

Teilhard and the Holy Office Revisited

with Kenneth W. Kemp, “Teilhard de Chardin, the ‘Six Propositions,’ and the Holy Office”; and David Grumett, “Teilhard, the Six Propositions, and Human Origins: A Response.”

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, THE “SIX PROPOSITIONS,” AND THE HOLY OFFICE

by *Kenneth W. Kemp*

Abstract. Between 1924 and 1937, the Jesuit Curia in Rome repeatedly placed restrictions on what Jesuit priest-paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was allowed to write on those aspects of human origins that, in the view of the Curia, had theological as well as scientific aspects. In 2018, David Grumett and Paul Bentley published an account of the first of those restrictions, together with a previously undiscovered document associated with that restriction. This article corrects a relatively important error in their historical narrative, offers an alternative to their comments about the case, and concludes by embedding the events of 1924–1925 in a slightly larger history of Teilhard’s relations with the Jesuit Curia and with the Holy Office. That larger narrative shows that, while Grumett and Bentley’s account was mistaken about the involvement of the Holy Office in the case they discuss, it was not wrong about the concerns of that Congregation in questions of human origins.

Keywords: Catholicism; evolution; original sin; Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

In 1924–1925, as a result of a talk that Jesuit priest-paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin had given on original sin, Superior-General Włodzimierz Ledóchowski required that Teilhard affirm six propositions on related points of doctrine. That requirement, and Teilhard’s reservations about affirming one of the six propositions, has long been known but the exact content of the propositions has not (Henri de Lubac, in Teilhard 1974, 123). In 2007, Paul Bentley visited the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus, open to researchers for the 1920s only since 2006. There, with the help of archivist Mauro Brunello, he was able to find a document containing the exact wording of the Six Propositions. In 2018, he and

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David Grumett published the text of the Six Propositions, an account of their immediate history, and some interpretive commentary.

In this article, I correct a relatively important error in their historical narrative, offer an alternative to some of their comments, and conclude by embedding the events of 1924–1925 in a slightly larger history of Teilhard's relations with the Jesuit Curia and with the Holy Office. That larger narrative shows that, while Grumett and Bentley's account was mistaken about the involvement of the Holy Office in the case they discuss, it was not wrong about the concerns of that Congregation on questions of human origins.

TEILHARD AND ORIGINAL SIN: THE EVENTS OF 1922–1925

In 1922, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest who had recently completed a doctorate in paleontology at the Sorbonne under the direction of Marcellin Boule, was teaching geology at the Institut catholique de Paris. During the last weeks of Lent in 1922, he received from Fr. Joseph Subtil of the Jesuit scholasticate in Enghien (Belgium) an invitation to address his students on the topic of transformism (to include a discussion of primates). In the course of the discussion that followed the lecture, Teilhard stated his views on the doctrine of original sin. He was then asked (by Fr. Louis Riedinger, a theologian on the Enghien faculty) to make a written summary of his views on that question. He wrote up in a few pages a “first approximation” of his views and sent it to Riedinger, and to some other friends as well (letter from Teilhard to Auguste Valensin, SJ, April 15, 1922: Teilhard 1974, 81–83). Teilhard seems not himself to have kept a copy of this “Note on Some Possible Historical Representations of Original Sin” (1922), but copies were found by the editors of his collected works in the possession both of his cousin Marguerite Teilhard-Chambon and of Henri Breuil.¹

Teilhard began with a distinction between “the dogmatic attributes of the first transgression (the universal necessity of Redemption, *fomes peccati* [concupiscence], etc.)” and “the external circumstances in which this transgression was committed” (Fr. 53, Eng. 45). There is, Teilhard went on to say, “no acceptable place for Adam [and] still less . . . , in our historical picture, for the earthly paradise.” He suggested, in place of the traditional account, that “We must so enlarge our views about original sin that we will no longer be able to situate it either here or there, around us, but rather that we will know only that it is everywhere, as intertwined with the being of the World as is the God who created us and the Incarnate Word who redeems us” (Fr. 60, Eng. 54). He went on to offer several speculative accounts of how this enlargement might be effected.

By 1924, someone—it is not clear who—had sent a copy of the Note to the Jesuit Curia in Rome. Teilhard, some of whose work had already

been the subject of at least one other Jesuit complaint to the Jesuit Curia (letter of Gabriel Huarte [professor of dogmatic theology, and dean, at the Gregorian University] to Henricus Carvajal [Secretary of the Society of Jesus], April 23, 1924: Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Censurae, 27-I, № 2), was suspected to be the author, but this was at first uncertain.² Huarte was asked to review the Note and said that, in his judgment, its main idea—that the original sin (*peccatum original originans*) was not an act that had been committed by an individual human being—was heretical (letter to Carvajal, June 9, 1924: ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 3).

On September 2, Norbert de Boynes instructed Jean-Baptiste Costa de Beauregard (the Jesuit provincial in Lyons) to meet with Teilhard when the latter returned from China later that month. If Teilhard was the author of the Note, he was to be given an opportunity to explain himself. Beauregard was also to get “a written promise that Teilhard would not say or write, either publicly or for purely private use, anything contrary to dogma or to its traditional explication on the topic of original sin” (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 4). (Grumett and Bentley [2018, 326] wrote that Teilhard was “charged with not taking sin seriously,” but the concern was rather his doubts about whether the source of all subsequent sin [the *peccatum originale originans*] was a historically individual event.)

After the meeting, both Teilhard and Beauregard submitted replies to Rome; Teilhard replied on November 21 (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 7).³ The Note, he said, had not been intended to provide any “firm solutions,” but merely to present “provisional orientations that would permit a temporary reconciliation of the data of dogma with that of scientific knowledge [*expérience*].” He promised that, in the future, he would speak only “with great caution” and, “as much as possible, only with professionals.” He would “conform his explications . . . as faithfully as possible to the commonly accepted representations of original sin.” Beauregard felt reassured after meeting with Teilhard and wrote the Superior General to that effect on November 25. He emphasized Teilhard’s loyalty to the Church and wrote that, in his opinion, no formal review [*censure*]⁴ would be necessary (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 7).

Ledóchowski was not satisfied and said as much in his reply to Beauregard on December 18 (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 8). The ideas in question were objectively heretical. If Teilhard actually held them to be true (as opposed to merely proposing them “hypothetically”), he would have to be expelled from the Society and reported to the Holy Office. They were objectionable even as mere hypotheses, since it makes no sense to advance hypotheses that are contrary to faith. Ledóchowski attached a critique [*censure*] of the Note, almost surely the one Huarte had prepared in June.⁵ Teilhard should send back to Rome any reservations or objections that he had and these would be submitted to theologians for review. He should, however, “clearly

and explicitly reject (even as hypotheses) everything which the critique had indicated to be contrary to faith.” The General would decide later what other measures might be necessary.

