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Teilhard de Chardin's Christocentric Trinitarianism[1]

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Abstract

Not only did Pierre Teilhard de Chardin speak about the work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart and see the Holy Spirit as the driving force of evolution, but the human union and community of persons joined by mutual love, in what he called the 'noosphere', was clearly analogous in his mind to the Trinitarian union of persons. Yet the Trinitarian dimension of Teilhard's writings has received little attention. On Teilhard's understanding, the Holy Spirit is the power through which evolution becomes the awakening of soul or spirit in matter, rather than being random variation and natural selection. It is also the Holy Spirit who promotes spiritual evolution in the human heart and opens human eyes to the divine presence in the world. Finally, Teilhard's concept of the 'noosphere' is analogous to that of the Trinity, understood as a personal unity where neither the individual person nor the Trinity as a whole would be complete without the other.

Keywords

Trinitarian, Holy Spirit, Soul, Evolution, Divine Milieu, Noosphere

Introduction

That Teilhard's theology was Pauline and Christocentric is well recognized. Less well recognized is the full extent to which it was Trinitarian. This is true even of major commentators on his works. While David Grumett recognizes that Teilhard's theology has a Trinitarian dimension, he says that:

> The significance for Teilhard is as a perichoretic or reciprocal and interpenetrating relation internal to the Godhead that preserves the real

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> distinction between God and the created order and is mediated by the Holy Sprit. Teilhard's theology does not anticipate the opportunities explored much more recently by immanentist Trinitarianism, which looks for traces or analogies of the Trinity in the world.[2]

It is my contention, however, that even if Teilhard did not explicitly make it clear, his understanding of the noosphere, the sphere of humans brought together intellectually and in shared efforts to promote the good of this world, was profoundly Trinitarian in an 'immanentist' or analogical way.

Nor do I accept the view expressed by Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pontifical Household. In his Lenten Sermon given on March 13, 2009, he said that while Teilhard's account of evolution was indeed Trinitarian, insofar as it was Christocentric, missing from it was 'an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit'.[3] As I shall seek to show, Teilhard's understanding of spiritual development within the human mind as well as his theory of evolution were indeed based on an understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit as actively involved in these processes.

It is ironical that today Teilhard's theology should be described as lacking an 'immanentist' Trinitarian approach, when in his own days he was suspected of immanetism both in the sense of pantheism and utopian thinking. This is because a major reason why Teilhard was never allowed by his Jesuit superiors to publish his writings during his lifetime was precisely the suspicion that he was guilty of these two kinds of 'immanentisms',[4] although he often rejected any charge to that effect. However, since the aim of this paper is to show how profoundly Trinitarian Teilhard's thought was I shall only deal with the last-mentioned suspicion insofar as it has a bearing on the question whether his theology was Trinitarian.

My argument is largely based on an analysis of two of Teilhard's writings: the *Divine Milieu,*[5] written in 1926–1927 and *The Human Phenomenon* written in 1938–1940.[6] This is because, arguably, these

[2] David Grumett, *Teilhard de Chardin: Theology, Humanity, and Cosmos* (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), p. 130.

[3] http:www.zenit.org/phprint.php., accessed August 19th, 2009.

[4] Immanentism was an 'error' that was condemned in the first and middle parts of the last century under the title of modernism. But the condemnation of immanentism in Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* was not directed at Teilhard, since at that time his writings were not yet published. But in 1962 he was given a warning. See, Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, *Warning Regarding the Writings of Father Teilhard de Chardin,* June 30th, 1962.

[5] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu,* (DM) (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).

[6] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon* (HP), ed. and trans. Sarah Appleton-Weber (Brighton and Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 1999).

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are his major writings. Interestingly, neither of these works was described by Teilhard as a work of theology, although both develop his Pauline understanding of how, through Christ, God—and so the Spirit–operates in the world. Another writing that I have chosen as representative of his thought and am examining closely is *My Universe*, an early paper written in 1924.[7]

The Spirit of evolution

When reading Teilhard it must be born in mind that he uses the word spirit (esprit) both in the sense of Holy Spirit and soul and also that he uses the word psyche both in the sense of mind and in the Greek sense of soul.

