

**JOHN F. HAUGHT**

## **True Union Differentiates: A Response to My Critics**

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I thank the four respondents for their close examination of my lecture. I realise how difficult and time-consuming it can be to evaluate another's work, and all the respondents have made sacrifices in order to meet the deadline for this discussion. I also want to express my gratitude to Denis Alexander for setting up the conversation and for his editorial work in putting this issue of the journal together.

Initially I had intended to comment separately and in detail on each response. However, I found so many debatable points in the essays by Paul Helm and R. J. Berry that I concluded it would serve no useful purpose to respond to every one of them. Instead I have decided to concentrate mainly on the deeper, and sincerely felt, concern about my theological method that comes through in all four responses. In clarifying what I am trying to accomplish in my theology of evolution, I shall have occasion to address *ambulando* some of the particular reservations that each author has raised, but I shall not attempt to meet each and every one. Still, in the course of my reply I will not be able to avoid commenting at some length on Berry's caricature of Teilhard de Chardin, as well as on several other of the many problematic items in his essay. I shall also have to spend some time reacting to Paul Helm's understanding of the relationship between Scripture and our theological understanding of the natural world. Since I will not devote nearly so much space to the responses by Conway Morris and Alister McGrath I want to say at the outset how much I appreciate their careful and thoughtful essays, with which I can agree for the most part. I will continue to keep their understandable cautions in mind in my future work.

The global message that I hear coming from all of my critics, although it is somewhat louder in the case of Berry and Helm than of McGrath and Conway Morris, is one that goes something like this: 'Be careful! You are doing something that might be dangerous theologically. If unchecked, it could turn out to be injurious to the integrity of Christian faith, or it may imperil proper respect for the inaccessible ways of God. Conversation between theology and science can easily end up fusing Christian faith with ill-formed ideas, or with naturalistic ideologies that will only diminish the doctrines of creation, redemption and providence.' Even McGrath's reservations about natural theology rightly emanate from a concern about theological integrity. I agree with him that any natural theology that emulates the original Boyle Lectures will not work today. Certainly my lecture does not fit the mould. But if vocal opponents of natural theology such as Karl Barth and Stanley Hauerwas are invited to give Gifford lectures – the prestigious series endowed to advance the cause of natural the-

ology – then perhaps there is already a precedent on British soil for the kind of slippage my lecture also indulges.

In any case, I accept happily the challenge to exercise all due caution with respect to the claims of theology, especially since my critics' concern arises from a deep Christian faith in all cases. I have tried, though perhaps not always successfully, to be conscious of the limits of both natural and constructive theology, recognising what a tentative and revisable enterprise such efforts are. The famous quotation from Job 38 that Helm rightly calls to our attention hangs figuratively over my theological workbench, as does the often embarrassing history of ill-conceived unions between theology and science to which Berry and McGrath rightly allude.

However, I believe the theologian can also err on the side of caution in not speaking directly to sincere inquirers, especially scientists and scientific thinkers in our own times. I have been heartened in this respect by the many favourable responses I have received from biologists and other scientists to my book *God After Darwin*.<sup>1</sup> Some science students have also related that my approach allows them to study biology without fear that they are getting into areas inimical to their faith. An Ivy League professor of palaeontology told me in person that my theology of evolution allowed him to return to the Christian faith from which he had long been intellectually estranged. Other scientific readers have expressed with some surprise their satisfaction in finding a theology that does not try to edit out the disturbing aspects of evolutionary science. The same, of course, can be said of many other books on science and religion today.

