

Lo scritto *“Evoluzione cosmica ed impasse teologico”* (fra gli “Articoli” di questo sito) termina con l’accenno ad un’interessante studio di Richard W. Kropf, qui integralmente pubblicato, il cui titolo in italiano è:

“Ecumenismo e convergenza: il progetto di Teilhard de Chardin per la riunificazione cristiana”

[Alle pagine 7-9 sintesi in italiano.](#)

ECUMENISM AND CONVERGENCE:

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN’S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN REUNION

Richard W. Kropf *

The author bases his analysis on Teilhard de Chardin’s unpublished notes and his essay on ecumenism, published in 1946, in which Teilhard defined two kinds of ecumenism: basal-ecumenism which includes all people and all great religions, and summit-ecumenism which includes the “divided bodies of Christian belief”. Basal-ecumenism refers to the separation across religious lines between those who are humanistically oriented and those who are not, or those with a “this worldly” as opposed to an “other worldly” orientation. Summit-ecumenism is concerned with doctrinal and organizational difficulties within Christianity itself. However, both forms are interdependent.

In his later notes on the issues of ecumenism, he perceived that the basic problem was one of uniting two conflicting orientations, i.e. this-worldly progress vs. other-worldly salvation. He observed that the then current approaches were inadequate. One wanted a return to a mythical common past while the other was searching for a common ground of agreement for the present which could lead only to reductionism and union based on sentimentality. The author explains how these objections of Teilhard’s fit into his overall philosophy.

Teilhard takes a third approach called “convergence”. The basis of convergence is an assertion of the progressive revelation of Christ. Humans come to terms with progressive revelation through divergence, then an eventual convergence. The author spells out this concept in Teilhard’s categories. Thus, our eventual direction is not past or present but future-oriented and consists in a readjustment of the main axis of the Christian faith in order to include “the positive contributions of the converging branches”. Teilhard considered that the basic issue consisted of the coming together of two branches of doctrinal tradition: the Roman and Eastern Orthodox (together representing the “cosmic” aspect of Christ) and the Protestant. The author relates this consideration to Teilhard’s concept of “Pleroma”.

Finally, in his notes, Teilhard calls for a “Christic Revolution” in which the church provides a “new vision of Christ” for the waiting world. The author concludes with a comment on this challenge.

In the face of the present stage, or as some may see it, the present “detente” in Christian ecumenism, the theoretical speculations of the priest-scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin would seem to merit critical examination. While the general philosophical and theological ideals of this seminal twentieth-century thinker are generally concerned with a fruitful synthesis of evolutionary theory with Christian doctrine, his apologetic concern with the situation of Christianity in the face of an unbelieving world prompted him to be directly concerned with ecumenical matters, both in a broad and in a more specific sense. Although only one essay of his has been published on this matter,¹ there also exists in his private notes an outline for a further excursion into the subject. It will be the object of this paper to explore the meaning of these latter notes in the light of the earlier

*At the time of this article’s original publication (in the “Journal Ecumenical Studies”, Vol. 12, 1.Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, pp. 69-77), Richard W. Kropf (Roman Catholic) taught philosophy and religion at Lansing Community College and was Associate Professor of Religion at Olivet College, both in Michigan. He previously taught in primary and secondary Catholic schools and in adult education for nine years in Michigan. He holds a Ph.D.-S.T.D. from St. Paul University, Ottawa, and the University of Ottawa (1973), Fairleigh Dickinson University Press published his doctoral dissertation in 1980 – *“Teilhard, Scripture, and Revelation: A Study of Teilhard de Chardin’s Reinterpretation of Pauline Themes”*.

¹ Ecumenisme,” in *Science et Christ, Oeuvres de Teilhard de Chardin*, Vol. 9 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), pp. 253-254. The English translation may be found in *Science and Christ* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 197-198.

essay in the hope that ideas which death prevented him from developing more fully will nevertheless contribute to further ecumenical dialogue and progress.

