Editorial*

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This is the second of two special issues of *Ecotheology* dedicated to the memory of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his death on Easter Sunday 10 April 1955. They are also dedicated to my colleague and friend Siôn Cowell, lately President of the Teilhard de Chardin Association of Great Britain, who regrettably passed away on 12 September 2004. Although ecological concerns have come to the foreground of academic discussion since Teilhard's death, this collection of essays demonstrates the richness of aspects of his thought to contemporary concerns about the environment, and in some cases moves beyond his thinking in order to develop ideas in a more self-consciously ecological direction. Ecotheology has always both drawn on aspects of Christian theology and developed it in specific ways. However, the recognition of the relevance of Teilhard's work will do much to deepen an ecological spirituality.

This issue begins with two articles that put emphasis on the mystical aspects of Teilhard's thought. John Grim and Mary Tucker provide an instructive overview of Teilhard's phenomenology, metaphysics and mysticism. Teilhard challenges mechanistic models of physical matter by pointing to the possibility that it too has psychic properties that eventually flower into complexity and consciousness. The emergence of

* I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Siôn Cowell who was instrumental in setting up the arrangements for both issues of *Ecotheology* dedicated to the memory of Teilhard de Chardin. Sadly, due to declining health, he was only able to contribute substantially to the beginning of this project. Siôn Cowell's article in *Ecotheology* 10.1 (April 2005) entitled 'Newman and Teilhard: The Challenge of the East' should have acknowledged the original source. This article was based on the original French version given at the *International Teilhard de Chardin Colloquium*, Centre Spirituel, Hautmont, Lille, on 27 October 1991, and published in *Colloques Internationaux Teilhard de Chardin, 2001 Lille-Hastings; 2002 Paris-Le Caire* (Paris: Aubin Éditeur, 2003).

complexity is one of the great challenges of evolutionary theory. For Teilhard, a particular way of 'seeing' how this complexity emerges and in particular, its appearance in humans, flows out of the dialectical relationship between matter and spirit. Grim and Tucker remind us of Teilhard's concept of involution, that is an inward turning towards greater complexity/consciousness by a synthesis of matter and spirit. In this sense matter is neither denigrated or reformulated through a Platonic idealism, but contributes itself to the evolutionary process. In addition, the participation of humanity in the evolutionary process becomes what he calls the centration of persons, a discovery of the human place on earth by means of active participation in the evolutionary process. The authors are also aware of some aspects of Teilhard's work that were time bound, such as his ideal of progress, his tendency to emphasize the importance of the human, and his failure to pay due attention to bioregions. In spite of these limitations they argue strongly that Teilhard's vision provides an important corrective for much of the way we think about the earth, it is a uniting vision that serves to challenge humanity towards greater responsibility and action.

Mary Grey's article takes up the eucharistic elements in Teilhard's thought through a focused study on his *Mass on the World*. She begins by tracing some of the reasons behind Teilhard's condemnation by the Vatican, and finds it wanting. However, she also asks important questions about the value of his Eucharistic texts, which pointed to a world that was charged with psychic energy. She recognizes the way Thomas Berry and others have been indebted to Teilhard's vision, in particular the way humanity is situated in a universal, cosmic context. His emphasis on the cosmic Christ as an anchor for spirituality also finds echoes in contemporary ecotheology. Yet Grey sees the Eucharist as the heart of Teilhard's spirituality, but it is an offering that is infused with both the presence of cosmic matter and spirit, based on his deep appreciation of the importance of the incarnation of Christ. She is particularly appreciative of his cosmic vision, which she argues overcomes tendencies towards anthropocentrism, and his concept of the God of the future luring the cosmic world into full participation. She also draws on the work of David Toolan, who develops Teilhard's eucharistic vision, but manages to ground it more successfully in the historical context of the reality of Jesus as Jew approaching his own suffering and death. She also believes that Toolan gives more place to the role of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of creation compared with Teilhard, and in this provides an important corrective to his work. She also argues that in spite of his lack of attention to practical issues of justice, his mystic vision remains important as a means of nourishment for those who are activists and who regularly identify with the suffering of both people and planet.

