

# THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER



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## EDITORIAL

### Is There Life Out There?

Until recently we could only wonder whether we were alone in space. We could only speculate on the possible existence of other planetary systems elsewhere in the universe. Now everything has changed. In October 1995 astronomers announced they had discovered the first known planet outside the Solar System: a planet circling the star 51 Pegasi, 45 light years away in the constellation Pegasus. And in January 1996 two more planets were discovered: one orbiting the star 47 Ursae Majoris, 35 light years from Earth in the constellation Ursa Major; the other orbiting the star 70 Virginis in the constellation Virgo. "Unless the chances are literally 100 billion to one against the emergence of life - and recent advances in biology suggest that the chances are considerably better - there is life out there, somewhere" (*Time*, 5 February 1996, 47-51)

Teilhard first addressed the problem of a plurality of inhabited planets while serving on the Western Front in 1918. It was a problem that was to continue to preoccupy him until his death. Over the years he was increasingly convinced of the existence elsewhere in the universe of numerous planets supporting or capable of supporting life - including intelligent life. Hence his readiness to talk of other noospheres and even "noospheric systems" (*The Human Zoological Group* (1949), 114). Noogenesis is a cosmic phenomenon. So, too, is omegagenesis. And there can only ever be one Omega (*Journal*, 2 March 1918, 282, 283). In one of his

last letters: "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 astronomer)" (Letter to Bruno de Solages (16 February 1955), *Lettres intimes*, 45).

In *The Plurality of Inhabited Worlds*, written less than two years before he died, Teilhard noted: "considering what we now know about the number of 'worlds' and their internal evolution, the idea of there only being one hominised planet in the universe has in fact (without our generally having realised it) already become as unthinkable as the idea of there being humans on earth without any genetic link to the rest of the animal population" (*Christianity and Evolution*, 231). He believed this raised important christological considerations: "I am more and more convinced," he wrote to Bruno de Solages, "the Church will only be able to resume its conquering march when (resuming the great theological effort of the first five centuries) it starts to rethink (ultra-think) the relations, no longer between Christ and the Trinity, but between Christ and a universe that has become fantastically immense and organic (at least a thousand billion galaxies each surely containing life and thought...)" (Letter to Bruno de Solages (2 January 1955), *Lettres intimes*, 450).

The discovery of planetary systems elsewhere in the universe makes it even more likely that we shall soon

discover planets capable of supporting life - even intelligent life - elsewhere in the cosmos. Is it not now

time to start thinking about the cosmic implications of an omegagenesis that lies at the heart of cosmogenesis?

## **TWO VISIONARIES: TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND ALISTER HARDY**

### **John Franklin reflects on what Teilhard and Hardy mean to him**

I am constantly struck with the range of vision of these two great thinkers, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ and Alister Hardy FRS.<sup>1</sup> Both looked beyond the present, both were evolutionists who looked beyond just material, physical evolution to the spiritual, both needing and seeking to accommodate the differing data of science and revelation. Both pointed to the future and, whilst they would not have agreed on many aspects, in essence they were reaching out - Hardy in a more cautious way - to a similar, if not the same goal, even if the language used is different. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, driven by a desire for unity, sought to reconcile evolution with Christology, Christogenesis leading to final culmination in the Cosmic Christ. As Julian Huxley says in his introduction to the English translation of *Le Phénomène humain*, "he has forced theologians to view their ideas in the new perspective of evolution, and scientists to see the spiritual implications of their knowledge... The religiously minded can no longer turn their backs on the natural world...; nor can the materialistically minded deny importance to spiritual experience and religious feeling."<sup>1</sup> This might also have been said of Alister Hardy, a scientist, who was also deeply religious, in his case, from a Unitarian viewpoint.

