Another theme is the place of worship in Christian experience, and as a more-or-less necessary context for authentic Christian theology. There are some interesting observations about the relation between worship and culture, from the author’s years in India. He rejects the view that scholarship cannot privilege the Bible as a sacred book, and defends the Barthian and Kierkegaardian argument for a necessarily ecclesial reading of Scripture. Such a reading will always have public and political dimensions and, as a recapitulation of salvation, Christian worship should be a liberating experience. Perhaps more dubiously, he offers a ‘non-sacramental’ interpretation of Baptism and the Eucharist, along lines sketched by Karl Barth. He argues for the Eucharist being a real meal – no ‘tasteless wafers or cubes of tired bread’. The Eucharist is nourishment for those seeking the Kingdom and its justice through human ethical action, and not the feast at the end of the journey.

There are also stimulating individual essays on the gay crisis, the Holocaust, and the media. Each shows a keen appreciation of human experience as a source of theological reflection. Forrester’s own sensitivity is evident throughout this limited but engaging selection of his writings. He argues for a full acceptance of committed, long-term gay relationships, and claims that essentially non-procreative gay relationships may have much to teach a heterosexual world which is still coming to terms with the advent of reliable contraception. The Holocaust, surely rightly, is presented as off the Richter scale of conceivable experience and as such an enduring challenge to all human reflection. The media emphasises on story and image can help the Church to relocate its life in better communication with the culture in which it is set.

Throughout, the style is easy and accessible. There is a certain sense that the wisdom of a rich and varied teaching and ministerial career is being distilled into a rather motley array of beakers, but with something of interest for everyone.

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Greatly in vogue a few decades ago, the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin continues to hold fascination for theologians, philosophers, and general readers. The present book enters a large field of secondary literature relating to Teilhard, but its emphasis on the origins and content of Teilhard’s theology marks it out as of particular interest.
At one time, Teilhard was hailed as an important thinker at the interface of theology and the natural sciences. This was due primarily to his combining scientific work as a palaeontologist and evolutionary biologist with his vocation as a Jesuit priest. However, as interest in the dialogue of science and theology has mushroomed, his contribution to that dialogue has been found wanting by many. For example, John Polkinghorne finds his essentially optimistic outlook on evolutionary processes to be ‘unhelpful’ in the light of more recent thinking by evolutionary theorists; while Ian Barbour finds in Teilhard’s writings a ‘theology of nature’ which, while drawing on data from the sciences, cannot truly be read in a scientific light. Moreover, Teilhard’s reputation as a scientist has been damaged through his implication in the Piltdown Man forgery, a palaeontological scandal in which artificially-aged human and orang-utan bones were presented as coming from an early ape-like hominid (although the precise role played by Teilhard in this forgery is debated).

Given the continued attractiveness for many of Teilhard’s theological ideas, however, independent of their relationship to the natural sciences, the time is ripe for a re-examination of him as a theologian; and David Grumett’s thorough exploration of those ideas, and their background, is most welcome.

Grumett’s monograph focuses on particular elements of Teilhard’s theological thinking: his understanding of the cosmos, as a fusion of ‘matter’ and ‘spirit’; the capacity of the human soul for action and passion in its interaction with the material world; the substance of that world, which enables it to be a consistent forum for such action and passion; and the roles played by vision and by virtue in Teilhard’s thought. In all these cases Grumett looks at the origins of Teilhard’s ideas in earlier philosophers and Christian thinkers, such as Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Ignatius Loyola, Leibnitz, Hegel and Bergson, and at the moulding of those ideas by Teilhard’s immediate intellectual surroundings as a twentieth-century French Jesuit.

Particularly useful are two chapters near the end of the book. One explores the role of evolution in Teilhard’s thought. Teilhard’s incorporation of evolutionary thinking into his theology is generally accepted as a highly important strand of that theology, even if his consequent advocacy of concepts such as the ‘omega point’ (towards which, he maintains, evolution is tending) remains controversial. The other chapter looks at the political movements of both left and right in early twentieth-century France, and Teilhard’s changing (in general, leftwards-tending) attitude towards them. There are a number of valuable insights gained from this contextualization.

Readers of this journal may wonder about the relevance of all this to ecclesiology. That relevance is, I think, twofold. First, it is characteristic of Teilhard’s theology to explore, in somewhat abstract terms, the relationship of the One to the Many, and to site the locus for the activity (or passivity) of the human individual in