

CHRISTOGENESIS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEILHARD'S COSMIC CHRISTOLOGY

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Abstract: As part of his evolutionary cosmological vision, Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin devised an original Christology whose development can be followed in his writings. His main purpose was to establish the person of Christ as the convergent focus of cosmic evolution. Already, in his earliest essays, he spoke of the universal Christ and about the cosmos being centered in him. Once his conception of evolution converging in an Omega Point was established, he identified the Omega Point with Christ, so that the whole process of cosmogenesis becomes a true Christogenesis. A Christic sense of the world, the consequence of Christ's presence as the enlivener of the evolutionary process, corresponds to a cosmic vision, the consequence of the evolution. Teilhard's vision was for him not a mere theory, but the motor of his interior life and mission, which, he proclaimed, was to universalize Christ and thus to Christify the universe.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout his life as geologist and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was in constant contact with the fossil record of biological and human evolution. One of the highlights of his scientific career was his involvement in the early discoveries of primitive human fossils in China. Evolution was for him no mere scientific hypothesis, but the revelation of the deepest essence of the world, the universal rule that explains all reality. His main concern was to find a way to integrate Christian thought into the new cosmological vision of the evolving universe. Already present in his early writings, this concern continued to occupy him until he wrote his last pages only a few days before his death. He realized that in contrast to the prevailing static worldview, an evolutionary vision of the universe and of life would necessarily deeply affect our conception of the relation between God and the world which would have to be adapted to a dynamic evolutionary framework. This implied, among other things, a reformulation of the idea of creation, the problem of evil, the mystery of Christ, and its relation to the world. In the process, Teilhard discovered the presence of the cosmic Christ at the very heart of the material universe. In fact, the very foundation of his Christian vision of evolution and the core of his mysticism is the conception of the role of the person of Christ in the evolution of the world.¹ His writings on these subjects were precisely those which raised problems for the ecclesiastical authorities of the Catholic Church who did not allow their publication during his lifetime.

¹ Among the works which deal with Teilhard's mysticism we find the already classic work of Christopher F. Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the mystery of Christ* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday-Image, 1968) and the more recent of Thomas M. King, *Teilhard de Chardin* (Wilmington: Michel Glazier, 1988); E. de la Héronnière, *Teilhard de Chardin, une mystique de la traversée* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003); A. Danzin and J. Masurel, *Teilhard de Chardin visionnaire du monde nouveau* (Paris: Rocher and Gustave Martelet, 2005) and *Teilhard de Chardin, prophète d'un Christ toujours plus grand* (Paris: Lessius, 2005).