Sir Alister Hardy was a distinguished zoologist and founder of what is now the Religious Experience Research Centre currently based at Westminster College, Oxford. Whilst basically an ardent Darwinian, he argued that Darwin's doctrine must be enlarged to take on board the spiritual side of man which has been firmly established by objective systematic observation. He wrote in his last book, *Darwin and the Spirit of Man*, "I like to think that our studies at the Religious Experience Research Unit (as it was then called) are... helping, however modestly, to build up an academic knowledge towards a better understanding of the spiritual nature of man ..."<sup>2</sup> "What we need," he wrote in his earlier book entitled *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, "is more data, more and more accounts (of spiritual/religious experience), more and more observation."<sup>3</sup> He agreed with William James' statement, in his preface to Starbuck's book *The Psychology of Religion*, that studies must be applied to other cultures and other faiths for comparative purposes with accounts of religious experiences collected from Catholic, Jewish, Moslem, Buddhist and Hindu sources. He said, "... it is vital, I believe, that we should establish whether these characteristics (of spiritual/religious experience) we have been discussing are indeed applicable to mankind as a whole."<sup>4</sup> From his studies he concluded that "the main characteristics of man's religious and spiritual experiences are shown in his feelings for a transcendent reality... a feeling that 'Something Other' than the self can actually be sensed; a desire to personalise this

presence into a deity and to have a private I-Thou relationship with it, communicating through prayer."<sup>5</sup>

Feeling that spiritual/religious experience is common to all humankind, Hardy advocated the development of a "natural theology." This, he writes, should be based on a natural history of religious experience, which should be built up from many different fields, including biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and psychic research etc.<sup>6</sup> The natural theology that he envisaged would be a science of man's religious behaviour - and could lead to a new religion. "Could the religious sense," he asked, "- the sense of the Holy - the feeling of the sacred - the something we call God - be something as fundamental as time but, like love, be unperceived directly by our sense; and like love - indeed linked with it - felt by our conscious ego in an extra-sensory way. As our natural history of religion brings together the records of religious experience and slowly, through classification and relation to psychology, merges into our future science of theology, it will begin to show us more of the nature of the divine flame in man which responds to what we call divinity in the universe."<sup>7</sup> "A true science of theology," he held, "cannot fail to have a great influence for peace in the world. The bitterest wars have always been those of rival religious faiths."<sup>8</sup> "Yet" he goes on to say "the same spiritual features can be seen in all the great religions of mankind. A natural theology built as strictly as a science would have elements reflecting the truer parts of all the great faiths; it should lead to an experimental faith acceptable to all the people of the world."<sup>9</sup> "I am convinced," he said, "that with the experimental method we could have a new flowering of faith that could reshape our civilisation."<sup>10</sup> Hardy agreed with Canon H.P.A. Major DD, one time Principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, who preached the need for a world religion - which Canon Major called Basic Christianity, the only "creed" for membership being the use of the Lord's Prayer. "Yes," Hardy writes at the end of his book *The Divine Flame*, "a world religion is what is needed, one founded upon a flame of faith within the heart, and reason in the mind, a reasoning based upon the findings of scientific studies in both natural theology and psychical research."<sup>11</sup>

Once, in answer to a question, "Can anything be said about a possible purpose in the universe?" Hardy said that whilst he felt that nothing *useful* could be said on this subject because it couldn't be more than the wildest speculation, "perhaps it might just be worth saying that, on purely logical grounds, it is not impossible to imagine a reasonable goal for the cosmic evolutionary process." In developing his thoughts on this, he said, "I am, perhaps, in my imaginary answer getting near the Omega Point of Teilhard de Chardin, but by a different road. Perhaps we really *are* the children of God and that

evolution must, with its psychic, spiritual element operating within the material matrix, eventually lead to a collective omniscient consciousness knowing just how and where in the universe life may and *will* be started again! We are perhaps part of a great system for generating love, joy and beauty in the universe: the highlights of existence that can only be perceived and appreciated when seen against the darker background of their opposites.”<sup>12</sup>

One of the seminal moments in the development of human thought and perspective was when Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon, and when the cameras looked back at Planet Earth. For the first time we saw all the multiplicity of life on earth and our earth itself as a single whole. We are part of a single whole, itself a tiny part of the universe, part of a greater whole - at this moment it might be said that this *awareness* entered our psyche. Teilhard all his life was driven by an inner vision of unity: “There are in reality two types of mind,” he wrote, “and only two, those who never get past the perception of multiplicity nor feel the need to do so... And those for whom this same perception of multiplicity must necessarily resolve itself into some unity.”<sup>13</sup> He himself saw, with his religious vision, “the heart of Christ at the heart of matter,”<sup>14</sup> envisioning the universe in evolution and convergence to the “Omega point” - a completion at a centre of cosmic spiritualisation which he believed to be none other than the Christ of Revelation. He saw this as “universal,” though thinking and speaking in the terms and concepts of Pauline/Johannine Christianity and the Catholic Church.

