

# THE BRITISH TEILHARD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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## EDITORIAL

### *TIME FOR STOCKTAKING*

The nineties have been eventful years for our Association. Many members will remember the many painful decisions we had to take earlier in the decade. At the end of 1992 the cost of staffing and running an inner city office compelled us to move out of Central London and at the end of 1994 we found ourselves obliged to suspend publication of *The Teilhard Review*. By the late eighties it had become apparent that expenses were beginning to exceed income and irreplaceable legacies were being used up in order to underpin the cost of premises and administration we could no longer afford. It seemed for a moment that the Association itself had reached its natural term. Proposals were even tabled for its dissolution at the end of 1995. But this did not happen. And in April 1995 *The Teilhard Centre* re-emerged as *The British Teilhard Association*. Our membership today is much smaller than it had been in the early nineties and our long-term future is far from certain. But our mailbag is eloquent testimony to the support we have had from a small but dedicated band of activists who continue to see a place for our Association as non-sectarian enabler helping people from all walks of life to meet together to study and build on the evolutionary ideas Teilhard developed.

In restructuring the Association in the mid-nineties we felt it important to reinforce the democratic accountability of the Executive Committee by making those responsible for the day-to-day management of the Association directly answerable to our members coming together in the Annual General Meeting. We no longer spend money on things we can no longer afford like salaried staff or costly inner-city premises. We ensure financial transparency by employing professional bookkeepers and auditors to. We are in good standing with the Charity Commissioners. Above all, however, we believe we in *The British Teilhard Association* have remained faithful to Teilhard's vision of a universe in movement towards its ultimate completion or consummation in a supra-personal cosmic centre of evolution that he sees making itself known (revelation) and becoming human (incarnation). This cosmic centre on which the whole of evolution converges (omegalisation) is identified in the christian tradition with the Cosmic Christ of St Paul and St John without whom there could have been no cosmos.

Teilhard has called one of the founding fathers of contemporary creation spirituality. In *Original Blessing* Matthew Fox recognises his debt to Teilhard, Jung and their fellow 'pilgrims of the future'. Elsewhere Fox tells of his being confronted by a man who was clearly a fundamentalist of the aggressive kind with whom we are all too familiar, 'I have heard you speak of the Cosmic Christ, of cosmology and mysticism, but are you a christian? Do you believe that Jesus is Lord and Saviour, or don't you?' Fox replied, 'I am a trinitarian christian. Those who think that christianity is exclusively about Jesus are in fact heretics. They deny the trinitarian divinity' (*Creation Spirituality*, Bear & Co., 1991, 55).

Creation spirituality, of course, is profoundly trinitarian reflecting as it does the concept of three or the trinity that is more or less universal among Indo-European cultures - especially in the Celtic culture with which Teilhard's thought shows remarkable affinities. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that we find him speaking of trinitisation as a transcendent act whereby God both affirms himself as one and

spreads, in his unicity, the richness of the three persons. It should not be forgotten, as Paul Tillich observes, that 'classical theology employed the term *person* for the trinitarian hypostases but not for God himself' ('God as Being and as Living' (1951), in *Paul Tillich, Theologian of the Boundaries*, Collins, 1987, 162).

Teilhard's vision is truly a vision for the Third Millennium. Teilhard himself may no longer a major topic of discussion at fashionable dinner parties in the West End and the Teilhard 'fad' may well and truly be behind us. His cosmology, as René d'Ouince remarks, could even be said to have become dated. But there is every reason to suppose his influence will take on a new lease of life and he will be read he as we read the great classics (René d'Ouince SJ, *Un prophète en procès*, II, Aubier-Montaigne, 1970, 266-267).

His continuing appeal to ordinary men and women is quite extraordinary. Something of this appeal is reflected in the testimony of the many members of our Association who have written in to tell us, in their own words, what it means to them to walk and talk daily with Teilhard. Reading these stories has been one of your editor's most rewarding tasks. Some of these stories have already appeared in the *Newsletter*. Others appear below. Further selections will appear later in the year.

