



The Journal



July - September 2016

French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

By Dan Driscoll, Goa, India

Almost 87 years young, Dan Driscoll continues to write on his favourite topic, Teilhard de Chardin S.J. Dan as an OMI taught for 10 years in Ottawa and Edmonton before leaving the Oblates and working for the National Film Board in communications. If I ever wanted to know anything about Teilhard or communications, I knew whom to ask. The following is but a short item by Dan.



French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin a 'top-drawer scientist'---once Head Of Dept. of the Faculty of Paleontology at University of Paris---was 'silenced' by Jesuits & Vatican and 'transferred to China' to be rid of him. I found his books in the early sixties and spent my years in India studying them---he was forbidden to write during his lifetime, but the day after he died in 1955 the safe with his manuscripts was unlocked and in the 1960s & 70s his works went global/viral. Then, global 'marketing and branding blanketed any real progress in the philosophy/theology sector. Seminary libraries have Teilhard's works, but practically no one is reading them. The tragic consequence of this is 'loss of hope' to the point where people are beginning to 'end it all' simply because 'Science' keeps insisting that 'planet earth' will eventually (in just a couple of billion years; but sooner or later, what's the diff?) freeze in the dark! The Baltimore Catechism had a Q., "What are the sins that cry to heaven for vengeance? The answer given was "despair and presumption". What Teilhard did was restore a certainty for human immortality based on science .

I am now in an exchange with John Stevens of Halifax, and this is the latest exchange. John got back to me asking if I could send him something to 'clue him in on the Teilhard theme'.

In response to this request of his, I sent him this. I feel that the final paragraphs of this pretty well closes the topic---if he is in a position to bring it to the attention of the archbishop. The problem with the whole systemic bit is that there is no real guarantee that the archbishop will see or hear of anything going down between John Stevens & me.

I guess my basic position is that whereas there is a tremendous amount of goodwill quite in evidence (globally) for Christian Renewal, there remains at the very level of infrastructure underlying our contemporary faith & praxes in the christian world, the hangover from the old Mediterranean Classical Culture, which in turn rested on what one might whimsically term "a flat Earth Society". The whole of mankind was so afraid of the notion that 'man is descended from the ape' that they tried to put schoolteachers in jail for teaching it in school (The Scopes Trial); so Rome and Jesuits were so afraid of Teilhard that they forbade him to publish while he was alive, and in 1962 issued a warning against his writing. To get him out of Europe and University of Paris, he was transferred by his Jesuit Provincial to China. In the cosmology that I have learned from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's writings, I now see the other side of that coin. The trauma endured by young people because of their 'ignorance' is typical of a normal evolutionary tactic for human consciousness reaching a higher level of development---one has to break the egg to make the omelette. A proper understanding of that 'cosmology' is in my view the only true option to be considered for 'upgrade' in school curriculum approach to teaching kids. Currently, I am trying to get that notion through to the Director of Pastoral & Evangelical Programs for Archdiocese of Halifax/Yarmouth. Our 'Holy Mother Church' is now plagued by an 'obsolete theology' which mostly stalled with the Nietzsche tweak done on Augustine/Aquinas interpretation of Aristotle---before the scientific breakthroughs occasioned by Charles Darwin's revelations (mid 19th Century). Teilhard wrote the following: "And so we can now say that the goal of worship and the goal of creation as a whole are one and the same---divinization, a world of freedom and love. But this means that the historical makes its appearance in the cosmic. The cosmos is not a kind of closed building, a stationary container in which history may by chance take place. It is itself movement, from its one beginning to its one end. In a sense, creation is history. Against the background of the modern evolutionary world view, Teilhard de Chardin depicted the cosmos as a process of ascent, a series of unions. From very simple beginnings the path leads to ever greater and more complex unities, in which multiplicity is not abolished but merged into a growing synthesis, leading to the "Noosphere", in which spirit and its understanding embrace the whole and are blended into a kind of living organism. Invoking the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, Teilhard looks on Christ as the energy that strives toward the Noosphere and finally incorporates everything in its "fullness". From here Teilhard went on to give a new meaning to Christian worship: the transubstantiated Host is the anticipation of the transformation and divinization of matter in the christological "fullness". In his view, the Eucharist provides the movement of the cosmos with its direction; it anticipates its goal and at the same time urges it on."

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The Journal welcomes submissions from small faith communities and individuals that share its vision of the Christian Church as one in which all are equal, decisions are made by consensus, healthy relationships are nurtured, justice is done, and the Good News of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

All submissions to the Journal must be received by February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15.

