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## Filial Relationship, Mercy and limitation in Thérèse of Lisieux: Towards a Thérésian Theological Anthropology and its Implications

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**Publication Details**

Schneider, J. (2012). Filial Relationship, Mercy and limitation in Thérèse of Lisieux: Towards a Thérésian Theological Anthropology and its Implications [Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)]. The University of Notre Dame Australia. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/74>

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FILIAL RELATIONSHIP, MERCY AND LIMITATION IN THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX:  
TOWARDS A THÉRÈSIAN THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ITS  
IMPLICATIONS

Judith Petra Schneider

*Principal Supervisor*

Adjunct Associate Professor Rev. Dr. Thomas Ryan SM

*Associate Supervisor*

Professor Matthew Ogilvie

Thesis submitted for the fulfilment  
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the College of Theology  
University of Notre Dame Australia

Fremantle, Western Australia

June 2012

## ABSTRACT

Against the nineteenth century neo-scholastic description of grace as an *unfelt* state, Thérèse of Lisieux, in an emphasis on affect, offers an understanding of grace as a *felt* experience. In *Story of a Soul*, her effort (initially from a Jansenist motive) to demonstrate grace as present in her life, in its transparency reveals a self in formation, and a related developing God-perception. Noting the centrality of affect in human development through L. Alan Sroufe's model of affective development, and applying D. W. Winnicott's True Self/False Self paradigm to Thérèse's thought, the research explores Thérèse's eventual consonance with Pr 9:4 "Whoever is very little... come to me," and Isa 66: 12-13, "As a mother caresses her child so shall I caress you," a filial relationship with a merciful God where one's very self comes to be protected by an infinitely potent other, through, not despite, limitation. Thérèse heralds an understanding of faith as interiorly sustained *affective knowing* – originating through early interaction with a significant other – in a *capax dei* of limitation (where the one needing self-preservation is the one God calls). This has implications for theological anthropology in that Thérèse's confidence in God's sustaining presence, mediated by her trust in the valuing other, visibly resembles this trust activity. Thérèse's experience of grace resembles the parental "holding environment" which enables the child to become a new self. Such an approach allows for a constructive relationship between grace and human development.

## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This research proposal is the Candidate's own work and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in this or any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

This thesis is 99,084 words in length (excluding contents, footnotes, bibliography and abstract).

Judith Petra Schneider ..... Date: .....

Student no 20050765

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my parents who taught me to value enquiry, and to my beautiful children who consistently encouraged me. Thanks to Dr Stephen Truscott SM who initiated a path to further study, Dr Anthony Imbrosciano for his faith in me, to Dr Henry Novello for sharing his zeal for theology, to Dr Chris de Silva for his proofreading, to Christina Schwarcz for her assistance, to Professors Peter Black and Matthew Ogilvie, Dr Angela McCarthy, Dr Joe Naimo, Deborah Tarrant, Jim Cregan and so many others in the College of Philosophy and Theology at Notre Dame Fremantle community for providing a congenial and positive environment.

Finally, I acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude to Rev Dr Tom Ryan SM, for his mentoring, professional advice, inspiration, friendship, and support in so many ways in this project to its completion.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Context and Purpose of the Study

Towards the end of the nineteenth century from the Carmel of Lisieux, France, Thérèse Martin wrote<sup>1</sup> of her experience of grace in “God’s merciful love toward human weakness.”<sup>2</sup> Pursuing her desire to be a great saint amid deeply felt limitation, she discovered Proverbs 9: 4, “Whoever is very little, let him come to me,” and Isaiah 66: 12-13, “As a mother caresses her child so shall I caress you,” which resonated with her experience of maternal love. She reasoned, surveying her failures, if by her own efforts she could not “grow up,” then God would have to stoop to her level.<sup>3</sup> Interpreting Scripture in relation to her sense of impotence and smallness as these presented themselves,<sup>4</sup> Thérèse envisioned her relationship with God in terms of who she was and what she was capable of – from wishing to impress God to ‘foolish’ degrees, to receiving God’s potency as her own, and finally, simply content to return his smile.

In *Manuscript A*,<sup>5</sup> written in 1895 after suffering many painful limitations, Thérèse returns to her early years where she neither sees nor is concerned with her effort to reap a smile because she looks only at the smile she produced in the other.<sup>6</sup> In *Man B*, Isaiah 66:12-13 and Proverbs 9:4 affirm the witness to herself as loved in infancy, allowing

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<sup>1</sup>This writing is comprised of three *Manuscripts: A, B, and C*. Thérèse addressed *Man A* to Mother Agnes of Jesus (her sister Pauline), *Man C* to Mother Marie de Gonzague, and *Man B* to Marie of the Sacred Heart (her sister Marie), at her request. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke, OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996), xiv-xviii. Hereafter, *Story of a Soul*. Thérèse’s autobiography is generally cited by its title alone, such as Augustine’s *Confessions*.

<sup>2</sup>A summary of Thérèse’s experience – in the words of John Paul II – in the Apostolic Letter promulgated at the bestowal of Thérèse’s doctorate in 1997, detailing her fulfilment of the *Positio*’s requirements. John Paul II, *Divini Amoris Scientia*, 8, 1997. <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2THERE.HTM> Accessed April 1, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 207.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Payne, OCD, *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Doctor of the Universal Church* (New York: Alba House, 2002), 193.

<sup>5</sup> Hereafter *Manuscript* will be abbreviated to *Man*.

<sup>6</sup> “...the first memories I have are stamped with smiles and the most tender caresses.” *Story of a Soul*, xv, 17.

her to develop her understanding of the dynamics of grace<sup>7</sup> and make the liberating quality of this image effective.<sup>8</sup> She recalls the little one's freedom and value; it is free from the weight of self-judgment, and it finds value in the face of its mother. Returning to images of early efforts to please, and how the child's heart begins in life, Thérèse rediscovers her original desire to please (delight) and the irrepressible hope that this desire could be realized.<sup>9</sup> The question of whether desire and hope alone were of any value could be answered here.

Thérèse saw the felt-limitation of her impotence and insufficiency not as eclipsed or removed by grace, but as the source of the dynamic of God's loving condescension, beginning a dance of mutual self-disclosure. She took the ordinary hindrance of human limitation, a source of self-deprecation in Jansenist piety and disdained by plaster-saint perfection, as the opportunity to partake of the delight of the filial privilege (remembered as a happy child-parent dialogue) offered by God. Symbolizing the poignancy and yet profound hopefulness in humanity's 'predicament', her image may be viewed as a valuable contribution to theological anthropology because "...if one posits that the offer of grace is given universally" (as Rahner does), "then the language of mysticism," to which Thérèse's imagery belongs, "must be seen as offering a possible interpretation of the whole of human experience."<sup>10</sup> Thérèse's sense of filiality as transcendent (affirmed by Isa 66:12-13) made limitation, unbelief, and hope intelligible on an existential level.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 188.

<sup>8</sup> 'Little' is specified by Thérèse with regard to childhood. *Story of a Soul*, 196-197.

<sup>9</sup>This is based on Thérèse as already having discovered her "little way" by the time of writing *Man A*, and as here articulating it. De Meester, *With Empty Hands: The Message of Thérèse of Lisieux* (London and New York: Burns & Oates, 2002), 58-64. Pleasing is taken as 'delighting', distinct from 'placating'.

<sup>10</sup> In full: "as offering a possible interpretation of the whole of human experience rather than simply describing particular ordinary experiences." Philip Endean, SJ, "Theology out of Spirituality: The Approach of Karl Rahner." *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 3/2 (Fall 1995), 6-8, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Rahner's approach could be seen as "a kind of transcendental deduction, what must be the case if it is true that we human beings can experience God" – comparable to Kant's question, "what must be the case if every-day experience is to be possible?" Following this, we may view that spiritual experience resonates with dogmatic theology, as "realities implicit in and intrinsic to the reality we call God's self-disclosure [and] self-communication to human beings," articulate "what must be the case if human experience of God... is possible at all." Endean, 7.

Pope John Paul II describes Thérèse as offering a practical path to holiness through hope in “God’s merciful love toward human weakness,” helping to “heal souls of the rigours and fears of Jansenism, which tended to stress God’s justice rather than his divine mercy.”<sup>12</sup> Gradually the depth and fruitfulness of her insights have emerged, so that to constrain Thérèse to the issues of her time fails to do justice to the richness of her thought which addresses the fundamental issue of the nature-grace relationship in a novel way.<sup>13</sup> While for a century it has been assimilated into Catholic theology towards its renewal, her thought is yet to be converted to a resource for systematic theology.<sup>14</sup> The present research will attempt to do this by deriving a Thérésian theological anthropology from her writing, acknowledging that while it is not a presentation of syllogisms with explicit premises in a systematic analysis, her spontaneous yet purposeful recalling of her life celebrating God’s mercy in *Story of a Soul*,<sup>15</sup> is nevertheless composed of logically patterned inferences, drawn from a reflection on her experience and from consistent motive and instinct.<sup>16</sup>

In support of such a project, Rahner argues that the study of Christian spirituality ought to be considered as a “resource for the renewal of fundamental theology.”<sup>17</sup> Rahner cautions that Christian spiritual experience cannot represent an emancipation from theological dogmas, because in order to have, name, or study Christian experience there

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<sup>12</sup> Thérèse contemplates that in God’s mercy “even his justice... seems to me clothed in love.” John Paul II, *Divini Amoris Scientia*, 8, 1997. “What a sweet joy it is to think that God is *Just*, i.e., that He takes into account our weakness, that He is perfectly aware of our fragile nature.” *Story of a Soul*, 180.

<sup>13</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the “Way of Spiritual Childhood” of St Therese of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), XXVIII.

<sup>14</sup> Payne, *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Doctor of the Universal Church*, 219- 220. In her review of Payne’s book, Thérésian scholar Mary Frohlich states that Thérèse’s “core insight [‘the gradual recognition of her own radical weakness as creature and her accompanying “rediscovery” ... of a God who is all Merciful Love, who calls her to reciprocate that love “infinitely” by surrendering with love and confidence and “abandonment” of a child to the activity of God’s love within her, in the smallest details of her life’]... has yet to be fully received and reflected upon by systematic theologians.” A review for Alba House by Mary Frohlich RSCJ, from “Catholic Theological Union,” *New Theology Review*. <http://www.albahouse.org/Therese.htm> accessed on January 26, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, LIV-LVIII. At LIV, “...with Thérèse, there is a correlation between testimony and existence.”

<sup>16</sup> Payne, *Doctor of the Universal Church*, 194- 195,169.

<sup>17</sup> The study of Christian spirituality ought not be isolated from Christian dogmatics but ought to be considered as a “resource for the renewal of fundamental theology.” Endean, “Theology out of Spirituality,” 6-8.

must be a commitment to a coherent theology.<sup>18</sup> A “theological account of an experience insists that it be interpreted in terms of the triune God’s self-gift to the creation,” but what form that experience should take and how God is active in it emerges from the unstraightforward process of learning from experience – a sphere of activity represented by Christian spirituality.<sup>19</sup> Due to the developing nature of human experience, what is known about God is permanently a preliminary knowledge, an incentive to explore further the reality of God.<sup>20</sup> We suggest that the developing nature of experience itself reflects God, thus its (psychological) dynamics should be brought into conversation with theology.

This study aims to explore Thérèse’s experience of God, reflecting an existence originating in God. It also aims to describe an understanding of grace where human limitation, experienced as *weakness* and *inability*, is attributed intrinsic value inasmuch as these are precisely the characteristics that enable a bond of filial love to flourish between the human parent and child. It hopes to confirm that human limitation is not a mark of deficiency, but that it is limited in order to be awakened to the privilege and delight of utter dependence on God who is merciful love, the occasion for turning to God in love and trust. A model of grace, based on Thérèse’s understanding of *capax dei*, unique in the use of her ‘child self’ as its image, will offer something new to fundamental issues in the grace-nature relationship.

Thus, we will examine the early experiences that Thérèse recounts, and characteristics of parental care toward the child, viewing these as informing her image of filial love in the God-human relationship. Suspecting that felt merciful care in infancy critically informs Thérèse’s analogy, we will seek to demonstrate that the consoling and liberating quality of Thérèse’s thought emerges from the primordial experience of herself as, before all else, loved, and that this serves to correct a lesser view of God’s concern for humanity (found in Jansenism). In parallel to early childhood experience, Thérèse trusted that God, as the origin of her desire, would also fulfil it. God himself was her potential to love. And since the desire to love underlay the desire to please,

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<sup>18</sup> Endean, “Theology out of Spirituality,” 7.

<sup>19</sup> Endean, “Theology out of Spirituality,” 8.

<sup>20</sup> Endean, “Theology out of Spirituality,” 8.



failure to please God did not amount to failure to love God.<sup>21</sup> God was her potential to love, and its opportunity was to be found in her limitation.

### **Methodology and Structure of the Thesis**

In considering the methodology for this project, it must be remembered that the study of Christian spirituality is a relatively new academic discipline. Contributing significantly to its development are writers such as Walter Principe, Sandra Schneiders, Philip Sheldrake, and Kees Waaijman, and its standing as a discipline is represented by publications such as *The New Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* and the journal *Spiritus*.

Principe outlines Schneiders' thought on what is integral to the study of Christian Spirituality: via an interdisciplinary approach, particular Christian transforming experiences are described, analyzed, and constructively appropriated through a hermeneutic theory, to equip the student with knowledge of the examined transformation, to heighten their own experience of transformation, and to make this available to others.<sup>22</sup> Mary Frohlich states it as: "the living and concrete human person in dynamic transformation toward the fullness of life."<sup>23</sup>

Developments in Christian Spirituality as an academic discipline were also influenced by Bernard Lonergan's seminal work *Method in Theology*. *Method* approached the problem of a method for studying inner processes from the perspective of "intentionality analysis," based on the phenomenon of re-orientation in conversion.<sup>24</sup> Lonergan's thought regarding re-orientation in conversion was elaborated on by writers such as Robert Doran in *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences*, Mary Frohlich in her essay "Critical Interiority,"

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<sup>21</sup> The premise "God does not inspire unrealizable desires," is from St John of the Cross. De Meester, *The Power Of Confidence*, 98.

<sup>22</sup> Walter Principe, "Christian Spirituality" in *The New Dictionary of Spirituality*, 938, 936.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Frohlich, "Critical Interiority," *Spiritus* 7 (2007), 77-81. 7, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

and Joann Wolski Conn and Walter E. Conn in their essay “Conversion as Self-Transcendence Exemplified in the Life of St Thérèse of Lisieux.”<sup>25</sup>

Schneiders and Waaijman, in their methodology for spirituality, incorporate Aristotelian categories of ‘material object’ (the *what* being studied – here ‘Spirituality’), ‘formal object’ (*the perspective from which* something is being investigated), and ‘*how* the object must be studied’ (linked to the *what*), consistent with those used in *Method* – tools used in substantialist ontology.<sup>26</sup> Analysing Spirituality by a process of categorizing, Waaijman develops a massive taxonomy. He identifies the forms to be found (Lay, Schools, and Countermovements), and then makes a “foundational investigation” into those forms, acknowledging and exploring past and present activity of spiritual reflection and study – needed “for the definition of the material and formal object of the study of spirituality and for the development of [a] methodology which fits this object.”<sup>27</sup> This leads to a methodological design based on three steps: starting with the Aristotelian epistemology of *diakrisis* and *phronèsis*, he chooses the science of phenomenology, which leads to four lines of research, Form-Descriptive, Hermeneutic, Systematic, and Mystagogic.<sup>28</sup>

Under “Form-Descriptive Research,” for example, Waaijman lists three kinds (The Spiritual Biography, In-depth study of the three levels of description, and Descriptive research). In each, he offers examples followed by analytic commentary. Under “Spiritual Biography,” he gives the profile of the saint, and follows with how they

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 1981); Joann W. Conn & Walter E. Conn, “Conversion as Self-Transcendence Exemplified in the Life of St Thérèse of Lisieux,” *Spirituality Today* 34/4 (1982), 303-311. The development of method with regard to psychic conversion is discussed by Tom Ryan, “Psychic Conversion and St Thérèse of Lisieux,” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 22/1 (2005), 3.

<sup>26</sup> Lonergan use of these categories preserves continuity with methods used in Catholic Tradition. See Schneiders’ use of “form” and “material” in Sandra Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 6 (Spring 1998), 3. Waaijman writes of defining spirituality in terms of its “material and formal object.” He suggests its “forms” as Lay, Schools of Spirituality, and Countermovement. They may be further categorized: in the light of praxis; viewed from within the discipline; Divine-human transformation its object; Discernment: a blueprint for its method; and Plan for its discipline. He lists Descriptive, Hermeneutic, Systematic, or Mystagogic, for its “how”, or “Method.” Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, 593.

reflect their context, epitomize elements of their time, or connect with a point of origin valued here, thus, ‘speaking’ to persons of that time.<sup>29</sup> He completes his analysis by noting that the profile material presented leads to the saint’s interior dimension: the figure described “is interpreted in terms of their relation to God. An attempt is made to lay bare the working of God in their life to make it accessible.”<sup>30</sup>

Waaïjman’s categories and subsequent analytical commentaries are of immense value and offer the background context of this study. This research method will follow his categories in broad lines in that it seeks to be familiar with the context of Thérèse’s spiritual writing, applies a scientific method which includes a phenomenological approach, notes accompaniment in psychological terms (the subject of “Mystagogy”)<sup>31</sup> and relates its findings to systematic theology, and its praxis.

#### *a. Research Question and Structure*

In the light of these introductory considerations, we are in the position to articulate the research question guiding this project is:

What are the implications of Therese of Lisieux’s experience of filial love, mercy and limitation, psychologically, autobiographically and theologically?

Its methodology will be based on ‘filial love’ as an integrating principle in Thérèse’s thought, in the form of a core metaphor, intuitively employed as both its hermeneutic lens and investigative tool.<sup>32</sup> Filial love [and its components of grace/mercy and

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<sup>29</sup> Waaïjman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, 602-621. At 617, Waaïjman’s lists these as (1) a profile of the life to be described; (2) the contextuality; (3) the interior of the *vita*.

<sup>30</sup> Waaïjman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, 621.

<sup>31</sup> See Waaïjman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, 869- 942. Here the accompanist will be a component of Thérèse’s self; her “True Self.”

<sup>32</sup> The expression ‘core metaphor’ is used by Ormond Rush to describe an integrating principle. The core metaphor of “reception,” for example, uses “reception” as both a hermeneutic lens and an investigative principle, to uncover “reception” as an integrating principle, and to further open up new ways of understanding “reception.” See Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church’s Reception of Revelation* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 5-7.

limitation] will be applied in three forms, a process that provides the basic design of the study:

- a] *Psychologically*, using the models found in Sroufe, and McDargh,<sup>33</sup> and informed by Nevin's research [Chapters 2 and 3]; in addition the influence of Arminjon<sup>34</sup> will be explored [Chapter 4], as containing symbols Thérèse adopted, ones needing correction;
- b] *Autobiographically*, where it is the interpretative window through which Thérèse comes to understand God in the light of her life experiences [Chapters 5-6];
- c] *Theologically*, as a tool to explore the implications of Thérèse's interpretative account in terms of the theology of God and of the human person [Chapters 7-8].

The present research adopts a phenomenological and an interdisciplinary approach in investigating in what ways Thérèse draws from early experiences of mercy in childhood. It will draw on psychological theory, and include a component situated in systematic theology, where the findings from the phenomenological investigation will be interpreted – Thérèse's described will be experience explored in existential terms. The research, thus, is situated in the arena of Christian spirituality as delineated by Kees Waaijman, namely, the study of the "dynamic process" of one's "inner core" in relation to "ultimate reality" fostered by means such as "prayer," and the intersection of this activity with other social disciplines such as psychology and theology.<sup>35</sup>

As the research will first try to show a connection between Thérèse's early childhood experience of mercy and her little way, its primary focus will be on Thérèse's

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<sup>33</sup> Alan L. Sroufe, L. *Emotional Development: The Organization of Emotional Life in The early Years*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, translated by Susan Conroy (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press), 20008.

<sup>35</sup> Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, translated by John Vriend (Leuven, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2002), 4-5.

autobiography and correspondence.<sup>36</sup> Attention will be given to John Clarke's 1996 translation of Thérèse's autobiography comprised of the three manuscripts, *A*, *B*, and *C*.<sup>37</sup> This text will be supplemented by Thérèse's letters.<sup>38</sup> Her "last conversations" recorded by her sisters Pauline and Celine will be treated as a secondary source.<sup>39</sup> Biographies recounting Thérèse's family life and the chronology of her life events will be used to contextualize Thérèse's psychic and spiritual development, namely by Nevin, Görres, Piat, and Furlong.<sup>40</sup> These studies reconstruct her activity in the light of her reflection and examination of a lived life, her thought and spiritual teaching.

*b. Use of French-Text Sources*

With regard to the language of sources, three practices may be observed in Thérésian scholarship. Scholars, such as Mary Frohlich, Constance Fitzgerald, and Joann Wolski Conn, writing for English audiences, use Clarke's English translation of Thérèse's autobiography and letters. French speaking authors such as Conrad de Meester, Jean-Francois Six, and Guy Gaucher, writing to a French audience, use her original French text. The English translations of their works, however, retain none of Thérèse's French text. Classicist scholars such as Thomas Nevin and Richard Burton, interested in

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<sup>36</sup> Poetry will be drawn from *The Poetry of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux* translated by Donald Kinney (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996).

<sup>37</sup>The research will use John Clarke's English translation of the 1996 edition of Saint Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus et de la Saint Face, *Histoire d'une Âme: Manuscrits Autobiographiques* (France: Éditions du Cerf & Desclée de Brouwer, 1972), and will use this French edition when looking at the original French text.

<sup>38</sup> *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982); *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II, 1890-1897*, translated by John Clark (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988).

<sup>39</sup>St Thérèse of Lisieux, *Her Last conversations*, translated by John Clarke (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1997). Six argues that Mother Agnes' compilation of Thérèse's words in *Last Conversations* is Mother Agnes' own accentuation of Thérèse's words which conforms to Mother Agnes' spirituality. Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), 5, 1-18.

<sup>40</sup> Ida Gorres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (New York: Pantheon, 1959); Stephan-Joseph Piat, *The Story of a Family: The Home of the Little Flower* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1947); Monica Furlong, *Thérèse of Lisieux* (USA: Pantheon Books, 1987); Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux, God's Gentle Warrior*. Oxford; New York: University Press, 2006). Further biographical material is taken from *Celine Sister Geneviève of the Holy Face: Sister and Witness to St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus* by Stephane-Joseph Piat, OFM (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997); *Light of the Night* by Six; *The Passion of Thérèse of Lisieux* by Guy Gaucher (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006); *Storm of Glory* by John Beevers (London: Sheed & Ward, 1949); *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux* by Kathryn Harris (Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2003); Peter Thomas Rohrbach, *The Search for St Thérèse: A Study of the Life, the Legend, the Mystery of Thérèse of Lisieux* (New York: Hanover House, Doubleday, 1961).

exposing their reader to the French text, devote considerable space to placing French and English texts side by side. This research will use Clarke's English editions of Thérèse's writings, and include her original French words, phrases, and sentiments, where a nuanced sense is critical.

## Literature Review

### *a. Developing Thérésian Scholarship*<sup>41</sup>

Much was written in response to *Story of a Soul* at a "time when Thérèse's writings were not accessible "in their original version," often satisfying instead the hagiographer's own motive and piety.<sup>42</sup> The 1949 critical edition of Thérèse's letters gave rise to a response more in tune with her intended meaning resulting in a fruitful and more authentic Thérésian theology. In 1956 the complete original text of the three autobiographical manuscripts brought about a turning point in Thérésian studies while prompting responses with two extremes.<sup>43</sup> The first saw changes in the new text as so insignificant that they would have no real impact on Thérésian thought.<sup>44</sup> Alternatively, what was said previously regarding Thérèse was seen as simply incorrect, a position taken by Jean-François Six who argues that Pauline (Mother Agnes) superimposes her own spirituality in her corrections and assemblage of *Story of a Soul*. De Meester adopts a middle position (he suggests) which holds that Pauline's censorship left Thérèse's message substantially unchanged, but added a "wealth" of historical and psychological detail.<sup>45</sup>

Before exploring the far-reaching effects of this wealth of material, we note two significant post-Second World War works by Görres and von Balthasar that involved a phenomenological examination of Thérèse's life, addressing her as theologically

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<sup>41</sup> This summary draws from De Meester's review. De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, XIII-LXV.

<sup>42</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, XXXIV.

<sup>43</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, XXXV.

<sup>44</sup> De Meester suggests Görres as an example of this second position. De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, XXXV-XXXVI.

<sup>45</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, XXXV-XXXVI.

substantial.<sup>46</sup> Görres sought to “extract” Thérèse “from the kitsch and [restore] her to the truth,” while von Balthasar strove to identify Thérèse as exceptional by virtue of her realizing a theological mission which though expressed in her own person urged her to go beyond herself.<sup>47</sup> Von Balthasar argued that Thérèse responded to a call to mission which transcended her person.<sup>48</sup> Görres, concerned with Thérèse’s unfolding path in terms of “fidelity to [her understanding of] sanctity” and ‘hiddenness’, provides psychological insights with regard to experience, symbol, and fidelity. Von Balthasar, however, argues that Görres does not emphasise enough Thérèse’s deeply and urgently felt theological mission and the significance of the spiritual way she lived and wanted to make known (his focus). Nevertheless, their works converge in von Balthasar’s observations: “Truth is the touch stone of Thérèse’s love... a witness to the light of God illustrating the farthest reaches of one’s being. Her whole life becomes an exposition to the unique truth within her.”<sup>49</sup>

As noted earlier, De Meester and Six responded to Thérèse’s authentic text. De Meester states he undertook to find the origin of Thérèse’s “way,” because previous studies, primarily aiming to nourish piety, were not committed to uncovering its structure and fell short of analysing it comprehensively.<sup>50</sup> He then attempts to show a historical progression in Thérèse’s thought, tracing her searching and the formulation of her “little way” as a cohesive journey, linking events and ideas through attention to chronology, context, textual accuracy – ascertaining a ‘way’ continuous at least from the end of 1894.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Thérèse: The Story of a Mission* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954). In his introduction, von Balthasar writes that Görres does not treat Thérèse as theologically substantial in *The Hidden Face*, finding her psychological approach lacks a theological perspective. Rohrbach argues that Görres allows her German cultural bias to colour her interpretation of Thérèse in viewing her strength as transcending her stifling French context. Görres “is disenchanted with... French Catholicism of the late nineteenth century,” and attributes Thérèse’s greatness to a “breakthrough,” to “a radical departure from French thinking.” Peter-Thomas Rohrbach, *The Search for Saint Thérèse*, 22, 24.

<sup>47</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, XXXV; Von Balthasar, *Thérèse: The Story of a Mission*, xxi.

<sup>48</sup> Oakes and Moss, *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 81.

<sup>49</sup> Von Balthasar, *Thérèse: The Story of a Mission*, 3, 4.

<sup>50</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, XXXVI.

<sup>51</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 268.

De Meester finds Thérèse's "little way" – developing as awareness of her powerlessness increased – is characterized by audacious confidence in God's mercy toward littleness (her felt impotence and insufficiency).<sup>52</sup> God supplies (her) love for God.<sup>53</sup> By experiencing the chasm between her desire to love and its expression, Thérèse was exposed to the radical poverty of human love.<sup>54</sup> Despite suffering the helplessness of this, she was not overcome by self-dissatisfaction, but she offered God "her empty hands," confident in divine mercy.

Though affirming Thérèse's bold confidence in mercy, and noting this as characteristically filial, de Meester does not explore any connection between Thérèse's childhood and her filial imagery.<sup>55</sup> Instead of the image of herself as child, which this research project will argue is pivotal in conveying the dimensions of condescension toward the weak one, de Meester employs the symbol: "two pillars of a bridge."<sup>56</sup> Despite describing Thérèse's way as "the abandonment with total confidence to infinite mercy," as "the surrender of the little child without fear in its Father's arms,"<sup>57</sup> and asserting that the little one "must act with a 'loving audacity,' with an entirely filial confidence,"<sup>58</sup> he invokes Péguy, John of the Cross, Thomas Aquinas, and Paul's writing on the nature of confidence, where, in an absence of it as a *filial* dynamic, he

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<sup>52</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 230-231, 285.

<sup>53</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 351. De Meester describes the following process. Believing for love to be love it must be expressed, Thérèse strove to love God by offering God her goodness, but came to discover she had no goodness other than her desire to love God. She held that "love is repaid by love alone," (*Story of a Soul*, 195), however her desire to repay Jesus' love was of an infinite proportion and could not be realized by her own power. Determining that her desire for God was God's own aim in her, Thérèse looked to God to supply what was necessary to bring it to fruition, "He [God] will be very much embarrassed in my case. I haven't any works. Well then. He will reward me according to his own works." De Meester, *With Empty Hands*, 59, 114.

<sup>54</sup> "From desire to despair that is the fate of all men." Bernard Bro, *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Family, Her God, Her Message* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) 179-180. Six applies this sequence to the experience of *belief*.

<sup>55</sup> De Meester states, "Thérèse looks at the image of the child through her own experiences of a very good and well-behaved child. To analyze this image would take us afield." De Meester, *Power of Confidence*, 339.

<sup>56</sup> De Meester, *Power of Confidence*, 227.

<sup>57</sup> De Meester, *Power of Confidence*, 273.

<sup>58</sup> De Meester, *Power of Confidence*, 275. *Letters of St. Thérèse: Volume II*, LT 247, 1132-1134.



simply explains that confidence is not static.<sup>59</sup> Thérèse's image of herself as child, a present example of this dynamism, is passed over.

Six, alternatively, centres on Thérèse's experience of doubt as to the existence of heaven and how, through this, she comes to participate in the drama of the atheistic humanism of her time, to discover the true enemy, and the cause of Godlessness. Six argues that her experience enables her to challenge "the vague and deceitful categories that people try to establish: bad believers, agnostics, the indifferent."<sup>60</sup> This experience, he asserts, representing the universal experience of doubt,<sup>61</sup> was made possible from within the shelter of Carmel because doubt can only occur in the believer.<sup>62</sup> It should not be said, "Thérèse does not doubt, but rather believes;" instead, it should be said, "Therese doubts *and* believes," for it is precisely in the face of doubt that "her stubborn trust, her obstinate abandonment, her love and [her] joy remain."<sup>63</sup> Six views an existential experience of unbelief as representing the helplessness that Therese endures for the sake of love; it is to this that she applies God's mercy, and it is from this that trust in God's acceptance of human insufficiency wells up within her. For Six, a focus on 'child' follows a secondary aspect of her thought which, without paying due attention to the implication of Thérèse's trial of the night of faith, cannot properly reflect the Christian hope which it claims to reflect.<sup>64</sup> He prefers a sustained attention to her trial of doubt, finding Thérèse's expression of faith and charity in the midst of an experience of unbelief the "verve" and newness which overturns Pauline's more traditional spirituality.<sup>65</sup>

Six asserts that Thérèse's "indifference to reward or punishment" in the midst of her night of faith demands a radical interpretation of her way:<sup>66</sup> in surrendering herself to

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<sup>59</sup> De Meester, *Power of Confidence*, 313-321.

<sup>60</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 176.

<sup>61</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 174.

<sup>62</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 174.

<sup>63</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 172.

<sup>64</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 170.

<sup>65</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 184.

the powerlessness of unabating feeling of unbelief, while at the same time expressing hope in God's reality, Thérèse subverts the categories of "bad" faith present in her time, upheld by her sisters. He argues that the sisterly corrections of Thérèse's writing<sup>67</sup> re-worked notions into her spiritual thought<sup>68</sup> supporting an insipid theology of redemption which emphasized a fearful and hesitating response to God (reparation for the faults of sinners).<sup>69</sup> Of particular importance to Six is Thérèse's unhesitating acceptance of unity with sinners (sharing in their unbelief) and Thérèse's desire to bring the sinner home rather than condemn him.<sup>70</sup>

Six and de Meester appear to agree that Thérèse responded to God out of confidence in God's merciful love, rather than out of a spirit of timidity, but they differ in *what* Thérèse saw as weakness, and how radically she departed from tentative hope for a merited heavenly reward which included fear of being denied that reward.<sup>71</sup> Where de Meester treats her "trial of faith" as just one contribution to her 'receiving God as a child' resolution, Six argues that the last eighteen months of Thérèse's life, her "trial," is central to understanding Thérèse's sense of helplessness; her spirituality must be read primarily through this.<sup>72</sup> In different ways, both writers assert Thérèse as finding that to love God did not mean first and foremost to *be* someone good,<sup>73</sup> counteracting "the noble but dangerous illusion of the Stoics and the Jansenists" that it was necessary to be good in order to approach God.<sup>74</sup> De Meester's description of Thérèse's "little way" as confident hope in God's tender mercy toward human weakness might be brought into conversation with Six's insights, by examining the presence and quality of the child's

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<sup>66</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 6-8.

<sup>67</sup> Görres states: "several thousand cuts." Görres *The Hidden Face*, 25.

<sup>68</sup> Six, *The Light of the Night*, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Six, *The Light of the Night*, 184. Six shows this spirituality as subverting Thérèse's by contrasting Pauline's timid reparation spirituality (which he traces to Mother Thérèse of Jesus) with Thérèse's promotion of the law of love which replaces the law of fear. 5, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Six, *The Light of the Night*, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Six, *The Light of the Night*, 5.

<sup>72</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 21-73.

<sup>73</sup> Good as the one who offers "great actions" of sacrifice in Ps 49 rather than "surrender and gratitude." *Story of a Soul*, 188.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard Bro, *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, 179.

audacious trust. A focus on Thérèse's sense of helplessness, resulting in her attitude of "open hands" (de Meester) complements Thérèse's identification with "sinners," and her sense of belonging to their circumstance and sharing with them God's judgment as merciful (Six).

*b. Writers in Spirituality: Lonergan and Thérèse's Text*

Bernard Lonergan, observing the trend to view the human person as constructing meaning through symbols which unfold historically, set forth a new way of studying a person's interior activity toward ethical action. Lonergan provided a science of consciousness by developing a method based on interiority as the place and process where a person is self-transcendent.<sup>75</sup> This underlies Mary Frohlich's description of interiority as "self-awareness in the midst of the operations of our consciousness" and "critical interiority" as the organism for transformation.<sup>76</sup> Elaborations of these principles, in some cases formulated with Thérésian analysis in mind, have been applied to Thérèse's autobiography, (understood as an integration of memories and layers of reorientation toward God). Frohlich offers an important study of symbol in Thérèse's inner conversion<sup>77</sup> where its use in Thérèse's identification with Jeanne d'Arc is "an event of spiritual self-knowledge occurring in three dimensions: history, memory, and interiority ... History deals with what happened; memory deals with meaning, and interiority deals with communion."<sup>78</sup> Frohlich shows how Thérèse through the symbol of the story of Jeanne d'Arc reinterprets her mission at different stages in her life.

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<sup>75</sup> Lonergan notes this in Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972). Tom Ryan SM. "Psychic Conversion and St Thérèse of Lisieux," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 22/1 (Jan 2005), 5.

<sup>76</sup> Mary Frohlich, "Critical Interiority," *Spiritus* 7 (2007), 77-81.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Frohlich does this in "'Your Face is my Only Homeland': A Psychological Perspective on Thérèse of Lisieux and Devotion to the Holy Face" in *Theology and Lived Christianity* edited by D. Hammond (23rd. Publications, 2000) and "Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne D'Arc: History, Memory, and Interiority in the Experience of Vocation," *Spiritus* 6/2 (Fall 2006). Frohlich argues that the Holy Face is the 'root metaphor' unifying the images of Thérèse's spirituality. This particular image of the Holy Face evokes the 'wounds' of absence and the transforming moments of presence in her life and in her image of God. This image certainly has the characteristics of the images and symbols discussed here. See Mary Frohlich, "'Your Face is my Only Homeland,'" 177-205.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Frohlich, "Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne d'Arc: History, Memory, and Interiority in the Experience of Vocation," *Spiritus* 6/2 (2006), 173.

Through this example she discusses the validity of interpreting the past with a “scaffold of meaning which was subconsciously present.”<sup>79</sup>

Studies by Fitzgerald, Wolski Conn, and Astell provide further insights into Thérèse’s use of symbol, and help in the research’s methodology. Fitzgerald’s treatment of a particular symbol, the “regarding” face,<sup>80</sup> focuses on the image of child as valued by the mother’s mirroring face. Investigating symbols that Thérèse uses which might address the contemporary context, Fitzgerald explores Thérèse’s understanding of God’s love as a ‘mother’s regard’ which Thérèse receives and then gives.<sup>81</sup> Through her (M)Other’s original regard for her, and uniting herself to God’s motherly regard, Thérèse’s benevolent love flows to others.<sup>82</sup>

Wolski Conn and Astell offer perspectives on the subject of ‘little’ and ‘child’ in Thérèse.<sup>83</sup> Wolski Conn, viewing ‘littleness’ as representing maturity in terms of self-transcendence, is concerned to show it as not connected with a facile notion of childhood. Using a paradigm of self-development, she shows Thérèse’s activity (in being ‘little’) reflects spiritual maturity. Alternatively, Astell, takes up Levinas’s concept of responsible “facing.” Seeking a confluence between two ways of facing, she compares Levinas’ view of the child as the other for whom one is responsible, and Thérèse’s idea of the child as one who calls forth responsibility from the other.<sup>84</sup> Thérèse is prepared to remain facing as a child, her smile a child’s gift, whose value lies

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<sup>79</sup> Frohlich, “Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne d’Arc,” 179.

<sup>80</sup> Constance Fitzgerald, “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux,” *The Way Supplement* (Summer 1997), 74-96.

<sup>81</sup> Fitzgerald takes “regard” from the French *un regard*, following Marianne Hirsch and Ronnie Scarfman’s work, to “mean both the look or gaze, and one’s appearance... one’s face. It further signifies being face to face as if one were looking into a mirror and considering the face on which one gazes and... by extension the word ‘regard’ indicates esteem.” Fitzgerald, “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux,” 74-76, 86.

<sup>82</sup> Chodorovian psychologists in relation to the “dual unity of the female vision” have coined the word (M)Other. We find the word also a useful way to include both Rose and Zelig as Thérèse’s ‘mothers’. Fitzgerald, “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux,” 76.

<sup>83</sup> Joann Wolski Conn, “Rereading Spiritual Classics Thérèse of Lisieux: Far From Spiritual Childhood,” *Spiritus* 6/1 (2006), 68-89. Ann W. Astell, “Facing Each Other: Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and Emmanuel Levinas,” *Spiritus* 4/1 (Spring 2004), 24- 43.

<sup>84</sup> Thérèse takes God hostage by expressing confidence in his merciful response to her. Astell, “Facing Each Other,” 29, 32-33, 37-40.

in the hope that God's grace will transform it into potency without a "from above" (adult) understanding of how this will occur.

To explore Thérèse's sense of self, mercy, and God, the research will include studies on 'self' development (developmental psychology), and 'God' development (psychoanalytic object relations theory). Vitz and Lynch dedicate a study to Thérèse's psychological development in terms of Bowlby's "circle of security," needed by the child for normative development.<sup>85</sup> Listing signs of separation anxiety in Thérèse, they suggest how this was used by Thérèse "as a positive source for motivation in her search for and response to God."<sup>86</sup> We will examine the quality of "secure" attachments that preceded the losses which may be understood as underpinning (amid Thérèse's radical weakness) the formulation of the little way. This entails noting norms in early childhood development, with particular attention to the dynamic produced by the infant's weakness in relation to the parent. The research will use writings that Vitz and Lynch draw from, especially that of emotional-development researcher, Alan Sroufe.<sup>87</sup> Sroufe's view that early development is organized and integrated by affect will be used to describe and evaluate Thérèse's developing affective life, in particular, her sense of love and mercy. McDargh's study on religious development (incorporating authors such as Niebuhr, Macmurray, Freud, James, Winnicott, and Rizzuto) will provide the method for analysing how Thérèse's early senses (affective knowing) motivates her search for, and response to, God. Finally, socio-historical psychoanalytic explorations of Thérèse by such as Jacques Maître and Pierre Mabile, will be accessed through Richard D. E. Burton in *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Paul C. Vitz and Christina P. Lynch, "Thérèse of Lisieux from the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety," *The International Journal For the Psychology of Religion* 17/1 (2007), 61-80. At 61, "Circle of security," used by Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, identifies the shape of primary attachments.

<sup>86</sup> Vitz and Lynch, "Thérèse of Lisieux from the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety," 61.

<sup>87</sup> Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organisation of Emotional Life in the Early Years* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Sroufe affirms much of the classic paradigm of John Bowlby. *Volume I Attachment* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1969).

<sup>88</sup> Richard D. E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2004), 20-61, draws from these two untranslated French works. Jacques Maître, "L'Orpheline de la Bérésina," *Thérèse de Lisieux (1873-1897): Essai de psychoanalyse socio-historique* (Cerf, 1996), and Pierre Mabile, *Thérèse de Lisieux* (Editions Allia, 1996).

In its evaluation of Catholic anthropology, the research will investigate the writings of Augustine and Aquinas via commentaries offered by such as Stephen Duffy, Roger Haight, Neil Ormerod, William James, observations by Mulcahy (with respect to de Lubac) and McArdle (with respect to John Macmurray). After naming de Lubac, Lonergan, Rahner and von Balthasar as representing post-Thérèsian anthropologies, it will compare Thérèse's thought with Lonergan's and his influence in such as Wolski Conn. It will also compare her thought with Hans Urs von Balthasar's.<sup>89</sup>

### **Figurative language in Thérèse's Writing**

De Meester's list of precautions with respect to chronology, varying meanings for words, and evolving images will be observed,<sup>90</sup> and for critical terms, the original French will be offered. As Thérèse's writing involves figurative language (peculiar to her religious context), we will define the terms "image", 'metaphor', 'analogy' and 'symbol', focusing on their distinctive characters, as what they entail can overlap in a complexity of ways. All denote a comparison of one thing to another, but in different ways and with varying effects. Each will be illustrated through Thérèse's own figurative use of the flower.

The 'image' evokes through some representation (by any means) the impression of a quality or qualities.<sup>91</sup> In her prologue, Thérèse uses the rose to convey its classical image. In its beauty, size, fragrance, complexity, and depth of colour, the rose is taken to mean the most splendid of flowers; it connotes full fragrant splendour.<sup>92</sup> The 'metaphor' involves an implicit transfer *metapherein* (the verbal form of 'metaphor') of the incidental qualities of one thing to another (to some degree unrelated) thing.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, tr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991).

<sup>90</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, LIII- LXIV.

<sup>91</sup> For example, Thérèse describes (in her journey to Rome) how her tall and handsome white-bearded father in his dignified bearing gave the appearance of a gracious aristocrat. *Story of a Soul*, 124, 127.

<sup>92</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14.

<sup>93</sup> *Metapherein* means 'to transfer'. Such a transfer is made explicit in the 'simile'. See Margaret Quane, *The Life and Writings of St Therese of Lisieux: contributions to contemporary understandings of the Relationship between Faith and Sin*, 2008. Thesis submitted for Doctor of Philosophy at ACU, 40

Thérèse uses a field flower to describe a small soul. Though not a flower, in relation to God a small soul is beautiful yet inconsequential, precariously ephemeral, and entirely dependent on the powers of nature; it cannot effect anything of its own accord. The field flower profoundly conveys the small soul's state yet 'flower' cannot be deduced from the small soul's appearance. Qualities beyond what can be seen are accessed through the metaphor.

An 'analogy' is a parallel, or a correspondence, which may have a processing aspect (via either a simile or metaphor) whereby what one thing does or undergoes is transferred to another. Metaphors often also have an analogical quality. Using the previous examples, Thérèse uses the rose and the field flower (evoking different images) as metaphors to describe different kinds of persons.<sup>94</sup> The small soul has the character of the field flower, simple, unimposing, pleasant but unremarkable, while the great soul has the character of a rose, the height of splendour. Using these flower metaphors, Thérèse draws an analogy, describing a process which parallels another. The flowers represent different types of souls. As the flowers undergo the forces of nature, the sun the rain and the seasons, towards their purpose to bloom on a set day, so do souls undergo what God sends their way to be nourished and brought to spiritual flowering.<sup>95</sup>

Finally, a 'symbol' is something which is participated in. When participated in, the symbol takes the person beyond themselves toward that to which the symbol points. Through its multivalent and tensive character, it provides a knowing 'something more'.<sup>96</sup> A symbol may make use any of the previous forms, but also from things not of a figurative quality, such as, history, memory, persons or objects. The above field flower, Thérèse uses, furthermore, as a symbol. This means the previous examples also

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<sup>94</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 16-17.

<sup>95</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14-15.

<sup>96</sup> Margaret Quane, *The Life and Writings of St Therese of Lisieux*, 40. See also Tom Ryan SM "Psychic Conversion and St Thérèse of Lisieux." *The Australasian Catholic Record* 22/1 (Jan 2005), pp3-18, 10-11. Ryan refers to Avery Dulles SJ, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), and to Avery Dulles, "The Symbolic Structure of Revelation," *Theological Studies* (March, 1980), 61, where he observes that a symbol gives "not objective, but participatory knowledge...an environment to be inhabited. Symbols are places to live, breathing spaces that help to discover the possibilities that life offers."

share the quality of symbol, but the most distinctive aspect of symbol is demonstrated in her particular use of the flower just before she enters Carmel. Her father plucks a field flower with its root inadvertently still attached and gives it to Thérèse after she has disclosed to him her desire to enter Carmel.<sup>97</sup> The metaphor of Thérèse as a field flower, and the event of the plucked still rooted flower, becomes a symbol for Thérèse's movement from Buissonnets to Carmel. She is the flower; the root as the flower's means for absorption symbolizes her means of absorbing spiritual nutrition, her childhood at Buissonnets with Louis. So functional at home, this 'root' is taken with her to Carmel, with the approval and help of her father who enables it. This is her experience. The flower (Thérèse), in moving with root still intact, finds this state allows, indeed favours, absorption from another soil. By being the flower who is now replanted in Carmel and taking up nutrition, Thérèse participates in the experience of the 'more' that God gives: a wellspring of meaning about what God has given her in the past, what he is giving now, and what he is going to give – based on the extraordinary care and foresight shown in the past.

The research will take the view that Thérèse uses the metaphor of the child in a dynamic relationship with its parent, based on the narrative of her childhood, to characterize 'filial love' between humanity and God. This will be considered her core metaphor. She gives this metaphor an analogical dimension by corresponding her own childhood activity of love and trust to spiritual dispositions. The research will investigate the role of the metaphor of filial love as integrating all of Thérèse's symbols and imagery toward an *ontological* state, and ultimately, a theological state of filiality. As noted earlier, the expression 'core metaphor' is used by Ormond Rush in an investigation of 'reception' to reveal an integrating principle, which uses its hermeneutic lens as its investigative tool. As this research is investigating the core metaphor of 'filial love' in Thérèse's writing, it will similarly treat "filial love" as an integrating principle in her thought, employing it as both its hermeneutic lens and investigative tool.

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<sup>97</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 108.



It will maintain that her filial metaphor (images of herself as child receiving merciful love from her parents describing her relation with God) is a sustained one. ‘Limitation’, foundational in Thérèse’s experience, in her spiritual interpretation of it and in the theology implied in it, will be understood in the first instance as a child’s physical weakness, impotence, and insufficiency. It will then be understood as ontological limitation, the limits of human existence, the very means by which Jesus through embracing them in his incarnation received the fullness of the Father’s love, expressing love for his creation and divinizing it.<sup>98</sup> Thérèse’s insights regarding filial love are to be found in her experience of God gazing at her with love, inspiring audacious trust, especially during her experience of doubt. A model of grace will be proposed based on the study of this core metaphor, in the light of Avery Dulles’ concept of the model (in contrast to a system based on philosophical *a priori*) accompanied by a discussion on its corrective character.<sup>99</sup>

Having explained the investigation’s rationale, aims, methodology, relevant literature and key aspects of language, we proceed to the first phase in addressing the research question.

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<sup>98</sup> See Mark McIntosh, *An Introduction to Christian Theology: Divine Teaching* (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 101-105.

<sup>99</sup> Joseph Komonckack comments on the need for theological anthropology to be based on criteria (such as “reception”) other than “a priori” philosophical or scientific criteria. In Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith*, 6.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Thérèse's Stage: the Context of Nineteenth Century France**

“The action of an individual life,” John McDargh writes, “is usually regarded with the event of birth,” but

a more adequate understanding of human development would follow from ... [the] metaphor of the world as a stage. ...[H]uman birth is something like the new character onto the stage. The drama is one that began well before his or her arrival and will continue indefinitely after the character utters his or her last lines... This setting, the props, the other characters and the suggested scripts by no means strictly determine the plot of the play... They do however account for much that will shape and influence the course of the story.<sup>1</sup>

As this research project is in search of a Thérésian theological anthropology, it will investigate self-understandings in relation to God (even those excluding God) leading up to Thérèse's time, to see what shaped the self-understanding of those who, in turn, shaped her. Thus, while contextualizing Thérèse usually begins with describing her immediate French Catholic milieu, this research will begin more broadly, and trace a path to her time, showing the origins of the diverse self-understandings she would encounter. This chapter will: (i) outline the social and intellectual climate of Western Europe; (ii) trace religious development, from Protestant Reform in Western Europe to Jansenism in France; (iii) discuss what it meant to be a Catholic woman in France.

Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, was born Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin in 1873 in Alençon, France. The ninth child of Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin, the youngest of four surviving daughters, Thérèse's birth was welcomed amid a reserved calm.<sup>2</sup> In civil life, the upheaval of the Commune in Paris, a reprise of the ideals of France's 1789 revolution and its ensuing bloodshed, had calmed to a simmering political animosity together with a reprieve from national defeats. In the Martin home, three years after the death of daughter Mélanie-Thérèse, there had arisen a tentative hope for another child – one who this time would survive, and perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> John McDargh is a researcher into religious development. John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 214.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Payne, OCD. *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Doctor of the Universal Church* (New York: Alba House, 2002), 36.

become a priest. Before her birth Zélie wrote to her sister-in-law Mme Géurin “I will not leave [this child] as long as it and I have any life. ...[The] child will come as my New-Year’s gift.” Upon Thérèse’s birth she wrote, “I am very happy.”<sup>3</sup>

Thérèse was sheltered during her formative years as a provincial *émigré de l’intérieur*<sup>4</sup> and during her adult life as an enclosed Carmelite nun. She died at twenty-four from tuberculosis. In this brief life, Thérèse affirmed who she was, namely, one who loved God, and searched for what her unique expression of this was to be in terms of the symbol ‘vocation’.<sup>5</sup> Through persistent engagement with what she felt opposed her quest to substantiate love (which she found to be her vocation), she replied to the Jansenist moralizing and perfectionist piety of her day, and to modern atheism, reinterpreting how heroism in the Catholic faith might be expressed. Though sheltered and cloistered, Thérèse confronted some of the significant expressions of late nineteenth century Western Europe regarding the nature of the human person. While embedded in a culture that posed obstacles to her hope, nevertheless, it was from here that she drew the symbols of her spiritual imagining so as to communicate her truth. We reconstruct her era.

## **1. Self-Understanding and Developing Intellectual Thought in Western Europe**

### *a. Enlightenment and Modernity*

Thérèse entered the “stage” of nineteenth century Western Europe, a world excited by radical ideas and scientific progress (anticipating greater in the new millennium), a world of emerging nations and their complicated alliances –recently shaken by wars and revolutions. This period, referred to as ‘modernity’, an incoming tide spanning

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<sup>3</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence, Volume II 1890-1897* translated by John Thérèse of Lisieux, OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1198-1199.

<sup>4</sup> Görres describes *émigré de l’intérieur* as a retreat from the “modern spirit,” in this case, imprisoning oneself in one’s own home. See Ida Görres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (New York: Pantheon, 1959), 34-37, 124, 148, 152, 192. Michelle Jones writes: “The Martins, like many of their Catholic contemporaries, lived as *émigrés*...emigrating from the corruption they perceived in the world about them, they... created a separate purified existence constituted by home, family and Church...” Michelle Jones, *From Mother to Sister: The Development in the Understanding of Mission in the Life and Times of St Thérèse of Lisieux and Its contemporary Relevance*, Dissertation for Master in Theology submitted at Notre Dame University Australia, 2006, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS, 1996), 192-194.

centuries, was typified by movement away from medieval culture<sup>6</sup> toward autonomy and capitalism, from agrarian life to urban economies and industrialization, from provinces toward the nation state, from religious culture to secularization (a separation between the Church and state).<sup>7</sup> In Western Europe, and particularly in nineteenth century France, modernity coincided with the rise of secular institutions.<sup>8</sup> The Church's control over social and educational institutions such as the university decreased, and religious practice moved from the communal to the private realm.<sup>9</sup>

The concepts which were to form modernity had been washing in since the Renaissance, shaping and reinforcing its "self-awareness of history, of humanism, and of individuality," toward a new sense of autonomy.<sup>10</sup> Self-understanding with emphasis on self-determination<sup>11</sup> was enhanced in the Protestant Reformation. Rationalism and subjectivism were underscored in the Cartesian "turn to the subject" with reason as the new source for authority.<sup>12</sup> Empiricism, rationally and sensibly evident criteria for truth, fanned an intellectual interchange and a scientific revolution.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Thornhill, *Modernity: Christianity's Estranged Child Reconstructed* (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2000), 4, 23. Thornhill discusses the difficulty defining 'modernity'. It originated in a reaction against "the cultural assumptions of medievalism," as well the physical and cultural changes which occurred during this time of reaction. "Essential" to its meaning is that it is a "rejection of medievalism." For the metaphor "tide", see Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 70.

<sup>7</sup> Technological developments such as means of production and transport were collectively termed as "modernization." Chris Barker, *Cultural studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Sage, 2003), 444.

<sup>8</sup> Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 71.

<sup>10</sup> Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 67-69.

<sup>11</sup> A growing interest in the individual, or the 'self', can be traced from the tenth century. See Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual* (London: SPCK, 1987 (1972)) and the response of Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual' in her *Jesus as Mother: Studies in Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 82-109.

<sup>12</sup> Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 69.

<sup>13</sup> Gallagher writes that this removed, many felt, the security of understanding the cosmos and its history as endowed with a transcendent meaning; "self-expression" was instead looked to "as the source for [all] human meaning." Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 69.

The social relations effected by rationalism, secularism, industrialism, and the nation state, came to be known as “modernity,”<sup>14</sup> its associated experience (expressed in the arts), “modernism,”<sup>15</sup> with philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, Kant, Rousseau, and Newton and Voltaire, in their approaches to causes and effects (through *a priori* notions, and empirical deductive reasoning) as “modern.” Their interchange was viewed by many as “the enlightenment” or “age of reason,” based on the thinking that “human reason ... the apt and only instrument for solving problems connected with man and society” marked an advance on medieval scholastic thought.<sup>16</sup> A new ‘self’ was proposed, construed primarily in terms of autonomy, which had implications for the person in relation to society, and for religion as a revealed reality.

*b. Romanticism*

Some artists and writers, reacting to rationalism and mechanization, looked inward (to the self) to a naturally good intuitive motive in humanity, to a spirit animating the universe by affective wisdom. These were the romantics. Against mechanistic notions from such as Hobbes (1588-1679) and Descartes (1596-1650), they held that nature was not a “mechanical system” but an “organic whole... clothed in beauty and mystery.”<sup>17</sup> Hegel (1770-1831), representing German idealism, proposed that there was a spirit of history moving toward an end, in people, culture, and language, in a dialectical fashion, toward “the realization of spiritual freedom” – and, in the present time, the human spirit has become aware of this historical end.<sup>18</sup> The spirit of a people was a felt sense of

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1992), 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Barker, *Cultural Studies*, 443. The first use of the word is found in Charles Baudelaire’s *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964). Baudelaire notes “Modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of whose other is the eternal and the unchangeable.”

<sup>16</sup> Frederick Copleston, S.J. *A History of Philosophy: Volume IV Modern Philosophy* (New York: Image Books, Double Day, 1994), xi- 20-62, 34. Descartes reflected that Scholasticism was “powerless to discover new truths.” Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Vol IV*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Romanticism, growing around the nationalist wars between 1759 and 1799, was accompanied by German idealism. There was also a harking back to medieval ‘tranquillity’. Frederick Copleston S.J., *A History of Philosophy: Volume VII, Modern Philosophy* (New York: Image Books, Double Day, 1994) 16, 13-21.

unity rather than a concept as “concepts tend to perpetuate defined limits and boundaries while romanticism tends to dissolve limits and boundaries in the infinite flow of life.”<sup>19</sup> Romanticism was “a feeling for the indefinite,” of something grasped which then could not be proven or fully explained, and, ultimately, a longing for transcendence.<sup>20</sup> The self here was occupied in a spiritual quest without need for an institutional religion.

In terms of the individual person, romanticism involved “the exaltation of creative imagination and the role and feeling of intuition,” emphasizing “the free and full development of the personality.”<sup>21</sup> It, in turn, gave birth to individualism.<sup>22</sup> From bohemians to dandies, all wished to be “different from the ordinary bourgeois;” proclaiming the “rights of fantasy and originality against conventional morality;” advocating social conscience and pioneering social reform.<sup>23</sup> Elevating originality as a moral good, they as much widened the horizons of thought as obscured them with fantasies, emotions, and ideals.<sup>24</sup> Despite their variations, romantics consistently held up passion and a love of liberty, disapproval of the present, and a yearning for another time, whether for the past or a future utopia.<sup>25</sup>

In religious terms, Christian romantics focused on God’s immanence in the beauty of creation, but where Christianity was dislodged from its central position, the “quest for ecstasy and transcendence” remained; romantics pursued a secular quest for salvation in a parallel to the religious quest.<sup>26</sup> Romanticism flourished in France, entering Marian

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<sup>18</sup> This spirit was ‘Volkgeist’. The dialectic was a negation, or contradiction, followed by another, then another so that movements were continually countered. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume VII*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume VII*, 18, 19, Quotes from Schlegel.

<sup>20</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume VII*, 18, 19.

<sup>21</sup> This ‘self’, seeking a fuller view of integration through a richer epistemology, beyond that of the Cartesian self, tended to “ethical subjectivism.” Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume VII*, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> Theodore Zeldin, *The Oxford History of Modern Europe: France 1848-1945: Volume II, Intellect, Taste and Anxiety* (London, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1973), 796.

<sup>23</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 796.

<sup>24</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 796.

<sup>25</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 796.

devotion, where Mary represented affective wisdom over-riding industrialism, commerce, bureaucracy, and rationalism.<sup>27</sup> Devotées, shaped by their experience, sought less to understand Mary than to idealize her.<sup>28</sup> Like the devotées of “courtly love,”<sup>29</sup> there was a surrender to fantasies and difficulty in distinguishing dreams from reality, confusing the good and the beautiful in a new way.<sup>30</sup> Romanticism entered hagiography; a mother-God benevolently noted her children’s goodness. Thérèse would use, amongst other images, a romantic Joan of Arc to symbolize her own mission/role.<sup>31</sup>

c. *Romanticism and Empirical Science*

The thrust to see the self in a wider context had another dimension. The romantic self-view was not opposed to empirical science but co-existed with it. Empiricism demystified human agency, William Washabaugh writes, replacing the “intentional agent” with subjects driven by larger systemic forces and external contexts, but these forces themselves, whether perceived as through internal mechanisms or external constructs, remained in the realm of the unknowable.<sup>32</sup> Darwin’s proposing evolution as the origin of species described concrete mechanisms, “natural selection” and “the Struggle for Existence” (echoing Schopenhauer), but admitted its guiding force as unknowable, as “several powers” breathed “into a few forms or one.”<sup>33</sup> The notion that

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Zamoyski, *Holy Madness, Romantics, Patriots and Revolutionaries 1776-1871* (London: Wedenfield & Nicholson, 1999), inside cover. Zamoyski proposes that at this time fervour of a religious quality propelled religious and non-religious ideals alike.

<sup>27</sup> Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and The Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 248-242.

<sup>28</sup> Superlatives were ascribed to Mary that obscured her humanity. Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 247.

<sup>29</sup> As in the thematizing of Mary of Aquitane’s representation of the woman to be ultimately desired. The knight pledges himself, to death, to this elevated woman, and their relationship is never consummated. Tristan and Isolde is the classical example. Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitane and the Four Kings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), and David L. Norton and Mary F. Kille, (Editors), “Chivalric Love” in *Philosophies of Love* (Totowa, N.J. : Rowman & Littlefield, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> Zeldin’s description of the romantics’ praise of love. Caprice replaced self-control; the individual’s value was reckoned by the “nobility of his sentiments,” and the “grandeur of his emotions.” Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 795-796.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Frohlich, “Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne D’Arc: History, Memory, and Interiority in the Experience of Vocation.” *Spiritus* 6/2 (Fall 2006),

<sup>32</sup> William Washabaugh, *A life of Response: American Cultural Anthropology*, Chapter 5. [http://www.uwm.edu/~wash/102\\_7.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/~wash/102_7.htm), accessed October 9, 2009.

nature prevailed over civilization's constraining structures was a position felt to be supported by science. Romanticism was not opposed to science, but to dehumanization through industrialization, to the view that the natural person without the veneer of society was morally inferior, to reason as superior to affect or intuition. Thérèse would show no hostility toward science, or invention; even praising the invention of the elevator.<sup>34</sup>

*d. Conversation and the Exceptional Self*

Millhorn writes that a feature of the romantic period was the concept of the 'public sphere',<sup>35</sup> and Zeldin writes of the notion of the "genius."<sup>36</sup> The "salon," an invention of the well-to-do provided a place for intellectual stimulation and cultural exchange. Persons of means courted persons of educated opinion, *philosophes*.<sup>37</sup> *Philosophes*, writers, and artists who attended a salon also might find patronage and an income. Where the *philosophe*'s role was once to provide fresh insights into how things are or ought to be in terms of manners, virtue and chivalry, in the eighteenth century the *philosophe* became the writer of insights about human motivation, a 'genius' wielding the political influence to create the utopia.<sup>38</sup> Through Romantic literature's emphasis on the artist's sensibility, and wild and creative natural spirit, as one who "could perceive truths others could not," there was a shift away from the saint – who would implicitly convey the Church's teaching – to the "natural genius" as knowing a new and better truth about humanity.<sup>39</sup> This convention contributed to women's intellectual freedom

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, Chapter 14 "Recapitulation and Conclusion" (E Book, 1859), 403.

<sup>34</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 207.

<sup>35</sup> Jim Millhorn, "French Revolution: philosophical background and influence of". In E. Craig (ed), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (London: Routledge, 2003).  
<http://www.rep.routledge.com.ipacez.nd.edu.au/article/DC118SECT2> Accessed on July 08, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Theodore Zeldin, *The Oxford History of Modern Europe: France 1848-1945. Volume 1 Ambition, Love and Politics*, (London, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1973), 428.

<sup>37</sup> "Salon Women", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 00095982, 4/1/2005, Vol 51, Issue 30, So that women might find themselves "a place in history, not...in etiquette books."

<sup>38</sup> Zeldin, *The Oxford History of Modern Europe: France 1848-1945. Volume 1*, 428-430.

<sup>39</sup> Zeldin, *The Oxford History of Modern Europe: France 1848-1945. Volume 1*, 428.



and influence in the eighteenth century, but on the side of being patron rather than the artist with “the idea.”<sup>40</sup>

Voltaire, well known as a *philosophe*, with Rousseau, and Chateaubriand, represented “genius” ideas in France. Thérèse would encounter Voltaire’s name expressed with disgust in her milieu, as he represented a diabolical attack on the Church. Voltaire (François-Marie d’Arouet 1694-1778), while a trenchant critic in political, social and Church matters,<sup>41</sup> nevertheless remained a deist until his death. Chateaubriand’s name, alternatively, Thérèse heard held with admiration, through her father’s reference to him (as viewing the revolution as enabling a spiritually refreshed Catholicism).<sup>42</sup>

Free-spirited intellectualism, scientific progress, and personal struggle, had also shaped the romantic writings of humanists such as Locke, Rousseau, and later Schopenhauer and their views of the self in society and nature.<sup>43</sup> Rousseau wrote in *Emile* that the child untouched by society was good and innocent,<sup>44</sup> and in *The General Will*, he observed that before persons staked ownership of land, it belonged to no-one, but may be shared by a “social contract” between citizens (as there is no intrinsic ownership).<sup>45</sup> He wrote that individual freedom was given up for the general will (civil freedom) which as a reflection of individual natural good, was a contract for overall good. An individual moral being would become a different, collective moral being expressing rights (toward freedom) by a democratic vote.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Susan K. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789* (New York, USA: Penguin Compass, 1999), 3-4.

<sup>41</sup> John Mc Mannors, *Lectures on European History 1789-1914: Men, Machines, and Freedom* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 10 -11.

<sup>42</sup> Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*, 179.

<sup>43</sup> Locke (1632-1728); Rousseau (1712-1788); Schopenhauer (1788-1860).

<sup>44</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945, Vol I*, 317-318. In *The Child*, Rousseau influenced by Desessartz, wrote that the family was the natural place for affection and growth; the mother was best equipped to nurse her own child.

<sup>45</sup> Copleston, *History of Philosophy VI : Modern Philosophy Part I* (New York: Image Books, 1964), 84-85. In *Discourse on Equality*, Rousseau observed that “private property” was a departure from humanity’s primitive simplicity, and the beginning of evils.

<sup>46</sup> Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume VI: Modern Philosophy Part I*, 100-108.

Schopenhauer looked to humanity's biological drive towards survival to define the nature of the person. He argued that the drive to procreate and survive underpinned human decisions, which he asserted were not free. He concluded that the will to live is the motive of all human and animal endeavour.<sup>47</sup> To contend with his sense that the human passage is painfully meaningless while desires persist, Schopenhauer looked to eastern practices of detachment from desire. Turning to a new exotic way to resolve life's aporias was a facet of romanticism.<sup>48</sup> Nietzsche and Freud would further direct persons to their natural inner potential to expose a subconscious motive that flowed from a principle which ultimately was unfathomable.<sup>49</sup>

While acknowledging that other humanist thinkers remained in the deist tradition (e.g., Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau), it is generally true to say that, from this ground, romantic and atheistic humanism grew. There was a drive to remove social and religious constraints from humanity's natural potential. This emerged from both the promise suggested by progress and discovery, and from the disillusionment of defeat and loss, namely, from a *need* for new human potential. Incongruities between religious expression and injustices were felt as intolerable, leading to the rejection of religious behaviour which refused to right injustice. This is the *entrée* to a tumultuous time.

e. *The self as the subject of rights: Revolution in France*

Together with the freedoms brought by mechanization, there was a mounting interest in social, political, religious and personal freedom. In 1690 John Locke proposed a rational basis for government based on "the welfare of the governed who had natural rights."<sup>50</sup> His "principle of utility" translated into entitlement of rights in respect to occupation of land and education, and freedom of speech and thought (freedom from religious control). Demand for its implementation was roused in France by Rousseau's

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<sup>47</sup> Copleston, *History of Philosophy VII*, 273.

<sup>48</sup> Copleston, *History of Philosophy VII*, 277-284. Schopenhauer was influenced by the "Veil of Maya" in the *Upanishads*.

<sup>49</sup> Washabaugh, *A Life of Response: American Cultural Anthropology*, Chapter 5.

<sup>50</sup> Stewart Ross, *The French Revolution* (London, Evan Brothers, 2002), 14. From Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1690).

declaration of the problem, “Man was born free but everywhere he is in chains.”<sup>51</sup> Feeding on the discontent bred by inequities in wealth and justice, this principle led to the ‘revolution’, a realization of a utopia based on this ideal.<sup>52</sup> The uprising in 1789, a declaration of citizen’s rights and the attempt to realize them, was articulated as ‘revolution’ by its own people.<sup>53</sup>

Following the revolution, nineteenth century writers continued to express ideals, modulations on changing perspectives of the self. One revolutionary thinker, Karl Marx, proposed the self as driven by desire for happiness – to be found in material equity – which he felt would arrive spontaneously through a social dialectic. Unrealized in the Commune of 1871, Marx pressed to fulfil humanity’s ‘natural end’ by pre-empting it.<sup>54</sup> Later, Thérèse was to write that God would have to realize her otherwise unrealizable desires, felt as ultimately God’s in her. While she was confident that God would come to her aid, for many, ‘God’ represented the thwarting of their desires. Freud asserted that ‘God’ was a collection of internalized childhood ‘authorities’ projected outside of the person. He advocated removing this figure and its morality as it prevented persons from resolving their competing subconscious forces - sexual desire (life) and death. Resolution could be achieved by retrieving and naming the conflicts subsisting in the subconscious, accumulated throughout one’s history. The quest for fulfilment involved unravelling the tangled strands of the unconscious, to lay bare the archaeology of the psyche.

Marx saw religious practice (as transcending the alienation persons might feel toward material injustice), serving as an opiate, as diverting persons from realizing their fundamentally ‘material’ desire: a harmony between one’s work and the fruit of one’s work. Religion stood in the way of society’s dialectic which would naturally find its

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<sup>51</sup> Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume VI: Modern Philosophy Part I*, 100.

<sup>52</sup> William Doyle, *The Oxford Dictionary of the French Revolution*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Roger Price, *A Concise History of France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 103-116.

<sup>53</sup> Mc Manners, *Lectures on European History 1789-1914*, 16.

<sup>54</sup> “Commune” was Marx’s word for his utopia. In 1891 Marx wrote “The Civil War in France” reflecting on what, in his opinion, should have taken place with regard to the Commune. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume XII*, 311-312.

resolution in the “commune,” a materially just society.<sup>55</sup> Religion subverted the human need to express the dissatisfaction of alienation.<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche, alternatively, argued that the present experience of Christianity was an obstacle to humans living to their full potential, as Christianity’s God was against the desire for life itself.<sup>57</sup> Realizing a full life was not to be found in detaching from or transcending the urge of desire, but to become united with one’s potential in the form of willing. These articulate a view of the self without or against God.

*f. Conclusion*

Nietzsche, observing God as “dead” (“...we have killed him”),<sup>58</sup> proposed being human without God,<sup>59</sup> loving one’s fate, and realizing desires by willing.<sup>60</sup> Freud stripped away morally ordering religion to expose subconscious motivations.<sup>61</sup> Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud attacked what they saw in Christianity as escapism, an abdication of responsibility in the denial of the nature of present existence and what it demands from humanity. In the twentieth century Jean Paul Sartre further asserted that human ‘existence’ preceded human ‘nature’, revealing the true burden of self-determination

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<sup>55</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume XII*, 311-312.

<sup>56</sup> Marx viewed the denial of ordinary physical/material satisfaction (which ‘religion’ asked persons to merely endure) as causing human persons to become alien to their true feeling and natural fulfilment.

<sup>57</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (USA: Penguin Books Inc, 1961, 1969). See 41-43.

<sup>58</sup> Nietzsche meant that ‘our time’ has killed him through writings such as of David Strauss’s 1835 *The Life of Jesus*. See Schaberg, William, *The Nietzsche Canon: A Publication History and Biography* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996) 32. He also pointed to self-humiliating Christian attitudes which devalue this world. The consequences of this are still to come. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom* (New York: Friedrick Ungar Publishing Co, 1960), 167-169.

<sup>59</sup> De Lubac interprets Nietzsche as proposing ‘humanity as the new god’. Henri De Lubac. *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, (San Francisco: Communio Books, Ignatius Press, 1991), 78.

<sup>60</sup> See the posthumous publication of Nietzsche’s notes, “The Will to Power, An Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values.” Concepts such as *amor fati* (love of one’s fate) and “eternal recurrence” (from Schopenhauer) are to be found in *The Gay Science* and *Ecco Homo*. The extent of Thérèse’s surrender will resemble *amor fati*.

<sup>61</sup> Washabaugh, *A life of Response: American Cultural Anthropology*, Chapter 5. The new evident truth was that the human was a being which experienced things, and “its perceptual faculties structure[d] experience independently of the human will.”

under those conditions.<sup>62</sup> These thinkers attacked and removed stale presumption with their critiques, but their new ideals in the face of the human inclination toward egoistic striving and competition, and despondency over felt weakness, left a burden of inescapable aloneness.

Thérèse would encounter some of the above issues in events and persons, through the papers *Le Normand* and *La Croix*.<sup>63</sup> The ideal of the 1871 Commune was fresh in the mind of her community. Adulation of an ‘anaemic’ hero, and eagerness for a moralizing and reprimanding God was being resisted. The possibility of self-knowing through intuition, consonance with one’s desire, and symbolic imagining was present in the popular romantic thought of her time. Leo Taxil’s deception over Diana Vaughan’s conversion, described by Six, embodied some of the scorn that those such as Marx, Freud and Nietzsche held.<sup>64</sup> Taxil’s ruse showed how ‘foolish’ was blind trust in the unseen God of this one believer – Thérèse in the Carmel of Lisieux –vulnerable to his simple deception. Thérèse persisted in being in relation to a divine ‘thou’ where others tried to take control of human forces by way of reason. From this intellectual climate in Europe, the growing sense of the person as autonomous and as the subject of rights represented an expansion in human consciousness and self-understanding at personal, social or cultural levels. A dialectical progression corrected inhumane and anti-life tendencies, bringing good in things such as physical health, technological progress, education, work and living standards, welfare, and freedom from discrimination, but also gave rise to relativism, consumerism, and freedom as an end in itself, whose beginnings Thérèse encountered.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Essays in Existentialism* (New York: Citadel Press, Kensington Publishing Corp, 1993), 347-349.

<sup>63</sup> Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*, Translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1995), 36.

<sup>64</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 36-41. In 1896 Thérèse prays for the conversion of Diana Vaughan, and writes “The Triumph of Humility” for her which is performed on 21 Jun 1896. Leo Taxil, Diana’s inventor, later reveals in April 1897 that she was a fictitious character designed to show Christians their folly.

<sup>65</sup> This was identified and addressed a century later in John Paul II’s document *Veritatis Splendor*. Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 06/08/1993. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html)

## 1. Self-Understanding in Relation to God: Religious Development

This section traces religious movements in Western Europe up to Thérèse's time, to show how God was perceived and what God favoured or rejected in the human. This was to affect who the Church would designate as its enemies and allies, and, consequently, to whom and how Thérèse might express her vocation to "love."

### a. *Self and God from the Protestant Reformation*

The Catholic Church in the fifteenth century, amid simony and concubinage in Church offices where poverty and celibacy were professed, saw the beginnings of reform, within boundaries that avoided divisions (schism), through such as Erasmus, and Cardinal Ximenes who called for a return to scripture.<sup>66</sup> One expression of reform, by Augustinian monk Martin Luther (1483-1546), however, resulted in schism (the Protestant Reformation), an event reaching into Thérèse's time. Striving to be acceptable to God, Luther found himself overwhelmed by his sin, the futility of his efforts in self-denial and that only faith in God could make the sinner 'just'.<sup>67</sup> In 1517, he made a public protest over the trading of grace as a commodity and the corruption of religious practices by legal and pragmatic ends<sup>68</sup> From this emerged a new perspective on who the human person was in relation to God.

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<sup>66</sup> Cardinal Ximenes expressed the hope that "the hitherto dormant study of Holy Scripture may now at last begin to revive." John C. Olin, *Catholic Reform: from Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent, 1495 -1563* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 6, 1-12.

<sup>67</sup> Luther's attitude of resignation to the workings of grace alone (rejecting works as meriting salvation) may be traced to Tauler's mystical writing which echoed Eckhart's contention that "God must be born in the soul." Luther drew from Tauler the concepts of "resignation to God's will" and "renunciation of external works, as they are useless in themselves," but rejected Tauler's view that humanity has capacity for good. Resignation and renunciation of works had validity in the mystical context but lost this when withdrawn from this context. John A. Hardon, *History and Theology of Grace: the Catholic Teaching on Divine Grace* (USA: Sapientia Press, 2005), 170.

<sup>68</sup> On this date Luther pinned his 95 theses to the church door, protesting at the selling of indulgences by local Dominican Tetzl who sold reprieves from purgatory. Luther would propose a relationship with God unmediated by ordained priests or formulas, based on Pauline texts, arguing that all belonged to a priesthood of believers. He viewed the priest's special role as elucidating the scriptures. Rejecting the inerrancy of the pope, and the Church council, Luther was eventually excommunicated by Pope Leo X in 1520. G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe 1517-1559* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1963), 16, 17-22.

a.(i) *A father-son conflict: a connection between self and anthropology*

Like Augustine's (354-430) autobiographical reflections in his *Confessions*, Luther, recalling childhood incidents, allows a connection to be made between his childhood and his self-understanding in relation to God. Helpful here is Erik A. Erikson's investigation of the effects of Luther's early relationships on his perception of God.<sup>69</sup>

Martin was beaten in childhood by his overbearing, ambitious father, Hans, and by a mother 'overwhelmed' by her domineering husband.<sup>70</sup> His father was driven by a "constant" temper over the possibility of his authority being questioned, and over fairness with regard to work and its due reward.<sup>71</sup> The sensitive<sup>72</sup> Martin Luther came to read God through his dilemma – how to please a father who vented disproportionate anger toward him surrounding authority, honesty, and fairness in business, and who, by this, induced resentment and distance between them. Through his parents' example Martin felt God loathed corruption and pretence, demanded moral perfection (as in punishment for stealing a nut).<sup>73</sup> In adulthood, he responded to 'God' by confronting the ruling (Roman) dimension of the Church and rejecting its corruption, and Tetzels improper money raising (via indulgences). He also drew close to Jesus (not father, but friend) who did not keep at a distance – abating his relational pains. Luther's Jesus softened the harshness and distance between him and his father.<sup>74</sup> As his mother was

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<sup>69</sup> Erik A. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1958, 1962).

<sup>70</sup> Erikson notes that while beating one's child was a fairly common practice in that time, in history overall it is unacceptable. Hans Luther's demands subsumed his mother. Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 65, 67-68, 70.

<sup>71</sup> Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 66, 73-74.

<sup>72</sup> Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 63

<sup>73</sup> Luther's parents approached child-rearing as a sort of exorcism. Erikson notes this was not unusual during this time, but comments on its unacceptability, quoting, "Millions of boys ...live...with half of their heart and with only one of their lungs, and the world is the worse for it." Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 66-70. At 64, Luther wrote "My mother caned me for stealing a nut until the blood came. Such strict discipline drove me to a monastery [to asceticism, scrupulosity] though she meant it well."

<sup>74</sup> Martin writes "I fled him [his father] and I became sadly resentful towards him, until he gradually got me accustomed (or habituated) to him again." Erikson writes: "Martin, even when he was mortally afraid, *could not really hate his father*, he could only be sad; and Hans, while he could not let the boy come close, and was murderously angry at times, *could not let him go for long*." Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 64-65.

allied with his punishing father, Luther conferred Mary's mediating role onto Jesus.<sup>75</sup> His conflictedness was transferred to the public context of Roman-German Catholic relations.<sup>76</sup>

Luther's argument with Rome gathered support by coinciding with German resentment of Roman rule.<sup>77</sup> A catalyst for revolt, by 1542 there was a clear schism that would permanently divide medieval Christendom.<sup>78</sup> A negative sense about the human condition (as helplessly corrupt), once portrayed by Augustine (since balanced by Aquinas), re-entered Christian anthropology in Lutheran theology, then Calvinism and Jansenism. Luther's emphasis on subjective intimacy, however, was attractive because it reinforced what mystics already held, "the right to privacy, liberty of tastes and pursuits, of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character," diversity within the Church.<sup>79</sup> Luther subjected the God-human friendship to scripture's authority: biblical text ruled authoritatively, but in the sphere of individual faith and reason. Luther held the Church as a gathering of equal receivers of the "Word".

The Church replied to Luther through the Council of Trent (1545-1563) in a stance that was formally defensive toward Protestantism and in its engagement with modernity. Away from formal promulgations, in affective and spiritual domains where temporal control was not an objective, Christianity evolved in response to prevailing concerns. The (protesting) proclamation of scripture as authority brought interest to its meanings and thus to original texts – scripture scholarship progressed rapidly in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.<sup>80</sup> Where the Catholic Church resisted the treatment of scripture

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<sup>75</sup> St Anne was the Luther family icon, because 'she does *not* come with empty hands'. Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 61.

<sup>76</sup> It was projected, amplified, and universalized. Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 58, 77.

<sup>77</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 23-29.

<sup>78</sup> Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume IV*, 2. Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 158, 266-267, 274.

<sup>79</sup> Zeldin, *The Oxford History of Modern Europe: Volume II*, 794.

<sup>80</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 52. One of Luther's reforms, access to the Bible, was enabled straightaway by his translation of it into German (while in exile in 1521-1522), and the Gutenberg Press invented earlier in 1440.



as a document apart from the authoritative lens of Tradition,<sup>81</sup> Protestants feared the possibility of doubt cast on “the word” as divinely inspired.<sup>82</sup>

*b. Counter Reform and Protestantism in France*

In France, Lutheranism did not take hold as in Germany because there was little Roman rule.<sup>83</sup> Lutheranism was expelled from France following the 1534 “Placards” (slogans denouncing the doctrine of the Eucharist) leading to the persecution of its converts, and to sympathizers looking to Calvin in Geneva for reform.<sup>84</sup> Calvin was to exert a strong influence in France via Jansenism, becoming part of Thérèse’s religious milieu. However, Calvinism had to contend with the Society of Jesus, a Catholic movement initiated by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556).<sup>85</sup> Ignatius, of Spanish nobility, also concerned with the personal self before God, similarly emphasised the need to nourish a personal relationship with Christ, and the need for reform. However, he interpreted love for God in terms of a soldier’s gallantry; defence of God meant active defence of the Church and its teaching.<sup>86</sup> Pope Paul III (1468-1549) assigned to the Jesuits the duty of reclaiming what was being lost to Protestantism; subsequently the Calvinists and the

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<sup>81</sup> Pius IX (1792-1878) denounced modernism in “The Syllabus,” resisted modern biblical scholarship, and countered modernism by affirming as dogma an extra-biblical tradition, the immaculate conception of Mary. Leo XIII revived Thomism. Gabriel Daly “Modernism,” in Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (Editors), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), 668-670.

<sup>82</sup> Feuerbach rejected the objective existence of God, viewing God as “a projection of man’s ideal for himself and religion as temporal.” He studied scripture from the point of view of “clarifying the real existence and function of religion in the light of human life and thought as a whole.” Feuerbach substituted anthropology for theology. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol VII*, 294.

<sup>83</sup> The Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges 1438, had conferred power to France’s own Catholic hierarchy – until 1516, when it was redirected to the crown. Luther’s position did not appeal to those who already had power at their disposal. It was welcomed by humanists wanting reform and peasants who harmonized with its aims Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 114, 124.

<sup>84</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 120 -121.

<sup>85</sup> This society (approved 1540) was one of many who sprang up to reform the Catholic Church from within. Olin, *Catholic Reform: from Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent*, 11. Thérèse’s own spiritual guide and correspondent, Père Pichon, was a Jesuit.

<sup>86</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 197- 209. See also Harvey D. Egan, “Ignatian Spirituality,” in Downey, Michael. ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville, Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1993), 521-522.

Jansenists became their ‘enemies’ and rivals.<sup>87</sup> The Jesuit aim of deepening spiritual lives by education was redirected to uprooting ‘heresy’.<sup>88</sup>

### c. Calvinism in France

Jean Calvin (1509-1564), from Picardy (who also suffered a troubled relationship with his father), responded to Protestantism a generation after its beginnings.<sup>89</sup> Through *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), Calvinism took hold in France.<sup>90</sup> *The Institutes* approached human existence from God’s purposes, asserting that humanity’s chief aim in life was “to know God” who created humanity.<sup>91</sup> Unlike Luther, who faced a personal God, Calvin felt himself to be a creature-subject within God’s created universe, awed by this transcendent God’s power. Salvation was secondary to creation, whose purpose was to reveal God. Christ’s role was to make the Father known. Calvin redirected the “problem of salvation” to the problem of existence, asserting that, before all time, God knew all things that would happen, and created in the light of this knowledge.<sup>92</sup> God predestined some people to be saved (election) and some to be condemned (reprobation). Predestination was a concept that people were attracted to, as, if God had chosen you, what pain could human rejection bring? Adversity could be endured with confidence in the conviction of being one of the Lord’s elect.<sup>93</sup> Thérèse would encounter this sense in Jansenism.

Luther’s iconoclasm was directed toward sacramental symbols such as a special priesthood authorised to dispense grace, and apostolic succession through the pope, but Calvin’s was more vigorous. He took as his guide for Christian truth only that which

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<sup>87</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 201.

<sup>88</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 205.

<sup>89</sup> Calvin also defied his father’s will, preferring theology to his father’s ambitions for law. See Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 66. Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 210.

<sup>90</sup> Calvin revised the *Institutes* until 1559. Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 214-215. Calvin’s Church (not hierarchical but run by synods) was charged to preach scripture, and had powers to discipline. Calvin further taught that the Eucharistic sacrament involved no bodily presence of Christ, but celebrated a spiritual presence. Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 219-220, 232, 236.

<sup>91</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 216.

<sup>92</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 217.

<sup>93</sup> Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 236.

was contained in scripture, asserting that the Old Testament was not superseded but an earlier, less distinct revelation.<sup>94</sup> Some of this would be absorbed into Jansenism, such as the Sabbath observance, maintained by Thérèse's father, Louis, in his watch-making business.<sup>95</sup> However, Luther and Calvin provoked animosity in removing traditions they felt were incongruent with scripture, such as practices found in rural France where faith was expressed in its medieval rhythm, revolving around a calendar of feast days honouring saints and the fecundity of earth itself.

Here, Mary held ideological, cultural, and economic forces in balance; "she functioned as the centre of a cohesive and inclusive divine creation."<sup>96</sup> Pilgrimages involving Marian shrines were popular as her miracle producing qualities were universally appreciated.<sup>97</sup> In late medieval times, Bernard of Clairvaux, Anselm, and Francis of Assisi, while focusing on the risen Lord, proposed that images of the mysteries of Christ's life, including Mary's pivotal role, illustrate the antiphons in the Divine Office to help the reader "share in the life of Christ imaginatively and emotionally."<sup>98</sup> This invited symbolic imagery reflecting artists' insights, embellished by local beliefs.<sup>99</sup>

From the sixteenth century, the tendency to displace Jesus with Mary met resistance from Protestants.<sup>100</sup> However, while disallowing mediation of power through Mary and the saints (as they did of grace through the Church), they increased aspects of autonomy in women's daily lives. This represented a significant shift in feminine self-

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<sup>94</sup> Though Luther used the expression "*Sola Scriptura*," he retained Catholic traditions which Calvin was to refuse. Calvin laid emphasis on the Hebrew Scriptures; the law was not superseded but had been improperly kept, leading to a renewal of the covenant in Christ. Calvinism emphasized obeying aspects of Jewish law such as keeping the Sabbath. (But removed Hellenist Apocryphal writings.) Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 221-222.

<sup>95</sup> Nevin notes Louis' practice as oddly Jewish. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 97-98.

<sup>96</sup> This was Mary's role in medieval times. In medieval France, the Black Madonna, who represented fertility at a time when life was precarious, was looked to for saving help especially in childbirth and child care. Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and The Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 176, 181.

<sup>97</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 178.

<sup>98</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 186-187.

<sup>99</sup> St Francis focused particularly on the connectedness between Jesus, Mary, and nature. Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 186.

<sup>100</sup> Protestants viewed veneration of Mary as non-biblical. Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 201.

understanding.<sup>101</sup> Feminine mercy and perpetual virginity were no longer ideals in competition with Jesus' saving love. A new ideal arose: the good of marriage was a vocation for all, and celibacy, entailing a gift of grace, was meant for the few.<sup>102</sup> Calvin asserted that mutual love was as important as procreation, that sex was not unclean, and divorce was possible in some cases.<sup>103</sup> In Protestant regions, celibate vocations decreased as, among the baptised, no merit was attributed to mortifications – it was felt “the troubles which family life brings” were enough to bear.<sup>104</sup> The power taken from Mary was given to individual women, who were expected to learn scripture and become teachers of their children.<sup>105</sup>

However, with a surge in women's self-determining, the patriarchal Pauline structure of the Protestant family allowed the earlier mediation of power to re-enter in the role of the husband's household priesthood, where he was considered the head. What was gained was lost through a literal rendering of the Scripture. Though women were “apostles, priests and bishops,” their bishopric, Luther wrote, was in the home.<sup>106</sup> This heralded the family structure after the French Revolution.

As under Calvinism, Marian shrines in France were threatened with destruction, and feast days with abolition, France was acutely divided between Catholicism and Protestantism which resulted in massacres, as tolerance of religion was taken to be “an absence of conviction.”<sup>107</sup> Here, Mary was associated with the monarchy, and depictions of her wearing a crown reinforcing a particular social order, infuriated reformers.<sup>108</sup> During the French Wars of Religion (1652-98), Huguenots destroyed

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<sup>101</sup> Set out in Luther's Estate of Marriage (1522). Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 202.

<sup>102</sup> Stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646-1647). Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 202.

<sup>103</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 202.

<sup>104</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 202.

<sup>105</sup> *Cunneen In Search of Mary*, 203. Luther and Calvin fought for education for women.

<sup>106</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 203. Without priests imposing sacramental ‘rules’ (such as confession), the Protestant Church community came to critically guard morals through the familial home. Elton, 224-231.

<sup>107</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 205.

<sup>108</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 205-206.

twenty-five black Madonnas together with the ‘Lady of Miracles’ to whom Joan of Arc had prayed, both which were to become significant symbols for Thérèse.<sup>109</sup>

The Council of Trent’s counter-reform led to a defensive attitude which went two ways. On the one hand, some Marian traditions, such as the rosary and certain dogmas, were vigorously affirmed and depicted in art, while others such as mystery plays and images which represented “false doctrines” were condemned.<sup>110</sup> The local bishop was to be on guard against statues like the Black Madonna and local ‘pagan’ Catholic practices. In spite of Trent’s specifications, sculptures and paintings of Mary were heavily adorned with crowns and supernatural phenomena.<sup>111</sup> Guarding against mystical (‘superstitious’) activity extended into Thérèse’s time. Finally, Protestant reform would serve to increase the interiorization and individualization of Catholic spirituality begun in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – evident in Thérèse.

#### *d. Carmelite and Bérullian Spirituality*

In Spain, amid the spirit of reform and the poor state of religious houses, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and St John of the Cross (1551-1591) began reform in the Carmelite order (becoming the Discalced Carmelites) and to write their ‘interior’ lives.<sup>112</sup> The well-born and vivacious Teresa instructed the young John with regard to her ideals, and he offered her his spiritual insights. Teresa wrote her *Autobiography*, describing four stages of ascent, and *The Interior Castle*, a progression in contemplation through various chambers.<sup>113</sup> John, newly ordained, and an earnest reformer, became the target

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<sup>109</sup> Initially, Calvinists did not resist French Catholic government, but later disciples preached the right to overthrow “false princes,” and became anti-authoritarian, which resulted in persecutions and massacre. Religious warring continued until Henry IV issued the Edict of Nantes to end it. Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 133, 237. The Council of Trent rejected St Anne’s matrilineal imagery, but allowed visual imagery of St Anne as teacher especially in relation to Catholic women taking up the new role of catechist. Gabriel now finds Mary reading rather than spinning. Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 207-208.

<sup>110</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 208-209.

<sup>111</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 211.

<sup>112</sup> Iain Matthew, *Impact of God: Soundings from St John of the Cross* (United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 8.

<sup>113</sup> Thomas McKenna, “Modern Spirituality,” in Downey, ed., *Dictionary of Spirituality*, 662.

of resentment by members of his own order.<sup>114</sup> Imprisoned for nine months in a dark cell (listening to the sounds of nature outside), he composed the deeply symbolic poems, “Where have you hidden?” and “One dark Night.”<sup>115</sup> After a daring escape, he fled to a nearby Carmelite convent where he became a spiritual director and wrote a commentary to his poems.<sup>116</sup> Teresa’s injunction to her nuns to become as “men”<sup>117</sup> and St John’s “Song of Songs” imagery and his psychology of spiritual progress would later influence Thérèse.

