

THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER



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Editorial

All the members of *The British Teilhard Association* owe Siôn Cowell an immeasurable debt of gratitude. Since the closure of the Centre in Kensington he has run the Association from his home in Beaumaris with all the disruption that this causes to life at home. Caroline also deserves our gratitude for allowing this to happen. On behalf of all the members I would like to thank both of them for all that they have done on behalf of the Association. They have kept the Association going with, of course, the aid of other stalwarts (and one might especially mention Peter Reid — without prejudice to others). That the Association has a future more hopeful than for several years past is largely due to them.

It is with pleasure that we can record that at the AGM in May 2002 he was elected President of the Association. This means that we will not lose his encyclopaedic knowledge of Teilhard, nor his wide contacts with the Teilhard Associations of Europe and America. We hope that in his more leisured days he will continue his studies on Teilhard and that at some time in the future we will all benefit from them.

I understand that Professor Ursula King has retired from her post as Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Bristol

University after a distinguished academic career. In the course of this she devoted much time and energy to writing and teaching about Teilhard's life and thought. It has been an immense contribution to Teilhardian studies for which we must be very grateful. We wish her a long and happy retirement — which will probably be as busy as all her previous years of scholarship.

In addition to the mention of the death of Professor Bernard Towers in the last *Newsletter*, we are also saddened by the deaths of John Woodcock and Betty Lamb. John was for many years the Secretary of the Centre in the days at Kensington and as Editor of *The Teilhard Review* I found him very supportive and owe him a great debt of gratitude. There will be an obituary of him in the next *Newsletter*.

Betty Lamb was a member for very many years and has been most generous in her support of the Association — most especially with her important bequest for its future work which the Executive Committee wishes to acknowledge with gratitude.

We are delighted to welcome Canon Alan Nugent of the Diocese of Lincoln as our new Chairman. His letter speaks for itself.

From Alan Nugent

It came as a great surprise and an even greater honour to be asked to chair *The British Teilhard Association*, not least because I cannot call myself a Teilhardian scholar, just someone who has found Teilhard an inspiration and an illumination. Time and again as I read Teilhard, most often early in the morning, I find myself saying with a gasp, "Yes that's it," "That's right," "That's what I really believe."

I first read Teilhard back in the 60's as an undergraduate and for several years was a member of *The Teilhard Centre for the Future of Man*; though I never attended any conferences. Perhaps looking back, I feared I would be out of my depth in such august company. The quality of *The Teilhard Review* and the published

articles of symposia held to discuss particular aspects of Teilhard's thought represented high quality scholarship. The people who directed the life of the Centre in the 60's and 70's managed brilliantly to keep the vision of Teilhard before the attention of theologians and philosophers and reassure the Church as to the importance of that vision.

During the intervening years as a university Chaplain, a Parish Priest and an Anglican Director of Education, I continued to read Teilhard but came to suppose that the Centre had just ceased to be. My education work, however, took me on several occasions to meetings at the Maria Assumpta Convent in Kensington, where a notice board told me that a group of Teilhardians still met. After a

while I rejoined and from the start found welcome and friendship and laughter as well as an enthusiastic dedication to ensure that the insights and vision that Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin offered for the Church and for the world should not be forgotten or neglected.

We are a group of people whose lives and souls have been touched by the devotion and thinking of that truly remarkable man. That is the most important thing about us, not that we are now few in number or not as young as once we were; but that we have been touched by this unique vision. Because we recognise the importance of the Christian faith to the fact that ours is a universe in the process of evolution; because we believe that ultimately, no matter how long it might take, all things will find their fulfilment in God; because we believe that the truest power is that of love as exemplified in the cosmic Christ; then we have the confidence that what we have learnt from Teilhard, is of ultimate importance.

We live in days when Churches as institutions are seriously in decline and even those that are apparently “successful” are really repositioning existing or fringe believers and in doing so, are neglecting difficult questions. The simple fact is that the Christian message fails to make contact with the changing consciousness and expectations of people in Britain today. Yet Teilhard saw this danger over 50 years ago. Shortly after the Second World War, Teilhard wrote to his superiors in Rome in a report with the title “The Heart of the Problem” in which he sought to explain “what seemed to me to be the source of modern religious restlessness.” He wrote: “So long as the Church neglects, by means of a refashioned Christology (all the elements of which are available to us), to solve the apparent conflict that henceforth exists between the traditional God of revelation and the ‘new’ God of evolution, so long, too,” I wrote in that report, “will there be increasing distress not only on the fringe of the believing world but at its very core; and, *pari passu*, Christianity’s power to attract and convert will grow less.”