In *My Universe* Teilhard wrote of a creative and unifying force,[8] a directing force or an attraction emanating from an Omega.[9] While Teilhard generally identified this Omega as Christ, he sometimes also referred to it as God. This very way of identifying Omega suggests that the force in question is that of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Thus it is the Holy Spirit which, on Teilhard's understanding, gives evolution a direction 'towards the establishment of a new and eternal Earth'.[10] And the Holy Spirit is the power that makes evolution something more than a Darwinian play of necessity and accident.[11] It is the force through which evolution becomes the awakening of spirit or soul in matter. In line with St Thomas, Teilhard understood the soul as the form of matter, from which it follows that a cabbage has a cabbage soul and a snail a snail soul. Hence, he saw the Holy Spirit as an active and animating force that works not only in man but also in other creatures and even in the very atoms of things.[12] 'All is held together from above'; and 'while the Spirit promotes and supports the material world in its ascent towards increasing consciousness, the material world allows the Spirit to subsist and act and provide nourishment', he wrote.[13]

[7] Teilhard de Chardin, 'Mon Univers' ('My Universe'), in *Science et Christ* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), pp. 63–114. The translations of terms and sentences quoted from this text are mine. It is also to be noted that the 1924 paper is not to be confused with a paper in English under the same title in Pierre Teilhard de Cardin, *The Heart of the Matter* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, 1978), pp. 196–208. The latter was written in 1918.

[8] SC, 73.

[9] SC, 76.

[10] SC, 71.

[11] This is not to say that Teilhard was not influenced by Darwin's theory or by what Bergson had borrowed from it. See, David Grumett, 'Teilhard de Chardin's Evolutionary Natural Theology', *Zygon,* 42 (no. 2) (2007), pp. 520–534.

[12] SC, p. 75.

[13] SC, p. 78.

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For Teilhard the spiritual dimension of material things was more fundamental than their physical dimension. According to him: 'the solidity of the inorganic, the fragility of the body, tends to make us think that being comes from matter. But the very opposite is the case. Nothing exists unless it is supported and held together by Spirit'.[14] Materialism was for Teilhard anathema. Yet, he understood sprit (soul) and matter as inseparable and complementary. He was no dualist.

In the final part of the paper, identifying Omega with Christ,[15] Teilhard said that Christ is the one whose spiritual and unifying force sustains and guides the evolution of creation seen as a pilgrimage to a destination willed by God. And to bring home the point that Christ is the Omega—who through the Holy Spirit–directs the world to it ultimate consummation, Teilhard quoted a number of Pauline passages, including notably, Col. 1: 17 (And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together).[16] And in the light of these passages he described his understanding of the Pauline Christ as pan-Christic, which might have been a play on the word pantheism.

The understanding of Omega put forward in *My Universe* is the same as that put forward many years later in *The Human Phenomenon*. There the Omega is again identified as the Pauline Christ 'in whom all things were created [Col 1:15], and in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell [Col. 1: 19]. Here as in *My Universe* of 1924, the spirit of the Christic Omega is seen as working within matter to unify and bring about consciousness as well as within the human mind to encourage love.[17] In both works Teilhard makes it clear that for him evolution is to be explained as the spiritualization of matter and not merely as a result of Darwinian natural selection and random variation. Nor did Teilhard believe in a theory of divine design according to which God created the world and then stood back to let it tick over by itself like a clock–which once created does not change into something different.[18] Teilhard saw evolution as a process, and as such as primarily a spiritual process which proceeds from

[14] SC, p. 77. I have written Spirit with a capital S, because Teilhard here wrote 'l'Esprit', with a capital e.

[15] SC, p. 82.

[16] Other Pauline passages referred to are: Col 2:10; Col 3:2; Eph 4:9.

[17] For a detailed and sympathetic account of Teilhard's understanding of love, one that covers a variety of aspects of love, see Henri de Lubac, *The Eternal Feminine* (London: Collins, 1971).

[18] As Gustave Martelet noted, Teilhard's understanding was not that of God as a sort of a clock-maker. See, Gustave Martelet, *Et si Teilhard disait vrai.* (Paris: Editions Parole et Silence, 2006), p. 19.