We turn to Bellarmine’s (1542-1621) defensive move, and the spirituality of Bérulle (1575-1629). Against Calvin’s concept of church, an unseen community of the ‘elect’ whose members were known to God alone, Italian Jesuit Bellarmine declared: “The Church is a human gathering as visible and palpable as the community in Rome, or the kingdom of France...” whose membership does not call for any “inner virtue.”<sup>118</sup> This would lead to the imagery of a “perfect society,” a Catholic self-perception of an “institutional model” of the Church dominant until the late twentieth century<sup>119</sup> – felt in Arminjon’s *The End of the Present World*, a book loved by Thérèse, and in a general apocalyptic sense surrounding events in France and Rome, expressed by Thérèse’s

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<sup>114</sup> Matthew, *Impact of God*, 5-7.

<sup>115</sup> Matthew, *Impact of God*, 10.

<sup>116</sup> These comprised *Canticle*, *Ascent and Night*, and *Living Flame*. Matthew, *Impact of God*, 10-20.

<sup>117</sup> Teresa writes “I want you to be women in nothing, but that in everything you may equal strong men.” Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila Volume Two*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, (Washington DC: ICS, 1980), 70. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016.

<sup>118</sup> Robert Cardinal Bellarmine’s definition appears in *De controversiis*, vol 2, *Prima controversia generalis*, liber 3, ‘De ecclesia militante’, caput 2, ‘De definitione ecclesiae’, 1601 ed. Ingolstadt, cols 137-138. Cited in John Thornhill, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for the Changing World* (London: Collins, 1988), 61-62.

<sup>119</sup> Komonchak writes that Dulles offered *Models of the Church* to serve inner Church dialogue, by tracing the origins of differences in practice and theory to different images. He succeeded in showing that the “perfect society,” an “institutional” model (an autonomous state whose concern is institutional power and hierarchy) was being challenged in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Joseph A Komonchak, “Many Models, One Church” *Church*, Spring ’93, pp 12-13.

mother, Zélie, and her uncle Isidore.<sup>120</sup> Closer to home, Bérulle formulated a relation between the Church and the French monarchy.

Catholicism in nineteenth century France, seeking to restore the alliance between the “throne and altar,” an order ‘intended by God’, was inescapably political. Gallican and Legitimist views on the relation between state and Church, the fabric of eighteenth century Catholic society, emerged from a spirituality established by Bérulle.<sup>121</sup> Any effort to disconnect the traditional relations between the Church, nobility, royalism, regionalism, and wealth, was not just political. It was also a challenge to spiritual sensibilities, ones that would touch Thérèse from childhood. Louis and Zélie Martin were raised in military families who supported the legitimist “royalist” cause with religious fervour, because this represented a defence of God’s order.<sup>122</sup> This heritage entered Louis and Zélie’s household,<sup>123</sup> to surround Thérèse with a sense of ‘right’ Catholic thinking on military virtue.<sup>124</sup> Visible in Jesuit spirituality, military fervour would re-appear in D’Alzon of the Assumptionists. We trace its path.

Monarchy and French Catholicism became linked through the Bourbon Monarchy which came to power late in the sixteenth century (with Henry IV of Navarre) and remained until the French revolution when Louis XVI was guillotined. The connection shaped Pierre de Bérulle’s thought on religion and politics. As advisor and confessor to Henry VI and influenced by the climate following the Council of Trent, Bérulle sought

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<sup>120</sup>Isidore reported that a comet was heading towards earth. Zélie felt France would be punished, but that the pope would hold firm. Nevin, *Gods Gentle Warrior*, 95-96.

<sup>121</sup> Gallican (France as not submitting to Rome in religious matters) and Legitimist (the monarchy as legitimate ruler of France) positions were at once spiritual and political. Wallace K. Ferguson, “The Place of Jansenism in French History”. *The Journal of Religion* 1/7 (Jan 1927), 16-42. Anne M. Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle: A New Look. *Spirituality Today* 36/3 (Fall 1984), 210-219.

<sup>122</sup> Joyce K. Emert, OCDS. *Louis Martin: Father of a Saint*. (New York: Alba House, Society of St Paul, 1983), 3. Military service as both a religious and romantic ideal for Royalists existed to such a degree that Pope Leo XIII ordered Catholics in the Third Republic to obey its laws in an encyclical in 1892.

<sup>123</sup> Piat, *The Story of a Family*, 13.

<sup>124</sup> Piat’s *The Story of a Family* in its feeling of ‘right’ Catholic society conveys the ‘royalist military’ sentiment. Piat writes that faithfulness to the legitimist cause was a bond between Louis and Henry-Charles Lacaue where “the cultus of the military virtues and the Catholic faith” was shared. Stephane-Joseph Piat OFM. *The Story of a Family: The Home of the Little Flower*. (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1947), 11, 26.

a way of describing in spiritual terms the relationship between God, Church, and government.<sup>125</sup>

Bérulle had originally dedicated himself to the work of reforming the priesthood, believing that his effort in an attitude of profound self-denial could “reorder society and reform the Church in terms of holiness.”<sup>126</sup> He felt that God’s will was the conversion of Calvinists, and that the only obstacle in this task was overcoming his “self-love” and its associated delusion.<sup>127</sup> After a time of persuading Calvinists to return to Catholicism, Bérulle was confronted by his inadequacy to achieve this through his own effort. Acknowledging that human effort was not enough, he gave up identifying “his goals for the Church with the will of God” and surrendered himself to God’s grace, likening his turn to a Copernican revolution, where his new orbit was Jesus.<sup>128</sup>

Admitting powerlessness in the presence of God’s ‘otherness’ (anéantissement), he allowed poverty and failure to become an invitation for God to take control of his activity, activity issuing from unreserved self-giving.<sup>129</sup> Influenced by Olier, he arrived at a Trinitarian pattern of contemplation in the form of “adoration, adherence and co-operation.”<sup>130</sup> Acknowledging that effort flows from, and is empowered by, the spirit of Christ who responded to God perfectly, Bérulle contemplated the states of Christ as interior dispositions which resembled the eternal movements of the Trinity.<sup>131</sup> Conforming to these dispositions served to strip “interior idols.”<sup>132</sup> Beginning with

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<sup>125</sup> Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 210.

<sup>126</sup> Lowell M. Glendon, “French School of Spirituality,” in Downey (Ed), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 421.

<sup>127</sup> Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 211.

<sup>128</sup> Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 211-212.

<sup>129</sup> Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 212.

<sup>130</sup> Tom Ryan S.M, Evelyn Underhill on “Spiritual Transformation: A Trinitarian Structure?”, *Australian EJournal of Theology* (March 2007, Issue 9) 4, note17.  
[http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt\\_9/ryan.htm](http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_9/ryan.htm).

<sup>131</sup> Olier asserts this in *Introduction to the Christian Life and Virtues*. Glendon, “French School of Spirituality,” Downey *The New Dictionary of Spirituality*, 420. Thomas McKenna, C.M., “Modern Spirituality,” in Downey (ed) *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 663.

<sup>132</sup> McKenna, “Modern Spirituality,” in Downey (ed) *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 663.



adoration (where the self was cast aside), he moved to union with Christ through the grace of God's spirit, to where Christ-like action flowed. Bérulle continued to work assiduously, now detaching himself from the ultimate success or failure of his works, and viewing the grace of God at work in human failure and defeat.<sup>133</sup>

While Bérulle did not return Calvinists to Catholicism, his identification of the reigning monarch with Christ drew Catholic allegiance to the French monarchy.<sup>134</sup> He reasoned that if the monarch was attributed independence by virtue of receiving his power directly from God, as the Pope did (becoming Christ's representative on earth for France), criticism of the sovereign was criticism of Christ. Reinforcement of the Bourbon monarchy was justifiable on the basis of divine right. Thus theology and politics became intimate partners. The reigning monarch was now vulnerable to the temptation to support theological positions which buttressed his power. This is what occurred in the argument between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, who both had representative advisors to the monarchy. Bérulle persuaded people to feel God as present among them in their monarch's voice; however, the monarch's voice was to sway between personalities and power factions. In Thérèse's time, the power had been returned to the pope.

#### *e. Jansenism*

The sense of the self in *anéantissement*, before God's transcendent 'otherness', had alternative expressions. Calvin, in a variation of Bérulle's experience, had read scripture's covenantal theme 'rationally': all creation through history unfolded according to a preordained plan, revealing God to bring glory to God. An individual's orientation toward God was not within their power – where they stood would become evident in their responses to God's law. Jansenism was to marry this sense with Catholic tradition, giving Catholic expression in Therese's time its distinct flavour. We describe its emergence.

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<sup>133</sup> Bérulle established many "houses of Oratory" and inspired foundations of Carmelites. Minton, "The Spirituality of Bérulle," 213-214.

<sup>134</sup> Minton, "The Spirituality of Bérulle," 214.

In a political rivalry with Calvinism, certain Jesuits promoted a particular interpretation of sin (held by de Molina).<sup>135</sup> By defining it in relation to circumstance, sin could be dealt with case by case, allowing its ‘severity’ to be reduced.<sup>136</sup> Concern that this would undermine a sense of sin and lead to formalism in approaching the sacraments (together with the rising conversion to Calvinism)<sup>137</sup> provoked an appeal by Catholics to Augustine’s doctrine of original sin. This also led to the notion of election re-entering Catholicism.

Cornelius Jansen’s (1585-1638) Augustinianism was associated with the predestination of a limited elect, original sin, the human condition as corrupt, the need for “earnest co-operation with grace, working out salvation with fear and trembling” through moral rigour, ascetic practices, and “perfect contrition.”<sup>138</sup> It entered France through fellow student de Hauranne (1620) who became abbot at the Benedictine Saint-Cyran where he began to teach it and later at the convent of Port-Royal-des-Champs, with Arnauld, where it took hold.<sup>139</sup> The animosity Jesuits directed toward Calvinists was now turned to the Jansenists. Jansenism as theology (represented by the treatise *Augustinus*) was condemned in various ways between 1641-1653, but continued in the form of a spirituality. Arnauld translated *Augustinus* for all in a pastoral document, *On Frequent Communion*;<sup>140</sup> the relationship between divine grace and free will had sacramental ramifications. Was the Eucharist restorative or merited? He recommended infrequent reception of Holy Communion and stringent conditions for its reception (venial sin an impediment) until its overturning by Pius X in 1905 in *Sacra Tridentina*. As a reflection

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<sup>135</sup> Accommodating approaches to morality eventually degenerated into pragmatism. In the meantime Calvinism exercised moral scrupulosity. Ferguson, “The Place of Jansenism in French History” 18-22.

<sup>136</sup> Casuistry involved “establishing cases of conscience.” Ferguson, “The Place of Jansenism in French History,” 22.

<sup>137</sup> Ferguson, “The Place of Jansenism in French History,” 22- 23.

<sup>138</sup> Dupre and Saliers argue that in this Augustinianism, Jansen followed his colleague Baius, and so continued the argument against Molina and Banez, an argument banned by Pope Paul V in 1607. Louis Dupre and Don E Saliers, with John Meyendorff (editors), *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 122-123.

<sup>139</sup> De Hauranne and Bérulle were friends. Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132.

<sup>140</sup> The 1653 condemnation also opposed Arnauld’s recommendations on communion in *On Frequent Communion*. Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 122-123.

of this, Thérèse would be restricted in receiving communion, in spite of her eagerness for it.

Later in the seventeenth century, elements of Jansenism were to be found in Quietism, a Catholic spirituality promoted by Molinos, Madame Guyon, and Fénelon (1651-1750), which stressed that the “efficacy of grace advocated total abandonment.”<sup>141</sup> Both spiritualities supported a disposition of passivity, and had as their guiding principle: to “not...worry about one’s progress in the spiritual life.”<sup>142</sup> Fenelon taught that passivity consisted “not in the absence of work or active virtue, but that of a restive attitude... the disposition of one who leaves all initiative in the order of grace to God.”<sup>143</sup> Caricatured as “contemplative quiet and passivity” over and against “discursive meditation and active virtue,”<sup>144</sup> Quietist writings were condemned in 1687 by Pope Innocent XI for their “contempt for the active pursuit of moral virtue as a way to perfection.”<sup>145</sup> Thérèse would distance herself from Quietist spirituality and mysticism on principle,<sup>146</sup> yet Fénelon’s notion of “pure love” (which distinguished between motivations for love – loving God indifferent to personal benefits was to be preferred over loving God for these) resembled St John of the Cross’s thought, with which Thérèse would find an affinity.<sup>147</sup>

#### *f. Spiritual Jansenism*

Jansenism in Thérèse’s time took the form of a spirituality, described by such as Pascal (1623-62) who supported the idea of predestination, arguing that the elect were given the “eyes of faith,” making redemption intrinsic.<sup>148</sup> The eyes of faith were given through the heart, “as it is the heart that perceives God and not the reason,” but this seeing can

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<sup>141</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132.

<sup>142</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality* 132.

<sup>143</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 141.

<sup>144</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132 -134.

<sup>145</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132-133.

<sup>146</sup> De Meester, *Power of Confidence*, 290.

<sup>147</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 141.

<sup>148</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 127.

only be infused through an irresistible movement by God.<sup>149</sup> To seek God, according to Pascal, was itself a grace that is granted only to those who will be allowed to find: “You would not seek me, if you had not found me.”<sup>150</sup> Those who were not elected suffered an obscurity which blinded, and did not receive the supernatural (enlightening) light of faith, which allowed the secret language of Scripture to be deciphered.<sup>151</sup> This light contained a certain sign of election (the infidel was helpless insofar as response to God). Thérèse will speak of prevenient grace that brings her to where she is, and of being given “lights” to understand scripture.<sup>152</sup>

Those who took up Jansenist spirituality saw themselves as “continuing and intensifying spiritual trends that were anchored in Catholic orthodoxy.”<sup>153</sup> They wanted to critique *and* be assimilated, but fear of a judgmental God instead made them vulnerable to spiritual rivalry.<sup>154</sup> Belief in an irresistible force of grace controlling one’s destiny was held in conjunction with striving to earn one’s “crown” through good works. Good works – necessary for salvation – endangered by sin, could lead to scrupulosity. Also, rigorous penance was required before receiving Holy Communion. As favour with God was preordained, signs were sought to ascertain God’s favour, and, thus, one’s future. These were especially important with regard to one’s vocation – how one most co-operated with grace.

Zélie’s effort to bring her children up in an atmosphere of austerity, inculcating a disdain for vanity, reflected her taste for monastic life, but also Jansenism. Zélie sought signs to prove God’s will. She spoke of events as “ordained by God,” and of

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<sup>149</sup> Pascal, *Pensees*, #424, p. 154 in Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 128.

<sup>150</sup> Pascal, *Pensees*, #919, p. 314 in Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 128.

<sup>151</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 128.

<sup>152</sup> “I am constantly discovering in them [scripture] new lights, hidden and mysterious meanings.” *Story of a Soul*, 179.

<sup>153</sup> Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 121. Ferguson, “The Place of Jansenism in French History,” 18.

<sup>154</sup> Ferguson, “The Place of Jansenism in French History,” 16. 17-18. Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 130

premonitory signs of a vocation or sainthood (indicators of election).<sup>155</sup> Jansenism involved collecting evidence to be secure in the fact of election. Thérèse would encounter it in the Carmel of Lisieux where nuns, in proving holiness to others, to self, and to God, succumbed to a spirit of competition, suspicion, and measuring.

g. *Catholic Restorationism*

The view that “When order is disrupted [by revolution], it must be restored” was termed “Restoration” by such as F. de Maistre and F de Chateaubriand.<sup>156</sup> Encompassing different solutions (the first argued for papal supremacy; the second for royalism with a parliament), Restoration involved the Church/society’s return former ‘truer’ ways, to the ‘alliance between the throne and altar’, which included resisting enlightenment ideals.<sup>157</sup> Catholic Restorationism in 19<sup>th</sup> Century France was, thus, characterized by resisting the social representations of secularism. The situation was well conveyed by the juxtaposed phrases “*déchristianisation du peuple*” and “*réchristianisation de la bourgeoisie*,” and the expression “*émigrés de l’intérieur*,” denoting a stance that demarcated itself from the society developing around it.<sup>158</sup> Spiritual Jansenism, for example, shunned people and activities not overtly God-oriented, identifying these as “the world.”<sup>159</sup> “Only expressly religious activities were held to be worthy of a Christian,” which amounted to “active devoutness” and the monastic life, “the supreme model of Christian life.”<sup>160</sup> Pieties characterized by defensiveness against social secularization grew. Pope Pius IX (1846-

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<sup>155</sup> Zélie simultaneously felt salvation was deserved, “you get the graces you desire, but on the condition of your observing scrupulously the Church’s laws about Sundays.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 97.

<sup>156</sup> Werner K. Blessing in Erwin Fahlbusch at al, editors, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity: Volume 4*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmann Brill, 1999 - 2005), 656-657.

<sup>157</sup> Blessing, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity: Volume 4*, 656-657. Theologically, the age of Catholic Reform and Counterreformation could...be understood as an epoch of restoration.” 19<sup>th</sup> Century Catholicism, specifically, sought to reinstate the “right order” of Catholic hierarchy, the divide between lay and religious, and classicist theological formulations, felt in Neo-Scholasticism.

<sup>158</sup> I am indebted to Dr David Ranson, a reader of this research, in his observations with respect to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Catholic Restorationism. For phenomena related to Catholic Restorationism during this period, see Caroline Ford, “Religion and Popular Culture in Modern Europe” *Journal of Modern History* 65 (March 1993), pp 152-175. She notes historians argue that Catholic theology was feminized during this period. Retreating from the “public domain” (masculine) might be a reflection of that feminine stance.

<sup>159</sup> Christopher O’Mahoney, *St Thérèse by Those who Knew Her* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1975), 110. Celine would state in her deposition for Thérèse’s beatification: “...at home... we shunned the disturbance of worldly acquaintances, and tended to keep to ourselves.”

<sup>160</sup> See Ida Görres, *The Hidden Face*, 34-37, 124, 148, 152, 192.

1878) supported this spirit of defence, as did Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) – who a young Thérèse was to approach in 1887 – in encyclicals promoting Eucharistic, Marian, Sacred Heart, and St. Joseph pieties.

#### *h. Anticlericalism*

Anticlericalism, united only in its attack on the Church, was a phenomenon that French Catholicism struggled against up to Thérèse's time.<sup>161</sup> The Church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hoped to become a universal hierarchy governing a Christian society (seen in Arminjon's 1881 *The End of the Present World*, which would become a highly evocative text for Thérèse).<sup>162</sup> Animosity developed toward the Church demanding obedience in terms of thought and morals, Jesuit and Jansenist concerns respectively. Suspecting new scientific and political thought (freethinking and republicanism) as leading toward heresy, and eradicating "lax" morals by severe penance and suspended absolution, were felt by some as patronising control.<sup>163</sup> Controversial anticleric Voltaire, raised by an authoritarian Jansenist father (who wanted him to be a lawyer and not a writer), was at odds with the Church practices he encountered, rebelling against their "severity and fanaticism;"<sup>164</sup> later, in support of Newton, argued that science's immediate concern was not with a primary mover such as God.

In the heat and haste of the 1787-99 and following revolutions, diverse positions in the community at large were forced into two camps, 'clericalism' and 'anticlericalism'.<sup>165</sup> Freethinking (autonomy) came to be identified with 'anti-religion', and those who attended Sunday mass (obedience) were assumed as religious. A divide would have

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<sup>161</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II, Intellect, Taste, and Anxiety*, 1024-1026.

<sup>162</sup> "This reading was one of the greatest graces of my life" *Story of a Soul*, 102. See Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, translated by Susan Conroy (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008).

<sup>163</sup> Nevers, a highly anticlerical region, was found to have harsh refusals for awaited absolution. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 1029-1031.

<sup>164</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 1031-1032.

<sup>165</sup> Ironically, those who tried to adapt Catholic dogma to the changing times were often singled out by anti-clericals. Revolutionaries killed educated priests who were working for the liberal cause. Those who remained were pressured to choose between the liberal and anti-liberal causes. Freethinkers themselves were often dogmatic and controlling in their logic. Zeldin, *France Vol II*, 1031.

been better drawn between those who were occupied with “the problems of death, guilt, conscience, the distinction of the valuable from the trivial and the place of the individual in the universe,” and those who were not.<sup>166</sup> Voltaire’s intense dislike of the Church, in its efforts to govern the progress of rational science was felt by ‘good Catholics’ as anti-God.<sup>167</sup>

Anti-clericalism was also a protest against the Church’s resistance toward a pluralist society and state: its 1789 and 1848 outpourings finally began a deeper separation of Church and state.<sup>168</sup> In spite of this, in 19<sup>th</sup> Century France there was vigorous renewal in religious life.<sup>169</sup> New orders emerged, and women’s vocations flourished. By 1880 women comprised three-fifths of religious in France due to the feminization of the Church in a return to Baroque styles of worship, devotion to Mary, to the Sacred Heart, and to the infant Jesus.<sup>170</sup> After the collapse of Louis Napoleon’s second empire and the rise of the Commune in Paris, a religious movement sprang up in France that reflected the plight of the powerless and the poor, but particularly of women, namely, pilgrimages to Lourdes. Bernadette’s visions at Lourdes, like the apparition of Catherine Labouré, the children of de Salette, and others, followed a pattern of hope offered to children who suffered sickness, economic and social poverty: the vulnerable in a society dominated by male authority were visited by Mary, who conveyed messages through them to the Church.<sup>171</sup> Clericalism was to be the cause of ambiguous suffering in Thérèse and Bernadette’s lives.

### 3. Self Understanding and Women in 19th Century France

The section will discuss what it meant to be a woman in France at this time, and to be woman and Catholic, drawing from manuals prescribing behaviour and diaries kept,

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<sup>166</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 994.

<sup>167</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 995.

<sup>168</sup> Napoleon I made the clergy into civil servants paid by the state, and Napoleon III gave them charge to develop an education system. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 1025.

<sup>169</sup> Zeldin *France 1848-1945, Vol I*, 992. A sphere where women had some possibility of self-determination.

<sup>170</sup> Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2000), 213.

<sup>171</sup> Cuneen, *In Search of Mary*, 231-236.

including Zélie and Thérèse's own correspondence. The woman had a role prescribed for her that resembled a particular kind of Catholic spirituality, and conversely, spiritualities of abandonment resembled this time's expectation of a wife to joyfully resign to her husband. This anthropology was to influence Thérèse's emerging self-perception.

For any woman at this time to educate herself to have a public voice was to behave contrary to her "natural" state of being a companion and private creature. With this judgment attached to it, it was not comfortably open to her.<sup>172</sup> Her most independent options were dependent on another power, a man or the Church. She may have experienced equality as wife, but in romantic literature she was rarely portrayed as the genius, or the one abandoned to the forces of nature; she was a nurturing complementary helper, the astute governess, the benevolent nurse, the lover dying from tuberculosis, perhaps the mysterious strange woman. In this sphere, Zélie and Thérèse's efforts at self-determination stand out.

*a. Expectations of the Elite Woman*

Marriage and morals in nineteenth century France were written about both in manuals and from the perspective of ideology and social reform.<sup>173</sup> These writings reflect the progressing religious, political and spiritual ideals noted in the previous sections. Though France ruled in 1792 that all marriages must be contracted by civil law,<sup>174</sup> the norms and expectations of marriage remained complex, operating largely according to medieval Catholic and legal practices. The reasons for contracting marriage were for convenience, love, or duty.<sup>175</sup> For Zélie, 'duty' was understood as 'vocation', God's call to live a life in witness to God. She chose spiritual marriage, represented by a virginal

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<sup>172</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 7, 45.

<sup>173</sup>Theodore Zeldin, *The Oxford History of Modern Europe: France 1848-1945, Volume I Ambition, Love, and Politics* (London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1973), 285-314. See also Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Church* (Ligouri, Missouri: Triumph Books, 1981, 1982, 1991), 364-379.

<sup>174</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 377.

<sup>175</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 285.



existence in a women's community (approaching Hôtel Dieu at Alençon).<sup>176</sup> After being refused entry, she prayed, "Since O Lord I am not worthy to be thy spouse, I will marry to do thy holy will."<sup>177</sup>

In practical terms, a woman's choices were determined by her social standing and the laws and traditions of her particular region. Zeldin names *grand amour* as an ideal but not a realistic hope let alone an expectation, as many women married after barely meeting.<sup>178</sup> In the main, marriages were contracts between equal wealth, and alliances between families, and not independent individuals.<sup>179</sup> Whether a woman was aristocracy, bourgeoisie, or peasant, a dowry was involved; *mésalliance* was to be avoided, thus love the great social subverter was avoided.<sup>180</sup> (When Zélie finds that she is not to be a nun, she conscientiously works to become a favourable 'asset'.)<sup>181</sup> For the lower commercial bourgeoisie, marriage was the means of social ascension, and for the poorest urban industrial workers marriage was not a social pressure. Though it was hoped that love might follow a union, the hoped for values in the contract were fidelity, health, kindness, and a family.<sup>182</sup>

At this time, writing regarding marriage and family life in the main conveyed Catholic teaching, but also feminist positions, polemics over anticlericalism, and philosophical ideals. The romantic ideal and materialism had placed pressures on the emotional relations between men and women. Zeldin writes,

The cult of purity made [women] inaccessible: pleasures in sexual intercourse could not in such circumstances be sought with them, who were dedicated to motherhood... the hate of all metaphysics destroyed enthusiasm and closed up

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<sup>176</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 2.

<sup>177</sup> John Beevers, *Storm of Glory* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1949), 10.

<sup>178</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 286-287.

<sup>179</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 287- 289. Dowries were kept safely in the woman's possession by law.

<sup>180</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 287.

<sup>181</sup> Zélie learns the craft of Point d'Alençon and sets up a business. *Story of a Soul*, 2.

<sup>182</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 286-288-289.

the doors of the infinite.<sup>183</sup>

Critics such as Michelet presented the disharmony between men and women as caused by the moralizing wife who sought less to please her liberal, home loving spouse, than the priest.<sup>184</sup>

*b. Social Expectations*

Susan K. Foley states social expectation was determined by the categories, “elite,” “urban working,” and “peasant.”<sup>185</sup> We class the Martins as moderately elite based on the fact that Louis and Zélie were skilled artisans, and did not labour for a wage from an employer. They had two secure incomes, sufficient enough for Louis to give up his watchmaker business and support Zélie’s lace-making enterprise. They lived in a moderate sized house at Alençon and, later, at Les Buissonnets with servant help, but, ultimately, it was their code of social behaviour which further identified them as elite.

Foley argues that after the Revolution the elite were marked less by political affiliation, than by codes of behaviour that involved fulfilling one’s natural destiny, being male or female, in an idealized way.<sup>186</sup> Before the Revolution there were divisions based on social status; women of means exercised freedom and influence such as by hosting salons.<sup>187</sup> After it, there was the “citizen,” conceived of through biological science via the ‘evidence’ of rationalism and Rousseauian naturalism.<sup>188</sup> Instead of the (hoped for) uniform citizenship that gave voting power to all, citizen identity came to be based on gender roles, with the male’s reflective of his being rational, straightforward, emphatic

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<sup>183</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 291-292. Michelet proposed family as religion of the home.

<sup>184</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 292-293. Adèle Esquiros replied that if men did not want wives to become dry peevish prudes, they should treat a wife as a friend with perceptions of equal value to his.

<sup>185</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 25-80. Isidore, Zélie’s brother, as a pharmacist could be classed as “notable,” one of note in the elite class - able to command community respect.

<sup>186</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 27-28

<sup>187</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 2-3, 5. But this freedom had been compromised by the capricious and manipulative behaviour of public women in the royal courts (such as Marie Antoinette), perceived as ‘feminine’ rather than ‘masculinely’ rational.

<sup>188</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 4.

and public, and the woman's of being affective, capricious, tender, nurturing, and private.<sup>189</sup> These roles, felt to be naturally evident, were asserted as complementary.<sup>190</sup>

Where, in medieval times, the woman was considered an incomplete man (the man being the universal norm) who might over time evolve to completion, the woman, now, as complement, was permanently prevented from becoming the norm.<sup>191</sup> While he was an autonomous universal, she was defined as 'the sex', there to be governed.<sup>192</sup> In Rousseau's anthropology, the woman was unable to control her sexuality; he recommended she stay in the private domain – her role, as "chaste wife," to tame and help the man sublimate his baser urges for public good.<sup>193</sup> Women did not automatically receive the right to vote as they could not be relied on to be rational; they were likely to be affective, and unreliable, and religious (their vote might return the parliament to the Church's influence).<sup>194</sup>

The new ideal, as "natural," reframed the order of the *ancien régime* into an inescapable order – one that allowed a subtler domination, and which also held a tone of fatalism echoing Jansenism and predestination. A girl's concern was to conform to what her future husband desired her to be, his companion, committed to his happiness, and raising children. To this end she needed to learn to "suppress her own will and desires" as she was "to live for others and not for herself."<sup>195</sup> The girl-child's education was oriented to this ideal and was imposed from an early age in a way that did not acknowledge her true self.<sup>196</sup> Though Thérèse would experience herself as a

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<sup>189</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 1-3.

<sup>190</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 4.

<sup>191</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 5-6.

<sup>192</sup> During this century in legal terms she was of no consequence, because her word was of no legal account. Nevertheless, her dowry was safeguarded by law (a paternalistic expression?) by being kept in her family name. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 7, 21.

<sup>193</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 6-7. This contradiction was to resolve the woman's capacity for enticement.

<sup>194</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 345.

<sup>195</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 28.

<sup>196</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 28.

combination of gender characteristics, her education and expected response to God was framed in this romantic ideal.<sup>197</sup> Thérèse was a (mild) disappointment to Zélie, from the perspective that had she been a boy, she might have become a priest, owning such characteristics as dynamism, virility, and proactive self-determination next to spiritual resignation.<sup>198</sup> Many women did challenge these complementary, separate, gender spheres, finding them “unsustainable in reality.”<sup>199</sup> Thérèse would, observing her powerlessness against this expectation, while seeming to allow it, step under its barrier.<sup>200</sup>

In a convent school, such as Thérèse and her sisters attended, a girl’s attention would be directed toward God, and further reinforced through associations such as the Children of Mary.<sup>201</sup> However, while devotion toward God might be routinely excited, its natural succession, a place in religious life, did not automatically follow; this was assisted by encouragement and recommendation.<sup>202</sup> Thérèse was to write that entering the Children of Mary seemed as much a social privilege as a spiritual exercise. The whole exercise “cost” her “much.”<sup>203</sup> Ruth Harris notes that girls such as Bernadette Soubirous, the uneducated visionary of Lourdes, were excluded from the Children of Mary due to their inability to afford what it took to belong.<sup>204</sup> The impression from this time was that entry into the convent was gained by a combination of publically visible virtue (hailing

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<sup>197</sup> See Steffen Lössel, “Prayer, Pain, and Priestly Privilege: Claude Langlois’s New Perspective on Thérèse of Lisieux\*.” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol 88, No 3 (July 2008) pp 273-306.

<sup>198</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 229.

<sup>199</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 28.

<sup>200</sup> Symbolizing this, Thérèse would step under the barriers in Rome to reach what she loved as a woman. *Story of a Soul*, 130.

<sup>201</sup> Pauline and Marie attended school at the Visitation Convent in Le Mans; Leonie, Celine and Thérèse at a Benedictine school near the Abbey of Notre Dame-du-Prés. Thérèse writes her desire was to imitate her sisters in their membership of the Children of Mary, the Association of the Holy Angels, and the Association of Mary, but she was lonely and miserable here. *Story of a Soul*, 16, 53, 86-87. 106.

<sup>202</sup> Thérèse is encouraged by Marie De Gonzague to become a nun after her ‘vision of Mary’s smile’. *Story of a Soul*, 67. Bernadette Soubirous did not have the ability to pay at the convent so she had to remain with the day students. Harris, *Lourdes*, 139.

<sup>203</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 87.

<sup>204</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 229.

from a “good family”), a talent for work, a dowry, or, more rarely, a heavenly recommendation, such as a sign of holiness. Middle class refinement was taken as a virtue,<sup>205</sup> the corollary being that unrefinement, ignorance, and social inappropriateness (bold confidence or manifest weakness), was taken as lack of virtue.<sup>206</sup> (Zélie, however, objects to the emphasis on appearances when she advises her brother Isidore not to be distracted by appearances but find a wife who is not afraid to dirty her hands with work.)<sup>207</sup> The girl accepted to be a nun would evidence self-sacrificing devotion, identifying her as a spouse to Jesus. Jesus’ wishes were expressed through the masculine element of the Church; her spousal role was receptivity to its magisterium and mission, and her motherhood was a social role – her children being her social inferiors such as the poor, uneducated and sick.<sup>208</sup> Thérèse’s sisters prepared her for this role, as their aunt Sister Marie-Dosithée, a Visitation sister at Le Mans, had prepared them.

“Even where there was money and opportunity, the woman must understand that she does not create, invent, or produce any masterpiece, as men do, her masterpiece is to raise an honest child.”<sup>209</sup> To this end, it was thought that a woman had no need for intellectual development, thus her education, comprised of music, dancing, drawing, and languages, named as “accomplishment,” was oriented to adornment and entertainment.<sup>210</sup> The Martin girls received this kind of education. Beyond this, the older girls were occupied with pious activities and the cares of raising Celine and Thérèse in their mother’s absence.<sup>211</sup> The practice of resignation was inculcated in

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<sup>205</sup> Thérèse was to name “lack of judgment, good manners, touchiness in certain characters,” as “moral infirmities.” *Story of a Soul*, 246.

<sup>206</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 43, 90-91.

<sup>207</sup> Patricia O’Connor, *Thérèse of Lisieux: A Biography* (Huntingdon, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1983), 8.

<sup>208</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 50-55.

<sup>209</sup> De Maistre wrote this to his daughter. Michelet wrote that it is the man who completes the woman’s education, by conforming her to himself, so that he might imprint himself on her character. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 31.

<sup>210</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 30.

<sup>211</sup> At one school (of Marie D’Agoult), the prize for knowledge was less than for good behaviour because a woman ought to be more concerned with “docility and conformity.” Foley *Women in France Since 1789*, 30.

Catholic spirituality (as in Chapter XXXVII of Thomas A Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, a book favoured by the Martin girls) and in secular culture. One girl wrote in her diary "I must accustom myself to crushing my will underfoot and [learn] to do everything with submission and joy," a reference to the Christian virtue of mastering the will, but whose end was the "ability to accept male superiority and their own lesser rights and power."<sup>212</sup>

The young woman was not free to take walks outdoors, nor read what she pleased.<sup>213</sup> She was encouraged to write in her diary and to engage in light correspondence.<sup>214</sup> Finally, and significantly, the young woman was discouraged from reading, as her "imagination and aspirations" needed to be disciplined.<sup>215</sup> This was especially so of romantic books which might inspire daring hopes rather than prepare them for a marriage of convenience.<sup>216</sup> The romantic novel presented the complexity of two ill-fitting ideals.<sup>217</sup> One was that an affectionate and compassionate marriage promised emotional fulfilment in compensation for separate male and female spheres and for a limited and predestined choice. The other suggested that the acceptable ideal was to surrender to love, seeking fulfilment only in devotion to a man.<sup>218</sup> To prevent the chaos that pursuit of desire would bring, it was recommended that girls read books that reinforced modesty, conformity, self-sacrifice, in which self-determining women were

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<sup>212</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 31.

<sup>213</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 32-34.

<sup>214</sup> Through diary writing we have many accounts of young women's frustration at being confined. Lack of exercise produced a physical weakness which doctors then attributed to her natural feminine state, indicating the need for male support. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 32. Deprived of their mother, with Louis Céline and Thérèse enjoyed relative freedom. Nevertheless, activity seems mostly comprised of letter writing and planned outings. *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 236-244.

<sup>215</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 35.

<sup>216</sup> Foley gives an example of two girls who enacted the male parts of historical plays, echoing Thérèse's desire to express herself. The fear was that social norms might be challenged, as it was expected that a woman waits to be chosen for marriage, and that she must not determine her life by way of profession as a man did. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 35 – 37.

<sup>217</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 36. The hope that these could together be fulfilled paralleled the hoped for realization of deepest human desires; in the bliss of surrender a person might transcend the ordinariness of this present life.

<sup>218</sup> Thérèse attributes this advice to *Imitation of Christ* III, 43. *Story of a Soul*, 101.

mocked as caricatures of dissatisfaction.<sup>219</sup> Thérèse would write that she preferred spiritual reading, as if in reply to this advertised expectation.<sup>220</sup>

Catholic manuals affirmed the civil code which required the wife to be obedient in marriage.<sup>221</sup> A fictitious woman illustrates the ideal form of obedience, “I am happy to be submissive, even more happy because affection makes obedience easy.”<sup>222</sup> When Thérèse recounts willing surrender to her family and God in childhood, she confesses that it was easy (“natural”) due to her being immersed in a familiar culture without obstacles, in the warmth of affection.<sup>223</sup> She implies that, away from the context of natural affection or desire, when submission meets the mundane, the distasteful or cruel, ease evaporates. One woman wrote that she felt it was the woman’s role to submit to her husband, but if she truly loved him, it would be no sacrifice.<sup>224</sup> There was also the appeal to the “authority of tenderness,” in the ideal union where “a wife obeys without her husband commanding.”<sup>225</sup> The course of natural desire resonated with the spiritual goal of willing submission.<sup>226</sup>

c. *The Ideal of Virginity and Spiritual Marriage*

The ideal of virginity, found in first century Christian writing (virgins are “the flower of the tree that is the Church ... virgins are unique, elect, most honoured in Jesus’ eyes”), became a favoured ascetic practice (a “non-bloody martyrdom of renunciation”) in the

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<sup>219</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 36.

<sup>220</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 179, 298.

<sup>221</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 36.

<sup>222</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 36.

<sup>223</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 30.

<sup>224</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 37.

<sup>225</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 37.

<sup>226</sup> These approaches fulfilled Rousseau’s ideal: “in return for his support and protection, she promised him plenty of love and submission...” Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 37.

fourth century after martyrdom diminished due to a new political context.<sup>227</sup> Spiritual marriage was an extension of the practice of virginity, where the soul (its quality feminine)<sup>228</sup> was freed to unite, contemplatively, with the object of its desire: God. (Louis perhaps aimed for this in a celibate bond with Zélie.)<sup>229</sup> In a natural marriage, sexual response to one person alone represented fidelity; in relation to God, virginity represented fidelity, while carnal satisfaction, infidelity.<sup>230</sup> This was not stoicism, but employed the erotic language of Song of Songs and the “idea of spiritual fecundity.”<sup>231</sup> While spiritual marriage applied equally to men and women, women could take its imagery further. Through their natural feminineness, they could become a spouse to Jesus embodied as male.<sup>232</sup> In Thérèse’s time, the above natural-marriage imagery served to illustrate spiritual marriage, and would make its way to the forefront of Therese’s spiritual imagining.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Elizabeth Castelli, “Virginity and its Meaning for Women’s Sexuality in Early Christianity,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol 2, No 1 (Spring, 1986), pp 61-68, 67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002030> accessed 17/08/2010.

<sup>228</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 -1153) allegorized the relationship between the individual and God as a spiritual marriage between a human bride (the soul – *anima*) and a heavenly Bridegroom (Christ).” This imagery “engendered the soul as female” as basis for nuptial spirituality. See Abby Stoner, “Sisters Between: Gender and Medieval Beguines,” 8. [http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~epf/journal\\_archive/volume\\_IV\\_no\\_2\\_sp\\_1995/stoner\\_a.pdf](http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~epf/journal_archive/volume_IV_no_2_sp_1995/stoner_a.pdf) accessed 14/01/12

<sup>229</sup> “In his hand there is some writing, copied... that speaks of the sacrament of marriage as a bond separate from consummation. Mary and Joseph’s provided the saintly model of this higher sort of union ...it also pointed to Christ’s mystical wedding with the Church.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 82.

<sup>230</sup> Jerome, Tertullian, Cassian, Gregory of Nyssa, Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom, in favour of virginity, tended to gnostic mind-body dualism, but ultimately drew support from Paul’s position: “marriage is good but virginity is better.” Castelli, “Virginity and its Meaning for Women’s Sexuality in Early Christianity,” 68, 71-74.

<sup>231</sup> Castelli, “Virginity and its Meaning for Women’s Sexuality in Early Christianity,” 72.

<sup>232</sup> “Expanding upon the tradition of ... Clairvaux, who had viewed the human soul (*anima*) as female, the women placed themselves – as women – in the role of the bride, which allowed them to express their love for the human, masculine Christ.” This was expressed (by the medieval Beguines, such as Hadewijch) in “frankly erotic” raptures in relation to the Eucharist. Stoner, “Sisters Between: Gender and Medieval Beguines,” 8.

<sup>233</sup> Castelli writes “In marriage a woman could not deny to her husband access to her body to her husband...Yet it is not at all clear that the ideology of virginity was not as domesticating and circumscribing of women’s sexuality as the ideology of marriage. [Plutarch wrote] ...the Romans gave them [their daughters] away at twelve and even younger, for thus the body and the moral character [of the girl] might be clean and untouched for her husband. ...In the realm of religious virginity, women’s sexuality functioned in a similar way as a token offered to God as a sign of renunciation; the virgin’s body belonged to the celestial bridegroom, conceptually, in the same way that it would have to its earthly counterpart.” Castelli, “Virginity and its Meaning for Women’s Sexuality in Early Christianity,” 85-86.



To be a nun meant to resemble Mary, as an ever virgin mother to society. Being spouse to Jesus meant transcending an otherwise lowly state in society's eyes.<sup>234</sup> However, in the epithet "ever-virgin," elements of French courtly love were often added, so that Mary resembled the unattainable, pale, elite woman. The ideal of the saintly nun, as the hagiographer painted her, emanated a radiance of ethereal perfection; not earthy Franciscan motherhood, or the strength and physicality of such as Teresa of Avila, but Murillo's portrayal of the Immaculate Conception standing in the clouds.

d. *Zélie's Household*

As Zélie was refused her first choice, to enter religious life, she took up hand crafting lace, fulfilling orders she collected (contracting workers), toward a dowry.<sup>235</sup> Somewhat unconventionally, she chose Louis to be her spouse, and determined her own work and income, but kept to traditional social networks and remained in the home. The Martin daughters were taught to sew, sing, write poetry, and paint, and did not need to seek employment for money.<sup>236</sup> They occupied themselves with lessons, letter writing, reading, taking walks, visiting, attending mass, celebrating the liturgical calendar feast days, and charitable works.<sup>237</sup>

Louis and Zélie reflected the marriage ideals of the day, as child-centred,<sup>238</sup> with child-raising as governed by gentle but firm correction.<sup>239</sup> Against earlier authoritarian practices, it was felt that the wife in the child-centred family should show nurturing love for her children and affection for her husband, and he should "surrender some of his paternal dignity, playing with their children and developing close emotional ties

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<sup>234</sup> As spouse, she was better than a servant, prostitute or beggar; God had chosen her as a bride.

<sup>235</sup> Patricia O'Connor, *Thérèse of Lisieux*, 8-9.

<sup>236</sup> Gorres notes this was true of the Martin girls. Ida Gorres, *The Hidden Face*, 36-37.

<sup>237</sup> Occupying oneself in pious reflections was a luxury only open to the elite. Gorres, *The Hidden Face*, 36.

<sup>238</sup> Zélie's correspondence regarding the hope of another child in Thérèse is remarkably like a comment found in the nineteenth century diary of Caroline Brame, who is concerned to be pregnant to "bring our joy to completion." Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 46- 48.

<sup>239</sup> Gorres states firmness as particularly Norman. Ida Gorres, *The Hidden Face*, 63-66. A sense of this may be felt in the film "Être et Avoir," 2002, directed by Nicholas Philibert, about in a rural school in Auvergne.

with them.”<sup>240</sup> Advised by Catholic and secular writers alike, this would have been consistent with the spiritual principles that Louis and Zélie held to.<sup>241</sup> They might have read Bishop Dupanloup’s 1860’s publication on the child in which he quoted Rousseau and Fénelon at length, advocating authority, respect, innocence, purity, and obedience. Based on experience, Dupanloup wrote in defence of the child in a charter called *The Child* asking that parents did not demand academic success irrespective of the child. “The first task of a parent was to study the child’s nature to discover what he was capable of.”<sup>242</sup> We read Zélie attempting this in her letters referring to Thérèse and Céline’s development.<sup>243</sup>

*e. The Social Pattern*

In spite of an improvement in her ability to be a paid worker and to make choices away from religion, a woman’s options in Thérèse’s time remained as restricted if not more so than before the Revolution.<sup>244</sup> An urban worker could do factory work, menial clerical tasks in an office, or cafe work. A peasant woman might labour on a farm, in a mill, mend, offer herself as a wet-nurse,<sup>245</sup> or serve a household. The elite woman might offer tutoring, or produce skilled piecework, as Zélie did.<sup>246</sup> Sewing was recommended as keeping the woman, useful, productive, and occupied at home.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 46.

<sup>241</sup> Advised by Gustave Droz. Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 46. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 319.

<sup>242</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 323.

<sup>243</sup> “My little Celine is drawn to the practice of virtue; it’s part of her nature; she is candid and has a horror of evil. As for the little imp, one doesn’t know how things will go... Her intelligence is superior to Celine’s, but she’s less gentle and has a stubborn streak... she has very rare answers for one her age; she surpasses Céline who is twice her age... She will be good; one can already see a germ of goodness in her.” *Story of a Soul*, 22, 25, 27, 29.

<sup>244</sup> This is well documented in Harris’s account of Bernadette Soubirous’ circumstances. Harris, *Lourdes*, 3-4.

<sup>245</sup> Zélie writes how she cannot easily find a suitable wet nurse, but then employs Rose Taillé with whom she was very “satisfied.” There was no safe alternative for feeding an infant. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1198-1199.

<sup>246</sup> A woman wrote in 1840 she would do anything rather than needlework like her mother. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 309-310. The work Zélie did was lengthy and exacting, even tortuous

At this time, a disproportionate number of women in France earned money from prostitution.<sup>248</sup> Venereal disease, especially syphilis, was rife and there was very little acknowledgment of its presence, let alone successful treatment.<sup>249</sup> Women often had no means as many husbands and sons had died during the wars. Mothers died in childbirth and from tuberculosis, and both men and women died from cholera from lack of hygienic sewerage, leaving a great many children orphaned.<sup>250</sup> In 1875, 93,000 children were abandoned.<sup>251</sup> The problem of treating sickness and providing welfare was immense, making for much needed help. On the one hand, there was sickness, abandoned children, and an industry of sexual trade (touted to reflect new social freedom), and on the other, there were women in the private domain searching for a purpose. Harnessing this need for purpose, the Church gathered many willing workers to ‘mother’ beyond marriage (social motherhood), an occupation which flourished.<sup>252</sup> Reminiscent of charity and patronage in the old regime, women offered their “maternal virtues... compassion... moral strength and practical accomplishments – to the less fortunate,” practising resignation for others twofold.<sup>253</sup>

*f. Powerlessness, the Priest and the Willing Helper*

The Lourdes pilgrimages, a public demonstration of one’s Catholicity, and the practice of social motherhood, embodied a particular Catholic expression amid rising secularization. Harris, writing on Bernadette Soubirous, observes that, at the centre of modern developments, in transport and communication, was “the miraculous and the individual encounter with the supernatural, a vision of community and of self-hood

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(causing weariness headaches and sleeplessness), under the pressure of high demand. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 80-81.

<sup>247</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 31.

<sup>248</sup> In Paris in the 1850’s an estimate of 34,000 prostitutes. The wife was often not seen as a husband’s sexual partner. Contributing reasons were a lack of choice in her spouse, and sexual relations as not becoming of an elite Christian woman, even morally compromising. Zeldin, *Volume I*, 305-311.

<sup>249</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 303-305.

<sup>250</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 48-49. Zeldin *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 315.

<sup>251</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 315.

<sup>252</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 50-55.

<sup>253</sup> Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 50-51.

entirely at odds with secular creeds.”<sup>254</sup> Harris observes Bernadette embodied a paradox where women were concerned.

Bernadette (1844-79) in her 1858 visions at Lourdes came to represent both culturally subversive and transcendent empowerment for women. A poor uneducated girl from the foothills of the Pyrenees, Bernadette communicated with an apparition, a “young girl” like herself during eighteen visions – at one point scratching open a muddy spring.<sup>255</sup> Touching French Catholic folkloric spirituality, she immediately drew a local Catholic following, becoming fervour on a national level, sanctioned by the Church. The local poor, especially women, accepted Bernadette’s experience, responding to the privilege of being supernaturally touched by an apparition, but fearful local priests accepted the apparition only when she asserted (through Bernadette) her identity as “the Immaculate Conception,” affirming a dogma promulgated by Pius IX four years earlier during his ‘imprisonment’ in Italy.<sup>256</sup> Upsetting the order of social privilege and the prevalent rationalist physicalism made Bernadette a romantic hero. An ‘ignorant’ peasant girl-child was the agent of a transcendent event in the secular sphere.

A print-publication brought Lourdes into the national consciousness, and the ‘pilgrimage to Lourdes’ followed after.<sup>257</sup> Like the encouragement for devotion to the Sacred Heart through politics in Nantes, the pilgrimages emerged through d’Alzon’s 1870’s campaign on behalf of his Assumptionist order: to “restore the Bourbon monarchy, release the pope from his ‘Vatican prison’ and re-establish the alliance between the throne and altar,” thus restoring Christian society.<sup>258</sup> This campaign continued a Catholic discourse over France’s moral decline and the need for a

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<sup>254</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 11.

<sup>255</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 3-12, 55-82.

<sup>256</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 14. This represented a union of rural piety and the Vatican.

<sup>257</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 210.

<sup>258</sup> Raymond A Jonas, “Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence during the *Année Terrible*: The Sacred Heart and the Diocese of Nantes, 1870-1871.” *French Historical Studies*, Vol 21, No 1 (Winter 1998), 56-57. Bishop Fournier encouraged the diocese of Nantes to take refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus after the defeats of 1870, announcing France’s defeat was an act of punishment by God for its moral and spiritual lack. The emblem of the Sacred Heart (1793), emerging from a vision received by Marguerite Marie Alacoque was used to encourage martyrdom for France and her monarch. For Assumptionists, see Harris, *Lourdes*, 211.

politically militant Catholicism<sup>259</sup> (begun during its wars and revolutions, when it swayed between romantic philosophical aspirations and a stronghold of royalist Catholicism).<sup>260</sup> Attributing national defeat to religious apathy and betrayal, the Church sought support from the Monarchist and Catholic West, to lend their military and spiritual support to the monarch.<sup>261</sup>

After the loss of a stable monarchy, Legitimist Catholics such as D'Alzon, in their concern over faith and moral order, turned from the monarch to the pope.<sup>262</sup> When the papacy came under threat, they sought to defend papal authority now felt to be essential to "independence in spiritual matters."<sup>263</sup> Where Gallicanism (fighting to free the French Church from papal control) was once favoured, now an Ultramontanist position was adopted. The Church urged support for the papacy in the form of serving in the Pope's army, the Zouaves, to contribute to the spiritual (and thus political) regeneration of France.<sup>264</sup>

D'Alzon, concurring with a military approach, clothed his men like the Zouaves, processed in military style, and named Protestantism, revolution, and materialism as the enemy of Catholic values. Adopting the Jesuit ideal of defending the Church during the counter-reformation, he named the Church's enemy the Revolution, and their weapon pilgrimage.<sup>265</sup> Francois Picard took charge of the Assumptionists in Paris, exerting influence especially over women.<sup>266</sup> From here he initiated national pilgrimage. Bailly

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<sup>259</sup> Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence, 56-62.

<sup>260</sup> Roger Price, *A Concise History of France: Second Edition*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 181.

<sup>261</sup> Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence," 61, 65-66.

<sup>262</sup> Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence," 61.

<sup>263</sup> Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence," 61-62.

<sup>264</sup> Once the domain of bishops, this role, to fight the "new infidels, the partisans of the revolution," would now fall on the male laity. West Catholic France in 1870 saw itself as supporting the Church by defending the Pope as legitimate monarch, above French nationhood. Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement," 61, 66.

<sup>265</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 215-219.

<sup>266</sup> D'Alzon remained in Nimes. Harris, *Lourdes*, 216.

was in charge of the Assumptionist Press, and the editor of *La Croix* (a publication Thérèse's uncle Isidore Guérin actively followed) who campaigned against Dreyfus and Freemasonry.<sup>267</sup> The Assumptionists planned to mobilize their ideals for France on the same scale as left wing republicans did, to keep Catholic life in the public sphere, and support the pope's temporal power.<sup>268</sup> They called for Catholics to express their faith publicly for one week at Lourdes, demonstrating that the Catholic faith was kept safe in France, with the hope that a public expression of the *droits de Dieu* against the *droits d'homme* would transform secular society.<sup>269</sup> The work entailed in these pilgrimages would be supplied by further recruits, the Petit Sœurs de l'Assumption.

When the Commune arose in Paris in 1871, hundreds of priests and bishops were killed in a fury of anticlericalism.<sup>270</sup> Condemning this "desecration," 'caused' by revolutionary women, Picard appealed to "good" Church women to build up the Church by 'moralizing' them, like a new Catholic spirit arising from Paris's purging fires.<sup>271</sup> Through the Notre Dame de Salut, a Catholic revival by lay women, he sought to bring about the moralization of the left-wing, and, through their influence over servants in their employ, of the poor.<sup>272</sup> Gender roles were clear. D'Alzon saw the men as dynamic leaders, soldiers and missionaries, while the women were to collect funds for the priests and love devotedly as Mary loved the infant Jesus.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> D'Alzon promoted the recently promulgated dogmas of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception against Protestant and modern thinking. His spirituality involved frequent reception of communion (against Jansenism), taking refuge in the "might of Jesus" rather than suffer scruples, preaching dolourism to women (redemption came through spiritual pain and physical suffering, as Christ experienced), and supporting the pope's beneficence and infallibility. Harris *Lourdes*, 219-220.

<sup>268</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 222

<sup>269</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 221.

<sup>270</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 224.

<sup>271</sup> Picard set up society women against revolutionary 'red' women who were 'scarlet' in politics. Harris, *Lourdes*, 225-226

<sup>272</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 227.

<sup>273</sup> In Bailly and Picard's working relationships with these women, correspondence reveals, spiritual direction was mixed with manipulation to benefit their cause. Harris, *Lourdes*, 229

One priest, Etienne Pernet (1824-99), offered spiritual direction to Antoinette Fage (Mère Marie de Jésus 1824-83) of the Petit Sœurs, which had a quality of care in return for Fage's openness.<sup>274</sup> Both from poor circumstances (Fage was frail and deformed), they formed a partnership, sharing common ideals in care for the poor without distinction or self gain.<sup>275</sup> Under Pernet's guidance, Fage developed a spirituality of selflessness. Discovering value in suffering (as mothers in their care for their ailing children) she and those she directed took on a maternal relationship to humanity.<sup>276</sup> Abandoned to God working through her as a willing conduit, Fage referred to herself as a mere "plaything" in the hands of God (as Thérèse would, responding to a devotion by Jean Léonard, "The Toy of Jesus"), yet all the while she represented a potent instrument developing a capacity for "psychological strength and spiritual wholeness."<sup>277</sup>

Fage who felt that she had nothing but her goodwill to offer in the form of trusting obedience, when she put her whole self to the task, trusting herself to God's movement in her, transcended her constraining circumstances. Work that women such as Fage otherwise did in private was affirmed in the Lourdes pilgrimages in a very public display.<sup>278</sup> Women who had been refused the vote, laboured under gender driven division beside an imposing masculine physical symbol of orthodoxy, a church and Eucharistic processions asserting the centrality of a Christocentric doctrine in the spiritual realm, here lived out a subordinate role with enthusiasm which strengthened their moral authority.<sup>279</sup> The more physical the pilgrimage became (in death and disease – the physical touch between the helpers and the sick, the immersions), the

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<sup>274</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 336.

<sup>275</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 236-239.

<sup>276</sup> As "children in God's hands, they were mothers to God's children." Harris, *Lourdes*, 242.

<sup>277</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 243. *Letters of St Therese of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1279-1280. "The Toy of Jesus" was a poem sent to Thérèse from Pauline. Thérèse used it to accept her suffering after refusal of early entry to Carmel. The purpose of this self-objectification was to endure suffering in a meaningful context, but the lines "In your hands, I would like to possess the suppleness/ of a ball pliant to the whim of Your desire./Throw me, break me, I want to be insensible/ To everything except your good pleasure" threaten to undermine the dignity of humanity's role, as Jesus' companion.

<sup>278</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 242.

<sup>279</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 283.

more spiritual it became – Lourdes was not merely public belief in supernatural grace, but also acknowledgment of oppression and suffering within Christian society.

For Zélie, who made the pilgrimage in 1876, it was arduous and painful journey which led to resignation to her illness.<sup>280</sup> The organizers, such as D’Alzon, who prized the vulnerability of the sick, advocated the journey to Lourdes when all else failed, not appreciating the dilemmas that the powerless, especially women, faced. Its saviour was grace animated through women such as Fage who transcended oppression and suffering by entering it unflinchingly. Thérèse would similarly transform suffering.

Lourdes came to represent support of the body where science had failed it.<sup>281</sup> Ironically, Church representatives set up medical scientific/empirical proof to ‘approve’ inexplicable physical cures rather than the interior transformation of the suffering person, which is what it originally represented for Bernadette. For Bernadette life was difficult. Labour necessitated by poverty was punished by the resentment of her employer, once her loving wet nurse – her life source.<sup>282</sup> Salvation was a smiling girl who consoled Bernadette by offering companionship to her alone, lifting her by a happy, and excluding, intimacy.<sup>283</sup> When Thérèse’s loss of her mother is added to by Pauline’s withdrawal of attention, she will, similarly, be met by an affectionate smile. Both describe the quality of the smile as beautiful.<sup>284</sup>

Neither of the girls sought to describe their consoling companion, and, as it became clear that others were looking for some objective image, they retreated to protect their joy and integrity.<sup>285</sup> In spite of obedience, superiors and clerics were to patronize

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<sup>280</sup> “If the Blessed Virgin does not want to cure me, it’s because my time has come and God wants to take me to take my rest elsewhere than on earth...” *General Correspondence Volume I*, 117. See also Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 107-109.

<sup>281</sup> The Church, while trying to curb ‘delusion’ (in the spirit of Counter-reform) succumbed to physicalism – searching for proofs of physical cures over healing of the soul. Harris, *Lourdes*, 249, 21,

<sup>282</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 44-49.

<sup>283</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 7-9.

<sup>284</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 156-157, *Story of a Soul*, 67.

<sup>285</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 150-159. *Story of a Soul*, 67.



(humiliate) Bernadette (and Thérèse to a lesser degree) by speaking of her in her presence as if her thought was unformed and her feeling of no consequence.<sup>286</sup> This reflected a perception of the child and the poor person as lesser persons (less human) than the adult male cleric, and, in Bernadette's case, less than a woman of good society. Yet both girls would hold to a mission with extraordinary endurance, resisting the presumption that they were not competent interpreters or guardians of their experience. They would conform to the rule of obedience, but affirm a sense they had perhaps interiorized as infants (neither nursed by their mother, but cherished by their wet-nurse) that love and suffering went by no other names.

*g. The Enemy*

Assumptionists wrote against 'anti-clericalism' as a Voltairian phenomenon. Anticlericals, they published, were conspiring with Freemasons, in league with Protestant and Jewish influences.<sup>287</sup> In the nineteenth century the Freemason's lodge became a place for republicans to meet and to share ideas.<sup>288</sup> Philosophers, scientists and idealists shared common grievances through Freemason membership, but they were not inherently irreligious. Some turned to eastern mysticism. While some Protestants and Jews were vocal anti-clericals, anticlericalism did not represent a cohesive group. United opposition was a misperception. Some Catholic writings suspected Jews of collusion as they sided with the cause of liberalism, and occupied the same milieu as successful republicans.<sup>289</sup> Thérèse would have no personal contact with any of these, hearing of them via publications like *La Croix*.

Freethinkers, Protestants, and republicans were enemies in theory. Thérèse would fight these from afar (in Carmel), but, in practical terms, she met what they represented within Catholicism, herself anti-clerical, freethinking, and 'quietist'. What some Catholics touted the 'enemy' as doing, they – whose virtue was social niceness – did against 'sinners'. When Thérèse named her true director as Jesus, she echoed

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<sup>286</sup> Harris, *Lourdes*, 153-156.

<sup>287</sup> Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 1032.

<sup>288</sup> Catholics could and did have membership here. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 1032-1034.

<sup>289</sup> The Jewish population was very small in France. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 1036-1039.

Protestantism.<sup>290</sup> Taking spousal intimacy seriously, she excluded the subverting effect of the cleric's personal aims,<sup>291</sup> aims which might thwart her goal, such as entering Carmel, which represented listening to God alone.

#### 4. Conclusion

Thérèse's story would be shaped by the following broad influences. The intellectual climate of her time involved modernity, Romanticism, political idealism, and various humanisms. These provided the impetus to scientific and technological progress, which allowed new freedoms. Political idealism and the humanisms were instrumental in bringing change, such as the separation of Church and state, religious diversity, and the secularizing of culture. The perception of self was being disengaged from its traditional moorings, with respect to Church authority, justice, creativity, and liberty; in this new self-sense and its factions, God was variously loved, accommodated and hated.

Romanticism counterbalanced and complemented mechanization, materialism and social veneer. It emphasised the metaphysical in natural intuition, and elevated individualism. Consistent with Romantic thought was Luther's idea that Scripture could be interpreted by oneself unmediated by Church representatives. Opposing it was his feeling that humanity's original goodness was entirely lost by Adam's sin, yet his feeling (a personal conflict which he 'universalized') resonated with many. Also opposing it was Calvin's emphasis on God's grace as pre-ordained to a limited elect – a kind of fatalism which entered Catholicism through Jansenist spirituality. The Catholic Church's quest for a perfect Christian society on earth led to ambiguity: 'enemies' of the Church were not necessarily enemies of religion. Much atheism was reactionary, representing anger toward Church practices which threatened the self. Amid violence and felt-adversity, however, Catholic spiritualities flourished in both contemplative and active forms. God was variously felt as adversary, lover, and advocate.

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<sup>290</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 228-230, 247. Against the image presented by her own tradition, such as de Montefort's elevation of Mary's femininity and motherhood to inhuman perfection, Thérèse is reported to finally describe Mary as "imitable." St Thérèse of Lisieux, *Her Last Conversations*, translated by Clark, 159, 161.

<sup>291</sup> Thérèse acknowledged that she disclosed her thoughts to her human directors. She appears to have chastised Pichon in a letter over his secret plans for Céline. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Volume II*, 900.

Post-Revolution gender roles reflected a continuity with embedded hierarchical order. The woman's role – forming her self-perception – was now defined by biological natural characteristics (interpreted as nurturing, capricious and dependent). Though not directly subjugating her to a social class, she was subject to a gender order which condemned and ridiculed those who did not conform to this shape. Under the guise of being for her protection, a sense of limitation was inculcated. Declared to be fundamentally complementary, she was to marry in accordance to social expectations, with prospects defined by her dowry.

Romantic idealism, Jansenist moralizing, social elitism, and clericalism present in Catholic society reached into convent life. Clericalism, the ordained minister of God's grace as of higher value to God than one not ordained – pointing to imperiousness, to social and educational superiority, rather than the qualities of Jesus – led to delegating service to the sick and the poor to women. Hierarchical power depended on the woman's role as empty of self-determination and education, so that she became a repository for the husband's, or cleric's direction and education. A pyramidal order with wealth, gender, and physical capacities its criteria, and women and children at its base, represented an implicit anthropology, influencing spiritualities of the day.

The romantic anthropologist looked back to medieval times, to ancient cultures, and to present native ones, and 'observed' that men, women, and children's "natural" difference lay just beneath a social veneer.<sup>292</sup> The Catholic Church in its Restorationist form, embodying Western imperial and paternal social order as a "right order," provided the symbols for Catholic theological anthropology of the time. Both Bernadette Soubirous and Thérèse suffered this social order, but challenged it.<sup>293</sup> Thérèse would reject what society and the Church taught with respect to a girl-child's importance to God (turning to the image of Joan of Arc, a warrior girl-child), through an irrepressibly positive self-understanding in relation to God.

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<sup>292</sup> John Wall, "Fallen Angels: A Contemporary Christian Ethical Ontology of Childhood." *International Journal of Practical Theology*, Vol 8, pp 160-184. Wall's study reveals the anthropologies implicitly held with regard to the child. As created in the likeness of God, men, women, and children hold more in common than in difference, but societal organization imposes its own order.

<sup>293</sup> Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 240. When asked why she would not disclose the apparition's secret to the pope Bernadette replied, because she asked me not to tell any person, "and the pope is a person."

## CHAPTER TWO

### PART ONE: PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

#### **The Phenomenon of a Return to What is Most Real**

Having presented her time and milieu, it is now time to return to the question that guides this research project: What are the theological implications of Thérèse's understanding of herself as limited and her relationship with God as filial? In her autobiography, written in the last eighteen months of her life, Thérèse centres on God's mercy toward her limitation.<sup>1</sup> She feels herself again carried like a child, loving with the love that she is first given, with the greatest effort that her personality, culture, and age will allow. 'Filial love' becomes an integrating principle in her thought, in the form of a core metaphor, acting as both a hermeneutic lens and investigative tool.<sup>2</sup> Yet, how did Thérèse re-imagine a God whose favour (heaven) was merited only by the stringent measures of moral perfection and martyrdom, to be one whose justice was mercy?

Thérèse's sense of merciful love is generally surmised as due to being an indulged youngest child. As "indulged," she knew mercy; this resonated with Proverbs 9:4 and Isaiah 66: 12-13.<sup>3</sup> We aim, however, to establish Thérèse's sense of mercy more explicitly, asking: 'How might the quality of love in infancy be merciful?' and 'Where Thérèse might have experienced this?' This preliminary search will lead to Thérèse's sense of mercy as theology.

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<sup>1</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 13. At the outset she writes "...I'm going to be doing only one thing: I shall begin to sing... ""*The Mercies of the Lord;*"" which she continues to the end of her life.

<sup>2</sup> See Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 5-7. The expression "core metaphor" is used by Ormond Rush to describe an integrating principle. The core metaphor of "reception," for example, uses "reception" as both a hermeneutic lens, and an investigative principle to uncover "reception" as an integrating principle, and to further open up new ways of understanding "reception."

<sup>3</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 188. Proverbs 9: 4. "Whoever is a *little* one, let him come to me." Isaiah 66: 12-13 "As one whom a mother caresses, so will I comfort you; you shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they will caress you."

Toward the end of her life, Thérèse appears to return to an affective memory. Pondering her father's goodness while his mental health fails, reading her mother's letters about herself, and renewing her childhood bond with Celine (with Celine's 1895 entry into Carmel and discovering the Proverbs and Isaiah texts), she revisits her childhood mercy experiences, and revalues them. Fitzgerald writes,

In the first chapter of her autobiography, Thérèse sees herself in the eyes of her own mother whose letters, written before Thérèse was four, attest to how the baby daughter has been mirrored to herself by a loving mother. By documenting what Thérèse knows experientially but perhaps not consciously, these letters bring to an awareness the affirmative experience of love lying dormant in her psyche, thereby enabling her to tell us that her "first memories...are stamped with smiles and the most tender caresses."<sup>4</sup>

What experience became "dormant," which, when recalled, was felt as mercy (*miséricorde*) – understood as alleviation of misery via "forbearance towards one who is in one's power: a forgiving disposition"<sup>5</sup> – applicable to God?

*a. Method*

For the investigation we use: (i) as qualitative data, impressions about Thérèse from family correspondence, (ii) a paradigm of emotional development offered by L. Alan Sroufe,<sup>6</sup> relating to infant and caregiver dyad interaction, (iii) and John McDargh's study, where he outlines the faith development process, and explores the phenomenon of human imaging of God by way of the 'heart', which can have the appearance of regression.<sup>7</sup>

To show what takes place in a return to this sense of mercy, we rely on McDargh's work in the psychological dimensions of faith that underlie the formation of the self

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<sup>4</sup> Constance Fitzgerald, "The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux," *The Way Supplement* (Summer, 1997), 74-96, 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> A. M. McDonald, Ed., *Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary*, (Edinburgh: W&R Chambers Ltd, 1972), 820.

<sup>6</sup> L. Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organization of Emotional Life in the Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 117-118.

(relating to the capacity to love and accept love).<sup>8</sup> He argues, using “object relations theory,” supported by H. Richard Niebuhr, Rizzuto and others, that what is felt as most real in relational terms is applied to God, and this presses upon us, or is returned to in a crisis situation. Psychoanalytic theory is not without criticism;<sup>9</sup> McDargh’s work on the psychic processes which lead to theology, however, agrees with phenomenological accounts of spiritual and religious development, and human symbolizing within religious faith.<sup>10</sup> Through McDargh, we will trace the development of religious faith.

For our data, to establish the characteristics of Thérèse’s early development, especially the presence of mercy (underpinning her later sense of it), we will use Zélie’s impressions of young Thérèse found in her correspondence. We hope to show what was most real for Thérèse emerged from her early relationships – supporting a process that McDargh outlines, the felt-substance of these relationships is foundational to one’s image of God. Evidence of this process in Thérèse will illustrate a phenomenology of returning to primal truths via conflict and suffering, and of ascribing to God what is felt as most true. To explore the formation of an affective memory of the experience of mercy, we turn to Sroufe’s theory of emotional development based on behavioural research.<sup>11</sup> Incorporating Bowlby and Ainsworth’s findings, Sroufe argues that infant behaviour is organized towards attachment and that affect is central to that organization.<sup>12</sup> Providing behavioural support for McDargh’s observations, his theory will be used to describe aspects of caregiver-infant interaction.

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<sup>8</sup> “The continuous creation of the self”, maintaining its integrity and unity, “is the all-commanding life task.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 27, 133-134.

<sup>9</sup> Psychoanalysis is vulnerable to being used to support claims by reinforcing some experiences above others.

Karl Popper declared Freud’s ‘theory’ of the subconscious as unscientific in its inability to be ‘falsified’. See A. F. Chalmers, *What is this thing called Science?* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), 59, 64. Erich Fromm criticized Freud for analysing persons according to his personal criteria of significance, and cultural conditioning in “Freud’s Model of Man and its Social Determinants,” *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 108. This work agrees with the work of William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (NY: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> L. Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organization of Emotional Life in the Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 177.

a. *Sroufe's Theory*

Sroufe reports that the sensitive caregiver develops an “affective bond” with the infant, toward developing “the regulation of emotion.”<sup>13</sup>

In the first half of the year...The caregiver reads the infant's signs of distress and other affective communications, imbues them with meaning, and responds to them – dyadic regulation being accomplished without intentionality on the part of the infant...in the second half of the year the infant specifically and achieve contact, and intentionally directs communications to the caregiver, takes purposive action to flexibly selects and alters behaviours ...until the goal of interaction... is achieved.<sup>14</sup>

This affective bond enables the child's self-regulation, providing a foundation for what is to come.<sup>15</sup> To the degree that the caregiver sensitively responds to the child, to that degree the child acquires confidence in his or her own causality.<sup>16</sup> Confidence in the caregiver becomes confidence in the self with the caregiver, and, ultimately, confidence in the self.<sup>17</sup> The child will form expectations concerning their caregiver based on their interactive history and will elicit responses complementing these expectations.<sup>18</sup> Early on, interactive history is comprised of coordinated exchanges orchestrated by the caregiver, then, later, of caregiver responsiveness to signals that call for availability, where infants learn when the caregiver is likely to be available and when emotional regulation may be maintained or retrieved.<sup>19</sup> Such interactive history prepares us for

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<sup>12</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 177. See L. Alan Sroufe, “Appraisal: Bowlby's Contribution to Psychoanalytic Theory and Developmental Psychology: Attachment: Separation: Loss,” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, Volume 27, Issue 6 (November 1986), pp 841-849, 841. Sroufe maintains that Bowlby's construct supports psychoanalytic theory, which he views has “always been a developmental theory.”

<sup>13</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 172.

<sup>14</sup> At the beginning the infant's responses are supported by built-in regulatory capacities. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 172.

<sup>15</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 172.

<sup>16</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 185-186.

<sup>17</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 186.

<sup>18</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 185.

<sup>19</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 185. What could be taken as a closed system of behaviour, we interpret in terms of experiences of transcendence. Sroufe states that the goal of attachment should not be viewed as a cybernetic system (a system where an organism relates to its environment and is then

Thérèse's idea that God will act for her on her behalf while she is with "empty hands," and that this mercy is God's justice.

Thus, in our re-construction of Thérèse's sense of self and of God, we use McDargh to show how faith development is a dynamic constructed via childhood relations, and Sroufe to show the presence of mercy in infant-caregiver interaction. For this reconstruction, Zélie's correspondence will be used. *Story of a Soul* will only be used for material not available from elsewhere (as Thérèse's 1895 writing indicates returning to a sense of what is most real about God).

Chapter Three will continue to describe Therese's 'self-becoming' until 1895 (when she begins her autobiography). Chapter Four will show Thérèse taking up concepts that do not figure in her final sense of God, as they are not 'affectively credible' (yet are instrumental in her returning to her intuition about what is real). Chapter Five will find Thérèse writing *Man A*, beginning her return to what is most felt as real about God, to become her "little way." Together with Chapter Six, it will follow Thérèse's imaging of God (the foundation for our theological comment in Chapters Seven and Eight), describing a parent-God who accommodates her limitations as she loves God without restraint. This filial metaphor, explicit in *Mans B* and *C*, we will view as emerging in *Man A*, based on de Meester's study tracing its development,<sup>20</sup> and on Fitzgerald observing the effect reading her mother's letters has on Thérèse.

Below, we first outline the dynamic of faith development through McDargh. Then, through Sroufe, we identify mercy in the infant's experience, to show the veracity and richness of Therese's adaption of the filial metaphor from her felt-memory. For example, in *Man B* Thérèse has her relation with God corresponding to 'smallness'/weakness. The more she recognizes her limitation (through suffering it), the more she surrenders herself to being 'carried'. She no longer tries to prove anything.

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stimulated by environmental feedback), but as *felt* ("felt security"). Responses to internal and external cues result in a subjective experience of security. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 177.

<sup>20</sup> We accept de Meester's observations regarding Thérèse's "little way" as beginning around September 1894, before writing *Man A*, based on progressive use of child imagery. Conrad De Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the "Way of Spiritual Childhood" of St Therese of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), 145-182.



“Doing nothing,” however, involves the interior work of trusting in God’s mercy;<sup>21</sup> her filial metaphor becomes productive in her evoking the various dimensions of felt-merciful love. This research, thus, is concerned with the early impressions which inform Thérèse’s imaging of God (and with exploring that image’s theological value).

### 1. The Dynamic of Faith Development

We begin with two observations from McDargh central to our project: (i) Intellectual ‘concepts about God’ are secondary to a person’s ‘image of God’ which is based on affective knowing. Inextricable from self-becoming, this image involves projections of early impressions formed by the self in relation to their significant care-giver.<sup>22</sup> (ii) Many of these projections, however, do not result in a sustainable or positive image of God; it is theology’s enterprise to ascertain, which “projections are supportive of human freedom and dignity and do not ‘lie about life, death, and reality.’”<sup>23</sup>

Thérèse’s environment surrounded her with concepts about God. How did she affirm her image of God against these? The answer is to be found in McDargh’s observation that “religious faith” (rooted in “primal faith”) is a “reasoning of the heart,” by way of “images that are living products of the imagination.”<sup>24</sup> These images, “making up what is lacking” in an immediate reality we do not fully know, sustain our interaction with one another. Transcendence is apprehended at the level of felt-relation;<sup>25</sup> what is held is

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<sup>21</sup> Therese converts her felt experience to a metaphor at a cognitive level. See Iain Matthew, *The Impact of God: Soundings from St John of the Cross* (United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995). This apparent regression, marked by trusting that all, even love, will be supplied, involves a practice of spiritual imagining, as St John of the Cross did, against the inclination to ‘conquer’ God, so that confronted by our limitation we might recognize and receive God

<sup>22</sup> In the processes of self-becoming, the child projects a defence to any threat to his self, upon ‘God’ as the guardian of his continuance. The material of the projection (whether I am loved for being me) is drawn from “internalization” of interactions with primary others. Specifically, I know that I am loved through “the formation of the representations of loving...or rejecting other and of [myself] in relation to that other.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 105.

<sup>23</sup> McDargh quotes Ernst Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 202. *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 111.

<sup>24</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 104, 105. McDargh quotes from H R Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan Paperbacks, 1941), 72.

<sup>25</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 104-105. This entails choosing between images that are “creative and life enhancing,” or “evil imagination[s] of the heart,” such as mistrust, fearfulness, and other distortions of the heart.

chosen from personal images rather than concepts. McDargh offers instances where a felt-God overrides ‘concepts of transcendence’. Two examples follow:

A young man, by no means uneducated or theologically uninformed, confides in a period of emotional turmoil that he longs to be held and rocked in the arms of God.

A... professional with a...demythologized notion of God appropriate to his that his liberal theology is surprised to discover in the midst of a threatened airline crash spontaneous prayer leaps... over the carefully developed formulations of his adult life to address the God of his childhood.<sup>26</sup>

Finding support in William James (“there persists a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence... a perception of ‘something there’” which “provides the psychic foundation for... receptivity to beliefs about divinity presented at other levels of cognitive organization”),<sup>27</sup> McDargh asserts that though appearing abstract and conceptual, faith in God is anchored in the centre of meaning and value, made potent by images from a particular history of personal relationships, most critically shaped in infancy.<sup>28</sup> This “centre of meaning and value” may be understood in terms of “object relations theory,” as McDargh explains below.

*a. Object Relations Theory and Transitional Objects*

‘Object Relations Theory’ is “a broad ranging development within psychoanalytic theory” that accepts “those insights in Freud which give pride of place to *personal relationship* as the matrix within which the human psyche is formed, and as the model for subsequent operation”– internalizing interpersonal relations, and negotiating interpersonal relations through this internalizing.<sup>29</sup> “Objects” refers to Freud’s observation that the infant’s relationship with its mother is formed through what the infant interacts with – aspects of her such as breasts and eyes. These represent the mother and the infant’s relationship with her. Donald Winnicott proposed something

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<sup>26</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 117.

<sup>27</sup> James names this “the human ontological imagination.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 118.

<sup>28</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 106.

<sup>29</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 17. McDargh quotes Otto Kernberg, *Object Relations Theory and Clinical Psychoanalysis* (New York: Aronson, 1976), 56.

further.<sup>30</sup> The giving or withdrawing of the breast, supporting arms, eyes and voice, do not just represent the relationship with the mother,<sup>31</sup> but are dynamic (through these mother and infant express their relationship) and portable (transferable to other relationships); Winnicott named them “transitional objects.”<sup>32</sup> Their dynamism and portability leads to the object representation of God – a pervasive life-long object-representation.<sup>33</sup>

Winnicott further named the array of sensory impressions, which encompasses the mother’s picking up, gathering together, holding, bathing and feeding, the “holding environment.”<sup>34</sup> When the mother meets the child’s physical, cognitive and affective needs through these, feelings of trust and self-esteem are created in the child, a sense of being valued and valuing the care-giver. As the child feels valued and learns to trust, so it trusts and loves the world around it. Sroufe notes that the child feels and repeats the quality of this holding environment: the child recapitulates “not specific behavioural features experienced with the caregiver but the quality and patterning of the relationship, mediated by affect.”<sup>35</sup> We will return to this.

#### *b. Transitional Objects, Trust, and God*

The child begins inside another, symbiotically *in utero*, rocked, cushioned, and ‘held’ by confinement. With no want for air or food – fluid occupies mouth and lungs – this

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<sup>30</sup> In Freud’s early work, these fragments of the person were the object of (the child’s) energies or ‘drives’. Otto Rank, Ronald Fairbairn, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and Harry Guntrip build on and diverge from Freud’s concern with drives, asserting ‘relation’ as the object of internalized aspects of the other.

<sup>31</sup> To ‘mother’ we add, ‘significant caregiver’. The child’s early nurturer may include persons beyond its biological mother. (Rose Taillé nursed Thérèse.)

<sup>32</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 13-14.

<sup>33</sup> “...one of the most significant object representations with which an individual is in lifelong relationship is the object representation of God.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Donald Winnicott, *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World* (Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1973), 86-87, 194, 231.

<sup>35</sup> The child seeks to recapture the familiar emotional features of an interchange through anticipating and effecting a situation which elicits a familiar interchange. They behave “in terms of their understanding and expectations regarding relationships with the aim of making experience meaningful.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 232. 224-227, Sroufe offers data for the “preschool” child, displaying patterns of relating that mimic the overall tone, sense and values of what it has experienced, rather than specifics.

represents the child's original experience of abundance. This experience, after birth, is overlaid by the breast, arms, words, approving gaze, and the smile. The parental smile arouses self-awareness in the infant (and the chain of cognition) and stimulates smiles in return.<sup>36</sup> Bestowing esteem on the child begets its power to esteem in return.<sup>37</sup> Consistent giving (first in terms of routine, then emotional stimulation via the transitional object such as the smiling face) encourages anticipatory response to what is previously given in the form of expectation on it being repeated in the future.<sup>38</sup> "Basic trust" (primal faith), is critically encouraged or dissuaded in infancy, through significant relationships.<sup>39</sup> A sense of being loved as a separate growing self (or not) occurs through "internalization." Internal representations of events of acceptance or rejection provide the material for dealing with future threat or nourishment to the continuing self.<sup>40</sup> An "inner working model" is created to assess what should be sought and avoided, to enhance the sense of self and avoid what threatens it.<sup>41</sup> Through the nurturing of basic trust, communicated through transitional objects, a "background of safety" is established, sponsoring the growing child's venturing out into the world.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*. Translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Fitzgerald, "The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux," 3, Fitzgerald writes in relation to a feminist developmental position from Nancy Chodorow that the unsevered maternal gaze serves to equip the girl-child to mother in her own right. We wonder whether this observation about the maternal gaze perhaps relates more to quality of relation (equipping to "mother") rather than gender.

<sup>38</sup> After 9 months of secure holding in the womb, there is a strong residual trust. Clinical studies point to an infant as beginning "robust and well-organized in the first few months of life," and not even manifesting alienating behaviour in their repertoire, but after months of emotional rebuffal from an "avoidant" parent, expectations are brought into being. "It is not static characteristics of the child that are carried forward, but expectations concerning self, other, and relationships and patterns of emotional regulation, all deriving from patterns of regulation within the relationship system." Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 232-233.

<sup>39</sup> The mutual exchange between infant and caregiver is critical in emotional development, and reciprocally, affect is important for all aspects of personality and social development. "Depriving the child of this interchange is a serious...[even] a dangerous handicap for its development in every sector of the personality." Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 40. Rose's surrogacy was essential for Thérèse's development.

<sup>40</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 105. In Sroufe's terms, sensitive caregiving involves stimulating positive affect, while insensitive caregiving or unavailability leaves the infant affectively disorganized.

<sup>41</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 106.

<sup>42</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 107.

From this background, images are reworked and re-elaborated throughout a life to accommodate what challenges the developing self.<sup>43</sup>

McDargh notes that Freud (while developing it in a negative sense) proposed that the infant's early trust in the parent was to find its way into structuring subsequent religious faith.<sup>44</sup> Accepting Freud's primary thesis, McDargh investigates *why* trust is invested beyond early centres of meaning (the parent and what the parent gives) while "maintaining a continuity with those centres." He examines two psychological motives for turning to a transcendent object representation as a locus of faith.<sup>45</sup> Ernest Becker, in the first, views persons as driven to a beyond upon experiencing absolute limit by the threat of dissolution.<sup>46</sup> "Expansion and communion" is yearned for "against the limitations of finitude."<sup>47</sup> Karl Rahner, in the second, views persons as open to greater participation in the real; transcendence proceeds from, and is inherent in, the fullness of living.<sup>48</sup> Thérèse witnesses to both in her writing. The desires which propel her, unrealizable in terms of her own capacity, accentuate her limitation. But her childhood experience of sensitive attention (mercy toward her smallness) recalls beneficence and draws her toward deeper and wider engagement with the real.

### *c. Separation, Self-Becoming and God*

In Becker's view, central to self-becoming is the need to be uniquely other, as the self is threatened with death in sameness, yet at the same time there is the need for merger, for

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<sup>43</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 106.

<sup>44</sup> Freud described this development as supporting a "wish fulfilment," encouraging an "infantile pattern of dependency" through a structure of reward and punishment via the "superego" phenomena. Others, since, have observed that a benevolent superego can integrate and orientate, playing a positive role in adult adaptation. There may be "regression in the service of the ego" based on the intuition that "a return to the foundations of our self-formation in the psychic interaction with our earliest representational world can have positive implications for our adult functioning." Quote from E Kris, "The Psychology of Caricature," in *Psychoanalytic Exploration in Art* (New York: International universities Press, 1952), McDargh, *Psychoanalytic object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 107.

<sup>45</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 108.

<sup>46</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 108.

<sup>47</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 133.

<sup>48</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 108.

communion, but not at the cost of loss of self for the sake of it.<sup>49</sup> Confronted by loneliness, separation, and powerlessness, the child transfers qualities experienced through relationships, such as strength, dependability, watchfulness, indestructibility, in short, the conservation of life, to “a beyond” that validates the self.<sup>50</sup> Projection is thus necessary for survival and self-fulfilment.<sup>51</sup> Though Becker’s view expresses projection from the perspective of negative circumstances, it does illustrate, McDargh observes, that “the first locus of transference in the dynamic of faith is derived from the powerful protective figures of childhood”<sup>52</sup> and the object representation of God is “inextricably involved in the process whereby human beings maintain themselves and develop as selves.”<sup>53</sup>

McDargh prefers the process of human wants and desires which ‘construct God’ to be more than a mere survival mechanism against threat to the self (Becker), but as God-intended.<sup>54</sup> He reflects that the young child’s most creative and powerful energies are invested in the “process of determining what is real, the dependable, the trustworthy.”<sup>55</sup> The child creates a symbolic sphere, “the space of the transitional object,” where,

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<sup>49</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 110. This is positively embodied by the smile, where pleasure and esteem is expressed between persons who stand “apart.”

<sup>50</sup> From Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, Macmillan, 1973), 158. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 111.

<sup>51</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 111.

<sup>52</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1218-1219. Thérèse exemplifies this when she enlists her mother to rescue her from Hell, which is tantamount to Zélie rescuing Thérèse from both God’s judgment and her own imperfections. Thérèse later projects this form of rescue upon God.

<sup>53</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 116-117. At 111-112, Becker concludes that persons surrender themselves through what is an intrinsically religious activity, “to the rest of nature, to become part of it by laying down one’s whole existence to some heroic personality... [giving] hope because it holds open the dimensions of the unknown and the unknowable, the fantastic mystery of creation that the human mind cannot even begin to approach...that make[s] a mockery of earthly logic... [amid] the impossible limitations and frustrations of earthly matters. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 203-204.

<sup>54</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 112. McDargh notes from Franz Josef van Beeck, *Christ Proclaimed: Christology as Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), that “elevating the theme of againstness and limitation to central importance risks either defining God in terms of the diminishment of the human person, or setting God apart from the positive, real functioning of human wants and desires.”

<sup>55</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 112.

Winnicott asserts, configuring a lasting and reliable sense of the enduring reality of the parent is

the...beginning of a lifetime of creative enquiry into the more-that-is-possible... there is a motivating hunger for the real that proceeds not from a sense of... limitation of life ... but precisely from the plenitude of being.<sup>56</sup>

The infant's search for stimulation<sup>57</sup> is congruent with Rahner's perspective: that what is most real opens persons to the "inexhaustible depths of other particular existences, [to] reality in total..." which conveys "the incomprehensible mystery in God."<sup>58</sup> The motivating hunger that draws the child forward, paradoxically, is rooted in its most real, original, experience,<sup>59</sup> and this most real original experience, in turn, possesses a transcendent quality. Von Balthasar, reflecting on the "plenitude," the "something more" conveyed by the smile writes that from the very early encounter with its mother's smile the child derives a sense of being as unbounded and reaching to the ultimate, to the Divine.<sup>60</sup> When the mother smiles at the child, unity is effected in spite of the mother and child's separation. Martin Buber in *I and Thou* proposes that the 'between' of two persons is the occasion of eternity.<sup>61</sup>

McDargh notes that a positive description of the process of faith development may be based on an extension of Freud's thought – that the nature and quality of the child's first significant care-giving relations determine all later relations, which become "substitute figures for these first objects" of the child's feelings (including and especially in the case of God).<sup>62</sup> The substitute figures are derived from the "imagos" of the mother

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<sup>56</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 113.

<sup>57</sup> Sroufe observes that very quickly, in the first few weeks of life "infant behaviour is increasingly a matter of seeking stimulation, rather than always seeking relief from discomfort, and a matter of synchrony with the caregiver environment, rather than a mere need for gratification." Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 153.

<sup>58</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 112, 113. From Karl Rahner, "Concerning the relationship between nature and grace" translated by C. Ernest, in *Theological Investigations, Vol 1*, (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961).

<sup>59</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, Translated by Erasmo Leiva- Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 17-18.

<sup>60</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribner, 1958), 60-63.

<sup>62</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 119.

(father, siblings and so on) and inherit, and elicit, sympathies and antipathies which they themselves did not contribute to.<sup>63</sup> Later choices of relationships follow upon the subconscious memory traces of these first prototypes.<sup>64</sup> McDargh believes that when Freud's object relations theory is treated as a process involving images which are dynamic "within the total economy of a life," an "essential connection between self and object representations and the formation of the self" is revealed.<sup>65</sup>

McDargh notes Ana-Maria Rizzuto's refinement of Freud, which follows. The child's interaction with significant carers is codified, and later retrieved as "representations." Codification includes the remembrance of past physical sensations,<sup>66</sup> their actual physical enactment in the body, visual or audial senses of presence, and conceptual senses evoked by ideas or words.<sup>67</sup> These experiences are influenced by distortions of the perception that were needed at the time. As the needs for those distortions fade or are 'healed', a reconstruction of the object representation may take place.<sup>68</sup> Importantly, accompanying the formation of object representations are how we felt, as the process serves to form the self in relation to the primary caring others.<sup>69</sup> The ongoing development and maintenance of the self involves a dialectic that allows a re-reading of ourselves and these relationships.<sup>70</sup>

The object representation of God, Rizzuto continues, occurs subsequent to these (parent or caregiver) images. A child imaginatively constructs an image of God that involves

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<sup>63</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 119.

<sup>64</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 119.

<sup>65</sup> These are not to be thought of a static affective event in the past. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 120.

<sup>66</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 182. In their physiological expression, emotions produce neurological imprints that are codified as memory. Shore speaks of the symbiotic entrainment between the mother and child, resulting in the shift from negative affect to positive affect, as influencing the formation of dynamic brain systems (sympathetic parasymphathetic balance) – "externally activated sympathetic activity leads to increased arousal regenerated positive affects," and increased mobility "which enable the reenergized toddler to go back out into the world."

<sup>67</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 120-121.

<sup>68</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 121.

<sup>69</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 121-122.

