



## Teilhard at Ore Place, Hastings, 1908–1912

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### Abstract

The crucial role of the French Jesuit theologate in exile at Ore Place, Hastings (1906–26) in the development of *la nouvelle théologie* has been greatly overlooked in favour of Lyons and Fourvière. In fact, Ore Place played a key early role in the *ressourcement* of twentieth century French Catholic theology through constituting a unified and sympathetic scholarly community during an era of theological and political turmoil. One of the theologate's best-known students was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1908–12), while other teachers and students included Pierre Charles, Joseph Huby, Henri de Lubac, Ferdinand Prat, Pierre Rousselot, and Auguste Valensin. Within this congenial scholarly community, Teilhard developed some key theological foundations of his thought on topics including grace and nature (miracles, anthropology, and evolution) and christology, and was ordained. The full importance of theological formation at Ore Place for the thought of Teilhard and other French Jesuits of his generation has rarely been recognized.

### Keywords

Hastings, Lyons, *nouvelle théologie*, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

In September 1908, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin arrived in Hastings, on the south coast of England, to commence his four years of Jesuit theological formation at Ore Place— a period known as the theologate. The centenary of his arrival there provides a suitable opportunity to consider the importance of this little-known period to Teilhard's life and theology, as well as the contribution made by Teilhard and fellow scholars there to twentieth century catholic thought. I shall begin by explaining why Teilhard was studying in England rather than in France, and describe the extent and significance of the French Jesuit presence in the town, which lasted from 1883 until 1926. I will next highlight two key aspects of Teilhard's theology with origins traceable to this period: the relation of God and nature; and

christology. Finally, I will assess the overall importance of Ore Place for Teilhard's intellectual development, and for the French provinces of the Society of Jesus in France generally in the early twentieth century.

### Hastings and the Ore Place Theologate, 1906–1926

The city of Lyons has a good claim to be the *foyer* of the Christian church in France. The burial site of Irenaeus and Bonaventure, the location of two ecumenical councils, and the see whose archbishop was honoured by Pope Gregory VII as 'Primate of the Gauls', Lyons was a major Christian centre into the later nineteenth century. It was natural that the Society of Jesus decided, early in their history, to establish a significant presence there. By the time of Teilhard's birth in 1881, the city boasted a large Jesuit house overlooking the city on the hill of Fourvière, and a recently founded Catholic university. A large basilica was under construction, also on Fourvière, overlooking the medieval cathedral on the River Saône.

Despite this illustrious Christian history, storm clouds were on the horizon. In 1880, the year before Teilhard's birth, the Society of Jesus had been forbidden to teach in France, as part of the laicization of teaching promoted by Jules Ferry, then Minister of Education.<sup>1</sup> As a result, several Jesuit schools and colleges were relocated to surrounding countries, with the south-east coast of England particularly favoured because of its close proximity to France. In Hastings, the Lyons province opened a novitiate at Hurst Court in 1883—translated from Peak House at Sidmouth in Devon—and in 1887, as numbers expanded, built new premises, named St Stanislas College, at nearby Hollington Park in Saint Leonards-on-Sea.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the decade, the teaching ban on religious orders was being enforced less rigorously, with the result that, in 1896, the Jesuits left Hastings and moved back to France, to Aix-en-Provence. This return proved short-lived, however, as persecution escalated with the passing of the Waldeck-Rousseau legislation on 1 July 1901, which permitted the Council of Ministers to disband any religious congregation by decree. This further deterioration in relations with the state precipitated the return of the novitiate to Hollington Park—which, in the intervening period, the Society had, fortuitously, not been able to sell—now accompanied by the provincial hierarchy. This relocation proved

<sup>1</sup> Dominique le Tourneau, *L'Église et l'État en France* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000), p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Rosette, «Hastings», in *Établissements des Jésuites en France depuis quatre siècles: répertoire topo-bibliographique*, ed. Pierre Delattre (5 vols.; Enghien: Institut supérieure de théologie; Wetteren: De Meester, 1940–57), vol. 2, 792–808 (792–800). Rosette was Rector at Hastings from 1887 until 1901.

foresightful, because the Waldeck-Rousseau measure was applied vigorously by Émile Combes, who assumed office as Prime Minister the following year. On 7 July 1904, yet another law was passed, this time authorizing confiscation of the assets of religious congregations.