Precisely so: indeed how better to describe the real search for spirituality and heightened religious consciousness in our day with the failure of so many to relate this to formalised religion and ecclesiastical structures; than as “religious restlessness.”

From so many possible quotations may I just choose one from “The Future of Man” (pp. 268-269) which actually is from the

paper “The Heart of the Problem” referred to earlier. Of course, this is now dated, Marxism has declined but it has been replaced by powers more seductive yet equally dangerous — as for example, a Globalised Market Economy.

“I said at the beginning of this paper that the human world of today has not grown cold, but that it is ardently searching for a God proportionate to the newly discovered immensities of a Universe whose aspect exceeds the present compass of our power to worship. And it is because the total Unity of which we dream still seems to beckon in two different directions, towards the zenith and towards the horizon, that we see the dramatic growth of a whole race of ‘spiritual expatriates’ — human beings torn between a Marxism whose depersonalising effect revolts them and a Christianity so lukewarm in human terms that it sickens them.

But let there be revealed to us the possibility of believing at the same time and wholly in God and the World, the one through the other; let his belief burst forth, as it is ineluctably in process of doing under pressure of these seemingly opposed forces, and then, we may be sure of it, a great flame will illumine all things: for a Faith will have been born (or reborn) containing and embracing all others — and, inevitably, it is the strongest Faith which sooner or later must possess the Earth.”

Our task is to keep alive this hope and take steps to ensure that it is a vision that we can share with others, especially the young. I am conscious of the sheer enormity of the task, but am heartened by the deep dedication of this vision that I have always found in the Teilhard Association.

I am pleased that Siôn Cowell is still as President available to us with all his wisdom and erudition and his encyclopaedic knowledge of Teilhard’s work. The Executive Committee are also dedicated to the task and vision and are delightful company.

Please write to me. Share with me your understanding of the importance of Teilhard and perhaps once again renew your commitment to the task of reconciling evolutionary thought with vibrant Christian faith; not least by sharing in our national conferences and by organising small groups in your area to hear about Teilhard or by getting a slot for Teilhard in the discussion groups or lecture series in your local Church.

The 50th Anniversary of Teilhard’s death in 2005 is a target for our renewing.

Conference 2002

Although numbers attending the Conference were small it was felt that not only was it a great success, but it also laid out a path for the future which was more optimistic than for some time.

The main speakers were Professors Celia Deane-Drummond and Bill Cranston, Canon Alan Nugent, the new Chairman of the Association, and Michael Le Morvan. Below is a summary of some of the talks in the order in which they were presented.

Friday evening: “Living the Divine Milieu,” Michael Le Morvan

The Divine Milieu is one of the most significant ideas in Teilhard’s thought and is the key to his vision of creation, a vision opposed to the rationalism of much of western theology. Our vision of the universe is limited by the space-time boundaries of the Cosmos. The Universe is permeated by the Divine Presence in every aspect of its existence. This Presence is centred on the Divine — Human — Cosmic Christ united in the loving relationship of Father — Logos — Spirit. This relationship of LOVE fills the entire Cosmos. The Presence of the Logos through whom all creation comes into being finally brings about the fulfilment of the divine plan seen in the writings of John and Paul (e.g. Col 1). This Divine Milieu is alive with the Divine Presence. This wonderful creation continuously supports the existence of our universe, including the Milky Way Galaxy, and our own Solar

system of sun, planets, comets, etc. It is the story of our home and of our own lives. It is in fact essential that we experience ourselves as a part of this wonderful creation. The Logos became Incarnate into this as our brother, and He must have loved being human and a sharer in our humanity.

Each of us has a role to play in the life of our universe and in its convergence. Our Logo reminds us of Teilhard’s fundamental concept ALL THAT RISES CONVERGES. Today we are facing challenges to our very existence on the planet. The age of humanity is as yet very short compared to that of the dinosaurs. Each of us is called by the Divine Milieu to play our part, however small, to bring our lives and that of the planet, to the fullness of our evolutionary convergence in Christ. Are we prepared for this?

Saturday Morning (1): “Teilhard, Wisdom and the Eternal Feminine,” Celia Deane-Drummond

Celia Deane-Drummond’s talk was essentially a reflection and comment of Teilhard’s essay “The Eternal Feminine” found in *Writings in Time of War* (Collins, 1968, pp. 191-202)

The poem is a work integrating scientific and religious experience. The agent of integration is Wisdom, expressed in the form of the Eternal Feminine. He spent many months composing this work which is based on the importance which Mary of Nazareth had in his own spiritual growth and devotion. For Teilhard any synthesis which omitted the role of love was inadequate. He saw the expression of this love in the feminine and dedicated the poem to Beatrix.