<sup>70</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 122.



the characteristics of, and predicaments relating to, primary persons in their life such as parents and siblings, the “religious, social and intellectual background of the household...and the circumstances of the moment where the question of God emerges.”<sup>71</sup> The experience of God involves an interplay between the early relations with primary caregivers (where the perception of the self is formed) and concepts of God both presented to, and creatively formed by the child.<sup>72</sup> (We recall McDargh asserts that the object representation of God is a greater determinant of the character and development of a person’s faith in God than conceptual reasoning about God, regardless of its intellectual reasonableness.)<sup>73</sup> There is within the child a complex interaction between the theological ideas offered by a community’s tradition, and the God and self-representations which the child brings along to confront those ideas. He quotes Rizzuto,

the child brings his own God, the one he has himself put together to this official encounter. Now the God of religion and the God of the child-hero face each other. Reshaping, rethinking, and endless rumination, fantasies and defensive manoeuvres will come to help the child in his difficult task. This second birth of God may decide the conscious religious future of the child..<sup>74</sup>

A child’s early theology may come to be rejected through the child’s encounter with others who seem to possess the same god-representation but render it futile by their refusal to give it life. McDargh illustrates this in the child Sartre, who “learned that the Almighty had made me for his glory,” but, while “I needed a Creator, I was given a Big Boss...” Disbelief arose “not by the conflict of dogmas, but by my grandparent’s indifference.”<sup>75</sup> Jung writes of his experience

I began to distrust the Lord Jesus. He lost the aspect of a big comforting, benevolent bird, and became associated with the gloomy black men in frock coats...who busied themselves with the black box.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 122.

<sup>72</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 123

<sup>73</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 131-132.

<sup>74</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 129.

<sup>75</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 130.

<sup>76</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 126.

The ‘concrete’ experience of being loved and ‘brought to life’ provides the referents for making affective sense of the concept of God as compassionate and loving. Without these, the concept is meaningless.<sup>77</sup> Those referents are to be found in early life, and McDargh notes that the place of significance for religious faith is in the pre-oedipal phase.<sup>78</sup>

We return to the examples presented earlier representing the phenomenon of persons who put their early God-object aside, but upon some critical event, or predicament, retrieve it and once again engage with it.<sup>79</sup> The event, re-evoking one’s object representation of God, brings the relation back to life; engagement may lead to ‘conversion’, or the re-organization of a cognitive attitude, thus, transformation.<sup>80</sup> This brings us to the example of Thérèse. Did she, in the depletion of suffering, refuse religious ideas that threatened her self, that conflicted with early realities? Did she, in answer to “Who is finally there for me?” (Niebuhr), recall a God who favoured her in her smallness?<sup>81</sup> To examine Thérèse’s early self-becoming, we sharpen our focus on the “setting” she entered.

## **2. Thérèse’s Case: The Martin Household**

Chapter One presented the religious, social and intellectual background of Thérèse’s time. We saw Thérèse, participating in a family that shared a common ideal of sanctity, as a subject connected with her culture, affected by the mood of her time – romantic heroism, modernist physicalism, and modes of Catholic thinking which drew scorn from outside it, and experiences of alienation within it. Concepts such as election, moral perfection, and prescribed vocations imposed constraints, but practices of self-examination and communicating via symbolic imagery provided fertile material for

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<sup>77</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 132. Thus, the God of “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” our ancestors’ God, can be relied on to deliver us, and not the God of the philosophers.

<sup>78</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 144-145.

<sup>79</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 129-130.

<sup>80</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 131.

<sup>81</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 105.

Thérèse's spiritual imagining, especially her progressive imaging of God. A review of her domestic culture follows.

Thérèse's father Louis Martin was born and raised in a Catholic nationalist and military environment and its associated legitimist cultus.<sup>82</sup> Inclined to meditation, the loss of his brother and three sisters (one at nine years of age) perhaps contributing to his pensiveness, he sought entry into the monastic life with the Augustinian Canons of St Bernard.<sup>83</sup> Refused because of a lack of a classical education, he eventually gave up on this and went to Paris to finish a watch-making apprenticeship. Upon completing his apprenticeship, Louis bought a business and became a successful watchmaker, using his trade to also express his Catholic virtue, such as honouring the Sabbath, which entailed doing no trade on a day that would have been profitable.<sup>84</sup> Returning to his family home, for eight years he lived a solitary life, occupied with travel, the Catholic Club, prayer, reading, and fishing.<sup>85</sup>

Louis met and married Zélie Guérin, who had also been raised in a Catholic and military environment – by an overbearing father and a moralizing mother who was critical of Zélie, the least favoured of three children.<sup>86</sup> Zélie thought of her life in terms of vocation (a call from God to either serve God in the religious life or married life). Like Louis, Zélie had felt that her vocation was in the religious life (with the sisters of the Hôtel Dieu), but, too, was refused entry, whereupon she took up Alençon lace-making and established herself as a successful “middle-woman.”<sup>87</sup> Louis and Zélie

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<sup>82</sup> Stephane-Joseph Piat OFM. *The Story of a Family: The Home of the Little Flower* (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1947), 22.

<sup>83</sup> Piat, *The Story of a Family*, 22-24.

<sup>84</sup> Richard D. E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: women, Catholicism, and the culture of suffering in France, 1840-1970* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2004), Under republican rule, this day was made available for work. Working on Sunday represented *le vice français* about which the Marian apparition at La Salette (1846) expressed her pain.

<sup>85</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 1.

<sup>86</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 2. Zélie's “father was present at Wagram” and concluded his career in the gendarmes. See also Bernard Bro, *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Family, Her God, Her Message* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 34.

<sup>87</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 2.

began their marriage with a celibate ideal; after ten months, however, a confessor advised them to consummate their union.<sup>88</sup> The ideal of a life offered to God remained, but now it took in the prevailing Catholic teaching on marriage. Through spousal affection and co-operation in having and raising Christian children, it was to resemble a domestic mission in forming religious and saints. Zélie describes their new orientation in accepting the vocation of marriage: “When we had our children our ideas changed somewhat. Thenceforward we lived only for them; they made all our happinesses...nothing any longer cost us anything; the world was no longer a burden to us...my children were my great compensation, so that I wished to have many in order to bring them up for heaven.”<sup>89</sup>

Nine children were born in thirteen years. Joy was accompanied by struggle against sickness, and grief upon death, which claimed two infant sons and two daughters. Three infants died from enteritis due to Zélie’s inability to successfully breast-feed.<sup>90</sup> In 1870 there were two losses; six months after four year old Hélène died, their baby starved to death.<sup>91</sup> Zélie’s own health was also a concern. When cancer was finally diagnosed, it was declared “incurable.”<sup>92</sup> Louis and Zélie persevered, naming God as their true value and reality. Their days were governed by the liturgy, going beyond the practice of the time by attending daily Mass and receiving communion frequently, celebrating feasts and keeping fasts.<sup>93</sup>

While conducting her business, Zélie was also present to her children when Louis was away (on pilgrimage, Christian meetings, fishing and visiting his retreat). Zélie and Louis cared for their children in an attitude of unrestrained giving, providing for them

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<sup>88</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Piat, *The Story of a Family*, 48.

<sup>90</sup> Enteritis caused starvation. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 25.

<sup>91</sup> Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 25.

<sup>92</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 3.

<sup>93</sup> They attended mass early in the morning. *Story of a Soul*, 4.

generously.<sup>94</sup> Louis related to his daughters in a spirit of playfulness, giving them names such as “pearl” and “diamond,” and on occasions took them to his place of retreat, the Pavilion.<sup>95</sup>

Görres notes that the Martins held to an older French style of education where education, begun in the heart of the family, was unapologetically direct and firm. It was gentle ruthlessness – strictness in following a clear objective, within an environment of loving care.<sup>96</sup> Academic achievement was rewarded. Virtue was praised.<sup>97</sup> Beyond work and childcare, Louis and Zélie’s day to day activities were directed to profiting the faith of the Catholic Church through the practical care of the poor and sick, almsgiving, and pilgrimages, and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary, and the saints, in donations and self-sacrifice.<sup>98</sup> They parented with the heavenly community in mind, one where the resurrected faithful enjoyed an everlasting rest in God’s restoring presence.<sup>99</sup> We turn our attention to Thérèse.

### 3. Thérèse: Early-life Data

The following data contributes to Therese’s early self-formation. Some weeks before Thérèse’s birth, Zélie expresses her love of having children, exclaiming that she was

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<sup>94</sup> This included a swing to play on, pet roosters, hot chocolate in bed, May altars with Hawthorne reaching to the ceiling, a puppy called Tom, making apple cider, songs on Louis’ knee, and family Christmas feasts. After Zélie’s death, Louis continued family ceremonies, and showering gifts: pet canaries, a day-old lamb, and supplying Carmel with the fish he caught. *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 113; *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1304, 1228.

<sup>95</sup> Louis would later name Thérèse his “reine” (queen) to his position “roi (king) de France et Navarre.” Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Görres, *The Hidden Face*, 63-64. Görres’ observation compares well with the 2002 film, “Être at Avoir” by Nicolas Philibert.

<sup>97</sup> Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 24. In spite of regret over her “guilt ridden and guilt inducing education,” Zélie repeated some of her mother’s ways in her own focus on sin.

<sup>98</sup> Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 23.

<sup>99</sup> After Zélie’s death, the Martin girls were made the legal guardians of Zélie’s brother Isidore, a pharmacist and “leading lay figure in the Catholic community at Lisieux,” while Louis continued to travel. Isidore contributed to the local Catholic Newspaper *Le Normand* of which “he was also the principal financier.” Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 22.

born to have them.<sup>100</sup> She expects this new baby to be a boy, perhaps to become a priest.<sup>101</sup> The new child is a girl. Zélie will later comment that she “has the face of the predestined.”<sup>102</sup>

*a. Data for Thérèse’s Early Self-formation*

At two weeks, Zélie describes Thérèse as unusually responsive

She is beautiful, she is already smiling. I noticed this on Tuesday for the first time. I imagined I was mistaken, but yesterday doubt was no longer possible; she looked at me attentively, then she gave me a delightful smile. When I was carrying her, I noticed... when I sang, she sang with me.<sup>103</sup>

Thérèse, at less than two weeks of age, refuses Zélie’s breast in favour of bottle feeding.<sup>104</sup> For two months Zélie worries over her health, writing about the possibility of another death.<sup>105</sup> Apart from feeding problems Thérèse progresses,

as soon as she has a short moment of respite [from crying], she laughs heartily,<sup>106</sup>

but she has arrived in the wake of her sisters Melanie and Helene’s deaths, and looks into a face (Zélie’s) haunted by death. In the sixth month of her pregnancy, Zélie had written to Mme. Guérin

How will I rear it? I have nightmares about this every night. However, I must hope that I shall come out better than I believe and shall not have the grief of losing it.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 3.

<sup>101</sup> “I was surprised, for I was expecting to have a boy... because I felt the child to be much stronger than my other children.” *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1199.

<sup>102</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1207.

<sup>103</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1200.

<sup>104</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1200. Which is inadequate as it is toast and water, or breaded “half- milk.”

<sup>105</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1198-1205.

<sup>106</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1202

<sup>107</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1198.

In her ninth month Zélie wrote of the difficulty of finding a suitable wet nurse but expressed hope – a desire – that she herself might feed her baby.<sup>108</sup> Two weeks after the straightforward delivery of a healthy baby, she wrote

She promises to be strong. However, I do not dare count on this, I always fear enteritis.<sup>109</sup>

The following day she writes

I notice [in Thérèse] the same alarming symptoms as my other children who died. Will I have to lose this one?<sup>110</sup>

She worries about how to name Thérèse so that she will not die (showing a certain strength by defying her sister's strategy to have Thérèse called 'Françoise' to save her life), and the following week she writes "My...daughter is sick, she has enteritis, and I fear losing her."<sup>111</sup> A week later she writes that she sees "all the gravest signs that preceded the death" of her other daughters, and that she is "very sad, convinced that the poor darling was unable to receive help from her in her weakened condition;" this fear of being helpless with regard to feeding was "a continual agony."<sup>112</sup> The 'face of fear', though, is also the face of determination, that fetches a wet nurse (from Semallé about nine kilometres away) Rose Taillé, who consents to nurse her.<sup>113</sup> Thérèse returns to Semallé with Rose, the married mother of a one year old child (she successfully fed) amongst three other children.<sup>114</sup> At this point Zélie is grateful but resigned to the outcome without much optimism, stating,

I have grave fears...my first little boy was like this... I have done all in my power

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<sup>108</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1189-1199.

<sup>109</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1199.

<sup>110</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1200.

<sup>111</sup> Zélie expresses her abhorrence of death in the context of her sister's threat that life could not be counted on unless she named her child "Françoise," after Frances de Sales. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1201-1202, 1202.

<sup>112</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1204-1206.

<sup>113</sup> Christine Frost, *A Guide to the Normandy of Thérèse: From the Cradle to the Grave* (London: The Thérésian Trust and St Thérèse Missionary League, 1994), 88. Rose has Thérèse from March 15 or 16, 1873 to April 2, 1874. *Story of a Soul*, 279.

<sup>114</sup> Frost, *A Guide to the Normandy of Thérèse*, 88. Rose is married to Moses Taillé.

to save Thérèse's life; now if God wills to dispose matters otherwise, I shall bear up with the trial.<sup>115</sup>

The outcome, however, is that Rose's milk revives Thérèse and a bond is formed with Rose.<sup>116</sup> For a year Thérèse thrives in Rose's care, in a country cottage, amongst fields of daisies and cornflowers, animals, children and working women. One vignette is of a plump tanned baby Thérèse atop a wheelbarrow loaded with hay,<sup>117</sup> another is of Thérèse tied to Redskin the cow, to leave Rose's arms free for milking.<sup>118</sup> When Thérèse cries on a visit home at five and a half months, Zélie has her maid Louise return her to Rose at the market (selling butter),

As soon as she saw her wet-nurse, she looked at her, laughing, then did not breathe a word; she remained like that until...noon.<sup>119</sup>

Rose is happy to have Thérèse, and Zélie is pleased with Rose's care

I am well satisfied with this woman, you hardly meet another like her for taking care of children.<sup>120</sup>

With Rose, Thérèse becomes "well and strong," Zélie is pleased to see that Thérèse (at six months)

screamed with laughter with [Celine] ... wants to play already, stiff as a little post... will be walking soon...appears to be intelligent..<sup>121</sup>

and is eating solids (porridge) with vigour. Rose reports she rarely cries and "one cannot see a more darling child."<sup>122</sup> At ten months she is "very strong and big and holds

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<sup>115</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1205.

<sup>116</sup> Thérèse "is very strong at present. I saw her on Thursday last; her wet nurse brought her, but she did not want to stay with us and let out piercing cries when she no longer saw her wet-nurse." The only way to subdue her cries was to take her to "little Rose" at the market. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1204, 1206.

<sup>117</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208.

<sup>118</sup> Frost, *A Guide to the Normandy of Thérèse*, 88. This vignette is illustrated in a window of the parish church in Semallé.

<sup>119</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1206-1207.

<sup>120</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1207.

<sup>121</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1206, 1207.

<sup>122</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208.



herself up straight against the chairs.”<sup>123</sup> As Thérèse grows into Rose’s country-life, she shows a preference for women whose dress and manner are like Rose’s. Nevertheless, when Thérèse chooses to be held by working women rather than those dressed *à la mode*, Zélie expresses amusement where she might have shown disdain or resentment.<sup>124</sup> Rose and Zélie agree on the delight that Thérèse brings, and while Zélie is eager to have Thérèse back home, due to a promise, she remains in Rose’s care for a further four months, returning “definitively” at fifteen months.<sup>125</sup> Thérèse advances physically, affectively and cognitively, and her carers are united in their love for her.

Upon Thérèse’s return, Zélie’s satisfaction with Thérèse continues. “The dear thing does not want to leave me, she is continuously with me.”<sup>126</sup> Thérèse remains outgoing in her affection, “The little baby has just passed her hand over my face and kissed me,” however there are indications that she misses her previous life.<sup>127</sup> Thérèse loves “going into the garden” but does not enjoy it without her mother’s company, such as Rose would have given. “If I am not there, she does not want to remain and cries until someone brings her back to me...”<sup>128</sup> Zélie’s work requires her to be inside; she writes that Thérèse’s affection causes her happiness “but sometimes it is troublesome.”<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, she chooses to occupy herself with her “little Thérèse” rather than “external events.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> At eleven months “We have only to place her standing near a chair and she supports herself well there, and never falls. She takes little precautions for this...” *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208, 1209.

<sup>124</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208-1209.

<sup>125</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208, 1210, 1298.

<sup>126</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211.

<sup>127</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211.

<sup>128</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1210-1211. A swing is erected and Thérèse is exuberant in her use of it; “...when it [the swing] does not go fast enough, she cries...,” a reminder perhaps of the excitement of being pushed at speed in the wheelbarrow at Semallé.

<sup>129</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211, 1210. Zélie works on her lacework orders till 10pm at night, then again at 5am. “However, the more trouble I have [with her] the better I am.”

<sup>130</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211.

*b. Significance of Early Self-formation*

Zélie, from birth, affirms Thérèse's extraordinary responsiveness. Her sensitivity to Thérèse nourishes Thérèse's physical growth, and fuels her own determination for Thérèse to live. Thérèse's early self-formation, however, involves ambiguity. With the death of three other infants, Zélie's confidence in giving life has been eroded. Zélie's eyes express adoration *and* fear: at times there are adoring eyes, tender holding, a voice that sings; at other times, 'tentative' breasts and a concerned (contorted) face. This culminates in the withdrawal of nourishing milk and happy face – if she could verbalize her experience, Thérèse might say: "the face which adores me also makes me sick" and "I draw an anxious face." At the appearance of Rose's calm face and restoring breast, her mother's tense face eventually cheers and approves. It then disappears to reappear intermittently, happy and approving.<sup>131</sup> Though rendered superfluous, Zélie approves of the flow of milk and smiles from Rose, from the background. Zélie does not oppose Thérèse's insistence to maintain her bond with Rose (which amounts to "I deserve what-Rose-gives in abundance"). In her occasional presence, Zélie's approving face supports Thérèse's self-formation through Rose. (Her early sense of self may be verbalized as: "I am who is given milk from a warm breast, smiles, scents, outdoor atmosphere and sunshine" and "familiar faces appear and pay great interest in me.")<sup>132</sup> Thérèse can feel from this, "I am highly valued as my desire is indulged." After Rose weans Thérèse, Thérèse is returned to Zélie. While Thérèse's contact with Zélie is continuous, contact with Rose fades.

*c. Conclusion*

In terms of object relations theory (based on breast, bottle, face, voice and arms), in drawing a tender gaze, and sensitive holding, but also an anxiously offered breast and bottle, from a face contorted by worry, Thérèse would have internalized an ambiguous sense of self. Thérèse's sense of 'I am desirable and given to' established by Zélie, is

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<sup>131</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, In the in-between time Thérèse was fading (perhaps fainting) from lack of nourishment, and unable to sleep from diarrhoea, so there may have been lapses in consciousness.

<sup>132</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1206. Zélie visits regularly, reporting on Thérèse's development, writing this down for Mme Guerin and Pauline. Marie is at this point home sick with Polio.

sustained by Rose in a more abundant way, via her productive breast and confident face. Zélie maintains Rose's giving, but Thérèse prefers consolation from Rose her felt-provider. Rose brings Thérèse to Zélie, and Zélie travels to Semallé to play with Thérèse. Thérèse then loses her benevolent milk-face, but she rejoins play and eating to the familiar face of Zélie.<sup>133</sup> This combined care Winnicott might view as fulfilling the idea of "good enough" mothering, where the specifics of "holding," while varying, is, in its progression, "good enough."<sup>134</sup> We will now turn to comment on the quality of early parental care as merciful, using Sroufe's model of emotional development.

#### 4. Care in Infancy as Merciful

##### a. Sroufe's Theory of Affective Development

To find whether what Thérèse received might be felt as mercy, we turn to Sroufe's theory of emotional development,<sup>135</sup> which acknowledges that cognitive, affective, and physical capacities do not develop in isolation but, through interactive organization, develop as one unified process.<sup>136</sup> Sroufe's behavioural approach, based on clinical research, is based on goal-oriented motivation rather than Freudian drives.<sup>137</sup> It incorporates John Bowlby's "attachment" behaviourist construct,<sup>138</sup> the infant/caregiver dyad's aim to form an attachment (a secure base from which to explore/encounter the

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<sup>133</sup> This is evident in Thérèse taking porridge from Zélie's table. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1207.

<sup>134</sup> "Holding" used by Winnicott, represents an overall environment. Donald W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*. London, New York: Karnac, 1965, 1990), 44-55.

<sup>135</sup> Sroufe approaches human development as analogous to embryonic development; each emergent stage is the precursor to a next more differentiated stage. More complex behaviour emerges from what was previously present; the new creations feature emergent properties which constitute the precursor for what follows. The prior behaviour makes possible the new but does not specify it. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 38-39.

<sup>136</sup> The difference between the six month old and the ten month old illustrates not their individual and physical cognitive and affective capacities, but the organization of these capacities allows the 10 month old to grasp the resemblance of a game. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 38, 41-42.

<sup>137</sup> Infants do not run out of "drive," but keep seeking until attachment is achieved. Bowlby sees the balancing between attachment and exploration as part of human survival. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 176- 177.

<sup>138</sup> Bowlby's construct can be found in James Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss Vol 1*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (New York: Basic, 1969/1982) and *Attachment and Loss Vol 2* (New York: Basic, 1973).

world).<sup>139</sup> Characterized by behaviour directed toward a relationship, rather than by specific behaviours, “attachment” is established when “active and corrected behaviour with respect to the goal of emotional regulation [is] directed preferentially to a particular other.”<sup>140</sup> Attachment is necessary for a positive sense of self, self-regulating and maintaining positive affect.<sup>141</sup>

By “emotions” Sroufe means expressions of “cognitive/affective engagement” (“tension” or “arousal”) relating to the meaningfulness of an event, corresponding to the capacity developed to generate it, which changes with age.<sup>142</sup> Sroufe views emotion as predominantly social in nature and inseparable from its social context.<sup>143</sup> He views the mutual exchange between infant and caregiver as critical in emotional development, and reciprocally, affect as important for all aspects of personality and social development.<sup>144</sup> Importantly, he views the development of emotion and cognition as “nondissoluble,” being two different aspects of the same process of the person-

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<sup>139</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 175. Unique in Bowlby’s observation is that “the adult does not need to teach or reinforce such behaviours, but merely be available and interactive for them to occur.”

<sup>140</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 173-175. No behaviour is exclusively an attachment behaviour, but attachment behaviour is oriented toward the end of attachment. Some indicators of attachment in the child are separation distress, a secure base from which to go out, positive affect, such as at 10-13 months, the sharing of pleasurable discoveries with the caregiver in the form of joint visual attention, and alertness to the caregiver’s whereabouts (to access their safe haven when under threat).

<sup>141</sup> Goals such as attachment, and autonomy, in their variety, contribute to the emergence of the self. The tension between “drives” and “behaviour,” to some degree, is resolved by using the terms “goal” and “motivation.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 159.

<sup>142</sup> Sroufe prefers “tension” to “arousal” as it involves active expression on the part of both caregiver and infant. By “development” Sroufe means the common core processes underlying the emergence of emotions and the capacity for emotion regulation. In an organizational approach, no premium age is placed on age of acquisition, but effectiveness of adaptation is sought for in each child as unique. Goals such as striving for autonomy or attachment, extending beyond infancy, are viewed as a sequence “each rising to ascendancy, and each having logical ties to former and subsequent issues.” The regulation of tension (affective engagement) within caregiver-infant interaction is an organizing principle for the first six months for individual adaption, but also the precursor for later construction of attachment to the caregiver. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 140-141, 158.

<sup>143</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 39.

<sup>144</sup> “Affection and rage typically have social objects. Shame requires an audience. Infants smile more frequently and broadly when they are with others than when they are alone. Guilt is based on the internalization of social values. From an evolutionary perspective, social communication is the primary function of all emotions.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 40.

environment transaction.<sup>145</sup> Emotional development underpins attachment, crucial to the formation of the self.

Of interest here is Sroufe's exploration of the regulation of "tension" an activity which we view as intrinsically merciful, and inferentially evident between Thérèse's caregivers and Thérèse. Regulation of tension means to engage the other such that emotion is evoked, and the occasion of it is meaningful. The caregiver

trains the infant in tension management. In the course of playful interaction the infant learns, over time, to maintain behavioural organization in the face of increasingly high levels of tension. As caregiver and infant play, tension is escalated and de-escalated to the edge of over stimulation and back again, commonly ending in the bursts of positive affect that are so rewarding for caregivers. Episode by episode... the infant's own capacity to modulate (and tolerate) tension is developed, and a reservoir or shared positive affect is created... in time the caregiver is not only a beacon for security but a repository of positive feelings as well...the infant can be more direct and active in seeking what he or she needs by behaving effectively even in the face of high tension.<sup>146</sup>

Sroufe argues that the regulation of tension (affective engagement) within caregiver-infant interaction is an organizing principle for the first six months for individual adaption, and the precursor for later construction of attachment to the caregiver.<sup>147</sup>

Attachment, the result of this interaction, is influenced by "the regularity with which arousal has historically led or not led to infant behavioural disorganization in the context of the caregiver."<sup>148</sup> Caregiver disinterest, insensitivity and inappropriate actions, lead to disorganization. The management of tension, Sroufe asserts, is "a single integrating thread that ultimately becomes woven into the fabric of emotional functioning." What begins as built in physiological arousal becomes, via caregiver

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<sup>145</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 40.

<sup>146</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 144 -145. "To the degree that the caregiver is reliable, dependable, and consistent, he or she is knowable and therefore a source of security in the midst of novel experiences...to the degree that the caregiver is alert, "attuned," responsive and effective, the infant can engage the novel surround with assurance and confidence – becoming a base for exploration and mastery."

<sup>147</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 158.

<sup>148</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 158.

orchestration, true dyadic interaction, and finally, self-regulation.<sup>149</sup> Paradoxically, “the infant who is effectively dependent – who operates successfully from within the caregiver-infant relationship – later shows more effective functioning outside of this relationship, and is more capable of independent functioning.”<sup>150</sup> From the above data, we can infer that both Zélie and Rose regulated “tension” in baby Thérèse. Thérèse’s insistence on being reunited with Rose (her “secure base”), and her clinging to Zélie when returning to Alençon, attests to effective dependence in Thérèse, pointing to Rose/Zélie responding to and guiding Thérèse’s bids for emotional engagement.

*b. The Process of Affective Development*

To evaluate Thérèse’s care more closely, we present the passage of affective development in Sroufe’s terms. In the first days of life the infant almost entirely responds to internal (interoceptive) stimulation such as pain and hunger.<sup>151</sup> Very quickly, however, in the first weeks of life, “infant behaviour is increasingly a matter of seeking stimulation, rather than always seeking relief from discomfort...”<sup>152</sup> Attachment is relatively flexible in the beginning.<sup>153</sup> Though the process for recognition has begun, as there is not so much person recognition but familiarity with caregiver patterns of behaviour, a change of caregiver for the infant (such as Thérèse going to live with Rose) is primarily an adaption to a different routine.<sup>154</sup> The infant, disposed to responding to contingent care (care comprised of responses that match, consider, and ‘reply to’ the infant’s individual behaviour), adapts to synchronized caregiving (a familiar close ‘conversation’), readily taking up “interactional idiosyncrasies,” culminating in “differentially looking at the caregiver’s face.”<sup>155</sup> At her time of going into Rose’s care, at two and a half months, Thérèse was giving Zélie “clear smiles”

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<sup>149</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 159.

<sup>150</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 151, 152.

<sup>151</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 44, 152-153.

<sup>152</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 153.

<sup>153</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 159.

<sup>154</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 160. Familiarity with caregiver patterns of behaviour is the precursor for person recognition.

<sup>155</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 160. Babies who roomed in with their mothers were compared with babies kept in a nursery.

(smiles involving cognition) between bouts of distress, suggesting, if not an effort on Zélie's part to produce smiles in Thérèse, Zélie watching for Thérèse's smiles.<sup>156</sup>

At about three months, the infant begins an emotional life by processing the content of events.<sup>157</sup> Because the infant so readily engages, the infant is now vulnerable to chaotic and unresponsive care.<sup>158</sup> Between 3-6 months affective regulation involves avoiding overstimulation, providing relief, and interactive repair (rapprochement after being left), but, critically, it includes high levels of tension associated with smiling and laughter in "face to face" mirroring.<sup>159</sup> "A cyclic escalation of positive affect...that begins with mutual smiling and ultimately builds to mutual joy and mutual hilarity" confirms that extreme heights of arousal need not be distressing or disorganizing as "much part of the regulation of tension as the termination of distress."<sup>160</sup> We encounter Thérèse's ability and readiness to be led to a high level of positive affect when at six months she visits Zélie, and her older sisters. Thérèse is happy to remain at their house, and eats porridge. Further,

She did nothing but laugh, and little Celine was the one who pleased her. She screamed with laughter.<sup>161</sup>

Cognitive growth comes through mastering encounter with novelty; the caregiver's role is to help the infant remain organized and affectively positive.<sup>162</sup> Disorganization impairs cognitive and social development, while organized focus in the face of tension serves social and cognitive development.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> See Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 80-83.

<sup>157</sup> From six to eight months, the infant is not just merely capable of emotions, but now "is an emotional being." At 10 months the infant is more like an adult than a three month old. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 153.

<sup>158</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 162.

<sup>159</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 162.

<sup>160</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 162. This is named the period of positive affect.

<sup>161</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1207.

<sup>162</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 162.

<sup>163</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 163.

In summary, smooth harmonious routines are necessary for 0-3 months, management of tension is necessary for 3-6 months, and the responsive availability of the caregiver is necessary at 6-12 months.<sup>164</sup> Our data shows Zélie regulating tension through her responses to Thérèse's smiling and crying in the first few months of her life.<sup>165</sup> Zélie looks for and encourages (engages) Thérèse's smile, and tries to calm her when she cries. At five and a half months, in the event of Thérèse's reunion with Rose in the market place, we have evidence of efficient tension regulation and signs of attachment. First, Thérèse cries to bring about caregiver-proximity; then, upon being delivered to Rose, "recovery from an overly aroused, disorganized state is smooth, steady, and carried to completion."<sup>166</sup> At six and a half months we find Rose has placed Thérèse upon a wheelbarrow to be close to her in the field where she works and she "hardly ever cries" (with Rose close by).<sup>167</sup> At eleven months Thérèse makes intentional bids for affective connection with people she recognizes as familiar. Zélie writes

She really wanted to see [working women], even more willing than to see me, and she kissed them several times.<sup>168</sup>

*c. The Activity of Regulation – a Form of Mercy?*

In the first six months, "an infant does not have the capacity for self-soothing and self-regulation and [is] frequently on and past the edge of overwhelming arousal" and the caregiver orchestrates affective regulation.<sup>169</sup> The responsive caregiver "reads the

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<sup>164</sup> In the first six months, emotions are being 'taught'; in the second six months, "the same time that infants become capable of meaning based emotions, and the nature of the emotion becomes based on subjective evaluation, infants take an active role in emotional regulation...apparent both in their expanding capacities for arousal management and intentional bids for caregiver assistance." Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 161, 152.

<sup>165</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1200.

<sup>166</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 176. 183. This description of attachment, observed in 12 month old children in Ainsworth's laboratory experiment, well illustrates the established synchrony between Rose and Thérèse.

<sup>167</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208.

<sup>168</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208.

<sup>169</sup> At first, smiles are produced by gentle modulated stimulation, then by nodding head and voice, and then by stationary visual stimuli (by 10 weeks) which is an active transaction between infant and event. The content of the event is crucial; the arousal is produced by a cognitive or recognition process. Distress occurs at the cessation of pleasurable stimuli (such as rocking or sucking) and overstimulation –any



infant's signs of distress and other affective communications, imbues them with meaning, and responds to them – dyadic regulation is accomplished without intentionality on the part of the infant.”<sup>170</sup> The infant's gaze is captured, held, and directed (aroused to tension). Through this guided arousal the caregiver establishes an interactive bond where she is the initiator and guide, but by her regulation in this, she is modelling for the infant the skills required to initiate and guide, so that in the second half of the first year, the child participates by also initiating.<sup>171</sup> Essentially, as the child cannot control its own attention (affect) without help, it is stimulated and guided to smile, to laugh, to be soothed.

What the caregiver does is an example of a social dance involving “matching or attunement.”<sup>172</sup> The infant is captured with gentle tones, and changing facial expressions (as stillness will not garner attention), and through modulating tones and expression builds excitement.<sup>173</sup> As soon as the infant gives cues that show distress, by turning away or showing distress, the caregiver will de-escalate (reduce stimulation) and allow the infant to re-organize before continuing. Sensitive caregivers do not take this as rejection but understand that continuing will result in distress and future avoidance of stimulation.<sup>174</sup> “After the stimulation has ended the caregiver stays in contact with the infant, with the episodes and the total encounter becoming greater in length and more rich and varied;” the result is a sense of being “fitted into a dialogue.”<sup>175</sup> The roots of mutuality are set out; the infant gains a sense of give and take, of social participation, and efficacy. The caregiver is both source of stimulation,

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stimulus that locks and captures the infant's attention will lead to distress. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 45, 137.

<sup>170</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 172.

<sup>171</sup> Dyadic regulation teaches self-regulation. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 151, 172.

<sup>172</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 163-4 “This involves behaving in ways that amplify, support, or modulate the infant's response.” When the child “coos” or smiles, the caregiver may “shimmy” their upper body, promoting a “repetition of the smile,” unaware of their “matching.”

<sup>173</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 164.

<sup>174</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 164.

<sup>175</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 164.

and responds to stimulation.<sup>176</sup> Moderating the intensity, novelty and complexity allows the child to cope with an increasingly rich and varied experience without breaking contact and without becoming disorganized.<sup>177</sup> The mother provides

a “holding” framework for her own cues. That is, she holds the infant with her hands, with her eyes, with her voice and smile, and with changes from one modality from another as [the child] habituates to one or another. All these holding experiences are opportunities for the infant to learn how to contain himself, how to control motor responses and how to attend for longer... periods. They amount to a kind of learning about organization of behaviour in order to attend.<sup>178</sup>

Zélie, it can be inferred, regulating positive affect in Thérèse by soothing, by engaging a smile at two weeks, then laughter at nine weeks.<sup>179</sup> Thérèse smiles after her saving breastfeed, at two and a half months (whereupon her “gaiety” returns). Zélie expresses sadness over losing “care” for Thérèse.<sup>180</sup> Her sadness is likely to be due to the loss of regulating interaction and its rewards.

In creating contingency (the caregiver modifying their behaviour in relation to the child’s) the child learns that she or he can affect the environment, and that this is more than just a matter of mere contingency, but of “synchrony.”<sup>181</sup> It is considered synchrony because it involves more than

...waiting for an appropriate response from the infant and being prompt with a reward. The caregiver also creates a climate and arranges the interaction such that the response can occur. ...giving the impression of true reciprocity...The caregiver guides the interaction and crafts the mutuality that the infant may then experience.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 164.

<sup>177</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 165.

<sup>178</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 165

<sup>179</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1200, 1202.

<sup>180</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1204.

<sup>181</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 165.

<sup>182</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 165.

Though there appears to be genuine reciprocity, as a mother genuinely fits in with the infant's responses and call for the next behaviour, the mother leads by implementing those requests. Ainsworth states that

The sensitive caregiver responds socially to his attempts to initiate social interaction, playfully to his attempts to initiate play. She picks him up when he seems to wish it and puts him down when he wants to explore. When he is distressed, she knows what kinds and what degree he requires to comfort him ... the mother who responds inappropriately tries to socialize with the baby when he is hungry, play with him when he is tired, or feed him when he is trying to initiate social interaction.<sup>183</sup>

The infant is at the mother/caregiver's mercy to take charge of bringing a new self to being. With restraint and attentiveness, the sensitive caregiver arouses the child to laughter and excitement but allows excitement to abate before it becomes too much and moves to distress.<sup>184</sup> Through sensitive contingent engagement, and synchrony, the child is given to feel that they can affect their environment (experience potency), and by being met and replied to, experience belonging to a conversation (feel a valued other).<sup>185</sup> Though we do not have any written accounts of this between Zélie and Thérèse, or Rose and Thérèse, we can adduce its presence from Sroufe's observation that sensitive caregiving is normative:

Helping the infant learn to maintain organized behaviour in the face of increasingly high levels of tension is something that caregivers do if they are involved with infants and psychologically available to respond to them. The system seems to be arranged so that caregivers customarily do what infants need, and infant's responses encourage caregivers to continue or change their behaviour appropriately.<sup>186</sup>

Further, Sroufe (quoting Sander) describes the consequences of insensitive care-giving. Interfering caregiving is judged to occur when

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<sup>183</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 166.

<sup>184</sup> There appears to be genuine reciprocity, as the mother genuinely fits in with the infant's responses and call for the next behaviour, but, in effect, she leads by implementing those requests.

<sup>185</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 167.

<sup>186</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 163.

...interventions and initiations of interaction break into, interrupt or cut across the baby's ongoing activity, rather than being temporally fitted to the baby's state, mood, and current interests." The highly interfering caregiver "has no respect for her baby as a separate, active, and autonomous person whose wishes and activity have a validity of their own." Co-operative caregivers guide rather than control, their infants. Responsivity, mutuality, reciprocity, and cooperativeness are all related. When caregivers respond to an infant's signals, they lay the groundwork for a sense of potency. The infant finds that the world (the caregiver) responds to his or her needs; the infant can have an effect. Likewise, such a sense is fostered when ...ministrations [are tuned] to the infant's activity [and] The infant is stimulated when open to stimulation... The infant learns that stimulation from the caregiver is not chaotic, not strident...<sup>187</sup>

What care did Thérèse receive? We do not find frequent frustrated crying (which might indicate emotional disorganization), or dullness (passivity/low responsiveness from repeated rebuffal) in Zélie's written accounts around Thérèse's first year in Semallé. From Zélie's reports, Thérèse is alert and content. When she calls for Rose's presence in Alençon, upon her appearance, Thérèse is swiftly reorganized. At eleven months of age, she makes advances of affection (kisses) toward persons of her own choosing ("working women") in Rose's absence.<sup>188</sup> These represent initiative, a dynamic taught and practiced within sensitive interaction, indicating a sense of potency and expectancy. Thérèse has progressed to initiating affective-engagement. Finally, Zélie notes that Thérèse (at fourteen months) is "advanced for her age" (cognitively) which in Sroufe's schema is inextricable from organized affect.<sup>189</sup>

#### *d. Sensitive Regulation as Merciful*

In the developing infant (whose physiological needs are met) there is an intrinsic motivation to do and to experience. Sensitive caregivers support this intrinsic motivation by their participating with the infant as well as allowing space. Incorporating play into bathing, feeding and changing, "caregivers customarily do what infants need, and infants' responses encourage caregivers to continue or to change their

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<sup>187</sup> Sroufe quotes Sander (1975, in press). Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 167. Trust and efficacy in mutual interaction comes from consistency, reliability (in making room for the infant's needs) and non-capriciousness.

<sup>188</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208.

<sup>189</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1210 At eighteen months of age, Zélie considers her "intelligent"(1210), and again at two years of age (1213); at almost three (Dec 1875): she "has an incredible facility...she has an extremely precocious intelligence."(1220) Then, at almost four (Nov 1876), she is "sharp as a needle" (1226).

behaviour appropriately.”<sup>190</sup> Like accessing milk, cleanliness, safety and warmth, engaging with the environment can only be taken up with help; but, unlike hunger, pain, and discomfort, this need is easy to ignore. Here the infant relies entirely on the caregiver’s imagination and commitment. To bring the child ‘to life’ as a new positive other, requires the caregiver to envisage what life holds for the child, on the child’s behalf. It involves attention to the infant’s subtle indications, their developmental changes, and their otherness in the face of its inability to override the caregiver’s powerful (adult) will, or to exert protest over what it does not know (not yet knowing itself as separate).<sup>191</sup> To alleviate the distress of the infant’s limited ability to regulate its own emotion involves the adult caregiver putting aside height, speed, power, strength, reserve, and self-glory. The adult restrains herself, yet also implements all at her disposal to regulate the emotion of one who is increasingly recognized as vulnerable, and entirely at her mercy. The adult compensates, models, carries, and responds, so that true/equal interaction is felt by the infant (a sense of influence). This orchestration may be described as ‘gracious’.

Caregiver orchestration is not felt as mercy by the infant. Mercy describes the caregiver’s activity, but the infant is as yet unaware of its own helplessness, especially, when it is well cared for.<sup>192</sup> The child, however, eventually reaches a point of self-regulation, and begins (around 6 months of age) to repeat and *initiate* the activity that she received. Merciful behaviour will be practiced in play. Later, upon encountering a younger person or animal, perceived as more limited than herself, she recreates her

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<sup>190</sup> Stern studied mother’s play with their infant. “In an intricate process...infant and caregiver wind their way toward positive outcomes of smiling and cooing, which punctuate bouts of interaction. The playful interactions vary greatly, with the infant at times slowing the pace by looking away ... or the caregiver may “escalate” and “de-escalate” the stimulation by changing the intensity, variety or pacing, or by pausing momentarily. ...all [is]... organized around a common outcome, the affectively positive exchange.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 163.

<sup>191</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 167.

<sup>192</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 205. Søren Kierkegaard writes about a mother teaching her child to walk: She is far enough from him so that she cannot actually support him, but she holds out her arms to him. She initiates his movements, and if he totters she swiftly bends as if to seize him, so that the child might believe he is walking alone... Her face beckons like a reward...thus, the child walks alone with his eyes fixed on his mother’s face, not on the difficulties in his way. He supports himself by the arms that do not hold him and constantly strives towards the refuge in his mother’s embrace, little suspecting that at the very same moment that his is emphasizing his need of her, he is proving that he can do without her, because he is walking alone.

familiar environment, sensitively accommodating the other's limitation, from her affective-memory. In this mimetic activity, merciful behaviour is comprehended. But mercy, we suggest, is effectively felt when a contrast arises. The sense of potency and of being met, as mercifully given, enters the child's awareness, and is gauged, on the occasion of its loss. We will observe later that suffering, in its loss of autonomy, represents this contrast. Suffering, as Thérèse felt it, especially in the form of helplessness ("impasse"), disables a person's hopes, aims, and efforts, creating a sense of chaos and impotence. We turn to Zélie and Rose as Thérèse's caregivers.

*e. Zélie and Rose*

Thérèse's development is first advanced by the experience of regular and reliable events involved in feeding and changing, and by sensitive engagement during these events.<sup>193</sup> Favouring her child, she looks into Thérèse's face with expectation. Watching for Thérèse's smile, Zélie stimulates positive affect. She reports that Thérèse is very responsive to her at two weeks of age, showing a clear smile,<sup>194</sup> which generates anticipation in Zélie. Zélie feels Thérèse is full of potential (smiling, singing, "different," "strong"),<sup>195</sup> and she looks for occasions to reinforce this. Thérèse responds to what the presenting face does.<sup>196</sup> We reaffirm that the child, not privy to the whole person and their intention (object relations theory), makes what it can from "objects" presented.

At this age, consistent handling satisfies the infant's responsiveness to routine. Responding to emotional states and signals, comforting and engaging, learning the infant's characteristics and qualities is critical for the subsequent period.<sup>197</sup> Investment and confidence in managing the infant (what works and what does not), is rewarded by

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<sup>193</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 44.

<sup>194</sup> "... she is already smiling. I noticed this on Tuesday for the first time. I imagined I was mistaken, but yesterday ... she looked at me attentively, then gave me a delightful smile." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1200. For description and circumstance of "second week" smile see Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 80-81.

<sup>195</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1199-1200.

<sup>196</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 104.

<sup>197</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 161.

the infant's reliable smile.<sup>198</sup> For Zélie, much of this period is occupied with worry, with assessing Thérèse's health, in terms of her surviving. While a negative (an interfering fear), Zélie also interacts with Thérèse positively. Concern with nutrition does not wholly eclipse loving stimulation. Zélie shows a level of confidence by realizing that what she was doing (feeding poorly) was not working. Importantly, overall, Zélie's orientation toward Thérèse is joy; fear stems from the possible grief over losing this joy.

When Thérèse comes to live with Rose, she is in an adaptable phase (in the first six months, focus is on caregiver routine). She has experienced reliable replies to her needs/requests. As Zélie did, Rose invests in Thérèse's welfare (her paid task), but on the side of nourishment in its most physical sense, with perhaps less fear or moral fastidiousness than Zélie, and desire to prove the extent of her bounty. Rose takes charge of an infant who has experienced attention to her every movement.<sup>199</sup> From two and a half to thirteen months of age Thérèse is with Rose. For this time, we have some vivid records of high positive affective response. Thérèse squeals with delight – able to tolerate high positive tension in the presence of her sisters, and wants to stand, to 'get at' the world.<sup>200</sup> She has formed a strong attachment bond with Rose (cries insistently for her), she seeks to engage with others,<sup>201</sup> and enjoys "novelty" (new experience), such as in eating porridge from Zélie's table. Importantly, she is described as smiling, 'hardly ever crying,' and "darling," which means she expresses positive affect and makes bids for affectionate returns.<sup>202</sup>

Rose and Zélie are both responsive to Thérèse, but their sense of freedom is different. Rose uses her ingenuity to be available to baby Thérèse by tying her to the cow she is

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<sup>198</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 161-162.

<sup>199</sup> Constance Fitzgerald describes this maternal watchfulness: when Thérèse looks "into the face of her mother (and by extension her surrogate nurse-mother)" she sees "her mother's ability to let her tiny daughter see her own reflection in a loving gaze of total regard." This emphasizes an available, attentive face, rather than an exclusive identity. Fitzgerald, "The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux," 3.

<sup>200</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208-9.

<sup>201</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1207.

<sup>202</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208-9.

milking, by placing her atop of a wheelbarrow of hay, and by holding her while she sells butter at the market. For Rose, rearing a baby belongs to life's natural fecundity, as much as does all farm productivity. Zélie, on the other hand, carries with her the expectations of her place in life, and is less secure about her intuitions. She consults doctors with respect to feeding,<sup>203</sup> and expresses annoyance that her maid is unable to take Thérèse off her hands when she meets with her "working women."<sup>204</sup> Zélie's commitment to mass attendance causes her to be less available to Thérèse.<sup>205</sup> Influencing Zélie were the religious and romantic themes of this time. Through a focus on the preeminent goodness of the 'natural', parents were encouraged to attend to child-rearing with tender watchfulness.<sup>206</sup> Compatible with this, a theme in Catholic spirituality saw the human surrender to the every 'whim' of a tender God, such as a wife might toward a husband (requiring attentiveness to those whims). Fulfilling this led to belonging to a privileged community, and one's true home (this present life a sad empty, deceptive, 'land').

## 5. Mercy and Thérèse's Early Self-Formation – Conclusion

Beginning with the premise that the characteristics attributed to God are drawn from experience, there was an attempt to reconstruct the process which formed Thérèse to find what in her early life provided an experience of mercy. McDargh's insights on the development of religious faith in the light of object relations theory, and Sroufe's observations with regard to emotional development were enlisted. McDargh noted the importance of the representations of early relations in forming a God-object. Sroufe's theory of emotional development showed human development as integrated through affect, and occurring through affective-engagement between the caregiver and infant. Thérèse's experience of Rose and Zélie's early caregiving provided potential material for her God-object relation.

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<sup>203</sup> Zélie frequently asks for medical opinion with regard to her children. She concedes to being mistaken in offering the feeding bottle. She regularly asks M Guerin for advice, and not having faith in one doctor, mentions sending for "another" doctor to attend to Thérèse. Zeldin notes this as typical of bourgeois practice. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1200, 1201, 1203.

<sup>204</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208.

<sup>205</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1208-9.

<sup>206</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211.



While no behaviour is intrinsically merciful, activity directed to anchoring the infant to a caregiver (a secure base), who affirms the child's goodness, values them, and envisions the best possible future for them, may be classed as merciful. Such a (secure) base promises future interaction, and ensures justice based on the caregiver participating in the infant's history (its repository). Ultimately, merciful behaviour is that which alleviates the helplessness of the one who cannot bring what is needed to establish and prolong interaction with one who knows their intrinsic good and potential.

Sensitive engagement with the child, as outlined by Sroufe, in its alleviation from physical, cognitive, and emotional disorganization, we asserted qualified as merciful care. This care ("synchronic" or "contingent") is central to forming secure attachment, and critical to forming a self that senses itself as affecting its environment. Though our data offered no explicit accounts of "sensitive regulation of affect" from Zélie or Rose, we inferred it as present from the attentive interaction in the Zélie-Thérèse and Rose-Thérèse dyads. Further, there was strong evidence of attachment, affectionate initiatives, and a state of predominantly organized positive affect in Thérèse.

Finally, merciful care is from the perspective of the caregiver, rather than the infant. How does Thérèse as a recipient come to own it? In the caregiver guiding the child to regulate their affect (establishing positive affects, trust, and positive expectations in the future), the child comes to replicate these patterns – now responding to an internalized 'merciful guide'. She absorbs and repeats it; its quality is imprinted in her in a felt-knowing. Cognitive comprehension of the quality of mercy will occur by way of contrast (through its absence), and in intentionally merciful activity.

In Chapter Three we examine Thérèse's later self-development, continuing our search for evidence of merciful caregiving influencing her self-formation. Thérèse interacts with religious concepts, such as reparation. Entering the dynamic of faith development, we investigate whether Thérèse returns to the 'most real', a felt-knowing from childhood, through experiences of helplessness – leading to filial love as a "core" metaphor.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Leading Out From Childhood**

In this chapter, we continue to seek evidence for an early childhood experience of mercy in Thérèse: in terms of what Sroufe observes about the toddler and the young child, and what McDargh observes about progressing self-formation and assimilation of the idea of God. The discussion will take us to Thérèse's painful experiences of an absence of mercy, and how this serves to bring into relief the vivifying and empowering effect of mercy. From eighteen months onward, we find morally sensitive behaviour emerging in Therese, marking the awareness of independent agency and beginning of a separate self. We note the influence of the Martin's religious lens (winning eternal life in God's presence as a saint) and a particular family dynamic on her self-formation. We encounter what McDargh describes as a complex interaction between the theological ideas offered by a community's tradition, and the God and self-representations which the child brings along to confront these ideas.<sup>1</sup> To explore this, the research will examine the Martin family dynamic, using, in addition to McDargh and Sroufe, Thomas R. Nevin's *Thérèse of Lisieux: God's Gentle Warrior*,<sup>2</sup> and Thérèse's aim "to be a saint," and her goal to be a nun (from the "dawn" of her reason).<sup>3</sup> We turn to the notion of 'self-becoming' and developmental nature.

#### **1. Self-formation and early interactions with the idea of God**

##### *a. Self becoming as Developmental and the Place for God*

In the previous chapter, we concluded that where dependency in the infant is sensitively (mercifully) responded to by the caregiver – and not treated as the basis for rejection –

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<sup>1</sup> John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 129.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux, God's Gentle Warrior* (Oxford; New York: University Press, 2006), 71-112. It will use the chapter entitled, "On Her Mother: The Travails of Zélie Martin."

<sup>3</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 207. Thérèse declares her life-long quest to be a saint, in Man C. "I have always wanted to be a saint." At 116, In *Man A*, she asserts to Bishop Hugonin that she took up her aim to be a Carmelite at "the dawn of my reason." At two Thérèse decided to become a nun. See also *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1298.

competent self-regulation, and a confident self results.<sup>4</sup> “Self-becoming,” McDargh states, is an ongoing process with no end point, and the “self” is no one thing.<sup>5</sup> It is not a completion, such as “a set of traits” that one has, but a progressive inner organization of attitudes, beliefs, and values.”<sup>6</sup> The human infant is utterly dependent on the ministrations of caregivers, not only for the provision of physical needs but, McDargh notes, also, and equally crucially, for the organization of the psychic structure.<sup>7</sup>

Dependence becomes the place for God. The child is first “absolutely,” and, later, permanently “relatively” dependent on the mother.<sup>8</sup> In adults, McDargh states, dependence is not only on actual persons available, but on the total experience of significant past relationships which provide an internal sustaining foundation.<sup>9</sup> This inner sustainment reminds us of our perpetual indebtedness to help that must come beyond ourselves, and, as that help is an on-going relationship kept alive psychically, beyond any present person available to us.<sup>10</sup> Religious faith “is essentially related to this inner sustainment” and “makes possible a mature dependency.”<sup>11</sup> Attachment, a “continuum of condition and age appropriate dependence” entails maintaining a sense of “well-being and relatedness even in the absence of the parent” via a process of internalization.<sup>12</sup> A sense of trust in the reliability and availability of love and care, and the processes of faith that renew and sustain that sense, form an interior presence (the

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<sup>4</sup> L. Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organization of Emotional Life in the Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 150.

<sup>5</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 75.

<sup>6</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 218.

<sup>7</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 84. Bowlby and Ainsworth’s studies resulted in the acknowledgment of the “fact of normative dependence.”

<sup>8</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 84.

<sup>9</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 84.

<sup>10</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 84.

<sup>11</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 84.

<sup>12</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 86.

“transitional object”), while lack of it, and the subsequent lack of renewability, cause a person to continuously approach other persons for validation.<sup>13</sup>

*b. The Complex Interrelatedness of Self-becoming*

Sroufe noted that the caregiver’s handling, responses, and initiatives, in arousing and guiding the child’s emotion, raising and meeting its expectations, produced a shared language of trust, and therein “attachment.” With the child’s growth, new capacities provide the means to evolve, both in degree of response and sophistication of repeating the quality of the care-giving received.<sup>14</sup> In the second and third year, the child appraises and responds to events in context (including the context of feelings) and evaluates his behaviour in relation to external standards, then, in the following years to internal standards.<sup>15</sup> As infants literally “move out” from the caregiver, and now have a new capacity for representing experiences and have their own place at the centre of this experience.<sup>16</sup> The child is able to express, control and modulate affect, and has positive expectations in their ability to stay organized in the face of high arousal (they expect to recover after expressing strong emotion).<sup>17</sup> A “self” determines motivation for action, and the child is aware of “the self as an actor”.<sup>18</sup> With these capacities, the child develops a new understanding of the self: the self felt as good (in a suffusion of pleasure with oneself – the cockiness of the toddler), and the self felt as bad (a sense of shame, of the self exposed and vulnerable).<sup>19</sup> With a “fragile and rather undifferentiated self ... the toddler is vulnerable to a global feeling of dissolution when

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<sup>13</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 86-87.

<sup>14</sup> “Because of motoric and cognitive advances, affective states arise more as a result of the child’s own actions leading to a sense of agent. As a result, certain new affects arise, such as shame and “positive self-evaluation,” which exercise a powerful influence on the child’s social behaviour and inner experience. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 193.

<sup>15</sup> The child’s advancing linguistic skills make this possible. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 193.

<sup>16</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 195.

<sup>17</sup> For example, they expect to be able to be fully angry and recoup. Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 195.

<sup>18</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 195.

<sup>19</sup> Quoting Tomkins, Sroufe describes shame as: “felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul... the humiliated one... naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 199.

being punished for a specific behaviour, especially if done in a harsh and degrading way.”<sup>20</sup>

*c. Mercy in the Toddler Age*

Given the type and degree of helplessness infants are born to, caregiver mercy, in restraint and exertion, could be described as normative. Defining mercy with respect to the toddler (one to three years old) requires greater attention to context. Universal features, though, are still to be found. Aware of itself as an agent the child tries to live up to the standards of persons present to them (who also mediate the standards of others – the government, or God).<sup>21</sup> Any claim that there is a direct correspondence between an ethical value and the child’s response at this point must be a tentative one because the child responds to the adult’s emotion accompanying the rule or standard, rather than the value itself.<sup>22</sup> Mercy here, thus, involves the caregiver accommodating the child’s conflicting aims ‘to please’ and ‘to become a self’.

Finally before we turn to “theological ideas offered by a tradition,” we consider the influence of the inborn difference in the child upon the caregiver. Was Thérèse simply born with an appealing character? For Sroufe, variation in character belongs to the developmental history of the child: the responsive care offered to both “universal” and particular inborn characteristics.<sup>23</sup> Temperamental differences observed in toddlerhood are “complex constructions, with inborn variation transformed in the context of caregiving relationships, rather than as freestanding, relatively immutable characteristics of

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<sup>20</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 199.

<sup>21</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 197. This is indicated by “positive self evaluation” and by being “ashamed when scolded for a wrongdoing,”

<sup>22</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 197-198. “By the middle of the second year, toddlers show a sensitivity to social demands, understanding that certain behaviours are forbidden.” There is a generalized response to disapproval. They express uncertainty, or distress toward a flawed object, or “when an external standard is violated or cannot be met.” By the end of the second year, distress or deviation anxiety is shown “when they are about to commit a forbidden behaviour,” and “a variety of negative emotions are displayed with verbalized concern and even attempts at reparation.” Toddlers show also show spontaneous self corrections, often mediated by language such as “No, can’t.” At this age “standards are externally based, and the adherence to standards almost always requires an adult presence.”

<sup>23</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 194.

the child.”<sup>24</sup> Much is established during infancy, and from the second year the child is a strong force in his or her own development: “toddlers influence the actions of others and, in part, create their own environments.”<sup>25</sup> The challenges presented to the caregiver in infancy gradually expand, but caregivers draw from the strength of the dialogue they have nurtured. The Martins profit from Rose’s style of caring when a well-nourished, responsive, active Thérèse returns (added to their relief and joy that in Thérèse life came to flourish). Zélie faces a strong otherness in Thérèse (a confident self trying to secure a new attachment). Noting that the ability to respect the child’s otherness prepares the caregiver for its ever-growing reality, we observe Zélie responds with acceptance, perhaps learned through the difficulty she had with daughter Leonie.

### **1. Theological ideas offered by a Community’s Tradition**

Thérèse’s family interacts with her on the basis of religious assumptions: God is the origin and goal of one’s existence and to whom all is directed. The liturgical and sacramental life of the Catholic Church is a manifestation of God’s presence in the world for all cultures. Wholehearted agreement to this, through participating in the Church’s liturgical and sacramental life leads to sainthood. Zélie and Louis make God ‘real’ by themselves relating to God as real, encouraging their children to interact with God on the basis of how they perceive God to be moved (by prayer before such as the statues of “Our Lady of Victories” and “Our Lady of the Smile,”<sup>26</sup> processions and pilgrimages, partaking in the Mass, charity, and self- sacrifice). ‘God’s ways’, where they are felt as distasteful, such as in self-renunciation and death, are defended. The child is held aloft by the parent’s faith activity. In this environment, a self still merged with the parent is encouraged and prolonged. Such unity, however, might ignore the child’s normative moral development, frustrating necessary individuation – as this form

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<sup>24</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 194.

<sup>25</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 194.

<sup>26</sup> C. Kevin Gillespie, SJ, “Narcissism and Conversion: The Cases of Thérèse of Lisieux and Henri Nouwen” *Spiritual Life* (Summer 2007) 53, 2, pp108-118, 133. This was an unnamed family statue, but thus named after Thérèse’s experience of the statue’s healing smile.

of unity tends to maintain a one-to-one correspondence between the ‘goodness’ sought from the child and the values/standards the parents are held to.<sup>27</sup>

Zélie also communicated a view of the human person. Jansenism, where it held correction as a “sign of God’s mercy” (like Calvinism), required the parent to counteract sin as soon as it was first felt to be in evidence: in behaviour taken as ‘self-will’ or acting for self-profit.<sup>28</sup> This represented another possible hindrance to moral-development. Identifying the child’s defence of self (as other) as a rejection of God’s ways (punishing/correcting the child in terms of this), interprets a child’s self-assertions through adult moral-standards.<sup>29</sup> It assumes an adult capacity for choosing renunciation (based on caregiver-esteem as unequivocally felt and successfully transposed to the transcendent Other).

#### *a. Theology in Thérèse’s home Environment*

As a toddler, Thérèse’s theological environment is the home – the place of her parent’s married relating, and interaction with her sisters as companions and caregivers. Here Louis, in part, lives out his ardent feeling for God and Zélie continues to practice

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<sup>27</sup> Zélie’s sadness over the felt-pain of her mother’s moralizing and unequal treatment itself presented as a value. Zélie’s judgment that her mother’s moralizing made her life sad led to her resolving to make a different life for her family. Zélie wrote to Isidore, “My childhood and youth were as dismal as a winding sheet; although my mother spoiled you, she was very severe with me as you know. Even though she was very good she did not know how to take me, and I suffered very much interiorly.” (Nov 7, 1865). Therese of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Following Augustine, Calvin viewed children as affected by original sin, who need diligent “substantive and energetic guidance.” Calvin developed Augustine’s view that “children’s ‘whole nature is a seed of sin.’” toward the idea that “children’s inborn ‘seeds of sin’ naturally develops over time into increasing capacities for becoming actual ‘fruits’ of sin.” These capacities he saw as increasing with the onset of reason and puberty. Infant baptism was to prepare parents at the earliest point for this task. The child could “look back” to see “baptism as a “sign” or “assurance of God’s mercy against sin, becoming one way of helping prevent sin from dominating...” “The more ‘holy discipline’ a child receives from adults, the more likely that child will live in God’s grace and the more secure will become the social order for God’s reign.” John Wall, “Fallen Angels: A Contemporary Christian Ethical Ontology of Childhood.” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 8 (2004), 160-184, 170-172.

<sup>29</sup> As the toddler’s action rests largely on the imitation of gestures, one of its means for pushing for independence is to turn the “no’s” used to restrain him against restraint. The typical negativistic behaviour of this period reflects (i) the limited means available to them, (ii) the extent they feel vulnerable to their need for independence as thwarted ---there is “a tendency for toddlers to overcompensate in pulling away from the dependency of infancy in accord with a dialectic principle of development.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 195.

abandonment to God's incomprehensible ways.<sup>30</sup> Neither had relinquished their aspirations to be a religious, performing hidden works of charity. Refusal by the religious orders they approached did not change their fundamental desire. Zélie by her own admission, suffered as the unfavoured middle child; she could do nothing to please her mother and endured an austere childhood under her mother's moralizing.<sup>31</sup> Though her aim was not to repeat those circumstances for her own daughters, to an extent she helplessly did. We turn to Zélie and Louis' marriage.<sup>32</sup>

*b. Zélie and Louis' Marriage*

Affecting Zélie and Louis' marriage were the practical realities that: women and men were educated separately and lived in separate spheres, Louis was by nature and choice a confirmed celibate,<sup>33</sup> Zélie was faced with a life choice of spinsterhood, the lowest of Catholic society,<sup>34</sup> middle class women were poorly informed about sex, and Zélie and Louis began married life living with Louis' family.<sup>35</sup> In her correspondence, Zélie expresses expectations relating to her social class,<sup>36</sup> and refers to Louis as "my

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<sup>30</sup> Nevin writes, for Zélie "adversity is desirable as a sign of divine testing and thus of divine favour." Following the loss of her children Zélie reflects: "When afflictions come, I resign myself quite well, but fear is a torment for me." "I prepare myself "in advance to bear my cross as bravely as possible." With her cancer, Zélie came to feel that that "suffering in this life would advance the soul's purification and thus reduce the time that it would have to spend in purgatory." Summing this up Zélie believes that "God does well what he does," and "I am calm, I find myself almost happy, and I wouldn't change my lot for any other." Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux, God's Gentle Warrior* (Oxford; New York: University Press, 2006), 90, 98, 105-106.

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 27.

<sup>32</sup> We use Nevin's review of *Correspondence Familiale 1863-1877* which contains 217 letters written by Zélie over 15 years. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 78, 84.

<sup>33</sup> Louis perhaps held no less fear and apprehension about sex than Zélie. His only experience of sex may have been the vision from prostitutes in Parisian clubs he had earlier encountered and "emerged victorious from." Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 76-77.

<sup>34</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 79-84. 100-101. Zélie felt the highest place in Catholic life was to be a religious. Pauline recalled that she was told that virgins alone follow Jesus, and that Zélie added, these virgins "would be crowned with of white roses and sing what no-one else could," and that married women "would only have red roses in their crowns."

<sup>35</sup> Later, they also take in Zélie's father. Maureen O' Riordan, "Blessed Zélie Guerin and Louis Martin: Companions on our Journey," 4, 6. <http://www.thereseoflisieux.org/their-pastoral-significance/> Accessed December 29, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> "...they [our daughters] really need to have their father and me working together to provide them with a dowry; otherwise when they are grown they won't be happy with us!" Zélie reflects upon the cost of this



husband” rather than by name.<sup>37</sup>

Zélie and Louis were beatified for their care for the poor, commitment to prayer, and abandonment to God’s will,<sup>38</sup> a recognition of their merits while (not because of) occupying spousal roles.<sup>39</sup> A preference for the virginal life remained as a background to their mutual affection. Stephane Piat expresses this preference in the feeling of his time,

A temporary sojourn on the peaks of continence [the resolve of the Martin couple] was a providential preparation for an exceptionally holy progeny. God, who willed for His Son a virgin birth, willed to entrust Thérèse of the child of Jesus only to parents who were capable of understanding the grandeur of virginal life because they practiced it.<sup>40</sup>

A card was found in Louis’ belongings with underlined text expressing that “a marriage with the desire for sexual activity without the desire for children is invalid; whereas it is a valid marriage when the two spouses agree to ‘to cultivate the intimacy of the heart

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work, “How much toil and hard work for this cursed place of Alençon, which is filling up my suffering to the brim! I earn a little bit of money, true, but my God, at what cost! ... It is costing my life, because it is shortening my days; and if the Lord doesn’t protect me in some special way, I don’t think I’ll be around long.” In hindsight she comments “ if I were alone and had to go back and put up with everything I have suffered for the last 24 years up to today, I would prefer to die of hunger, because just thinking about it all I feel a shuddering coming over me.” Antonio M. Sicari OCD, “Zélie (1831-1877), and Louis (1823-1894) Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face,” translated by Thomas Koller OCD, accessed on 29/12/2010 at <http://www.thereeoflisieux.org/their-pastoral-significance/>, 10, 14, 15.

<sup>37</sup>Zélie’s writing consistently uses the singular for the shared things of marriage; for example, ‘My daughter was born...’ “I would have preferred to keep the wet nurse at my home and so would my husband” rather than “We preferred to have the wet nurse in *our* home.” *Letters of Thérèse: Volume II*, 1199, 1205. Considering that Zélie and Louis have been married for fourteen years, and Zélie has been writing to Mme Guérin for seven years, we today find this awkwardly distant. Zélie writes this way in spiritual terms: “my suffering,” and in business, using “I” in relation to her business as a *fabricante* (does not give the impression of teamwork with Louis). Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 81, 87, 89-90.

<sup>38</sup> Maureen O’Riordan, “Blessed Zélie Guerin and Louis Martin: Companions on our Journey,” 6. Their Beatification was on 19 October 2008 by Pope Benedict XVI.

<sup>39</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face,” 25.

<sup>40</sup> Piat indicates Louis and Zélie embody an ideal: “Free from other cares, the husband and wife can fully realize the moral union between them. Marriage has a social objective...this is the essential end which dominates and precedes all the others—the bestowal of life, the rearing of the child, the training of the man. What more effective noviciate in this order than that period of recollection, prayer and sacrifice wherein the mind restrains the instinct and suspends its activity.” Stephane-Joseph Piat OFM, *The Story of a Family: The Home of the Little Flower* (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1947), 46.

and of the spirit, while renouncing the physical union allowed them'.<sup>41</sup> Near the end of her life, Zélie writes to Pauline about her feelings shortly after her wedding

I shed so many tears, more than I had ever shed in my whole life... I was comparing my life with hers [Marie-Dosithée's]. I felt so unhappy seeing myself living in the midst of the world; I wanted to live a hidden life, to hide my life alongside hers. You who love your father so much, my Pauline will think that I was unhappy with him, and that I regretted the day of my marriage with him. But no, he consoled me wonderfully, because his tastes were so similar to mine; in fact I believe that our mutual affection grew precisely because of this inclination [for religious life]. Our feelings have always been of one accord, and he has always been my consolation and support.<sup>42</sup>

Antonio Sicari supports the idea of an “original vocation to virginity:”

the human heart is made for the Absolute, and that nothing will satisfy that heart except God; in the end there is always a solitude in the human soul that can never be filled or healed by creatures, not even the most loved creature, another human being.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, a monastery is always worthy of every Christian’s “tears of desire” even when his or her vocation leads the person away from the sacred space. Spouses should not flee this original desire for virginity.<sup>44</sup> Does Sicari’s ideal of an individual union with God as primary undermine the hope of, and original good of human consummation? Perhaps the Catholic symbols for marriage in their time, in such as parents working to swell the Church, or as fellow penitents (self-effacement), against the values of the ‘world’, arise from this thought.<sup>45</sup> Here is little sense of a *circumincessio* of union by

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<sup>41</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse,” 4-5.

<sup>42</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse,” 5.

<sup>43</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse,” 6.

<sup>44</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse,” 6. This is a far cry from Jephthah’s daughter lamenting her death as a virgin in Judges 11: 36-39.

<sup>45</sup> In Patristic times, marriage was threatened by Gnostic Christians who “taught that sexual relations were evil.” Origen wrote that people could achieve salvation through marriage, but that “married people temporarily lost the Holy Spirit during intercourse, for “the matter does not require the presence of the Holy Spirit and nor would it be fitting.”” Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to the Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Ligouri, Missouri: Triumph Books, 1981, 1982, 1991), 351, 378-379. In present Catholic writings on Zélie, for example, see Joan Gormley, “Earth is not our true home: The mother of St. Thérèse of Lisieux,” *New Oxford Review* 68.9 (Oct 2001): 15, Zélie’s marriage is reduced to child-bearing, housework, and, significantly, to it being her second choice.

beings capable of consummation;<sup>46</sup> the goal of marriage meant “raising up” children for heaven, serving “God really well... one day to be among the company of the saints.”<sup>47</sup> Fidelity to God as one’s foremost satisfaction possibly encouraged spouses, such as Zélie and Louis, to seek individual moral exemplariness over depth of relation – something that would influence their daughters. Marriage, a sort of twin service to God, was not the place for the most ardent pursuit of God

Nevertheless, Zélie and Louis did express loving feelings. Five years into their marriage, Louis writes

My dearest, I cannot get back to Alençon before Monday: the time seems long to me, for I want so much to be with you...I embrace you with my whole heart, while awaiting the joy of being with you again.... Your husband and friend who loves you forever.<sup>48</sup>

Zélie writes, “Louis makes my life sweet. He is truly my holy husband; I would wish a husband like him for every woman,” and “You would not find one in a hundred as good as a husband is to a father-in-law.”<sup>49</sup> After the birth of her first son, she reflects (Nevin writes), “if only she could attain heaven with her ‘dear Louis’ and see her children as saints there... then she would not ask more.”<sup>50</sup>

When Zélie accepts the possibility of her death, she writes to Louis: “I am not here freely except to be with you, my dear Louis;” then, close to death, she writes: “Poor Louis, every now and then he held me in his arms like a little child.”<sup>51</sup> Louis (reclusive

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<sup>46</sup> The expression ‘*circumincessio*’ suggests an interpenetrating dance, used by John of Damascus, and later Bonaventure, to describe the Trinity’s way of being.

<sup>47</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse,” 9, 11. Celine reports (in her deposition) that her parents spoke chiefly in pious platitudes about this world and the next. They spoke of this world as precarious, full of miseries – and the wretchedness of France. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 92 and 347 footnote 34.

<sup>48</sup> 3 October, 1863. O’Riordan, “Blessed Zélie Guerin and Louis Martin,” 3.

<sup>49</sup> O’Riordan, “Blessed Zélie Guerin and Louis Martin,” 4.

<sup>50</sup> Nevin notes that this is a rare occasion of Zélie using Louis’ name. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 87. In 1873 Zélie writes, “I am with you all day in spirit, and say to myself: ‘now he is doing such and such a thing.’ I long to be with you Louis dear. I love you with all my heart, and I feel my affection doubled by being deprived of your company. I could not live apart from you.” O’Riordan, “Blessed Zélie Guerin and Louis Martin,” 3.

<sup>51</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse,” 17, 19.

and emotional) and Zélie (overshadowed by her more perfect sister, and doting on her younger favoured brother) reflect their background and personalities. Restrained in her affection, Zélie tends to sermonize Louis, let down by his worry and his absences.<sup>52</sup> Louis is affective (cries), but is retreating, often away, in Père Pichon's words, like "a monk astray in the world."<sup>53</sup>

*c. Zélie and her Children: Thérèse's place in the Family*

Zélie's daughters differ due to inborn characteristics, but also in reply to Zélie's developing responsiveness. Marie, the eldest and the "sweet" hearted favourite of Louis (in Zélie's opinion, "at once too wild and too shy to marry"), is 'spoilt' by the harsh reality of work.<sup>54</sup> She leaves the convent school at Le Mans where their aunt Sr Marie-Dosithée resides (Marie, Pauline, and Leonie admitted through their aunt's influence) resolving to be an "old maid."<sup>55</sup> Zélie's desire for the cloister is lived through the next daughter, Pauline, who shares Zélie's physical appearance, is composed, obedient, successful at school, and shares Zélie's spiritual disposition.<sup>56</sup> Named "petit Paulin" by Louis, over her 'masculine' independence, Pauline's presence in the *Visitandines* convent represents a vicarious 'arrival' for Zélie.<sup>57</sup> The temptation, Nevin writes, is for Zélie to co-opt Pauline with respect to her own aspirations; writing to her as a confidante (at fourteen and fifteen) and drawing support from her, Zélie pressures Pauline to become who Zélie wants to be.<sup>58</sup> Léonie, the third

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<sup>52</sup> Zélie remonstrates with Louis' fear about political outcomes: "I've told him, 'Don't be afraid God is with us'." In 1870, she writes, with frustration, that Isidore "is like my husband, very lazy about writing." Nevin notes that she then delimits her writing to women. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 96, 92.

<sup>53</sup> Zélie comments during the Prussian invasion, "everyone is crying but me.." *Story of a Soul*, 42. Louis is in tears over the sermon. Marie recalls Louis in tears over her leaving. Sicari, "Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse," 26, 28, Louis writes about Thérèse entering Carmel, "in the midst of tears my heart is overflowing with joy." Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 94, 86, 75.

<sup>54</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1212.

<sup>55</sup> Pupils at the *Visitandines* of Le Mans "came from *la haute société*." Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 91, 100.

<sup>56</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 100-101.

<sup>57</sup> Louis named "little Paul", perhaps over declaring her refusal of the three options (nun, wife or spinster) open to a Catholic girl. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 100-101.

daughter, not young enough to be excused as a child, suffers from being sickly, awkward, and slow to learn (“foolish conduct beyond compare” Zélie writes), and has the difficulty of defining herself against her older sisters.<sup>59</sup> Susceptible to exploitation, Leonie is taken advantage of by their maid, and, later, by two women masquerading as nuns.<sup>60</sup> As Zélie transfers her own (punished) failures to Léonie, they spiral “downward in a closed circle of resentment and failure, each helpless toward the other.”<sup>61</sup>

Before the arrival of Celine and Thérèse, Zélie gives birth to Hélène who charms her with her personality, Joseph-Louis, who brings profound joy but dies five months later, then, Joseph-Jean-Baptiste.<sup>62</sup> After one week, unable to nurse him, he goes to Rose Taillé, who expresses doubt over her ability to save him.<sup>63</sup> When he develops bronchitis Zélie walks eight kilometres twice daily to visit him at Rose’s home.<sup>64</sup> Rose, taking on the care of her mother, returns him in July and he gradually dies of enteritis, at eight months of age.<sup>65</sup> Zélie is torn by grief, a second time, over her helplessness and awaits his death as a relief.<sup>66</sup> During her fear of losing her following baby, Celine (1869), she expresses her state: “When afflictions come, I resign myself quite well, but fear is a torment for me;” she tells herself “to prepare ... in advance to bear...[her] cross

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<sup>58</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 100, 102-103. Zélie writes to Pauline: “My feelings for you grow daily, you are my joy and happiness. Well, I have to be reasonable and not push my love too far. If the good Lord were take you with him what would become of me?” and “My dear Pauline, you, you’re my dear friend. You give me the courage to sustain my life with patience.” To Mm Guerin she writes, “Pauline is my favourite; I love her only too much, but I just can’t help it, she is so exquisite.” Later, she confides: “I dream only of the cloister and solitude. I really don’t know how with my views, it wasn’t in my vocation to remain an old maid, or to close myself up in a convent. I would like to now live to old age and withdraw into solitude once all my children are grown.”

<sup>59</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 101-102.

<sup>60</sup> Léonie had been withdrawn from the *Visitandines*. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 102.

<sup>61</sup> Quote from Nevin. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 102.

<sup>62</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 91, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 88.

<sup>64</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 88.

<sup>65</sup> Zélie is burdened by “increased commissions for her lace,” and her father’s decline. He dies in August. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 88-89.

<sup>66</sup> Marie sadly recalls arousing “pearly” laughter, when she danced for him. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 88-89.

as bravely as possible.”<sup>67</sup> But, after the unexpected death of five-year-old Hélène in Feb 1870 from a fever and congested lung,<sup>68</sup> Zélie is reduced to bitter suffering, accepting life only on behalf of her children’s needs. When her next daughter Melanie-Thérèse, who Zélie is also unable to nurse, dies from starvation also in 1870 (October), Zélie is beyond “consolatory beliefs.”<sup>69</sup>

Celine, the next child, is counted as one of the babies. Four years older than Thérèse (delicate, reserved, well-meaning, and pious), she will come to be dominated by Thérèse’s ‘large’ personality<sup>70</sup> – producing some rivalrous feeling. Zélie unwittingly contributes to this by playing favourites with her children, evident not only in open acknowledgment of it (“Pauline is my favourite”), but also in her daughter’s efforts to earn her attention. Just before her death, observing her mother as pleased by health *and* obedience, Hélène (to stem Zélie’s tears over her wilting appearance), asks plaintively

If I eat [the broth], will you love me better? ...yes, right, now, I’m going to get well, yes, at once.<sup>71</sup>

Leonie, sensing the frustration she causes her mother, asks

Do you love me Maman? I won’t disobey you anymore.<sup>72</sup>

Celine, threatened by Thérèse’s ‘easy winnings’ and aware of the place that Pauline holds, approaches the matter of Thérèse’s place

Tell me, Mamma, if you love me the most [seeing that Zélie is giving much to Thérèse].

Zélie replies that she loves both equally, to which Celine responds:

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<sup>67</sup> Zélie adds, “It’s best to leave all things in the good Lord’s hands and await in calm and abandon to his will. That’s what I’m going to force myself to do.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 90.

<sup>68</sup> Isidore blames improper medical care on Zélie. Her sister, Marie-Dosithée suggests perhaps she will be “the great saint you have so much wanted for his glory.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 91.

<sup>69</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 93.

<sup>70</sup> Celine shows a preference for her father. Her arrival follows a difficult and grief-filled time for Zélie. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 91.

<sup>71</sup> Hélène refers to swallowing the bouillon the doctor prescribed for her. She dies and Zélie is left feeling wretched. This time she blames herself for not preventing it. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 91.

<sup>72</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 104.

Love me like you love Pauline; you know that you love her more than a little more than Marie<sup>73</sup>

Though the above belong to different contexts and need to be treated so, there is a theme – what must be done to secure Zélie’s favour?

Toward the end of her life, amid a new challenge to accept God’s (and the Virgin’s) will<sup>74</sup> in her deteriorating health and the diagnosis of her cancer, whether it be a miracle or further suffering, even to death, Zélie struggles with Léonie’s ‘faults’. Having discovered Léonie’s predicament, Zélie recognizes that Léonie’s trait of stubbornness, which has a positive aspect, originates in herself. We return to the opening thought in this section about Zélie’s maturing responsiveness to her children. Zélie over-zealously steers her first children, seeking herself in them. Suffering wrenching loss in the deaths of babies she treasured, and troubled by resistance in her children’s, at times, poignant opposition, she becomes more aware of her self. Thérèse is to reap this maturing in Zélie.<sup>75</sup>

*d. Zélie’s Hope for Sainthood for her Family*

Sainthood is Zélie’s hope for her children:

I really hope Marie will be a good girl, but I would like her to become a saint, and I would like you, my Pauline, to be a saint too. I want to become a saint, but I don’t know where to start; there is so much to do, and I will just hold on to the desire. Often during the day I say, ‘My God, I would like to be a saint!’ But then I don’t do the works! But now is the time to get going...<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1227-1228.

<sup>74</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 106, 108, 109. Zélie felt that “suffering in this life would advance the soul’s purification and thus reduce the time that it would have to spend in purgatory;” summing this up Zélie believes that “God does well what he does.” “I am calm, I find myself almost happy, and I wouldn’t change my lot for any other. Disillusioned by doctors, she prefers the Virgin’s cure. When after a painful trip to Lourdes and four dips in the water, which does not result in a cure, Zélie takes courage by repeating what the Virgin told Bernadette: “Alas! The Blessed Virgin has told us as she told Bernadette, ‘I shall make you happy, not in this world, but in the other’.”<sup>74</sup> She advised Pauline, “If I didn’t hope for heavenly [joys], I would be quite wretched.”

<sup>75</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 87.

<sup>76</sup> Sicari, “Zélie and Louis Martin, Mother and Father of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus of the Holy Face,” 12.

After giving birth to a son she reflects,

if only she could attain heaven with her “dear Louis” and see her children as saints then she would not ask more.<sup>77</sup>

Zélie aspires for her little son to be a priest, but after Melanie Therese’s death, Zélie is shattered and confides to Mme Guerin

I don’t want a little boy, just a Thérèse who will look like this one.<sup>78</sup>

Thérèse is doted on – but Zélie watches for sanctity (which, she feels, is marked by premonitory signs), interpreting Thérèse’s behaviour through her desire to see evidence of dispositions the elect possess. For example, when they go for a walk, Thérèse wants it to culminate in visiting the church (Thérèse likes the Mass).<sup>79</sup> When her parents attend early Mass, Thérèse does not want to be left behind (further interest in mass attendance).<sup>80</sup> When she is scolded for not yet being asleep – her bed being cold – she asks to say her prayers lengthily with Zélie or Louis (she’s insistently prayerful).<sup>81</sup> Prayer draws more approval from Zélie than mischief (reciting holy things is Thérèse’s joy).<sup>82</sup> Though Zélie recounts these wryly, she also has them as true. Thus, Thérèse’s religious inclination, on the one hand is reinforced, but on the other hand, it is also not taken entirely seriously – bemused suspicion as to her motives, especially from her sisters, wounds her.<sup>83</sup>

Zélie praises Thérèse (at two and a half to three and a half years), by ambiguously placing “impish,” “rascal,” “ferret,” and “stubborn,” next to “intelligent,” “affectionate,” and “bringing joy;” ingenuity and defiance indicate incorrigible,

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<sup>77</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 87.

<sup>78</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 92.

<sup>79</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1213.

<sup>80</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1214.

<sup>81</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1218. When Zélie is tired, obedience becomes the virtue most desired from Thérèse. Marie is quick to correct Thérèse.

<sup>82</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1233.

<sup>83</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1217, 1220, 1222, 1231.



tenacious life.<sup>84</sup> By her writing, Zélie indicates that she understands little Thérèse to mean well even while being self-serving.<sup>85</sup> While finding Thérèse ‘difficult’, Zélie adores her, follows her actions with interest, and notes her potential with satisfaction and humour.<sup>86</sup> Zélie delights in Thérèse’s small-child audacity.

*e. Becoming a Saint from Thérèse’s Perspective*

Thérèse absorbs a sense of ‘sanctity’ through the inter-affirmation of language and its context. When the word “angel” (*ange*) connoting innocence<sup>87</sup> is applied to Thérèse, the Martins mirror back to her the innocence, beauty, or heavenliness they feel she resembles/evokes.<sup>88</sup> ‘Angelic-ness’ (*angélique*) belongs to expressing and receiving love, and is consonant with such actions as saying prayers, singing, attending mass, and speaking about God. Involving a place called “heaven,” a person called “God,” and being “elected” (their precise character overseen by Zélie), “angel” names something about herself.<sup>89</sup> It means to delight the ones she wants to delight, and earning a loving gaze from those who value her. Zélie exclaims, “How happy I am to have [Thérèse]! I believe I love her more than all the others; no doubt because she is the youngest,” “we are enraptured by [Thérèse’s recitation about God] it;” and “...my husband adores

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<sup>84</sup> Therese of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1222, 1223.

<sup>85</sup> Perceiving her presence was of immense value, little Thérèse was testing how difficult she might be and remain adored, through events such as insistence to say her prayers, calling out numerous “mama’s,” “why” questions, and unwillingness to yield. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1215, 1218, 1223.

<sup>86</sup> Marie tells of Thérèse’s stealthily acquiring/appropriating things which do not belong to her, and ‘killing’ her much loved doll, only for necessitating a later emotional burial *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1220, 1222, 1223, 1219, 1219.

<sup>87</sup> O’ Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew her*, 84. Marie blends the word “angel” with the idea of ‘saint’ in her testimony for her canonization, “I desire very much to see [Thérèse] beatified...I looked on her as an angel.”

<sup>88</sup> Zélie writes that Thérèse told her “that she wanted to go to heaven and that, for this, she was going to be nice like a little angel.” *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1222.

<sup>89</sup> “Mother told us:”Thérèse always has a smile on her lips; she has the face of one of the elect.” Christopher O’ Mahoney OCD, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew her: Testimonies from the Process of Beatification* (Dublin: Veritas Publication, 1975), 86,

her!”<sup>90</sup> If Thérèse felt valued in proportion to these declarations, preserving Zélie and Louis’ maintenance of her value would involve high stakes.

## 2. Thérèse’s Developing Independent Agency and Intention

At first Thérèse experiences Zélie’s ‘God’ as joined to Zélie. By pleasing Zélie she also pleases Zélie’s God. Zélie’s pleasure with Thérèse (connected with God) forms a self in her that tells her she is good, beautiful, and able. Zélie’s displeasure or disappointment suggests her self as naughty, unattractive, weak, unable, or foolish. As indicated by Sroufe, the child approaching a sense of separate agency-awareness responds to sensed demands.<sup>91</sup> We see from eighteen months onward, Thérèse absorbs others’ values by sensing their emotion. Though it distresses her, she tries to be quiet and obedient at Le Mans (Sr Marie-Dosithée’s value which Zélie maintains?).<sup>92</sup> When the *sous* are upon the floor they must be quickly gathered in for Louis (Louis’ value).<sup>93</sup> In “transports of love” she demonstrates her affection by wishing death on Zélie so that they might be able to more speedily go to heaven, the place they seem to yearn for (to preserve their happiness and permanence).<sup>94</sup> If she resembles an angel, she will go to heaven (her mother’s wish).<sup>95</sup> There is family worry over Thérèse’s life; her mother and her sisters state that they cannot bear losing her (through sickness).<sup>96</sup> Thérèse absorbs their emotion over the injustice of losing, a sense underneath their simple joys,<sup>97</sup> however the persons she ‘loses’ do not leave through sickness and death, but to the train or the convent. Amplifying Zélie’s interest, she expresses concern and impatience for these

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<sup>90</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1223, 1233, 1227.

<sup>91</sup> “In the third year children ... often refuse to violate parental prohibitions and show signs of affective distress, even in the absence of a parent, and they may confess to parents upon their return when violations did occur.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 217.

<sup>92</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1214. In a way Zélie shares her sister’s feeling and feels more intensely over the convent as it is a pathway not privy to her.

<sup>93</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1214.

<sup>94</sup> This occurs just before three years of age. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1218-1219.

<sup>95</sup> Thérèse insists the roses are not to be cut by Zélie as they are Marie’s (Maries’ value). *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1222, 1224.

<sup>96</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1216, 1223, 1227.

<sup>97</sup> Visits, feast days, and new toys at Christmas. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1220.

persons' return.<sup>98</sup> Pauline, whose return Thérèse often asks for,<sup>99</sup> and holds Zélie's admiration, perhaps reminds Thérèse of a leaving/returning Zélie in Semallé.<sup>100</sup>

Thérèse absorbs the tenor of Jansenist sanctity through Zélie's approving and disapproving tones in conversation with Marie, Pauline, Mme Guérin, and Sr Marie-Dosithée.<sup>101</sup> Sanctity's degree and quality is ground for disagreement. Sr Marie-Dosithée wants Marie to be separated from fashion and play, but Zélie responds, "In the world we cannot live in seclusion! There is something to take and leave in everything."<sup>102</sup> Against others, Zélie feels the Sabbath is to be kept (to be sure one's profit is sent by God), that France deserves the punishment it is experiencing, prosperity should be treated with suspicion and adversity welcomed as God's means for purgation.<sup>103</sup> Zélie chides Louis for his lack of trust in the good outcome God offers in health, business and politics.<sup>104</sup> Loving God, Thérèse learns, often means not doing as one pleases. Indeed, sanctity may be measured by the comfort forgone to make God happy.<sup>105</sup> For Zélie, adversity is desirable as a sign of divine testing and thus of divine favour.<sup>106</sup> Renunciation is more virtuous if it is hidden so that it cannot supply the

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<sup>98</sup> *General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 113.

<sup>99</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1213,1218.

<sup>100</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1221, 1223.

<sup>101</sup> "...father always respected the punishment we [Marie] meted out for her little faults." As Marie was only in her teens herself, she might not have been aware of the path of a child's moral development. Thérèse replied to Victoire's teasing to amuse with "you know well that that offends the good God." O'Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew her*, 85, 86.

<sup>102</sup> Zélie also argues against judgment of infants as sinners, viewing them to be innocent. *Story of a Soul*, 5, Burton, *Holy Blood, Holy Tears*, 24.

<sup>103</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 84, 96, 97, 105.

<sup>104</sup> Zélie remonstrates with Louis' fear about political outcomes: "I've told him, 'Don't be afraid God is with us'." Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 96.

<sup>105</sup> Hagiography of this time presented external evidences of goodness. Marie, in her deposition recalls her mother as exclaiming, in relation to Blessed Marie of the Incarnation "How blest she was to have given three daughters to God!" O'Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew her*, 84.

<sup>106</sup> Zélie comments: "It's a bad sign when all is going well. God in his wisdom has willed it thus, to make us remember that our earth is not our true country." Also: "it's certain that continual prosperity alienates us from God. He has never led his elect along that road; they have previously passed through the crucible of suffering in order to purify themselves." Zélie admits to her tendency toward pessimism, "I who see black in everything," when awaiting the outcome of her illness. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 84, 97.

satisfaction of sympathy, or triumph of earthly vindication.<sup>107</sup> Thérèse incorporates these into her appetite for ‘mostness’ and ‘bestness’ as a kind of ledger – a motivation to do with self-development. It is possible that Marie and Pauline, practicing at being adult, and Celine from rivalry, accuse Thérèse of *not* being a saint, when being a saint is essential to her becoming a self.<sup>108</sup> Zélie documents a concern in little Thérèse about her goodness.

Thus, at three, going to heaven had something to do with God’s judgment (Zélie’s deliberation), with being an angel (being “nice”), and not going to hell (bypassing her disfavour). While Zélie is alive, Thérèse is indulgently loved for being the amusing and affectionate baby of the family. Görres observes that being “good” meant

doing the will of her father and giving her mother joy. Naughtiness was but one thing: making her parents sad. Contrition and forgiveness wiped out all faults entirely, instantly, without reservation. That was her basic ethical experience and it remained with her all her life. From the very start all formalism in fulfilment of the law was excluded.<sup>109</sup>

However, Thérèse is affected by her sisters who were raised by a more stringent Zélie, attend a convent school, are influenced by their aunt, and who *do* express formalism in the fulfilment of the law.

#### *a. Frustrated Intentions*

Zélie refers to Thérèse’s frustrations. Her comments show a limited understanding of what is transpiring in Thérèse. Close to three years of age, Thérèse is trying to achieve with blocks what Celine does.

...from time to time they argue. Celine gives in, in order to have a pearl in her

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<sup>107</sup> “at four she began to count her little acts of virtue and her sacrifices on a string of beads made especially for the purpose.” O’Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew her*, 86.