## **'WHAT TEILHARD MEANS TO ME'**

*Members and friends are invited to tell us preferably in no more than 50 words what Teilhard means to them*

### **Sheelagh Flawn**

Teilhard has given me a Creation of enhanced beauty, mystery and, above all, holiness, still in the making (evolution), powered by the love-energy of God; a Christ immersed in matter and therefore very near, redeeming and perfecting the world, so that everything is holy, from humans down to the stone in which Teilhard sought to discern the divine. Also an incentive to make the circumstances in which I find myself my own way of corresponding with Grace, my personal divine milieu.

### **Koyapillil Mathai Matthew SJ**

For me an environmentalist, option for life, even more comprehensive than option for the poor, is decisive in the new millennium. I draw Inspiration from Teilhard's optimism towards eventual integration, synthesis and convergence of human endeavour. I should work with people of all faiths and no apparent faith, free of all denominational or sectarian labels, through cosmic ecumenism towards the new cosmogenesis.

### **Ann Parker**

Teilhard said, back in the twenties, that we needed a God big enough for the twentieth century. This statement has become central to my own search, and the reason I am where I am today. For me Teilhard is 'Yes!'

### **Petrona Schmitz SAC**

I joined the *Teilhard Association* in the early sixties. It has led me above and beyond all narrow denominationalism into spiritually pure air and space where I can live and breathe - and to the Cosmic Christ. It has led me to see the unity between matter and spirit and that love is the greatest power in the Cosmos - God is love.

### **Shiela Ward**

I was introduced to Teilhard's writings in 1978 and was immediately excited by the vastness of his vision which for me gave a reality and meaning to life. I wondered how such a vision could manifest in practical terms. Soon after this I wrote a book in fiction form as a basis for discussion in which I envisaged how the early stages of such a development might come into being. I made thirty copies of this as a pilot project (one of which I gave to the Teilhard library) to discover to what extent this resonated with other people's experience well over two hundred people have now read it and the response on the whole has been very positive. For the last eleven years I have been running a retreat house concerned with the exploration and manifestation of Teilhard's vision.

### **Bill Wigram**

Teilhard started to open my eyes thirty-five years ago with his vision of evolution in action, and ever since I have looked for the signs of continuing evolution in our hectic world. In the past six years I have seen the reality of his vision, through a gift of healing that I have found within me, which is now my life. All healing comes from the heart of God, and helps each one of us on our path towards Him; and for me the omega point is now visible, when our next step in evolution becomes manifest. Perhaps then we will also see the continuing flow of our spiritual evolution as it guides us on into our place in the wider universe.

## **THE KEY TO TEILHARD'S THOUGHT**

*Alena Fraser sees evolution - being on the move - as the key to Teilhard's thought*

Teilhard sees life proceeding through growing complexity to increased consciousness, the birth of life coming in at the 'chemical' level and the birth of thought at the 'organic' level - his Law of Complexity-consciousness. He sees this law at work in the family, tribe, nation and now internationally, for with communication we are becoming members of a global society. This inter-communication, a kind of super-consciousness, Teilhard calls the noosphere.

This harmony of super-personal consciousness will be brought about, says Teilhard, by the energy of love. He calls the two aspects of this energy the radial and the tangential. Radial energy is the central thrust of the primary driving force of evolution; tangential energy is the force by which all things come together and interact to form new entities, instinctual, chemical, mechanical, electromagnetic, social, etc. The more

complex the arrangements tangentially, the greater the presence of radial energy and the speedier the move upwards to a unified consciousness. Teilhard calls this coiling inward and upward 'reflection' or 'knowing that we know'.

Teilhard sees around us not a static cosmos but cosmogenesis, a world moving towards completion at Point Omega that he identifies that with the consummated Christ of Christianity. He says any religion must be measured by the degree to which it helps us fulfil our responsibilities to evolution and leads to unity and harmony. Evolution is always the key to his thinking: as he says (1923), 'I am a pilgrim of the future on my way back from a journey made entirely in the past.'

## **THE SCIENCE OF COMPLEXITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

*John Woodcock sets the scene for the 1999 annual conference (see also p. 8)*

Teilhard de Chardin's vision of a cosmos in process of complexification is becoming increasingly accepted by the world of scientific world in the light of work being undertaken by scientists such as Ilya Prigogine and others on the new science of complexity including the theories of chaos and anti-chaos.