In 1905, the owner of woodland adjacent to Hollington Park died. He had been hostile to the Jesuit presence there, but the community was now able to purchase the land and enlarge its premises.<sup>3</sup> Apart from these, the Society owned several other properties in Britain. Saint David's College, a former prison abandoned for two years and situated far away at Mold in north Wales, had from 1880 accommodated the theologate of the Lyons province.<sup>4</sup> Following a brief return to Lyons in 1897, the theologate resided at Hales Place, Canterbury, from 1901. Here, significantly, they were joined by the theologate of the Paris province, which had been located at the Maison Saint-Louis on Jersey from 1880 until 1899.

During the most intense period of state persecution, the Society was developing these British foundations. In 1905, it purchased Ore Place, an old manor house above Hastings on the eastern side, possessing good sea views and a fourteen hectare park. These grounds allowed space for much-needed expansion, and a four-storey extension was constructed providing accommodation for 120 people each in a separate room.<sup>5</sup> A further building, apparently a recreation hall, was erected during 1911.<sup>6</sup>

The secularizing Third Republic was subjected to visceral papal condemnation around this time. Not only did its policies undermine the Roman Catholic Church, but challenged the fundamental conception of humanity as a spiritual being too. Pope Pius X inveighed against its supporters:

It is no longer only the Christian faith that they would uproot at all costs from the hearts of the people; it is any belief which lifting man above the horizon of this world would supernaturally bring back his wearied eyes to heaven. . . . War has been declared against everything supernatural, because behind the supernatural stands God, and because it is God that they want to tear out of the mind and heart of man.<sup>7</sup>

Patrick Cabanel has suggested that this state persecution of Christians in France be seen as a prelude to the expulsions of Jews and

<sup>3</sup> Rosette, «Hastings», 799.

<sup>4</sup> Louis Rosette, «Mold», in *Établissements*, vol. 3, 372–85.

<sup>5</sup> Rosette, «Hastings», 801. For a photograph of the extension, see *Lettres d'Hastings et de Paris, 1908–1914* (Paris: Aubier, 1965), p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters from Hastings, 1908–1912* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968) [subsequently *LH*], 19 March 1911, p. 140. All unattributed sources are by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Pius X, encyclical of 6 January 1907, *Une fois encore*, 4, in *The Papal Encyclicals* (5 vols.; Pierian: Ann Arbor, 1990), vol. III, pp. 67–70 (67).

other minority groups by the Vichy regime during the 1940s.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, personal exile from their own country gave a whole generation of theologians a very particular stake in issues surrounding secularity and the defence of the supernatural. At the same time, the exile certainly presented the Jesuits and other religious orders with some logistical difficulties, and with challenges in maintaining levels of vocations during their isolation from French society.<sup>9</sup> The exile nevertheless had some positive outcomes, not least the concentration of the theological activity of the Lyons and Paris provinces in a single location. A similar arrangement had been in place for philosophy since 1892, when the Lyons philosophate had transferred to Jersey to join the Paris philosophate, which had been situated on the island since 1880. There were significant advantages in combining forces, with the arrival of the Lyons philosophate on Jersey contributing to the maintenance of high intellectual standards.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly high levels of theological enquiry were maintained at Ore Place. Among Teilhard's fellow students, for instance, were Pierre Rousselot, Pierre Charles, and Auguste Valensin. Louis Rosette, situating Ore within the entire sweep of Jesuit formation beginning in the sixteenth century, states:

There was, in the large house, an intense and profound activity, from which derived its real cachet. The twenty years' existence of Ore Place resulted in a top-ranking house of studies. Teachers and students worked together well there, mirroring and emulating, from a theological point of view, the Colleges of the former Society whose reputation is better established. . . We thus came to possess a group of truly competent men, who placed the scholasticate of Ore in the top ranking of our houses of formation.<sup>11</sup>

This positive assessment is endorsed by Cardinal Henri de Lubac, himself a student at Ore from 1924 until the transfer of the theologate back to Fourvière in 1926. Thirty years later, he reflected:

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Cabanel, «Le Grand exil des congrégations enseignantes au début du xxe siècle», *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 81 (1995), pp. 207–17.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Atkin, 'The politics of legality: the religious orders in France, 1901–1945', in *Religion, Society and Politics in France Since 1789*, eds Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin (London: Hambledon, 1991), pp. 149–65.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Liouville, «Jersey: 2—La Maison Saint-Louis (1880–1940)», in *Établissements*, vol. 3, 840–61 (845).

