

# THE BRITISH TEILHARD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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## EDITORIAL

Problems have come together to hinder production of the Newsletter and the New Year mailing to members and supporters. First, a trapped nerve left the Editor physically incapable of using his PC! Second, his PC decided to develop problems of its own. We can only offer apologies on both our behalves.

Human and other frailties underline the need to rethink administrative tasks within the BTA. And this especially in light of what we hope will be a significant renewal of interest in the work of the Association following the September 1998 meeting at St James's in London (see "Upcoming Events"). Over the next few months the Association will be looking at ways of developing a management resource centre closer to London. What we are looking for especially is volunteers with experience in handling membership renewals and mailings. If you think you can help, please contact Peter Cox, Secretary, 12 Falconers Field, Harpenden AL5 3ES.

The Rules of the BTA remind us that the primary aim of the Association is to "promote the study of the works, thought and teaching of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ and to develop such study in accordance with his own words: '*If I have had a mission to fulfil, it will only be possible to judge whether I have accomplished it by the extent to which others go beyond me*'" [Rule A.2(a)].

This calls, amongst other things, for a constant effort to balance our task of making available to future generations the vision and legacy of one of the truly seminal thinkers of the twentieth century against our equally important task of developing and building upon that vision and legacy. And unless we succeed in achieving that delicate balance we run the risk - in Bernard Tower's words - of becoming no more than "another pietistic meeting-place for those 'good Catholics' (with a capital 'C'), able to communicate only with one another and not with the world at large." *Mea culpa?*

## 1997 CONFERENCE REPORT UPDATE

*In our last Newsletter we reported on the 1997 London Colney Conference on "Teilhard and Jung - Complementary Approaches to Spirituality".<sup>1</sup> We are glad to have the opportunity of reproducing here Bronwen Astor's own notes on her opening contribution which set the scene for an extremely successful conference.*

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<sup>1</sup> In our last report we regret we omitted mention of Emily Binns and Bronwen Astor. We apologise for this omission. We hope to be able to let readers have an overview of Emily Binn's contribution at a later date.

Bronwen Astor outlined what the other speakers would enfold - the journeys of transformation of these two scientists reconciling science and religion in their work and in their lives. Jung's journey was towards the unconscious, not away from it. He was mystical. Teilhard's journey was towards matter, not away from it. He was a mystic. Both men were very courageous.

Jung's goal was an inner unity he called individuation - gathering the world into oneself including the shadow, i.e. elements that are "out there" to achieve a balance of opposites (masculine - feminine; introvert - extrovert; unconscious - conscious; etc.). Teilhard's goal was Omega - a cosmic destination through evolution: the soul must fully integrate the physical with the spiritual through a series of "deaths" or critical points.

In the First World War, Jung watched Europe descend into barbarism and the unconscious, and he grappled with his own unconscious. Teilhard, a stretcher-bearer/priest, lived through it and experienced the optimism of a higher unit of togetherness that released a spiritual energy of self-sacrifice.

**Bronwen Astor**

## THE SPIRITUAL CONVERGENCE OF HUMANITY

For those of us fortunate enough to have been able to attend the annual conference of the French Teilhard Association at the Abbey of Sylvanès in south-west France on 5-8 September 1996, the experience was unforgettable.<sup>2</sup> The theme of the Conference was ecumenical in its widest sense, involving the spiritual convergence of humanity. The Abbey of Sylvanès, nestling in a hollow amidst wooded hills, was founded by the Cistercians in 1136. It provides a magnificent setting for research and religion to meet in a common effort. Behind everything lies the inspiration and direction of a remarkable man, André Gouzes OP who insisted in his talk on our first evening that ecumenism cannot survive unless it looks to the future in hope - not back to the dogmatism of the past. It cannot be left purely in the hands of intellectuals. Christians must be open to other religions while holding to biblical and patriarchal traditions in order to realise the totality of their heritage. Those of us in the west must be prepared to return to a more mystical interpretation of the scriptures - something we can share with both Jewish and Orthodox tradition.

Earlier Raoul Giret had outlined Teilhard's vision of the process of evolution, the victory of life over death, the rising complexity of consciousness leading to the human being who little by little discovers liberty and love which engender creativity and responsibility where creativity brings choice and choice brings responsibility. But in order to be successful in their choice humans must reach a state of consciousness leading to what Teilhard calls the "ultra-human" and, ultimately, to "Point Omega".

