

THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER



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Charity No. 313682

NO. 12

MARCH 2002

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Editorial “A time to go...”

A few weeks ago I had a meeting with my cardiologist. What he told me confirmed a decision I had been thinking about over the last few months. I shall be stepping down as Chairman of the Association at the Annual General Meeting on 18 May after eleven years in office. The reason is simple. Last October I was in Hastings waiting to greet a party of French teilhardians when I suffered what can best be described as a “cardiac alert.” The consequence is that I shall have to do a little less “Euro-hopping” and a little more “mountain-gazing.”

This, then, is the last *Newsletter* I shall be editing. Time, perhaps, to take stock of developments over the last eleven years which have been, for me at least, some of the most interesting and certainly some of the most challenging of my life.

The Association still has much work to do. What it needs, more than anything else, are the human resources to enable it to fulfil its mission.

Its short-term future: our finances are probably in better shape than they have been for twenty years or more. But the long-term future is less certain...

This is where the members come in. The survival of the Association depends on the willingness of the members, not only to

recruit actively in their own neighbourhood, but also to participate actively in the running of the Association — helping out at the annual conference, putting together *The Newsletter*, setting up and animating local groups... Those who come after me will undoubtedly be looking to members to support them in large numbers at the Annual General Meeting at London Colney on 18 May.

The Association has dominated my life for the last eleven years. Life without the Association will not be easy — even if I now have the truly exciting prospect of working towards my doctorate on Teilhard and the Eastern Fathers!

But, above all, I know the friendships that have been built up will endure into the future. My thanks to all for their kindness and support over the years.

As I leave the Chair with Teilhard’s dictum that “the future is more beautiful than all the pasts” ringing in my ears I remember his prayer I have always tried — in my own small way — to make my own:

“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. Amen.”

“A Poem of Hope” (For Christmas and the New Year)

Sleep, dear Child, in the crook of my arm,
Peace be with you,
may the Spirit of Love protect you from harm.

Joy be with the Young in our keeping,
kindness, wisdom and strength be theirs,
may they bring easement
to those who lose Loved-ones
and healing to the fount of the World's tears.
Peace be between People, Religions and Nations,
a time come when hatred and strife shall cease
and the Spirit of Love inspire each one of us
to build together the foundations of justice
to work in concord for lasting Peace.
Then wake, my Child, to the joy of living,
to the wonder of flowers, the cool shade of trees,
reverence for Life and smiling faces,
that daily you grow in mind and body
to work for and cherish our beautiful World,
Celebrate with joy the Spirit of Peace.

Venetia Carse, December 2001

Treasurers Past and Present

Fred Redding, our Treasurer since 1995, retired effective 31 December 2001. He it was who, more perhaps than anyone else in the recent history of the Association, took the necessary — and sometimes painful — decisions to put the Association's finances on a sound footing. And today, thanks to his efforts, our financial status is better than it has been for several decades. Waste has been eliminated, costs cut and operations kept within budget. This is no mean achievement!

Fred Redding tells us he is willing to remain a member of the Executive Committee and doubtless his knowledge and wise counsel will continue to be available to his worthy successor Professor Bill Cranston.

Lille and Hastings

As part of their preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of Teilhard's death in 2005 the French Associations organised an international colloquium on Teilhard de Chardin at the Centre Spirituel du Hautmont, Mouvaux, near Lille, on 25-28 October 2002 on the theme: "Le sens de l'Évolution en question?" Keynote speakers included Thomas King SJ from Georgetown University, Gustave Martelet SJ from the Catholic Institute of Paris and the Chairmen of the French and British Associations, Raoul Giret, Bernard Casset and Siôn Cowell. The colloquium which was attended by some 200 participants began on 25 October with an address at the Catholic Institute by Bishop Gérard De fois of Lille entitled: "Teilhard est-il encore moderne?" His response was a resounding "Yes."

