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TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

by

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According to Teilhard de Chardin, the human community is undergoing a radical transformation of consciousness. We are evolving from a state of tribal-national awareness to global consciousness. Through a process which he calls "planetization," the forces of evolution have shifted from divergence to convergence. When mankind first appeared on the earth, groups diverged into separate tribal units. However, the spherical shape of the earth, the increase in population and the rapid development of communication in recent times have caused consciousness to converge and intensify. Out of this process, global consciousness is emerging. What effect will this have on religion? What role will religion play in the process of planetization? Can Teilhard's concept of religion help us understand the religious phenomenon of our time? Is this religious phenomenon a specific manifestation of the larger human phenomenon which Teilhard describes as a process of planetization? My paper will examine these questions, exploring the religious phenomenon in the light of Teilhard's concept of religion and his study of the human phenomenon.

The Religious Phenomenon

What is the religious phenomenon of our time? In a broad overview, we can see that it is characterized by two trends: the meeting of world religions and the secularization of modern culture. In an unprecedented
way, diverse religious groups are meeting in an atmosphere of harmony. This is true not only of the ecumenical movement within Christianity, but also of world religions. Where in the past there had often been alienation, suspicion and persecution, there is now mutual respect and enrichment. Both the World Council of Churches and the Vatican have official agencies for dialogue with other religions. Interreligious conferences abound in both the East and the West. The sacred books and spiritual treatises of the world religions are being translated and distributed on a broad scale.

The most striking aspect of this religious convergence is that it is not primarily on the level of dogmatic beliefs, moral prescriptions or ritual, but on the level of spiritual experience. Throughout the world there is a thirst for spiritual values, a focusing on that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions "the spirit." This spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that one is open to the transcendent; it is here that one experiences ultimate reality. Once this core is awakened, it must be cultivated and made the center of one's life. For this purpose, many have embarked on a spiritual journey, seeking the wisdom of religious teachers. In the United States, for example, thousands have turned to the teaching of the East, the practice of meditation and a semi-monastic way of life. However we evaluate it, we are witnessing a religious ferment, a welling up and convergence of spiritual energies which seems to be activated by the process of planetization that Teilhard describes.

Paradoxically, at the same time that the spiritual energies of religions are converging, the modern world is being secularized. Not spiritual, but material concerns have gripped the energies of millions
throughout the world. Those in the poor countries clutch for the bare necessities of life, while the industrial nations multiply luxuries to adorn themselves with the trappings of affluence. In the midst of these extremes, humanists strive for the political, social and economic betterment of mankind. In their secular concerns, they dedicate themselves with the fervor of religious devotees to building a better future for mankind. Yet the tools of progress—so effective in the nineteenth century—have become the very instruments of destruction in the twentieth. Science, technology, industrialization, which have brought the affluent nations countless blessings, have led to the threat of nuclear holocaust, the pollution of the environment and the depletion of natural resources. Mankind's secular enterprises are threatening life on our planet—striking at the very biological support system that sustains human consciousness.

What is the significance of this secularizing trend for the religious phenomenon? Is it merely the negation of religion? Or does it contain within itself a religious meaning? In Teilhard's terms, does it represent a form of human energy which in its roots is spiritual and which must be channeled into the human phenomenon in its process of planetization?

The thesis of this paper is as follows: Teilhard's concept of religion helps us understand the religious phenomenon of our times in both its ecumenical and secularizing trends. His concepts of the convergence and complexification of consciousness clarify the meeting of religions. His understanding of the spiritual power of matter makes it possible to see the process of secularization in a spiritual light. Yet his thought is not merely a harmonious synthesis to be admired at leisure, but the call of a
prophet ringing out across the future, challenging the religions to be active forces in our time to harness and direct human energies at this critical moment in history: so that the secular will reach fruition in the spiritual and the spiritual will encompass and activate the energies of the secular. It is in this sense that Teilhard's thought has had and, I believe, will continue to have an impact on the religious consciousness of the twentieth century.

