# Teilhard de Chardin's Final Spiritual Writings: From *The Heart of Matter* to *The Christic*

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Throughout his life, Teilhard de Chardin engaged in continuous philosophical and religious reflection alongside his scientific work, seeking to rethink the formulation of the Christian faith in light of the scientific vision of an evolving universe. Behind this reflection, we also discover the development of a new and deeply personal spirituality, the fruit of both his scientific experience and a genuine mystical experience[1]. The final development of his thought and spirituality can be found in the writings from the last five years of his life (1950–1955). It is primarily in these works that Teilhard developed his distinctive Christology, centered on the relationship between Christ and the universe, which constitutes the heart of his spirituality. As he assured Jeanne Mortier in 1948—his faithful collaborator of fifteen years, later entrusted with the publication of his writings—his relationship with Christ was, for him, the most important thing in his life and the one for which he would ultimately be called to account: "I sometimes wonder if, in the final phase of my life—more than research on fossil man—more than speculations on the Noosphere—it is not the simple practice of the total Love of the universal Christ that will be asked of me in 'annihilation'[2] On March 8, 1955, he summarized in another letter how he could not give up developing and spreading his ideas and experiences while remaining faithful to the Church: "The Father General invites me to 'peacefully pursue science.' But precisely, how can one have a *taste for research* unless it is a *certain* form, a *certain way*, *of worship*! All my difficulties with Rome lie there (and those of all priests working in factories or laboratories as well)… — I repeat: none of this breeds any bitterness in me—because I am too certain of the final outcome. I could not feel more deeply bound to the Church; — nor more certain that this Church, by rethinking its Christ more deeply, — will be *the* religion of tomorrow."[3] Two days before his death, he had written a letter to Father André Ravier, Provincial of the French Jesuits, in which he once again set forth his ideas, and at the end of which he said: "This is my faith: the one I so dearly wish I could profess publicly before I die…"[4]

## The Heart of Matter

The first seminal work with which he began this stage of his spiritual journey was his spiritual autobiography, *The Heart of Matter*[5]. While resting in Les Moulins, in his native Auvergne, Teilhard took advantage of this time to write it. On August 14, 1950, he wrote to Jeanne Mortier: "And so, I have finally decided to draft at least an outline of *The Heart of Matter*: a sort of first draft. We'll see what comes of it later." A few days later, on the 19th of the same month, he wrote: "I have begun drafting *The Heart of Matter*. Will it be a first draft, or the

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[1] The bibliography on Teilhard's spirituality is extensive. Among the most recent works are: Gustave Martelet, *Teilhard de Chardin, Prophète d'un Christ toujours plus grand* (Brussels: Lessius, 2005); André Dupleix and Évelyne Maurice, *Christ présent et universel: La vision christologique de Teilhard de Chardin*, (Paris: Mame-Desclée, 2008); Kathleen Duffy, *Teilhard's Mysticism: Seeing the Inner Face of Evolution.* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2014); Ursula King, *Christ in All Things: Exploring Spirituality with Teilhard de Chardin.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016).

[2] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier,* (Paris: Seuil, 1984) (August 24, 1948), 38.

[3] *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier* (March 8, 1955), 178.

[4] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Lettres intimes à Auguste Valensin, Bruno de Solage, Henri de Lubac, André Ravier (1919-1955).* (Paris : Aubier Montaigne, 1975), 466.

[5] *The Heart of Matter*, translated by René Hague, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

final version? I cannot say. In any case, it will untangle and clarify the problem for me."[6] The text is ultimately dated October 30.