Such remarks are indicative of the fact that religious educators have often placed unnecessary obstacles on the scientist's path to faith. Hence I believe that theology has a *pastoral* obligation to remove the many false stumbling blocks to Christianity that insensitive evangelisation has placed in the way of sincere scientific inquirers. In this respect, at least, I am a devoted follower of Rudolf Bultmann. The removal of unnecessary barriers to faith is one of the main objectives of apologetic theology, and this is why natural theology may still have a limited place in our work. My point, more specifically, is that theologians need to acknowledge that there are many educated people today for whom evolution, often in a strictly Darwinian form, is the integrating concept in their worldview. We should not insist that science-minded people cut out this core of all their thinking as a condition for making themselves ready for faith – any more than St Paul demanded that circumcision be a requirement of discipleship. I believe that today's theologians must emulate the ancient Christian authors who, in their fervour to share the joy of faith with their contemporaries, did not demand that the latter abandon contemporary thought-forms in order to be incorporated into communion with Christ. Today, however, the dis-

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1 Haught, J. *God After Darwin*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press (2000)

dain for evolution, and even for science itself, in much contemporary Christian theology and in our seminaries and theological colleges (at least in N. America) is simply appalling, making Christian faith unnecessarily difficult for large numbers of otherwise religiously disposed people.

Along with Bultmann, however, I do not believe that removing false stumbling blocks to faith will make the challenge of Christianity any *easier* to face. And so with Conway Morris I agree that we need to avoid shallow accommodation and instead expose to each age ‘the very strangeness of the Christian claim’. I have tried to do exactly this in highlighting the incredible themes of kenosis and divine promise, notions that even many Christians have yet to acknowledge as central. That these are the true stumbling blocks is evident in the fact that for many ‘enlightened’ people the Christian notions of divine kenosis and promise are much harder to swallow than are ideas about ultimate reality implicit not only in creationism and Intelligent Design Theory but also in forms of classical theology that have sometimes suppressed the terribly good news about God.

It seems to me that we Christians too, including theologians, have yet to catch up with the religious revolution at the foundation of our faith. Even erudite Christian thinkers often bristle at the suggestion that the whole universe – and not just human life and history – needs to be framed by the strange ideas of kenosis and promise. Witness, for example, the resistance especially by Berry and Helm to my proposal that the *whole* of creation still has a future. Apparently they do not think much of the large body of Christian thought, including St Paul’s, that places the whole of creation within the revelatory horizon of hope. So distasteful does the idea that nature is seeded with promise seem that Berry spends a considerable portion of his response to me vicariously tearing apart Teilhard de Chardin. I shall be obliged to comment further on this puzzling assault later on.

For now I would note that Helm too has great difficulty believing that the theme of promise is relevant to a theology of nature. He accuses me of a ‘misapplication of New Testament language to the natural order’.<sup>2</sup> He complains that in my zeal ‘to integrate some Christian theology with evolutionary theory’ I pay too high a price. He objects to my transposing ‘the Incarnation-Resurrection motif from its original home in the New Testament onto the entire cosmos’ and claims that it is ‘illegitimate ... to relocate the idea of divine promise ... to the cosmos as a whole’. It is *illegitimate*, he goes on, ‘because, quite simply, there is no warrant in Scripture for doing this, nor any hint that doing so might be a profitable exercise’.

But do all ‘profitable’ Christian truths have to be literally or explicitly pres-

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<sup>2</sup> Helm also bases much of his criticism on his misreading of my verb ‘enfold’ to mean ‘unfold’. This is only one of numerous problems I have with Helm’s essay, and I do not have space to address them all.

ent in unambiguous scriptural formulas? If so, Nicea and Chalcedon, to start with, would have to be discarded. But let us play by Helm's restrictive hermeneutical rules for the moment. Perhaps, then, someone should have warned St Paul that there are no warrants in the ancient Scriptures for extending the promise of redemption to the whole of creation either (Rom. 8, 18ff). St Paul tells us, in words that Helm would surely accept, that if we belong to Christ then we are 'Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3: 29). However, the author of Colossians must then be violating Helm's rules by declaring that in Christ, who is the very epitome of God's promise and fidelity, 'all things hold together' (Col. 1:17). For since when is the physical universe not part of 'all things'? Christ, the promise of the ages, is 'all in all' (Col. 3: 11). How then can it be maintained that a theology that situates the entire universe within the context of promise has no scriptural warrants? For Helm apparently the 'word' of promise that came to Abraham is quite different from the *Word* that was 'in the beginning' (Jn. 1:1) and from the Christ *in quo omnia constant* (Col. 1:17).