Teilhard submitted his reply on January 13, 1925 (ARSI, *Censurae*, 27-I, № 9). He would not be able to subscribe to the critique in its entirety. He expressed a number of concerns. He said that the dogmatic texts, the truth of whose content he did not deny, left some outstanding problems, which needed to be addressed. In the end, he hoped that, rather than writing a full account of his views, he could meet in person, if not with the General himself then at least with some theologian in whom they both had confidence. That, he hoped, would remedy any misunderstandings or concerns.

As he had said he would do, Ledóchowski asked two theologians for their assessment of Teilhard’s reply. The theologians, Augustin Bea and Henry Pinard de la Boullaye, both returned negative verdicts. Bea thought that the root of Teilhard’s Note lay not so much in geology as in a modernist theology that verges on pantheism (1925, 1). Whatever might be its roots, Teilhard’s account of original sin was undoubtedly heretical (6). In addition, Bea had concerns about two other points. One was the idea that the human race gradually evolved from animals. The idea of the direct creation of a human soul without which a human being would not be human (whatever external form it might have) was theologically certain, if not *proxima fidei* (4).⁶ That would make the origin of the human race not *gradual*. In addition, Bea thought that the descent of all human beings from a single original couple was *de fide*, even if it had never been explicitly defined. Teilhard’s version of evolutionism (a matter distinct from his views on original sin) was, therefore, at least improbable, if not rash. Pinard’s evaluation (1925) was not substantially different from Bea’s.

Ledóchowski seems next to have gone back to Huarte on the matter, since the latter, in a letter to Ledóchowski on April 2, 1925 (ARSI, *Censurae*, 27-I, № 13), proposed a list of six propositions to which Teilhard should be expected to subscribe “without any tergiversations.” The first three propositions, on original sin, were drawn directly from the canons of the Council of Trent (Session 5, canons 1–3); the last two, on faith and reason, were from Vatican I (Session 3, canons 3–4). Proposition 4 required him to acknowledge that “the entire human race has its origin in one protoparent, Adam.” This, the document acknowledged, was “nowhere explicitly defined, but was clearly contained in the first three propositions;” it is explicitly introduced with the word “ergo.” If he would not accept the six theses, said Huarte, he should be reported to the Holy Office.⁷

On April 13, 1925, Ledóchowski expressed his concerns in a letter to Beauregard (ARSI, *Provincia Lugdenensis X* [1921-1928], 157). Teilhard “seems to want to accommodate faith [*fides*] to science [*scientia*] and not the other way around.” “If we allow the case to continue on as it has, then

Teilhard will get more and more entangled in his errors until it ends with a condemnation.”

Huarte’s Six Propositions (for the content of which, see Grumett and Bentley, 313–314) were communicated to Teilhard.⁸ Five of them Teilhard said that he could accept. About monogenesis, however, he hesitated (letter to Valensin, June 12, 1925, Teilhard 1974, 123): “Everything that I know about science, and all the scientific knowledge [*expérience*] of the last three centuries, make me think that this last proposition contains one part of ‘appearance’ (which will little by little be recognized) which will be modified (as was geocentrism, the universality of the Deluge, the 4,000 years, and so on) as we uncover the true dogmatic substance included in the traditional ‘representation’.” In the end, however, on July 1, he signed (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 17; Grumett and Bentley, 313–14; d’Ouinice 1970, I: 117). Ledóchowski was not, however, convinced that the problem would not recur. He later told Alfred Baudrillart (rector of the Institut catholique de Paris) that Teilhard “would never want to remain silent about the burning questions which preoccupied him” (Baudrillart 2002, 498). He ended Teilhard’s teaching assignment at the Institut catholique and sent him back to China to resume his scientific work both in the field and at the museum being established by his fellow-Jesuit Émile Licent.

THE SIX PROPOSITIONS AND THE HOLY OFFICE

According to Grumett and Bentley (2018, 319), the Holy Office was the “prime mover” in the case. They are not the first to assert that the Holy Office was involved. Rumors of its involvement had been around for many years. Bruno de Solages (1967, 42) mentioned them in 1967, but seems not to have been confident that they were true. Other authors have accepted the truth of the rumors, but the only author to present any *evidence*⁹ was René d’Ouinice, Teilhard’s friend and, from 1936, his superior, who wrote (1970, I:106–107): “Teilhard thought that the affair was an internal one, within his order, but he was mistaken. . . . The decisive intervention was that of someone then all-powerful in Rome, Cardinal Merry del Val.” On his account, Merry del Val, Secretary of the Holy Office, told Ledóchowski that the latter needed to put in order the subversive activity of one of his subjects. Ledóchowski allegedly told this story to Alfred Baudrillart. Baudrillart reportedly told it in turn to Christophe Gaudefroy (a priest-mineralogist with a position at both the Sorbonne and the Institute and a good friend of Teilhard). Thirty or forty years later, Gaudefroy told the story to d’Ouinice. Baudrillart himself, however, offers a somewhat different account in his notebooks. In a conversation that he had with Ledóchowski on October 19, 1926, the latter had said, “When he intervened, a complaint to the Holy Office was looming” [*la dénonciation au Saint-Office était imminente*] (Baudrillart, 2002, 498).¹⁰ This does raise the question of

who Ledóchowski thought might be about to file a complaint. There is no indication in the Jesuit archive of worry that someone else might be on the verge of doing so; perhaps Ledóchowski just meant that Teilhard would keep talking about these topics until he got himself in trouble (as Baudrillart also reports the General as having said and as the General said in the letter to Beauregard quoted above).

Grumett and Bentley (2018, 320) suggested that the wording of the Six Propositions came from the Holy Office. As evidence for that origin they say only that the Six Propositions are based on texts from the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council, the same texts used in its measures taken against Auguste Brassac, the Sulpician biblical scholar whose revision of Fulcran Vigouroux' *Manuel biblique* had been placed on the *Index of Prohibited Books* in December 1923.