A. *"Basal-Ecumenism": The Necessary Prerequisite*

In his 1946 essay, "Oecumenisme", Teilhard made a distinction between ecumenism in the broadest sense of the word, which he called "basal-ecumenism" (the relationship between all people in general, and between all the "great religions"), and "summit-ecumenism" (meaning by this the specific efforts to achieve unity between the divided bodies of Christian belief). In his mind, the basic division which cuts across humanity as a whole is not so much the distinction between Christian and non-Christian, but the division between those who believe in the future of humanity on this earth and those who do not. This basic division to some extent even cuts across Christianity for, while the Christian *ex professo* (in virtue of the doctrine of the Incarnation) believes in the redemption of human beings and their universe, the fact is that Christianity has been often deformed (as Bonhoeffer also trenchantly noted) into the pattern of transcendental escape from this world. To Teilhard's mind, this "basal" rift between persons of good will not only divides the believers in a this-worldly progress from those who believe that the only true progress can be in terms of the other-worldly (thus dividing, for example, the Marxist from those who would use religion as an "opiate"), but it also tends to divide (at least in theory, if not entirely in practice) the adherents of the great Oriental religions from the believers in Christ. Finally, this rift, inasmuch as it is found in a more or less disguised form within Christianity itself (even within the same denominations), both debilitates Christianity's efforts to spread its message to the rest of the world and also underlies (as shall be seen) the major difficulties facing the Christian churches in their attempts to achieve unity with their counterparts or even within their own ranks.

This singling out of the need for a "basal-ecumenism" on Teilhard's part, however, is not meant to imply that "summit-ecumenism", more explicitly understood in terms of doctrinal and to some extent organizational unity, is something entirely secondary, impossible, or ill-conceived until such a time that "basal-ecumenism" becomes-a fact. On the contrary, "faith in mankind, if carried as far as it can be taken, cannot, it would seem, be satisfied without a fully explicit Christ". But, without a "basal-ecumenism" which involves a "sharply defined 'type' of humanity" as well as "the clear perception of a sharply defined (and real) 'type' of God ... no agreement can have serious value: it will be based only on ambiguities of pure sentimentality".² In other words, the success of both a broad (human) ecumenism and a specific (Christian) ecumenism depend mutually on each other: a progressive humanism without Christ will remain nebulous and incomplete and a unified Christianity will be impossible without a Christ who is seen as activating and focusing the progressive evolution of humanity. As will become evident from Teilhard's notes, the hope of "summit-ecumenism" lies in such a progressive (both in object and development) concept of Christ.

B. *"Summit-Ecumenism": The Problem of Doctrinal Development*

The essay that has just been discussed was written in 1946, Teilhard did not directly address himself to the subject of "summit-ecumenism" until shortly after the Evanston meeting of the World Council of Churches in the autumn of 1954. The news of this meeting and the statements that issued from it apparently stimulated Teilhard's reflections on "summit-ecumenism" (although

² Ibid., p. 254 (p. 198). While it is not clear from the above quotation whether "a sharply defined" God is spoken of in relation to "summit-ecumenism" or a "basal-ecumenism" (the former seems more logical), still in "Pour y voir clair" [in *Oeuvres de Teilhard de Chardin*, Vol. 7, pp. 223-236; in English, "A Clarification: Reflections on Two Inverse Forms of the Spirit," in *The Activation of Energy* (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 215-228], the question of God conceived as a term of "pantheistic fusion" vs. a God of personal union ("Eupantheism" in Teilhard's terminology) is treated as correlative to the whole question of humanity's future in a universe which Teilhard was convinced was ultimately "personalistic". In his estimation, it is the lack of a fully explicit Christ which accounts for both the "fusionary" (impersonal) and "otherworldly" tendencies of Oriental pantheisms.

he no longer used that phrase), specifically in terms of the christological aspects of his thought which had increasingly dominated his attention during the final years of his life and which would reach a climax in his last major essay, "Le Christique",³ written just a few months later and a few weeks before his death. The unwritten essay, which was to be called "Oecumenisme et Convergence", is outlined in a lengthy note in his "Journal" and is dated September 10, 1954.⁴ Along with the proposed title there appears the phrase "(A la recherche d'un sommet!)", which seems to orient his concern as being not primarily ecclesiological but more directly christological, directed towards a common faith and hope in the future, a converging apprehension of the Omega-point of evolution as embodied in the "Cosmic Christ".

