



TEILHARD PERSPECTIVE

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President's Corner John Grim, November 2015

Remarks at the Teilhard 60th Anniversary Georgetown University April 9, 2015

Thank you very much, Frank and Mary Frost, for organizing this gathering. My gratitude also goes to Georgetown University for hosting this event. As we were discussing earlier, it is so encouraging when we come together as the Teilhard family, the Teilhard community in the United States. In this spirit, Jack Haught will give the annual Teilhard lecture this May to honor the 60th anniversary of Teilhard's death. Jack has devoted his life to locate Teilhard's thought in relation to contemporary questions of religion and science.

I also want to acknowledge Kathleen Duffy's tireless work for the American Teilhard Association as the editor of the Teilhard Study series. We are an active, small, and voluntary organization with a domestic and international membership close to 700 strong. We manage to carry out our publication and programmatic work that provides insight and raises questions regarding the relevance of Teilhard's thought. I want to remember several other

people: Thomas King has been mentioned, let me also mention Thomas Berry, Jim Salmon, Winifred McCulloch, Ewert Cousins, Fanny deBary, Jim and Jayne Ann McPartlin. All of these people, and many more, have brought forward the American Teilhard Association in its current form. I acknowledge the major contributions of Mary Evelyn Tucker, Brian Thomas Swimme, Brian Brown, Arthur Fabel,



Georgetown University, April 2015

Donald St John and numerous others who participate in the work of our association. Teilhard's relevance is obviously not just dependent upon Teilhard's life and thought, but on a lineage of like-minded companions along the way. I sense this every time I read significant thinkers whose publications

continue to provide insights into religion, the sacred, and meaning in relation to our evolutionary cosmos. In settings such as this one today, then, we explore human-Earth and human-cosmic relations in new ways that are unsettling, provocative, and exciting. For example, let's briefly consider theology, science, ecology, and the idea of progress—Teilhard made contributions in all three of these areas and he has been criticized here as well.

Teilhard's Theology

Theologically, consider Jack Haught's earlier remark about the sense of God in traditional Christian communities at a time when the church was not capable of accepting evolution. In this context some of Teilhard's theological ideas were problematic, both for him and for the Christian community broadly conceived. Consider three theological proposals, namely Teilhard's sense of creation not as caught in the snare of "the world, the flesh, and the devil," but as "the divine milieu." Second, think about Teilhard's rejection of original sin as a pejorative perspective on creation, and, third, his questions regarding the nature of the "soul" as integrally related to evolutionary dynamics. During his life from 1881 to 1955, Teilhard often moved along a theological knife's edge. Admittedly, the early 20th century was a time of great theological ferment. Teilhard ran headlong into opposition from traditional thinkers who resisted what they saw as the corrosive influence of modernism on Catholic teachings.

Most importantly, Teilhard did not have a theological community of like-minded thinkers with whom he could consult. During most of his life he lacked sympathetic partners or friendly critics with whom he could develop his theological and metaphysical ideas. It is the case that he had a limited science community, and he was a geologist who was internationally recognized. His scientific studies were published during his life and, thanks to Karl and Nicole Schmitz-Moormann, we have much of that work available in English. However, his speculative philosophical and metaphysical thought was not formally published until after his death. Thus, it has come to those of us in the Teilhard community to explore and to critique in appreciative ways the relationships of his theological and scientific thought.

For Teilhard, spirit-matter was at work in the world and matter and energy were two dimensions of the same evolutionary process. Interesting, just as Albert Einstein spoke of space-time as a unific dimension in his theory of relativity, so Teilhard spoke of matter-energy as a single reality. For Teilhard, as we know, spirit, or energy, which he also

named the Christic, drew matter forward. If energy did not draw matter forward in time, matter would collapse. Matter for Teilhard was determined on the one hand by gravity as well as pulled forward by spirit. In Teilhard's terminology, the Christic is what drew all of us toward the future.

This is where Jack Haught's work has been so helpful for all of us in understanding the Christic as a sense of future promise. Jack has highlighted Teilhard's seeing of the universe as resonant with meaning, not devoid of it. He has also made helpful connections between Teilhard's perspective and the covenantal promise in the Hebrew Bible.

The Perspective of Science in Teilhard's Evolutionary Thought

If we consider the controversy surrounding Teilhard's theology, and the polemic addressed to his science, a shared critique surfaces. That is, Teilhard had a teleological vision of the direction of unfolding evolutionary processes. These come together in his articulation of what he named the Law of Complexity-Consciousness. Teilhard understood the energies of evolution as operative at the micro level as an inwardness of matter from the great flaring forth of the universe. Teilhard also had a sense of evolution as a totalizing milieu that oriented matter to be inherently creative but did not direct the material process of evolution. Thus, galaxies could arise from the primal particulate expanding universe. Small scale changes obviously coordinated with large scale processes to bring forth emergent possibilities. For Teilhard, possibilities such as galaxies or planets or cellular life could happen, but they did not need to happen. Collapse could have predominated, but it did not.

