

THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER



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Editorial

"Arius is alive and well and living in Oxford (and elsewhere)"

Arius, a fourth-century priest of Alexandria, Egypt, was a brilliant propagandist with a flair for the soundbite who, says Olivier Clément, developed a radical way of simplifying the incarnation and the Trinity: he made "understanding" christianity easy. And in doing so he and those who picked up and developed his ideas found themselves striking at the heart of orthodox christianity by denying that the Son was "of one being with the Father." "There was," said Arius, "a time when he was not." Athanasius, the great champion of catholic orthodoxy replied by asserting: "There never was a time when he was not." And the first ecumenical council, Nicæa I (325), agreed with Athanasius by defining the relationship between Christ and the Trinity churchgoers continue to affirm every time they say the Creed.

Arianism *expressis verbis* may have long been suppressed but his ideas live on. Arians keep reappearing in various guises down the ages. John Milton, for example, has been called a semi-arian. And in our own day there are many who profess a belief in God without necessarily believing Christ was both wholly divine and wholly

human. And yet these people continue to call themselves christians. Were these, we wonder, the people Teilhard had in mind when he wrote in *The Divine Milieu*: "The mystical Christ, the Universal Christ of St Paul, has neither meaning nor value in our eyes except as an expression of the Christ who was born of Mary and who died on the Cross"?

Teilhard sees the "new arians" denying the Cosmic Christ. This deeply disturbs him - as we know from his correspondence. He sees an urgent need for a new ecumenical council - a new Nicæa - to define the relationship between Christ and the cosmos for which, as Logos, he is responsible. His thinking on what he calls the third or cosmic nature of Christ is arguably his most important legacy to those who came after him.

And this, perhaps, is what he meant when he said: "If I have had a mission to fulfil, it will only be possible to judge whether I have accomplished it by the extent to which others go beyond me." What do you think?

Correspondence

Siôn Cowell's article "What Would We Do Without Cardinal Ratzinger?" brought us a small and but interesting postbag.

"I want to congratulate you on your article 'What Would We Do Without Cardinal Ratzinger?' in the October number. I thought it absolutely excellent."

- Barbara Wall

"If indeed *Dominus Iesus* is just saying what we all know, then why is it necessary to say it again! And there is virtually nothing about the fruits that are already following from work being done together by Christians as a result of dialogue. And virtually nothing of an

indication that the 'Church' would have to demonstrate at some stage some flexibility."

- Bill Cranston

"The visible Church today is what holds and puts into action the Gospel as taught by Christ without adding anything and without taking anything away. Orthodox and Catholics have taken a similar conservative view, Orthodox regarding the Catholics as having split from the true Church and vice versa. Orthodox regard the Reformation as a storm in a tea cup as both sides were based upon

the same error which in fact caused it. However, so much has recently changed in the West that the boundaries between denominations have become absurd but few Orthodox outside the West would be aware of this.

On the problem of authority in the Church, the gulf between East and West remains unchanged. If you ask most Catholic theologians who are the guardians of the faith, they will reply: 'The Magisterium' meaning the pope and bishops. The Orthodox will say that the whole people of God (laos) are the guardians of the faith. The Orthodox likewise will never accept the legalism of the Vatican (and incidentally, neither will the Anglicans if you read ARCIC 2).

My personal view on this is that Orthodox theology is so simple and precise as a framework to the Gospel that they is very little to define. Theology is merely keeping in balance two dualities:

- Creator and created leading to distinction and relationship between us and God, etc, etc.

- Logos and Spirit leading to authority and personal interpretation, etc, etc.

The precision of Orthodox theology obviously rules out the ultra-Protestant view that they can be six billion acceptable interpretations of the Gospel.

However, I do agree with you that there is a case for a Nicæa III based upon the writings of St. Maximus and Teilhard. The time is particularly ripe as most grass roots no longer care a fig about Neo-Platonism, Purgatory, indulgences, etc. but have not replaced these ideas with anything else."