The note itself appears to fall into three general parts, the first dealing with the state of the question as posed by the ecumenical approaches explored by the Evanston meeting. The situation, as seen by Teilhard, is given an "irreversible" impetus by the command of Christ but at the same time appears to hinge around the problem of the bringing together of two apparently diverse goals or hopes of humanity, namely worldly progress and heavenly salvation, the old dichotomy expressed in his first essay on ecumenism, and this time characterized as a "double summit".⁵ However, in the attempt to achieve this integration which he has already deemed absolutely necessary, Teilhard delineates the two approaches which he sees ecumenical discussions taking, both of which he deems inadequate to the task at hand, even when confined to the strictly theological task of coming to agreement on basic christological doctrine.

The first of these approaches, that which he saw to be favored by Eastern Orthodox (as well as Roman Catholic) Christianity, consists of an appeal back to a "primitive" or undivided Christianity, idyllically thought to exist before all "sinful separations", in other words in terms of a simple recall to "the faith of our fathers" or, as Teilhard put it, "(our) grandparents".

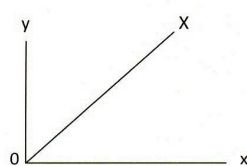
The second approach, which Teilhard also deems insufficient, is that favored by Reformed or Protestant Christians, that of seeking out a "common ground" through a reductive process of "disengagement" from the particularities or peculiarities of present confessional positions.

If inference can be made from many of Teilhard's other works, particularly those dealing with the continuation of evolution on the level of human thought as superseding biological evolution, it is obvious that his objections to these two approaches would devolve upon two errors contained in them. The first position advocates a turning-back of the clock of the evolution of human thought, an attempt which, in addition to probably being impossible, also assumes that any further development of Christian doctrine after a certain point of time (as after the first seven ecumenical councils) or outside of a certain mainline tradition (as outside of communion with Rome) is *ipso facto* illegitimate. The second position, while not denying the legitimacy of doctrinal (or confes-

³ Unpublished (March, 1955).

⁴ Journal XX (VIII), p. 70. Journals XIII-XX are in the possession of the Paris Province of the Society of Jesus.

⁵ Teilhard generally depicted the twin axes of human effort by means of a graph in which the horizontal axis (ox) represents evolutionary progress in terms of immanent aspirations, while the vertical axis (oy) represents the direction of y humanity's transcendental aspirations. Hence it would appear that a third axis terminating with an X, i.e., Christ (X, Xt, being common abbreviations employed by Teilhard), would stand for an axis which reconciles the x of human progress (the term of line Ox) with the y of transcendental striving (the term of line Oy).



0 → x = immanent human aspirations

0 → y = transcendental human striving

0 → X = axis towards Christ, reconciling immanent and transcendental human efforts

sional) developments in the sense of a more precise statement of the original Christian beliefs, seems to imply that these developments need only be hermeneutically reduced to a common understanding, if not a common expression, of the biblical message. This latter position would in effect divide the two approaches even more sharply, inasmuch that while Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism hold that doctrinal development yields further truth which is dogmatically binding, the Reformed churches generally consider such doctrinal development simply as theological explication of a "normative" nature, thus adding no new content to the specifically expressed articles of belief.⁶ Be this as it may, Teilhard's objection to both of these approaches becomes more obvious when his own approach (a third method) is examined.

C. Convergence upon a Common Summit within a Progressive Revelation

The extent to which Teilhard's approach differs radically from those which he previously outlined is evident from the very start where he presents his basic principle and its corollaries.

Revelation is a directed process involving a discovery of Christ. Thus schisms and heresies are the inevitable *effects* of divergence preceding the discovery of a greater Christ following in a phase of Convergence.⁷

