

THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER

(Published by the British Teilhard Association www.teilhard.org.uk)



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Charity No. 313682

NO. 17

MAY 2005

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Editorial – The 2004 Conference

Our annual conference took place over the weekend 26-28th March. Advertising in the *Tablet* brought forth considerable interest, and seven of the enquirers registered for the conference. In addition we awarded bursaries to three students from the University of Canterbury. There were over forty in attendance, including our speakers, the highest for some years.

Unfortunately Dr Badawi had to cancel his attendance at short notice. His presentation was replaced by an impromptu workshop session with questions set for discussion by member John Hands.

The quality of the papers and the discussions which took place was high. Overall the speakers helped us to see the continuing relevance of Teilhard's thought, particularly its importance in emphasising the relevance of the world in which we live; we need to see how the processes of

evolution and convergence can help us to grasp the opportunities and the dangers which the ever-increasing rate of change is forcing upon us.

Summaries of three of the papers are presented in this issue, along with a reflection on a group discussion at the 2003 Conference. (As editors we encourage members in general and conference participants in particular to share their thoughts about matters of interest to the Association and about the present and future of our planet.)

A review of the workshop session, and a summary of the final presentation by Dr Jonathan Gorsky will appear in the next newsletter. It is intended that full copies of all four presentations will be available in due course.

The piece on Piltdown (see Contents list above) was held over from the last newsletter.

Conference Summary 1 - The Challenge of Unity:

Some Philosophical and Theological Implications of Teilhard's Vision for our Time

Dr Joseph Milne, Honorary lecturer at the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK, Fellow of the Temenos Academy

Dr. Milne, who introduces Teilhard to his students at Canterbury, began by asking the question which should concern all Teilhardians "What response does Teilhard's view of evolution call for from me?" This is not easy to answer since Teilhard's vision has such a great sweep and needs to be focussed on smaller details. The time for debate and defence is over and we need to begin to think with

Teilhard. In looking at the great problems confronting us two important ones are the clash of different cultures and the meaninglessness of most human work. Though different, they both need to break down the walls of human isolation. Previously nations and cultures dwelt for the most part in isolation but in the modern world the sense of being part of a greater human story has thrown into relief the

narrow vision of personal life. There is a growing sense that human work should provide not just the basics of life but should also call on the deepest creative powers of man and increase his being and consciousness. For most people work does just the opposite so that leisure simply becomes distraction.

At the same time we see a growing conflict of cultures, of religions, of ideologies and struggles for meaningful identity. But these are much deeper in their roots than in the various issues that get taken up in the public mind. Teilhard saw the need for humanity to come together in mutual understanding and something far greater than the mere tolerance of differences is needed in response to these emerging pressures.

The different spiritual and physical orientations of East and West are not just bringing about confusion in their clashes, they are each being thrown into inner turmoil. A phrase like "multi-culturalism" may sound attractive and edifying, but actually it is just renaming social and ideological ghettos. These walls of isolation are being built on the false premise of the autonomy of the individual. They do not represent a shared world, and even less a shared work of the transformation of the spirit. They may protect but do not enhance greater being or enable creative action to flourish. Of what use is the right to work if that work does not nourish the spirit of man?

Teilhard's view of human rights follows first upon "the absolute duty of the individual to develop his own personality", then follows "the relative right of the individual to be placed in circumstances as favourable as possible to his personal development," and then "the absolute right of the individual, within the social organism ... to be inwardly super-organised by persuasion" (The Future of Man, p 195). According to this these pressures are inevitable, calling for a higher unity of consciousness.

The social corollary of "unity differentiates" is that society individuates. To be an autonomous individual is to be a centre that can act in reference to the whole and for that which is greater than himself. There is a social law at work - the potential of society is determined by its degree of self-knowledge or self-reflection. What is needed is a transformation of understanding the nature of society - an enhancement of perception, coming to understand its living intelligence. Thus modern economic theory ignores the transformative meaning of work. Every human being desires to realise their creative potential. Through mutual collaboration the highest talents are called forth in a way far beyond anything the individual could accomplish alone. Work becomes an art of creative adoration - an example of which was the building of the great mediaeval cathedrals.