<sup>108</sup> Marie writes, Thérèse “is so accustomed to caresses that she hardly pays any attention to them; and so when Céline sees how indifferent she is, she tells her in a tone of reproach: ‘One would say all these caresses are *Mademoiselle’s* due.’ You should see Thérèse’s face!” *General Correspondence Volume I*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> Ida Görres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (New York, Pantheon, 1959), 52. “The will of her parents took absolute precedence in her life, she always obeyed it...she obeyed it at all costs. Nothing else was possible for her.”

crown. I am obliged to correct the dear baby who gets into frightful tempers; when things do not go according to her way, she rolls on the floor like one in despair, believing that all is lost. There are moments when it is too much for her and she chokes up.<sup>110</sup>

Rather than guiding Thérèse's hands to do what she envisages but cannot achieve physically, to calm her frustration, Zélie takes this moment as the one for teaching self-restraint.<sup>111</sup> For Zélie, restraint, leading to passive acceptance (she views a moral good), must begin early; Thérèse must begin to become what Celine has become – surrendering. Thérèse, however, is struggling to execute her 'great' intentions. When she becomes distressed on the way home from Le Mans because she has lost her gift for Celine,<sup>112</sup> it is over failure to execute her good intention. She becomes upset by her limitedness (then by her inability to communicate the importance of her aim). The inability to realize her own intention, which contrasts with the infant illusion of unlimited agency, is crushing because it represents the boundaries of who she can be at this moment.<sup>113</sup> (The power to demonstrate her affection in 'good acts' will ensure Celine's gaze of approval).<sup>114</sup>

### *b. Self and Values*

From two and a half to four and a half years of age, the self continues to develop, with roles, values, flexible self-control, play, and peer relations as new concerns. The caregiver's role is to guide the child in relation to these, and on their behalf. In Chapter Two, Fitzgerald was quoted as stating that individuation, for the girl-child, involves maintaining the other's benevolent "gaze." At three years, Thérèse resolves the problem of her self being threatened (by admonition) by declaring her offences early,

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<sup>110</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1219.

<sup>111</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 213. Within certain boundaries the toddler is much more able than the infant to regulate affect – for example, fighting down tears or meting out angry feelings in subtle and indirect ways. But as stronger feelings, impulses, or desires arise, in this case frustration over her own proficiency, the toddler's emerging capacities for self-regulation are easily overwhelmed."

<sup>112</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 23. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1214.

<sup>113</sup> Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 196-197.

<sup>114</sup> Though Celine accepts she must be passive, it does not resolve her feelings of jealousy when she remains unrewarded. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1227.

before they are reflected back to her with the face of displeasure.<sup>115</sup> While maintaining the benevolent gaze, Thérèse still engages in “purposeful struggle” for a separate self,<sup>116</sup> emphatically asserting that her will is other than Zélie’s, even in the face of strong opposition.<sup>117</sup> With this self she expresses independent enjoyment at gifts of sweets, and anticipates desired events, opening the possibility of disappointment.<sup>118</sup> Zélie is amused by Thérèse’s developing logic – persons are better off with (available) sweets than wealth (a mere quality), one ought not “get sassy” to get one’s own way; (here Thérèse practices values she has encountered in Zélie and Louis); confronted by her mother’s power, “God” cannot block Thérèse’s way to heaven.<sup>119</sup> In the last, Thérèse has Zélie (who approves of Thérèse, and knows her good intentions) overcoming God where justice is concerned – triumphing over the God of Marie or Celine (who perhaps have recently ‘condemned’ her), or over God’s insurmountable arbitrariness.

“Charming, ..sharp... vivacious, but....a sensitive heart,” Thérèse struggles between enjoying favour, and earning companionship (sickness draws attention from Zélie, but that attention draws jealousy from Céline).<sup>120</sup> Sickness appears to be profitable where their mother’s attention is concerned, but Thérèse regrets wishing sickness for attention, upon seeing that it is not a good trade: “I [only] wanted to be sick as a pinhead” for the pleasure.<sup>121</sup> Celine strategically airs her envy of Thérèse’s easy rewards by projecting upon Thérèse’s dolls: they “are badly reared and ... she lets them carry out their whims!”<sup>122</sup> Amid her failing health, Zélie observes Celine is pious, but Thérèse is “a

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<sup>115</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1223, 1224, 1224-1225.

<sup>116</sup> Recognizing the self as the origin of action, the toddler can experience both shame and positive self-evaluation and can engage in a purposeful, even angry, struggle with caregivers that persist beyond some specific cause.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 213.

<sup>117</sup> Zélie comments that one could put her all day in the cellar, but her ‘no’ will remain a ‘no’. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1223.

<sup>118</sup> When Pauline does not arrive at the station (to come home) after a walk that neared the station “she cried all the way home.” On another occasion, she “struggled to ‘...get Pauline’” from the station. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1224, 1223, 1226.

<sup>119</sup> Thérèse copies tones and sentiments used with her. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1224, 1226.

<sup>120</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1227, 1228.

<sup>121</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1228.

real little angel.”<sup>123</sup> She recalls Thérèse feigning sleep (“I don’t want anyone to see me” meaning Marie who had stated “Mamma, she is pretending to sleep, I am sure”), which results in a tearful display of repentance.<sup>124</sup> Thérèse’s request for pardon met with pardon, and forgiveness is taken up as a celebration (of what more mercy might be had).

I took my cherub into my arms, pressing her to my heart and covering her with kisses. When she saw she was so well received, she said: “Mamma, if you swaddled me up as when I was little! I will eat my chocolate here at the table.” I went to the trouble of going for her blanket and I wrapped her up as when she was little.<sup>125</sup>

Thérèse, in effect, describes her familiar role – which has thus far defined her self: she is the baby; babies are forgiven, and indulged. In keeping with this, when Léonie offers a basket of toys she no longer wishes to keep (after Celine taking a little ball of wool), enthusiastically Thérèse takes charge of all.<sup>126</sup> We see Thérèse defend herself in a normative way, in her “little practices:” a form of piety, where beads are moved along a chaplet to count self-denials. When Zélie tries to correct Thérèse who has been moving the beads the wrong way, Thérèse deflects it by stating that her chaplet is lost.<sup>127</sup> It is likely that Thérèse felt her mistake in comprehension as a moral/value failing, not differentiating between these two.<sup>128</sup>

With death imminent, Zélie’s final letters relate Thérèse’s interest in God and her sweetness in pleasing; talk about God increases, and sober evaluations of her children

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<sup>122</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1229. Thérèse writes of this later. Celine reprimands Thérèse’s dolls for “bad behaviour” in *Story of a Soul*, 55-56.

<sup>123</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1229.

<sup>124</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1231. It is unclear why feigning sleep indicates “spoiled” behaviour, unless we know what is unjustly gained by it. On another occasion, Zélie writes that Thérèse forthrightly (freely) states that she is “bored” with the “beautiful,” long sermon on a feast day, which draws understanding, and not disapproval from Zélie.

<sup>125</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1232.

<sup>126</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 27.

<sup>127</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1232.

<sup>128</sup> She flees the possibility of shame, wary of transgressing a standard which results in fastidious correction, threatening her ‘good’ self.

increase.<sup>129</sup> As her pain increases, she becomes less available to the little ones. Thérèse no longer simply relishes the luxury of favour, but tries to restore its source – perhaps being good will make her mother well again. There is talk about being “good” (and of Marie to take Zélie’s place) which for Thérèse is no small task: she fixes on Celine as a companion, but Celine attends Marie’s class which involves enduring Marie’s firm requirements (not disturbing the lesson even when confronted by an unthreaded needle), for Celine’s company.<sup>130</sup>

*c. Self and Early Theology; Thérèse’s Aim to become a Nun*

Thérèse’s antics are relayed to a bedridden Zélie, who writes to Pauline that Thérèse’s ideas are rare for one her age. To “How can God be in a host so small?” Thérèse replies “This is not surprising since God is all powerful!” To “What does all-powerful mean?” “It means to do whatever he wills!”<sup>131</sup> Thérèse constructs a God who is not so much arbitrarily self-serving, but is defined by meeting all questions that might be asked of God. Pauline writes that Thérèse confesses (“and it was enough to make me die laughing”):

I will be a religious in a cloister because Celine wants to go there, and, then, also, Pauline, I must learn how to read to children, don’t you see? But I will not conduct class for them, because this would bore me too much. Celine will do it. I will be mother; I’ll walk all in the cloister, and then I’ll go with Celine; we’ll play in the sand with our dolls...<sup>132</sup>

In the above, Thérèse shows intentional agency within what she has been assigned. Becoming a “religious” is necessary to be in Céline’s game, one which Celine (seven years of age) steers, and which involves their dolls. Celine will have explained what there was to be done, and volunteered for the task of teaching as it interested her. As the younger, Thérèse creatively invents a space for herself to fit into the confines of the

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<sup>129</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1233.

<sup>130</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1233.

<sup>131</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1234.

<sup>132</sup> *General Correspondence Volume I*, 108. This letter, written in April 1877, shows the effect Zélie’s desire to be a religious has on the dynamic between her daughters.



rules, which she stretches to allow her to do exactly as she pleases (be Mother). Accepting her place as youngest, Thérèse nevertheless asserts a strong self within this confine, from the perspective of gaining Celine's company (which she values above "dessert"),<sup>133</sup> and confident rationalizing from her own judgment. Pauline breaks down Thérèse's "castles in the air:" "You think dear Thérèse that you'll talk all day long: do you know you'll have to keep silent?" Thérèse replies

True.... Ah! what a pity! I will say nothing...

"What will you do then?"

That's no problem; I'll pray to good Jesus. But what can I do to pray to him without saying anything? I don't know and who will show me since I'll be Mother? Tell me?

"She was gazing at me thoughtfully...she fixed her big blue eyes on me, and smiling mischievously, she gesticulated with her little arms like a grown person, saying"

After all, my petit Paulin, its not worth tormenting myself already, I'm too little don't you see, and when I'll be big like you and Marie, I will be told what to do before entering the cloister...<sup>134</sup>

Showing confidence in her power to rationalize, employing sentiments, values, and rules she has heard, Thérèse interacts with Pauline from an independent self. A positive interactive history allows her to be confidently open to the unknown future.

Pauline, in suggesting that life with God is not as 'good' or 'easy' as Thérèse thinks, puts 'religious practice' in the place of "good God," who for Thérèse is still the One who is pleased with companionship and contented play. God and play are not yet incompatible, and silent conversation will not do. Pauline places an obstruction before Thérèse – and Thérèse takes up the problem without becoming affectively

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<sup>133</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 107. *Story of a Soul*, 26.

<sup>134</sup> "That's it dear baby" Pauline answers "covering her with kisses.... Spend a few good nights before calling yourself Sister Marie Aolyisia... [the name Thérèse chooses for herself – Aloyisia mispronounced] you still have time to think it over." *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 108-9.

“disorganized.” She remains affectively positive, and preserves her good sense of self, confidently incorporating offered values.<sup>135</sup>

Zélie lists Thérèse’s virtues as honesty and a good mind.<sup>136</sup> However, miserable with sickness (writing she is happy to be alone), these will not win Thérèse Zélie’s companionship.<sup>137</sup> Thérèse becomes fragile. Marie reports Thérèse as sharp, with a talent for dramatizing and mimicking adult mannerisms, but fails to be aware of her insensitivity in her expressed amusement (“I told this to Mamma in front of Thérèse”) over repeating Thérèse’s words: “Mamma has a bruise here” (meaning the tumour on her breast), “and Papa has a bruise on his ear,” which trigger in Thérèse “pardons which never end” and inconsolable distress for not having got the thing correct.<sup>138</sup> Reducing her efforts to amusing incorrectness, especially amid her gradual loss of Zélie, undermines Thérèse’s sense of self.

#### *d. Zélie’s Example of Abandonment*

As her cancer progresses, God is the only physician Zélie trusts (“God does well what he does”).<sup>139</sup> Zélie travels to Lourdes, abandoning herself to a miraculous cure.<sup>140</sup> She returns without a cure: “Obviously, the Virgin does not want to cure me.” Zélie declares, “Alas! The Blessed Virgin has told us as she told Bernadette, ‘I shall make

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<sup>135</sup> Pauline then soothes Thérèse and puts her to bed. She continues, “How I would like this little angel not to grow up. A little soul who has never offended God is so beautiful....So I love having Thérèse close to me; it seems to me that with her no misfortune can befall me...” In a way Pauline is noticing the connection that a good sense of self, unspoil by shaming (harsh correcting) has with God. *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 108-109.

<sup>136</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1233.

<sup>137</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1234. *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 113. Marie now writes to Pauline about Thérèse: Thérèse bounds upstairs in joy to make her prayer at a lavish May altar, is indulged with kisses by all (which Celine observes Thérèse takes for granted), and during Marie’s lesson, outdoes Celine in comprehension and imagination.

<sup>138</sup> Marie states, pre-figuratively - “How innocent is a little child, how darling, how good! I’m not surprised that God loves them more than adults; they’re much more lovable!” *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 114.

<sup>139</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 105. Marie-Dosithée’s tuberculosis (she died earlier that year, in Feb 1877) and her “suffering in this life would advance the soul’s purification and thus reduce the time that it would have to spend in purgatory.”

<sup>140</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 117.

you happy, not in this world, but in the other’.”<sup>141</sup> She becomes sicker, weeping as she looks over her children; four weeks before her death she attends an award night Marie has prepared for her pupils.<sup>142</sup> Leonie wishes to suffer in Zélie’s place, but Zélie refuses this, stating “I’ll derive a two-fold profit: I’ll suffer less by resigning myself and I’ll spend part of my purgatory on earth.”<sup>143</sup> Accepting neither cure nor relief, with “I’ve suffered in the last 24 hours more than I’ve suffered in all my life,” Zélie dies.<sup>144</sup> The face which was enchanted by all that was Thérèse and adored her brightness, health and joy, vanishes. Thérèse now clings to the faces of Marie, Pauline and Celine, each suffering their own loss. Thérèse loses Zélie, the source and guide to her role and values, to a death to which Zélie assigned symbolic value: she had made terminal illness integral to spirituality, making it the final word on her *abandon*.<sup>145</sup>

### 3. Summary of Thérèse’s Developing Self in Toddlerhood

After her return from Rose Taillé’s care, Thérèse reworks her attachment to Zélie, making her a new secure base. Through expressions of attention and favour, Zélie consolidates Thérèse’s sense of ‘I am good, I delight my mother’ gained from Rose. Thérèse takes up her place in an established family culture which has goals that will affect her developing self.<sup>146</sup> Impacted by the culture/goals of those who assure her security, she forms a unique construction from their standards, values, and ideas about God, to contend with moment to moment concerns.

Thérèse competes with her sisters for Zélie’s attention, and works to earn her sisters’ approval. As an emerging independent self, in relation to others, she becomes aware of her physical, cognitive, affective, and moral limitations, and that these are not met by

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<sup>141</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 109.

<sup>142</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1235-1236.

<sup>143</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 109-110.

<sup>144</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 110.

<sup>145</sup>“For both mother and daughter, terminal illness became integral to spirituality and determined the character of their abandon.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 111.

<sup>146</sup> Thérèse is not entirely cut off from Rose. We read of a visit in a letter by Celine dated around April 1877. *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 111.

unending compensation. A self forms that senses ‘I am incapable of always winning your delight, in my otherness I am limited, my otherness and limitation are at times unloved’. Often Zélie, Louis, and her sisters allow her to feel she is delightful even in her limitation, even when her good efforts fail. But when her action/motive is suspected as being self-serving (through sisterly rivalry), her ‘good’ self is felt to be under threat. Thérèse wants to be wholly good, without compromise (this aspiration is simultaneously her strength and weakness), and presses for its reaffirmation. Seeking ‘forgiveness’ (but, really, rapprochement) for feigning sleep, Thérèse asks to *feel* its reality in holding and swaddling.

Thérèse’s strong-will is not seriously thwarted in her early years, as Léonie’s is, nor is Thérèse’s ability and obedience co-opted by Zélie’s ambition, as occurred with Pauline. Thérèse’s trusting disposition is appreciated by Pauline and Marie, but they do not grasp that her “innocence,” which they feel uplifted by, is vulnerable to the correction they mete out.<sup>147</sup> Thérèse is felt by her family as bringing new hope and delight following the hope-crushing deaths of her siblings. On the one hand, she is feted and adored. She enjoys a sense of freedom; Zélie no longer asks for a boy or a religious, which, considering her demands on the others, whether intended or not, might provoke envy.<sup>148</sup> Untouched by serious refusal or coercion in her early years, when Zélie dies, however, Thérèse will receive stern correction from Marie, as if to even the balance. Thérèse typifies the youngest and favoured by God in Hebrew Scriptures, whose ‘heart’ is preferred to that of the ‘first born’.

With Zélie, ‘religious rules’ and ‘being loved/good’ do not strictly coincide. At the time of Zélie’s death, who God is – is still plastic. The dialogue between ‘self’ and ‘God’ continues after her death. In Zélie’s absence, Pauline and Marie will implement rules from the religious writings and institutions which guided them. Thérèse gives these rules slavish attention, to build a sense of good-self by their standards.

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<sup>147</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 104.

<sup>148</sup> This is a motif in the Hebrew Scriptures, the most notable example is Joseph, who suffers the resentment of his brothers due to his father’s favour, but which is later redressed by divine favour.

*a. Mercy*

In the toddler years, mercy consists of making space for a new intentioning self, and providing values together with a safe space (one free from condemnation) to practice them. Mercy involves the care-giver encouraging independent assertions from the emerging self (actions that might otherwise be felt as opposing or rejection their care) and alleviating any emotion that overwhelms the toddler when their envisioned goals cannot be realized. Mercy is shown when the child, inconvenient and difficult for a household (a liability), is unquestioningly treated as a member.

In following the devastation of loss in infant deaths, Thérèse represents God's mercy in once more giving the Martins the joy of new life. Where previous births included Zélie's desire to participate in the emergence of a saint, Thérèse is the recipient of Zélie's simple gratitude for, and delight in, life. Mercy is the ground of Thérèse's life. In spite of this, mercy is not always shown her. Even while affirming her smallness (simply to be darling), a youngest's inherent role, rules not appropriate to her age are addressed to her, leading Thérèse to challenge 'God's arbitrariness and 'unjustness', as for her, 'God' allows play, and as 'one who sees all, defends one who means well'.

Before narrating her suffering, we turn to the last part of Thérèse's childhood self-formation. The following material about Thérèse, from four and a half to eight and a half, only found in Thérèse's autobiography, represents an important experience of mercy.

#### **4. With Louis at Buissonnets**

At Buissonnets (the home moved into after Zélie's death), as a four year old, Thérèse is taught by Pauline, and Louis takes Thérèse with him when he goes about visiting churches, and into the garden.<sup>149</sup> In the garden, Louis accepts the play-roles Thérèse prescribes for him in her games, enacting his part with humoured reverence.<sup>150</sup> When she presents her father with a potion in the garden, Louis "stops his work" and

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<sup>149</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 35-36.

<sup>150</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 37.

follows the rules of the game Thérèse is playing, which involves ‘tasting the soup’ she has concocted, and asking (“on the sly”) if he should throw away the contents or not.

In another game (one of “thousands”), Louis pretends to be overcome by admiration (“ecstasy”) for Thérèse botanical talent (her garden and May altar) to suggest that she had created a masterpiece.<sup>151</sup> Putting his adult judgment criteria aside, Louis confirms Thérèse’s sense of accomplishment – from the work she put into it and from satisfying an eye unspoilt by criticism. Thérèse’s creative endeavour leads to a game of mutual admiration. She asks whether her creative effort is pleasing, and he replies with an effusion of delight, his exaggeration giving her the clue that it is not real criticism.<sup>152</sup> He becomes heroic in his appraisal/defence of her talent. Louis’ co-operation dignifies her being a child, validates the value of play, and nourishes her imagination. Such experience supports later expressing freedom with God (sensing her ideas impact God; feeling God assesses her small efforts generously).

Taking Thérèse along with him, Louis sometimes takes her fishing. In the open space, in each other’s company, she begins to meditate. Feeling ‘right’ (happy) allows the ‘not right’ to penetrate (Zélie’s absence).<sup>153</sup> However, being secure and protected by Louis, allows Thérèse freedom to be excited by an oncoming storm.<sup>154</sup> On their walks, Louis supplies her with money to express charity on their behalf.<sup>155</sup>

Feast days were associated with being indulged by her family.<sup>156</sup> Louis, Marie, and Pauline’s feeling of anticipation, purpose, and unity, on these days, translated into

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<sup>151</sup> “[Papa] did all as I asked him... He would open [his eyes] and then go into an ecstasy to please me, admiring what I really believed was a masterpiece! I would never come to an end if I really wanted to portray a thousand little actions like this which crowd into my memory.” *Story of a Soul*, 37.

<sup>152</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 37.

<sup>153</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 37.

<sup>154</sup> The burden of protection being upon him, Louis was less enamoured by the storm. *Story of a Soul*, 38.

<sup>155</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 38.

<sup>156</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 41. “The feasts!” evoked happiness through Pauline communicating the “mysteries,” and through the expression of these mysteries: “What a joy it was for me to throw flowers beneath the feet of God! Before allowing them to fall to the ground, I threw them as high as I could and I was never so happy as when I saw my roses touch the sacred monstrance.”

favour toward Thérèse: staying in bed longer than on other days, being brought chocolate to drink while in bed, and then being dressed-up by her sisters.<sup>157</sup> Going to Mass involved the felt-honour of walking beside Louis, and felt-admiration from onlookers (by her association with an esteemed man).<sup>158</sup> Thérèse was also privy to a close view of Louis' tears during the sermon.<sup>159</sup> Though sad at the day's end (at the thought of her family being once again dispersed), she was carried home on Louis' shoulders, and they contemplated the stars.<sup>160</sup> In winter, after dinner, checkers would be played, then, Louis would teach 'eternal' things by his songs or poems while rocking her and Celine on his knees.<sup>161</sup> Alone together for prayers, she was moved by his demeanour.<sup>162</sup>

a. *Summary of Self-development, Mercy and Play*

The potion and garden games illustrate the value of play. In his allowing himself to be in her charge, and lending support to her imagining, Thérèse experiences Louis' grace. Before she can advise him of any rules, he first elevates her – a form of mercy. Louis' agreement to be fed by her tells her that he knows what it means to be young, small and tended to, and agrees that she knows how to be wifely (queen) and motherly, and, most importantly, that he sees value in giving himself to this activity. His cooperation with her play-acting allows her to practice roles, acknowledges her aspirations, overlooks her childly limitations, and finds her imaginary initiatives as worthy of his participation, all which form a positive and hopeful self.<sup>163</sup> The possibility of play requires the caregiver

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<sup>157</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 41.

<sup>158</sup> Thérèse writes: "everyone seemed to think it so wonderful to see such a *handsome* old man with such a *little daughter* that they went out of their way to give them their places" (emphasis Thérèse's). *Story of a Soul*, 41-42.

<sup>159</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 42, "His eyes at times were filled with tears which he tried in vain to stop; he seemed no longer held by earth so much did his soul love to lose itself in the eternal truths."

<sup>160</sup> Visiting Uncle Isidore for dinner without Marie or Pauline was a fearful event. *Story of a Soul*, 42.

<sup>161</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 42- 43.

<sup>162</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 43.

<sup>163</sup> Richard D. E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2004),43. Hugo Rahner in *Man at Play, or Did You Ever Practice Eutrapelia?* Translated by Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (Burns and Oates, 1965), 1-11, speaks of a God who is not confined to the concept of work, but according to Proverbs 8:31-32, is "at play," and that "creation has no 'point' beyond its existence as God's loving gift, and all that he requires is of his playmates is that they play along with him, like the David of 2 Samuel 6:21."

to momentarily put aside his height. Louis also takes Thérèse into his world, a world of God, of physical beauty and feeling. While on his knee, she experiences him cherishing his heritage, and, at Mass, his vulnerability (tears). Though not invited into all of his thought, Louis does not hide his feelings from Thérèse. She feels included in (and worthy of) their depth, so that affective depth becomes something she values in herself.

The feast day with her family represents for Thérèse the nourishment of a ‘good self’ as sacramental, signifying family as communion that originates in, and images God. Von Balthasar writes that Thérèse was “born into a family which immediately serves her as an image of heaven;” Thérèse looked “to her father, her father look[ed] to God, and so she learn[ed] to look to God.”<sup>164</sup> “Looking to” is part of Thérèse’s response to Louis’ love and esteem for her. Thérèse holds up her father’s God inasmuch as he names this being as the source and object of his love, patience, and vitality.<sup>165</sup> However, in his regular leaving (and not preventing her sisters, her carers, from leaving), Louis fails to stop the dissolution of her security. Her image of God, based on this, is of gentleness, warmth and depth, but concerned or unable to keep her loved ones together. God is weak in his defence of a physically present (this world) family environment for Thérèse. Thérèse does not feel secure. She welcomes Pauline’s mothering but fears Pauline withholding her favour.

## 5. The Years of Suffering

We now review Thérèse’s life from eight years of age to the writing of *Manuscript A* (in 1895, at twenty-two years of age), using Thérèse’s correspondence where it is available. In this period, concepts about God are pressed onto Thérèse, from pious devotions of the time and Jansenism, where moral rigorism, “refusal of the world” (temporal gain and happiness) and great personal piety, are believed to be a mark of the

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<sup>164</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Mission* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 72. Balthasar states that “the entire activity of the Martin household is for Thérèse the place and symbol of heavenly goods.” “Symbolic vision and grasp of wholeness precede the development of abstract thought and provide the surest guide for the awakening mind. The world is wholly sacramental, its appearance an effective symbol of the Spirit of God working through appearances and matter.”

<sup>165</sup> Without this, ‘God’ will not be properly sustained, as exemplified by Sartre with his grandparents. See Chapter Two, 81-82.



elect.<sup>166</sup> Moral rigorism involved self-examination for possible sin so to be in a ready state for the sacraments. This did not just involve examining one's behaviour for sins committed, but scrutinizing one's motives (so to divest oneself of possible self-satisfactions).<sup>167</sup> In this, Thérèse is confronted by the idea of God as such unapproachable perfection, and herself as so lacking in goodness, that their only point of interaction is acknowledgment of doubt over her every motive.<sup>168</sup> Yet, latent in her psyche is a God who affirms a Thérèse who is utter delight, who does not doubt the sincerity of her efforts, and who defends her intention – as all is not yet visible in the still developing child.

*a. Impasse*

Thérèse is cared for and taught by her sisters until they enter Carmel. As the youngest who sought by obedience to please God – inextricable from family harmony and her “circle of security” which threatens to evaporate – Thérèse is powerless in the face of her sisters' ordinary pain, jealousy and ambitions.<sup>169</sup> This kind of powerlessness, where control over one's actions is taken hostage by other persons' ambitions, spiritual though they be, is, arguably, congruent with Constance Fitzgerald's description of “impasse,” as it relates to St John of the Cross's “Dark Night,” where

there is no way out of, no way around, no rational escape from, what imprisons one, no possibilities in the situation.... Impasse is experienced not only in the problem but also in any solution rationally attempted. ... The whole life situation offers a depletion, has the word limits written upon it. ... intrinsic to the experience of impasse is the impression and feeling of rejection and lack of assurance from those on whom one counts...the support systems on which one has depended [have been] pulled out from under one and [one] asks if anything, if anyone, is trustworthy.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> “Jansenism,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Thompson/Gale; Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 2002-2003), 719.

<sup>167</sup> “Not soiling” her “baptismal robe,” an expression we read in Thérèse's writing, suggests that this sacrament is not so much an ongoing salvific process of conversion, but maintenance of purity.

<sup>168</sup> This scrupulous self-examination is named as “scruples.”

<sup>169</sup> Thérèse's immaturity, depression and unhappiness stood in Pauline's way, and made it difficult for Marie to have peaceful control at home.

<sup>170</sup> Constance Fitzgerald OCD, “Impasse and the Dark Night,” *In Living with Apocalypse, Spiritual Resources for Social Compassion* (San Francisco: Harper & Rowe, 1984), 93- 116, 2. Accessed 04/10/2010 from <http://www.baltimorecarmel.org/saints/John%20of%20the%20Cross/impasse%20and%20dark%20night.htm>

When Pauline unexpectedly enters Carmel, forgetting her promised motherhood and sisterhood (as hermits into the desert), it is utter suffering for Thérèse because all freedom to go forward, or to do good is withdrawn. Thérèse may be understood as helplessly ‘impacted’ by an impasse, as described by Iain Matthew,<sup>171</sup> “leading “to the admission that, ultimately, I am not the one who saves. I am not my saviour...God is.” We cannot “be our own liberators ... ultimate healing lies beyond our grasp,” as “the real wound is our need for God, and God himself must be the cure.” “God cannot be conquered or achieved.”<sup>172</sup> The following events attest to this.

After her mother’s death,<sup>173</sup> through social contact outside the home, her sisters’ tutelage, schooling at the convent, and life with the Guérins, Thérèse encounters religion and society away from the warmth of family mercy.<sup>174</sup> There are rules and other realities, apart from this warmth, which press to be integrated into one’s ‘pleasing God’. From eight to fourteen years she will struggle, locked in an impasse.<sup>175</sup> During these years, Thérèse tries to please Pauline and Marie. At the Benedictine abbey she fails to enjoy school, feeling the weight of herself “too serious, shy, and withdrawn,”<sup>176</sup> which she does not wish to trouble her family with, as she experiences this as a failure in terms of fault rather than loss that impinges upon her. Her isolation from the mischief and competition of ordinary play however, too, marks the beginning of a sensed separateness, and the need for an ongoing interior life (with God her unseen friend and defender) – suffering - felt difference heralds her special mission that will define her saintliness.

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<sup>171</sup> Iain Matthew, *The Impact of God: Soundings from St John of the Cross* (United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 70.

<sup>172</sup> Matthew, *The Impact of God*, 70.

<sup>173</sup> Thérèse’s early correspondence until 1887, surrounding ordinary bourgeois pastimes and concerns, is embroidered with the expressions of affection, such as “I am kissing you with all my heart.” Innocence is cherished and adored, and Thérèse is its present representation. Sisters, cousins, and aunt, exchange affection in writing. The adjective “petit,” used to express endearment by making its object diminutive, is applied prolifically to both persons and to things. *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 143, 211, 212.

<sup>174</sup> Prayers were to be recited at by Thérèse and Celine alone at Mme Leriche’s home as if a ritual independent of human relating. *Story of a Soul*, 33.

<sup>175</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98.

<sup>176</sup> Vitz and Lynch describe this as “Symptom Four” of Separation Anxiety. Vitz and Lynch, “Thérèse of Lisieux From the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety,” 67.

Pauline's unexpected departure for Carmel leaves Thérèse bereft. She felt Pauline agreed to be "a hermit" with her wish (felt as special intimacy), where Pauline "was waiting for me [Thérèse] to be big enough to leave."<sup>177</sup> Thérèse took this as big enough to be taken with her, not left behind. Pauline, without confiding her plan to Thérèse, leaves unexpectedly. The idea that Pauline would not wait for her brings "bitter tears."<sup>178</sup> When, in the Carmel speak-room, Pauline gives her a hurried last five minutes, after her cousins, Thérèse dissolves into tears.<sup>179</sup> The face Thérèse empowered to nourish her abandons her, leaving her alone with the part of her self that was drawn to the desert. Vitz and Lynch describe Thérèse as succumbing to depression associated with Separation Anxiety Disorder; a fragile state becomes even more brittle after her mother's death.<sup>180</sup> She develops headaches, and becomes 'difficult'.<sup>181</sup> Pauline and Prioress Marie de Gonzague write to Thérèse, persuading her, in spiritual language (metaphors) to change her behaviour, so that she might be acceptable to God (and Carmel).<sup>182</sup> Thérèse's letters searching for love are met by Pauline's exhortation to renounce herself for Jesus.<sup>183</sup>

This morning...you were crying like a baby! But since I've preached to you and scolded you I must now act as an indulgent sister...I'm asking... that [my little Thérèse] seek each day the means of pleasing the child Jesus, and to do this, that that she offer him all the flowers [sufferings] on her path! Yes, gather always these little hidden flowers...to form your crown one day.<sup>184</sup>

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how naughty of you, Mademoiselle, to aim at being sick like this! Wait till I

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<sup>177</sup> Italics Thérèse's. *Story of a Soul*, 56-57.

<sup>178</sup> "I understood what life was...it appeared to me in all its reality, and I saw it was nothing but a continual suffering and separation." *Story of a Soul*, 57-58.

<sup>179</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 151.

<sup>180</sup> Vitz and Lynch support this through Thérèse's own declaration: declares this herself, "my happy disposition completely changed after mama's death." (*Story of a Soul*, 34-35). Vitz and Lynch, "Thérèse of Lisieux From the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety," 65.

<sup>181</sup> "...you will work to correct [the little fights with Celine]..." *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 158-159.

<sup>182</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 183- 222

<sup>183</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 150-160.

<sup>184</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 150.

scold you... how eager I am to see... [you] open to the very gentle sun of the child Jesus' love...cure yourself quickly in order to come and see your Agnes.<sup>185</sup>

During that December Mother Marie de Gonzague writes in reply to Thérèse's sleeplessness, crying, and not eating, stating "if my dear little daughter follows what I advise her to do, she will... see her Agnes of Jesus again, and like her...become a good and fervent spouse of Jesus."<sup>186</sup> Pauline's letters intensify, oblivious to Thérèse's real need

You are distressing me...you are causing me worries. And worry is such an ugly flower. What should I say to you my dear little child...we must love God more and more. Oh! Don't you see, in that is life's only joy, even for little children... I trust little Jesus will caress you very often... and, as a consequence, that you may merit those caresses by very many efforts and by love.<sup>187</sup>

When her Uncle Isidore (who represented a threat to her security)<sup>188</sup> states that she is at present too "soft-hearted," Thérèse becomes unwell, appearing to retreat from her self, from her bodily senses.<sup>189</sup> Once Rose, Zélie, and Pauline mirrored the value of her soft-hearted and sincere self; now, defenceless and overwrought, Thérèse (we suggest) loses her 'self'.<sup>190</sup> During this state, she refuses to let Marie go any distance from her.<sup>191</sup> Pauline continues 'scolding',<sup>192</sup> but after a month she softens, promising long visits

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<sup>185</sup> Pauline named Thérèse her "rosebud." *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 154.

<sup>186</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 156. Marie de Gonzague takes up the role of spiritual mothering since Thérèse's request for entry into Carmel at nine.

<sup>187</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 157. At 158-159, Pauline writes, further, "...be very good during this Lent. Each day you will have to offer to the child Jesus a pretty bouquet made up of acts of virtue. I desire above all, that your flowers [self-denials] be gathered in the very beautiful garden of gentleness, for I am thinking at this moment of the little fights with Celine. [This refers to Marie's difficulty with the Celine and Thérèse's arguments]. Oh, you will work to correct this my little child? ... you will draw profit from everything, just as the bee gathers honey from the tiniest flowers.

<sup>188</sup> See *Story of a Soul*, 35, 42. Uncle "frightened me, and I wasn't as much at ease in his home as I was at Les Buissonnets..."

<sup>189</sup> After Uncle's speech, Thérèse is too "fatigued" to go out, and then begins to "tremble," which warming cannot stop. She is then often "delirious, saying things that had no meaning," appearing to be in a faint, sometimes unable to open her eyes. *Story of a Soul*, 60-63.

<sup>190</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 65. This state sometimes prevents her from recognizing other faces (suggesting -I have to be me in order to recognize you).

<sup>191</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 165.

<sup>192</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 163-164.

upon Thérèse's recovery.<sup>193</sup> When Thérèse fails to recognize Marie, who is beside her, Marie, Leonie, and Celine, in distress, throw themselves into prayer beside Thérèse's bed.<sup>194</sup> Thérèse suddenly recovers through a "ravishing smile" from "the Blessed Virgin" (*sourire de la Vierge*).<sup>195</sup>

The sisters at Carmel question Thérèse over the vision, wanting to know objective details.<sup>196</sup> Thérèse becomes guarded over her it, as her reviving vision was a relational event, and not an objective scene. Earlier, a priest at a retreat she attended, described how lying about a vision was a grave sin that would endanger worthily taking communion.<sup>197</sup> This marks the beginning of Thérèse's "scruples" – doubt with regard to the genuineness of her sickness and healing,<sup>198</sup> then, to the intention behind each good work. Pauline and Marie's directing Thérèse to critically examine herself demolished her sense (developed under Zélie's care) of her intention as well-meant (simply doing what it has learned so far). Examining herself as to whether her intention/action was undividedly good becomes her persecutor.<sup>199</sup> Marie, recognizing that this is neurotic rather than pious (though Thérèse obeyed what was put upon her), works against it.<sup>200</sup> "Scruples" involves returning to a possible mistake to correct it. It fears the mistake's consequences, and the inadequacy of the self (felt in the face of who it fails to please, or by the unexpected loss of an approving face). Pauline has asked Thérèse to improve herself, while her *face* remains hidden in Carmel. Thérèse later wrote, "Pauline was lost to me...as if she were dead;" "*Pauline* had become a saint who was no longer able

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<sup>193</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 166-168.

<sup>194</sup> O'Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew Her*, 173.

<sup>195</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 65-66.

<sup>196</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 67. "They [the sisters] asked me if the Blessed Virgin was carrying the child Jesus, or if there was much light, etc. All these questions... caused me much pain."

<sup>197</sup> At this time there was fear and suspicion among clergy about the authenticity of visions. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 32.

<sup>198</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 67.

<sup>199</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 84, 88.

<sup>200</sup> Pauline wrote "me a nice letter each week...and aided me in the practice of virtue." *Story of a Soul*, 74, 88.

to understand the things of earth...the miseries of ...Thérèse;" if she were to know of them it would have prevented "her from loving her Thérèse as much."<sup>201</sup>

Thérèse was once audacious in her self-confidence. As a little child, hearing from Marie that infants formerly received communion after their baptism, "she was amazed and asked 'Why then is this no longer the case now?'"<sup>202</sup> When she saw she was to be left alone for midnight mass at Christmas, she proposed, "If you will take me with you, I too will go to communion. I could slip in among the others and no-one would take any notice. Could I do that?"<sup>203</sup> Now, at eleven, in preparation for her much delayed communion,<sup>204</sup> Thérèse was

encouraged to practice a meticulous form of asceticism. Marie formed the ideas and Thérèse applied them literally...Pauline adorned them with ...symbols: roses, violets...<sup>205</sup>

#### *b. Boarding School*

The Martins' isolating themselves from society is cited as the cause of Thérèse's felt ineptness at boarding school,<sup>206</sup> but it could be argued that depression exacerbated this.<sup>207</sup> She is sad, and "...did not know how to enter into games of my age level." Upon her first communion, she began to look forward to "practicing virtues seriously," but "came in contact with students who were... distracted, and unwilling to observe

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<sup>201</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 88.

<sup>202</sup> O'Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew Her*, 88.

<sup>203</sup> O'Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew Her*, 88

<sup>204</sup> Marie recalls the imposition of a year's delay on her first communion date (due to her January birthdate) caused her "a great deal of suffering." O'Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew Her*, 87.

<sup>205</sup> "Thus the symbolism of the flower entered the vocabulary... [and] the spirituality of Thérèse." *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 182.

<sup>206</sup> "Our parents reared all of us in a spirit of detachment from the good things of this world." O' Mahony, *St Thérèse of Lisieux By Those Who Knew Her*, 85.

<sup>207</sup> Difficulty in learning is supported by Vitz and Lynch, as a distress (Criterion D) which manifests Separation Anxiety. Vitz and Lynch, "Thérèse of Lisieux From the Perspective of Attachment theory and Separation Anxiety," 69-70.

regulations...”<sup>208</sup> She sought “permission to learn [the catechism] during my recreation periods...My efforts were crowned and I was always first.”<sup>209</sup> Thérèse wants to compete spiritually – for a God who asks this – and have her spiritual mastery acknowledged, but no-one is interested in such competition. She admits to privately feeling that she was “born for *glory*” through becoming a “great *saint*,”<sup>210</sup> destined for more than small satisfactions.

While “affectionate,” she felt her fidelity “misunderstood,” and did “not beg for ...affection that was refused.”<sup>211</sup> She learns how affection can be won (in Celine), but refuses to do what is required;<sup>212</sup> she cannot bring herself to trade in flattery. Earlier, in her return to Alençon, she found that though she enjoyed being fêted, this seemed trivial next to the memory of death and its suffering.<sup>213</sup> Her mother’s absence, felt each day, draws a sober awareness suited to her circumstances. Grief impinges on her. At school, something greater than games is needed to lift her from inward thought – such as stories about transcendent realities.<sup>214</sup> With the faces that love her marked by work and tears, Thérèse senses affection bought by flattery and manipulation as shallow. Further, survival till now has cost *her* much.

With boarding school too much, due to headaches, Thérèse is given private lessons.<sup>215</sup> When she hears of Marie’s leaving for Carmel, further depleted, clingy tearfulness is added to scruples.<sup>216</sup> Thérèse disowns her attic room with shrines to her many interests,

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<sup>208</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 53, 81.

<sup>209</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 81.

<sup>210</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 72.

<sup>211</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 82.

<sup>212</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 83.

<sup>213</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 78.

<sup>214</sup> Thérèse composes stories at recess, eventually forbidden this by the mistress. *Story of a Soul*, 81.

<sup>215</sup> This occurs at Mm Papinot’s home where she receives unsolicited compliments. *Story of a Soul*, 81, 85-86.

<sup>216</sup> In 1886. *Story of a Soul*, 90, 91.

and her pursuit of Pauline and Marie.<sup>217</sup> She forms a union with God and holds this between her human relationships.<sup>218</sup> Her remaining goal, to be a saint, is thwarted by inability to actualize her good intentions.<sup>219</sup> For help, she turns to her deceased siblings whose faces she has never seen, as if the dead are more present to her than the living.<sup>220</sup> Her wish is to master herself, so that she can become a nun, a saint – familiar steps to prove that she *is* good.

Just as she was unable to make her goodness understood at school, at home she is unable to sacrifice without acknowledgment from those she aimed her good *at*, causing tears.<sup>221</sup> Accepting her sisters' idea of having to be 'perfect' before entry to the religious life, Thérèse is alienated from her childly self. She strives, but she has no power over her growing-up, which depends on external affirmation, and physical development. Still begging to be acknowledged, she is not yet in possession of a self whose riches might be renounced. Further, her ascetic practice, instead drawing her toward a loving face, turns her to look at herself.

### c. *Grace*

Thérèse will write that her predicament is overcome by grace.<sup>222</sup> Louis, arriving home tired from Midnight Mass at Christmas (1886), remarks, "fortunately, this will be the last year" for filling Thérèse's shoes, the Martins' Christmas practice for small children.<sup>223</sup> The remark "pierces" her, but Louis' testiness (anticipating her tears) perhaps 'cries' for Marie's help (Marie has left only two months earlier), which will evoke Thérèse mothering him in her place. She has mothered Louis before in play, now

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<sup>217</sup> She recalls others stating that she had a "weak character," ruled by the desire to please others. *Story of a Soul*, 90-91. Here Thérèse expresses anger toward the things that represent who she was (hopes in relation to loved ones).

<sup>218</sup> She later denies Pauline and Marie her confidences in the name of detachment.

<sup>219</sup> "Thwarting" is the true self in mutiny over the cost of pleasing.

<sup>220</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 93. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211.

<sup>221</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 97.

<sup>222</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98.

<sup>223</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98.



her moment has come in reality. Louis needs someone to be Zélie/Marie.<sup>224</sup> An impasse ends. From Christmas onward, ‘infused with charity’,<sup>225</sup> Thérèse can replicate Zélie’s role. From her new out-going disposition, Thérèse re-interprets her commitment to sanctity through a maternal symbol: “saving souls.” From her desire to please Jesus,<sup>226</sup> she asks for what she believes Jesus previously wants (that the criminal Pranzini will repent before his execution).<sup>227</sup> In this way her request will be fulfilled. Jesus fulfils her request by pleasing himself.<sup>228</sup>

*d. Summary of Suffering an Impasse*

While separated from familiar comfort, Thérèse encounters religion apart from relation. Pretty sentiments about flowers representing self-denials, to draw the child Jesus, however, do not dignify Thérèse’s powerlessness to recapture Pauline’s presence. She persists with this, the familiar symbol of her culture, nevertheless, as the path to the cloister, and to sainthood. In her scruples, Thérèse experiences herself as needing to be in control of her goodness to stay Pauline’s disappearing face.<sup>229</sup> Pauline is lost to her because she has become unreal, “no longer able to understand the things of earth,” while Marie demands ascetic rigour.<sup>230</sup> Both, in effect, ask her to give up needing a mother to reflect her value. She cannot divest herself of need; she can only suffer it or deny its presence. God releases her from scruples by replacing self-judgment with peace, and reminds her (subliminally) of the grace she once received, allowing her relieve Louis at Christmas. She becomes God’s conduit for God’s saving. God who unexpectedly and freely bestows favour to the helpless one constitutes a ‘return’ to reality. She enters into a conversation with this God.

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<sup>224</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98. She “resumed her strength of soul” which she lost when her mother died.

<sup>225</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 97-98.

<sup>226</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98-99.

<sup>227</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 100. She does not purchase Pranzini’s forgiveness through her prayers, denials, and merits, but simply obtains a sign of his forgiveness. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood*, 36-37.

<sup>228</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 100-101.

<sup>229</sup> Matthew, *Impact of God*, 70.

<sup>230</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 88.

## 6. Toward Carmel: Realizing her Goal to be a Nun

The above leads to a spiritual conversation between Thérèse and Celine (around a shared book, *The End of the Present World*), which forms a prelude to Thérèse declaring that she has a vocation, and seeking early entry to Carmel.<sup>231</sup> Louis not only agrees to Thérèse's request, but joins himself to her cause which takes them to the bishop and then Rome.<sup>232</sup> Achieving her goal is unexpectedly difficult, fraught with refusals.<sup>233</sup> Thérèse encounters rules in the name of religion aimed toward restraining women.<sup>234</sup> Along the way, she uses a metaphor supplied by Pauline: she is the infant Jesus' toy ball, an object which must be content to amuse him while it takes his interest.<sup>235</sup> Refusal into Carmel is imagined as Jesus' momentary abandonment of her, which she practices to welcome.<sup>236</sup> Yet all is felt as bitter, and the waiting represents another impasse.<sup>237</sup> Supported by Louis, and Pauline's correspondence, Thérèse joins herself to the suffering.<sup>238</sup>

Thérèse's encounter with bishops revealed them to be unlike God, who gives in a way that is consistent with what he wants. When Thérèse prays for the conversion that God desires, it eventuates. Bishops however, have their hands tied,<sup>239</sup> citing prudence as the basis of their refusal for a child to enter Carmel to pray for them.<sup>240</sup> They have to

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<sup>231</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 103. *Correspondence: Volume I*, 273-76, 281-82.

<sup>232</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 108-109.

<sup>233</sup> "I believed I'd be able to fly to Carmel." *Story of a Soul*, 109.

<sup>234</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 140.

<sup>235</sup> *Correspondence: Volume I*, 335, 353, 357-358. Thérèse takes this symbol from a poem Pauline sent her, which teaches surrender to a child. *Correspondence: Volume II*, 1279-1280.

<sup>236</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 136.

<sup>237</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 357- 368.

<sup>238</sup> Thérèse feels denial of self-will should begin now, and also practices separation from the world. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 800-802, 803-805. See also *Story of a Soul*, 130.

<sup>239</sup> Monseigneur Révérony, delegate of the Bishop of Bayeux, did not further Thérèse's case during her audience with the Pope. *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 351-353.

<sup>240</sup> Delatroëtte, the Lisieux Carmel's ecclesiastical Superior, disapproved of young Thérèse entering the rigour of the Carmelite life. *Story of a Soul*, 111.

respect the boundary of their jurisdiction, and be cautious about an extreme impulse to serve God. The girl who as a little child insisted to Marie that she go where ever God invites her faces intransigent refusal. Powerlessness becomes a theme. Human wills block her path. Decisions based on other than her own desire (which she aligns with God's will), translate into painful, inexorable realities. Comparing her ability to self-determine to an inanimate object, a ball, is apt.<sup>241</sup>

In his grace at Christmas Thérèse felt Jesus as one who is entirely 'for' whoever chooses him. She gives her self to Jesus, not to remove all suffering, but to be on the path to knowing, loving, and interacting with the One who is *for* her (who answered her in her distress), so that she might please him. She would like to impress her love upon him, but how can she know, interact, influence, *sway*, the One she pursues, when he eludes her? The answer is to do with her will and God's will. Thérèse contends with an overwhelming urge, which is felt to be God-given. She has control over very little, but this – her interior life and her desire for God – she makes much of. We turn to another cause of suffering in Thérèse: Louis' losing his mental faculties.

*a. Seven Years in Carmel*

Thérèse's move to Carmel (approval gained in March 1888) brings peace insofar as it realizes her aim to be with God in the desert. But here she suffers misunderstanding, spiritual aridity, the absence of her director, lack of encouragement for spiritual progress, and it is brought to her attention that she has no adequate work skills. Though she is professed, as the third member of one family, she is not able to become a voting member, so she is unable to hold office. Marie de Gonzague concedes to Thérèse's spiritual value to others, but Thérèse is caught between her and Pauline's rivalry for office, in a "storm" of tension.<sup>242</sup> These pains are converted to willing humiliations, as we shall see in *Man C*, but when her father suffers his dementia, Thérèse experiences bitter helplessness, an impasse of a different kind. At Pauline's instruction, Thérèse

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<sup>241</sup> This image is from a pamphlet received between her trips to Bayeux and Rome. Jesus punctures the ball (not in the original poem) and finds, Thérèse reflects in *Man A*, its inner substance (her disposition) pleasing. *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 335-336, 499.

<sup>242</sup> Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), 54-58. See also Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 776.

fixes on the “Holy Face of Jesus,”<sup>243</sup> which brings to mind Louis’ suffering. (Later, Louis will evoke in Thérèse affinity for Jesus’ merciful love.) Years of fearing she might hurt Jesus by her sin come to an end for Thérèse through the Franciscan Fr Prou.<sup>244</sup> She welcomes this ‘news’ about Jesus’ resilience (reminiscent of the quality of her caregivers in infancy). Yet Thérèse continues to use reparative symbols, enduring suffering the humiliation of Louis and the distance between herself and Céline as a means to lower herself. When Louis is allowed to return to his family, and Pauline becomes prioress, Thérèse briefly experiences a reprieve from pain.<sup>245</sup> Thérèse experiences darkness with regard to her faith, and the fact of Céline as still at home is a torment for Thérèse who fears the prospect of her remaining in “the world.” Thérèse persuasively reminds Celine that she belongs to God.<sup>246</sup> Upon Louis’ death, Céline enters Carmel.<sup>247</sup> This takes us to 1895 when Thérèse writes her autobiography.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

McDargh develops an argument on the human imaging of God around three points. He observes that the God who is called upon in time of need dwells in a person’s centre of value and meaning and does not consist of abstract concepts, no matter how beautifully plausible. He then explores what the human person’s centre of value and meaning is comprised of through “object relations” theory. From there he investigates how the idea of God and the concept of transcendence form, and concludes that the formation of the image of God is inseparable from self-formation, which is influenced by early affective experiences in relation to plenitude (or scarcity) and limitation. Through examples, McDargh shows that persons in ordinary life construct “cognitively-credible” God-images to fit their lives, but upon a time of need there is a return to a deep felt-sense about God.

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<sup>243</sup>She fixes herself on the Holy Face while she suffers aridity and weakness. Conrad De Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the “Way of Spiritual Childhood” of St Therese of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), 107.

<sup>244</sup> At the heart of Carmel’s reparative theology was the need for sacrifice and suffering to console Jesus for the pain that sin brings him. Six, *Light of The Night*, 7-8.

<sup>245</sup> There is a brief “euphoria” which becomes a “storm” of rivalries in the convent. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 773, 774-776.

<sup>246</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 861-863.

<sup>247</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 284.

This chapter investigated what was most real for Thérèse, what affirmed her self,<sup>248</sup> especially in terms of felt-images of God, to identify a place to which she returns to after ‘leading out’ in life. It explored the matrix of her self-development, and the early out-going passage of her life. Contributing to her early self-sense, we saw Thérèse feel immersed in Rose and Zélie’s forgiving love, ‘raised’ by Louis as a companion, included in his moment of prayer, and carried on his shoulders. As a child, through her desire to be ‘holy’ (in amongst family), she questions rules that stop her from receiving God when she is willing (the reception of her first communion, entry into Carmel).

McDargh documents persons encountering crisis returning to a felt-sense in their early life. Thérèse suffered crises in the form of phases of helplessness, or “impasses:” she is unable to prevent Zélie’s death, to keep her family together, to grow up, to act like other school children, or spare Louis from humiliation. Ordinary growing pains are met by absence and correction; Marie and Pauline imply that her “faults” pain Jesus, and prevent her progress to a place in Carmel. Fear of loss, and desire to generate love is so great in Thérèse that paining the ones she loved by “faults, even if involuntary,” distresses her.<sup>249</sup> These helplessnesses bring certain felt-knowing into relief – restoration (reorganization) after a smile, remembrance of gracious action – a return.

In Carmel, with childliness permanently imposed on her, Thérèse suffers an impasse in being unable to ‘outgrow’ her youngest sister-role. But, through her early self and God images, she will reassess what it means to be holy – finding this less to do with inhuman perfection, and more to do with loving God, which entails knowing what her capacities are and what she might receive.

Before exploring these images, we turn to a leading-out phase in Thérèse at fourteen, through reading Arminjon’s *The End of the Present World*.<sup>250</sup> Where does this take her?

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<sup>248</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and The Study of Religion*, 27.

<sup>249</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 173-174.

<sup>250</sup> Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, translated by Susan Conroy (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **A Leading Out: Arminjon – “oil and honey in abundance”<sup>1</sup>**

To find an influence that might have led Thérèse away from a primary felt truth, we turn our attention to a book by Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*.<sup>2</sup> Thérèse read this in May 1887. On May 29 that year she asked Louis’ permission to enter the Carmelites, copying a passage on “Purgatory,” and then on June 4 and 5, on “Eternal Beatitude.” This book resonated with deep feelings, but did it also introduce false notions about herself and God?

Psychosocial development researcher Erik Erikson notes that the adolescent is open to discovering creeds, ready to commit to what will take them forward.<sup>3</sup> Till now, Thérèse had ingested a manual of restraint, *The Imitation of Christ*.<sup>4</sup> On reading Arminjon, hope, desire, and fidelity, to the point of (sexual) abandon, erupt in her. Feelings which sought shape found shape in Arminjon’s visions which, informed by Catholic-‘rightness’, centred on fidelity to God in an adversarial sphere. Here, where destructors of one’s familiar order make a bid for power, fidelity is expressed through pain, ignominy, and humiliation, to a judge-God who punishes defiance but rewards surrender. Alongside is a theme of expelling one’s ambivalences – physical urges, desire to explore, and attraction to ‘the world’ – a threat to familiarity (representing God). Directed to martyrdom, energy, in all its forms, physical and psychic, sexual, becomes inverted: its vibrancy and exuberance is spent on restraint, torture, and death. ‘Expelling ambivalences’ as one’s entire project, we note, will threaten to compromise the truth of one’s reality – a complexity of loyalties.

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<sup>1</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, translated by Susan Conroy (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Browning and Reed in Robert A. Browning and Roy A. Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1985), 106-108. See Erik H. Erikson, *Toys and Reasons: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1964), 106-107.

<sup>4</sup> *Imitation* was aimed to help people live “the common life,” a devout life for lay persons. See Introduction in Thomas À Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, translated by Betty I. Knott (Great Britain: Collins, Fontana Books), 1963.

As our investigation seeks evidence for a ‘leading-away’ from Thérèse’s earliest felt-truth, we begin with that truth. Earliest felt-truth may be assumed to form *in utero*, where there is “an original sense of inclusiveness and mutuality with all that exists,” an “‘oceanic’ feeling.”<sup>5</sup> After birth, Rose, Zélie, Louis, and her sisters arouse positive affects in Thérèse, leading to her becoming adept at expressing these – charming affection becomes her ‘part’ in a conversation, Thérèse’s distinctive ability, central to her identity. Through this she sought peace, bargained for forgiveness and amused. Thérèse encounters God in her “mothers” approval and disapproval of behaviour (God named as the source of their judgment).<sup>6</sup> She is brought to their sacramental rituals, where she learns that ‘God wants’ Thérèse to recite prayers, give alms, restrain herself, make sacrifices, and absorb their books.

When Rose, Zélie, Pauline, and Marie, leave Thérèse, she loses the opportunity to take her part in a familiar dialogue (where to be outgoing, grand, charming, affectionate, and obedient gains the other’s company and approval). This results in losing her ability to ‘speak’ her usual love. Pauline and Marie persuade Thérèse to direct her love toward God through practicing self-sacrifice (which also served to make Thérèse agreeable toward their new undertakings). While God continued to exist for Therese, in Pauline and Marie’s absence, perhaps *God was now not felt to support her efforts*.<sup>7</sup> From her account, Thérèse seems to feel unnoticed, superfluous, her familiar self-identity under threat.<sup>8</sup> At fourteen (Christmas 1886), Thérèse’s confidence in being a lover returns.<sup>9</sup> In May 1887, she reads *The End of the Present World*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Michael Balint called this the “harmonious interpenetrating mix-up.” John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 218.

<sup>6</sup> Faith, Rizzuto offers, develops via the “interaction between the theological ideas offered by [her] community’s tradition” and “the God and self-representations” a child brings “to confront these ideas.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> We have an early indication of God as together-with, or in a familiar other: during Zélie’s sickness, when Thérèse and Celine stay with Mme. Leriche, they feel odd at the prospect of no “Mama” to say prayers with. *Story of a Soul*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> See *Story of a Soul*, 91.

<sup>9</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 99, 101.

<sup>10</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102.

Despite its high millennialism and adversarial tone, Thérèse speaks of this book glowingly. She writes: after “the grace of Christmas,” freed from “scruples and its excessive sensitiveness,” “my mind developed.”<sup>11</sup> According to the instruction *Imitation* gives regarding the “vanity” of enquiry, “I confined myself to a certain number of hours [of study each day]... to mortify my intense desire to know things.”<sup>12</sup> Her “new desire for knowledge” leads to *The End of the Present World*, a religious work with the qualities of an adventure-romance (a genre she would otherwise disallow herself), which in 1895, she describes as a gift through which she became Jesus’ “own,” “beautiful in His eyes and...a mighty queen,” offering her “the means to love.”<sup>13</sup> Had Arminjon supplied her with a new conversation partner, and role – even allowed her to re-enter her familiar role, lost to her? If so, the book represented mercy, its author ‘noticing’ her and providing her with a purpose, recovering her possibility of self-becoming. She writes, “I wanted *to love*...”<sup>14</sup> The means were to be found in “... the *Imitation of Christ*, and in “Arminjon’s conferences” providing “*honey and oil in abundance*”.<sup>15</sup>

This reading was one of the greatest graces of my life. ... the impressions I received are too deep to express in human words.<sup>16</sup> All the great truths of religion, the mysteries of eternity plunged my soul into a state of joy not of this earth. I experienced already what God reserved for those who love him ... and seeing the eternal rewards had no proportion to life’s small sacrifices, I wanted *to love, to love Jesus with a passion*, giving Him a thousand proofs of my love while it was possible. I copied out several passages on perfect love, on the reception God will give His Elect at the moment *He* becomes their Reward... and I repeated over and over the words of love burning in my heart.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “...at this epoch in my life I was taken up with an extreme desire for learning. Not satisfied with the lessons and the work my teacher was giving me, I applied myself to some special studies in history and science, and I did this on my own.” *Story of a Soul*, 101.

<sup>12</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 101, 102. “I was nourished for a long time on the *Imitation of Christ*... I knew almost all the chapters of my beloved *Imitation* by heart. ... At Aunt’s they used to amuse themselves by opening the book at random and telling me to recite the chapter before them.” *Imitation* adjures to give up “desire for knowledge, because it distracts you and leads you astray.” “A humble ignorant man who serves God is better than a proud scholar...” À Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, Book I: 2, 38, 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 101.

<sup>14</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102.

<sup>16</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, ix. Susan Conroy translates “too deep to express” into “too intimate and too sweet for me to express.”

<sup>17</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102-103.



We investigate what in the book resonated with Thérèse's sense of herself as a recipient of mercy, and what diverted her from it.

## 1. Introduction

*The End of the Present World*, translated into English in 2008, is relatively new to English-language Thérésian research.<sup>18</sup> Many images assumed to be original to Thérèse may be traced to this book. Lent to Louis by the Carmelites, its symbols and aims were shared in the Martin home.<sup>19</sup> Through rhetoric, apocalyptic imagery, and hagiography, *The End of the Present World* appeals to Catholics to remain loyal to the doctrine of the Church with respect to the afterlife: heaven, purgatory and hell.<sup>20</sup> Arminjon names “pernicious” non-belief and a new eroding science as the enemy to the faith, contrasting the characteristics, plans, and demise of its perpetrators, with the characteristics, goal and reward of “the elect.” This supplies material for his thesis that justice relies on a finite opportunity to yield to God's mercy (which necessitates suffering), with endless damnation of those who fail to yield – ensuring God's overall power. Nine conferences argue “incontestable” truths via “reason” from doctrine and scriptures, accompanied by examples from saints and martyrs. Augustine's *The City of God* is felt in Arminjon's millennialism, generating excitement for a God who will soon bring justice.<sup>21</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Arminjon favours the writings of Augustine, who felt his ‘bodily’ and ‘spiritual’ being in conflict.<sup>22</sup> In *The City of God*, Augustine contrasts two cities – the

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<sup>18</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, ix-xiv. “Conferences preached at Chambéry Cathedral” were “edited in 1881 under the title *Fin du Monde présent et Mystères de la vie future.*” *Story of a Soul*, 102.

<sup>19</sup> Arminjon's symbols were shared especially between Thérèse and Celine. See *General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 449-451.

<sup>20</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xx. Arminjon includes Augustine's Hellenist imagery. Hellenism is “best” expressed in Aristotle's “notion of entelechy,” an “operation filled with function and so perfection; *dynamis*, not merely a power but a power toward, almost a longing...” Theos (a “demonstrable and reconceptualised divinity”), “psyche,” and “logos the very entelechy” of Western thought. F. E. Peters, “Hellenism and the Near East,” *Biblical Archaeologist*, Winter, 1983, pp 33-39, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Millennialism refers to reading the times from the perspective of apocalyptic writings: the end of the world is imminent via a cataclysmic event, making way for God's judgment and a new world-order. This is cathartic in the light of France's recent revolutions. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 235.

<sup>22</sup> Augustine felt his longing, in relation to the spirit-psyche, as from God (“O Thou, the Power of my soul, enter into it and fit it for Thyself”), but his bodily/sexual desires as inherited from Adamic sin,

earthly city “pagan, self-centred and contemptuous of God and the heavenly, devout God-centred and in search of grace”<sup>23</sup> arguing that God’s intended order is based on charity, and not on desiring and possessing created things as ends in themselves.<sup>24</sup> Arminjon frequently refers to “the *City of God*” and to Augustine’s discussion on the world’s end, death, judgment, purgatory, hell and heaven. Arminjon employs similar rhetoric (“voice of the nations”) and hagiography (demonstrating the foolishness of those contemptuous of God), but his polemic on pagan (modernist) hubris is more sustained.<sup>25</sup>

*a. Some Questions*

Arminjon tenders dogmas to ground his ‘objective’ arguments, but his emotional exclamations and appeals, speak loudest.<sup>26</sup> Did his sense of triumph for Catholics through damnation for ‘God-haters’ enter Thérèse’s theology? Conceding its anti-Semitism as “noxious,” yet finding its extremity as “mere hyperbole,” Thomas Nevin dismisses Arminjon’s book as holding any serious negative influence.<sup>27</sup> Might its

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hindering the satisfaction of his inner longing. Torn between inner longing and bodily desires, Augustine gave up his mistress. Though he speaks respectfully of her, he does not defend her worth, reducing that part of himself which needed her to “lust.” “I was simply a slave to lust. So I took another woman ... and thus my soul’s disease was nourished and kept alive as vigorously as ever, indeed worse than ever...” Augustine does not view the longing of his body as connected with his spirit. Augustine, *Confessions of St Augustine*, translated by F. J. Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 98-99, 124.

<sup>23</sup> Augustine, born in an African Roman province, studied Greco-Roman classicism, rhetoric and Neo-Platonism in Carthage. He converted from Manichaeism to Christianity. *City of God* grew out of his analysis of Rome’s collapse in 410, becoming a treatise of “Christianity versus the official pagan religion of imperial Rome.” Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods. With an Introduction by Thomas Merton, (New York: Random House, 1950), ix-x. For Augustine’s work in terms of two ‘stories’ of love, see Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Augustine observes congruence between the writings of Paul and the apocalypticists and Plato, Plotinus, and Aristotle, drawing inferences from nature, and citing biblical texts as support. *The City of God*, xii, 249-258. He holds, as an end, contemplation of God (perfect and ‘other’) above sensory engagement with the imperfect corporeal. God who embodies perfect reason is the God who fulfils us. “Platonists...had the wit to perceive that the human soul, immortal and rational, or intellectual, as it is, cannot be happy except by partaking of the light of that God by whom both itself and the world were made.” See also 303, 305-306.

<sup>25</sup> Arminjon’s use of dogmatic formulations reflects a Catholic anti-Modernist stance. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 227. *The City of God* offers a counterbalance of meditations on mercy. *The City of God*, 309.

<sup>26</sup> His emotion conveys: ‘justice for us Catholics, presently suffering in France!’ Arminjon aspires to follow Augustine; he “yearns” to have the “pathos” of his “voice on his lips!” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 235.

conceptions of “right,” however, be so embedded, Thérèse assumes them? Did those conceptions support imagery (combat, the opportunity for glorious martyrdom) that offered a new potency to impact on her ‘environment’, something she had lost?<sup>28</sup> We turn to the first of Arminjon’s “conferences.”

## 2. The End of the Present World: Beginning Conferences

Arminjon presents a drama that gives Catholics reason to shun “the world.” Joining “Catholic” voices, he defies “the rationalists,” who promote “accidental and meaningless evolution,” the “naturalists” who live self-indulgent lives without a care, and the idealist philosophers who hold history as the judge; unlike them, *we* await God’s justice, aware that “nothing can last beyond a finite duration.”<sup>29</sup> “Christian reason and the assent of all the nations bear witness that the world must end,” due to the will of God (and not natural causes), when the measure of saints, a finite predetermined elect, has been filled up.<sup>30</sup> From the outset, Arminjon sees the familiar as ‘right’, and shows God to have adversaries, represented by contemptuous, foreign ways of thinking. To this, he adds scarcity, namely, there is a limit to God’s patience.

Asserting that the end will be marked by “the good news” having been proclaimed throughout the world (the Church with her solemnities established uniformly), the Jews converted, and the Antichrist’s reign as begun, Arminjon begins his onslaught.<sup>31</sup> The Gospel must be preached to all with urgency, especially in the light of limits to God’s patience and of the final Judgment. With “innumerable multitudes” still “sunk in darkness,” the Gospel first needs to be preached until persons are left with no “excuse

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<sup>27</sup> Nevin writes that it “informed her attention to suffering” and “taught her of the compensation God’s faithful would receive in exchange for the sacrifices they would make in this life.” He reflects “fortunately ... unsavoury pages seem to have passed by one young reader’s notice altogether.” He then notes that Thérèse perhaps drew “needed assurance or reassurance” from Arminjon’s description of heavenly bliss, and that it was fortuitous that she lost this particular vision of heaven where Jews and Freemasons were inadmissible. Dismissing much of Arminjon’s severity as hyperbole, Nevin suggests Arminjon captures his listener’s attention by giving attention to the “disquiet” “true saints feel in the midst of their own happiness and prosperity ....because they distract one from the thought of God.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 177-180.

<sup>28</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xi, xii.

<sup>29</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xix, xvii-xviii, 9, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 11-15.

<sup>31</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 15-16.

to refuse to obey it.”<sup>32</sup> As all will be destroyed, Arminjon adjures, why build ourselves beautiful houses – as all that matters is whether on the “Day of Judgment” we are found to have possessed virtue?<sup>33</sup>

Thérèse would have heard this in Zélie’s cautions not to invest oneself in building a grand home (to her sister-in-law).<sup>34</sup> The idea of election was also familiar, given her Jansenist environment. For fourteen year old Thérèse, “election” probably amounted to a desire to be spared rather than being sunk in darkness, and, as desire to *be* one of the elect was already an indication of predestination, comfort could be found here, along with the certainty that she was neither “a rationalist” nor “a naturalist.” Finally, Thérèse indicates a sense of election in her felt-suitability to save Pranzini from the fires of hell.<sup>35</sup>

Arminjon warns his reader to await the persecution foretold in Daniel and Revelation.<sup>36</sup> God will “unleash” the “antichrist,” a human personifying evil, who must be born both a Jew and illegitimate, the opposite of Mary’s immaculate birth, “to punish the infidelity of men” and the “incredulity of the Jews” (who will be attracted to his “impious deeds and doctrine” and dissolute life).<sup>37</sup> The antichrist, converting “unbelievers and free-thinkers,” removing “Sunday observance,” and turning the liturgical year into a secular

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<sup>32</sup> Arminjon writes, “All heresies and schisms will be overcome, and the true religion will be practiced in all places...” Like “Noah’s day,” there will be no more faith on the earth, and, as persons had enough time to obtain the grace of repentance, God’s “patience [will be] finally exhausted.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 18-23, 25, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 33.

<sup>34</sup> When a neighbouring couple’s home collapses and the occupants die Zélie comments: “It’s a bad sign when all is going well. God in his wisdom has willed it thus, to make us remember that our home is our true country.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Shortly after reading Arminjon, Thérèse would pray for the conversion of Pranzini, a young criminal sentenced to death. *Story of a Soul*, 99-100.

<sup>36</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 41.

<sup>37</sup> In an “impious and foolish war,” the antichrist will circumcise and reintroduce bloody sacrifice in temple worship in Jerusalem, which almost conquers the “entire universe.” Ordaining priests, and conducting “impious rites,” “he is motivated by hatred.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 41-45. Confused as to what “sufficient grace” means, Arminjon writes, “...he will not be deprived of the assistance of his guardian angel, nor of the necessary help of sufficient grace, which God bestows in this life upon every single man; but his hatred of God will be so violent [that]... grace from above will never penetrate his heart.”

one, will bring about a secular society; and, unable to tolerate homage to anyone but himself, will become a treacherous despot who profanes the cross.<sup>38</sup> This time, marked by the zenith of science and discovery with the east the centre of politics and learning, will be a test for the elect, with many apostatizing.<sup>39</sup> With France representing his apocalyptic scenario, Arminjon pronounces apostates (the “impious” or “reprobates”) as the enemy, imbuing them with virile power.<sup>40</sup> When the celebration of the Mass ceases, the antichrist will be at his most violent.<sup>41</sup>

The “empire of evil” will arise through the mingling of races and surging military powers, and built upon “upon the ruins of the suppressed nationalities,” which is drawn to Jerusalem (the Jew’s ideal and hope, refusing integration into other nations).<sup>42</sup> Arminjon asks – viewing this “chaos,” progress, and ideas – is it not too difficult to imagine an antichrist rallying the minds of millions of “misled, seduced peoples?”<sup>43</sup> There will be unparalleled bloodthirstiness and tortures of unheard of refinement but this will produce glorious martyrs. There will be a great apostasy, but the antichrist, in also persecuting Jews, schismatics, heretics, deists, and every theistic sect, will serve

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<sup>38</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 46-49.

<sup>39</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 50, 48.

<sup>40</sup> The 1880 meaning for “impious” emerges through Arminjon’s writing. “Impious” in “*Le Grand Croix Larousse du XIX siècle* (1873) is “Someone who has no religion, who is opposed to the idea of religion;” and P. Larousse goes on to specify: “*Impious* is stronger than *irreligious* and that is stronger than *incredulous*.” So *impious* is the height of unbelief, for there is a desire in it to combat God and religion: “The impious takes pleasure in attacking religion and even blaspheming against God...” Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*. Translated by John Bowden, (London: SCM Press, 1995), 26. Arminjon describes “reprobates” as once faithed “faithless men” who occupy themselves with “ruses and machinations,” despotism and force, making dark, arrogant, and intimidating threats against the good who suffer violence and oppression, rights unrecognized and trampled underfoot. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 104.

<sup>41</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 52, 54 – 56.

<sup>42</sup> Arminjon describes the mingling of races as occurring through the Chinese “hurling” themselves upon “our Europe, enfeebled and forsaken by God.” He further describes Judaism as “Christianity without its apex.” Instead of having “a real motherland,” Jews have only an “ideal motherland, Palestine.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 59-62.

<sup>43</sup> Such rallying, ironically, occurred in history through Adolph Hitler, not a Jew. Arminjon writes that the antichrist’s aim will be the annihilation of Christianity. Pretending to be the messiah, he will lure support through riches, “signs and lying wonders,” captivating attention by “the passions and lust of women,” and perform miracles that parody Christ’s, but do not “transcend the laws of nature” because they reflect a sham doctrine. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 62-66.

God's justice, by removing Judaism, Islam, Freemasonry, and all subversive societies.<sup>44</sup> In heaven, "the voices of angels and of virgins ... confessors and holy martyrs will hail Christ...for the extermination of the wicked."<sup>45</sup>

Arminjon, thirsty for justice, reveals, in his simple eagerness for retribution, his level of 'development'.<sup>46</sup> Employing a self-preserving logic, that all is justifiable if it is 'for Israel or Israel's God', and the rationale of Rom 11:13-15 as guiding history, he advocates annihilation of non-Catholic expressions.<sup>47</sup> Such thinking, for young Thérèse, in a family which at its core felt that 'free-thinking' would threaten fealty to one culture, was perhaps not ill-fitting. Removed from any conflicting loyalties, without a loved one suffering over the struggle for an authentic creed, she might not have noticed its inadequacy. Arminjon's theodicy – violent means serving God's end – however, appears to feed on torture and destruction rather than quelling it; "unheard of refinement" of torture is now sought by martyrs.

### 3. The Resurrection of the Dead and the General Judgment

During the dates of reading Arminjon, Thérèse (writing to Jeanne Guerin in June 1887) intimates she was particularly taken by the subject of death and resurrection.<sup>48</sup> We may infer from, "I suppose you are very happy not to be listening to my sermons on death [anymore]..." that Arminjon's conjectures excited Thérèse in her desire for learning, especially "science."<sup>49</sup> On the continuity of life beyond death, Arminjon writes, "Once it is taken ... that the destinies of man are limited to the bounds of this present life, there

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<sup>44</sup> Jesus will then destroy him by his breath, whereupon the Catholic Church will "once again enter upon a period of prosperity and triumph." Converted, the Jews will "enrich" the "Church Militant." Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 57-58, 68.

<sup>45</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 68, 69.

<sup>46</sup> Was Judaism's (intellectual) autonomy, next to Catholicism's constraint to 'authority', felt as provocative? Arminjon aligns this freedom with arrogance, academic and material success, and pits these against innocence, good-will, genuineness, and deep affect.

<sup>47</sup> Romans 11:13-15 refers to the Jewish rejection of Jesus opening a time of favour for Christians; conversion of the Jews will then follow. Violence could be justified by a literalist interpretation of Lk 12: 49-53.

<sup>48</sup> *General Correspondence Volume I*, 274-275, 276.

<sup>49</sup> Her self-deprecation also alludes to her unusual interest (for a young woman). *General Correspondence Volume I*, 274-275, 276.

is no happiness in the world except in the crassest and most brazen materialism;” but, “the Catholic creed” assures that the resurrected will keep the bodies that were indwelt on earth.<sup>50</sup> Conceding that the body is of value, even the epitome of God’s works as the interpreter of both the visible and invisible order, Arminjon, however, leaps toward its capacity to emerge as spirit-life.<sup>51</sup> Arminjon’s interest in post-death embodiment<sup>52</sup> and his assertion that God is only concerned with great suffering and trials, perhaps leads to Thérèse losing interest in her silkworms and birds.<sup>53</sup>

God’s judgment, central to Arminjon’s concern, is envisioned as public. During one’s life, like “a divine telegraph,” each thought, the “moment it is conceived” (including what “people concealed from themselves”), each word, as “it is uttered, is ... transcribed in indelible letters, with frightening accuracy...” to be revealed “in detail” as public “spectacles.”<sup>54</sup> The “sons of Voltaire,” repent only when exposed;<sup>55</sup> in contrast, a priest who cured the sick, restored the sight of the blind, and refused offered wealth, “majestically ... raise[es] his head” with “nobility and virtue.”<sup>56</sup> Arminjon’s comparison is based on caricatures.

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<sup>50</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 76 -77.

<sup>51</sup> Without a body (to engage with the physical world), the spirit has no instrument to animate. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 81-82, 83-85.

<sup>52</sup> Separated molecules, the body’s essential material, will be reconstituted by angels, and our spirit infused by God (our present physical properties allow for this). Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 90, 91, 88.

<sup>53</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 130-131. Thérèse mentions her interest in death and afterlife between amiable concerns, and humour in her interests – the death of her silkworms, and Celine’s finch going to the taxidermist. *General Correspondence Volume I*, 274-275, 276.

<sup>54</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 105, 101-102. There is a sense that this judgment would be unsatisfactory without publicity.

<sup>55</sup> “[T]he sons of Voltaire, the leaders of free-thought and revolution who ... are hatching dark ... plots against Christ and his Church...will be terror-stricken, and ... appear with unspeakable horror, when they see ...Him whom they had wished to crush... [W]orshippers of the golden calf and the chameleons of wealth and power... drifting along with opinion and doctrine, with no ... compass than that of their ambition, ready to ride roughshod over their conscience and principles ... This hideous, repellent type [who] recurs ...at every period of crisis and social unrest... will exclaim: ‘we have erred then’. ... [It] is an absolutely certain truth that those ... who defy God and deride His threats will one day have a minute and rigorous account to render to His justice... the wicked who called the just fools, who glutted themselves on their tortures and tears, like starving men devouring bread, will learn ... that God does not suffer Himself to be mocked ... and all wrongs will be strikingly redressed.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 103-104, 106.

As Thérèse may have allowed Arminjon's evaluation, we examine it in terms of moral development. When is such thinking normative? Erik Erikson notes the appeal of clear representation of right and wrong, "clarity of faith" to the young adolescent: adolescents need, and are nourished by, the opportunity to demonstrate faith in what is right with the perception of 'right' as external to them.<sup>57</sup> "The crucial issue for adolescents is to begin to find a great faith – someone or something to which they can give themselves – a faith which will help them to organize themselves and give them a sense of purpose and direction."<sup>58</sup> This phase corresponds to faith "Stage III," one of six stages proposed by faith development researcher James W. Fowler.<sup>59</sup> "Stage II" is defined by making judgments by way of a narrative, where symbolic representation is the central means for understanding right and wrong but limited to consistent archetypes who, fixed in their persona and their narrative, simply win or lose. Upon the capacity to think abstractly, subject to experiencing "diverse values, patterns of life, and loyalties," persons are ready to adopt an "independent identity."<sup>60</sup> Here faith provides a coherent centre

in the middle of ...conflicting norms... the adolescent period is the time for finding great fidelity, someone or something to which the adolescent can give him or herself in order to give the self a sense of identity and in relation to get which the person can a sense of direction and purpose.<sup>61</sup>

But while able to engage in abstract thought, Stage III persons are inclined to treat matters of peace and justice from the narrow perspective of how they are impacted, and

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<sup>56</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 107.

<sup>57</sup> Though able to abstract the ideas of good and bad, they are not yet ready to *practice* abstracting virtue or moral behaviour (acknowledging the capacity of good and bad within all).

<sup>58</sup> Browning and Reed in Robert A. Browning and Roy A. Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 97. At 98, Erikson observes that some persons, in their desire for this, fall into a state of "totalism," "a fanatic ... preoccupation with certain ideals within a very tight and legalistic system."

<sup>59</sup> Fowler's six stages of faith are: Intuitive – Projective; Mythic – Literal; Synthetic – Conventional; Individuative – Reflective; Conjunctive; and Universalizing. Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 98, 104-113.

<sup>60</sup> The figures of the narrative are not investigated for dimensions or instances of good or bad but taken as fixed sequences to be taken literally. Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 158-159, 107.

<sup>61</sup> Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 107-108. Responding to synthesizing experiences of the world thus far, the person in Stage III asks "who am I?" However, without stepping outside of belief systems long enough and fully enough for independent reflection and evaluation to take place, they remain conformist and conventional.



still locate authority “outside of the self” and “in the persons who represent the beliefs offered.”<sup>62</sup> At fourteen, Thérèse might have located authority in Arminjon, and have been drawn to his call to belong to

apostles, martyrs, Doctors, and thousands of the just, who have fought for the honour of God, and for the interests of the faith, [who] will unite with their leader in proclaiming the truth of his sentences and the equity of his judgments,<sup>63</sup>

a culture of familiar heroes. These “just” warriors are endowed with military courage and contemplative zeal, characteristics valued by the Martins. A ‘black and white’ scenario allows Arminjon to mete judgment to thoroughly different types: the “wicked,” who will be found to possess obdurate and cowardly hearts, ‘evident’ in free-thinking and secular politicking (reprobates “will no longer dare to oppose his justice”), and the “elect,” who possess courageous and responsive hearts (“the good in their turn will feel drawn to him in deeper trust”).<sup>64</sup>

Confronted with God’s “definitive and irrevocable” judgement, which allows no negotiation, one’s disposition becomes painfully important.<sup>65</sup> But, does such judgment resonate with Thérèse’s once-felt mercy? Arminjon’s condemnation of a negative disposition is an ill-informed evaluation. A negative disposition might indicate the (often lasting and pervading) involuntary mimesis of neglect or rebuff in infancy;

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<sup>62</sup> Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 108. Stage III stay subject to the authority of systems they engage with. Few people move to Stage IV, Fowler found, because “symbols of the sacred – their own and others – are related to in ways which honour them as inseparably connected to the sacred...Any strategy of mythologizing, therefore, threatens the participation of symbols and symbolized and is taken, consequently, as an assault on the sacred itself.” Also, concrete security is often found in affirming the rightness of systems they are affiliated with. To make the transition to Stage IV (characterized by “taking seriously the burden of responsibility for their own commitments, beliefs, attitudes, and style of life”) a profound upheaval is needed, in the form of “clashes or contradictions between valued authority sources” leading to the discovery of how relative beliefs are to each group, disillusionment with authority figures, or finding a previous position inadequate to a new circumstance.

<sup>63</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 101.

<sup>64</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 102, 99.

<sup>65</sup> Arminjon writes “[T]here is no level of jurisdiction higher than God’s, and there can be no appeal from absolute justice to relative and limited justice... there will be no reinstatement, no partial or complete amnesty. Divine sentences are irrefutable, unchangeable, and He... who has foreseen the crux and conclusion of human destiny in the eternal decrees of predestination is not a being likely to go back on His judgments.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 104.

alternatively, refusing a person or their creed may represent a positive self-assertion. Perhaps for Thérèse, Arminjon's reprobates simply represented the dark forces of a romantic battle – an indistinct 'out-there' opposition enabling a new sense of self, now felt-loved-by-God because she is willingly and decisively Catholic. Thérèse later reveals (in 1897) she formerly accepted the notion of the reprobate's 'no-faith' insincerity, believing "impiety" was acting against an underlying faith.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4. The Place of Immortal Life and Glorified Bodies after Resurrection

Locating immortal life in a universe in stasis ("at rest") after the "complete destruction of the present physical order," Arminjon offers a flight into the fantastical.<sup>67</sup> Against the "rationalists and pantheists," who "imagine" future-life in terms of "useless erratic figures, wandering around in ethereal, undefined space, shadows bereft of consciousness and personality, immersed in that supreme being called the *all in all*," he envisions a new earth "bedecked with new and evergreen species and incorruptible flowers" in a "perpetual springtime."<sup>68</sup> Here God is the source of light, "nothing profane shall enter;" here all desires are "fully quenched" with "no goods to covet," as God "will give Himself wholly to each in accordance with the degree of his merits."<sup>69</sup> Freed from the earth's physical laws, the elect will adopt "subtility," "agility" and "brightness," the capacity to pass through physical objects, move across distance instantaneously such as electricity or light does, and emit brilliance according to the degree of "their merits."<sup>70</sup> The difference between this earthly and the resurrected state

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<sup>66</sup>"Reprobate," here connoting apostasy, informs Thérèse's expression "impious," explaining why she thought persons of no-faith were culpable. "I believed [impious people] were actually speaking against their inner convictions when they denied the existence of heaven..." *Story of a Soul*, 211.

<sup>67</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 116. Using Isaiah's "perpetual and absolute" permanence, Arminjon proposes new physical laws: "... the sun and the heavenly bodies will no longer execute their revolutions, and the heavens and the earth will remain stable and at rest." "False science vainly protests against the affirmations of the Sacred Books and alleges that they are at variance with the laws of matter and the principles governing the elements; but how do we know that movement is an essential property of the elements and matter?"

<sup>68</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 115 -117.

<sup>69</sup> Arminjon quotes from Rev 21: 11-21. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 118.

<sup>70</sup>"Our flesh at present weak ... will become impassable, endowed with strength, solidity and consistency that will free it forever from all change, weariness and alteration." Levitation, bilocation, and illumination by halo in this present life indicates ascent to God. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 119-121, 122.

– omnipresent and undiminished as Christ is in his Eucharist, able to travel to earth and beyond, residing in a realm above all created things – will be “infinitely greater than ... between the purest gold and the foulest murkiest slime.”<sup>71</sup> Arminjon offers NeoPlatonic eschatology: Christ, choosing to enter our “inferior and limited planet,” raised it up by making it the centre of the supernatural sphere.<sup>72</sup> Troubled, it will eventually undergo transforming fire to bring it into a “clearer and purer image of the idea God realized in it,” a “city of God” developing unseen.<sup>73</sup> Arminjon concludes with Monica and Augustine’s contemplative experience at Ostia.<sup>74</sup>

There is some indication that Arminjon encouraged a distaste for the embodied present in Thérèse. Arminjon also promotes a God who rewards according to merit. Did this fit with Thérèse’s early experience? Thérèse *did* once count sacrifices with beads, but she was also given blessed bread without attending its ‘feast’ as she was too young; supplied with alms to give ‘not earned by her own hand’; her play garden-altar was praised as if a masterpiece – in short, she was favoured by those who loved her.<sup>75</sup> With effort depending on her capability, reward was in proportion to sensitive mercy toward her limitation. In the excitement of ‘growing up’ and reaching forward, was Thérèse forgetting her earlier defeat? Led by Arminjon, she reads her conversational sharing with Celine through Augustine’s Ostia experience, sharing in Augustine’s sense of unbounded creative vision.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 121- 124.

<sup>72</sup> Referring to higher and lower heavens, Arminjon encourages the reader to reject any science that limits life to this earth, and to consider instead that the stars and planets are populated by higher spiritual beings who serve God (a location for the drama between God and Lucifer). Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 124-126, 127-128.

<sup>73</sup> Arminjon writes, when we see God face to face, we will be united to God by the light of his faces, as “iron” unites “with fire.” Fire (in the process of refining precious metals) can only purify what is originally potentially valuable. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 128-129.

<sup>74</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World* , 132-133.

<sup>75</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 38, 26-27, 37.

<sup>76</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World* , 132-133. “Celine had become [my] confidante ... Jesus, wanting us to advance together, formed bonds in our hearts stronger than blood. ... lightly we followed in Jesus’ footprints. ...How sweet were the conversations we held each evening in the belvedere ! With enraptured gaze we beheld the white moon rising quietly behind the tall trees... rais [ing] our souls to heaven, that beautiful heaven whose obverse side alone we were able to contemplate. ...it seems to me the outpourings of our souls were similar to those of St Monica with her son when at the port of Ostia, they were lost in ecstasy at the sight of the creator’s marvels!” *Story of a Soul*, 103-104.

## 5. Purgatory

Arminjon's purgatory, a place of atonement where "divine severity and rigour" is exercised, had the potential to inspire fear in Thérèse.<sup>77</sup> "God's justice gains compensation for the portion of sacrifice and love refused Him here," but "courage, hope and true resignation" draws mercy.<sup>78</sup> Those in purgatory are buoyed up by a sense that "a merited crown awaits," by 'knowing' that we "love God, and hate [our] faults" (unlike the reprobate who "neither loves God, nor hate their sins"), by the happy realization that those in a state of mortal sin are not here (were cast into hell),<sup>79</sup> that here will be no more relapses into sin, and "terrifying doubts" over one's predestination has ended. Asserting that purgatory's torments are "ordained" with "love and equity," Arminjon exclaims a desire to be purged of faults.<sup>80</sup> We ask: while perhaps attractive to a perfectionist troubled by failure, what kind of creator-saviour is satisfied by tortuous pain? Far from Thérèse's later sense that God's mercy defines his justice,<sup>81</sup> Arminjon seeks repayment of a debt – God's honour offended – reminiscent of Anselm's symbolism.<sup>82</sup> Arminjon's language suggests a 'wounded' monarch,<sup>83</sup> when Thérèse's

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<sup>77</sup> "Consumed, alternately, by fire or impenetrable blackness, feeling happiness and anguish simultaneously, persons become aware of the degree of evil found in faults once felt "slight and unimportant." *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 141, 142. Thérèse implies a past fear of purgatory: "I need have no fear of purgatory." *Story of a Soul*, 181.

<sup>78</sup> This is felt as an "unshakable certainty in salvation." *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 142.

<sup>79</sup> Relief is felt at not hearing blasphemies (indicating hell). *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 145.

<sup>80</sup> "I should prefer my torments to the delights of heaven... All that God wishes, as He wishes it ... with thy paternal hand, purify an ungrateful and unfaithful soul! ...cut deep into the flesh, drain the unimaginable cup of Thy torments! Listen only to Thy honour and the interest of Thy justice, and until this is fully satisfied, pay no heed to my groans or my complaints." *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 146, 158-159.

<sup>81</sup> Thérèse's sense of God's justice in 1895 is: "All of these [God's] perfections appear to be resplendent with love, even His Justice (and perhaps this so more than the others) seems to me clothed in love. What a sweet joy it is to think that God is *Just*, i.e., that He takes into account our weakness, that He is perfectly aware of or fragile nature." *Story of a Soul*, 180-181. An 1890 letter attributed to Thérèse, stating "How good it is ... to pray and to appease God's justice," John Clarke suggests is not authored by her. A following letter focuses on Arminjon's beatitude. "Death will pass also, and then we shall enjoy life... with repose and happiness. ...you know that I do not see the Sacred Heart as everybody else..." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 707, 709.

<sup>82</sup> Anselm writes, By sinning, humanity robs "God of the complete devotion due him; only a human being can fittingly recompense God for what humanity has defaulted upon." However, "only God-become-human has the capacity to make such an offering of sufficient worth. ... Devotion to God is the sole and entire honour we owe God, and God requires of us... One who does not render this honour to God takes away from God what belongs to him, and dishonours God, and to do this is to sin. ...as long as

experience of justice from her primary carers weighed on the side of speedy and indulgent forgiveness.

Here also is a stress on inhuman perfection, on bodiliness obstructing our way to God.<sup>84</sup> In purgatory persons “... are freed from the body that, like a thick veil, darkened their view and understanding of the invisible, supernatural things...”<sup>85</sup> Clogged with venial faults, the

pure rays of His divinity ... could not penetrate...the dross and the remains of that earthly dust and mire with which ...[persons] are sullied. [But] ...having been cast in into a consuming crucible, they should lay aside the rest of human imperfections...<sup>86</sup>

Consumed “dross, dust and mire” evokes the ridding of experiences. The erasure of sin – memories of error – however, is problematic; inextricable from the body, these underpin the process of moral development. If we lose our growth narrative, can our identity remain? The process of identity formation appears to be under threat here. The image of refining precious metals by fire does little justice to the complexity of human experience and developing trust via embodiment – leading to acting from love.<sup>87</sup>

Arminjon writes that humanity’s limited time on earth is its opportunity to make “satisfaction” for sins; “souls which have not entirely satisfied God’s justice in this life” will “endure, in the life to come, penalties proportionate to the number and gravity of

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he does not repay what he has stolen, he remains at fault. And it is not enough merely to return what was taken away; in view of the insult committed, he must give more than he took away... everyone who sins must repay to God the honour that he has taken away, and this is the satisfaction that every sinner ought to make to God.” (McIntosh prefers “dishonour” as disregard for God’s creation, rejecting the often suggested interpretation of Anselm’s image of God as a feudal lord.) Mark McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2008), 91-92.