Teilhard's Concept of Religion

Before exploring Teilhard's thought in relation to the encounter of religions and the secularization of culture, it would be wise to investigate his concept of religion. An extensive study of Teilhard's religious thought has been made by Henri de Lubac, The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin. I will not analyze that work systematically here, but merely highlight some of the central elements in Teilhard's concept of religion. As a priest and member of the Jesuit Order, his understanding of religion was from a Christian and Catholic point of view. In his essay Introduction to the Christian Life, he states that a threefold faith is necessary, and sufficient, as a foundation for the Christian position:

1. Faith in the (personalizing) personality of God, the focus of the world.
2. Faith in the divinity of the historic Christ (not only prophet and perfect man, but also object of love and worship).
3. Faith in the reality of the Church phylum, in which and around which Christ continues to develop, in the world, his total personality.

The key to understand Teilhard's concept of religion is the universe, specifically the intimate relation between God and the universe, expressed
in his doctrine of the cosmic Christ. As he says in #1 above, God is the focus of the world. He sees God's presence in the world through the mystery of Christ. This is not merely the historical Jesus, but the universal Christ, which he understands as the "synthesis of Christ and the universe." This presence of Christ in the universe is not static, but dynamic; for Teilhard identifies the Omega of evolution with the Christ of revelation. In his comprehensive theory, evolution proceeds through the spheres of matter, life and consciousness. This process requires a center which is also its energizing goal. The center, which he calls Omega, is present throughout the process but transcendent to the process. It is the divine presence, active in the universe bringing it to its fulfillment. In the essay My Universe, he states the proposition: "Christ is Identical with Omega," and goes on to explain:

In order to demonstrate the truth of this fundamental proposition, I need only refer to the long series of Johannine--and still more Pauline--texts in which the physical supremacy of Christ over the universe is so magnificently expressed. I cannot quote them all here, but they come down to these two essential affirmations: 'In eo omnia constant' [in him all things hold together] (Col. 1. 17) and 'Ipse est qui replet omnia' [he is the one who fills all things] (Col. 2. 10, cf. Eph. 4. 9), from which it follows that 'Omnia in omnibus Christus' [Christ is all in all] (Col. 3. 11)--the very definition of omega.

By identifying Christ and Omega, Teilhard intimately relates the divine to the physical universe and to human endeavor. Religion, then, for Teilhard must be seen in this context. On the level of belief, religion accepts the doctrine of the cosmic Christ, with all that it entails: namely the threefold faith, stated above, in the personality of God as the focus of the world; the incarnate Christ; and the Church as
a force in evolution. On the level of experience, religion involves a cosmic mystical awareness of the presence of God, acting throughout the universe. On the level of morality, religion calls mankind to further the evolutionary process by taking responsibility for the earth, the future and the evolutionary process itself. For Teilhard, then, religion is primarily on the level of human consciousness and human action, rather than in institutions or belief systems, except insofar as these manifest and give direction to the former. In the following passage Teilhard expresses his understanding of how religion is related to energy and the evolution towards Omega:

Religion, therefore, was not developed primarily as an easy way out, to provide shelter from the insoluble or intrusive difficulties met by the mind as it became active. In its real basis, it is biologically (we might almost say mechanically) the necessary counterpart to the release of the earth's spiritual energy: the human being by his appearance in nature, brings with him the emergence, ahead of him, of a divine pole to give him balance...7

