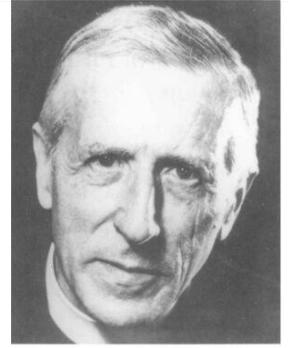


# THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER

Published by the British Teilhard Association

[www.teilhard.org.uk](http://www.teilhard.org.uk)



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## Editorial

Welcome to the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Teilhard Newsletter. Firstly, I would like to apologise for its late appearance due mainly to the change in editor late last year. Now the handover is complete and I would like, on behalf of all our members, to thank David Lewin for all his work on the Executive Committee and for taking on the role of ‘Acting Editor’ from August 2008 until recently. My intention, on taking up the torch, is that production will increase back to at least three issues in 2010. I have been joined by Stephen Retout as Assistant Editor and we will be working as an editorial team. We hope to explore some new directions and ideas in future editions. The key idea is that we would like the Teilhard Newsletter to be read and to be of interest to a much wider audience than the BTA membership. We hope to do this firstly by looking closely at how e-technology might allow us to reach out and engage with that large group of Teilhard sympathisers and latent interest in his ideas. The revamped BTA internet site mentioned later is a welcome step in this direction. Secondly, we take the view that future issues should contain at least



one article which is relevant to the non-specialist and with permission might be used by other publications. Thirdly, and by no means least we want to make the BTA's activities much better known in the U.K., with the mainstream churches for example, but also other groups with allied interests.

As part of this new approach we will be taking views and considering carefully the synergies that Teilhard's ideas have with other interest groups. One of these groups is of course ecology and faith, and were Teilhard with us today he would undoubtedly have been engaging with the ecological question. It is therefore with great sadness that this edition carries the belated obituary of Thomas Berry, the leading pioneer of Teilhard's ideas in the field of ecotheology. It is difficult to see right now who will replace Berry in this field, and his loss is compounded by the death of Thomas King S.J., whose writings on Teilhardian spirituality have inspired many. Both obituaries should be read as celebrations of lives well lived in the service of the church and the world in the spirit of Teilhard himself. Even more importantly they challenge this generation of Teilhardians and especially the BTA to reflect on how Teilhard's unique contribution to Christian thought and engagement with the earth can be carried forward this century.

Two further articles give us hope as we reflect on this daunting task, and show that the relevance of Teilhard's thought for the twenty first century is being articulated by some unexpected sources. Pope Benedict's brief reflections on Teilhard and the cosmos are highly significant for Roman Catholics, signalling as they do something of a rehabilitation. The statement by the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations reminds us that Teilhard is relevant well beyond denominational frontiers and he has resonances for the whole of humanity.

Because of time constraints we have relied heavily on articles from the *Teilhard Perspective* published by the American Teilhard Association. However, this issue also includes details of events and contributions from closer to home. The letters page contains fascinating correspondence relating to Bishop Amigo, who ordained Teilhard at Hastings in 1911. In future issues we intend to publish more articles from members and some specially commissioned ones. As suggested on the letters page, anything relating Newman's thought and Teilhard would be highly topical in this year of Newman's beatification. It would be helpful if any submissions could be restricted to around two sides of A4, and if any illustrations or photos could be submitted where available. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is 31 May 2010.

Finally we hope you enjoy this edition of the Teilhard Newsletter. Ideas for future issues of the Teilhard Newsletter would be helpful, and your comments on any of the content of this edition would be particularly appreciated.

### **Teilhard 2009 Conference**

The 2009 Teilhard Association Conference was in many ways a great success. Although numbers of attendees was not large, the quality of engagement was really encouraging. The next newsletter will be given over in part to recounting something of the presentations given at the conference, both to interest those who could not be there, as well as offer those who could a reminder of what went on. In the meantime, the talks have been placed on the new BTA internet site at [www.teilhard.org.uk](http://www.teilhard.org.uk).

Plans for future conferences are very much open to the views of the members. We have been running an annual weekend conference for many years now, but the committee now feels that new approaches and formats should be considered. This year we are likely to put our efforts into supporting the European conference at Assisi in October, further details of which can be found later in this newsletter and on the BTA internet site. One idea for next year is to build a series of events around the Centenary of the ordination of Teilhard on 24 August 2011.

Feedback from the membership and others on the format and content of future conferences, study days or events would be welcomed by your new editorial team.

## Members -- News

We are sad to report the passing of several members. Among these is Mildred Reynolds whose generous bequest is mentioned below. Other names include Oliver Knowles, Fred Redding (a former Treasurer of our association for many years, died 1 Jan 2010), Earnest Sheard and just months later, Paula Sheard (died 21 July 2009). This is the only information on these former members received by the editorial team. We would be very pleased to hear recollections about any of the above and will include them in future editions of the newsletter.

### New Look for British Teilhard Association Website

The new Teilhard website is now in place and can be located using the web address at the top of this newsletter. The BTA is extremely grateful for a generous bequest by the late Mildred Reynolds, a well known BTA member which has enabled this work to be carried out. Rather than describing in detail the content on the site we suggest you log onto it at your leisure. Points of interest include a collection of all previous BTA Newsletters and audio versions of some past BTA Conference talks. Should you have any views on improvements to the site and any content you would like to see placed on the site, you are welcome to write or e-mail us.

