

THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER

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Editorial

When Alan Nugent took over as Chair in October 2002, he said:

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

The conference and AGM reports in this issue show clearly that we have more than met that target. We have had a conference with the highest attendance for many years, where the enthusiasm of those attending matched the quality and enthusiasm of the speakers. We have renewed our Constitution, bringing it up-to-date and in line with Charity Commission requirements. And we continue to recruit more members.

The continuance of our renewal is dependent on drawing more members into active service. You are asked most earnestly to read the item which follows below.

We mentioned a new book in the Russian language in Newsletter 18 Part 2. We are indebted to Antoine

Lambrechts from the Benedictine Monastery in Chevetogne, Belgium for providing an English text of the review he prepared first in Dutch. This book is highly significant, particularly in view of Pope Benedict’s declared intention to develop closer links with the Orthodox Churches.

The short piece on the Teilhard celebrations in New York and Washington reports a large attendance and a wide range of speakers. The piece by Andre Daleux is a translation of an article published in 2004 on the website of the French Association of Friends of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Association des Amis de Pierre Teilhard de Chardin). Mrs Lydia Levington, one of our new members, has translated it for us. She passed a copy of the French version to a friend, who was so taken with it that he prepared a translation for his own use, not having realized that Lydia had already completed one. It still requires further work, before being placed on our website, but copies of the current full English text version are available on request.

Could you help the Association?

When former Chair and President Siôn Cowell informed us of his resignation in Newsletter No. 14 he said: “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 in the running of the Association — helping out at the annual conference, putting together *The Newsletter*, setting up and animating local groups, etc.”

You will note from the AGM report below that we now have terms of service for both Officers and committee members. The Charity Commission strongly recommends this, particularly in that it facilitates the introduction of ‘new blood.’ And you will see that have made a start on this

Your newly elected Committee gave careful consideration to the question of drawing in further ‘new blood’ at their meeting on 20th June. Tasks have

been identified which could be undertaken by individual members of the Association to assist the Committee in its work. There has also been consideration of the vacant Officer posts. See further detail below.

Individual tasks

The following tasks have been identified:

1. Dispatch of the newsletter. About 50 members receive the newsletters by e-mail. A further 80 receive it by post. Sheets with pre-printed up-to-date labels would be supplied along with the printed copies of the Newsletter.
2. Reviewing books.
3. Reporting Association events, for example preparing summary accounts such as the one below on this year's conference.
4. Membership 'chasing.' We have a list of members dating from the early 1990s when many people resigned from the Association. We would like someone to undertake the task of contacting a sample of 40 or more of these to inform those that are still at these addresses about our recent activity and ask them to rejoin. If this produces a reasonable return, then we would proceed with contacting all of them.

None of the tasks above may suit you. But you may have other talents or facilities. Are you good at graphics and can see how the layout of the newsletter could be improved? Perhaps you have high quality printing facilities at home, if so could you perhaps print the newsletter for us? Whatever you can do,

please consider carefully whether you are prepared to help us with that talent or facility.

Naturally all expenses incurred would be refunded. And the Executive Committee has already agreed in principle that a modest honorarium can be paid for any major task carried out for the Association, the sum to be of the order of that derived from an hourly rate equal to the statutory minimum wage.

If you are able to offer help in any way, then please let us know.

Unfilled Officer posts

The posts of Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary are currently vacant. These tasks are currently being carried out by the Treasurer, Bill Cranston. His preferences and abilities are more suited to the vacant posts, which at the current level of membership and newsletter frequency he can handle, thus our priority is for a volunteer to take over as Treasurer at the AGM next year (and sooner if possible). Ideally we are looking for someone with a methodical turn of mind (accounting knowledge is not essential, Bill will give a full briefing on the 'Cashcall' computing package, or we will pay for you to attend a course on 'Cashcall').

However, Bill is prepared to continue with the Treasurer's task for a further 3 year term from 2006, so we are looking just as much for both a Newsletter Editor and a Membership Secretary. Anyone interested in these posts should in the first place contact Bill on 01475 686374, or by e-mail to bill@cran-ce0.demon.co.uk for further details about what these posts entail.