<sup>83</sup> Anselm’s imagery harmonizes with the humiliation a spurned demoted sovereign might suffer. McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 91-92.

<sup>84</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 146.

<sup>85</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 155.

<sup>86</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 147.

<sup>87</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 148. Thérèse will later use this imagery. “If through weakness sometimes I fall, may your *Divine Glance* cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.” *Story of a Soul*, 276.

their sins” and “the fire of purgatory.”<sup>88</sup> Recalling a time when penance given by the Church was more in tune with its final punishment,<sup>89</sup> he follows with disturbing images of extreme physical, emotional, and psychological pains, illustrating purgatory’s effect with a mother whose child has died.<sup>90</sup> From the moment the child has left “there is no joy or pleasure in the world capable of filling the deep, unfathomable void the...loss... has created in her heart. How much more bitter and heart-rending are the cries of the unfortunate soul [in purgatory]?”<sup>91</sup>

It is useless to for me to seek Him [God] on this bed of flames where I feel only gloom and emptiness! O beloved of my heart, why keep me in this long suspense? Increase my torments – if necessary put centuries of punishments into the minutes.<sup>92</sup>

Describing the mother’s loss as “gloom and emptiness,” is inadequate, and seeking an increase in the pain of this separation denies the essentiality of bodiliness in loving. Zélie sought purgatory, not for torments; her abandonment to God was obedience to her circumstance from a measure of helplessness. “Her wish to die... was a plea that she be relieved of suffering their [her babies’] loss.”<sup>93</sup> It raises the question: was Thérèse

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<sup>88</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 149, 156.

<sup>89</sup>“...canon law was applied in its full rigor. ...Penance and works of satisfaction were imposed strictly according to what was required ... to satisfy ... the justice of God...A thief... was sentenced to two or five years’ penance, a blasphemer to seven years, an adulterer to ten, often twelve years of fasting, tears, and public prostrations... On this frightful calculation, an entire life spent in the macerations of the Anchorites ... would scarcely be enough to atone for the ordinary, habitual sins of the men of our time. O, you whose lives are so lax, who do not fear to stain yourselves with a thousand faults in order to please the world or spare your body a moment’s trouble, tell us: have you understood the mystery of God’s justice...have you meditated upon the length of the torments that awaits you?” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 159-160.

<sup>90</sup>The effect of physical suffering is not evaluated realistically by Arminjon. In acute pain, persons will suffer regression on all fronts, including moral. Further, acute physical pain is engaged with intermittently, with persons losing awareness, or even consciousness, in its extremity. In extreme psychological suffering persons will disassociate from themselves.

<sup>91</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 155. When a mother and child’s psycho-biotal tuning (the mother’s physiology responding to her infant child’s bids) is considered in the event of the child’s death, Arminjon’s treatment of bearing with loss seems shallow and unreal. By losing the person she interacts with through her physical self, there is a sense of that part of her being dead.

<sup>92</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 156.

<sup>93</sup> Zélie writes, “O I would like to die, too! I’ve been completely exhausted for two days, have eaten virtually nothing, and was up the whole night in mortal anguish.” Nevin comments that Sr. Marie-Dosithée’s urge to treat her dead infant as a “celestial soul” with “special power,” but “All that she [Zélie] expressed was fathoms down in bitterness. She dignified raw hurt by not seeking the familiar anodynes of faith.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 92-93.

conscious of the depth of Zélie's losses? Swept along by Arminjon's words on the effect of the fire of divine love, Thérèse copies this passage out – pain representing an extremity of passion, suffering counted as nothing next to one's surge of love.<sup>94</sup>

## 6. Eternal Punishment and the Unfortunate Destiny

Rejecting salvation for all (preferring God as conqueror), Arminjon affirms the value in being driven by fear – noting the practice of public execution before summoned spectators, and Jesus' dissuasion by warning of impending judgment and fearful punishment.<sup>95</sup> He argues that as reprobates refuse surrender to God, neither repent nor see evil as absolute, choosing unceasingly to obtain satisfaction outside God, to allow them death would be an offence against justice.<sup>96</sup> They are never forgiven by God, because once dead they are unable to repent, and, thus, God is *unable* to release them from a death that can never be consummated.<sup>97</sup>

Reversing the understanding of hell as representing a rupture between self and other, where God is felt to be that rupture's cause, Arminjon argues that a place of infinite suffering must exist to provide something from which Christ saves us – preventing us from saving ourselves by our own amends (possible if punishment were finite) and placing us in a boundless debt of gratitude; these serve as a foundation for moral order.<sup>98</sup> With moral order relative to finite choice and the existence of hell,<sup>99</sup> and sin

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<sup>94</sup>This was found in amongst her papers dated May 30, 1887. Arminjon quotes John Chrysostom: "The man who is inflamed with the fire of divine love is as indifferent to glory and ignominy as if he were alone and unseen on earth. ... He is no more troubled by pincers, gridirons, or racks than if these sufferings were endured in a body other than his own. What is full of sweetness for the world has no attraction for him, no taste; he is no more liable to be captivated by some evil attachment than is gold seven times tested, liable to be tarnished by rust. Such are the effects even on this earth, the effects of divine love when it firmly takes hold of a soul." Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 148. Later, Thérèse writes to Marie, in relation to Man B: "... when we love a thing the pain disappears." "My desires for martyrdom *are nothing*; they are not what give me the unlimited confidence that I feel in my heart. They are the spiritual riches [consolation] that *render one unjust*, when one rests in them with complacence and ... believes they are *something great*..." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 999.

<sup>95</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 173-4.

<sup>96</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 175-6.

<sup>97</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 176, 177.

<sup>98</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 178.

<sup>99</sup> Without a finite choice, Arminjon writes, one could slowly make amends – by the opportunity of thousands of years. If this opportunity is granted, "morality, public order, and all semblance of honesty

(chosen defiance) as freely preferred, Arminjon insists God must present a threat: “if crime went unpunished,” God would cease to be great; “greatness” would belong instead to “sinful man.”<sup>100</sup> Further, infinite damnation is necessary because, reckoning with infinite desires, humans are only swayed by something in proportion to these.<sup>101</sup> Finally, hell’s punishment is suitable in another way: upon the loss of our body (which obscured the soul’s aim), it becomes clear to the soul that God is its only treasure and end.<sup>102</sup> In their separation from God, the damned continue to live and experience as if they have bodies, but lose what gives them dignity – degraded by God, they have no reason or virtue.<sup>103</sup> We ask: without body, reason, or virtue, how does this remain a being at all? What profit does God draw from degrading his own creation?

Addressing how “the implacable severity of divine justice” might “be reconciled with its infinite mercy,” Arminjon reasons, God’s mercy is to be found in the restrictedness of human life; through limits, some are found to be obdurately unrepentant.<sup>104</sup> God, supreme in all things, is supreme in compassion, and if God were *able* to feel pain God *would* suffer supremely over humanity.<sup>105</sup> He describes the quandary as he sees it: to

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[will] disappear from the earth. Justice is stripped of its sanction; conscience will become a mere prejudice, virtue and sacrifice stupid exertions. Remove the fear of eternal punishment from mankind, and the world will be filled with crime; the most execrable misdeeds will become a duty whenever they can be committed without risk of prison or sword.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 180.

<sup>100</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 183-184. Those who reject God will say “we possess a tolerable enough existence for us to agree to do without You forever...we have a quality of life and repose that is our own work, and we are content with it; if we are not radiant like Your angels, at least we are not Your subjects; we do not serve You or obey You. ... If hell is not a deluge and overwhelming onslaught of unspeakable and eternal sufferings...man will forever be the victor, and the Lord of heaven will be the loser... It is a prime necessity... that the man who has insulted Him...should be subjected to extreme, endless, and incomprehensible torments in proportion to the offense against divine glory. He must endure unbroken heartache and pains, together with...desolation and terror...so that ...the extremity of his anguish ...[forces] the homage that goodness was unable to obtain...They would prefer little to surrender” – “were God in order to alleviate the misery of ...the damned, to allow them but a shadow of good, a slender hope, or a drop of water to refresh them, they would cling to that... with all the strength of their exhausted, gasping will; they would strive with their whole soul after that crumb of solace...rather than bend the knee to submit.”

<sup>101</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 185.

<sup>102</sup> Does the body obscure the soul’s aim? Contemplation alone can lead to retreat into felt-memories, rather than facing the other who calls a response from us. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 186.

<sup>103</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 187-188.

<sup>104</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 192.

<sup>105</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 193. “If God were able to suffer, no anguish would be comparable to the sorrow His heart would feel when he is compelled to condemn a soul... as He damned



abolish hell is to abolish heaven, as it belittles the effect fear of hell had on the “martyrs, virgins, hermits and saints,” who refused “seductive pleasures, trampled upon worldly snares... and braved the hangman and the sword”<sup>106</sup> “Without these fears, the City of God would never have filled up; no one would have done good.”<sup>107</sup> “[G]race and redemption [should] be excluded from hell” so that no “ray of mercy” may “fall upon...[the] unfortunate man who would grasp [God’s hand] with a love and gratitude proportionate to the immensity of God’s deliverance,” because God would lose his “infinite dignity.”<sup>108</sup> By way of explanation, Arminjon asserts: love might be set “against justice if it were justice that punished,” but love, in the face of unabated “contempt,” “never forgives.”<sup>109</sup> How was it that Thérèse kept silent over “damnation issues from love?”<sup>110</sup> Did she allow it until she wrote (in 1895), the only thing to “sustain me” (next to *Imitation*) was “Holy Scripture,” a “solid and very pure nourishment” – and no longer “oil and honey?”<sup>111</sup>

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a soul He would be gripped with the same horror and the same tremor as a mother who was herself compelled to let the blade of the guillotine fall upon the neck of her child.”

<sup>106</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 194.

<sup>107</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 194-195, 196. To the question “...is God just?’ when God goes beyond all proportion, punishing a passing fault committed in a single moment with an eternity of pains?” he answers: “Here reason is powerless for God is the greatest of mysteries. Sin is a mystery as unfathomable as the majesty of him who it offends; and the punishment due to its evil is another immeasurable mystery that the human mind will never succeed in solving.”

<sup>108</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 195-196.

<sup>109</sup> “Justice,” Arminjon notes, “was propitiated” on Calvary, forgiving debts persons had incurred. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 199. At 200, “Go then, ye cursed the Saviour will say on the day of His judgment...I gave you my life, my blood...you have constantly spurned me...with these words: ...I prefer my gross interests and my brutish sensual pleasures to You. ...It is not I who condemn you; it is you who have condemned yourselves. You have chosen, of your own free will, the city where egotism, hatred and revolt have established their dominion. I return to heaven... and [there] I bring back this heart... Be the children of your own choice, stay with yourselves...with the fire that is never extinguished.”

<sup>110</sup> Did Thérèse’s desire to save Pranzini issue from this? “... I burned with desire to snatch them from the eternal flames.” *Story of a Soul*, 99.

<sup>111</sup> In the final pages of Man A, surrounding her “Oblation to Merciful Love,” Thérèse writes of justice informed by Ps 117:1; 35: 6; 113: 13-14. Stating that in her aridity, Jesus provides “lights,” she declares that the experience of mercy gives rise to love, and not fear; that those gifted by mercy spontaneously love, that God’s justice “takes into account our weakness; that He is perfectly aware of fragile nature.” Since her oblation, “Merciful Love renews me,” and “I need have no fear of Purgatory.” *Story of a Soul*, 179-182.

Arminjon's impoverished understanding of human relations assumes punishment as the ground for the human-God relation, with all human motivation based on evasion of suffering/punishment. He places true goodness in God alone; human goodness amounts to admitting to and overcoming one's depravity, somehow connected to infinite capacity for desire (and thus sin?).<sup>112</sup> God, acting from finite, tired and tried mercy (from trying to break the human spirit into submission), is able to draw surrender only with threat. This God is antithetical to the joyful abundant self-giving One who lifts their child above fear of limitation and scarcity, and who expresses confidence in their creation.<sup>113</sup> Arminjon has humanity, as imperfect, tend toward "evil inclinations," but this weakness does not mitigate God's judgment; only self-deprecation draws pity.<sup>114</sup>

Arminjon's circumscription of the elect allows Thérèse to include herself. While reassuring at fourteen, will a concept of salvation based on damning persons remain satisfactory? In 1887, Thérèse is taken up with offering Jesus the gratitude she feels due to him. There is no evidence of vengeful triumph in her writing in her effort to save Pranzini, or in her later prayers for Loyson who she considers culpable.<sup>115</sup> Is Arminjon's theology of hell submerged – uncontested, because nothing in her circumstance challenges it? When writing *Man A*, she 'recalls' that as a young child she imagined Zélie rescuing her from hell regardless of fault, and that Louis played her

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<sup>112</sup> Arminjon is disturbed by persons deriding God over his impunity ("if You are weary of waiting for us, we are not weary of cursing You and of managing without You"). Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 198.

<sup>113</sup> See McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 108-110.

<sup>114</sup> This 'pity theology' provoked a strong response from Nietzsche. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translation, Introduction and Commentary, by R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 188-189.

<sup>115</sup> Four years on, in 1891, Thérèse underlined Père Hyacinthe Loyson's words in a newspaper clipping: "if the Church were to prove me wrong, I will gladly acknowledge my error and take my place once again humbly in Christian unity." Thérèse writes to Celine: "... Is it surprising that we are so favoured, we whose only desire is to save a soul that seems to be lost forever?... The unfortunate prodigal went to Coutances...It appears he intends to travel all over France...in this way, Celine. And with all this they add that remorse is *gnawing* at him. He goes into a Church with a huge Crucifix and he seems to be making great acts of adoration... His wife follows him everywhere. Dear Celine, he really is culpable, more culpable than any other sinner who was converted. But cannot Jesus once do what He has not ever yet done? And if he were not to desire it, would he have placed it in the heart of His poor little spouses a desire that he could not realize. No, it is certain that He desires more than we do to bring back this poor stray sheep to the fold.... Let us never grow tired of prayer; confidence works miracles. ...One just soul has so much power over my heart that it can obtain pardon for a thousand criminals." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 728-730.

game in the garden, on her terms, without any loss of dignity.<sup>116</sup> Here, affection was won spontaneously. Correspondence about Thérèse, however, also reveals that her sisters chastened her for spurning love, accused her of duplicitous motives, with Marie extracting respectful gratitude from her in a forced expression of affection, feeling this due to her parents.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps ‘spurning love’ represented the unforgivable.

## 7. “Eternal Beatitude: Heaven’s Glory”

Arminjon’s writings on heaven are echoed in Thérèse’s own writing. He begins in the following way. Confused by the present apparent disorder, the fool accuses God of injustice, not recognizing the mechanics of the present as serving a future end. The Catholic, too, might find the “mystery of suffering,” pointlessly harsh, but if we understood our end in terms of the joy of heaven, we might understand present honours and favours as “evil,” and so develop a “thirst” for “martyrdom,” lifting us when “we are no longer equal to the sacrifices the law of God requires” of us.<sup>118</sup>

Arminjon writes: in our weakness, we can only describe “the City of God” poorly, but divine grace comes to our aid.<sup>119</sup> This inability to express oneself on earth is a theme in Thérèse’s writing, shared in correspondence with her sisters. The future, revealed to John as a crystalline city, replete with throne, lamb, running water, the tree of life, white robed servants, wealth, glory, intoxication by sweet wine, a “splendour” pleasing the “human intelligence” to the “point of ecstasy,” Arminjon writes, is a pale image compared to its reality.<sup>120</sup> The elect, “subtle, immortal, impassable, and clothed in sweet light,” will dwell in unfading light, taste, music and fragrance.<sup>121</sup> All God’s thoughts are occupied with *heaven’s* creation, a perfection of present ecclesial culture, a great Sabbath (the repose of God’s intellect and heart) upon the completion of Jesus’

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<sup>116</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1226. *Story of a Soul*, 36-37.

<sup>117</sup> See the ‘swing incident’ (*Story of a Soul*, 19), and ‘under the blankets’. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1231-1232).

<sup>118</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 205- 207

<sup>119</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 208.

<sup>120</sup> A “shadow and reflection of the ideal.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 209-212.

<sup>121</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 212- 213.

perfect work as architect, where God will “in all truth say: This is well done.”<sup>122</sup> (God’s previous “It is good,” referred only to creation, not the “City of God.”) Here, the state of bliss will be “beyond all natural happiness.”<sup>123</sup> Thérèse, so taken by Arminjon’s illustration, copies it on June 4 and 5, 1887.<sup>124</sup> She refers to it in her paroxysm of desires in *Man B*, in “now my turn!” to Celine, and quotes parts from it in numerous ways.<sup>125</sup>

This “poetic dream” of “*the vision of God*” images the wholly supportive, knowing love of a mother toward an infant, and the outgoing abandon of sexual love.<sup>126</sup> Curiously, while to the rebellious, God presents as a stern judge, to the elect in heaven, God embodies a parental relation.<sup>127</sup> Such imagining, however, troubles Arminjon. Directing himself to “true doctrine,” and not “mysticism,” he examines “when we see God as He

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<sup>122</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 213, 214.

<sup>123</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 213.

<sup>124</sup> “As no mother ever loved her dearest son, the Lord loves His predestinate. He is jealous of his dignity, and could not permit himself to be outdone by His creature on the score of fidelity and generosity. Oh! The Lord cannot forget that the saints, when they once lived on earth, paid homage to Him by the total donation of their repose, their happiness and their whole being; that they would have liked to have had an inexhaustible flow of blood in their veins, in order to shed it as a pledge of their faith; that they would have desired a thousand hearts in their breasts, so as to consume them in the unquenchable fires of their love, and to possess a thousand bodies, in order that that they might deliver them to martyrdom, like victims unceasingly renewed. And the grateful God cries out : “Now , my turn! The saints have given me themselves: can I respond other than by giving myself without restriction and without measure? If I place in their hands the sceptre of creation, if I surround them with the torrents of my light, that is a great deal; it is going beyond their highest hopes and aspirations, but it is not the utmost endeavour of my Heart. I owe them more than paradise, more than the treasures of his knowledge; I owe them my life, my nature, my eternal and infinite substance. If I bring my servants and friends into my house, if I console them and make them thrill with joy by enfolding them in the embrace of my charity, this satisfies their thirst and their desires superabundantly ... but it is not enough for the gratification of my divine Heart, for the repletion and perfect satisfaction of my love. I must be the soul of their souls. I must penetrate and imbue them with my divinity, as fire penetrates iron; by showing myself to their spirits, undisguised, unveiled ... I must unite myself to them in an eternal *face-to-face*, so that my glory illuminates them, exudes and radiates through all the pores of their being, so that, ‘knowing me as I know them, they may become like Gods themselves.’” “O my Father,” exclaimed Jesus Christ, “I have asked of you that, where I am those whom I have loved may be there with me. May they be engulfed and lose themselves in the oceans of your splendours; may they desire, possess, enjoy, and then desire again; may they be plunged into the bosom of Your beatitude, and may it be as if nothing remained of their personality except the knowledge and experience of their happiness.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xi-xii, 215-216.

<sup>125</sup> For example, see Thérèse’s paroxysm of desires in *Man B*, *Story of a Soul*, 192-93. “It’s my Turn!” *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 841. “...as fire penetrates iron” *Story of a Soul*, 257.

<sup>126</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 216.

<sup>127</sup> Thérèse writes to Marie in 1896: “... nothing but confidence ... must lead us to Love... does not fear lead us to Justice...(such as it is portrayed for sinners, but no[t] *sic* this *Justice* that Jesus has toward those that love him)”. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1000.

is we shall know Him in integrity and without restriction” through Thomistic writing, as follows.<sup>128</sup> Humans, with only knowledge through senses (natural capacity) to contemplate God as spirit, receive “a new faculty” at baptism.<sup>129</sup> Freed from sin, they will behold God; by the “light of glory:”

souls... will no longer know through their own knowledge, but from the very knowledge of God,...no longer see with their...limited eyes, but with the... eyes of God. ...The transports that the divine vision will arouse ... will make their Hearts superabound in the most unutterable joys; it will be a flood of delights and raptures, life in its inexhaustible richness and the very source of all that is good in life...like a gift from God of His own heart, so that we may love and rejoice with all the energy of the love and joys of God Himself.<sup>130</sup>

This imagery alludes to the most embodied and affective knowledge: a child’s experience of their parent infusing life through their capacity for mutual interaction, or the experience of lovers when they offer and exchange their energies in love-making. Eternal life

is a source, forever fertile, where the soul will drink substance and life in abundance. It is a marriage, in which the soul will clasp its creator in an eternal embrace without ever feeling any diminution of the rapture it felt on that [first] day...it...pressed Him to its bosom.<sup>131</sup>

Such imagery would have resonated with Thérèse’s earliest experience. But Arminjon cautions, “even so, the elect will not comprehend” God. An “ever ascending progression” of coming to know God is required because of God’s limitless immensity.<sup>132</sup> Knowledge of God here appears to be an increasing grasp of the ‘laws’ of the universe, rather than subjects in dialogue. Previously, Arminjon pointed to an

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<sup>128</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 217. Cf, 2Cor 13:12, 1John 3:2.

<sup>129</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 218 -19. Though deficient in knowledge of supernatural things as animals are, the unbaptised (without the imprint of the “vision of God”) will be united with God through the limits of nature (a “sweet consolation” for mothers whose babies have died without baptism).

<sup>130</sup> Those free from sin will behold God, but, *unable to rise to knowledge of God by reason*, they are given “a created quality and a supernatural virtue of the intellect, infused into the soul,” expanding “the soul’s capacity for knowledge to ... apprehend immense and boundless good.” Italics mine. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 220, 221.

<sup>131</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 221.

<sup>132</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 222-223.

infinite human capacity, in God satisfying our taste for “forever more pure and more intoxicating delights” – realizing the desire for a continuing dialogue.<sup>133</sup> Continuing with ‘factual’ knowing, Arminjon describes an “illiterate, uneducated” Catholic villager unsullied “by the poisoned breath of any passion,” upon death, “with a single turn of his thoughts” fathoms all “in a twinkling,” including “the properties, secrets and innermost forces of the elements,” quenching any previous “thirst for knowledge.”<sup>134</sup>

He observes that such knowledge in this life would crush us, but spirits do not have this hindrance; they will understand God in a “glance.”<sup>135</sup> Sharing in Arminjon’s sense of bodiliness as hindering communication (once feeling nuanced abundance in a gaze between herself and another, she now felt frustrated in communicating herself), Thérèse takes up the use of the word “glance,”<sup>136</sup> accepting this hindrance is overcome by the spiritualization of bodies upon resurrection. Finally, Arminjon proposes the sight of God will not occupy our full attention, because we will be freed from the limitation of attending to one person at a time (human “energy and penetration” will be increased a “hundredfold”) – an ability Jesus enjoyed when he was on earth. This idea threatens Jesus’ human ‘being’ as a subject – produced by the experience of bodiliness and bodily extents when interacting with another self-aware being.<sup>137</sup> Arminjon intimates that embodiment defeats interpersonal love; however, it is embodiment that produces subjectivity – needed for love.

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<sup>133</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 223.

<sup>134</sup> The wise men of this world “who devise futile theories” and indulge in “speculation and useless research” will be envious when they see the just man who “set his heart on true wisdom.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 224-5. Thérèse has this sense of being watched in her writing. She imagines herself admired, her taste puzzled over, her unlikely wisdom noticed. Proximity to God gives advantage, whose pleasure involves others noting it.

<sup>135</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 226.

<sup>136</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 226. Thérèse writes, “I cannot tell you all I am thinking about .... Ah! HEAVEN!!!!!!Then a single glance and all will be understood!...” *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II* 620.

<sup>137</sup> Arminjon states that all knowledge leads a person to knowledge of God; when a person reaches God, objects that are ‘not God’ can no longer make us see God more fully. A person may equally know God yet know nothing of the created universe, but he is happy. These statements raise epistemological questions with respect to the relationship between embodiment/experience and knowledge, and of the relationship between human participation in Trinitarian life and how God ‘makes space’ for creation itself within the divine life. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 222- 23, 224.

Turning to ‘affection’ Arminjon observes that in heaven “We shall love God with that love He has for Himself.”<sup>138</sup> He writes that ‘love of God’ leads not to the annihilation of human friendships, but to their resumption in heaven.<sup>139</sup> Arminjon’s following image influences Thérèse deeply. A facet of heaven’s experience is the sharing of happy reminiscences, such as experienced at home while seated in front of the hearth, listening to the travels of older folk. How much greater it is when we sit at the hearth of our heavenly Father, listening to his stories of leading persons to the harbour of repose.<sup>140</sup> This happy vision, meeting Thérèse’s hunger to reunite with those she has lost, in coming from a renowned priest, frees Thérèse from fearing her hope is unacceptably self-interested. Further, noting uneven sanctity in the elect in heaven, Arminjon suggests different ranks operate in harmony; mutual happiness is found in unity, producing one heart and one body; each will mirror the good of the other.<sup>141</sup> This image is central to Thérèse finding her place as ‘a permanent youngest daughter’, the least (and “smallest”) of the heavenly saints.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 226-227. Thérèse will later assert that God himself will provide her with love to love him, in her poems: “Ah! Give me a thousand hearts to love You!” from “Remember” and “I’ll love you with that very love with which You have loved me...” from “How I Want to Love.” Conrad de Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure the “Way of Spiritual Childhood” of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), 270-271.

<sup>139</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 227-229. Those who have gone ahead of us wait to embrace us, for us to recognize and love them. On earth, love follows gratitude; in heaven this is doubly so, on seeing the cost our benefactor’s graces where the good actions of our beloved will be revealed. “Others will learn of your ... pious strategies to detach a friend from vice and irreligion, and to catch by innocent allurements, a soul, the object of your holy yearning.” *Heaven, for Arminjon, is the objective locus for vindication*. Thérèse perhaps feels this sanctions her strong persuasion to get Celine to become a Carmelite. See *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 702.

<sup>140</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 230. “Avec combien plus de charme, assis au grand foyer de notre Père céleste, nous entendrons le récit que nous feront frères, de leurs tentations si séduisantes et si multipliées, des assaults que leur livra.” Charles Arminjon, *Fin du Monde Présent et Mystères de la Vie*, 83, accessed [http://www.a-c-r-f.com/documents/Abbe\\_ARMINJON-Fin\\_monde\\_present.pdf](http://www.a-c-r-f.com/documents/Abbe_ARMINJON-Fin_monde_present.pdf) 06/04/2012. “Foyer evokes a central glowing domestic hearth with the family gathered around it, and all the rich associations of warmth, nourishment, generation and regeneration, joy, peace, security and intrinsic belonging.” For Thérèse love is essentially God, where she wants to be and live. “Five times [in Man B] throughout her allegory of the little bird, Thérèse “uses the beautiful French word ‘foyer’. ... Unfortunately there is no equivalent English word, and... we have used the words ‘Furnace’ and ‘Fire’.” See G. Gennari, *An Echo of the Heart of God and Studies of the Self-Offering of Thérèse of Lisieux* (Nedlands, WA: Carmelite Monastery, 2002), 212.

<sup>141</sup> “[E]ach will be rich in the richness of all.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 231, 232.

<sup>142</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 196.

Continuing, Arminjon observes that on earth, good is always mixed with “conceit and selfish satisfactions.”<sup>143</sup> On earth, a contented soul withdraws into itself, but in heaven, as happiness is one with God, its contentment inspires

souls to soar upward with inexhaustible energy [to] lose themselves in the ever closer embrace of God, who imbues them with His fullness through all their senses and penetrates every pore of their being.<sup>144</sup>

We note this resembles a return to original unity with our life-giving parent-creator. Arminjon reasons that peace multiplies because it is assured. Certainty of possessing God, a sense of secure control in a “perpetual present,” is the cause lasting joy.<sup>145</sup> On earth “our joys are [only] successive;” here God portions Himself out, and here we long for the events of the past – let us rise above temporality and “material things,” to the “city of God,” where every moment is an intoxicating delight, and seek after power and pleasure in imperishable fullness, by seeking their source.<sup>146</sup> Yet Arminjon invokes, and evokes, our bodily loves and remembrances, our physical felt-recollection, to generate a forward reaching hope, unaware of any contradiction.

### **8. Christian Sacrifice and the Means of Redemption**

Here Arminjon proposes a metaphysics of transubstantiation to describe God’s operations in this life.<sup>147</sup> He further promotes a piety where the priest is elevated, inferring that priests, in bringing God “down upon the altar,” are ontologically superior.<sup>148</sup> In *Man A*, Thérèse intimates she once thought highly of priests, believing their souls “to be as pure as crystal.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 232.

<sup>144</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 232-233.

<sup>145</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 233-234.

<sup>146</sup> As creatures who “love power and glory ... pleasure and joy,” we should seek after their source. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 235- 236.

<sup>147</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 243-249. He asserts that the Eucharist bestows grace to achieve an otherwise unachievable “supernatural life.”

<sup>148</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 251. At 251, The priest ranks above Mary as Jesus obeyed Mary once, in a passable state, but obeys the priest each day in an “impassable” state. Arminjon betrays pride in his own priestly identity. He argues the priest cannot be vanquished in spite of attempts. After the



Arminjon explains that each day Jesus annihilates himself by making himself captive to his minister.<sup>150</sup> Reducing himself to a “speck” (host), he endures human forgetfulness, negligence, coldness and indifference, thus suffering “abandonment, loneliness and disdain.”<sup>151</sup> Silent, he betrays no indignation when tabernacles have been desecrated, but tries to restrain his Father’s wrath by showing his wounds.<sup>152</sup> “Ignorant and illiterate people” can rise to great insights meditating on his self-annihilation, as it guides them as to how they, too, can offer themselves as victims.<sup>153</sup> The priest is somehow exempted, as power and mystery lies in this office – without the priest Jesus is unable to reoffer himself.

Listing the effects of the Eucharist,<sup>154</sup> Arminjon comments that proximity to the sanctuary helps voluntary captives in the cloister, whose detachment from a life of the senses shows a godless society God lives in this valley of misery to dry their tears and heal their wounds, wage “combat” over the sadness of leaving their loved ones.<sup>155</sup> Jesus, as a speck (host), scorned, and ignored, in need of welcome, was perhaps a role

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Revolution, a new week with a “legal rest” was proposed, and a civil priest was ordained. However, he was ridiculed because he did not bear “that divine ray, that cast of features,” which “God alone can give to a man” and “which no royal appointment or any lay kind of selection” will ever “bestow upon him.” Further, the Protestants have only “men clad in black” who “make decorous speeches.”

<sup>149</sup> She held this until her trip to Rome. Thérèse looks back on her vocation, to pray for priests. *Story of a Soul*, 122.

<sup>150</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 256.

<sup>151</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 253- 254.

<sup>152</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 255.

<sup>153</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 256.

<sup>154</sup> Arminjon lists the effects in a functional way. Equal to Jesus’ original sacrifice, the Mass, while infinite in value, has finite effects, “unable to bestow an indefinite multitude of merits and satisfactions,” as Jesus fixed “the sum and measure of grace” that could be accrued, when he instituted his sacrifice.” The Eucharist is an objective source of power and transformation (little is owed to the communicant’s disposition), and functions as a form of insurance. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 259.

<sup>155</sup> Some (who treat themselves as mere “physical strength and activity,” “as tools and machines”) accuse Mass communicants of laziness when they are exercising their faith. Yet its celebration influences human endeavours and physical events with power equal to “the sweat of man, rainfall and dew from the sky to... increase our industry.” They say: “Those who eat every day should work every day. Sunday ...and its futile ceremonies,” holds up the tide of industry “for twenty-four hours; the workman’s wages reduced by a seventh; destitution in the workshop; bread and clothing taken away from the child and from the wife of the tradesman and the indigent.” Yet God protects the grain from mildew, “more than ...industrial advances.” Arminjon adds, “Where do we find prosperous families, and strong developed races, except among those who go up to the altar...?” The daily descent and ascent of Jesus’ real presence assures his continuous presence on earth. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 262- 266, 267, 270.

Thérèse could identify with. She could fuse her own fragile, forgotten self with the helpless, forgotten, unseen Jesus, who was, however, at the same time gloriously potent.<sup>156</sup> In correspondence (until her Profession), Thérèse likens herself to a grain of sand underfoot (representing hidden suffering), which shares in the ‘grain’ imagery of sacrifice and humbling oneself into a “speck.”<sup>157</sup>

### **9. The Mystery of Suffering in Its relationship with the Future Life**

In choosing suffering as a means to reach her goal, Thérèse may have been influenced by Arminjon’s theodicy: Jesus “could have abolished pain at a single stroke,” and “restored man to the state of complete unmixed bliss that he enjoyed in the paradise of innocence, but he judged, rather, that suffering, for some, be a source of merit, glory, renewal, triumph ‘and for the greater number’, a necessary expiation.”<sup>158</sup> By choosing to appear among us not in splendour, but stained with blood, united with suffering, Jesus removed part of its bitterness, “implanting Himself as an inexhaustible instrument of mercy, life, and health,” for “souls... eager to escape from their coarse, sensual aspirations.”<sup>159</sup>

Asserting that undergoing accepting suffering brings moral sublimity, Arminjon offers insights on the good of surrendering to hardship.<sup>160</sup> Suffering poverty teaches us to retain value amid plenty; suffering ingratitude and exile reminds us to discern worth beneath rags.<sup>161</sup> Our fluctuations from joy to gloom are caused by the repugnance we feel toward suffering. By refusing slight hardship, small injury, and things to any degree demanding, we fall into a tyranny of avoidance.<sup>162</sup> Thérèse echoes this in *Story of a Soul*: once accepting giving up her will, she finds it sweet.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 104-105.

<sup>157</sup> This was introduced to Thérèse by Pauline from a prayer quoted by Fr Pichon. *General Correspondence Volume I*, 406-407, 427, 440, 441, 537, 547, 551, 552, 580, 612, 613, 663.

<sup>158</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 276.

<sup>159</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 277-8.

<sup>160</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 282.

<sup>161</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 280 -281.

Arminjon adds the notion of reparation. The fruits of Jesus' suffering, admitted at baptism, lose their fullness through sins after baptism, to become conditional on our "energetic" efforts of penance.<sup>164</sup> As Jesus' suffering was proportionate to our sin, so must our reparation be in proportion to it; there must be "a measure of pain equal to the measure of pleasure and sweetness relished amid iniquity and crime" – not mere restraint, but a deprivation of something useful or necessary.<sup>165</sup> Finally, not only are we to partake in Jesus' suffering, but we are to complete it.<sup>166</sup> Christ's body models the process. While not needing thirty-three years to secure human salvation – Jesus "could have leapt from his mother's womb in dazzling splendour... to astonish heaven" with an "unexpected entry" – but the way that attracted him was not the "shortest and easiest way;" he chose "the bloody stages of ... ignominies and searing pains," to giving his whole body over to its "murderous assaults."<sup>167</sup> It is not fitting that the faithful "body" of Christ soar into glory, suffering less than their head.<sup>168</sup> Thérèse shares Arminjon's heady response to the above suffering, but, later, "short and easy way" will appear in her writing, describing the path she finds most suitable for herself – a path affirming how things operated in the past; when filled with high desires, she was carried by others.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Those who do battle with suffering, carry a sanctuary of peace within themselves, because they see events governed by God's providential wisdom. The one who evades suffering becomes an enfeebled frivolous, effeminate character who is easily dominated. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 282-3.

<sup>163</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 225-227.

<sup>164</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 285- 286.

<sup>165</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 286. See *Story of a Soul*, 226.

<sup>166</sup> As Jesus did not suffer pain in all its aspects, we must complete what is lacking. While suffering the malice of men, he did not suffer the loss of a beloved child in death, or the delirium overwhelming a sinner – these are to be added through his members. The "incorporation of our life in the divine life of Jesus Christ" forms the "Mystical Body of Christ," which grows by incorporating the elect, only complete when the last predestinate has entered the Church. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 287-88; 290- 294.

<sup>167</sup> Again, Arminjon fails to affirm Jesus' humanity. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 288

<sup>168</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 288-289.

<sup>169</sup> Thérèse seeks out a means of going to heaven by "a way that is very straight, very short..." an elevator. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, 207.

Asserting “*Trial produces hope,*” Arminjon concludes with an appeal.<sup>170</sup> When all is well we are “lulled to sleep,” but when we suffer trial, we break from the bonds of space and time and seek transcendent mercy; bereft of everything, we find reasons for love and trust.<sup>171</sup> Thus, let us bless the “paternal hand” that “strikes us,” as it was in desolation that we most felt most moved by God.<sup>172</sup> God cuts off health, reputation, and all which draws us to love earthly things, so “that what is mortal may be absorbed by [God’s] life,” so that what is tainted emerges from “the crucible of suffering” as crystal, allowing God to be “all and in all.”<sup>173</sup> Arminjon aims to turn souls “away from the limited concerns of time,” to the good to come, as a “skiff [sailboat] that may help us reach the shores of heaven,” the “eternal meeting place which awaits us ... in the heart of Christ!”<sup>174</sup> Thérèse takes up these images: “the skiff,” her life/body, bears her to her true home, reuniting her with her loved ones in heaven, “spouse” expresses faithfulness to Jesus, and suffering (likened to the crucible) represents God’s chosen means for earthly progress. With “grain of sand” these harmonize with Pauline’s spirituality and feature in her correspondence till 1895.<sup>175</sup>

## 10. Discussion of Concepts in Arminjon

The “oil and honey” of *The End of The present World* appear to be images which carry Thérèse to her sought-for desert (sharing in Zélie, Louis, and Pauline’s desire to be there with God). Arminjon revives an evaporated hope, by placing before her a vision representing a primordial experience of satisfied union, and mutual delighting, in relation to God, accompanied by a call. At the possibility of reunion with her loved ones (sacrifice its means), Thérèse redoubles her efforts to please God,<sup>176</sup> allowing

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<sup>170</sup> Italics in original text. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 294.

<sup>171</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 295, 297.

<sup>172</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 297-30.

<sup>173</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 301-302.

<sup>174</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 304. On 305, “*The time is near...when the celestial spouse ...will say to us: Cross, come to me and enter into bliss and eternal repose!*” Italics in original text.

<sup>175</sup> For example, Thérèse, a grain of sand, persuades Celine to welcome suffering as a gift. In reply, Celine states she is an “imperceptible atom” next to Thérèse. See *General Correspondence Volume I*, 537, 539.

<sup>176</sup> See de Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 79-125.

Arminjon's concepts, some at odds with the activity of merciful love she experienced early in life. While theological "concepts" are "clean and easy to analyze," what persons do with them, McDargh notes, is complex.<sup>177</sup>

Arminjon's concepts, illustrated by images, may be collected into two groups. The first involves loving one person, or seeking one way, as necessitating forsaking another. Is this the crux of 'being with God'? Who or what must we forsake for 'God'? Collapsing all into one project, Arminjon forms a group that represents the "impious" and unyielding (Jews, rationalists, anticlericals) which he damns, helping him to vindicate fidelity to the familiar (Catholic culture). The second involves Arminjon's hagiographic examples. Heroes and their enemies are placed in the presence of watching others: God, and an envious crowd. The hero (self) emerges through contrast to one's enemy, and elevation. The envy of the once proud and well-off elevates (vindicates) the down-trodden one. These form a passage in self-becoming: security in familiar culture (where the foreign other is distanced, punished and banished) and the restoration of one's eroded (failure to 'measure up') or forgotten (abandonment) value.<sup>178</sup> Some elements of these concept-images follow.

*a. The Reprobate*

The 'reprobate' represents corruption away from the Catholic faith – yielding to "evil inclinations" the lure of pleasure, laziness, or lust for power.<sup>179</sup> Hostility to Catholic culture due to different enculturation, or to it posing a God which threatens one's self, are not considered. Reprobates, by refusing his sacrifice, do not lovingly receive Christ; thus, they offend God. Thérèse allows Arminjon's representation, 'confirmed' by supporting newspaper reports. Her vocation relies on the reprobate's existence, in rescuing persons from their grasp, or from the lure of their way of being (such as the

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<sup>177</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 117. Theology as "concepts" are "clean and easy to analyze." However, the occasions of felt (primal) experiences, "their subtlety disqualified from psychological or theological analysis," "co-existent with the more conceptually refined dogmatic expressions of religious belief or unbelief," ... "demand to be taken into our analysis of human faith."

<sup>178</sup> This state eventually needs to give way to the (courageous) meeting and exploration of others in relation.

<sup>179</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 243.

fictional Diana Vaughn). Thérèse does not take Arminjon's vengeful stance, but so immersed is she in the pattern of her given faith, she can, without loss of integrity, agree to 'in heaven, *we* will be found to have been misunderstood', vindicating disapproval of *them*.<sup>180</sup> Toward the end of her life, helpless in her loss of feeling and vision, Thérèse re-values intention as critical to actions.<sup>181</sup>

*b. Bounded Mercy*

Arminjon's God of justice suggests a paternalistic husband, who offers his acquiescing wife (a maternal Jesus) to his uncaring children. The husband, angered over his children's cavalier approach to her generosity/mercy (taking it for granted) – and feeling his authority under threat – guards her generosity/mercy (which seems unable to cure their wayward children) by setting fear-inspiring punishments. The idea of superabundant merciful-love as ineffectual, causing wilfulness, however, misconstrues parental mercy. The young child imitates a sense of how they are treated. Ingratitude, or 'selfishness', mirrors some aspect of parental attitude. Does Arminjon endow the material of Christian faith with his experience of a domestic household where parents portrayed these roles? If we apply this analogy to Thérèse's experience (Jesus and the Father as analogous to a parent-couple's operating), we find little about a need to appease; Louis does not insist his authority.<sup>182</sup> Through Arminjon, Thérèse is held to ransom over Jesus being pained by sin; she responds with an image of Jesus as a beggar whose thirst can only be quenched by souls who love him.<sup>183</sup> Her later desire to be a

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<sup>180</sup> Our paraphrase of Arminjon's thought. Thérèse, writing to Celine in 1894, echoes Arminjon in how *our* (the Catholic's) goodness is often mistaken (against *they* who are "senseless") by others: "What a joy it is to suffer for Him who loves us unto folly and to pass as fools in the eyes of the world. We judge others as we judge ourselves, and since the world is senseless, it naturally thinks we are the ones who are senseless!" "Senselessness" is embodied by the "world." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 882.

<sup>181</sup> Thérèse writes that one ought not be surprised by human (her Carmelite sisters') faults. *Story of Soul*, 220, 221. See also de Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 282-283. In 1891 Thérèse considers the external evidence with regard to Loyson, and assumes wrongdoing, but suspends her judgment over his 'sin' – hoping for his "return." (Loyson will later protest his innocence, stating he only felt sincerity in relation to God.) *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 728-29.

<sup>182</sup> During the sermon, "I looked more ...at Papa than the preacher, for his *handsome* face said so much to me! His eyes, at times, were filled with *tears* which he tried in vain to stop..." *Story of a Soul*, 41-42.

<sup>183</sup> Later, in 1891, at a retreat with Father Prou, she is released from being held to ransom over Jesus' vulnerability. *Story of a Soul*, 283.

victim of love perhaps echoes Zélie and Louis' giving, sadly unappreciated, and ending in untimely death.<sup>184</sup>

*c. Supplementing Divine Atonement*

This involves whether one is acceptable to God, and the complexity of ways this might be achieved. Rejecting any notion of universal salvation, Arminjon has God bound by rules of justice, and this justice requires humans to accept, and supplement, Christ's sacrifice. To merit heaven, persons are to welcome the suffering God sends; all that can be suffered, should be. Sin, felt to ceaselessly erode goodness, necessitates that one act well to regenerate the potency of Jesus' redemptive work. Acting well (which assumes an effective will) is attributed to grace (which supplies motivation/vision), but when it is absent, it appears to be the person's fault. Arminjon attributes objective value to acts of restraint and surrender (Thérèse affords this to virginity), rather than promoting their intersubjective value.

*d. 'Ethereal Being' Preferred to 'This World' Bodiliness*

Sin is to be avoided. Beyond the hubris of the impious, Arminjon points to it as arising from affect, bodiliness, and subjectivity. Perfection, as if antithetical to process, touch, speech, weight/density and physical limits, is found in floating light-effusing figures (for whom speech is unnecessary), consistent with Romantic art depictions of this time's NeoPlatonic eschatology.<sup>185</sup> Thérèse enters such imagining with respect to purity and communication.<sup>186</sup> She holds that virginity is her "native land,"<sup>187</sup> but it was

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<sup>184</sup>Louis' name was pronounced "in a whisper as though it were the name of a man almost in disgrace." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 701. Recalling early childhood interaction with her parents, however, brings confidence to the foreground.

<sup>185</sup> Thérèse speaks of Louis flying about in the heavens to secure a place for Celine in Carmel (1894). *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 882.

<sup>186</sup> On whiteness and virginity, Thérèse wrote "Let us always remain the lilies of Jesus... that He withdraw us from the world before the pernicious wind of the earth has detached a single particle of the pollen from their stamens, pollens that could yellow a little the brilliance and whiteness of the lily... there is nothing so easy as to tarnish the lily... the tears of Jesus are ... mysterious pearls [which] have the power to whiten lilies, to preserve their brilliance..." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 732.

<sup>187</sup> Thérèse writes, "Virginity is a profound silence from all the cares of this earth," not only from useless cares but from all cares... to be virgin we must think only of the Spouse who allows nothing around Him that is not a virgin "since He willed to be born a virgin mother, to have a virgin precursor, a virgin foster-father, a virgin favourite, and finally, a virgin tomb." It is said: "Each one naturally loves his native land,

embodiment, wet and weighted, a dialogic progression of ‘learning by error’ that brought Thérèse into existence, that produced familial bonds, revealing the pattern of love. The rejected aspect of humanity here is not only embodiment-dynamism, but its effects, paradoxes and ambivalences arising through exploration of one’s world, and in sexual maturation.

*e. Family in Heaven*

Arminjon’s heaven is echoed in an image Thérèse shared with Celine in 1891,

the image of this world is passing, the shadows are lengthening, soon we shall be in our native land, soon the joys of our childhood, the Sunday evening, the intimate chats... all this will be restored to us forever and with interest. Jesus will return to us the joys which He has deprived us of for one moment!... Then, from our dear Father’s radiant head, we shall see waves of light coming forth and each one of his white hairs will be like a sun that will give us joy and happiness!<sup>188</sup>

This hope, approved of by Arminjon, places Thérèse on the path of a ‘return’, even as she accepts negative concepts (that she might greatly impress God with her sacrificial love, to draw the response: “Now, my turn!”). Arminjon’s concepts – but more so his images – serve as a way forward for Thérèse, rendering her of value, offering a sense of security (she has the characteristics of the elect, not of the condemned), and permitting her to pursue reunion with her lost beloveds. In the next chapter, we examine Thérèse’s developing self-view in her writing, using Winnicott’s True Self/False Self paradigm as our method to determine whether there is a ‘return’ from Arminjon’s negative aspects, namely, distortions of justice, reparation, inhuman perfection.

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and since the native land of Jesus is the Virgin of virgins, and since Jesus was born by his will of a Lily, He loves to find himself in virgin hearts.” Celine later writes, “I am unhappy... [N]ot being accustomed to living with boys, it seems strange to me to be spending my days in their company. As holy and pure and candid as they are, I cannot get used to it. ... These past days I have scruples and everything all mixed up, with the privation of my spiritual exercises, makes me dry and sad...” When the recently married Jeanne and Francis disapprove of Celine’s decision to enter Carmel, Thérèse writes that they “have chosen a vocation so different from ours that they cannot understand the sublimity of our vocation! ... After this life of one day, they will understand who will have been the most privileged, *we* or *they*...” as if virginity is objectively better. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 708-709, 868, 881.

<sup>188</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 732. To Leonie, Thérèse writes: There we will be reunited never to leave each other, there we shall taste family joys eternally. We shall find our dear father again who will be surrounded with glory and honour for his perfect fidelity, and especially for the humiliations that were showered upon him; we shall see our good Mother, who will rejoice at the trials that were our lot during life’s exile; we shall take delight in her happiness as she contemplates her five religious daughters, and we shall form, along with the four little angels who await us up above, a crown adorning the heads of our dear Parents. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 816.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### PART TWO: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

#### **The Return: A Recovery of Thérèse's True Self Image of God**

In the introduction, it was proposed that Thérèse's overall controlling metaphor was her filial relation to God. To show the origins and dimensions of that filial love, we examined in Chapters Two and Three Thérèse's early relationships within her natural (and surrogate) family, focussing on the experience of mercy. We then investigated whether Thérèse digressed from the felt-knowing of her early experience. We found in her accepting *The End of the World*, Thérèse allowed some unmerciful concepts next to her desire to love.<sup>1</sup> We will now show Thérèse's filial love toward God as taking up positive and negative dimensions, note whether these over-ride or play into Arminjon's theology, and finally, show how she re-engages with her original object-representations of God. For our tool of analysis we use Winnicott's True Self/False Self paradigm as McDargh interprets it and uses it. We let Thérèse speak for herself, in *Story of a Soul* (*Manuscripts A, B, C*), and in her later correspondence.

To distinguish between thoughts that flow from felt-knowing about mercy and thoughts which are mere religious allegiances, we will interpret Thérèse's expression through a sense of True Self or False Self, expecting Thérèse's True Self to echo felt-mercy and her False Self to support Arminjon's judgment oriented eschatology. Spanning two chapters, the material of *Story of a Soul* will be divided into three phases. In this chapter we will 'listen' to Thérèse as she recalls mercy toward herself as a little child (phase one), and as she recalls yearning for mercy when she finds herself bereft of it (phase two). In Chapter Six, we will look for Thérèse using her early experience of mercy to illustrate her spiritual 'way' (phase three).

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<sup>1</sup> Boris Ford (ed), *The Pelican Guide to English Literature: From Blake to Byron* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1957), 221. The romantic poet John Keats saw the ability to tolerate uncertainties, to hold conflicting thoughts without resolution, as positive. He writes: "*Negative capability*... [is] when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact or reason." Thérèse, as we will notice, seems unconcerned about the full consequences of some of the ideas she endorses, only taking up the part that illustrates her immediate feeling. (Nevin opines, by virtue of the passages she copies, that Thérèse was primarily attracted to Arminjon's declaration that God desires to outdo (by reward) human demonstrations of sacrifice for God. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 177-178.)

a. *Aim*

The “True Self,” as coined by Winnicott,<sup>2</sup> operates from a position that is true to what a person has felt, while aiming to engage the world (what is really there) as constructively as possible. A “False Self,” alternatively, sets up a defence facade as real, leaving a person “aware only of a nagging and debilitating sense of personal unreality, a sense of the betrayal of an inner truth, or failure to realize a potentiality for living.”<sup>3</sup> To return to the True Self is a return to the heart, a *Redire ad Cor*, to one’s place of dwelling, away from a False Self (which houses pain and emptiness).<sup>4</sup> From where we dwell, or are present, we can meet another – and capacity for communion, John Macmurray proposed, is at the centre of theology.<sup>5</sup> We agree, and expect that a theology which promotes loving communion with God and neighbour will arise from a True Self. Thérèse’s thoughts on self-understanding and God (leading to communion with God), based on felt-knowing about mercy, thus, are important to theology.

b. *Method*

We turn our attention to “object relations theory,” where a person constructs an inner world (from “objects” that represent their early relations) through which to operate in

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<sup>2</sup> “True Self,” in the context of standing opposite to a “False Self” in psychoanalysis, is attributed to Winnicott. See D.W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London, New York: Karnac, 1965, 1990), 140.

<sup>3</sup> John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 233.

<sup>4</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 240. McDargh notes (from Aelred Squire, *Aelred of Rievaulx*, 1973), that the desert fathers spoke of “*Redire ad Cor*, to return to the place of the heart, the core or center of the self” as a homecoming. Ryan further notes that the Biblical notion of the “heart” should not be equated simply with the affective centre of the person; it is rather “the inside of a person” embracing “feelings, memories, ideas, plans, and decisions.” Citing Léon-Dufour, he points out that, “in the inclusive and concrete anthropology of the Bible, the heart is the principle of morality, the centre of one’s freedom, of decisive choices and the place where one enters to be in dialogue with oneself and where one opens oneself or closes oneself to God.” See Thomas Ryan SM, “Conscience As Primordial Awareness in *Gaudium et Spes* and *Veritatis Splendor*”, *Australian Ejournal of Theology* 18.1 (April 2011), 94, citing Léon-Dufour, X, “Heart” in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 228.

<sup>5</sup> This is noted by McDargh. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 206-207. McDargh states that John Macmurray’s “Gifford Lectures, *The Form of the Personal*, were a major effort to introduce the relational paradigm into fundamental theology.” He wrote “That capacity for communion, that capacity for entering into free and equal personal relations is the thing that makes us human... the personal life demands a relationship with one another in which we can be our whole selves and have complete freedom to express everything that makes us what we are.” From *Reason and Emotion* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd, 1935), 63, 97.

the world of relations. Winnicott states that these objects are mobile (“transitional”); they can be re-engaged or dispersed, and throughout life they are invoked to integrate, and reintegrate the self.<sup>6</sup> Here we are concerned with ‘self’, and the ‘God-object’ – for belief to be *in*, to preserve inner goodness,<sup>7</sup> and as occupying a reality “testified to by a whole social environment”<sup>8</sup>

True Self/False Self emerges through the early phases in life. A total absorption in maintaining homeostasis in the infant makes way for a “unified situational experience,” which becomes a “holding environment” (Winnicott)<sup>9</sup> where the mother provides an “auxiliary ego:” a safe anchorage in her maternal matrix that supplies an increasingly secure “ego feeling” or “continuity of being.”<sup>10</sup> The True Self is an ego feeling (“feeling real, creative and spontaneous”) protected enough to allow interaction with the “real external world.”<sup>11</sup> A False Self is the result of a pressured adjustment to a sense of unreality, or futility – a concern with being (*that* I am) rather than identity (*who* I am). This may be caused by insensitive “schedules, wishes and whims” of the caregiver.<sup>12</sup> True Self/False Self formation affirms that the inner representational world functions as a kind of model which enables us “to identify not only danger but safety, not only enemies but potential friends and lovers.”<sup>13</sup> On one level, thus, we are investigating Thérèse’s identification of “enemies,” “friends and lovers” in her filial metaphor.

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<sup>6</sup> Fairbairn argued for a static model whose temporary purpose was solely to help a self under threat to survive. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 210.

<sup>7</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 229. At 228, one client (who suffered painful absence) complained “People use God like an analyst – someone to be there while you are playing.”

<sup>8</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 227.

<sup>9</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 219.

<sup>10</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 219.

<sup>11</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 219. This ego feeling (we learned through Sroufe in Chapter Two) corresponds to a sense of impacting one’s environment – which effectively means an ‘other’. Insensitive care-giving – experiences of not impacting one’s environment – result in weaker development, and replication of such ministrings.

<sup>12</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 219.

<sup>13</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 213.

We will look for evidence of constructive engagement with her inner world of object representation<sup>14</sup> in Thérèse’s autobiographical reflections about herself and about God,<sup>15</sup> to infer self-perceptions that disclose a True or False Self. A True Self is represented by positions directly conveying feelings from early in life with regard to painful experiences (feeling threatened, rejected, punished, devalued, ignored), happy experiences (feeling valued, forgiven, encouraged, noticed, supported), or ambiguous experiences (feeling seduced, manipulated, approval as conditional). A False Self denies the fact of certain experiences to maintain an inner representation that buttresses against disintegration, betrayal, or intolerable binds. Helpful to this project is McDargh’s analysis of the creation, elaboration and reconstruction of the object representations of God of two women in a longitudinal study.<sup>16</sup> His analysis will guide our questions to Thérèse’s autobiographical text – reflections on a lived life. Chapters Seven and Eight will explore the theology arising from Thérèse’s affective-knowing (via interaction with her God-object representation), a response to felt-mercy toward felt-limitation.

### c. *Divisions*

As mentioned, *Story of a Soul* will be divided into three phases; the first two will be investigated in this chapter, and the third in Chapter Six. These follow Thérèse’s own phases except for one difference. Rather than ‘phase one’ ending with Zélie’s death (as Thérèse has it), our phase one is concerned with mercy received. Thus, to “*Chapter I –*

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<sup>14</sup> Winnicott stresses that an inner world that can be returned to constructively to reconfigure one’s position depends on previous respect for “the integrity and the timing of an individual’s private creation of a God that provides an inner sense of goodness.” He states, “Religions have made much of original sin, but have not all come around to the idea of original goodness, that which by being gathered together in the idea of God is at the same time separate[d] off from, the individuals who collectively create and recreate this concept. The saying that man made God in his own image is usually treated as an amusing example of the perverse,” but its truth could be made more evident by stating, “man continues to create and recreate God as a place to put what is good in himself, and which he might spoil if he kept it in himself along with all the hate and destructiveness which is also to be found there.” “[Theology] has stolen the good from the developing individual child, and has then set up an artificial scheme for injecting this that has been stolen back into the child, and has called it moral education.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 229.

<sup>15</sup> Thérèse’s autobiography is not chronologically straightforward. She moves from remembered affects to present ones, and mixes these, often declaring that she feels a thing today just like yesterday or that her feelings have remained unchanged. Theological concepts are held in tension, yet Thérèse reports herself as feeling integrated (at peace). In terms of chronology, we rely on Conrad de Meester’s study, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the “Way of Spiritual Childhood” of St Therese of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 213.

*Alençon*” (up till the age of four and a half), we add “*Chapter II – Les Buissonnets*” (from four and a half to eight and a half). In “*Alençon*,” Thérèse, through her mother’s ‘eyes’, awakes an experience of Zélie meeting her actual physical limitation and vulnerability with mercy.<sup>17</sup> In “*Les Buissonnets*,” she reinvests Louis with the tenderness he once showed toward her play initiatives, and ‘again’ enjoys Louis’ mercy.

Thérèse, however, includes “from the age of four and a half to...fourteen” in her “painful” years,<sup>18</sup> based on the loss of her childhood character due to her mother’s death, singling out “*Chapter III—The Distressing Years*” as “the most painful of the three, especially since the entrance into Carmel of the one whom I chose as my second “Mama.”<sup>19</sup> Thérèse states “at Buissonnets... my life was truly happy;” here “my life passed by tranquilly;” what marred her stay here was being sent away from it, especially to her Uncle and Aunt’s home.<sup>20</sup>

As Thérèse reaches eight, she approaches older childhood (pre-pubescence), where limitation requires a different form of mercy<sup>21</sup> - which appears to be lacking. Phase II, for our purposes, includes that period of time when Thérèse craves for what an eight year old to a thirteen year old aged child needs in normative, or “good enough,” terms. Thérèse recalls grasping at what childhood offers, to obtain the support and consolation she formerly experienced. Phase III takes in the remaining material of *Story of a Soul*: experiences of Phase I as imaging her present experience of God, symbolizing God’s merciful love toward her experience of existential vulnerability. We turn to the form of Thérèse’s writing.

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<sup>17</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 49.

<sup>18</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 34-35. She names this as her painful time during which she was “timid and retiring, sensitive to an excessive degree.”

<sup>19</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 34.

<sup>20</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 35, 49, 34-35. “I could not bear the company of strangers and found my joy only within the intimacy of the family;” “[Uncle] frightened me, and I wasn’t... at ease in his home.”

<sup>21</sup> See L. Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organization of Emotional Life in the Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 161. From three to five years of age, to master impulses, identity, and peer relations, the caregiver needs to provide clear roles, values, and show flexible self control; while from six to eleven years of age, for loyal friendships and peer group functioning, the caregiver needs to monitor, support activity, and co-regulate. These periods assume current American preschool and schooling. Thérèse was eight and a half years of age when she first attended school. *Story of a Soul*, 53.

d. *Preliminary Observations - Writings by a Carmelite under Religious Obedience*

In his research on Thérèse, Thomas R. Nevin observes the possible influence of a Carmelite literary convention, the *circulaire*, on Thérèse's writing.<sup>22</sup> Thérèse heard many of these spiritual biographies<sup>23</sup> during meal times and at recreation:

The *circulaire* depicted the sister's calling into religious life, usually signalled by a visitation or miracle; then her conduct within Carmel, including offices held and particular devotions; finally, how through illness, she came to face death.<sup>24</sup>

Some of the qualities that Thérèse would have heard repeated were smallness, hiddenness, love, and confidence; with "little way" indicating a nun's particular approach to life.<sup>25</sup> While the resemblance of Thérèse's thought to those contained in these biographies diminishes her originality, Nevin feels that this does not lessen the value of *Story of a Soul*, because Thérèse supplies a whole (inner) self to these ideas.<sup>26</sup> These ideas, further, relate to Carmelite aspirations and rule, and practices in one's own time.<sup>27</sup> For example, Nevin notes that the primary task of the prioress was "to help them [nuns] break their own will."<sup>28</sup> Small faults, indicative of greater ones, needed swift correction as their effects would be disastrous in a confined community.<sup>29</sup> "Coulpes," or

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<sup>22</sup> This summary of a nun's life, generally composed by her prioress, and sometimes incorporating a nun's own words, served as a death notice. Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux, God's Gentle Warrior* (Oxford; New York: University Press, 2006), 148.

<sup>23</sup> Nevin quotes from forty of the four hundred *circulaires* he read. These follow a formula, and incorporated symbolic language, such as "the perfume of a sister's life, flower imagery being drawn from the Song of Songs..." Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 154, 147-159.

<sup>24</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 142-143. At 150. Sr Euphrasie du Saint-Sacrament is quoted "I love God with my whole heart and compel myself to please him, and then all is done and I go my little way," further, "I'm deeply aware of my wretchedness. I'm a poor creature, but since God's goodness puts up with me, why should I not put up with myself?" Novices, listening to her story while they ate their vegetables, could be encouraged that the Carmelite way to perfection could be realized.

<sup>25</sup> Marguerite de Beaune who furthered Carmelite devotion to the Infant Jesus in the seventeenth century used the expression, "la petite voie." Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 118.

<sup>26</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 126, 161. Against this background, Nevin entitles his chapter on Thérèse's autobiography "Thérèse Writes Herself."

<sup>27</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 138.

<sup>28</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 138-139.

<sup>29</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 131-131.

“fautes,” were noted and repeated at a weekly chapter meeting (“le Chapitre”), where nuns would further accuse themselves and each other of “infractions.”<sup>30</sup> Due punishments were imposed. A “kind of death watch” was “kept on the self,” so much so that self fault-finding runs as a seam through Thérèse’s text.<sup>31</sup>

Nevin’s observation that the *circulaire* served as a guide to what Therese might include in her writing, helps us to be mindful of spiritual fashion, and of this writing’s overall goal. The *circulaire* was a vehicle to express things about one’s self, in relation to the prevailing Carmelite tradition (then Jansenist). Thus we might expect to find Thérèse sharing candid thoughts in the context of proving she is graced by signs, favour, and divine-aid to her efforts. We return to Thérèse’s life passage. On realizing her hope to become a hermit in the desert with Pauline (Carmel), Thérèse faces a new horizon.<sup>32</sup> With much time to search interiorly, she faces “the heart’s common query: Who or what is there that will allow me to be as I am?”<sup>33</sup>

*e. Life-Passages in Thérèse*

Thérésian scholars, interested in movements of change in Thérèse’s perception of God/self, have sought to identify significant life-passages that preceded that change. These are relatively easy to track in Thérèse, as her written thoughts on God – a progressing response to external influences – transparently reveal what she was engaging with. Of the passages catalogued by Thérésian writers, we note three.<sup>34</sup> De

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<sup>30</sup> Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 132, 139. Faults were observed by a “zélatrice” (an appointed observer) who repeated them at the chapter meeting (a practice later removed by Pauline).

<sup>31</sup> Though serving community harmony, this had the potential to deteriorate into a stylized ritual. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 145 – 146.

<sup>32</sup> McDargh analyses two women who ‘rewrite’ themselves in middle age. He describes middle age as a *kairotic* time in a life history by reason of the impress of “religious questions and decisions: questions of ultimate meaning and value, decisions about how to live out with integrity and passion the last quarter of one’s traditionally allotted “three score years and ten.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 153.

<sup>33</sup> Each of the women in McDargh’s analysis ask whether they might be what was earlier refused them. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 183.

<sup>34</sup> These are my summaries from De Meester’s *Power of Confidence*, Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), and Constance Fitzgerald, “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux.” *The Way Supplement* (Summer, 1997), pp74-96.

Meester finds Thérèse moves from ‘wanting to *do* for God’ to ‘audacious confidence in God’. Six, who centres a shift around Thérèse’s ‘loss of heaven’, finds that Thérèse initiates a new daring standard, in not guiltily fleeing from her state of unbelief, and in expressing surrender to Jesus through sexual imagery. Fitzgerald observes that mothering develops through mimesis, and that Thérèse mothers ‘sinners’ (and her readers) in the way she was mothered. This last is particularly helpful as it suggests that felt-knowing about merciful love, to be available to repeat on an intuitive level, refers to a previous ‘imprint’ of mercy (however submerged or overlaid by competing interests).

Written chronologically in the final eighteen months of Thérèse’s life, *Manuscripts A, B, and C* form a theological unity by the relation between Thérèse’s reflection on the past and her progressing self-perception. De Meester and Fitzgerald observe progressing self-perception in Thérèse recollecting her “whole life:” De Meester observes a refinement and intensification of her “little way;” Fitzgerald names an operation – Thérèse’s activity raises an awareness lying dormant in her psyche.

In the first chapter of her autobiography, Thérèse sees herself in the eyes of her own mother whose letters, written before Thérèse was four, attest to how the baby daughter has been mirrored to herself by a loving mother. By documenting what Thérèse knows experientially but perhaps not consciously, these letters bring an awareness the affirmative experience of love lying dormant in her psyche, thereby enabling her to tell us that her “first memories...are stamped with smiles and the most tender caresses.” These mother-letters become part and parcel of her identity so that the autobiography actually mirrors the letters while the letters mother the autobiography.<sup>35</sup>

In *Man A*, Thérèse states that she will write the story about herself (her soul) only to “...sing... *The mercies of the Lord.*”<sup>36</sup> Mentioned only twice in her writing before 1895, “mercy” suddenly becomes frequent in Thérèse’s writing in 1895, where it is found about twenty times.<sup>37</sup> Does this point to a shift away from Arminjon’s theology? We

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<sup>35</sup> Constance Fitzgerald, “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux,” 75-76.

<sup>36</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Conrad De Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the “Way, of Spiritual Childhood” of St Therese of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), 151-152.



present a short overview of Thérèse's path from reading Arminjon to writing *Man A*, with help from de Meester.

*f. The Passage of Thérèse's Thought from Arminjon to Writing Man A*

After Christmas 1887 and reading Arminjon, Thérèse wants to save souls to please Jesus. Pleasing Jesus also means to become his virginal spouse, separated from "the world," which she prepares for by resisting the attraction of temporal things. She welcomes the refusal of early entry into Carmel as from God, allowing her to practise accepting denial, befitting her future Carmelite life. Thérèse gains entry in April 1888, but life in Carmel brings new feelings of being misunderstood, lack of formal direction or commendation for spiritual progress. When her father is overcome by mental instability, she suffers helplessness. In a climate of shame over such matters, she writes to Céline that she yearns to return to her father the love he gives her; recognizing this as an impossibility, she will ask God to console him.<sup>38</sup> Her sense of loving Louis inadequately, she then applies to God.<sup>39</sup> Louis' condition worsens in 1889. In 1890 Thérèse reads Isaiah's text of the "suffering servant." She expresses solidarity with Christ's humiliation and rejection by defending her father as if he, too, is a suffering servant.<sup>40</sup> During this year she reads the works of St John of the Cross and his spousal imagery enters her writing.

In 1889, suffering aridity, Thérèse is directed by Pauline to fix herself on Jesus' suffering face.<sup>41</sup> De Meester notes that Thérèse aims to become "more and more little to love: to love more, to love exclusively, and ... more purely,"<sup>42</sup> but her understanding of weakness has not yet arrived at weakness as powerlessness due to filial smallness; weakness is thought of as "feebly" straining under the weight of suffering (a reward sent by Jesus).<sup>43</sup> Thérèse interprets suffering as communicating love,<sup>44</sup> but not as also

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<sup>38</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 460-461.

<sup>39</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 499-500. Thérèse writes "... I would so much like to love Him!... Love Him more than he has ever been loved."

<sup>40</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 283.

<sup>41</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 580-582.

<sup>42</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 107.

inviting God's aid.<sup>45</sup> In October 1891, Fr Prou preaches a retreat, whereupon Thérèse is released from feeling held to ransom over Jesus' suffering by her sin ("hurting Jesus") – an idea present in Arminjon.<sup>46</sup> In May 1892, Louis returns to his family; in December Thérèse writes she is now at "an age when [her] memories of childhood have a particular charm,"<sup>47</sup> and in 1893, when Pauline becomes prioress, Thérèse comes to know a love "whose characteristic is to lower Itself."<sup>48</sup> Where before she wrote that sanctity consisted of "suffering and suffering everything," now she writes that merit does not consist in "doing or giving" but rather in "receiving,"<sup>49</sup> that the only purpose for doing good is for love; that we do not love God for his rewards but he himself is our reward, and that she does not need a point of reference to see her progress with God.<sup>50</sup> Thérèse emphasises lowliness to show we are but an instrument, pointing to the primacy of God's action.<sup>51</sup>

Before 1894, the image of 'child' is incidental<sup>52</sup> (entering the Martin girls' vocabulary from the *Visitandine* convent),<sup>53</sup> and the word 'little' is associated with

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<sup>43</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 537. Jesus "strikes and presses down," without simultaneously alleviating. De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 107-111; quote at 111. Thérèse's desire for proving love through martyrdom is consistent with Arminjon's call.

<sup>44</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 629- 631.

<sup>45</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 117. She speaks of no longer desiring to see the fruit of her efforts. *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 641.

<sup>46</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 173-174. Nevin suggests that Arminjon's "pharasaical payoff psychology...fell away from Thérèse perhaps only when she lost heaven, but that deepening, the growing up from celestial mercantilism could have been abetted as early as...1891 ...[through] retreat notes from Agen. "To sanctify one's self to save one's soul, that's permitted, yes, but it is mercenary.'" Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 158.

<sup>47</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 765.

<sup>48</sup> Between 1889 and 1892, with suffering the humiliation of Louis and the distance between herself and Céline, Thérèse uses the symbols of reparative theology where God is to be appeased by their prayers and suffering. In 1893, she turns from the symbol of exterior hiddenness to interior humility. De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 132. See *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 765, 781 (LT, 139, 140), 776.

<sup>49</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 134.

<sup>50</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 138-139. See *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 809.

<sup>51</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 813-814.

<sup>52</sup> This image is sometimes offered to her: Pauline writes in 1890 ("He is carrying you... Does a child in its Father's arms need any other consolation?"). Other times Thérèse uses it to make a point; she writes to

‘insignificance’, such as, affirming an action’s value as not drawn from its size but whether it is done from love.<sup>54</sup> The image of a ‘child carried’ in terms of powerlessness and ignorance<sup>55</sup> appears occasionally with Thérèse’s focus on abandonment, and in her effort to comfort Céline.<sup>56</sup> When Celine enters Carmel, she brings scriptural excerpts new to Thérèse. Thérèse reads Proverbs 9: 4 and Isaiah 66:2-13 (God’s mercy toward the little one), and the appeal of mercy becomes visible in her correspondence. Céline’s arrival, further, brings their early family life afresh to Thérèse’s mind, which she recounts at recreation. Pauline asks her to record this. We turn to Thérèse, to see what she reveals about her present and past God-object representation.<sup>57</sup>

## Phase I: Feeling the Mercy of Childhood

### a. Introduction

Thérèse introduces her writing by stating that she takes up Pauline’s request as a call to obedience in the manner the disciples were called, and this will serve as an occasion to sing “*the Mercies of the Lord*” (*Les Miséricordes du Seigneur!!!*).<sup>58</sup> Her present vocation as a Carmelite is not the result of her choosing God, but of God’s merciful choosing of her.<sup>59</sup> By God’s “mercies” (“*Les Miséricordes*”) Thérèse refers to a particular perception of ‘grace’. In Bérulle’s spirituality, grace is understood as God’s

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Céline in 1893 that Jesus’ longing to rest might be found in the “heart of a child.” *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 665; *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 804.

<sup>53</sup> “The child’s abandonment on the heart of her father (or of her mother) was the theme of the entire Visitandine tradition and the devotion to the Sacred Heart, in which the Martin sisters were immersed.” De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 143, n29.

<sup>54</sup> See De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 141-142. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 855.

<sup>55</sup> In a letter to Mme Guérin, Thérèse describes the motherly heart (gifted by the overflowing love of God) as one which understands (amid her helplessness of being misunderstood). *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 833.

<sup>56</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 143-144.

<sup>57</sup> Quotes from Thérèse will replicate italics, capitals, and punctuation, as found in the publication cited.

<sup>58</sup> She will sing “*the Mercies of the Lord*” as she will do eternally. *Story of a Soul*, 13. Translations from Sainte Thérèse de l’Enfant-Jésus et de la Sainte-Face, *Histoire D’une Ame: Manuscrits Autobiographiques* (Editions du Cerf et Desclée De Brower, 1972), 19.

<sup>59</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 13.

mysterious immanence influencing a person's every earthly moment,<sup>60</sup> while in Jansenism, it is understood in the light of election and grace; some are saved while others are damned.<sup>61</sup> God arranges destiny by a force called grace, and extends favour through expressions of mercy.<sup>62</sup> Here, Thérèse, in her feeling she and her family were shown preference (*préférences*) by Mary, heaven's Queen for her family, appears to endorse the Jansenist position.<sup>63</sup>

Accepting arbitrary election and the inequality that it entails as the ground of reality ("God has preferences," showering "extraordinary favours" and "such favours"),<sup>64</sup> Thérèse proposes a solution within it. Using the flower as a metaphor, she notes that there are "great" flowers that God might look up at, but there are also little ones who should be content to have God glance down at amongst his feet.<sup>65</sup> She likens herself to a wildflower which has been graced with simple beauty.<sup>66</sup> To perfectly reveal God's love is to most fully be the flower one is created to be. Finally, God's love is most perfectly revealed in the simple soul, because it is in this soul that God descends furthest.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 120.

<sup>61</sup> Jansenism involves God's inscrutable and arbitrary free choice, on the one hand, and God's unequal distribution of grace upon his creatures, on the other. Of concern is literal correspondence between human capabilities, and cultural representations of good, and grace. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 119.

<sup>62</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 13. Thérèse refers to Romans 9: 13,16 where God calls whom he pleases. In this approach, grace is like an onslaught of another, albeit divine, will. While, in a sense, imperceptible, if we correspond creator and created to parent and child, we see that the simple acquiescing child Thérèse is overtaken by the force of the emotion of the stronger adult (the God posed by her faith) toward an end unknown to her, in a movement sometimes felt as foreign and brusque. She is taken hostage by the force of 'God's emotion' in the form of the present Catholic culture, specifically in relation to how to *do* for God. This often incomprehensible God (present in Arminjon's book, Marie's lessons and others who have assimilated it) occupies a threatening role in her identity formation, and affects her self-development by accentuating her sense of powerlessness. Though Thérèse does not question the incomprehensibility of election, she questions inequality.

<sup>63</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 13, 14. Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D'Une Ame*, 20.

<sup>64</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 13-14. "pourquoi le bon Dieu avait des préférences?" and "des faveurs extraordinaires," and "de telles faveurs." Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D'Une Ame*, 20.

<sup>65</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14. "...il en a crée aussi de plus petits [fleurs] et ceux-ci doivent se contenter d'être des pâquerettes ou des violettes destinées à réjouir les regards du bon Dieu lorsqu'il les abaisse à ses pieds." Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D'Une Ame*, 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14. "...ses fleurs des champs dont la simplicité Le revit..." Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D'Une Ame*, 21.

<sup>67</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14. "...c'est jusqu'à leurs cœurs [ses fleurs des champs dont la simplicité] qu'il daigne s'abaisser." Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D'Une Ame*, 21.

Thérèse resolves the problem of inequality by introducing the value of particularity, and by endowing lowliness with value (as associated with love). This is one aspect of her experience of her True Self.

Thérèse offers, somewhat tautologically, “Perfection consists in doing his will, in being what He wills us to be.”<sup>68</sup> (To be “great” suggests achieving much; can she simply be Thérèse?) In contrast to ‘greatness’, she adds that the wisdom God communicates is love, and “the nature of love is to humble oneself.”<sup>69</sup> Where this best takes place is in the child “who knows only how to make his feeble cries heard,”<sup>70</sup> God created occasions of powerlessness, and then chose to become the feeblest of his creations, the child.<sup>71</sup> Thus Thérèse overturns the apparent injustice of Jansenism.

Thérèse states that her writing will constitute her “*thoughts* on the graces God deigned to grant me.” She will “stammer,” (a word Arminjon uses to illustrate human inadequacy in the face of God’s much superior knowing)<sup>72</sup> when telling of her limitation and how God’s mercy operated through it. “Stammering” suggests elements of both a ‘kataphatic’ response (“verbose,” repetitious talk) and an ‘apophatic’ response (silent awe).<sup>73</sup> Thérèse contrasts her limited speech efforts, on behalf of her cognition of felt-impressions, with God the infinite source of those impressions. In the past, others responded to Thérèse’s stammering by anticipating her needs (Zélie had understood infant Thérèse’s “feeble” communications, ‘replying’ with nourishment; Pauline, with education and rewards), and she now asks this of Pauline, “you, who formed my heart,

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<sup>68</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14. This hints at Thérèse’s “martyrdom” over what her path to sainthood ought to be.

<sup>69</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14.

<sup>70</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14. Thérèse adds the “poor savage who has nothing but the natural law to guide him.”

<sup>71</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14 .

<sup>72</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 134.

<sup>73</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 15. For Turner, the kataphatic moment is the “Christian mind deploying all the resources of language in the effort to express something about God, and in that straining to speak, theology ...borrow[s] vocabularies by analogy from many another discourse...”Thérèse does this using flowers, famous conversions, soiling a white robe, a smelter’s crucible, and infancy. Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 20.

offering it up to Jesus.”<sup>74</sup> Thérèse asserts a felt-truth (True Self) about her early experience of limitation. She knows what it means to be misunderstood. She was teased by Marie for her mixed up way of saying things,<sup>75</sup> and sometimes altogether unheard, by Pauline who left for Carmel without her, did not listen at visits, or ‘hear’ the pain in her letters. Expanding the supportive help given to the child to a transcendent horizon, she asks Pauline (as God’s representative) to supportively anticipate what she means in her “stammering” to explain God’s merciful ways.

*b. Thérèse’s Intent Achieved yet Open*

Thérèse intends to share with Pauline the “mercies of the Lord” without “constraint” or “false humility,” as something Pauline will understand.<sup>76</sup> She begins by equating the outcome of her life with God’s intent in a literal way. It was God “who had her born in a holy soil, impregnated with a *virginal* perfume,”

... preceded by eight Lilies of dazzling whiteness. In His love He wished to preserve His little flower from the world’s poisoned breath. Hardly had her petals begun to unfold when this divine Saviour transplanted her to Mount Carmel ... now three Lilies in her [the Spouse of Virgins] presence. ...may the Lilyplant [in exile] be soon complete in heaven!<sup>77</sup>

This sums up in “a few words... what God did for me.”<sup>78</sup> Asserting earlier “...His mercy alone brought about everything that is good in her,” Thérèse implies that her virginal and Carmelite states – gifts from God – as “everything good in her” are intrinsically good (by divine command).<sup>79</sup> Her feeling is an allegiance to a cultural interpretation of the Christian message (held by Zélie and Louis, who preferred the

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<sup>74</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 15.

<sup>75</sup> *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 114.

<sup>76</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 15, 16 Though it seems that Thérèse here reads God as utterly benevolent, in the light of her acceptance of Arminjon, we must consider that ‘mercy’ may be meant as the favour of privilege, of being pre-ordained as one of the elect, who are known by particular qualities.

<sup>77</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 15-16.

<sup>78</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 16.

<sup>79</sup> She writes: “nothing in herself was capable of attracting divine glances, and His mercy alone brought about everything that is good in her.” *Story of a Soul*, 15.

virginal religious state for themselves). In affirming the above, does she also mean: if I am not a virginal religious, it shows that I love God less, and am loved less by God?

Thérèse's earlier comment, that she is able to glance unimpaired at the past due to maturation "in the crucible of exterior and interior trials," appears to mean that all the difficulties she encountered formed her in the best possible way, but through Arminjon's theodicy, it means that all her sufferings led to this one worthy end.<sup>80</sup> The assertion that only now is she capable of attracting God's divine glances suggests a False Self, a voice which states that God's love depends on becoming other than a child (refined, restrained, withdrawing). Enculturated to seek a community life based on a particular notion of purity and living the gospel (which has the capacity to alienate her from those who express sexual relations or who belong to the community of humanity alone), Thérèse expresses gratitude for the privilege of now belonging to it.

She, however, does not rest with ordinariness as her glory, *or* the pre-ordination of her Carmelite state as a privilege. By invoking the help of her mother and father (who she assumes have transcended death) to help her to do more than simply stammer about God's mercies, we suggest, she begins to re-engage her interior 'others' in ways she has not anticipated. When she reads Zélie's letters, describing how helpless she was, how much help she needed, and how she was loved and received, she 'hears' Zélie, through older 'ears'. From her position of an adult sense of limitation (existential), poor judgments could be forgiven, while loving ones had the power to strengthen her True Self.

Thérèse's introduction is dense with internal resonance. After asserting that God takes a particular interest in "each particular soul as though there were no others like it,"<sup>81</sup> she gives evidence of this kind of interest through her mother's letters (describing Thérèse's activity so to endear her to her absent sisters).<sup>82</sup> She quotes a mother who is openly pleased with her child's personality, who watched her actions closely, confident she

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<sup>80</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 15-16.

<sup>81</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14.

<sup>82</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 17-18.

knew her intimately, thought highly of her intentions, and recognized the magnitude of her efforts – supporting her declaration that she was surrounded by love, making her expressive of, and receptive to love. The “facts,” Thérèse is about to write, though trifling, are of value in their ability to charm a mother.<sup>83</sup> The love Thérèse assumes on Pauline’s part exemplifies the kind of love she plans to speak about.

*c. Alençon – Repeating Zélie’s Letters*

Stories tumble from Thérèse with little attention to chronological order. She writes playfully, telling how she came from an environment of love, to spread love around in a unique way:

God was pleased to surround me with love and the first memories I have are stamped with smiles and the most tender caresses. But although he placed so much love near me, He also sent much love into my little heart, making it warm and affectionate. I loved Mama and Papa very much and showed it in a thousand ways, for I was very expressive.<sup>84</sup>

Thérèse notes “placed love near me,” and “love into my little heart” as two gifts. Is Thérèse not cognizant of the inter-relation between these in a child’s development, or does she intuit that she introduced a surprising level of affection in an otherwise restrained atmosphere, where spirits were dampened, alluding that this came from elsewhere? Zélie, in her writing, will validate that sense (Thérèse has “a spirit about her that I have not seen in any of you”).<sup>85</sup> Unaware that Rose Taillé might have been instrumental in this, Thérèse simply takes this up as her unique identity, an enduring part of her character, her True Self, mysteriously endowed (by God).

This introduction leads to an “imp” who wishes death to her mother to pre-empt the happy place of heaven, who swings too high, and needs Zélie’s company outdoors.<sup>86</sup> Thérèse reads from Zélie’s letters about her creative circumvention of hell, her

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<sup>83</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 15.

<sup>84</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 17.

<sup>85</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 28. “...elle a d’esprit comme je n’en ai jamais vu à aucune de vous.” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D’Une Ame*, 37.

<sup>86</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 17-18.



judgment on the ownership of the family roses, and insistence on a formal procedure for ridding herself of sins.<sup>87</sup> She is reminded of her confidence in her mother's power and goodness, in her happy solution to the dilemma of naughtiness seizing her:

if I'm not good, I'll go to hell. But I know what I will do. I will fly to you in heaven, and what will God be able to do to take me away? You will be holding me so tightly in your arms.<sup>88</sup>

Thérèse re-encounters her own trust in Zélie's maternal defence, but here she encounters her mother holding no qualms over, even enjoying, her creative initiative to foil God. Thérèse's powerful protector is swayed by her trust,

I could see in her eyes that she was really convinced that God could do nothing to her if she were in her mother's arms.<sup>89</sup>

Thérèse recounts Zélie's perceptiveness of her sensitivity and good intention (with regard to the proper ownership of the rose her mother offered to her: Thérèse held that the roses belonged to Marie and her mother had no right to give Thérèse one);<sup>90</sup> hearing Zélie's awareness of her predicament (Thérèse had adopted Marie's emotion on the subject), affirmed the validity of her former distress. This is reinforced in Zélie noticing Thérèse's concern over committing 'wrongs' (strenuously pushing to be properly forgiven), in spite of the innocuousness of her 'fault'. Zélie's sensitive attention to Thérèse's desperation to be right according to the rules amid an onslaught of competing demands (love, be honest, be faithful, *and* be good), results in her recognizing Thérèse's emerging sense of right, as an independent self. By repeating Zélie, Thérèse re-lives herself impacting her mother, and feels secure in praise for her tenacity and aspiration, from one familiar with her limitations.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 18-19.

<sup>88</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 18.

<sup>89</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 18. Zélie intimates that she is disarmed by Thérèse's spiritedness. She empowers Thérèse from the past, by responding to Thérèse absorbing her teaching about God.

<sup>90</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 18.

<sup>91</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 22.

d. *Zélie's Ambivalence*

Thérèse tries to point to her faults by repeating Zélie's words, "As for the little imp...she is so small, so thoughtless!" yet Zélie's assessment, "But still she has a heart of gold; she is very lovable and frank,"<sup>92</sup> reveals a mother who is impressed by Thérèse's forth-rightness, such as pushing her sister, and then repenting of it (desire to continue the relation results in a confession of "I pushed Celine," with repentance close behind, "I won't do it again").<sup>93</sup> Intent on showing a former unruliness, Thérèse uses incidents of frustration as 'faultiness'. First, she recalls losing the sweets (from *Le Mans*) which were to convey her good intention of selflessness toward Céline, but, instead, upon their loss, conveyed loud distress, unshared by Pauline.<sup>94</sup> Ignoring the element of justifiable frustration (in what amount to demonstrations of independent agency at inconvenient moments), Thérèse uses these to show herself as faulted by "self-love."<sup>95</sup> A play on words, 'not even able to claim goodness whilst sleeping', illustrated by recalling her disturbance to Pauline and Celine's sleep, seems instead to heartily rejoice in being difficult (next to insipid behaviour),<sup>96</sup> parading her 'wilfulness' with a pleasure like Zélie's own. Thérèse is amused by her own defiance in the "fault" of "self love" "when she refused to kiss the floor even for a sou, and is similarly amused by her pride in the hope that by wearing her sleeveless blue frock her prettiness might be better noticed."<sup>97</sup>

In the example of frustrated block-building, where "my faults shine forth with great brilliance," Thérèse reads from Zélie, "I am obliged to correct this poor little baby...when things don't go just right and according to her thinking, she rolls on the

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<sup>92</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 22. Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d'Une Ame*, 29. Here, Zélie calls Thérèse a little ferret: "le petit furet."

<sup>93</sup> Thérèse also quotes from Zélie's letter that she would rather sleep in the cellar than give in. *Story of a Soul*, 22.

<sup>94</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 23.

<sup>95</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 24. In the struggle with self-love as early sin, Thérèse seems to echo a Jansenist concern with human nature. Yet, she might simply be establishing herself as one of those saints who was formerly self-absorbed and headstrong (*circulaire* material).

<sup>96</sup> Thérèse plays on the expression "good when sleeping." *Story of a Soul*, 24. Zélie wrote, "The more trouble I have [with her] the better I am!" *General Correspondence II*, 1210.

<sup>97</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 24.

floor in desperation like one without any hope. There are times when it gets too much for her and she literally chokes. She is a nervous child, but she is very good...<sup>98</sup>

Thérèse's desire to be good, however, is Zélie's last word on the matter. Thérèse comments: "I would have become very bad and perhaps even been lost" (supporting the idea of a fortunate 'saving' upbringing due to election). Because of "excessive *self-love*" ("l'*amour propre*"), early correction of "faults" was needed, but "*love of the good*" (l'*amour du bien*) overcame the first – Thérèse recalls that even the suggestion that a "thing wasn't *good*" impelled her to correct herself.<sup>99</sup> (In the process of asserting something as 'not good', might there have been suggestion that *she* was not good?) Thérèse then reads that she gave her mother "great consolation," in copying "little acts of penance," yet the greater part of Zélie's letter is devoted to Thérèse's friendship with Céline.<sup>100</sup>

Perhaps finally calming her sense of faultiness occurs through Zélie describing Thérèse as "charming, very alert, very lively, and sensitive;"<sup>101</sup> as persistent and courageous in her affection for Celine. Zélie relates how Thérèse wished so much to stay in Celine's company; there was no cost too high. Her monumental (pitiful) restraint is now noticed, a vindication of her love and effort:

the poor little thing sits in a chair for two or three hours on end; and is given some beads to thread or a little piece of cloth to sew, and she doesn't dare budge but heaves deep sighs. When her needle becomes unthreaded, she tries to rethread it; and it's funny to see her not being able to succeed but still not daring to bother Marie. Soon you see two big tears rolling down her cheeks!<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 23. While Zélie affirms Thérèse's "good heart," this was an occasion for Zélie to guide Thérèse's high affective disorganization, in her failure to express her goal. There is indication that Thérèse applied unreasonable expectations to herself, perhaps by trying to imitate the ascetic practices that Zélie and Pauline share. She fails in her efforts to be selfless quite simply because she is not developmentally ready – at this point she is supposed to be asserting a self. Thus she fails inasmuch as her capability *fails her*.

<sup>99</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 24-25. Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d'Une Ame*, 32.

<sup>100</sup> "Thérèse qui veut parfois se mêler de faire des pratiques..." Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d'Une Ame*, 32-33. Zélie simply states that "Even Thérèse at times wants to join in performing the practices." Six months later in 1877, Zélie writes again of Thérèse's practices, adding "she records even a little too much." We do not read of Zélie dissuading this, but while Thérèse practices (role-play), Zélie corrects her ("I told her... to push a bead back"). Thérèse is threatened enough to reply: "Oh! Well, I can't find my chaplet." *General Correspondence: Volume II*, 1226, 1232.

<sup>101</sup> Thérèse comments that this was mere imitation of family behaviour. *Story of a Soul*, 25.

<sup>102</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 26.

Thérèse follows with how she loved to be at play with Céline, treasuring the affirmation of their bond more than dessert, the park, or the toys belonging to the Mayor's daughter.<sup>103</sup> Even Thérèse's 'sacramental life' began with Celine's cooperation, who produced blessed bread at her insistence, by "gravely" reciting "a *Hail Mary* over" bread she obtained.<sup>104</sup> Thérèse then notes Zélie's amusement over Thérèse's confidence in divine matters (when she and Céline try to make sense of God), explaining that "all powerful" means God "can do what He wants."<sup>105</sup> This felt-approval of her past innovation has the potential to strengthen Thérèse's present theological initiatives – in an environment where her spiritual sensibility is largely unheeded.