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See the back page for further details.

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excerpted from LifePosts

Amos, of deep faith, troubler of the public conscience, and outspoken defender of God's honour, rose out of the ranks of the people. His words are meant more to stir us to reflection than to provide catechism answers. Jesus achieved his objective in making us wrestle with life's paradoxes. Amos' prophetic writings help us to understand Jesus who was also a prophet.

Resurrection And Transformation

by Illio Delia OSF, Washington, DC



Mystics and religious people (among whom are the prophets and other well known Bible people) have experienced God in many ways and according to their own religious state and context. This experience is largely unexplainable but many have tried, and they or others have been inspired to put their experiences into writing. This process continues even till the present. In the following

from Elia Delia in her Emergent Christ "in an Evolutionary Universe", she takes into account the new cosmology that sees God's love calling all of Creation forward.

Delia writes: "Christianity is based on several core beliefs that (in themselves) are shocking. One is that God became a human person, a carpenter turned preacher. The other is that a dead man is raised to new life. As fantastic as these claims are, the whole of Christianity rests on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:17) Without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we Christians are indeed a foolish people, following a dead man who died as a criminal. Despite the fact that Easter is the central Christian message, most people are less energized by Easter than by Christmas. It is much easier to rejoice in the birth of an infant than in a dead man rising from the grave. But without Easter, Christmas is undone. Easter is the core of Christian faith." (Resurrection and Transformation: Empowered New Life)

1. We celebrate Easter as the victory over sin. 'O Happy Fault!, for if Adam had not sinned, Christ would not have come.' Should we not be celebrating the power of God's humble love, instead of sin, a love so great that even death cannot vanquish it?

2. Most Christians believe that Jesus went to a place called heaven and will come again to judge the living and the dead. But how do we make sense of heaven in an evolutionary world? What does resurrection from the dead mean in a universe that will continue for about 100 trillion more years?

Jesus Christ ushers in a new creation through his death and resurrection; he shows what is intended for the whole world, a new way of being human with healthy relationships for the whole cosmos—new life, new bodies for a new cosmos. The portrait of Jesus in the resurrection narratives ought to surprise us in two respects:

1. Jesus is never depicted as a heavenly being, radiant with glory. He does not appear in brilliant light or otherworldly. He appears in the narratives as a human being among human beings, walking along the road to Emmaus or eating fish.

2. These appearances of Jesus are almost routinely depicted as bodily appearances; some of his close friends did not recognize him; others did.

N. T. Wright notes 'The picture of Jesus in the canonical gospels is of one who is embodied as a full human being, but whose body has in some way been transformed so that it now possesses new and striking, not to say startling, properties.' The Gospels, in effect, describe more or less what Paul states in his theoretical framework. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is an event involving neither the resuscitation nor the abandonment of a physical body. It is a transformation into a new mode of physicality, an event for which there was no precedent and of which there remains as yet no subsequent example.

Belief in the resurrection empowered the early Christians. 'The resurrection of Jesus...is not an absurd event but the symbol and starting point of the new world', ushering in not simply a new religious possibility or a new ethic, but a new creation. John D. Crossan states that the resurrection is about 'cosmic transformation of this world from a world of evil and injustice and impurity and violence into a world of justice and peace and purity and holiness'... The early Christians looked back to the Christ event with joy and looked forward to the event yet to come, begun at Easter and yet to be completed (Eph 1:19) a transformation of the whole earthly cosmos itself. (1 Cor:15:28)

The meaning of resurrection changed in the late second century (AD) when people started using the term to mean something different from what it meant in Judaism and early Christianity. (It came to mean) a spiritual experience, a disembodied hope in the future (Wright), the distinctions of soul, spirit, and body which led to an emphasis of soul over body and the notion of eternal life as a purely spiritual experience. The Judeans believed that the world of space, time, and matter was flawed but good and that God would bless the good with a final physical resurrection. But Greek-speaking Christians saw the cosmos as weak, mutable, and fallen. The idea was not to make it right but to escape it and leave behind our material bodies. Belief in the resurrection entered the modern period wrapped in a Platonic, spiritualized understanding of heaven, and the cosmic and risen Christ became a ghostlike principle.