Alan Nugent, Chair

Conference Report

Attendance totaled 52, made up of 47 registered delegates and our 5 speakers. Four of the five speakers attended for the full weekend, and all were in attendance for the discussion session on Saturday evening.

We started on the Friday evening with a reflection by Alan Nugent on *Teilhard, Complexity and Democracy*, highly topical in the light of the UK General Election about to take place on the following Thursday May 5th. Alan highlighted Teilhard's positive views on democracy, and himself expressed confidence in it, for all its shortcomings. Then followed an illustrated talk by Fr James (Jim) Skehan SJ, from Boston College. A geologist himself, Jim gave an authoritative account of Teilhard's achievements in geology in China – not just his individual efforts but also about the encouragement and support that he gave to Chinese geologists, who were faced in the 1930s with the massive task of preparing geological maps for the whole of China. He

went on to tell us about his having met Teilhard on two occasions at geological conferences in the USA. The final session on Friday, after supper, was a viewing of a video-recording of the BBC programme *The Heart of Matter* broadcast in the 1960s. While of course rather dated in style (and nostalgically, for some of us, in black and white!) it was good to hear comments from the various participants about the validity and relevance of Teilhard's insights. We hope to obtain some further copies of this tape which will be available for members to borrow (and perhaps show as well to friends and others).

On Saturday we had presentations from Professor Ursula King and Fr Bob Faricy. In her talk '*Faces of the Feminine: the phenomenon of love in Teilhard de Chardin*', Ursula reviewed the many close friendships that Teilhard had with women. She gave us valuable insights into Teilhard's relationship with Lucile Swan, referring in particular to the recently published letters

between them (*Letters of Teilhard de Chardin & Lucile Swan*, University of Scranton Press, 2001). Bob's talk on *Teilhard and Globalisation* was hard-hitting. Globalisation was here to stay, it had enormous potentiality for both good and evil. For example we now had global terrorism. We were 'messing up' in many ways. But he concluded on essentially the same point as Ursula. The authentic globalization that Teilhard foresaw meant coming together 'heart to heart' in love. We must 'understand, accept, and care for the growth of others' in our family circle, local community, country, and finally in the whole world.

Of course it was not all talk by the speakers. The question/discussion sessions were lively, and the dining room was a buzz of conversation at mealtimes. We had two sessions where participants broke up into groups. The final Sunday morning was given over in to Teilhard's *Mass on the World (Hymn of the Universe*, Collins, 1965, pp 19-37). Fr Billy Hewett SJ, led us first through a para-liturgy which he had 'orchestrated,' based very closely on Teilhard's 'Mass on the World,' in which all were invited to participate. After the morning coffee break, Fr Hewett, assisted by Frs Faricy and Skehan, celebrated a Roman Catholic

Mass. The liturgy of the word was drawn, as always from the bible. At appropriate places (introduction, communion, etc.) use was made of additional material from a version of the *Mass on the World* composed by Fr Tom King precisely for incorporation in an ordinary orthodox Mass. Opportunities were thus given for full participation by all delegates, respecting their varied backgrounds.

As for last year, the proceedings of the conference will be published (and, in due course, placed on our website). We will be making a nominal charge of £4 for the printed version to cover postage and printing costs (but those who attended the conference will receive it free of charge). It would be helpful if non-conference attenders who wish a copy were to notify the Secretary (see bottom of page 8) – this will be helpful to us in deciding how many to print.

Again as usual, recordings of the talks (and of the para-liturgy) were made by John Franklin, to whom thanks are due for this substantial effort. Copies of these, £7.00 for each talk including p&p, are available from him (his address is: 21 Park Vista, London, SE10 9LZ) – cheques payable to British Teilhard Association, please.