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'geogenesis' to 'biogenesis' and eventually to 'psychogenesis'.[19] And so he saw it as an 'irreversible advance toward a higher psyche'.[20]

Thus in *The Human Phenomenon* Teilhard described Omega as a spiritual force that makes the world gravitate 'toward a divine focal point of Spirit that draws it forward'.[21] This focal point is the Omega point, a point in this world oriented towards the next. Thus looking not as natural science does at piecemeal cause and effect, but at the overall scheme of things, the history or evolution of this world can be seen as having a direction. And this direction Teilhard attributes to 'the cosmic function of Omega'[22] But, so Teilhard noted, 'in its evolutionary aspect Omega still only shows half of itself', for at the same time as it is 'the term of the series, it s also outside the series'.[23] So Omega is both immanent and transcendent.

As Teilhard saw it, then, the rise from lower to higher, whereby inorganic matter becomes organic matter which in turn comes alive, is a divinely directed process through which matter increasingly gains spiritual life and consciousness and eventually in the human species reaches self-consciousness. He also held that the more complex an organism is the more developed its spiritual dimension and consciousness.[24] Looking at the nervous systems of different species, he said that associated with the development of an ever more sophisticated nervous system is an increasing degree of psychic development. Comparing insects and mammals, he observed that in insects as well as in mammals, as their nervous systems become ever more complex, we can perceive corresponding to the same development a psychic development. He also noted that in insects the psychic dimension has stagnated. That is, they act on instinct only, whereas in mammals we find spontaneity. Cats and dogs, then, are no longer totally enslaved by instinct. Even less so are primates. Explaining this difference between insects and mammals, Teilhard argued that insects are too small to house brains big enough for advanced psyches.

That Teilhard's account of evolution is anything but pantheistic is clear. God is not identified with the world. He should not be misunderstood when saying: 'In its very depths, the living world is composed of consciousness clothed in flesh and bone. From biosphere to species,' everything, therefore, is but one immense ramification of psyche seeking itself through forms'.[25] In saying this he was simply referring to the evolution of more and more mentally advanced

[19] HP, p. 96.
[20] HP, p. 97.
[21] HP, p. 193.
[22] HP, p. 191.
[23] HP, p. 193.
[24] HP, pp. 101–102.
[25] HP, p. 99.

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physical existences. What he meant was that the world of the Pauline Christ is increasingly brought to an ever more psychic and spiritual life through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, aware that at he might seem to sail close to pantheism, Teilhard described his thought as a higher form of pantheism. He did so, however, explicitly with reference to the Christ of St Paul and John the Evangelist, saying that Christ is the one 'directing, and superanimating the general rise of consciousness' and that 'by a perennial act of communion and sublimation he is aggregating the entire psyche [all souls] of the Earth to himself.'[26] Also Teilhard immediately added that when Christ has thus gathered and transformed everything, he will rejoin 'the divine focal point that he has never left'; and 'there will only be God, who is all in all.[27] This suggest that the focal point must be understood as the Holy Trinity.

The Spirit and human activity and perception

Having examined how, according to Teilhard, the Holy Spirit is active in the process of evolution from inorganic to organic matter, and from mere organic matter to life of ever higher life forms, let us turn to the *Divine Milieu.* Here Teilhard offered, what he described as a 'simple description of a psychological evolution', whereby one would come to see the world and one's own place within it in a new light.[28]

Developing his argument in the light of the Pauline understanding of Christ as central to the salvation of the whole of creation,[29] Teilhard explored the path to a perception of the world as permeated by the presence of God. As a work about human perception of the world around us the *Divine Milieu* is, however, also about the world itself. What is in question is not the perception of an illusion, but of a real presence. It is, however, only when man finds the divine presence in the world that he realizes that the world is sacred. It is only then that it becomes a sacred place for him. Notably there is a parallelism between this understanding and the message in the Letter to the Romans. There St Paul speaks about the whole of creation being brought to glorious freedom from its slavery to corruption together with the children of God who are the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. The Pauline passage tells us that when the Sprit transforms man, the world becomes the world of the spiritually transformed man and thus shares his glory.

[26] HP, p. 211.
[27] HP, p. 211.
[28] DM, p. 4.
[29] Central to Teilhard's eschatology, as is Rom 7: 18–25 and also Col 1: 16–20.