There is in human nature a "natural knowledge" of the meaning of creative work, which belongs to the realm of the noosphere. On the other hand modern economic theory

is essentially a model of the hunter-gatherer society. Skills acquired without any creative impulse produce next to nothing. Underlying this and many other realms is the reduction of reality to the quantitative. In the realm of evolutionary science there is a split between the reductionists and the teleologists. Scientific research should aim to understand the total order of observable reality. Knowledge of this kind connects thought and being, mind and reality, matter and soul. It situates the human essence in the cosmos. Scientific knowledge can often be unreal except to the experts. It differs from true mystical knowledge which is a direct intuition of ultimate reality.

Teilhard, on the other hand, discerns that there are laws in nature that apply to many planes at once - and are observable to the non-expert. Thus, in the socialisation of man, the greater the capacity of the individual to participate in society, the more whole he becomes as an individual. The same applies to groups which can become more integrated. There are things which can only be accomplished through the work of many minds, as there are tasks which need many hands. Huxley has commented that physics "is credited with probing the mysteries of matter ... but has failed to pay attention to the only real mystery - the fact of mind and its evolution" (*Science and Synthesis*, p 31).

It is to the realm of consciousness that mysticism rightly belongs. The mystery of the relation of consciousness to the totality of reality, of the relationship of man to the cosmos and to the ultimate destiny of all things. Knowledge moves from theoretical explanation (the most mechanistic) to direct observation (the most conscious) and then into the field of human action itself in relation to all that is.

The move towards human essence leads to convergence. Thus in Shakespeare there is the perfect marriage of language and essence which touches the human spirit directly.

The application of the vision of Teilhard to the modern world has been suggested here in three areas: the meaning of human work, the relation of different cultural traditions and the understanding of economics at a higher level. The great principle of 'Union Differentiates' is a key to this process, leading to the release of enormous creative energy, at present constrained by mechanistic thought.

The great religious traditions are now available to us in translation as never before. The apparent decline of Christianity is due to its institutional reluctance to embrace the world as meaningful. As a mere palliative for life it has no vision or nobility. It is the essence of religion to resolve any duality between spirit and matter. This lies at the heart of Teilhard's thought. The vision usually given by religion is too small in the face of the vastness and majesty of the universe.

Conference Summary 2 - 'Self Power' and 'Other Power': Tension and Synergy in Chinese Spirituality.

Professor Xinzhong Yao (Professor of Chinese Religion, University of Wales, Lampeter)

Chinese spirituality is very diverse with several religious traditions: Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and folk

religion. Within each of these diverse traditions and within Chinese culture there are two levels: the intellectual (upper

classes) and the ordinary people. These factors make Chinese spirituality difficult to define. A basic question for anyone seeking a spiritual path is "in spiritual practice should we solely rely on our own efforts or on deliverance by a being or power that is beyond ourselves?" This is summarized in two terms: self-power and other-power.

These terms are borrowed from Pure Land Buddhism. They represent two types of religious mentality and two contrasting methodologies concerning spiritual practice. In other-directed practice, people believe that the spiritual realm is far beyond our comprehension and spiritual perfection can only be completed through the help of external resources; in contrast to the self-directed practice where there is no separation between the spiritual and the mundane and each holds the key to the spiritual mystery of their own destiny.

The 'Other' in different forms of Religion

Ordinary Chinese people are fundamentally directed to the other-power in religious practices, thus their ritual worship in Temples and Shrines. The statues and figures symbolise the Other - a spiritual power that is far beyond our reach. These were at one time ordinary human beings. Thus spiritual practice involves seeking external resources. The Confucian concept of the Other is represented by Heaven and the Sage, i.e. one who represents the transcendent with magnificent spiritual power.

In Daoist philosophy the Other Power is the Dao. The ideal is "being one with the Dao". Much attention is given to individual freedom and calls for the cultivation of the Dao within one's self. At the same time the goal of one's journey seems far beyond one's reach.

Within Chinese Buddhism there were deep tensions over issues of Other-deliverance and Self-enlightenment. In Pure Land Buddhism one has to look for salvation by one's own efforts including all traditional Buddhist practices but because of the problems and difficulties it is very difficult, if not totally impossible, to be saved by these means. Thus the way is to seek salvation by Buddha Amitabha's vow power. Everyone, good or evil, intelligent or ordinary, can be reborn in the Pure Land by the wish and power of Amitabha.