The critiques of Teilhard's ideas raised by the theological and the scientific communities are different. However, they share a concern for the ways in which Teilhard understood matter-spirit as orienting evolution. Theologically, the inward, Christic dimension of matter challenged conventional concepts of a transcendent Divine. In a traditional Christian view, God created matter, but the divine was disengaged from the seemingly

corrupted fragmentation and mortality of created matter. Scientifically, Teilhard's sense of an inner energetic patterning within matter has only recently begun to be appreciated by thinkers who speak of emergent evolutionary dynamics. Prior to these ideas about complexity and consciousness, Teilhard's ideas about evolution were marginalized in the science community. For example, one of the geologists who invented the idea of "punctuated equilibrium" to describe the emergent activities in Earth's evolution, dismissed Teilhard's earlier ideas of evolutionary "thresholds" that expanded beyond prior realities. That Teilhard maintained good working relationships with the geologists with whom he worked is testimony both to his personality and to their shared love of dynamic processes open to exploration. Teilhard's sense of the depth dimension of interiority in evolutionary and Earth processes were not always well-received by some in the science community. But Teilhard was not without colleagues who wondered with him about the emergence of large-scale pattern in the expanding universe, as well as biological life, and reflective consciousness in the human.

Ecology and Teilhard's Thought

We can also consider the question of ecology in Teilhard's thought, namely, the interdependence of inorganic and organic life. Some students of Teilhard will make an argument that he was an ecologist. That is, he saw the dependence of the human on all previous life. But we know Teilhard was a trained geologist not an ecologist. Ecology is a specific science on the relationship of organisms in an environment, or an eco-system. Ecology was not his specialty. Still, it means little to collapse this argument into a "disciplinolatry" or pointless retreat into the differences of scientific methodologies. More importantly, we can ask if Teilhard had a sense of the role of living creatures on sustaining the human?

Teilhard is not without deep love and appreciation for the diverse forms of life throughout the Earth. However, for Teilhard, they were indispensable in the formation of the human as

a species. Yet his awareness of the roles that soils and other species play in the ongoing formation and sustenance of our bodies and minds was not fully formed. As Thomas Berry observed, following Teilhard's geological work, we humans emerge out of the florescence of life in the Cenozoic period of the past 65 million years. The complexity of our minds, then, comes out of this intense expansion of a diverse lifeworld. Berry realized that if you diminish this lifeworld, you diminish the whole human capacity of creative thought as it goes forward. Indigenous peoples in their own ways realized this in relation to local bioregions. Today, this realization finds eloquent expression in Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Yet even in this splendid document, the depth of Teilhard's cosmology of inwardness in evolutionary matter-energy is only suggested. Of the world itself, Teilhard had a vision of the divine milieu as sustaining and dynamically drawing evolution forward. His is a profound aesthetic sensibility inspired by a mystical vision of evolutionary processes as orienting the human.

The Idea of Progress and the Evolution of Humans

One of the driving philosophical perspectives in the Western worldview of his day was the emphasis on progress underlying evolution. Especially in the French intellectual world this progress ethos was linked to the emergence of human rationality. Moreover, perspectives on social order explained human communities as manifesting evolutionary development by constantly improving through ever more complex organizations and dominating exploitation of their environments. Social Darwinists suggested that evolution supports a view of human societies becoming better, and eugenics even connected that betterment to race issues reflecting colonial hegemony. Teilhard is largely located in that intellectual milieu of Enlightenment progress. Evolution becomes centered on expanding collective human consciousness. From this perspective human emergence marks the fulfillment of evolution itself.

Teilhard uses the term “hominization” to refer to an evolutionary process that moves through the universe into the galaxies, our galaxy, our solar system, through the spirit of Earth and into the formation of humans. The human for Teilhard manifests the process of evolution as well as the promise and culmination of that evolution.

Mainstream religious and scientific thought in the West separated the culminating drive in the evolutionary process, namely, human collective consciousness, from material processes on Earth and especially from the biological diversity of life. Among humans, for example, indigenous peoples were imaged as “traditionally” frozen in their own pasts even though they saw themselves as changing and adapting to imposed conditions. They were viewed by others as exhausted remnants of the evolutionary spirit that had passed through them. It is clear this is due to the progress ethos of the mainstream lineages of western Enlightenment philosophical thought. Teilhard can be located in a religious and humanist branch of this philosophical tree.

Teilhard’s sense of an evolutionary spirit was that it moved through a material stage or a human collective expression ever onward. From this perspective, indigenous peoples were remnant collectives. Their “religious” ways, for example, no longer manifest that divine milieu. Yet, in my studies with indigenous peoples, particularly American Indian peoples in the prairies and northern woodlands in North America, I have found profound religious and spiritual life that has endured centuries of oppression and dispossession. Teilhard observed that among early humans, and later indigenous peoples, the spirit of the Earth moved through them. For Teilhard, the spiritual dynamic in evolution moves from early hunter gatherers into later civilizational realms of the so-called “axial” or world religions. Christianity especially became the ultimate expression of human complexity and consciousness for Teilhard and for many scholars in the early study of the History of Religions such as Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, and Joachim Wach. Native peoples and the relatedness they felt with an

animated world of living presences were understood as having remained in an evolutionary past.

Conclusion

Therefore, we can ask: Is Teilhard relevant to our current challenges? Definitely, most definitely! His relevance goes beyond pedestaling Teilhard, or becoming discouraged by his intellectual or ecological limitations. Even here in this room at Georgetown we have a beautiful bronze bust of Teilhard by Malvina Hoffman. What I am suggesting is that Teilhard would not want to be pedestaled, nor would he appreciate being dismissed as simply a person of his period. I think he would want people to encounter and expand his thought, work with his life and ideas, and go forward with his insights and experiences.