AGM report

Alan Nugent reported on activities in the previous calendar year, noting a significant upturn in conference attendance due to our having advertised in the 'Tablet.' While attendance at the event in St John's Church, Waterloo in October had not been as large as we would have liked, new members had been recruited. By the end of the year our paid up membership had reached the 100 mark, and we had a growing list of others on our circulation list. Our website was growing in popularity, and several members had been recruited from that source alone. Tribute was paid to the efforts of the Committee, acknowledging in particular the hospitality of both Bronwen Astor and Barbara Hogg in whose London homes the Committee meets.

The Treasurer had two sets of accounts to present. The accounts for the calendar year 2003 presented to the AGM in 2004 had not been independently examined. A computer accounts package (Cashcall, specially designed for charities) had been purchased and all transactions relating to years 2003 and 2004 had been duly entered. The package automatically produces the accounts, under headings as recommended by the Charities Commission. These headings differed from those historically used by the Association. The members listened patiently to an exposition which demonstrated that the informal accounts for 2003 provisionally approved by the 2004 AGM did not differ materially from the 'Cashcall' accounts for 2003 now being put forward for approval. These 2003

accounts were approved. The explanations for the 2004 accounts were rather simpler, and these too were duly approved. Copies of these accounts are available on request.

Finally the Treasurer highlighted the setting up of the Publicity Fund and the Betty Lamb Fund, the latter to be applied to assist students in their studies. These funds were open for donations at any time.

The constitutional amendments outlined in Newsletter 18B (November 2005) were then considered. All were approved. The new constitution is currently being typed up and after being checked by the Executive Committee will be placed on our website. As for the accounts, copies of the constitution will be available on request. And new members without internet access will be supplied with one as a matter of course.

The Executive Committee for 2005-6 was elected under the new Constitution, which provides for the election of a Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary as Officers, in addition to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer, and for six ordinary members. Those elected, and their assigned retiral dates, are as follows.

Canon Alan Nugent –	Chair –	retires 2008
Mr Peter Reid –	Vice-Chair –	retires 2006
Mr Peter Cox –	Secretary –	retires 2006
Prof Bill Cranston –	Treasurer–	retires 2007
Ms Michelle Le Morvan –	Member –	retires 2006
Bronwen Viscountess Astor –	Member –	retires 2007

Mr John Franklin –	Member –	retires 2008
Mr David Lewin –	Member –	retires 2008
Ms Barbara Hogg –	Member –	retires 2006
Rev Fr William Hewett –	Member –	retires 2007

The newly created officer posts of Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary are currently vacant.

We welcome aboard new member of the committee David Lewin, who is a graduate student at the University of Kent. Michelle Le Morvan has decided not to continue with the task of Newsletter Editor

Book Review: *Tejjar de Šarden i pravoslavnoe Bogoslovie* [Teilhard de Chardin and Orthodox Theology] by Evgenij Strugovščikov, Moscow, “Dom Nadeždy,” 2004, 256 p., ISBN 5861813140

The author is a Russian Orthodox priest and, since 1994, has been a lecturer in fundamental theology and religious history at various St. Petersburg academies.

There are two encouraging introductions, one by Bishop Ilarion (Alfeev) of Vienna and the other by Galina Muravnik, a biologist at the Department of Religion at Moscow Patriarchy. Both praise the book as being the most comprehensive and original biography on Teilhard de Chardin in the Russian language.

So far in Russia (except for a scientific/philosophical study) there has been the publication of E.M. Babosov, *Tejjardizm: popytka sintezisa nauki i xristianstva* (Teilhardianism, an effort at Scientific and Christian Synthesis) at Minsk in 1970, and a number of articles in Soviet encyclopaedias and philosophical dictionaries (especially by V. M. Pasika). However in general Russian theologians have paid little attention to Teilhard's works. But there are exceptions, for example the Archdeacon V. V. Zenkovskij *O trudax Teilhard de Chardin* (On Teilhard de Chardin's Work), published in *Osnovy Christianskoj Filosofii, II: Christianskoe učenje o mire* (Paris, Vmca-Press, p. 175-187) and the Polish Orthodox priest Georgij Klinger, *O Tejjar de Šarden i pravoslavnaja tradicija* (Teilhard de Chardin and Orthodox Tradition), published in *Vestnik R.S.X.D.* 1972 (Nr. 106, p. 109-132). There are also two essays by the well-known biologist and Orthodox priest Alexander Men', who died in 1990. The first one as an appendix in *Istoki Religii* (under his pseudonym E. Svetlov - Brussels, 1970/1981, p. 345-372), the second one as a posthumous preview in a new Russian translation (1992) of *Le Mileu Divin (P'er Tejjar de Šarden: xristianin i učenyj* (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Christian and Scientist)), in *Božestvennaja sreda*, (Moscow Renessans, pp.V-XXIV - see Internet site: www.alexandremen.ru/nasledie/teiar/htm). Zenkovskij is critical of Teilhard's evolutionary ideas, which in his opinion are irreconcilable with Christianity's views (a 'mythology' that cannot be justified with God's creation). G. Klinger and A. Men' are much more positive and have a more differentiated approach,