Central to the process of complexification (anti-chaos) is the tendency of open energy systems, on becoming destabilised, to regain dynamic equilibrium by associating as parts in new whole and potentially more complex systems. For example, single eukaryote cells, under selective pressures, combined to form multicellular species including eventually the human species. Multicellular species themselves evolve and again under selective pressure aggregate further to form flocks, herds, swarms, etc. One consequence of this further aggregation has been the unique emergence in human groups of self-conscious individuals tending toward personality differentiation and identification with their own particular mindsets. The very properties that should in combination offer human groups adaptive ability to complexifying circumstances, themselves become a cause of instability.

We are therefore inviting representatives from a number of specialised organisations to compare the relevance of their interests and practices to the understanding and integration of personality differences. We may hope that one outcome of our efforts will be to discern the benefits likely to accrue from initiating a new ongoing multidisciplinary forum.

### **ANTICHAOS AND THE SCIENCE OF COMPLEXITY**

*John Woodcock summarises the 1992 Channel 4 Publication: 'Equinox: Antichaos'*

1. Science now recognises that the whole of nature should be seen as a spontaneous grouping of things together in a single complex dance of interrelated parts. Science now asks what are the organising principles behind this pattern of events.
2. Discovering and understanding these patterns present science with one of the greatest challenges it has ever faced. Meeting the challenge calls for a new science: the science of COMPLEXITY has evolved to meet the challenge.
3. The main preoccupation of complexity theorists is how order and structure develop in the universe. Their new theory explaining these matters is known as ANTICHAOS. 'Falling logs rot, but trees also grow'.
4. When one puts together pieces of a system, surprising and unpredictable behaviour can occur that was never apparent in the constituent parts. This phenomenon is known to complexity theorists as EMERGENCE.
5. Emergence transcends both the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics (entropy) and Newtonian law, and indicates the existence of self-organising tendencies for which, as yet, no laws have been formulated.
6. What fascinates complexity theorists is that the kinds of patterns observed in complex systems, and the forces that drive them, are very often the same, whatever the system: the growth of a pile of sand, the interplay of human genes, or the growth of an economy. It pays to study nature in order to understand human society.
7. The nerve centre of this study of COMPLEXITY and EMERGENCE is the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico, USA. The scientists at the Santa Fe Institute initially came from the nearby Los Alamos National Laboratory, set up during World War II to design the atom bomb. The head of research at Los Alamos, George Cowan, had noticed that, when scientists from a variety of fields worked together at Los Alamos on a vital project (the atom bomb), there was a great spirit of creativity, an explosion of ideas.
8. The findings from Santa Fe include: a) self-organisation is an intrinsic property of living systems, upon which natural selection can act, but of which it is not necessarily the cause; b) the activity of any particular gene is regulated by its relationship with other genes immediately adjoining it; c) a network's ability to co-ordinate complexity is greatest at the boundary between its chaotic and ordered states at the edge of chaos; d) systems spontaneously organise themselves to a state where chaos and order interact.
9. We should perhaps conclude from this that human systems deliberately involved in coordinating complexity need to operate 'at the edge of chaos': they need to remain stable while preparing and initiating change. This condition may be seen as the psycho-social equivalent of the balance between the spontaneous mutations and the genetic stability of organic species.

## **PAEAN of PRAISE**

### **from a SMALL PERSON on a SMALL PLANET**

*Mildred Reynolds*

*Belmont Abbey, Saturday 24 October 1998*

Maker, Designer, Creator of the Cosmos,  
Of the Universe and of every tree and leaf -  
I, with my gift from You of awareness and imagination,  
Want to offer You praises and thanks.

I want to offer You praises and thanks  
For everything., seen and unseen.,  
Which exists.

I want my praises and thanks  
to be as numerous  
as leaves on trees,  
as cells in leaves, branches and twigs,  
as nodules in yews...

as blades of grass in green fields,  
as stalks of corn in tilled fields,  
as ears on corn...

as flowers that bloom,  
as shrubs that flower,  
as petals and stamens and roots and leaves,  
as every cell in every flower,  
seen and unseen...

as insects in the air,  
as insects on the wing,  
as insects in the earth,  
as tiny cells in all the insects' make-up...

as birds in the air,  
as feathers on birds,

as needles on feathers,  
as cells in needles...

as animal species,  
as animals old and young,  
as cells in each living animal...  
as people on earth, born and unborn,  
as people gone from the earth, born and unborn,  
as people who will come on the earth...

as hairs on heads,  
as hairs on beards,  
as cells and growths on human skins,  
and inside those skins...