The work is divided into three parts: "I. The Cosmic, or The Evolutive," "II. The Human, or The Convergent," "III. The Christic, or The Centric," and a conclusion, "The Feminine, or The Uniting." We are particularly interested here in the third part, "The Christic," where he explores the theme of the relationship between Christ and the evolution of the world. Building on the ideas he had already developed regarding the identification of the Omega Point of convergent evolution with Christ, he now says that the "Christic" sense must be added to the "cosmic" sense of reality. With this new term, used here for the first time and substantivized as "the Christic," he designates the influence and presence of the universal Christ at all levels of the universe, which drives its evolution toward ultimate union in Him. In a sense, the Christic can be understood as a new dimension that the universe acquires beginning with the Incarnation. The Christic dimension brings about the union of the traditional "God of the Above" (en-Haut), the transcendent Creator, and the "God of the Ahead" (en-Avant), toward whom the evolution of the universe tends: the Omega Point. These two terms will recur frequently in subsequent writings. The discovery of this Christic dimension corresponds to "a new Faith in which the ascensional Faith that rises up towards a Transcendent, and the propulsive Faith that drives towards an Immanent, form a single compound;—a new Charity in which all the Earth's dynamic passions combine as they are divinized."[7] Teilhard confesses that the two axes of his life—which arose independently of one another: faith in the world and faith in God, "the Christian and pagan halves of my innermost being"—ultimately converged into a single fundamental identity. Christian mysticism—the seed of which his mother planted in him as a child in the form of devotion to the Heart of Jesus—eventually set ablaze, with the fire of love, the attraction of the Omega, with which that Heart is identified. "Fire" now emerges as the preferred image to represent Christ's influence in the universe, permeating everything with His presence. This presence is now expressed in the term "Christic Diaphany," in other words, the transparency of Christ's influence in the universe. Previously, Teilhard had used the term "diaphany" to denote the presence of God in the world, analogous to the expression "Divine Milieu"[8] The text concludes with a prayer in which the images of fire and diaphany appear together. It begins with the following words: "Lord, because, by every instinct and through all the vicissitudes of my life, I have never ceased to seek You and to place You at the heart of universal Matter," and ends as follows: "Let your universal Presence spring forth in a blaze that is at once Diaphany and Fire. O ever-greater Christ!"[9]

## Formulation of the Terms Christogenesis and Christic

The theme of Christogenesis reappears in the short essay titled "Reflections on the Scientific Probability and the Religious Consequences of an Ultra-Human," dated Paris, March 15, 1951"[10] After a brief presentation of the stages of evolution—cosmogenesis, biogenesis, and anthropogenesis (the evolution of the cosmos, life, and humankind)—Teilhard goes on to consider the religious consequences in the "mystical realm."

Starting from the acceptance of a "convergent cosmogenesis"—a presupposition that, for Teilhard, follows from the very analysis of the evolution of the universe as projected onto that of humankind, and which he considers on its way to being accepted and destined to become part of the human heritage—a "synthesis" between the Above and the Ahead in a becoming of the 'Christic' type, in which access to the transcendent hyper-personal would depend, as a condition, on the previous arrival of human consciousness at a critical point of collective reflection. The supernatural, in consequence, would not exclude but, on the contrary, call

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[6] *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier* (August 14 and 19, 1950) 65, 66.

[7] *The Heart of Matter*, 53.

[8] For example, in "The Divine Milieu," he introduces the term "Diaphany" by associating it with the terms "Transparency" and "Incandescence." *The Divine Milieu*, New York: Harper & Row, 1965, 128–132.

[9] *The Heart of Matter*, 55-58.

[10] Reflections on the Scientific Probability and the Religious Consequences of an Ultra-Human in *Activation of Energy*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963, 269-280.

for, as a necessary preparation, the complete maturing of an ultra-human."[11] (By "ultra-human," Teilhard means the final stage of human evolution) With this somewhat obscure statement, Teilhard refers to the way in which, in the supernatural Ultra-human—which requires its natural preparation—the final fulfillment and incorporation of humanity, and through it the entire universe, into the Christ-Omega is accomplished. To conclude that, in this process, Anthropogenesis (the evolution of humankind) is recognized as "ultimately identical to *a Christogenesis*" (the formation of the total Christ) and the Ultra-human as the union of humanity in Christ. One could hardly summarize in fewer lines the religious dimension of Teilhard's thought, concentrated in these two concepts: Christogenesis and Christic.

