

The 'Satan' Hypothesis

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The Church's imaginary field of Satanic energy, the Teilhardian idea of consciousness as a general phenomenon in nature, and the necessity to go beyond childish things and accept the responsibilities of adulthood

The Divine Milieu

In his spiritual testament written one month before his death, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, speaks of energy being transformed into Presence. But alas, he tells us frankly, he is one of the few people to have witnessed such a transformation - the wonderful "Diaphany" that has transfigured everything for him seems to be a closed book for other writers. And yet, in spite of having had a "glorious vision" of energy undergoing fundamental change, he is no better a person; he is still not at peace and cannot, through his actions, properly communicate the "wonderful unity" encompassing him.

The words used are interesting. "Diaphany." "Glorious vision." "Wonderful unity." And then a question from this remarkable Jesuit: "Is there in fact a Universal Christ, is there a Divine Milieu?" Or am I, after all, simply the dupe of a mirage in my own mind?" But each time he thinks like this, each time he questions the authenticity of his "Christic" (his vision of the cosmic Christ), three successive waves of evidence arise from deep within to sweep away any such a fear: (1) *coherence* of mind and heart; (2) a *contagious power* which allows love of God to erupt; and (3) the obvious *superiority* of such a vision over religious dogma. Startling stuff; particularly the last point. But as nothing compared with a later statement suggesting that this "superiority of vision" might spontaneously and explosively spread to others as in a chain-reaction. For is it not the case, asks de Chardin, "that the truth has to appear only once, in one single mind, for it to be impossible for anything ever to prevent it from spreading universally and setting everything ablaze."¹

Malachi Martin is less than sceptical about de Chardin's "glorious vision"; he is openly scathing. and not without justification on occasions. He flatly rejects what this fellow Jesuit postulated in his writings about the spiritual evolution of the human race. In fact he singles de Chardin out for punishment in his book *The Jesuits*, stating that it is not possible to understand the change brought about in the Society of Jesus without a knowledge of de Chardin's thinking - a change which he describes as "the almost perfected mode of recalcitrance to all and any papal wish". Warming to his topic from this interesting standpoint, we learn from Martin that De Chardin was tall and aristocratic in bearing, distinguished and quick-witted, messianic in intensity and not unlike de Gaulle in some aspects of character and verbal delivery. We also learn that he consciously identified with the sixteenth-century astronomer, Galileo Galilei, that he possessed an arrogance of attitude that did not repel, and that he injected a new philosophy and a new excitement into an age already revolutionised by genetics and many other scientific discoveries. The only problem was that this new philosophy utterly contradicted Catholic teaching on creation; the Bible did not say anything about Adam and Eve "evolving" from higher animals - the Scriptures stated quite clearly that Homo sapiens had resulted from a separate act of creation. The human soul had not "evolved"; it had been breathed into Adam as a direct gift from his creator.

The attempt by some Catholic scholars to reconcile evolution with official doctrine had, as a result, spawned a kind of nightmare scenario, a hybrid theory of creation in which God had intervened in the evolutionary process and infused a soul into an already highly evolved animal. Orthodox Catholic teachings rejected such a view. De Chardin had overcome this rejection by postulating an innate connection between matter and spirit - basic consciousness had existed in matter from the very beginning, and this process of development was now heading, in our century, for what de Chardin termed the "Omega Point" of history. Christ was this Omega Point; but not the Christ called "Jesus". More some figure of the distant future not properly defined by de Chardin in relation to the Christ of the Gospels.

Martin is not amused by this vague use of words. "Obviously," he says, tilting for the attack,

such a theory imposes either the abandonment or the complete transformation of all the basic doctrines of Roman Catholicism. Creation, Original Sin, the divinity of Jesus, redemption by Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary, the Church, the forgiveness of sins, the Sacrifice of the Mass, priesthood, papal infallibility, Hell, Heaven, supernatural grace - even the existence of the freedom of God - all must be reformulated, and perhaps abandoned in large part.²

But he's only just starting. He attacks de Chardin's notion of the "Ultra-Human", and with dexterity so describes his character and mind-set that almost every action, every statement, every thought takes on sinister overtones: De Chardin was against the cloistered life. De Chardin didn't like Christmas. De Chardin was feckless. De Chardin lacked gentleness and compassion and fair-mindedness and sensitive perception. And finally, de Chardin was completely disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church and its monstrous supernaturalisms.

