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## *Teilhard de Chardin and the Aggiornamento of Quaker Theology*

JOHN R. YUNGBLUT

### THE PERSPECTIVE OF BIOLOGICAL SPACE-TIME

There are two specific areas in which I would like to contribute to a theological *aggiornamento* among Friends in the spirit of that bringing up to date of the faith and practice of the Church of Rome inspired by John XXIII. Both of these areas represent new knowledge to which twentieth-century man has become heir. I am referring to the discovery of the process of evolution and to the extraordinary insights of depth psychology. Julian Huxley maintains that within recorded history there has been no discovery with regard to man's self-understanding comparable in importance to that of the fact of evolution. Nothing else has so enabled man to place himself in space and time, the basic categories of existence. Man is the first animal to know that he has evolved and is evolving as a creature, and to ponder directions for further development of his species. Teilhard insists that all disciplines of learning have been or should be radically affected by this discovery. "Evolution," he says, "is a light illuminating all facts, a curve that all lines must follow."<sup>1</sup>

I believe that our Christology and our understanding of "that of God in every man" have not yet adequately begun to follow that curve. Quakerism is set irrevocably, as I see it, within the Christian phylum. While I am passionately concerned to keep open all conceivable channels of communication with other living religions, I do not believe that the way forward is an eclecticism which would build a new religion by picking and choosing the best elements in all for some fresh amalgam. Religions, like species within the evolutionary process, are organic entities with depth in history and a promise

of life for the future. Arnold Toynbee is undoubtedly right, it seems to me, in suggesting in his *Christianity Among the Religions of the World* that, in the future, that religion will be victorious which is capable of persuading the other living religions that in its own continuing evolution nothing precious to them will be lost. He dares to hope that this achievement will spring from the living church of Christ, and so do I. Among the living religions I would personally include, as does Teilhard, a form of humanism, and hence I should like to keep these other Teilhardian terms in the back of our minds: "hom-inization" and "divinization" as well as "christification."

Teilhard took the cosmic Christ of St. Paul and updated the concept to meet the specifications of twentieth-century man, who is constrained to see everything in the perspective of biological space-time or duration. What are the new elements such an interpretation introduces? What are the new lines of thought that must follow that curve?

To begin with, the mysterious quality designated by the phrase, "that of God," can no longer be conceived of as static, the signature, as it were, of the Maker on a creature that is finished. Creation is known today, because it is experienced, as something still in process, unfinished, but tending toward an objective, the realization of the new man. Other metaphors in the Quaker vocabulary pointing variously to the same reality include the Light Within, the Inner Light, the Inward Light, the Light of Christ, Christ Within, and the Seed. This last metaphor happily suggests by promise a fruit not yet come into being. Teilhard stresses the importance of what he calls the within-ness, or the within of things. Within matter was the promise of life. Molecular substances, under certain circumstances, were capable of evolving into cellular substance. Within life was the promise of man. Within man is the promise of the Christ-Life. Point omega of the entire process of an evolutionary universe is the christification of man. And not man alone, but the entire universe. As with Paul, nature as well as man is to be redeemed. Teilhard sees the entire process as one vast becoming, a Christogenesis.

But we are here primarily concerned with the christification of man, that is, the becoming increasingly Christ-like of

the new man. It is important for us to see that here is a concept, a way of seeing man, in transit as it were, of which George Fox never dreamed. By strange coincidence, Mark records Jesus as choosing an epithet for himself, "Son of Man," and Paul proposed another, "the first-born of many brethren," metaphors which are not incompatible with our current perspective. But neither Jesus nor Paul could have known anything of our modern world view.

The metaphor, "the seed," for example, has in evolutionary context a meaning quite beyond its pre-Darwinian connotation. Later developments of species can be seen as present potentially in seed form at earlier periods. Similarly, civilized man was present by seed in prehistoric man. Spiritual man, if we may so name the new man, dwells in seed form in contemporary man. More than this, the seed has already borne fruit in the Jewish mystic, Jesus of Nazareth, and, less well-formed and ripe perhaps, in other Christ-like men in the milieux of other cultures and religions.

Moreover, we need to remember the strange unanimity of testimony made by the great mystics of all times and places regarding the basic questions of what it would be like to be fully man and what would be the chief characteristics of the good society. The portrait is always the representation of a non-violent man, the man for others, disciplined, self-contained, gathered, at once contemplative and activist. And the society envisioned is the kind of community such a man would shape.