which she is no longer able to fulfil alongside her other interests and responsibilities. We owe her our best thanks for taking over this task at short notice from former Chair and President Sion Cowell in October 2002 and for all her work in the meantime. The Assistant Editor has taken over as Acting Editor for the moment, and asks for forbearance from readers! And as mentioned in the first item 'Could **you** help the Association', the Treasurer continues for the moment with the task of Membership Secretary.

referring to similar ideas of orthodox philosophers and theologians like Vladimir Solovjev, Vladimir Lossky, Paul Evdokimov, Sergii Bulgakov and Oliver Clément. However these essays are not at all comprehensive and also in parts too controversial to properly reflect Teilhard's underlying views.

Strugovščikov also refers in his introduction (p.12 and footnote 9, p. 202) to unpublished work by Nikolaj A. Zabolotskij (1924-1999), professor at the Theological Academy in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), representative of the Russian Orthodox Church at the World Council of Churches in Geneva and an enthusiastic ecumenist. His literary works comprise not only the Russian translation of Teilhard's *L'avenir de l'homme* (The Future of Man) and Paul Grenet's *Teilhard de Chardin, un évolutionniste chrétien* (Teilhard de Chardin, a Christian Evolutionist) (1961), but also a comparative anthology of Church Fathers' quotations and quotes from Teilhard. He also delivered a lecture on Teilhard de Chardin and traditional Church doctrine at the Theological Academy in Leningrad in October 1970. Strugovščikov has made generous use of these sources.

Strugovščikov's first intention is to answer questions like 'What kind of theology did Teilhard put forth,' and 'What does it entail?' and 'Are there any connecting views with Orthodox theology?' (p.13). Insiders in the matter will realize that the Church Fathers - to name just a few like Irenaeus of Lyon, Clemens of Alexandria, Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregorius of Nazianze, Basilus of Caesarea, Gregorius de Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopage, Johannes of Damascus, Symeon the new Theologist and Gregorius Palamas - are taken into account continually. Augustine is also mentioned more than once, because Teilhard himself was fond of quoting him, although always with due reserve. The author admits (p 187) that the title of the book could also have run: 'Teilhard de Chardin and Orthodox Theology of the ancient East.'

The construction of the book is a classical one of fundamental theology and not so much based on Teilhard's philosophical system. However in the end

the reader will get a clear insight of the latter. Starting with a brief introduction (Ch. I) and a biography (Ch. II) the author goes on to give Teilhard's main notions and ideas – theology, philosophy, monism and pantheism, evolutionism and the Bible and how Teilhard derived and developed his ideas (Ch III). The next three parts treat topics in more detail: firstly Teilhard's vision of God – the doctrine of God, triadology, christology, eucharist, redemption (Ch IV); secondly, his view of the human being/humanity – the essentials of his anthropology, the origins of human beings, body and soul, on sin, asceticism and the sanctity of mankind (Ch V); and finally his view of the world – science and religion, the origins of the world and cosmology, matter, Mariology and miracles, the philosophy of religions as well as ecclesiology and eschatology (Ch VI).