At this point we begin to get down to the grass roots of de Chardin's search for something beyond dogma and magical-type beliefs; but the invective housed in Martin's questioning of de Chardin's character should not go unnoticed. It is after all a pretty damning exercise to strip someone of gentleness, compassion, fair-mindedness and sensitive perception. Considering how Martin has previously accommodates the austere, ultra-cool character of Ignatius Loyola, this relieving de Chardin of all the basic human qualities because of a surface coolness is perhaps to go too far. A cold fish he may well have been, but his writings reveal a mind on fire with a vision for humanity which even at its most strange is more balanced than some of the religious dogmas either rejected, or modified by that mind. We should remember that Martin earlier admits that de Chardin's type of arrogance did not repel

others; there was something deeply attractive about this man in spite of odd personality traits.

Yet I can sympathise with Martin's exasperation over de Chardin, for one senses in his writings the use of religious terminology merely for the sake of use. I mean by that that he had possibly jettisoned most, if not all, of the conceptions behind the religious language he utilises. In some curious fashion, Christ is not Christ and God is not God in the sense generally held. Something else is going on in de Chardin's language; something deep and troubling and confrontational is struggling to articulate its presence through his spiritual imagination. And my use here of the word "imagination" should not be seen as pejorative; I mean simply that faculty which allows us to explore and extend our mental boundaries. De Chardin's vision of God has undergone dramatic change; he's trying to highlight what most of us already know only too well: the simple God of our childhood is long since dead, he has evaporated like smoke and left us in the lurch. De Chardin puts it this way: "At the present moment in human history, no religion explicitly and officially offers us the God we need."

Father "Bones"

In *Hostage to the Devil* Malachi Martin hits novelistic stride and carries us down into what he considers the Teilhardian mystery in a new way. We are shown how the "fabric of faith" is stripped away from a priest's life (Father David Bones) through too strong a fascination with de Chardin's thinking. David falls into the trap of suspecting that what he had previously thought of Jesus was too small a concept. The "complaints of reason" in David's head over doctrines that do not fit with the findings of science constitute a "fatal thread" born out of his acceptance of de Chardin's theories. Due to such theories he can no longer put up with the break between the world of "nature" and Jesus as "saviour". In evolutionary terms, materiality and divinity are one; Jesus was not God come down to earth from Heaven, he was merely an off-shoot of creation's travail towards perfection. Here then was the meaning of how Jesus was simultaneously human and divine; he

had carried the divine element of self-consciousness potentially resident in matter to its point of fullest expression.

As seen through the eyes of a Catholic traditionalist like Malachi Martin, all of this is a horrendous deceit; it is a fundamentally satanic reinterpretation of a stupendous Gospel truth that should not be tampered with under any circumstance. It does not matter that Catholic doctrine flies in the face of scientific descriptions of how the world works. It does not matter that the evidence of palaeontology points unreservedly to there having been many crude precursors of the human. It does not matter that cyclotrons reveal an amazing complex subatomic world. It does not matter that every scientific discipline points in at least a similar, if not an identical direction. All that matters is that one continues to believe, without question, without a flutter of doubt, in a Catholic interpretation of New Testament writings. The “sacred” is locked up inside the pages of the New Testament, in the stories and dialogues of men and women two-thousand years dead, and the Catholic methodology of translating that sacredness from paper to life, from ancient story to modern mind and heart has to be accepted as having existed in the mind of God since before the foundation of the world.

De Chardin is not simply wrong, not simply mistaken; he was in some sense possessed by diabolical forces which skewed his thinking away from “revealed” truth. That is the bottom line. On this basis, Martin’s interpretation of my statement that something deep and troubling and confrontation was struggling to articulate its presence through de Chardin’s spiritual imagination, will be that I have unwittingly intuited a terrible truth. De Chardin was possessed; he was spiritually numb and eventually incapable of detecting that “possessing presence” in the depths of his own being. Energy was indeed transformed into “presence”, and this is the underlying reason why the Jesuit Order has succumbed to rebellion and disobedience.