The second day of the Conference was to plunge us into the ambience of Russian Orthodoxy. Basile Solnychkine reminded us that the Orthodox Church cherishes the charisma of mystery whilst remaining strongly attached to the concept of "Mother Earth". This is closely linked to the idea of the feminine that impregnates orthodox spirituality and is revealed through a Russian iconography that is more sensitive and more marked by tenderness than that of the Greeks. The human being is a divine icon who is linked to the cosmos just as all human beings are linked to one another.

Lack of space does not allow us to do full justice to these speakers or to others who contributed to the success of the Conference but we cannot close without mentioning Ina Bergeron SMM who began with a modest but impassioned account of her life as a missionary before focussing on two pillars of Chinese spirituality - Confucius or K'ung Fu-tzu (551-479 BCE) and his contemporary Lao-tzu (c.570-c.490). Confucius sees human beings, above all, as social creatures who must be capable of finding their own direction before being able to take responsibility for their country. Lao-tzu, author of the Tao-te-ching, the fundamental text of taoism, believes we must renounce all in order to reach our interior life - lose all in order to gain all. But what is the tao? It is practically indefinable. It is common to all things. It is invisible and inaudible yet represents a fundamental reality that is not God. It expresses itself in the Yin and the Yang. The Yin is symbol of the mysterious "Feminine" whose roots are Heaven and Earth.

All who attended the Conference found themselves in accord with Teilhard who looked to "an ecumenism founded not only on research into a 'common denominator' for beliefs but on a converging effort of religious discovery."<sup>3</sup>

**Solange Soulié (translated by Janetta Warre)**

## TEILHARD'S PROPHETIC INSIGHTS

On 7 October 1929 Teilhard de Chardin wrote to his friend Christophe Gaudefroy from Peking. One sentence reveals a rare insight into the problems which the Church has had to face increasingly in this century and which are no nearer to resolution today than they were seventy years ago: "It sometimes seems to me that there are three weak stones sitting dangerously in the foundations of the modern Church: first, a government that excludes democracy; second, a priesthood that excludes and mini-

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<sup>2</sup> This is an abridged version of the Conference report by Solange Soulié translated by Janetta Warre.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Jeanne Mortier, 26 December 1952, in *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier*, Éditions du Seuil, 1984, 122 (trans. JW).

mises women; third, a revelation that excludes, for the future, prophecy...”<sup>4</sup> In a limited space one can only reflect briefly on these words, but they stir up forceful reflections. The easiest way is to look at each item.

“*A government that excludes democracy...*” Teilhard was not so naïve as to expect the absolutist system of Church government to become a democracy. What he meant by this was, without any doubt, that the Church would open its ears and its heart to listen to what God was saying today in a million different ways. Through its negative attitudes to the world which had originated with Augustine, been continued through the Middle Ages, and given fresh impetus by an inward-looking Council of Trent, Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* and Pius X’s crusade against “modernism”, the Church had isolated itself from the modern world. She had forfeited the opportunity of winning the world for Christ. This process had to be reversed. Teilhard’s experience and that of his friends showed that only a reversal of attitude would open the Church to the rich insights of the outside world.

Teilhard later wrote a paper for his superiors on the causes of modern religious restlessness. This was sent on to Rome. It was the result of more than thirty years’ experience among men and women of all faiths and none, a fact which gave it some weight. He himself says: “The answer that I received from Rome was that my diagnosis did not coincide with the ideas currently accepted in the Eternal City...” (unpublished, September 1952)<sup>5</sup>

There was no room for new ideas, at least not until ten years later when John XXIII was to do exactly what Teilhard had asked for by calling the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The tragedy is that the real insights of that Council are still largely unfulfilled.

“*A priesthood that excludes and minimises women...*” Here Teilhard expresses his deep concern about the marginalisation of women in the Church. From his deep personal friendships with a number of highly intelligent women, who yet had great warmth of character, he knew what they could offer to the Church and its ministry, given the opportunity. The situation has not changed and as a result many have left the Church or become alienated from its activities. The fundamental question is not the ordination of women, or simply joining a men’s club, but rather the opportunity to share effectively in the decision-making processes of the Church.