Finally in Ch VII there are the conclusions. Here he recapitulates the similarities and the differences between Teilhard and Augustine (pp. 188-191) and between Teilhard and the Greek Church Fathers (pp. 192-196). In this reviewer's view, perhaps some unjustified generalisations creep in here, for example the suggestion that Augustine takes a basic psychological approach, whereas Maximus Confessor and Teilhard do not. Ultimately the Church Fathers and Teilhard must be seen in the context of difficult, often abstract and poetical intuitive ideas which can only be understood after extensive meditative consideration.

Having summarized the views of V. Zenkovskij, G. Klinger, and A. Men' earlier in the introduction, the author concludes with his own opinions:

1. The private mysticism of Teilhard stands close to the eastern Church Fathers. His language, however, is not theological, but more poetical and

therefore often vague.

2. Augustine's influence and a number of typical Roman Catholic ideas take him away from Orthodoxy. Particularly the Filioque, papal infallibility and the doctrine of the Eucharist.
3. But also as a private philosopher Teilhard does not stand very close to the Orthodox Church Fathers. Zenkovskij already reproached Teilhard for having introduced evolutionism into dogma and confusing evolutionism with Creation.
4. In spite of all these 'flaws' he sees Teilhard's views as of great apologetic significance for Christian theology, demonstrated by the following quotation:

“Only Christianity accepts and explains undeniably the fact of temporal asymmetry of the world, which Teilhard has demonstrated in his own unique way and from different perspectives. Only Christianity is capable of explaining in a general sense a Universe which gradually is opening up to humanity. All other forms of religious philosophies of life that are confronted with the problem of evolution are caught in a blind alley from which the only escape lies in self-denial and the final acknowledgment of Christian truth”

Naturally adherents of non-Christian persuasions would expect a milder view. And, to be fair, the author, at the start of his conclusions says himself: “Practically all the questions that are raised in this book should be worked out from a larger perspective.” We encourage all readers – and the author himself – to follow this advice.

Antoine Lambrechts
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News of Celebrations in the US – (Report by Bill Cranston)

In New York these took place from April 7th – 10th. Capacity audiences of 500 attended the two sessions in the United Nations Conference Center where an opening greeting was delivered on behalf of President Chirac. Around 1500 people attended the final session in the Cathedral of St John the Divine. A major delegation attended from France, organized by the French Association of Friends of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ, nearly all of whom attended the graveside service held on April 10th, the precise anniversary of Teilhard's death 50 years earlier in New York. The service was conducted by Fr Olivier Teilhard de Chardin, a grand-nephew of Teilhard, assisted by Fr Tom King.

The speakers in the various sessions included scientists, theologians, philosophers, economists, business leaders, as well as spokesmen for international organizations (UN, UNEP, UNESCO, etc). This wide range of interest reflects the scope of Teilhard's writings and ideas, which cover the topics

of science and religion, philosophy, politics, economics, technology, and ethics.

The conference at Georgetown University on Monday 11th concentrated on the relations between science and religion, but with an evening session of the Woodstock Forum where the panelists were Mary Gilbert (co-editor with Tom King of *The Letters of Teilhard de Chardin and Lucile Swan*), Philip Hefner, Professor of Systematic Theology Emeritus, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, and ex-Senator Harris Wofford, President of Bryn-Mawr College.

It was a privilege to attend these celebrations on behalf of the Association, and I am grateful to the Association for a grant towards my expenses in New York and Washington (I traveled to the US on other matters)

An extended report is in draft, which will be placed on our website, and will be available on request to members who are interested in more detail.

Summary/synthesis of books by André Daleux, (international member)

(Based on translations by Lydia Levington and Mark Bones – see editorial)

I want to tell you about my own discovery of the thought of Teilhard de Chardin, and the profound influence it has exercised on the course of my life. In summary, his thought has allowed me to travel from a materialist and agnostic vision of the world, imposed by reason, to a spiritualism which also sought to be reasoned.

Since my adolescence, my temperament, with its rational tendency, has made me draw back from dogma such as that presented in the Catechism during the 1940s. Later, in my final year, my initiation into philosophy sharpened my critical spirit. And then my medical studies persuaded me that the wonderful and complex human mechanism was perfectly suited to functioning without the support of any divine action whatsoever. Thus I was, at around thirty, comfortably established in a state of total disbelief based on scientific determinism. To me the world was only matter, a mere chain of cause and effect, insulated from any kind external intervention of a spiritual kind, divine or otherwise.