Why *doubt* the involvement of the Holy Office in this case? The primary reason is because there is no documentary evidence for it in either of the two places where such evidence should be found. If the Holy Office had received a copy of the Note, that fact should have been recorded in the *Minutarii* of that Congregation. Those *Minutarii* do contain similar complaints about other Jesuits (e.g., about Anton Huonder [1921] for his *Der Europäismus in Missionsbetrieb* [Archivio della Congregazio per la Dottrina della Fede (ACDF) *Minutario* 1925/I, fol. 125] and about Artur Vermeersch for things that he had written about birth control [July 11, 1924: ACDF *Minutario* 1924/I, fol. 385] and had said about the limits of his responsibility to file complaints against errant bishops [April 20, 1925: ACDF, *Minutario* 1925/I, fol. 236]). They contain, however, nothing about this case.

Nor is there anything in the internal Jesuit correspondence about the case that suggests that the Holy Office was in any way involved. Indeed, quite the opposite. When the Holy Office was mentioned in that correspondence, as it sometimes was, the assumption of the correspondent was that the Holy Office did *not* know about the Note, but might well take action if it found out. An example from a letter written by Huarte was quoted above, and it cannot just be a matter of Huarte having been kept in the dark. Two letters from Ledóchowski to Beauregard also show this. On December 18, 1924 he wrote: "If Fr. Teilhard had, obstinately, claimed to defend these ideas, it would indeed be heretical; and we would have no choice but to dismiss him from the Company and then to report him to the Holy Office" (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 8).¹¹ And on June 29, 1925, this time as thoughts about what Beauregard might say to Baudrillart about why Teilhard was being removed from the Institut: "I know Rome and remain personally convinced that, if the notes written by Fr. Teilhard had been reported to the Holy Office, that would have done grave harm both to the reputation of the Catholic college and to the Society of Jesus" (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 16). If these remarks do not themselves show that the Holy Office did not know about the Note, at least they show that the Jesuit Curia did not

think that the Holy Office knew. The Holy Office, that is to say, was not pressuring the Society to take some action against Teilhard.

What about the reported conversation between Merry del Val and Ledóchowski? Merry del Val *had* been in communication with Ledóchowski about *another* Jesuit priest, Artur Vermeersch, a moral theologian at the Gregorian University. About him complaints *had* been received at the Holy Office; these complaints, and the follow-through by the Holy Office, are reported in *Minutarii*. Perhaps Ledóchowski cited the Vermeersch cases, about which Merry del Val had written to him twice, to emphasize the potential for future Holy Office intervention in the Teilhard case. D’Ouinice’s hearsay chain (from Ledóchowski to Baudrillart to Godfrey to d’Ouinice) is too tenuous to prevail over the absence of documentary evidence in the two archives in which it should be found.

There is also no reason to think that the Six Propositions originated at the Holy Office. Any competent theologian would have been fully capable of citing the sources on which the propositions were based. In addition, they appear in a letter from Huarte to Ledóchowski, dated April 2, 1925 (ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 13bis), without any reference to an external source. The idea that they came from the Holy Office leaves three things unexplained. First, why are they not mentioned in the *Minutarii* of the Holy Office? Second, why would they have been sent to Huarte rather to Ledóchowski (i.e., through regular channels)? Third, even if they had gone directly to Huarte, why would he have put them into *his* letter without mention of their having come from the Holy Office?

The collapse of the case for the involvement of the Holy Office undermines Grumett and Bentley’s in any case speculative suggestions (2018, 320–21) about the involvement of Pope Pius XI and their idea that the disposition of Teilhard’s case “could . . . have been part of [a] tacit or explicit agreement between Merry del Val and the Pope,” with Teilhard being “a prudent sacrifice to appease the conservatives within the Jesuit curia and the Holy Office.” Their suggestion was that the condemnation of Teilhard could have been something that Pius conceded to Catholic conservatives in exchange for toleration of his perceived “accommodation with secularism” in *Maximam gravissimamque* (the 1924 encyclical that permitted the existence of diocesan associations in France in an attempt to improve the Church’s legal position there).

THE SIX PROPOSITIONS AND THE REQUIREMENT OF ASSENT

What should we think about the *justice* of the demand that Teilhard sign the Six Propositions? Grumett and Bentley (2018) question the “validity” of the demand with respect to Proposition 4—“it seem[s] that Teilhard was being required to submit to a more restrictive formula than could be justified on either historical or logical grounds” (316). “Requiring Teilhard

to subscribe to this proposition,” they later say, “may therefore be regarded as an illegitimate exercise of power” (325). In defense of their objection to Ledóchowski’s action, they ask: “if Proposition 4 was nowhere explicitly defined, on what authority was subscription to it required? Moreover, if Proposition 4 was really ‘clearly implied’ by Propositions 1–3, why did it merit separate definition?” (316).

These questions are not hard to answer. On what authority? It follows from the Tridentine canons. Why does it merit separate mention? To make certain that, whether Teilhard *thought* that it followed or not, he accepted its truth. That it followed from defined doctrines is not, one might add, necessary to the legitimacy of the required assent. Catholic epistemic practice was both more nuanced and less liberal than such a conception of legitimacy would suggest.

Grummet and Bentley also express puzzlement on another point: “because the fourth proposition’s subject was scientific rather than theological, it is unclear how it could be assented to in faith, and therefore in what sense, if any, Teilhard did in fact subscribe to it” (316). The idea that there is a problem here would seem to have as its foundation two theses—that there is a clear distinction between scientific and theological propositions and that revelation teaches only theological propositions (with its corollary, that one can assent in faith only theological propositions).

Perhaps, these theses are an attempt to re-present ideas that have their roots in St. Augustine’s *De Genesi ad litteram*, but that have also been articulated by more recent thinkers—in an epigram generally attributed to seventeenth-century Oratorian Cesare Cardinal Baronio (and mentioned by Galileo), that “the Bible teaches us how to go to Heaven, not how the heavens go” and in the encyclical letter of nineteenth-century pope Leo XIII, who wrote in *Providentissimus Deus* (1893, Lat. 286–287, Eng. 24) that “the sacred writers . . . did not intend to teach men . . . the essential nature of the things of the visible universe They did not seek to penetrate the secrets of nature.”

However, both of these theses are mistaken. Let us stipulate the following. First, that, the proper goal of science being to state “the *essential nature* of the things of the visible universe,” the only purely scientific statements are those that state those natures. Second, the warrant of faith, being limited to theological matters, does not extend to purely scientific ones. Those two theses are not enough to justify the puzzlement that Grummet and Bentley express.

