Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Paleoanthropologist

The sudden death of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., in New York on 11 April 1955 deprived the scientific world of an outstanding expert in the fields of vertebrate paleontology, paleoanthropology, and Pleistocene geology. He was well known, deeply respected, and admired by colleagues in four continents. Born in central France in the Puy-de-Dôme, he was educated at the Jesuit College in Villefranche-sur-Saône. After he had joined the order, he completed his religious studies in Jersey, England, and Egypt between 1904 and 1912. Upon his return to Paris, he worked under Marcellin Boule, director of the Laboratoire de Paléontologie du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, who was at that time engaged in intensive research on fossil man in connection with his studies of the skeleton from La Chapelle-aux-Saints. Teilhard's interest in the problems of the evolution of man dates from this time, when he received so much inspiration from so great a teacher. At this time he also published a number of monographs, mainly on the small mammals, carnivores, and primates that had been collected from the Eocene deposits at Quercy and in the Jura.

Just before World War I, while he was in England, Teilhard visited the Piltdown site with Arthur Smith Woodward and discovered a tooth of the so-called "Eoanthropus dawsoni," which was recently found to be the most singularly clever forgery of all time in the field of paleoanthropology.

Teilhard served with a medical corps unit as a stretcher-bearer in France from 1914 to 1918 and was awarded the Médaille Militaire and the Croix de la Légion d'Honneur for distinguished service and bravery—honors which, with all his others, he received with the utmost modesty and characteristic simplicity. When in 1946 he became an Officier de la Légion d'Honneur au Titre des Affaires Étrangères because of his invaluable work in China, and in 1950 and 1951 a corresponding member and a nonresident member of the Académie des Sciences de Paris, he accepted these further outstanding acknowledgments of his brilliant contributions to science with his usual humility, almost never alluding to them.

Before he began his distinguished Asiatic career, Teilhard was awarded his doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1922, and until 1928 he was professor of geology at the Institut Catholique de Paris. With Father Licent he was for 2 years in the Ordos region of North China, where the French Government sent him in 1923, to conduct a highly successful research program. This was followed by an expedition in 1928–29 to Somaliland and Abyssinia. From 1929 until the outbreak of hostilities with Japan in World War II, Teilhard was adviser to the Geological Survey of China at Peking. During these years, he took part in expeditions to the Gobi Desert, to Chinese Turkestan, northern and central India, and Burma and Java. After the war, unable to return to China because of political developments, he visited South Africa twice, and at the time of his death was expressing a hope of going to Formosa in the near future.

The years in China resulted in the most important contributions that were made by Teilhard in the fields of vertebrate paleontology, paleoanthropology, and Pleistocene geology. With his Chinese colleagues, he participated in the excavations at Choukoutien, where *Sinanthropus* was discovered. He followed up his intense work on the material by visits to Java, where he made important observations on the geological provenance of *Pithecanthropus* and *Meganthropus,* as well as related fossil forms. Later, when he went to Africa, he was able to study at first hand the breccias in the Transvaal that have produced the australopithecine remains. His observations were set forth clearly in a series of short papers that were published just before he died.

Teilhard de Chardin's long and invaluably productive life covered a vitally important era in the study of human evolution. When he entered the field before World War I, the study of fossil man was in an extremely elementary and almost amateur stage. During his lifetime, he saw and participated in the rapid development of the allied sciences of Pleistocene geology, vertebrate paleontology, paleobotany, paleogeography, paleoanthropology, and finally the use of radioactive carbon for dating purposes. Always a scientist, but never a skeptic, Teilhard was a man of outstanding integrity in his work and of unfailing kindness to and interest in his younger and less-experienced colleagues. He was a splendid teacher who was clear and succinct in his explanations, which were readily forthcoming whenever he was appealed to for help or advice. Tall, lean, and hard, he was always in excellent physical shape; on an expedition, he was a tower of strength and he quietly and certainly without intention became the central pivot of the staff. Blessed with a gentle but perceptive sense of humor, he was at all times the best of companions, always unselfish, always inspiring, and always ready with information for the furthering of the work at hand.

Above all, Teilhard held strongly to his conviction concerning the spiritual side of man's development. The spiritual side was as vital to him as the purely physical evidence, and in his ability to sustain and teach this belief he was head and shoulders above those of us who are left here to carry on the work and to mourn the passing of a noble scholar and a great gentleman.

HALLAM L. MOVIUS, JR.
Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

A research problem is not solved by apparatus, it is solved in a man's head. . . . The laboratory is the means by which it is possible to do the solving after the man has the idea clarified in mind.—CHARLES F. KETTERING.