<sup>11</sup> «C'était dans la grande maison une activité intense, profonde, qui lui donnait son vrai cachet. Les vingt ans d'existence d'Ore Place en firent une maison d'études de premier ordre. Maîtres et disciples y travaillèrent beaucoup, et la mirent en état de rivaliser, au point de vue théologique, avec les Collèges de l'ancienne Compagnie dont la réputation est la mieux établie. . . On arriva ainsi à posséder un groupe d'hommes vraiment compétents, qui plaça le scholasticat d'Ore au premier rang de nos maisons de formation.» (Rosette, «Hastings», 803.)

Anyone who did not live at Ore Place did not know in all its fullness the happiness of being a ‘scholastic’. There we were really rather far from the world, away for a while from nearly all the responsibilities of the apostolate; alone among ourselves, as if in a big ship sailing, without a radio, in the middle of the ocean. But what an intense life within that ship, and what a marvellous crossing!<sup>12</sup>

The tremendous intellectual energy the theologate boasted is confirmed by the names of contributors to the groundbreaking journal *Recherches de science religieuse*, founded in 1910. This publication included, in its first two years, twenty articles by seven different Hastings scholars.<sup>13</sup> Referring to the seminarians, moreover, Pierre Clavel states: ‘They will become men of great worth who will distinguish themselves in fields as diverse as education, missions, byzantine studies, history of religions, etc. The exchanges between these young men aged between twenty-five and thirty could only be stimulating.’<sup>14</sup> The atmosphere at Ore Place certainly seems to have been more open than at the Maison Saint-Louis on Jersey, where Suarezian Thomism reigned supreme under the conservative rector, Gabriel Picard, and the redoubtable Pédro Descoqs, ‘whose combative teaching was’, in de Lubac’s words, ‘a constant invitation to react’.<sup>15</sup> At the theologate, in contrast, de Lubac was encouraged by Joseph Huby to develop his interpretation of the *surnaturel* in the Sunday reading group «La Pensée».<sup>16</sup>

Most French Jesuits seem to have enjoyed their work and recreation in Hastings and the surrounding area, appreciating in particular the favourable climate and pleasant countryside.<sup>17</sup> Teilhard even describes the town to his parents as the ‘Cannes of England’.<sup>18</sup> French members of the Society was welcomed by English Roman Catholics, notably Bertram, fifth Earl of Ashburnham and a convert to Roman Catholicism, who allowed them to roam freely across his 600 hectare estate.<sup>19</sup> Teilhard recollects, in his memoir written five years before his death

<sup>12</sup> Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned his Writings* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Xavier le Bachelet (two), Frédéric Bouvier (two), Albert Condamin (six), Alfred Durand (four), Joseph Huby (two), Louis Jalabert, Louis de Mondandon.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Clavel, «De Newman à Teilhard: Une piste de recherche—1: Ore Place à l’arrivée de Teilhard en 1908», in *Newman et l’histoire*, eds. Claude Lepelley and Paul Veyriras (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1992), pp. 245–55 (250), my trans.

<sup>15</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Georges Chantraine, *Henri de Lubac, I: De la naissance à la démobilisation (1896–1919)* (Paris: Cerf, 2007), pp. 228–29.

<sup>18</sup> *LH*, 1 February 1909, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> *LH*, 2 October 1908, p. 18; 4 November, p. 24; 20 November, pp. 27–28; 23 November 1909, p. 78; 13 July 1910, pp. 102–3.

the extraordinary solidity and intensity I found then in the English countryside, particularly at sunset, when the Sussex woods were charged with all that ‘fossil’ life which I was then hunting for, from cliff to quarry, in the Wealden clay. There were moments, indeed, when it seemed to me that a sort of universal being was about to take shape suddenly in Nature before my very eyes.<sup>20</sup>

Life in Edwardian England, tolerant of Roman Catholicism, thus provided some respite from the state persecution prosecuted in France, as well as conditions conducive to intellectual and spiritual contemplation. Community life, teaching, and research were able to flourish in these liberal conditions.

