

THE TEILHARD NEWSLETTER

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Editor – Rod White
Editorial Team – Jane Bingeman, David Grumett, David Lewin
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Introduction

As your editor I feel ashamed to say that this newsletter has been delayed. On 28th March 2008, my wife gave birth to Isabella Sarah Luz White, a beautiful girl. Having a baby gives you a new perspective on the universe. I apologise that this edition has been delayed for so long and I am determined not to let this happen again.

Many thanks for your response to the Readership Survey. The responses have already led to significant changes. I am including it again and I would encourage as many people as possible to respond.

Energy Crisis

We are facing an energy crisis. Not just in the international oil market but in terms of individual input to community life. This creates problems in the traditional institutions of social life. In the church, in education, in communities we see a greater

reluctance by people to give more than they will expect to be given back.

On a global view we see tribal groups reluctant to look outside their own communities and calling out in anger at

other groups / areas to blame them for their own problems.

In business at the same time we see a huge emphasis on 'teamwork' – we also see a new trend in the ability to 'work from home'. Social interaction is replaced by emails that can so often be misinterpreted.

In society we see a rise in anti-social/anti-community behaviour. The result no doubt of many complex factors but based in the reluctance of families and adults to involve themselves with young people and to be responsible role models of behaviour. There is a worrying rise in knife crime and gang

warfare. There is no doubt that our society is facing a crisis.

How would Teilhard respond to this?

I think Teilhard would respond calmly with the idea that we do not have other people to fear, we only have ourselves to fear, our own selfish instincts. The only way around this is to look to ways of creating harmony with other people, to be willing to invest more energy on others than we expect to receive back. The love that this generates will create a positive ripple effect that we can only hope and pray will spread around the world to avoid a future that is very fearful indeed.

New books!

Make sure you look out for '*The Jesuit and the Skull: Teilhard de Chardin, Evolution, and the Search for Peking Man*' by Amir D. Aczel. Aczel is the bestselling author of '*Fermat's Last Theorem*' and it is a good read. It will be available in paperback from November 2008. Aczel gives great detail on Teilhard the man, his relationships, his foes and work colleagues. It is an easy read and a good way to introduce Teilhard to other people.

Logical Faith: Introducing a Scientific View of Spirituality and Religion by Joseph P. Provenzano and Richard W. Kropf. Joe Provenzano is well known to members of BTA as he spoke at one of the conferences in the 1990s. He works for NASA in the California Institute of Technology. A full review of this book will be printed in the next newsletter. Joe sent several copies to committee members and they are available to borrow.

27th International Teilhard Conference

By all accounts an excellent time was had by all in Hastings this year. From seeing fossils collected by Teilhard and the tobacco case he used to listening to talks by David Grumett and Fr François Euvé.

David Grumett gave an excellent historical background to the Jesuit Theologate at Ore

Place. A full transcript of his talk is available from me. The following is a brief transcript of the talk given by Fr François Euvé. [I would give caution that I was not present and this summary is based on my copy of the tape recording.]

The reception of Teilhard's thought by modern theology Fr François Euvé

Fr Euvé gave a masterful talk to conclude the conference. With no script and only brief notes and quotations he still managed to communicate the thrill and the challenge that Teilhard poses to modern theology.

It is now 100 years since Teilhard arrived at Ore Place and it was Teilhard who has been responsible for a radical reinterpretation of Christianity in the light of evolution.

Teilhard's Legacy

"I know myself to be irremediably less a child of heaven than a son of earth"*.

The words surfaced as my feet connected with young volcanic rock between sandy bays on a lonely island.

Words written by the man who loved rocks, the man who bent towards Hastings's shingle beach, whose hands lifted ancient fossilized plants, whose spark recognised the Fire.

And I saw anew fresh tracks of the ancient nesting turtle carved in recently created sand.

Jane Bingeman

*Hymn of the Universe by Teilhard de Chardin
Mass on the World – 'The Offering'.

Over the past 100 years society has changed, evolution has been championed and religion has suffered. Yet even today theologians claim that evolution is not relevant to faith. Surely the challenge for religion today is to answer the claims of the scientific materialists that there is no God and no purpose in nature.

The materialist argument is that the world is all there is. Science is the answer to everything, some have made grand claims about the end of religion, Teilhard realised that we have to answer their claims and that one of the best ways was to say that with God we have hope for the future.

