

# Teilhard, Evil and Providence

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On many occasions Teilhard told of his sensitivity to a universal Reality—"the All." When he first tried to express this in terms of Christian faith he called it the Will of God, a presence of divine energy everywhere. He claimed that if one sees all events as the *will* of God, the entire universe is transformed. For a while this was the only way he could understand and articulate what he seemed to perceive. But later on he came to appreciate God as a universal creative *Activity*. (W, 294)\*

These early stages in Teilhard's thought fit well into a spirituality popular in Catholic circles at the end of the last century, a spirituality that found classic expression in *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, a book by the Jesuit Jean-Pierre de Caussade and first published in France in 1861. De Caussade summed up his message as "complete and utter abandonment to the *will* of God" in all things. But he also spoke of God as active throughout creation:

[God's activity] flows through every fibre of our body and soul . . . it runs through the universe. It wells up and around and penetrates every created being. . . . its waves sweep them onwards. (25-26) Jesus Christ lives in everything and works through all history to the end of time, . . . every atom of matter contains a fragment of . . . his secret activity. Faith transforms the earth into Paradise. (36, 40, 37) Faith shows us God in all created things. (40) Our faith is never more alive than when what we see through our senses contradicts and tries to destroy it. (39) His uncreated hands do everything for me. (54) . . . in all troubles and the most deadly dangers . . . the soul finds the fullness of divine life. (64)

\*References are abbreviated throughout this essay. A list of abbreviations will be found at the end.

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