At the core of all the great religions, and implied by them all, is universality. The cultural tenets, however, taken literally, again divide into multiplicity - the “stories” are different, the settings, history, interpretation and language are different: what may be seen as holy and true from one religion’s perspective, may be seen, from another’s perspective, as blasphemy or idolatry. Yet, basically, all the faith-systems do subscribe to a common ground, the ground of love, *agape*, seen in mystical revelation in all religions. Jesus, from the Jewish perspective, drew together the Hebrew commandments in the pithy statement “Love God, and thy neighbour as thyself, on these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets.”<sup>15</sup> Dame Julian of Norwich wrote, “From the time these things were first revealed I had wanted to know what was our Lord’s meaning. It was more than 15 years after that I was answered in my spirit’s understanding. ‘You would know our Lord’s meaning in this thing? Know it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed it you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For Love.’”<sup>16</sup> Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Hindu Avatar, writes, “There is only one religion, the Religion of Love; there is only one caste, the Caste of Humanity; there is only one language, the language of the Heart.”<sup>17</sup> Buddhism, if not speaking of “only one God,” refers to “Buddha Nature,” and that religion teaches the four “brahma-viharas,” or “heavenly abodes” - “Loving kindness to all

things; joyful regard of all things; compassionate concern for all things; and equanimity,” which tenets might be said to lie at the heart of all religion. Beinsa Douno (Peter Deunov) (1864-1944), the great Bulgarian Christian mystic, a Spiritual Master of our time, spoke and wrote a great deal about love: “There is a single law in the world: the law of love.” “Love is necessary for the rescuing of the world. It is the only force which can bring peace between the nations, each of which has a mission to accomplish on earth. Love is beginning to appear; goodness, justice and light will triumph; it is simply a matter of time. The religions need to be purified; they all contain something divine, but this has been obscured by the repeated addition of human conceptions. All believers will have to get together and agree on one single principle: to make love the basis of any and every belief. Love and brotherhood, that is the common basis.”<sup>18</sup> Teilhard and Hardy would not have quarrelled with this - indeed, would any one?

It is so very much a matter of perspective. As we move into the 21st century, becoming ever more a “one-world” society and having to think globally to meet our increasingly global scale problems, our perspectives changing - and changed and enlarged, too, by and through science - it is time to take a harder look at our religions from a new perspective. As we see that we are all holons and parts of holons, so, too, perhaps we should see our different religions as holons and parts of a greater holon, or ultimate One. It is becoming more and more evident, as Teilhard foresaw that we are on a path of “convergence.” Great strides have been taken in this last century in the meeting of religions and religious traditions, witnessed in the growth of the inter-faith movement and through the intermingling of peoples of different faiths. Theologians are looking to a reconciliation of religions, as instanced, for example, in the work of Keith Ward and John Hick, and in the steps being taken by Hans Kung and others, in the development and promotion of “a global ethic.”<sup>19</sup> Steps are being taken, too, towards the meeting and reconciliation of science and religion - seen in such books as John Polkinghorne’s *Science and Theology*.<sup>20</sup> Now, in the 21st century, it is time for the full wisdom of science, humanism and the religious spirit to meet - to draw together all the data, and the basic insights of science and religion, into a new socio-theological thought pattern, philosophy and outlook appropriate for our new, global, age - a new story. Thomas Berry, the cultural historian, said that no community can exist without a community story. We have a new universal scientific creation story but have not yet integrated this into our lives.<sup>21</sup> This is true and it needs building up. As a step towards this, Hardy’s thinking and programme of data-collection I believe can make a significant contribution. Within this programme the Religious Experience Research Centre is currently promoting a study into the concept of there being a “common core” at the heart of spiritual/religious experience. Hopefully, this will be able to add a little to cross-cultural

understanding - and development of our global story. And Teilhard's vision?

How are we to see, develop and promote the thought and vision of Teilhard de Chardin in the 21st century? Steven Rockefeller writes, "In this new ecological age of developing global community and interfaith dialogue, the world religions face what is perhaps the greatest challenge that they have ever encountered. Each is inspired by a unique vision of the divine and has a distinct cultural identity. At the same time, each perceives the divine as the source of unity and peace. The challenge is to preserve their religious and cultural

uniqueness without letting it operate as a cause of narrow and divisive sectarianism that contradicts the vision of divine unity and peace."<sup>22</sup> Is this not, too, in part, a matter of language? We need to develop a different language, a transcendence or re-relationship/clarification of our present terminology and current concepts that can so hold us back and with which others can so easily take issue or offence. This will be difficult, but should it not be attempted? If so, the question, and a very large question, is, how? Here, though, I must lay down my pen, for others, with Teilhardian fire, and greater skill, to take up.