### The Construction and Suppression of ‘Modernism’

In the early twentieth, the French Jesuits found themselves in the curious position of being under the suspicion of both the state and the church hierarchy, the latter seized by an obsessive urge to eradicate a collection of allegedly liberal tendencies in theology labelled ‘modernist’. The 1907 encyclical of Pope Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, defined modernism in terms of a collection of specific theological tendencies: a concern with phenomena and with religious experience; the denial that dogma revealed by the Church is axiomatic; the subordination of religious faith to the natural sciences; a symbolic rather than literal understanding of sacramental efficacy; historical and textual criticism of Scripture; and pantheism.<sup>21</sup> The encyclical presented the ‘modernists’ as ‘inflated like bladders with the spirit of vanity’, and modernism itself as the ‘synthesis of all heresies’.<sup>22</sup> Few if any individual theologians identified as modernist had espoused all the positions identified in the encyclical, and their synthesis therefore existed more in rhetoric than in reality. Some of modernism’s defining features indeed appeared to exclude others: for instance, proponents of religious experience would be unlikely to subordinate faith to the natural sciences. Leading modernist figures were excommunicated in this period, among them George Tyrrell in 1907 and Alfred Loisy in 1908.

Appended to *Pascendi* was the well-known anti-Modernist oath, obligatory for all seminarians and clergy. Teilhard swore this oath on 25 November 1907<sup>23</sup>, assenting ‘not that dogma may be tailored according to what seems better and more suited to the culture of each

<sup>20</sup> ‘The Heart of Matter’, in *The Heart of Matter* (San Diego: Harvest, 1974), pp. 25–26.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Pius X, encyclical of 8 September 1907, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, 6–13, 16–17, 19–21, 29–34, 39, in *Papal Encyclicals*, vol. III, pp. 71–97.

<sup>22</sup> *Pascendi*, 17, 39.

<sup>23</sup> *LH*, 25 November 1907, p. 123.

age; rather, that the absolute and immutable truth preached by the apostles from the beginning may never be believed to be different, may never be understood in any other way'. Teilhard has at various times been identified as a modernist, like many others who also swore the oath. As will be seen, however, many of his theological positions in this period—on which his later theories build—were, on the contrary, highly critical of modernist positions.

### God and Nature: Miracles, Anthropology, and Evolution

Teilhard's two main theological publications during his residence at Ore Place were an article in the journal *Études*, and a dictionary entry.<sup>24</sup> These reveal some of the trajectories of his thought in this early period. In the 1909 article for *Études*, he examined the concept of a miracle and the process by which the Church determines that a miracle has occurred, with specific reference to Lourdes. Here, even at this early phase in Teilhard's theology, is evident his conviction that the natural world is shaped by divine action. He writes of the healing miracles:

This intrusion in nature of 'someone' who operates externally to you, who plays with the matter that you hesitate to admit into his hands such that he draws out of it unexpected effects, is exactly what you discern, and which throw your minds into disorder. Accustomed to regard the visible world as a mine without limits, where you can dig your tunnels and plot your labyrinths without fears of encountering boundaries, here under your blows it begins to sound hollow; the wall becomes thinner; on the far side, there is something which is no longer our world; there is *another* who is working.<sup>25</sup>

Significantly, divine action on the world is not here understood in purely immanentist terms: God, when acting on the world, is experienced as other and cannot be equated in pantheist fashion with natural material forces. The church sees the specifically miraculous action of God on the world as a 'special energy which operates in

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Becker, *Geist und Materie in den ersten Schriften Pierre Teilhard de Chardins*, Freiburger theologische Studien 134 (Freiburg: Herder, 1987), offers detailed discussion of these early writings.

<sup>25</sup> «Cette intrusion dans la nature, de «quelqu'un» qui opère en dehors de vous, qui joue avec cette matière que vous hésitez à reconnaître sous ses mains tellement il en tire des effets inattendus, voilà précisément ce que vous devinez, et ce qui jette le malaise dans vos intelligences. Habitué à considérer le monde visible comme un filon sans limites, où vous pourriez creuser vos galeries, tracer vos labyrinthes, sans craindres d'en rencontrer les bords, voici que sous vos coups il vient de sonner creux; la paroi s'est amincie; de l'autre côté, il y a quelque chose qui n'est plus notre monde; il y a même «un autre» qui travaille.» («Les Miracles de Lourdes et les enquêtes canoniques», *Études* 118 (1909), pp. 161–83 (177).)

his service'.<sup>26</sup> Teilhard reflects on this energy from a scientific perspective, stating prophetically (in 1909) that recent scientific theories 'reveal to us, in the separation of atoms, an inexhaustible supply of energy', and leaving open the possibility that healings inexplicable with scientific theories are due to the activation of this energy.<sup>27</sup> Yet he proceeds to situate such healings, in the case of Lourdes, squarely within the Christian and Catholic context of divine revelation and the intercession of Mary. Although the existence of this energy might be explicable in scientific terms, an account of its activation, Teilhard here makes clear, requires a theistic context.