So how do we go forward with his life and thought? Let’s consider this one point, namely, Teilhard’s critique of creation as being completed, as simply a past event that is expanding outward. Some people questioned Teilhard’s early turn from Genesis as the fixed story of creation in a remote past towards an evolutionary understanding of a dynamic ongoing present. Just think what a significant challenge Teilhard presents to our concepts of time. I want to recall the comments made on this panel about spirit, love, and the Christic pulling us forward. The creative process for Teilhard was not simply in the formative past; rather, cosmology occurs both now and in relation to the future. Thus, “cosmogogenesis” as multiple dimensions of unfolding time underlies all of his thinking. Cosmogogenesis was for Teilhard both a name for the early universe, a micro world that shaped material reality, as well as the term to describe the ongoing universe, the macro world in all of its churning creativity. Our world is creative, evolutionary activity. Teilhard would not want us to lose our zest for understanding, participating in, and nurturing the integral dynamics of our world.

Through Teilhard, then, we extend his thought to encounter ecological thought. That is, we realize our total interrelatedness with the organic and inorganic worlds. Hominization becomes itself a stage for realizing the Anthropocene – human-

induced change on planet Earth. The community of life that we are, that we depend upon, has been shut down extensively by hominization. As we revisit that thought we begin to realize the creative possibilities that Teilhard lays out in cosmogenesis, that this world around us is an interdependent world, and we recover again a depth dimension of ourselves in relationship to the Earth community. Through recovery of our inherent relatedness to our world, we rediscover our hominization on and with the planet. Though Teilhard might not have a developed ecological component exactly, but by extension, he gives rise to an even more profound ecological insight.

*To view video of this event go to:
<https://president.georgetown.edu/initiatives/teilhard.html>*

“MASS ON THE WORLD”

*Georgetown University
April 9, 2015*

Today’s “Mass on the World” is not a Catholic Eucharistic Liturgy. It is a reflective reading of selected excerpts from an essay by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ. For Teilhard the essay was a mystical expression of the presence and activity of God in all creation.

Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the death
of Teilhard de Chardin in New York City
on Easter Sunday, April 10, 1955

Selected Readings from the original text of
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ
Text selection by Kathleen Duffy, SSJ,
and Frank Frost

HISTORY AND SPIRIT OF “MASS ON THE WORLD”

In the summer of 1923 Teilhard de Chardin was working a paleontological dig on the edge of the Ordos Desert in Inner Mongolia. As a priest he had made a serious personal commitment to say Mass daily. So when camping out in primitive conditions

made this impossible, his mystical sense took hold. The Eucharist for him was more than a matter of consecrating and offering up tokens of bread and wine.

Five years earlier, huddled in a shelter from shelling and tracer fire on the front lines of WWI, he had written that Christ’s continuing incarnation “is not confined to the particle of matter [of bread] ... The transubstantiation is encircled by a halo of divinization that extends to the whole universe.”

Now, on the edge of the Ordos, Teilhard expanded at length on that idea in an essay he called “Mass on the World.” The language of this prayer is deeply steeped in Teilhard’s persona as a priest of Christ. But throughout his life Teilhard was also able to articulate his vision in ways people could embrace whether they believed differently or not at all.

For example, at dawn on New Year’s Day 1932, Teilhard led a prayer for his gathered Yellow Expedition colleagues, mostly non-believers, that echoed “Mass on the World.”: “My dear friends,” he said, “we have met this morning to come before God at the beginning of this new year. Of course, probably, for not one of us here does God mean, or seem, the same thing as for any other of us.” But he went on to pray, “What we ask of that universal presence which envelops us all, is first to unite us, as in a shared, living, center with those whom we love, those who so far away from us here, are themselves beginning this same new year.”

It is in this spirit, knowing that people drawn to this assembly today hail from many different traditions, that we together celebrate an abbreviated version of Teilhard’s “Mass on the World.”

(Selections from)
MASS ON THE WORLD
THE WORLD AWAKES

(GONG SOUNDS)

LEAD READER:

Over there, on the horizon, the sun has just touched with light the outermost fringe of the eastern sky. Once again, beneath this moving sheet of fire, the living surface of Earth wakes and trembles and begins its fearful travail.

LEAD READER:

Since once again, Lord, here in the steppes of Asia — I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer to you all the labors and sufferings of the world.

GATHERING OF THE GIFTS

READER 1:

Lord, Grant me the mystic presence of all those whom the light is now awakening to the new day. One by one, Lord, I see and I love all those whom you have given me to sustain and charm my life.



*Ordos Desert, where Teilhard wrote
"Mass on the World" in 1923*

READER 2:

One by one I also number all those who make up that other beloved family which has gradually surrounded me, its unity fashioned out of the most disparate elements, with affinities of the heart, of scientific research and of thought.

READER 1:

And again one by one I call before me the whole vast anonymous army of living humanity; those who surround me and support me though I do not know them; those who come, and those who go; above all, those who in office, laboratory and factory, through

their vision of truth or despite their error, truly believe in the progress of earthly reality and who today will take up again their impassioned pursuit of the light. It is to this deep ocean of humanity that we desire all the fibers of our being to respond.

READER 2:

All the things in the world to which this day will bring increase; all those that will diminish; all those too that will die: all of them, Lord, I try to gather into my arms, so as to hold them out to you in offering.

This is the material you desire: nothing less than the growth of the world borne ever onwards in the stream of universal becoming.

ALL:

Receive, O Lord, this all-embracing host which your whole creation, offers you at this dawn of a new day. In this formless mass you have implanted an irresistible desire which makes us cry out, believer and unbeliever alike: "Lord, make us one."