John Franklin is a Trustee of the *Alister Hardy Trust*, Committee Secretary of the Executive Committee of the *Alister Hardy Society* and Secretary of the AHS London Group. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of *The British Teilhard Association*. Further information about the work of the *Religious Experience Research Centre* and the *Alister Hardy Society* can be obtained from Robert Waite, Hon. Administrative Secretary, *The*

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Views expressed are those of the author. They do not necessarily represent those of *The British Teilhard Association* or the *Alister Hardy Society*.

1. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955); Alister Clavering Hardy (1896-1985) (ed.)
2. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Collins, 1959, 26. *Le Phénomène humain* has now been re-published as *The Human Phenomenon* by Sussex Academic Press (1999) in a new and improved translation. (ed.)
3. Alister Hardy, *Darwin and the Spirit of Man*, Collins, 1984, 239
4. Alister Hardy, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, Clarendon Press, 1979, 136
5. *ibid*, 142
6. *ibid*, 131
7. Alister Hardy, *The Divine Flame*, RERU, 1966, 205
8. *ibid*, 229-230
9. *ibid*, 239
10. *ibid*, 240
11. *ibid*, 242
12. *ibid*, 244
13. *ibid*, 241-242
14. Teilhard, *Comment je crois*, 1934, 5; quoted in Christopher Mooney SJ, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*, Collins, 1966, 14
15. Jeanne-Marie Mortier, ed., *Lettres a Jeanne Mortier*, Seuil, 1984, 48
16. Matthew 2.37 - Jesus citing Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18
17. Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Penguin, 1966, 211-212
18. Peggy Mason and Ron Laing, *Sai Baba: The Embodiment of Love*, Gateway Books, 1994, 219
19. David Lorimer, ed., *Prophet for our Times: The Life & Teachings of Peter Deunov*, Element Books, 1991, 71 and 36
20. See Hans Kung and Karl-Josef Kuschel, ed., *A Global Ethic*, SCM Press and Continuum, 1993 - this contains, in "The Declaration Towards a Global Ethic" printed as its Introduction, the clause "We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic". See also Peggy Morgan and Marcus Braybrooke, ed., *Testing the Global Ethic: Voices from the Religions on Moral Values*, CoNexus Press, 1998
21. John Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology: an Introduction*, SPCK/Fortress Press, 1998
22. Thomas Berry CP, *The New Story: Comments on the Origin, Identification and Transmission of Values*, Teilhard Studies 1, Winter 1978, 1
23. Steven C. Rockefeller, *Spirit and Nature*, 169 - quoted at the beginning of Joel Beversluis, ed., *A Source Book for the Community of Religions*, The Council for a Parliament of World Religions, 1993

## **A MILLENNIUM POEM** **Venetia Carse**

I planted snowdrops on our lawn  
    beneath the shade of apple trees  
to commemorate two thousand years  
    since Christ was born.  
I planted them in clusters,  
    in sunlit dappled shade,

a rosary, a living prayer  
    of pure white metals strewn in hope  
to celebrate - to welcome in  
    the new Millennium.

I scattered golden showers of Angel Tears

to enrich the human heart,  
as Shepherds those many years ago, their hearts  
inspired by the Celestial Host,  
did leave their flocks for the manger in Bethlehem,  
did kneel before the Heavenly Babe  
"Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God!"  
born to lead us through the Darkness  
confounding Mind and Soul, newborn to teach us  
Agape  
and how to lead our lives.

Come, celebrate the birth of Christ,  
Christ's Mass - the New Millennium!

Come, celebrate this gift of Light -  
the "Word" that radiates Truth!  
And when Big Ben shall strike the Hour,  
bells peal and bonfires  
light the sky - join hands across the world  
and sing:

"Come, plant a tree - a flower - a Christmas Rose,  
a resolution - a prayer:  
Come, welcome the Christ Child to your hearts  
and dedicate the coming years  
'to harness for God the energies of love':  
Come, build God's Kingdom in our strife-torn world."