In fact, however, I think it is correct to say that God's 'word' in Scripture often, if not always, holds overtones of promise. So it is not at all unwarranted to conclude that God's promise opens up the future to *all* of creation, not just to us humans. Am I stretching things too far biblically when I suggest that the promissory word of God is the *ultimate* context and cause of cosmic and biological evolution? If I am, then so also is the psalmist who exclaims in joy and hope: 'Thou has made thy promise wide as the heavens.' (Ps. 138: 2 *New English Bible*).

God's promise, of course, is inseparable from God's self-gift, and for this reason Berry is mistaken when he claims that nature is gift *rather than* promise – as though a promise is not also the most momentous gift that a world *in via* could possibly receive. I do not believe that we are doing theology responsibly, especially in an age of science, if we view God's gift of the promise as though nature can be left out of the picture. Moreover, anyone familiar with contemporary biology and cosmology cannot, even physically speaking, sever the human from the natural world as though the latter were incidental to our own being both now *and eschatologically*. Helm and Berry both seem satisfied to view redemption as a process in which God harvests human souls from the cosmos, rather than as the Pauline coming to fulfilment of an entire universe. I could be wrong here, but my suspicion is that Conway Morris also leans in the same direction when he dismisses the immensities of the cosmos as somewhat irrelevant to religious concern about human existence and destiny.

What then are the roots of the acosmic theological perspective endorsed by Berry and Helm, and even, it seems, to some extent by Conway Morris and his mentor Chesterton, the brilliant Christian thinker who never disguised his hostility to Darwinism. Perhaps Alister McGrath, along with other ecologically sensitive Christian theologians, is right in tracing the problem partly at least to the modern emphasis on God's 'word' that edged out the sacramental and

hence physical sense of the world's relationship to the Sacred.<sup>3</sup> Maybe there is still a fear that I am abandoning God's covenant with people and returning to 'paganism' in my deliberately Catholic extension of the sacramental vision beyond liturgical experience. Whatever the reason, I would still argue that the theme of the 'promise of nature' can tie together both word and sacrament in a way that makes theological sense of evolution and at the same time provides a firm biblical and Christian basis for ecological responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

## Larger Questions

Hovering over the conversation between my critics and me about the meaning of evolution, of course, is the broader question of how theology should go about conversing with science. Conway Morris is right to point out that if there is to be a genuine conversation between science and theology, scientists now need to do their own part by acknowledging the ideological factors – and I assume he is thinking especially of scientific naturalism – that often imprison their science and that indeed constitute an unnecessary stumbling block to faith. I agree, and I have attempted recently to show how uncritically evolutionists have turned Darwinism into ultimate explanation.<sup>5</sup> Whenever Darwinism becomes a new belief-system, as it often does these days, it cannot be assimilated into theology until the science is distinguished carefully from the ideology. It is all too easy to conflate scientific information with mechanism or materialism, and in the case of Darwinism this fusion requires delicate theological surgery in order to cut out the cancerous philosophical assumptions without excising good science along with it. My own impression is that many theologians and religious educators, and not just creationists and Intelligent Design advocates, view the whole phenomenon of Darwinism as so diseased by materialism that they prefer either to euthanise the patient or postpone the operation indefinitely.

However, the name of Darwin is arguably more important today than ever before, and so theology's dialogue with science will get nowhere as long as it simply waits for biologists to get over it. Moreover, even if evolutionary science eventually becomes less Darwinian, and a 'new paradigm' emerges – something, say, along the lines of Lynn Margulis's organismic, symbiotic theory, or any other of the new ideas that highlight the cooperation and self-organisation, rather than competition, in evolution – theology will still be obliged to address the very same general features of nature that make Darwinian biology so the-

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3 McGrath, A. *The Reenchantment of Nature: The Denial of Religion and the Ecological Crisis*, New York: Doubleday (2002); *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World*, New York: Doubleday (2004).