Thérèse then concludes with an "incident" to summarise her "whole life."<sup>106</sup> When Léonie offered Thérèse and Celine a basket of things she had outgrown, Celine took one object while Thérèse took the whole basket, saying, "I choose all."<sup>107</sup> She interprets the basket as the totality of opportunities to respond to God's advances, where all are free to choose little or much. She would come to choose all that God offers, affirming the spiritual goal of forgetting oneself, suffering, and choosing all that God wills over keeping her own will.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> I "much prefer[red] to stay in our own little garden to *scrape the walls* and get all the shiny stones there, then we would go and *sell* them to Papa who bought them from us with in *all seriousness*." *Story of a Soul*, 26.

<sup>104</sup> Making a sign of the cross over it Thérèse ate it with "great devotion," recalling it "tasted the same as the *blessed bread*." *Story of a Soul*, 26- 27.

<sup>105</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 27.

<sup>106</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 164. Nevin observes that Thérèse "imposes portentous meanings upon events and sayings which at the time of utterance they perhaps did not sustain." Though she expresses a "child wit, at once ingenuous and mischievous...familiar to the parents of any half-alert and reasonably expressive youngster," she means here to say more than "was I not a clever child, then?" This is a "self-constructing act," in Paul Ricoeur's words, a "configuration of a prefiguration," where she interprets an "incident as a portent of her will's destiny."

<sup>107</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 27.

<sup>108</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 27.

e. *Beyond Infancy*

Applying one of Zélie's endearments, "rascal" ("Lutin") to herself, Thérèse speaks of entering a phase of dubious initiative.<sup>109</sup> She narrates a dream which she interprets as indicating that even devils flee before the gaze of a child who, here, is felt to be "in a state of grace."<sup>110</sup> An early experience of imperviousness to evil — an innocent child who is close to God intuitively knows what and what not to fear, which thwarts evil — is both romantic hagiography and *circulaire* material.

Returning to the present (1895) Thérèse comments (alluding to suffering in between time) that she has resumed the happy disposition, and "firm control over her actions" she once had, which, then, were due to "good" inspiration (rather than meritorious work);<sup>111</sup> virtue flowed naturally from her desire to be good, and, in 'sunny' circumstances, she was naturally acquiescing.<sup>112</sup> Such virtue, situated in the uncomplicated appeal of good, the contentment in family outings, and the beauty of nature felt as poetry in her heart, she feels was without merit — being a child with an unchallenged *natural* desire for good, allowed 'easy' virtue.<sup>113</sup>

f. *Summary Remarks for Recollections at Alençon*

When Thérèse begins her autobiography, Pauline is prioress, and Thérèse has recently been reunited with her companion, Celine. Flushed with felt-favour,<sup>114</sup> she seems to reaffirm her familiar Catholic values (Jansenism and Arminjon's theology), aiming to show signs pointing to her electedness, and examples of herself as needing correction from an 'original wilfulness', perhaps, later, to list trials that merit a crown. However,

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<sup>109</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 28. In Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d'Une Ame*, 25, Zélie writes "Le Bébé est un lutin..."

<sup>110</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 28.

<sup>111</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 28, 30. Thérèse remembers her natural good will was taken advantage of when her grandmother took her flowers. Though this didn't please her, she preferred to be silent and not excuse herself. "There was no merit here but natural virtue. ...this inspiration has vanished!"

<sup>112</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 29.

<sup>113</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 29. This is an allusion to suffering to coming (and present suffering).

<sup>114</sup> Louis has died, relieved from humiliation, making way for the possibility of Céline's entry. Approval from Carmel was felt by Thérèse to indicate that Louis has gone to heaven. *Story of a Soul*, 177-178.

as she writes her past, Thérèse encounters anew her mother reflecting pleasure in her, confidence in a “germ of goodness,”<sup>115</sup> and pride in a “spirit ... that I have not seen in any of you.”<sup>116</sup> Zélie’s approval reads as a tacit encouragement of a spark she herself was deprived of. Thérèse hears that good prevails in her. If Thérèse planned to write a beautiful *circulaire*, to appear once spirited but now tamed, or as reaching the heights of docility toward suffering, this subverts it, as here is a celebration of spirited initiative – how the self healthily begins. Thérèse is in league with her mother’s hope.

We noted earlier Thérèse developed through sensitive care-giving forming a self and object representations in which she felt unequivocally loved.<sup>117</sup> Quoting her mother’s letters allows re-engagement with aspects of this experience in a way that might affect her transitional God-object. From them Thérèse feels her good self (and True Self): I was loved (am lovable) and I meant well (am good). She also discovers: I operated the rules given me (and was sometimes praised, found amusing, other times misunderstood). I was expected to change, to try harder even when I was trying hard. Being myself did not draw the kind of attention I hoped for. There are seeds of a bad self here: if I operate their rules better, I will be *not* misunderstood, not corrected, not laughed over, but taken seriously. Almost defiant in goodness, Thérèse forms a False Self which hopes to conquer by pleasing. The following period will accentuate this self. Trying to be good did not keep Zélie present, nor does it keep Louis close by. Nevertheless, at les Buissonnets, when home, Louis gives himself to her as she needs; his companionship compensates for Zélie’s absence.

*g. Les Buissonnets*

Thérèse reflects on her mother’s death. How small she felt next to death’s reality; how her awareness was underestimated. She recalls, toward the end of her mother’s illness when she and Celine were left to recite prayers in an empty room (in the absence of

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<sup>115</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 29.

<sup>116</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 28.

<sup>117</sup> Thérèse’s present sense of unreserved gratitude and peace reflects a foundational experience of being seen and held. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 221. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 231.

their mother), discovering that prayer belonged to motherly presence.<sup>118</sup> Zélie had kept all securely together. An untroubled (“happy”) childhood ended (once “full of life,” she was now “timid, retiring, sensitive to an excessive degree” and easily reduced to tears), but a further experience of childhood mercy was to be found at “Les Buissonnets.”<sup>119</sup> There, Thérèse recalls the consolation of her family together.

Thérèse writes that she replaced Zélie with Pauline, whose care, with Louis and Marie’s, was as God’s “beneficent rays upon” her.<sup>120</sup> Louis, “enriched now with a truly maternal love,”<sup>121</sup> took her with him on his walks, and patiently accepted the roles she assigned him in her games, enacting his part with humoured reverence: “Papa stopped all his work and with a smile he pretended to drink [my precious mixture].”<sup>122</sup> He “showered tender love upon his queen” in a way that “the heart feels but which the tongue and even the mind cannot express.”<sup>123</sup> She tells of him taking her fishing in the countryside among the flowers and birds, sometimes with the strains of military music on the wind. Here, feeling “sweet melancholy,” she began to meditate.<sup>124</sup> The jam in her bread symbolized her predicament. Bright when the day was still a promise, it was now faded because the awaited good was coming to an end, and “earth seemed again a sad place.”<sup>125</sup> With Louis, she had freedom to be delighted by the oncoming storm: “far from being frightened, I was thrilled with delight because God seemed to be so

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<sup>118</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 34.

<sup>119</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 33-35. “for there my life was truly happy.”

<sup>120</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 35. These beneficent rays are a reservoir Thérèse later draws from in her trial. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 147. With regard to flower imagery (well used in *circulaires*), we enter an array of metaphors which are not consistent. For example, in correspondence with Thérèse, Pauline uses flowers to symbolize a self garden of opportunities where self-denial is the perfume of love. However, it does not seem likely that Thérèse likens Pauline’s care to an opportunity for self-denial.

<sup>121</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 35. Zélie’s passing gives rise to the substituting maternal love of Papa’s “very affectionate heart.”

<sup>122</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 36.

<sup>123</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 37

<sup>124</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 37.

<sup>125</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 37.

close!”<sup>126</sup> (The burden of protection being upon him, Louis was less enamoured by the storm.) Further, on their walks Papa “loved” her expressing charity on their behalf.<sup>127</sup> Thérèse then tells of her childish indignation at Victoire’s (their maid) lack of compliance with her wishes, for which Thérèse held no remorse, in contrast to her obedience at her first confession, for which Pauline had well prepared her.<sup>128</sup>

“The feasts!” evoked deep happiness Thérèse remembers: Pauline communicated the “mysteries,” and then these were expressed.<sup>129</sup> The feast illustrates an event infused with emotion which later comes to ascribe value to the event, and now still evokes that emotion. Feast days were associated with being indulged by her family:

first I stayed in *bed* longer than on the other days; then Pauline spoiled her little girl by bringing her some chocolate to drink while still in bed and then she dressed her up like a little Queen.<sup>130</sup>

Mass, the feast’s final expression, included feeling her relationship with Louis admired by onlookers: “everyone seemed to think it so wonderful to see such a *handsome* old man with such a *little daughter* that they went out of their way to give them their places.”<sup>131</sup> Thérèse relates how the priest’s sermon was listened to in the intimacy of their relationship where she witnessed Louis tearful openness to “eternal truths”.<sup>132</sup> The day coming to end introduces the theme of experiencing “*exile* on this earth” and the feeling of sadness at the dispersion of the family.<sup>133</sup> Walking home, with Papa, she

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<sup>126</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 38.

<sup>127</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 38-41.

<sup>128</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 39-40.

<sup>129</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 41. “What a joy it was for me to throw flowers beneath the feet of God! Before allowing them to fall to the ground, I threw them as high as I could and I was never so happy as when I saw my roses touch the sacred monstrance.” Thérèse describes a procession on the feast of Corpus Christi.

<sup>130</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 41.

<sup>131</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 41-42.

<sup>132</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 42. “His eyes at times were filled with tears which he tried in vain to stop; he seemed no longer held by earth so much did his soul love to lose itself in the eternal truths.”

<sup>133</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 42.



contemplated “the star studded firmament” rather than looking “upon this dull earth.”<sup>134</sup> She loved their winter evenings: after checkers, she and Celine would sit on “Papa’s knees” while he sang stirringly, or recited poems, rocking them gently, teaching “eternal truths.”<sup>135</sup> Alone together for prayers, she felt that to see him was “to see how the saints pray;” the day was completed by a ritual kiss and her bid “goodnight.”<sup>136</sup>

Thérèse affirms Pauline’s education and mothering (she found herself strengthened, corrected, and *unspoiled*). Her desire to please Pauline was such, she muses, that in spite of love for Louis, she strove to gain Pauline’s total approval for any activity he proposed.<sup>137</sup> She recalls how her illness elicited Pauline’s favours, in the sacrifice of her “beautiful knife” and the *promise* of even greater sacrifice and rewards.<sup>138</sup> Pauline clarified certain theological points for her nourishment, and on one feast day each year she experienced a justice (an award for school work) like a happy “judgment day” on hearing her just sentence read by “the King,” her father.<sup>139</sup> She shares that she admired her father; but though promoting the idea of him becoming king, she secretly wished to keep him in her possession.<sup>140</sup> On a visit to Trouville, Thérèse recalls her father motioning to suppress a compliment directed to her, then, notes her gratitude in never hearing a compliment from her family, stemming vanity and preserving her innocence.<sup>141</sup> She concludes with asserting that she received enough affection to brace her for the “miseries” of “the world.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 43.

<sup>135</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 43.

<sup>136</sup> In order of age, Thérèse was bid “goodnight” last of all, taken by the elbows for her kiss, and her reply was in “a high pitched tone.” *Story of a Soul*, 43.

<sup>137</sup> When Pauline disapproved of her taking a walk, she cried till Pauline gave her a “Yes.” *Story of a Soul*, 44.

<sup>138</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 44. These took the form of a wheelbarrow ride and planting.

<sup>139</sup> “How glad I was to see the day of the distribution of prizes arrive each year! In this, as in all other matters, *justice* was strictly observed and I received only the rewards I deserved.” *Story of a Soul*, 45, 46-48. Thérèse then narrates the vision she has of her father’s illness, reflecting on how the truth about the present was already given, albeit veiled, in the past. This serves as a sign to show Louis figures as one of God’s elect.

<sup>140</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 48-49.

<sup>141</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 48.

g. *Summary Remarks – Les Buissonnets*

Thérèse recalls that her depleted self was sheltered at Les Buissonnets. Only amongst her immediate family was she “truly happy,” because there her weakness is accommodated.<sup>143</sup> Thérèse’s need stimulates a new occasion for caregiver mercy. Louis’ cooperates with Thérèse’s play, enabling her to practice roles, important to her development. Also, in the security of Louis’ watchful presence Thérèse is anchored and compassed,<sup>144</sup> allowing her to safely retreat (meditate). Not needing to be guarded, she can “reorganize” herself.<sup>145</sup> This safe environment, like Louis, its instigator, is not consistently present.

The feast is a reconstitution of family wholeness. Louis and Thérèse’s sisters lend joy to the feast, but anticipation of their leaving casts a shadow. The closeness and assurance briefly had by Thérèse dissipates in its passing, revealing commitment to pursuits away from her. The feast is like a warm moment in the cold sea of absence. Louis’ leaving, especially, has the power to affect Thérèse’s God object representation. In Zélie’s absence, Pauline is felt as her effective anchor; an air of ineffectuality and vagueness surrounds Louis’ intermittent presence. God will become Thérèse’s sole friend and the ultimate controller of all events. Thérèse will distance herself from the value of physicality (no human mirror affirmed her physical beauty), leading her to Arminjon’s other-worldliness as her true value. Thérèse accepts Louis’ leaving (on his trips), treating her consequent sadness and difficult behaviour as a fault (emerging false self). Fairburn explains why a child might deny parental deficiency:

It is better to be a sinner in a world ruled by God than to live in a world ruled by the devil. A sinner in a world ruled by God may be bad; but there is always a sense of security to be derived from the fact that the world around is good.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 49.

<sup>143</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 36.

<sup>144</sup> “Compassed” meaning aware of the direction in which her security lay.

<sup>145</sup> Louis shares his love nature with Thérèse, but what is occurring within him? He has lost siblings, four children, and now his wife – is part of him with them?

<sup>146</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 233.

Thérèse, in the present, acknowledges Louis' former loving care. (Recollecting Louis' fathering presence re-establishes his virtue after his humiliation. His forgotten goodness images Jesus' forgotten mercy). Through her otherworldly focus, Thérèse attributes felt-abandonment with a transcendent value: a sense of exile – true belonging is not to be felt on earth by those who were destined for a home elsewhere. Consolidated by Louis' attention to “eternal truths,” Thérèse feels her real home is “the everlasting repose of heaven, that never-ending *Sunday* of the *Fatherland*.”<sup>147</sup> She points to grace as preventing her from being comfortable in a world treacherously ephemeral; her losses as producing spiritual health – implanting distaste for the physical present. Paradoxically, Louis' lap, “knees,” rocking, a kiss, his voice in poetry and in song, represents the heaven Thérèse will seek.

Her True Self acknowledges Louis' play as something good, and does not deny Louis' absences. Though feeling insecure, Thérèse is reluctant to apportion blame. She does not interrogate the Catholic culture that justifies Louis' travel, but finds fault in life on this imperfect earth (happiness is reserved for heaven), protecting their shared culture. Though devaluing the physical present faults God's creating, Thérèse prefers to view sadness as caused by the passage of life as far from heaven, rather than by her carers.

Experiencing a lively faith in the present, Thérèse describes her upbringing as a graced unfolding. She praises Pauline and Louis' guard against spoiling her and recalls Louis once a year *justly* awarding her a prize.<sup>148</sup> Her father-king rewarded her on her hard-won merit, “like a picture of the Last Judgment” (for the faithful) painted by Arminjon. Thérèse lends the grandeur and benevolence felt in this at-home judgment scene, where she enjoys the favour of family bonds, to the judging Father-God.<sup>149</sup> The ‘fair’ judgment, between parent and child, however, is comprised of awareness of the child's capacity and giving consideration to this. Away from family, there are certain kinds of fairness, but within family, ‘fairness’, in compensating for limitation, favours.

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<sup>147</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 42, 43. For heaven as Sunday, with one's family (“at the great hearth of our heavenly Father”), see Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 214, 230.

<sup>148</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 45.

<sup>149</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 45.

Thérèse's experience of justice involves the favour of filial bond. In the following section, the absence of family security amid 'Catholic demands' becomes too much.

### **Phase II: "*The Distressing Years*"**

Phase II surrounds the next two chapters from *Man A*, where Thérèse encapsulates what it means to be small by recalling clutching at the mercies it draws, which threaten to fall away.<sup>150</sup> In Phase 1, balanced by her mother's narration, Thérèse makes light of her 'faults' from a now "mature" perspective. While still trying to amuse in Phase II, here are no mere foibles; Thérèse is miserable. A True Self calls for compassion to dignify what was lost.

Thérèse begins "*The Distressing Years*" (*Années Douloureuses*) with the word "poor" to describe her state. She was a "poor little flower" who had to find sustenance in a shared and impartial soil that did not give her "poor little heart" the strength to practise "virtue" (fortitude) in her circumstances, so to "rise above" the "misereries of life."<sup>151</sup> This echoes her mother's forgiving tone. Though she continues to 'laugh' at her failings, she now includes self-compassion. Recalling a sense of not-fitting at boarding school, she describes how relief came on her return home: her heart once again "expanded," she jumped "up on Papa's lap," and "his kiss" caused her to forget her troubles.<sup>152</sup> "The poor little thing needed these [rewards of a coin and a 'pretty hoop' for her school successes] family joys very much, for without them life at boarding school would have been too hard."<sup>153</sup>

Thérèse 'hears' in her writing (internally) that she retreated from places at every opportunity to eat from her 'family table', like one starving. Beyond suffering depression, as noted in Chapter Three, Thérèse's poor peer-relations owed to her interests. School-children's games were unlike the spiritual 'rule' which Thérèse had practiced playing. She liked to play hermits, while the Maudelondes liked "*dancing*

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<sup>150</sup> These chapters are entitled "*The Distressing Years*," and "*First Communion Boarding School*."

<sup>151</sup> "Pauvre petit fleur" Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d'Une Ame*, 63.

<sup>152</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 53-54.

<sup>153</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 54.

*quadrilles;*” she liked to bury dead birds while others played sport.<sup>154</sup> Conceding to her poor companionship, Thérèse remembers she was adept at gathering flowers.<sup>155</sup> She does not suggest these traits to signify holy sensitivity, but to show her failure and inability to ‘grow up’ led to a certain comprehension about life.

Thérèse enjoyed playing “hermits” with her cousin Marie, she recalls, as they understood the rules of the game with one mind.<sup>156</sup> This involved an effusive blessing over cake, and the combination of *unity of wills* and *blind* holiness which caused a disaster. The pairing of naïveté (Thérèse and Marie) was promptly undone.<sup>157</sup> She recalls Céline standing up for her at school, taking care of her health and letting her watch her at play – so becoming known as “Céline’s little girl.”<sup>158</sup> She tells of Céline’s over-attention (which resulted in the arms of her embracing doll going up Thérèse’s nose), and of how they resolved their differences (Thérèse’s dolls behaved badly compared with Céline’s) which mostly involved tears; their “petals swayed in the same breeze,” “what gave one joy or pain did exactly the same to the other.”<sup>159</sup> She experienced Céline’s first communion as her own, and Louis provided her with cherries so that she might have the pleasure of giving them to her.<sup>160</sup> A father like Louis supplied love with which to love, a sister (like Céline) did not refuse companionship.

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<sup>154</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 54.

<sup>155</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 54. Nevin *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 162. Nevin observes that here Thérèse takes up a Cinderella role. She didn’t like dancing, but was able to find the prettiest flowers to gather; “I stirred the envy of my little companions.” Nevin adds that Thérèse, though, varies from the fairytale in that she “portrays no wickedness in anyone else. She charges herself with awkwardness and misfitting, an outsider without recriminations. The collectivity of the dance underscores her isolation but is relieved by the visit to the park, where she thrives in both the gathering of flowers and the admiration of the other girls. At last she got one thing right and so much better than anyone else.” Nevin continues, “This passage parallels her conventual life. The one who was not up to chores and could not keep awake at morning prayer had a certain gift she could impart.” Nevin *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 162.

<sup>156</sup> This involved reciting the rosary, screening their faces from the public. *Story of a Soul*, 57.

<sup>157</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 55.

<sup>158</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 55-56.

<sup>159</sup> The tears were toward being reinstated as “Céline’s little girl,” when Céline declared: “You’re no longer my little girl; that’s over with, and I’ll *always remember it!*” *Story of a Soul*, 56-57.

<sup>160</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 57.

a. *Thérèse's Sickness*

Thérèse remembers Pauline agreeing to her suggestion that they might “go away” to “a far desert place” and be hermits together.<sup>161</sup> This was not to be. Bitter sadness is felt in Thérèse’s recollection of Pauline’s unexpected departure for Carmel.<sup>162</sup> With mild humour, Thérèse recounts her enterprising but unsuccessful effort to enter Carmel as a nine year old, helpfully arranged by Pauline,<sup>163</sup> but questions hang. Her serious intent was not treated seriously, Pauline’s ambition was treated as more appropriate than hers, and Pauline’s vocation somehow absolved Pauline from taking care of Thérèse.<sup>164</sup> The scenario cries out ‘does a child matter to God?’

Thérèse recalls how Pauline’s attention to her cousins during her visits to Carmel was felt as an abandonment of her (“Pauline is lost to me!”).<sup>165</sup> She makes no mention of Marie’s strictness or Pauline’s insensitive letters, but recalls that on one evening away from home she began to shiver, and lost the faculty of connecting with her family (which she attributes to demonic influences).<sup>166</sup> She recalls her family’s attentive and prayerful watch while she is helpless to control herself.<sup>167</sup> This watch, which becomes increasingly anxious, was concluded, she writes, by her recovery through the “ravishing smile of the Blessed Virgin” whose “Ray” warmed her with joy.<sup>168</sup> But, vocalizing this healing, Thérèse recalls, marked the beginning of her *spiritual* trials.<sup>169</sup> Though the

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<sup>161</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 57.

<sup>162</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 58. “Ah! how can I express the anguish of my heart! In one instant, I understood what life was; until then, I had never seen it so sad; but it appeared to me in all its reality, and I saw it was nothing but a continual suffering and separation. I shed bitter tears... ..if I had learned of my dear Pauline’s departure very gently, I would not have suffered as much perhaps...but it was as if a sword were buried in my heart.”

<sup>163</sup> Was Thérèse respecting her own then hope? *Story of a Soul*, 58.

<sup>164</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 59. “I felt this [Carmel as my vocation] with so much force that that there wasn’t the least doubt in my heart; it was not the dream of a child led astray but the *certitude* of a divine call...”

<sup>165</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 60

<sup>166</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 60.

<sup>167</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 60-67.

<sup>168</sup> “...the luminous Ray which had warmed her again...” *Story of a Soul*, 65- 66.

<sup>169</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 67.

healing (“my grace”) led to a joyful meeting with Pauline, the sisters at Carmel had their own ideas about her experience, envisioning an objective manifestation (a sign of her vocation?), which caused her to feel that she “had lied” about her vision.<sup>170</sup>

*b. Visit to Alençon*

Thérèse recalls dreaming up a name for religious life. Combining a love of her own name and her devotion to “*Little Jesus*,” she arrived at “Thérèse of the Child Jesus.”<sup>171</sup> To her joy, Marie de Gonzague, without knowing this, suggested the self-same name. Her childhood love of *Joan of Arc* evoked the desire to not simply become a saint, but to become a “great saint.”<sup>172</sup> Seeing her smallness, she would trust in God to raise her to this level.

Recalling a visit to Alençon, Thérèse contrasts an experience of lightness in the world (being fêted by friends was a mere “bewitching of vanity”) with the reality of death, and the shortness of life (felt in returning to childhood places and praying at her mother’s grave).<sup>173</sup> She assesses fidelities. Their friends at Alençon “alli[ed] the joys of this earth to the service of God.”<sup>174</sup> Thérèse reflects that people ought to think more on death, that the only good on earth is “to love God ... and to be poor in spirit...”<sup>175</sup> She recalls Pauline getting her to perform acts of renunciation, through the symbol of flowers,<sup>176</sup> Marie encouraging her in this respect, and in prayer, and preparing her for her first holy communion; seated on her lap, Marie passed “her *large and generous heart*.”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 66

<sup>171</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 71.

<sup>172</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 71-72.

<sup>173</sup> ‘Shortness of life’ is an idea found in her mother’s correspondence. *Story of a Soul*, 73.

<sup>174</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 73. Valuing her mother’s love rendered other types of happiness, “enchanted...houses and gardens,” as ephemeral.

<sup>175</sup> This is reminiscent of both Arminjon and Zélie. *Story of a Soul*, 73.

<sup>176</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 74.

<sup>177</sup> Thérèse recalls her emerging mental prayer. This reference to her early spiritual development, and to Jesus instructing her in secret, is an election signifier. *Story of a Soul*, 74-75.

c. “*First Communion*”

Thérèse writes that at eleven she was still coddled as a child. This caused her embarrassment during her Abbey retreat, but the support of her family enabled her to take part in it.<sup>178</sup> Describing the associated memories of her first communion, Thérèse does not articulate what transpired (avoiding what occurred with Mary’s smile), noting, “There are certain things which lose their perfume as soon as they are exposed to the air.”<sup>179</sup> She discloses that the “first kiss of Jesus... was a kiss of *love*; I *felt* that I was *loved*,” that she felt herself taken up “in the immensity of the ocean,” and contrary to the speculations of onlookers (over her tears), she did not feel the loss of her mother, but unity with her.<sup>180</sup> (It is as if Thérèse has to shield what makes her feel precious.) She recalls each element of the day as in harmony with family love: embrace, gifts, reunion and feeling special. Consecrating herself to Mary, she felt both special and appropriate: Mary who is with Zélie, who healed Thérèse by her “*visible smile*.”<sup>181</sup> Despite some melancholy the following day, the experience of spiritual enrichment intensified.<sup>182</sup> She shares her delight in being granted a second communion through daring to ask for it, which resulted in the happiness of kneeling “between Papa and Marie.”<sup>183</sup> Finally, Therese recalls her desire to receive the Holy Spirit in the “sacrament of love,” whereupon she felt given the strength to suffer.<sup>184</sup>

d. “*Boarding School*”

The feasts over, she recalls that she felt life at boarding school “unhappy;” here, unlike the pleasure her father and sisters expressed, she felt no mercy toward her desire to

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<sup>178</sup> Adding humour, she writes that she “made a spectacle of herself” by wearing a big crucifix in her cincture. *Story of a Soul*, 75.

<sup>179</sup> “There are deep spiritual thoughts which cannot be expressed in human language without losing their intimate and heavenly meaning; they are similar to ‘...the white stone I will give to him who conquers, with a name written on the stone which no one KNOWS except HIM who receives it’ [Rev 2:17].” *Story of a Soul*, 77.

<sup>180</sup> Thérèse writes that she appropriated Zélie’s desire to be with God as her own. *Story of a Soul*, 77-78.

<sup>181</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 78.

<sup>182</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 79.

<sup>183</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 79-80.

<sup>184</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 80.



entertain.<sup>185</sup> She found unself-conscious play difficult, but studying catechism and competing for prizes to her taste.<sup>186</sup> This, however, brought tears because repetition was not her strength, and she was ambitious to excel.<sup>187</sup> While successful at school, Thérèse recalls she won no praise at uncle Isidore's home – here she was “incapable,” “stiff” and “clumsy” (leaving God alone to praise her).<sup>188</sup>

Her “sensitive and affectionate” heart, she relates, accustomed to certain ways of loving, could not attune itself to the ways of other children. She felt her love misunderstood, and others seemed to be capricious and fickle.<sup>189</sup> Recalling herself unable to succeed at manipulating love, Thérèse exclaims, “O blessed ignorance!”<sup>190</sup> Her inability became a gift of incorruptibility, she reflects, keeping her from being entrapped by the desire to please others. With her natural desire for love, she would have been seduced and “burned entirely by the *misleading light* had I seen it shining in my eyes,” but, she reasons, God chose to spare her from this.<sup>191</sup> Knowing that she would fall like the Magdalene, God removed the stone in her path before she encountered it.<sup>192</sup> Thus, she owes God the same gratitude for mercy as a great sinner, because God loved her with the fatherly “love of unspeakable foresight.”<sup>193</sup>

Thérèse recalls her “scruples” (compulsive self-examination and confession) and Marie's patient listening to her while she curled her hair for school.<sup>194</sup> When Celine

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<sup>185</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 81.

<sup>186</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 81.

<sup>187</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 81-82.

<sup>188</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 82.

<sup>189</sup> Thérèse writes that while remaining faithful to who she befriended, she did not “beg for an affection that was refused.” *Story of a Soul*, 82-83.

<sup>190</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 83.

<sup>191</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 83.

<sup>192</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 83- 84.

<sup>193</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 84.

<sup>194</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 85.

leaves boarding school, Thérèse, unable to remain there alone, leaves too, continuing her education at Mme. Cochain's house.<sup>195</sup> She recalls enrolling for the Association of Mary to be like her sisters who had belonged to this, but because she no longer belonged to the Abbey, she was without any connection of friendship.<sup>196</sup> So she spent time alone (before the Blessed Sacrament) in conversation with Jesus, who increasingly became her "only friend."<sup>197</sup> She reflects how in her sense of exile,

Sometimes I felt *alone*, very much alone, and as in the days of my life as a day boarder when I walked sad and sick in the big yard, I repeated... "Life is your barque not your home!"<sup>198</sup>

The "barque" ("navire"), reoccurring in Arminjon as a "skiff" ("nacelle"), an image enduring to the present,<sup>199</sup> is felt to take her to an eternal family reunion, "around the *Paternal hearth*" of heaven.<sup>200</sup>

Thérèse tells of her final abandonment, Marie's entry to Carmel.<sup>201</sup> Marie had become her mother and educator; her departure represented the loss of one who knew her, who helped organize her, especially in relation to her scruples.<sup>202</sup> Thérèse recalls that the Guérins tried to cheer her up with a visit to Trouville, but the loss of Marie's guidance led her to confess to vanity in wearing ribbons in her hair, and to cry to draw sympathy for her headache.<sup>203</sup> A second visit was cut short by homesickness. Upon hearing of Marie's departure, Thérèse lost taste for her room, a nest of consolations she created for

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<sup>195</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 85-6.

<sup>196</sup> She states that this permission meant as privilege felt cold and painful. *Story of a Soul*, 86-87.

<sup>197</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 86-87. She prayed till Louis came to fetch her. This brought peace as she observed spiritual conversation involved so much self-love.

<sup>198</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 87.

<sup>199</sup> "La vie est *ton navire* et non pas ta demeure." From Lamartine's poem "Reflection." *Story of a Soul*, 87-88. Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D'Une Ame*, 104. "Skiff" is a boat that helps us reach the shores of heaven. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 304. "Une nacelle enfin qui nous aidera... à atteindre les célestes rivages." Arminjon, *Fin Du Monde Présent*, 106.

<sup>200</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 88. "...la famille réunie au foyer *Paternal* des Cieux..." Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D'Une Ame*, 104. See Arminjon, *Fin Du Monde Présent*, 83.

<sup>201</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 88-89.

<sup>202</sup> "We were sad when we knew Papa was so far away [Constantinople]." *Story of a Soul*, 89.

<sup>203</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 89-90.

herself, and frequently seized Marie with embraces.<sup>204</sup> Reflecting on the weakness and poverty of her character, noted by others, Thérèse reasons that God took her to Carmel before Celine to protect her.<sup>205</sup> In a final grasp for care, she remembers asking her deceased four older siblings in heaven that they might dote on their youngest sister, with the same affections her living siblings once had. Thérèse recalls “I knew [felt] then that if I was loved on earth, I was also loved in heaven.”<sup>206</sup>

*e. Summary Remarks – Phase II*

Thérèse notes her past neediness in a number of contexts. She recalls with astute detail what it means to lose a reliable environment where significant persons are constantly present and protective of those in their care (“circle of security”), true affirmation for her abilities, and an ongoing familiar relational exchange (which for her was affectionate, and affirmed religious values). She describes the goodness of what was had (and the badness of what was not had) in a nuanced way. Her accuracy in this reflects a True Self.

Her baby sweetness faded and the age of cute precociousness outgrown, Thérèse recalls experiencing herself as inconveniently babyish, and painfully self-aware. Without her child-appeal, a mark of her identity and claim to specialness, she was powerless to make herself esteemed for being Thérèse. In spite of Thérèse’s good intentions and efforts to co-operate, her care-givers, one by one, leave to pursue their own God-ends.

A False Self, speaking from the present, diminishes spontaneity and lightness (caprice), characteristic of the child, by aligning these with the enemy, “the world.” She affirms that her weaknesses were for the best; they brought her safely to Carmel. Through vignettes showing her dependence, competitiveness, scruples, social ineptness, and lack of elegance, Thérèse writes that God (who controls all) was her true non-abandoning

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<sup>204</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 91.

<sup>205</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 91.

<sup>206</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 93.

friend, who alone taught her.<sup>207</sup> God allowed her ‘failures’ and consequent detachment from human friendships so that he could have her to himself, for his own good purpose.<sup>208</sup> God, as companion, emerged in the past through her need for praise, and the protection of her hope to be like Joan of Arc. Was to openly want this somehow indecorous – her communion with God and God’s favour not to be articulated, so as to shield its role?

A True Self is re-gathering to re-affirm the strength and confidence that Zélie affirms. From her mother’s letters, Thérèse finds she possessed a spark of goodness other than docility. Concerned with telling Pauline “everything,” from subliminal sadness and anger, her detailed confession doubles as ‘God’s’ irony.<sup>209</sup> From a revived True Self, Thérèse tells Pauline of the sad consequences of her leaving. Amid self-effacement and fault-finding, she finds what she is good at (discovering and collecting pretty flowers, an eye for the existing good) – her God-imaging – and offers it as her gift.

### Concluding Notes for Phases I and II

Dimensions of a True Self and False Self were found in Thérèse’s reading of mercy expressed to her as a little child, and recalling yearning for mercy when feeling bereft of it. We review those. From her secure place in Carmel, Thérèse is reminded of the path her life took. Searching for the good in that early passage,<sup>210</sup> she surveys God’s grace as achieving in her a certain Catholic epitome that her mother yearned for.<sup>211</sup> She gives thanks for the mercy that brought her to wear an “immaculate” baptismal robe, as a Lily blooming in “dazzling whiteness,” due to a “holy soil, impregnated with a virginal

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<sup>207</sup> This is a consistent theme in *Imitation of Christ*. See, for example, À Kempis, *Imitation*, 41, 176-177.

<sup>208</sup> Immense suffering (coming from a good God who controls all) is dignified by revealing its purpose was to prepare for a mission.

<sup>209</sup> ‘Under obedience’, Thérèse does not spare Pauline the details. *Story of a Soul*, 60.

<sup>210</sup> Thérèse uses the idea of “God works all things toward the good of those who love him” (Rom 8: 28) as a base truth.

<sup>211</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 200. “...ton amour va jusqu’à la folie.” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D’Une Ame*, 228.

perfume.”<sup>212</sup> Attaining a vocation dedicated to God is not easy (Zélie and Louis were refused, and Leonie failed twice); God’s mercy brings it.

Thérèse questions why she is fortunate where others are not, but not the requirements of the quest she was born into. Her God was conveyed through family love, something which she very much wanted. Family love meant to dream and imagine the Martin culture with them, to hold true what they approved of, to suffer now for a reward later, and to measure oneself by how much one loves Jesus in comparison to others. If the Martins were to be worthy of heaven (as they understood it, and as Arminjon suggested), they needed to love Jesus better than those who would be refused heaven (who loved Jesus poorly). Loving belonged to family togetherness, but this togetherness did not always equate to happy spontaneity. Sometimes it entailed earning, by self-restraint – sitting quietly with Celine, obeying Marie’s rules, and accepting exclusion, such as, being an unsuitable age for Mass.<sup>213</sup> Not being good enough for family love, ‘holy’ friendships and ‘holy’ events, formed a False Self construct where Thérèse holds a ‘good’ God as guardian of these, with herself as faulted (a sinner). A True Self feels sins are incapacities and limitations which are fixed/made up for by God, while a False Self defends a practice that devalues her: naming failures produced by the rules of holy friendships (required by Pauline and Marie), and holy events (silence in a convent, such as at Le Mans) as ‘sin’.

A darker side to passing on a culture of faith involves a child’s struggle with the threat of parents severing the parent-child bond if they refuse to support parental faith. A perception (on the parents’ part) that parents who do not turn their child’s heart toward God will be held eternally accountable for their child’s faith, or lack thereof, can lead to a fearful manipulation of the child. The threat of severance does not need to be explicitly stated; it may be implied in how existing members of the family are treated. At not quite three years of age, Thérèse deflects such manipulation (being sent to hell for bad actions) by inventing a way to escape. Next to abundant affection from her family, there is a threat; she might deserve ‘hell’, implying that there are sons,

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<sup>212</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 14, 15-16.

<sup>213</sup> Though her parents felt that Mass was too long for Thérèse, she would have felt, in her inability to be silent and for so long, that she was deficient in relation to a holy thing.

daughters, brothers and sisters, who may justifiably be treated this way. It is her family (not strangers) who introduce the possibility that one might be cut off from their presence. She evades the threat by invoking family bonds which she holds more real (sacred) than divine punishment, as she has never felt entirely cast away from her parent's presence (Zélie's face reappeared in Semallé).

Thérèse supports a False Self when she agrees to obey all rules/'keep the faith' at any cost, but True Self, when she assumes that maternal love will spare her from hell (there are some costs she does not agree to). Later, she will offer to others the privilege that she allows herself, by suggesting that if they were to be like her, an audaciously confident child, God, too, will love them. Thérèse bases her correction on the felt-primacy of her bond with Zélie. She appeals to filial privilege, a metaphor that appears in Hebrew literature (God as mother, as shepherd). In New Testament Scriptures, there is talk of family betrayal, and cutting off those who do not believe, for the sake of Christ, and images of an elect who give up their lives for an imperishable laurel, for a judge-God surveying a competition,<sup>214</sup> talk far from the remonstrating patriarchs and prophets who present God's justice back to God. Thérèse's True Self activity resembles that of the patriarchs and prophets.

Jacob Chinitz reflects on this activity: God limited himself by sharing "reason" with humanity, so that created life could proceed.<sup>215</sup> Though we cannot "fathom" the overall "reasoning" of events, we have the ability to argue with God about our position of not understanding all.<sup>216</sup> This is not unlike Thérèse placing the problem of her limitation squarely in front of her caregiver. Chinitz concludes, "perhaps then it is correct to say

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<sup>214</sup> See Mt 19: 29, Mark 10:29-30, Luke 14:26. These ideas, incorporated in the New Testament, reflect some aspects of the Hellenistic "polis," of good and heroic citizenship, functionality, the gymnasium, and a certain kind of education. F.E. Peters, "Hellenism and the Near East" *Biblical Archaeologist*, Winter, 1983, pp 33-39. At 34, The Greeks devised an "effective way to transmit their values. Other societies relied on absorption or mimesis...to orient the young; the Greeks...did not 'orient' but rather instructed their young in schools [not to impart techniques, but] ...to transmit culture." Alexander the Great engaged his young men in studying Homer, based on his analysis: "to fight like a Hellene, one had to think like a Hellene."

<sup>215</sup> "[T]he logic of events that are inexplicable to us" God reserves for himself. Jacob Chinitz, "Creations and the Limitations of the Creator," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol 34, No 2, 2006, 126-129,128-129.

<sup>216</sup> Chinitz, "Creations and the Limitations of the Creator," 129. "My children have triumphed over Me, have triumphed indeed" (Bava Mestzia) 59b.

that the limitations upon God and the limitations upon man are not weaknesses but challenges – for the former patience and the latter, steadfastness.”<sup>217</sup>

Hell, Thérèse is taught, is an insurmountable conclusion for those who resist grace, who intentionally dissent from Catholic culture. The threat of being cut off from a parent-creator produces fear. Her True Self rises to correct this. She remonstrates with Zélie, based on the felt-reality of Zélie (a God-object representation) already dispensing mercy toward her limitation, and her tacit acknowledgment of filial privilege – to correct an unacceptable threat. Running away from the reach of a God whose dimensions are Zélie’s province, takes up a tradition which acknowledges the fundamentally interactive character of a filial relationship. Though this example is in the past, it is tinder for the present. We will see Thérèse once again take the liberty of presenting God’s own justice back to God – feeling confident (as she has felt previously) that God will respond to her prayer.

In the present, Thérèse is further expressing her vocation.<sup>218</sup> God has mercifully realized her desire in part: being in Carmel, with her sisters, fulfils Zélie and Louis’ dream for the religious life for themselves and for her. But there are other pressing desires, such as living this life so that it leads to great sainthood, and affirming herself as much loved, wanted, valued, and *noticed*, defined by familial relations alone, as in former times. Reminded of once feeling the zeal she imagined drove Jean D’Arc, “born for *glory*” (not “evident to the eyes of mortals, [because] it would consist of becoming a great *saint!*”), she does not want to merely receive affection; she wants to show God “proofs of her love.”<sup>219</sup> Yet, *earning* a palm, through one’s vocation, militates against simply being a ‘darling poppet’, against being valued for daughterly/sisterly relation alone.

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<sup>217</sup> The human response of turning God’s logic back to God leads “to consoling God.” Chinitz, “Creations and the Limitations of the Creator,” 129.

<sup>218</sup> There is talk of going to Saigon as a Carmelite missionary. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 820.

<sup>219</sup> Thérèse wrote a pious recreation on Jeanne d’Arc in 1894. *Story of a Soul*, 72.

Can Thérèse reconcile her sense of mission (to make conversions) with simply being *Thérèse*? Next to having her limitation acknowledged, she wants also to feel that God takes her seriously, is impressed by her sense of drama and her poetic ardour, and, in yearning for deep communion with her, desires to share great thoughts with her.<sup>220</sup> She suffers to appear as God's plaything (delighting, without serious influence) – a gift through which to negotiate life – but she feels she is much more. A hidden felt-value to God (involving intimacy and deep communion like the fullness of sexual relating) allows her, interiorly, to rise above appearances. In Chapter Six, Therese finds how to 'be' by turning to her particular being in relation – being as a child.

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<sup>220</sup> Pauline asks Thérèse to write and perform "pious recreations," such as, "Jeanne D'Arc" (1894, 1895), "The Divine Little Christmas Beggar (1895), "The Flight into Egypt" (1896), "The Aviary of the Child Jesus" (1896), and "The Triumph of Humility" (1896) – reminiscent of little Thérèse charming her mother with her poetry recitation. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1233. See Six, *Light of the Night*, 37, 97-99.



## CHAPTER SIX

### **The Recovery Continues: Thérèse's True Self Image of God**

Chapter Five, in Phases I and II, discussed how recalling her childhood experiences provided Thérèse with an opportunity to re-engage with her object-representations of God, allowing her True Self to be strengthened and, at times, her False Self to be interrogated. Chapter Six is concerned with Phase III where Thérèse recalls her life from fourteen onward, writing from mid 1895 (*Man A*) up to 1897 (*Man B* and *C*). Thérèse's spiritual "way" emerges in her writing through images of merciful love in childhood which represent the right way to proceed because, together with confirming Scriptural texts, they feel right. That 'right way' of feeling and proceeding, the present research argues, represents a return to the True Self. Thérèse finds her vocation (the God-ordained reason for her being, her quest, and her salvation) by turning to her felt being-in-relation – the well-received, affectionate child of indulging parents – to guide her human-God relating.

### **Present Experience of God in relation to Felt Mercy in Childhood**

Thérèse, in this section of material, recalls two self-expressive decisions which, in their being felt as independent of others, may be classed as 'individuations'.<sup>1</sup> The first is the request to enter Carmel early. The second (in progress in *Man A* and recalled in *Mans B* and *C*) is her "Offering to Merciful Love," which initiates a quest to surrender to merciful love.<sup>2</sup> The second self-expression (offered as spouse to Jesus), will lead to *Man B* which involves images from childhood: helpless smallness in the face of overwhelming feelings and events, a sense of being weak and inconsequential, and an involuntary loss of 'seeing'. We turn to Thérèse to find whether she returns to her True Self or affirms False Self constructions.

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<sup>1</sup> Here, 'individuation' is understood as a declaration of separate identity (I am 'me' and not 'you'). This does not necessarily coincide with True Self, yet it may (and often does) lead to it.

<sup>2</sup> The offering is dated 9<sup>th</sup> June, and is made public on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1895. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 276-277, 284.

A True Self is the source of the spontaneous gesture; only the True Self can be creative and feel real; a False Self is reflected in “greater than usual difficulties in connecting to others,” lack of healthy constructed artifices to protect the True Self, the “need to collect impingements from external reality” filling lived time “by reactions to these impingements,” and a poor ability to use symbols.<sup>3</sup> The False Self, we recall, begins when the mother’s “holding environment” is not “good enough,” causing the child to withdraw from advantages to be gained.<sup>4</sup> The child first protests against being “forced into a false existence” but, then, through a “False Self builds up a false set of relationships” that appear real, presenting in a number of ways.<sup>5</sup> There is a distorted perception of how the world operates (negative expectations), an acceptance of messages about the self which are false, and an absence of an effective self-defence mechanism (a healthy form of False Self).<sup>6</sup> The child shows greater than usual difficulties in connecting to others, and “a need to collect impingements from external reality,” filling their living with “reactions to these impingements.”<sup>7</sup> In the previous chapter, we saw Thérèse suffer difficulty in connecting with others, with few defences to protect her True Self. This chapter will witness Thérèse searching for external impingements. Two things stand out: Thérèse having some awareness of seeking impingement (suffering), and treating losses and failures not as detractions but in her favour.

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<sup>3</sup>Donald W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London, New York: Karnac, 1965, 1990), 148, 144, 149-150.

<sup>4</sup> Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, 145-6.

<sup>5</sup> Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, 146.

<sup>6</sup> There is lack of a self-construction to safe-guarding the True Self. A ‘healthy’ False Self equates to the self-defence mechanism needed to operate in ordinary life, such as hiding intimate things which would render the person needlessly vulnerable to ‘insensitive’ others. In her school age years, Thérèse over-zealously employed the spiritual rules she was taught – scrupulously confessing all, and disclosing self-exposing realities so to allow ‘humbling’, classed as a good outcome in spiritual literature.

<sup>7</sup> Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, 144, 150.

## 1. *Manuscript A*

### a. *In Pursuit of Carmel: "After the Grace of Christmas"*

Thérèse writes that her Carmelite vocation (her first individuation) emerged through “the grace of Christmas,” the sign of Pranzini, her deep sharing with Céline (likened to Monica and Augustine’s experience at Ostia), a personal invitation from God such as found in St John of the Cross’s canticle, and Pauline’s example.<sup>8</sup> Ending a time of “extreme touchiness,” and beginning “the third period of my life,” “the grace of Christmas” restored “the strength of soul she had lost at the age of four and a half,”<sup>9</sup> removed what prevented her entry into Carmel,<sup>10</sup> and offered the impetus for pursuing it. Thérèse describes herself after the grace of Christmas as ‘a young woman’ (“jeune fille”)<sup>11</sup> because she shed her need (like swaddling clothes) and began to initiate demonstrations of love (paradoxically resuming her infant-character).<sup>12</sup>

At almost fourteen years of age, Thérèse writes, she was unable to practice virtue without *merciful* praise being heaped on it. “I had a great desire... to practice virtue, but... [i]f Celine was unfortunate enough not to seem happy or surprised by my little services, I became unhappy and proved it by my tears;” still “in the *swaddling clothes of a child*,” a miracle was required to make “to make *me grow up*.”<sup>13</sup> Thérèse describes this in spiritual terms, as ‘a divine exchange’:<sup>14</sup> at his birth Jesus “made himself subject

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<sup>8</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 99-106.

<sup>9</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98.

<sup>10</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 97. “I really don’t know how I could entertain the thought of entering Carmel when I was still in the *swaddling clothes of a child*!”

<sup>11</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 80. Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d’Une Ame*, 94. “Jeune fille” is an idiomatic expression meaning a ‘young woman’ rather than a girl who is young; ‘fille’ here equates with ‘miss’.  
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/jeune+fille> accessed 16/may/2011.

<sup>12</sup> This is reminiscent of Thérèse who, at almost two years of age, spontaneously “comes to caress me [Zélie].” See , Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1218.

<sup>13</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 97. At Christmas 1886 Thérèse is approaching her fourteenth birthday on January 2.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus takes on a double weakness in relation to the Father: humanity and infancy. Through this double weakness, Jesus inaugurates full human dependence on the Father through the Holy Spirit.

to *weakness* and suffering” for her, so to now make her “*strong* and courageous,” to arm her with his weapons.<sup>15</sup>

She relates, “Papa, tired out after the midnight mass” annoyed over the expectation that he would still “baby” her this Christmas Eve, commented, “Well, fortunately this will be the last year!”<sup>16</sup> Previously this would have resulted in tears, however “Jesus desired to show me that I was to give up the defects of my childhood and so he withdrew its innocent pleasures.”<sup>17</sup> “The work I had been unable to do in ten years was done by Jesus in one instant, contenting himself with my goodwill which was never lacking.”<sup>18</sup> Her “strength of soul” was restored in one movement of grace; God was more merciful to her than he was to his disciples because, with her, he “took the net Himself [and] cast it.”<sup>19</sup> Upon seeing nothing other than the desire to love, God replied to her “good will” by casting the net himself; he undertook work toward success on her behalf.<sup>20</sup> Thérèse felt God supply her with his own capacity to love.

*b. Evaluation of After Christmas*

Attributing her new disposition to “grace,” a “complete conversion,” a surprising change,<sup>21</sup> Thérèse goes on to describe it in terms of natural experience: the resumption

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<sup>15</sup> Thérèse uses Teresa of Avila’s words here. See *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016-1017.

<sup>16</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98.

<sup>17</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 98.

<sup>18</sup> “I took my slippers ... and withdrew all the objects joyfully.” *Story of a Soul*, 98.

<sup>19</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 99.

<sup>20</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 99.

<sup>21</sup> To missionary Roulland in 1896, Thérèse describes her “grace at Christmas” as “the night of my conversion,” and “decisive for my vocation.” *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016. This been interpreted as an event of moral conversion (see Joann Wolski Conn and Walter E. Conn, in “Conversion as Self-Transcendence Exemplified in the Life of St. Thérèse of Lisieux” *Spirituality Today*, Winter 1982, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 11303-3), and of psychic and affective conversion (see Tom Ryan SM in “Psychic Conversion and St Thérèse of Lisieux.” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 22/1 (Jan 2005), 3-18). A word infrequently used by Thérèse (*Story of a Soul*, 98, 167, and *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016), “conversion,” in “coming forth from the swaddling clothes and imperfections of childhood,” “transformed [by God] ... in such a way that I no longer recognized myself ... Without this change I would have had to remain for years in the world,” appears to mean an extraordinary event. *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016.

of her childhood resilience. She frames her problem in terms of God correcting an imperfection, and then elaborates on the natural aspect, a return to confident exploration and initiative.<sup>22</sup> From the present Thérèse appears to be more concerned with telling Pauline about the divine eradication of her failings (being made “strong and courageous,” undefeated, victorious, “to run as a giant”),<sup>23</sup> than in their cause or justifiable presence – that for her vocation to proceed (ensuring sisterly approval and belonging) she needed to speedily grow up.

Some writers have focussed on Thérèse’s identification of her “Christmas grace” as a radical permanent change (over it as a recovery of character), exploring this as moral and psychic/affective conversion in the context of a phenomenology of conversion. Joann Wolski and Conn Walter E. Conn, to demonstrate a shift toward inner confidence (supporting Lonergan’s thought on transcendence), contrast Thérèse feeling a lack of recognition for intellectual talent whilst at Isidore’s home (a place where she feels “uncomfortable,” and is not cosseted as her cousin Marie is),<sup>24</sup> with later in Carmel where she feels confident in her independent theological thought. Our interest, however, is in a return to a former way of being as most true. This involves finding reports on Thérèse’s early character that show her as once confidently creative. Marie writes of Thérèse (at four years old) as in an environment of relational security and familiar affirmation which engenders audacity (or ‘sassy-ness’).<sup>25</sup> “All at home devour her with kisses... However, she’s so accustomed to caresses that she hardly pays any attention to them...;” “she comes here [to the May altar] to make her prayer, leaping with joy ... full of mischief... and yet not silly,” “You can see her imagination constantly at work.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> “[I]t wasn’t because I merited them [graces] because I was still very imperfect.” “I was quite unable to correct this terrible fault. ....The work I was unable to do in ten years was done by Jesus in one instant... ..God was able to extricate me from the very narrow circle in which I was turning...” *Story of a Soul*, 97, 98, 101.

<sup>23</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 97.

<sup>24</sup> Here she was “was taken as a little dunce...incapable and clumsy.” *Story of a Soul*, 82.

<sup>25</sup> There is an implication that Thérèse has been accused of being too bold, in her stating, as a three year old, “We must not get sassy...” *Letters of Thérèse: Volume II*, 1226.

<sup>26</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 111. Earlier in her writing (phase II), Thérèse reflects her “original” approach in what appears to be an unimaginative environment (the Guérin’s household). Thérèse wryly comments, “...my spelling... was nothing less than original,” rather than noting it as a lack

Noting that weakness in the face of her good intent drew God to her aid, Thérèse has grace consistent with natural processes. Rather pointing to an ‘external’ event (adding to “Mary’s smile”) which, interrupting natural processes, might have an other-worldly connotation, she takes the experience of a familiar way of being (“strength of soul”) as the measure of grace. In the way that Rose/Zélie once inspired trust in her by meeting her failed good efforts with a forgiving smile, so she felt God ‘look’ forgivingly upon years of failed attempts of “good will” – reviving a once-felt power-to-impact and allowing her to go outside of herself. This understanding represents a True Self, while a voice that names pre-adolescent “touchiness” as a “fault”<sup>27</sup> to be corrected and outgrown (leaping over/denying psychic cause and effect), a False Self-construction.

c. *The Signs of Pranzini and Arminjon*

Thérèse recalls a desire to spend the mercy she felt bathed in, through an image of gathering up Jesus’ falling blood and pouring “it out upon souls.”<sup>28</sup> She begged for grace for Pranzini a convicted criminal: “I felt *charity* enter my soul, and the need to forget myself and to please others...,” “I wanted...to prevent him from falling into hell, and...I employed every means imaginable. ...I told God I was sure He would pardon ... Pranzini...absolutely confident in the mercy of Jesus.”<sup>29</sup> After finding Pranzini had kissed the crucifix (a sign that her actions were pleasing to Jesus), she was enthused to further mediate Jesus’ mercy, which she felt as “a true interchange of love...”<sup>30</sup> Her responsiveness to Jesus was rewarded by more desire to repeat God’s mercy (“...the more I gave Him *to drink*, the more the thirst of my...soul increased...”)<sup>31</sup>

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of proficiency, showing in the present she is unperturbed by conventions. Aware, then, that she succeeded academically, Thérèse felt awkward because she was treated so (Marie and Pauline not here to mirror her ‘spark’), reflecting the young one’s inability to rise above the evaluation of adults. *Story of a Soul*, 82.

<sup>27</sup> In original, “grande sensibilité,” and “défaut.” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d’Une Ame*, 112, 113.

<sup>28</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 99.

<sup>29</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 99-100.

<sup>30</sup> Thérèse does this via the image of slaking Jesus thirst by giving the blood of Jesus. *Story of a Soul*, 101.

<sup>31</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 101.

Thérèse then tells of her hunger to learn, especially through reading, noting she restrained herself to emphasize God's part in drawing her to Carmel.<sup>32</sup> Connecting to the present where she is taking care of Celine, now a novice, Thérèse reflects on God raising her to Celine's 'height'. Celine had told little Thérèse she needed to grow "as high a stool" to share in her secrets, but while this gave her extra height, it did not help her to understand Céline's secrets; it was the grace of Christmas that raised her to meet Céline so to share their "...aspirations of love [for Jesus]." <sup>33</sup> Celine became "the confidante of my thoughts," thoughts surrounding heaven where God outdoes the love of his faithful (arising from reading Arminjon).<sup>34</sup> Thérèse describes a spiritual experience through the physical:

How sweet were the conversations we held each evening in the belvédère! With enraptured gaze, we beheld the white moon rising quietly behind the tall trees, the silvery rays it was casting upon sleeping nature, the bright stars twinkling in the deep skies, the light breath of the evening breeze making the snowy clouds float easily along; all this raised our souls to heaven whose "obverse side" alone we were able to contemplate.<sup>35</sup>

Next to the soaring feelings about God, Thérèse recalls being offered regular communion from her confessor, because Jesus was "Aware of the uprightness of my heart..."<sup>36</sup> Further, to "ripen" her for Carmel, God acted in her "directly," without the need for a spiritual director. Thérèse imagines others witnessing the mysteries that had occurred in her:

Because I was little and weak He lowered himself to me, and He instructed me secretly in the *things* of his *love*. Ah! Had the learned who spent their life in study come to me, undoubtedly they would have been astonished to see a child of fourteen understand perfection's secrets, secrets all their knowledge cannot reveal because to possess them one has to be poor in spirit!<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102.

<sup>33</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 103.

<sup>34</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 103.

<sup>35</sup> This scene relates to childhood happinesses reported earlier: imagining (playing) with Céline, looking at the stars, enjoying songs and checkers with Céline, and papa on a winter's night in the belvédère. *Story of a Soul*, 103.

<sup>36</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 104.

<sup>37</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 105.

She recalls, while living with Céline in an “*ideal of happiness*,” the discouragement Pauline and Marie expressed over her becoming a Carmelite only served as encouragement.<sup>38</sup> With Céline’s support, and an appeal to the apostles to help the “timid child ... chosen by God,” Thérèse sought her father’s permission to enter Carmel.<sup>39</sup> He approved, but unexpected resistance followed; Isidore disapproved.<sup>40</sup> She recalls feeling nature in harmony with her disappointment (a bitter “dark night”), rain reflecting God’s will in unison with hers.<sup>41</sup> Uncle Isidore then miraculously reassessed his position.<sup>42</sup> When Carmel’s superior Fr Delatroëtte refused her entry, Thérèse experienced a storm (and rain followed).<sup>43</sup> Thérèse reflects that she was propelled to the “shore” of Carmel, as wind might steer a boat.<sup>44</sup>

So simple and adventurous was this early love, so securely did she feel heaven “as none other than love,” that at that time she consented to see herself “plunged into Hell so that [Jesus] would be *loved* eternally in that place of blasphemy.”<sup>45</sup> She recounts Louis taking her to see the bishop at Bayeux,<sup>46</sup> turning to her experience – Louis’ familiar ways and appearance – to describe spiritual rightness: though not familiar with “the rules of polite society,” Louis conducted himself with simplicity and “natural dignity.”<sup>47</sup> Papa, against the Bishop’s advice, supported her desire to enter Carmel.

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<sup>38</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 106

<sup>39</sup> In the imagery of the practice of the martyrs, Céline allowed Thérèse to go into “combat” first knowing she might be destined for greater things. *Story of a Soul*, 107.

<sup>40</sup> Thérèse places her request with God, and prayed for a miracle. *Story of a Soul*, 109.

<sup>41</sup> “I have noticed in all the serious circumstances of my life that nature always reflected the image of my soul. On days filled with tears, the heavens cried along with me...” *Story of a Soul*, 109-110.

<sup>42</sup> Pauline wrote to Isidore on Thérèse’s behalf. See *General Correspondence: Volume II*, 294-296.

<sup>43</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 111. Fr Delatroëtte conceded that the bishop could overturn his decision. Louis consoled her by assuring her that they would beseech the bishop at Bayeux, and if the bishop refused they would go to the Holy Father.

<sup>44</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 110-111.

<sup>45</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 112. She implies heaven, a place felt to be (a little too) predictable and secure, is a safe base from which to go forth and confront danger.

<sup>46</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 117.

<sup>47</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 117.



d. *Evaluation of Pranzini-Arminjon Recollections*

Thérèse retells the past consonant with her present feeling. In Celine's company, and under Pauline as prioress, she is "enjoying...a clear *faith*." Her past desire to draw repentance from a sinner (Pranzini's) to quench Jesus' thirst for souls, from gratitude for felt-mercy, is being replicated in the present, in her "Offering to Merciful Love."<sup>48</sup> Then she felt invigorated by Arminjon's call in *The End of the Present World*; now, she marvels at the way which God drew her, reliving feeling chosen/loved by God through receiving the signs she sought.<sup>49</sup> This sense of gratitude belongs to a True Self.

However, the sense that grace co-operates with the expectations placed on her points to a False Self construction. Thérèse asserts that the grace of Christmas removed her childish 'faults'; without their hindrance she succeeds at the self-renunciation Pauline and Marie require. This leads to unity with God's will, and 'achieving' Carmel (God's mercy toward her obedience). In truth, though, Thérèse had felt helpless to control her self in spite of good intention, her God – different from her sisters' God who rewards self-deprecation – nevertheless, meets their expectations (by this God she enters Carmel). Thérèse's sense that she won God's favour by her good intent amid weakness (failing Pauline and Marie's 'adult' rules) indicates a True Self. Next to this, a False Self claims God's favour, citing obedient self-denial, and God ridding her of a faulted character, brought her to Carmel where she is feeling her present light of faith, a sure path to the glorious community of the elect. A True Self recalls being with God and her family as her whole joy, the place of courage-inspiring love; another voice endorses martyrdom, parents willing to forsake their children, and children their parents,<sup>50</sup> blind to what lies in its wake (disruption of family joy).

Thérèse draws all together in a symbol from her context, the romantic orphan, a child faced with its effort alone (in place of a mother's face), against the reasoning of great

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<sup>48</sup> This is made on 9 June 1895, in the year of writing *Man A*, which she is now half-way through. *Story of a Soul*, 211.

<sup>49</sup> Past and present signs are read through each other; the past confirms the present, and the present is written into the past.

<sup>50</sup> Cf Mt 19: 29.

faithless, “prudent” (fearful) adults who disregard the child. Casting herself in this role in her writing to Pauline, she performs before others (hagiography’s spectators) according to a plan revealed to her alone. (Consistent with romantic writing, the weather sympathizes with her feelings.)<sup>51</sup> In relating God’s indulgent signs to her, such as that of Pranzini, Thérèse tells Pauline of her acceptability to God. After her sisters, and finally Louis on Christmas Eve, communicate that her neediness was a bother, God suddenly calls her to a mission. She feels that she is needed by Jesus, who has distinct a purpose for her, and reveals this intimately.<sup>52</sup> She takes up a role like Arminjon’s innocent, like Jeanne d’Arc. However, in these images, God champions Pauline’s pretty self-forgetting child, rather than the scrupulous self-conscious Thérèse who aches to be ‘good’ so as to be noticed. Despite asserting that her childhood “strength of soul” never again left her, Thérèse’s graced tenacity (God achieving in Thérèse what her sisters failed to get from her) is fragile under the threat of “storms” thwarting God’s mission. Exterior obstructions to progress were felt interiorly – a drop in the momentum of her inner vision, as it were, collapses her sail.

We pause to acknowledge the problem of isolating Thérèse’s True Self. *Story of a Soul*, in demonstrating the fulfilment of a Carmelite vocation, resembles the hagiography of a circulaire. Prizing hiddenness, Thérèse avoids self-particularity, affirming principles from the lives and writings of favoured saints through stylized language and symbols; she imitates others – most significantly, Jesus. This appears to warrant a charge of “bad faith” in Sartre’s terms.<sup>53</sup> If we allow that imitating Jesus through a stylized role is her conscious aim, and proving fidelity to her culture by intense participation (reaching for its best – its agreed principles, and connected

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<sup>51</sup> Storms reflect God’s displeasure. Storms coinciding with the sufferer’s feeling indicate their connection with God, who is present in nature and within the hero.

<sup>52</sup> Following the proceedings of Pranzini’s case involved surreptitiously reading a newspaper which she was forbidden, and getting Céline to offer a Mass for her intentions, secrecy which suggests intimacy between her and God. *Story of a Soul*, 99-100.

<sup>53</sup> “Bad faith” for Sartre involves abdicating one’s self-definition by playing out a set of scripted responses. Persons entering a role treat themselves as an object. For example, when a person waiting on tables takes up the automatic movement of a waiter (efficiency, etiquette, finesse), they suspend their real being. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 63-64, 55-56, 59-60.

authenticity) is appropriate for her age, we can concentrate on examining her creative movement within these.<sup>54</sup>

Having qualified our search, we return to our analysis. Thérèse has her limitation (good-will without success) as the opening where God enters. God, with “grace” at Christmas, enters a psychological deadlock: “God ... extricate[d] me from the very narrow circle which I was turning without knowing how to come out.”<sup>55</sup> The circle Thérèse burst from resembles, arguably, Fitzgerald’s “impasse,” or the “darkness” of St John of the Cross (interpreted by Iain Matthew), in that its imprisoning defeat is due to an inability to see or do things another way, in spite of devoting all one’s energy to it.<sup>56</sup> Through a new ability (maternal grace toward Louis’ shortness), Thérèse felt self-determining agency return to her. “Freed from scruples and its excessive sensitiveness, my mind developed.”

Blending past and present emotion, Thérèse lists her responses to the grace that lifted her from her confining circle: (i) desire for Pranzini’s conversion (ii) deep impressions from reading *The End of the Present World*; (iii) union with Celine whilst talking about heaven in the belvédère, feeling they followed as the virgins of St John of the Cross’s canticle;<sup>57</sup> a feeling of Jesus directing her, by wordless secrets, and (iv) a sense described by stanzas 3 and 4 of St John’s *Dark Night* (surrounding St John’s escape from his prison cell into the life of Jesus) conveying what she learned from her director. St John of the Cross experienced a path forward in the unlikely event of imposed imprisonment.<sup>58</sup> He felt God enter his helpless imprisonment, and guide him to escape. Thérèse similarly feels God enter her deadlock and provide an escape. She allowed herself to be led by Jesus (by a light burning in the heart) toward himself.<sup>59</sup> *The End of*

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<sup>54</sup> Here we described Fowler’s Stage III, which may be understood as a reprise of the toddler’s value sensitive phase, enlarged to create the fidelity needed to prepare to repeat one’s cultural matrix (without critique as no new culture has yet been encountered).

<sup>55</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 101.

<sup>56</sup> See discussion on “impasse” in Chapter Three, 30-31, 38.

<sup>57</sup> “Spiritual Canticle,” stanza 25. *Story of a Soul*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Iain Matthew, *Impact of God: Soundings from St John of the Cross* (United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 51-66.

<sup>59</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 105.

*the Present World* sent her spiritual imagination in flight, resulting in soaring hopes – sharing these in conversation with her play-companion Céline invigorates her. Suddenly all things become possible: she reads new things, she feels God responding to her, and new life enters her and Celine’s relationship, all of which reach Pauline and Marie in Carmel. God’s rescue from helplessness results in a self-descriptive decision: to make Jesus, felt-as-merciful-toward-her, known and loved.

*e. Trip to Rome and The First years in Carmel*

Thérèse recalls during her trip to Rome (a final attempt to gain permission for early entry into Carmel) observing the shallowness of titled persons and the weakness of priests, discovering both to be ordinary.<sup>60</sup> In Paris, she asks Mary and Joseph to watch over her purity. Recounting their fellow pilgrims admiring her (and Céline) with her “handsome and distinguished... beloved King,”<sup>61</sup> Thérèse then attributes Louis’ natural grace to God. Interpreting a barricade at the Colosseum to be like the one Mary got around at the tomb of Jesus, Thérèse entered the forbidden area, kissed the soil of martyrdom, and returned promptly.<sup>62</sup> “Papa, seeing us so happy, didn’t have the heart to scold us and I could easily see he was proud of our courage.” Ascribing like favour to God, she adds: “God visibly protected us, for the other pilgrims hadn’t noted our absence.”<sup>63</sup>

To gain the Pope’s permission for Carmel, Thérèse recalls entreating him as a father: “... instead of kissing [his hand] I joined my own and ... cried out: “Most Holy Father, I have a great favour to ask you!”<sup>64</sup> Permission was not granted.<sup>65</sup> Her hope was now in

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<sup>60</sup> The souls of priests were not as “pure as crystal” as she had thought. *Story of a Soul*, 121-122.

<sup>61</sup> Thérèse comments that she felt Fr Révérony carefully study her actions to see whether she was capable of becoming a Carmelite. *Story of a Soul*, 123-124.

<sup>62</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 130-131.

<sup>63</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 131.

<sup>64</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 133-134. Pauline instructed Thérèse to be bold in her request, to say: “in honour of your jubilee, permit me to enter Carmel at fifteen.” *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 315.

<sup>65</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 135-6. She recalls feeling “peace” as she had succeeded in expressing her call. To endure the bitterness, she offered herself to the child Jesus as a ball, open to the attack of investigation. She then imagined Jesus abandoning her after becoming tired from play. Thérèse engages with these

God alone.<sup>66</sup> Thérèse recalls the riches they further encountered could not alleviate her pain.<sup>67</sup> Even so she still took an interest in things. As the smallest in the pilgrimage group, she was given the role of reaching relics. Recalling her efforts as “brazen,” she explains she was “like a *child* who believes everything is permitted and looks upon the treasures of his Father as his own.”<sup>68</sup> Observing that women were constantly refused entry to sacred places in Italy (suppressing their fervour),<sup>69</sup> Thérèse reflects love for Christ’s passing traces was misunderstood; and that in this life, in spite of their faithful devotion, women had to suffer being “last.”<sup>70</sup>

With her entry into Carmel, Thérèse writes, peace descended; “suffering opened wide its arms to me and I threw myself into them.”<sup>71</sup> She suffered for five years.<sup>72</sup> At the outset, Fr Pichon (her director), upon her general confession, offered “the most consoling words I ever heard in my life ... *YOU HAVE NEVER COMMITTED A MORTAL SIN.*”<sup>73</sup> In his ongoing absence, she held Jesus as her director, learning a “science hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to *little ones.*”<sup>74</sup> She came to fathom the suffering face of Christ, who desired to “be unknown and counted as nothing.”<sup>75</sup>

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symbols (the ball and the child Jesus) introduced by Pauline (as if Pauline consoles herself with the memory of Thérèse’s infancy).

<sup>66</sup> “It was better to have recourse to Him than to his saints.” *Story of a Soul*, 139.

<sup>67</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 137- 9.

<sup>68</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 139-140.

<sup>69</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 142-143.

<sup>70</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 140.

<sup>71</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 147-151. She understood then, and maintains now, that suffering was the means by which her goal, saving souls, was to be attained.

<sup>72</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 149-150. Marie de Gonzague’s severity, she feels, was a grace which led her to obey from a motive of pure love rather than natural affection.

<sup>73</sup> Had God “‘abandoned you, ... you would have become a little demon.’ ... I had no trouble believing it...and gratitude flooded my soul.” *Story of a Soul*, 149.

<sup>74</sup> Pichon left for Canada, sending her one letter a year in reply to her twelve. *Story of a Soul*, 151.

<sup>75</sup> She was inducted into this piety by Pauline. *Story of a Soul*, 152.

I thirsted after suffering and I longed to be forgotten. ...*Never* has He given me the desire for anything which He has not given me, and even His bitter chalice seemed delightful to me.<sup>76</sup>

Thérèse then speaks of Louis' deterioration, likening his spiritual progress during this to that of Francis de Sales.<sup>77</sup> She narrates two gifts: Louis' visit against all expectations, and finding snow upon the reception of her habit, when this seemed a hopeless desire.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps people wondered and asked themselves...[why snow?] What is certain, though, is that many considered the snow on my Clothing Day as a little miracle and the whole town was astonished. Some found I had a strange taste, loving snow!<sup>79</sup>

*f. Evaluation of Trip to Rome and First Years in Carmel*

In the imagined comments of watching persons, Thérèse validates her special relationship with Jesus. This is reminiscent of admirers of Louis and her at mass, and while travelling. Later, in her devotion to the traces of martyrs and Jesus' presence, she casts herself as a courageous follower of Jesus – its goodness and rightness based on Louis' example. Thérèse arranges her interior story (with scripted audience affirming her sense of being watched) as a drama for Pauline.<sup>80</sup>

Thérèse looks back on her path to Carmel as guided by God. Grace, producing needed growth, enabled her entry; now God celebrates her 'arrival' (with snow). She feels refusals and abandonment as grace, too, as they contribute to the disposition needed to be a Carmelite. In this drama there are dimensions of a False Self. From what has been asked of her – purity, innocence, martyrdom – Thérèse identifies what life is and what God wants from her, supplying connections between these as present in her and God's

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<sup>76</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 152.

<sup>77</sup> Thérèse raises up Louis as he once raised her up. *Story of a Soul*, 153.

<sup>78</sup> She names this "*incomprehensible condescension*." *Story of a Soul*, 154-156. Snow out of season, and a flower out of place, are received with joy as she once received little valueless gifts with joy. See *Story of a Soul*, 56.

<sup>79</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 156. At 161, Thérèse concludes that Louis is absent from her profession (he died), which (in a play on words) turned her attention to "Our Father... in Heaven..."

<sup>80</sup> *Story of a Soul* could be aptly named '*Drama of a Soul*'. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 229. Thérèse has persons watch like a mother watching in the background.

approval of her. This is realized in an interior drama, a story (and form of self-determination) which cannot be contested by others.

g. *Profession and Offering to Merciful Love*

Thérèse begins by attributing her aridity in Carmel to “little fervour and lack of fidelity,” rather indicating sanctity.<sup>81</sup> Gathering no remorse for sleeping during prayer, she reflects that Jesus (so fatigued by having to attend to others) hastened to her as she allowed him to sleep in her “boat:”

I should be desolate for having slept (for seven years) during my hours of prayer... well, I am not desolate, I remember that *little children* are as pleasing to their parents when they are asleep as well as when they are wide awake<sup>82</sup>

Earlier, Zélie wrote she was not only charmed by Thérèse’s activity but by her sleep.<sup>83</sup> Thérèse experiences from God Zélie’s attitude to her sleeping (ungrudging concern for her welfare).

Thérèse recalls God offering her moment to moment grace (not a once-only provision), giving her thoughts as to what to do from his position as residing within her.<sup>84</sup> On the day of her profession, she felt as a queen who would obtain “favours from the *King* for His ungrateful subjects,” deliver “all the souls from purgatory, and convert all sinners.”<sup>85</sup> She then recalls Mother Geneviève, from whom she sought spiritual thoughts, offering her one, describing the closeness they shared. Sensing Jesus in her, Thérèse had declared: “Mother, you will not go to purgatory!”<sup>86</sup> Again reporting to Pauline her felt-specialness to God, she tells how she felt Mother Geneviève imparted some of her joy at the moment of entering heaven, that she obtained a tear from her as a relic, and was given a dream where Mother Genevieve stated three times that she gave

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<sup>81</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 165.

<sup>82</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 165. At 173 Thérèse writes that her absence of fear was due to forming happy thoughts from her miseries.

<sup>83</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211, 1122.

<sup>84</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 165.

<sup>85</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 167. She felt herself as “the Little Blessed Virgin,” with great anticipation of the coming consummation of eternal happiness as she gazed up at the starry night sky.

<sup>86</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 170.

her heart to Thérèse.<sup>87</sup> She remembers during the Influenza epidemic receiving communion each day: “Jesus spoiled me for a long time, much longer than he did His faithful spouses, for He permitted me to receive Him while the rest didn’t have this same happiness;” further, God allowed her to touch the sacred vessels and cloth which were to touch Him.<sup>88</sup>

Thérèse recounts her lack of optimism in what Fr Prou – reputed to be helpful to great sinners and not for devout religious – might achieve at their retreat.<sup>89</sup> However, his informing her that her “faults caused God no pain,” and God was very much pleased with her, was of great benefit.<sup>90</sup> Entirely new to her, she felt this was true, because “was God not more tender than a mother?” – Pauline, for example, “always” pardoned her “little involuntary offenses.”<sup>91</sup>

#### *h. Evaluation of Profession and Offering to Merciful Love*

A True Self may be seen in Thérèse expressing confidence in Jesus not being displeased over distractions and sleepiness, and feeling supplied from moment to moment, both recalling a time of nourishment in infancy. We also encounter two kinds of False Self. A continuum, the False Self spans Thérèse’s conscious construction of a self for operating in her faith community, to joining with others’ rejection of parts of her self. At the first end, she maintains an effective “social self even while aware ...of the discrepancy between the public self and the secret self” (such as ritually conceding to accusations of fault, while a secret True Self knows no harm was intended).<sup>92</sup> At the other end, the False Self sets up as real a pattern of relating (accepting her spirited

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<sup>87</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 170-171.

<sup>88</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 172.

<sup>89</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 173.

<sup>90</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 174.

<sup>91</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 174.

<sup>92</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 233.



behaviour as wilful), beginning “a nagging and debilitating sense of personal unreality, a sense of the betrayal of an inner truth, or failure to realize a potentiality for living.”<sup>93</sup>

### 1. *The Social Self*

Thérèse adopts a “social” self for the Carmelite life that safely accommodates its ritual nature. Its ‘operating currency’ (purity and self-denial) to secure merit (a place with God in heaven), outlined in hagiography, is drawn from a world-view like Arminjon offers, where persons are called by God to overcome Satan’s evil, then face an after-death judgment over their earthly performance. Christ’s life, passion, and death, is offered as the preeminent template,<sup>94</sup> but exemplary Christians in Neo-Platonic hagiography sense their mission in ‘perfections’, defending (to the death) qualities consistent with Hellenist heroism. Romantic Christians respond to God’s call from their unremarkableness, subverting the evil of the powerful. Simple innocence, representing a formidable strength, is venerated. A drama declares: God is at work here! Implied is its corollary, God is less present in the ambivalences entailed in growth.<sup>95</sup>

### 2. *The “Nagging Unreality”*

The above images were accepted by the Martins as ideals guiding their expression of Catholic behaviour. They were also used to modify Thérèse’s behaviour. Did the remembrance of their insufficiencies represent a “nagging unreality” in her? The images, arising from the Visitandine convent Marie and Pauline attended, were supported by Zélie and Louis, but their use varied between parents and sisters. Zélie and Louis expressed pleasure and wonderment over little Thérèse, while Marie and Pauline used the imagery, at times, to protest felt-injustices (Marie against Thérèse’s lavish

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<sup>93</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 233.

<sup>94</sup> See J. Warren Smith, “Martyrdom: Self Denial or Self-Exaltation? Motives For Self-Sacrifice from Homer to Polycarp: A Theological Reflection,” *Modern Theology*, 22/2 April 2006, pp170-196, 171-178. Hagiography often refers to winning a victory palm, or a crown, and favours apocryphal writings for its support. Thomas Nelson, *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Inc., 2008 ), p. XI. The “Apocrypha” a Hellenist component of the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament bible, includes the Book of the Maccabees, featuring Jewish legends and heroism of a distinctly Hellenistic style.

<sup>95</sup> The romantic imagery of Joan of Arc (its “dream” and language) adopted as a child, ‘grows with her’ in Carmel. *Story of a Soul*, 72, 193, 283. A year earlier (January 1894) Thérèse wrote a pious recreation on Joan of Arc with herself in the role of Joan. She will include in Man B hagiography copied from Arminjon, and later hopes to emulate the martyr, Théophane Vénard, a French priest who suffered martyrdom in Saigon, whose life she reads of the year after writing Man B, in November, 1896.

treatment, and Pauline against Zélie's vicarious wishes). Marie implemented strict asceticism; Pauline constrained Thérèse to a caricature of idealized innocence,<sup>96</sup> preferring her childlikeness. Marie 'corrected' Thérèse (in respect of rose ownership, 'feigning sleep', and 'refusing Louis a kiss on the swing') telling her she was wilful. Pauline adds the 'refusing kiss' incident to Man A, to clarify Thérèse was *not* spoiled, but well brought up, preserving a perception of right behaviour in the Martin family.<sup>97</sup> We witness "nagging unreality" when Thérèse accuses herself of wilfulness, and when she offers Pauline, next to asserting felt-goodness, proofs of God's acceptance. Thérèse lists God's special responses to her (snow, flowers, a handsome father who is proud of her), stating she feels loved by God. Some special responses, however (from holy figures<sup>98</sup> and in 'objective' facts – virginity, a declaration of sinlessness, an esteemed nun's dream, relics, admiring onlookers), affirm Pauline's values to gain the approval of 'Pauline's God'. These represent a less true sense of mercy.

Pointing out to Pauline her mistake in preferring her vocation over Thérèse's companionship indicates a True Self, but listing God's favours in the colour of Pauline's values involves compromise (a "nagging unreality"). Thérèse tries to reclaim something Pauline and Marie took from her: her right to be good. In an Augustinian world-view, one's sense of being good was questioned from the time of emerging value sensitivity. Adults drew attention to 'naughtiness' without impunity as it reflected a religious fact. Thérèse, however, senses that goodness is something she once happily owned (critical positive self-formation gathered earlier).<sup>99</sup> She tries to retrieve this through the words and actions of holy others.

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<sup>96</sup> We note that the sisters, however, mirror Zélie, as children mirror back the parent's own attributes, both desirable and undesirable, accepted or unaccepted (McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 224). The parent instinctively affirms an accepted aspect ("that's my girl"), and rejects a denied aspect ("do not be this") exposing the need for re-integrating that denied part of their personality (split-off self). Zélie repeated some of her mother's favouring, moralizing, and intolerance with Pauline and Marie, who would in turn have repeated it.

<sup>97</sup> Pauline had certain ambitions in the (institutionalized) spiritual sphere. *Story of a Soul*, 19.

<sup>98</sup> In telling Pauline that she feels herself holding a special place in Mother Geneviève's heart (who, with Louis, she has 'sent' straight to heaven), Thérèse pursues the approval of 'holy' persons.

<sup>99</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 218-219.

### 3. *Thérèse's God Object-Relation informed by Louis*

Thérèse's object-representation of the person of Jesus matches attributes of Louis that support fashionable piety. Feeling like a "queen" who obtains "favours from the *King* for his ungrateful subjects" recalls Louis, where he does Thérèse's bidding, and she admires him as "King." Louis' character evokes the generous but easily wounded Jesus of nineteenth century piety, allowing Thérèse to form a representation in harmony with this.<sup>100</sup> The Martin women tacitly agree (an unspoken contract) that the affective, retiring Louis is to be protected from his daughters' impositions (do not ask at whim to visit the Pavilion, his place of retreat) to prevent his generous spirit from being taken for granted.<sup>101</sup> When Marie sees Thérèse play the queen game too liberally ("come and get [my kiss] if you want it"), she chastises her ("You naughty little girl, how bad it is to answer one's father in this way")<sup>102</sup> to make her obey this contract.<sup>103</sup> Thérèse experiences Jesus as she did Louis – as sensitive, hurt by the 'sin' of refusal, by 'careless disdain', and bothered by too difficult requests. Not robust enough to withstand ordinary thoughtless behaviour, Thérèse thoughtfully acknowledges Jesus' gifts, and tenderly accommodates him (offers him repose in her boat).

Thérèse's sense of being especially responsive to Jesus is tied with her experience of being the (youngest) favoured, affectionate one. As a toddler, she charmed and soothed Louis, seldom refusing him. Marie ensured that Thérèse did not refuse either of her parents' overtures for her affection, conveying that refusing parental overtures of love, she 'sinned' by careless hurting.<sup>104</sup> Charming and soothing, however, did not spare

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<sup>100</sup> By entering a tacit agreement over what each member's role is, family members together forestall an unwanted reaction.

<sup>101</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1226.

<sup>102</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 19. "One day when I was swinging contentedly, [Papa] passed by and called out to me: 'Come and kiss me my little Queen!' ... I didn't want to budge, and I answered boldly: 'Come and get it, Papa!' He paid no attention to me... Marie was there. She said: 'You naughty little girl! How bad it is to answer one's father in this way!'"

<sup>103</sup> This also reflects Marie's feeling; if nowadays she only received Louis' love sparingly and formally – Thérèse now occupying the place she understands best – then she will appoint herself guardian of Louis' generosity, ensuring that it be carefully absorbed and not wasted.

<sup>104</sup> Marie's action echoes French Catholic sensitivity to loss of respect for God-representing monarchs. Parents, like monarchs, were to be respected, keeping 'God' enthroned. Through this, parental grace would be hallowed.

Thérèse from Louis' absence, or save him from suffering. Thérèse might have outgrown such representation, but Louis' final vulnerability to humiliation, and Zélie's untimely death, both evoking defenceless goodness, preserve images relating to persons she does not want to fail – leading to a False Self.

Jesus slept peacefully in *Thérèse's* boat, and not others', because others fatigued him. Thérèse consoles Jesus, defends him from persons who spurn his love, and makes no demands on him, but does a God whose love is elicited by the soothing affections of an acquiescing child, betray an inner truth? – she was lovable at other times. Jesus defends her threatened self against those who punished her and forgot her, rescuing her from being forgotten and irrelevant, allowing her sleepiness and distractions – while she is a self-effacing, virginal, well-intentioned, Catholic, child. Though charmed by her ingenuous admiration, Jesus is hurt by the 'ingratitude' of unbelief.

*i. A Further Self-description: Offering to Merciful Love*

Thérèse describes a God who knows his daughter's tastes. Beyond the unseasonal appearance of snow, she sees field flowers again and Celine entering her Carmel, in spite of opposition to another 'Martin' entry.<sup>105</sup> With Celine's entry, her "childish desires" end.<sup>106</sup> Arriving at the present time, she writes her goal is to "love Jesus unto folly."<sup>107</sup> So surrendered to Jesus does she feel, she prefers neither suffering nor death; "I can no longer ask for anything with fervour except the accomplishment of God's will in my soul."<sup>108</sup> Reaffirming that God speaks from within her when she needs guidance, she writes – flagging a new aim – that if all were to experience such "graces" then all would love God through love, and not fear, "and no one would consent to cause Him any pain."<sup>109</sup> Though she accepts that variations in souls must exist so that different facets of God's perfections (justice and mercy) may be "adored," in her being granted

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<sup>105</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 175- 178.

<sup>106</sup> She means the gifts of indulgent signs. *Story of a Soul*, 178

<sup>107</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 178, 181. This sense of surrender is in relation to the possibility of being sent to the Carmel in Hanoi, Saigon. "Perhaps the little flower will be... transplanted to other shores!"

<sup>108</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 178-9.

<sup>109</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 179, 180.

“infinite Mercy,” Thérèse contemplates perfections such as justice “through” mercy.<sup>110</sup>

Through mercy

His Justice...seems to me clothed in *love*. What a sweet thing it is to think that God is *Just*, i.e., that He takes into account our weakness, that he is perfectly aware of our fragile nature. What should I fear then?<sup>111</sup>

Questioning why God’s justice (sin deserving punishment), alone attracts victims,<sup>112</sup> she writes:

On every side this [Merciful] love is unknown, rejected; those hearts upon whom You would lavish it turn to creatures, seeking happiness from them with their miserable affection; they do this instead of throwing themselves into Your arms and of accepting your infinite *Love*... Is your disdained Love going to remain closed up within your heart?<sup>113</sup>

If God’s justice *is* mercy, then it “demands” a sacrifice that results in opening person’s hearts. Thérèse offers a solution.<sup>114</sup> Amid the ingratitude God is faced with, she will enter with a spirit of receptivity:

I want to console You for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of You to take away my freedom to displease you. ... In order to live in one single act of Perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, asking you to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of *infinite tenderness* shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a *martyr* of your *Love*, O my God!<sup>115</sup>

#### *j. Evaluation of Self in Offering*

Thérèse’s offering is a new self-expressing initiative. Made with Céline, it fulfils Arminjon’s call to suffer a poignant and glorious martyrdom, in imagery that suits her soaring feelings. Arminjon wrote that God is powerless to surmount his creatures’

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<sup>110</sup> This recalls her introduction where she refers to different flowers. *Story of a Soul*, 180.

<sup>111</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 180.

<sup>112</sup> Oblations to justice were popular in the Lisieux Carmel’s tradition. See Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 118.

<sup>113</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 180- 181.

<sup>114</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 276-277.

<sup>115</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 276-277.

angers and disbeliefs, on earth,<sup>116</sup> but Catholics can assuage the hurt that anger and disbelief bring to Jesus. Thérèse replaces Jesus ‘pained by faults’ with Jesus ‘thirsting for gratitude’. Non-reception of Jesus’ love (felt to be ingratitude) opens the need for consolation. She will console Jesus over his love being refused.<sup>117</sup> Having felt rejection, to be in solidarity with Jesus’ experience of rejection is to be in solidarity with her self. She will respond to Jesus’ love, in the place of all who do not respond, in her spousal role. As to what constitutes “ingratitude,” this is left unsaid. Thérèse, earlier, excused her inattention to Jesus (sleeping at prayer), treating it as forgivable infant-thoughtlessness, but the possibility of her misjudging *other* inattentions (non-responsiveness) is not raised.

Diverging from the person of God (as Father) as outraged, Thérèse asserts him as not to be feared because he takes weakness into consideration – resembling Zélie who is sensitive to her children’s limitations, compensating for their variances in character. Thérèse characterizes the person of Jesus with Louis’ affective sensitivity, and asks God (Father) for an abundance of love to console Jesus, corresponding to what Zélie/Rose once supplied. Finally, she speaks of reciprocal feeding: just as she consumes Jesus, so might Jesus consume her when she gives herself to him.<sup>118</sup> Thérèse ‘eats’ Jesus; Jesus ‘burns away’ her (imperfect) life until she ‘becomes’ God. Thérèse enters Arminjon’s landscape and declares a great allegiance, repeating mercy with a magnanimity in proportion to sexual abandon. In Man B we see how elements of her offering evolve into a truer self-representation.

## 2. *Manuscript B*: “My Vocation is Love”

Much happens between completing *Man A*, during which she wrote *Offering to Merciful Love* (June 1895) and writing *Man B* (September 1896).<sup>119</sup> Thérèse discovers

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<sup>116</sup> See Arminjon, *The End of The Present World*, 178-181.

<sup>117</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 277.

<sup>118</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 276. “If through weakness I sometimes fall, may Your *Divine Glance* [communion] cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.”

<sup>119</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 166. This is the anniversary of her profession.

she has tuberculosis and loses her ability to envision heaven. With involuntary feelings (loss of control of an interior kind), her offering acquires new values. *Man B* replies to Marie's request for Thérèse's dream and her "little doctrine," and adds a cover letter.<sup>120</sup> We begin with the dream which addressed her losing a sense of heaven.<sup>121</sup> Amid this "darkest storm," Thérèse dreamt that Venerable Anne of Jesus caressed her, and assured her that God would come for her soon.<sup>122</sup> To Thérèse's question whether she was content with Thérèse's "poor little actions and desires"? Anne de Jesus became "*incomparably more tender*," and replied "God asks no other thing from you. He is content, very content!"<sup>123</sup> These words were consoling, but her smile and her caresses were her sweetest answers. Thérèse was reassured that there *was* a heaven; she felt its existence and knew it was peopled by souls who loved her, who considered her their child.<sup>124</sup>

*a. Vocation to Love*

Recalling how she comes upon her vocation, Thérèse begins by describing her love for Jesus as desires which "reach" into "infinity."<sup>125</sup> Enthusing over the many possibilities for expressing this, she quotes Arminjon, imagining herself enduring some of the extraordinary means by which Christians were martyred. Conceding her hopes (to love invincibly with powers she does not possess) resemble a child's, she feels it is because of her weakness that it pleases God to grant her desire.<sup>126</sup> Abasing herself to the "depths of nothingness," she discovers her vocation: love itself – its motivating force inspiring all other vocations.<sup>127</sup> With her powerlessness and weakness in view, she writes, "... it is my weakness that gives me the boldness of offering myself as a victim of your

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<sup>120</sup> This "little doctrine" (September 8), or "way," is prefixed by a cover letter, written September 12. *Story of a Soul*, 189.

<sup>121</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 187, 284. She had this dream on May 10, 1896. Her sense of losing heaven was around April 5.

<sup>122</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 190-191.

<sup>123</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 191.

<sup>124</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 192.

<sup>125</sup> Unresolved, these desires cause "a veritable martyrdom." *Story of a Soul*, 192-193.

<sup>126</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 193.