Teilhard's other significant published theological text dating from his Hastings years was an essay that formed the fourth and final part of an entry on «L'Homme» in the *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique*. The methodology of this dictionary was innovative, aiming not simply to describe church teaching on the topics covered, but to bring this teaching alongside modern scientific perspectives, and demonstrate and defend its coherence and significance in light of them. Teilhard affirms the particular importance of this interdisciplinary approach to the subject of his own entry, in which he states:

The Church which, indirectly, eliminates philosophical systems, by declaring them incompatible with her faith, has never defined anything, and has not in fact done so. Only, by clear research and by necessity, she employs the language of her time to establish the truths of which the profound sense must alone necessarily be preserved.<sup>28</sup>

In the second sentence, Teilhard seems to intend a double meaning: theology alone grapples with the deepest, unprovisional truths of reality, but is only able to do so if it remains attentive to current secular theory and debate. In his subsequent theological exposition of humanity, several key Teilhardian and Christian themes are identifiable, including: that humankind is composed of spirit and matter, soul and body; that individual humans do not exist in isolation in the world, but in a state of mutual interdependence in which each becomes a centre of action reflective of the whole; and that individual humans are unique and possessors of dignity.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> «Les Miracles de Lourdes», p. 162.

<sup>27</sup> «Les Miracles de Lourdes», p. 173.

<sup>28</sup> «L'Église qui, indirectement, élimine des systèmes philosophiques, en les déclarant incompatibles avec sa foi, n'en a jamais défini aucun, et n'a pas à le faire. Seulement, par recherches de clarté et par nécessité, elle emploie le langage de son temps pour fixer des vérités dont le sens profond doit seul être sauvegardé nécessairement.» («Homme: IV: l'homme devant les enseignements de l'Église et devant la philosophie spiritualiste», *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique*, II (4 vols.; Paris: Beauchesne, 4th edn, 1924–28 [1912]), 501–14 (502).)

<sup>29</sup> «Homme: IV», 501–4.



Following his arrival at Ore Place, Teilhard quickly established links with local geologists, with iguanodon prints in the eastern cliffs proving an early point of interest.<sup>30</sup> Within six months, he commented that ‘new fossils are comparatively plentiful, and in some cases, I’m beginning to have a better collection than the Hastings museum’.<sup>31</sup> It was during his time at Ore, he later reflects, that he began to gain a spiritual awareness of evolution—‘a deep-running, ontological, total Current which embraced the whole Universe in which I moved’<sup>32</sup>—motivated, no doubt, by these paleontological researches. Towards the end of his dictionary essay, Teilhard describes the nature of evolution in light of a spiritual conception of humanity. He rules out, crucially, a purely Darwinian theory of human evolution on the grounds that this would be incompatible with essential axioms of church teaching:

We conclude by rejecting necessarily an evolutionism which, linking humanity in the fullness of its being to inferior life forms or to matter, regards it only as the product of a transformation—whether from like to like, by the reshaping of primitive compounds—or from lesser to greater, by increases (which were due to a divine source), that will not culminate in an unanticipated and profound reordering, a rending of the vital current, placing humanity in a region of transcendence and stability.<sup>33</sup>

Teilhard here sets out a key element of his evolutionary theory as developed in *The Human Phenomenon* and several shorter essays: that evolution is not simply an outcome of the play of immanent natural processes within the world, as a purely scientific account might maintain, but is given to the world from outside in an act of completion, transformation, and revelation. He proceeds to describe the idea of humanity given by philosophy and the natural sciences, with key elements of his later thought once again identifiable: the

<sup>30</sup> *LH*, 4 November 1908, p. 24; 4 December, p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> *LH*, 20 February 1909, p. 36; also 31 May, pp. 47–48; 1 July, pp. 53–54; 25 July, p. 58; 15 August, pp. 63–64; 16 February 1911, p. 134; 26 February 1912, pp. 190–91; 3 June, pp. 197–98; 13 July, p. 206; *Letters from Paris, 1912–1914* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), 15 August 1913, pp. 98–99; 29 August, p. 101. While in Hastings, Teilhard had contact with Charles Dawson. For a rebuttal of accusations that he knowingly played any part in the Piltdown Man fraud, see Mary Lukas, ‘Teilhard and Piltdown: a re-assessment’, in *Humanity’s Quest for Unity: A United Nations Teilhard Colloquium*, ed. Leo Zonneveld (Wassenaar: Mirananda, 1985), pp. 61–70.

