

Fri., 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020**To all members of our International English-Speaking Community of the Parish of Luxembourg Notre-Dame**

We carry on reading step by step “*The Mass on the World*” written in 1923 by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a Jesuit priest, a theologian and a palaeontologist, whilst he was working as part of a team in palaeontological fieldwork in the Ordos desert, a barren landscape, west of Peking, near the border with Inner Mongolia.

Today, let us read the second section of Part III, “Fire in the Earth”, that is the equivalent of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

It follows Part I, “The Offering”, read last week, that was the equivalent of the Offertory at Mass, and Part II, “Fire over the Earth”, read on Monday this week, that was the equivalent of the *epiclesis*, the moment at Mass when the priest calls the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine to make them become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The first section of this Part III of *The Mass on the World* was read on Wednesday. You may find it again by clicking on the link here: <https://catholic.lu/2020/04/01/facing-unusual-times-part-vi-by-fr-hp/>

**Fire in the Earth (2/2)**

[...]

What I experience as I stand in face of—and in the very depths of—this world which your flesh has assimilated, this world which has become your flesh, my God, is not the absorption of the monist who yearns to be dissolved into the unity of things, nor the emotion felt by the pagan as he lies prostrate before a tangible divinity, nor yet the passive self-abandonment of the quietist tossed hither and thither at the mercy of mystical impulsions. From each of these modes of thought I take something of their motive force while avoiding their pitfalls: the approach determined for me by your omnipresence is a wonderful synthesis wherein three of the most formidable passions that can unlock the human heart rectify each other as they mingle:

like the monist<sup>1</sup> I plunge into the all-inclusive One; but the One is so perfect that as it receives me and I lose myself in it I can find in it the ultimate perfection of my own individuality;

like the pagan I worship a God who can be touched; and I do indeed touch him—this God—over the whole surface and in the depths of that world of matter which confines me; but to take hold of him as I would wish (simply in order not to stop touching him), I must go always on and on through and beyond each undertaking, unable to rest in anything, home onwards at each moment by creatures and at each moment going beyond them, in a continuing welcoming of them and a continuing detachment from them;

like the quietist<sup>2</sup> I allow myself with delight to be cradled in the divine fantasy: but at the same time I know that the divine will, will only be revealed to me at each moment if I exert myself to the utmost: I shall only touch God in the world of matter, when, like Jacob, I have been vanquished by him.

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<sup>1</sup> Monism: (in metaphysics) any of various theories holding that there is only one basic substance or principle as the ground of reality, or that reality consists of a single element.

[It also describes] the reduction of all processes, structures, concepts, etc., to a single governing principle [or] the theoretical explanation of everything in terms of one principle.

[It finally describes] the conception that there is one causal factor in history; the notion of a single element as primary determinant of behaviour, social action, or institutional relations.

(Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/monism>)

<sup>2</sup> Quietism [is] a doctrine of Christian spirituality that, in general, holds that perfection consists in passivity (quiet) of the soul, in the suppression of human effort so that divine action may have full play. [...] the term is usually identified with the doctrine of [Miguel de Molinos](#), a Spanish priest who became an esteemed spiritual director in

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Thus, because the ultimate objective, the totality to which my nature is attuned has been made manifest to me, the powers of my being begin spontaneously to vibrate in accord with a single note of incredible richness wherein I can distinguish the most discordant tendencies effortlessly resolved: the excitement of action and the delight of passivity: the joy of possessing and the thrill of reaching out beyond what one possesses; the pride in growing and the happiness of being lost in what is greater than oneself.

Rich with the sap of the world, I rise up towards the Spirit whose vesture is the magnificence of the material universe but who smiles at me from far beyond all victories; and, lost in the mystery of the flesh of God, I cannot tell which is the more radiant bliss: to have found the Word and so be able to achieve the mastery of matter, or to have mastered matter and so be able to attain and submit to the light of God.

Grant, Lord, that your descent into the universal Species may not be for me just something loved and cherished, like the fruit of some philosophical speculation, but may become for me truly a real Presence. Whether we like it or not by power and by right you are incarnate in the world, and we are all of us dependent upon you. But in fact you are far, and how far, from being equally close to us all. We are all of us together carried in the one world-womb; yet each of us is our own little microcosm in which the Incarnation is wrought independently with degrees of intensity, and shades that are innumerable. And that is why, in our prayer at the altar, we ask that the consecration may be brought about for us: *Ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiat...*<sup>3</sup> If I firmly believe that everything around me is the body and blood of the Word<sup>4</sup>, then for me (and in one sense for me alone) is brought about that marvelous “diaphany” which causes the luminous warmth of a single life to be objectively discernible in and to shine forth from the depths of every event, every element: whereas if, unhappily, my faith should flag, at once the light is quenched and everything becomes darkened, everything disintegrates.

You have come down, Lord, into this day which is now beginning. But alas, how infinitely different in degree is your presence for one and another of us in the events which are now preparing and which all of us together will experience! In the very same circumstances which are soon to surround me and my fellow men you may be present in small measure, in great measure, more and more or not at all.

Therefore, Lord, that no poison may harm me this day, no death destroy me, no wine befuddle me, that in every creature I may discover and sense you, I beg you: give me faith.

*To be continued...*

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth” (Ps 123 (124), v. 8)

Fr HP

Rome during the latter half of the 17th century and whose teachings were condemned as heretical by the Roman Catholic Church (Pope Innocent XI, 1687) (*to be continued overleaf*)

For Molinos, the way of Christian perfection was the interior way of contemplation to which anyone with divine assistance can attain and that can last for years, even for a lifetime. This contemplation is a vague, undetermined view of God that inhibits man’s interior powers. The soul remains in “dark faith,” a state of passive purification that excludes all definite thought and all interior action. To wish to act is an offense against God, who desires to do everything in man. Inactivity brings the soul back to its principle, the divine being, into which it is transformed. God, the sole reality, lives and reigns in the souls of those who have undergone this mystic death. They can will only what God wills because their own wills have been taken away. They should not be concerned about salvation, perfection, or anything else but must leave all to God. It is not necessary for them to perform the ordinary exercises of piety. Even in temptation the contemplative should remain passive.

(Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Quietism>).

<sup>3</sup> "That it may become for us the Body and Blood of your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ."

<sup>4</sup> Through the “physical and overmastering” contact of him whose appanage it is to be able *omnia sibi subicere* ["to subdue all things unto himself." Ph 3,21], (*Le Milieu Divin*, English Translation, p. 114.)