“*A revelation that excludes prophecy...*” The prophetic ministry is essentially concerned with forth-telling the word of God for our own day. We are reminded of our duties to God, to others and to our world. In post-exilic Israel the prophetic ministry declined as the Law took over. The two do not sit comfortably together. Many twentieth-century prophetic voices have arisen within the Catholic Church including Dorothy Day and more recently John XXIII and Oscar Romero. To this group we may add Teilhard himself. But it is significant that many prophetic voices have also arisen outside the Church including Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. For such a rapidly developing earth, with its abundant technology, increasing greenhouse effect, rapidly rising population with increasing poverty and many other problems, these are pitifully few. Who would want to be a prophet? Yet we have all been baptised as “prophet, priest and king”.

**Michael Le Morvan**

## DOWN HOUSE

For many people, Darwin is as great as Shakespeare and certainly his work has had as great an impact on all our lives. Yet the house where for 40 years he pondered the mysteries and mechanisms of evolution and finally produced a work which has changed our view of the world and ourselves for ever was slowly crumbling into decay. Those few people who did visit could be moved by the sight of his study kept much as he left it, but the state of the building and the facilities seemed strangely out of keeping with such momentous work.

Fortunately, in 1995 the Natural History Museum in South Kensington launched an appeal so that Down House, near Downe (sic) in Kent, could be saved from neglect and obscurity. Nearly £3 million has been raised, the major part from the Heritage Lottery Fund, but a substantial amount from the general public. Renovation work to preserve the building and transform this lovely old Victorian gentleman’s home into an international centre for visitors and studies, fitting the stature of the man who lived there, is nearly complete. The house will reopen this Spring.

For teilhardians Darwin must have a particular significance. Both Teilhard and Darwin encountered hostility and resistance to their ideas and suffered accordingly. Neither have yet received their due recognition.

**Margaret Brown**

## TOWARDS A NEW NICÆA?

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<sup>4</sup> Gérard-Henry Baudry, ed., *Teilhard de Chardin, Lettres inédites*, Éditions du Rocher, 1988, 80 (trans. SC).

<sup>5</sup> Teilhard, “What the World is looking for from the Church of God” (1952), in *Christianity and Evolution*, Collins, 1971, 213.

With only a little time to go to the third millennium it is a good moment to take stock of where Teilhard stands today. His biographer Claude Cuénot calls him a “cosmo-mystic”.<sup>6</sup> He is truly a “mystic of the cosmos” with a poetic vision that continues to get him into trouble with the reductionist school of science and others who cannot share that vision..

“Teilhard’s poetic vision can be found at that point of intersection between matter and spirit that highlights the deficiencies of our conventional modes of discourse and understanding. It should not be surprising, then, that most scientists, both Jesuit and non-Jesuit, should approach Teilhard with a combination of caution, bemusement, and disapproval. It is the mystical flavour, the interdisciplinary thrust, of Teilhard’s thought that vexes them. The science is fine.”<sup>7</sup>

René d’Ouinice suggests of his fellow Jesuit: “Almost certainly his ‘ideas’ and especially his cosmology will, like all cosmologies, become dated. What will remain is that at a particular moment of history, in a particular cultural milieu, a particular believer had a vision of the undoubted grandeur of the world. After a certain period of decline I believe that the influence of Teilhard will take on a new lease of life. He will be read as we read the great classics.”<sup>8</sup>

D’Ouinice speaks of “a prophet on trial”. Jules Carles and André Dupleix develop this idea in their discussion of “the Teilhard Case”. They detect four phases in what we might call Teilhard’s rediscovery. “The first phase was characterised by the curiosity and spectacular development of the years 1955-1965. This was followed by a second phase marked by his eclipse and virtual disappearance in the years 1965-1975. In the third phase, however, the various events associated with the centenary of his birth in 1981 showed just how far teilhardian intuitions had become intellectually embedded in almost every discipline. This has been confirmed over the last ten years. And now on the eve of the year 2000 the fourth phase that is slowly emerging is marked by a triple movement of integration, recognition and effectiveness which together make up what Teilhard himself calls his necessary ‘dépassement’.”<sup>9</sup> The word “dépassement” is not easily rendered into English. It is best understood as conveying the idea of “developing” or “going beyond”. Teilhard expresses himself as follows: “If I have had a mission to fulfil, it will only be possible to judge whether I have accomplished it by the extent to which others go beyond me.”<sup>10</sup>

