

THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER



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Editorial Black Tuesday

Over the last few days we have been trying to make sense of the tragedy in New York. Black Tuesday 11 September 2001 is a day few of us in the west will easily forget. The media have seen to that burying us beneath an avalanche of words to the point where it is difficult to find anything to say that has not been said already. As we write the radio is telling us the last remaining flicker of hope that life might somehow have survived beneath the rubble has been extinguished. Many of us will know of friends or relatives who were or who might have been in the twin towers on that fateful morning. We remember attending a breaking meeting on the top floor of WTC1 not that long ago. And a friend tells us her son saw everything from his office only a block away. And he

still sees the people waving from the upper floors minutes before the towers collapsed and the figures jumping from the windows to avoid the inferno behind them...

In the hours and days that followed the suicide attacks we found ourselves calling to mind over and over again the words of Teilhard to his cousin written only months after the end of the most bloody conflict the world had yet seen: "The future," he said, "is more beautiful than all the pasts." And only weeks before the outbreak of the Second World War he wrote: "The future of the thinking earth is organically linked to the transformation of the forces of hate into forces of charity."

When, we ask ourselves, will we ever learn?

"Christ in All, All in Christ" Gerard Langley, 1985

O'er countless years clouds' tear drops rained on rock,
Each wrestling from reluctant crag a tithe
Immeasurably small to build a stock
Of nourishment, a bed for things alive.
Once fell compassion's tear from Father's love
On soil prepared from all eternity,
From which sprang up, through action of the Dove,
The Hybrid to restore man's fealty.
New water-streams flow from re-livened hands,
Dove-driven, through a stewardship made ill,
To raise again to God's creation's lands
Disfigured by mankind's blaspheming will.
Hymn of the universe we must renew,
We struggle still, till Christ be formed in you.

Bill Cranston writes: Father Langley was our parish priest in the Catholic parish of Langley, Slough, UK in the late '70's. He moved from there to Bury St Edmunds and then to Blakeney in Norfolk. The poem was appended to a short note he sent to me and my wife in December 1985 about a stained glass window which had just been installed in the small church at Blakeney.

The theme is Teilhardian, and the title and the use of the words "hymn of the universe" would seem to confirm that Father Gerard had read Teilhard's works. One of the paragraphs in the note describing the images in the stained glass window is as follows: "From the open, wounded hands of the risen Lord, and

driven by the wind of the Holy Spirit blowing through the hair and garment of Christ, two streams of life-giving water flow through creation, vivifying with divine life the inanimate, plant and animal worlds: 'All creation is in travail until Christ be formed.'"

Further confirmation of the Teilhardian inspiration, I think. I learnt from his sister Agnes, who is a nun, that many poems were found among his papers after his death on 24 December 1992. I suggested to her that they should perhaps be gathered together, with a view to publication, but as far as I know no action has been taken.

"Towards Convergence"

Today we live in a mixed and divided world. As we saw on 11 September, many are driven by narrow hatreds, and particularly by the fear which underlies all fundamentalism and the unknown. We stand on the threshold of a world which appears to be about to tear itself apart. The protests against global capitalism and the seeking of enormous personal power and wealth which goes with it, reflect the great concern of many for poor who are getting poorer. The Christian Churches are apparently dying while Islam and New Age sects are drawing multitudes. Large numbers are seeking spiritual experiences and values, appalled at some of the perceived excesses of science, and not finding them in the churches. Where and how do we find a sane and healthy way forward? Is it in the various programmes which some of the Churches are putting forward or in something much more profound?

Teilhard has much to say to us if only we can hear it. He saw that the ultimate union between an evolving world and a God lying ahead could only come about through love, the union of what is deepest within us. He stated clearly that humanity must love and unite or destroy itself. In a fractionating world which no longer respects life, the latter alternative appears to be looming ever closer and closer. Are we going to destroy ourselves by warfare, terrorism or on a slightly longer timescale by the total pollution and destruction of our beautiful planet? If we use the term "love" in the usual way that we do today then that destruction will inevitably happen.