- Peter Cox

"I was distressed to read your article using Teilhard to defend Cardinal Ratzinger. It seems to me that history always condemns great men after they have died, by using their writing to support events occurring at a later date. There is no doubt Teilhard loved his church and was wonderfully loyal in spite of what it did to him. But he lived in his own time, which was even pre-Pope John XXIII. On those grounds alone I would be loathe to use his words to support the Cardinal's outlook. Teilhard's vision was brilliantly greater, much more in tune with the cosmos and all that is, than any institutional church and I am personally horrified to have him brought into line. Had he brought himself into line with the church's narrow vision, he would not have been in exile. I feel your comments doubly negate his greatness. At another level though, I think Cardinal Ratzinger's comments do all of us a service. Now I have no doubt that the Roman Church is not interested in ecumenism, only conversion - something I had suspected but now know. So please, be careful how you use Teilhard; he is no longer here to speak for himself nor to defend himself."

- Jane Bingeman

We think Jane Bingeman is being a little unfair. What we were trying to do was, not to defend Cardinal Ratzinger, but to remind ourselves Teilhard's vision of a living Church. We hope we have never put words into Teilhard's mouth. Teilhard is well able to defend and speak for himself in his own words.

Anyone who has not read "Dominus Iesus" or the arguably even more important Apostolic Letter "Novo Millennio Ineunte" (6 January 2001) can download both documents from the Vatican website (www.vatican.va). Ed.

A Good Read

***The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, Olivier Clément, New City, 1993 (paperback)**

Another excellent book from the eminent French theologian Olivier Clément skilfully linking together a series of well-chosen texts from the early centuries of the Church to open the roots of a living mysticism that has flourished down the ages. It opens (or re-opens) our eyes to a living wisdom that has long been lost in the west. A must for every library - personal or public.

***Can a Darwinian be a Christian?*, Michael Ruse, Cambridge University Press, 2001 (hardback)**

Michael Ruse, Professor of Philosophy, Florida State University, has no doubt he can. Like Dawkins and Gould he takes natural selection as his starting point. He calls himself "an ardent naturalist and an enthusiastic reductionist" but he reaches radically different conclusions to Dawkins and Gould. An ideal book for anyone who wants to beat them at their own game!

***Creation through Wisdom, Theology and the New Biology*, Celia Deane-Drummond, T&T Clark, 2000 (hardback)**

This multi-disciplinary study by Celia Deane-Drummond draws on theology, biology, feminism, biblical studies, philosophy, ethics and sociology to offer a new theology of nature based on a trinitarian understanding of nature. Teilhard de Chardin figures prominently throughout the book.

***Hooking Up*, Tom Wolfe, Jonathan Cape, 2000 (hardback)**

Bronwen Astor recommends this collection of essays and fiction, especially "Digibabble, Fairy Dust, and the Human Anthill" which takes a sympathetic look at Teilhard's thought and vision. Wolfe argues it has taken "the current web mania, nearly half a century later, for this romantic figure's theories to catch fire..." Well-worth reading.

And finally...

***The Teilhard Lexicon*, Siôn Cowell, Sussex Academic Press, forthcoming (hardback)**

An indispensable tool for students and researchers to understand the specialised language of Teilhard's transdisciplinary approach. Essential reading for anyone driven by Teilhard's vision of an evolutionary universe. To be published in April.

If you know of a book you would like us to mention, please let us know. Ed.

Upcoming Events

23-25 April 2001. "Matters of the Heart - Engaging the Decision-Makers" - Twentieth International Teilhard Conference at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans, with Prof. Bill Cranston, Very Rev. Archimandrite Ephrem Lash, Fred Redding, Adrian Smith MAfr. Chairman: Siôn Cowell. Cost £120 (residential), £90 (non-residential). Further details from the Secretariat in Beaumaris.

This year's conference is being held on Monday-Wednesday by special request of members at the 2000 AGM. Ed.

26-28 October 2001. "Le sens de l'Évolution en question!" - international conference in French (but with translation facilities if required) organised by the French Teilhard Associations (Paris and Lille) at the Centre Spirituel du Hautmont, Mouvaux, Lille. One day will be devoted to Teilhard at Ore Place, Hastings (1908-1912). Siôn Cowell has been invited to present a paper on Teilhard and Newman. Further details in due course from the Secretariat in Beaumaris or from the Association des Amis de Teilhard de Chardin, 38 rue Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 75005 Paris (e-mail: secretariat@teilhard.asso.fr).

