

# THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER



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## EDITORIAL

### “Every Penny Counts”

Autumn is a time when Finance Ministers start thinking about ways of increasing revenue. Our Treasurer is clearly in good company. Membership dues are the means to our survival. Therefore we need to get the maximum benefit from every single subscription. The 2000 Budget recognises the importance of encouraging charitable donations: hence the new Gift Aid rules which simplify the task of giving. We ask, in particular, those

members who are paying UK tax but who — for whatever reason — have been reluctant to enter into a rather ominous-sounding covenant to take an early opportunity of making a very simple declaration to the Association which will allow us to recover tax on every £ paid by those members.

Is this too much to ask? We hope not. Please help us survive.

## Apology

John Franklin has asked us to point out that errors in numbering the footnotes in his article on Hardy and Teilhard (Newsletter No. 8) are wholly ours. We apologise

to him and regret any embarrassment that may have been caused to John Franklin.  
Ed.

## “Patient Trust in Ourselves and the Slow Work of God”

Above all, *trust in the slow work of God.*

We are, quite naturally,  
impatient in everything  
to reach the end  
without delay.

We would like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way  
to something unknown,  
something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress

that your journey is made

by passing through  
instability.

And this may take a very long time...

And so, I believe it is with you.

Your ideas mature gradually -

let them grow,

let them shape themselves,  
without undue haste.

Do not try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstance  
acting on your own good will)  
will make you tomorrow.

Only God can say what this new spirit,

Anthony Grahame (with thanks to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin)

We are grateful to Anthony Grahame for the above. Does any reader know where the original might come from? Ed.

### **A Word from the Treasurer “Gift Aid”**

At the Annual General Meeting I promised information about the new legislation which has made it easier for charities to claim back tax already paid by members in respect of subscriptions and donations to the charity. What is important is that the charity's Treasurer/Accountant is able to identify the donor and trace the source of monies received and record the same for inspection by the Inland Revenue should this be required.

This means that subscriptions/donations/gifts may be made by cash, cheque, standing order or by some other form of bank transfer. An official receipt from the Association will be sent to you for your records.

The other thing that is necessary is that a donor must agree that the Association may claim back the tax the members have paid in respect of such gifts/subscriptions. So I ask you to sign the form of agreement we enclose which will cover all forms of gift made with effect from 6 April 2000 until you inform us in

Fred Redding  
Treasurer

gradually forming within you,  
will be.

Give our Lord the benefit of believing that  
*His hand leads you,*  
and accept the anxiety of being  
in suspense and incomplete.

writing to the contrary.

Agreement may be given by word of mouth (e.g. by telephone) or by e-mail in which case we shall send you a form of agreement for your approval and retention.

Where any member has made a donation through a company of which she or he is a director and set this in the past against corporation tax quite different rules now apply and I would ask you to write to me through the Secretariat in Beaumaris and I will let you know what is to be done.

These provisions came into force in the Spring Budget of this year and apply to all donations and subscriptions made from 6 April 2000. Those of you who have been kind enough to covenant subscriptions in the past will be glad to know these will stand for this year and enable us to reclaim tax paid on subscriptions made even before 6 April 2000. However we would appreciate your signature of the more liberal undertaking which will apply from now and into the future.

### **What Would We Do Without Cardinal Ratzinger?**

“The Cardinal we all love to hate” — this is what we are supposed to do to think judging from the hysterical media reaction to the latest declaration from Rome. On 6 August 2000 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which is headed by Cardinal Ratzinger published the Declaration *Dominus Iesus* suggesting, amongst other things, caution in using the plural word “churches” — especially in an ecumenical context. Within days of its publication the popular press had sensed yet another opportunity to have a go at the Catholic Church. And not only the tabloids. Ruth Gledhill in *The Times* wrote (4 September), under the headline “Churches stunned by Pope’s attack on ‘defects,’” that the declaration “which has been received with ‘stunned horror’ by bishops and Roman Catholic theologians throughout the world, threatens to undo decades of inter-faith bridge-building...”