From the Other to the Self: An Inward Spiritual Journey

This change was a watershed in the history of Chinese religion and culture. None of the Chinese supernatural deities were the same as the Judaeo-Christian God. They explained creation in different ways. Historical and cultural heroes who enjoyed "supernatural birth" became the focus of religious and political life. If they obtained deity or semi-deity status through their own efforts some went so far as to wonder if there was something innate in every human being which enabled each of us to reach our divine destiny.

The function of Chinese gods was primarily to look after human welfare. There were a variety of gods subject to one supreme God, Tian, the Lord of Heaven. Human faith and prayers expected a return from spiritual powers and if things went badly wrong the subsequent uncertainty led to doubt, and doubt to tension between belief and rationality. Thus a significant number of leading thinkers turned from

external gods to humans themselves, searching for spiritual resources within.

Confucius turned in this direction and two fundamental principles of Confucianism emerged: there is no essential difference between the nature of the sage and that of ordinary people, and it is possible for anybody to become a sage by his own efforts. These became the cornerstones of Chinese spirituality.

The same movement occurred in Daoism, the need for personal engagement for finding and practicing a way. Thus the possibility was raised for all people to become immortals through self-cultivation. The two important ideas behind Daoism were that the transcendent destiny of human beings is related to their own nature and capacities, and that whatever kinds of nature we have, we are all able to reach eternity. Thus the movement was from Other-reliance to Self-reliance.

The same tensions permeated Buddhism. It was in Chan Buddhist teachings that the peak of self-reliance as reached and gave a person's heart/mind the full responsibility for their own enlightenment. As one teacher put it "Students today must have faith in themselves and must not seek things on the outside". The germ of Buddha-hood is latent in every human being.

The Self-Other Synergy

Synergy means that by combining a focus on self-power with a focus on other-power we have a synthesis which is greater than simply adding the two together. The attempt to achieve a synthesis of both became very important. How to combine Confucian moral virtue, Daoist mystical experience and Buddhist concerns about life after death and how to make them mutually supplement rather than contradict each other became central to a great number of religious texts. One master explained "Although there are three separate religions, their Dao is the same".

Dao in Confucianism and Daoism is fundamentally the Other but in the powerful inward journey it is also internalised as internal resources and power. Religious Daoists searched in spiritual practice for a middle way between externality and internality.

The two Buddhist schools, the Pure Land and the Chan, dominated Chinese spiritual practice. They had two basic principles. The first that everybody can be saved and become a Buddha; the second that those who have chosen and followed a spiritual path do not have to go through a difficult and long journey to reach this goal. However, the Pure Land Buddhism depends on the Other-power, while the Chan Buddhism opts for Self-reliance for enlightenment. But convergence occurred and the religious synergy resulting from this led to the merging of these two Buddhist schools into one spiritual current. In modern times it is almost impossible to separate them.

Concluding Remarks

Chinese spiritual practices are difficult to define in distinctive Western terms. Spiritual practices pursue an inward journey in which the human self is held to be responsible for each individual's own destiny. While the

Chinese practise their religious beliefs in relation to the 'spiritual other', they never totally separate the 'other' from the 'self', which explains why the religious world of China

is largely a reflection of the secular world. The closely related and mutually transformable 'self-other relationships' is exactly the key feature of Chinese spirituality.

Conference Summary 3 - **Bringing Together All Who Believe in a Future for the World: Teilhard de Chardin and Other Faiths.**

Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke (President of the World Council of Faiths and Patron of the International Interfaith Centre)

Teilhard, particularly after 1945, was increasingly interested in the convergence of religions. From the beginning he supported the Union des Croyants (the French sister body of the World Congress of Faiths) and at the inaugural meeting on 7th March 1947, an address he had written was read by Rene Grousset (printed as 'Faith in Man' in *The Future of Man – Ed note*). Even when he left France in his last years he kept in touch with the Union and met the Secretary in his last visit to France in 1954.