On 28 October a party of 100 French-speaking teilhardians visited Hastings to follow Teilhard's footsteps over four of the most important years of his life spent at the now-demolished Jesuit house at Ore Place. The highlight of the visit was a concelebrated mass at Our Lady's, Hastings, where Teilhard had celebrated his first mass: the principal celebrant was Teilhard's great-nephew Olivier Teilhard de Chardin who had been ordained earlier in the year. Concelebrants included Bishop Vicent Ri of Chonju (Korea), Thomas Daly SCA (Parish Priest), William Hewett SJ, Thomas King SJ, Gustave Martelet SJ, two other priests and a deacon.

William Hewett welcomed the visitors on behalf of his provincial, David Smolira, and (in the absence of Siôn Cowell who had been rushed to A&E at Hastings Conquest Hospital) on behalf of *The British Teilhard Association*: "As a committee member of *The British Teilhard Association*, a Jesuit of the British Province of the Society of Jesus, and a Sussex man who grew up near Ashburnham — mentioned by Teilhard in one of his letters from Hastings — I am delighted to bring you greetings from Fr David Smolira, Provincial of the British Province of the Society of Jesus, and Fr John Russell, now in his ninety-sixth year, our most eminent Teilhardian. We are proud of our Teilhard connections. We are glad that the ancient and beautiful countryside played a significant part in Teilhard's formation. We note with due humility that British writers, Cardinal Newman and R.H. Benson particularly, deeply influenced a Frenchman's intellectual development during and after his stay here. Above all, we are overjoyed to concelebrate Mass here in the very church, where on 25 August 1911, Teilhard celebrated his first Mass. The Eucharist was central to Teilhard's spirituality: the inspiration he drew from celebrating the liturgy would lead him, in a situation where this was no longer possible, to compose his profoundly moving and original Mass on the World. Today, we are particularly aware of the Eucharist's personal and family meaning for our violently troubled global village. This family meaning is epitomised by the presence here today of Teilhard's great nephew, recently ordained, Fr Olivier Teilhard de Chardin..."

A New Catechism

Alan Sage writes to tell us he has been working for some time now on a catechism in which he integrates Teilhard's evolutionary thought with traditional Christian catechesis. We have been privileged to see some of his work which we believe merits publication. Anyone interested in learning more or, indeed, meeting to discuss Teilhard and religious education should contact Alan Sage in Cumbernauld on 01236.720424.

A Good Read

Praying with Teilhard de Chardin, James Skehan SJ, St Mary's Press, 2001 (paperback)

"'Praying with Teilhard de Chardin' is an extraordinarily moving personal meditation and guided retreat, which will open the minds and hearts of readers in parishes and schools to the cosmic Christian vision of Teilhard for our time." (Sarah Appleton-Weber)

Wisdom for the Journey, Serge Bolshakoff, St Pauls, 2001 (paperback)

Conversations with Fathers of the Russian Orthodox Church over more than fifty years in Russia, Estonia, Finland and France and on Mount Athos — the Holy Mountain. A bedside must!

From the Holy Mountain, A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium, William Dalrymple, Flamingo, 1998 (paperback)

A book who only recently discovered by chance (?) but cannot put down covering a journey from Mount Athos through Anatolia, Syria and Palestine (where the monks of Mar Saba see Catholics as schismatics, heretics and, even worse, freemasons!) to the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Egypt. A useful reminder that Western Christianity should never forget its eastern origins. Nor should we ever forget that earlier generations of West Europeans only too often took advantage of monks who had little idea of the wealth of learning that lay hidden in their libraries.

In the Shadow of Sinai, Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson, Alpha Press, 1999

Two quite extraordinary sisters in an age where women are thought to have known their place who braved the perils of the desert in search of invaluable manuscripts in the Monastery of Saint Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai. Anyone who has read Robert Curzon's *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* must read this book before updating themselves with William Dalrymple (see above).

Newman et Teilhard: Le défi de l'Orient, Siôn Cowell, pamphlet, 2002

Text (in French) of Siôn Cowell's paper presented at the International Teilhard Conference in Lille on 27 October 2001 in which he discusses Teilhard's enormous debt to Newman and the Greek Fathers. Copies (£2.50 each including postage) can be ordered from Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH.

The Cosmic Christ in the Vision of the priest and scientist Teilhard de Chardin, Siôn Cowell, pamphlet, 2002

Text of Siôn Cowell's talk given at a meeting of *Christians Awakening to a New Awareness (CANA)* at St John's, Waterloo, London SE1, on 2 March 2002, in which he traces the development of Teilhard's vision of the Cosmic Christ and its relevance to Christianity today and in the future. Copies (£2.50 each including postage) can be ordered from Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH.