The tragic failure of the Christian Churches is that they have not preached or lived out the Gospel. Of course, many individuals have done so, and each of us most certainly have met some. Instead each has set up its own ideology (or theology) which has no real relevance to life and its joys and sorrows. These ideologies have often bred fanaticism and certainly exclusivity. The chief

preaching has aimed at a moral perfectionism, irrelevant to the Gospel message, which is about mercy and transformation. This is not something which we can achieve but which God brings about in each of us, generally though suffering. Our role in the world is very simple. We are to live as the followers of Christ, ordinary (holiness) by being fully human (feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, etc., cf. Mt 25.31-46), and embracing the freedom of the gospel. For two centuries the pagans could say: "See how these Christians love one another." Love, care, concern, compassion was the badge of the followers of Jesus. The Churches need no other programme today than to begin again to be fully human and live the Gospel.

When one reflects both on the Gospel and on Teilhard's thought, one immediately sees how closely he approaches the Gospel and the Cosmic Christ. In the Gospels it is quite obvious that the love we are to have for each other does not come from us but is a gift of God. We receive it because we allow the Spirit of God to flow into and to flood over our lives. When we read Teilhard we find that the love he talked about is also this divine energy which flows into us, not simply as individuals, but as members of a humanity, drawing closer to each other, as we are drawn ahead into the great cosmic convergence on Omega. He uses the term "amorisation," a dynamic energetic word, and not our pale meaningless word "love." There is a beautiful passage at the end of "The God of Evolution" (1953) where Teilhard talks about the final synthesis with:

"... the cosmic being on the point of magnifying fantastically the christic; and the christic being on the point (incredible as it may seem) of amorising (or energising to the maximum ¹) the entire cosmic."

This is clearly a two-way process which demands an answer.

Michael Le Morvan

¹ And, in some way, "raising it to incandescence." (Teilhard's note)

A Good Read

"Incarnation et pluralité des mondes habités d'après Teilhard," Jean-Pierre Demoulin and Gustave Martelet SJ, in Alexandre Vigne, ed., Dieu, L'Église et les Extraterrestres, Albin Michel, 2000 (paperback)

Teilhard long foresaw the probability of reflective life elsewhere in the universe raising important questions about Omega and what he calls "noospheric systems." This essay by Demoulin and Martelet is an important contribution to a collection which suggests the Church really is taking the probability seriously.

A Walk Through Time, From Stardust to Us, Sidney Liebes, Elisabet Sahtouris and Brian Swimme, John Wiley & Sons, 1998 (hardback)

Those of you who remember John Woodcock's enthusiasm for the Timewalk will welcome this book which is backed by all the resources of Hewlett Packard Laboratories. Further details about the "Walk" from www.globalcommunity.org/wtt.

Evolution and the Myth of Creationism, Tim M. Berra, Stanford University Press, 1990 (paperback)

Genesis, Creation, and Creationism, Lloyd R. Bailey, Paulist Press, 1993 (paperback)

Two excellent resource books for all those who want the tools to combat so-called creationists and their fundamentalist allies. We hope they are still in print. Otherwise go to Hay-on-Wye!

The God Experiment, Russell Stannard, Faber and Faber, 1999 (paperback)

Stannard looks at creationism and Big Bang, Biblical miracles and Quantum physics and concludes a Christian can indeed be an evolutionist. Pity he's never hear of Teilhard!

The Holy Web, Church and the New Universe Story, Cletus Wessels OP, Orbis, 2000 (paperback)

Recommended by Diarmuid Ó Murchú MSC. Wessels shows Berry and Swimme's *New Universe Story* is open to religious interpretation: the biblical symbols of creation, incarnation, etc. reveal the meaning of the universe to those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Upcoming Events

17-19 May 2002. "Walking with Teilhard — Teilhard and Spiritual Evolution" - Twenty-First International Teilhard Conference at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans, with Siôn Cowell, Bill Cranston, Michael Le Morvan, Alan Nugent, Fred Redding and others. The conference theme is inspired by Teilhard's vision of the emergence of spirit in an evolutionary universe (what Teilhard calls "the spiritualisation of matter"). There will be plenty of time for talking and reflecting and, above all, working in small groups. Cost £120 (residential), £90 (non-residential). Further details in due course from the Secretariat in Beaumaris.

Many regular participants were unable to attend last year's conference which was held during the week by special request of members at the 2000 AGM. The Executive Committee felt it better to revert next year to the usual weekend format. Ed.