In the inaugural paper Teilhard suggested that in spite of their differences people of different faiths can come together through their shared faith in the value of human beings and can cooperate in building a common future. Such faith in man provides a basis on which to work toward a summit of the spirit. This meeting of religions was one aspect of the growing coming together and interdependence of people which was becoming obvious and which we term 'globalisation'. The whole world was awaiting the appearance of some unifying principle. The basis of this belief was threefold:

There is a future and a goal for the world ahead of man;

The future depends on the union which will establish itself between all individual, races and nations;

This union can only be achieved with the vision and under the influence of a supreme Centre, both attractive and personal.

A new spirituality was needed which corresponded to the emergence of a new consciousness among humanity - a religion for humanity and the earth which included the vision and the rich spiritual heritage available in all living religions.

In spite of Teilhard's early failure to understand Eastern religions (he was an outsider looking in) his views changed over time. He rejected one exposition of Vedanta because it appeared to him to be based not on a union which generates love but on identification which excludes love. For Teilhard mysticism is not just about unity with the soul or with God, but the unity of man with the world and with the Absolute.

There are many parallels between the work of Teilhard and Sri Aurobindo, especially the latter's great work 'The Life Divine'. The sum of what he says is 'that man is growing and has to grow in consciousness till he reaches the complete and perfect consciousness, not only in his individual, but in his collective, that is to say, his social life ... the growth of consciousness is the supreme secret of life, the master key to earthly evolution.' At the heart of things

Reflections following a group discussion at Conference 2003

Roy Bass, Member

(This is an abridged version of thoughts sent to the editor by Roy. We publish it as an encouragement to further comment and discussion. (Note that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor!))

there is a Consciousness-Force that is evolving to ever higher forms of being.

Both Teilhard and Aurobindo were influenced by Bergson. According to Zaehner they represent something totally new in mystical religion! Both were vitally concerned not only with individual salvation or 'liberation' but also with the collective salvation of mankind. They shared a common view of the universe. Other 20th century Hindu writers also have the sense of history moving towards a goal, and several modern writers speak of the 'history process' as an upward spiral rather than as cyclical.

This sense of history moving towards a goal is also found in other faiths: Judaism, Islam, Mahayana Buddhism, Japanese religions and the Bahai faith among others. This hope is essentially spiritual and Teilhard himself compared religions to living branches of a tree or to rivers joining the one great river of mankind. He spoke about an inward impulse - only through this can the unity of mankind endure and grow.

For Teilhard, Christ is the Omega Point. He did not explicitly enquire into the significance of Christ for different cultures but understood the Incarnation as a universal ongoing process. Christ is central but man's image of God is not complete because the human discovery of the Divine is on-going. Ursula King quotes a note of Teilhard that 'Christ would not be complete if he did not integrate Shiva'.

In Teilhard, Aurobindo and many more recent visionaries, there is a linking of mysticism and action. Today the search for inner peace and the struggle for external peace in society and the world are inseparable. Gandhi's well known remark 'I am a part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find God apart from the rest of humanity' sums up the whole process. Maha Ghosananda made a similar point 'we must have the courage to leave our own Temples and go to temples full of suffering, to the refugee camps, the ghettos and the battlefields.' Merton, too, was a prophetic voice, and Wayne Teasdale sees prophecy [the speaking forth of God's word into this situation, not foretelling the future - *Ed. Note*] as part of the spirituality of action together with selfless service and compassionate concern.

Teilhard envisaged a closer coming together of the different religions and their collaboration in working towards common aims beneficial for the whole human community. But it is always and everywhere the fire of love that he sees as the strongest source of empowerment for transformative action in the world.

A strong division of opinion arose in our group, arising from the query as to whether or not, if Teilhard were alive today, he would approve or disapprove of how the world has developed since his death. I've spent a good deal of

time reflecting on it - not least on the fact that it is impossible to gauge how far Teilhard's own thoughts would have co-evolved with the extraordinary series of events that have taken place since his death.

Essentially the more spiritually inclined members of the group thought Teilhard would disapprove, whereas the more technically inclined thought he would approve. Given his unique blend of mystical insight and scientific methodology I consider that Teilhard would have been fascinated by much of our technical progress at the same time as being appalled by many of the uses to which it is being put. Similarly I feel that his reaction to the current state of religious apathy would be disappointment but he would be pleased to see a few green shoots of a growing disillusionment with the crass materialism which now grips the world.

Many authors since Teilhard's death have either been influenced by him or thought along similar lines. It is not possible with limited space to quote extensively from them, but the following gives some flavour (and may stimulate readers to investigate them further).