Then the number of my praises and thanks  
Will be known to you only,  
O Lord my God.

I offer them, if I may, for all of my species,  
especially those who do not know there is anyone to thank  
or praise.  
Amen.

## 1998 CONFERENCE PAPERS

Papers from the 1997 conference are now available at cost as follows: Peter Cox £3.00 (UK) or £4.50 (overseas), Andrew Louth £2.30 (UK) or £4.50 (overseas), Monique Forthomme Nicholson £2.16 (UK) or £3.65 (overseas). Copies can be obtained from Siôn Cowell, Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH. Sterling cheques only should be made payable to 'Siôn Cowell'. Siôn Cowell's introductory paper appeared in the last *Newsletter*.

## BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

*Roy Bass comments on emerging disagreements among biologists.*

Richard Dawkins continues to enjoy considerable media exposure and uncritical acclaim by many broadsheet science correspondents. Recently however they have been reporting strong disagreements within the biological camp. This is brought out in biologist Steven Rose's review of Dawkins's latest book, *Unweaving the Rainbow*:

'On the one hand you have those who, like Dawkins believe that higher-order living processes can in some way be read off from a strand of DNA, the mythopoeic gene. For them genes are units (the atoms of life) whose goal is to generate the greatest possible number of copies of themselves. For this purpose they may ally with other genes to produce organisms who may be programmed to lie, cheat, make war, make love or even to cooperate peacefully, all to serve the higher genetic purposes. The other sees life as a self-constructing process in which natural selection at the level of individual genes has a part, but only a part to play. The four dimensions - three of space and one of time - of an individual's lifeline, their trajectory from conception to death, are not immanent within DNA but reflect the emergence of complex forms of dynamic order.'

This may well signify the beginning of a genuine debate within society at large as to the true place of the human in nature and as to how we should use this awareness before we irreparably damage our earthly home. If this should prove to be the case re-introducing Teilhard's works will be essential.

*Readers who wish to follow the debate could usefully turn to 'Lifelines' by Stephen Rose, published by Allen Lane, 1997, at £20 (Ed.).*

## BE STILL

*Sheelagh Flawn*

Be still. Your deepest self make clear;  
For should it come, that's where you'll hear  
It sound, the word you wistful seek.  
Be quiet, then. Love. Listen.  
Do not speak.

If it should come, it will come crystal clear,  
As music in the inner ear;

And gentle as the softest breath of breeze  
That barely stirs the trees;  
If it should come,  
O, nothing then will be the same,  
Not once you've heard Him say your name...  
As He said 'Mary!'  
Just one word,  
And instantly she knew her Lord.

## WHAT TEILHARD BELIEVED

*In his lifetime Teilhard was recognised by those who knew him as an original, if not dangerous, thinker, who was at the same time a person of faith, a believer. But if we speak of Teilhard as a person of faith, what did he believe? What was the content of his faith? His treatment by some on the Internet suggests we need to go back to basics. Gérard-Henry Baudry did just this in 'Ce que croyait Teilhard', Mame, 1971. We are sorry this excellent little book was never translated into English. As part of our modest contribution to the science-religion dialogue we reproduce below a revised version of the review article by Michael Day CO that first appeared in 'The Teilhard Review' in 1974 (Vol. IX.2, 60-62). We are glad to report Michael Day is alive and well and living in happy retirement at the Birmingham Oratory (Ed.).*

As thinker and believer Teilhard believed, first of all, in the convergence of truth. He believed in a God who revealed himself in Christ. He also believed in the world of experience which reveals the one same God. He met with opposition from those who could not see how faith in the world was consistent with faith in God, that is, from those who were not disposed to admit that the scientific, philosophical and theological aspects of reality could be reconciled.

When Teilhard speaks of 'faith in the world' and 'faith in God' he uses the term 'faith' in different senses but his faith in God leads him to believe that creation is trustworthy. In other words, he has faith in creation because he has faith in the creator but also because his scientific research has convinced him that creation as such is meaningful and of absolute value. His faith is a *fides quaerens intellectum*, a faith enriched, not diminished, by a search for the unity of all knowledge, including scientific knowledge. In fact, he attains a vision of reality in which the data of science and the data of revelation are mutually illuminating. This is not the same thing as trying to prove the data of revelation from the data of science or vice versa. Teilhard is no concordist. He seeks coherence, not concordance. And if there is synthesis, it is not by reduction but by allowing the positive data of these distinct sciences to illuminate his consciousness.