4 Haught, J. F. *The Promise of Nature: Ecology and Cosmic Purpose*, New York: Paulist Press (1993).

5 Haught, J. F. *Deeper Than Darwin: The Prospect for Religion in the Age of Evolution*, Boulder, Colo: Westview Press (2003).

ologically troublesome right now. Even if one accepts Conway Morris's carefully researched arguments regarding the convergence in evolution,<sup>6</sup> nevertheless the contingency in natural history, the absence of direct design, the blindness and impersonality of selection, genetic monstrosities, suffering, death and the gradualism in life's creation over the course of billions of years – all of these aspects of evolution will still be there to raise questions about what God is up to. We might eventually get past the materialist ideological overlay that cripples much contemporary biology, but the suite of theological issues that have accompanied the success of Darwinism will be with us indefinitely. Conway Morris and perhaps others among my respondents may prove to be correct in suggesting that I have tied my own theology of evolution too closely to the historically limited specifics of conventional Darwinism. However, I am persuaded that essentially the same puzzles that I now highlight as theologically challenging in Darwinism will still be around to torment or stimulate theology when something more precise has taken its place.

Theologically speaking, therefore, avoiding the hard work of at least trying to make systematic sense of commonly accepted evolutionary discoveries is, I believe, harmful to Christian faith. To me it seems escapist to keep putting off the labour of theological integration on the pretext that scientific ideas are provisional and revisable. How long are we going to wait? I agree with my critics that Darwinism by itself does not take us deep enough into an understanding of life, and that there is endless room for science as well as theology to dig deeper. But to avoid altogether the task of seeking out what the evolution of life means in terms of Christian faith is in my view a failure to embrace fully the doctrines of creation, incarnation and redemption.

The message that comes across from both Helm and Berry is that the attempt to extract meaning from the process of evolution is fraught with theological and philosophical pitfalls. But my reply is that for Christianity to avoid systematically commenting on the meaning of evolution, especially in view of the fact that Darwinian materialists have not been reluctant to do so, is fruitless quietism. Why should the likes of G.G. Simpson, Jacques Monod, Michael Ruse, Daniel Dennett, Stephen Jay Gould, George Williams, Richard Dawkins, David Hull and countless others be granted free reign to tell us what evolution means while theologians are advised in effect to just sit back and stay silent about it all? For example, when I hear Daniel Dennett claiming that the meaning of evolution is that the universe has no purpose, is my only option as a theologian simply to press my fingers to my lips in reverential, Jobian silence? Or am I not obliged at least to *try* to show how the details of evolution may be rendered consonant with faith in God's providence?

I find it extremely puzzling, in this respect, that Berry gladly approves of

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6 Conway Morris, *S. Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2003).

Dawkins's oft-quoted line that evolution proves the 'pitiless indifference' of the universe. It would follow that Berry should have no difficulty agreeing with Dennett's substantively identical claim either. He appears to be saying that the Dawkins/Dennett rendition is perfectly appropriate from the point of view of natural understanding. However, Dawkins<sup>7</sup> and Dennett<sup>8</sup> are issuing *belief* claims in the guise of natural explanation. Berry does not seem to notice, for if the claims of evolutionary materialists are true, as he seems to allow, then Christianity is patently false, and no '*credo quia absurdum*' will ever rescue faith from logical absurdity. Of course, eventually all of us will have to fall back into reverential silence before the majesty and glory of God. But there is a time for silence and a time to speak. And to resort to silence out of season is to stop learning and struggling – and living. Indeed, it is a denial of our finitude to suppose that we don't have to struggle toward the light, or to suppose that any final revelation could ever be deeply meaningful to us apart from a whole history of our trying at least to understand.

Contrary to Berry and Helm, I believe the theologian has to go to work here and now, looking squarely at the same painstakingly gathered information that feeds into absurdist and materialist interpretations of evolution, and showing how it can all make better sense theologically. At the very least, if theology is to have any intellectual credibility at all, it must try to demonstrate that the information gathered from the fossil record, biogeographical distribution, comparative anatomy, embryology, radiometric dating, genetics, etc. does not require a materialistic interpretative framework, as Berry puzzlingly seems quite willing to allow – why else would he not raise objections to materialists such as Dawkins, but instead sing their praises for wringing every ounce of meaning from the life-process?