Barbara Ward wrote: 'We are living at the end of a period during which more has been wasted, more has been thrown away, more has been violently disrupted than in the whole of human history - the experience of mankind has been the violent competition of rival centres of power.' She sees a confrontation between the optimists with faith in reason to solve human problems and pessimists who look at the totally uneven distribution of wealth, and concludes with considerable insight: 'Peace is a dream and delusion. We shall soon be confronting an age of revolt, of revenge, an age in which the present orderly search for a new economic order by negotiation and compromise turns into an angry, destructive and terrorist chaos . . . ' (Barbara Ward, *Resurgence Magazine*, 1978, article 'Save the Planet')

David Ehrenfeld of Rutgers University wrote in the same year 'it is my impression that personal ego is increasing in the world and I ascribe this to a humanist influence which

has left us no alternative but to love ourselves best of all. This is exactly the opposite of what was predicted by Father Teilhard de Chardin, who believed that the discoveries of science would help humanity to achieve a single world consciousness, a 'noosphere' in which mind and spirit would flow around the planet like a magnetic field ... we can note that it has not happened and the more humanistic inventions we get, the more Teilhard's dream fades into the shadows. . . ' (*The Arrogance of Humanism*).

Allerd Stikker, a life member of the Association, wrote in '*The Transformation Factor*', in the chapter called 'Distinction and Unity,:' 'Although Teilhard clearly saw the oneness of everything in the universe, including earth and humanity, he did not extend this integral vision to the role of technology . . . The ecological side effects of technology and science through artificial transformation of nature were not apparent to Teilhard in his daily, practical life, nor were they part of his philosophy or concern. He did not foresee that the very instrument of technology that could assist humanity in reaching a new phase in evolution would, at the same time, be the preventative cause through environmental damage. The ultimate phase of evolution will never be reached if the planet is destroyed suddenly by nuclear war or through a gradual, but rapidly increasing process of life-destroying ecological disasters on a macro-scale. The Taoist approach to nature needs to be revived world-wide if we are to prevent our own extinction.'

To conclude, I was interested to note that the 'Meta-Net links Network' included with the last Newsletter, represented almost entirely Christian or other spiritual based groups, few if any charged with ecological concerns. Thus I would recommend one of Eric Fromm's last books (published in 1976 and still in print) 'To Have or To Be' to all Teilhardians who have a genuine desire to see the present more clearly while standing on Teilhard's broad shoulders.

* * *

(A copy of Roy's complete paper can be obtained from Peter Cox, our Secretary - see page 6 for address)

Seeds of Hope – A note by Venetia Carse, Member

When it seems there is so much violence, greed, dishonesty and immorality in the world, it is perhaps helpful to realise the many individuals, young and old, small groups, societies and charities who are working unselfishly to promote dialogue and peace between nations. Also to improve the lot of the deprived and to care for the environment.

This is about a little charity, *The Soul of Europe*, which was founded about five years ago by the Rev. Donald Reeves on his retirement from St. James's Church Piccadilly. *The Soul of Europe* aims to contribute to the healing of war-torn lives in Bosnia.

It has been working against all odds to win the trust of the people, the religious leaders, Muslims, Jews, R.C's, Orthodox and Anglicans, persuading them to meet in dialogue and to cooperate in a united venture. One venture

already started is the rebuilding of the beautiful 6th century mosque in Banja Luka destroyed by the Serbs. Young people from all over Europe have volunteered to help in this project.

Another hopeful sign is that all religious leaders in Banja Luka have accepted an invitation to meet at Walsingham in the spring. Twelve members of the European Parliament have shown great interest in the *Soul of Europe*. This sets an example of what from small beginnings can be achieved by faith and dedication.

If you want to know more, please telephone me, Venetia Carse, on 01 798-865478.

(Venetia has been a member of the British Teilhard Association for many years. She has had a number of poems published both in the *Teilhard Review* and the Newsletter. Ed.)

The Piltdown Hoax – Teilhard exonerated – Bill Cranston, Member

Teilhard's works cannot be seriously studied without gaining a measure of him simply as a man. And many of his colleagues wrote extensively about him simply as a man. His honesty and integrity show through so clearly that for him to have been involved in any scientific hoax is simply inconceivable.