The BTA committee feel that this revamped internet site is a major asset for the association. It would be helpful in terms of making Teilhard's ideas better known if members could tell others about the new BTA internet site.

In a future edition of this newsletter we would like to produce a comprehensive list, or maybe a 'Top 10', of the most useful Teilhard internet sites. Contributions from readers on suggested sites and why they are particularly helpful for Teilhardians would be gratefully received. We feel this sort of information would be very useful for the many newcomers accessing the BTA internet site or reading the newsletter for the first time.

### British Teilhard Association and Alister Hardy Society

One day Conference

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010

**at**

The Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace Kensington, London W8

*Future of Humanity: A Cosmological Vision*

Programme and Booking Form on Pages 14-15 below...a day not to be missed!

**Why not send a copy to a friend and encourage them to come along?**

## Other forthcoming events

### Assisi 2010

In The 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the Teilhard Newsletter notice was given of a forthcoming international 3-day conference to be held in Assisi from 15-17 October 2010. Our apologies, but at the time of going to print we are still awaiting further details. We will keep you informed as and when information becomes available.

### Letters to the Editor

Do please write in! Here is our first contribution:

#### The Priest and the Playwright

I have been a member for about 40 years and I always enjoy the Newsletter. In the March issue you ask for “news, reviews, updates and interests” and under the last heading I venture to write with a request.

I was particularly interested in the article “The Unveiling at Hastings” and was struck by the mention of Archbishop Amigo (born in Gibraltar, apparently) whom I dimly remember as my great uncle, Bishop Brown was his assistant. I was so pleased to learn that he ordained Teilhard.

Having inherited hundreds of letters of Bishop Brown’s, I wrote an account of his friendship with a fellow convert. Both of them were influenced by Newman who is also mentioned in the same article as an influence on Teilhard. My great uncle was lucky enough to meet him in a private audience. So now I feel linked – albeit very indirectly – with someone who has been much more than a hero and an inspiration for many, many years.

I am wondering if you could possibly include a brief reference to my book, *The Priest and the Playwright* in the Newsletter. I enclose a leaflet and Joanna Bogle’s review in *The Catholic Times*.

I should be so grateful...

Yours sincerely,

M. F. Brown (Miss)

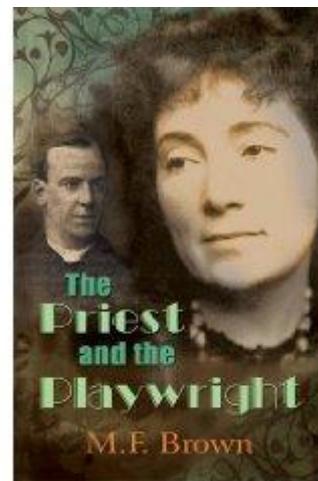
**BTA Editor’s note:** The London parish where Fr – later Bishop – William Brown was responsible for building a ‘fine church’ is that of St Anne at Vauxhall on the south bank of the Thames. Some of our London based membership may well know it. For those of you ‘online’ this book is also available from Amazon where there is also a helpful review. We are grateful for this information and take pleasure in drawing the book to the attention of our readership. Miss Brown’s letter also refers to the influence of Cardinal Newman on Teilhard. Further comments on this influence would be welcomed for publication in this year of Newman’s beatification.

#### M.F. Brown's THE PRIEST AND THE PLAYWRIGHT

Friendship between a priest and a socialite across the class divide of Edwardian London.

Haunted by memories of childhood meetings with her great uncle, the author recorded his lifelong work for the poor and determination to build them a fine church. His correspondence with a beautiful wealthy American writer, who struggled for acceptance in high society, reveals a fabulously powerful world doomed to die in Flanders mud.

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## In the Words of Teilhard...

We think it is important to quote directly from Teilhard in this and future issues, especially to highlight how he relates to current issues of concern to humanity and the Earth.

The following quotation from *Cosmic Life* in *Writings in Time of War* seems particularly relevant after the Copenhagen Summit on climate change. Teilhard is sometimes criticized for being too optimistic about the world. These words are a welcome corrective to this view and also to the idea that current issues such as climate change are going to be solved by some sort of technological fix. Teilhard also offers us a tantalizing insight into how a *Theology of the Cross* might help us creatively engage with suffering as part of a contemporary ecotheology:

‘We should like to be able to ... hope that suffering and wickedness are transitory conditions of Life, to be eliminated some day by science and civilization; but we must be more realistic and have the courage to look existence in the face. The more subtle and complex mankind becomes, the more numerous the chances of disorder and the greater their gravity; for one cannot build up a mountain without digging a great pit, and every energy has power for good and evil. Everything that *becomes* suffers or sins. The truth about our position in this world is that *in it we are on a Cross.*’

‘Cosmic Life’ (1916), *Writings in Time of War*. London: Collins, 1968, p. 67.

## What are they saying about Teilhard?

In this column we will quote scholars of Teilhard. For this issue, approaching Lent, I have chosen a quote from Robert Faricy S.J.:

‘Teilhard sees the world in the existential structure of Jesus carrying his cross; the world is dynamic, progressing, developing, moving rapidly – not without great suffering – into a future that lies hidden in Jesus’ heart. This calls

not for placid or contemplative optimism but for dynamic and energizing hope that encourages us to help build, with and toward Jesus, our own particular crosses united with his, into that future.’