Teilhard's concept of religion, then, is especially apt for understanding the religious phenomenon of our time, since it touches directly the two main trends described above. It is directly concerned with the universe and its evolution towards the divine. The religions of the world represent the highest development of human consciousness in that direction. In view of Teilhard's specific theory of evolution through planetization, the encounter of religions represents the most advanced stage in the convergence of consciousness. Furthermore, Teilhard's concept of religion is not limited to the terrain of institutional religion, but encompasses the secular as well; for he sees all human action as energy that can lead to Omega. Thus his concept of religion is sufficiently broad to reveal the
The convergence of religions should be viewed from the standpoint of Teilhard's theory of the evolution of consciousness. According to Teilhard, consciousness emerges out of a process that has its roots in the geosphere and the biosphere. Throughout the process a single dynamic is at work, which he articulates as the law of "complexity-consciousness" and "union differentiates." "In any domain," he says, "whether it be the cells of a body, the members of a society or the elements of a spiritual synthesis—union differentiates." From subatomic particles to global consciousness, individual elements unite in a center to center union which releases creative energy leading to more complex units. The greater complexity leads to increased interiority, which makes possible more intimate creative unions. In this process the elements do not lose their identity but rather have it intensified by the union. "Following the confluent orbits of their centers, the grains of consciousness do not tend to lose their outlines and blend, but, on the contrary, to accentuate the depth and incommunicability of their egos. The more 'other' they become in conjunction, the more they find themselves as 'self'." As these differentiated unions become more complex, interiority is increased and energy is released towards the formation of a more complex and interiorized consciousness. "Regarded along its axis of complexity," Teilhard states, "the universe is, both on the whole and at each of its points, in a continual tension of organic doubling-back upon itself, and thus of interiorization."
At this point in history, the forces of planetization are bringing about an unprecedented complexification of what Teilhard terms the noosphere, or sphere of consciousness, through the convergence of cultures and religions.

Teilhard himself saw the convergence of world religions as a phase of the complexification of the noosphere. In *How I Believe* he examined Oriental religions, confessing his attraction for them: "The great appeal of the Eastern religions (let us, to put a name to them, say Buddhism) is that they are supremely universalist and cosmic. Never perhaps has the sense of the Whole, which is the life-blood of all mysticism, flowered more exuberantly than in the plains of India." Although drawn to Eastern religions, he resisted their form of monism: "For the East, the One is seen as a suppression of the multiple; for me, the One is born from the concentration of the multiple." This difference of perspective and attitude led him to turn back to the West. "I thought I could discern him [God] in the East. But it is clear that he awaited me at the other end of the horizon in those areas more recently opened to human mysticism by the 'road of the West.'" In this essay he deals next with humanist pantheisms which are devoted to the universal progress of mankind. He was drawn by these, too, but discerned their limitations. He turned then to Christianity, and at first was dissatisfied with the impression it gives of not being concerned with the earth and human progress. In the universal Christ he finds a solution, which integrates the divine and best of the human. He states: "The universal Christ, as I understood the name, is a synthesis of Christ and the universe. He is not a new godhead— but an inevitable deployment
of the mystery in which Christianity is summed up, the mystery of the Incarnation."

In his conclusion, he sees the three currents flowing together: "In the great river of mankind, the three currents (Eastern, human and Christian) are still at cross-purposes. Nevertheless there are sure indications which make it clear that they are coming to run together." For Teilhard these currents converge in the universal Christ: "A general convergence of religions upon a universal Christ who fundamentally satisfies them all: that seems to me the only possible conversion of the world, and the only form in which a religion of the future can be conceived."14

The text of How I Believe was written in 1944. Since then much has happened in the meeting of religions, as I have indicated above. The West has moved more deeply into the academic study of Eastern religions; numerous Westerners have begun to practice the spirituality of the East, even traveling to India and Japan in search of spiritual guides; Christian theologians and the official churches themselves have engaged in dialogue with Oriental religions. As a result, a generation has emerged with a much more informed and complex understanding of Oriental religions and the convergence of religions than Teilhard himself seems to have possessed. Although he was drawn to Oriental religions, as the above text indicates, he does not seem to have entered as deeply into them--by way of technical knowledge and sympathetic firsthand encounter--as is called for at the present stage in the meeting of religions.