'The idea of the human Jesus now being in heaven, in his thoroughly embodied risen state, comes as a shock to many people, including many Christians. Sometimes this is because many people think that Jesus having been divine, and then, having been human for a while, stopped being human and went back to being divine.' (Wright)... bodily life is not valueless because it will die. Rather, God will raise it to new life that will last into God's future. The ascension of Jesus means that the human Jesus is with us as Lord, the hope of what we and all creation aim for; heaven is created life transformed in God. heaven is not a place of non-materiality. It begins in this earthly life as we co-operate with God to change our weak, frail, and incomplete human lives into vessels of God's transforming love."

Invitation Regarding Spiritual Growth, Happiness & Divine Union

by Leonard Schmidt, Winnipeg, MB



I am extending an invitation to all who would like to join me in a discussion regarding spiritual growth, on a path to attaining happiness (Felicity), or Divine Union. We will discuss Sections 31 to 45, 46 to 60 and 61 to 85 respectively in Century 1 in the book "Centuries of Meditation" by Thomas Traherne. Through discussion, we will better be able to share our personal experiences. We will meet on the last Friday of the month September 30, October 28, and November 25, 2016, in the library, at 125 Portsmouth Blvd., Winnipeg, MB. The book is available via email at adeline.leonard.schmidt@shaw.ca or 204-487-3553.

My purpose is to share with the reader the spiritual insights I received from reading "Centuries of Meditations" and to share what I have experienced on the path to felicity (happiness) with Thomas Traherne. The following has been gleaned from Centuries 2: 97-100" and Centuries 3: sec 1.

When in the Kingdom of God, there is no possibility for man to sin in the presence of God, because no person can sin that sees the beauty of God in front of him and no person can sin against his own happiness. Right now we see only "His face in a glass" and therefore we are only living in a mirror like reality. Our goal at this point is to live and using our imagination, with this glory in our mind, be intent in our desires to reach our destiny and see His glory with our own eyes. We have the choice to sin or to be holy - but if we ponder our destiny and remember that we can be heirs - who would choose to sin? We are challenged to imagine as young children are able to imagine that holding a doll, they are mothers. We adults should work in our lives, to imagine our life in Heaven which then lifts us to live a sublime and honorable life of holiness on earth. (Century 2: sect. 97)

Living with Heaven in mind " makes him sensible of the reality of Happiness: it feeds him with contentment and fills him with gratitude, it delivers him from the love of money which is the root of all evil, it causes him to reign over the perverse customs and opinions that are in the world. (98) Different philosophers claim that felicity can be found in honor, pleasure, riches as well as the contempt of riches, honor and pleasure, in wisdom, in firm stability of mind, in contemplation or in action, in rest or in suffering or in victory and triumph. (Sec. 99)

Today's philosophers, like Albert Camus or Jean-Paul Sartre, find felicity in the realization that life is absurd. The action of the Greek God Sisyphus who is condemned by Zeus for a misdemeanor to roll a round boulder up a mountain and upon reaching the top he seems to fail and allows the rock to roll down. So he has to go down and start all over again! There is no stopping his action and he keeps repeating this action infinitely over and over and over again. That is his punishment for some misdemeanor. Life is sort of meaningless and therefore happiness is unattainable. This section contrasts some of the positive attitudes towards where happiness can be found verses the negativity of those who believe it is unattainable. For those who seek it, it seems that it can be found in self sufficiency, in virtues, in the right government of our passions and the ability to distinguish between true and false riches; between real and feigned honors; between clear and pure pleasures and those which are muddy and unwholesome. Contentment and rest arise from a full perception of infinite treasures. (sec 100) In my opinion, 'felicity' is also an eternal experience. Regardless of where we find happiness on earth, the experience unfortunately will only be ephemeral. This next section explains that Thomas Traherne, as a fetus, had an out of body experience visiting Heaven and he was gifted with the memory of this journey. His understanding of 'felicity' was forged through this trip to the 'spirit world'. (The Third Century; verse 1) This visit is his greatest credential as well as his family receiving a book written by God himself of which Thomas Traherne makes good use in writing Centuries of Meditation. This is the reason why his book is so difficult to read and understand because it contains the transcendent wisdom of God himself. I have chosen it as my primary mentor to attain the state of contemplation on earth and hopefully, the state of Divine Union afterwards.

In conclusion, initially my spiritual growth group and I began our path to Divine Union on earth with St. John of the Cross, mystic and poet, as mentor. However, we both found that his work "Dark Night of the Soul" was especially non-felicitous. It described the hurdle of a passage through the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the spirit, non felicitous experiences. In conclusion, in my spiritual growth and by using my imagination I have attained a glimpse of the eternal and infinite attributes of the spirit world, divine gifts. Alleluia! Deo Gracias! I hope this sharing will motivate all the readers of the OFE journal to enjoy reading, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, this treasured book.