Faricy, Robert, ‘The Exploitation of Nature and Teilhard’s Ecotheology of Love’ in Deane-Drummond, Celia (ed.), *People and Planet*. London-Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2006, p. 135.



Photograph by Rosemary Cattell  
Location: St. Peter’s Church,  
Bratton Fleming, North Devon.

## Remembering Thomas Berry and Thomas King S.J.

[BTA Editor: Marking the passing of two inspirational thinkers and writers, these obituaries are reproduced, with permission for which we are thankful, from the American Teilhard Association Newsletter *Teilhard Perspective* Vol. 42, No. 1, Spring 2009.]

### Thomas Berry 1914 - 2009

This obituary is by Jon Thurber from the *Los Angeles Times* for June 13, 2009.

Thomas Berry, a cultural historian and specialist in Asian religions who in his later life became a leading thinker on religion and the environment, has died. He was 94 and died June 1 at the Well-Spring Retirement Community in Greensboro, N.C. The cause of death was not reported, but Berry was known to have been in failing health in recent years after suffering two strokes.

Described by Newsweek magazine in the late 1980s as “the most provocative figure among the new breed of eco-theologians,” Berry was an early advocate of the notion that Earth’s ecological crisis was basically a crisis of the spirit.

“Thomas Berry contributed to the realization in our times that environmental issues are more than science or policy. They are also issues of the spirit,” said Mary Evelyn Tucker, who with her husband, John Grim, heads the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology and directs the Thomas Berry Foundation. “How well we respond to the planetary challenges that face us now will be determined by our ability to form an Earth community with a common future for all species.”

Calling the universe God’s “primary revelation,” Berry wrote in his book “The Dream of the Earth” that “the natural world is the larger sacred community to which we all belong.” In his view, Earth’s natural elements - trees, forests, mountains - had as much right to exist as humans. “We bear the universe in our being even as the universe bears us in its being.”

The third in a family of 13 children, William Nathan Berry was born in Greensboro on Nov. 9, 1914. He would later write in his book “The

Great Work” that his sense of the natural world came to him at 11 when he discovered a nearby meadow. “The field was covered with white lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something, I know not what, that seems to explain my life at a more profound level than almost any other experience I can remember. It was not only the lilies. It was the singing of the crickets and the woodlands in the distances and the clouds in a clear sky.”

This highly personal experience helped inform his moral view. “Whatever preserves and enhances this meadow in the natural cycles of its transformations is good, what is opposed to this meadow or negates it is not good,” he wrote in “The Great Work,” adding what “is good in economics fosters the natural processes of this meadow. So in jurisprudence, law and political affairs - that is good which recognizes the rights of this meadow and the creek and the woodlands to exist and flourish in the ever renewing seasonal expression.”

He said that his thinking was also shaped when he learned the names of trees during a Boy Scout trip. “That was a great event in my life,” he told the Greensboro News & Record earlier this year. “I learned what names mean and what the capacity to name something means. It’s the human dimension of life that establishes a world of experience.”

At 20, Berry entered the Roman Catholic Passionist order and took the name Thomas, after Thomas Aquinas. “I recognized that I couldn’t survive in the world the way it was becoming,” he told the National Catholic Reporter in 2001. “I joined the monastery to escape from a world that was becoming crassly commercial, so that I could find meaning.”

Ordained a priest in 1942, he earned a doctoral degree in European intellectual history from the Catholic University of America. Along the way, he learned Sanskrit and Chinese to help his studies of Asian religions. He went to China to study Chinese religions, but the Communist victory in 1949 prompted him to flee. In the

early 1950s, he served as an Army chaplain in Europe.

After returning to America, he taught the history of world religions at Seton Hall University, St. John's University and Fordham University before retiring in 1979. He was also a founder of the Riverdale Center for Religious Research in Riverdale, N.Y. He was the director until 1995, when the center closed and he moved back to North Carolina. His two books on Asian religions are "Buddhism" and "The Religions of India." By the late 1980s, Berry had refined his focus and was writing on the intersection of ecological, spiritual and cultural issues. He called himself a "geologist," or scholar of the earth. His key works were "The Dream of the Earth" (1988), "The Universe Story" (written with physicist Brian Swimme; 1992), "The Great Work: Our Way Into the Future" (1999) and "Evening Thoughts: Reflection on the Earth as Sacred Community" (2006). Two more books of his essays, "The Sacred Universe" and "The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth," are scheduled to be published in August.

"The planet Earth is something more than a natural resource to be used by humans," Berry wrote. "Here we might propose that a viable future for the human community rests largely upon a new relationship between human communities and the planet we dwell on. Both our physical and spiritual survival depend on the visible world about us."

[BTA Editor: A public memorial service took place at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City on 26 September 2009.]

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## Thomas M. King, S.J. 1929 - 2009

**Editor:** Fr. Tom King's passing was most sudden since he had just made a brilliant, vigorous presentation; "Teilhard: The Anthropic Principle and Intelligent Design" at our ATA annual meeting on April 4th in New York City. I recall first meeting Tom at the remarkable conference that he, and fellow Jesuit James F. Salmon, organized at Georgetown University in May of 1981 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Teilhard's birth. Its proceedings are collected in *Teilhard and the Unity of Knowledge* (Paulist

Press, 1983) which is available on Amazon.com. This remembrance is compiled from a number of sources including Wikipedia.com.