Teilhard remains faithful to the religious tradition from which he springs but he is no less deeply committed to an ecumenism that he sees “inevitably linked to the psychic maturation of the earth.” And he finds himself asking “whether the only two effective ways of ecumenism might not be: (1) an ‘ecumenism of the summit’ - between christians - to bring out an ultra-orthodox and ultra-human christianity on a truly cosmic scale, and (2) an ‘ecumenism of the base’ - between men and women in general - to define and develop the foundations of a ‘common human faith’ in the future of humankind.” But, he adds, “faith in humankind does not seem to me capable of being satisfied without a fully explicit Christ. Any other method would, I fear, only produce confusion or syncretisms without vigour or originality.”<sup>11</sup>

Teilhard looks to a “new Nicæa”<sup>12</sup> to combat the threat of what he calls a new arianism, a new diminution of Christ, not in relation to the Trinity, but in relation to the universe: “I am more and more convinced that the Church will be unable to resume its conquering progress until (resuming the great theological effort of the first five centuries) she succeeds in rethinking (ultra-thinking) the relations that exist, no longer between Christ and the Trinity, but between Christ and a universe that is unbelievably organic and immense (at least one trillion galaxies each almost certainly containing life and thought). Christianity can only survive (and super-live) by subdistinguishing in the ‘human nature’ of the Word Incarnate between a ‘terrestrial nature’ and a ‘cosmic nature.’”<sup>13</sup>

He sees the problem of a plurality of habitable worlds as a fundamentally christological question.<sup>14</sup> He looks at the idea of a “spiritual meeting” with another planet,<sup>15</sup> then after developing the concept of the noosphere he considers the possibility of a “spiritual meeting” with other noospheres<sup>16</sup> and even of the formation of “noosphere systems”.<sup>17</sup> All, however, must converge on the same Omega.<sup>18</sup> “The eventuality of the plurality of thinking planets is no longer what you call ‘a possibility’... It has become a positive probability (and even a very real probability)(something recently noted in passing by a leading American

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<sup>6</sup> Claude Cuénot, “Teilhard de Chardin”, in *Encyclopédie Universalis*, 798; cf. id., *Science and Faith in Teilhard de Chardin*, Garnstone, 1967, 36, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Letson and Michael Higgins, *The Jesuit Mystique*, Fount, 1996, 237.

<sup>8</sup> René d’Ouinice SJ, *Un Prophète en procès, Teilhard de Chardin et l’avenir de la pensée chrétienne*, Aubier, 1970, II, 266-267.

<sup>9</sup> Jules Carles SJ et André Dupleix, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, Centurion, 6-7, 1991 (trans. SC).

<sup>10</sup> Teilhard, conversation with Max Henri Bégouën, summer, 1954, *Cahiers Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* 2, Éditions du Seuil, 1960, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Teilhard, “Ecumenism” (1946), in *Science and Christ*, Collins, 1968, 197, 198; cf. Carles et Dupleix, 179 (trans. SC).

<sup>12</sup> Nicæa I (325), the first ecumenical council; Nicæa II (787), the seventh and last ecumenical council recognised by both Latin and Greek Churches.

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Bruno de Solages OCarm, 2 January 1955, *Lettres intimes*, 450, trans. SC.

<sup>14</sup> de Solages, *Teilhard de Chardin*, 204-207.

<sup>15</sup> Journal, 3 November 1921, in de Solages, 205.

<sup>16</sup> “Outline of a Dialectic of Spirit”, in *Activation of Energy*, 144.

<sup>17</sup> *The Human Zoological Group* (“Man’s Place in Nature”), 114 n.

<sup>18</sup> de Solages, *Teilhard de Chardin*, 204 n.118, 205 n.122.

astronomer)... I am more than ever convinced that we shall need, sooner or later, a new Nicæa that will define the cosmic face of the incarnation.”<sup>19</sup>

He sees a new ecumenical council defining the relations, not between Christ and the Trinity, but between Christ and the cosmos: And he emphasises what he had said earlier: “It seems we are now reliving after 1,500 years the great conflicts with arianism - with the big difference that we are now concerned with defining the relations, not between Christ and the Trinity, but between Christ and a universe that has suddenly become fantastically large, formidably organic and more than probably poly-human (*n* thinking planets - millions perhaps). And if I may express myself brutally (but expressively) I see no valid or constructive way out of the situation except by making through the theologians of a new Nicæa a sub-distinction in the human nature of Christ between ‘a terrestrial nature’ and ‘a cosmic nature’.”<sup>20</sup>

Vatican II (1962-1965) only partially addressed these concerns. It dealt with the relationship, not between Christ and the universe, but between the Church and the world. The relationship between Christ Pantokrator and the universe remains “unfinished business”. And so, by extension, does the relationship between Mary Theotokos (who is inseparable in Teilhard’s mind from Christ her Son) and the universe. A new Nicæa - Nicæa III - that would bring together the catholic and orthodox churches of east and west has yet to be summoned!