Torn between Realities

In *Hostage to the Devil*, Malachi Martin refers to de Chardin’s thinking on seven occasions; in *The Jesuits*, on fourteen occasions.

And each time he makes reference to this internationally acclaimed Frenchman of international fame, we gain access to Martin's thinking processes and witness the phenomenon of a highly educated mind bound to, and in the service of, Christian dogma. It is fascinating to listen to his tone, to pick up on his passionate sincerity, to feel the binding power of doctrine on his thinking. He can list reasons galore for not believing in something, and in the next breath declare belief in that very thing by way of faith or revelation. Whatever the hard facts of a situation, he can produce an escape route by pointing beyond these facts to miraculous intervention. Which is to say that he believes in a universe where the laws of physics are mere decoration. If God wants to intervene in human affairs, such laws can be suspended. And why not, he would argue. What's the good of being God if you can't have your own way.

But first of all, let's get the de Chardin in Malachi Martin's mind out into the open. What is this American Jesuit's overview of this French Jesuit's contribution to the sciences of palaeontology and anthropology? How does he rate his fame, influence, and character? Well, Martin describes de Chardin as an intellectual, an ascetic, a hero, a brilliant student, teacher and mystic, and goes on to paint him as pioneer excavator, a discoverer of Pekin Man (*Sinanthropos pekinesis*), and a philosopher who thought matter, even primitive matter, was transfused with consciousness. Dedicated to the philosophy of Descartes, de Chardin's ability to "answer inquisitorial questions with a flow of professional and technical detail"³ is recorded, and his refusal to "kowitz intellectually" to Church authority is described as having frightened the ecclesiastical mind.

All in all, quite a grocery list of positive attributes, one would think, but immediately invalidated by his statement about Teilhard being the "custom-built answer, the ready-made darling for the bankrupt Catholic intellectuals of his century". Quite a barrage, that, and all because de Chardin helped others shake off the traditional shackles of Christian dogma. Condemned for his "refusal to revolt when silenced by chicanery", de Chardin is likened to Joan of Arc, Francis Xavier and Simone Weil.

Condemned for his refusal to revolt when silenced by chicanery? What exactly does that mean? Does it mean that in spite of being wrong de Chardin is further condemned for having had the intelligence to keep his mouth shut when faced with trickery and fallacious methods of reasoning? If so, what exactly is Martin saying by saying? Why this choice of words? What is his game plan in making such an extraordinary statement? And why is his work peppered with sentences like this? Is some other part of his mind perhaps trying to inform him that his conscious evaluation of Catholic Christianity is questionable?

Malachi Martin's principle gripe with de Chardin's thinking is that he allowed scientific theory to get in the way of revealed truth. Allow the beliefs and assumptions of science to stand as undeniable facts, or even as highly probable facts, and the Church's teaching on creation, the human condition and the coming of Jesus as saviour become superfluous. Describing the gulf between these two approaches as an "impassable" and "impossible" gap, Martin derides those who think such a gap can be closed, and speaks of them as being in the clutches of a fatal flaw. For in such a scheme, ultimately, God is no longer divine, Jesus is no longer a saviour figure, life is an evolutionary accident and human consciousness is no more than the "culminating flower" of a process born among the gases and acids of outer space. We have emerged from nature, and Jesus is no more than the prototype for a new species of evolved human being.