That Teilhard considered Revelation as a continuing process of discovering the Christ, who will fully appear only at the Parousia, is something that is increasingly obvious from both his writings and his notes on the subject. Without denying the historical definitiveness of God's appearance in Jesus, Teilhard nevertheless believed that the fullness of Christ in his cosmic dimensions is still in the process of revealing itself.⁸ Such a progressive Revelation on the part of Christ is correspondingly apprehended by humankind in much the same way as other knowledge is disseminated, that is, by following laws of divergence and eventual convergence which are analogous to the spread of humanity itself over the face of the earth. Thus just as humanity first experienced an initial phase of geographical dispersion, followed by a new stage of planetary "compression" due to the continued growth of population on a limited surface, so too the "Noosphere", or network of reflective thought generated by these human beings also undergoes its divergent and convergent phases. So, too, Revelation, which Teilhard saw as an on-going process of divine-human interaction, finds that its specifically human components, mysticism and theology, have up until now been characterized by more or less divergent systems; as well as being developed more or less in isolation from other human concerns. Thus religion, as Teilhard characterized it in this note, as elsewhere, tends to move exclusively along an axis that is "ascensional" in direction (this typifying "transcendental" religion), while other human concerns tend to move strictly along a horizontal axis, that is, to be dedicated to exclusively human "progress".

The major problem, however, as Teilhard saw it, is not so much that of the ascensional direction of humanity's transcendental striving (for transcend itself it must in one way or another) as to be the problem of defining the true nature of the "progressive" horizontal axis. More exactly, human effort must be directed in such a way that the progressive striving will at the same time issue in "a higher level of Humanity". This problem involves, as Teilhard understood it, the task not only of correcting the direction of the progressive axis along a line that is more "ascensional" in direction, but also of redirecting theological concern in such a way that the "common ground" of present belief and the "deepening" of primitive Christian belief is sought not in the present or the past, but

⁶ Teilhard, following Newman in this matter, was convinced that the doctrinal content of Christianity undergoes a true evolution which can be legitimately defined in dogmatic terms.

⁷ Journal XX (VIII), p. 70.

⁸ Regarding Teilhard's conviction that Revelation should be understood more in terms of a process, cf. the author's more extensive treatment of the subject in Chapter VIII of his thesis, "Christogenesis: A Study of Teilhard de Chardin's Reinterpretation of Pauline Themes" (thesis presented to St. Paul University, Ottawa, and the University of Ottawa, 1972).

in the direction of the future (*en avant*).

Practically speaking, however, such a solution must deal with existing realities, both ecclesiastical and theological. The phenomenon of Christianity, as Teilhard remarked so many times, resembles that of a phyletic growth, a "phylum of love" whose distinctive characteristic is convergence on a single point, a totalization or a "cephalization" of reflective personalities in a single organism which is centered in the divine Omega. But such a phylum, if it exists at all, must already have its principal axis, its central trunk of growth. This trunk is for Teilhard, of course, the Roman "stock".⁹ But this central member of the Christian phylum needs a certain "re-adjustment", a kind of reorientation to bring its line of growth within the true direction or ideal axis of growth, and in addition misreadjustment must be made in such a way as to incorporate "the positive contributions of the converging branches". Clearly Teilhard holds to the well-known "branch theory" of Christianity, but, as with his own comparison of his ideas with Bergson's model of evolution, he has stood the whole thing "on its head", seeing true evolution, at least in its later stages, as convergent rather than divergent in nature.

But why should any readjustment be required? Does the actual direction of the phyletic growth (especially of the trunk itself) and its theoretical axis allow for any possible correction? For Teilhard, this is the nub of the question, for if the present direction of growth is not in fact coterminous with the "critical pole of convergence", then the readjustment must be made and made quickly. The critical pole of convergence, as he saw it, must be the "ever greater Christ", the merging of both the ascensional and the progressive axes of human effort, and the reconciliation of what has hitherto been the occasion of a rift or cleavage concerning the true object of humanity's hope. As he mentions at the conclusion of this section of his outline, and as is illustrated further in the final section of the same note, Teilhard felt that American Protestantism has been granted the privilege of being the pathfinder in this effort, a point which he found curious (Teilhard did not find American theology particularly profound), but nevertheless significant.

D. Teilhard's "Pleromic Solution" for Ecumenical Theology

The third part of Teilhard's outline is more directly concerned with the positive dogmatic content of Christology and less dependent, although not entirely so, on his foregoing analysis of the growth of the "Christian Phylum". While the matter of a "readjustment" of the axis of Christian growth is a more or less abstract expression of human theorizing, what Teilhard finally proposed is based on what he believed is already a revealed fact, the "Pleroma" of Pauline theology.