In September 1952, while in exile in New York, he wrote a short essay on the ecclesial implications of his thought. The essay's lengthy title is as follows: "What the World is looking for from the Church of God at this Moment: A Generalizing and a Deepening of the Meaning of the Cross."[12] Teilhard begins by referring to an earlier work (1949), "The Heart of the Problem"[13], in which he had highlighted the conflict between the hopes placed in a purely human and material evolution and progress of humankind—which would lead "Ahead" to an "ultra-human"—and the religious hopes placed in a transcendent God, "Above." He finds the solution to the conflict in the union of the two tendencies within the Christian faith in the Incarnation, with the ultimate incorporation of all into Christ, toward whom, consequently, all evolution is directed. In 1952, Teilhard acknowledged that these pages had not been very well received "in Rome," and he reintroduced them in light of the current spread throughout the world of a "neo-humanism," which views humanity as evolving toward a purely natural "cosmic ultra-human." Faced with this situation, Teilhard asserts that it is urgent for the Church to present a "new" meaning ("an ultra-humanized meaning") of the Cross. Traditionally, says Teilhard, the expiatory character of the Cross has been presented in terms of redemption from sin, and we must now begin, in an evolving world, to see the Cross as the very salvation of evolution. Thus, "bearing the sins of the guilty world" is, for Teilhard, in terms of cosmogenesis, "*bearing* the weight of a world in a state of evolution." So, for him, the Cross represents the synthesis of the Transcendent and the Ultra-human, of "the Above" and "the Ahead," and he adds, "it is exactly the same Cross which I worship: the same Cross, *but much more true*."[14]

The relationship between the cosmic and the Christic is also briefly discussed in "The God of Evolution," written on October 25, 1953, during his return trip from his stay in South Africa.[15] In this work, Teilhard begins by expressing concern that the traditional Christian worldview will no longer appeal to "the most progressive segment of humanity" because it does not incorporate the evolutionary worldview revealed by science. The answer to this concern lies in the presentation of what he calls "the God of Evolution." This is not merely the God who creates through evolution, but the God made man, the universal Christ, in whom we recognize the convergence of the Omega of human experience—toward which evolution tends—and the Omega of faith in the Incarnation; that is, the Omega of science and that of Christian mysticism. The presence of Christ-Omega transforms the cosmic dimension into a "Christic" dimension, so that the Cosmic extends and enlarges the Christic, and the Christic "amorizes," that is, fills the realm of the Cosmic with energy (the energy of love) to the point of "incandescence." Here again, we see the image of fire used to express Christ's life-giving action in the world. Science and mysticism unite around a Christ who is ultimately identified as the final Omega point of a convergent evolution.

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[11] Reflections on the Scientific Probability and the Religious Consequences of an Ultra-Human, in *Activation of Energy*, 279.

[12] What the World is looking for from the Church of God at this Moment: A Generalizing and a Deepening of the Meaning of the Cross, in *Christianity and Evolution*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1971, 212-220.

[13] The Heart of the Problem, in *The Future of Man*, New York: Harper Colophon, 1964, 259-280.

[14] What the World is looking for from the Church of God at this Moment: A Generalizing and a Deepening of the Meaning of the Cross, *Christianity and Evolution,* 219.

[15] The God of Evolution, in *Christianity and Evolution*, 237-243.

A new spiritual essay, dated March 1955, is titled “Research, Work, and Worship.[16] Teilhard begins by recalling the advice given to him by his superiors: “ ‘Pursue science peacefully, without getting involved in philosophy or theology…’”—and then declares that, for him, this is “psychologically untenable and, moreover, directly contrary to the greater glory of God.” He goes on to write that “scientific research has become, both quantitatively and qualitatively, a major—if not the principal—form of reflective activity on earth.” The recognition of the paramount importance of the scientific worldview is fundamental to Teilhard’s thought. This scientific worldview has revealed that life is the result of evolution and that this evolution continues and progresses—through human activity, particularly scientific activity—to bring about the transformation of humankind itself into what Teilhard calls the “ultra-human,” the final stage of evolution. Thus, every researcher has become a believer—a believer in “the Ahead,” a believer in Progress—and is committed to bringing about the “ultra-human.” The consequences of this attitude lead to a resolution of the practical problem between science and religion—a problem that stems from the perception of a contradiction between traditional religious values (the God of the Above) and the future-oriented human destiny toward which scientific progress leads. But Teilhard reminds us that it is precisely in an evolving universe—such as the one revealed by science—that he sees the progression toward its final fulfillment in Christ, recognized as the “natural and supreme center of Cosmogenesis” or the “supreme pole of Cosmic Evolution.” So, any work that aims at progress—and scientific work in particular—is in itself already a participation in the process that leads toward the world’s final fulfillment in Christ. For the Christian, who has become a “worker of the Earth,” a “magnificent resonance” is realized between his worship of the traditional God of the Above and his faith in the Christ of the Ahead, the ultimate pole toward which human evolution progresses.