Referring to a meeting between de Chardin and Father David Bones in 1955 (two months before de Chardin's death), Martin describes the man some have likened to a second Aquinas as exhibiting a strange simplicity. In fact he describes de Chardin in such a fashion that he begins to take on a sinister and vacuous edge. Martin's description of the man is straightforward enough, probably accurate enough, but something difficult to pin down is going on within or behind these words. And then there is the inscription written by de Chardin in *Le Milieu Divin*, the book brought by David to be autographed. This inscription, innocent in itself, is left in mid-air, so to speak, and later made into a reason for David to question the old Jesuit's state of mind. The words are innocuous, it might be argued but deadly in their impact when

all the pieces are finally presented. For the old Jesuit had written: "They said I opened Pandora's box with this book. But, they did not notice, Hope was still hiding in one of its corners."⁴ And in a description of de Chardin during this meeting (a description which makes one wonder if Martin was hiding in a cupboard complete with spy-hole), Martin has him " . . . completely with David, totally present to him, taking in David's glance with a personable expression and a direct simplicity that almost embarrassed the younger man."⁵

But instead of reading this reaction positively, it is again left in mid-air and the impression given is of an old man curiously empty, perhaps even drained of intelligence in some untoward fashion. Clever writing. Once again Martin the novelist is at work, and the impressions build page by page towards a damning broadside which eventually change the old anthropologist into an agent of the Devil. This is not, of course, said directly, but it is undeniably what Malachi Martin is driving at when he later describes Father David Bones' breakdown-cum-possession and makes the whole incredible experience the result of his having accepted the theories of Teilhard de Chardin.

So what exactly did Teilhard de Chardin believe to warrant such a fear-ridden response? This is a complicated question and can only be touched upon lightly here, but it was undoubtedly his metaphysic of evolution which upset the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Christocentric this metaphysic may have been, but in the end it was a synthesis of ideas which bred suspicion, incomprehension, and finally anger among his peers. As with the theories of the theologian John Hick, de Chardin saw evolution as a process converging towards a final unity. And like Hick's he also helped revitalise the ideas of Irenaeus and Don Scotus over against those of Augustine without losing sight of the problem of sin so dear to Augustine's heart. He was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church and remained as such until the end of his days; and that in spite of the fact that he was eventually censored, silenced, exiled and forbidden to publish or lecture. But as Martin points out, his ideas "ran through the intellectual milieu of Europe and America like mercury",⁶ and these ideas continue to influence thinkers dissatisfied with constipated theology and the sometimes arrogant

dictates of science. Classified along with devout pioneers such as Pico della Mirandola, Ramon Llull and even Origen, de Chardin's originality of thought earned him much applause in some quarters, condemnation in others.

And all because he believed that materiality and divinity were one and the same thing. That was what could not be tolerated by orthodox Catholic thinkers. This recalcitrant Jesuit had had the cheek to amalgamate physical creation with the spiritual domain. Which is to say that the Church's carefully nurtured grand divide between the material and the divine was under threat, and that science and theology were being made to coalesce in an utterly indecent manner. That was the crux of the problem, and if allowed to mature as an alternative theology of the human spirit, this diabolical stitching back together again of God and world would result in a new paganism, a pagan Gnosticism placing the emphasis not on redemption through Christ's death on the cross, but on man's consciousness "emerging from sheer materiality as automatically as a hen from an egg".⁷ This description of cosmic events is unthinkable in Christian terms. For if accepted even tentatively, then Jesus' divinity must also, by repercussion, be interpreted as having emerged from his human nature.

In *The Jesuits*, de Chardin is singled out for special obloquy over the state of the Catholic Church in India. Focusing on a special meeting between John Paul 11 and some high-ranking clerics, Martin releases fascinating information on Vatican tensions, while at the same time concentrating on a report which summarises Jesuit influence in India as an adulteration of Christian belief. Accused of having deformed the meaning of priesthood, baptism, the value of prayer, mortification and penance, the Society is also held responsible for undermining the value of the Eucharist, of discrediting belief in immortality, of diluting belief in Heaven and Hell, and of eroding the primacy of the Holy Father.⁸ All in all, a most damaging catalogue of misdemeanours, and aimed directly at de Chardin's influence on Catholic intellectuals of Jesuit variety. In view of this, it is not at all strange that a sturdy traditionalist like Malachi Martin froths at

the mouth when de Chardin's name is mentioned, and in terms of personal beliefs it is quite understandable.

