

A New Creation Story:

The Creative Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin

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WHEN *The Phenomenon of Man* first appeared it caused confusion. It was difficult to know precisely how the book was to be read and, hence, how it was to be interpreted and understood. Is it, as Teilhard himself maintained in his Preface, “a scientific treatise”? Scientists will discover much scientific material there, but in the end they find it impossible to accept this as a scientific text. Is it, even though Teilhard himself passionately denied it, “a work on metaphysics” or “a sort of theological essay”? Philosophers and theologians have been reluctant to acknowledge it as belonging legitimately to their own fields of specialization. Scientific, philosophical, and theological elements are woven together in this book, but no one of these familiar categories is entirely appropriate.

Is Teilhard a scientist, a philosopher, or a theologian? In some measure he took up each one of these roles, but no one of them leads us into the heart of the matter. Essentially he is a storyteller and a masterful one at that. This is the source of his attraction. He has a strange but spellbinding story to tell, one that awakens wonder and bewilderment. This story of cosmic history, this new creation epic, possesses the power to transform consciousness, to enable us to see for the first time. It possesses spiritual power, the power to release energy, the power to open up a new spiritual path and a new creative spirituality. But it is time to come to the story, a story of life and of death, of union and of separation, of gain and of loss—a story of the universe and of the man who saw it afresh.

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In their recent biographical study of Teilhard, Ellen and Mary Lukas have provided us with an unusually compelling image of the man and his lifestory drawn from the legends of his native Auvergne:

In that slim literature of the marvelous which does exist, one single theme recurs with curious frequency. It is the story of the Innocent Seeker who leaves his land and all he has to look for the Secret at the Heart of Reality—the Magus who seeks