Robert Faricy's paper also argues that Teilhard's writing helps to overcome any dichotomy that may exist between nature and humanity, and as such is an important prelude to the development of ecotheology. He believes that one of the legacies of the Reformation is an undue emphasis on the separation of the orders of creation and redemption. He argues, in particular, that while this gap between nature and humanity and between nature and grace remains exploitative attitudes to the natural world are unchallenged. Yet once the gap is closed, as in, for example, the works of Teilhard and Rahner, then it becomes impossible to exploit the natural world and treat it simply as a resource for humanity's benefit. He is also critical of two sharp a separation between immanence and transcendence and a failure to recognize the importance of immanence that he suggests is characteristic of Reformed theology. In addition, counter trends in Reformation thought that make the earth sacred also fail, rather the earth should be thought of as holy as it exists in relationship to God. In particular, it is Teilhard's attention to the energy of love uniting the whole cosmos that informs his spirituality and mystical vision. Like Mary Grey, he points to the harsh experiences of Teilhard as a stretcher-bearer in World War 1 as the context in which his vision for love energizing the world developed. He also argues strongly against those interpretations of Teilhard that believe he succumbed to pantheism, drawing on both Teilhard's visionary experiences and his subsequent reflections. The love that Teilhard pointed to is a love that differentiates and personalizes, rather than one that confuses or merges individuals. In this sense the love becomes connected with all of creation, and hence forms a basis for thinking in a more holistic way about the earth.

Ludovico Galleni and Francesco Scalfari's article looks more deeply into the evolutionary context in which Teilhard developed his ideas. They look, for example, at the way Teilhard draws on the evidence for increased complexity in the animal evolution of canalisation and parallelisms, the most important of which was the development of a central nervous system, or cerebralisation. Teilhard was also deeply appreciative of both biological research that helped to uncover the processes behind the complexity of life and geo-biology that formed the science of the evolving biosphere. Galleni and Scalfari are deeply appreciative of the way Teilhard manages to develop a synthesis between his biological understanding of evolution and his theology. The authors also trace the importance of Teilhard's work as a paleontologist and assess its significance in light of contemporary discussions about the evolution of complexity. They acknowledge the way Teilhard is a pioneer in more holistic ways of thinking about the relationships on the earth, alongside pioneering work of the geologist priest Stoppani, whose writing finds its

contemporary expression in the Gaia hypothesis of James Lovelock. Galleni and Scalfari believe that Leonardo Boff drew out the social implications of Teilhard's work in his early writing on liberation theology. They argue that Boff also recognized the importance of Teilhard's thinking for environmental ethics, for it avoided the difficulties associated with either anthropocentrism or biocentrism. Hence, implicit in Teilhard's vision is a call for ecological responsibility, for his eschatology and the coming of Christ presupposes the preservation of the biosphere. In addition, Galleni and Scalfari argue that the biological concept of symbiosis, where each creature is dependent on the other for its existence, is also implicit in the close dependency between the biosphere and the noosphere, or region of consciousness as expressed in humankind.