Projet Teilhard 2005. The Association des Amis de Teilhard de Chardin is actively laying the ground for an international colloquium to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Teilhard's death in 2005. Further details in due course.

And something to keep in mind...

The Religious Experience Research Centre is now located at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Llanbedr Pont Steffan SA48 7ED. *The Alister Hardy Trust and Society* can be contacted at 42 High Street Watlington OX49 5PY (tel/fax: 01491 614777).

Meetings of the *Alister Hardy Society* London Group are regularly held in Kensington, London: 7 February 2001 - speakers: Prof. Peter Clarke and Peggy Morgan; 21 March 2001 - speaker: Prof. Chris Clarke. All welcome. Further details from John Franklin (0208.858.4750; johnfranklin35@hotmail.com). For details of Oxford Group meetings contact Marianne Rankin (01684.772417; e-mail plant@johnrankin.demon.co.uk).

A Visit to Teilhard's Grave

A feeling of sadness always comes over me when I read of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's death - and particularly the account of his funeral and burial where only one friend was present. As a "soldier of Christ" who fought mightily he deserved "full military honours." Hence a resolution that on my next visit to the USA, I would pay tribute. My opportunity came in late 2000.

It was a glorious day of October sunshine as the "Shortline" bus set off from the New York Port Authority Terminal. We dived down into the long dimly lit tunnel under the Hudson River, and then spiralled upwards to a freeway on high stilts to be given a stunning panoramic view across the water of the Manhattan skyline. I was heading out to the Culinary Institute of America, around 50 miles north of New York. They have owned, since the mid 70s, the estate formerly owned by the Jesuits, where Teilhard is buried.

By the time we reached the Institute I was the only passenger. The driver, who had a "stop-over" at the terminus in Hyde Park a few miles further on, promised to watch out for me on his return.

Teilhard's grave has been given "special treatment" by some admirer; a small stone-bordered plot has been added, with various plantings. The foliage from two shrub type plants obscured the headstone, and much of those on either side. A recent bunch of flowers had been laid. A transparent plastic envelope also lay there, displaying the Teilhard quotation beginning: "The age of nations is past..."

The inscription reads:

**I.H.S.
P.PIERRE TEILHARD.S.J.
NATUS 1 MAI 1881
INGRESSUS 19 MAR 1899
OBIIT 10 APR. 1955
R.I.P.**

The cemetery contains almost 400 graves, all with that same staccato inscription, with birth dates going well back into the 1800s, and with the last interment in 1973. It is well cared for, but the stones in front of Teilhard's headstone prevents the grass cutting from being done

properly. I tidied things up a little before taking photographs.

The foliage on the trees which surround the cemetery was beginning to fall, and patches of sunlight dappled the grass. I spent over an hour quietly walking around, occasionally kneeling before a headstone to try and get an exact name or date. The thought of the collective effort of all those laid to rest here was almost overpowering. Every now and then a burst of traffic noise from the nearby highway would intrude - and an occasional train horn - lines pass close by along both sides of the adjacent Hudson river.

A party of visitors had been leaving just as I arrived: they said they had been unable to locate the grave. But they had been looking for a handsome memorial - perhaps someday there will be one. Just as I was about to leave, a family party of three arrived. I went back with them and guided them to the gravestone. A brother of one of the party had been a Jesuit priest in New York. This priest had been very much influenced by Teilhard and had always planned at some time to visit his grave. Sadly he had died three years ago; so they had come to pay the tribute that his brother had never got around to. A little anger was expressed that "no-one seemed to paying attention to Teilhard." Perhaps my presence provided just a little reassurance...

The woman in the security office (where visitors are issued with the key), said that there are many visitors in the course of a year. She recommended the new café that the Culinary Institute have recently installed for visitors, in the huge former junior seminary building. Teilhard would have approved of the coffee! Quite against the rules, I made my way to the former chapel, still with original stained glass, but now set up as a banqueting hall for the students to show off their prowess to guests. I talked to a black student, who said that coming from the Mid-West, she felt probably as much a foreigner in New York State as I did! She didn't know that the hall had been a chapel, but on learning this, said that it "did feel special." Around 20% of the students come from outside the USA...

I find it very fitting that Teilhard is buried close to such a busy and cosmopolitan atmosphere, with the overtones of industry in the background.