In other words, it is no mark of religious integrity or theological rectitude to invoke paradox prematurely, that is, where faith can still seek understanding. Lapsing into theological passivity without pointing out the logical incoherence of materialist interpretations of life and mind, for example, heightens only contradiction, not true paradox, and this evasion serves to make theology intellectually irrelevant. My own attempt to construct a systematic integration of evolutionary biology and Christian theology has been motivated by a conviction that evolution is too important to be left to the mechanists. Theology must at least make the effort, therefore, to place evolution in a more intelligible framework than that of scientific materialism. Perhaps future generations will judge my own and others efforts to construct a theology of evolution too naively accommodative, but the approach I have taken is respectful of the fact that

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7 Dawkins, R. *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co. (1986); *River Out of Eden*, New York: Basic Books (1995); *Climbing Mount Improbable*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co. (1996).

8 Dennett D.C. *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, New York: Simon & Schuster (1995).

most scientifically educated people simply cannot make a leap of faith that requires that they deny the facts in front of their eyes.

So much, then, for why I cannot help getting involved in the evolutionary fray. But what about the specific theological angle I take with respect to evolution as a Christian theologian? Here are a couple of relevant background items. When I was still in graduate school I read the following powerful lines in Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, expressing Christianity's essential continuity with Jewish expectation:

From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day... Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence and of the whole Church. There is therefore only one real problem in Christian theology ...: the problem of the future.<sup>9</sup>

To this day I believe Moltmann was right on target. But it was not from Moltmann and the Bible alone that I first adopted 'the coming of the future' as the framework of my theology. Prior to that, when I was still in my early twenties, I began to study the writings of Teilhard de Chardin,<sup>10</sup> the renowned Jesuit geologist and palaeontologist, and it was he who first convinced me that not just human history, and not only the individual's destiny, but *the whole universe* must be framed by the biblical theme of promise. Cosmology and evolution, Teilhard realised long before Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, must also be set in 'the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day'. Teilhard was perfectly Christian in holding that it is theologically unacceptable to place the universe and life's evolution outside of the context of Christian hope. As for the centrality of kenosis, the theme is already there in Teilhard and Moltmann, but there have been many other theological sources that have led me to highlight it. I have set these forth in my systematic theology of revelation.<sup>11</sup>

I am convinced then that the twin themes of kenosis and promise that underlie my theology of evolution will always be relevant to a Christian understanding of the results of scientific discovery. But since Berry and Helm

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9 Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope*, Leitch, J.(trans.), New York: Harper and Row (1967) p. 16.

10 e.g. Teilhard de Chardin, P. *Human Energy*, Cohen J. M.(trans.), New York: Harvest Books/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1962); *The Human Phenomenon*, Appleton-Weber, S.(trans.), Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press (1999).

11 Haught, J. F. *Mystery and Promise: A Theology of Revelation*, Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press (1993).

express such strong reservations about my usage of these two themes, I should address their objections a bit further at this point.

First, regarding kenosis, Berry writes:

The problem with all discussions about it is knowing how far God's 'emptying' extended. God clearly restricted and humbled himself when he took human form, as the classical passage in Philippians 2: 6-8 states. Logically also, God has drawn back in allowing us to have free will; we are not automata. On the other hand, Jesus retained and exhibited authority over natural forces beyond that of normal humanity: 'Even the winds and waves obey him', while the temptations in the wilderness imply that Christ could have escaped them by supernatural agency. In fairness, we have to acknowledge that the extent of kenosis has limits and that we do not know them.

It is clear from his own words that Berry associates kenosis with physical weakness. Otherwise he would not view Jesus' authority to alter the physics of nature as inconsistent with kenosis. In fact, however, kenosis should be understood to mean that there are no limits to the outpouring of divine love, and love should never be associated theologically with weakness. Berry backs up his understanding of kenosis with a hermeneutically dubious – indeed a literalist – reference to Jesus' so-called nature miracles, apparently taking these as proof that divine action can be physically manipulative. Yet, even if one takes the Gospel accounts of nature miracles literally, such occurrences would not mean that the eternal divine self-emptying is being momentarily suspended or limited. Nor does kenosis mean the negation of divine power. Indeed, God's power is not vanquished but even more impressively expressed in its giving birth to a world that can make itself (as Charles Kingsley, Frederick Temple, Teilhard de Chardin and other post-Darwinian religious thinkers have put it) than in a hypothetical world wherein God is the immediate cause of everything.