The need to reconcile faith in the creator and faith in creation springs from a need to reconcile love for the creator and love for creation. Teilhard cannot concede that God is in some way in competition with his creation. On the contrary, if creation is meaningful and of absolute value then to promote this value is to co-create with the creator. Teilhard speaks of faith in God in the sense of faith in the supreme value, that is, faith in the creator as source of all values. He speaks of faith in creation, faith in human beings, faith in love, etc., in an analogous sense as values participating in the one absolute value. He sees human beings and their world existing within a divine milieu. We do not encounter the creator by turning our backs on creation but by penetrating more and more into the mystery of creation.

Born and raised in a traditionally catholic family Teilhard was, in a sense, born with the idea of God. His later scientific, philosophical and theological reflection was a deepening of his initial faith in God. From an early age he tells us he had a 'passion for the absolute' which manifested itself in a search for the immutable reality underlying the world of change and giving it consistency. His research progressively purified his vision of the divine centre of all reality, that is, of a creative presence which reveals itself from within creation, so that he could speak of creation as *diaphanous*.

For Teilhard creation exists in duration in a state of genesis. This is what he calls cosmogenesis. It is cosmogenesis which reveals a dynamic presence. Because God is creator he is also evolver. This is a deepening of our concept of God, a step forward from what Teilhard calls the neolithic view of God as no more than the conserver of a static creation. His vision of cosmogenesis involves us in an active cooperation with God as evolver of a world (and a universe) in genesis. We are truly co-creators with the Creator.

Teilhard believes in the world because he believes in God as dynamically present in the world. He believes in evolution because he believes in God as evolver. But this faith is nourished by his scientific research into the very structure of an evolving world which reveals the gradual trend towards higher levels of complexity-consciousness. He is convinced that a world in evolution must have a goal worthy of so great a labour since time began.

This is not a facile faith in automatic progress but faith in a movement towards greater complexity-consciousness which involves struggle and suffering, a progress which can only be achieved by responsible human effort and hence is fraught with human drama. A world in which there is no disorder is a world which has already arrived at the term of its evolution.

Teilhard believes that as species we are presently the spearhead of the evolutionary process. We are responsible for what we make of the world. This responsibility follows from the nature of reflective consciousness. By the universal law of complexity-consciousness as species we are called to higher forms of community in which our value as individuals is heightened, that is, the community in which as species we find fulfilment must safeguard the value of the individual self.

It is one thing to believe in the destiny of the species, another to achieve that destiny as an individual; granted that our individual selves find personal fulfilment in communion with others (differentiated union), to achieve our destiny we must overcome our own egoism which Teilhard regards as the Origin of Sin. But where will we find the inspiration and power to overcome our inveterate egoism?

We cannot work towards a unification of the species in which personal values are sacrificed or work towards a personal fulfilment apart from the destiny of the species.

Teilhard finds the solution to this dilemma in his faith in Christ as the source from whom we derive our personal value and the goal on whom we converge as a species. A true human community is progressively attainable through the power of Christ. But the Christ in whom Teilhard believes is the creative Word made flesh who in his resurrection became the Cosmic Christ, ever at work within his creation as the evolver. He is convinced that nothing less than this faith can do justice to the divinity of Christ. He is truly creator and redeemer and he is redeemer because he is evolver whose transforming action completes and perfects creation by opening up a divine future for us and our world.

For Teilhard, faith in the Church is an extension of his faith in Christ. The Church as the community of individuals incorporated in the Risen Body of Christ forms a 'phylum' within the human species. Within the time-space continuum of human history Teilhard sees the Church as in organic continuity with its origins and as the centre from which the power of the Risen Christ reaches out to the whole of humankind. He speaks of the Church as a 'phylum of love' to the extent that it has manifested in countless examples the possibility of a universal love.

The sacraments of the Church bring the christian into dynamic relation with the Risen Christ, above all, the sacrament of the Eucharist which assimilates christians in their humanity to the glorified humanity of Christ and makes them partakers in his transforming action in the world.