This does not mean that this seed, "that of God in every man," the as yet unborn Christ-life, will inevitably bear its ultimate fruit in the christification of man. Our evolutionary perspective can, on the one hand, give credence to the claims of the most enthusiastic humanists. On the other hand, this enthusiasm is tamed by the sober realization that, on the record, within the evolutionary process, not only do individuals fail to realize their potential — whole species can become extinct. This death of species, when it occurs, seems to be the result of over-specialization, as with the saber-toothed tiger and the dinosaurs. Man too is in grave danger of over-specializing. To the neglect of the cultivation of conscience, his intellectual development has enabled him to conceive and to fashion imple-

ments of destruction so potent as to threaten his own survival. And one cannot erase from memory what man has proven himself capable of in the grip of what Toynbee called the false religions of our time: communism, nationalism, and individualism. There is no guarantee of continued forward movement of man, even in evolutionary perspective. There is only evidence of promise in the seed. Lecomte de Noüy, in his *Human Destiny*, a precursor in some ways to Teilhard's *Phenomenon of Man*, expressed the conviction, from the evolutionary point of view, that should one man in a million be loyal to conscience, this is more important than all the social, political, and economic revolutions of our time.

Teilhard views the christification of man as certain to the eye of faith because it has been in the plan of the Creator from the beginning. As I understand him, in his attempt to remain loyal to the dogmas of his church, sometimes at the expense of logical consistency, he retains a kind of *parousia*, a return of Christ from on high, concurrently with the final stage of the upward climb of evolution. My own conviction is less sanguine. It is for me a matter of hope against hope, of a great promise that may not be realized. As I see it, as post-Darwinians we can engage in a new covenant with the living God. If, in the Quaker view, we may have post-biblical revelation, may we not also come by a post-biblical covenant? The new covenant promises that if man will be obedient to the moral law, operative within the Kingdom as Jesus lived and taught it, he may move in the direction of the christification of man on earth. Alas, a covenant is a covenant, and this implies the keeping of an agreement by both parties: man as well as God.

Let me pause here to draw parallel to our thinking the other metaphors Teilhard uses: divinization and hominization. Christification may be a stumbling block to some in other living religions who would accept the word divinization. After all, the Christ concept is in some ways a superstructure imposed by the church on the Jesus of history. I think specifically of Sri Aurobindo in the Hindu tradition whose epic poem, *The Divine Life*, indicates the extraordinary degree to which his philosophy and theology had assimilated the perspective of

biological space-time. And I would want to keep in mind those humanists who have been lost to the church in our time because of the church's insistence that doctrines be literally instead of metaphorically interpreted, but who have, nevertheless, a profound faith in man and his potential. Teilhard expresses confidence that even those communists who are also genuine humanists will find their quest at some point converging with that of the theists.

I am thinking too of that very moving section in *The Plague* by Camus when Tarrou says, "It comes to this. What interests me is learning how to become a saint." Doctor Rieux responds, "I feel more fellowship with the defeated than with the saints. Heroism and sanctity don't really appeal to me, I imagine. What interests me is being a man." Then Tarrou makes a very moving confession: "Yes, we're both after the same thing, but I'm less ambitious."<sup>2</sup> For some men becoming truly human is more to be desired than striving for sainthood, and even more difficult. More elements in man would have to achieve integration. It is well that we should recognize this fact if we would enter into real communication and genuine communion with some of the humanists of our time as well as with representatives of other living religions.

What we have to be is what we are by promise. As Christians we may well choose to call this process the christification of man, but let us not rule ourselves out of communication and communion with our fellows by failing to accept also the terms divinization and hominization.

#### ROMAN CATHOLIC UPDATING IN THE TEILHARDIAN TRADITION

It is my impression that more is being accomplished at present by Roman Catholic than by Protestant theologians in attempting to rethink traditional questions in categories acceptable to modern man. It will be instructive, I think, to follow the approach of one Eulalio Baltazar in his ground-breaking, foundation-shaking, proposed new philosophy for the Church of Rome. In his book entitled *Teilhard and the Supernatural*, he presents the outlines of a new philosophy of process as a "feasible framework for theological reformulation in general."

He sees the task of Christian renewal as fundamentally the task of grasping more deeply the relation between nature and super-nature.