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Teilhard loved the world and ascribed much importance to human activity. But his eyes were ultimately on the next. Yet he spurned otherworldliness. Loving God, he loved this world and saw it as a mistake for the Christian to take the Christian message about the next world so to heart that he neglects or forgets this world. Espousing neither utopian optimism nor pelagianism, he said of the human person seeking to work with God that he is 'collaborating in an *opus* which infinitely transcends, while at the same time it narrowly determines, the perspective of his individual achievement: the completion of the world'.[30] The *opus* in question is that of laying the earthly foundation stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem. As Teilhard put it, 'beneath our efforts to put spiritual form into our own lives, the world slowly accumulates, starting with the whole of matter, that which will make of it the Heavenly Jerusalem or the New Earth'.[31] That is to say, spiritualised man glorifies the world and helps to prepare it for the next.

There should, however, be no doubt about the *primus motor* of this work of preparation. Teilhard is no Pelagian. While not speaking of Omega in the *Divine MiIieu,* Teilhard is anticipating it. To use Aristotelian language, it is God, the Triune God, who is the first and final cause as well as the efficient cause of the work constituted by human efforts to put spiritual form into life. That Teilhard's Pauline and Christocentric theology is Trinitarian is obvious on the understanding of the Triune God as first, last and efficient cause. It is as efficient cause that God as the Holy Spirit (the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son) promotes spiritual evolution within the human heart and opens human eyes to the divine presence in the world. Just as it is as efficient cause that God as Holy Spirit awakens matter and promotes evolution from mere matter to life and makes life increasingly conscious and eventually self-conscious. Thus, Teilhard wrote in *Divine Milieu*: 'little by little, stage by stage, everything is finally linked to the supreme *in quo omnia constant*', that is, in whom all dwells.[32]

But even if, on Teilhard's Pauline understanding, it is Christ who through the Spirit brings about salvation and so the Heavenly Jerusalem and the union of human souls in God, we humans are called to be his humble co-helpers. Thus we are called to 'unite ourselves with him in the shared love of the end'.[33] And by working with Christ we come to experience both the world around us and our own work as divinised. That is, we draw closer to God and come to see his hand in this world.

[30] DM, p. 24.
[31] DM, p. 24.
[32] DM, p. 25.
[33] DM, p. 27.

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According to Teilhard, some people even contribute unconsciously to the work of Christ. This situation is, however, described as 'a second best, a temporary phase in the organization of human activity'.[34] This is with the suggestion that ultimately, if things went according to the will of God, the whole world would be Christianised and so 'awakened to a sense of the close bond linking all the movements of this world in the single, all-embracing work of the Incarnation',[35] that is, the salvific work of the Triune God through Christ. On Teilhard's account, then, not only is human work in this world important, but all human work has 'supernatural value 'inasmuch as it contributes to the work of the Incarnation'.[36] In passing, it may be noted that Teilhard recognized that some theologians might 'feel vaguely upset or uneasy in the face of a Christian ideal which lays such stress on the preoccupations of human development and the pursuit of earthly improvements'.[37] But, as noted Teilhard was no Pelagian.

Not only did Teilhard speak of the divinisation or supernatural value of our activities, but in the *Divine Milieu* he also spoke about the divinisation of our 'passivities'. These are the things that happen to us or the things we undergo. Even these things, he said, may promote spiritual growth in the human heart and help us see the hand of God in the world. Distinguishing between passivities of growth and passivities of diminishment, he not only noted that divine providence sustains us and promotes our successes, but he also wanted to make us see the benign possibilities inherent in the passivities of diminishment such as events of bad luck and our failings. Thus he encouraged us to seek to turn these too into good with trust in God. In all our encounters with the created world Christians may recognize the divine presence, he said. Even death might be welcomed, since 'Christ has conquered death . . . by reversing its sting'.[38] For according to Teilhard, death means union with God. And so he wrote: 'No man lives or dies to himself. But whether through our life or through our death we belong to Christ' [Rom. 14:7–8]'.[39]

Thus, as noted above, on Teilhard's understanding the divine milieu or presence is not merely a subjective experience. It is an objective reality 'within in us and around us'.[40] It is within those who recognize and it. Also, it is there around us whether we recognize it or not. And the organizing or driving force of the divine milieu derives from Christ. With reference to 1 Col: 19, Teilhard often repeated that in

[34] DM, p. 31.
[35] DM, pp. 31–32.
[36] DM, p. 33.
[37] DM, p. 35.
[38] DM, p. 49.
[39] DM, p. 89.
[40] DM, p. 93.