The proposition in question, that the human race had its origin in a single couple, is not about “the *essential nature* of the things of the visible universe.” It is not, therefore, a purely scientific one. It is not even about where the first human beings *could have* come from. It is rather about their *historical* origin, where they *did* come from. Consider an analogous case, a question that the chief steward at the wedding feast at Cana apparently did

not ask: Where did the wine served last come from? The question is not how wine is made or where anyone *could have* gotten that wine. Catholics accept *by faith* (in Scripture, reinforced by a long-standing liturgical tradition) that the wine was produced by miracle. Similarly, Ledóchowski could have said, with the question of the origin of the human race: the question is not how many original human beings there might have been if that origin had been completely natural, but how many there in fact were. The question of whether God acted, rather than leaving the course of events solely to nature, is precisely a theological, not a merely scientific, question.

These *historical* questions are mixed. Their resolution requires answers both to a scientific question (was the production of the effect in question within the powers of nature?) and a theological one (did God in fact produce the effect directly?). An affirmative answer to the first does not preclude an affirmative answer to the second (as the example of Cana shows). Faith can thus render the scientific inquiry moot. Teilhard, perhaps, did not always realize this; Ledóchowski surely did.

So, to summarize what I have said so far, the objections to Teilhard's Note, and the formulation of the Six Propositions to which he was expected to assent, were an affair internal to the Society of Jesus. There is no evidence that the Holy Office (or the Pope) played any role in that course of events (beyond their general implicit expectation that the Society, and its priests, would respect Catholic orthodoxy). That they did have such general expectations, however, and a willingness to act on them if necessary, is made clear by the events of the following years, as the second half of my article will show.

TEILHARD AND THE ORIGIN OF THE HUMAN RACE: THE EVENTS OF 1928–1937

After the events of 1924–1925, Teilhard largely refrained from further public speculation about original sin and modern science through the rest of the 1930s.¹² He returned to that subject, and to something like his original views, only in an unpublished article circulated "*à la critique des théologiens*" in 1947.

He had more trouble remaining within the bounds expected of him on the question of the origin of the human race. Although he had promised to accept the doctrine that "the whole human race takes its origin from one protoparent" "in the full sense which the Holy Church gives [it]" (ARSI, *Censurae*, 27-I, № 17; Grumett and Bentley 2018, 313–314) in his assent to the Six Propositions, those propositions had not addressed a second thesis concerning the origin of the race. The controversy over whether evolutionary processes had played any role in the formation of the body of Adam or whether it was formed directly by God from nonliving matter was still very much alive among Catholic theologians. This was a question

distinct from the question of monogenesis. The answers on offer were, unfortunately, often articulated without the precision that one would hope to find. Between the Darwinian idea that natural evolutionary processes are sufficient to account for the origin of the human race and the idea that the first human body was formed by God directly from nonliving matter, lay two intermediate positions. English Catholic biologist St. George Jackson Mivart, in his book *On the Genesis of Species* (1870), had proposed the evolution of the human body followed by the infusion of a created rational soul. Spanish philosopher and theologian Zeferino Cardinal González, in *La Biblia y la ciencia* (1891), had acknowledged (if not defended) the possibility that God had formed the first human body by modifying an evolved animal body prior to the infusion of the soul. Which of these views was meant by someone who asserted or rejected the idea that the human race was descended from animal ancestors? The answer might vary from one writer (or reader) to another.

Much of Teilhard's paleontological work was focused on clearly pre-human mammals. His first major contribution to paleo-anthropology was his discovery (together with Licent) of the first evidence of Paleolithic culture in China (Teilhard 1924). This work did not touch the question of the origin of the first human body. A second piece of paleo-anthropological work, however, did do so. In the late 1920s, Teilhard began to play a part in the discovery of the lower Quaternary *Sinanthropus* (popularly Peking Man, now *Homo erectus*) at Dragon Bone Hill near Choukoutien (Zhoukoudian). The discovery was the work of half a dozen scientists from nearly as many different countries and was, Teilhard thought, probably of great significance: "If [the cranial dimensions] are confirmed [as being completely human], . . . it will be the conclusive answer to the opponents of transformism as extended to man" (letter of September 16, 1929: Teilhard 1962, 160). Teilhard contributed to the scientific study of the find, but also wrote articles for the more general Catholic readership of the Belgian *Revue des questions scientifiques* and the French Jesuits' own *Études* (1930a, 1930b, 1934, 1937a).

Sinanthropus was probably, Teilhard wrote, "a true and new link in the series of morphological stages leading to the modern human type" (1934, 70). "To the very loose degree of precision that is all our palæontological series can normally attain, only one place theoretically remains to be filled for the chain to be practically complete . . . between the anthropoid and the human type" (1937a, 90). It soon became clear that *Sinanthropus* was both a firemaker and a toolmaker. "The chances are," Teilhard concluded, "that *Sinanthropus* was intelligent" (1934, 74).

Between 1929 and 1937, Teilhard's writings, and some public lectures, led to a series of complaints, first from within the Society, directed to the Jesuit Curia, and then from without, usually directed to the Holy Office but also occasionally to Pope Pius XI.

The first of these later controversies arose in 1930, with the publication of his “What Should We Think of Transformism?” (1929). In that essay, Teilhard had emphasized the dangers of materialistic theories of evolution, but at the same time emphasized that the facts of comparative anatomy and of the fossil record “cannot reasonably be explained without some historical (that is to say empirically detectable) connection between us and the primates” (Fr. 95, Eng. 155–156).¹³ He also emphasized the disagreement between science and faith on the question of monogenesis, suggesting that “monogenesis will gradually, without losing any of its theological ‘effectiveness,’ assume a form fully satisfying our scientific requirements” (Fr. 96, Eng. 157).

Toward the end of 1929, Antonio Tissoni (superior of the Jesuits’ Pengpu (Bengbu) Mission) sent to Leandro Gaia (who taught science at the Jesuit colleges in Genoa and in Chieri and was a member of the same Jesuit province as was Tissoni) a copy of Teilhard’s article, together with a request for Gaia’s opinion of it. Gaia thought that Teilhard’s ideas were at least rash. Two months later, he received another letter about Teilhard, this time from one N. Dubois, an acquaintance and, according to Gaia, a fervent Catholic. Gaia wrote to his rector (on February 4: ARSI, Censurae, 27-II, № 3), passing on Dubois’ letter (dated January 26, 1924: № 2) with the idea that it should be forwarded to Rome.