Nonetheless suspicions rumble on in English speaking circles (not in France where he is better known), substantially fuelled by speculative essays written by Stephen Jay Gould. These have been comprehensively refuted in Winifred McCulloch's *Teilhard de Chardin and the Piltdown Hoax*, published in 1996 by the American Teilhard Association. However the readership of this pamphlet has been slight. Also the question has never been satisfactorily answered as to who exactly was responsible.

What are the facts? The story begins with the discovery by Charles Dawson, a local amateur geologist and archaeologist, of a damaged human skull and a damaged ape-like jaw close together in a gravel pit in Sussex in 1912. This was thought to be clear evidence of man's descent from apes. 'Piltdown man' was an international sensation. Teilhard was at that time similarly engaged in geological and palaeontological studies (in his recreation time during his theological studies in Hastings). He had met Dawson through this work, and assisted at Piltdown on three occasions, the last of which was on September 10, 1913. On that day he found a human type tooth which fitted perfectly into the ape-like jawbone, providing further confirmation of 'human-ness.'

The hoax was uncovered in 1953, when it was found that the skull was only some hundreds of years old and the ape jaw was from a young orang-utan. In addition microscopic examination of the tooth showed that it was an orang-utan tooth carefully filed down and polished to look like a human one. The bones had been artificially stained to look very old.

In the years immediately following most people suspected Dawson to be the hoaxer. One piece of evidence in favour was that Dawson had directed Teilhard to go and look through a particular pile of gravel where he found the tooth.

But things have moved. New concrete and hearsay evidence has emerged in relation to other suspects.

In 1996, an article was published in the prestigious journal 'Nature' which described the finding of samples of bone stained in exactly the same way as the Piltdown specimens in a trunk which had belonged to Martin Hinton, a curator at the Natural History Museum (NHM) at the time of the original discovery. The trunk had been discovered by chance in the attic of the museum. Subsequently the executor of Martin Hinton's estate supplied glass tubes from a hoard of bequeathed material. These were found to contain teeth subjected to various staining solutions - essentially forgery trials. The author of the article maintained strongly that Hinton was the sole perpetrator.

In November 2003 the 50th anniversary of the uncovering of the hoax was marked by an exhibition at the NHM. The original items were put on show. A BBC Timewatch documentary was broadcast on November 21st 2003. The story develops in that it is now strongly suggested that at least one other person was involved, also from the palaeontology department at the NHM, namely one Charles Chatwin. He, like Hinton, is alleged to have a strong motive for the hoax, in that they wished to severely embarrass their dictatorial boss, Arthur Smith Woodward, who had been involved in later work with Charles Dawson on the Piltdown site, where further remains (also forged and planted) had been discovered. He, just as much as Dawson, desired fame and prestige. If it became known that Woodward had been 'taken in' by such crude forgeries, it would have been enough to terminate his career, quite apart from the suspicion he would have been under as a possible perpetrator. But the original items were never subjected to detailed scrutiny - plaster casts were made for subsequent study by other researchers. Others were never allowed to handle the originals.

The key conclusion for us is that Teilhard is now virtually removed from any suspicion of involvement in the hoax. And his judgement of Dawson as being inconceivable as the perpetrator lends support to the case that the whole thing was organised by two (or perhaps more) junior staff at the NHM bent solely on embarrassing their unpopular boss.

(Based on articles in Sunday Times Magazine, THES, Nature, BBC website, and Teilhard's *Letters from Hastings*)

Event dates

Saturday 2nd October, 2003 – Joint One Day Event with Alister Hardy Society – see leaflet enclosed

Friday 29th April – Sunday May 1st – BTA 2005 Conference – Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Teilhard's death

Friday 5th May – Sunday 7th May – BTA 2006 Conference – (Topic to be announced)

The Next Newsletter will be issued during June/July. Reporting on the 2004 conference will be completed, there will be a brief report on the AGM (held at the conference) and the Executive Committee's future plans, also details about some of the world-wide conferences and other celebrations planned for the 50th anniversary. One of the most important of these is being held in Rome this October, organised by *L'Association des Amis de Teilhard de Chardin*. It will be presided over by Cardinal Poupard. (But there will be space for members' contributions – please let us have them.)

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