Although Teilhard provided a brilliant theory for understanding the convergence of religions, I believe that his own application of the theory
to specific religions was limited. In his personal reaction to the religions he encountered in the Orient and in his theoretical speculation on them, he seems to lack the very complexification of consciousness that is characteristic of this period in the evolution of religious consciousness. I believe that the central element in this new complexified religious consciousness is sympathy or empathy for the values of the other religions. For example, the Christian does not look on the other religion merely from his own theological perspective; rather he enters into the very structure of consciousness of the other religion and grasps its distinctive values from its own perspective. From this perspective, he also views his own tradition, both sympathetically and critically. Then he returns to his Christian consciousness, but now enriched by his expanded horizons and with the spiritual energies that he has activated by a center to center union with the other mode of consciousness.

In the present generation of Christian theologians, this empathetic religious consciousness is appearing in a way not found in Teilhard himself or the theologians of his time. Raimundo Panikkar described it under the term "dialogic dialogue" to distinguish it from the dialectical dialogue, which is concerned with defending oneself and refuting the claims of other religions. In his book The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man, he has established a dialogic dialogue between the Christian understanding of the Trinity and the religious experience of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. In a similar vein he explored the doctrine of Christ in his book The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Another example of empathetic
theological consciousness is found in the book of Hans Waldenfels *Absolute Nothingness: Foundations for a Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*. Here he empathizes with the Buddhist notion of absolute nothingness in a way that is radically uncharacteristic of Western thinking. In so doing, however, he finds a point of convergence with the apophatic statements of Christian mystics and theologians.

We are at the dawn of a new Christian theological consciousness which can no longer ignore the religious experience of the majority of mankind. Christian consciousness took shape out of its Jewish heritage in the first and second centuries A.D. by creative interaction with the Greco-Roman culture of the Mediterranean world. Since that time it has not seriously encountered empathetically the great religions of the world. Its theology of redemption, for example, has been developed for centuries without taking into account the Hindu and Buddhist experience of liberation. In a global environment, this can no longer be tolerated. The task of the Christian theologian now is not to write a *summa* from the standpoint of Western culture, but to draw into a new complexified consciousness the totality of the religious experience of mankind.

What this will mean for Christian identity—or Hindu or Buddhist identity—is difficult to predict. But at the present, this much is clear: those like Panikkar who engage in a dialogic dialogue do not abandon their Christian identity, any more than the Buddhist partner abandons his. What is operating here seems to be the very dynamic of differentiating union that Teilhard saw at work from the geosphere to the noosphere. The Christian is intensified in his Christian identity by the center to center
empathetic encounter with the Buddhist. At the same time a more complexified form of religious consciousness emerges. In this complexified consciousness the Christian may perceive the mystery of Christ in Buddhism and the Buddhist may perceive Buddha nature in Christianity. Within the complexified consciousness, Teilhard’s perception of the universal Christ might appear less dialectical and more dialogic. Seen within this complexified religious consciousness, then, his theory of the convergence of religions can become more universalistic than he intended. Although he himself did not enter into a dialogic dialogue nor did he appropriate personally this complexified religious consciousness, he did discern the dynamics of its emergence. He mapped the journey and pointed to the goal, without having traveled himself into this new realm.

Spiritual Meaning of the Secular

While the encounter of religions intensifies the spiritual, the secular trend in modern culture eliminates the transcendent from life, focusing on material values, finite goals and human effort. It criticizes traditional religion for being other-worldly, unconcerned about human needs or development. With the secularists, Teilhard affirms the value of this world, but he sees the transcendent embodied within the world. He discerns spiritual-power-in-matter, a sacramental reflection of God throughout the universe and human endeavor, with the entire evolutionary process moving toward greater union with the cosmic Christ. His affirmation of God’s immanence is so strong that he has been criticized by Christian theologians for being pantheistic. I believe that this is unwarranted, for his vision harmonizes with major strands of the Christian tradition: for example, with
the theophanic universe of the Greek Fathers and the Franciscan awareness of God's presence in material creation.