Teilhard referred to this as the 'materialist illusion' or cosmic pessimism. Teilhard understood that we can offer people hope whilst materialism can offer no hope.

Teilhard wanted to harmonise the history of nature / humanity / salvation. Many theologians have criticised him for being merely an apologist but there is a growing recognition that his theology and metaphysics have a unique contribution to make.

Teilhard believed in a God of the future. Religion looks to the future to interpret the present whilst science looks to the past to interpret the present. Teilhard found a way to bring these two approaches together.

Teilhard liked to present problems as a paradox. The differences between science and religion are striking but he did not seek a simple solution. He encouraged people to think and research their own answers.

Religion tends to assume that salvation will bring us out of the world and that this implies that the present world is superficial or not as important. Teilhard disagreed strongly with this. Teilhard believed that salvation waits for us inside the world. The incarnation meant that nature is in a process of 'becoming'. Our hope therefore is in the world, we have to survive in order to find Christ. Love unites us, as in individuals it will unite all of humanity. Humanity is the key to evolution because we have the freedom to love.

We cannot see the direction that evolution is going because we are deep within the 'current'. We are like a submarine deep beneath the sea. Everything around us is moving forward but we cannot see it because we have no periscope to look 'outside' the world:

Accordingly we need some criterion of values to enable us to make our choice. But immersed in the Universe as we are, we have no means of getting outside it, even momentarily, to see if it is going anywhere, and if so, where. We have no periscope; we are navigating in the depths. Is there nothing within the world to enable us to judge whether we inside it are moving in the right

direction, that is to say, in the same direction as it is moving itself? ("The Grand Option", 1939, FM, p. 39).

When God incarnated himself he united with the world, Christ became the centre of creation. Teilhard saw that Christ was 'one with all' and that mankind has to unite. The love that God showed on the cross is the love that we must show. The unity of mankind

through love is a certainty and a precondition of Christ's return.

Increasingly academics are coming to realise that Teilhard had a unique contribution to make to Christology. Also to metaphysics i.e. his thoughts on reality, matter, freedom, time. All these things point to the fact that Teilhard is still a fascinating and challenging subject for modern theology and that he is relevant to society today.

Teilhard in China 1923 – 1924

Part 2

by Michelle Le Morvan

1. January – March 1924

During the winter of 1923 – 1924, Teilhard travelled several times to Peking to widen his contacts with Chinese and other foreign geologists (Letters 4th December, 8th January, 27th January).

After a brief visit in January to the coal mines of KaiPing (Cuénot, p52), he made two further visits in early 1924 to the Chieli area (east of the Ordos and south of Peking). The first was a courtesy call to the Episcopal centre of the

Jesuit Mission in the area. The second was a geological trip accompanied by Père Charvet, a Jesuit who also worked in Tientsin. The purpose was to traverse a small mountain massif on the west of the Chieli plain on the Shensi-Honan border. Their work was described in a small paper, which described the geology of the region (Vol 2, pp 440 – 444). The general structure is essentially

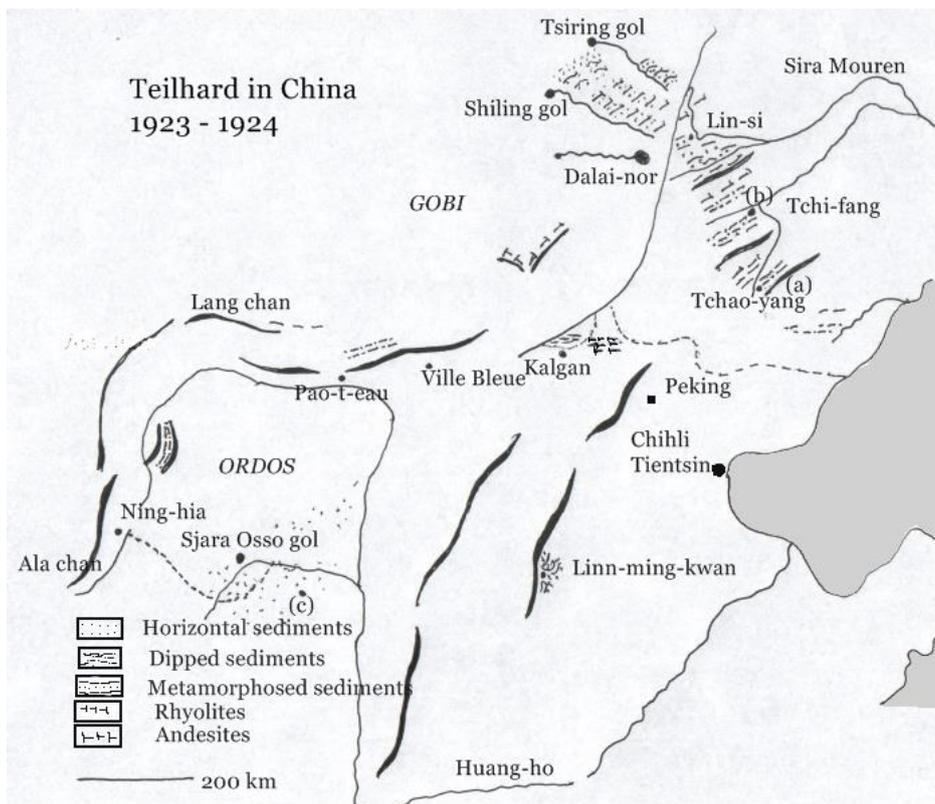
simple with a series of Carboniferous and post-Carboniferous sandstones and shales, crossed by numerous outcrops of granitic rocks. In the Zen Chan on the west, a series