26-28 October 2001. "Le sens de l'Évolution en question!" — international conference in French (without any translation) 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 will be presenting a paper on Teilhard and Newman. Further details from the Association des Amis de Teilhard de Chardin, 38 rue Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 75005 Paris (e-mail: secretariat@teilhard.asso.fr).

2 March 2002. "Awakening to the Omega Point and the Second Coming" — Seventh Annual CANA Conference at St John's, Waterloo, London, with Siôn Cowell, Christine Morgan, Simon Peter Fuller and others. Further details from CANA, 102 Church Road, Steep GU32 2DD.

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. 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).

Solange Soulié (1927-2001)

Pierre Leroy SJ writes in his autobiography: "In 1978 I received a visit at Versailles from a charming 'femme du monde', a mother and a young grandmother. She wanted to know more about Teilhard de Chardin and his work. I knew by intuition that we had work to do together, without knowing exactly why". (*Un Chemin non tracé, Jésuite au XX^e siècle*, Desclée de Brouwer, 1992)

So in 1981, it was agreed that Solange should join Pierre Leroy and a scientific colleague, Hélène Morin, to discuss the mystery of human existence, or, in today's words, what it is to be human. These spontaneous conversations were recorded on tape and led, over the years, to many publications in the form of books and cassettes.

I first met Solange Soulié on Teilhard's home ground. It was after the mass in the little church at Orcines where Teilhard had been christened and near the Château de Sarcenat where he had been born. We had both attended the session held there in 1981 and were introduced by Father Leroy in a fleeting moment before leaving as I had a train to catch. That was the beginning of a treasured friendship, full of fun and laughter. Her inexhaustible energy took some effort to keep up with and it is possible that Father Leroy did not know what had hit him.

She persuaded him to come to London for the exhibition held on Teilhard's life in Westminster Abbey in 1983. I met them at Victoria Station. Father Leroy, recovering from a hip replacement operation, was being pushed down the platform by Solange on the luggage trolley. Another adventure was in Washington DC where he spoke at Georgetown University, also at Baltimore, and again in England to speak at Wantage for the British Teilhard Association. He loved every minute of it and could not have done it without her.

After Father Leroy's death in 1993, Solange continued promoting the study of greater understanding of the development of the world today through Teilhard's vision of evolution. The transcripts she wrote on the many conferences she attended are brilliant in their precise accounts. She went straight to the heart of the many people she met on these occasions, from wherever they came, whoever they were, regardless of class, creed or colour.

Her lovely home in Neuilly was open house to all. Her friends were friends for life.

Solange was the centre of a large and loving family and had enormous pride in the grandchildren as they arrived. She had three lovely homes to run, in Paris, in Solonge and in Verbiers in Switzerland, where, until latterly, she loved her skiing at which she excelled. It was

indeed a privilege to be her guest. She had a wonderful sense of humour which it has been my luck to enjoy on many occasions. She loved all the good things in life.

I cannot end without mentioning her courage which shone for us all to see until the end of her life.

A truly wonderful lady. RIP.

Janetta Warre

Local Groups

If you have any experience of running a local Teilhard group we should like to hear from you. Your experience could benefit others who want to start a group. Help us to help them. Anyone wanting to start a group should contact the Secretariat in Beaumaris.

“Tiger’s Eye”

The old man,
ageless,
stood, smiled,
showed toothless gums.
His gnarled twigs
of fingers workworn
fumbled, found,
forced in my hand
a stone,
only a stone.
I asked him,
“Why *this* stone?”
He looked straight through
my eyes. His stare
came from beneath
his wrinkled brow,
brown as brittle bark.
The stone, cuneiform wedge,
a chip from African rock,

a rock from ancient times.
“Grind it,” he said, “burnish,
rub, polish and cherish,
it is for you.”
Time passed, the work hard
but I did as he had said
and it became an eye,
a living eye, it watched me
through a lens of soft striations
to follow the sun to respond to light
caught in a prism. I took
this stone to the old man
all pleased, he said,
“It is for you, care for it,
as it will care for you.
It is the ‘Tiger’s Eye,’
it is for you.” He bowed
and went upon his way.

Betty Hackman

Teilhard - Mystic of the Cosmos

**“The great cosmic attributes of Christ,
those which accord him a universal and final primacy over creation,
these attributes only assume their full dimension in the setting of an evolution
that is both spiritual and convergent..”**

(Catholicism and Science, 1946, IX, 189 E; 239 F)

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