Thomas Mulvihill King, SJ was born on May 9, 1929 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and passed away on June 23, 2009 of a heart attack. He first entered the Society of Jesus in 1951 as a novitiate after completing undergraduate studies in English at the University of Pittsburgh. After further studies at Fordham University and Woodstock College, he was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1964. Upon completion of a doctorate in theology at the University of Strasbourg in 1968, King began teaching theology at Georgetown University.

His special interest has been the life and thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ. In this regard, he has written or edited several works including *Teilhard's Mysticism of Knowing* (1981), *Teilhard and the Unity of Knowledge* (1983), *Teilhard de Chardin* (1988), *The Letters of Teilhard de Chardin and Lucile Swan* (1993) and *Teilhard's Mass on the World* (2005). Regarding Teilhard, King has said, "as a priest and a thinker there is a life and vitality in [Teilhard de Chardin] that has moved me very much. His interest in science has echoes in myself; he had a passion about him that speaks to me."

In addition to Teilhard, Fr. King found much value in the work of Thomas Merton, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Carl Jung. His further volumes then included *Sartre and the Sacred* (1974), *Enchantments: Religion and the Power of the Word* (1989), *Merton: Mystic at the Center of America* (1992) and *Jung's Four and Some Philosophers* (1999).

Thomas King has helped to co-found an annual gathering of scientists interested in religion known as "Cosmos and Creation." In 1993, he recorded a series of lectures for The Teaching Company entitled "Can the Modern World Believe in God?"

Fr. King was also well-known among Georgetown students and alumni for offering Mass at 11:15 p.m. each night from Sunday to Friday in Dahlgren Chapel on Georgetown's main campus, a tradition he started in 1969. In 1999, *The Hoya*, Georgetown's student

newspaper, declared King “Georgetown’s Man of the Century,” noting that “no one has had a more significant presence on campus and effect on students than Father King.”

Beyond his intellectual dimension, Father King loved to meet new people. He has been described as being “quiet and unassuming, but also friendly and disarming.” In line with Catholic moral teaching, he took a strong stance against abortion and euthanasia and was the co-founder of the University Faculty of Life, a group that seeks to create dialogue on life issues in the academic community. King was also a member of Pax Christi and opposed war and capital punishment, though he stressed the peaceful prevention of conflict over strict pacifism.

As an example of still another contribution, Tom King was a main advisor to the author Amir Aczel when he wrote his excellent 2007 biography of Teilhard: *The Jesuit and the Skull*.

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## Praying with Teilhard...

following a family bereavement or the loss of friends:

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The following is taken from *The Making of a Mind: Letters from a Soldier-Priest 1914-1919*. London: Collins, 1965, pp.147-148. It is a letter from Teilhard to his cousin Margueritte Teilhard-Chambon following the death of her father (Teilhard’s uncle).

**BTA Editor:** May these words of Teilhard, providing much for reflection as we approach Lent and Easter, be a source of strength and comfort in our own lives.

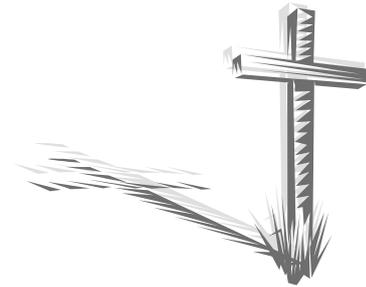
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‘I, too, have been feeling it these days, - partly because of family bereavements that gradually leave so little of our youth remaining with us, partly because new deaths of friends, fallen recently in action, made me realize how precarious is my own immediate future. And I’ve come to think that the only, the supreme,

prayer we can offer up during these hours when the road before us is shrouded in darkness, is that of our Master on the cross:

*“In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.”*

To the hands that broke and gave life to the bread, that blessed and caressed, that were pierced; - to the hands that are as our hands, of which we can never say what they will do with the objects they hold, whether shatter them or care for them, but whose whims, we may be sure, are full of kindness and will never do more than hold us close in a jealous grasp, - to the kindly and mighty hands that reach down to the very marrow of the soul, - that mould and create - to the hands through which so great a love is transmitted, - it is to these that it is good to surrender our soul, above all when we suffer or are afraid. And in so doing there is a great happiness and great merit. So - let us do so together.’




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## Remembering Teilhard



**10 April 1955**  
(Easter Sunday 1955)

Give thanks for Teilhard who died on this date and entered into the real peace of God’s presence.

## An Endorsement by Pope Benedict XVI of Teilhard de Chardin

[BTA Editor: This article is reproduced, with permission for which we are thankful, from the American Teilhard Association Newsletter *Teilhard Perspective* Vol. 42, No. 2, Autumn 2009.]

This newsletter has earlier noted in its Spring 2008 issue an historic Vatican warming to Pierre Teilhard's mid 20th century synthesis of a creative evolutionary science with traditional Christianity. In that case, Cardinal Christoph Schonborn, a close advisor to Pope Benedict XIV, and once a theologian co-author with then Joseph Ratzinger of *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, saw Teilhard's achievement as pointing the way for such a vital 21st century rapprochement, both in his own book *Chance or Purpose?* and before public audiences.

This past summer, Pope Benedict himself, in a Homily at a Celebration of Vespers at the Cathedral of Aosta, Italy on July 24, 2009, personally cited "the great vision of Teilhard de Chardin" as a beacon to appreciate a numinous universe. The full Homily can be read online at: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2009/documents/hf\\_benxvi\\_hom\\_20090724\\_vespri-aosta\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2009/documents/hf_benxvi_hom_20090724_vespri-aosta_en.html), or can also be reached via Google and some of the above keywords. We next quote the excerpt wherein Teilhard is so lauded by Benedict.