of largely terrestrial sandstones lie above a crinoidal marine limestone.

From small pits in the upper rocks locals mined anthracite.

There were a series of igneous rocks, which formed a striking topographical feature. In the Ming Chan River massif to the

east, more sedimentary rocks are intruded by igneous rocks with greater metamorphism than further west. The structure may be linked to the Zen Chan further west, though separated from it by an igneous ridge. Part of the area was covered by a reddish loess, lying under an upper mantle of yellow loess.



2. April – June 1924: The region of the Dalai-Noor

The area covered lay to the north of the Ordos and was separated from it by the east-west mountain ranges which bordered the Ordos. In 'Letters from a Traveller' Teilhard described the area (p. 111), and it was a region whose geology had been inadequately explored. They had to cross a series of mountainous ranges (aligned NE-SW) before they reached the Mongolian Plateau and the Dalai-Noor. The region was described by Teilhard and Licent under five headings:

1. The Mountain Ranges

The structure was essentially of andesitic mountains and valleys of deposits formed by the erosion of the igneous rocks which made up the ridges. Most of these rocks were of Mesozoic age, except the first ridge which was of an overturned fold of the Precambrian Sinian limestone. The igneous rocks cut across a basement of more ancient rocks (largely igneous) and were themselves cut by later dykes. Several rivers also cut through the mountains, notably the Lao Ho and the Sira Mouren. Other streams flow from the Mongolian Plateau.

A thick series of metamorphosed sediments are found between the mountains and the Sira Mouren as far as the Mongolian Plateau. These were named the Linnsi Series. In places these were intruded by igneous rocks which left both regional and contact metamorphic remains. One bed of limestone, less metamorphosed than the rest, contained Carboniferous brachiopods.

2. The Mongolian Plateau

This is essentially a complex basement of igneous and sedimentary rocks which have been metamorphosed in a complex geological history. Widespread Tertiary deposits cover the area and the basement sometimes can be seen in exposures in the later beds. The crystalline basement appears to underlie the whole area as far south as Kalgan.

3. The Tertiary Basin of the Dalai-Noor

These are Tertiary deposits lying above the Basement beds. Two main groups of beds are found. These are the Upper White Beds – a succession of white marls and sands. These lie above the Red Beds, which are mainly a red sandy clay with some beds of white limestone and sandstone. These beds are tilted and faulted and only the top 25m are visible. Both the White and the Red Beds have a characteristic vertebrate fauna. This fauna shows that the Red Beds are of Pontian (Upper Miocene) age, while the White Beds are of Pliocene (Post-Pontian) age. The White Beds are protected by flows of Basalt lava which cover a wide area. These flows are of Post-Pontian age. A series of well-preserved volcanoes of Quaternary age are found on the north side of the Dalai-Noor – they reminded Teilhard of the Puy of the Auvergne.

4. The Quaternary Deposits of the Mongolian Plateau

Along the valley slopes of the Tsjinging gol and Shiling gol are found loess deposits. The valleys are filled with white sands laid down in lakes, and are very similar to the Sjara Osso gol deposits of the Southern Ordos.