But general medicine, and a constant contact with suffering, diminution and death, came little by little to trouble my beautiful serenity. Where was the sense in my efforts to cure my patients, if the struggle was lost in advance – because at the end of the journey, there was death and complete annihilation, as much for my patients as for myself? Such a world no longer made sense.

It was then, at around thirty, that I discovered the thought of Teilhard de Chardin. I realised immediately that it had much to offer me.

Since the end of the 1950s, my researches have revealed that the thought of Teilhard – at once completely incompatible with the classical science established by Newton, which still held sway in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century – found itself more and more at ease in the framework of the new Physics; that is to say the Relativistic Physics of Einstein, applied to extremely large speeds and astronomical distances; and the Quantum Physics of the extremely small. Both emerged at the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1994, I published the result of my researches under the title: “*Teilhard de Chardin, science et foi reconcilié?* [Teilhard de Chardin, Science and Faith Reconciled?],” through Editions Gabriandre. This was followed in 2002 by a simplified version of that book, with the title: *Teilhard de Chardin : permis de croire en l’au-delà* [Teilhard de Chardin: Permission to Believe in the After-life]. I presented in them an account of my progressive discovery of the thought of Teilhard, a journey that had led me to admit to the existence of a spiritual side of the world, and of a God of the

Individual infinitely surpassing ourselves. This little book passes through the essential concepts in the thought of Teilhard, and their logical succession, and ends with a reflection on the after-life in the face of today’s science. It is a synthesis and summary of these two books that I present here.

Teilhard, palaeontologist and Jesuit, scientific and devout at the same time, seeks to rework the Christian dogmas in a language suited to today’s culture. His first concern is to go beyond that philosophical puzzle, still unresolved today, of the relationship between spirit and matter, or even between the body and the soul. It is to this end that he conceived of his theory of Spirit-Matter, according to which the stuff of the cosmos is not dual – or formed of one part matter and the other part spirit – but singular. This singular entity displays two aspects. It has an internal aspect, in which we come into contact with our own interior, when in meditation, in prayer or merely in profound reflection. The other, external, material aspect, arises through interpretations by the sensory organs of the form of objects and beings situated in physical space-time. According to Teilhard, our sensory organs deceive us. The substantial aspect of Spirit-Matter is not in its material appearance, but in its spiritual side. That is to say, that for Teilhard, the world is Spirit. Our senses lead us into error when they convey to us a world made up simply of static matter.

Initially that affirmation of Teilhard’s offended my beliefs, which were based on classical science as applied to the solidity of matter. But the discovery of the new types of Physics, Relativistic Physics and Quantum Physics, disturbed those beliefs. Their almost phantom world implies, in effect, a progressive dematerialisation of the physical object. For Einstein, matter is just a manifestation of energy. To him, the particle of quantum matter from which our entire world is built, loses, little by little, its material attributes - a persistence in time, a precise position in space, and also a unique identity.

[A portion describing quantum physics in more detail followed by various quotations from Teilhard has been omitted here]

According to Teilhard a diffuse spirituality is present from the beginning in the primitive stuff of the universe, a spirituality which becomes more and more evident, as the cosmic elements grow in complexity, while at the same time rising to consciousness. In the successive development of particles, then atoms, then molecules, then the living cell, and finally to the family of multi-cellular beings to which we belong, the evolution of the unique entity of cosmic Spirit-Matter sees its spiritual face become clear, as its material aspect, in turn, becomes diffuse. This

evolution crosses two major thresholds of complexity: first when life first develops, and second with the arrival of human reflective thought. At both of these thresholds says Teilhard, a quantitative increase in complexity imposes a qualitative change of nature, with the appearance of a new form of being. Our reflective thought, present thanks to the number and organisation of the neurons in our brains, comprises a closure of the ring of our thought upon itself – not only knowing, as the animals that precede us [in evolution] do, but *knowing* that we know. Such reflective thought allows us to sense time, the passing of time, gives us the ability to look back, to recalling our past, to record it in history, and finally, of projecting ourselves into the future. We perceive ourselves as individual, as subject, in a world become object.