"The role of the priesthood is to consecrate the world so that it may become a living host, a liturgy: so that the liturgy may not be something alongside the reality of the world, but that the world itself shall become a living host, a liturgy. This is also the great vision of Teilhard de Chardin: in the end we shall achieve a true cosmic liturgy, where the cosmos becomes a living host." (Pope Benedict XVI)

Needless to say, this Papal endorsement, after many years of clerical warnings and banishments, did not escape a perceptive media. These next excerpts are from a news report by John Allen on July 28, 2009 in the *National Catholic Reporter*. The whole article can be accessed by going to their website and searching for "Teilhard."

### Pope Cites Teilhardian Vision of the Cosmos as a "Living Host"

Though few might have cast him in advance as a "green pope," Pope Benedict XVI has amassed a striking environmental record, from installing solar panels in the Vatican to calling for ecological conversion. Now the pontiff has also hinted at a possible new look at the undeclared patron saint of Catholic ecology, the late French Jesuit scientist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Benedict's brief July 24 reference to Teilhard, praising his vision of the entire cosmos as a "living host," can be read on multiple levels -- as part of the pontiff's rapprochement with the Jesuits, or as a further instance of finding something positive to say about thinkers whose works have set off doctrinal alarms, as Benedict previously did with rebel Swiss theologian and former colleague Hans Küng.

The potential implications for environmental theology, however, are likely to generate the greatest interest among Teilhard's fans and foes alike -- and more than a half-century after his death in 1955, the daring Jesuit still has plenty of both. Admirers trumpet Teilhard as a pioneer, harmonizing Christianity with the theory of evolution; critics charge that Teilhard's optimistic view of nature flirts with pantheism.

Toward the end of a reflection upon the Letter to the Romans, in which St. Paul writes that the world itself will one day become a form of living worship, the pope said, "It's the great vision that later Teilhard de Chardin also had: At the end we will have a true cosmic liturgy, where the cosmos becomes a living host."

Though offered only in passing, and doubtless subject to over-interpretation, Benedict's line nevertheless triggered headlines in the Italian press about a possible "rehabilitation" of Teilhard, sometimes referred to as the "Catholic Darwin." That reading seemed especially tempting since, as a consummate theologian, Benedict is aware of the controversy that swirls

around Teilhard, and would thus grasp the likely impact of a positive papal reference.

At the very least, the line seemed to offer a blessing for exploration of the late Jesuit's ideas. That impression appeared to be confirmed by the Vatican spokesperson, Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, who said afterward, "By now, no one would dream of saying that [Teilhard] is a heterodox author who shouldn't be studied."

On the basis of his scientific work, Teilhard developed an evolutionary theology asserting that all creation is developing towards an "Omega Point," which he identified with Christ as the Logos, or "Word" of God. In that sense, Teilhard broadened the concept of salvation history to embrace not only individual persons and human culture, but the entire universe. In short order, Teilhard's thought became an obligatory point of departure for any Catholic treatment of the environment.

Yet from the beginning, Teilhard's theology was also viewed with caution by officials both of the Jesuit order and in the Vatican. Among other things, officials worried that his optimistic reading of nature compromised church teaching on original sin. In 1962 -- seven years after his death -- the Vatican's doctrinal office issued a warning that his works "abound in such ambiguities and indeed even serious errors, as to offend Catholic doctrine."

In 1981, on the 100th anniversary of Teilhard's birth, speculation erupted about a possible rehabilitation. It was fuelled by a letter published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, by the then-Cardinal Secretary of State Agostino Casaroli, who praised the "astonishing resonance of his research, as well as the brilliance of his personality and richness of his thinking." Casaroli asserted that Teilhard had anticipated John Paul II's call to "be not afraid," embracing "culture, civilization and progress."

Responding to ferment created by the letter, the Vatican issued a statement insisting that its 1962 verdict on Teilhard still stands -- to date, Rome's last official pronouncement on Teilhard. (The statement was issued in July 1981, four months before then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, took over as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.)

Across the years, Benedict has sometimes seemed to be of two minds himself. In his 1968 work *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger wrote that Eastern Christianity has a deeper appreciation for the "cosmic and metaphysical" dimension of Christianity than the West, but that the West seemed to be recovering that perspective, "especially as a result of stimuli from the work of Teilhard." He argued that Teilhard gave authentic expression to the Christology of St. Paul.

Yet Ratzinger's ambivalence about Teilhard is of equally long vintage. In a commentary on the final session of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), a young Ratzinger complained that *Gaudium et Spes*, the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," played down the reality of sin because of an overly "French," and specifically "Teilhardian," influence. Overall, the impression is that Benedict finds much to like about Teilhard's cosmic vision, even if he also worries about interpretations at odds with orthodox faith.

### **Teilhard at Vespers**

A further commentary on the Pope's homily appeared in this excerpted editorial in the Jesuit magazine *America* for August 17, 2009.