Have many people have actually read *Dominus Iesus*? Probably not many — I suspect I am one of the few who have (it can easily be downloaded in English, French, Latin, etc. from the Internet). Does it say anything new?

Hardly. Will it really “undo decades of inter-faith bridge-building”? Most unlikely. Could it have been written with greater sensitivity? Perhaps. *Dominus Iesus* may not have been translated as well as it could have been. In the past Vatican statements were drafted in Latin before being translated into the vernacular. Today they are first drafted in, say, French, translated into Latin and then translated from Latin into other vernacular languages. This can cause problems. In *Dominus Iesus* Ruth Gledhill notes “Churches such as the Church of England... are not considered ‘proper’ Churches” while “some Churches — this would include the Eastern Orthodox — are ‘true particular Churches’ because they have preserved the ‘apostolic succession’ of bishops from the time of the Apostles” (§ 17). The declaration actually says the former “are not Churches in the proper sense” (“*sensu proprio Ecclesiae non sunt*”) — meaning, in the language of Catholic theologians, that amongst other things these churches lack the mark of catholicity.

From the earliest times the Latin Church has always understood the mark of “catholicity” to be communion

with the bishop of Rome and the “Apostolic Succession.” Both the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople believe they have preserved the “Apostolic Succession.” So, too, does the Church of England. Rome and Constantinople dispute this. Here matters stand for the present.

As we said earlier *Dominus Iesus* hardly contains anything new even if we agree the language in which it is expressed could be improved. The Catholic Church’s understanding of “Church” and the relationship of “the Catholic Church” to other Christian communities is spelled out in the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) — notably in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (1964) and the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964). Clearly this continues to exercise the minds of theologians and journalists alike. But what about the rest of us? Does it really matter what the Vatican says or does not say? Many of our members will yawn and move quickly on to other things. Others, like your editor, continue to believe, with Teilhard, that “the Church is the axial current of life...” (Journal, 13 December 1918, *Journal*, 377)

Teilhard was never afraid to stand up and be counted — even if this meant saying things which might not always reflect the flavour of the times. Henri de Lubac has little doubt that when Teilhard speaks of the Church he means the Church in communion with the bishop of Rome.

“The privilege claimed by the Roman Church,” Teilhard writes, “of being the sole authentic expression of christianity is far from being an unjustified pretension but is a response to an inevitable organic need... Christianity, by its very essence, is much more than a fixed system, formulated once and for all, of truths that must be accepted and preserved literally. For all its basis in a nucleus of ‘revelation’, it represents, in fact, a spiritual attitude in process of continual development: development of a christic consciousness that keeps pace with and is required by the growing consciousness of humanity. Biologically, it behaves like a ‘phylum’. By biological necessity, therefore, it must have the structure of a phylum, that is, it must constitute a progressive and coherent system of collectively associated spiritual elements. Clearly, *hic et nunc*, nothing within christianity but catholicism possesses these characteristics. There are doubtless many individuals outside catholicism who love and discern Christ and who are united to him as closely (and sometimes even more closely) than catholics. But these individuals are not grouped together in the ‘cephalised’ unity of a body that reacts vitally, as an organic whole, to the combined forces of Christ and

humanity. They are fed by the sap that flows in the trunk without sharing in its youthful surge and elaboration at the very heart of the tree. Experience shows that, not only logically, but factually, it is only in catholicism that new dogmas continue to germinate and, more generally, new attitudes are formed that, by process of continued synthesis between ancient Credo and views newly-emerged in human consciousness, pave the way for the coming of a christian humanism. Evidence suggests that if christianity is indeed destined, as it professes and feels, to be the religion of tomorrow, it is only through the organised and living axis of its Roman Catholicism that it can hope to match and assimilate the great modern currents of humanitarianism. To be catholic is the only way of being fully and completely christian” (*Introduction to the Christian Life*, 1944, X, 167-168 E; 195-197 F).