Ledóchowski solicited two opinions on the article, one from Paul Bornet (Superior of the Mission at Sienhsien (Xianxian)) and the other from Peter Hoenen (editor of the *Gregorianum*). The reviews were submitted on June 3 and July 6, 1930 (ARSI Censurae, 27-II, № 4 and № 5, respectively). Bornet thought that Teilhard’s article presented a treatment of his topic that was, especially in the *Dossiers de la Commission synodale*, “inadequate and unsafe [*dangereux*].” Teilhard had said nothing about what the Church had to say about the distinctive creation of the human race and about the origin of Eve and had made a strange distinction between the results of exegesis and the “Pauline conception of original sin.” Hoenen thought that Teilhard’s conclusions ran farther than the arguments for them would bear, but he “did not see in them anything with which to find positive fault” (ARSI, Censurae, 27-II, № 4):

Where he takes up the evolutionary origin of the human *body*, he poses the problem from a purely philosophical point of view in considering this *process* [*devenir*] as something that is philosophically possible, which seems to me to be completely irreproachable; then he very nicely disentangles the difficulties that need to be resolved, as much from the scientific point of view as from the theological one; he wants the question to be studied from both sides and he energetically affirms that, for the believer, “Faith guarantees that there will be no contradiction between his Credo and his human knowledge.” (ARSI Censurae, 27-II, № 5)

He concluded that he did not know whether the Biblical Commission would approve of what Teilhard had to say about the origin of the human body, but Teilhard had, he noted, already published his ideas in the Catholic press.

Perhaps because the first two reviewers differed in their evaluation of the piece, Ledóchowski requested a third evaluation, from Biblicist Alberto Vaccari (1930).¹⁴ His evaluation also was negative. Where Teilhard had written, “For reasons that are not ultimately [*en définitive*] either philosophical or exegetical, but are essentially theological (the Pauline conception of the Fall and Redemption) the Church holds to the historical reality of Adam and Eve,” Vaccari thought that Teilhard should put “The Church firmly holds the historical truth of Adam and Eve for reasons that are both exegetical and strictly dogmatic (and not merely theological).” Ledóchowski decided that Teilhard’s article was unacceptable and on August 2, de Boynes asked Bornet to inform Teilhard that “he should absolutely make a retraction because of the harm that his article could do to his readers” (De Boynes, ARSI, Missiones Galliae VIII, 250; Bornet [to Beauregard, passing on the responsibility of informing Teilhard, which Bornet had been unable to do before Teilhard left China]; ARSI, Censurae, 27-II, № 6).

Meanwhile, before Teilhard had been informed of Ledóchowski’s decision, he had sent off several other articles for publication. Two of these (1930a, 1930b) were versions of the same basic article on *Sinanthropus*, one for a general and the other for a professional readership. The third (1931) discussed human exceptionalism in light of evolution. Those became the subject of another complaint. This time, the Holy Office was involved.

The files of that Congregation contain two complaints about Teilhard’s work from Agostino Gemelli (Franciscan priest, medical researcher, and founder of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan). The first was a letter dated April 29, 1931, addressed directly to Pope Pius XI, whom Gemelli had known from Pius’ days as archbishop of Milan. Pius passed it on to the Holy Office (ACDF, Censura Librorum (CL), 1930/461, № 3). Although the focus of that letter had been Édouard Le Roy (French philosopher and friend of Teilhard, three of whose books, including *Les Origines humaines et l’évolution d’intelligence* [*Human Origins and the Evolution of Intelligence*], were put on the Church’s *Index of Prohibited Books* in 1931), it included a complaint about the work of Teilhard as well: “On the basis of his studies of human fossils which were found in China last year he has written in some journals published in China relatively advanced affirmations from which one infers that he believes in the simian derivation of man” (fol. 20).

The second was a 20-page opinion [*votum*] on Teilhard’s views on the origin of the human race that Gemelli had sent, apparently on his own

initiative, the following month.¹⁵ He summarized his own views on the matter by saying,

The paleontological and biological sciences in general, at the current state of acquired knowledge, certainly admit evolutionism in general—namely the plasticity of living species and the non-identity of systematic and natural species; but they have not brought us any decisive proof, nor have they spoken the definitive word on the monogenesis of living things or on the derivation of the human species from a zoologically similar species. (ACDF, CL, 1931/1528, № 6, fol. 31)

“The derivation of man from brute animals,” he said, was at the time he wrote “a scientific hypothesis which has the same value as the contrary hypothesis.” That had, Gemelli wrote, this consequence: “If the proper stance of a scientist is one of caution, then the stance adopted by Teilhard, at the least, shows bad judgment [*è imprudente*]. His authority as an anthropologist will make people think that the admission or rejection of the animal origin of man is a matter of indifference to Catholic philosophy and theology.”

What should the Holy Office do? He recommended “a reminder [*richiamo*] to Fr. Teilhard that, while he continues with his (surely important) anthropological studies, he should be more circumspect and above all more respectful of philosophy and of Catholic tradition in expressing his conclusions.”

On June 9, Donato Raffaele Sbaretto (Secretary of the Holy Office) advised Ledóchowski that a complaint had been received, adding,

Before making a decision in the matter, the Congregation is turning to you to get more ample and precise information on the person and on the activity of the priest in question. We would, in particular, like to have a complete list of the priest’s publications and to know about the reception and criticism which they have received from scholars, especially Catholic ones. (ARSI, Censurae, 27-III, № 3; also in ACDF, *Minutarii*, 1931/I, 760)

A complaint from Gemelli also came to Ledóchowski from the Pope himself, by way of the Secretary of State (ARSI, Censurae, 27-III, № 1 [the complaint itself] and № 4 [how it got to Ledóchowski]).¹⁶ This time, the focus was directly on the article in *L’Anthropologie*. On June 10, 1931, Ledóchowski wrote to Christophe de Bonneville, who had by then become provincial in Lyons and was, therefore, Teilhard’s superior: “The Holy Father himself recently sent me a complaint which he received concerning an article Teilhard published in *L’Anthropologie* at the beginning of this year” (Censurae, 27-III, № 2). Bonneville was to arrange a review of Teilhard’s article, which Ledóchowski could pass on to the Holy Father. When Sbaretto’s letter arrived, on the 13th, Ledóchowski wrote to Bonneville again, adding the items Sbaretto had requested to the list of agenda (ARSI, Censurae, 27-III, № 5). The work went slowly. Teilhard was inaccessible due to his

participation in the Haardt Scientific Expedition (“La Croisière Jaune,” May 1931 to February 1932), which was by then deep in Central Asia.

Bonneville disagreed with Ledóchowski over what to make of the article in *L’Anthropologie*, which was the focus of the inquiry. “It was simply a descriptive account of the discoveries made at Choukoutien by the Black Scientific Mission The Father abstained from philosophical considerations and conclusions,” said Bonneville. Ledóchowski replied: “I am amazed that you wrote that the article in question contained nothing but a description of what was found at Choukoutien. Indeed, it is immediately apparent to the attentive reader that the author presupposes hypotheses on the antiquity and origin of man that are considered rather unsafe [*periculosus*], if not worse, in Catholic schools” (Bonneville to Ledóchowski, July 9, 1931, and Ledóchowski to Bonneville, July 24: both, ARSI, Censurae, 27-III, № 6).