In *Christ in the World of Matter*, Teilhard employs a number of images to express the presence of the divine in the physical world. He describes a picture of Christ whose outlines blur and expand to fill the universe. He refers to a lamp whose "pedestal and shade were made of diaphanous sea-green glass, and the bulbs were so ingeniously placed that the entire mass of crystal and the designs which decorated it were illumined from within." In the context this becomes an image for the way the cosmic Christ shines through matter, illumining the entire universe. In *The Spiritual Power of Matter*, Teilhard sings a hymn to matter: "I acclaim you as the divine milieu, charged with creative power, as the ocean stirred by the Spirit, as the clay moulded and infused with life by the incarnate Word." In *The Phenomenon of Man*, he speaks of the significance of secular enterprises for building the earth and for its ultimate religious meaning. For example, he sees that "religion and science are the two conjugated faces or phases of one and the same complete act of knowledge -- the only one which can embrace the past and future of evolution so as to contemplate, measure and fulfill them."  

His finding the presence of Christ in matter and in human enterprises flows from his doctrine of the cosmic Christ which we explored above in dealing with his concept of religion. Teilhard sees "a Christ who is no longer master of the world solely because he has been proclaimed to be such, but because he animates the whole range of things from top to bottom." As animating the whole range of things, this universal Christ
energizes the human community to its fulfillment. As the other side of this phenomenon, human effort should focus on the same goal. In this way the concerns of the humanists, the social servants, the political reformers, the research scientists have a religious orientation even though the individuals involved may not be aware of it. On the other hand, the explicitly religious person, whether a formal member of a church or not, should be dedicated to authentic secular concerns.

It would be simplistic, however, to see Teilhard's contribution as merely a religious recovery of secular values in our time. The issues are much more complex, rooted in his notion of planetization. In order to see them in perspective, I will sketch my own understanding of the evolution of religious consciousness, drawing from Teilhard's theory of the noosphere and Karl Jaspers' theory of the Axial Period. I believe that Teilhard's general theory of the evolution of consciousness can be nuanced by Karl Jaspers' description of the transformation of consciousness that occurred in the first millenium B.C. Jaspers discovers an axis at this "point in history which gave birth to everything which, since then, man has been able to be." Jaspers goes on to claim that "this axis of history is to be found in the period around 500 B.C., in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 B.C. It is there that we meet with the most deepcut dividing line in history. Man, as we know him today, came into being. For short we may style this the 'Axial Period'."

In Greece, Israel, Persia, India and China, consciousness was transformed without discernible influence of one area on another. In China Confucius and Lao-tze taught, and the schools of Chinese philosophy came
into being; India produced the Upanishads and the Buddha; in Persia Zoroaster described the struggle between Good and evil; in Israel, the prophets--Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah--spurred their people to moral awakening; in Greece, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle ushered in critical reflective thought.

The great religions of the world, as we know them today, are a product of this transformation of consciousness; for Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Judaism were shaped in this period, and the transformation of Jewish consciousness became the base for the later emergence of Christianity and Islam. In the Axial Period consciousness evolved from mythic awareness to critical reflection. In this period individual self-reflective consciousness, as we know it, was born. In the previous period, primitive consciousness was embedded in the cosmos, in the life processes and in the collectivity of the tribe. In the Axial Period, philosophers and spiritual teachers appeared, calling the public to use intellect to free themselves from collective consciousness, from the physical world, from myth and ritual. Although in the Post-Axial Period primitive forms of consciousness survived, they were largely subliminal, appearing in dreams and art, preserved in rituals and in the substratum of myth found in the sacred texts of the religions of the Axial Period. In contrast, the distinctive consciousness of the Axial Period was non-mythic, critical, self-reflective and individualistic. With the awakening of reflective subjectivity, the individual could take a stand against the collectivity, become a distinct moral and spiritual self, and embark on an individual spiritual journey.
The spirituality of all the great religions presupposes this Axial consciousness. A striking example of this is found in monasticism—one of the most distinctive forms of spirituality which developed in the Axial Period in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism and which emerged later in Christianity. It is interesting to note that monasticism did not exist among primitive peoples because the structure of primitive consciousness could not sustain it. Primitive consciousness was embedded in nature and the life cycles of fertility and was fused with the collectivity of the tribe. The spirituality of primitive peoples—a rich, sophisticated spirituality—took shape within the horizons of this cosmic consciousness, expressed itself in rituals and articulated itself in myths. With the transformation of consciousness in the Axial Period, the monk emerged; a marginal person, who separated himself from the community, from material goods and from the fertility cycles, practicing poverty and celibacy as a wandering beggar or the member of a monastic community that shared his radical lifestyle. It was only with the emergence of the individual, self-reflective, critical consciousness of the Axial Period that such a path was opened, and even here, because of its radicalness, for only a proportionally small number.