"The church seems forever to be embracing those she once held in suspicion. Galileo Galilei, the Italian astronomer, is the most famous among them. But there are others, too, like Thomas Aquinas, Joan of Arc and Ignatius Loyola. The most recent candidate for rehabilitation is the Jesuit palaeontologist, evolutionary philosopher and spiritual writer Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Vatican watchers have taken note of Pope Benedict XVI's appeal to Teilhard during an evening prayer service he celebrated July 24 in Aosta, Italy, as a sign of re-appraisal of the priest and his thought. Citing Teilhard's "great vision," Pope Benedict urged that "we consecrate the world, so it may become a living host," a phrase reminiscent of the French Jesuit's eucharistic theology, in which all creation becomes an offering to God.

Teilhard articulated his vision during an expedition to the Ordos Desert of Inner Mongolia in 1923. Lacking the elements of unleavened

bread and wine to celebrate Mass, he composed a poetic prayer, “Mass on the World” (published in *Hymn of the Universe*; Harper, 1961), offering the whole of creation in its evolutionary history as a host to God. Pope Benedict has previously praised the sense of cosmic liturgy in the Eastern Church. His appeal to Teilhard adds the distinctive resonances of the Frenchman’s vision: a cosmos evolved over time and increasingly known by scientific investigation; a spiritual process that comes to consciousness in humanity, a humanity whose spirituality is found in activity as well as passivity; and a humanity called not only to live in the world but also to transform it.

The pope’s prayer in fact puts emphasis on our obligation to “transform the world.” In adopting this theme, his thinking seems to have developed along the same trajectory as that of Pope John Paul II. After the Second Vatican Council, both expressed dismay at the optimistic, Teilhardian tone of the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” with its focus on the cosmic Christ and its affirmation of the transformative power of the resurrection in history. Then Bishop Karol Wojtyla complained that Christ the redeemer had been eclipsed by Christ in glory. As Pope John Paul II, he revised his opinion in his encyclical *On Social Concern* (1987). Likewise, Pope Benedict has come to write increasingly of the transformation of the earth as a Christian vocation. He writes in *Charity in Truth*, for example, “Man’s earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family” (No. 7). The pope appears to acknowledge that the kind of sensibility Teilhard possessed belongs to the full flowering of our human nature. To an unexpected degree, he voices trust in the graced capacity of human beings to transform the world and in so doing make it a more fitting offering to God.

Like Teilhard, Pope Benedict reminds us that the world we transform by our labour, our learning and our ingenuity contributes to Christ’s great offering of the world to God. The pope has pointed to an array of problems awaiting solution and transformation: the protection of human life and the environment, the expansion of the “responsibility to protect” to include provision of food and water for needy populations, and the

creation of international structures to regulate speculation in financial markets and govern a global economy.

In whatever field we endeavor to transform the world—science, engineering, communications, business, the arts—we must aim at promoting sustainable, fully human development at rising levels of well-being for all and for everyone. At the end, when this transformation has reached its fullness, as Teilhard wrote, “the presence of Christ, which has been silently accruing in things, will suddenly be revealed—like a flash of light from pole to pole.”

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[BTA Editor: The following article, a further endorsement of Teilhard as a visionary thinker highly relevant to our world today, is also reproduced from the American Teilhard Association Newsletter *Teilhard Perspective* Vol. 42, No. 2, Autumn 2009.]

### **A Teilhardian Vision for the United Nations**

Thank you to veteran ATA member Mary Ann Shores of Fergus Falls, Minnesota for alerting me to this endorsement of Teilhard on the floor of the UN General Assembly. It was presented in an Address by Miguel D’Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly, on June 26, 2009 and made upon the adoption of the “Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development.” We excerpt here, the full text can be read online by Googling some of the above keywords.

“My role as President of this General Assembly, which brings together representatives of all the world’s peoples, is to invite you to look beyond today’s economic concerns and to hold out hope for the common future of the Earth and of humanity.

We may well ask what next? Not necessarily in terms of the economy, but in terms of humanity. Where are we headed? At this point it is unlikely that anyone, however wise, can answer this question with certainty. But even without having the answers, we can all seek and build together

the consensus that will lead us towards a more hopeful future for us all and for Mother Earth.

This reminds me of the vision of the great French scientist, archaeologist and mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In China, where he carried out his research on "Homo pekinensis," he had something like a vision.

Looking at the advances in technology, trade and communications that were shortening distances and laying the foundations for what he liked to call planetization, rather than globalization, Teilhard de Chardin was already saying, in the 1930s, that we were witnessing the emergence of a new era for the Earth and for humanity.

What was about to appear, de Chardin told us, was the noosphere, after the emergence in the evolutionary process of the anthroposphere, the biosphere, the hydrosphere, the atmosphere and the lithosphere. Now comes the new sphere, the sphere of synchronized minds and hearts: the noosphere. As we know, the Greek word *noos* refers to the union of the spirit, the intellect and the heart.

Where are we headed? I venture to believe and hope that we are all headed towards the slow but unstoppable emergence of the noosphere. Human beings and peoples will discover and accept each other as brothers and sisters, as a family and as a single species capable of love, solidarity, compassion, non-violence, justice, fraternity, peace and spirituality.

Is this a utopia? It is undoubtedly a utopia, but a necessary one. It guides us in our search. A utopia is, by definition, unattainable. But it is like the stars: they are unreachable, but what would the night sky be without stars? It would be nothing but darkness and we would be disoriented and lost. A utopia likewise lends direction and purpose to our lives and struggles.