By empowering nature and secondary causes, the divine kenosis, the outpouring of divine love, is unlimited. For the Christian this love should be power enough. If power means the capacity to influence things, then the self-emptying that Christianity attributes to God on the basis of the life and death of Jesus is itself a deep expression of power, not powerlessness, as Berry assumes. Power, the capacity to influence, can be of different sorts. There can be unilateral or coercive power, but there can also be *relational* power.<sup>12</sup> God's kenosis is an instance of the latter, the power to relate. And God's longing for deep relationship with the created world means that God is also affected by what happens in the world. Love cannot do otherwise than make itself vulnerable to the sufferings and joys of the beloved. And the intuition that God does not characteristically intrude into the world in the manner of unilateral power is not a

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12 Loomer, B. 'Two Conceptions of Power', *Process Studies* (1976) 6(1), 5-32.

sign of weakness but is entirely consistent with relational power.

The divine incarnation, rooted in the eternal kenotic love of God, is apparently for the sake of deep communion and intimate relationship with the created world. Accordingly, a central Christian intuition is that the power to relate is ultimately more influential than is dictatorial (or unilateral) power. Trinitarian theology expresses the belief that 'to be is to be related', and that 'to be *more* is to be even more deeply related'. The maximum degree of being, then, would consist of an *absolute* relationality.<sup>13</sup> Hence God's absoluteness (or *aseity*, if one insists on the term) does not consist of icy detachment from the world, but of an absolute (unlimited) relationship to – and immanence in – the world. God's absolute distinctness from everything created consists of God's *unrestricted* capacity to exist in close relationship to what is other than God. We humans are not endowed with such an infinite power to relate. Our own capacity for relationship, and therefore our degree of being, is finite. Humans can relate more widely to the world than can rocks, carrots and monkeys, but our relational power is still limited. On the other hand, God's capacity to relate – and therefore God's capacity to constitute beings as *distinct* from and other than God – is unlimited. The ontological principle here is nicely expressed in many works of Teilhard: true union differentiates.<sup>14</sup>

It is in this relational sense of power that the divine kenosis is unlimited. So it is theologically misleading, I believe, to think of kenosis in the way that Berry does, as in some way detracting from God's power. I want to emphasise once again that God's relationality, intimacy or intercommunion with creation does not mean that God dissolves the creation or absorbs it into the divine being so that its distinctive identity is lost. Rather, what God wills is the deepening of the *otherness* of creation. In Teilhard's terms, the principle that 'union differentiates' has a profound theological application. The deeper God's relationship to the world becomes, the sharper is the distinction between God and the world. So there is no justification whatsoever to Berry's and Helm's claim that my theology of nature jeopardises the transcendence of God. Just the opposite is true. What it does jeopardise are those kinds of supranaturalist theism that think transcendence means separateness from the world, a view of things that Paul Tillich rightly locates at the foundation of modern atheism. In the logical order we distinguish in order to relate, but in the real order it is relationship that allows for distinctions to arise in the first place. This is why it is good theology to say that even the creation of the world as something *other* than God is grounded in the eternal kenosis of God that lets something other than God come into being.

Berry, however, complains that in my use of kenosis 'the distinction between an infinite creator and a finite cosmos is blurred, and it is difficult to maintain

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13 Ogden, S. *The Reality of God and Other Essays*, San Francisco: Harper and Row (1977), p 47.

14 Teilhard de Chardin, P. *The Human Phenomenon*, p. 186.

the deity of Christ as an ontological as opposed to a functional concept. This in turn reduces the significance of the incarnation and the atonement.' Berry's undisguised hostility towards my lecture reveals how uneasy he is with any truly close association of God with kenosis. He is not alone. Countless Christians still find it offensive, preferring a more manipulative understanding of divine power. I would suggest once again, though, that the strange and even 'foolish' idea of God's kenosis is the true stumbling block to Christian faith, so much so that even many theologians through the centuries have circled around it, looking for some less paradoxical understanding of God and divine power.