What Teilhard here termed the "sole (and 'gaping'!) issue" is nothing but how the two theoretical axes of human endeavor are to be brought together in a synthesis of Christ (X) and the Cosmos (K). Understood in terms of existing dogma, it would involve the convergence of two streams or "phases" of doctrinal tradition. The first is the specifically Roman (he added "Neo" to Roman-did he mean his own contribution?) and Eastern Orthodox contributions, taken together, apparently to be understood with the stress on the divine nature itself, but particularly with the Eastern stress on the "cosmic" role of Christ, something which Teilhard found lacking in most Western theologies. The second major contribution would come, he hoped, from Protestantism, but not from European Protestantism alone, the Barthianism which he believed overstresses the transcendent aspects of one's vocation. Instead, Teilhard appealed to the "equilibrium" he believed could be achieved if American and European Protestantism were allowed to complement each other.

While Teilhard's christological synthesis reached its full expression in his own adaptation of the

⁹ Cf. *Le Phénomène Humain* (*Oeuvres*, Vol. 1, p. 332); *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper and Row Torchbooks, 1.965), p. 298. Cf. also "Introduction à la Vie chrétien" in *Oeuvres*, Vol. 10, p. 196); *Christianity and Evolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), pp. 167-168.

Pauline Pleroma, the total implications of this concept in Teilhard's mind still remain only tentatively explored. True, the Pleroma in Teilhard's writings can all but be concretely identified with the "Cosmic Christ", but the full ontological content of this affirmation cannot be underestimated. His 1940 definition of the Pleroma in "La parole atténuée" perhaps best clarifies this element:

*The Pleroma: the mysterious synthesis of the Uncreated and the Created, the great completion (both quantitative and qualitative) of the Universe in God.*¹⁰

But even this definition does not tell the full story, for Teilhard's concept of the Pleroma was not simply a passive one (i.e., creation being completed by God) but, as is evident from his mature thought, it includes a strong active element as well—the concept of God in some way being "completed" by his Pleroma! In his 1953 "Contingence de l'Univers et goût humain de survivre", in the context of speaking of the Pleroma as a corrective notion to the exaggerated sense of contingency which would discount human efforts towards progress in this world as being inconsequential, Teilhard affirmed:

*In truth, it is not the sense of the Contingency of creation, but the sense of a mutual Completion of the World and God which makes Christianity live.*¹¹

While a great deal more could be said about the implications of this view, it would appear from this expanded concept of the Pleroma why Teilhard ranked the "basal-ecumenism" of a common vision for human destiny as being of nearly equal importance with the "summit-ecumenism" which must be undertaken among the Christian churches, for the Christic Pleroma, in his estimation, is not to be simply the product of a divine "Parousia" of an interventionist and destructive nature. Rather, remaining true to all his earlier insights on this question, the Parousia marks the consummation of the Pleroma, for the time of the Parousia remains, at least in part, dependent on the condition of humanity's having achieved its fullest possible maturity.

E. Postscript: Ecumenism and the Christic Revolution

While Teilhard's outline for his intended essay appears to end with the notation described above, there exists another notation, undated, on the next page of his "Journal", which may have been meant to be a conclusion or postscript to the same essay.¹² It is not entirely legible. However, in it Teilhard appears to have been harking back to his old theme of the 1946 "Ecumenism" essay, at least so far as it involves the relationship of Christian believers with all other religious persons. Thus he again searches for a "Foyer" or "threshold" of a common belief, but one which he apparently despairs of finding in terms of any "Common ground" or in terms of a succession of common origins (?—the wording is not clear).

However, this much is very clear, and that is that this final note calls for a veritable "Christic Revolution", one in which the church finally presents, after two millennia of doctrinal elaboration, that new vision of Christ which the world awaits. That there is such an expectation in humanity, fermenting in the depths of the "noosphere", was one of Teilhard's most certain convictions, and that there is an ever-growing answer to this expectation, already revealed in the Pleroma as taught by St. Paul, was his even more certain belief. But until the Christian churches, engage in a revolution in their Christology, one which is capable of meeting this expectation of humanity, much of our present ecumenical activity, however well-meant, remains methodologically premature.

¹⁰ Le Plérôme: la mystérieuse synthèse de l'Incréé et du Créé - la grande completion (à la fois quantitative et qualitative) de l'Univers en Dieu" (as published in *Cahiers de Teilhard No 4* Publication of the Fondation et Association Teilhard de Chardin, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1963, p. 26).