Understandable it may be, but definitely not acceptable when this skilled writer and thinker carries his umbrage too far and makes de Chardin into a henchman of the Devil for daring to question, by way of reasoned argument, the contents of the Church's doctrinal suitcase. Or would the word "baggage" not be better in this instance - for in essence is that not the whole point of this war of words, the doctrinal baggage lugged down the centuries by Christians because of a deeply embedded fear of their own inner darkness? And not only of the darkness, but also of the light. A fear of the mind and its illumination. A fear of the body and its utterly natural requirements. A fear of anything which directly challenges or confronts their pet paradigm - a paradigm where innocent human beings can be damned to the flames of hell for not carrying a particular belief-system in their heads. If it were not so dangerous, it would be laughable; but it is not laughable, it is pathetic, for ultimately it is much more than a war of words orthodox Christians are engaged in. It is a war for control of our innermost being, and as such a doctrinally driven Christianity is not a shield against diabolical infringement, but more probably a perfect example of it.

Now I do not mean to infer by this that Christianity is in any sense evil; that is, evil in the sense that de Chardin is made out to be evil by Malachi Martin. Merely that the behaviour of the Christian churches in relation to their own dogmas is unacceptable to thinking people who have broken out of the doctrinal straitjacket. And I do not mean by that people who have no spiritual life, no interest in spiritual things, no sense of God or the numinous. No, I'm referring to ordinary people with a healthy sense of the spiritual who have not only categorically rejected Christianity's central thesis of Salvation through the cross, but also rejected the candypuff spirituality of the New Age. There are a lot of thinking people on this globe who are awake in, and to, their intrinsic self, and it would appear that Teilhard de Chardin, whatever one might think of his spiritual-cum-scientific and social theories, was one of these awake individuals.

This goes far to explain the disturbance in Malachi Martin's mind when he learns from Father David Bones of de Chardin's wide-open stare, of his expression of direct simplicity. Embarrassed indeed this already fearful young Jesuit who would in the end unravel psychologically and shout "I believe, I believe, I believe" because of deeply instilled and reinforced fear. And what are we to make of the fact that de Chardin's vision seemed to have ceased before his death as Martin claims? We can read into Father Bones' description of this old palaeontologist a deep-seated fear of his own - the fear of a human presence rendered bare and immediate through authentic questioning. *That* is what is going on here, and the relegating of this marvellous old man to the spiritual scrap-heap is, in my opinion, an act of character vandalism. For what Father Bones sensed in de Chardin was not a diminution of hope, but the presence of a man to whom faith was no longer an act of belief, but a laying bare of the self to what exists. Without realising it, what David had glimpsed was de Chardin's soul.

Matter & Consciousness

The candypuff spirituality of the New Age is dismissed by most Christian churches as being exactly that, a spirituality which cannot in the end satisfy our deepest needs. Our cravings perhaps, but not our needs. Attacking the label "Neo-Gnosticism" on the fandango of cultic groups which have appeared since the early 1960s (and long before in the shape of Theosophy and such like), Christians glare disapprovingly from their Olympian perch - a perch consisting of doctrines so intrinsically daft in essence that they have caused a veritable exodus from the churches. Staring into the eye of science, reason and logic at every corner, most people have eaten of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and can no longer be fobbed off with tall stories. Christians with a little more sense have attempted to reinterpret ancient doctrine to suit this change in the general mentality, but such refurbishments generally fail for reason of mystification continuing to be the hallmark of the new versions proffered. On the whole these new versions are creations dripping with poetic licence. And so the

Dean of Litchfield can confound by sandwiching history with theology and logic and expect to be taken seriously.

What then must we do? Should we return to the Gospel stories and attempt to ignore the screaming silliness of doctrines like the Virgin Birth and the perpetual virginity of Mary? Should we plump for the more upbeat interpretations of the Dean of Litchfield? Or should we attempt to create a synthesis as de Chardin tried to do, and as many another writer has tried to do since? Is it enough to place a Christocentric veneer of language on science and speak of super-organisms "woven of the threads of individual men";⁹ or should we bite the reality-bullet and allow wash over us the terrible feeling that we are intrinsically alone and responsible for our own lives? Teilhard de Chardin understood this dilemma only too well, hence his probing question on whether there is in fact a Universal Christ or a Divine Milieu. But he experienced "Energy becoming transformed into Presence", and so is able to rescue his thoughts. No aloneness here; this man has been nudged by "something" which has unravelled his dependence on religious or scientific dogma.