The modern man wants all values related to the world, and not just to any world, but to this world — the modern world. Furthermore, any supernatural value must be seen as central, intrinsic, "natural," to this world. If there is to be any spirituality at all, it must be "naturalistic," as opposed to supernatural, immanent rather than transcendent.<sup>3</sup>

Baltazar wrestles valiantly against the philosophic-theological system of Thomism in which he was reared, inspired and encouraged by the Teilhardian vision. Wanting to retain the gratuity of grace he concludes that, far from the Aristotelian-Thomistic view that to be gratuitous grace must be extrinsic, one must understand that, from our new evolutionary perspective, the greater the gratuity the greater the immanence. He believes that "the source of most of our tensions in theology and the spiritual life, is, then, the attempt to think in the context of the medieval world while actually living in this world." So he goes on to demonstrate that the supernatural is "constitutive of nature, situated at the very core of it, and its highest perfection, without which it is unintelligible."<sup>4</sup> In the end, however, he concludes that we should not even refer to the natural and the supernatural but think only in the categories of the natural and the unnatural. That from one reared as a Thomist! Where are the Protestant theologians today accomplishing anything like such an *aggiornamento*? Most, alas, are still neo-Barthian or neo-orthodox in their outlook.

Baltazar supports this radical bringing-up-to-date by constructing a philosophy of process which is an attempt to bring the lines of that basic discipline into conformity with the curve of modern man's perspective: biological space-time. In an evolving universe, change is the condition for growth. There has been a shift from the Ptolemaic to the Einsteinian perspective in space and from the static universal species of Aristotle to the evolving species of Darwin in the time perspective. Philosophy

and theology today must be evolutionary in outlook. Creation is still going on and the essential meaning of reality will be revealed only at the end of the process. A church that has made the transition from a Platonic to an Aristotelian philosophy and hence from an Augustinian to a Thomistic theology should not shrink from a new philosophical and theological orientation to meet our modern world view. The medieval synthesis was a great achievement in its time. It is not valid for today. As Teilhard put it, we need now to advance from a "metaphysic of the cosmos to a metaphysic of cosmogenesis."<sup>5</sup> Another way to express the transition of philosophic outlook required by our times is to say that it involves moving from a philosophy of being as in Plato and Aristotle to a philosophy of becoming.

The book proceeds to effect a conversion from Aristotelian categories to those of a philosophy of process, from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional world. This revolution is comparable to the revolution in human thought when man discovered that the earth revolves about the sun, instead of the reverse. One must think of everything now in terms of process or processes, not as substances.

We must also break free of the Hellenic notion that eternity is a-temporal instead of limitless time, as in the Scriptures. Baltazar reminds us that for the Greeks eternity is qualitatively different from time, whereas for the Hebrews, it involves an indefinite or infinite extension of time. In our evolutionary perspective we are in an important aspect returning to the Hebrew conception of the fullness of time as a limitless time.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is ever the Almighty. (Rev. 1:8)

We move therefore from a concept of reality that is basically static to one that is basically becoming. In a philosophy of process, the only meaning essence can have in relation to a given object would be the form that object took when it was fully evolved. Since no one knows what that form will be, we can speak only of probabilities. What identifies a particular seed for us is the fruit it will bear. When we as Quakers now

refer to the seed within we must see it as a potential for the christification of man, since our understanding of the essence of man cannot, at least at this stage of the process, conceive of any condition for man beyond the realization of Christ-likeness. Hence christification is point omega for man, man's essence or promise: the omega, moreover, is not only the end product in the process, but the withinness of the object in the present. What needs always to be kept in mind is that if reality is process, then the present is the region of becoming and not being. To be separated from time would mean to cease to be. To be, moreover, is to change and grow. A paradox is involved here: to remain the same, that is, to preserve a state of being, a thing must change. It is necessary to grasp this principle of paradox if we are to understand the philosophy of process and to be able to move in theological statement from the literal to the symbolic.

Baltazar also sees grace as intrinsic to man, instead of extrinsic as had been taught by the Roman Church. It is immanent within man while retaining its transcendence. Grace is God's offer of divine love to the creature and of the union that this love makes possible. Love is an interpersonal union and hence operates within the uniqueness of the individual, the personal. Love is, as Teilhard called it, the radial energy of the universe, the within of things.

