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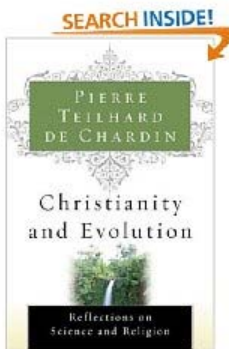
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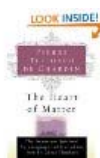
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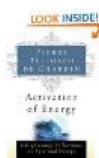
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Language Notes

Text: English, French (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Paperback: 264 pages

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ISBN-10: 0156028182

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It's not a sin to make Christianity possible to believe,

January 6, 2001

By [Thayne Currie](#) (Cambridge, MA) - [See all my reviews](#)

This review is from: [Christianity and Evolution \(Paperback\)](#)

Teilhard de Chardin probably has done more to make Christianity, and God in general, believable to the modern person than perhaps anyone else. His most endearing quality is his ability to, and this is a necessity if believe in a personal God is to survive in light of the modern world, combine science and God in a unified metaphysical system. No longer are religion and science two mutually exclusive realms of truth: for the theist to have a coherent system, he MUST seek a unity of the two spheres. This, though, involves risks. It involves facing up to conflicts between the two and compels an honest seeker of the truth to entertain abandoning his previously beliefs. For such a person (and I consider myself to be one), Teilhard de Chardin's ideas are invaluable.

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I actually had a crisis of faith while reading "Christianity and Evolution." The cause of this unsettling event is not a demonic, evil, blasphemous spirit contained in Teilhard's exhortations but rather the fact that he is quite honest and unforgiving about the serious difficulties raised by traditional theism. In a way, he is me what Hume was to Immanuel Kant being that he

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A little out of date but still worthwhile

Definitely not new-age drivel. I found the essays authoratative, imaginative, and

"awoke me from my dogmatic slumbers."

The content of "Christianity and Evolution" is too vast to cover in a review, so instead I will highlight 2 of the more radical or interesting ideas that proceed from it.

The Universal Christ- Christ can only truly be Christ if he redeems all of existence. If he only came to save a particular species of animals on a planet orbiting a normal star, in the outskirts of a normal galaxy, in an insignificant cluster of galaxies, in one of the countless superclusters of galaxies then "he is abjectly extinguished, eclipsed by the size of the universe." Traditional Christian theology states that the reason why Christ redeems the world is that it suffers from sin, Original Sin being foremost (see St. Paul's argument about the Two Adams). However, a literal Fall makes absolutely no sense in light of modern science (specifically the evolutionary history of the earth). But regardless of the nature of the Fall, the spirit of the Bible is clear: all of the universe has been corrupted and the whole of existence must be redeemed. From this follows the demand that Original Sin be universalized: not as a transgression made by a man in a garden in the Persian Gulf region 6000 years ago, but as part of the intrinsic structure of the universe.

The Problem of Evil- Critics of Teilhard, for example Jurgen Moltmann, argue that Teilhard ignores the "losers of evolution," an accusation that amounts to charging Teilhard with neglecting the problem of evil. However, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, from Teilhardian metaphysics the solution to the problem of evil, the only solution I have ever encountered, surfaces. Classical theism is absolutely destroyed when faced with the problem of evil (see William Rowe's argument for atheism). Teilhard provides a solution, though. It would take many pages (26 w/ small print to be exact, in my paper on the topic) to fully argue the Teilhardian position, but his main points can be summed up. 1) Certain impossibilities about creation follow from an honest understanding of the nature of God: agape, completely self-giving, uncoercive... 2) The appearance of evil is not something that God could have prevented nor just "decided to get rid of" but follows from the nature of the creative act itself 3) This is a manifestation of the nature of God 4) Furthermore, although I would have to go into specifics, this insight as well as the universality of Christ (if God is agape, agape is uncoercive, Christ treats the human being as uncoercive, and Christ is the universal Redeemer, then the same freedom manifested as contingency in evolution must be given to the universe as a whole) absolves God from being "negligent" in eliminating evil since God cannot be negligent of eliminating something that he does not have the power to eliminate (because of his nature, not because of a lack of omnipotence). 5) The theodicy theory here is part of his metaphysics which, when thoroughly argued, not only makes evil compatible with God, but makes evil (especially as it is in type and magnitude now, both natural and moral) NECESSARY in a world like this one created by God. Teilhard's apologetic defense of God turns into a lethal argument in favor of his existence by the very thing that the atheist uses as grounds to discredit theism!