<sup>127</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 194.

love.”<sup>128</sup> Echoing her “Oblation to Merciful Love,”<sup>129</sup> she observes that the “soul” suited for a holocaust to love must be a “nothingness” for “Love” to “lower Itself to;” that one is her.<sup>130</sup>

In reply to God’s love, Therese will offer what motivates “all vocations:” love itself.<sup>131</sup> But, how will she muster enough for God?<sup>132</sup> With her excess of desire, she made friends with those in heaven; she will now get them to adopt her and ask for a double measure of *their* love – whatever she merits by this will be to their glory.<sup>133</sup> Acknowledging her request amounts to childish impulse, she reminds Jesus that parents “do not hesitate to satisfy the desires of the *little ones* whom they love as much as themselves”<sup>134</sup> Thérèse takes up the place of “*a little child*” who “stays very close to the *throne* of the King and Queen; she will “strew” flower petals and sing “the canticle of *Love*,” recalling her childhood pleasure in her petals touching Jesus in the monstrance held up during the Corpus Christi procession. “Unpetalling” symbolised making sacrifices for love of Jesus – like the actions required to be with Celine, which involved sitting patiently (difficult considering her exuberant nature), and holding back her tears when help was not forthcoming. “Unpetalling” in the present will appear similarly innocuous, but she is confident that these “nothings will please.”<sup>135</sup>

Thérèse uses the metaphor of a chick to explain how she will possess “the plenitude of love.”<sup>136</sup> While it has the heart and eyes of an eagle, the chick is unable to fly. This is

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<sup>128</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 194-195.

<sup>129</sup> In this, the “law of love” replaces the “law of fear.” *Story of a Soul*, 195.

<sup>130</sup> She reasons that this may be her, “a weak and imperfect creature.” *Story of a Soul*, 195.

<sup>131</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 195. Thérèse echoes St John of the Cross in “love is repaid by love alone.”

<sup>132</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 195.

<sup>133</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 195. Luke 16: 9. At 170, Gaining the spirit of another (as Elisha requested from Elijah) is reminiscent of Thérèse feeling herself receive “happiness” from Mother Geneviève after her death.

<sup>134</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 196.

<sup>135</sup> They will please because heaven is “desirous of playing with her little child.” *Story of a Soul*, 196-197.

<sup>136</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 197-198.



reason for it to give up, but it doesn't. Alluding to her "darkness," she writes neither wind, nor clouds, or darkness frighten it; it joyfully remains "gazing at the Invisible Light which remains hidden from its faith!"<sup>137</sup> Distracted by the simplest, earthbound things, it does not hide but "recounts in detail all its infidelities," and if the eagle is deaf to its chirping, the chick accepts the suffering it has brought upon itself.<sup>138</sup> It is happy to be small as 'bigness' would prevent it from being bold enough to appear in God's presence, drifting to sleep, all the while oblivious to sleeping.<sup>139</sup> The chick hopes in, and lives for, the eagle (Jesus) who it adores, seeking to be fascinated by its glances.<sup>140</sup> In this way she will be accepted as love's victim, sure that God will lovingly stoop to lift anyone abandoning themselves with confidence in God's mercy.<sup>141</sup>

*b. The Cover Letter*

Thérèse introduces her "science of love," as something God taught her from the "*book of life*."<sup>142</sup> She learnt that love alone makes one acceptable to God; the only love which she ambitions, "is the *surrender* of the little child who sleeps without fear in its Father's arms," leading to the "Divine Furnace."<sup>143</sup> To Isaiah's words "*As one whom a mother caresses, so I will comfort you; you shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they will caress you*" – "there is nothing to do but to be silent and to weep with gratitude and love."<sup>144</sup> "Jesus does not demand great actions" from weak and imperfect souls but "simply surrender and gratitude." To be receptive to God's mercy is to desire his love, to love his love. Jesus is thirsty for receptivity "as he meets only the ungrateful and

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<sup>137</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, 198. This alludes to the darkness of unbelief. Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), 78-80.

<sup>138</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 199

<sup>139</sup> "asleep in front of you." *Story of a Soul*, 199.

<sup>140</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 199-200. "Glance" is Jesus as host giving "life from one moment to the next."

<sup>141</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 199. God's "unspeakable condescension" will pour itself out on anyone abandoning themselves with total confidence to God's infinite mercy.

<sup>142</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 188.

<sup>143</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 188.

<sup>144</sup> Isaiah 66:12-13. She also quotes Proverbs, 9:4; Wisdom 6:7; Isaiah 40:11, showing mercy toward the little child, nourishment, sheltering simpleness, and God's concern for the lowly. *Story of a Soul*, 188.

indifferent among his disciples in the world;” few hearts “surrender to Him without reservations” or understand the “tenderness of his infinite love.”<sup>145</sup>

*c. Evaluation of Man B*

Dreaming of Anne of Jesus represents approval for Thérèse’s way of ‘being’ Carmelite through an embodiment of it. Anne of Jesus might also represent a nurturing relationship now unavailable to Thérèse, an experience of approval formerly felt with Zélie, and, even more so, with Rose.<sup>146</sup>

I was, up until then, *absolutely indifferent to Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus*. I never invoked her in prayer and the thought of her never came to my mind except when I heard others speak of her, which was seldom.<sup>147</sup>

As valued, Zélie and Rose have the capacity to give approval. With ‘heaven’, the epitome of parental presence, alongside ‘vocation’ – both uppermost in mind – Thérèse’s subconscious ‘casts’ her experience of Zélie/Rose’s reassuring approval as Anne of Jesus.

In *My Vocation is Love*, Thérèse continues with imagery of St John of the Cross. To discover her vocation, she abases herself to “nothingness,” to where God alone is felt to achieve her end.<sup>148</sup> She empties herself (desiring her beloved from the motive of love alone) to possess his “flame,” so it might ignite and penetrate her, and transform her into fire.<sup>149</sup> However, she feels it is not her effort of emptying that makes her suitable

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<sup>145</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 189.

<sup>146</sup> If a principle of dream economy is used (where the dreamer casts each aspect of self in the form of a known person to most economically identify that aspect), then Anne of Jesus represents the face of loving esteem.

<sup>147</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 192.

<sup>148</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 194, 195.

<sup>149</sup> His “Beacon” alone attracts her boat. *Story of a Soul*, 195. For imagery of wood taking up fire see *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, 144, 416-417.

for manifesting God's mercy, but emptiness caused by her limitation.<sup>150</sup> In this, Thérèse conveys a crucial transition.

Where earlier she feels the abundance of her desires makes her suitable as the offering to "Merciful Love," now she feels helpless limitation makes her suitable for conducting love's outgoing movement. In her acknowledgment of a new limitation/"impasse" (losing sight of heaven), we are presented with a True Self dimension. Accepting helpless limitation allows her to resume a former way of operating (when very young) that preceded the implementation of a False Self; its appropriateness discovered in Isaiah 66:12-13. It recalls her being physically lifted up, and valued for her ability to charm by expressions of affection and earnest effort. Then her imaginative initiatives were accepted, and when she tried to imitate adult behaviour, unsuccessfully, she was forgiven.

Already welcoming her illness, she now accepts her loss of vision without guilt or fear,<sup>151</sup> experiencing it as a childly limitation. She views her ability to love God as contingent on God's help, conceding that she is essentially 'child', making no recriminations, nor agitating over what she might, or ought to be. Invented suffering holds no longer interests her.<sup>152</sup> To impact her darkness, she declares aspirations of love. Sweet symbols and gestures,<sup>153</sup> now unfelt, are used to make love present, affirming faith-in-the midst-of-suffering doubt (actualizing a hidden fidelity to Jesus).

Such activity, however, could lead to using others as a means to express fidelity, strengthening intimacy with a God who secretly favours us. From an interior world, we might treat others as objects (souls) enabling our salvation, rather than disclosing

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<sup>150</sup> This recalls the impasse that led to the "grace at Christmas."

<sup>151</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 8.

<sup>152</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 196.

<sup>153</sup> See Guy Gaucher OCD, *The Passion of Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by Anne Marie Brennan OCD (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 51. Gaucher argues that the thought within "the pious religious clichés of her day concealed burning confidences. At each stage of her interior adventure Thérèse put her whole heart and soul into these verses."

ourselves, only to find them sharers in our limitation.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, hiding her good intentions to prevent them from being misunderstood (such as hiding her beads from Zélie, from the ‘great one’ who imposes upon the child in its defencelessness), represents a healthy False Self. In contrast, treating others as a means for ‘salvation’ whilst remaining untouched by them points to a destructive False Self, as it projects tendencies we all share, external to us.<sup>155</sup> Was there an element of this in Thérèse?<sup>156</sup>

Thérèse, in her cover letter, expresses relief that for one like her (in the tiring struggle with darkness)<sup>157</sup> receptiveness to help is all that is expected (revealing a True Self). She concludes, though, observing that “few hearts... surrender to Him without reservations.”<sup>158</sup> Viewing herself as one of few (repeating the sentiment of her time) is a false sense, but her feeling that receptivity to love is little practiced or valued (citing Jesus as rejected by his own) is true in that she felt her offers of companionship ignored, and those close to her (Louis) unappreciated.

The chick metaphor appears to refer to feelings evoked<sup>159</sup> from Thérèse’s childhood when she mothered pet birds (the earliest mention, a rooster) and watched their habits and frailties.<sup>160</sup> She projects onto God her own maternal care for orphaned chicks. The chick’s movement from helplessness (aspiring to much without any means to achieve it apart from its parent’s help), to surrender to a beloved (prey to love), leaves an impression of Thérèse realizing “oedipal” desires.<sup>161</sup> The chick is lifted by the eagle to

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<sup>154</sup> This leads to: ‘Christ beside me creates a barrier between us’ instead of ‘in Christ, I am with you’.

<sup>155</sup> Jesus effectively condemns keeping the law (rendering one ‘clean’ or holy) at the expense of mercy: touching them in healing, feeding, or eating with them. See Lk 14: 5.

<sup>156</sup> Six argues that Thérèse does not enact a role of “redemptive compassion” but participates “in the ‘infinite mercy’ of God, a participation which can be lived out here below and also in Heaven.” Yet Thérèse saw herself as occupying a special place in this participation. Six argues that Thérèse identifies with sinners, but we observe that she does not identify with ‘deliberate’ rejection of God, only involuntary loss. Six, *Light of the Night*, 49.

<sup>157</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 213. “I want to rest my heart fatigued by the darkness...”

<sup>158</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 189.

<sup>159</sup> See McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 145-146.

<sup>160</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 113-114.

its nest (“in the centre of the Sun”) and consumed in the flames of love (“...remontant avec lui au Foyer de l’Amour...”).<sup>162</sup> The image of fire taking up matter (used by Arminjon and St John of the Cross), might have evoked in Thérèse the feeling of being mesmerized when gazing into the family hearth – representing warmth and completion in familial unity.

### 3. *Manuscript C*

#### a. *The Trial of Faith*

Completing her ‘song of mercy’ to Prioress Marie de Gonzague, Thérèse begins with her life-long desire to be a saint. Asserting “God cannot inspire unrealizable desires,” she will explain how this might occur, given her “littleness” (“it is impossible for me to grow up”).<sup>163</sup> “[T]oo small to climb the rough stairway of perfection,” she will reach heaven through the invention of the elevator.<sup>164</sup> Searching the scriptures for some sign of an elevator, she discovers Proverbs 9, which refers to the “little” one, the perennially simple, and Isaiah 66, how God treats the “little one” who answers his call. God is toward little ones as a mother is toward her infant. Jesus’ lifting arms become the “very straight, very short, and totally new” elevation<sup>165</sup> (recalling her father carrying her in the garden and the rain).<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Her images may be explored as follows: fulfilment with one’s complementary parent is inadvertently encouraged by the Martin women limiting inter-gender love to relatives (especially Louis) and celibate religious, to bypass ordinary ‘concupiscent’ sexual feelings. The chick becoming one who is consumed suggests a child-spouse; without assuming equality, she imagines consummation through images of being carried, transformed by penetration, plunged into, absorbed and consumed. These suggest a passive consummation of love, like the parent-child interaction where the greater part of the infant’s activity is reception. Sensitive responsiveness gives the child an impression of potency. The eagle represents the source and the object of Thérèse’s desire, and brings her desire to fruition. In this image, sexual surrender converges with the infant’s experience of unity with its mother, suggesting desire for union as bound up with the primal experience of union. This leads to fusion with the beloved, to amplifying the beloved’s love, and confidently mothering the beloved.

<sup>162</sup> “...remontant avec lui au Foyer de l’Amour, tu le plongeras pour l’éternité dans le brûlant Abîme de Cet Amour auquel il s’est offert en victime.” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d’Une Ame*, 229.

<sup>163</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 207.

<sup>164</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 207.

<sup>165</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 207- 208.

<sup>166</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 19.

Thérèse demonstrates this in practical terms. She recounts agreeing from obedience to Marie de Gonzague's request to take care of the novices.<sup>167</sup> As God once revealed his secret to "little ones" (to Jesus), so he did with Thérèse, supplying wisdom for her task. Since her "trial" (Easter 1896), however, she is conscious of her "littleness and impotence" with respect to wisdom.<sup>168</sup> She recalls her hemoptysis (a felt-call from heaven, her home) and her previous "lively faith," and how this ended in losing her vision of heaven,<sup>169</sup> placing her with people who have no faith (people she formerly felt were simply speaking against their inner convictions).<sup>170</sup>

Thérèse describes her "trial:" obscured by a "fog," she feels none of the reality of heaven that she formerly felt. She now feels how (she imagines) the faithless feel, and, as "a soul who loves [God]" through former enlightenment, she "begs pardon for her brothers."<sup>171</sup> Her 'unseeing' brings her to sit at the sinners' table (eating "the bread of sorrow") for the purpose of saying, in her own "name and in the name of her brothers, 'Have pity on us O Lord for we are poor sinners!'"<sup>172</sup> If it be God's desire, as one who loves God, she accepts the role of purifying a table soiled by others: to ask, on their behalf, that all may be enlightened by faith. In her trial, Thérèse 'hears' voices taunting that what she hopes for is an illusion.<sup>173</sup> Fatigued and tormented by its effects, she makes "acts of faith."<sup>174</sup> Avoiding her adversaries' faces, she affirms God's presence by

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<sup>167</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 209. As with Mother Geneviève, Thérèse offers Marie de Gonzague future help from heaven, suggesting felt-confidence in her powers to impact God.

<sup>168</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 210.

<sup>169</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 38-41. Six argues that Thérèse's milieu portrayed secularism as part of a spiritual war waged by demonic forces over heaven's existence. He argues that her felt loss of heaven was due to Leo Taxil revealing (on 19 April 1897) that Diana Vaughan, the woman whose conversion Thérèse had been praying for, and who she hoped would enter Carmel, was a hoax.

<sup>170</sup> Perhaps alluding to Taxil, she is now convinced that there are those who, through "the abuse of grace," have no faith. *Story of a Soul*, 211.

<sup>171</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 212.

<sup>172</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 212.

<sup>173</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 213

<sup>174</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 213-214.

composing poems expressing what she wants to believe.<sup>175</sup> She emphasizes this trial does not discourage her as it came upon her when she was ready to bear it.<sup>176</sup>

*b. Evaluation of Trial of Faith*

In her “Offering to Merciful Love” Thérèse sought a share in suffering that uniquely answered her desires. She accepts illness, then a “trial” as God’s response to her request to love him in accord with her desires.<sup>177</sup> Her ability to be a sacrifice for merciful love (abundant desire, limitation and weakness) she believes is due to God’s arranging it (preparing her for a trial), and its success as due to God aiding her surrender. God supplies her desire, provides the occasion to love, and fulfils it. Significantly, Thérèse’s premises that “God doesn’t inspire unrealizable desires,” and that what God gives to her he previously gives a taste for,<sup>178</sup> are consistent with seeking for something once had with a significant other in infancy. In the light of Winnicott’s observations that impingements felt in infancy are again sought, in the next paragraph we point to an experience in Thérèse’s early life that evokes a sense of God who withdraws all visibility of his heaven.

We suggest that heaven (peopled by Zélie, Louis and her deceased siblings) represents Thérèse’s home environment. Heaven is constituted by those who love her. Heaven’s truth is the familiar ways of home: the structures of how “the world” (relationships) operates and the scenery for it to make sense. Here all is well. This environment engenders a “germ” in Thérèse, which animates her responses. The early experience that Thérèse waits to reprise (what God gave her a taste for) is the ‘darkness’ of losing her entire Alençon surroundings (at Rose Taillé’s cottage), and, later, Rose Taillé’s surroundings (on her return to Alençon). The second, leaving Rose Taillé’s

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<sup>175</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 213-14.

<sup>176</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 214. This interior suffering brings her joy, especially averting or making “reparation for one single sin against *faith*.” We draw attention to Thérèse speaking in strong terms of reparation as late as 1896.

<sup>177</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 216-217. Desire to make God’s merciful love known brought a trial which became the place to express gratitude for God’s mercy. This led to relieved resignation to imperfection and impotency.

<sup>178</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 207, 152, 250.

environment and resuming her place in Alençon, will be explored in the following paragraph to show an object representation of a God who withdraws.

From all accounts, Thérèse flourishes in Semallé. She appears happy, nourished and stimulated. Her sisters like to visit, not just her, but Semallé itself. The Taillés, as farming people, would have given little attention to social niceties, or to ascetic practices. She charms them and they include Thérèse in their daily chores. With Rose, Thérèse finds forgiving treatment, and begins to form a self. One day, Thérèse is taken from this and inserted in new environment (she is fifteen months of age). Rose/Semallé vanishes. Lost to her is the pattern of contingent responses that represent comfort and home. The second occasion of such an experience,<sup>179</sup> Thérèse tries to recreate her familiar interaction by responding with a repertoire that belongs to the environment that fostered it. She tries to charm the Martins, who express love in other ways. At a table with people occupied with values ‘oblivious’ to the Semallé way, Thérèse (at a value-sensitive age) is equipped with only her “spark” to lighten it. This takes great effort, as there are new less forgiving ways; no-one here knows Rose’s cues, threatening to ‘deny’ the memory of her goodness.

We turn to what led to a parallel experience of “darkness” in Carmel, requiring Thérèse’s light. Thérèse, Six argues, was deceived by imposter Leo Taxil into praying for the conversion of the fictional Diana Vaughan, even for her to enter Carmel. Echoing Thérèse’s prayers for Pranzini, which were instrumental in cementing her vocation and pivotal to her growing bond with Jesus, the Diana Vaughan prayers, instead of confirming a special bond or revealing God as authoring spiritually significant events, led to betrayal and humiliation. Disturbed, then beset by unbelief, Thérèse, however, fixes on herself as a believer suffering unbelief for good yet to come. Unlike other unbelievers, her desire is to believe. As in her infant experience, sensory evidence informs Thérèse that her trust was betrayed. But, as she did then, Thérèse fights off the semblance of abandonment through a True Self: the memory of herself as good, and of ‘God’ as loving her goodness.

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<sup>179</sup> In the first, after Zélie had encouraged Thérèse’s responsiveness, providing a “holding-environment,” at two and a half months of age, Zélie’s smell, taste, and sound, were replaced by those of Rose. Now Rose’s environment generated life in Thérèse.



c. *Charity*

In following Pauline's advice to write "on charity, on the novices and so on," Thérèse, in the remainder of *Man C*, tends to be instructive. We look for signs of her self-sense.<sup>180</sup> First she recalls feeling conflicted in Carmel with regard to feelings for her natural sisters (sadness over the possibility of Pauline going to Saigon).<sup>181</sup> She then speaks of her own desire to go there, to be poor, unknown, and without affection,<sup>182</sup> sacrificing herself "for Him in the way that would please him." She felt her "yes" to the "cup" Jesus offered was all he asked of her; he then removed the cup.<sup>183</sup> This leads to her to reflect that religious obedience offers freedom from anxiety.<sup>184</sup>

Thérèse recounts some of her past efforts to love her sisters in religion that were "misunderstood for imperfections."<sup>185</sup> Seeing her efforts misunderstood, she resolved not to judge another's motive.<sup>186</sup> Confessing she hasn't got much better at this but rises more quickly after she has fallen, she relates some efforts to show where it was hardest (in weaknesses and failures which now amuse her).<sup>187</sup> Responding to Jesus' call to love all, she found that by surrendering her rights, and not being ruled by feelings of attraction or distaste, though difficult in anticipation, once accepted, felt like a "yoke... sweet and light."<sup>188</sup> In all this, Thérèse enjoys the child's liberty of not having the burden of responsibility, or its failure.

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<sup>180</sup> Pauline advised Thérèse on what to write for *Man C*. Six argues that Thérèse indicated she wished to write about charity through a commentary on Song of Songs, but lost that opportunity in being directed otherwise by Pauline. Six, *The Light of the Night*, 127-130.

<sup>181</sup> Thérèse mention herself in bed, indicating the progress of her illness. She apologises for needing the prioress's care, yet is pleased to be as God wishes: broken by love. *Story of a Soul*, 215, 216.

<sup>182</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 217-218. This is reminiscent of St John of the Cross's own final months of life.

<sup>183</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 218.

<sup>184</sup> With her superior's will as her compass, she will not wander outside of "the water of grace." *Story of a Soul*, 218.

<sup>185</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 221. Thérèse states that she grasped a new understanding of charity. Charity sees through God's eyes, "not being surprised" by others' "weakness," and thus bears with others' faults.

<sup>186</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 221-222.

<sup>187</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 222-224. She writes that on one occasion she stated she was "pleased" to come upon a sister she disliked (but meant "pleased" in a spiritual sense). On another, rather than argue in her own defence, she ran away.

d. *Those You have Given Me: Novice Care, Power of Prayer and Sacrifice*

Reaffirming her role as child,<sup>189</sup> Thérèse explores the idea of having no rights over what is felt as owned, as God first lends to us what we have.<sup>190</sup> God aided and guided her (in her efforts to practice self-detachment) as an artist might move a paintbrush.<sup>191</sup> Through early “combat” with self-satisfaction, she overcame the attractions of “human consolations,” readying her for the novice care she would be assigned. At that the commencement of this office, seeing that she was not equal to it, she looked to God as a child toward its mother:

I saw immediately that the task was beyond my strength. I threw myself into the arms of God as a little child, and hiding my face in His hair, I said: “Lord, I am too little to nourish Your children; if You wish to give through me what is suitable for each, fill my little hand and without leaving Your arms or turning my head, I shall give Your treasures to the soul who will come and ask for nourishment.”<sup>192</sup>

In the arms of God, Thérèse is shielded from the task’s enormity. Nourishment for her novices is placed in her “little hand,” even while her head is turned away.<sup>193</sup> If it is distasteful to them, she does not lose her peace, but explains that it has been prepared by God. She is protected from “complaint” because she feels herself as only the messenger (“From the moment I understood that it was impossible for me to do anything by myself, the task you imposed on me no longer appeared difficult”).<sup>194</sup> Since taking up her place high “in the arms of Jesus,” she felt “like the watchman observing the enemy from the highest turret of a strong castle.”<sup>195</sup> From here she worked, acting

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<sup>188</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 225-268. Thérèse relates that the poor are reduced to asking for indispensable things, yet “... are not surprised” over rebuke as they do not feel anyone “owes them anything.” She describes feeling liberated when giving up her rights, and sense of ownership to the point of being relieved when asked for something. However, she only comprehends that this freedom is true; its successful practice eludes her.

<sup>189</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 233.

<sup>190</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 234.

<sup>191</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 337.

<sup>192</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 238.

<sup>193</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 238.

<sup>194</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 238.

<sup>195</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 239.

on Jesus' behalf without seeking to "attract their hearts," suffering hostility from the person reproved.<sup>196</sup> Others simply saw her as an informed, guiding sister.

Sensitive to the diversity of souls, Thérèse recalls serving bitter medicine to one to draw remorse, and honey to another for encouragement, but felt prayer as most efficacious: reaching God as a "queen" accesses a king.<sup>197</sup> Here she did as children do. Dispensing with formal prayers, "I say very simply to God what I wish to say."<sup>198</sup> Unable to muster fervour during the recitation of formal prayers, she feels that Mary, her mother, sees her goodwill and is satisfied with her.<sup>199</sup> Any good impression the novices have of Thérèse is for the sake of God's task, and not herself; the 'remembrance of who she is' is always close to mind.<sup>200</sup> Her taste for humiliation is satisfied when her novices tell her what they think of her.<sup>201</sup> Thérèse then relates her efforts to be charitable toward sisters in her community felt to be unattractive, experiencing her activity as (through God's eyes) an elegant feast in a drawing room.<sup>202</sup> She turns to her (God-given) sense of smallness, which disposes her to never fear God, but to gratefully receive all she is sent.<sup>203</sup> Though this disposition seemed to offer God no means to try her interiorly, God nevertheless sent a "trial" without changing her.<sup>204</sup>

*e. Evaluation of Novice Care, Power of Prayer and Sacrifice*

The analogy of being held in Jesus' arms flows from *Man B*. Admitting powerlessness means the happy necessity to rely on help from the parent. Thérèse avails herself of the advantage of the parent's ability, height, and strength, and clings close to their heart.

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<sup>196</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 239.

<sup>197</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 240 -241.

<sup>198</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 242.

<sup>199</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 242-3.

<sup>200</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 243-4.

<sup>201</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 244-46.

<sup>202</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 246-250.

<sup>203</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 250. Or, to put it another way, God "has made me desire what God wants to give me."

<sup>204</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 250. She accepts the "salutary bitterness," sent to mingle with her joys.

Held aloft in protective arms, Thérèse willingly embodies her parent's love in the world, passing on what she receives. Once Louis had supplied her with alms for the poor; he also lifted Thérèse and gave to her abundantly:

When he [Papa] came home I used to run and sit on one of his boots; then he would carry me in this way all around the house and out into the garden. Mama said laughingly to him that he carried out all my wishes; and he answered: 'Well, what do you expect? She's the Queen!' Then he would take me in his arms, lift me very high, set me on his shoulder, kiss and caress me in many ways.<sup>205</sup>

It perhaps also means that she will offer her novices the corrections Marie and Pauline dealt in early life. Thérèse was admonished for refusing Louis a kiss in her queen game.<sup>206</sup>

Thérèse is confident in spending God's gifts, without owning them, attributing to God their outcomes, and from her efforts at charity. She reasserts her taste for suffering, correction, injustices (later vindicated), and the drama of abandonment, which correspond to childhood experiences. Through events which echo earlier experiences, God is able to offer her the interior trial she seeks – making God consistent with nature, of concern to her.

*f. Two Missionaries and "Draw me, we shall run"*

Next to her hoped-for interior trial, Thérèse tells of a joyful childhood hope eventuating – to have priest brothers.<sup>207</sup> Concerned over such pleasure, she reflects on the practice of obedience, detachment, and authoritative approval.<sup>208</sup> At first suggesting that her writing under obedience might "rekindle" Marie de Gonzague's "fire," she thinks the

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<sup>205</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 19.

<sup>206</sup> Marie replies to Thérèse's game-play with "You naughty little girl! How bad it is for you to answer ones father in this way!" instead of explaining that now is not the time/ this is not the way to play this game.

<sup>207</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 250-251.

<sup>208</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 251-252. Thérèse reflects that one ought only take up communication with another sister when repugnant and not pleasing, to avoid temptation to spiritual pride in self-reflection.

better of this (“I am only joking”) and reflects that the prioress might also do good by burning what was produced under obedience.<sup>209</sup> To make a decision over whether to correspond with the seminarians, fearing that this would be too much for her, Thérèse had asked her prioress whether agreeing under “obedience” would “double” her “merits.”<sup>210</sup>

Ultimately, the task of spiritual care does not overwhelm Thérèse, as Jesus gave her a “simple means” of accomplishing it.<sup>211</sup> As she follows Jesus’ fragrance, her missionary brothers and novice sisters are pulled along together, as “little ones,” in her wake.<sup>212</sup> Daring to “borrow” Jesus’ “words,” she asks that they be spared from the world just as he does not belong to the world, “before flying into his arms.”<sup>213</sup> She reminds Jesus that he has permitted her boldness with him, feeling he addressed the words from the parable of the prodigal son, “EVERYTHING *that is mine is yours*,” to her (the one who was always with him).<sup>214</sup> To explain “draw me” Thérèse refers to John 6:44; no-one can follow the Father unless they are drawn, which involves asking and seeking (Mt 7:8, John 16:23). Thérèse, who has asked to be drawn, feels that it means to be united with, and “penetrated” by the fire of God’s own desire which animates one to active love.<sup>215</sup> She feels she expresses her love the way that Mary Magdalene gives herself to Jesus by absorbing his words.<sup>216</sup> She seeks the last place, repeats the publican’s prayer, and

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<sup>209</sup> This “would cause me no pain.” *Story of a Soul*, 253.

<sup>210</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 253. A reply of “Yes” decided this for her.

<sup>211</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 254. She found this through Song of Songs 1:3.

<sup>212</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 254. God, she feels, will them draw forward as children together. “When drawing me, draw the souls whom I love.”

<sup>213</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 255. John 17:4ff.

<sup>214</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 256. She reflects on her ambition to love God, and the chasm between God’s love for her and hers for God. Jesus attracts her love by his love, but she would have to borrow from God’s own love for her to love God as God loves her. Concerned with a possible accusation of pride, Thérèse states that she is not ambitious for glory, but asks that they reach heaven together; later she may discover her charges merit more love than she does, but on earth she feels she, without merit, has received an “immensity of love.”

<sup>215</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 257-258. Modifying Arminjon, Thérèse describes Jesus as the fulcrum by which the saints, through prayer, have moved the world.

<sup>216</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 258.

imitates the Magdalene who by charming the “Heart of Jesus” with audacious love is received as “the prodigal child.”<sup>217</sup>

g. *Evaluation of Two Missionaries and “Draw me, we shall run”*

Though in the pursuit of God’s voice alone (via Marie de Gonzague), these reflections, ironically, amount to spiritual tallying.<sup>218</sup> “Doubling my merits,” a False Self, asks: by doing this, am I then good? Thérèse’s undisguised desire to be held as good is pervasive. Ambiguously, Thérèse asserts a sense of God unconditionally loving her, or of being charmed by her, but she also wants it known that there is goodness in her intent, and in the actions she chooses – neutralizing the self-doubt her religion mandated. To be approved by God, Thérèse projects her grateful, receptive, and audacious character onto the Magdalene.

h. *Thérèse’s Novice and Missionary Correspondence*

We further examine Thérèse expressing her “little way” in her correspondence to her missionary brothers (some time after she ceased *Man C* in June, 1897). Thérèse instructs Maurice Bellière and Adolphe Roulland and her novices in her “way.”<sup>219</sup> She writes to Bellière how she admires repentance and audacious love, how her faults invite her think of mercy and love; she wants him to follow her way, committed to expiate others’ faults and not her own (leaving herself behind).<sup>220</sup> She writes that she will not let God rest till he gives her what she wants, and God treats her as a spoiled child.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 259. Here, Thérèse was taken to the infirmary, unable to complete her manuscript.

<sup>218</sup> The incongruence of tallying relational ideals (which refer to unconditional acceptance, and lead to inherent rewards such as happiness and freedom) is typically found in the writings of de Sales, Bérulle, and De Paul.

<sup>219</sup> Thérèse writes to Roulland, “To be just is not only to exercise severity in order to punish the guilty; it is also to recognize right intentions and to reward virtue. I expect as much from God’s justice as from His mercy. It is because he is just that ‘He is compassionate and filled with gentleness, slow to punish and abundant in mercy, for He knows our frailty. He remembers we are only dust. As a father has tenderness for his children, so the Lord has compassion on us!’” Her way leaves great endeavours to great souls, but she, recognizing her nothingness, abandons herself as a child in God’s arms, to enter the mansion awaiting those who resemble children. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1093.

<sup>220</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1133-1134.

<sup>221</sup> Thérèse similarly promises her after-death presence to Roulland, and to M. and Mme. Guérin. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1140, 1141-1142, 1145. Reflecting *Man C* she writes that she has a

Bellière, she suggests, should act as the child who climbs upon the parent's lap seeking forgiveness in childlike confidence.<sup>222</sup> Of two brothers needing forgiveness, one trembles and draws away, but the other

throws himself into his father's arms, protesting that he is sorry for hurting him, that he loves him, and that to prove it he will be good from now on...I doubt that the heart of the happy father will be able to resist the childlike confidence of the son of whose sincerity he is sure. He's well aware that the child will often fall back into these same faults, but he's always ready to forgive him, provided the boy always grasps him by the heart.<sup>223</sup>

This action resembles Thérèse's early behaviour from Zélie's letters. Thérèse reasserts her advice in another letter, "do not *drag* yourself ...to *His feet*," but "follow that first impulse into his arms,"<sup>224</sup> and, in her final letter to him, she writes that the saints, sharing in both human frailty and God's mercy, show "great compassion" and "fraternal tenderness."<sup>225</sup> Thérèse's advice involves her using felt-images evoking a sense of herself in infancy (True Self). It also explicitly asks Bellière to follow her "way."<sup>226</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

Thérèse recounts two distinct self-expressions in her adult life; the first is her entrance into Carmel, the second is an expression within her Carmelite vocation that further defines it. This second involves a return to the place of the heart (*Redire ad Cor*), to the familiar ground of the early self which guides how she is to act, through her particular

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taste for suffering. She then tells Bellière to be as a child, while sailing the stormy sea, trusting in a father who is unable to leave his child in the hour of danger. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1152.

<sup>222</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1152. Thérèse advocates he take her "ELEVATOR of love" rather than "the rough stairway of fear."

<sup>223</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1153. While understanding herself as "spoilt child," Thérèse seems unable to suffer with the pained elder brother, who "trembles and draws away."

<sup>224</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1164.

<sup>225</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1173.

<sup>226</sup> "You are *forbidden* to go to heaven by any other way except that of your poor little sister." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1164.

'being', a youngest child with great desire to express love.<sup>227</sup> We retrace this return to early self, informed by Thérèse's False Self/True Self constructions.

*a. The Path*

Zélie described Thérèse as highly responsive in infancy: smiling, and "singing" in response to her. At two years of age she promises Zélie, "Mamma, I will be very good."<sup>228</sup> In her toddler years, certain role-playing events (hiding under the blankets feigning sleep, and playing queen – "if you want my kiss, come and get it") were interpreted as disdainful, and punished. In reports of Thérèse being an "imp," a "thief," and "naughty" (judging her spiritedness through religious moral values), while in half-jest, Zélie, or Marie project their own desire to be free to sin without culpability. Uncomprehended by the child, this instead thwarts their natural desire to feel that they are good. A judgment is felt – a false one – it is wrong to joy in your freedom; this-life goodness (pleasure), finite and scarce, is to be accepted tentatively.<sup>229</sup> Through admonishment and praise, Thérèse senses God as forgiving baby faults, but pained by ingratitude, pride, unbelief, and attachment to physical things. Zélie and Louis, who themselves experience a God who asks for surrender (rewarding it with heaven), recreate the sphere they experienced. God, further, owns the sexual arena; intimacy and communion belong to God.

An early protest, gathering strength, cries (in paraphrase): I am good; never mind my amusing ineptitudes; I mean well.<sup>230</sup> I don't mind my mistakes, but accusations cause me to feel upset and shame. Further on is: I am proud of myself – I have big ideas and plans. This expands into: I have great felt-knowing, poetry, and I understand the tragic-drama of my loss and feeling myself as not-belonging. Still later: when I mimic and expose the ironic, I make people laugh, and they can see how funny we are and the rules we keep. Thérèse develops a powerful sense of the symbolic. When she articulates

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<sup>227</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 240.

<sup>228</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1214.

<sup>229</sup> See Mark A. McIntosh, *The Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 101-104.

<sup>230</sup> See *General Correspondence Volume I*, 113-114.



her “lights,” feelings of melancholy, and sense of the ironic, in *Story of a Soul*, Thérèse expresses her True Self.

From early on, Thérèse creatively engages with her God-representation. Much is also *taught* about God’s characteristics. In middle childhood, there are instances of difficulty in connecting with others, and evidence of a weak self-defence mechanism to protect her from others. When she feels abandoned, Mary smiles at her; when she feels awkward, Jesus, needing her, calls to her and becomes her inner teacher and lover. Father-God watches and bestows merit on her good effort. Thérèse determines to go to Carmel where Jesus and her surrogate mothers are. Homesick for the hearth of Alençon, she longs for heaven – its door, suffering, loving reparations, and death. In her adult years, there is a search for external impingements, in symbols which serve to safeguard her True Self. Thérèse observes that God supplies her with a taste for what he gives: “preference” for solitariness, sickness, misunderstanding, and humbling – to remind her of who she is.<sup>231</sup> Inviting scenarios that caused her suffering, Thérèse rewrites their meaning as positive, as a place where God operates toward overall good.<sup>232</sup>

*b. Loss of Heaven*

Thérèse’s loss of heaven seems to reprise a withdrawal of true/familiar surroundings (Semallé), her object-relation for heaven. Lost to her were nourishing others with familiar ways, yet she felt herself bringing joy to a new place. Bringing joy through sacrifice is felt in the present and retrojected into past experiences. She brought joy to foreign environments as an infant, as a child,<sup>233</sup> and as a young adult in Carmel. Thérèse felt that she had come home when she arrived in Carmel.<sup>234</sup> With Pauline as

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<sup>231</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 232. Thérèse is relieved that God gave critics. Might she otherwise have taken herself to task? In Freudian terms, Thérèse identifying with her aggressor pre-empts an anticipated attack, before it is thrust.

<sup>232</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 245. McDargh proposes that God may be the source of the sense of “God,” attributing to Niebuhr, “that wherever we see faith pushing towards inclusive love and genuine charity, and challenging penultimate loyalties and idolatries, we see the activity of God, the One beyond the Many.”

<sup>233</sup> Thérèse brought joy to foreign environments, such as when she performed bird burials, narrated stories at boarding school, and collected flowers after dancing quadrilles.

<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, she applied the rule of detachment strictly in relation to Pauline and Marie, and, via Carmelite rule, resumed finding fault with herself to break “self-will.”

prioress, and Celine's arrival, Thérèse expresses, in a second individuation, her gratitude for God's mercy by offering herself as a victim to it, hoping to be sent to Saigon.

Her offering, which anticipates a victimhood, followed by the loss of a sense of heaven, leads to her "way" – illustrating herself as a child the arms of God. Her metaphor emphasizes the plenitude of parental merciful love, leading forward and outward. She interprets her first hemoptysis (April 2-3, 1896) positively, as a call from Jesus, death felt as the portal to her heavenly home. Her experience of 'loss of heaven' follows around April 5. Though painful, this sought for "trial," an opportunity for reparation for sinners, also serves to relieve her from the responsibility of conditions she has no power over (faith and desire itself),<sup>235</sup> allowing her to bypass the difficult "stairs" of working for approval. A significant dream (May 10) approves of this approach.<sup>236</sup> In her trial, which lasts up until her death, she offers 'merely' her smile (its inspiration now absent) to those in Carmel who have no "spark" (no experience of a mercifully forgiving other).

### *c. False Self Constructions*

To the end of *Man C*, Thérèse holds 'disdaining offered love' as a category of sin she did not commit. She, however, through her own experience of doubt, removes "unbelief" as a characteristic of persons who disdain Jesus' love, interpreting her loss of belief (joining the table of unbelievers) as for the purpose of reparation (saving unbelievers).<sup>237</sup> Holding herself separate in this way points to her youth, and to a need to hide her feelings and reasoning from those who misunderstood her, and accused *her* of spurning love. There were signs of overcoming this as she increasingly proposed

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<sup>235</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 235. Now God may be felt as fully in control, and not Thérèse as responsible for God. As a dying, 'blind' victim, she can no longer hurt Jesus. She can now also, justifiably, be utterly dependent on God.

<sup>236</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 242. Fairbairn states that dreams are usefully regarded by analysts as "'state of the nation reports' on the vicissitudes of an individual's object relations."

<sup>237</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 214. Her trial allows her to make "reparation for one single sin against *faith*." We note Thérèse allows herself the freedom to doubt, but avoids the sin of "cursing God," reminiscent of Job's righteousness. See Job: 1:22, 2:9-10.

God as finding playfulness endearing (True Self).<sup>238</sup> In her example of the two brothers, to Bellière, sin belongs less to a type of person, than to a type of response (she appears to not comprehend the pain of the cowering brother).<sup>239</sup>

*d. Death a Positive Horizon*

Thérèse interprets death positively. Through her early experience of Rose, Zélie and Louis, she felt that a speedy confession of wrongdoing and confident expectation of mercy would culminate in family reunion, even in heaven (reinforced by Arminjon). As a child (adopting Zélie's values), she imagined death as pleasing inasmuch as it is the entry to happiness, and, so, wished Zélie dead.<sup>240</sup> (Zélie at that moment perhaps was despondent; there she will be happy). Thérèse now applies this death-wish to herself.

*e. Thérèse's Positivity*

Positivity plays an important role in Thérèse activity.<sup>241</sup> Though she agrees with the feeling of her time, preferring a 'heavenly later' over a 'passing now', her intense desire to interact with an immanent God leads to viewing the physical present as conveying God's love for her, and her actions as demonstrating love for God. Watching the 'now' for how God is there for those who love him, she attributes extraordinary value to physical events, both in the present and the future.

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<sup>238</sup> Thérèse writes to Bellière: "Regarding those who *love* Him and come with each indelicacy to ask His pardon by throwing themselves into His arms, Jesus is thrilled with joy," reminiscent of her childhood habit of declaring her 'faults' to make sure her relationships remained intact. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1164-1165. See 1223, 1225, for "I pushed Celine" and "Tell Papa that I tore the [wall]paper."

<sup>239</sup> See dimensions of the elder brother in Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (N.Y.: Image, Doubleday, 1992), 67-76.

<sup>240</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1218 -219.

<sup>241</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr views persistent positivity as attributable to God. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 245.

## 5. Overall Conclusion for Chapters Five and Six

Winnicott's True Self/False Self paradigm, a sensitive indicator of change in notions of self, other, and God, has shown Thérèse corrected certain self/God-perceptions by reasserting her earliest happy realities, informed by felt mercy in her early relationships. This shaped her theology.<sup>242</sup>

### *Thérèse's Sense of Self and a Metaphor for Mercy Toward Limitation*

Our investigation, firstly, showed that, in her imagery, Thérèse underwrote much of the Carmelite, Jansenist, and romantic piety of her time. Yet, by engaging with her God-representations, and treating her desires as emerging from God, she describes a felt-God and aligns her Catholic faith with her needs toward 'self-becoming'. Against the background of her felt-circumstance (a youngest daughter, once treated as special, desperate to 'outgrow' her inconvenience and looming inconsequentiality), and inspired by references to the predicament of smallness in Hebrew and Christian literature, she overcomes her impasse by surrendering to its terms. God will protect her and provide for her because, and *when*, she is a little one. This leads to her declaring, be as I am; it works!

Thérèse describes her self in terms of the characteristics of early human interaction, in particular, felt-mercy. Tensions between her freedom (initial parental love) and restriction (sisterly constraints), her vast desires and obvious limitation, are represented in a religious drama which has her in a filial relationship with God (while child-spouse to Jesus). Her desire to impact God/Zélie (all) is gradually shrouded in the mist of helpless impotence (nothing), yet 'all' remains to be had, just by asking. Using her 'youngest daughter' experience as an overarching metaphor for her relationship with God, the effects of limitation are resolved by recalling her own parents' responses to these in childhood. As her parents did, through a familiar, forgiving presence, God is now felt as supplying knowledge, confidence and courage.

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<sup>242</sup> Asserting her True Self led to healing "the rigours and fears of Jansenism." John Paul II, *Divini Amoris Scientia*, 8, 1997. <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2THERE.HTM>

In her ‘youngest daughter’ metaphor, Thérèse creates a correspondence between this-present-life and a transcendent God-for-her reality. An imagined God-perspective – God acting as an ultimately benevolent parent – provides *existential* meaning, meaning to the physical boundaries of existence, imparting courage to face incomprehension, powerlessness, and death. This metaphor also sustains, as a parallel, the passage of human development, supporting the Augustinian premise that ‘longing for God’ is an *a priori* state (God previously implanting desires in her) and Thérèse’s sense that she is supported with life “from one moment to the next” (rather than depending on a stockpile of provisions). A theology derived from this, with a focus on mercy toward limitation, will be taken up in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **A Review of Theological Anthropology**

Chapter Six concluded with suggesting that Thérèse's analogical interpretation of her experience of God's mercy toward her limitation, felt to be transcendent, may be extended to existential dimensions toward a theological anthropology reflecting Thérèse's particular attention to grace and mercy. Our investigation began with whether Thérèse first felt mercy as a child, to find whether this influenced how she experienced God. It was determined that caregivers in acting graciously toward the limited one in their care, show mercy. Being engaged with, guided, lifted, and carried by a more able other underlies the sense of religious grace, just as primal-trust faith underlies religious faith. Both first develop in physical terms, in an archetypical, generic, form. Experienced grace between the self and projected other is internalized, taking on specificity when it is felt between self and God. Limitation is a necessary condition for grace: developmental limitation calls for generic grace, and existential for religious grace. In the psychic dimension, grace is conveyed throughout self-becoming, beginning concretely, then through inner psychic constructs, to become prayer.

Chapters Two and Three explored parental grace (generic), in mercy toward the child, through Sroufe's theory of *Emotional Development*, which holds that emotion, an intrinsically relational event, facilitates cognitive and physiological advancement. The parent orchestrates affective engagement in their child to organize their emotion, needed to function as a self in relation. A dialogue forms a secure parent-child (dyadic) bond from which to explore, and from which to become a valued other/self capable of other relations. When any intermediate goal that serves this overall goal is hindered, it is returned to and repeated. Behavioural research shows parental care toward their infant as sensitive (merciful and gracious), and mimetic response as central to the infant's learning.

Having explored grace and mercy from the perspective of psychological development, Chapters Five and Six examined Thérèse's spiritual self-understanding in *Story of a Soul*. The grace and mercy she experienced between herself self and primary others (becoming the expectation blueprint for other relations) Thérèse now feels with God,

and saints, who defend her self-becoming. Using Winnicott's True Self/False Self paradigm, it was found that Thérèse's assertion of a True Self ensured the continuance of grace and mercy in the self, within the "I-Thou" of self and God. Hebrew Scripture records experiences of graciousness toward the limited one, where God is felt, like a parent, as an advocate for the weak and threatened self. Limitedness appears to be an essential characteristic in the God-human dyad, which recalls God's initiative in calling (engagement) and sustaining.<sup>1</sup>

It was shown that affective interaction between persons is the building block of all development, inextricable from cognitive and physiological advancement, and that mercy and grace lie between persons at a primordial level. On this foundation, we will derive a theological anthropology from Thérèse's thought in two phases, historical/contextual (Chapter Seven), and epistemological (Chapter Eight). Thérèse's interpretation of her own experience will be incorporated into the language and conversation of theological anthropology, by naming some of her premises and the direction in which she moves to arrive at her conclusions. This requires a review of theological understandings of grace. A review of grace in Judeo-Christian history will be followed by Stephen Duffy and Neil Ormerod's summaries of the problem of extrinsicism, William James' thought on religious feeling and scholastic abstraction, and, finally, John Macmurray's thought which re-opens the way for grace as between persons (evidenced by Thérèse), leading to a reintegration of disparate notions about grace.<sup>2</sup> In Chapter Eight, we will examine Thérèse's experience of God next to the anthropological formulations of some post-Thérésian theologians, with a particular focus on Lonergan. We turn to human-identity and God's grace as it has been understood in history.

### **1. God, Grace and Self-understanding in History**

The following overview will concentrate on three broad perceptions of the God-human relation in Judeo-Christian history, leading to Thérèse's (Modern) time. In the Hebrew

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this sense of an other calling, and sustaining us, is common to all, accessible from one's experience-memory.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992); Neil Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* (Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books, 2007).

Scriptures to which Thérèse turns, God is felt as gracious toward the needy one. In the New Testament, writers witness to Jesus as gracious in his healing and forgiveness. Paul of Tarsus states that he experiences this for himself in conversion, and conveys to others God's graciousness (Eph 3: 2-3) in redeeming humanity from the Law/sin and death. Later, in a similar way, Augustine of Hippo experiences healing and forgiveness in conversion, feeling that God's surmounting his rebellious/subverting will carries him almost irresistibly to God. Finally, in the Thomistic scholastic tradition, grace is defined in terms of objective states, entailing such as merit and loss, and healing and elevation. These states were encountered in Arminjon. While Thérèse is taught Thomistic doctrine, she is immersed in a Jansenist impression of grace as a force carrying one towards one's destiny (taken by some as fate).<sup>3</sup> We review those trends.

The above may be viewed as thematic clusters. Two are fundamentally experiential. (i) In Hebrew Scripture various (archetypical) experiences are held in tension, an extant one being a conversion of heart, wherein God is felt/remembered to graciously favour the poor/weak one. (ii) In the self-examining writings of Paul and Augustine, we find experiences of God's rescue and of conversion. This entails not just change of heart, but a content of faith (the risen Jesus as the new law, Rom 8: 1-2; for Augustine from Manichaeism to more Biblically-based thought), and an increasing awareness of sin's enslaving power hindering their response to God. The third, (iii) beginning with God as utterly other (classical theism), is not experiential.<sup>4</sup> Concerned with proofs and science,<sup>5</sup> conciliar metaphysical solutions against heresies, and supplying the material for sacramental formulations, it entails conceptual, unfelt, categories. Here, adopting

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<sup>3</sup> Here fate (*fatum* – an oracle) is taken to mean something fixed, while destiny (*destinare* – to secure, to which has been added (in *destination*) devotion to a direction and plan. While fate is linked to the word of the gods, destiny is linked to action, to “a preordained path that man can fulfil.” See discussion on fate and destiny in Richard W. Bargdill, “Fate and Destiny: Some Historical Distinctions between the Concepts,” *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, Vol 26, 2006, pp205-220, 205-206. [\\server05\productn\T\THE\26-1-2\THE1203.txt](#) accessed on 26/02/2007.

<sup>4</sup> Classical theism, Macquarrie argues, assigns a purpose to God (as necessary for the existence of all things); making God a necessitous being, distancing and reducing God. Creation is made from material outside of and unrelated to God; God and creation are of different substances and orders; the act of creation as arbitrary may be felt as capricious. This monarchical being does not describe the Christian God, who is not indifferent to human being, but relates to process, temporality and history. John Macquarrie, *In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 33-41.

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas' writing on grace, a “synthesis” of Aristotle's method and Augustine's traditional datum, is “dispersed” throughout his work. Edmund J. Fortman, *The Theology of Man and Grace: Commentary* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), 181-182.



Aristotle's epistemology,<sup>6</sup> Aquinas describes God as "simple being" (pure act), as essential, non-material substance, and human existence as composed of contingent designations in form and matter.<sup>7</sup> Further, universal qualities, consistent with Augustine's platonism, exist in the pure spirit of God.

## 2. Theological Anthropology: A Working Definition and Historical Overview

In Hebrew Scripture, persons experience God as calling, leading, and accompanying them, choosing them as his own and covenanting himself to them,<sup>8</sup> promising his blessing.<sup>9</sup> In his nurture, defence and leading, God is felt as mercifully loving, loyal and compassionate. In the Christian witness, 'grace', deriving from *gratia* (Latin) and *charis* (Greek),<sup>10</sup> words chosen to convey three distinct Hebrew meanings,

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<sup>6</sup> L. Matthew Petillo, "The theological problem of grace and experience: a Lonerganian perspective," *Theological Studies* 71.3 (2010) 586+. Accessed 6 Sept 2010, 5.

<sup>7</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, "On Being and Essence" in *Selected Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Robert P. Goodwin (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1965). The later carve-up of Aquinas's work into dogmatic theology emphasised this metaphysical entry point, further sharpened when later scholastics turned this into a system of tracts, emphasized it even more. Thomas Marsh, *The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Study* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-third Publications, 1994), 145-146. While the substance of Aquinas's discussion uses metaphysical categories, in the *Summa Theologiae* (I-II. 112. 5) he does address how grace is experienced, what signs to look for and what level of certainty we can have about it.

<sup>8</sup> Klaus Berger translates Hebrew Scripture's early meaning of *חסד* (loving kindness) as "unfailing duty of reciprocity between relatives, friends, sovereigns, and subjects, and ...the contracting parties in a covenant, since the covenant implies the obligation of *חסד*" This is often used in combination with an adjective denoting 'love', 'justice', or 'mercy', with the predominant meaning for *חסד* in connection with covenantal favour as 'loyal love'. "The relationship called for by the covenant in Ex 20:16, Deut 7:12, Hos 6:4 is *חסד*, and the covenant bestowed by God is identical with the *חסד* he has promised. Israel's appeal to God's "loyalty to his covenant," to love his people, after repeated failure to uphold its part, more and more resembles a plea for mercy. God's *חסד* is hoped for in the future by the faithful, as they recall its presence in the past. Louis Bouyer writes that *חסד* refers to "a favour accorded to someone," which in relation to the favour God shows to his elect in the Hebrew Scriptures is "accompanied by a ...motherly compassion (*rahamim*), and is manifested first of all in his loving kindness (*hesed*) and then in his faithfulness (*emet*)..." Klaus Berger "Biblical Grace" in Karl Rahner, Editor, *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (London: Burns & Oates, 1975), 584-585.

<sup>9</sup> George E. Menderhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," in D. N. Freedman (ed), *Anchor Bible Dictionary: Vol I*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1191.

<sup>10</sup> A second word *חסד* (grace), meaning 'favour', rendered theological through St Paul use of it in Rom 4:16, is used in relation to God finding favour with the Patriarchs and bestowing his favours on the lowly. *חסד* in relation to God as sovereign "is closer to compassion and consideration for weakness than to the notion of loyalty to a covenant." Grace to the elect was symbolized as the undeserving (not the natural offspring) receiving the favour given to a natural child through an adoptive bond - consistent with the role of grace (as favour) in relation to election (as adoption). *חסד* (loving kindness) which translates into *ἐλεος*, when transferred into the New Testament is translated into *χάρις* where the concept of *חסד*, of favour, is mostly meant. Rahner, *Encyclopedia of Theology*, 585. John Hardon, in *History and Theology*

“condescending love, conciliatory compassion and fidelity,” is pivotal to describing a self-revealing God in Jesus, faithful to those who hope in his saving power.<sup>11</sup> God is felt as graceful (adjectival) and as supplying grace (substantial) to those in need of grace – in revelation, salvation and redemption.<sup>12</sup> Grace pertains to relation; it describes that God loves humanity, the nature of that love, which entails how God deals with humanity.<sup>13</sup> A working definition of theological anthropology may be “an understanding of human existence in relation to God in the light of [Judeo] Christian experience,”<sup>14</sup> embracing creation, covenant, Christ as realisation of the human being created in the image and likeness of God, the notion of sin, nature/grace, personhood, and salvation. We discuss the continuity between Judaism and Christianity.

*a. Continuity between Judaism and Christianity*

Amongst Catholic writers on grace, there has been a trend to begin with a brief mention of Christian faith originating in Christ, some Pauline texts, then lengthy treatments of Augustine and Aquinas (an apologetic of Thomist doctrine, the institutional Church, its councils and its dogmas).<sup>15</sup> However, passing over the continuity between Judaism and

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*of Grace: the Catholic Teaching on Divine Grace* (USA: Sapienta Press, 2005), 1-2, refers to χάρις as “a person or an object [having] the power to give joy to the hearer or beholder,” noting, “Since to a Greek there was nothing so joy inspiring as grace or beauty, it implied the presence of these,” not merely conveyed by passive qualities, but also in their operation. As *charis* described in Aristotelian ethics a favour freely conferred, in a spirit of “free-heartedness” “without claim or expectation of return,” Christians took it up to describe their “doctrine of divine condescension.” Bouyer describes St Paul’s use of *charis* (a translation of חסד), the favour of forgiveness “accorded to sinful mankind through Christ’s death,” culminating in adoption as “children of God in the risen Christ through the Spirit,” as “pregnant” with the associations of motherly compassion (*rahamim*), loving kindness (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*emet*). Louis Bouyer, *Dictionary of Theology*, translated by Charles Underhill Quinn (New York: Desclee Co, 1965), 173.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (New York, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Haight states that noting this different usage does not resolve the confusion it causes, and circumscribes the study he presents. Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 6-7.

<sup>13</sup> Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 7-8.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 9. At 8, Haight’s investigation begins with Augustine. “Judeo” (added by author) acknowledges a continuity, asymmetrical as it is, with the Christian experience. See Frans Josef Van Beek SJ, *Loving the Torah More Than God: Towards a Catholic Appreciation of Judaism* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, ),

<sup>15</sup> For example, Piet Fransen SJ, *Divine Grace and Man* (Belgium: Desclée Co, Inc, 1962), and John Hardon SJ, *History and Theology of Grace: The Catholic Teaching on Divine Grace* (An Arbor, MI: Sapienta Press, 2002, 2005). Fransen simply states scripture as God speaking to humanity in history pointing to Heb 1: 1-2 (“God, having spoken of old to our forefathers through the prophets, by many degrees and in many ways, has at last in these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the world”), showing a greater concern to describe its relation

Christianity neglects the fact of their historical connectedness, that the second draws its meaning of grace from the first.<sup>16</sup> Hans Walter Wolff in “The Kerygma of the Yahwist” writes

in the New Testament the Old is cited at every turn, either directly or indirectly... in the form of atomized quotations. ...The New Testament recourse to these documents is not only frequent it seems to be indispensable. Even in the gospel of John people refuse to accept who Jesus is except upon the testimony of the “Scriptures.” That Jesus is the righteousness of God comes to light... cannot be explained without adding “the Law and the Prophets.” What takes place in “faith” must in some sense parallel what happened to the Patriarchs of Israel... Without the Old Testament, who Jesus is apparently remains hidden....in order to understand fully what it is to which the New Testament bears witness, we will we will have to recognize the Old Testament anew, in its own function as a witness, and the pertinence of that to our times.<sup>17</sup>

Wolff proceeds to investigate the Yahwist’s kerygma (*Verkündigungswille*), the oldest Israelitic tradition. He finds the kerygma is to describe Israel as a blessing on all people. “[T]he fullness – ‘all the families of the earth will gain blessing in Israel’ – is for now only in the promise, and is placed before Israel as a task...,”<sup>18</sup> a promise and task that reaches into the New Testament. Paul quotes through the tradition of the prophets, “God who had set me apart before I was born [still in my mother’s womb] and called me through his grace... so that I might proclaim him” Gal 1: 15 (*cf* Isa 49:1) to announce the Yahwist kerygma, “the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the Gospel beforehand to Abraham by saying ‘All the gentiles shall be blessed in you’.” Gal 3: 8 (*cf* Gen 12: 7ff). Significantly, this blessing resembles the unconditional grace/covenant, preceding its restatement as conditional, where

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with Tradition (the hierarichal institutional Church built on infallible dogmas, liturgy and seven sacraments); Scripture is the Holy Spirit’s “inspiration,” while Tradition is its “assistance.” (Fransen 20-25). Duffy, *The Graced Horizon* begins with Augustine.

<sup>16</sup> The Christian Church cannot understand itself except in relation to the Hebrew story and the election of Israel. See John Thornhill SM, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World* (Blackburn, Vic: Collins, 1998), 14-64.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Walter Wolff, Trans Wilbur A. Benware, “The Kerygma of the Yahwist,” *The Vitality of the Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox traditions, 1975), 41-42.

<sup>18</sup> Wolff, “The Kerygma of the Yahwist,” 63.

divine grace precedes and becomes the foundation for human obedience to the divine will, a will that is revealed most clearly in the experience of “grace” itself and not in some fixed code of social and legal norms. Morally and psychologically, it implies that persons under the covenant are capable of recognizing ... they have received benefits in their past that they have in no way earned. ...that it is the good things in life that they have received in the past (and not some politically determined, legally defined, and socially enforced set of formal patterns of behaviour)... that provide the basis for defining the good they hope to realize in their future...<sup>19</sup>

Such a feeling, and hope, was pronounced by the “unsophisticated” prophets (Amos, Micah, Jeremiah), who were neither “historiographers” nor systematic theologians outlining the formal elements of premonarchic Israel covenant theology.<sup>20</sup> They embodied the dialectic of a people repenting of haughtiness, receiving protection from God when humbly acknowledging their dependence on God – grace first being “the benevolence” experienced in the “struggle to survive”<sup>21</sup> – in tension with a later voice who feels there will be a resumption of order only when laws and customs are obeyed.<sup>22</sup> We resume our overview.

*b. Jesus, a Developing Faith Tradition, and the Reformers*

Beyond perceptions of covenant, as conditional and unconditional, the experience of God’s grace is described through a diversity of metaphors. In the Christian scripture, Jesus calls God “*Abba*.”<sup>23</sup> He speaks of being gifted by his *Abba*/father in the

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<sup>19</sup> Freedman, (ed.), *Anchor Bible*, 1191.

<sup>20</sup> Freedman, (ed.), *Anchor Bible*, 1190.

<sup>21</sup> Grace in Hebrew Scriptures is felt as God’s way of acting in “fidelity, justice, uprightness, and magnanimity above and beyond any human legalistic criteria,” toward one’s ancestors and one’s self. Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Freedman (ed.), *Anchor Bible*, 1191.

<sup>23</sup> Mk 14: 36 Under great duress in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus quotes Ps 42: 6, 12 and follows it with “*Abba*, Father, for you all things are possible,” concluding in (14: 38) with phrases that resemble the Lord’s prayer (which borrows from the Jewish *Kaddish*, prayer upon death) Paul uses “*Abba*” in Rom 8:15a-16 (“When we cry ‘*Abba*! Father’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God”) and Gal 4: 6 (“God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘*Abba*! Father’ so that you are no longer a slave but a child.”) referring to Jesus’ experience as a vivifying principle of the Spirit of the risen Son. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ, “The Letter to the Galatians” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds Raymond E. Brown SS, Joseph A Fitzmyer SJ, Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc, 1990, 1968),787-788.

metaphors of his parables, as a father to his children (Mk 10: 24; Jn 21:5).<sup>24</sup> Paul adopts Jesus' "Abba" experience, addressing his communities of converts as brothers and sisters as they are all now God's children (e.g., Rom 10:1; Cor 2:1; Php 1: 14). In proclaiming Jesus, the originator of grace who frees one from the yoke of the law (Mt 11: 29, 30; Gal 5:1; 1Tit 6:1) Paul is now a conduit for grace (Eph 3:2-3), "a saving way of acting" which arouses eschatological hope.<sup>25</sup> In Greek theology, grace deified humanity: as God entered human form in Jesus of Nazareth, so human form is made divine.<sup>26</sup> In the fourth century, Augustine of Hippo, from an experience of compromised freedom (felt as rebelliousness), unable to *will* what he desired, wrote in "amazed gratitude" of grace as "healing and liberation;" Pelagius, a contemporary, objected to this, asserting that humanity *was* equipped with freedom and ability.<sup>27</sup> They came to represent persisting polarities.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The use of "Abba" is significant to Jesus' sense of his identity (as based on gift from, and relationship with, his Father). See Matt. 11: 25-27; John 3: 33-36 and 8: 25-29. See Brendan Byrne's footnote on Mk 14: 36. Jesus' "striking" use of Abba to describe his intimate experience God as a father makes a deep impression upon his disciples and is hence kept in the memory of the early Church communities. Brendan Byrne, *A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2008), 224.

<sup>25</sup> Boff, *Liberating Grace*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Athanasius (295-373) used *theopoiein* (to divinize) "to express the work of sanctification performed in us by the Logos through his Spirit." He taught that divinization is a "participation in the Word," where "we are created in the image," and "rendered capable of sharing in the knowledge that the Logos-Image has of the father, and thus the living life of God." "Deification" is used to translate the Greek *theosis*. Peter Phan, *Grace and the Human Condition* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), 132. Andrew Louth notes that it is broader than redemption and is, rather, the fulfilment of creation. *Theosis* represents "what is and remains God's intention: the creation of the cosmos that, through humankind, is destined to share in the divine life, to be deified." See Andrew Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology" in Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Eds.), *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic): 32-44, at 34-5.

<sup>27</sup> Pelagius struck upon a contradiction within Augustine's disposition of "amazed gratitude." In Augustine's "unbounded rejoicing in the generosity of God showed in saving us," he "seemed to imply that we could not save ourselves." Without help to live a good transformed moral life, how could God punish us if we fail? Therefore, to be logical, we must be able to live a moral life. Augustine asserted oppositely; "without Christ we can do nothing." Quentin Quesnell "Grace" in, Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane, Editors, *The New Dictionary of Theology* (United States: Liturgical Press, 1987, 1991), 438-439.

<sup>28</sup> Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 438- 439. The Church at this time was occupied with "inner Church controversies... on sin and forgiveness, the need for infant baptism, on predestination and foreknowledge" ... for the most part the focus... remain[ed] practical, sometimes juridical." Persecution, sickness, and apostasy led to a need to articulate a theology of grace. During Augustine and Pelagius's dispute, the word "gratia" became a technical term which began to demand definition ("causes, properties, efforts and rules of operation").

In the twelfth century (alongside the Church's increasing legal responsibilities, and the "efficacies" of sacramental life in relation to sin) through Anselm, grace acquired a legal dimension: the terms of "right and obligation."<sup>29</sup> Also in the twelfth century, supporting conciliar metaphysical (substances) and ontological (states of being) definitions of God, Peter Lombard wrote of "uncreated grace" (the Holy Spirit/Charity)<sup>30</sup> in relation to an earlier notion of "created grace." In the thirteenth century, Aquinas defined the relationship between God and human nature in terms of Aristotelian science: "actual" and "operative,"<sup>31</sup> including "created" and "uncreated grace" in his categories,<sup>32</sup> building on the foundation of 'five ways' for the existence of God.<sup>33</sup> To elevate humanity to a supernatural end – the fulfilment of desire for God evidenced by Augustine – God supplies "sanctifying" grace. Proofs, teleological,

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<sup>29</sup> Mark McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 91-94. See also John Thornhill, "Changing Horizons of Community Awareness" in *Sign and Promise* (London: Collins, 1988), 57-60.

<sup>30</sup> "Created" and "uncreated grace" were scholastic concepts Aquinas took up. Peter Lombard held the Holy Spirit as "created grace." *Sententiae*, Liber 1, d.18, c 2. See also *Sententiae*, d, 2, d.27, c7, [QL 1: 448] in Bernard J. F. Lonergan, Frederick E. Crowe, Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in Thomas Aquinas* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2000), 24. See also Karl Rahner, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace" in *Theological Investigations*, Vol 1, E.T. (London 1961), 319-46. Cited by Walter Hilton, John P. H. Clark, Rosemary Dorward, *The Scale of Perfection* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 317-18.

<sup>31</sup> Petillo offers an evolving human perception of grace, based on developing cognition and self-awareness, on evolving consciousness in history. He notes that a shift occurred from "soul" to "subject" through the empirical method. Petillo, "The theological problem of grace and experience: a Lonerganian perspective," 1.

<sup>32</sup> "... thus grace is said to be created inasmuch as men are created with reference to it, i.e. are given a new being out of nothing, i.e. not from merits, according to Ephesians 2:10, "created in Jesus\_Christ in good works." *S.T.* I-II, 110, 2 ad 3. For 'created grace' in Aquinas, see *ST*, 1. 103, 2 ad 2; *ST* 1, 112.1. See also Peter Phan (editor), Michael Scanlon in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook Ecclesiology in Honour of Patrick Granfield OSB* (Collegeville Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 2000), 207-208.

<sup>33</sup>"The existence of God can be proved in five ways." *Summa Theologica* I-II. 1-3 (New York: Benziger, Bruce & Glencoe, 1948), 13 -14. Hill argues that Aquinas "seeks out ... ways (*viae*, not 'proofs', 'arguments', or 'demonstrations') by which the human ... might ascend to an affirmation of God ... who has already addressed his word to man." William J. Hill, *The Three Personed-God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 63. Schussler Fiorenza and Galvin note that in the nineteenth century Aquinas's ways were organized in Neo-Scholastic manuals toward an apologetic (beginning with the tract *De Deo Uno*) "to defend both the legitimacy of Christianity and the objective certainty of supernatural revelation against the criticisms levelled by modern natural religion." Francis Schussler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (New York: Fortress Press, 2011), 137 -138.

taxonomic, and essentialist concerns<sup>34</sup> eclipsed the pre-eminence of God and humanity as subjects in relation.

Consonant with the “turn to the subject,” in the sixteenth century Martin Luther protested against Anselmian legality,<sup>35</sup> re-interpreting grace interpersonally as God (in Jesus) liberating persons by addressing them with forgiveness.<sup>36</sup> Concerned with grace as between persons in relation, Luther saw redemption as the restoration of friendship with God and fraternal fellowship with Jesus. John Calvin followed Luther’s protest, reinstating ‘covenant’ as a systematizing principle for understanding grace, somewhat leading away from relation.<sup>37</sup> In an atmosphere of disenchantment over grace traded as a commodity (using scholastic substantialist definitions) in what was judged as pragmatism and Pelagian optimism, an Augustinian strain of Catholicism arose. Before we take this up, our discussion returns to perceptions (ii) and (iii), Augustine’s experience, and non-experiential scholasticism.

### 3. Implicit Self-Perceptions Contributing to Perceptions of Grace

While (i) encompasses a plurality of self-perceptions,<sup>38</sup> there is a consistent sense of God as “one,” on “our side,” against those who menace, protecting the vulnerable, or

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<sup>34</sup> To make faith a science, Aristotelian categories were followed. Aristotle developed principles in relation to motion, causation, place and time, from the desire to construct a “natural” philosophy of physics (which he felt was a “*first philosophy*”) made into a “second philosophy” by virtue of the previousness of metaphysics. Thus he constructed his metaphysical philosophy by a “metaphysical investigation of physical entities.” “Four causes” explained the necessities of matter (rather than God as God for God’s purposes). Unmoved movers lead to one unmoved mover. He devised an inner principle (“nature”) of change and being at rest, and external principles of change and rest (active powers or potentialities), which require considerable qualifications (the problem inherent in systematizing complex organic development), leading to an interplay of categories (in “nature,” “motion,” “causation,” and “movers and unmoved movers”) and subcategories. He lists categories, from the general to the particular (qualifications expanding the particular). Istvan Bodnar, “Aristotle’s Natural Philosophy” (2012) <http://stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-natphil/> accessed 7/02/2012.

<sup>35</sup> G.R. Elton, G. R. *Reformation Europe: 1517-1559*, (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1963), 15-17.

<sup>36</sup> Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Luther’s theology of grace and redemption addressed his distress over legality as the measure for religious faith (and the problem of nature and sin). Calvin rearranged this to a systematic treatise around the Hebrew covenants. See Chapter One.

<sup>38</sup> (i) In Hebrew Scripture various (archetypical) experiences are held in tension. An extant one is a conversion of heart: recalling the feeling that God graciously favours the poor/weak one.

the proud who humble themselves, which points to being under threat. What self-perceptions contributed to the positions taken in (ii) and (iii)?

*a. Augustine*

Augustine, in (ii), allows us access to his self-experience in his *Confessions*, an affective prayer conversation recalling the conversion of his will and cognition. Exploring his formative development through his present feeling, he ‘recalls’ God supplying him (metaphorically) with his mother’s nourishing breasts, his speech development,<sup>39</sup> and his resistance to God, in school incidents revealing apathy/distaste toward learning, and, later, succumbing to sexual chaos. Informed by others, Augustine observes developmental states (“I knew how to suck, to lie quiet when I was content, to cry when I was in pain: and that was all I knew. Later I added smiling to the things I could do, first in sleep then awake”).<sup>40</sup> He then describes “rage,”<sup>41</sup> in what seems to be developing intentionality (individuation).<sup>42</sup> Sent away to school at eleven,<sup>43</sup> he prays that he might not be beaten, and endures his parents (“who wished no harm”) treating “my stripes as a huge joke, which they were very far from being to me.”<sup>44</sup> In spite of this, he writes of ‘deserved’ beatings (over five pages), analogous to needed

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<sup>39</sup> His account of speech development, and later of memory, demonstrates a platonic view. Robert J. O’Connell, *Images of Conversion in Augustine* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 18-19. At 118, O’Connell notes, as we have noted with Thérèse, that his chronology serves his meaning, and his motive for saying things influences his recollection of events.

<sup>40</sup> Augustine, *Confessions of St Augustine*, translated by F. J. Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 4.

<sup>41</sup> “Gradually I began to notice where I was, and the will grew in me to make my wants known to those who might satisfy them; but I could not, for my wants were within and those others were outside; nor had they any faculty enabling them to enter my mind. So I would fling my arms and legs about and utter sounds, making the few gestures in my power – those as apt to express my wishes as I could make them: but they were not very apt. And when I did not get what I wanted, either because my wishes were not clear or the things not good for me, I was in a rage – with my parents as though I had a right to their submission, with free beings as though they were bound to serve me; and I took my revenge in screams. That infants are like this, I have learnt from watching other infants” Sheed, trans, *Confessions of St Augustine*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> “In Mahler’s terms (parallel to Ainsworth’s), a symbiotic (close) relationship in infancy paradoxically supports the movement toward autonomy or “individuation.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 205.

<sup>43</sup> Augustine was sent to school twenty kilometres away. Andrew Knowles and Pachomios Penkett, *Augustine and His World, IVP Histories* (InterVarsity Press, 2004), Chapter 2.

<sup>44</sup> “...my parents seemed to be amused at the torments inflicted upon me as a boy by my masters” *Confessions of Augustine*, 9.



correction from God. Augustine points to infancy “rage” and “writing or reading or studying less than my set tasks” because the “one thing I revelled in was play,” as signifying “inherent sinfulness:”<sup>45</sup>

You made man but not the sin in him. ... in Thy sight there is none pure from sin, not even the infant whose life is but a day upon the earth. ...what then were the sins at my age? That I wailed too fiercely for the breast? For if today I were to make as gluttonously and clamourously ...for the food I now eat, I should be ridiculed and quite properly condemned. This means that what I did then was in fact reprehensible...<sup>46</sup>

“Reprehensible,” meaning ‘culpable’, ‘objectionable’, suggests early crying, “sin”, was not from God. From whose perspective, however, is it culpable, or objectionable? Able only to mirror his mother’s care, noted earlier through Sroufe, it is the role of the caregiver to organize the infant’s affect, a task which reaches well into toddlerhood.<sup>47</sup>

Augustine examines himself (his developing behaviour) as a being-in-isolation, as a solitary will, apparently unaware that his disposition and ability are the response-product of a dyadic partnership (reflecting the quality of care given). As such, he does not tend toward sin as victimhood. We explore this, using Marjorie Suchocki’s *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology*.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Confessions of Augustine*, 5, 9. See Ormerod *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Italics in original text. *Confessions of Augustine*, 6-7. “This means that what I did then was in fact reprehensible, although, since I could not understand words of blame, neither custom nor common sense allowed me to be blamed.” “Surely it was not good, even for that time of life, to scream for things that would have been thoroughly bad for me; to fly in a hot rage because older persons - and free, not slaves - were not obedient to me; to strike out hard as I could with sheer will to hurt, at my parents and other sensible folk for not yielding to my demands...” “...the innocence of children is in the helplessness of their bodies rather than any quality in their minds. I have seen myself a small baby jealous...too young to speak... but it was livid with anger as it watched another infant at the breast...Mothers and babies will tell you that they have their own way of curing these fits of jealousy.” This behaviour, if large and consistent, is reflective of a child being refused, or goaded, as if the adult is threatened by, or in competition with the infant, as if the adult is unable to understand their role as calming the child (organising their affect) -- understandable if these women are nurses and not the natural mother of a wanted child.

<sup>47</sup> “Within certain boundaries, the toddler is much more able than the infant to regulate affect – for example, fighting down tears or meting out angry feelings in subtle or indirect ways. But as stronger feelings, impulses, or desires arise, the toddler’s emerging capacities for self-regulation are easily overwhelmed. An important issue becomes whether the caregiver can continue to provide guidance and support. Despite the intentionality and wilfulness often characteristic of the period, toddlers do not yet have the capacity of self-management in a wide range of circumstances.” Sroufe, *Emotional Development*, 213.

<sup>48</sup> We will refer to Suchocki’s composite of Augustine’s position, drawing from *City of God*, Books 11 to 14, *On the Freedom of the Will*, *On the Deserving of Sinners and their Forgiveness*, and *On Rebuke and*

Interpreting “the human condition,” through a “mythic structure,”<sup>49</sup> Augustine roots sin in human pride.<sup>50</sup> Adam and Eve’s disobedience replicates a prior heavenly defection through pride (“preferring to rule rather than to be another’s subject”) before the creation of earth.<sup>51</sup> “Angelic beings, created for the purpose of praising God, and enjoying the bliss of such praise forever, [turn] from their necessarily total dependence upon God to rely on their own created capacities.”<sup>52</sup> To praise God is “bliss because through praise... beings are actively and positively participating in the divine being that this is their very source of one’s being;” praise is “knowing,” and “knowing God” is to be “connected to the source of one’s being that is the very source of life;” praise is not “flattery needed by the divine ego” but enjoying the “graciousness and generosity of God as the sustainer of creation.”<sup>53</sup> Augustine’s imagery parallels the quality of infant-parent relation: when angels turn away, it is not just from the source of bliss, but from sustenance.<sup>54</sup> The first human pair can remain in bliss if they agree in “unbroken willingness” to “depend on God” (not question the limits of one’s existence, which is to assume the prerogative of the creator).<sup>55</sup>

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*Grace*, particularly Books X and XI, Marjorie H. Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: the Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 19.

<sup>49</sup> Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Augustine, *On True Religion*, XI.23. Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods, (N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), 458. Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 19. “1, ...[man] desires to praise Thee. ...Grant me, O Lord, to know which is the soul’s first movement to Thee – to implore Thy aid or to utter its praise of Thee; and whether it must know Thee before it can implore. For it would seem clear that no-one can call upon Thee without knowing Thee...” *Confessions of Augustine*, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 19-20

<sup>54</sup> To guard against Manichaenism, Augustine avoids humans as falling from spirit to embodiment (what God created is good), but as replicating angelic rebellion in the embodied human sphere. While embodied, Augustine views humans (created in the image of God) as having the capacity of “sustaining communion with God.” “Obedience in such a setting is neither hardship or contradiction to the human nature... but a fulfilment of human nature, establishing a communion with God that issues into social communion with one another, and harmonious communion with the rest of created order.” Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 20

<sup>55</sup> Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 20-21.

(i) *The Problem of Rebellion as Analogous to Individuation*

If Augustine's 'praising' and 'pride' are analogous to early development, (reaching for sustenance, or rebelling) we are confronted with a problem. Infant dependency is good, but so is establishing a separate will, a new separate self (needed for free loving response). Individuation cannot be sinful.<sup>56</sup> Further, dependence and individuation occur in a particular human relation that the infant has no power to surmount. Augustine sees the consequence of sin as being disconnected from one's source of sustaining power<sup>57</sup> – but what causes this disconnection?<sup>58</sup> Augustine explains that the angel and Adam disobeyed God because they were "secretly corrupted" by pride, "the craving of undue exaltation" aiming to become "a kind of end itself."<sup>59</sup> Holding to Plotinian thought, he argues that this was due to a corrupted will; there was no "efficient cause" acting on the will, but a "deficient cause,"<sup>60</sup> because the "nature" of the proud angel and Adam were "made from nothing."<sup>61</sup> As such, they are mutable, and their will is defective: Adam falls away from God, not to nothing, but "being turned towards himself, his being [simply] became more contracted than when he claved to Him

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<sup>56</sup> Irenaeus, albeit from a gnostic perspective, accepts this: "... created beings are... but babes; and to the extent that they are babes, they are unaccustomed to and unpracticed in perfect conduct. ...a mother may well give grown up food to an infant, but the infant itself is not yet able to take food that is too strong for it ... God was certainly capable of giving humans perfection from the beginning, but they were incapable of receiving it, because they were still infants (*Adv. Haer.*, IV, 38, I). "How would people have learned that they are weak and mortal by nature, and God powerful and immortal, if they had not learned by experience (experimentum=peira) the meaning of both these conditions?" (*Adv. Haer.*, V, 3, I). Peter Phan, *Grace and the Human Condition* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), 50, 56.

<sup>57</sup> Suchocki writes that Augustine names it as "desire to transcend one's creaturely limits and be like God." See her discussion on Reinhold Niebuhr's resolution of this in Chapter Eight. Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Suchocki reports *pride* leads to disobedience, representing both "the initial action and its effects." This leads to a loss of "original communion with God," "a lust for created things in and for themselves, a darkened understanding with respect to true knowledge of God, self, or world, and the invariable movement from birth to death [to] henceforth mark all human life." Augustine names rebellion as every human's story, in two ways (i) by biological means. Aristotelian in his thought, he saw rebellion infecting the whole of Adam's being including his semen, (ii) in *Against Julian*, through conception involving carnal intercourse (as different from Adam and Eve's non-carnal origin), entailing lust (desire for created things in, and for, themselves) as most present here. As intercourse taints the nascent person, persons are "already corrupted without our individually conscious consent." Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 21-22.

<sup>59</sup> Eve, 'as weaker' (being woman), Augustine held as merely 'deceived'. Augustine, *The City of God*, 458-460.

<sup>60</sup> Augustine struggles with the cause of sin over pages 385-387. Augustine, *The City of God*, 387, 460.

<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, 387-388.

who supremely is” (immutable God).<sup>62</sup> Is Augustine’s Plotinian world view compatible, analogically, with the child expressing an independent will (individuation)?

Individuation is necessary for identity formation, and its success is dependent on sensitive, responsive (gracious) caregiving.<sup>63</sup> To view individuation as mere disobedience is to reduce it. Distinct from positive independent assertions, chronic obstructiveness in childhood reflects frustrated self-becoming, a reaction to poor caregiver-response to bids for autonomy (e.g., to caregiver resistance, suppression, ignoring, and provocation in the face of their intention). Augustine’s illustrations of initial and recurring self-interested contrariness, developing a theme of an unruly will, fails to acknowledge the caregiver’s part, nor differentiates between healthy individuation and thwarted self-becoming.<sup>64</sup> For human behaviour to be analogous to the God-human relation requires a sound understanding of human development, otherwise there is a danger that sin (fault) is placed where it does not belong: at healthy, *necessary*, normative behaviour, or at *victims* of inadequate care-giving. This will lead to a culture of suppressing individuation (becoming an authentic self), and simmering, irrepressible, frustration (Augustine’s predicament).<sup>65</sup> Is supplying help after neglect (hurting then healing), grace? Augustine’s sense of the will in a precarious state, rather than suspended by the parent’s watchful care, seems to require the child to cling.

Toddler individuation – saying ‘I am other’ – while revisited in puberty and adulthood, requires frequent vigorous revisiting when it is unsupported by the care-giver (Augustine revisits it often and strongly). Asserting a separate self does not involve pride (an adult value-emotion), but “cockiness” – the audacious confidence Thérèse

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<sup>62</sup> Augustine refers to Scripture’s naming persons as “self pleasers.” Augustine, *The City of God*, 460.

<sup>63</sup> We leave aside transmission of sin through semen and lust (Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 21), an idea that appears to follow Aristotle’s principle of “causational symmetry:” “that a sleeping pill does not merely induce sleep, but needs to also be slumbering itself.” For corruption to be transmitted, semen (and the intercourse that accompanies it) is somehow itself corrupt. Bodnar “Aristotle’s Natural Philosophy,” 7 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-natphil/> accessed 7/02/2012.

<sup>64</sup> Breast milk, 4; learning to speak, 8; beaten at school for “idleness,” preferring to play with a ball, 9, 11- 15; grammatical pretension the value most absorbed in boyhood, 15-18; his parents ambition, 23; Monica’s dissuasion against adultery, 23; stealing pears, 24-25; captive to sexual desire, 97-99, *Confessions* .

<sup>65</sup> Augustine seems oblivious to the helplessness of his absorption of poor values (in infancy), of pride, artifice and competition. There is a sense that he feels that he might have had the strength to resist these values.

expresses, the desire to be other, so to initiate, to explore. Lack of early emotional-guidance, and poor parental values, shallow ambition, using persons for self-gain, showing off, rivalrous competition, result in repetition of these values and lack of control over impulses. Augustine wanted encouragement to act well (to marry), and to have his bold showing-off curbed, feeling himself almost compelled to sexual impulsivity.<sup>66</sup>

Augustine's self-perception leads to a difference between his and Thérèse's theologies. Both Monica and Zélie's caregiving is flawed, but Thérèse views God (through Zélie's letters) as a mother who welcomes hungry "clamouring" for the breast (Rose).

Augustine observes himself, vociferous in frustration, suggesting a lack of affective guidance, even provocation<sup>67</sup> from a threatened, disrespected (used?), mother/nursemaid's view, perhaps interpreting infant self-assertion as rejection or commandeering, i.e., taking her for granted. A care-giver who regards the child through charity and confidence will view the child as meaning well, desire to know what ails them to ease their frustration, and help them become a new other. In the light of Thérèse's writing, we propose "original sin" represents not individuation, but amassing and inserting 'objective' knowledge in place of the activity of being in relation (relation is feared).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "My family took no care to save me from the moral destruction [many sexual liaisons] by marriage: their only concern was that I should learn to make as fine and persuasive speeches as possible." "My longing then was to love and be loved, but most when I obtained the enjoyment of the body who loved me. Thus I polluted the stream of friendship with ...desire...and...lust." *Confessions*, 21, 30.

<sup>67</sup>The caregiver who is confident of their otherness, will not interpret their child's bid for independence as refusal, rejection, resentment, slighting, or dispensing with, as comparable with 'mature' negative values.

<sup>68</sup> Augustine's Plotinian position begins well, if it is thought of in relational terms: nearness to the One corresponds to the benefits of relation. To the degree that we are near to the other (affectively engaged by sensitive carer in infancy), to that degree we are spared from affective disorganization. However, a problem remains. The infant's will does not simply arrive as a fact (*City of God*, 387, 460) but develops: effectiveness of its will (sense of potent impact) depends on parental response to its initiatives. (Augustine implies that the infant is responsible for its own development.) A parallel with the position proposed above is found in William Johnson. He notes that both Thomas Merton and the Zen scholar Dr. D.T. Suzuki saw the Genesis story as an "important link in the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity." It is man and woman *in-relationship* who are created in the image of God, one that includes harmony with each other, with humankind, God and all creation. Their 'separation' from each other led to different levels of division – with God, with others and with the created world. In their state of 'original justice', knowledge was immediate, non-discursive through the union of contemplation. The 'Fall' brought with it recourse to discursive, discriminating (objective) knowledge which is 'ignorance' rather than 'contemplative wisdom.' See William Johnston, *Being in Love: The Practice of Christian Prayer* (London: Harper Collins, 1988), 102-3.

(ii) *Is Augustine's Sense Universal?*

"...Augustine's arguments [his "exploration of "concupiscence" blurring "sinfulness and finitude"] carried the day..."<sup>69</sup> but was his sense of an unsteady (affectively disorganized) will shared by care-givers, spouses/lovers whose circumstances were different?<sup>70</sup> Caregiver-infant dyads are flawed to different degrees; some are positively healthy (full of grace), encouraging self-becoming.<sup>71</sup> Augustine's Manichaean tendency represents a particular experience, a felt reality of inner "manyness" ('fragmentation' rather than integration),<sup>72</sup> a lack of control over the will. The Manichaean view (rather than representing a 'primitive self-view') images this experience.<sup>73</sup> Augustine yearns to be free from his felt sexual chaos, attraction to pretensions, and most from contrariness, from resisting "God" After an experience ("take and read")<sup>74</sup> Augustine becomes willing to learn from God. Healing is felt in relation to the will and to learning (artificial values are dispensed with; now he desires to know the one he is in relation with), suggesting that the trusting-learning process (originating with the care-giver in infancy), was somehow hindered.

(iii) *Augustine and Human Nature*

Augustine senses God as within, but struggles to name where he senses God, leading to an excursion into his memory where God is felt as present in truth.<sup>75</sup> Though he feels

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<sup>69</sup> Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 71.

<sup>70</sup> Augustine's conception of original sin has traces of Manichaeism (a belief held when a young man), where embodiment incarnates the turmoil of many wills reflecting a battle of light and dark forces. *Confessions*, vii- ix.

<sup>71</sup> Beyond different abilities in parental giving, there is limitation: a child can make more demands than a parent has in reserve.

<sup>72</sup> A problem described by H. Richard Niebuhr. See John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 24-33.

<sup>73</sup> While Augustine's return to Monica is religiously productive (resolving some of his manyness) it is not altogether healthy. See Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Psychological Foundations of Belief in God*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> *Confessions*, 135-139; "take and read" at 141.

<sup>75</sup> Augustine speaks of God's entry *within* his memory. *Confessions*, 186-187. "When this view of memory is turned towards knowing God, in Book 14, Augustine relates our ability to be aware of the role

God arrived late into his memory (“For you were not in my memory, before I learned of you”), he affirms God was always within; it was he who was away from his self (“late have I loved thee! For behold Thou wert within me, and I outside... Thou wert with me and I was not with Thee.”)<sup>76</sup> Augustine did not feel God when he acted pretentiously. When he is relieved of the pretensions (False Self) involved in teaching rhetoric (encouraged by his parents for the sake of appearance), he is able to become himself, and fall in love with God. Whilst not referring to grace as between concrete persons, Augustine, nevertheless, conveys grace toward himself, in returning to ‘inhabit himself’ (in finding his True Self, he finds God).<sup>77</sup> Nature, for Augustine (representing his personal dilemma), encompasses his struggle to conquer a will not in his control apart from God’s grace. Indeed, grace was needed in his early life to “organize” his affect – loving restraint by another on his behalf.

Augustine is occupied by the mechanics of cognition, and with advancing neo-platonic ideas (humans as emanations from the One – though *from* the One, Light, we are at a distance, light is diminished light in us<sup>78</sup> – a helpful correction to Manichaeism).<sup>79</sup> Distance from God the stable One results in sinking into darkness, but the light of God’s spirit lifts him to God.<sup>80</sup> Augustine expresses affection for God, responding to God as teacher parent who he strains to reach. He expresses gratitude that God (“Mercy” itself) did not “forget” him when he “forgot” God; God is “whom I owe that I am a being capable of happiness,” which is only found in God.<sup>81</sup> Grateful to find God

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of memory in sheer self-presence to our awareness of God. In like manner, in relation to God, our awareness is of discovering something that we have always known, yet failed to articulate. We are recalling what is always present, like the memory, but seldom brought to awareness by an act of knowledge.” Edward Howells, “Appropriating the “Divine Presence: Reading Augustine’s *On the Trinity* as a Transformative Text,” *Spiritus* 11-2, 2011, pp201-223, 218. <http://muse.jhu.edu> accessed 11/17/2011.

<sup>76</sup> The imprint of God (*imago deo*) is felt as within. *Confessions*, 187-188.

<sup>77</sup> He feels God through sensory metaphors: “Thou didst breathe fragrance upon me...I tasted Thee, and now hunger and thirst for thee: Thou didst touch me, and I have burned for Thy peace.” *Confessions*, 188-189.

<sup>78</sup> See Plotinus, *The Enneads*, translated by Stephen McKenna (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1930), 369-402.

<sup>79</sup> See *Confessions*, 259-263.

<sup>80</sup> *Confessions*, 263. See also Petillo, “The theological problem of grace and experience,” 3, 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Confessions*, 259.

“immutable,” knowing all on his behalf, and saving him from sinking into loss of power over his own will,<sup>82</sup> he cries out

Give Thyself to me, O my God, give thyself once more to me. I love thee: and if my love is too small a thing, grant me to love more intensely. I cannot measure, to know how much my love falls short of sufficiency, that my life should run to Thy embrace and never be turned away until it is hidden in the secret of Thy face. This only do I know, that it is ill with me when thou art not with me – I do not mean by me, but in me; and all that is abundance which is not my God to me is neediness.<sup>83</sup>

Augustine follows with making sense of scripture by interpreting it symbolically, by comparing it with what he senses as true.<sup>84</sup> In speculating about a nature (from nothing) that suffers concupiscence, Augustine remains focused on his troubled “I,” seeking to realize desire for God in the face of an unruly, unstable, will.<sup>85</sup> We turn to Aquinas.