He used the insights in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature, especially Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus, to express the origin and activity of the love. This Wisdom, essentially feminine, is integral to the world’s creative process. The feminine essential to this process becomes the Universal Feminine, the archetype of bride and mother. As the veils covering wisdom are removed the roles of the feminine are increasingly elaborated.

The feminine allures man with its magnetism and causes an inner struggle. Yet it is a created feminine and not divine. In the features of Mary humanity finds its own face, and its magnetic

attraction. The removal of the veil reveals the paradoxical juxtaposition of virginity and motherhood. Somehow virginity is not in opposition to evolution.

In the final part of the poem the author suggests that the allurements of Mary drew God into the Incarnation and she becomes the focus for the understanding of motherhood.

Teilhard himself had many significant relationships with women, though at the time he wrote the poem the only one was his cousin Marguerite Teilhard-Chambon. The other relationships came later, but it seems that this basic idea of the eternal feminine, developed from the idea of wisdom and culminating in the centrality of Mary at the apex of creation remained central to his thought on the development of love.

Celia closed the lecture by drawing a comparison with Vladimir Soloviev, suggesting Teilhard’s thought was perhaps more closely associated with the traditions of Eastern Christianity than Western Christianity.

Saturday Morning (2): “‘All in All’ — The Consummation of the universe in Christ,” Canon Alan Nugent

The starting point of the talk was the final page of Teilhard’s diary, written three days before his death on Maundy Thursday 1955. It was entitled “What I believe” and expresses his core belief of the Universe being evolutive, a cosmogenesis, with Christ at the centre.

Teilhard’s thinking is, in effect, a development in an evolutionary context of some of Paul’s expressions, as in 1 Cor 15: 26-28, Col 1 and Eph 1. These passages describe the “fulfilment of all things in Christ.” This is a theology which looks towards the future, rather than the traditional method of looking backwards.

The important word which embraces all these ideas is PLEROMA, a Pauline word taken up and interpreted by Teilhard. Teilhard’s vision brought together “cosmic, human and divine dimensions all centred on Christ and all involving a process of becoming or genesis”. The Cosmic Christ is the motive power and goal of the universe in evolution.

How does this Pleroma relate to the Omega Point, or the Christ-

Omega? For the speaker these terms were seen to be virtually synonymous.

In respect of the basic question “how does an individual become a sharer in the Pleroma?” Teilhard’s answer suggests that it is God’s action, a unitive transformation, brought about by the divine Presence. In this activity God forms us into a “communion of persons.” This is an aspect of the Pleroma.

One further point is the connection between the Pleroma and the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ. For Teilhard this represents the human desire for God coming to maturity. It is the meeting of the human and divine desire to fulfilment, and in so far as we are a part of the communion of persons we contribute to the human desire for this fulfilment. Thus “All things have been created in him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together.”

When the consummation of all things is completed God will be “all in all.”

AGM and Executive Committee, 2002

At the AGM a new Executive Committee was elected for the coming year

Siôn Cowell was elected President of the Association. This position had been vacant for a number of years, and it was felt that he should fill this vacant position in recognition of his years of devoted service to the Association.

Other positions were filled as follows:

Chairman:	Canon Alan Nugent
Vice-Chairman (and Vice-President):	Peter Reid
Secretary:	Peter Cox
Treasurer:	Prof. Bill Cranston
Other Members:	John Franklin
	William Hewitt SJ
	Bronwen Viscountess Astor
	Barbara Hogg
	Michael Le Morvan

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peterjohncox@lineone.net.

Obituaries

Bernard Towers (1922-2001)

As reported in the last *Newsletter* Professor Bernard Towers died on 19 August 2001. He was born in the North of England and educated at Liverpool University and taught in Bristol, Cambridge and Cardiff Universities before becoming a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge.

I first met Bernard in Cambridge in 1956 at the meetings of the Newman Association. As a scientist specialising in human embryology, he was also interested in philosophy and religion. The Newman Association was therefore a natural meeting place for him. He was quiet, friendly and unassuming but with a deeply questioning mind. Later on I got to know him much better when the Teilhard Association of Great Britain and Ireland was formed at Attingham Park about 1964.