5. Deposits outside the Mongolian Plateau

Between Lao Ho and the Sira-Mouren a number of basaltic lava flows are found which may be of Pliocene age.

Prehistoric Remains

The whole region of North Chihli and the Mongolian Plateau are rich in Neolithic remains: polished or chipped axes, arrow heads, pottery and bones of domesticated animals are found in a rich layer of black earth overlying the Quaternary White Sands. No trace of the Palaeolithic was found.

Conclusion

The whole area of Northern Chihli and Eastern Mongolia has a geological structure resting on a massive crystalline basement.

The younger rocks lie on this basement. Much of the folding of this complex occurred during the great Mesozoic orogenic movement which affected Northern China.

General Conclusion

By undertaking the two great traverses of 1923 and 1924, Teilhard and Licent had achieved an understanding of the geology of the Ordos and its surrounding mountains, and the area of Eastern Mongolia to the

north. This prepared Teilhard for the subsequent work he was to undertake over the following years. It had also given him an insight into, and knowledge of, the vertebrate palaeontology of China which he could now see in the wider setting of Western Asia, India and Europe. They had also made the first real discoveries of Palaeolithic hearths and animal remains – which encouraged the way for the work which Teilhard was to do subsequently.

Books to Read

TOWARDS WISDOM by Sheila WARD

Publication September 2007, Price £7.50 (including UK postage) ISBN 978-1- 899600-99-1

Distributed by: GreenSpirit Books, 56 Downlands Road, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 5EF.

Tel and Fax: +44 (0)1380 726 224. Email: greenspiritbooks@btinternet.com

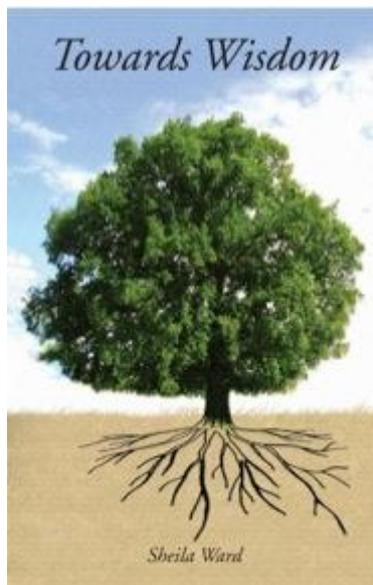
www.greenspirit.org.uk/books

Review by Viscountess Bronwen Astor

Sheila Ward has written a timely book. It describes her search for authenticity, integrity, spirituality and love. She follows a path which is becoming more and more popular as women in their later years, find the freedom to explore the meaning of Christ's words, "I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly." (John 10.10)

"I have always been interested", she says, "in the truth about love". For twenty years from the age of 50 she has pursued this, working with groups of women.

Married to a Diplomat after university, she travelled widely encountering different faiths and their teachers such as, Baghwan, Ghandi, Sri Aurobindo and many others. After posts in Singapore, Rhodesia and Sri Lanka, Sheila and her husband and four children found themselves in Mauritius and it was there, joining in a discussion group of women; a Muslim, a Hindu, two Roman Catholics and a Chinese Buddhist that Sheila began a more intense inner journey. One of



the books the group discussed was Teilhard de Chardin's *The Future of Man*.

It was at this time at an Anglican service that Sheila took the Eucharist for the first time (she had been brought up a Methodist). She had an immediate and crucial experience; "I was filled with an immense energising love so powerful that without my yoga practice I felt that I would have been blown apart..... I was seeing the whole world in a new paradigm. It changed my life.

This state of heightened perception and energising love lasted for several months and at some level it is there still."

After reading this I waited for some reference to the Holy Spirit whose powerful influence this describes perfectly and subsequently her actions. But her story goes on and she pursues the phenomenon of falling in love, not with God, but with a friend who introduces her to the work of Teilhard de Chardin. She discovers the truth of evolution and his important axiom. "One

day, after we have mastered the winds, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love and then for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire.”

Given her age, I am surprised that her childhood was free from the damage of war. The war years were spent in the Lake District. Maybe that is why she reached the age of 50 before beginning to find out who she really is other than a daughter, a wife, a mother or someone known only as in a relationship to someone else. Many of us can identify with this.