Finally, Teilhard compares the work of the priest-scientist to that of the worker-priest, an experiment then at its height. In both cases, he believes that a new spirituality is necessary, one in which the Kingdom of God and human effort are “genetically” united (as he puts it). Furthermore, he calls for a “spiritual education” in which the Spiritual Exercises (and even dogma) are reconsidered in order to appreciate the “Christ-like and Christ-forming virtues of human actions and works.” The essential meditations of the Spiritual Exercises (The Principle and Foundation, The Kingdom, The Two Standards…), conceived from the perspective of a static universe, must be adapted to the vision of a dynamic universe, evolving through human labor drawn by the action of the total Christ toward whom it tends. The new universe of evolution, as discovered by the sciences, demands a new Christology. Thus, Teilhard tells us in conclusion that “the old Earth-Heaven opposition disappears (or is corrected) in the new formula: ‘To Heaven through the fulfillment of the Earth’” and that “a new and higher form of worship, gradually discovered by Christian Thought and Prayer,” emerges.

**The Christic**

The most important work from the final period of Teilhard’s life, written one month before his death, is undoubtedly the one titled “The Christic”[17], in which he presents a final version of his vision of the world and of Christ. As early as 1950, in a letter to Jeanne Mortier, he had already expressed his intention to write this work: “For me […] this extraordinary Christic, I want to live long enough to have time to express it more or less as I now see it taking shape, with an ever-increasing sense of wonder.”[18] In April 1952, by then in New York, he mentioned in another letter to Jeanne Mortier: “The next thing I shall write 'for myself' (and for close friends) will perhaps be a study of 'the Christosphere' – or the Christic (the Christic Point, Milieu and Energy), which brings me back more or less to the 'Divine Milieu'".[19] At last, in September 1954, he wrote: "Meanwhile, I am thinking more and more about writing something "confidential" about the Christic: a sort of quintessence of 'The Divine Milieu', 'The Mass on the World' and 'The Heart of Matter'."[20] The term “Christic” appears in

[16] Research, Work and Worship, in *Science and Christ,* New York: Harper & row, 1968, 214-220.
[17] The Christic, in *The Heart of Matter*, 80-102.
[18] *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier* (August 19, 1950), 66.
[19] *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier* (April 30, 1952), 97.
[20] *Lettres à Jeanne Mortier* (September 22, 1954), 162.

the third part of "The Heart of Matter", as we have seen already. Teilhard now explains that an innate cosmic sense, as well as a certain Christic sense, emerged within him as the result of spontaneous evolution. For him, therefore, what he calls "the Christic" constitutes a synthesis between *cosmic convergence* and *Christic emergence*. He thus unites the vision from below with that from above—what one can arrive at by contemplating the evolving world and what the Christian faith tells us about Christ, present in the world through his incarnation.

On the one hand, science has discovered cosmic evolution toward a planetary-scale complexity-consciousness, which continues at the human level and must be convergent. This convergence must lead to an ultimate union of all things, through the human spirit, into something that projects toward the future as an Omega point. Christian faith recognizes Christ's place within the process of evolution through the Incarnation, which—through his resurrection—unfolds to the point of integrating all of humanity into a single body, in union with the entire universe at the Parousia, at the end of time. Thus, the Omega Point of evolution as viewed by science is ultimately identified with the Christ of faith. The view from below, that of Science, is completed by the view from above, that of faith. The universe and Christ are complemented and united in a *Christified* universe and a *universalized* Christ. As he states before the Conclusion: "With the Christified Universe (or, which amounts to the same thing, with the universalized Christ), an evolutive super-milieu appears—I have called it 'the Divine Milieu'." [21] Teilhard acknowledges that this vision of Christ has not attracted the attention of theologians, even though it is vital for the future of Christianity.