However, today the appeal to kenotic theology is no longer as marginal or as optional as Berry would like to think. Even some of the most cautious and conservative Christian thinkers now make kenosis central. In *Fides et Ratio*, for example, Pope John Paul II writes that the chief purpose of Christian systematic theology is to explore 'the understanding of God's kenosis, a grand and mysterious truth for the human mind, which finds it inconceivable that suffering and death can express a love which gives itself and seeks nothing in return'. Here and in his statements on science and religion John Paul has displayed a sophisticated theological awareness that for many enlightened people the true stumbling block to Christian faith is not the history of its occasional opposition to science and evolution but the 'inconceivable' kenosis of God. By no longer allowing the impression that Christianity opposes evolution, the Pope is asking in effect whether we are ready to accept in faith the real challenge to reshape our lives and minds in accordance with the self-outpouring of God.

Berry goes on to claim that my kenotic theology of evolution is decisively vitiated because I also draw upon ideas of Alfred North Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin, both of whom are in his view unqualified to offer any substantive assistance to those of us who are struggling to make religious sense of evolution: 'Haught uses kenosis to qualify what he calls soul-centred and cosmic directionality in evolution, along the lines predicted or inspired by a Whitehead-Teilhard philosophy. This can be rejected... Whatever the intrinsic merit of Whitehead's ideas, they have the effect of reducing the significance of events in time, because reality is a process of becoming, not a static property of objects.'

I have no idea what Berry means by the first sentence in this quotation, but when he says that Whitehead's ideas have the effect of 'reducing the significance of events in time' his meaning is clear, though still expressed imprecisely. He does not seem to realise that one of the main reasons why theologians have turned to Whitehead is because his thought gives back to the world of becoming and temporal events the value that was stolen from them by the ancient prejudice that process inevitably means deficiency. In fact almost every Whiteheadian that I know of has been attracted to his thought in the first place precisely because it does *not* permit us to 'reduce the significance of events in time'. Instead, process thought redeems the value of temporal events, includ-

ing our own personal histories, by allowing them to be taken everlastingly into the life of God. For Whitehead (as well as for Teilhard) the world of becoming truly matters to God – eternally. I fail to see what is so unchristian about this kind of theology. At least Whitehead’s thought is open to the fuller implications of the bold Christian idea of the divine incarnation. God embraces the physical world with such intense and preservative care that God takes *every* event in time, and that includes every event in the story of *nature*, into the expansive beauty of the everlasting divine life. How is this panentheistic view a diminishment either of God or of ‘the significance of events’?

And, by the way, as most readers of this journal already know, the theological framework underlying Whiteheadian process theology,<sup>15</sup> sometimes called *panentheism*, has nothing whatsoever to do with pantheism. Berry erroneously presents Whitehead’s thought as equivalent to pantheism, and he interprets C. S. Lewis as condemning panentheism as though it were indistinguishable from pantheism. While doing a computerised word-search I could not find the term ‘panentheism’ in Lewis’s book *Miracles*, the one that Berry cites. I do not pretend to be an expert on C. S. Lewis, but I would be surprised, and terribly disappointed, if Lewis could not grasp the clear distinction between pantheism, which he rightly refutes, and panentheism, which in many instances is a completely orthodox theological position. At any rate, perhaps it needs to be pointed out once again that panentheism, a theological position that asserts that ‘all is *in* God’, not that all *is* God, is a far cry from pantheism. Once one grasps the sacramental, Chalcedonian and Trinitarian principle that ‘true union differentiates’, one will no longer be tempted to interpret the nearness of God to nature, or the immanence of God in nature, as though it means a monophysitic dissolving of God into the world. Panentheism, therefore, is perfectly consistent with the strong affirmation of God’s transcendence. It is already implicit in St Paul’s sermon in *Acts* when he speaks of God as ‘the one in whom we live and move and have our being’ *Acts*: 17: 28.<sup>16</sup> Much more disturbing to me than his misstatements about panentheism and Whitehead, however, are Berry’s intemperate remarks about Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). By first identifying me as an admirer of Teilhard, and then trying to discredit Teilhard on the basis of a single negative book review, Berry apparently assumes that he has found the central defect in my own lecture. Naively swallowing Peter Medawar’s own misguided labelling of Teilhard as a ‘Spencerian’ – a smear that says nothing about the biblical, Pauline and Christological basis of Teilhard’s theology of nature – Berry then goes on to say that ‘[Herbert] Spencer is really the modern author of Haught’s “cosmic directionality”.’ Well, this is news to me since I have never embraced a Spencerian interpretation of evolution