Teilhard de Chardin's basic hypothesis was that matter and consciousness are bound together, and that although not measurable, consciousness is nevertheless "organically and physically rooted in the same cosmic process with which physics is concerned."¹⁰ So consciousness is no chance eruption in nature - it is not simply a fortuitous event. It is there because it is a *general* phenomenon. It is essential. It is fundamental. It is what makes sense of it all. Without consciousness there would be no universe, and without universe there would be no consciousness. This is to say that human beings are pretty special, for it is in them that consciousness has reached its most complex form. Small and insignificant we may be, but we are nevertheless an important part of a general thrust in nature towards ever more complex expressions of awareness. Consciousness belongs to all organised states of matter. Almost imperceptible in relation to low values of complexity, it "gradually makes itself felt and finally becomes dominant when we reach high values."¹¹ So there is no such thing as inert, brute matter in de Chardin's scheme of things, for matter and life are not opposed but complementary.

Enter Malachi Martin with a reversal of this view couched in the language of diabolism run rampant. It is not enough for Martin to disagree with de Chardin - he has to link the close relationship of consciousness and matter to an imaginary field of Satanic energy. For in the story of Father David Bones there is another priest, a certain Father Jonathan, who figure importantly in David's breakdown and eventual brush with Satan. Handsome, intelligent, and with an attractive personality, this young man prepares for the priesthood, sells out to de Chardin's ideas as a result of training in palaeontology under David, and in the end formulates an approach to Church doctrine utterly at odds with orthodox sensibility. The sacraments, for Jonathan, become no more than "... expressions of man's natural unity with the world around him",¹² Jesus' death on the cross a return to nature and the universe. Perturbed by the news that Jonathan holds such views, David blames himself for not having more carefully guided this talented young man through Teilhard's notions. He ought to have realised the dangers involved, noted that Jonathan was crossing the "thin and fragile line between Teilhard's view and a total denial of the divinity of Jesus."¹³ But he had not noticed; in fact he had begun to think along similar lines to Jonathan without fully realising what was happening to him.

The writing is masterly as Martin pieces this jigsaw of possession and infection together. Visited by a force which instructs him as he goes about his business, Jonathan will progressively surrender his will until he has no more will to surrender. He will become a priest, but his mind by then will be in the service of "serpentine thoughts", his will intertwined with "fine tendrils" which cannot be shaken off. And all around him the glorious world of colours, smells and textures which progressively infatuate his senses. And through and behind it all a "coiled presence weaving slowly, possessively, with ease, lazily enjoying an acquired resting place in the shaded corners of his being".¹⁴ An ancient voice sounding deep within, asking him to "let go", inviting him to be at peace. Then, finally, the moment of surrender as this invading force lays claim to his life during Mass. A seizure as he stretches his hands out over the chalice. Tears and groans and urine easing from him as he stands there, rooted to the

spot, his hands clamped down on chalice and wafer. Then suddenly flung backwards onto the marble floor and rendered unconscious before an astonished pastor and his two assistants. Epilepsy on his mother's side is blamed for the incident, but there is no truth in this claim. Father Jonathan's mother was not an epileptic.

This is indeed a far cry from de Chardin's experience of nature, of energy transformed into a presence, of the whole universe in evolution - a universe described as *concentrating upon itself*. Yet perhaps it is not all that different. Perhaps it is only a matter of mental focusing, of the way in which the mind is trained and directed to perceive reality. For it should be remembered that de Chardin and Father Jonathan were, first and foremostly, Catholic priests, their mental paradigm Christ-centered, their inclination towards a religiously-oriented overview underscored by science and the arts. Jonathan was a gifted painter, poet and writer enamoured of the poet Shelley's fresh ideas about God from an early age. By pioneering a similar break with Catholic orthodoxy's notion of God during the 1960's, Jonathan's contribution would be curiously New Age in feel and quality, a candypuff of spirituality with the elder Jesuit's Jesus as Omega Point planted on top like the fairy on a Christmas tree. This was not at all the diaphanous transformation of the world as experienced by de Chardin; more a bedazzlement of the mind and senses. Yet it was not all that dissimilar when the experiential visions of these two men are placed side by side. Grandiose ideas coursing through both minds. A new humankind for de Chardin; for Jonathan a new priesthood and a new church that would replace both Catholic and Protestant institutions. These constructions of the younger priest are rooted directly in de Chardin's writings, but they are not so well contained intellectually; in fact, they are quite manic on occasions.

