

## Teilhard de Chardin

THE WRITINGS of the French Roman Catholic priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Tay-ard de Shar-dan) have been a major influence on the development of modern Christian thought and have contributed to the development of dialogue between Christians and non-believers. Although Father Teilhard died in 1955 his main writings were published later. Sir Julian Huxley in an essay devoted to Father Teilhard explains his influence in the following words:

Through his combination of wide scientific knowledge with deep religious feeling and a rigorous sense of values, he has forced theologians to view their ideas in the new perspective of evolution, and scientists to see spiritual implications of their knowledge. He has both clarified and unified our vision of reality. In the light of that new comprehension it is no longer possible to maintain that science and religion must operate in thought-tight compartments or concern separate sectors of life; they are both relevant to the whole of human existence. The religiously minded can no longer turn their backs upon the natural world; nor can the materialistically-minded deny importance to spiritual experience and religious feeling.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was born in 1881 into the family of a small landowner, the fourth of eleven children. At eighteen he decided to enter the Jesuit order. In the years until he was ordained in 1912 he studied or taught philosophy, science and theology both in England and in the Jesuit College at Cairo.

In Cairo he developed considerable ability in geology and palaeontology (the study of fossils) which led him to a deep interest in the theories of evolution.

In 1922 he took his Doctorate and lectured as Professor of Geology at the Catholic Institute of Paris. The following year he visited China but on his return to France he found that his views were considered unorthodox and he was forbidden to continue teaching. He soon returned to China, where, with certain short breaks, he spent most of his life.

While his superiors doubted his views on human evolution his work in China strengthened his convictions. He worked with leading scientists from many countries taking part in many expeditions including that which unearthed the skull of Peking man. His major work *The Phenomenon of Man* was completed in 1938 but he never succeeded in gaining permission from the Church to publish any of his controversial writings.

The outbreak of war prevented his return to France until 1946. He was there directed not to write any more on his "dangerous thoughts" and his vow of obedience was further tested in 1948 when he was refused permission to put forward his candidature for a professorship in the College de France although this position was open to him and was the highest academic position to which he could aspire.

He was, however, accorded many scientific and public awards in this period.

Father Teilhard spent the last four years of his life in the United States working on anthropological studies. His works came to be published after his death because he had left his manuscripts to a friend and because permission to publish is only required for the work of a living priest.

Concerned as he was with the immense possibilities for the development of man he considered many questions fundamental to marxists. He once expressed the problem of human beings as "torn between marxism whose depersonalising effects revolts them and a Christianity so lukewarm in human terms that it sickens them". He saw the marxist and the Christian as "two extremes . . . each a convinced believer in his own particular doctrine, but each, we must suppose, fundamentally inspired with an equal faith in Man." He felt that between the two positions there was, ". . . a basic human sympathy for the other — not for any mental reason, but arising out of the obscure recognition that both are going the same way, and that despite all the ideological differences they will eventually, in some manner, come together on the same summit."

The new currents in Catholic thought, represented in the works of Teilhard de Chardin find their reflection in the discussions of the Vatican Council and in Pope John's social encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.

## Roger Garaudy

IN THE DISCUSSIONS between Christians and marxists the name of the marxist who has done so much to promote and influence this discussion is Roger Garaudy. Although he has published widely it is only recently that his book *From Anathema to Dialogue* has been available in English. First published in France in 1965 it followed the Second Vatican Council and the lead from Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* which posed the question of the Church's dialogue with the world.

Recognising that Pope John did not address himself solely to the clergy and the faithful but "to all men of good will" Garaudy sets out, as he says in the preface to his book "to ask a few questions of his own about possibilities, the limitations and the perspectives of this dialogue, so as to offer his contribution to the common effort of reflection".

By any standard Garaudy must be counted as an outstanding marxist theoretician. In France he is professor of philosophy at the University Institute of Poitiers. He is a Doctor of Letters of the Sorbonne and holds a doctorate in science from the Soviet Academy of Science. A member of the political committee of the French Communist Party, Roger Garaudy is the Director of the Centre for Marxist Studies and Research in Paris.

His published works include studies of marxist humanism and ethics, marxism and existentialism and the problem of freedom in the twentieth century. His book *Karl Marx: The Evolution of his thought* is soon to be published in English while his latest work, *20th Century Marxism* is now a best seller in France. This work is being widely and critically debated in communist and other circles.

In recent years he has participated in Christian-marxist discussions in many countries. Twice in the past year he visited the United States speaking at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, the Harvard Divinity School and Jesuit-run St. Louis University. He was a notable contributor at the meeting of Salzburg held under the patronage of Cardinal Koenig, head of the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Believers.

Christians have found that one of the most positive contributions of Garaudy is his ability not to sidestep difficulties. While he accepts the need for dialogue he does not see it as some exercise in which individuals hide differences or make concessions rather he says, "We do not ask anyone to stop being what he is. What we ask is on the contrary, that he be it more and that he be it better." Garaudy comes to dialogue to express faith in man. It is here that he sees common ground between Christians and marxists no matter what else divides them, or distorts their positions. "... faith imposes on us the duty of seeing to it that every man becomes a man, a flaming hearth of initiative, a poet in the deepest sense of the word: one who has experienced, day by day, the creative surpassing of himself — what Christians call his transcendence and we (marxists) call his authentic humanity."