of them all into one, he could not better succeed than the Modernists have done. Nay, they have done more than this, for, as We have already intimated, their system means the destruction not of the Catholic religion alone but of all religion. With good reason do the rationalists applaud them, for the most sincere and the frankest among the rationalists warmly welcome the Modernists as their most valuable allies Modernism leads to the annihilation of all religion. The first step in this direction was taken by Protestantism; the second is made by Modernism, the next will plunge headlong into atheism.'

Pope St Pius X in PASCENDI