The final clincher in the argument of Baltazar is that if a process is known by its omega, as the acorn is judged the seed of an oak, then evolution is itself a "supernatural" process in the traditional use of the word. The distinction made by the scholastics between the natural and the supernatural falls apart. Creation cannot be opposed to redemption. It must be understood as not merely cosmological but soteriological as well. We can no longer think of two acts as if the natural order had been created, and the supernatural superimposed upon it, as Aristotelian-Thomistic theology had insisted. Our modern categories enable us to return to a more biblical approach. Paul, for example, was able to see the incarnation as the fullness of the process of creation. The fatal flaw in scholastic theology was the equating of creation with Aristotelian cosmology which demanded the formulation of supernatural revelation as extrin-

sis in character. The incarnation, instead of being understood as immanent and intrinsic to the process, was also thought of as extrinsic. From our modern perspective, creation itself must be perceived as salvific and gratuitous. The christification of the universe becomes the fullness of creation. God must be understood, not so much as the ground of our being, as the ground of our becoming in evolution.

For the Bible itself there was no natural or cosmological order distinct from the redemptive or supernatural order. This later view was the result of an accommodation of the biblical account to the Hellenic perspective. With our new biological space-time perspective we are actually returning to the biblical point of view, but with a new dimension added. Christ becomes the within of an evolving universe which is God's creative action in time. We may no longer think of creation first, to which an order of grace is added, but an unfinished creation whose core and completion is grace. The principle of gratuity is retained, as indeed it must be where love is involved, but the gratuity becomes present from the start, not brought to bear later. The incarnation is intrinsic, immanent in creation itself, because the whole process moves toward ultimate christification. We must particularly note that the Aristotelian-Thomistic epistemological approach is to see things as possessing form or essence, whereas the Pauline-Teilhardian approach is to see reality as a symbol of becoming. From the first perspective the incarnation, the coming of Jesus, had to be related extrinsically to the creation; from our perspective creation must be intrinsically related to the incarnation and the final denouement in the christification of the universe.

The whole question with which Baltazar is grappling is whether Christ is natural to the world or supernatural to it. Christ, he insists in the end, is natural to the world. Christianity from this perspective turns out to be pure naturalism. The material world is identified as sacred, spiritual, and divine, because it leads to Christ omega. This evolving universe is conceived and experienced as a Christogenesis from start to finish. Hence Baltazar sees Christian renewal as inevitably involving philosophic renewal in terms of a covenanted universe and of reality in process. In this light the province of theology becomes

that of discovering within the framework established by this philosophy of process, what constitutes past and present revelation, and to identify valid symbols in the present stage of becoming for the ultimate point omega. And the vocation of the church of Christ becomes the divine commission of drawing the world forward to this point omega, whether by the sacramental process as Teilhard envisioned it for the Church of Rome, or by the nonliturgical methods employed, for example, by the Society of Friends.

The relevance of all this for us Friends is that, while George Fox was in no sense a strict scholastic, his thought moved more within that framework than our own. The doctrine that there is that of God in every man does indeed presuppose the immanence of the supernatural in the form of grace. But Fox thought in terms of the two worlds, basically represented by the sea of darkness and the sea of light. The world he lived in was two-dimensional, this world and the world beyond of Christian hope and expectation. They were bridged, it is true, by the Light Within, the Inner Christ, the Seed, and so on. But the natural man had still to be transformed by divine intervention. The philosophic undergirding of Fox and Barclay was not fundamentally different from the Aristotelian-Thomistic one.

In a philosophy of process demanded by three-dimensional space-time, that of God in every man must be reinterpreted and understood, not merely as the immanence of the divine vouchsafed man for the salvation of his immortal soul, but as a seed infused in matter from the foundation of the world, bearing the promise of the christification of man and the universe. I am to turn to this inward monitor then, not only to teach me obedience to the will of a transcendent God and the Son who metaphorically reigns with him at his right hand, but as my daimon who can teach me how I can pursue my own, as yet un-lived, Christ-life, and in so doing make my own tiny contribution to the christification of the species as well. I must relate to the Jesus of history as disciple to master, that I may learn from him how to live in the Kingdom that is already in our midst by seed and promise.