An old dread seeps into the mind as one reads Malachi Martin's skilful prose - the dread of things that go bump in the night. As he brings the story of Father Jonathan to its climax, he pushes the question of what is happening to this man beyond the edge of credibility and into the realm of paranoia - his own. Receiving an invitation to spend three weeks with a party of

friends in the Canadian wilderness, Jonathan accepts, and so is set in motion a train of events which will result in his being exorcised by Father David Bones. He takes to spending more and more time by himself while the others are hunting and fishing, and eventually wanders deep into the wilderness, "looking for something or some place."¹⁵ And it is not long before he finds what he's looking for - an S-shaped section of river bank where he experiences an electrifying sense of discovery. It is a beautiful place. The water is shallow, the sand of the riverbed soft, the surrounding boulders and rocks almost like black-cowled monks arranged in rows. Here then is his place of revelation and transformation, his "opening in nature".

It is all as he expects it to be. Stretched out face down on the sand he starts to dig with his fingers, shouting all the while *Sacerdos! Sacerdos! Sacerdos!* He wants to become a new priest for the New Time, and as he lies there this process of transformation begins, first as an emptying, then as a flushing away of the man he had become. Under some kind of compulsion he is made walk into the water, and in midstream bends over to feel at the base of a rock for the "veined heart of our world...where Jesus, the Omega Point, was evolving . . . and was on the threshold of emerging."¹⁶ Softly chanting the name of Jesus, he relaxes into the experience until all anticipation, forward-looking thought and emotion is "wrapped up and contained in the now, the here-present."¹⁷ Then psychological disaster strikes. Withdrawing his now bleeding hands from the water, he looks at them lovingly, turns, wades back to the beach and heads at a zigzagging trot through tall pine trees. Propelled by an inner force, he struggles up to a ridge where a small tree with low branches allows him to rest, but on drawing back to look at this tree properly, is horrified to see that unlike the pines, this tree is a dead, barkless, lightning-blasted trunk with two stubby arms. It is a cross, and there is blood on it. Falling into a state of uncontrollable rage, he begins to curse the tree and everything it stands for. Breaking off one of the stubby arms, and then the other, he tumbles down the slope and is rendered unconscious.

Malachi Martin makes an emotional meal of this incident and what follows. Yes, Jonathan has problems, that is pretty

obvious, but his principle problem is not demon possession, it is the kind of Catholicism he has dined on since childhood. David too is undergoing the same troubling process, the same process of will-bending towards an accommodation of doctrines which contradict reality on every level imaginable. He does not experience seizures, but his mind will eventually seize up and threaten him with exactly what he expects - possession by evil. For David is a practicing diocesan exorcist torn between the realities of palaeontology, anthropology and the literalist demands of his faith. Aware that palaeontology and the doctrines of the Church are at odds with one another, he nevertheless manages to continue with his priestly life and ignore the obvious, at least for a while. But when faced with an exorcism this easy alliance of incompatibles becomes difficult to handle; and when confronted by his bishop and asked point blank if evolution is as much a fact as the salvation of Jesus, this alliance finally breaks down. Jesus may have become the culmination of the evolutionary process for Teilhard de Chardin, but for Father David Bones such an arrangement is not sustainable. Neither is it for Father Jonathan. He too will crack wide open as the pressure towards doctrinally conformity is applied by way of progressively more confrontational exorcisms.