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Christ everything is reunited and consummated, 'Christ dead and risen *qui replet omni, in qou omnia constant*.'[41] For the Christian knows that Christ born of Mary–who lived and died and rose again–will lead his faithful, who 'have the first-fruits of the spirit' back to God.[42] Indeed, so Teilhard insisted, the Christian also knows that with them who have the first fruits of the spirit Christ will lead the whole universe back to God.

It is noteworthy in this context that the spiritual nourishment of the Eucharist has a special significance for Teilhard. For it is through the Eucharist that, on Teilhard's understanding, Christ leads his faithful to God. He saw the Eucharist as having a 'sovereign influence upon our human natures,[43] and as extending its influence 'over all that makes up the internal and external ambiance of the faithful'—and beyond.[44] Thus he believed that humanity as a whole is becoming ever more spiritualized under the influence of Christ through his body of faithful nourished by the Eucharist. He spoke of the 'sanctifying grace which the Catholic faith causes to circulate everywhere as the sap of the world'.[45]

At the same time, finding a spiritual quest within every human heart, he recognized that an awareness of the divine milieu has been growing for a long time and that the Christian awareness of it takes its origin from the expectation of the Messiah and the Heavenly Jerusalem among the Israelites.[46] That is to say, just as the awareness of the divine milieu grows gradually within the heart of the individual person on a spiritual journey and so transforms his perception of the world, likewise it has gradually grown within mankind as a whole. On Teilhard's understanding spiritual growth is thus a phenomenon that might be found in a pagan as well as in the Christian.[47] And even in a pagan the perception of a divine presence would be animated by Christ, through the Holy Spirit. In a pagan as in a Christian the spiritual awakening to the divine presence would be the result of an act of grace which the human person might accept or reject.

There is not yet a fully fledged concept of the noosphere in the *Divine Milieu.* The term was not yet used by Teilhard when he wrote this work. But seeing charity, in the sense of love of neighbour, as the foundation of human spiritual relationships, Teilhard described a joint mystical effort to which non-Christians as well as Christians might contribute. Indeed, to his mind all humans must grow spiritually

[41] DM, p. 95.
[42] Cf, Rom. 8:23.
[43] DM, p. 98.
[44] DM, p. 98.
[45] DM, p. 94.
[46] See, DM, p. 130.
[47] DM, p. 103.

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closer to one another for a real spiritual transformation to take place in this world. While he saw Christians as having the first fruits of the Spirit, he said that 'the only subject ultimately capable of mystical transformation is the whole group of mankind forming a single body and a single soul in charity'.[48] Yet, he was not sure that all humans actually do, or would, contribute to the spiritual effort required for such a spiritual transformation to take place within mankind in this world. But nonetheless, he felt that a new spiritual community was being engendered under the rule of Christ, arousing hope and expectation in the Christian heart, and also working in the heart of all humans moved by charity.[49] Thus he was anticipating the concept of the noosphere to which we now turn.

Trinitarian analogy and the noosphere

Admittedly there is a certain ambiguity in Teilhard's understanding of the noosphere. Often it sounds as if he means the whole human 'thinking layer'. At other times he seems to refer only to that part of the 'thinking layer' which is unified by love. Overall, the last-mentioned understanding seems to prevail. This, then, is that of a human community tied together by love. It is one based on intellectual bonds as well as love and loyalty and recognition of the individual, coupled with a shared view of a common good.

In *The Human Phenomenon* Teilhard talked at length about this community and about love as a unifying force that does not depersonalise the person. On Teilhard's understanding, then, the noosphere founded on love is an aggregation of minds and souls complementing one another as if they constituted an organic whole. Indeed, he thought of the noosphere held together by love as an organism, a spiritual organism in which each part is interdependent.