On August 10, 1931, Bonneville and Ledóchowski had completed their work and Ledóchowski wrote back to Sbarretti.¹⁷ His letter included a list of Teilhard’s publications and Ledóchowski’s answer to the questions that had been put to him. What did Catholic scientists think of his work? Ledóchowski reported: “As far as I know, simply from having heard it said, Catholics are divided on the questions treated by the Father, some of them highly praising his scientific work and others having reservations about some of the hypotheses which he has articulated.” What about his person and his activities?

Teilhard is neither a philosopher nor a theologian by profession, but a geologist and a paleontologist, two fields in which he has acquired true competence in the scientific world. To that is due his nomination to the chair of geology at the Institut catholique de Paris in 1921, a chair which he held for five years to general satisfaction; Msgr Baudrillart was able to attest to the fact that his public instruction was unobjectionable [*irreprehensibile*] and that, despite the fact that he was a Jesuit (a fact that he never hid), he enjoyed a good reputation in scientific circles. (ARSI, Censurae, 27-III, № 12; also in *Epistolae ad Romanam Curiam VII* (1930–1934), 75–78)

Ledóchowski went on to summarize the story of the “Note on Original Sin” and of the article published in the *Dossiers*. Since even Teilhard’s profound attachment to the doctrines of the Church and his loyalty had not been sufficient to keep him from going doctrinally astray, Ledóchowski would now require a review of his articles by two reliable priests, and a review much stricter than that ordinarily applied by journals.

Meanwhile, Nicola Canali, then Assessor of the Holy Office, apparently suggested to Gemelli that perhaps Gemelli was being too severe in his judgment of Teilhard; Gemelli acknowledged the suggestion in a letter of February 10, 1932, but held his ground. Teilhard’s writings, he asserted again, were “unjustified and unsafe [*pericoloso*].” Gemelli’s letter made clear the exact nature of the concerns of Teilhard’s critics:

First, Fr. Teilhard has not limited himself to a strictly scientific treatment of the question. Nor has he limited himself to expounding his bold hypotheses, contrary to the traditional teaching of the Church on the origin of man, in technical publications for anthropologists and paleontologists. If he had limited himself to technical articles, the formulation of such hypotheses could have been considered to be part of the work of a scholar. But Fr. Teilhard has also written popular articles. . . . With respect to an hypothesis which could be accepted by some scholars but rejected by others, or one which has some facts in its favor but has not been proven, or one which is usable by a scientist as a working hypothesis today (but might tomorrow fall as a result of the work of science itself, as happens to many hypotheses), the duty of a Catholic scholar is without a doubt to discuss such an hypothesis. A Catholic scholar can take part in this examination without danger to his Faith because his honesty, his good judgment, and his circumspection will defend him. But the Catholic scholar also has the obligation of circumspection, i.e., not to discuss it in articles for the general public. Such popularization is unwise and dangerous: those who are not specialists in the subject matter, who do not have sufficient scientific preparation and who lack the mental habits of a scholar trained to evaluate hypotheses (e.g., as temporary research tools) could easily mistake a new hypothesis, presented in an attractive way, for a scientifically established truth. If then, in our case, it is a matter of a hypothesis contrary to the traditional teaching of the Church, then there is indubitably a danger to the religious life of many readers and an occasion of disturbance for many consciences.

Second, I think that Teilhard's publications are dangerous [*periculoso*] because of the authority he enjoys in the Catholic world, given his position as a scholar, a religious, and a Jesuit. (ACDF, CL, 1931/1528, № 8, fol. 38–42)

Despite Gemelli's rearticulation of his concerns, the Holy Office does not appear to have taken any further action. Perhaps it considered Ledóchowski's planned remedy to be correct, and sufficient.

That was not, however, the last that the Holy Office was to hear from Gemelli about Teilhard. On July 22, 1933, Gemelli wrote again, this time with a complaint about Teilhard's review of Othenio Abel's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Rahmen der Wirbelthiere* (ACDF, CL 1931/1528, № 12, fol. 51–52). The review was, for the most part, favorable, reporting the Austrian paleobiologist's summary of the state of scientific research on the origins of the human race. It began with Teilhard's comment that "No paleontologist now doubts that Man is attached historically, 'evolutionarily,' to the Primates. The matter has been settled."

The Holy Office passed the matter on to Ledóchowski with the request that he have the article examined by two theologians (ARSI, Censurae, 27-IV, № 6). Ledóchowski chose for the task Charles Boyer and Arnaldus Parenti, the former of whom taught philosophy and theology, and the latter Sacred Scripture, at the Gregorian University.

Boyer had just published his *De Deo creante and elevante*. About the evolution of plant and animal species, Boyer had been skeptical ("but

willing . . . to accept anything that is established,” added one reviewer; Leeming 1934). The idea that the human body was the product of evolution, however, he had adjudged to be rash, a verdict for which he had been criticized by another reviewer (Gross 1935). Boyer noted in his report (1934) that Teilhard had defended a theistic form of evolution with explicit acknowledgment of the creation of the human soul, but with an evolutionary origin for the human body. That last, Boyer said (as he had said in his textbook), must be adjudged rash on the basis of three facts. The first was that Church authorities had prohibited several recent books that defended that view. Boyer must have been referring to the books of French Dominican Dalmas Leroy (1891) and Holy Cross priest John Zahm (1896), though he did not name either book. The second was that the view seemed to be inconsistent with the unity of the human race, the formation of the first woman from the first man, and original justice. These are among the theses that the Pontifical Biblical Commission had, in 1909, said should not be called into doubt. The third was that the arguments Teilhard adduced were not sufficient to produce certainty. There was still too much controversy among experts on Piltdown Man, on Peking Man, and in general on the transition from animal to human being.

Parenti (1934) thought that what Teilhard had said did not seem consistent with Genesis 2:7, was opposed to the Response of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1909), and was not in harmony with common understanding of the Fathers and theologians. In making this judgment, Parenti thought, he was following the line taken by the Holy Office in its proposed treatment of de Dorlodot’s earlier work touching on the topic (1921).¹⁸

On March 8, 1934, Ledóchowski, after repeating the severe admonitions that had already been made, required that Teilhard “not publish anything even remotely related to the subject without its first being submitted to two censors of sound doctrine” (ARSI, *Censurae*, 27-IV, № 6). That apparently satisfied the Holy Office, since its file on Teilhard ends with the documents just mentioned (ACDF, CL, 1931/1528).

