

**Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Sir Julian Huxley:
A Tale of Two Friends**

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A Psalm of Life

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Teilhard de Chardin and Julian Huxley, two prominent intellectual figures of the twentieth century, were scientists—Huxley, a zoologist and science writer working in Europe and North America, and Teilhard, a geologist and hominid paleontologist working mainly in Asia and Africa. Both scientists also made pioneering attempts to reconcile the theory of evolution with humanity's cultural and spiritual needs—Teilhard from a Christian and theological perspective and Huxley from a secular and humanistic perspective. Teilhard died in 1955 at age 74; Huxley lived longer and died in 1975 at age 88. Huxley was fortunate to have published all of his works during his lifetime and thus saw the impact of his ideas and research on society. Teilhard, on the other hand, was forbidden by his Jesuit Order to publish his mystical and religious essays (indeed, a painful experience for any author); these works were made available to the public only after his death. Nevertheless, Teilhard's ideas have had great impact on intellectual and theological discourse. Today, many of Teilhard's books are still in print, and several societies carry on his legacy at both the academic and the grassroots level.

Huxley^[i] and Teilhard^[ii] were close friends during the last decade of the latter's life. But the friendship and the intellectual exchanges between these men, one an ordained Catholic priest and the other an admitted agnostic and secular, need to be better appreciated and studied because they have profound implications for debate and discourse on the relationship between science and religion in our world. This essay, which explores the intellectual and biographical links between Teilhard and Huxley, relies on their biographies, memoirs, letters, and writings, and attempts to assemble the scattered information about this subject in a coherent manner.

^[i] Rasoul Sorkhabi, "Sir Julian Huxley bridged biology and humanity," *The World and I Online Magazine* (April 2006).

^[ii] Rasoul Sorkhabi, "Geology and spirituality: The evolution of Teilhard de Chardin," *The World & I Online Magazine*, (June 2005).