Faith is inseparable from hope which alone generates human energy. Reflective human beings are activated by hope of attaining a worthwhile goal, by faith in the future.

For Teilhard, faith in the future rests on the reasoned conviction that creation is of absolute value and that every personal value is eternal. This is the presupposition of human effort, for we cannot be enthusiastic in promoting a creation which is ultimately meaningless or in working for a future in which we can have no part. Teilhard believes in an open-ended yet convergent future; the future is always open-ended in the same way that the past was always open-ended but this does not mean that the process of evolution is without direction, only that the possibilities of greater complexity-consciousness are limitless. The movement towards greater complexity-consciousness (or complexification-conscientisation) is convergent to the extent that it is a movement towards greater human community.

Faith in the future is ultimately faith in a goal for humankind beyond history, but this goal must be attainable by every individual self and must be seen as a fulfilment of the individual self. In other words, the future is our future, not merely the future of future men and women. But individuals can, through egoism, frustrate the call to ultimate community; we can refuse to converge on the divine centre of our existence and so condemn ourselves to ultimate isolation. In this sense, evolution of its very nature involves selection and rejection.

Teilhard believes in love as a cosmic energy springing up in human beings from the depths of the divine life; love energy is the primary force at work in a convergent universe, uniting men and women, person to person, in community. But this love energy is for Teilhard inseparable from its source in the Cosmic Christ who, as the fountainhead of love, amorises from within.

His faith in the cosmic dimension of the love of Christ is the ultimate ground of his faith in evolution; from Christ the Evolver flows the love energy which alone can change the faith of the earth.

## ALPHA AND OMEGA

*Dennis Capes*

Majestic in Your infinitude,  
Burning in Your proximity,  
Light beyond Light,  
Darkness unfathomable.  
Beyond thought and sight and touch,  
But glimpsed, fleetingly, in the  
iridescence of light on sea, or leaf  
or feather.  
Secret life under every stone,  
Within every stone,  
Even the unseen, untouched,  
undisturbed pebble on the  
unfrequented beach owes its  
existence to You, and is

enfolded in Your design.  
In Your economy nothing is accidental,  
nothing wasted, nothing lost,  
All is Becoming.  
Such impenetrable mystery could  
give rise to alarm, consternation,  
even fear. It is all too vast, too daunting,  
overwhelming -  
Until You unlock the mystery;  
The key is love, Love Personified,  
Jesus, the Christ, the Logos  
The Alpha and the Omega,  
The Beginning and the End.

## A GOOD READ

*3rd Millennium: The Challenge and the Vision, Ervin Laszlo, Gaia Classic, 1997*

The Club of Budapest report on the creative paths of human evolution makes essential background reading for London Colney 1999. Laszlo calls for a new planetary consciousness to respond to the need for a new global awareness for the new millennium, to regain the power that comes from taking local and global responsibility and to celebrate the richness of cultural and environmental diversity. And he reminds us that religious and spiritual experience 'testifies that we are an integral part of the universe' leading to the realisation 'that the divine is intrinsic to all things, from atoms to galaxies; that the cosmos is our sacred community' - concept that is present in the 'naturalism of St Francis of Assisi and the evolutionism of Jesuit biologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin' (op. cit. 88).

*The Biosphere, Vladimir Vernadsky, Copernicus, 1998*

A timely reprint of this now-classical work first published in 1926 but long neglected in the west. Vernadsky points to life the transforming geological force on our planet. Our only complaint: the numerous references in the index to a certain 'Chardin, P.T. de'. When, when will publishers learn to use Teilhard's name properly?

**John Woodcock's recommendation:** Lee Smolin, *The Life of the Cosmos*, Phoenix Press, 1997. 'In this provocative book Smolin merges key elements of Einstein and Darwin in a breathtaking synthesis. The result is nothing less than a radically new view of the evolving cosmos and our place within it' - Paul Davies. 'The most important science book published in 1997' - John Gribbin.