The main focus of this new step will be life in all its forms, humanity with all its peoples and ethnic groups, the Earth as a mother with all its vitality and an economy that creates the material conditions for making all this possible. We will need the material capital we have built up, but the focus will be on human and spiritual capital, whose most wholesome fruits are fraternity or

brotherhood, co-operation, solidarity, love, economic and ecological justice, compassion and the capacity to coexist happily with all our differences, in the same shared home, the great and generous Mother Earth."

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## Evolution in Rome

For four and a half days during the first week of March, several hundred people packed the great lecture hall of the Gregorian University in Rome to hear thirty-five lectures by prominent scientists, philosophers, theologians, and historians of science, all on one or another aspect of evolution. Sparked partly by the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Darwin's world-shaking book *The Origin of Species*, and by the growing polarization between religious "creationist" fundamentalism on the one hand, and aggressive atheism claiming a scientific foundation on the other, the conference was designed to bring experts together in fruitful dialogue to attempt to find some common ground and mutual understanding.

To a large extent I think the conference succeeded in its goal. Not that there were no difficulties. In fact, there was a bit of fireworks the first day when the representative of a Muslim anti-evolutionist movement from Turkey loudly challenged several scientists who had just finished summing up all the latest fossil and biological evidence for evolution to come up with even one good example (in fact they had just spoken about quite a number of them) of evidence of a transitional form or "missing link." Likewise, complaints have since come to light that proponents of Creation Science and so-called Intelligent Design theory were deliberately excluded from the list of specially picked speakers scheduled for the conference. Other than that — or even perhaps because of the absence of these dissenting voices — the discussion proceeded rather smoothly. Not that there were no disagreements over some more technical points, for example, the long-standing debate as to whether or not evolution proceeds by slow and gradual development, or instead, at least occasionally, by relatively sudden changes.

To my mind, however, the most serious area of disagreement that surfaced still revolves around the concept of "teleology" — that is, the issue as to whether or not evolution can be said to have a goal or overall purpose. Discomfort was expressed by one speaker — and apparently shared by a few others judging from the applause — with the special attention and praise given by three other speakers to the Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). There can be little doubt that it was Teilhard's view of evolution as an inevitable process leading toward greater complexity and consciousness, and eventually culminating in the rise of the spirit, that explains at least some of the reluctance on the part of many scientists to see any final goal or purpose in evolution.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that it is on this same point that Church continues to undercut its own position — which might be generally characterized as "theistic evolution" — when it still holds to the doctrine, as reiterated by a priest-professor from the University of Bologna, of the *special creation*, in the case of each and every individual human being, of his or her immortal soul. One can understand, given all the assaults on the sacredness of human life, the motivation behind clinging to this ancient idea, largely borrowed from Platonic philosophy. But one cannot but wonder — as did one young German priest-biologist during a question and discussion period — why it would not be enough to see evolution itself as having given humans this thirst or openness to the transcendent.

Otherwise the appearance is given that the official Church teaching, through this rather abrupt disjunction between our biological origins and our spiritual potential to share God's own life, continues to place a barrier between itself and contemporary science. But not just that; it also puts it at odds with the current thinking of its own philosophers and theologians who are trying to convince us that the creative power of God is present in and continues to work through the *whole* evolutionary process from the very beginning to its final end or fulfillment. I hope that the follow-up conferences, one to be held at Notre Dame University this coming November (2009) and still another in Rome, will give more attention to this crucial issue.

R W Kropf 3/14/09

E-mailed by Rod White (16 March 2009) – report from Richard Kropf on the latest conference in Rome on evolution. Thank you to David Lewin for passing this report on to us.

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## Contributions for the June Newsletter

The Editorial Team would be pleased to receive  
contributions for the June Newsletter

*by 31 May 2010*

Please send hard copy to Rosemary Cattell at  
Whitegates, Salisbury Road, Horsham, West  
Sussex, RH13 0AL

E-mail contributions, in Word, are most welcome.  
Please send to [r.a.cattell@btinternet.com](mailto:r.a.cattell@btinternet.com)

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### *General communications and enquiries about the Association*

These should be addressed to the Secretary:

Peter Cox, 12 Falconer's Field, Harpenden, Hertfordshire,  
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Phone: 01582 761955  
Fax: 01582 621526  
E-mail: [peterjohncox2@btinternet.com](mailto:peterjohncox2@btinternet.com)

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### Subscription Renewals

If you are not paying your subscription by Standing Order and your subscription is now due please may we ask you to renew promptly – thank you for your continued support.

**Booking Form**

***Future of Humanity: A Cosmological Vision***

British Teilhard Association/ Alister Hardy Society One Day Conference,  
Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

To:- Peter Cox, Secretary, British Teilhard Association, 12 Falconers Field  
Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 3ES.

I would like to book ..... places for the Conference on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April

I enclose a booking fee of £ .....

[£18.00 for BTA/AHS Members and students; £25.00 for non-members. Cheques  
payable to The British Teilhard Association]

(Please use Block Capitals)

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E-mail address .....

Alternatively: e-mail peterjohncox2@btinternet.com to register – and pay at the door.