This new status acquired by us human beings permits us to engage with each other, through emotional ties, which have a power far greater than any animal. We must be realistic here, and recognise that these capacities for feeling are inevitably coupled with a capacity for hate. But Teilhard, confident of the future, considers that future evolution, leaving the anatomical level of chromosomal heredity, will lead to superior standards, for the emotions and for the psyche. Thus will the *noosphere* be moulded, a psycho-emotional union of all humanity, which will envelop our planet, in the more or less distant future, in a spiritual atmosphere. The development of our noosphere will find its crisis and fulfilment in Omega. That last letter of the Greek alphabet symbolises the Divine state. But God is not merely the Omega that harvests all the noospheric spirituality at the end of time. He is also the Alpha creator who maintains in being, from moment to moment, every second of his creation. Properly understood, for Teilhard, the Omega and Christ are one. The incarnate Christ finds in Omega the full blossoming of his universal role of attraction and cosmic inspiration.

That omnipresence of a God who transcends time is one of the metaphysical notions where I myself admit some reticence. It meets with strong opposition from many classical scientists; more so in that Teilhard attributes to each human individual an ownership within him, that is rather close to that omnipresence. According to him, the spiritual aspect of each of us individuals is coextensive with cosmic totality; its dimensions are the very dimensions of the universe of the past, present and future. “Each of us (...) is enveloped, is haloed, by a prolongation of his own being as vast as the Universe.” (*Écrits du temps de la guerre*[Writings in Time of War]p 369). That cosmic co-extension of our individualities, though considered as eccentric by a Classical Physicist, is much less so to a Quantum Physicist. [a further portion on quantum physics followed by further Teilhard quotations has been omitted here]

These propositions of Teilhard’s, which one might be tempted to classify as chimeras of poetry, hold quite a different value if one confronts them with the Physics of Relativity. Indeed, if the flow of time is an illusion induced in our thinking by the physiological functioning of our brains, what happens to it at our deaths? There is a cessation of brain activity, and therefore an instant disappearance of temporal flow for the individual concerned. In other words, death is not a departure to an “elsewhere” or an “after,” rather a transformation to an “otherness.” At our deaths, each of us topples instantly into a state in which the concept of before-and-after makes no sense at all, a state outside time that believers can name the ‘divine state’. If one pauses, here at this point in the reasoning, the obvious objection is : “If the brain no longer functions, it hardly matters if time flows or not, because the individual no longer exists, and everything is at an end.” It is then that it is necessary for the thought of Teilhard to intervene, with the co-extension of the spiritual side of our being, which itself has for its dimensions the whole of the universe, past present and future. The survival of the deceased then rests entirely in the spiritual aspect of that individual - which is I remind you, its robust and sole fully existent aspect. That spiritual side of the individual is coexistent with space-time, that is to say, it is eternal and omnipresent. I will not here discuss the new perspectives that these notions give to concepts such as, for example, the “communion of saints”, or the “beatific vision of God”. But only to insist on this concept “otherness”, into which we can emerge through death, every place, every instant, every being of the world, is “near” to us - that is to say, is attainable.

We are here, or so it seems, very far from daily life. But do not be deceived Thinking back over the several decades dedicated to my research on the thought of Teilhard has made me realise that my contact with the Other was modified, little by little, as I progressed in my profession as a general practitioner of medicine. In the first years of my medical career, the patient before me was, a human being, a fellow man who had a right, due to this fact, to my solidarity, my consideration and all my attention. He was also a marvelous and extremely complex assemblage of organs, which I was engaged in maintaining in as harmonious a functioning as possible. But, little by little, to the degree that I discovered the possible existence of the Spirit, this singular symposium of doctor and patient was modified. I had before me an Individual, involved like me in an adventure of cosmic dimension; and to whom ties united me, which drew their intimacy from the forces of Love, under the mask of material appearances. If my purely technical medical activities turned out to be but little modified, the climate in which they were employed became extraordinarily enriched.