Thus, having spoken of the evolution from less complex organisms to more complex and more conscious ones and of the summit reached in humans who alone are self-conscious and historical beings, Teilhard wrote: 'And now like a germ of life in the dimensions of the planet the thinking layer is developing and intertwining its fibres over its whole expanse, not to blend and to neutralise them, but to reinforce them in the living unity of a single tissue'.[50] This single tissue is the noosphere in which 'no element can move or grow unless with and by means of all the others as well as itself'.[51] Thus Teilhard thought of the noosphere as a 'superaggregation of souls',

[48] DM, p. 121.
[49] DM, p. 133.
[50] Hp, p. 172.
[51] HP, p. 173.

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one constituting a 'new step in the genesis of spirit'.[52] That is, the step at which there emerges a collective in which 'the parts perfect and fulfil themselves' without losing their personal identity. [53]

Theilhard's understanding of the noosphere was thus analogous to the Pauline understanding of the members of the Church seen as a body where the different limbs play their own recognized roles, while belonging together, and without which the organism would be incomplete. The noosphere is thus also analogous to the Trinity understood as personal unity where neither the individual person nor the Trinity as a whole would be complete without the other. For on the Pauline understanding inspiring Teilhard, the Church herself is, of course, analogous to the Trinity.

Seeing the noosphere as an organism, Teilhard attributed to it a personal or super-personal nature and identity. Yet while he saw the noosphere as a sort of super-organism, and thus as something more than and distinct from a collection of 'thought-worlds' or spiritual universes loosely brought together, he said that it did not erase the individuality of the parts. Just as 'there is definitely something more in the molecule than in the atom, more in the cell than in molecules, more in the social than in the individual', the synthesis of human thought, the sum-total consciousness of humanity– constituted by the thought and consciousness of the individuals or even that of different societies and cultures–is 'something that cannot be reduced to the individual elements', he insisted.[54] In line with the Pauline understanding of the Church and in analogy with the Trinitarian union, Teilhard held that the more people come together in the noosphere, the more self-fulfilled and perfect they become in their own personal uniqueness.

Teilhard's understanding of the noosphere is thus quite distinct from any form of pantheism where individual souls or spirits are lost and dispersed in the whole. As Teilhard saw it, true union differentiates. 'By failing to grasp this universal law of union, so many kinds of pantheism have led us astray in the worship of a great Whole in which individuals were supposed to become lost, like a drop of water, dissolved like a grain of salt, in the sea', he said.[55]

Now, it is towards the 'hyper-personal' consciousness constituted by the noosphere that evolution is oriented insofar as it is fuelled by love as a gift of grace, according to Teilhard. Here he was speaking about love both in a narrow sense with reference to humans and also in a broader sense not unique to humans. That is, he was speaking of love as a spiritual and unifying force that is found in all living

[52] Hp, p. 179.
[53] HP, p. 186.
[54] HP, p. 191.
[55] HP, p. 186.

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creatures. Indeed, in a rudimentary form love, as Teilhard understood it, is found even in the molecule. It is a spiritual energy the expression of which becomes more and more articulated the higher the life form. It is thus the energy of the Holy Spirit which animates the physical. As such it is an internal, as opposed to, external energy. Moreover, if it were not already present in a rudimentary form in the lowest forms of life and even in mere organic matter, it would never have been able to come to fruition in higher life forms and eventually in us humans. Thus according to Teilhard: 'if some internal propensity to unite did not exist, even in the molecule, in probably some incredibly rudimentary yet already nascent state, it would be physically impossible for love to appear higher up, in ourselves, in the hominized state'.[56]

However, as noted, on Teilhard's understanding while love unites it does not depersonalise or make those it unites loose their individual identities. Indeed, in his earliest writings as well as in his later ones, Teilhard insisted that God individualizes or 'pushes to its furthest possible limit the differentiation among the creatures he concentrates within himself.'[57] This is both in this world and the next. In the *Divine Milieu* he said that while all things have this in common that they are perfused by the divine, and while the divine presence is a point at which 'all the elements of the universe touch each other by what is most inward and ultimate in them',[58] this shared and so uniting presence is not one that spoils the individuality of souls or things.[59] In short, recognising the Trinitarian dimension of God Teilhard always recognised God as a relational God and so as one that personalises. This was one of the reasons why he considered, as de Lubac noted, Christianity to be the most perfect religion.[60] In an essay entitled 'Christianity in the World', written in 1933, he thus described Hinduism as a religion with a quest for ultimate union (l'Unité), but one that is negative inasmuch as it finds the ultimate union in a Nirvana of oblivion, in which the person disappears.[61] Far superior he found the Christian understanding on which the ultimate consummation and union and communion of saints in heaven is not one that obliterates individuality or personality, but one of 'universal convergence' or a meeting of souls in God. In another essay, 'The Christic' written in 1955, Teilhard wrote: 'Whatever may be the