British Teilhard Association  
and Alister Hardy Society

Invitation to a One day Conference

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

at

**The Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace  
Kensington, London W8**

***Future of Humanity: A Cosmological Vision***

**Programme**

- 10.00 am Arrival/doors open
- 10 45 am Welcome and introductions
- 11.00 am *The Future Evolution of Humanity on Earth: A Gigantic  
Task, a Dream or a Nightmare?*  
Prof. Ursula King  
*Professor Emerita, Theology & Religious Studies, Bristol University*
- 12.00 pm *Evolution and Spiritual Experience –  
an Eastern Christian Perspective*  
Dr. Christopher Knight  
*Scientist and Priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church*
- 1.00 pm **Lunch** (bring your own – tea/coffee provided)
- 2.00 am *Cosmos, Creation and the Culmination of Consciousness*  
Prof. Bernard Carr  
*Professor of Mathematics & Astronomy at Queen Mary,  
University of London*
- 3.00 pm **Panel & Open Discussion**
- 4.00 pm Departures  
\* \* \* \* \*

Cost: £18.00 for AHS/SMN Members & students; £25.00 for non-members  
book-stall available

## ***Future of Humanity: A Cosmological Vision***

The day will seek to explore the subject from various viewpoints, each speaker bringing his/her own perspective and understanding. The day will include a debate between the speakers on the implications of the subject and where this might be leading, this followed by questions and discussion from the floor.

**Prof. Ursula King:** *The Future Evolution of Humanity on Earth: A Gigantic Task, a Dream or a Nightmare?*

Is the Teilhardian vision of the further self-evolution of humanity merely a mistaken dream or is it a genuine possibility? How can a more passionate sense of the Earth and of a convergent, more unified Humanity be nurtured among people around the globe while maintaining ecological balance and harmony? I will examine some of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's life-long reflections on these questions regarding the evolution of Earth, Life and Humanity, but also cite some of his doubts. How can we develop the necessary collective will for seeking greater collaboration, convergence and more love amongst human beings? And what will it take to rise to a higher level of consciousness and spirit? Can we take on the necessary co-responsibility for the further evolution of humanity?

**Ursula King** is Professor Emerita of Theology and Religious Studies and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Bristol. Her publications deal with gender and religion, the works of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and pluralistic approaches to spirituality. Her recent publications include *The Search for Spirituality: Our global quest for meaning and fulfillment* (2009), *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies Throughout the Ages* (2003), *Pierre Teilhard De Chardin (Modern Spiritual Masters)* (1999), and *Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* (1996)

**Dr. Christopher Knight:** *Evolution and Spiritual Experience - an Eastern Christian Perspective*

In his talk, Dr Christopher Knight will explore links between the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and certain strands of Eastern Christian thinking about the creation. A model of God working through the evolutionary process will be presented, and then expanded in terms of a notion of the referential nature of religious experience and of the necessity of the co-operation of human beings with the divine purpose for the fulfillment of that purpose. The traditional western distinction between the natural and supernatural gives way, in this model, to an expanded naturalism in which the higher the level of the world's complexity that is explored, the less applicable will be the scientific method in that exploration.

**Christopher Knight** is the author of two books - "Wrestling With the Divine" and "The God of Nature" - published in the "Theology and the Sciences" series of the Fortress Press. After receiving his Ph.D. in astrophysics in 1977, he turned to theology, initially in order to be ordained in the Church of England, in which he served

until 1992, latterly as Chaplain, Fellow and Director of Studies in Theology at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. He is now a priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church and works as Executive Secretary of the International Society for Science and Religion.

**Prof. Bernard Carr:** *Cosmos, Creation and the Culmination of Consciousness*

One of the remarkable features of the Universe has been the development of increasing complexity in the 14 billion years since the Big Bang. This is most obviously manifested on the physical level studied by conventional science and has culminated (at least on Earth) in the production of brains. Among the striking properties of brains are consciousness, mind and spirit, so it is odd that many scientists judge these manifestations to be entirely without significance: consciousness is assumed to have a purely passive role in the Universe, minds are just neurological froth, and spiritual evolution is a delusion. However, the development of complexity required extraordinary fine-tuning of the physical constants and this is not explained by conventional science. Whether this testifies to the existence of a creator or a multiverse or both, this suggests that consciousness is a fundamental rather than an incidental feature of the world. In this case, its continuing evolution is likely to be important, so cosmological and biological evolution might merely be precursors to the sort of mental and spiritual evolution envisaged by Teilhard de Chardin. However, to make this idea respectable a new paradigm of science is required which accommodates all types of conscious experience and thereby unifies matter, mind and spirit. One feature of this paradigm may be that consciousness exists on a hierarchy of different levels in the Universe, and this may relate to the possible form of future spiritual evolution.

**Bernard Carr** is Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy at Queen Mary University of London. His professional area of research is cosmology and he has recently edited a book entitled "Universe or Multiverse?" He also has an interest in the relationship between consciousness and physics and, more generally, in the science-religion interface. He is Vice-Chairman of the Scientific and Medical Network and a former President of the Society for Psychological Research.

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**The British Teilhard Association** promotes the study and development of Teilhard de Chardin's vision of a universe in evolution towards ultimate convergence or completion in a "universal cosmic centre" or "centre of centres", which he identified, in the Christian tradition, with the Cosmic Christ of St. John and St. Paul and the Church Fathers. Contact: Peter Cox, Secretary, British Teilhard Association, 12 Falconers Field Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3ES.

**The Alister Hardy Society** supports the work of the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales Lampeter and provides a forum for discussion of spiritual/religious experience. It welcomes all people interested in the subject; publishes a newsletter, *De Numine*; and organises talks and other events. Contact: John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, SE10 9LZ. Tel: (020) 8858 4759 e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com

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