The result of the Axial Period, then, was a form of consciousness which released enormous spiritual energies that shaped the great religions: It freed the human spirit from nature, allowing individuals to discover the image of God or the atman within their subjectivity. It made possible an individual spiritual journey leading to personal enlightenment or union with God. It awakened individual moral conscience which could stand in judgment over the state and even the religious establishment. It brought forth
philosophical reason, which could criticize myth and seek truth through
dialectical processes. At the same time, it alienated man from the earth,
from his rootedness in the geosphere and biosphere, and ultimately led to
secularization in the West.

I believe that we are presently going through a Second Axial Period,
which Teilhard discerned although he did not use the term. Like the first,
this period has been developing for several centuries, and has reached a
critical point in the twentieth. And like the first, it is effecting a
radical transformation of consciousness. While the first produced individual,
self-reflexive consciousness, the second period is producing global conscious-
ness. The consciousness of the Second Axial Period is global in two senses:
(1) in encompassing the entire human community on the planet in all of its
historical experience; (2) in recovering its rootedness in the earth. We
have already seen how the encounter of world religions reflects the first
sense of global, with its corresponding form of complexified consciousness
described by Teilhard. In the second sense, the religions of the world must
cultivate an awareness of our rootedness in the earth, as Teilhard discerned
that the noosphere was rooted in the geosphere and biosphere. Like Teilhard
we must recognize the value of the secular; but, as he so wisely saw, this
secular energy must be grounded in spiritual energy so that it will not run
riot and destroy life on our planet.

Teilhard sketches the profile of the saint at this phase of history. He is not the one who undertakes severe asceticism to free himself from
matter and to gain mastery over matter. Rather he is the one who activates
all the energies of the earth and the human sphere to direct them to the
fulfillment of the total cosmic process:

The saint, the Christian saint, as we now understand him and look for him, will not be the man who is the most successful in escaping from matter and mastering it completely; he will be the man who seeks to make all his powers—gold, love, or freedom—transcend themselves and co-operate in the consummation of Christ, and who so realizes for us the ideal of the faithful servant of evolution.26

According to Teilhard, religion should energize and activate human creative potential in the building of the earth and the development of the human community. But this must be an integrated development, which respects the earth and our total environment. It is here that Pre-Axial consciousness should be integrated into Axial consciousness. Primitive peoples have a sense of belonging to nature, of being in harmony with natural processes, of respect for the earth as sacred and for the total environment as a divine gift. In the face of our ecological crisis, this consciousness should be reactivated and made part of the reflexive consciousness of the Axial period. Teilhard, I believe, was aware of the need for this integration, although he expressed it in the Axial language of science rather than the Pre-Axial language of myth.

Thus the Second Axial Period challenges the religions to bring about a new integration of the spiritual and the material, of sacred energy and secular energy into a total global human energy. From the standpoint of spirituality, this means that we must recover the pre-Axial modes of cosmic and collective consciousness, without relinquishing the subjective, reflexive critical awareness of the Axial Period. This integration will produce a remarkably complex form of consciousness in which the spiritual energies of religion will be integrated with the physical energies of the secular. Although I believe that Teilhard himself had not personally achieved the
complexified consciousness of the Second Axial Period in the sphere of the meeting of religions, he did achieve that complexification in an extraordinary degree in the integration of physical and spiritual energies. 27