## **PROPHETIC VOICES: TEILHARD AND MERTON**

### **Michael Le Morvan**

The voice of the prophet reminds us of God's word for today. The vision of the seer shows us the reality which underlies surface appearances. Both Teilhard and Merton were mystics which meant that they saw "reality" and expressed it so that we might be led to "see" for ourselves. The essence of the mystical experience is the knowledge (of the heart not the head) of unity. Somehow mystics know that they are ONE with creation, with the world, with our fellow human beings. In this Oneness we experience the whole of reality, created or even in some sense uncreated. Each of us is a part of this. Mystics are led to find their real hidden self, immortal, constant, unchanging, not bound by space or time.

Merton had an experience of God in 1939 which determined his vocation to the priesthood and led him to Gethsemane Abbey in 1942. Inexorably he fell victim to the stress of trying to suppress his vocation as a writer and in 1949 he had a breakdown from which he was released by an experience which was essentially that of the "present moment" and which brought him freedom. He wrote: "... My love for everybody is equal, neutral and clean. No exclusiveness. Simple and free as the sky, because I love everybody and am possessed by nobody..."

An experience of complete freedom and love in the

touch of reality!

Many years later he had a similar experience in Louisville. He was overwhelmed by the love within for everybody in the busy city which made him a part of their lives and enabled him to see with startling clarity that he was part of their world and they of his. In this everything belonged to God.

Teilhard also came to "see" the love which was at the centre of the universe and brought life to it. He speaks of the experience in the "Three Stories" written in the trenches. In these he describes how he saw that God is the energy and hence the love at the centre of the universe. This was experienced and described in Eucharistic terms as he prayed "The Mass on the Word." They determined his life's work and inspired his many writings. They led him inexorably to describe his whole experience in terms of Christogenesis to Omega. He had seen. He wrote his last essay "The Christic" to pull everything together for the last time. He still retained "the glorious vision" of his early years which he had striven so faithfully to communicate to others.

Both Teilhard and Merton saw reality as the Divine Reality at the core of the universe, expressed as love, and found in every person. Let us ask to see it for ourselves.

## **RECEPTION AT THE REFORM CLUB**

More than 60 guests of Association attended the reception held at the Reform Club on 16 September 1999 to mark the publication by Sussex Academic Press of *The Human Phenomenon* in a new and improved translation by Sarah Appleton-Weber who flew over specially from the States for the event. We wish her and her publishers every success. Our

thanks to Bronwen Astor for facilitating a most enjoyable evening. This new translation will appeal, not only to newcomers to Teilhard's vision, but also to those who first read Teilhard 30 or more years ago.

*The Human Phenomenon* is available at a special price for members. Please contact the Secretariat in Beaumaris for further details.

## **OBITUARIES**

### **Frank Leadbetter (1910-1999)**

Frank Leadbetter died in September 1999. Originally from Lancashire, he spent the last years or so of his life

in London where he played an active part in exploring the potentialities for spiritual growth. Indeed, it could be

said he was one of that rare breed of men and women who had experienced cosmic consciousness. Sadly his last months were dogged by physical ill-health. Last September he went to Hampshire for a rest when he sustained a serious fall from which he never recovered.

Frank was a good friend of Teilhard - and a good friend of the Association. One of those who faithfully attended our annual conferences at London Colney, Frank will be remembered with love and affection by all who knew him. RIP.(SC)

### **André Ravier SJ (1905-1999)**

André Ravier who died on 19 May 1999 will be remembered by his many friends at home and abroad as Teilhard's superior during the last five years of his life (1950-1955). And it was to Ravier that Teilhard wrote what turned out to be his last letter. He and Ravier were regular correspondents: 22 of Teilhard's letters are to be found in *Lettres intimes*, Aubier, 1974. Ravier gave the

memorial address at the mass on 25 March 1965 to mark the 10th anniversary of Teilhard's death. A prolific writer, André Ravier was, above all, a passionate and compassionate member of the Society of Jesus who would be happy to think we remember for the words with which he loved to end the mass he had just celebrated: "Go in the peace and joy of Christ." RIP. (SC)

## François Russo SJ (1909-1998)

François Russo will always be remembered as Teilhard's friend and defender who was never afraid to criticise where he thought objective criticism was due. Russo was recognised in his own right as expert in energetics and informatics, talents he used to advantage during the many years he worked as editor and writer at *Études* in Paris. He corresponded regularly with Teilhard during the latter's final exile in New York (1951-1955). His

name frequently occurs in Teilhard's correspondence with Jeanne-Marie Mortier. Of 30 letters Teilhard wrote to Russo the last is dated 5 March 1955. He played an active role in creating the *Association des Amis de Teilhard de Chardin* and even in his later years was a regular figure at conferences. I was privileged to meet him on several occasions during my years in Paris. RIP. (SC)

### TEILHARD'S LAST LETTER

***We reprint below as a tribute to the late André Ravier (1905-1999) our translation of Teilhard's last letter which he wrote in New York on Good Friday 8 April 1955<sup>1</sup>***

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.)

