Acceptance Of Absurdity Urged By Nogar In Rice Chapel Series

By JIM DENNEY

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Christ is one who calls men to say “yes” to an absurdity, according to Dr. Raymond J. Nogar.

In his lecture last Thursday, Dr. Nogar gave a description of the life of the French theologian-scientist Teilhard de Chardin. Before his death in 1955, Teilhard, a Jesuit priest, had made extensive study into the theory of evolution and the history of man.

Teilhard’s study of paleontology was recognized as exceptional throughout his lifetime. He felt that within the story of evolution, there was a logical place for Christ as the culmination in the development of man.

Because of his radical ideas in the early part of the 20th century, Teilhard was accused of being a heretic by many people within the Roman Catholic Church. Although he was never charged with heresy, Teilhard was assigned to work in China. In the Orient, Teilhard continued his studies and wrote his first book, “The Divine Milieu.”

Unenlightened Controversy

After several years, Teilhard was able to return to France where he finished his famous work, “The Phenomenon of Man.” The reaction within the church was unfavorable and Teilhard was asked by his superiors to discontinue his writing.

The world of this great philosopher was filled with unenlightened controversy. Unable to explain his case in Rome, Teilhard died a very misunderstood man.

Teilhard de Chardin felt that man had a certain meaning in the logical unfolding of nature. To him evolution was a fact. He could study the history of the creature called man in such areas as brain capacity and the ability to use the fingers; however, Teilhard believed that there could be no explanation of the spirit of man.

In the fulfillings of Teilhard, there was no conflict between the Bible and the theory of evolution. The revelation of Christ was the ultimate expression of creation in the history of human development.

World Disorder

In his lecture given in memory of theologian Paul Tillich, Father Nogar said that he does not see what Teilhard saw. To Father Nogar, while there may be order in the world, there is a great deal more of disorder.

Teilhard’s ideas were “strange, but not strange enough,” for failure and waste are as much a part of the history of man as is logical development. The extinction of species is noted to confirm the world as being “chancy.”

Lord of Absurd

To Teilhard Christ was a step in the orderly fulfillment of evolution, while to Father Nogar Jesus was “far from expected.” Christ was one who came in mystery. Christ is not the end to a logical series, but rather an unexpected “Lord of the Absurd.”

Father Nogar went on to belie man’s preoccupation with putting things in order. The collection of innumerable statistics and the prediction of events is part of a drive for security. Father Nogar labeled this type of human mentality as “seat belt spirituality.”

Accept Consequences

Father Nogar called upon his listeners to “jump out of statistics.” Just as order is not to be expected, we often face the world with a “terror of tomorrow.”

One must not reject the world. The world is often absurd, and one must accept this absurdity with all its consequences.