In 1958 he published his first essay on Teilhard, a review essay on Rabat's "Dialogue avec Teilhard de Chardin". Subsequently he published other essays, many in his collection

Concerning Teilhard (Collins, London 1969). In the Introduction to this he recalled an afternoon spent with Sir Peter Medawar in 1960 debating Teilhard for the BBC Third Programme. When Medawar published his devastating attack on *The Phenomenon of Man* (aggravated by the weaknesses in translation) Bernard replied with a broadcast talk, printed in the *Listener*, and reprinted in this book. In spite of this he and Medawar remained friends. When he went to America to take up a Professorship in California I lost track of him.

He published three books on Teilhard (so far as I am aware): *Concerning Teilhard* (already mentioned); *Teilhard de Chardin* (1966, The Lutterworth Press), and (with John Lewis) *Naked Ape or Homo Sapiens* in the Teilhard Study Library (1969, The Garnstone Press).

May he rest in peace.

— Michael Le Morvan

Betty Silverwood Lamb (1907-2001)

Betty Lamb grew up in St. Albans but lived most of her life in Dorset, the County she served both as a distinguished probation officer and through many voluntary activities. A graduate of London University, she became a Home Office trainee in the Probation Service before the repeal of the Poor Law, and was deeply offended by the lack of dignity afforded clients. She had a particular gift relating to and working with adolescent girls. She was chosen by the Foreign Office to give lectures and represent British Probation Officers on the Continent. She was a founder member of the Lulworth Society set up to protect the local environment. She was also an original committee member and honorary life member of the Dorset Summer Music Society. Betty Lamb was a skilled needlewoman, craftswoman, artist and poet. She created her beautiful garden from wilderness. At the age of 85 she published "Wilton Anthology", a collection of her poems and paintings.

At her funeral I said: "Miss Lamb loved to teach; undoubtedly one of her greatest attributes was being positive and encouraging.

Good teachers are life-long students. With her Lord central to her life and to the world, she embarked on a voyage of discovery and soul searching with total commitment and honesty. Who was the Son of Man / Son of God and how should he be served? This led her from being an active serving member of the Church of England and delegate to the 1939 World Council of Churches at Amsterdam to being received into the Roman Catholic Church. In herself, she was a bridge between the two denominations.

She was one of the first members of *The British Teilhard Association* and Teilhard's writings had a profound effect on her. (She has been a most generous supporter of the Association — Ed). A long and full life slowly diminished over the past few years....Though she lost her power of speech her great spiritual journey continued through prayer....Finally she came into the real Presence of Peace which surrounded her. We rejoice with her that she has gone on to experience what she always called "the next adventure".

May she rest in peace.

— Jane Bingeman (God-daughter)

Farewell to John Woodcock

John died in July this year. A full obituary will appear in the next *Newsletter*. In the meantime we print a short description of the final resting of his ashes.

The Scattering of the Ashes of John Woodcock in Colney Wood, Norwich on 27th July 2002

Bahiya Bashir and I made the journey to Norwich to take part in this peaceful and serene ceremony. It was very smoothly organised. We were met at Norwich station and taken to Colney Wood along with personal friends and friends from Braziers. We were welcomed by Evelyn Woodcock and her son and daughter Francis and Alison. We quietly made our way to an open space where chairs were set out in front of a small open-fronted chapel adorned with a simple vase of flowers. Rather like a Quaker meeting we were given the opportunity to make our tribute to John after a period of silence. I gave him the following tribute:

"In paying tribute to John on behalf of *The British Teilhard Association* I would like to refer to a talk he gave in September 1986 entitled "Towards a Human Future". In this he talked about the Cosmic process of creative union and the importance of human relationships not just through interests, functions and business

dealings but personally coming together centre to centre in love. He used quotes from Teilhard's *Science and Christ*:

"To love is to be drawn together and brought closer centre to centre";

and from John McMurray the Quaker moral philosopher:

"The personal life demands a relationship with one another in which we can be our whole selves and have the complete freedom to express everything that makes us what we are. It demands a relationship with one another in which suppression and inhibition are unnecessary."

So John's proposal was to set up small groups coming together centre to centre. He started a group at the Teilhard Centre, Kensington Square, when he was Secretary of the Association. He worked out a unique method of giving everyone an opportunity to speak without interruption. After sixteen years some of that

original group are still meeting regularly and John has still a strong presence there. Evelyn and he set up a group in Reading. His method of conducting Centre to Centre meetings as they have come to be known is frequently used in workshops and meetings. It was his dream for the possibility of introducing “bottom up” personal groups and networks into corporate organisations. In conclusion I feel that it is fitting to read a verse from a poem written by Venetia Carse in memory of that other eminent Teilhardian Eric Doyle OFM:

Our Dying As Our Birth is Ineffable
Holy Mystery
both personal to ourselves
and part of the whole,
part of creation
centred on the Infinite,
encompassed by the ALL

Even as we are born into awareness
of this world of shimmering, fragmenting, forming, reforming
energy, matter, spirit,

So we have been part of the universe
since before time.