My regard for my partner, my children, that family in which my life was engaged, I also found to be transfigured.

In fact, the thought of Teilhard arises from a very demanding ethic. Each of us is called to attend to our cosmic role, tiny though it may seem. Each of our acts, each of our thoughts, can contribute to a cosmic spiritualisation. Thus we have an obligation of making fruitful, to the utmost limit of what is possible, our personal spiritual resources; even if, more often than not, we remain deaf to that appeal.

Teilhard's morality rests on a principle acceptable to all men of goodwill, from which could emerge a Natural morality. This principle could be enunciated as follows : "It is good if it promotes a spiritualising cosmic evolution".

That is where the thought of Teilhard de Chardin had led me. From an agnosticism tainted with materialism, I had moved, little by little, to a spiritualism which has profoundly influenced my rapport with the world and my manner of being.

But from a rational point of view, I still felt confused. There was something missing if the world of Teilhard was to acquire a real coherence in my eyes. It is then that the keystone appeared to me, which assures the solidity of the conceptual edifice. *The world has a meaning, and it cannot be mistaken, nor deceive us*; this is the undemonstrable postulate, or if you wish the act of faith, of Teilhard. With him, I have agreed to make that act of faith - convinced by the rational coherence of his cosmology. It is for me a source of interior peace, and of a mobilisation towards action

Forthcoming Events

British Teilhard Association /Alister Hardy Society

Joint Conference, Friday 16th – Sunday 18th September 2005; *Revelation and Evolution*; and Pre-Conference Workshop (optional), 15th-16th September; *Coming Together* at the University of Wales, Lampeter

Featuring: Revd Canon Alan Nugent, Chair of the British Teilhard Association, talking on *Reflection, Revelation and the Sense of Humanity*; Dr David Grumett, author of a forthcoming book on Teilhard, *Teilhard de Chardin: Theology, Humanity and the Cosmos*, talking on *The Vision of Evolution: Teilhard and Catholic Theology*. Other speakers include Dr Rupert Sheldrake, Revd Marcus Braybrooke, Prof Chris Clark, Dr Denis Alexander, and Dr Neil Messer.

Bronwen Astor, member of the British Teilhard Association and a Patron of the Alister Hardy Trust, will lead a Workshop on *Evolution of Spirit*.

For full programme, including booking form, [click here](#).

British Teilhard Association/Glasgow Newman Circle

One day conference in Glasgow Saturday 29th October: *The Vision of Teilhard*

Featuring Professor John Haught, Georgetown University (USA), Alan Sage, Stirling University, and Fr Seamus Mulholland, Franciscan International Centre, Canterbury. To be opened by Bishop Maurice Taylor.

Full programme including booking form in preparation, phone 01475 686374 for details.

Ignatian Inspired Spiritual Exercises– (led by Billy Hewett SJ)

At Inigo's Place (25 minutes from Waterloo Station): *Christ Emergent with the vision of Teilhard de Chardin*, Saturday 29th October. (One of four events on: 'The Variety of Ignatian Spirituality for Today')

Contact 020 8949 1670 for details & booking form (must be returned by 1st October)

At Holland House, Crowthorne, Pershore, Worcs: *Teilhard de Chardin: His Growing Relevance for Today*

Contact 01386 960330 for details and booking forms.

British Teilhard Association 2006 Conference, London Colney

Friday 5th May – Sunday 7th May, 2006 – **BTA 2006 Conference** – theme and programme still to be decided, but a session for student presentations on Teilhard is planned.

The Next Newsletter is planned for September - **deadline for receipt of copy, August 15.**

Articles, letters, opinion pieces or poems, etc should be sent to Bill Cranston, 3 Anthony Road, Largs, KA30 8EQ, or by e-mail to: bill@bcranston.demon.co.uk.

Communications on Association matters should be addressed to the Secretary:

Peter Cox, 12 Falconer's Field, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 3ES

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