[56] HP, p. 188.
[57] DM, p. 88.
[58] DM, p. 86.
[59] DM, p. 87.
[60] Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard Postume: Réeflexions et Souvenirs* (Paris: Fayard, 1977), p. 40.
[61] Teilhard de Chardin, 'Le Christianisme dans le Monde', in Teilhard de Chardin, *Science et Christ* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), p. 139.

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merits of other religions . . . . , it is indisputable that the most ardent collective focus of love ever to appear in the World is glowing *hic et nunc* (here and now) at the heart of the Church of God'.[62] For calling for love and union in this world, and a meeting of souls already here on earth, Christianity promotes a 'Christified Universe' in which 'all opposition between Universal and Personal being is wiped out, but not by any confusion of the two'.[63]

Teilhard, likewise condemned Communism. In a paper called 'Save Humanity', written in 1936, he faulted this ideology both on account of being pantheistic and on account of being utopian.[64] Pantheistic inasmuch it puts the emphasis on the collectivity while forgetting about the person; utopian inasmuch as it centres on our earthly future, while leaving out all thought or hope of a spiritual metamorphosis of man.

Hoping that Christianity would prevail, Teilhard wrote in *the Human Phenomenon* that Christianity is the only faith that is 'capable of synthesising the whole and the person in a single vital act'.[65] In other words, it is the only religion that unifies while recognising the individual person. And this, according to Teilhard, is why, working in the human heart through grace, the Christian call for love is what brings hope to the world. Thus it is only insofar as humanity reflects its likeness to the Triune God, who is Love as mutual love of persons, that there is hope for humanity. Could any understanding of our likeness to God be more Trinitarian than that?

Conclusion

While no utopian, Teilhard was hoping for a better world on earth as a preamble to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Not unaware of the evils of this world, including perverted racist and eugenic ideologies that plagued his century,[66] he was hoping that through the work of the Holy Spirit the evolution of human consciousness would produce a global and spiritual union embracing the whole world in anticipation of the next. Yet in the penultimate part of *The Human Phenomenon*, 'The ultimate Earth', where he expressed these hopes, he also admitted that things might go wrong. Thus 'obeying a law from which nothing in the past has yet escaped, it is also possible that evil increasing at the same

[62] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Christic', in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Heart of the Matter* (HM) (Orlando, Florida: Harourt, 1978), p. 89.

[63] Hm., pp. 80–102.

[64] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 'Sauvons L'Humanité, in Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Science et Christ* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1965), pp. 169–191. See also, Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard Postume: Réflexions et Souvernirs* (Paris: Fayard, 1977), p. 43.

[65] HP, p. 214.

[66] See, HP, p. 168.

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time as the good, will reach its paroxysm in the end, and it, too in a specifically new form'.[67] The final days on Earth could be ones in which the 'thinking layer' is torn apart, by two opposing ideologies or intellectual cultures, one in accord with the salvific work of Christ through the Spirit, the other turning its back on God and love of neighbour.[68]

That said, noting that Christianity has survived and even thrived in the souls of the faithful for 2000 years, Teilhard nonetheless wrote in the epilogue to *The Human Phenomenon* that Christianity and its call for love 'seems to be bent on gaining speed and intensity'.[69] But he also said that 'no progress is to be hoped for on Earth . . . without the primacy and triumph of the personal at the summit of the spirit'.[70] Or put is this way, unless we image the Triune union and communion of persons, there is little hope for common spiritual progress and harmony on earth.

Not only did Teilhard speak about the work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart and see the Holy Spirit as the driving force of evolution, but the human union and community of persons joined by mutual love, for which he was hoping, was clearly analogous to the Trinitarian union of persons.

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[67] HP, p. 206.
[68] See, HP, pp. 206–207.
[69] HP, p. 213.
[70] HP, p. 214.

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