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 "How I See" which might perhaps please you. I shall send it to you.) (© Siôn Cowell, 1999/2000)

<sup>1</sup> Original French text in *Lettres intimes*, Aubier, 1974, 465-466. "What the World expects of the Church of God" appears in *Christianity and Evolution*, Collins, 1971, 212-220 and "How I See" (incorrectly entitled "My Fundamental Vision") was actually written in 1948 and appears in *Toward the Future*, Collins, 1975, 163-208.

### CREATIVE WITNESS (AND SOME SYNCHRONICITY) Peter Reid reports on a Sussex Bible Study Group

The Group has been reading extracts from *The Man Born to be King*, the set of twelve radio plays commissioned by the BBC in 1940. In these Dorothy Sayers re-created in realistic dramatic fashion the story of the four New

Testament gospels, as the authors of those had re-created the singular event which they saw as new creation. Unknown to us in that time of war Teilhard de Chardin, in far-away China, had completed the first

draft of *The Human Phenomenon*. For him creation was continually renewed in the great time-flow of evolution; and the human race was deeply involved in that process, because in human consciousness evolution had both formed and found itself. At about the same time Dorothy Sayers wrote, "The universe is not a finished work. Every mind within it is in the position of the audience; ... Or rather, every one of us is on the stage, performing a part in a play, of which we have not seen either the script or any synopsis of the ensuing acts."<sup>1</sup>

Teilhard valued human creativity and the scientific research which fostered some of it. He believed that this creativity could be channelled "along the lines of human energy"<sup>2</sup> in the forward thrust of evolution. Set against the great expanse of space-time, evolution moves towards wholeness, which may be seen by Christians as God's creation through Christ. Dorothy Sayers saw danger in the independence of artist or craftsman which could lead to self-centredness or arrogance; dramatised with the symbol of the master-builder who defies the architect; a sin of HUBRIS, with inevitable NEMESIS.<sup>3</sup> Teilhard, in 1948, added, as an appendix to *The Human Phenomenon*, "Some comments on the role and place of evil in an evolving world." This was to counter criticism of a work which appeared to overlook the shadow side of human nature. But, for Teilhard the vision was all-important; looking to the summit beyond the spiritual adventure trail of evolution, albeit far beyond the near horizon of the world. Confidence must be restored in the fulfilment of creation; and, for the Christian, in the scriptural promise of "glory and honour" to a human race "at first created lower than the angels."<sup>3</sup>

A poem on the dedicatory page of *The Man Born to be King* has a parable of the Architect and the Craftsman,

1. *The Mind of the Maker*, 1941

2. *Understanding and Using Art Along the Lines of human Energy*, 1939 - see Note 20, *The Human Phenomenon*, 261

3. *The Zeal of Thy House*, 1938

4. Heb. 2.7 quoting Ps 8

5. *The Makers*, 1945

6. *The Zeal of Thy House*

7. *The Human Phenomenon*, 71: "First of all the idea..."

each concerned only with his own rights and skills.<sup>4</sup> But a third voice is heard; that of the stone, the hard, lifeless material which is shaped to the whim of the sculptor, the architect or the master builder. In like manner we use the world to our advantage, with no reference to any "architect," - uncertain of our belief in God. For Teilhard, the "architect," rather than designing a blue-print, holds a compass pointing the way ahead. Indeed, the stone which played such a part in Teilhard's life as a scientist did not finally hold pride of place, (as "rock" or "foundation stone") to be a fundamental of creation. Paradoxically, that place was held by immaterial spirit-energy; or, in Christian terms, Christ Spirit.