In my own article I turn the spotlight onto Teilhard's understanding of the Virgin Mary, and I argue that his devotion to her finds expression in the prose poem *Hymn to the Eternal Feminine*. I am particularly interested in the way Teilhard links his understanding of the Eternal Feminine with Sophia, comparing his understanding of Mary with that found in the work of the Russian Orthodox writer, Sergei Bulgakov. Both authors offer accounts that bridge the divide between the Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity. Both authors are conscious of the cosmic significance of Mary. However, I argue that by confining Sophia to Mary, and by putting due emphasis on her subsidiary place in relation to Christ, Teilhard does not go as far as Bulgakov in developing an adequate Sophiology. On the other hand, Teilhard is more aware than Bulgakov seems to be of the importance of evolution in understanding the way the world has emerged. I am, none the less, critical of Teilhard's ideal of progress which seems to blind him to the ethical dangers in modern technology and science. He was less aware, of course, of the implicit dangers in the ever-increasing demand for progress by humanity in a way that lacked attention to environmental concerns. There are, of course, other strands in his thinking that counteract this trend somewhat, such as have been pointed out by Galleni in the preceding article. I also argue that implicit in both Teilhard and Bulgakov are ways of perceiving Mary that allow her to have significance for environmental responsibility. She becomes, through embodiment of Sophia in its creaturely expression, representative of idealized humanity, who speaks of what the world as redeemed may become. As creaturely Sophia incarnate and divinised, Mary represents both the connectivity and care for the earth that is possible for humanity to achieve.

Finally, Richard Kropf's paper argues that Teilhard's understanding of the evolutionary process and his belief in the emergence of an 'ultra-humanity' that is both a summation of the evolutionary trajectory, but

transcends its limits, is significant for environmental ethics. He is conscious of the advances in cosmological and planetary science and its relationship with Teilhard's views on the future of human evolution. He believes, in particular, that research, which indicates that life once existed on other planets, will be significant, as it shows that life has come into being and then been destroyed, and further, the possibility that life is sustainable on other galaxies becomes more likely. He believes that Teilhard was aware of the way cosmology could provide challenges to classical notions about human uniqueness, the doctrine of the Fall of humanity and the need for redemption. He was also aware of the pessimism about the future that pervaded the cosmology of the period, the ultimate futility of the earth according to its predicted destruction in a heat death. Teilhard's optimism needs to be situated in such a scientific context in order to be understood as a counter trend to this pessimistic secular eschatology. He was also aware not just of the need to counter pessimism, but also of the need for engagement, rather than withdrawal, and solidarity, rather than isolation. Kropf believes that these three strands have inescapable implications for the way we treat the planet. Teilhard seemed to be more concerned that humanity would run out of psychic energy before material resources were exhausted. While he may have been naïve about the environmental dangers, the difficulties that are faced by environmentalists today concern the lack of will to change, an apathy in spite of knowing what the dangers might be. In this sense, Teilhard is correct in his estimation that psychic energy is a prerequisite to action and knowledge. Kropf also believes that we need to learn to be co-creative with the earth in engaging with it, rather than withdrawing from it by turning away from its demands. Kropf also argues that the question of whether the evolution of the cosmos has a goal remains the ultimate question to be tackled. He argues, in particular, that Teilhard's vision can help to sustain hope even in the midst of more pessimistic accounts about the future of the universe and planet earth.

Overall this collection of essays has taken up and developed themes in Teilhard's thought in different ways, representing the richness of the heritage of his ideas, and testifying to his belief that science and religion need to come together in order to enrich, sustain and challenge one another. As in my last editorial, I will finish this editorial with a final word of appreciation for Sïon Cowell,¹ whose constant enthusiasm and

1. All of Sïon Cowell's books on Teilhard now form a special collection at St Deiniol's residential library in Hawarden, Flintshire, Wales. If any reader wishes to either benefit from or contribute to a special memorial bursary fund dedicated to Teilhardian scholarship, please name the Sïon Cowell Bursary Fund and write to Peter

dedication to Teilhardian scholarship was exemplified not just in the way he wrote and spoke, but also in his lifestyle and in his manner of dying. Shortly before he died he had the occasion to celebrate a house mass with Billy Hewett SJ who visited Sîon and his wife Caroline in August 2004. Sîon later told me that 'We concluded with words from Teilhard's Journal from 1941: "...il y a cependant quelque chose de si exaltant dans la Mort Chrétienne : *Le Trouver*... Quel «thrill» !'"² Such words speak for themselves.

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2. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ, *Notes de Retraites*, 7th day, 1942 (Éditions du Seuil, 2003): 223.