HYMN: "Ubi Caritas"

CONSECRATING THE GIFTS

(GONG SOUNDS)

LEAD READER:

Blazing Spirit, Fire, personal, super-substantial, be pleased once again to come down and breathe a soul into the newly formed, fragile film of matter with which this day the world is to be freshly clothed.

LEAD READER:
Radiant Word,
blazing Power,
you who mold the
manifold so as to
breathe your life into
it; I pray you, direct
and transfigure the
earthly travail which
I have gathered
into my heart and
now offer you in its
entirety. Remold it, rectify it, recast it down to the
depths from whence it springs.



LEAD READER:
You know how your creatures can come into being,
only like shoot from stem, as part of an endlessly
renewed process of evolution.

ALL:
**Over every living thing which is to spring up, to
grow, to flower, to ripen during this day say again
the words: This is my Body.**

ALL:
**And over every death-force which waits in
readiness to corrode, to wither, to cut down, speak
again your commanding words which express the
supreme mystery of faith: This is my Blood.**

ALL:
**Fire in the Earth. It is done. Once again the Fire
has penetrated the earth.**

HYMN: “Ubi Caritas”

An Excerpt from Searching for “The Ground of Being”: Scientists, Theologians and Philosophers Pool Their Efforts

*By Thierry Magnin,
Rector of the Catholic University of Lyons*

IS THERE A TRACE OF THE GROUND OF BEING IN EMPIRICAL REALITY?

As our basic purpose in this paper remains oriented to research, we can now question ourselves as to whether the researcher in science (who also happens to be in quest of meaning) can detect any traces of “the Ground of Being” in the empirical reality he studies. Does the One leave an imprint on the world that is accessible to scientific observation? For me, personally, the unifying principle that seems to drive evolution toward more and more complexity, from its beginnings in the universe to the emergence of consciousness in man (within the double context of entropy and negative entropy) can be considered a sign of the One, partially observable at work in empirical reality. Here I call on the reflections of Teilhard de Chardin, who was much impressed by what he called “union that differentiates” to back me up in this belief: *Nature at an advanced stage, in opposition to these early inert masses in which elements seem to melt together and disappear, seems, at an organic stage, to favor associations that function in a quite contrary way. At that further stage, the elements that come together do so without negating their differences. On the contrary, their uniting intensifies their distinctness... In all sorts of experimental domains, real union does not act as a merger but is an agent of differentiation. We need to understand this when on the verge of making the “Great choice.”*¹

“Union” and “Differentiation” are two of Teilhard’s key words. To summarize his vision of evolution, the rise in complexity has accompanied the universe through its various stages, from inert matter to organic life, to its culmination in self-conscious man, and finally to a form of spiritualizing socialization enveloping the planet (called by him the *noosphere*). In this vital surge of matter/energy, he envisioned the eventual emergence of a wonderful new world, all of its constituents converging at a future Omega point (which he identified with the

¹Teilhard de Chardin, *Texte sur la Grande Option*, Cahiers du monde nouveau. 1945. 1.3.

cosmic Christ). He also saw globalization as part of this process, unifying the multiple in the One: as a manifestation of *the aspiration to unity of the universe surrounding us* (as he wrote in a letter to l'abbé Godefroy and l'abbé Breuil in February of 1935).

This “differentiating union” which scientific observation seems to concur in, can, in my opinion, be considered as one of these “signs” that point to that Ultimate Reality which escapes scientific observation. Whether or not one shares Teilhard's spiritual perspective, one can concur in thinking that a dynamic unifying principle—one of connection



Thierry Magnin

and relation—is at the heart of the evolutionary process. One can see it at work in the cooperative manner in which many species unite their forces, even if chance and necessity are also responsible for the on-going process.

“Everything is relationship,” some go as far as to say, observing the progressive increase in connections, reactions, and finally conscious relations, in the interactions taking place through the eons since the Big Bang: first between elementary particles, then between atoms, eventually organizing in molecules, with inert matter becoming more and more complex, (the principle of non-separability proving their underlying unity for the observer); then, with the emergence of organic matter, self-organization takes over, an ever-growing complexity-in-unity flowering first in the beauty of vegetation,

then in the constant adaptation of animal instinct (now considered to be a form of intelligence) to insure survival, constant invention and altered relationships leading to surprising new species—until hominid evolution crosses a final threshold, with man becoming a conscious being, conscious of his own consciousness...

Both the physical sciences and the social sciences can be called on today to analyze these interactions: the development of *reflexive* reactions becoming *reflective* reactions, and gradually taking form in personal as well as social responsibility. Each scientific discipline will approach those connections and relations that are key actors in evolution in separate ways. Where man is concerned, it is in relationships that he finds his self-definition: in his relation to the continually evolving cosmos, to others (whether to individuals or to groups), to himself as subject or object (in his relation to history: his own, his society's or the world's), or to God (either in silence or in prayer, in acts of sharing or of charity)—all of which involve his physical, emotional, psychic and spiritual health.

These relationships can also wound and tear apart: they can confront a person with the enigma of evil—of sin when the hurts inflicted are voluntary. Everyone is called upon to take stock of the extent to which destroying relationships, or tearing up the social fabric, lead to immeasurable consequences for oneself as well as for others. All of which goes to say how basic relations are, even in a negative way. In a positive sense, forgiveness restores relationships that have been torn apart; it binds up the wounds. Yes! “Beings and things” exist through their relations, and can only be conceived of in a network of relations.