Models of creativity offered by the two writers considered here are similar. Dorothy Sayers emphasises a universal aspect<sup>5</sup> as the three linked and concurrent stages of Idea all-embracing, Energy materialising and Power unfolding recall the Christian Trinity of Father, Word Incarnate and Holy Spirit. Teilhard uses a model of human creativity to demonstrate forward movement in evolutionary growth.<sup>6</sup> The instance illustrated is the growth of a phylum, where the process involves experimenting, seeking the way forward, searching for that compass bearing to an unknown future. Each unit (or "person") in this trinity of creation is interacting, reflecting back and forth, upon the others.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**31 March-2 April 2000.** "Towards the Fourth Millennium - Participating in the Creative Process" - Nineteenth International Teilhard Conference at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans, with Emily Binns, Siôn Cowell, Diarmuid Ó Murchú and Alan Nugent. Cost £120 (residential), £90 (non-residential). Further details from the Secretariat in Beaumaris.

***And something to keep in mind...***

Meetings of *Alister Hardy Society* local groups are regularly held in London and Oxford. Further details from John Franklin (0208.858.4750) or Marianne Rankin (01684.772417).

## A GOOD READ

***Knowing Jesus in the World: Praying with Teilhard de Chardin*, Robert Faricy SJ and Lucy Rooney SND de N, St Pauls, 1999, £4.99 (paperback)**

A very helpful book for all who are drawn to Teilhard's spirituality. The Foreword by Hans-Peter Kolvenbach, General of the Society of Jesus, Superior-General of the Society of Jesus, expresses warm appreciation of Teilhard's mission. It is an important contribution to the ever greater recognition of "the life and work of this companion of Jesus" by the Society and the wider Church to which he belonged. We hope the book will eventually be reprinted without the errors which the publishers themselves failed to correct in the first printing.

**Wider Horizons: Explorations in Science and Religion**, David Lorimer et al., ed., *Scientific and Medical Network*, 1999, £12 (paperback)

Contributions from scientists and thinkers across a wide range of disciplines include Ilya Prigogine, Henryk Skolimowski, Mae-Wan Ho, James Robertson, Robert Muller and many others. A useful overview of developments over the last 25 years.

**And a quick reminder...**

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

This 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" is still in print in hardback and paperback. A rewarding Easter gift to a friend or relative.

**Conversations about the End of Time**, Umberto Eco, Stephen Jay Gould, Jean-Claude Carrière, Jean Delumeau, Allen Lane, 1999, £14.99 (hardback)

Thought-provoking conversations at the dawn of the new millennium looking at questions such as: Why are we so fascinated with the apocalypse? Is time cyclical or linear? How do religions understand the end of Time?

Occasional papers by the *Religious Experience Research Centre* in Oxford cost £2.50. For further details and information on these and other publications, contact: Robert Waite, Administrative Secretary, *Alister Hardy Society*, Westminster College, Oxford OX2 9AT (tel. 01865.243006 or fax. 01865.201197).

## CAN YOU HELP?

Could you help run a local group? Would you like to share Teilhard's vision of an evolutionary universe with others? Volunteers are wanted to set up local reading groups to study Teilhard's writings. Groups like these are extremely popular in France - an old idea that is still

proving its worth. Why not build on French experience? The new translation of *The Human Phenomenon* would be an excellent starting point. Contact the Secretariat in Beaumaris if you would like to do something to share Teilhard's vision with those around you.

## POSTSCRIPT: THE TIMEWALK

The Timewalk spans the 15,000,000 years of cosmogenesis or cosmic evolution. John Woodcock says the Timewalk "helps us to recognise and respond to the essential wonder and creativity of the universe of which we are all a part. We can realise that the immensities of time and space are not as threatening as they may seem, but are, among other things, necessary for the creation of life on suitable planets throughout the universe, including human life on planet Earth." The Timewalk which was originally developed in the US can

be found, for example, at Braziers Park near Oxford but it is easily transposable into any place or space. It lends itself readily to contemplation or meditation on the wonder of the creative process that lies at the heart of the Teilhardian vision. According to Teilhard, full symbiosis or collective consciousness finds its ultimate completion in the process he calls omegagenesis (see Editorial above).

John Woodcock will be demonstrating the Timewalk at the Annual Conference (see above).

## COSMIC SENSE

"The cosmic sense must have been born as soon as humanity found itself facing the forest, the sea and the stars. And since then we find evidence of it in all our

experience of the great and the unbounded: in art, in poetry and in religion." (Teilhard, *Outline of a Personalistic Universe* (1936) in *Human Energy*, 82)

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