Needless to say, you could read Teilhard de Chardin for a decade and still not grasp his genius in its fullness. He covers other areas as well including the topic of Christianity v. Pantheism (interesting solution) and the Trinity (actually puts forth a strong RATIONAL argument for the triune nature of God). This is a must read!

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By [Kaija DeWitt \(kaija.i.dewitt.2@nd.edu\)](#) (Notre Dame, IN) - [See all my reviews](#)

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After spending a year studying this book, I have concluded that Teilhard could be right on. In the least he offers a delightful synthesis of turn-of-the-century anthropology/science and his religious tradition. So although I get called a heretic in class, I'd suggest this book to folks who want are frustrated with the lack of scientific reflection in theology.

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"The fact that we now see the universe not as a cosmos but henceforth as a cosmogenesis in no way affects the idea we used to be able to form of the Author of all things. 'As though it made any difference to God!'" P. Teilhard De Chardin, The God of Evolution

Evolution Vs Intelligent Design:

Panel discussion on Evolution and the scientific method highlighted "Darwin Day" program at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, last March 4th. Sponsored by the Center for Inquiry Community of Indiana, a group that includes atheists, agnostics, humanists, and others skeptical of a divine role in natural processes, followed by a two-hour debate on the subject between a Wyoming paleontologist who supports evolution and a representative of an Ohio organization that supports intelligent design. It could have been more enjoyable albeit inconclusive, if the participants were provided earlier with a copy of this book.

De Chardin Essays:

Reading Fr. de Chardin enlarges the religious vision of the faithful who search the scriptures (Jn 5:39), and offers scientists an authentic new approach to some problematic theological concepts. These nineteen previously unpublished essays represent his toil to fill the gap with some of his genuine thought in this critical and controversial area.

Some of his essays will echo orthodox thought of the eastern Church fathers (Original Sin, Fall & Redemption, Monogenism and Monophysitism), and in others he tries to investigate postmodern issues (Christology & Evolution, Creative Transformation, Universe's Contingence, Plurality, Secularism & Pantheism)

Wildiers claims that the problem of secularity in the essays is central to Teilhard's thought. Yet, what fascinated me was linking 'a world in evolution' with an anthropology that exalts the dignity of Man's work, 'a holy love of earth'

More interesting to me, an Oriental Orthodox, was his papers on Original Sin and the Fall. He excludes the School of Alexandria, from the rest of the Church as to the derivation of those concepts interpreting Genesis. His twofold difficult way out of the Fall dogma, revisited later when Fr. Matthew Fox contrasted it with his proposed Creation Spirituality, is to "bring the past to life again by means of science, the less we can accomodate either Adam or the earthly paradise."

Provocative Author:

Pere Teilhard, an eminent paleontologist himself, was a believing scientist who kept asking theologians questions that provoked earnest study and passionate debate, de Chardin's asked questions they had never dared to tackle before!

The genius mystic who championed an attempt of a new meticulous presentation to help Christian believers understand his view of scientific reality, captured the attention and stimulated theologian's thought. His theological speculations, like Master Origen, got him into trouble and was under suspicion by the Roman Curia, for the rest of his life.

A Theological Advice:

Dr. Wildiers advice to lay theologians in his insightful forward very well applies, today as was yesterday, "In order to fully understand a writer, we must do more than examine the various points in the teaching he offers. The first thing we have to do is to form as clear a picture as we can of the problem to which the teaching is presumed to supply a solution."

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