Under the Merlin Spell, Margaret Mann, Tayar Books, 2001 (paperback)

Those who enjoyed Sam, Gilly, Tom and Lucy's adventures in Margaret Mann's much-loved earlier book, *The Merlin Set-Up*, will surely welcome its sequel. And they will certainly enjoy meeting a certain Tayar whose wisdom and vision speak to all!

And finally (a reprise)...

The Teilhard Lexicon, Siôn Cowell, Sussex Academic Press, 2001 (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.

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

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 and others. Special guest: Professor Celia Deane-Drummond, author of *Creation through Wisdom*. 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 from the Secretariat in Beaumaris.

18 May 2002. Annual General Meeting of *The British Teilhard Association* at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans, beginning at 14.30. Reports and accounts will be available in due course from the Secretariat or at the meeting.

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: in 2002 teilhardian from France, Belgium and elsewhere in Europe will be visiting Egypt on 24-31 October. It is hoped English-speaking teilhardians will be well-represented. Further details from the Association des Amis de Teilhard de Chardin, 38 rue Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 75005 Paris (secretariat@teilhard.asso.fr).

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; plant@johnrankin.demon.co.uk).

Radio 4

Alison Williams wrote reminding us that late last year and early this year the Radio 4 “Sunday” programme invited listeners to submit their personal creeds. The responses were quite astonishing in number, range and breadth. Some of our readers may well — like Alison — have sent in their own creeds. Alison’s was one of those appearing on the BBC website. Members will remember we ran our own “What Teilhard Means to Me” between 1997 and 1999. This is, perhaps, an opportune moment to ask members who would like to do so to share their own personal creeds with other members through the *Newsletter*. Alison has promised to send us her creed which we hope to publish shortly.

Bernard Towers (1922-2001)

It was only when surfing the Internet the other day that we learned that Bernard Towers had died on 19 August 2001. Sadly we have no information about the circumstances of his death. Bernard Leonard Towers was, we know, Chairman of the Association in what now seems another age. Formerly a Vice-President of *The Teilhard Centre* we did not know him personally but had corresponded briefly with him on one or two occasions in the mid-nineties. He had, we understand, lived and worked in the United States for more than ten years before his death. RIP.

We invite anyone who would like to submit an obituary note to contact the Editor.

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 Harpenden.

Change of Address

As mentioned in the Editorial above, Siôn Cowell is standing down as Chairman of the Association (and Editor of *The Newsletter*) on 18 May 2002. After this date the Secretariat will no longer be located at Beaumaris. If you want to contact the Association after 18 May, please write, in the first instance, to: Peter Cox, Secretary, *The British Teilhard Association*, 12 Falconer’s Field, Harpenden AL5 3ES (tel. 01582.620145; e-mail: peterjohncox@lineone.net). Further details will appear in future numbers of *The Newsletter*.

Teilhard — Mystic of the Cosmos

**“To live the cosmic life is to live with the dominating consciousness
that each one of us is an atom of the cosmic and mystical body of Christ.”**

(Cosmic Life, 1916, XII, 70 E; 81 F)

The Timbered Choir

The year begins with war.
Our bombs fall day and night,
Hour after hour, by death
Abroad appeasing wrath,
Folly, and greed at home.
Upon our giddy tower
We’d oversway the world.
Our hate comes down to kill
Those whom we do not see,
For we have given up
Our sight to those in power
And to machines, and now
Are blind to all the world.
This is a nation where
No lovely thing can last.
We trample, gouge, and blast;

The people leave the land;
The land flows to the sea.
Fine men and women die,
The fine old houses fall,
The fine old trees come down:
Highway and shopping mall
Still guarantee the right
And liberty to be
A peaceful murderer,
A murderous worshipper,
A slender glutton, or
A healthy whore. Forgiving
No enemy, forgiven
By none, we live the death
Of liberty, become
What we have feared to be.

Wendell Berry, 1991, in “The Catholic Worker,” December 2001

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