In the context of Teilhard's concept of religion, he approaches the integration of matter and spirit from the doctrine of the cosmic Christ. This is, of course, because he was a Christian and viewed the issue from his Christian standpoint. Yet in the Second Axial Period all of the world religions will have to face this issue in a new way. For all the religions are confronted with the common problems of our planet: nuclear holocaust, the pollution of our environment, the depletion of natural resources and the just distribution of the earth's goods. In the converging context, the different religions will face these issues from their own perspectives and with their own resources. They will not speak of Christ as Teilhard did; yet they may discover in their own traditions a dimension of reality that converges with what Teilhard meant by the universal Christ. In other words, the way in which the religions relate to these concrete problems must be through the complexified religious consciousness that is emerging in the dialogue of religions.

In the context of the Second Axial Period, Teilhard's thought has its special meaning for the religious phenomenon of our time. He is a prophet calling us to a moral awakening—unprecedented in human history—to take collective responsibility for the future, for the survival of life on our planet, for the evolutionary process itself. But more than this, he is a spiritual guide; for he shows us the way by pointing out the stages of the spiritual journey. From Teilhard's perspective, the spiritual journey is
not embedded in the cosmic processes as it was in the Pre-Axial Period, nor is it a journey away from the cosmos as in the First Axial Period; rather, the cosmos itself is on the spiritual journey. Geogenesis, biogenesis and noogenesis are stages of a single cosmic-spiritual journey. The religious phenomenon of our time represents a stage of enlightenment along this spiritual journey, when in the Second Axial Period consciousness becomes truly global by encompassing the planet and assimilating its roots in the earth.

In conclusion, I would like to observe how appropriate it is for this symposium to be held at UNESCO, for the United Nations is the concrete symbol of and the pragmatic agency for developing the global consciousness that Teilhard described. On October 24, 1975, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, a conference of leaders from the world religions was held at the United Nations in New York. The planning of this conference was directly influenced by Teilhard's thought, in an attempt to activate the two dimensions of global consciousness described above. In a joint statement read at the conference, the religious leaders affirmed:

The horrors of current and possible wars, the destruction of the earth through the abuses of technology, and the vastness of problems confronting the human condition require the re-dedication of all peoples; in an awakened sense of the unity of the human spirit—to enhance co-operation toward the building of a peaceful and just world...

The crises of our time are challenging the world religions to release a new spiritual force transcending religious, cultural, and national boundaries into a new consciousness of the oneness of the human community, and so putting into effect a spiritual dynamic toward the
solutions of world problems....We affirm a new spirituality, divested of insularity and directed toward a planetary consciousness....

In conclusion, the delegates of the conference "One Is the Human Spirit" propose that the time is ripe for the religions of the world to bring together in concert their several visions in aid of the United Nations in its endeavor to build a better human society. To this end, we strongly recommend that the United Nations consider the creation of an agency that will bring the much-needed resources and inspirations of the spiritual traditions to the solution of world problems.28
NOTES


4Teilhard, Comment je crois, in Comment je crois, p. 146; trans., p. 126.

5Teilhard, Le Phénomène humain, pp. 298-303.


9Ibid., p. 335; trans., p. 302.

10Ibid., p. 335; trans., p. 302.

11Teilhard, Comment je crois, in Comment je crois, p. 142; trans., pp. 121-122.


Teilhard, La Puissance spirituelle de la matière, in Hymne de l'univers, p. 73; trans., p. 70.


Teilhard, Christologie et évolution, in Comment je crois, p. 108; trans., 89.


27 From the Joint-Statement of Spiritual Leaders Attending Spiritual Summit Conference "One Is the Human Spirit", held under the auspices of the Temple of Understanding, read at the United Nations, October 24, 1975. The complete text of the statement is printed in *Most of All, They Taught Me Happiness*, by Robert Muller (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978), pp. 199-201. Although the recommendation to establish a special agency has not been implemented, it remains a concrete symbol of the global religious consciousness described in this paper.