

O Heartman
(Elgar)

H.M.V.E. 728

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Recently, we had the gospel parable about the man going out to sow seed in his field, and how the seed fell on different kinds of ground. In the explanation given in the gospel, it's pointed out how enthusiastically the word of God is received by some, but that then the enthusiasm gets stifled and dies off. I was reminded by this of a man I've been intending to quote and talk a little about at this time of day sometime this summer. For he was born exactly 100 yrs ago (on 1st May 1881, to be exact); and, a short time after his death in 1955, he became something of a 'cult'-figure — his writings became very popular, were reprinted many times and translated into many languages, and sorts of books and articles were written about him and his ideas, and societies sprang up all around the world devoted to studying and discussing his thoughts.... he had been "discovered", with enthusiasm, and welcomed for the freshness of his ideas and insights. Today, you don't hear his name mentioned very much any more, although books and learned articles about him have continued to appear during the past 20 years or so. The enthusiastic reception is over; tho' he's touched the hearts and lives of thousands of Christians and has greatly influenced Catholic thought over the past quarter-century. He is (if you haven't guessed), Fr Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit, priest, scientist, mystic. It's been said that the excitement and optimism of the 1960s made that a good time for reading Teilhard. But as the

hopeful atmosphere of that decade faded into the more jaded climate of the 1970s, interest in Teilhard seemed to subside. Now, it might be questioned whether Teilhard's message did not fall on deaf ears, and whether his hopeful vision of mankind was not false. But it should be remembered that he wasn't trying to propound a new system of theology or philosophy or spirituality; nor to sell a personal theory of his own, a kind of private vision or revelation — he was a scientist, studying and reporting on data he and others had observed in the material universe. As a Christian scientist, he was trying to get people of faith to tune in their religious lives to the rhythm of evolving creation observed and described by scientists. The artificial separation between science and religion, which grew out of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, weighed heavily on Teilhard. For him, all creation showed a marvellous unity; and in observing and studying that creation he found no conflict between science and religion, but a harmonious complementariness. From his youth he had experienced (as he wrote) "a sort of profound feeling for the organic ^{reality} ~~unity~~ of the world... an awareness of the synthesis of all things in Jesus Christ." There are indications today that his hope and vision are being shared, by people of all kinds: that the day will come when man will realize that it is in order that he might know and be (rather than have) that life has been given to him. It's not towards endless progress that the world is moving... but towards an ecstasy outside the universe. || Teilhard inspired many people: here's a song, written and

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sung by one man who caught the enthusiasm of the 60s. "Where shall we
hide the truth"

MUSIC- PRAYERS

I'd like to

end today with something written by Teilhard himself, from his 'The Divine Milieu': "Lift up your head, Jerusalem, and see the immense multitude of those who build and those who seek: see all those who toil in laboratories, in studios, in factories, in the deserts and in the vast crucible of human society. For all the ferment produced by their labours, in art, in science, in thought, all is for you. Therefore open wide your arms, open wide your heart, and like Christ your Lord welcome the wave-flow, the flood, the sap of humanity. Take it to yourself, for without its baptism, you will wither away for lack of longing, as a flower withers for lack of water: and preserve it and care for it, since without your sun it will go stupidly to waste in sterile shoots. What has become of the temptations aroused by a world too vast in its horizons, too seductive in its beauty? They no longer exist. The earth-mother can indeed take me now into the immensity of her arms. She can enlarge me with her life, or take me back into her primordial dust. She can adorn herself for me with every allurements, every horror, every mystery. ... But all her enchantments can no longer harm me, since she has become for me, more than herself and beyond herself, the body of him who is and who is to come.