“The Church,” he says, “is phyletically essential to the completion of the human” (letter to Pierre Leroy SJ, 15 August 1951, *Lettres familières*, 107; *Letters from My Friend*, 98). He repeatedly expresses his belief “in the Church, mediatrix between God and the world” (letter to Auguste Valensin SJ, 22 August 1925, *Lettres intimes*, 125) in essays and correspondence throughout his life. “The Church,” he adds, “the principal focal point of inter-human relationships through super-charity; the Church, the central axis of universal convergence and precise point of contact between the universe and Point Omega” (*My Fundamental Vision*, No. 24, 1948, XI, 191-192 E; 206 F).

“I now feel myself,” he writes to Jean-Baptiste Janssens, “more indissolubly bound to the hierarchical Church and to the Christ of the Gospels than ever before in my life. Never has Christ seemed to me more real, more personal, more immense” (letter to Jean-Baptiste Janssens SJ, 12 October 1951, *Lettres intimes*, 1974, 399-400; *Lettres familières*, 115; *Letters from My Friend*, 105).

What would we do without Cardinal Ratzinger? But what would we (and the Church) do without Teilhard de Chardin?

*Siôn Cowell*

## Cosmic Harmony

Still, stone chapel by the M25  
While the sound of circulating traffic  
Roars and rushes through our ears, like  
God, as architects and theologians  
Have decreed that he shall be,

Waits, silent, motionless, somewhere  
In limbo; wavering between the organ  
And the whiff of incense.

What moves when we are still?



*Conversations with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*, Olivier Clément, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997, £10.99 (paperback)

An extremely worthwhile read by the eminent French theologian Olivier Clément based on conversations with Patriarch Bartholomew will help many in the west to appreciate the extremely rich and living tradition of what Pope John Paul III calls "the Church's eastern lung." Patriarch Bartholomew's comments on the dangers of nationalism taking hold of the Church are important in the light of the unfortunate rise of nationalism in the wake of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe.

*Nonzero, The Logic of Human Destiny*, Robert Wright, Little, Brown and Company, 2000, £22.50 (hardback)

Challenges the conventional view of Dawkins, Gould and others that biological evolution and human history are aimless. Wright finds support in many corners, including (not surprisingly) Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. An excellent Christmas present!

*Four books in an important series from the Vatican Observatory, Vatican City State, and the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences, Berkeley : Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action...*

*Chaos and Complexity*, Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy and Arthur Peacocke, ed., 1997, £16.50 (paperback)

*Evolution and Molecular Biology*, Robert John Russell, William Stoeger SJ and Francisco Ayala, ed., 1998, £18.50 (paperback)

*Neuroscience and the Person*, Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy, Theo Meyering and Michael Arbib, ed., 1999, £19.95 (paperback)

*Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature*, Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy and C.J. Isham, ed., 1999, £17.50 (paperback)

An important series of books containing scientific research papers presented at conferences jointly sponsored over more than ten years by the Vatican Observatory and the Center for Theology and Natural Sciences. The titles of the series speak for themselves. Good value for money and well worth dipping into if you do not feel like reading them in a single session!

*And forthcoming...*

*Spirituality and Society in the New Millennium*, Ursula King, ed., Sussex Academic Press, April 2001, £45 (hardback)

Looking at contemporary understanding and practice of spirituality with contributions from Rosemary Harthill, David Hay, Philip Sheldrake, Linda Woodhead and others.

Occasional papers by the *Religious Experience Research Centre* cost £2.50. For further details and other publications, contact: The Religious Experience Research Centre, University of Wales Llanbedr Pont Steffan, Ceredigion SA48 7ED.

### **"Top of the Pops"**

The American Teilhard Association *Newsletter*, Spring 2000, reports *The Human Phenomenon* tops the List of the 100 Best Spiritual Books of the Twentieth Century. Leading publisher of general religious works HarperSanFrancisco commissioned a panel of leading scholars to canvas the 100 most influential spiritual nooks of the twentieth century. The book receiving the most nominations was Teilhard's *Le Phénomène humain*, only recently republished in a new translation under its correct title *The Human Phenomenon*.