**Siôn Cowell**

## A GOOD READ

### ***Reclaiming Spirituality, Diarmuid Ó Murchú MSC, Gill & Macmillan, 1997***

Following the publication of his *Quantum Theology* in 1997, Diarmuid Ó Murchú has produced this exquisite highway for searchers trying to find their way to truth. In the current period of breath-taking human advance and, at the same time, extraordinary religious fundamentalism in some quarters, a way forward is sought. This book is to *Quantum Theology* what *The Divine Milieu* is to *The Phenomenon of Man*. One sees the vistas and clarifies one’s “natural” thought in *Quantum Theology* and then in *Reclaiming Spirituality* one straightens out one’s relations to God, the Church and to formal religion in the context of the *real* universe. It is a challenging, perhaps disturbing book, and yet it brings one home - home in humanity.

The cover note says: “*While the modern world continues to struggle with religious fanaticism on the one hand and religious indifference on the other, spirituality explodes with new vision and with fresh possibilities for a more integrated world view. Drawing on the modern findings of many disciplines the author sets out to explore this new spiritual irruption, one that leaves religious allegiance waning while millions throughout the world seek meaning and nourishment in a range of new contexts, many of which transcend, circumvent and even abandon the religious certainty of bygone days.*”

This is a book to be read and absorbed by all who are seeking spiritual meaning. “My goal in writing this book is to retrieve the long-lost, subverted tradition of spirituality, and to re-establish its primary significance in the human search for meaning and purpose in life” (Ó Murchú, *Introduction*). In a world hungry for purpose, it is an apt response to a crying need.

**Frances O’Kelly IBVM**

### ***The Phenomenon of Teilhard - Prophet for a New Age, David Lane, Mercer University Press, 1996***

This book claims to provide the first detailed analysis of the link between Teilhard de Chardin and New Age thought. Written by a New Zealand zoologist with wide-ranging interests, its primary purpose seems to be an evangelical apologetic for fundamental christian truths based on biblical texts, accompanied by an irrational fear of anything to do with evolution, modern theology or contemporary social changes. Amazingly well informed (especially about members of different Teilhard Associations) and abundantly referenced, it is unclear whether the profuse quotations are always taken from Teilhard’s original works or simply culled from secondary sources, often paraphrased at length.

In spite of its repeated claims this is not an academic study of either Teilhard or the New Age movement, but an unfounded attack on the authenticity of Teilhard’s fervent christian faith. The book contains neither detailed analysis nor reasoned argument but consists largely of a string of unconnected quotations from Teilhard’s opponents and *philosophia perennis* writers. Yet these hardly prove that Teilhard is a “patron saint” or prophet of the New Age, especially when the few references to “new age” in Teilhard and his commentators are taken out of context here. There are a number of factual errors, including wrong key dates, and several misprints. How does Anthony Hanson like to be described as “Anthony Hull”?

This book can gravely mislead any unsuspecting reader. The author sees little in Teilhard’s writings not said elsewhere before. He promotes a “conspiracy theory” about the New Age and brands Teilhard’s christianity as pantheism, monism and gnosticism mixed with emergent evolution. David Lane promises to publish another book about this soon! One wonders about the hidden agenda and intention behind all this trouble in being so unbalanced and warped in his judgement.

**Ursula King<sup>21</sup>**

<sup>19</sup> Letter to Bruno de Solages, 16 February 1955, *Lettres intimes*, 459 (trans. SC); cf. de Lubac, *Teilhard Posthume*, 145-146.

<sup>20</sup> Letter to André Ravier SJ, 14 January 1955, *Lettres intimes*, 452 (trans. SC).

<sup>21</sup> First published in *The Expository Times*, Vol. 108, No. 10, and reproduced by kind permission of Messrs T&T Clark, Edinburgh.