How Did We Get It So Wrong?

by *Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK*



Atonement theology is the idea that Jesus as the Son of God died on the cross in atonement to God the Father for our sins. The Oriental Rites and Franciscans do not subscribe to this view, but for the Roman Catholic Rite, the priesthood, the Mass and sacraments, are all based on this idea. Where did we go wrong?

Bishop John Shelby Spong in his book titled “Biblical Literalism: A Gentile Heresy”, writes, “Nothing in this book will be more important than freeing Christianity from the shackles of atonement theology”. (p.172)

Bishop Spong explains that, “Atonement theology was born in Gentile ignorance of Jewish worship traditions.” (p.209)

In the early days of the Jesus movement they still met at the Sabbath service. Those early “Followers of the Way” as they were called told and retold stories at the synagogue gatherings. about Jesus their Jewish hero.

It wasn’t until the third or fourth decade after the crucifixion that the first Gospel was written. It is impossible to assert that everything written about Jesus would be literal and historical fact. There would naturally have been omissions and additions and embellishments – and any Jew understood this.

Pulling back the layers of misunderstanding created over the centuries by Gentile ignorance of things Jewish, Bishop Spong reveals how a literal reading of the Bible is so far removed from the original intent of the Jewish authors of the Gospels that it has become an act of heresy.

The Moses of Egypt and Mount Sinai portrayed God as a Lord above the sky, who was a stern taskmaster. That God’s commandments were given in a thunderous message from the mountain to be strictly observed. A God to be feared because they were the sinful race of Adam, a God whose name may not be spoken, but may be only referred to by breathing “Yah-whey”.

Bishop Spong shows how Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as the New Moses turned the old idea of God upside down. God was to be called by the intimate name “Abba”. The Ten Commandments are replaced by the new commandments taught by a gentle Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. He said it is not enough to refrain from killing, one must not so much as be angry with another; far from committing adultery, one must not even have adulterous thoughts. The God Jesus spoke of was a God of Love, not recrimination needing someone to pay for sin by dying on a cross.

Added to that is the concept of biological evolution proposed by Charles Darwin in 1859. One conclusion is that there never was an Adam and Eve as portrayed in the Bible. And so Original Sin as taught by St. Augustin never happened. Therefore the reason for Atonement disappears. The reason Jesus died on the cross could not be atonement for sins of humanity. Consequently It is not necessary that Jesus must be God.

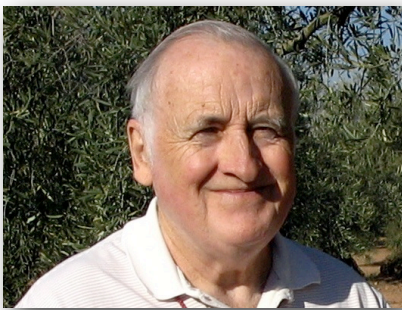
So then who was this Jesus?

Spong writes that “God was in Christ, but that does not mean that the external theistic God, who lives above the sky, somehow entered him and took over his humanity. Rather I think that his humanity became so full and so complete that the meaning of God could find expression in him. I think all human beings have that capacity.”(Charting A New Revolution, (2016)

I find Bishop Spong’s reasoning very convincing.

The Brothers In Our Midst

by *Hank Mattimore, San Jose, CA*



“We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers.”– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Poor humankind, we know so much about our world but we don’t recognise our brothers and sisters when we see them.

They are right there in front of us but we are blind to their

presence. We think the person of a different color or who holds different values or who dresses in different clothes is somehow “other.” How sad! How weird. to walk through our very short span of years seeing strangers where we could see brothers. They could be of so much help on our journey if we could but peel back the curtain that hides them from us and us from them.

Why is it that we separate our fellow human beings into the little boxes of countries or states or neighborhoods as though where we stand on this great

blue planet divides us into different species? Does not the same red blood flow in our veins?

I’m reminded of Shylock in the Merchant of Venice, asking if a Jew is any different from a Christian or any other human being. “If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?”

What perversity has entered into the human strain that blinds us to our common ancestry and leads us to see differences that do not exist? For a fleeting moment, when we witness the birth of a baby or when little children play together our eyes are opened, only to close again, way too quickly.