**And some quick reminders...**

*Rediscovering the Christ, John Yungblut, Element, 1991*

*Shaping a Personal Myth to Live By*, John Yungblut, *Element*, 1992

Two books by the late John Yungblut that apply jungian and teilhardian perspectives to our understanding of the Historical Jesus and the Cosmic Christ. They provide thought-provoking material for those who see in fundamentalism one of the greatest threats to the future of Planet Earth and all that it contains. If you find these books are no longer obtainable in your local bookshop, a call to Hay-on-Wye may prove worthwhile!

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, contact: Robert Waite, Administrative Secretary, Alister Hardy Society, Westminster College, Oxford OX2 9AT (tel. 01865.243006 or fax. 01865.201197).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**27 March 1999.** 'The New Universe Story' - a one-day day conference at Braziers Adult College, Ipsden, with Michael Colebrook and John Woodcock. Further details from Braziers, Ipsden, Wallingford OX10 6AN (tel: 01491.680221).

**16-18 April 1999.** 'Teilhard and Evolutionary Cosmology - Complexity-Consciousness for the New Millennium' - Eighteenth International Teilhard Conference at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans, with Ervin Laszlo (Club of Budapest), Emily Binns (Villanova University), Paul Maiteny (Alister Hardy Society), Max Payne (Scientific and Medical Network) and Allerd Stikker (Ecological Management Foundation). Further details from Siôn Cowell, Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH (tel: 01248.810402; fax: 01248.810936).

**29 May 1999.** 'In the Footsteps of Teilhard'. An open one-day event with members of the *European Teilhard de Chardin Centre* at All Saints Pastoral Centre looking at what we can still learn from Teilhard as we move into the Third Millennium. Details from Siôn Cowell, Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH (tel: 01248.810402; fax: 01248.810936).

## OMEGA AND THE CHRISTIANITY OF TOMORROW

*Barry Perrott*

With the advent of the full understanding of the meaning and implications of evolution, which is in itself the most powerful idea ever to have occurred to the human mind, comes the notion of progress, relentless progress. We have now grasped that things are now no longer static, or even 'merely rotating' but that everything is in 'process'. We are going somewhere! Humankind and all things are developing somewhere, unfolding in a straight line (orthogenesis), from Alpha to the ever-warmer radiance of Omega. Evolution has a precise axis, which is the Church, and direction towards and converging on Christ-Omega.

We see, emerging from the mists of the deep past the anthropoids, and from them the first primitive humans (so labelled 'Adam and Eve' by Moses in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2) by the inert force of biological evolution alone, and not by human choice. Science has traced these intelligent beings up to the present day, and Teilhard has projected them into the future into a hypothetical zone of convergence with a double meaning (see Diagram 4 in *The Phenomenon*, 192).

The hypothetical zone of convergence has a double meaning. Followed upwards, it shows convergence on Christ-Omega, but traced from the top downwards it shows 'the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son (i.e. from Omega), who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified...' (*Nicene Creed*), drawing humankind and all things (forward) to Himself.

Immobility never inspired enthusiasm, and that is why Teilhard's dynamic Christianity is so exciting. He believed that the whole Universe was founded on, built of, and held together by LOVE, and it is this amazing vision of unity, this dynamic love, that I find so irresistible. Teilhard, evolution, convergence, Omega, ecumenism, this new universal love - these, are some of the 'key' words for our day, and for the Christianity of tomorrow.

*We are grateful to the editors of Kensington Parish News for permission to reprint this article (Ed.).*

## TEILHARD'S LAST LETTER

*For André Ravier SJ, Teilhard's last provincial, Teilhard was 'above all a religious, a son of St Ignatius, a priest and a missionary'. Teilhard wrote his last on Good Friday 8 April 1955 - two days before his death. He wrote it from New York to his friend and provincial, André Ravier. It is a remarkable restatement of his faith. The original is in 'Lettres intimes', Aubier, 1974, 465-466. This translation is by Siôn Cowell (Ed.).*

I have just received your letter of 4 April - and am replying immediately - on this predestinate day.

The Sense of the Cross... I do not see anything of substance to add to the few pages I seem to remember I sent you in September 1952: 'What the World expects of the Church of God' - a generalising and deepening of the Sense of the Cross. (If you have not got this short paper, let me know - I can let you have a copy.)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'What the World expects of the Church of God' (1952), in *Christianity and Evolution*, Collins, 1971.