¹¹ "En vérité, ce n'est pas le sens de la Contingence du Créé, mais c'est le sens de la Completion mutuelle du Monde et de Dieu qui fait vivre le Christianisme" (*Oeuvres*, Vol. 10, p. 271, my translation; cf. also *Christianity and Evolution*, pp. 226-227).

¹² Journal XX (VIII), p. 71.

SINTESI IN ITALIANO

Pag. 1

Lo studio di R. Kropf si basa su alcune note inedite di TdC e sul suo scritto *"Ecumenismo"* (Cfr. P. Teilhard de Chardin, *La Scienza di fronte a Cristo*, Gabrielli ed., Verona 2002, p. 227). Ivi, egli prevede due tipi di ecumenismo: di base (fra tutti gli uomini) e di vertice fra tutte le confessioni cristiane. Il primo raccoglie tutti coloro che hanno a cuore le sorti di questo mondo. Il secondo si occupa dei problemi dottrinali e teologici che tuttora dividono i cristiani.

Nelle note successive TdC si accorse che esistono due orientamenti contrastanti: uno per il progresso del mondo e l'altro per la salvezza del mondo. TdC adotta un terzo approccio, definito di "convergenza", il cui fondamento è la progressiva rivelazione di Cristo. La direzione deve essere orientata al futuro e comporta una revisione dell'asse principale della fede cristiana in modo da includervi i "contributi positivi dei rami convergenti". Per TdC, si tratta di riunire due correnti cristiane: da un lato i cattolici e gli ortodossi (che rappresentano l'aspetto "cosmico" di Cristo) e dall'altro i Protestanti. R. Kropf correla questa prospettiva al concetto teilhardiano di "Pleroma". Infine, nelle sue note, Teilhard invoca una "rivoluzione cristica", in cui la chiesa offre al mondo in attesa una "nuova visione di Cristo".

TdC ha operato una sintesi filosofico- teologica fra l'evoluzione e la dottrina della Chiesa; si è inoltre preoccupato dei problemi ecumenici, in senso generale e specifico. Sebbene sia stato pubblicato un solo suo saggio sull'ecumenismo, fra i suoi appunti personali si trovano delle linee guida per ulteriori approfondimenti.

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Secondo TdC, l'umanità è divisa fra coloro che credono nel suo futuro su questa Terra e quelli che non se ne preoccupano o non assumono delle responsabilità verso il mondo.

Questa spaccatura attraversa anche le comunità cristiane, è di ostacolo alla diffusione del messaggio evangelico e rende più difficile la loro unificazione.

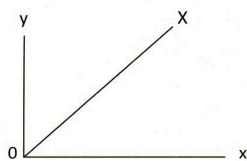
TdC non sottovaluta l'ecumenismo di vertice, per finalità sia dottrinali che organizzative, ma l'ecumenismo di base è essenziale con il suo modo di esprimere una nuova umanità ed un'idea più penetrante di Cristo. Insomma un umanesimo progressista senza Cristo resterebbe vago ed incompleto, mentre una Cristianità unita sarebbe impossibile senza la proclamazione di un Cristo che anima e guida l'evoluzione umana.

La speranza di successo dell'ecumenismo di vertice è solo possibile con l'accordo su una concezione dinamica di Cristo, come sviluppo e termine dell'unificazione umana.

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TdC ha rivolto la sua attenzione all'ecumenismo di vertice solo nel 1954, dopo aver saputo l'esito del World Council of Churches, ad Evanston, nell'autunno del 1954. Se n'è interessato sotto l'aspetto cristologico, che peraltro dominava il suo interesse alla fine della sua vita (cfr. "Il Cristico", ne *"Il Cuore della Materia"*). Egli stese nel suo "Journal", in data 10 settembre 1954, un lungo saggio (tuttora inedito), intitolato "Ecumenismo e Convergenza". Accanto al titolo c'è questa frase: "Alla ricerca di un vertice!", con cui intendeva riassumere la sua fede e speranza in un futuro verso Omega, incarnato nel Cristo-Cosmico. La nota è suddivisa in tre parti.

