

Teilhard and the Feminine*

Jean Maalouf

What kind of man, do you think, is he who once wrote: "I have experienced no form of self-development without some feminine eye turned on me, some feminine influence at work" (HM, 59)? You would not think that a paleontologist, philosopher, theologian, poet, Jesuit priest, could have been in love. But he was. He was taken by the one true love, all the way to its very Source.

Teilhard had an authentic passion for God and an authentic passion for the world,¹ and he did not think he had to choose either God or the world. He confessed solemnly his allegiance and loyalty to both. He suggested a third way, which is reaching God through the world. "There is a communion with God, and a communion with earth, and a communion with God through earth" (WW, 14). He saw God in matter. He saw the unitive force of the feminine and its importance to the world. He saw that "The feminine is the most formidable of the forces of Matter" (TF, 74). He saw the impact that woman had, in his deepest longing for God, and he dared to suggest living "*à trois*": man, woman, and God.

Teilhard must have had a vibrant and charming personality. A certain magnetism, as his legal executrice, Jeanne Mortier told me one time, used to pull people to his presence. Emile Rideau, S.J., who knew Teilhard personally and wrote major works about him, tells us how much Teilhard wanted a dialogue with others and how eager he was to communicate with them, to listen to them as well as to persuade them.²

Teilhard was open to others, demanding, and vulnerable. He enjoyed having many good friends, men and women, even though he had difficulties with them sometimes. The enormous number of letters he wrote attests to how important his friendships were to him, as were the women he chose to

*Besides his voluminous correspondence, the main essays in which Teilhard de Chardin wrote about the Feminine are: "The Eternal Feminine" (1918), WW, 191-202; "The Evolution of Chastity" (1934), TF, 60-87; "The Feminine, or the Unitive" (1950), HM, 58-61; "Sketch of a Personalistic Universe" (1936), HE, 53-92. Please see "Abbreviations" at the end of this study for complete title of works cited within parentheses throughout this text.