<sup>32</sup> ‘The Heart of Matter’, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> «Nous concluons au rejet nécessaire d’un évolutionnisme qui, soudant l’homme, par toute l’épaisseur de son être, aux formes inférieures de la vie ou à la matière, ne verrait en lui que le produit d’une transformation,—soit du même au même, par remaniement des combinaisons primitives,—soit du moins au plus, par des accroissements (fussent-ils dus à une source divine), que ne terminerait pas un remaniement brusque et profond, un arrachement au courant commun, plaçant l’Humanité dans une région de transcendence et de stabilité.» («Homme: IV», 505.)

distinction between the inside (*le dedans*) and the outside (*le dehors*); matter as a principle of multiplicity, and spirit as a source of unity; and a vital act (*acte vital*) and creative drive (*poussée créatrice*) as the source of action in the world.<sup>34</sup>

### Christology

During Teilhard's four years' residence at Ore Place, important new approaches to Pauline christology were being developed in French catholic biblical scholarship, and the theologate was an important centre for these.<sup>35</sup> The house included three figures of decisive importance: Teilhard's teachers Ferdinand Prat and Albert Durand, and his fellow student Joseph Huby. Prat's christology is best expressed in his two-volume, one thousand-page study *The Theology of Saint Paul*, first published in 1908 and 1912, in which he affirms of Christ:

All things are in him because, being the perfect image of God, he comprises the ideal and the model of all things possible, and is the exemplary cause of all contingent beings. All things are by him, as the efficient cause, God, in his outward operations, acting by the Son in the Holy Spirit in accordance with the order and harmony of his inmost life. All things are for him by a double right, both because the creation is his work and because God, embracing at a glance the whole multitude of his counsels, connected with his Son, in advance and by a special bond of finality, the world of nature and the world of grace.<sup>36</sup>

Cyril Martindale, a fellow student of Teilhard's, describes in a letter to Charles Raven the formative influence of Prat's study of Paul on Teilhard's theology.<sup>37</sup> This enduring inspiration is combined with an earlier Johannine influence to which Teilhard was subject by his teacher Albert Durand.<sup>38</sup> The tendency in contemporary New Testament circles was to highlight the correspondence, rather than the disjunction, between Paul and John, with the captivity epistles

<sup>34</sup> «Homme: IV», 505–14.

<sup>35</sup> James Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin: A Comparative Study* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 43, 150–52.

<sup>36</sup> Ferdinand Prat, *The Theology of Saint Paul* (2 vols.; London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1945), vol. 2, p. 146.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Charles Raven, *Teilhard de Chardin: Scientist and Seer* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> *LH*, 10 October 1909, p. 70, n. 1, which provides, along with 18 October 1908, p. 21, n. 1, a full list of Teilhard's subject teachers. Richard W. Kropf, *Teilhard, Scripture and Revelation: A Study of Teilhard de Chardin's Reinterpretation of Pauline Themes* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), pp. 208–15, shows that most of Teilhard's early appeals to scripture were to John. Alfred Durand, «Le Christ 'Premier Né'» 1 (1910), pp. 56–66; «Le Discours de la Cène» 1 (1910), pp. 97–131, 513–39; 2 (1911), pp. 321–49, 521–45; and «La Réponse de Jésus aux noces de Cana» (1912), pp. 157–59, were all published in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* during Teilhard's residence at Ore Place.

(Ephesians, Phillipians, Colossians, Philemon) being taken for this purpose as forming the core of the Pauline corpus.<sup>39</sup> This hermeneutic accounts for the distinctly Johannine philosophical and mystical character of the Pauline christology being developed.

Prat's interests were pursued by his pupil Joseph Huby, who was a contemporary of Teilhard's for three years at Ore Place, being one year Teilhard's senior. Henri de Lubac identifies the influence of Teilhard's theology on Huby's study *Saint Paul: les épîtres de la captivité*, published in 1935.<sup>40</sup> The twelfth edition of this classic study appeared in 1947. Huby there states of Christ:

In him all was created as in the supreme centre of unity, harmony, and cohesion, which gives the world its meaning and its value, and so its reality; or, to put it another way, as in the 'foyer' (*the meeting point*—Lightfoot) at which all the threads, all the generating forces of the Universe, are woven together and co-ordinated... He is the dominating centre, the keystone of the Universe: 'In him all subsist.'<sup>41</sup>