In addition, says Teilhard, : Everything in the universe comes into existence by union and fertilization—through the coming together of elements that are attracted to each-other, two by two, and are reborn in a third entity. Again: My dearest belief is that a loving Something is at the heart of the expanding universe. And finally: As I was saying,

isn't the deep contact between two beings, heart to heart, (quite independently from what they may communicate explicitly, in the form of ideas) the most creative act conceivable in our universe?

This passionate need for union (one that differentiates, through interaction) is like the signature of the Trinity, creating through the communion between the divine Persons, each distinct within their "differentiating" Unity. Either through practical action or through reflection, man adheres to the creative power of God, whether as a man of science, for example, an artist, a miner, or an engineer. He becomes an instrument of that Power. The greatness of man's actions comes from this passionate desire to unify, which impels him with a magnet-like attraction toward socialization—drawn by the love impulse culminating in Omega/Christ. For Teilhard, God's action never intervenes from the outside, in a superficial manner, the way creatures subject to time and space have to. His is a continuous force at work within reality, whose action gives it substance, allowing the existence of his creatures and sustaining their duration in time. The man of science is only capable of measuring the external dynamics of phenomena; he has no access to the transcendent presence through which all things are maintained in being. God's action reveals itself as a founding energy, a ground for the beings it supports, rather than expressing itself in sporadic, occasional acts. "Inspiring" the life of an individual being from within, the divine Will always acts through adhering to his creature's action. It then becomes, in some sense, the action of his creatures, in their own right, with the added ingredient of freedom when it comes to man—with all the risks and potentials that liberty entails.

For God, Creation, from its very beginning (along with its concomitant, time), is a single action

co-extensive with the duration of the universe—a universe which is in a process of constant transformation. In referring to the origin of man and declaring, quite exactly, that he is a creation of God's, we are not referring to a single act in time due to the Creator's intervention. Like Teilhard, we are saying that the whole of human existence, along with its natural causes, is dependent on the continued support of God's will. Thanks to a sustained growth in complexity, new species of the living, concentrating more and more sophisticated life, continue to appear. God is constantly breathing out new forms of being.

Comments on *Laudato Si'*

By Ruud Lubbers

*Originally Published 06/24/2015 at the
Earth Charter International Website*

In 2015, the U.N. will agree on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Conference of Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change will offer nations the opportunity to make a choice for Our Common Future. Pope Francis has just gone on record with *Laudato Si'*: the Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home.

This gives me an immense joy. As a Roman Catholic, born in 1939, I have lived my life according to the teachings of Christ, my beliefs based on Love as His most important lesson. Also, I have been greatly influenced by Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit cited by the Pope in *Laudato Si'*, whose *Le Phénomène Humain* taught me in terms of science what our history and future is about.

During my life I have had the fortune to raise my children to become aware of our misbehavior in relation to nature. In that time, Europe—in particular the Rhine area with Rotterdam as its main

²Teilhard de Chardin, *Oeuvres complètes* XII, *Le Seuil*, 281.

³T. de Chardin *Letters to Lucile Swan*, p.4.

⁴T. de Chardin *Lettre du 3,3,43* in C. Rivière *En Chine avec Teilhard (1938-1944)* Le Seuil 1968, p.232.

⁵JM Maldané *Le Christ et le cosmos*, Vrin, 2001 and A. Ganoczy, *La Trinité créatrice*, Cerf, 2003.

port—was recovering from the Second World War and industrializing thanks to the generous American Marshall Plan. While recovery was impressive, it came at the cost of the environment and nature. It was an important lesson for me to respect nature, Our Common Home.

Almost 50 years ago, the Club of Rome published *Limits to Growth* and I entered politics to contribute to sustainable growth, prioritizing the quality of life above simply growth as an end in itself. It was what I thought my children, then teenagers, deserved.

Shortly after, I met Gro Harlem Brundtland, then the Environment Minister (in Norway), while I was at the time the Minister for the Economy (in the Netherlands).

Later, the two of us became Prime Ministers of our respective countries and were together in Rio de Janeiro at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit in 1992, trying to give shape and substance to Our Common Future. It was there where NGOs and indigenous people convinced us to try and create the Earth Charter.

In the following years, people like Leonardo Boff, invited to go into silence by the Roman Catholic Church because of his Liberation theology, joined the effort, and now in 2015, the Pope, who chose to be named after Francis of Assisi, has written history with his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si.*

Only two generations after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Pope has made history by inviting mankind to the joyful celebration of life, contributing to the awareness needed to make a new start to achieve Our Common Future and to leave behind a period of self-destruction due to unsustainable growth and the lack of care for Our Common Home.



Ruud Lubbers

Our New Frontier: Planetary Biocide

By John Surette, SJ

“Frontiers...those geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find difficult to reach.”

Father General Nicholas

I was ten years of age in 1945 when the USA dropped the Atomic Bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki immediately killing at least 129,000 innocents. I remember assembling a scrapbook full of photos of the devastation that I cut from magazines and newspapers. Obviously these events made a deep impression on my young psyche. I didn't have any words for my experiences but at that tender age in some intuitive way I knew that planetary biocide was a possibility.

The dictionary describes biocide as something that happens to microorganisms in a laboratory petri dish. No reference is made to planetary biocide, that is, to the diminishment and destruction of Earth's web of life.