For we have our beginnings in the dust
of which stars are made,
And our first beginnings, with out brothers and sisters,
the vast and varied
Totality of the Cosmos are cradled
In the breath of God

Other tributes were given by friends from Braziers where John had been a staunch worker since its foundation by Norman Glaister, and by members and friends of the family.

After the tributes we walked up a hill farther into the wood overlooking a lake. There a young beech tree had recently been planted and the ashes were scattered. On the place where we stood to watch this simple ceremony a bench is to be placed, the idea of Evelyn, Francis and Alison, on which the stages of evolution are to be carved. A fitting and loving memorial to a dear and creative friend of Teilhard.

— Barbara Hogg

The Alister Hardy Society

The British Teilhard Association and the Alister Hardy Society held a joint meeting on 4th September 2002 entitled “Perspectives Teilhardian and Hardian.”

The speakers were Dr. David Hay and Siôn Cowell. It is hoped to have a report on this meeting in the next *Newsletter*.

The following meetings have been arranged by the *Alister Hardy Trust*:

16 November:	Oxford with speakers Dr. Mark Cox and Professor Ursula King.
8 January	London Group.
8 February	Oxford/Cotswold Group in Oxford
22 March	Oxford/Cotswold Group in Oxford

Further details of these and other events can be obtained from John Franklin,
21 Park Vista,
London SE10 9LZ
0208 858 4750 (phone and fax) or
johnfranklin35@hotmail.com

Future Events

At the AGM held at the 2002 London Colney Conference, the Executive Committee held an important meeting which discussed future activities, particularly in relation to the year 2005 which marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Fr. Teilhard. It is hoped that it will be possible to mark this special anniversary in an appropriate manner. The conferences in 2003 and 2004 will be a preparation for the anniversary. It is hope that more information will be available in the next Newsletter.

2003 Conference

Date: 28-30 March
Venue: London Colney

2004 Conference

Date: 26-28 March
Venue: London Colney

Please put these dates in your diaries and try to be there.

2005 Activities

Some of the following features are being investigated:

— Video: the possibility of preparing a special new Video.

— *Eco-Theology*: two issues of this prestigious journal are expected to be dedicated to Teilhard in 2005.

- Joint Activities with other Catholic Organisations.
- Special articles in Catholic Periodicals.
- A special one-off edition of *The Teilhard Review*.

If any members can help in any of these areas or if they have other ideas please contact the Secretary Peter Cox whose address is above.

The River

Listen!

Can you hear the distant carillon
of the Mistle Thrush
as she offers up her paeon
to the rising sun — to the new day?
If your heart is moved, come down to the meadow
where the Rother wends her way.
There shall you find nature in all her splendour,
there you may pause... and quietly pray.
for soon a stream of cars and lorries
will be speeding through the countryside,
spilling fumes, noise and rubbish,
exceeding speed limits in our villages,
setting nerves on edge and threatening children's lives.

The River of life carries with it
a flotsam and jetsam of stress.
Each of us a droplet — isolated
yet incarnate in the turbulent flood
of Global and Apocalyptic waters
that shape the tireless contours
of our contemporary lives.

Will there never be time to pause,
to gaze in the river that runs by the meadow,
banks bedecked with Willow-herb, Wild Iris and Bugloss?
Go, go, go down to the River,
tired housewife and tired commuter,
There gaze, gaze in the slow-flowing River
and let the Healing, Tranquillity and beauty
mirror your mind and your heart
each day and for ever.

— *Venetia Carse*

Postscript

(From "The Heart of Matter")

Lord of consistence and union, you whose distinguishing mark and essence is the power indefinitely to grow greater, without distortion or loss of continuity, to the measure of the mysterious Matter whose Heart you fill and all whose movements you ultimately control — Lord of my childhood and Lord of my last days — God, complete relation to yourself and yet, for us, continually being born — God, who, because you offer yourself to our worship as "evolver" and "evolving", are henceforth the only being that can satisfy us — sweep away at last the clouds that still hide you — the clouds of hostile prejudice and those, too, of false creeds.

Let your universal Presence spring forth with a blaze that is at once Diaphany and Fire.
O ever-greater Christ!

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