Huby was inspired by the Pauline tradition of reflection on the cosmic work of Christ, developed in order to take full account of the implications for humanity and the cosmos of the fact that the whole fullness of God dwells bodily in Christ.<sup>42</sup> The implications of cosmic christology are not, however, confined to the mutual relations subsisting between the persons of the Godhead. Rather, the Son is, in Teilhard's words, 'He in whom everything is reunited, and in whom all things are consummated—through whom the whole created edifice receives its consistency—Christ dead and risen *qui replet omnia, in quo omnia constant*'.<sup>43</sup> Particularly striking in demonstrating the biblical inspiration of this Teilhardian christology is a gloss that combines least four scriptural passages, which praises Christ as

the Alpha and the Omega, the principle and the end, the foundation stone and the keystone, the Plenitude and the Plenifier. He is the one who consummates all things and gives them their consistence. It is towards him and through him, the inner life and light of the world, that the universal convergence of all created spirit is effected in sweat and tears. He is the single centre, precious and consistent, who glitters at the summit that is to crown the world, at the opposite pole from those

<sup>39</sup> Kropf, Teilhard, *Scripture and Revelation*, p. 209.

<sup>40</sup> *Lettres intimes à Auguste Valensin, Bruno de Solages, Henri de Lubac, André Ravier, 1919–1955* (Paris: Aubier, 1972), p. 69, n. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Huby, *Saint Paul: les épîtres de la captivité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1935), p. 40; trans. in Henri de Lubac, *The Faith of Teilhard de Chardin* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> Col 1.19, 2.9.

<sup>43</sup> *The Divine Milieu* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), p. 84.

dim and eternally shrinking regions into which our science ventures when it descends the road of matter and the past.<sup>44</sup>

It is thus evident that Teilhard was very far from embracing a modernist christology. The encyclical *Pascendi* proclaimed that modernists, ‘not sparing even the person of the Divine Redeemer, whom, with sacrilegious daring, they reduce to a simple, mere man’, had called into question the divine nature of Christ.<sup>45</sup> By developing his biblical doctrine of the cosmic Christ, Teilhard presents, in contrast, a high christology, which pictures the whole world as dependent on Christ for its creation, preservation, and consummation. A nuanced perspective such as this demonstrates that, as early as the opening decades of the twentieth century, the dynamics of French theology were considerably more complex than is suggested by standard images of a conflict between modernism and traditionalism.

### Toward the Future

At the heart of Teilhard’s theological formation at Ore Place was his ordination. He was made subdeacon and deacon on Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 March 1911, the feast of the Annunciation. He was ordained priest on 24 August of the same year, the feast of Saint Bartholomew, by Bishop Peter Amigo of Southwark, who held office from 1904 to 1949, and in whose diocese Hastings was then situated, being one of a total of over 500 French Jesuits ordained by him.<sup>46</sup> In a letter to his parents shortly after, Teilhard commented: ‘My life has been extremely calm, quite transformed by morning Mass, and the knowledge that I am finally a priest.’<sup>47</sup> This part of priestly formation was, for Teilhard, both spiritual and intellectual: he had written his thesis on the eucharist, defending it in a Latin disputation in December 1911.<sup>48</sup>

There is no anticipation during Teilhard’s time at Ore of the life-changing deluge of war into which he and most of his fellow scholastics would soon be plunged. Yet attention to Teilhard’s intellectual and priestly formation in this prior period, and the continuities with later periods in his life, reveals his thought and mission to be rooted

<sup>44</sup> ‘Science and Christ, or Analysis and Synthesis’ (1921), in *Science and Christ* (London: Collins, 1968), pp. 34–35; cf. Rev. 22.13, Col. 1.17, Jn 8.12, Rom. 8.22.

<sup>45</sup> *Pascendi*, 2.

<sup>46</sup> *LH*, 30 August 1909, p. 67, n. 1. For a family photograph marking the occasion, see Thomas M. King, *Teilhard’s Mass: Approaches to ‘The Mass on the World’* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2005), p. 5. Surprisingly, no mention is made of this important early episcopal ministry in the biography by Michael Clifton, *Amigo: Friend of the Poor* (Leominster: Fowler Wright, 1987).

<sup>47</sup> *LH*, 11 September 1911, p. 162.