The final chapter is prophetic and encouraging. There are clues here for the future and I would thoroughly agree with her

conclusion that there is a Sea Change coming. This book is not just for women; men also need to discover the importance of an inner journey to that frightening anima which they feel threatens to emasculate them, yet, when finally embraced, strengthens and grounds them. Perhaps we each have to emerge with a heightened consciousness from our small groups, tribes and nations, in order to integrate into larger groups, the world, the universe. A new state of being that we all may be One.

This is an ongoing journey with which the reader can engage and it makes an exciting read. It is time to grow the Tree of Life, so I ask, “will it need deeper and stronger roots than are portrayed?” I very much look forward to her next book.

Something to start a debate?

Sheila Ward has sent the following contribution. Perhaps this could initiate discussion / debate to involve and encourage members to write for the newsletter. Sheila has offered to write a ‘column’ for the next newsletter and I am sure both these questions and her book will give you plenty to think about.

She writes:

Although I enjoy reading the Teilhard Review I should be very interested to read some considerations of the following questions:

1. Teilhard foretold an evolutionary leap into a new way of being. Obviously this would be as much beyond our comprehension as it would be beyond an ape to imagine the poetry, literature, music and science of our own time. However it would be interesting to share some ideas of what might be involved and suggest clues which would lead us to further exploration.

2. Is it not possible that our present belief system is actually forming a barrier to

further understanding? Should we consider how we may need to adapt/ reformulate/ rethink our present belief structure if we are to discover a new way of being?

3. Although we say in church about five times every Sunday "As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be", surely this was introduced into the liturgy by priests who wanted to reassure their people in a dangerous world that they could hold onto the old traditions for their emotional security? Of course Christ said "I came that ye might have life and have it more abundantly" which must mean change - and risk.

4. Christ's command to "Love one another" must surely be a pointer to this new way of being . Have we even begun to understand what this really means?

5. Is it possible that transformation might take the form of a group experience rather than a solitary one?

If anyone would like to respond to these questions or suggest their own set of questions for debate I would be very willing to print this in the next issue of the newsletter.

28th International Teilhard Conference, 2009

Theme: Teilhard and the Politics of Globalisation

Venue: Pastoral Centre, London Colney

Friday 1st May to Sunday 3rd May 2009

[Further details to be announced shortly]

Discussion Group – Web site update

<http://www.teilhard.org.uk>

The Association regrets that, owing to persistent posting of spurious and offending spam messages – deleted, in each case, as soon as seen – it has been considered necessary to close down the Discussion page for the time being. We regret any disappointment that this may cause to people genuinely interested in putting forward comments, suggestions, and ideas, or discussing thoughts relating to the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin.

In pursuit of above, I have been investigating the Yahoo Teilhard discussion Groups. I consider that perhaps the best is:

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/teilhard>

Please remember that when you enter Yahoo Groups, firstly you have to be a Yahoo member (with email address) and secondly you need to apply for membership to the group owner. This is relatively simple. The Yahoo group is busy and friendly.

Newsletter by Email

The Association has piloted and successfully distributed a small proportion of the previous newsletter by email. This worked well and the main advantages are that you receive the newsletter quicker and it reduces expenses. It also means that you have the ability to forward the newsletter to friends and colleagues. I would appreciate if anyone is interested in joining this service if they would email me, expressing which format you would prefer. I can distribute the newsletter in PDF or Word (*.doc) format. If there are any difficulties I am willing to assist. Other formats may be considered.

General communications and enquiries about the Association should be addressed to the
Secretary:

Peter Cox, 12 Falconer's Field, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 3ES
Phone: 01582 761955 Fax: 01582 621526 E-mail: peterjohncox2@btinternet.com

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Readership Survey

1. How long have you been receiving this newsletter?

First time

1 – 2 years

Over 2 years

2. How would you rate this edition of the newsletter?

1.Poor to 10.Excellent _____

3. Is there a good variety of articles?

1. Poor to 10.Excellent _____

4. Did you have any problems reading the newsletter – text size, printing quality etc.?

5. What articles did you find most / least interesting?

6. I would be interested if you could list your interests and your reasons for being interested in Teilhard.

7. Do you have any other comments or questions?

If filling out the form on the computer don't be afraid to simply type in a number or X where appropriate and please feel free to expand your answer beyond the size of the box if necessary.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. I would be appreciate if you could either post this form to me