I am now eighty years of age and the reality of planetary biocide occupies a prominent place in my consciousness. It challenges me regarding what it means to be a man of faith, a Jesuit, and an Earthling. It moves me into the realization that “the most basic issue of our time is not our Divine-

human relations or our human-human relations but our Earth-human relations” (cultural historian Thomas Berry).

As planetary biocide intensifies we are reaching the limits of what life on Earth can tolerate. Within this pathology our human-human relations are becoming more violent and all of our works for social justice more difficult and challenging. As Earth, our outer world, becomes more degraded our Divine-human world, our inner world, is correspondingly affected. We are facing ultimacy and nothing less. We are the first humans ever to be facing such ultimacy. No previous humans could even have imagined such a situation. The identification of our human fate with the fate of Earth is becoming increasingly clear.

I ask myself what are we Jesuits called to do and to be within this new frontier? It seems to me that the future vitality of our Society will be measured by our ability to make a religious response to the fate of Earth. Making this response can be for us the overarching context for our being and our doing in this twenty-first century. Our Ignatian spirituality can be helpful. Birthing a planetary consciousness is a necessity. This consciousness requires that we move beyond understanding and experiencing ourselves as economic, political, and religious people into understanding and experiencing ourselves as also being planetary people.

Of special urgency is the restoration of a sense within ourselves and within others of Earth as being a Divine manifestation, a Divine Milieu, a scripture, and therefore a sacred place. Following our brother Teilhard de Chardin who saw us humans as emerging out of both the physical and spiritual dimensions of this sacred place, another urgency is the restoration of an awareness within ourselves and within others that we are not “on” Earth but “of” Earth. Our capacity for subjective communion with Earth needs to be nurtured. “The human community and the natural world will go into the future as a single sacred community or we will both experience disaster on the way” (Thomas Berry).

So here I am moving through my eighty-first year of life and very much aware that we Jesuits have

been and are presently passionate about Divine-human and human-human relations. In the light of planetary biocide we are now challenged to become passionate about Earth-human relations. This is our new frontier. I don’t expect Earth-human relations to become mutually enhancing in the years of life remaining for me but I hope that it will happen later on this century. I choose to live in that hope!

Excerpt from Claude Cuénot’s Description of Teilhard’s Death

by Claude Cuénot

“I am going towards the one coming “

Shortly before April 10, 1955, on Easter day, when he was privileged to pass away,¹ Father Teilhard de Chardin had proclaimed “I am going towards the one coming.”² This is a plain account of his death and some facts of the previous days. Is not death a very simple matter? We know through André George that the last lines written by Father Teilhard de Chardin were inspired by a meditation of St Paul, and an act of faith in Christ. His last gestures convey this unconditional membership to the line of the Church—his own attitude had always been faithful to it.

A week before his return to God, he had seen the Reverend Father Gannon, Rector of St Ignatius, and later he summed up his impression in those terms: “He expressed himself openly in such an earnest way, and with such a charm of his own, that I thought I was watching a child.” The night before his death, Father Teilhard had confessed to the R.F. de Breuvery, a French Jesuit friend. Consequently, he was well prepared religiously for Easter day.

This is the account of his last moments, according to the very terms of the letter that one of his most faithful friends, the R.F. Leroy, forwarded to Europe:

He felt great. On the morning of Easter day, he had attended to solemn mass at St Patrick’s cathedral.

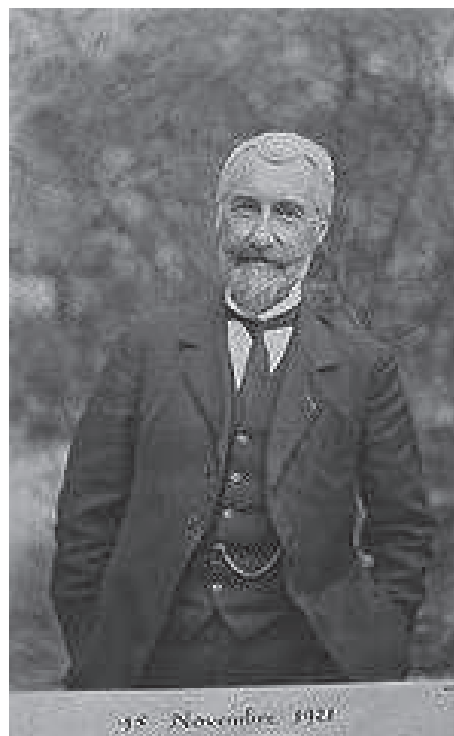
In the afternoon, he had gone to a concert. Upon his return to friends, he was glad about that “glorious day” and felt happy. He was about to have tea, had just left a paper on the window sill, when suddenly he collapsed, cut down like a tree. At first, it was believed he had fainted and a pillow was put under his head, as he seemed to have lost consciousness. After a few minutes, he opened his eyes and said ‘Where am I? What happened to me?’

“You are in our house, can you recognise me?” said his hostess. “Yes, but what did happen to me?” “A fainting fit”—“I cannot recall anything, it is awful this time” meaning “this time, it is really serious.”³

His doctor was called, but he was away. A few minutes later, another one arrived, and he advised to call a priest as he realised his very serious state. Father de Breuvery, who was also away, was replaced by an American priest of the St Ignatius’ residence in Park Avenue. Upon his arrival, the Father had just succumbed. Nevertheless he gave him absolution and the last sacrament.