So, the Christic is the union and synthesis of the cosmic demands of an Incarnate Word and the potentialities of a universe in convergent evolution. The scientific vision of a convergent universe is thus linked to the consequences of the Incarnation, the central mystery of the Christian faith. This new vision, which he considers both "pan-humanizing" and "pan-Christifying," constitutes for Teilhard the foundation of a new Christianity: "a Christianity re-incarnated for the second time (Christianity, we might say, to the second power) in the spiritual energies of Matter. Exactly the 'ultra-Christianity' we need here and now to meet the ever more urgent demands of the 'ultra-human'"[22] toward which humanity is progressing.

**The Last Lines**

Teilhard's last writing is the last page of his diary.[23] It consists in a few short lines written on Holy Thursday, three days before his death, and represents a highly condensed synthesis of his entire religious thought. It is titled "What I Believe: Syntheses," a title that already indicates the content of the lines that follow and recalls the similar 1934 title "How I Believe." [24] There, he gives a presentation that ranges from the world of evolution to the universal Christ. He begins with what he considers to be the theological confirmation of his thought, quoting Saint Paul (in Greek): "God is all in all" (1 Cor 15:25–28). This is followed by an affirmation of the dynamic and evolutionary nature of the universe, which finds its fulfillment in Christ: "Cosmos = Cosmogenesis—Biogenesis—Noogenesis—Christogenesis." The evolution of the cosmos entails the evolution of life (biogenesis) and of humanity (noogenesis), and has as its ultimate goal the Universal Christ (Christogenesis). Next come "*The 2 Articles* of My Credo." First: "The Universe is centered (Evolutively, Above, Ahead." Teilhard used these two expressions, as we have already seen, to denote the transcendent nature of God (Above) and God as the ultimate end of creation (Ahead). Second: Christ is its center (noogenesis = Christogenesis), that is to say, the evolution of humanity (noogenesis) culminates in the Universal Christ, the Omega point of all evolution. The last two lines, under the heading "*Plan* 'What I Believe'": 1) a Centered Cosmos leading to a "neo-humanism," by which he means the "ultra-Human," that is, the final stage of humanity's evolution; 2) Christ is the center of the Cosmos (noogenesis = Christogenesis). Consequently, the formation of a "neo-Christianity" that is understood as a new Nicaea ("Neo-Nicaea"), that is, a new Christology,

[21] The Christic, in *The Heart of Matter*, 95.
[22] The Christic, in *The Heart of Matter*, 96.
[23] The last page of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's diary, in *The Heart of Matter*, 103-104.
[24] How I believe, in *Christianity and Evolution,* 96-131.

identified with that of Saint Paul. And he concludes that this neo-Christianity "saves noogenesis and is saved by it."

These brief lines by Teilhard confirm what was on his mind in the final moments of his life. However, he was also aware of how little influence his Christological vision had had, especially among theologians, and he adds at the end of The Christic: "How is it, then, that, as I look around me... I find that I am almost the only person of my kind… to have *seen*… the Universal Christ… the Divine Milieu… Or am I, after all, simply the dupe of a mirage in my own mind? … my 'Christic' may be no more than an illusion." And he concludes, full of hope: "… this is one more proof that Truth has to appear only once, in one single mind, for it to be impossible for anything ever to prevent it from spreading universally and setting everything ablaze."[25] Sixty-five years after these lines were written[26], the acceptance and spread of Teilhard's vision and spirituality confirm this.

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[25] The Christic, in *The Heart of Matter*, 102.

[26] Written by Fr Udías in 2021 and sent to Marie-Anne Roger on April 26, 2026, a few days before his death.