Nella prima parte TdC riconosce che l'incontro fra le varie confessioni cristiane è causato dall' "irresistibile" forza del comandamento di Cristo all'unità, ma nello stesso tempo egli ritiene che la situazione sia paralizzata dal problema di far coesistere due speranze apparentemente diverse, cioè il progresso del mondo e la salvezza nei cieli: dicotomia già evidenziata nel primo saggio sull'ecumenismo e ora definita come "duplice vertice", rappresentato in tal modo:



0 → x = sforzi per il progresso umano

0 → y = aspirazioni umane trascendenti

0 → X = via che porta a Cristo e concilia le due tendenze umane

Intanto, però, egli pensa che le due posizioni già assunte nei dibattiti ecumenici siano inadeguate, anche se ristrette al compito teologico di trovare un accordo sulla dottrina cristologica di base. La prima, sostenuta dalla chiesa ortodossa (oltre che da quella cattolica), propone il ripristino del cristianesimo iniziale, esistente prima delle “peccaminose divisioni”, il ritorno alla fede dei “nostri padri”. La seconda, dei cristiani protestanti, mira a trovare un “terreno comune” mediante l’abbandono delle attuali peculiarità delle diverse confessioni.

Dal pensiero espresso da TdC nei suoi scritti si evince facilmente che la prima posizione appare anti-evolutiva, presuppone la cancellazione, da un certa data in avanti, di tutte le esperienze fatte, non solo di quelle negative.

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La seconda posizione, pur non negando la legittimità delle differenti basi dottrinali, comporta la necessità di ridurle ermeneuticamente ad un’interpretazione comune del messaggio biblico. Questa è una difficoltà aggiuntiva per la Chiesa cattolica e per quella ortodossa, che considerano i propri sviluppi dottrinali degli arricchimenti di verità, a differenza delle chiese riformate per le quali il contenuto della fede rimane immutato.

Per TdC, la Rivelazione è un processo direzionato che conduce alla scoperta di Cristo. Scismi ed eresie sono effetti delle divergenze che precedono la scoperta di un Cristo più grande, al termine della fase di convergenza, che è quella della Parusia. Senza negare la storicità della presenza di Dio in Gesù, TdC ritiene tuttavia che la pienezza di Cristo nella sua dimensione cosmica sia ancora in corso di rivelazione. Essa è progressivamente acquisita dal genere umano, come ogni altra conoscenza. Allo stesso modo della Noosfera, che si va formando in forza di continue fasi di divergenza-convergenza.

La Rivelazione è un processo di interazione umano-divina. Le sue componenti umane, il misticismo e la teologia, sono caratterizzate da sistemi più o meno divergenti e si sono sviluppate più o meno separatamente dagli altri interessi umani. La religione, poi, tende a muoversi esclusivamente su un asse “ascensionale”, mentre gli altri interessi umani si occupano esclusivamente dell’asse orizzontale, volto al “progresso”.

Il problema principale sta nel definire la vera natura di quest’ultimo. La ricerca del progresso dovrebbe creare nel contempo un “livello più elevato di Umanità”. Non si tratta solo di correggere in senso “ascensionale” la direzione del progresso, ma anche di modificare il pensiero teologico in modo tale che “il motivo comune” della fede presente e l’ “approfondimento” della fede primitiva cristiana sia ricercato non nel presente o nel passato, ma in direzione del futuro (*en avant*).

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È una soluzione che deve fare i conti con le esistenti realtà ecclesiali e teologiche. TdC ha più volte sottolineato che il cristianesimo è paragonabile allo sviluppo di un *phylum*, un “*phylum di amore*” che ha la caratteristica di convergere in un punto di totalizzazione umana o di “cefalizzazione”, in una singola monade centrata nell’Omega divino. Se tale *phylum* esiste, deve già avere il suo asse principale, che per TdC è il “tronco” romano. Questo, tuttavia, necessita di un certo “riaggiustamento” in direzione dell’asse ideale di sviluppo e in modo tale da incorporare “i contributi positivi dei rami convergenti”. TdC si attiene alla nota “teoria dei rami” del Cristianesimo, ma considera più convergenti che divergenti le fasi avanzate della evoluzione.