***In Search of Life's Meaning, Raymond Matley and Rebecca Smith, Praxis Books, 1992***

A book that was only recently drawn to our attention. The authors tell us it is written for those who “restlessly seek a sense of meaning in their lives, creating it for themselves even when forced to live in subhuman conditions.” They provide an invaluable *tour de force* for genuine seekers after the truth looking progressively from the “fundamental viewpoints” of world religions towards “modern viewpoints” on the meaning of life. The search ranges from Buddha to Buber. The authors give Teilhard de Chardin frequent mention although searching for references is complicated by the failure of those compiling the index to call him by his proper name! When will editors ever learn that Teilhard was never known as “de Chardin”?

The authors are right to think of Teilhard as “pantheistic” (God is in all and all is in God) rather than “pantheistic” (God is all and all is God) in the generally accepted sense of the term. But they are wrong in suggesting he did not coin the term “noosphere” until 1949. He first used it in his essay “Hominisation” way back in 1925! And his understanding of the “christosphere” (the sphere of the amorising and transforming omnipresence of Christ) certainly suggests something that is to come but equally something that is already present and, it seems to me, is itself in process of development.

**Siôn Cowell**

***Riding with the Lion, In Search of Mystical Christianity, Kyriakos Markides, Arkana, 1996***

This is not a book I had intended to read but, having picked it up, I could not put it down. It is one of those books one so often seems to come across just at the right time. I had been thinking about the theme of our 1998 Conference - “Teilhard and Eastern Christianity” - when, quite literally, my eyes fell on this book that had lain unopened on the shelves since I bought it earlier last year. The sub-title alone - “In Search of Mystical Christianity” - should have told me that here was something exciting only awaiting early exploration. But this is not a book for those who “believe” (or think they “believe”). It is a book for sceptics written by someone who understands sceptics because he himself long followed the road of the sceptic. I know. I myself had followed the same road!

Markides is currently professor of sociology in the University of Maine. Born in Cyprus and raised in the Greek Orthodox Church, he has long lived in the United States. Like so many of his contemporaries he found himself increasingly alienated by institutional religion. And he found himself turning - as many had done before him and many doubtless will continue to do in the future - to the eastern religions. It was, however, his experience with the east - and especially with buddhism - that opened his heart and his mind to the eventual rediscovery of the deep mystical current that is to be found within his own christian tradition. This is a rediscovery that awaits us all.

The reader shares with Markides the excitement he experiences when he sets foot on the *Agion Oros*, the Holy Mountain, that is the monastic republic of Mount Athos. Here is a living spirituality that reveals a living Orthodox Christianity virtually unknown in a Europe spiritually impoverished by the process of demythologisation that has increasingly blighted the west in recent years. It is a useful reminder that many who have been inclined to look to the East can find what they are looking for in abundance in Eastern Christianity. Much of what we find in Eastern Christianity including the veneration of the icon has long been hidden in Western Christianity and is only awaiting rediscovery! And many of those seeking an authentic Celtic spirituality could well find what they are looking for in the living spirituality of the Orthodox Church. As John Paul II has said many, echoing Yves Congar OP, christianity needs to breathe with two spiritual lungs - one eastern and one western.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps in the third millennium we shall recover the sense unity in diversity characteristic of the first millennium that we lost in the second!

**Siôn Cowell**

**And a quick reminder...**

***Petals in the Mind, Venetia Carse, Praxis, 1997***

In her introduction Venetia Carse says that “writing these verses has given me a lot of pleasure that I hope I can share with my family, my friends and anyone else who may enjoy them. They come from the heart: I believe them.” A must for anyone who hungers for the mystical dimension in poetry. And what, after all, is life without poetry?

***Quantum Theology, Diarmuid Ó Murchú MSC, Crossroad, 1997***

A powerful challenge from a leading thinker to explore ways of seeking out the divine co-creativity emerging from one of the most exciting discoveries of the later twentieth century: quantum theory.

***Spirit of Fire, The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin, Ursula King, Orbis, 1996***

A popular yet incisive biography of someone who was, in Ursula King's words, “in love with God whose creative energy and living spirit pulsate throughout everything there is.”