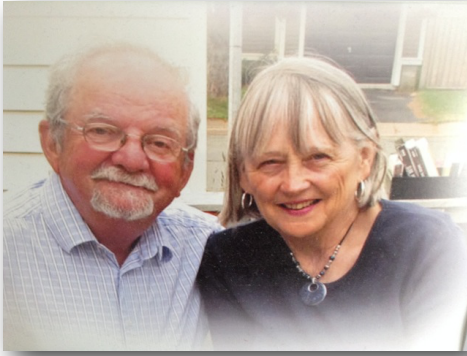
The moment passes and we start building walls lest that kid from Iran or the homeless guy with his possessions in a shopping cart or the teenager with drooping pants, be mistaken for a brother or a sister. No, let’s put some distance between us and them.

What nonsense! Do we not get that all the brothers and sisters we need are already in our midst. Stripped of all our masks and petty disguises we are one with them. We are them.

More than 50 years have passed since Martin Luther King reminded us that, despite all our technical progress,” we have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers.”

Ways To See God

By Charles Callanan, St. John's, NL



When we were in the seminary we were told that St. Thomas Aquinas had the last word about all dogma in the Catholic church. Duns Scotus was cited sometimes but we were discouraged from reading him.

Now, as a result of reading Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, I am beginning to see that there are other ways of looking at Catholic dogmas.

Remember the great dogmatic controversies between the Dominicans and the Franciscans in the middle ages? I never knew what they were about nor did I care. It was enough trying to figure out Aquinas. Why worry about someone else? These old controversies were not explained to us anyway, which led me to believe that they were unimportant.

If I had understood these controversies I probably would have lined up with Scotus and Bonaventure. Here is what Scotus had to say. He said that, "Jesus did not come to change the mind of God about humanity, but rather, Jesus came to change the mind of humanity about God." Think about this. Because it should turn our beliefs about Jesus completely around! So in that sense Jesus did not come to die for our sins, to make atonement for us or to "pay the price"

Jesus came to tell us that God already loves and accepts us and wants to show us how to live in this life, by sharing His love with others.

In the "economy of salvation", we were told, Jesus came to "pay the price for our sins". The real truth is, God is continually with us, even when we are in sin. He loves us, even in our sins. When I tell people this, they say, "that's a nice thing for you to think. In other words...you believe this but I do not.."

Father Rohr says, "God is not pissed off with us and filled with wrath, nor did God's love have to be bought". Jesus did not come to earth to conduct "a mop-up operation". God, through Jesus, wanted to show Himself and His love to all material creation.

Lay people complain that in the past preachers spoke of "hell and damnation" as a means of using fear to scare them away from their sins and point them towards God. This was never really necessary, but rather shows God as being a "hard case" rather than a lover of His people.

The theology of Bonaventure and Scotus has never been condemned by the church and thus the views of Aquinas and Scotus have both prevailed up to this day.. The point I am trying to make is that we would have had greater happiness and peace of mind if we had known these things from early life.

Paul Tillich has written that, "we are a people, who cannot accept acceptance". As a friend of mine says, "we cannot take yes for an answer" The Good News is almost too good to be true...yet it is good news and it is true. We are saved and set free by the infinite love of God for us..all of us.

Our pastor used to say to us, "We are all Christians yet we come to Mass with glum faces, as if the Good News never really caught on.

Hilaire Belloc once wrote, "Wherever a Catholic sun doth shine, there's always laughter and good red wine. At least I've always found it so... Benedicamus Domino".

Berta Caceres Story

excerpted from *LifePosts*



Less than a year ago, Berta Caceres, Honduran activist, won the world's leading environmental award, the Goldman Environmental Prize for her courage and leadership in defending human and environmental rights in her native

Honduras. Accepting the award she said: "Where basic rights are systematically violated - demands that we take action. In our world-views, we are beings who came from the earth, from the waters and

from the corn. The Lenca people are ancestral guardians of the rivers, in turn protected by the spirits of young girls who teach us that by giving our lives in various ways for the protection of the rivers is giving our lives for the well being of humanity and of this place."

In the early morning hours of Thursday, March 3, Caceres' courageous battle as leader of the indigenous Lenca people of Honduras ended when she was murdered by gunmen in her hometown of La Esperanza. It was the day before her 46th birthday. She was currently working to stop a company from building a hydroelectric dam on the Gualcarque river, which the Rio Blanco community said would fundamentally change their way of life. Authorities said she was killed during a robbery, but her mother said that Cáceres was killed "because of her struggle." Many Hondurans took to the streets to mourn and protest the murder of Caceres. She is survived by her four children, aged 26, 24, 23 and 21, and by her mother.

<https://www.lifeposts.com/p/milestone/284/berta-caceres-memorial/lifestory/>

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