The last of the complaints about Teilhard’s ideas on the origin of the human race came in 1937, in the wake of a short visit to the United States. He had been invited to Philadelphia to attend the International Symposium on Early Man organized by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and by the Carnegie Institute. Held on March 17–20, 1937, its significance is indicated by the fact that most of the world’s leading paleoanthropologists (Eugène Dubois, G.H.R. von Koenigswald, Robert Broom, and V. Gordon Childe, among others) were in attendance. His visit to Philadelphia included one other event. Villanova College, run by the Augustinian Friars, had, in 1928, established in honor of the order’s most famous member a Mendel Medal to be awarded annually to a scientist who had “advanced the cause of science . . . [and] demonstrated

that between true science and true religion there is no intrinsic conflict.” Early recipients had included Georges Lemaître; more recently they have included Francis Collins, George Coyne, and Kenneth Miller. In 1937, the Medal was given to Teilhard. After the symposium, he had gone to Boston, where Harvard anthropologist Ernest A. Hooton had invited him to speak (on March 31) to a group of about 200 students and faculty.

What did he say at these talks? The proceedings of the symposium include Teilhard’s paper on “Late Cenozoic Correlations between North China, Malaysia and Central Europe” and a paper by his Chinese colleague, Pei Wen Chung, on “The Palaeolithic Industries in China,” which Teilhard presented in Pei’s absence (Teilhard 1937b; MacCurdy 1937; Howard 1937). Beyond, possibly, the assumption of the antiquity of the Paleolithic toolmakers, neither paper presented anything of theological interest. However, at some point during the conference, Teilhard said something more. An article by *New York Times* science reporter William L. Laurence says both that he discussed *Sinanthropus* “before the international symposium” and that, in addition, he agreed to “an interview following the paper” (Laurence 1937, 9). In the remarks “before the conference” Teilhard distinguished *Sinanthropus* from his Neanderthal and modern successors. *Sinanthropus* is still “definitely below the Neanderthal, [but] too far above the apes to be regarded as the link between ape and man.” A “still earlier type” will someday be found. In the interview, Teilhard also addressed the question of science and religion, saying, “I find absolutely no barriers between my beliefs as a scientist and my beliefs as a priest. . . . As a scientist, I must admit the evidence that man was born from the animal kingdom. But he was not an animal.” He added, “I might compare [the emergence of thought in the material world] to the crisis that takes place in the tea kettle when water is heated.” In another article, the Associated Press reported that, in reply to the question, “How do you, a Jesuit, reconcile evolution with the religious belief of the special creation of man?”, Teilhard had answered, “As a scientist, I must put aside personal feelings and accept the facts. From the facts I must believe in evolution” (*Washington Post*, March 20, 1937, 4).

At Villanova, he gave an acceptance speech at the faculty dinner that accompanied the presentation of the award. The *New York Times* reported him as describing “man as ‘nothing but evolution becoming conscious of itself’” and adding that “we are on the eve of a spiritualistic evolution” (*New York Times*, March 23, 1937, 9). He made the same remarks at his Harvard talk, but a reporter from the Boston *Globe* put one point in slightly different terms: “The process of evolution is not ended. I believe that man will probably reach a higher stage of intelligence”¹⁹ (ARSI, Censurae, 27-V, № 3).

Teilhard was quite explicit not only about his compatibilism, but about his exceptionalism (however much the boiling-water analogy obscured that point). Nevertheless, reporters, and especially headline writers, are not

always good at fine distinctions. A story by Howard W. Blakeslee, science editor for the Associated Press, appeared on page one of the *Washington Post* under the headline, “Man Descended From Apes, Jesuit Says Evidence Proves.” Blakeslee’s story only made it to page three of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* but there it appeared under an even more provocative headline—“Jesuit Agrees with Darwin.” Both newspapers did acknowledge Teilhard’s compatibilism in secondary headlines (March 20, 1937).

Such press coverage could hardly fail to evoke a reaction. On April 1, William McGarry, SJ, the prefect of studies at Weston College, sent to Ledóchowski clippings from the Associated Press and from several Boston newspapers (the *Post*, the *Herald*, and the *Globe*, April 1, 1937: ARSI, Censurae, 27-V, № 3). The newspaper interviews, and the resultant headlines, are just an example of the lack of pedagogical prudence that d’Ouinice described some years later:

Teilhard [would] talk to a young scholar practically incapable of understanding him in the way in which he talked to a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. . . . He would give a response which, to be understood correctly, required a long familiarity with his thought. Like the rest of us, he was perfectly capable, in the course of a conversation or of a letter written in haste, of using a formula that was objectionable, was literally indefensible, and misrepresented his thought. (1970, I: 104–5)

On April 16, Ledóchowski sent a telegram to New York: “TELL DE CHARDIN CEASE CONFERENCES; LEAVE STATES” (ARSI, Censurae, 27-V, № 4).

CONCLUSION

As a matter of historical fact, there is *no* evidence that the Holy Office or Pope Pius XI played any role in the handling of Teilhard’s “Note on Original Sin.” Actions taken in response to later complaints about what Teilhard said about the origin of the human race do make it probable that they would have acted had they known about the Note and had they thought that the matter was not being properly handled by the Jesuit Curia.

Concern at the Jesuit Curia about the content of the Note was not limited to Teilhard’s revisionist account of original sin, but extended to his views on an associated question about the origin of the human race, in particular whether it could be traced back to an original couple. The controversies of the 1930s make this clear. It is not as clear as Grumett and Bentley suggest that the question of monogenesis was a purely scientific matter, as Teilhard to some extent conceded in an unpublished piece that he wrote in 1950. Where the balance between liberty and deference to Tradition should lie in matters not explicitly defined by the magisterium is a complex question. To say that Ledóchowski’s expectation that Teilhard subscribe to Proposition 4 was “invalid” is to take a decidedly liberal position on the question of where that balance lies.

Nor is it clear that the tension between what Teilhard sometimes called the “strict monogenesis” of the theologians (1920, Fr. 49, Eng. 36; 1922, Fr. 65, Eng. 49) and the results of scientific inquiry (1950, Fr. 248, Eng. 210) were quite as irresolvable as Teilhard believed them to be. In 1929, he wrote, in a passage that I quoted earlier, “monogenesis will gradually, without losing any of its theological ‘effectiveness,’ assume a form fully satisfying our scientific requirements” (Fr. 96, Eng. 257). Two other authors and I (separately, in Kemp 2011; Austriaco 2018; Swamidass 2018; Swamidass forthcoming) have offered accounts of how this might be done, and (at least in two of the cases) without what Teilhard thought it would require, namely an “extensive metamorphosis of the notion of original sin” (1920, Fr. 59, Eng., 36). Perhaps then it would be best to conclude with an insight from Teilhard (1929, Fr. 96, Eng., 157):

In the meantime, the proper attitude for the believer cannot be in doubt.
He has merely to seek, patiently and confidently, *on both sides*.