Il nocciolo della questione è il riaggiustamento della direzione del *phylum* (specie nel suo tronco) perché non è contigua con il “polo critico di convergenza”, cioè con il “Cristo sempre più grande” che emerge sia dagli sforzi ascensionali sia da quelli per il progresso. Questo riaggiustamento è urgente.

TdC riteneva che il protestantesimo americano fosse alla ricerca di questa via mediana ed era per lui un aspetto curioso (perché non considerava che la teologia americana spiccasse per la sua profondità), ma tuttavia significativo.

La terza parte della nota di TdC riguarda il contenuto dogmatico della Cristologia, meno dipendente dall’analisi dello sviluppo del “Phylum cristiano”. Qui la proposta di TdC è più concreta e si basa su un fatto che ritiene già rivelato: il “Pleroma” paolino. La “sola (e ‘dividente’) questione è su come i due assi dello sforzo umano debbano essere messi insieme in una sintesi di Cristo (X) e del Cosmo (K). Bisognerebbe che le due correnti o “fasi” della dottrina tradizionale convergessero.

La prima unisce i contributi specificamente Romani e orientali Ortodossi (TdC ha però scritto “Neo-Romani” e R. Ropf si domanda se egli voleva alludere al proprio contributo), che esaltano la natura divina

e la funzione “cosmica” di Cristo (quest’ultima però carente, secondo TdC, nelle teologie occidentali). Il secondo contributo principale verrebbe dal Protestantesimo, non solo da quello europeo (che, secondo lui, dà eccessiva importanza agli aspetti trascendenti della vocazione personale). Piuttosto, egli pensava ad una soluzione di complementare “equilibrio” fra protestantesimo europeo e nord-americano.

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Negli scritti di TdC, il Pleroma è precisamente identificato nel “Cristo Cosmico”, come lui ha chiarito nel 1940 in “La parola attesa”:

“Il Pleroma: la misteriosa sintesi dell’Increato e del Creato, il grande completamento (sia quantitativo che qualitativo) dell’Universo in Dio”.

Questa definizione non esprime tutto il pensiero di TdC, perché più tardi vi aggiunge un forte elemento attivo, ossia il concetto che Dio in qualche modo viene “completato” dal suo Pleroma! Nel 1953, in “Contingenza dell’universo e gusto umano di sopravvivere”, TdC afferma:

“In verità, a far vivere il Cristianesimo non è il senso della contingenza del Creato, bensì quello del reciproco completamento del Mondo in Dio”.

Da questa concezione ampliata del Pleroma si capisce che per TdC l’ecumenismo di base, avente una comune visione del destino dell’umanità è di non minore importanza dell’ecumenismo di vertice.

Infatti, per TdC, il Pleroma cristico non è semplicemente un effetto della “Parusia” divina di tipo interventistico e di natura distruttiva. Da tutti i suoi scritti risulta chiaro che la Parusia segna la consumazione del Pleroma, poiché il tempo della Parusia è almeno in parte dipendente dalla massima maturità possibile raggiunta dall’umanità.

E. Post-scriptum: Ecumenismo e Rivoluzione Cristica

Oltre a quanto scritto in questa sua bozza per uno studio sull’ecumenismo, c’è una nota senza data nella pagina successiva del “Journal”, che forse avrebbe dovuto essere utilizzata come conclusione o come post-scriptum. Non è del tutto leggibile; tuttavia TdC riprende il vecchio tema del 1946 sull’ “Ecumenismo”, relativamente alle relazioni fra i credenti cristiani e quelli delle altre religioni. Egli cerca ancora un “Focolaio” o una “soglia” per un credo comune, che in apparenza dispera di trovare come “Base comune” o in termini di *origini* (la parola non è chiara) comuni.

È molto chiara invece la sua nota finale, che reclama una vera “Rivoluzione Cristica” da parte della Chiesa, la quale dopo due millenni di elaborazioni dottrinali dovrebbe presentare il Cristo che il mondo attende.

TdC è fortemente convinto che in fondo alla “Noosfera” vi sia tale aspettativa. Ma finché le Chiese non s’impegnano a rivedere la loro Cristologia, in modo tale che essa venga incontro alle attese dell’umanità, molte nostre attività ecumeniche risultano intempestive.

f.m.