I am more convinced than ever of what I thought then (and this from *The Divine Milieu* onwards). In a universe of cosmogenesis where evil is no longer 'catastrophic' (that is, born of an accident) but 'evolutive' (that is, a statistically inevitable by-product of a universe in the course of unification in God) - in such a universe the Cross (without losing its expiatory and compensatory function) becomes even more the symbol and the expression of the whole of 'evolution' ('noogenesis'): coreflection and unanimisation of humanity through and by means of suffering, sin and death.

And so - without diminishing the christian tradition - the Cross can be presented to the world of today not only as a 'consolation' for the miseries of the world but also as a 'stimulant' (the most complete and most dynamic stimulant possible), progressing as far as possible, on earth, for God, in the direction of some 'ultra-human'. In the system of 'cosmogenesis of unification' (which, by definition, is the system of the Pleroma) God could neither create without becoming incarnate nor become incarnate without bearing the painful and sinful weight of evolution. 'Evolution, that is, ultra-creation.' From this point of view, Christ the Redeemer is identical to Christ the 'Evolver'.

Christ on the Cross is the most complete expression in human consciousness of a 'God of Evolution'. A God of Evolution, that is, a divinising, christifying God, both above and ahead.

But quite obviously this only appears (with any clarity) if, from the outset, the new relationship established between spirit and matter and the new figure presented by evil (in all its forms) in a system of cosmogenesis have been understood: spirit becoming the genetic function of matter - evil becoming the by-product of the unification of spirit by means of matter. A new 'intellectual dimension' appears here (we must succeed, as I have said, in no longer seeing 'in a circle' but 'in a sphere'). I have often been disappointed to find as penetrating a mind as an Auguste Val(ensin), a Grandmaison or even a de Lubac (?) still thinking and praying in 'cosmos' and not in cosmogenesis. But (happily) it is impossible to bar the irresistible drift which inspires human thought around us. Tomorrow, the whole world will think 'in sphere', in cosmogenesis. And then, quite naturally, God crucified will become (*qua* crucified) the most powerful (because the most valorising and the only 'amorising') spiritual mover of ultra-hominisation.

This is my faith - what I should so much like to be able to confess publicly before I die.

All this must seem a bit confused - thrown together higgledy-piggledy. But you will find your bearings in my 1952 paper. (Around 1949 (sic) I also wrote 'My Fundamental Vision' which might perhaps please you. I shall send it to you.)<sup>2</sup>

*'Thinking Globally, Living Responsibly'*

**TEILHARD AND EVOLUTIONARY COSMOLOGY**  
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Teilhard has rightly been called a cosmo-mystic. His vision of a cosmos in process of complexification continues to place him on the leading edge of modern thought. His ideas are a powerful antidote to fundamentalists of all persuasions for whom certainty is more important than truth. 'Truth,' says Teilhard, 'is nothing other than the total coherence of the universe in relation to every point within itself' ('Sketch of a Personalistic Universe' (1936), in *Human Energy*, 54). Today his insights are finding confirmation in the work of thinkers like Ilya Prigogine, Ervin Laszlo and others on the new science of complexity including the theories of chaos and anti-chaos.

The *British Teilhard Association* is deeply grateful to the members of the distinguished faculty of speakers who have accepted our invitation to speak at this important conference.

<sup>2</sup> 'My Fundamental Vision' (1948), in *Toward the Future*, Collins, 1974.

Please do what you can to give this conference every possible publicity in your neighbourhood.

The cost: £120.00 per person residential or £90.00 non-residential. Enrolment forms from: Siôn Cowell, Plas Maelog, Beaumaris, Ynys Môn LL58 8BH (tel: 01248.810402 or fax: 01248.810936).

## ENDNOTE

Members who have 'surfing the Net' will know Teilhard is well represented on the Internet. Some see the Internet as Teilhard's noosphere come true but this is to reduce the noosphere to something mechanical (which it is not). Teilhard's noosphere is essentially spiritual and, above all, cosmic. This being said we are becoming increasingly convinced of the need to get on to the Net. Oliver Knowles has urged us to get some pages on the World Wide Web 'setting out something about Teilhard's ideas and listing his books, our contact addresses for membership, books by and on Teilhard, any meetings planned, etc.' We hope to let members have more details in the next *Newsletter*. Meanwhile, any thoughts or suggestions about the sort of material we should put in our pages will be most welcome (Ed.).