

General conclusions

The alignment between the patristic tradition and the works of Teilhard

There was much common ground between the patristic tradition and the works of Teilhard as they followed the same God of Otherness and Love who is found by contemplation. In particular, Teilhard excelled in his understanding of the works of God regarding how they are viewed temporally. From this understanding, he believed that the universe was moving towards union with God. This eschatological movement was by the universe as a whole, humankind as a whole and individual human persons. He acknowledged that the universe and its parts were all entities which were preserved even when united with God. He also acknowledged that human persons had the freedom to reject the path to union in favour of separation from God. He understood how human persons could begin and retain their position on the path to union. In accordance with the patristic tradition, Teilhard believed that the Universal Christ encompassed the many unions with God and the movement towards them. Finally, Teilhard understood that these things should be reflected in the Eucharistic liturgy

However, he lacked understanding of the patristic tradition of the Trinity, particularly the respective role of its members. This could have adversely affected his understanding of how God works towards the universe but this lack of understanding was alleviated because he understood the principle of not only the divine essence and divine energies but also the divine and natural energies of this world.

Even though Teilhard's writings have excited many, religious authorities have been loath to support the concepts expressed. Support for his writings therefore remains at an individual level. If more people realised that his writings reflected the original Christianity, they would probably receive greater support.

Teilhard's contribution to the western tradition

Teilhard's greatest contribution to the western tradition must be that he unwittingly attempted to restore the essence of the patristic tradition regarding eschatological movement towards God in the Universal Christ. We have used the word 'unwittingly' because Teilhard often regarded himself as an innovator despite his reading of the Cappadocian fathers. If Teilhard has read the works of St Maximus, he would have realised that he was not an innovator on many matters but was merely restoring the original faith as recognized by Charles Raven and Michael Day. Even though their terminology was similar, it appears that it was unlikely that Teilhard had read St Maximus as, otherwise, he would have acknowledged the fact.

Teilhard's contribution to the eastern tradition

The eastern tradition closely follows the theology and spirituality of the patristic tradition. However, Teilhard attempted to describe the eschatological movement of humankind as a whole in both a religious context and also in a social one, an approach which would not have been considered in the seventh century. The fact that there were flaws in Teilhard's arguments should not detract from the importance of what he tried to do. Hopefully, the eastern tradition will take up Teilhard's initiative and express the patristic tradition in terms

of the current age of science and social mobility and collectiveness.¹

The future of Christianity

The loss of the God of the patristic tradition would result in a multitude of various denominations as there would be a variety of deviations from the true God. Some of these denominations will continue to support this tendency because they value their independence. If nothing is done, there is a danger that the result of this situation could lead to a common denominator of mediocracy sharing an inferior 'God'.

Some have attempted a ecumenical position. However, ecumenical activity appears to be devoted to searching for a common denominator even if it was far removed from the original patristic tradition. Such an approach tends to avoid solving fundamental issues. For example, the ARCIC statement on the Mother of God² did not even address the divisive problem of original guilt! If the future Christianity became based upon a common denominator of a diminished 'God' or gods, a diminished universe and a diminished Christ with a diminished relationship between God and human persons.

It therefore appears that, under these circumstances, the only course of action is to restore the patristic tradition and rid Christianity from deviations from that tradition. Such a restoration could be extremely it would be difficult.

One problem is that the true God and His universe have been out of the minds of the faithful for such a considerable time. Also, many are unable to grasp that God is both 'other' but also relates to the universe. Others may find difficulty in understanding the infinite character of God's love. The defenders of the patristic God and universe will have to exercise both guidance and compassion.

Closely connected to the deviations from the patristic God were the loss of understanding of the Universal Christ generally and the related cosmic aspect of the Eucharist. The influence of Teilhard was unfortunately unable to influence this loss. Furthermore, the decline in emphasis on self-offering particularly in the Eucharist must impair the work of God through the hearts of the faithful. To restore such patristic concepts would require not only re-education but support from those in authority, neither of which are likely to be forthcoming in the near future.

Despite these difficulties in the restoration of Christianity, the author has little doubt that restoration of patristic principles could bring about a golden age of Christianity even in this modern age. We are therefore indebted to Teilhard de Chardin, Joseph Ratzinger, Gerry Hughes and others who have shown us the path to a rejuvenated Christianity.

The loss of the true God

If we took a more pessimistic view, the restoration of the original Christianity through a return of the patristic tradition may not occur. Christianity would collapse if the original God of Otherness and Love was lost. The most vulnerable attribute of God is His otherness. His love is less vulnerable but the infinite quality of His love depends on His otherness. A God who does not love all things becomes a phenomenon of the universe.

1 Cf. Alexei V. Nesteruk, *Light from the East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003) Introduction.

2 *Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ*; The Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission, An Agreed Statement (Harrisburg and London: Morehousing Publishing, 2005).

We ascertained that, at times, the concept of otherness was lost principally because, in some parts of Christendom, the God of Otherness was replaced by judicial 'Gods'. The religion of such 'Gods' tend to be divisive because they tend to centre upon a set of rules. This brings them into conflict with those who hold concepts incompatible with those rules. The tendency towards judicial 'Gods' has been maintained because some of the deviations from the God of patristic times were supported by conciliar decrees. Support of these councils must inevitably maintain the resulting schism.

Humankind is tainted by self-love which is divisive so that it has a tendency to lack a common direction, a tendency which working with God can overcome. A less extreme situation would be that human persons love some things to the exclusion of the remainder. If such persons believed in 'God', they would tend to believe in a 'God' who does not love all things. There would then be a multiplicity of different 'Gods'. There is therefore always a danger that the concept of the One God of *Infinite* Love could be lost.

Unfortunately, despite some progress against the notion of judicial 'Gods', there does not appear to be a significant revival of the concept of the God of Otherness so that the concept of the One God is under threat.

In fact, there is an increasing trend against belief in the God of Otherness. If the universe was regarded as the universe-with-God, He could still survive as an entity if He remained unlimited by time. However, a more common tendency is that the God of Otherness is disappearing so that love would no longer be regarded as coming from God. As a result, a common view is that religion can be reduced to the maxim that all human persons should love one another.

At best, a belief could emerge that the universe has a natural energy of love. While those who have found the true God would know that such a natural energy of love must come from God, if that energy was attributed to the universe, it would not be negated. If God was lost, but a natural energy of love was retained, all will not be completely lost. Moreover, if humankind became dedicated to love, it would realise its enormous power for good and may once again look beyond the universe for its origin. Furthermore, human persons will never cease to find the God of Otherness by contemplation. The concept of God will therefore never die especially as those who turn to God become empowered by His Spirit in order to change all things according to His Plan for the universe.

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