Other classic volumes in the Top Ten were *I and Thou* by Martin Buber, *Black Elk Speaks* by John Neihardt,

*Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Shunryu Suzuki and *Waiting for God* by Simone Weil.

HarperSanFrancisco say of Teilhard: "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was one of the most distinguished thinkers and scientists of our time. He fits into no familiar category for he was at once a biologist and a paleontologist of world renown, and also a Jesuit priest. He applied his whole life, his tremendous intellect and his great spiritual faith to building a philosophy that would reconcile Christian theology with the scientific theory of evolution, to relate the facts of religious experience to those of natural science."

### **Nineteenth International Teilhard Conference : A Meditation**

*We have pleasure in publishing by popular demand the meditation led by Ernest and Paul Sheard at the Teilhard Conference on 1 April 2000.*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin opens our eyes to "see" and introduces us to a creation-centred spirituality. This short meditation will be creation-centred, and will have pools of silence in it, because it is only in the silence, "standing before God with the mind in the heart," that

we can come to know and appreciate, however dimly, the greatness and the love of the Creator, and begin to move towards Omega, the fulfilment and union of all that is.

Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes...

Teilhard saw and took off his shoes, and he invites us to do the same and join him in adoring the Eternal Presence revealed in "Harsh matter... in perilous matter... in mighty matter, which constantly shatters our mental categories and forces us to go ever further and further in pursuit of the truth."

"The world is still being created, and in the world it is Christ who is being fulfilled." When I had heard and understood this saying, I looked, and I saw, as though in an ecstasy, that through all nature I was immersed in God.

Blessed be you, universal matter, immeasurable time, boundless ether, triple abyss of stars and atoms and generations: you who by overflowing and dissolving our narrow standard of measurement, reveal to us the dimensions of God...

I acclaim you as the divine milieu, charged with creative power, as the ocean stirred by the Spirit, as the clay moulded and infused with life by the incarnate Word.

And yet he has the same problems and weaknesses that we have when we spend some time on the mount of contemplation.

How can it be when "I come down from the mountain" and in spite of the glorious vision I still retain, I find that I am so little better a person, so little at peace, so incapable of expressing in my actions, and thus inadequately communicating to others the wonderful unity that I feel encompassing me?

I begin to think that most of our weaknesses are due to the fact that our "belief" is too narrow, and that we don't believe through to the end.

## Local Groups

*In our last Newsletter we asked whether you could help run a local group. Ann Parker in Nottingham took up the challenge. Her report will be published in our next Newsletter..*

If you have any ideas on the sort of information anyone wishing to start a group might find useful, please contact the Secretariat in Beaumaris. We should like to have a “starter pack” that would include tips on setting up and running a group as well as suitable material to get them started. What would you need to start a group?

## Postscript

### **Newsflash from the Alister Hardy Society:**

4 November 2000, AHS Members Open Day, Harris Manchester College, Oxford, 10.00-16.00, contact Robert Waite (phone/fax: 01491.614777).

8 November 2000, AHS London Group, St Mary Abbots Church Hall, Vicarage Gate, Kensington, start 15.00, contact John Franklin (0208.858.4750).

13 January 2001, AHS Oxford and Cotswold Group, 2 Canterbury Road, Oxford, 10.00-15.30, contact Marianne Rankin (01684.772417)

7 February 2001, AHS London Group, St Mary Abbots Church Hall, Vicarage Gate, Kensington, start 15.00, contact John Franklin (0208.858.4750).

21 March 2001, AHS London Group, St Mary Abbots Church Hall, Vicarage Gate, Kensington, start 15.00, contact John Franklin (0208.858.4750).

## Cosmic Life

**“To live the cosmic life  
is to live with the dominating consciousness  
that one is an atom of the cosmic and mystical body of Christ.”**

*(Cosmic Life, 1916, XII, 70 E; 81 F)*

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*The Teilhard Newsletter* is published by *The British Teilhard Association*. We always welcome contributions and comments which should be sent to the Editor, Siôn Cowell, Plas Maelog, Beaumaris LL58 8BH, GB — Wales:

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