***Christ in All Things, Exploring Spirituality with Teilhard de Chardin, Ursula King, SCM, 1997***

Ursula King's eight 1996 Bampton Lectures remind us that many books “deal with christian spirituality but few refer to the French Jesuit scientist and mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.” King invites us “to explore something of the power of this spir-

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<sup>22</sup> George Maloney SJ, *Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, An Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality*, Crossroad, 1997, 17.

ituality by learning about Teilhard's experience and reflections... and about his dazzling discovery of the Divine, which he saw as the intimately loving presence of Christ in all things."

### ***Universe Within, An Exploration of the Human Spirit, Anjam Khursheed, Oneworld, 1995***

A bold challenge to ongoing reductionist assertions that the world around us is nothing but a meaningless collection of particles. Khursheed reminds us that "the more science progresses, the deeper the mysteries of the universe and the mind appear to be... If history teaches anything, it teaches us that our understanding of the universe is open-ended." And he concludes by expressing the hope that he may have contributed something "towards restating the importance of the universal mysteries underlying our experience of being human, and in particular, towards reinforcing belief in the spiritual nature of the mind."

Occasional papers by the Religious Experience Research Centre in Oxford include *Poetry and Spirituality - The Case of Celtic Christianity*; *Kierkegaard's God and Hawking's Universe* and *Medieval Women Mystics*. Papers cost £2.50. For further details and information on other publications, please contact: Robert Waite, Administrative Secretary, Alister Hardy Society, Westminster College, Oxford OX2 9AT (tel. 01865.243006 or fax. 01865.201197).<sup>23</sup>

## **CAN YOU HELP?**

The Religious Experience Research Centre is looking for help with a current project into negative accounts of religious experience. Preliminary work indicates that about 5% of accounts are of a negative kind, some mentioning an evil presence. The Centre would be interested in hearing from anyone who has had spiritual experiences of a negative kind.

If you think you can help, please contact: New Research Project, Religious Experience Research Centre, Westminster College, Oxford OX2 9AT (tel. 01865.247644 or fax. 01865.201197).

A further project to be launched this year will focus on the common features and common effects of religious experience across spiritual traditions. It would be interesting to know whether teilhardians believe experience suggests any convergence to Omega Point. Further details in due course.

## **WHAT TEILHARD MEANS TO ME**

*Members are invited to tell us in not more than 50 words what Teilhard means to them*

### **Fred Ahern**

"When I left school I really began reading literature. I was impressed by the existentialists, imbibing their slogans and eventually their prose. Life was disastrous! Teilhard was almost too late. But he has been my backdrop for years. Thanks Teilhard!"

### **Peter Cox**

"Teilhard restored the place of the universe in western philosophy and theology in as much God wishes to and will accomplish differentiated union between the universe and himself. The universe is thus in a state of becoming what it is in reality."

### **Grahame Fallon**

"Having recently completed 62 billion kilometres in solar orbit - 65 times around the sun - I find that Teilhard's writings cause the core of my being to burn increasingly with the Spirit of Christ.<sup>24</sup> They fill me with the 'energies of the Gospel'<sup>25</sup> and the 'dynamism of christian faith'.<sup>26</sup>

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**4-6 April 1998.** "Itinéraires teilhardiens" - a weekend workshop (in French) at the Centre Spirituel du Hautmont with members of the *Centre Teilhard de Chardin* (Lille). For further details: Maître Bernard Casset, 56 avenue Barrois, 59700 Marcq en Baroeul, France.

**24-26 April 1998.** "Teilhard and Eastern Christianity - Convergence towards Omega" - Seventeenth International Teilhard Conference at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans, chaired by Peter Reid with Donald Allchin, Bishop Basil of Sergievo, Peter Cox, Andrew Louth and Monique Forthomme Nicholson. For further information: Secretariat, Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH (tel. 01248.810402 or fax. 01248.810936).

**24 April 1998.** Annual General Meeting of *The British Association* open to all paid-up members between 14.00 and 16.00 at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans. For further information: Peter Cox, Secretary, *The British Teilhard Association*, 12 Falconer's Field, Harpenden AL5 3ES (tel. 01582.761955).

<sup>23</sup> Both the Alister Hardy Society and the Religious Experience Research Centre operate under the auspices of the Alister Hardy Trust.

<sup>24</sup> Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, § 2.

<sup>25</sup> Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, § 48.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, § 37.

**27 May 1998.** Gala Supper and Concert in London being organised by the Alister Hardy Society for the Religious Experience Research Centre, Oxford. For further details: Robert Waite, Administrative Secretary, Alister Hardy Society, Westminster College, Oxford OX2 9AT (tel. 01865.243006 or fax. 01865.201197).