So we are left with Jonathan's mysterious seizures to bedevil our imaginations, and the fact that he lied about his mother being an epileptic. Everything is neat and tidy in Malachi Martin's mind as we move to the next possession story. But it is not quite as neat as he imagines, for there is a little more to these seizures of Jonathan's than meets the eye. His mother may not have been an epileptic, but as David finds out later, she too was prone to seizures. Martin makes no comment on the mother's seizures, except to record that David was "relieved" to know that something of the kind ran in the family. The obvious implications are not taken up by Martin, but the word "seizure" reverberates on the page. If not epilepsy, then what exactly? That's the question he hints at without actually posing it.

So are we to conclude that Jonathan's mother was also possessed by evil, and that the son was in receipt of this evil force from the mother? If not, then why separate the information on the

mother's seizures from Jonathan's claim that he has inherited epilepsy from his mother? If not, then why separate the information on the mother's seizures from Jonathan's claim that he has inherited epilepsy from his mother? *That* is when we should have been informed that seizures ran in the family, not, as is the case, later. For this separation causes the word "seizure" in relation to Jonathan to collapse into the word "seizure" in relation to the mother, so making her seizures diabolical by inference. But since Martin offers absolutely no evidence that the mother is possessed and, indeed, she is said to assist at Jonathan's final exorcism, then why should we accept the son's seizures as diabolical when it is perfectly obvious that such seizures are an inherited condition? Since Martin has already revealed that Jonathan had been prone to severe outbursts of uncontrollable temper when a boy, the evidence for a disturbed, rather than a possessed mind becomes the more tenable explanation.

Mental Adjustment

After such a barrage of nonsense it is necessary to re-adjust one's perception of de Chardin and his work. For beneath all the obscure language lies a great truth, a truth capable of carrying us not only to the heart of matter, but to the heart of what matters in the deepest sense of presence, or identity. Teilhard de Chardin offers us a clue when he speaks of "a precise and overwhelming sense of the general convergence of the universe upon itself". And this is not, as Malachi Martin seems to think, a reference to the presence of nature, of the world, of the universe usurping consciousness to the detriment of the divine. Rather, it is a fundamental perceptual capacity to detect the underlying unity of creation in a manner not yet developed in our societies. Such a capacity "encompasses" de Chardin; it is a spontaneous breaking into perceptual focus of a gift we all possess, but do not know how to activate. Yet he admits that he has no been fundamentally changed by this experience. Looking at the humble, kneeling worshipper whose unsophisticated faith in the catechism produces more real charity and calm trust than he himself can muster, he recognises both his failings and his inability to accept the old way.

For Malachi Martin such a statement is self-explanatory: de Chardin's sophisticated perception of things could not produce the moral base that simple faith in the catechism could. *Ergo*, his perceptions were not spiritual at all.

To my way of thinking this kind of approach is naive and inadequate; it smacks loudly of the simplistic and cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. But for all that, it is a conclusion reached with the deepest sincerity and backed by what seems to be irrefutable evidence on the moral level. For if God were really part of this opening up of the senses, then surely the experiencer would be transformed for the better, changed instantly in their inner being like the early disciples, made into a new man devoted to the very doctrines de Chardin's theories render obsolete. That is Malachi Martin's argument, and on the surface it is a good one. But when it is examined closely and made to bear the weight of human experience down the centuries, it is no argument at all. Yes, we are more than we seem, more than our science can fathom, more than our education can describe, but when all is said and done the path to spiritual and intellectual maturity has never been simple or straightforward.

References and Notes:

- 1 Chardin, Teilhard de, *Let me Explain*, Collins/Fontana Books, London 1974, p. 159.
- 2 Martin, Malachi, *The Jesuits* (1988), p. 288.
- 3 Martin, Malachi, *Hostage to the Devil*, Arrow Books, London 1988, (1988), p. 93.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- 8 Martin, Malachi, *The Jesuits* (as above), p. 88.
- 9 Chardin, Teilhard de, *Let me Explain*(as above), p. 51.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 12 Martin, Malachi, *Hostage to the Devil* (as above), p. 107.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 114,
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

17 Ibid., p. 131.