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15 Whitehead, A.N.. *Process and Reality*, corrected Edn., Griffin, D.R. & Sherburne, D.W. (eds.), New York: The Free Press (1968).

16 For clarification see the helpful essays in Clayton, P.& Peacocke, A.(eds.) *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmann’s (2004).

and have instead used the biblical themes of promise and hope as the basis of my theology. However, I see no point in defending my own work against Berry's reckless objections any further at this point. Instead, on this fiftieth year after Teilhard's death it is more fitting to make at least a brief remark or two about Berry's gratuitous savaging of this brilliant and modest Jesuit priest, a man whose fellow scientists considered among the top geologists of the Asian continent and whom many others, including myself, take to be one of the great religious thinkers of the twentieth century and indeed of Christian history.

I have not the space to set forth a detailed rebuttal, even though I am fully prepared to do so. I can only caution readers that Berry's attack on Teilhard is groundless. I am still trying to locate the source of such venom. What is most remarkable to me, however, is Berry's shocking deviation from acceptable canons of scholarship. Instead of citing passages directly from Teilhard and refuting them head on, as would only be fair, Berry introduces us to the man and sums up what he is all about by saying '... it is difficult to believe that anyone who has read the review of *The Phenomenon of Man* by Peter Medawar in *Mind* (1961) would ever take his ideas seriously'. I can only exclaim that it is difficult to believe that anyone who has actually read the works of Teilhard would take either Medawar or Berry seriously. Perhaps Berry has read a bit of Teilhard; maybe he has even perused the *Phenomenon*. I simply don't know. What I do know is that he lacks an accurate understanding of Teilhard. Teilhard's ideas are difficult to follow, but not impenetrable, and with good will and an open mind one can gain at least something from *reading* his numerous works. Teilhard's ideas, like those of every other great thinker and scientist are flawed, but no thinker deserves to be flayed so publicly without first being given a fair hearing.

The (in)famous review by Medawar, which for Berry captures the essence of Teilhard, accuses the Jesuit scientist of writing 'nonsense', and issuing 'tedious metaphysical deceptions'. Bernard Towers, the renowned Cambridge embryologist and successful interpreter of Teilhard, gives a much less adulatory assessment of Medawar's review in *Mind* than does Berry. 'Rarely if ever', he begins, 'can that staid and erudite little journal [*Mind*] have bristled and sparkled with such a display of verbal fireworks.' I would only add that rarely if ever has a single review wrought so much misunderstanding. One might even agree with Towers that Medawar's review is 'undoubtedly first-rate' as 'entertainment'. But, as Towers rightly adds, the review can also 'with justice be described as highly emotional parody'. Berry, I regret to say, is just one more victim of Medawar's rhetorical puffery. For another perspective I suggest that he read Teilhard, or in lieu of that, at least peruse Bernard Towers' book *Concerning Teilhard*.<sup>17</sup> As for Teilhard's theological orthodoxy one can do no better than

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17 Towers, B. *Concerning Teilhard, and Other Writings on Science and Religion*, London, Collins (1969).

Henri de Lubac's *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*.<sup>18</sup> My point is that if so much of Berry's distaste for my theology of evolution is due to his associating me with Teilhard, then it would be helpful if it were grounded in an accurate understanding of the latter's thought.

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18 De Lubac, H. *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, Hague, R.(trans.), New York: Doubleday Image Books (1968).

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