**4-6 September 1998.** "Coping with Change in the Modern World" with Diarmuid Ó Murchú. For details: Grail Retreat Centre, Tan-y-Bryn House, Tan-y-Bryn Street, Abergynolwyn, Tywyn LL36 9YA (tel. 01654. 782268 or 01686.668502).

**26 September 1998.** "Three Twenty-First Century Visionaries - Hardy, Jung and Teilhard" - a one-day conference at St James's, Piccadilly, London, with David Hay, Ursula King and Molly Tuby,. For further information please contact: John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, London SE10 9LZ (tel. 0181.858.4750).

**3 October 1998.** "The Spiritual Search of Our Time" - an exploration with Diarmuid Ó Murchú. For details: Old Stable House Centre, Fordham Road, Newmarket CB8 7AF (tel/fax. 01638.667190).

**23-25 October 1998.** "Rediscovering the Vision" - a spiritual workshop on the Celtic Saints and Rhineland Mystics in the year of St Hildegard of Bingen with Siôn Cowell. Further information: Dom Brendan Thomas, Retreatmaster, Belmont Abbey, Hereford HR2 9RZ (tel. 01432.277388 # 223).

**11-14 December 1998.** Advent preached retreat on Celtic spirituality with Siôn Cowell. Further details: Diocesan Pastoral Centre, The Barn, New Hall, Chelmsford CM3 3HT (tel. 01245.467588 or fax. 01245.464348).

**Monthly meetings.** The "Centre-to-Centre Group" continues to meet regularly in Central London and always welcomes new members. For further details please contact: John Woodcock, 9 Gurney Close, Caversham, Reading RG4 7LE (tel. 01189.478156) or Barbara Hogg, Flat 3, 9 Hendon Avenue, London N3 1UL (tel. 0181.371.9823).

*If you would like us to mention an event in your area in our next Bulletin (scheduled for late 1998) please let us know and we shall do our best to fit it in.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know Teilhard remained attached throughout his life to one of the four provinces of the Society of Jesus in France? The Lyon Province was responsible for missionary and pastoral work in Armenia, Syria (including Lebanon and Palestine) and Egypt. Teilhard spent the period between 1905 and 1908 in Cairo and in the early twenties and again in 1929 he often talked of the possibility of being sent to Beirut. This was not to be but we cannot help wondering whether the Lyon province's responsibilities in a Middle East where orthodox tradition was so strong might not explain, at least in part, Teilhard's openness to orthodox christian tradition and especially his appreciation of the contribution the Greek Fathers had made to the development of christian doctrine.<sup>27</sup>

## A NEW CHRONOLOGY

A newly-updated 17-page chronology of the life of Teilhard together with a critical assessment by contemporaries and others of his work and contribution as a thinker of world repute is now available at a cost of £5.75 (UK) or £6.75 (abroad). Please send a sterling cheque made payable to "Siôn Cowell" to Siôn Cowell, Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH.

## POSTSCRIPT

"In Newsletter No. 3 Peter Reid mentioned the photograph of the world taken by the lunar astronauts as a potent symbol for a developing creation theology. Likewise, it seems to me that whereas the biblical Tower of Babel was an appropriate symbol to mark the start of human divergence around the world and down the ages, the Tower of Babel-Mark II marks the start of human convergence, with the latest stage of its construction already towering up to 400 million kms above Mount Everest!<sup>28</sup>

The time is ripe to start composing a cosmic liturgy for a cosmic eucharist, bearing in mind that:

*'The future of humanity lies in the hands of persons  
whose faith, hope and all-embracing love  
are strong enough  
to give coming generations  
reasons for living and hoping'.*"<sup>29</sup>

**Grahame Fallon**

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<sup>27</sup> Henri de Lubac SJ, ed., *Lettres intimes de Teilhard de Chardin*, Aubier, 1974, 62, 148, 200; cf. Siôn Cowell, *Teilhard Lexicon*, F-1.

<sup>28</sup> The distance from Earth to Mars ranges from 78.39 to 399 million kms.

<sup>29</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, § 31 (adapted Grahame Fallon).

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“Christ must always be far greater than our greatest conception of the world.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Teilhard, letter to Pierre Lamare, 26 December 1929, in Robert Speaight, *Teilhard de Chardin*, Collins, 1967, 162.