#### THE PERSPECTIVE OF DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

We have to relate what we are saying now to what we were saying earlier about modern man's need to assimilate in every area of his thinking the new concept of the process of development within the biological space-time continuum. Evolution has progressed by means of expanding forms of consciousness, involving the experience of ever more unity and relatedness in the midst of ever greater complexification, until we arrive at the achievement of individuation in man. But if man is still evolving, and we assume he is, then in the new man, man's successor, the first-born among many brethren, we shall inevitably look for the emergent as a new form of consciousness. We should expect to find its present seed somewhere in the unconscious of the individual and in the collective unconscious of the species. We may also anticipate increasing conscious manifestations as this new form of consciousness emerges from the unconscious.

This brings us to a consideration of the way in which the new depth-psychological insights into the nature of man also place their demands upon us for an *aggiornamento* of our only Quaker dogma. I am thinking particularly of the work of Carl Jung who dared to insist that the unconscious was the locus of the growing, the evolving, edge of the individual's psyche in terms of individuation, and of the species in terms of archetypal images in the collective unconscious.

Some of us believe that the mystical consciousness of identification with all men, with nature, and with nature's God in an infinite variety of forms is one of the authentic marks of the new man. The classical mystical experience in the modern perspective confirms our belonging to the entire process out of which we have evolved and within which we continue to evolve. The values we cherish, the immanent God we have known as the mysterious presence within, these are the grounds of our becoming.

For the individual this also involves the experience of an interior daimon to whom he must turn in the spirit of child-like teachableness and obedience to learn what manner of man he is to become, what new directions pursue, what new commitments undertake. The Jungian looks for this daimon to make

his message known through dreams, what Frances Wickes called phantasy and what Ira Progoff calls twilight imaging. A trusted counselor capable of assisting in evoking and interpreting such images, and participation in a small group, stimulating one another in a faithful pursuit of the quest, are both helpful. But the most important thing is faith in the capacity of the quest itself to yield the pearl of great price, a sense of personal meaningfulness and meaningfulness in the process, evolution, of which we are the product and one of the present manifestations in transit.

Depth psychology, meantime, has also provided us insights by which we can be spared dead-end detours such as projection, transference, and wish-fulfillment. We are more intensely aware of the potential vagaries within the human psyche than any previous generation. At the same time we possess more wisdom with which to appraise movement that is going in the right direction. One can apply here, for example, the criteria Rufus Jones proposed for judging the authenticity of a mystical experience: a marked increase in the coherence of the personality, and a striking release of psychic energy, so that a man finds that he can do better and with less fatigue the work that lies at hand.

From this point of view "that of God in every man," whatever else it may mean, becomes the point of potential growth and development for the individual and the species, made known primarily through the unconscious. A new interior activity, to be added to the traditional forms of prayer, meditation, and contemplation, is indicated. Not only does one continue to pray to a transcendent God who existed before life began on this planet and who has determined its point omega when we shall be no more, but also one is to become attentive to the immanent God precisely through the images speaking through the unconscious to his conscious condition. What these modern psychological evangelists are telling us in their contemporary gospels is the good news not only that there is indeed that of God within, but also that this somewhat, something, Someone within, is the power of God unto salvation here, now, not only for us as individuals but also for the species as well.

Finally, if these new insights are to be fused and transposed into a genuine *aggiornamento*, instead of dying for want of rootage, we must discover together and demonstrate how they relate to and in some sense actually emerge from our Judaeo-Christian heritage. We would return in solitude to disciplined meditation upon the word of God in the Bible. We would dare, on an ecumenical basis, to determine together by consensus what might constitute a new canon of written revelation since biblical times. We would enter into fraternal discussion with our brethren from other living religions and with other genuine humanists of our time that we may learn from them as well as offer to them the shape revealed by the archetypal images that point the way forward to the new man and the redeemed community in our respective traditions. Within our own household of faith we may speak of the christification of man. With others we shall be led to know when to refer to the "divinization" of man, and when to "hominization." But we shall be speaking of one process of becoming.

We shall not spend our energies debating the manner in which humanity and divinity were fused in the historic Jesus of Nazareth, the natural and the supernatural, as have other generations of Christians. We shall rather experience and celebrate the human and the divine in ourselves and learn as disciples from the Jesus of history what it means to dwell in the Kingdom here, now, in this world. Nor shall we ever forget that all we know of a mysterious being we name God has come to us through meeting something of Him in other men and in ourselves. All the rest is projection. William Blake gave counsel that still speaks to our condition:

Thou art a man;  
 God is no more;  
 Thine own humanity  
 Learn to adore.

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