<sup>48</sup> *LH*, 29 December 1911, p. 179.

firmly in the French Jesuit intellectual and community milieu of the early twentieth century.<sup>49</sup> As Henri de Lubac states of Teilhard:

In order to understand certain orientations and emphases of his thought, in order to do justice to what was both most daring and most timely in it, a work of historical reconstruction has become necessary. We must bring to mind again the situation of the religious and conservative world in France around 1900, the interior exile of Catholic society, the theology current at that time, as well as the positivist, determinist and antireligious mentality then dominant.<sup>50</sup>

Although the experience of war undoubtedly made many impacts on Teilhard, his thought has prior origins, and specifically, prior theological origins. As René d'Ouinice beautifully affirmed in 1970:

If the walls of the house ... of Ore Place in Sussex were able to speak, they would tell much of this special period, of which few written records remain. But the silence of archives means little. The shock of the Great War was decisive for Teilhard's thought, but an intense intellectual activity had preceded it. Most of Teilhard's theological ideas had gained form at the scholasticate, in these conversations between equals where young intellectuals freely discussed the results of their personal reflections.<sup>51</sup>

Just one example of the theological origins discussed in this article has been evolution. That the concept of the Omega Point (the final synthesizing goal of the evolution of the created order) originates in Teilhard's Christian faith, theology, and worship, is confirmed by a comment in *The Human Phenomenon*, in which he states of Omega: 'I probably would never have dared to consider or form the rational hypothesis of it, if I had not already found in my consciousness as a believer not only the speculative model for it, but its living reality.'<sup>52</sup>

The theologate at Ore Place closed in 1926, following a decision that June after the former Rector, Jean-Baptiste Costa de Beauregard, had assumed office as the new Provincial.<sup>53</sup> The community was relocated back to Fourvière in Lyons. The house and its grounds remained empty for a time, but were then sold to the Society of African Missions, who retained ownership until 1986. The building was demolished in 1987, by which time it was in advanced disrepair.<sup>54</sup> All that remains of the site from Teilhard's time are a gatehouse and

<sup>49</sup> David Grumett, *Teilhard de Chardin: Theology, Humanity and Cosmos* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), pp. 1–8.

<sup>50</sup> De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, p. 110.

<sup>51</sup> René d'Ouinice, *Un prophète en procès: Teilhard de Chardin dans l'Église de son temps* (Paris: Aubier, 1970), p. 55.

<sup>52</sup> *The Human Phenomenon* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), p. 211.

<sup>53</sup> Rosette, «Hastings», 807.

<sup>54</sup> *LH*, 23 March 1910, pp. 89–90. I am grateful to Cathy Walling of Hastings Museum for supplying some historical details.

gateposts, some ruins from the original manor house, and some of the flora he refers to, including the rhododendrons and mature trees. A small housing estate has been built on the site with its two roads named after Teilhard and the theologate.

Memory of the large impact of the Ore Place theologate on French catholic theology in the twentieth century has been similarly obliterated. This has been due largely to the myth that all the important theological developments occurred at Fourvière in Lyons as part of the movement labelled «la nouvelle théologie». Yet the notions that «la nouvelle théologie» represented an organized school that began in the 1930s and was located in Lyons have rightly been challenged.<sup>55</sup> The origins of the shift in French Jesuit theology away from a purely defensive apologia towards engagement with the world and contemporary thought in fact need to be traced earlier, to the period 1900 to 1930.<sup>56</sup> By nurturing a scholarly and spiritual community banished from France, by freeing members from their native social and pastoral commitments, by uniting numerous theologians of the Lyons and Paris provinces of the Society under a single roof, and by its proximity to important sites for geological research, the theologate at Ore Place, Hastings, made a tremendous contribution to modern French catholic thought, and thereby to the theology of the wider Church, that has gone largely unacknowledged.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See «Y a-t-il eu une ‘école de Fourvière’?», in Bernard Sesboüé, «Le surnaturel chez Henri de Lubac: un conflit autour d’une théologie», *Recherches de science religieuse* 80 (1992), pp. 373–408 (386).

<sup>56</sup> Étienne Foullieux, «Épilogue: les jésuites en France du xix<sup>e</sup> au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle», in *Les Jésuites à Lyon, xvi<sup>e</sup>–xx<sup>e</sup> siècle*, eds Étienne Foullieux and Bernard Hours (Lyons: ENS, 2005), pp. 247–64 (264).

<sup>57</sup> This article was first presented at the British Teilhard Association annual conference, Aylesford, 18–20 April 2008. I am grateful to François Euvé SJ and Stephen Retout for discussion.