Boarding the bus for the return to New York, the driver asked: "How was your visit." "Just fine," I said, "Just fine."

Books Olds and New

Janetta Warre recently reminded us of the importance of making sure that any books we have by or about Teilhard are preserved for posterity. Many of her own papers are, for example, to be found in

the archives at Georgetown University. Other papers and books are expected to find their way to Oxford University. Please let us know at the Secretariat if you would like guidance on making

arrangements, e.g. in your will, to ensure your books can be made available to students and researchers in the future.

Bernard Wall

Many readers will remember with gratitude Bernard Wall for his translations of “Le Phénomène humain” and “Le Milieu divin” which brought Teilhard’s vision to the English-speaking world for the very first time. We are grateful to Barbara Wall for telling us something of those early days and the difficulties Bernard Wall, René Hague and others had to overcome. The following is based on notes of a conversation with Barbara Wall kindly provided by Venetia Carse. Ed.

Barbara Wall, widow of Bernard Wall (1908-1972), told Venetia Carse last February how, in the late fifties, Collins had appointed her husband General Manager and Translator of Teilhard’s books, beginning with *Le Phénomène humain*. Bernard, she said, had long wanted to introduce the English-speaking world to French and Italian religious writers, especially those to do with the Papacy and the Catholic Church. When, however, in 1958 he was invited to become editor of the Twentieth Century Review he and his wife returned to England from France at Valmondois where, amongst other things, he began working as Teilhard’s books. The Walls were then living in a cottage at Pigotts, near High Wycombe, where Bernard renewed acquaintance with René Hague (1905-1981) with whom he shared many friends in common, including David Jones (artist and writer), Tom Burns (attaché in Madrid and editor of *The Tablet*), Robert Speaight (actor and biographer of Teilhard), Harman Grisewood (controller of Radio 3), Martin D’Arcy SJ (philosopher and author), Jacques Maritain (writer and philosopher) and many others. The community at Pigotts had been founded in 1928 by Eric Gill

(sculptor, printer and founder of St Dominic’s Press) earlier in a group of converted farm buildings to bring together a small working group of artists, writers and printers. Bernard and Barbara soon realised René Hague was not only brilliant as a printer, writer and contributor to the *New Oxford Dictionary*, but he was the translator they had both been looking for. Bernard asked René to take on all future translations of Teilhard’s translations which, Barbara says, with his empathy with Teilhard, he was happy to do.

In her book, *Bernard Wall and René Hague : Personal Memoirs*, published in 1989, Barbara Wall recalls Bernard and René’s backgrounds and personalities as well as the sale of Pigotts in 1963 when René and his family moved to Ireland to continue writing. It was with some sadness that the Walls returned to London.

On Bernard’s death in 1974 Barbara went back to her family home at Rackham in West Sussex where her grandmother, Alice Meynell (the poet), and Barbara herself had grown up.

Bernard Wall translated two of thirteen volumes of Teilhard’s collected works and René Hague no less than seven.

Readers will be pleased to learn that Anthony Grahame of Sussex Academic Press is actively pursuing the idea of republishing in revised translation Teilhard’s collected works, including The Divine Milieu as well as Cosmic Life, The Mass on the World and The Christic. More news on this in due course but it is worth recalling with gratitude the pioneering work of Bernard Wall and René Hague in making Teilhard available to English-speaking readers while

accepting with scholars generally today that Teilhard’s seminal works, Le Phénomène humain and Le Milieu divin, should indeed be translated in English as The Human Phenomenon and The Divine Milieu respectively. Teilhard, for example, understands “the divine milieu” to mean both “the divine centre” and “the divine circle”. Ed.

Local Groups

If you have any ideas on the sort of information anyone wishing to start a group might find useful, please contact the Secretariat in Beaumaris. We should like to have a “starter pack” that would

include tips on setting up and running a group as well as suitable material to get them started. What would you need to start a group? Would you like to start a group yourself? Please let us know.

Teilhard the Evangelist

**“I, Lord, for my very lowly part,
would wish to be the apostle
and (if I dare be so bold) the evangelist of your Christ in the universe.”**
(*The Priest*, 1918, XII, 219 E; 329 F)

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