NOTES

1. Because the published translations of Teilhard’s works occasionally contain errors, I have made corrections where necessary. For the convenience of the reader interested in the larger context, I cite both the original and the published translation, even when the translation used in this article is my own.

2. Suspected: Teilhard began to hear about the problem in May 1924, when he was still in China, doing field work with his fellow-Jesuit Émile Licent (letter from Teilhard to Henri Breuil, May 26, 1924: quoted by Henri de Lubac in his notes to Teilhard [1974, 113–14]; letter from Teilhard to Léontine Zanta, May 20, 1924 [1969b, 67]).

Uncertain: On September 2, 1924, Norbert de Boynes (the Superior-General’s assistant for France) wrote to Jean-Baptiste Costa de Beauregard (the Jesuit provincial of Lyons) as the first step in the evaluation of a complaint about the Note. He said, “Everything points to Teilhard as the author,” and asked Beauregard to confirm whether that was so (ARSI, Provincia Lugdunensis, X [1921–1928], № 254, 132–33). A letter written by Henry Pinard de la Boullaye (formerly professor of the history of religion at the Enghien scholasticate) suggests that inquiry was not a mere formality (letter to an unidentified priest, October 8, 1924: ARSI, Censurae, 27-I, № 5).

3. Grumett and Bentley (2018, 310), no doubt by typographical error, dated this letter “November 20.”

4. The letter was written in French, in which the word *censure* does not invariably have the note of disapproval that its English counterpart has. A contemporary dictionary (Augé 1918, 162) includes “Critique of a work, Blame, . . . Ecclesiastical judgement pronouncing a severe reprimand, Examination which a government has made of works before permitting their publication.” The Latin *censura* has its semantic center even closer to mere assessment.

5. The archival copy of Huarte’s letter is labeled in pencil, “Censura scripti P. Teilhard de Peccato originale” [Critique of Fr. Teilhard’s Note on Original Sin]. Although it is not filed next to Ledóchowski’s letter in the relevant folder at ARSI, I was not able to find in the archive any other document that matches this description.

6. “Theologically certain” and “*proxima fidei*” [nearly a matter of faith], along with “*de fide*” [a matter of faith] are technical terms in Catholic theological epistemology denoting increasing grades of certainty; “rash” (or “temerarious”) is a theological censure denoting deviation from a generally accepted teaching without good reason. (For more on this, see Ott 1960, 9–10.)

7. Grumett and Bentley (2018, 310) put “denounced *by* the Holy Office,” but the original says “*au* Saint-Office” (emphases mine).

“Denounce,” though common, is somewhat misleading as a translation of “denuntiari.” Ecclesiastical use shows that, like its French counterpart “dénoncer” in some documents quoted

below, it means reporting someone to the competent authorities and not, primarily, making a public condemnation, as the English word might suggest. So, I have translated the word (at various places in this article) as “reporting” someone or “filing a complaint” against them. The Holy Office is the recipient, not the agent.

8. When and how they were communicated is not clear. Ledóchowski’s letter of April 13 does not mention them although that should be about when the propositions were sent.

9. One of the works mentioned by Grumett and Bentley (305–06), Robert Speaight (1967, 136), cited no source at all. Another, Mary and Ellen Lukas (1981, 91), does not refer directly to the Note on Original Sin. It only says that a “bloc of conservative French bishops” made a complaint about Teilhard to the Holy Office. Grumett and Bentley call this the commencement of the “action” against Teilhard. The Lukases, however, are vague about the substance of the complaint, suggesting a more diffuse concern about Teilhard’s “influence.” For this, they did cite a source, the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* for 1924, but without a page number. That source does not, however, record complaints (except indirectly, insofar as they result in some official act).

10. Grumett and Bentley (2018, 319) mistranslate this passage as a “denunciation by the Holy Office” (emphasis mine).

11. Grumett and Bentley (2018, 310) misread this letter in a way relevant to the difference between their account and mine. The original text is: “si le Père prétendait les défendre avec obstination, il serait bel et bien hérétique; il ne nous resterait qu’à le renvoyer de la Compagnie, puis à le dénoncer au Saint-Office.”

12. For an exception, see a passing reference in Teilhard (1929, 156–57).

13. In the French text printed in the posthumous collection (1957), Teilhard’s “détectable” (“detectable”) was miscopied as “décevable” (“fallible”), which the English edition then incorrectly translated as “disappointing” (“décevant”).

14. Someone wrote “Nov. 1930” at the top of the document. That date is hard to reconcile with Borne’s statement (mentioned above) that a decision about the case was ready in early September, but in June 1931, a letter of Ledóchowski (ARSI, *Censurae*, 27-III, № 4) also indicates that his instructions to Teilhard were made in November 1930. Perhaps, a document that was ready immediately before Teilhard left China to return home (in September) only reached him in November.

15. This *votum* made reference to the three articles mentioned above, as well as a few of Teilhard’s other articles on the same topic.

16. ARSI’s copy of the complaint is unsigned. It was clearly clipped from the original to remove the signature and (probably) the letterhead identifying Gemelli’s Sacred Heart University, stationery which he ordinarily used. The handwriting is identical to that in Gemelli’s letter to the Pope. The letter begins “Some time ago, I allowed myself to mention to Your Holiness some writings of Fr. Teilhard de Chardin, who maintains the simian origin of man,” something which Gemelli had done. (On both points, see ACDF, CL, 1930/461, № 3.)

17. A preliminary reply had been made on June 26 (ARSI, *Censurae*, 27-III, № 4).

18. The Holy Office did not make any public statement about the book. Its effort to get de Dorlodot to withdraw the book from sale was not approved by Pope Pius XI (ACDF, *Censura Librorum* 1922–1923, 1923/904). For a history of the case (but one with which I differ on some points of detail), see Raf De Bont (2005).

19. The Boston *American* reported Teilhard’s remark that “Man, ‘a thinking animal[,]’ has a long way to go yet before utilizing his mental process to its extreme.” Both stories bore the dateline of April 1, 1937. Similar remarks were reported from Philadelphia in *Laurence* (1937).

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