The Christ’s witness died on Easter day. Father Teilhard’s remains were exhibited in the chapel of Park Avenue ... On Tuesday 12th April at nine o’clock the funeral was held by Father de Breuvery. The laymen were few and far between, on the whole roughly ten people, among whom Mr. Hoppenot, ambassador to France at the United Nations, and Paul Fejos. The ceremony took place in a plain way, and even in a great poverty.

It was raining. Father Leroy and the Father Minister were the only ones to follow Father Teilhard towards St Andrews-on-Hudson, where the novices’ quarters are located. Today, it is a simple straight stone with a brief inscription above the remains of Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.



Claude Cuenot in 1921

Footnotes:

1 Rupture of a coronary artery

2 On March 15th, he had already said to his nephews, in a dinner at the French Consulate in New York “I should like to die on the day of Resurrection.”

3 the word “awful” meant “mortal” in his mind.

Please join us for the Annual Meeting of the

American Teilhard Association

Saturday May 14, 2016

Lunch: 12:00 p.m; Talk: 1:45 p.m.

In the refectory at

Union Theological Seminary, 3041 Broadway at 121st St., New York, NY

Ilia Delio will be speaking on:

Teilhard de Chardin and World Religions: Ultra Catholic or Ultra Human?

The position of Teilhard with regard to world religions still evokes a perception of hostility or rejection of other religions because of his Catholic beliefs. Is this true or did Teilhard see religion within a wider framework of cosmology that leaves open the possibility of a new religious synthesis up ahead? We will explore the role of religion in Christogenesis and Teilhard's catholicity in view of cosmic personalization.

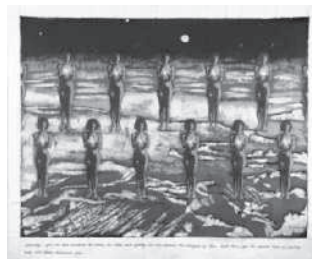
Ilia Delio is a Franciscan Sister and Haub Director of Catholic Studies at Georgetown University where she is also Visiting Professor. Earlier she was a Senior Research Fellow at Woodstock Theological Center in the area of Science and Religion, focusing on transhumanism and evolution and religion, especially the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. She holds a doctorate in Pharmacology from Rutgers University, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, and a doctorate in Historical Theology from Fordham University. She is the author of 15 books and numerous articles. Her recent books include From Teilhard to Omega: Co-creating an Unfinished Universe and The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love, From Teilhard to Omega for which she won the 2014 Silver Nautilus Book Award and a 2014 Catholic Press Association Book Award in Faith and Science.

“Discovering Fire”

By Angela Manno

“Discovering Fire” is a newly released fine art archival print inspired by Teilhard de Chardin's renowned statement: *“Someday, after we have mastered the wind, the tides and gravity, we will harness the energies of love. And then for the second time in history, man will have discovered fire.”*

Teilhard's words appear as a handwritten caption on the bottom of the print and serve to reinforce the visual imagery. The original art is part of a 13-piece mixed media series created by Manno in 1985 entitled “Conscious Evolution: The World At One” on the theme of global unity and personal and collective responsibility for the state of the planet. The entire series traveled internationally as a one-woman exhibition before becoming part of the permanent fine art collection of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air & Space Museum in Washington, D.C. in 2000. “Discovering Fire” was published in January of 2015 and is the most recent of three prints drawn from this celebrated art series. Size: 21” x 25” (23” x 27” with border)
Art & Soul Studios, <http://www.angelamanno.com/ConsciousEvolution/C10.html>



Notable Books

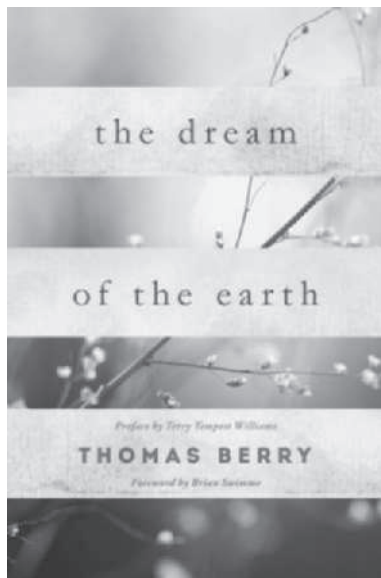
Announcing the reprinting of two Thomas Berry classics

The Dream of the Earth

Published by: Counterpoint Press, 2015
(First published by Sierra Club Books, 1988)

Foreword by Brian Swimme
New Preface by
Terry Tempest
Williams

This landmark work has established itself as a foundational volume in the ecological canon. In it, noted cultural historian Thomas Berry provides nothing less than a new intellectual-ethical framework for the human community by positing planetary well-being as the measure of all human activity. Drawing on the wisdom of Western philosophy, Asian thought, and Native American traditions, as well as contemporary physics and evolutionary biology, Berry offers a new perspective that recasts our understanding of science, technology, politics, religion, ecology, and education. He shows us why it is important for us to respond to the Earth's need for planetary renewal, and what we must do to break free of the "technological trance" that drives a misguided dream of progress. Only then, he suggests, can we foster mutually enhancing

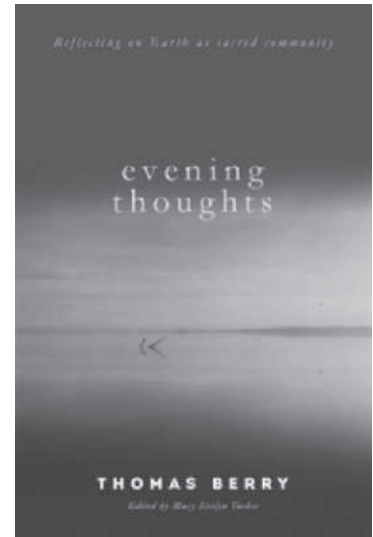


human-Earth relationships that can heal our traumatized global biosystem.

Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community

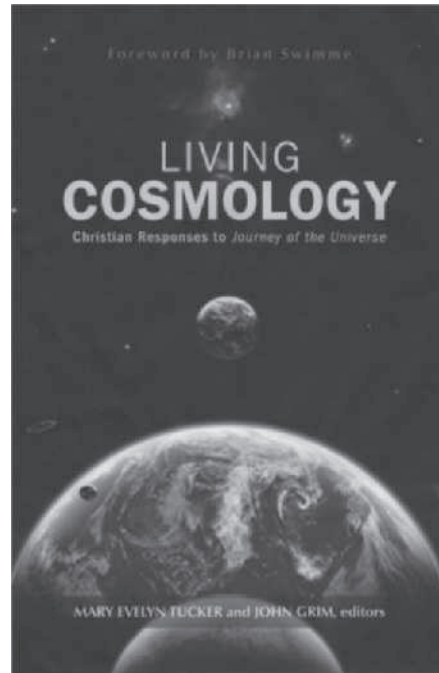
Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker
Published by: Counterpoint Press, 2015
(First published by
Sierra Club Books,
2006)

Among the contemporary voices for the Earth, none resonates like that of noted cultural historian Thomas Berry. His teaching and writings have inspired a generation's thinking about humankind's place in the Earth Community and the universe, engendering widespread critical acclaim and a documentary film on his life and work. This new collection of essays, from various years and occasions, expands and deepens ideas articulated in his earlier writings and also breaks new ground. Berry opens our eyes to the full dimensions of the ecological crisis, framing it as a crisis of spiritual vision. Applying his formidable erudition in cultural history, science, and comparative religions, he forges a compelling narrative of creation and communion that reconciles modern evolutionary thinking and traditional religious insights concerning our integral role in Earth's society. While sounding an urgent alarm at our current dilemma, Berry inspires us to reclaim our role as the consciousness of the universe and thereby begin to create a true partnership with the Earth Community. With *Evening Thoughts*, this wise elder has lit another beacon to lead us home.



Forthcoming in 2016 from Orbis Books!

**LIVING COSMOLOGY:
CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO
JOURNEY OF THE UNIVERSE**



Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim
Preface by Brian Thomas Swimme

Organized by the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale in honor of Thomas Berry's 100th birthday, the "Living Cosmology" conference at Yale University in November 2014 offered hundreds of participants an opportunity to hear from dozens of scholars and religious practitioners on the Christian response to the Emmy Award winning film, *Journey of the Universe*.

Now, through this volume from Orbis Books, select papers from that event will be available to the general public. Covering topics such as: the legacy of Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry; environmental ethics; evolutionary cosmology; Ecojustice; Ecofeminism; food and water issues; Earth jurisprudence; and much more, Living Cosmology includes a wealth of information from many different perspectives with something of interest for everyone.

For more information on *Journey of the Universe*, and to join the mailing list to be notified when the Living Cosmology volume is released, go to:

journeyoftheuniverse.org

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Teilhard Perspective

TEILHARD PERSPECTIVE is published by the American Teilhard Association, a non-profit organization whose goals are to explore philosophical, scientific, religious, social and environmental concerns in light of Teilhard's vision and to clarify the role of the human phenomenon in this emerging understanding of the cosmos.

We welcome suggestions of relevant ideas, books, news, events and contributions of articles for this newsletter. The editor is Tara Trapani. The *Teilhard Perspective* newsletter along with the biannual *Teilhard Studies* pamphlet and Annual Meeting notices are available through membership. Please contact us at: American Teilhard Association, c/o John Grim, 29 Spoke Drive, Woodbridge, CT 06525. Annual membership is \$35.

The Association President is Dr. John Grim, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, 195 Prospect Street, New Haven CT 06520. Email john.grim@yale.edu. Vice Presidents are Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, maryevelyn.tucker@yale.edu, and Dr. Brian Thomas Swimme, California Institute for Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. For Publications and other information, please email Tara Trapani at: tcmk@aya.yale.edu.

American Teilhard Association, Thomas Berry, and Journey of the Universe Websites

At the new ATA site www.teilharddechardin.org can be found a Biography, List of Writings, Pictures and Quotes, Life Timeline, ATA Events, Teilhard Studies with first page, recent full Teilhard Perspectives, Membership info, Links, and a Brian Thomas Swimme interview on Teilhard.

The Thomas Berry site www.thomasberry.org offers a Biography by Mary Evelyn Tucker, a John Grim essay: "Time, History, Historians in Thomas Berry's Vision," Writings by Thomas Berry, comments on his *The Great Work*, Films about or inspired by, and a List of Books.

A new site www.journeyoftheuniverse.org introduces this title film, book and educational series by Brian Thomas Swimme, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and an advisory board to carry forward in multimedia fashion the inspiration of Pierre Teilhard and Thomas Berry.

The Association President is Dr. John Grim, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, 195 Prospect Street, New Haven CT 06520. Email john.grim@yale.edu. Vice Presidents are Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, maryevelyn.tucker@yale.edu, and Dr. Brian Thomas Swimme, California Institute for Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. For Publications and other information, please email Tara Trapani at: tcmk@aya.yale.edu.