*b. Aquinas*

What lies beneath Aquinas’ scholastic corpus? (For our argument, we focus on his incorporation of Aristotelian metaphysics, as taken up by nineteenth century Neo-Scholastics.) Aquinas advanced on Augustine, Petillo argues,<sup>86</sup> by prescinding from

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<sup>82</sup> *Confessions*, 262, 264 -265.

<sup>83</sup> Italics in original text. *Confessions*, 264. This echoes Augustine at the beginning of *Confessions*, in a deeply relational mode. “...if you are already in me, since otherwise I should not be, why do I cry to you to enter me?” (Augustine expresses the need for the loving regard/imprint of the other.) “For Thy mercies’ sake O Lord my God, tell me what thou art to me. *Say to my soul, I am Thy salvation*. So speak that I may hear, Lord, my heart is listening; open it that it may hear thee say to my soul *I am Thy salvation*. Hearing that word, let me come in haste to lay hold upon thee. Hide not Thy face from me. Let me see Thy face even if I die, lest I die with longing to see it.” (He tries to evoke what resembles a presence once had, or he struggled to have, with Monica/his nursemaid.) *Confessions*, 2, 3.

<sup>84</sup> For example, “In goodness of will is our peace. A body tends by its weight towards the place proper to it – weight does not necessarily tend toward the lowest place, but toward its proper place. Fire tends upwards, stone tends downwards... Things out of their place are in motion: they come to their place and are at rest. My love is my weight: wherever I go my love is what brings me there. By your gift we are on fire and borne upwards, we flame and we ascend.” *Confessions*, 264.

<sup>85</sup> In *Confessions*, Augustine feels of himself (his ‘nature’): “What is man that thou should be mindful of him?” In *The City of God*, ‘nature’ for Augustine is to be exile from one’s homeland, eternity’. Though he speaks of the good of peace in an earthly city, it is the heavenly which is his true goal. Matthew Bernard Mulcahy, OP, “Not Everything is Grace: Aquinas’s Notion of “Pure Nature” and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac and of radical Orthodoxy,” Doctoral Thesis submitted to the Australian Catholic University, 2008. [dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adt-acuvp238.../index.html](http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adt-acuvp238.../index.html). Accessed 25 Sept 2011, 115, 60-62. See also 259.

<sup>86</sup> Petillo argues that this was an advance, following Lonergan’s sense of Hegel’s idealism (a spirit of developing consciousness in history). Petillo, “The theological problem of grace and experience,” 1 (586).



Augustine’s concrete, enabling nature to be thought of through the abstract notion of teleology, and of grace to be conceived of as a “distinct order of being beyond the order of nature.”<sup>87</sup> Was this an advance? Thomas Marsh, in a discussion on Aquinas’s Trinitarian relations (*de Deo Trino*) as treated subsequent to God as one (*de Deo Uno*), describes the effect of the *Summa Theologica*’s *Exitus-Reditus* structure (creation comes forth from God, and then, through God’s redemptive providence, returns again to God – a Neo-Platonic shape).<sup>88</sup> Prima Pars, questions 2-43, considers God as the one divine nature or substance, without envisaging Creation (questions 44-49) or God’s relation to Creation, causing a separation “more explicit than anything heretofore,” between the theological discussion of God as Trinity and “God’s external activity in creation and salvation history and appropriation.”<sup>89</sup> This “commitment to beginning with God as beginning with God in Godself...” imposes a “separation between the concepts of nature and ... God ...which later formal statements to the contrary scarcely negated.”<sup>90</sup> Without Genesis’s anthropomorphisms, relational signifiers (loving, caring), and narrative relating to Adam and Eve, God (as the One source) is devoid of relationality;<sup>91</sup> universal perfections are radiated by a simple, indivisible, necessary, immaterial, uncreated, unmoved mover.<sup>92</sup> This “static conceptualist worldview” views “natures as pre-existing in the mind of God (like Platonic ideas), who then created a world in which to implant these natures.”<sup>93</sup> Confining the reality of God within the

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<sup>87</sup> According to Lonergan “... the fallacy in early thought had been an unconscious confusion of the metaphysical abstraction ‘nature’ with the concrete data which did not quite correspond... [The] achievement was the creation ... of a set of coordinates to eliminate basic fallacies and their attendant host of anomalies.” Petillo, “The theological problem of grace and experience,” 5.

<sup>88</sup> Marsh, *The Triune God* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-third Publications, 1994), 144.

<sup>89</sup> Marsh, *The Triune God*, 144-145.

<sup>90</sup> Marsh, *The Triune God*, 145-146. The later carve-up of his work into dogmatic theology sharpened this procedure, and, then, the later scholastic turning this into a system of tracts, emphasized it even more. Thomas, in later treatises, builds upon his beginning point with developmentally sensitive statements.

<sup>91</sup> Genesis’s God is inclined toward creation, saying “it is good,” giving the human a task, “be fruitful and multiply” and “subdue the earth,” providing seeds and fruit to eat for humans and animals, and resting after work (Gen 1:28-2:3).

<sup>92</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (NY: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982, 1985), 445-556.

<sup>93</sup> This description is offered with respect to what de Lubac opposed. Neil Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 119.

“immanent” Godhead, Marsh notes, de-personalizes our understanding of God’s relationship with us.<sup>94</sup>

Aquinas’s subsequent God-human analogies (‘craftsmen’ metaphors, following Aristotle) to explain aspects of that relation tend to view human life as a collection of functions. Comparing God’s creating of humanity to a blacksmith choosing iron from which to make a saw for cutting (while iron is best for the purpose, it breaks) to illustrate the relation of weaknesses and mortality to embodiment, is alienating.<sup>95</sup> Saws, unlike human beings, are neither conscious subjects nor relate to others. To shed light on God’s choice of embodiment, at the very least there should be some investigation of embodied animals (of which there are plenty of species). Sensate abilities allowing emotional responsiveness – positively (in nurture) and negatively (in fear of death) – reflect the creature’s need for emotional and physical sustenance. Embodied animals appear to be equipped for relation; relation requires sensitivity for nurture, and life (fear of death) to be available to love.

Further diverting us from relationality (and toward a being’s essence) is God’s addition of the gift of immortality to a composite body and soul which it cannot naturally possess; “God overcame the inherent corruptibility of bodies by endowing Adam and Eve with an added ‘preternatural’ blessing, namely immunity to bodily dissolution.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> “The net result was to reduce ... theology... to a matter of abstract and purely academic interest, somewhat like a problem in pure mathematics.” Marsh, *The Triune God*, 146. A similar concern in relation to the person was raised by Joseph Ratzinger twenty years ago. In the light of Trinitarian debates and the distinction between nature and person (*suppositum*), the person has been predominantly viewed in terms of substance, nature and rationality – what human beings have in common. By starting with the theology of the Trinity and the person of the Word as constituted *to* and *from* relationship with the Father, the unique quality of the person is better preserved. Most importantly, this acknowledges that being-in-relation is constitutive of, and not accidental to, personhood. See Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Retrieving the Tradition: Concerning the notion of person in theology,’ *Communio* 17 (Fall, 1990), 440-454.

<sup>95</sup> *De Malo* q. 5, a. 5: “If one could find iron incapable of breaking or rusting, it would be most suitable matter for a saw, and a blacksmith would seek it. But because one cannot find such iron, the blacksmith takes such as he can find, namely, hard but breakable iron. And likewise, since there can be no body composed of elements that is by the nature of matter indissoluble, an organic but dissoluble body is by nature suitable for the soul that cannot pass away.” Bernard Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace: Aquinas’s Notion of Pure Nature*, 88-89.

<sup>96</sup> Mulcahy uses “supernatural” to describe the preternatural blessing (Aquinas), favours granted by God above and beyond the powers or capacities of the nature that receives them but not beyond those of all created nature. Such gifts perfect nature but do not carry it beyond the limits of created nature. They include three great privileges to which human beings have no title--infused knowledge, absence of concupiscence, and bodily immortality. Adam and Eve possessed these gifts before the Fall. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 89.

This stage, not described in Genesis, seems unlike the God who *called* humans into being (“in our image, according to our likeness” Gen 1: 26a), or who made flesh from clay and breathed life into them (Gen2: 7). The problem becomes more evident in the idea of “limbo” where life is considered without reference to the parent-child bond, a significant Hebrew metaphor denoting an inviolable bond (child, heir, adoptive privilege).<sup>97</sup>

What is implicit in this portrayal of the human person, influencing the description of grace? Petillo suggests that the development of cognition from infancy and childhood was ill-understood at this time,<sup>98</sup> but development of human life (mothers and babies) were all around. Did the emphasis on the essential, the abstract and the a-historical mean that the notion of ‘becoming’ (and its evidence) was devalued? It would be somewhat difficult to show a link between Aquinas’s self-perception and his theology. Torrell writes that a personal dimension can be detected in Aquinas’ theology.<sup>99</sup> For all

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<sup>97</sup> Mulcahy writes: concerned to show that God was just and would not punish those who through no fault of their own were unable to attain their end, de Lubac proposed that all human existence must intrinsically include the “vision of God,” (because to be denied that vision is tantamount to the cruelty of hell). Aquinas states, even if man “had never sinned, he would deserve the lack of the divine vision, to which one may not come except by grace,” (*De Malo* q. 5 a. 1, obj. 15) and makes a distinction between “defect” and “punishment. “It is one thing not to deserve (which would not be a punishment, but merely a defect), but something else to deserve not to have, which would be a punishment.” We find this distinction inadequate; it fails to picture a dying infant in the arms of its parent – a theoretical mode of existence intrudes into human hope. Mulcahy states, rather limply, we “can only reason about [the unbaptised’s] future from the data of faith and from sound theological conclusions.” That hope is allowed for these to reach heaven “is a speculative theological conclusion inspired by hope: it is not a dogma.” Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 117 – 127. Jesus states in Mk 2: 27, “The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath;” baptism is made for humankind and not humankind for baptism.

<sup>98</sup> Petillo writes that Aquinas made an advance over Augustine’s existential work, in a “grasp of things not in relation to sense and feelings but of things in relation to one another; its correlations are not based on narrative or doctrinal reason but on necessary or immanent reasons; its insights have a broader implication...” Aquinas enriched Augustine, transcending “the limits of existential description” by transposing his “psychological narrative to the more explanatory context of Scholastic metaphysics.” This “allowed Aquinas to work out a more theoretical and scientific understanding of grace.” “...elaborating an abstract view of nature, even though it never exists outside the context of sin and grace, allows one to understand more precisely the impact of sin and grace on human persons.” While this is true in the form of meaning and its intelligibility of faith seeking to understand Revelation in relation to human experience at the objective, public level, the cost of this was a diminished sense of the meaning found at the existential, subjective level and, in particular, in the realm of relationship and responsiveness. It hardly helped Zélie understand God when her babies died. Though she held onto hope she still suffered torment over such formulation. Petillo, “The Theological Problem of Grace and Experience,” 5.

<sup>99</sup> Torrell observes that Aquinas, in writing on friendship (*S.T.* II-II. 23.1) shows a “delicate sensibility” making it “difficult to think that the man who spoke in this way had nothing but a literary knowledge of

that, what has been said above suggests a need, felt or imposed, to articulate essentially relational matters objectively, to systematize and control them – resulting in a controlling system. Thérèse feels herself having an impact on God, implying a mutual relationship. Alternatively, Augustine and Aquinas seem to stress being impacted on (lifted, enlightened, infused, affected) by contemplating God’s perfections.<sup>100</sup> One wonders whether they had a diminished sense of mutuality (lack a remembered sense of impacting one’s caregiver) due to being in partnership with a parent who they felt they could not affectively impact?

In Marsh’s view, the de-personalizing effect in Aquinas’s writing has its roots in his first giving attention to *de Deo Uno* and second to God as Trinity – persons in relationship. God as ‘non-contingency’, as the “external” first cause, as ‘uncreated’, with us as ‘created’, is foreign to our experience of relation. Whilst Augustine’s sense of his will as corrupt was alienating, it was, at least, an alienation within human self-identification. While Aquinas sees friendship with God as the heart of the moral life and the workings of grace, his language on grace (images and metaphors) often do not connect with our experience of relation,<sup>101</sup> of being a self in relation to God. Our experience of beginning life contingently (created), is relational in its quality; we sense unity with our originator’s body (it creates us from itself). At the matrix of our God-perception is an experience of warmth within and next to our being, in undifferentiation between self and our nourishing originator,<sup>102</sup> becoming an interaction of persons or

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affection.” See Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1: The Person and His Work*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 283.

<sup>100</sup> For Augustine, God encompasses an immutable objective “Truth” above the experience of our smaller subjective knowledge, to which we only have a limited access. See *Confessions*, 251-253.

<sup>101</sup> For example, “The entire justification of the ungodly consists as to its origin in the infusion of grace. For it is by grace that free-will is moved and sin is remitted. Now the infusion of grace takes place in an instant and without succession. And the reason of this is that if a form be not suddenly impressed upon its subject, it is either because that subject is not disposed, or because the agent needs time to dispose the subject. Hence we see that immediately the matter is disposed by a preceding alteration, the substantial form accrues to the matter; thus because the atmosphere of itself is disposed to receive light, it is suddenly illuminated by a body actually luminous. Now it was stated (112, 2) that God, in order to infuse grace into the soul, needs no disposition, save what He Himself has made. And sometimes this sufficient disposition for the reception of grace He makes suddenly, sometimes gradually and successively, as stated above (112, 2, ad 2). For the reason why a natural agent cannot suddenly dispose matter is that in the matter there is a resistant which has some disproportion with the power of the agent; and hence we see that the stronger the agent, the more speedily is the matter disposed.” *S.T. I-II. 113.7.*

<sup>102</sup> Sroufe offers a theory of differentiation in the emotions which presumes a time of undifferentiation. This argues that there is an order of precursors, “global reactions to broad classes of stimulation”

selves, who, with progressing strength, tolerate distance. While Aquinas does develop the role of love and the affective virtues in human interaction, overall his starting point, focuses “all attention on what is known” and only subsequently coming “to discover the knowing self;” the self being “the remote principle of its own acts,” is perhaps telling.<sup>103</sup> The self as subject is relational - but primarily in epistemological terms and only secondarily in the embodied and responsive sense.

#### **4. The Medieval Problem: the Interrelatedness of Teleology, Taxonomy and Essentialism**

Writing before empirical method and a contemporary concept of ‘personhood’, Aquinas (representing for us the medieval problem) defined “being” in a treatise (humans, contingent to a creator, “exist,” in contrast to God who, as primary, is “being and essence”) in the language of Aristotelian science (a taxonomy of essences and ends),<sup>104</sup> where objectively real things are examined in themselves. A thing is examined for its inherent properties (essences) against accidents (“superficial characters”),<sup>105</sup> to name its end (teleology) so to isolate it from, and relate it hierarchically (*scala naturae*), to other things (taxonomy), which becomes its definition.<sup>106</sup> To differentiate creaturely substances (primary beings), Aristotle used predicates which describe most of the creature, such as “rational animal” (the species), followed by more peripheral

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dynamically lead to “mature forms [that] are precise and often immediate reactions to specific meaningful events.” L. Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organization of Emotional Life in the Early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 58.

<sup>103</sup> Patrick Byrne remarks that “remote” is a pretty odd way of speaking about self-hood; but ... if one follows the method of *De anima*; if one begins metaphysically with [objects and] acts it takes a while to get back to the soul.” Petillo, “The Theological Problem of Grace and Experience,” 6, 7.

<sup>104</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, translated by Richard Hope (USA: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, The University of Michigan Press, 1952), 169-180.

<sup>105</sup> Aristotle saw the chief distinction between species as “differences of proportion, or relative magnitude...of ‘excess and defect’.” See James G. Lennox, “Aristotle on Genera, Species, and the More and the Less” *Journal of the History of Biology*, vol 13, no 2 (Fall 1980), pp. 321-346, 321.

<sup>106</sup> “Essentialism” is the activity of defining by essentials. Quine offers, as one definition, “the doctrine that some of the attributes of a thing... may be essential to a thing, and others accidental.” (Quine1953b/1976, 175-6) in Teresa Robertson, “Essential vs. Accidental Properties” 2008, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed on <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/essential-accidental/> on 20/11/2011.

characteristics (the genus).<sup>107</sup> Partakers in the God-human relation are categorized under contingency, perfection, inherency, naturalness, infinitude, with grace suffering the same categorization.<sup>108</sup> Dichotomous constituents, echoing the physics of this time (matter made up of indissoluble particles in contrast to insensible substances, matter owning a true, “at rest,” state), failed to reflect the interrelatedness of persons,<sup>109</sup> leading to categorizing persons and their operations as discrete entities (containing inherent properties).<sup>110</sup> Aristotle’s axiom, that A is not non-A, however, does not apply to intersubjectivity – intersubjectivity involves the paradoxical logic, “A and non-A’ as not excluding “each other as predicates of X.”<sup>111</sup> In scholasticism, Christians were confronted with dispersed definitions of grace connected with instances of it in creation, ends as such, and the virtuous life.<sup>112</sup>

The effort to be scientific subverted the aim to describe human *being*. Toward finding a *telos*, things are isolated and observed in linear way to find their ultimate end: is the tree’s end is to be tall and leafy, to flower, to produce fruit, or, through dying, to cast

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<sup>107</sup> Douglas E Rasmussen argues “that a being’s essential properties consist of that which is not accidental,” held by many as Aristotle’s thought, came from the NeoPlatonic philosopher, Porphyry (234-305). Douglas E Rasmussen, *Quine and Aristotelian Essentialism*, reprinted from *The New Scholasticism*, Volume LVIII, 3, Summer, 1984.

<sup>108</sup> As noted earlier, by starting with the theology of the Trinity and the person of the Word as constituted *to* and *from* relationship with the Father, the unique quality of the person is better preserved, as it acknowledges that being-in-relationship is constitutive of, and not accidental to, personhood.

<sup>109</sup> “‘Relationality’ is now a pervasive feature in the contemporary sense of reality.” Patrick McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, Doctoral Thesis submitted at ACU, Vic, 2006, 148-149.

<sup>110</sup> Current subatomic physics looks beyond particles toward waves and movement. “This suggests an analogy for considering the human person ... as the intersection of relationships. Similarly, ecological science, and the concerns it inspires, stresses the interactive habitat or ecosphere in which each living being exists.” McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, 148.

<sup>111</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Perennial, 2000), 68.

<sup>112</sup> For example an ungraced nature finds a position in relation to substance, attaining virtue, and those who cannot achieve union with God, but do not deserve punishment, such as infants. A “not yet graced” nature described a step in creation where humanity was gifted with such as immortality. In terms of ends “in themselves,” there was a natural one, “happiness and flourishing,” and a supernatural one, “beatific vision.” Augustine’s single desire threaded through these, but it was unclear as to how the two ends interrelated within a person. For Augustine the first was mere peaceful existence (Mulcahy, 58-63). Finally, in the virtuous life, natural ability (cognitive and affective) is altered by supernatural elevation, so that the natural person might live a life of supernatural virtue. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 88-120.

fruit upon the ground to germinate?<sup>113</sup> However, a tree is not only all of these, but it exists also to cast shade on other flora and animals, feed animals, and beautify the earth, all of which help other ends but at the same time assure its own survival; it is ecologically interdependent. Scholastic essentialism contrasts things as lower and higher in terms of degrees of “perfection” (with immateriality, rational principle, and stasis, of a higher order). In the way God is contrasted with the human, the human is contrasted with other animal beings to show it as higher (in possession of a soul, most rational, emotional and vulnerable at birth). There is something anthropocentric, almost competitive, about it all. To show humans as in possession of superior properties, other species were devalued by predicating them negatively, namely, non-human animals were non-persons, non-affective, less-rational, lacking self-awareness and moral sensitivity, without language, symbol, or culture.

With empirical method, essentialist distinctions were tested.<sup>114</sup> Non-human animals were found to live in interdependent groups, with many mammals noted to be vulnerable at birth, dependent on the affective care-giving of parent animals for survival and learning skills. They were found to communicate, show favour, and ‘concern’ toward ‘family’ members beyond mere functioning for survival.<sup>115</sup> Classifying by valuing most what is familiar to humans, e.g., digital dexterity (superior to other purpose-oriented appendages, such as beak, wings or flippers) reflects something of the

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<sup>113</sup> Mulcahy supplies a meaning of *telos* which shows its unsuitability for describing animate beings in relation. *Telos* refers to the full determination or maturation of a being, “what a given being is when it reaches the status of the defined; the complete; a condition of perfection, completion, fulfilment. ... The principle invoked to explain a being’s kinesis (motion, change) and stasis (rest) is nature. The end of that nature is its good...” Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 94. Can Aristotle’s notion of “at rest” (his physics – we now view ‘matter’ as phasic) be applied to living things, when they are never an unfinished or finished entity: a human’s being in relation, or holiness, is always possible at every point, always becoming, and, by virtue of resurrection never ceases to a deepening participation in God’s dynamic “I am Who I am.”

<sup>114</sup> Rationality, emotion, and self-awareness, were offered in medieval theology as the contrast between human and other animals. Nevertheless, Aquinas, building on Aristotle, discusses the “internal senses” in humans and their presence in other animals – memory, imagination, *sensus communis*, instinct, aestimative power (the capacity to instinctively seek or avoid certain things because they are useful or dangerous). See *S.T.* 1.78.4. Aquinas elsewhere makes the telling comment that, in animals, the sensitive appetite (affective powers) is not obedient/subject to reason (as in human beings). It is guided by “the aestimative faculty, which is subject to a higher reason, namely God’s; and, to that extent, *their emotions bear some resemblance to moral goodness.*” *S.T.* I-II.24.3 ad 3 (italics added). In Aquinas’s mind, one could say that all the “internal senses” can justifiably be described as incipient forms of rationality.

<sup>115</sup> Continuity was found between humans and other animals, such as affect in mammals, and a positive response in the “mirror self-recognition test” in chimpanzees. Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organization of Emotional Life in The Early Years*, 196.

competitive strand in essentialism.<sup>116</sup> Humanity's unique end as the pursuit to know the One (by a particular kind of cognition-contemplative) wherein all knowledge inheres, illustrates an epistemological emphasis, implying affective-relational knowing as peripheral.<sup>117</sup> The cost of emphasising the person as a substance and as rational meant that the awareness of what we have in common with the animal world, namely, *embodiment*, was diminished and, with it, the centrality of human relationality and interdependence in its various forms.<sup>118</sup> In the light of this, we turn to its bearing on grace, and specifically to the two Catholic trends that dominate in Thérèse's time, and the perceptions arising through them.

### 5. Trent and Banez – Towards Thérèse's time

Between the sixteenth and the twentieth century, through the consolidation of Thomistic positions against the Reformers,<sup>119</sup> and Banez's commentary, Catholic theological anthropology became a problem of "nature and grace." Bypassing 'how is God experienced as good?' many theologians asked, 'what did God's freedom look like with regard to grace and election', and 'was desire for God (inscribing one's beatific end) and its realization intrinsic to the person, or did it come as a second movement from outside the human person's intrinsic abilities?'<sup>120</sup> Did grace work from within human capacities, or was it added as a second tier, on top of human capacities? Thus, the question moved from, 'given limitation due to sin, how might felt-desire for God be fulfilled (Augustine)?' to 'what power did humans possess in relation to achieving the high end offered by scholastic thought: a new vision "beyond the heart and mind of

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<sup>116</sup> Denis Edwards overcomes this in his model of Trinity where 'relationship' is the primary metaphysical category. Denis Edwards, *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000).

<sup>117</sup> Aristotle held that the human end was intellectual; "its flourishing therefore requires a properly intellectual fulfilment [all men by nature desire to know] and in order to find the perfect fulfilment of such a desire, we need to know the First Cause and to possess it as ultimate Truth." Aquinas synthesizes Aristotle's "desire to know" with Augustine's thought that humanity is able to be exalted to a supernatural existence, unimaginable in his natural state. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 116.

<sup>118</sup> This emphasis perhaps relates to fear of the body.

<sup>119</sup> Against Luther's grace alone (*sola fide*, not *and* works), Catholic theologians defended meritorious virtue.

<sup>120</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 14. "Grace supplements nature by providing power to achieve a cognitive and affective level of activity transcending the natural."



humanity.”<sup>121</sup> Stephen Duffy in *The Graced Horizon* in tandem with Neil Ormerod’s summary in *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* inform our discussion on the scholastic and Augustinian trends, and their arguments.

*a. A Scholastic Trend: Extrinsicism*

“Extrinsicism,” first of all, describes “two tiers of grace” where grace elevates a hitherto natural end to a supernatural one. It also describes the impression of grace as external to persons, as a “bank” accrued by merit, lost by sin, and, without relationality playing a part, as a sort of magical state obtained through “the” sacraments.<sup>122</sup> Where grace was felt, there was a sense of the ethereal.<sup>123</sup> Knowledge of God, and the affect needed to sustain theological virtues arrived in inexplicably *religious* ways. We recall Aquinas’s starting point.

In Aquinas, pure nature existed before God added the preternatural gift of immortality<sup>124</sup> (a part-way stage in God’s creating), producing a “perfect nature”, or a “state of integrity.”<sup>125</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange explains Adam and Eve received *praeter naturam* (such as “immortality, impassability and other endowments”) and *super naturam* gifts (“united to God in a personal communion of love and righteousness”); for him “pure nature” describes humanity’s inherent constituents – having neither grace nor

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<sup>121</sup> A much elevated supernatural end required a supernatural desire, raised by a second grace. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 115 -118. The end (*telos*) proposed in Thomistic theology was drawn from 1 John, 1 Peter 1:4. “...an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading...” an increasing allusion to platonic ideals, and Paul in 1 Cor 2: 9 (“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived...”). Here Paul quotes Isaiah 64: 4, where Isaiah speaks of an anthropomorphic portrayal of God, named as father in verse 8, who rewards/forgives those who wait on God, and (in verses 10-12) gives them a spirit that knows God’s thoughts, which in Isaiah 55: 7-13 are about mercy and bounteous sustenance (unlike human desire for revenge) for those who, v 3, “incline their ear, and come” to God. Like the scholastics, Mulcahy aligns this (using Isaiah 65: 17 “I am about to create new heavens and a new earth”) with the wholly-otherness of a new metaphysical order, when Isaiah speaks, rather, of the joy in a physical restoration of Jerusalem. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 116.

<sup>122</sup> See Patricia Smith, *Teaching Sacraments* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 26-27. In relation to *The Baltimore Catechism*, see also George Worgul, *From Magic to Metaphor* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 126-127.

<sup>123</sup> Grace was felt to belong “to some divine, religious realm above and separate from the human person.” Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 120.

<sup>124</sup> Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 89-91.

<sup>125</sup> See S. T. I-II. 109. 2.

the effects of the fall, it is affected by neither by grace nor by sin.<sup>126</sup> Did one of Aquinas' ends, "perfect" or "imperfect beatitude,"<sup>127</sup> apply to pure nature? It is not clear. Upon the "fall," there arose a "state of corrupt nature,"<sup>128</sup> but a natural desire to seek the "First Cause" persists through both the gifted state to the fallen one. Cajetan interpreted nature as possessing its own enclosed end. He proposed that grace, quite unrelated to that enclosed end, supplied a vision so transcending natural human powers that it required a new "extrinsic superstructure" in proportion to it.<sup>129</sup> This led to a "separation of grace from nature, the sacred from the profane, the religious from the secular, and the spiritual from the mundane."<sup>130</sup> We turn to another trend, Jansenism.

*b. An Augustinian Trend: Jansenism*

In France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was amongst Catholics another sense of grace. While identified as Jansenist, this did not entail holding to the propositions of *Augustinus* intellectually, but to a certain sentiment, expressing faith radically and rigorously. Mulcahy quotes the Jansenist orator J-J Douguet:

There is nothing purely human, nothing purely political, in a Christian woman; religion is everything, enters everywhere, has control over everything; it is religion that should rule everything, sacrifice everything ennobles everything. Salvation not only the most important business, but the only one. One must work towards it independently of everything else, and only apply oneself to other matters with reference to that great purpose. Everything must be adjusted to it, everything respond to it; but it must never be adapted to our purposes.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange follows a Plotinian world-view. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 102. For Aquinas, immortality must belong to human nature, to show that death is a corruption of it. At the same time he held death as natural to the body. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 74, 86. See 83-84 for Aquinas' treatment of death in *De Malo* q.5 a.5, and *Compendium theologiae et Fratrem Reginaldum*.

<sup>127</sup> In relation to the virtues in *S.T.* I-II q. 5, Aquinas speaks of two ends, one of "one proportionate to his own nature, and this he can reach through his own resources," and "a happiness surpassing his nature, he can only attain by the power of God, by a kind of participation in the Godhead." Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 97.

<sup>128</sup> In *S.T.* I-II.110 Aquinas writes "... in the state of perfect nature man needs a gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength... to do and wish supernatural good," but in the "state of corrupt nature," to, both, "be healed," and to "to carry out works of supernatural virtue, which are meritorious."

<sup>129</sup> For Cajetan, grace supplies a new *telos*; an elevated supernatural end required a supernatural desire, raised by a second grace. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 115 -118.

<sup>130</sup> Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, Redemption*, 118.

<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief*, Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 232.

This sentiment resembled Calvinism, but Jansenist worship and creed remained vehemently Catholic. It was distinctively both Augustinian and unThomist:<sup>132</sup>

since humanity is ordered to the vision of God, the means required for that end must be given, among them the graces that theology calls supernatural

further, “humanity cannot be found in a state of pure nature,” that is, “in a state destitute of the means of grace necessary to the pursuit of its end.”<sup>133</sup> There was one unfolding God-intended order from conception to salvation, integral to all predestined human persons and their development.<sup>134</sup> A side product of this was that election was often read, retrospectively, as fate (fixed), rather than destiny (open).<sup>135</sup>

### c. *The Positions*

To gain an understanding of what ensued, we follow Duffy’s discussion of the arguments ensuing from these perceptions<sup>136</sup> Z (two tiers of grace) and X (one grace).<sup>137</sup> Not always in agreement with their fellow X or Z holders, proponents crossed over on issues (preserving God’s gratuity as grace-giver, and the value of secular activity) for the sake of internal consistency. Their arguments confused orders (substantialist science, relational phenomenology, and scriptural texts). Arguments became abstruse, leading to misunderstanding, and to a theological anthropology that lacked cohesion. We review some of these arguments, leading us to propose, in the light of our discussion of Thérèse of Lisieux, that human development entailing grace in its generic

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<sup>132</sup> Trent was needed to keep Jansenism at bay as much as Protestantism. “De Gratia” was produced as a systematic treatise on grace,” actual and sanctifying or habitual (which was incorporated into the *Baltimore Catechism*, the staple preconciliar educative tool in the USA). Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 442-443.

<sup>133</sup> This was not with respect to ordination (election), i.e., “not in a condition of non-ordination to vision.” Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 27.

<sup>134</sup> De Lubac held human nature “essentially ordered to the beatific vision, so that it is unintelligible without reference to that supernatural end.” Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 234. See also Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 119.

<sup>135</sup> Bargdill, “Fate and Destiny: Some Historical Distinctions between the Concepts,” *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 205-206.

<sup>136</sup> We will treat these as perceptions, rather than include their many (mechanical) qualifications. We remove J-J Douget’s radical God orientation from X, taking a more philosophical approach, such as God-orientation understood through psycho-somatic signs (such as John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*).

<sup>137</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 12-49.

form provides an analogy toward a re-integration of theological anthropology in relation to grace.

In Z, humans, as natural, are ordered to a natural end; God offers his creatures a new supernatural end, a share in his divine spiritual being. Without God effecting a change to the human end, they were destined to a good, but mere “flowering” of life.<sup>138</sup> It might be asked of Z: what was our *imago dei* imprint at creation? Why does God create then alter his “good” creature? We are left with an impression that God is not present in the human from the beginning, but arrives later, from outside, as an intrusion,<sup>139</sup> or that God diverts humanity from its original course.

One line of argument (offered by Duffy) traces extrinsicism to Aquinas’s use of Aristotle. Following Aristotle’s theory in “that all intuitive knowledge entails a certain identity of the knower and the known,” Aquinas asserted that “the highest intuition the finite mind can achieve is immediate awareness of itself” and “no finite mind can attain of itself immediate direct knowledge of God.”<sup>140</sup> On these assumptions, a supernatural power is needed to enable cognition of God (“transcend” human “limits”).<sup>141</sup> In the case

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<sup>138</sup> “...in the state of integrity...man by his natural endowments could wish and do the good proportionate to his nature, such as the good of an acquired virtue, but not surpassing good...as of infused virtue.” “... even in the state of corrupted nature it can, by virtue of its natural endowments, work some particular good...yet it cannot do all the good natural to it...just as a sick man can...make some movements...” Nevertheless, “...in the state of perfect nature man needs a gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength... to do and wish supernatural good...” *S.T. I-II. 109. 2.* See also Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 114.

<sup>139</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 37. See also Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 97-98. Aquinas writes that persons cannot transcend natural sensory knowing “except by a superadded form, as water can only heat when heated by fire;” human understanding is “sufficient for knowing certain intelligible things”... “but higher intelligible things ...the human intellect cannot know, unless it be perfected by a stronger light...” (*S.T. I-II. 109.1*). Beyond assuming Aristotle’s physics (substances “at rest” as their true state), fire heating water, causing it to enter another phase, is a poor metaphor for animal beings as, made from another’s body, we are interpenetrated by what begets us in a way that is *not* entirely other. We sense becoming as occurring through an experience of an other within and surrounding, by umbilical and womb, by breast and arms, by subliminal memory of affective engagement.

<sup>140</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 14.

<sup>141</sup> Duffy writes: “God can only be apprehended only mediately, indirectly, inferentially, as ground of being. ... grace supplements nature by providing a power to achieve a cognitive and affective level of activity transcending the natural. Grace renders nature capable ... of a direct relationship with God *in via*...and *in patria*.” Given this understanding of human nature, the introduction of extrinsic ‘superadded’ powers (*habitus* was the Aristotelian category evoked) became...necessity. the elevation of natural powers is a must if one is to be capable of ... activities otherwise impossible.” Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 14. Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace*, 10. “Action follows from being” (*Agere sequitur esse*), generated by a prior principle; in virtuous action, *grace* is that principle.

of Thérèse, though she gives assent to this by speaking of “illumination” and “lights,” she *acts* on the assumption that she can know and impact God, based on *feeling* God as consistent with her early relational experience of mercy (generic grace).<sup>142</sup> She creatively interacts with God via an interior landscape (a representational world containing earlier gracious/merciful parental relations, constructed to “carry the assurance of well-being”)<sup>143</sup> to understand the new persons, events, and processes God “sends.” Whilst she confesses that she can only “stutter” about God (objective knowing?), in writing of her experience of God Thérèse is eloquent. Attributing what she learns from God as “lights,” she hints at its operation:

the Gospels sustain me during my hours of prayer. ...I am constantly discovering in them new lights and mysterious meanings. I understand and know from experience that “The kingdom of God is within you.” Jesus has no need of books or teachers to instruct souls... Never have I heard him speak, but I feel that He is feel that He is within me at each moment; He is guiding and inspiring me with what I must say and do. I find just when I need them certain lights that I had not seen until then, and it isn’t most frequently during my hours of prayer that these are most abundant but rather in the midst of my daily occupations.<sup>144</sup>

This activity of knowing leads us to question the adequacy of approaches to God based on objective (analytical) knowing. Thérèse *feels* grace as a gift whose presence is mediated by her early life experience, deepening as she reflects on it, experiencing grace as working in human consciousness. In supplying an inexhaustible dynamic of God-object representations, our psychic operations represent an unfathomable<sup>145</sup> God-knowing, leading us to qualify what is meant by knowing as “finite” with respect of

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<sup>142</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 179.

<sup>143</sup> This refers to Winnicott’s paradigm. See McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 225.

<sup>144</sup> Underlining added. *Story of a Soul*, 179. “Je comprends et je sais par expérience...” St Thérèse, *Histoire D’Une Ame*, 204.

<sup>145</sup> See William Washabaugh, *A life of Response: American Cultural Anthropology*, Chapter 5. [http://www.uwm.edu/~wash/102\\_7.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/~wash/102_7.htm) accessed 9.10.2009. This claim is born out by the nuanced and multivalent layers apprehended in human symbol-operating. There is no limit to our capacity to know and love God in an ever deepening and expanding sense - in John of the Cross, Aquinas, Paul in Ephesians praying that we be filled with the utter fullness of God. Augustine also speaks of his limitless desire transcending limitation and finitude.

God who is “infinite.”<sup>146</sup> If relating to God is connected with the experiencing self, originally, in relation to a nourishing other, forming the ground for further knowing God, then it can be said that transcendent knowing resides within immanent knowing. Further, if we view God (the internalized face, voice, arms that values us) and self-becoming as inextricably entwined, we might view this (encoded memory) as an infinite source of grace within the person. Though the effects of engaging with this felt-knowing (via transitional God-object representations) are *felt* as inexplicable, they are not foreign to the operations of the human person. This is another way of saying that grace builds on, rather than replaces, nature. God speaks the original “it is good...” from within the human person, in a process ordered toward this.<sup>147</sup> McDargh writes,

What if it were the case that the psychic processes by which persons became selves, all the dimensions of the creation and maintenance of the self...linked to the dynamic of faith were... simultaneously the processes involved in the formation and transformation of God? What if both the representation of God and the self... had their origins in the same matrix of relationship, bore the birthmark of the same process of separation and individuation, looked to the same vexed or blessed circumstances of family and culture? Would this not have the consequence of making “God” uniquely available for the processes of faith...? The development of history and process would then belong together... as synchronous and inter-related processes which mutually inform and influence one another.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Aquinas asserts that one might discover the eternal One/First Cause through contemplating essences or “universals” in existent objects. Thomas Aquinas, “On Being and Essence,” *Selected Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, 33- 36. In Thérèse’s activity, we see a shift to the eternal as the ‘inbetween’ of relation. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), 53-85. Buber speaks of addressing the eternal in the “I-You relation.” In being drawn into a relation with the other, the other ceases to be an “it,” a “thing among things,” nor “consist of things.” “Neighbourless and seamless, he [it] is You and fills the firmament.” The “I,” not an “it,” relates also to the self as a “you.” See Søren Kierkegaard in *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 29-30. Kierkegaard speaks of a dialectic with oneself: “The self is a conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude that relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, which done only through the relationship to God.” In “every moment that a self exists, it is in the process of becoming, for the self... does not actually exist, [it] is... that which ought to come into existence.” Eternity, for Kierkegaard, is “to live vividly in the present” in the presence of God; to “live in the finite... from infinite resignation.” Nythamar Fernandes de Oliveira, *Dialectic and Existence in Kierkegaard and Kant*, <http://www.geocities.com/nythamar/kant-sk.html> accessed 16/10/2011.

<sup>147</sup> Genesis 1: 31a. “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”

<sup>148</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic object relations theory and the Study of Religion*, 115.

If this is so, there are as many experiences of God as there are human lives; each of them stating a truth about the God they encountered. McDargh writes, where object representation is unavailable for the “integrative processes of faith” it is

because it is too terrifying, too unreliable, loaded with too ambivalent affect, or because it has remained an ...undeveloped childhood companion that cannot be related to under most circumstances in adult life... [A]n examination of that representation discloses much of what is central to [their]... struggle of faith. The God which... cannot [be] believe[d] in, trusted in, relied on may often be as revealing of the vicissitudes of faith as that God which can be consciously affirmed.<sup>149</sup>

Thus, what the theologian implicitly holds about God is of great importance, because he/she indirectly communicates it. How one models prayer is even more important, because, here, false God-representations are re-scripted, and rickety holding frames are re-suspended. Thérèse communicates, in my deepest self, because I want good, am I not, then, good? echoing God’s “it is (you are) good” to her readers. What happens when the theologian holds grace as an abstraction?

The inadequacy of a non-relational understanding of grace is felt in the platonic characteristics attributed to God, by the scholastics, and in the resultant discontinuity of two human ends. While Isaiah 55’s constancy relates to God’s mercy in forgiveness and in the earth’s bounty, God’s constancy in scholastic terms refers to perfection as immutability and stasis, as a completion of knowing, and evenness in charity.<sup>150</sup> To explain humanity’s “end,” in Aristotle and Aquinas’s way of thinking, as the “human

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<sup>149</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic object relations theory and the Study of Religion*, 116.

<sup>150</sup> Lonergan states: “...because man develops, every additional element of understanding and affirming and willing is a further act and reality in him. But the perfect primary being does not develop, for it is without defect or lack of imperfection; and so the unrestricted act understands and affirms and wills contingent beings to be without any increment or change in reality.” Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: a Study of Human Understanding* (San Francisco: Harper and Rowe, Publishers, 1978), 661. Aquinas does write of reaching a point, in this life, when we can only “know” through love (*S.T.*1.64.1.). Through sharing in the divine intersubjectivity, our intentional consciousness and operations share increasingly in those of God, in knowing, loving and responding. (*S.T.*II-II. 45. 2.). Aquinas often uses “contemplation” to mean rational and hence includes knowing, loving and willing (embracing love and desire and will). If he had started his discussion of grace from his treatment of the Trinity and of the centrality of relationship in personhood, it may have offered a more adequate and experientially grounded account viewing “perfect fulfilment” in more relational terms in participating in the Trinitarian life through God’s gift of “consortium divinae naturae” *ST*, I-II. 112, 1.

soul is intellectual...its flourishing must involve... an intellectual fulfilment.”<sup>151</sup> “To find the perfect fulfilment...we need to know the First cause and possess its ultimate truth.”<sup>152</sup> Viewing humanity in isolation, as an intentioning-being, a self-sufficient organism that might flower and fruit, led to disparate ends such as imperfect and perfect beatitude. Viewing humanity as beings-in-relation, however, meets the complexity of “human nature;” it considers development and allows layered and consecutive aims. In non-relational thinking, a state of powerlessness to know all and to act well is posed as a deficiency rather than the occasion of evoking relation, thus discussions of mercy toward limitation, helping toward mutuality (I help you to impact me, as I impact you) are truncated.<sup>153</sup> Yet it is through Isaiah’s *relational* tradition (restoring a community where mercy alone is counted as pleasing sacrifice to God, Isa 60, 65: 17-25, 66) that Jesus responds to God as father (“*abba*”) who provides him with identity, purpose, guidance, and power. Jesus dialogues with God as Abraham, Moses, and the prophets did, indicating an opening for such interaction.

*d. Human Nature, the “Existential,” Freedom, and Election*

We look to see how Thérèse’s activity may be further applied. Duffy introduces the notion of an “existential.” Augustine’s sense of God hollowing out a space in him that only God can fill, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you,” – felt as an unconditioned longing constitutive of his humanity – may be named an “existential.”<sup>154</sup> (This “hollow,” we note, may be aligned with the impression of responses given to Augustine’s bids in infancy,<sup>155</sup> which points to a conditioned response). Such a desire (containing the idea that a human nature is always a graced nature) evoked alarm in z, over God’s free offer of salvation, and its effective

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<sup>151</sup> Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 95.

<sup>152</sup> Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 95.

<sup>153</sup> In his two ends, Aquinas appears to make a distinction between Abrahamic faiths (a first end is to know God as the first and final cause of creation – Islam and Judaism) an imperfect beatitude, and Christian belief (a second end is life in Christ, new and “unforseen”) a perfect beatitude. This leaves aside many other ways of knowing such as non-Abrahamic religions and perhaps even atheism. Mulcahy suggests that de Lubac, by not making this distinction, falls into Arianism. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 97-99.

<sup>154</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 19-22.

<sup>155</sup> Augustine remarks that he cannot remember his infancy. *Confessions*, 5.



accomplishment. If humans are governed by a desire they have no power to either turn from or bring to fruition, it appears to affect God's gratuity – is not God obligated to fill their desire? But Augustine and Thérèse's focus is otherwise: feeling that God precedes all they are, they assert God generated their desire<sup>156</sup> to enable the relation God now has with them.

The notion of 'election' appears to preserve God's freedom. Mulcahy discusses the relationship between nature and election. *Nature*, not mentioned in ancient Hebrew Scriptures, appears in Hellenized Judaism (Wisdom and Maccabbees) and Christianity to identify the properties of a being.<sup>157</sup> First applied to animate wholes in Aristotle,<sup>158</sup> in the New Testament "nature" (characteristic or normative) supplied a way of being against which to contrast "supernatural" (such as a branch grafted onto a vine, or a new way of acting).<sup>159</sup> The property of 'chosen-ness', Mulcahy argues, is unconnected to nature, belonging rather to God's freedom. It denotes a

choice of a particular people, in specific contexts within the economy of salvation. It emphasizes God's freedom and the transcendent source of God's gifts. God could have just as easily chosen others, or no one. However this difficult doctrine is interpreted... it does not suggest that the divine election extends to human nature as such, as though ... [it] were automatically ... the recipient of divine grace, or of a supernatural destiny.<sup>160</sup>

However, is it not that creation *is* God's act of choosing? De Lubac will later argue: our nature need *not* have been created.<sup>161</sup> Mulcahy suggests that de Lubac's reasoning

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<sup>156</sup> I said to myself God cannot inspire unrealizable desires." *Story of a Soul*, 207. "I call Thee into my soul, which Thou dost make ready to receive thee by the desire that Thou dost inspire in it:... for it was by Thy aid going before me that I called upon Thee; and Thou hadst urged me over and over, in a great variety of ways, to hear Thee from afar off and be converted and call upon Thee who wert calling me." *Confessions*, 259.

<sup>157</sup> The Greek *physis* becoming the Latin *natura*, appears 18 times in the new Testament. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 32-42.

<sup>158</sup> For Aristotle "*nature* belongs properly speaking, only to natural wholes that move (change themselves)... but not to statues or brick walls... or feet or brains (which are parts of wholes). Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 34.

<sup>159</sup> Mulcahy, *Not everything is Grace*, 38-49.

<sup>160</sup> Mulcahy, *Not everything is Grace*, 48.

<sup>161</sup> Italics added. Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 48.

is a “hurried” passing over of the issue of election, but does not the poor one (Thérèse) cry out to God on that basis: do not separate yourself from me who you have created?<sup>162</sup> While two tiers of grace preserves God’s freedom (by allowing God to further gift life), Augustine and Thérèse, from the depth of their experience, see things another way – without you, I am bereft of what I need.<sup>163</sup> Thérèse, in her True Self, is less concerned with a theoretical shape of God’s freedom than her familiar experience of mercy and belonging. Whilst holding one particular grace as important (conversion at Christmas), she acknowledges grace as flowing on a continuum from birth. Confidence in God’s reply to her prayer for sinners<sup>164</sup> flowed from a sense of already ‘knowing’ God’s mercy.<sup>165</sup>

Ultimately, Thérèse understood “nature and election” through her identity as *in-relation*. The scripture-based metaphors she takes up for self-identification (flower, lamb, infant at the breast, the simple one, bride, Mary Magdalene),<sup>166</sup> beyond describing the particular filial character of her side in relating with God, express dimensions of experience in relation to nature and election. These express felt-dependency, charming toward a response, expecting in confidence, which in turn names God as strong, loving, available, forgiving, as desirous of relating as Thérèse. By taking up Thérèse’s method of self-insertion into these experiences, we are in a much better position to resolve the nature-election problem through her overarching metaphor, the

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<sup>162</sup> In imagining rescue from hell, and orchestrating forgiveness towards herself, Thérèse seeks the face she needs. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1226, 1231-1232.

<sup>163</sup> “Give Thyself to me, O my God, give thyself once more to me.... This only do I know, that it is ill with me when thou art not with me.” *Confession*, 264.

<sup>164</sup> Thérèse’s quest for Pranzini’s conversion was an occasion of seeking relation. She sought God’s ‘need’ for her, awaiting God’s reply to her request to reveal her vocation (having filled her with desire to save souls), on the one hand, and a conviction of the potency of Jesus saving mercy on the other: a God-Thérèse-God interaction, where Thérèse feels she impacts God. If Pranzini showed no signs of conversion, however, she felt Jesus would save him anyway. “...to obtain courage to pray for sinners I told God I was sure that he would pardon the poor, unfortunate Pranzini; that I’d believe this even if he went to his death without any signs of repentance or without having gone to confession. I was absolutely confident in the mercy of Jesus. But I was begging Him for a sign for my own simple consolation!” *Story of a Soul*, 100.

<sup>165</sup> She acted towards those in her spiritual care as she felt herself cared for. The enormity of guiding souls, later, in concrete terms, weighed on her (she fled into Jesus’ arms). “I saw immediately that the task [entering into the sanctuary of souls] was beyond my strength.” *Story of a Soul*, 238-9.

<sup>166</sup> Song of Songs 8:7; Isa 40: 11; Isa 66: 12-13; Wis 6:7, Prov 9:4; Lk 10:41. *Story of a Soul*, 188, 258.

parent-child relation. We consider dimensions of the parent-child relation as representing ‘what is the case’ about life, and not an imposed structure.<sup>167</sup> Analogous to the God-human relation (in our “imaging” God, we can justifiably sense something of the parent-child quality), the parent-child relation richly informs us of the nature of God’s gratuity.<sup>168</sup> The parent-child relation involves both a continuum, and a plurality of human experiences of generic grace (shaping a person’s God-image in terms of grace), which parallels possible X (one grace) and Z (two tiers of grace) scenarios.

X (one grace) is concerned to express life as already graced in possessing a God-orientation. This parallels *anlage*,<sup>169</sup> a potential that anticipates all the stages of its future becoming. Conditioned toward becoming a new self in relation, by originating in relation to a previous other, this is an existential directed toward supernaturalness. The language in a wording of X,<sup>170</sup> “humanity, in principle, does have the means for the graced existence it desires; grace arouses ‘and sustains the activity that one is capable of by nature...’”<sup>171</sup> echoes Sroufe’s description of what the mother offers her infant in sensitive care-giving. The parent’s engaging and sustaining the infant’s affect on its behalf, to realize their capacity to give and receive, act out an intention, and learn (forming a bank of object-relations), leads to the child’s later activity of engaging with these object-relations, representing God-within. The possibility of accessing grace,

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<sup>167</sup>James M. Gustafson notes Paul Lehmann (in *The Decalogue and a Human Future*) views this of Israel’s *halachic* community: “the Ten Commandments are not so much rules for living as accounts of the way the world operates.” James M. Gustafson, “Commandments for Staying Human,” *Christian Century* (Dec 20-27 1995), 1247- 1249, 1247.

<sup>168</sup> As McIntosh points out, theology becomes “joyfully abandoned whenever it can get its hands on a good metaphor (in which one reality is used to provoke our imaginative thought about another quite different from it) or a decent analogy.” Mark A. McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Maldon, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 18-21.

<sup>169</sup> *Anlage* (German) is a primordium, the foundation of a subsequent development. . In embryology it is the initial clustering of cells, a bud, from which a structure (body part or organ) develops. We use it here symbolically, as an encoded potential. It See <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/anlage> accessed 19/11/2011.

<sup>170</sup> This is a modification of what de Lubac proposed, that humanity has a natural, intrinsic, desire (*capax Dei*) for “the mode of existence offered by grace” but not the means to fulfil it. Its end is intrinsic to human nature. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 118.

<sup>171</sup> Eugene TeSelle, in “Nature and Grace in The Forum of Ecumenical Studies” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, VIII, No 3 (1971) 539-559, argues that certain Patristic writers assert this. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 15.

through its generic representation embedded within the psyche (available as religious or transcendent grace) allows grace to be thought of as intrinsic.

Z (two tiers of grace) is concerned to express the exterior conditions that represent God's freedom to elect, and gift (graciously interact) with the created person. In our analogy where God is the parent and the human person their birth infant, the variables are as follows. A woman may choose not to conceive (no gift of life). She may choose to conceive, resulting in a foetal 'experience of utter nourishment and unity' (first gift of life) yet abort, give birth (gift of biological independence) yet abandon, neglect, mistreat (threaten life's continuance, or reducing life to mere existence), treat as a possession, or raise perfunctorily (thwarting personhood/self-becoming). In contrast, a parent may nurture and value their infant, infusing not mere life, but desire for life to the full (grace).<sup>172</sup> These positions reflect possibilities about grace, intuited by X and Z's God-human positions. By acknowledging a correspondence between sufficient pure nature and "basic trust" (the ground for religious faith) and between grace and "religious faith" (a dynamic elaboration of basic trust), one can preserve a 'this-life' continuity.

God's adoption of creaturely beings points to our being treated as a birth-child, thus understanding what it means to be a birth-child is paramount to our analogy. The child imitates what the parent offers, adopting the parent as much as the parent 'owns' the child. We see this in the child who poignantly clings to a neglecting or abusing parent, who once valued/owned them, in the hope that they might again see that face. The story of Yosl Rakover illustrates this. Amid the horrors of the *Shoah*, Yosl clings to an abusive God:

he reproaches God for His unbounded grandeur and his excessive demands. He will love Him in spite of all that God has attempted to turn away his love. But "You should not pull the rope too tight" is Yosl's cry.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> In short, all humans experience a prenatal symbiosis, but after birth what the mother provides toward future flourishing varies; many babies are nurtured in a perfunctory manner, but not all are brought to joyous life. Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper & Rowe Inc, 1956), 45-46.

<sup>173</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, "Loving the Torah more Than God," in Zvi Kolitz, *Yosl Rakover Talks to God*, Carol Brown Janeway, trans, with afterwords by Emmanuel Levinas and Leon Wieseltier (NY: Vintage Books, Random House, Inc, 1999), 16.

e. *Overall Integration of X and Z*

In the developmental research presented earlier, we examined human desire for God indicative of grace. In-utero union-plenitude is embedded (subliminally) in the human psyche as a common primordial memory.<sup>174</sup> As this is how life begins for all; an affective memory about union as good is intrinsic to all. (This memory, due to conception and gestation in another's body, a universal life condition, describes an already graced nature because it is the matrix for the supernatural life.) Further experiences of being carried, of being valued as an other, are contingent on the parent and other external events. If all is well and the parent loves the infant, graciousness will be felt: sensitized to the child's needs, a parent will *bend* to lift the child, and *turn* to engage its affect, restraining self-directed desires to meet and raise the child. In helplessness, the infant embodies a 'call for mercy', yet in the course of time the parent does not embody mere gratuity, nor the child mere receptivity; the parent's desire for relating rapidly becomes mutual. From a feeling-knowing which is ahead of the child's, the parent, invigorated and enriched by their child's thirsty absorption and growth, stimulates a new self. If God, the original willing parent who proclaims the first "it is good" upon his/her creature's coming into being, is like the human parent, God's freedom is not in jeopardy, but multiplies (goodness is self-diffusive - *bonum diffusivum sui*), like Bonaventure's fount of over-flowing (*fontalis plenitudo*) goodness.<sup>175</sup>

The parallel between parental love and God, at this point, is usually abandoned, for fear that to take this further will put transcendence at risk by confining the process to this-world operations, leading to a mere sum of psychological and historical parts, to a

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<sup>174</sup> "The child even after birth remains psychically fused with the mother...Although it is impossible to know what the child's inner experience.. is...it is hypothesized that it is something like what Michael Balint called the 'the harmonious interpenetrating mixup'. The child is not aware of distinctions between himself and the parenting other, where his boundaries end and the mother's begins." Mc Dargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and The Study of Religion*, 218.

<sup>175</sup> Bonaventure, *What Manner of Man? Sermons on Christ by St Bonaventure*, translated by Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 9-10. See also Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings, Spiritual Legacy Series* (New York: Crossroad, 1999); *The Hidden Centre: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St Bonaventure* (Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1992).

processing panentheistic God.<sup>176</sup> Yet the human process of God-imagining, via the protective union once felt with an encompassing nourishing one, who becomes a primary other, imaging and communicating God, sustaining a positive identity and confidence throughout life, as a God-originated process<sup>177</sup> may be justifiably described as a “supernatural existential,” because through it, God brings God-self to being by imprinting that communion “is good”. In the disclosure of her felt-experience of God, Thérèse indirectly gives witness to this “existential.”

The integrating effect of the parent-child analogy, allows X and Z to be held without contradiction, because both contain a dimension of truth. Thérèse holds to Z, arriving as more, in the extra helps of God’s presence (strengthened character or will, illuminations). However, she predominantly holds to X, where God calls persons to a single Godward end, not because of any theoretical correctness, but because it is the meaning framework she grew with, in association with an enclosed separated life demonstrating love for God, against the world’s flow of self-pleasing shallowness. In this context, Thérèse will choose images of God that harmonize with feeling great love/desire, and feeling under threat. To express great desire, she uses images of the early Christians, when salvation becomes available to all in Jesus,<sup>178</sup> inaugurating a new election. Jesus’ open invitation had a dramatic side: allegiances perceived as anti-Roman Empire (Jesus’ followers) earned death, and death suffered willingly, it was felt, was a witness favoured by God (amplified by Arminjon). Martyrdom became a sign of election. Concerned with election, spiritual bonds, and heroic sanctity, Thérèse’s faith community emphasised a God moved by allegiance to the point of death, wishing to repay great self-sacrifice. In *Story of a Soul*, Thérèse writes that her being a Carmelite

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<sup>176</sup> One cause of this fear is mistaking the felt-object representations of God as a static image, rather than a dynamic inner construct which actively engages with ongoing realities. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 143.

<sup>177</sup> Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Psychological Foundations of Belief in God*, 115, in James W. Fowler and Antoine Vergote, editors, *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity* (Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Co, 1980) pp 115-135.

<sup>178</sup> God looks beyond the family God covenanted Godself to, responding to persons who receive Jesus, as a new “law.” See Hebrews 8: 7-13 and Romans 9: 6-8, in the light of Psalm 40: 8. Thérèse seeks to express her love by martyrdom, *Story of a Soul*, 196-197.

(suffering for love of God) was through Jesus choosing “those whom He pleases” (Mk 3: 13), such as St Paul and Augustine.<sup>179</sup>

While the Carmelite life guides the shape of her response to God as sacrificial, it is through the metaphors from Isa 66:12-13 and Prov 9: 4<sup>180</sup> that she feels her authentic connection to God (God is mercifully loving to the helpless one), allowing her to act toward God with the familiarity of a child who belongs with its mother/father. To validate her being-in-relation with God, she uses images of God as a nursing mother, a shepherd, a teacher for the simple one, the willing caregiver who loves unconditionally, who is dynamically present to those who cry for help,<sup>181</sup> evoking the sense of favour that allowed patriarchs and prophets the courage to bargain and remonstrate with God, using God’s own ethic.<sup>182</sup>

In our discussion, we enter Thérèse’s time, the concluding part of our anthropological review.

## **6. Thérèse and Her Time: A Reassertion of Grace as Between Persons**

In her time, there was still resistance in the Church to Luther’s relational emphasis, and to God’s saving action as definitively felt by faith (formally expressed in Trent),<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Echoing Augustine’s, “For you will have mercy on whom you will have mercy, and You will show mercy to whom You show mercy” (*Confessions*, 170) Thérèse writes, “God will show mercy on whom He will have mercy, and he will show pity on whom he will show pity,” *Story of a Soul*, 13) in reflecting on her election to a Carmelite vocation. In her flower metaphor (p 14) Thérèse has herself as an adornment (a role imposed on her as a young child). The flower, in God’s scheme of things, does not have any purpose but to please God by its beauty. If a flower were to pretend to be other than its naturally pleasing shape, its God-intended purpose, it will fail to please God. (Thérèse feels her purpose is to please by common simplicity.) Thérèse animates her flower, as if her flower might make for itself another purpose, which would be a false one. In spite of the possibility of dual purposes, the real one is the only true one – an X position. “He has created the savage who has nothing but the natural law to guide him,” and the baby who symbolize Thérèse’s present state of simplicity, a graced one not to be advanced on.

<sup>180</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 188. Isa 66:12-13: “As one whom a mother caresses so I will comfort you; you will be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they will caress you.” Prov 9: 4, “Whoever is a little one, let him come to me.”

<sup>181</sup> God is felt by God’s calling persons, keeping promises, delivering from oppression toward life and freedom. See Den Hertog, C. “The Prophetic Dimension of the Divine Name,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 64 (2002), 213 – 228.

<sup>182</sup> For example, Gen 18: 22-32; Ex 32:31-32; Job 10: 1-22, Jer 20: 7-18.

<sup>183</sup> Trent proclaimed anathema upon those who reformers who expressed saving by their felt-faith alone. “If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins

favouring instead scholasticism's sure method (seen in *The End of the Present World*). In post-revolutionary Europe, the Church reacted to the threat of secularism, nationalist allegiances pulling away from Rome, the Papacy's loss of temporal powers, and to modernity in Leo XIII's preference for Thomism (*Aeternis Patris*, 1879).<sup>184</sup> A range of influences and spiritual writings shaped French Catholicism: romantic feminism<sup>185</sup> where the woman best served God in roles complementing the man, expressed in not so subtle sexual imagery; Jansenist spirituality (a negative perception of the human condition);<sup>186</sup> in Carmel, the mystical writings of Teresa Avila (a progression of interior states) and St John of the Cross (the 'beloved' making room within a person). Influential non-theistic ideas of the God-human relation were proposed and accepted: Marx asserted that God was the tool of the wealthy ruling class to establish and maintain order; Feuerbach held God as "the projection of the race, an ideal form of 'humanity'" as "a matter of social psychology," while Freud saw God functioning as a "father-image."<sup>187</sup> In these ideas, an experience of God was stated in new ways. Not all felt God as grace. Yet, while negative, they still stated something about self-becoming and the experience of God.

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for Christ's sake, or that it is confidence alone that justifies this – *anathema sit*. If anyone shall say that in order to obtain the remission of sins it is necessary for every man to believe with certainty and without hesitation on account of his own weakness and indisposition that his sins are forgiven him – *anathema sit*. (DS 1562-3)" Ormerod, *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, 123-124.

<sup>184</sup> Pius X reacted to Modernism in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 1907. Later, with Pius XII in *Humani Generis* (1950) there was criticism of the "*Nouvelle Theologie*." Rondet notes that the "*nouvelle théologie*," pointing to non-Thomistic principles, was originally intended as derogatory, and applied to theologians against extrinsicism. Though accepted into mainstream theological thinking in Vatican II, *nouvelle théologie* was at first treated with suspicion as its theologians turned to Biblical and Patristic sources to explore theology. *Humani Generis* in 1950, "on certain opinions which menace the foundations of the Catholic faith," was concerned with the threat of evolution as an accepted theory (issue of polygenism), unorthodox formulating, and "unwittingly identified Thomist theology with the common doctrine on grace." Henri Rondet, "Nouvelle Théologie" in Karl Rahner et al, eds, *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, Volume Four* (Basle-Montreal: Herman-Herder-Foundation, 1969), 234-235.

<sup>185</sup> Romantic feminism "stresses the differences between men and women and the complementarity of their roles in society and Church." It "... views women in terms of sensitivity, compassion, purity...[and] complementarity is often viewed in terms of public-private spheres. Men's engagement in the public sphere leaves them more prone to sin, while women are shielded from these forces and hence less fallen than men." Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 58.

<sup>186</sup> Jansenism represented an untypical Catholic position with regard to "original sin." Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 75.

<sup>187</sup> Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 25.



a. *William James and the Experience of Grace*

Five years after Therese's death, in North America (1902), William James published a study into the phenomenon of religious experience.<sup>188</sup> We quote from *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in response to questions Haight asks: what is the experience of grace, and what is its language?<sup>189</sup> We listen to James reflect on the abstractions of scholasticism, and his feeling that, for a belief to have value, it needed to relate to a concrete aspect of living:

even were we forced by a coercive logic to believe ... [God's metaphysical principles], we still should have to confess them to be destitute of all intelligible significance. Take God's aseity, for example; or his necessariness; his immateriality; his 'simplicity', or his superiority to the kind of inner variety and succession which we find in finite beings, his indivisibility, and lack of inner distinctions of being and activity, substance and accident, potentiality and 'personality', apart from the actuality,...his repudiation of inclusion in a genus; his actualized infinity; his moral qualities which it may comport; his relations to evil being permissive and not positive; his self-sufficiency, self-love, and absolute felicity in himself: – candidly speaking, how do qualities as these make any definite connection with our lives? ... I must frankly confess that even though these attributes were faultlessly deduced, I cannot conceive of its being of the smallest consequence... that any one of them should be true. Pray what specific act can I perform in order to adapt myself the better to God's simplicity? Or how does simplicity? Or how does it assist me to plan my behaviour, to know that his happiness is anyhow absolutely complete?<sup>190</sup>

James' questions reflect meaning as connected to experience which is inextricably accompanied by affect. Thus we return to emotion as integral to religious experience. Collecting and analysing numerous experiences of faith, James observed that they did not involve a particular language, or a type of emotion. There seems

to be no one elementary religious emotion, but only a storehouse of emotions

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<sup>188</sup> William James' study *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902 preceded Freud and Erikson's work on 'self' and 'subconscious'. Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* was published in 1911. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (NY: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982, 1985).

<sup>189</sup> Haight's questions are "Is God good? And how does one know that God is good?" Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 22-23.

<sup>190</sup> James continues (addressing scholarly metaphysical invention): here is "shuffling and matching of pedantic dictionary adjectives... aloof from human needs, something that might be worked out from the mere word 'God'..." "One feels... they are a set of titles obtained by a mechanical manipulation of synonyms; verbliness has stepped into the place of vision... Instead of bread we have a stone..." James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 445-447.

upon which religious objects may draw, so there might conceivably also prove to be no specific and essential kind of religious object, and no one specific and essential kind of religious act.<sup>191</sup>

Yet a felt-quality (“grace”) was reported as added to emotions; the “Subject” feels

a new sphere of power. When the outward battle is lost, and the outer world disowns him it redeems and vivifies an interior world which otherwise would be an empty waste.<sup>192</sup>

Further, a certain solemnity pervaded religious feeling.<sup>193</sup> These two observations show the presence of, and an entering into, an interior construct which nourishes and preserves the value (and holiness) of the self/person. What then is the relationship between this experience and the dogmatic formulations of religious faith? Religious experience is the primary event and interpretation follows it for the sake of communication. James observes

intellectual operations, whether they be constructive or comparative and critical, presuppose immediate experiences as their subject matter. They are interpretative and inductive operations, after the fact, consequent upon religious feeling, not coordinate with it, not independent of what it ascertains.<sup>194</sup>

Thus faith seeks understanding, and understanding is converted to a communicable system and language to be conveyed to others,<sup>195</sup> but experience precedes it.<sup>196</sup> The

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<sup>191</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 28. James’ aim is investigative from a psychological perspective. Before his 1901-2 pre-Freud study, many held that creeds preceded religious experience, yet our earliest religious story (Abraham hearing God’s call) is one of experience. This faith develops via accumulating experiences. One of the questions that has emerged since James’ work, is that of the relationship between religious experience and the interpretation and articulation of that experience. Such a discussion is beyond the scope of this present study. Suffice it to say that Thérèse of Lisieux, consistent with the Christian spiritual tradition, attempts to understand and evaluate her felt-experience against the benchmark of her Catholic tradition – her upbringing, Scripture, Carmelite heritage.

<sup>192</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 47-48.

<sup>193</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 47-48.

<sup>194</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 433. In Ch 8 we investigate further the question of faith, in terms of experience and its relationship the various forms of meaning. Can we actually have the experience without simultaneously interpreting it? And is the interpretation just for communication? As we shall see, experience may be interpreted according to different forms of meaning, for instance, constitutive, effective and also in the form of public statements for communication.

<sup>195</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 76-77.

relation of the experience of faith and its conceptual and verbal articulation (described by John Henry Newman in *Grammar of Assent*),<sup>197</sup> is noted by Haight – the “words of grace... [from] Scripture and the liturgy, in the creed and in doctrine, may be passively received and assented to, but have little in relation whatever to [persons’] experience.”<sup>198</sup> This brings us back to our intuition, supported by McDargh’s research: that though she repeats formal doctrine and allows its influence on her behaviour, Thérèse relies on felt-knowing for her deep truths. Her felt knowing emerges in connection with her sisters, dreams, the relational activity of prayer together with her pondering and interrogation of the Scriptures. James quotes Auguste Sabatier, *Esquisse d’une Philosophie de la Religion* (1897) on the relational character of prayer:

Religion is an intercourse, a conscious and voluntary relation, entered into by a soul in distress with the mysterious power upon which it feels itself to depend, and upon which its fate is dependent. This intercourse with God is realized by prayer. Prayer is religion in act...It is prayer that distinguishes the religious phenomenon from such... neighbouring phenomena as purely moral or aesthetic sentiment. Religion is nothing if it not be the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it draws life... [P]rayer ... no mere repetition of certain sacred formulae, but the very movement of the soul, putting itself in personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence, – it may be even before it has a name by which to call it. Wherever this interior prayer is lacking, there is no religion; wherever, on the other hand, this prayer rises and stirs the soul, even in the absence of forms or doctrines, we have living religion.<sup>199</sup>

Leaving aside the reformer’s apologetic, Thérèse affirms this when she prefers spontaneous prayers (brief exclamations), instead of composed ones and when she feels

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<sup>196</sup> The experience of God as revealing and loving (of “faith seeking understanding”) is developed in the context of a community of faith. Where faith communities threaten and contradict self-becoming, experience of God may develop to correct that community, as seen in the Prophetic literature.

<sup>197</sup> John Henry Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, “Chapter 5 Notional and Real Assent,” 5, p 36 ff. <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/grammar/index.html> accessed 1/12/2011.

<sup>198</sup> Haight quotes from James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier Books, 1961) edition. Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace*, 13.

<sup>199</sup> James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 464. This assumes the communal aspect of religion which names this conversation ‘prayer’ in the first place. Auguste Sabatier (1839 - 1901), a French Protestant theologian promoted biblical interpretation, developing liberal Protestantism and the Catholic Modernist movement by his interpretation of Christian doctrine as the symbolism of religious feelings. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Auguste Sabatier," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/514951/Auguste-Sabatier> (accessed February 13, 2012).

her “poor little mind” tiring while reading “spiritual treatises on perfection.”<sup>200</sup>

*b. Macmurray’s Relational Paradigm and Thérèse*

The above, “a soul in distress,” seeking help from which “it feels itself to depend” (written in the year of Thérèse’s death) returns us to Thérèse’s relational activity. We ask: if grace is about feeling that God is good, and before anything, humans are relational, is God’s goodness connected with being in relation? Scottish Protestant philosopher John Macmurray (1891-1976), in an “organic,” non-mechanistic, empirical approach, observed relationality as a quality of personhood.<sup>201</sup> He “saw human existence as constituted by personal relationships,” that “the self exists only in the context of relationship with others,” and removed philosophy from “a theoretical orientation” concerned with “the epistemologically objective and independent state of the human individual.”<sup>202</sup> Thus Macmurray takes us away from that problem we encountered earlier in Aquinas, whose Aristotelian starting point led to dual ends in a person (flourishing and union with God), evoking questions such as “does a craftsman operate his craft (toward flourishing) better in a state of grace?” (leading to “What type of grace meant?”).<sup>203</sup> Macmurray views

[T]he mother-child relation as the basic form of human existence, as the basic form of human existence, as a personal mutuality, as a “you and I” with a common life. ...[h]uman experience is, in principle, shared experience; human life, even in its most individual elements, is a common life; and human behaviour carries always, in its inherent structure, a reference to a personal Other. ...[T]he unit of personal existence is not the individual, but two persons in personal relation; and that we are not persons by individual right, but in virtue of

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<sup>200</sup> For spontaneous prayers, see *Story of a Soul*, 77, 87, 179, 217, especially 242-243. “...when I am reading certain spiritual treatises in which perfection is shown through a thousand obstacles... my poor heart quickly tires, I close the learned book that is breaking my head and drying up my heart, and I take up Holy Scripture... I see it is sufficient to abandon oneself as a child in God’s arms. Leaving to great souls, to great minds the beautiful books I cannot understand, much less put into practice, I rejoice at being little...” *Letters of St Thérèse, Volume II*, 1093-1094.

<sup>201</sup> For his “empirical,” approach, see John Macmurray, *The Structure of Religious Experience* (USA, Archon books, 1971), viii.

<sup>202</sup> Patrick McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, Doctoral Thesis submitted at ACU, Vic, 2006, 154. Patrick McArdle explores personhood as relational.

<sup>203</sup> Mulcahy, *Not Everything is Grace*, 146.

our relation with one another. The personal is constituted by personal relatedness. The unit of the personal is not the “I” but the “You and I.”<sup>204</sup>

Thus, with regard to Aquinas’s investigation into ends and states of grace, Macmurray might offer: Jack taught me to make tables and now I make them (unhappily) for Frank’s & Co; but when I’m praying on the job, things seem to go better, I’m happier. Praying evokes the memory of a happier, *relational*, circumstance in carpentry. Love of carpentry emerged in the affective teaching/learning dialogue between himself and Jack, which resembles his primordial mother child engagement. Re-living that affect serves to make him less irritable with God/the circumstance he finds himself in, leading *toward* ‘a state of grace’, a new co-operative spirit, with respect to persons and tables.

Macmurray’s proposal of the human person as “relationally engaged,” counters “the stance of [the] impartial observer seeking knowledge.”<sup>205</sup> He then adds how the person is relationally engaged. The “essential form” of all relationships is derived from the archetypal relation of “mother and child” which

includes human need, the enablement of a capacity for future relationships and a physical basis. ...The mutuality of interpersonal relationships is the dynamic constitutive of personhood. No person can come into existence except through the relationship with others. The initial relationship between mother and child will develop into more explicit and wider relationships...<sup>206</sup>

While Thérèse does not explicitly construct any theological anthropology, her prayer activity and her choice of images to negotiate life lead to a position similar to Macmurray’s, which we take to be God’s intrinsic presence, or ‘imprint’, in humanity. Her filial metaphor, the mother-child relation, begins with the child’s limitation; that is its locus. McArdle observes that between mother and child there is an asymmetry of power. But while the mother is in a “position of obvious power over the child,” she is

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<sup>204</sup>John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961). 61. . McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, 158. At 159, In terms of personhood, Macmurray distinguishes between human and other animals – by asserting that humans are unique in their heightened sensitisation toward, and need for relation. Such an observation does not enhance his argument. For example, mammal calves such as elephants, die soon after birth if they do not receive ongoing affective-tactile contact.

<sup>205</sup> McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, 160.

<sup>206</sup> McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, 160-161.

also in a position of vulnerability, “called by the infant into a new relationship, and, in a sense, into a new depth to her personhood” requiring her to limit herself in some ways, and extend herself in new ways.<sup>207</sup> This relation prefigures the relationship that “has no purpose beyond itself; in which we associate because it is natural to human beings, to their experience, to understand one another, to find joy and satisfaction in being together; in expressing and revealing themselves to one another.”<sup>208</sup> Macmurray states,

In ourselves we are nothing; and when we turn our eyes inward in search of ourselves we find a vacuum. Being nothing in ourselves, we have no value in ourselves, and are of no importance whatever, wholly without meaning or significance. It is only in relation to others that we exist as persons; we are invested with significance by others who have need of us; and borrow our real reality from those who care for us. We live and move and have our being not in ourselves but in one another; and what rights or powers or freedom we possess are ours by the grace and favour of our fellows. Here is the basic fact of our human condition; which all of us know...in moments when the veil of self-deception is stripped from us and we are forced to look upon our nakedness.<sup>209</sup>

Thus we return to McDargh’s observation, that the absence of someone mirroring my value either from outside, or from inside, is felt as the most profound threat to the self.<sup>210</sup> Life, as a self, depends on, if not a replying other, an interested watching one. God is the other who mirrors our value (goodness) in a limitless communion, entering at the moment of our receding into nothingness. For some persons, societies, or religious frameworks, the value of being in relation is so eroded that only a mission, purpose, or usefulness in terms of objective profit will suffice to invite/maintain an other. To make a thing of one’s self (take up a False Self), by entering a role, to

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<sup>207</sup> McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, 163.

<sup>208</sup> John Macmurray, *Reason and Emotion* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1935, 1962), 98. McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, 163.

<sup>209</sup> Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 211. McArdle, *The Relational Person within a Practical Theology of Healthcare*, 164.

<sup>210</sup> Winnicott relates an insight gained from one of his patients. Feeling “empty, unmet and somehow not alive ... as though there isn’t really a ME,” she objected to Winnicott suggesting that she might relate to God as “I AM,” saying “People use God as an analyst – someone to be there while you’re playing.” The amazing insight was “that for some persons God functions as that all accepting other, who ... is the guarantor and preserver of that background of safety which makes possible play. ...God serves as a transitional object which allows the person to experience and express the True Self.” In her writing, Thérèse surrounds herself with God as an interested watching “background” to all she does. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 144-5. This is reminiscent of being “regarded,” a symbol Fitzgerald elaborates in “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux.” *The Way Supplement* (Summer, 1997), 74-96.

gain/force the reply of an other was the malaise Jean-Paul Sartre wrote of.<sup>211</sup> This, too, was Thérèse's predicament, causing her to swing between a True and False Self. We review our earlier observations.

### **Summary of Observations of Thérèse's experience of God**

In the previous two chapters we found Thérèse concerned with Pauline knowing how God is gracious and merciful toward Thérèse. To ascertain what the experience of God's grace and mercy comprised of, we looked for a primordial experience of mercy, that would represent an authentic state (truth) to which she might return. A concrete experience of mercy/grace was found to exist in Rose/Zelie's valuing of her, an other, which, as nourishing her becoming-a-self, would represent a True Self. Non-gracious (non-merciful) experiences which led her to believe she must diminish herself by acting a self-effacing role, asking for and expecting little to earn affection, would come to represent a False Self (self-becoming is constricted). We found that Thérèse held False Self constructs 'next to' a True Self, but her dialogue with God, which increasingly took the form of her early familiar holding environment, where limitation was tenderly smiled upon and treated graciously, gradually dissolved False Self constructs. We found self-becoming a complex drama of an inner world, projected onto exterior persons and events, the resolution of which was sometimes found by fulfilment of expectations – early childhood events (God/Zelie as abandoning, Thérèse as a stranger in her own family, heaven/'elsewhereness' as family) repeating themselves in different ways.<sup>212</sup>

We concluded that God (her memory of merciful-care as transitional object) was constructively re-engaged with through prayer, with the aim of restoring self-identity toward positive self-becoming (life) for the sake of being in relation with the loving other. By examining Thérèse's spiritual activity, first through Sroufe's empirical model of human development, and, second, through McDargh's psychoanalytic model of self-

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<sup>211</sup> See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 63-64, 55-56, 59-60.

<sup>212</sup> See John and Paula Sandford, *The Transformation of the Inner Man* (NJ: Bridge Logos Publishers, 1982), and *Healing the Wounded Spirit* (NJ: Bridge Logos Publishers, 1985), who offer insights into dysfunctional personality patterns affecting relationships based on expectations formed in early life, in terms of being victim/sinned against.

becoming, the centrality of ‘generic grace’, mercy, limitation, in the process of self-becoming, and self-being, were shown. ‘Religious grace’, mercy, and limitation, elements of affective-psychic processes show self-becoming, and self-being, as, in hoping for re-generation, also transcendent. Where life becomes stifled, regeneration occurs by reorientation. As one way of reading the Psalms, we wonder whether these intensely “I-Thou” texts, served Thérèse in this way.

Paul Ricoeur shows this in relation to stories in the Hebrew Scriptures and the songs and laments of the Psalmist.<sup>213</sup> Confronted by the collapse of his world order, the Psalmist at first resists his loss. This resonates with “God’s impact” (Iain Matthew), resulting in a disorienting “impasse” (Constance Fitzgerald’s interpretation of St John of the Cross). The Psalmist bargains with God, with offers of greater fidelity. Only after conceding to utter helplessness, does God enter with surprising newness. God restores the spirit, gives a new heart, inspires celebration, providing a new self that is anchored in God, which can no longer be threatened by lies about its deficiency.

## 7. Conclusion

Thérèse’s anthropological sense may be seen as a recovery of a dialectic found in Hebrew Scriptures – a self in need of preservation when confronted by the most primal threat. She identifies with the poor one crying out to God: do not separate yourself from us who you have created. Returning to the experience of God favouring the poor one – as an advocate (defender) for self-becoming – within a relationship, supplies us with a cohesive anthropology. By applying an informed phenomenology of human development and self-becoming to Thérèse’s experience of the God-human relation, we find an analogical God-human conception that integrates the experience of God’s grace as one pervading desire (X), and ‘becoming’ in layers through outside influences (Z). Thérèse’s experience of God as relational, developing and dialogic, transcends X and Z’s confusion of substantial and relational orders. Responding to God on the basis of relation, leads her to view the ends of the “savage,” “feeble child” or “field flower” as serving relation; fulfilling her sensed role, or end, via these images, perpetuates the

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<sup>213</sup> Walter Brueggemann uses Paul Ricoeur, *Conflict* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1974), *Freedom and Nature* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1966), and *Freud and Philosophy* (New haven: Yale University, 1970), in Walter Brueggeman, “Psalms and the Life of Faith: a Suggested Typology,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17 (1980) pp3-32.



possibility for relation with God.<sup>214</sup> Finally, as we will explore in Chapter Eight, Thérèse identifies limitation (lowliness) as central to the transaction of grace. God entering limitedness signifies its importance with respect to love: limitedness (whose potential is via relation) occupies the matrix of the demonstration of love, and “the whole [subsequent] psychic process by which persons become selves.”<sup>215</sup> We turn to Chapter Eight where we recount Thérèse’s specific experience in four forms.

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<sup>214</sup> When Thérèse uses inanimate things to represent her self, such as, flower or brush, she shares Pauline’s images (which focus on the resigned abandon of Jansenism), but, for Thérèse, these represent her particular sense of simplicity and helplessness under the overarching metaphor of ‘child’. They are sub- metaphors that colour what sort of child she is – a three year old: “...even though I have on my conscience all the sins that can be committed, I would go, my heart filled with sorrow... with confidence and love...” *Story of a Soul*, 259. (See letters of May 14, 21, 1877, *Letters of St Thérèse, Volume II*, 1223-1225).

<sup>215</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations theory*, 115.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Towards a Thérésian Theological Anthropology

In Chapter Seven, we saw that thinking about our union with God, in terms of higher knowing and acting (scholasticism), instead of being-in-relation (Macmurray), could lead to defining grace in categories of objective increases in an individual person. In this chapter we investigate whether Thérèse shifts the understanding of grace from ‘objective increases’ to ‘being-in-relation’. Thérèse, in *Man A*, uses the image of growing up (mastery over her emotion – an objective increase) to describe her “conversion.”<sup>1</sup> In *Man B*, observing she cannot grow up (from audacious, foolish love), she characterizes her relation with God as not growing up, and uses the image of being a child. ‘Limitation’, conquered in the first way of thinking, is prized in the second.<sup>2</sup> Needing, and looking out for God’s gracious help leads to enjoying God’s presence, to being with God, reminiscent of her childhood relating. While McDargh’s method acknowledges the centrality of being in relation to faith-development, do any post-Thérésian theologies do likewise in response to Thérèse’s thought?

This chapter will begin with three post-Thérèse theologians’ understandings of ‘the experience of God’.<sup>3</sup> It will then discuss Lonergan’s method in theology, contrasting his thought with Thérèse’s, and proceed to use his “functions of meaning” in order to describe her experience as theology. Where an ‘objective increase’ is shown in Thérèse in spiritual maturity<sup>4</sup> and an “about face” in conversion,<sup>5</sup> we show Thérèse’s self-imaging reflects her desire *to be-in-relation*. To be-in-relation means to become a child, not any child, but the one she once was, one who responds to her mother/father with confidence rather than fear.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Growing up’, in turn, enabled her to become a Carmelite, to enter her vocation, Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 97. Rarely using the word “conversion” in relation to herself, Thérèse repeats her *Man A* conversion description to Bellière (writing in October, 1896). “Without this change, I would have had to remain for years in the world.” Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1016.

<sup>2</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 208.

<sup>3</sup> This approach will be taken from Anthony J. Kelly and Francis J. Moloney in *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Joann Wolski Conn. “Rereading Spiritual Classics Thérèse of Lisieux: Far from Spiritual Childhood.” *Spiritus* 6/1 (2006), 68-89.

<sup>5</sup> Joann Wolski Conn & Walter E. Conn, “Conversion as Self-Transcendence Exemplified in the Life of St Thérèse of Lisieux.” *Spirituality Today* 34/4 (Winter 1982), 303- 311.

Finally, we look for evidence of Thérèse's thought in von Balthasar, who uses Thérèse's sense of vocation in his idea of personhood, and notes similar themes as Thérèse in Christ's call to "become a child."

### 1. Some Theological Understandings of "the Experience of God"

Kelly and Moloney present four theological understandings of experiencing God, that of a) Aquinas (1225-1274), b) Karl Rahner (1904-1984), c) von Balthasar (1905-1988), and d) Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), which are respectively: (a) gifts of "charity and infused wisdom;" b) openness to the experience of the transcendent; c) a progressing dispossession of the self, and d) a radical "being in love."<sup>6</sup> Thérèse subscribes to Aquinas's increases, as the happy fruit of relation. Rahner's supernatural existential is hinted at in Thérèse's "empty hands" (seen in Ruth Burrows' use of this expression).<sup>7</sup> Von Balthasar interprets Thérèse as an exceptional instance of progressively looking away from her self and toward God, in a self-surrendering mission.<sup>8</sup> Finally, writers have used Thérèse to exemplify Lonergan's dimensions of conversion.<sup>9</sup>

#### a. Post Thérésian Developments

We offer a brief overview of de Lubac (1896-1991), Rahner, von Balthasar, and Lonergan, to see if they resolved the unacknowledged theological issues of Thérèse's time – lack of dynamism (little sense of the fact of, and the good of the human as developing), the subject as an authority of their own authenticity, and relationality (*being-in-relation* is an objective, which leads to the activity of graciousness). A change began with de Lubac.<sup>10</sup> Feeling that the concept of pure nature (two distinct levels of nature) was alienating Catholics, and fuelling

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<sup>6</sup> Kelly and Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, 4-8.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Ruth Burrows, "If you Knew the Gift of God," *The Pastoral Review*, September 2008, [http://www.thepastoralreview.org/cgi-bin/archive\\_db.cgi?priestsppl-00051](http://www.thepastoralreview.org/cgi-bin/archive_db.cgi?priestsppl-00051) on 12/09/2008. Also, "Amen: The Human Response to God." *The Way* 43/2 (April 2004), 78-90.

<sup>8</sup> See Mary Frohlich, "Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne D'Arc: History, Memory, and Interiority in the Experience of Vocation." *Spiritus* 6/2 (Fall 2006), 173-194. Hermeneutics sensitive to Thérèse's use of symbol have been designed to analyse experience of God the way Thérèse understood it.

<sup>9</sup> See Dorothy Day, *Thérèse: A Life of Thérèse of Lisieux* (Springfield IL: Templegate Publishers, 1987); Wolski Conn and Robert Doran; Tom Ryan.

<sup>10</sup> De Lubac responded openly to the flourishing of atheistic humanism against an anti-modernist Church stance. Mulcahy, "Not Everything is Grace," 17. See Henri de Lubac. *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1950).

atheistic humanism, de Lubac tried to restore the cohesion of human 'being' by removing a superstructure of grace, and offering one God-intended passage.<sup>11</sup> He proposed that all are constituted by a desire for God (God-desire constitutive of human nature); God freely constitutes humanity this way when choosing to destine all for union with God.<sup>12</sup> Human nature, for de Lubac, is intrinsically disposed to reach for, and attain God, which is effected through grace.<sup>13</sup> All creatures are intrinsically God-oriented; Aquinas's fundamental 'desire to know' is conflated with the 'desire to know God'.<sup>14</sup>

To maintain continuity with Aquinas, Rahner asserted that pure nature *was* needed to preserve grace as a gift. Taking up the idea of an unconditioned existential, all in concrete history are endowed with a supernatural desire for God/a God-orientation/capacity for God (a sense conveying grace is always and everywhere on offer) – a “supernatural existential” – without which we are still human.<sup>15</sup> To overcome the impersonal categories that led to extrinsicism, Rahner described grace more relationally: as God's Self-communication. For Rahner, the *way* God is universally available is via a human capacity for God, with grace as God's Self-communication. Rahner (following Rousselot and Maréchal) begins with a transcendental notion from Kant: experience is (*a priori*) configured in the “ontological construction of the human knower.”<sup>16</sup> For Rahner, this ontological construction points to a transcendental conception broader than Kant's mere cognition; it points to the human as a “volitional, cognitional, affectional, composite, who bears a fundamental openness to God,

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Bernard Mulcahy, OP, “Not Everything is Grace: Aquinas's Notion of “Pure Nature” and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac and of radical Orthodoxy,” Doctoral Thesis submitted to the Australian Catholic University, 2008. [dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adu-acuyp238.../index.html](http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adu-acuyp238.../index.html). Accessed 25 Sept 2011, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Neil Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* (Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books, 2007), 118.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen J. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought*. (Collegeville Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, Redemption*, 119.

<sup>15</sup> Rahner states that human desire for God is constitutive of human nature but not essential to it. If our yearning for God comes *through* our original sense of unity and dependence on another (our universal prenatal experience), Rahner needs to explain its non-essentiality. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, Redemption*, 120-121.

<sup>16</sup> Jessica Wormley Murdoch, *Foundations of Christian Faith? Karl Rahner's Transcendental Hermeneutics and the Post Modern Critique*, (Maryland: UMI, ProQuest LLC, 2008), 16, 18.

and is constituted in such a way as to possess this God in the mode of offer (supernatural existential).”<sup>17</sup> Rahner (following Hegel) takes the human as

a union of the whole person in its ground with Absolute Mystery. Thus, “transcendence” means the condition of possibility of human knowing, which *necessarily* includes the dynamism toward the infinite God.<sup>18</sup>

Hence he begins with the human person as a question. Accepting the notion of a synthetic *a priori* whose judgments can access “the noumenal realm,” Rahner avoids the

Kantian “dichotomies between sensibility and understanding, understanding and reason, and theoretical and practical reason.” ...[as] the question about being already intimates a nascent knowledge of absolute being. Hence ...the investigation of human nature points to God as the ground for human knowing.<sup>19</sup>

Rahner introduces dynamism in “sublation,” the awareness of “transcendental experience” (annihilation, elevation, and preservation).<sup>20</sup> Von Balthasar, together with Rahner and de Lubac, stated that God created humanity with the sole intention of final union with Godself.<sup>21</sup> Human life has only this end in view, with gift to be understood relationally (to a beneficiary), never as an “absolute” (an abstraction).<sup>22</sup> Humanity finds itself in a supernatural order constituted by its necessity to actually possess grace, ordered by God this way and no

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<sup>17</sup> Murdoch, *Foundations of Christian Faith?* 18-19.

<sup>18</sup> Murdoch, *Foundations of Christian Faith?* 19.

<sup>19</sup> Murdoch, *Foundations of Christian Faith?* 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> Rahner imports *Aufheben* from Hegel, who uses to describe the transcending resolution to a dialectic’s conflict. William Friedrich Hegel, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 15. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/>. Accessed on 27/01/2012. Rahner moved from tradition to contemporary theology by posing theology’s “own questions to revelatory texts,” which “annihilates the original question meaning binary, and elevates it to a new understanding, and then preserves the truth by this process.” Murdoch, *Foundations of the Christian Faith?*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 15.

<sup>22</sup> “Grace is for a nature and to a nature; logically, if not chronologically, grace always presupposes a nature” Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Karl Barth: Darstellung und Deutung Seiner Theologie* (Cologne: J Hegner, 1951), 291, in Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 116.

other.<sup>23</sup> While humans tender an “otherwise” reality from their perspective “below,” life’s meaning and end comes “from above” (God’s perspective).<sup>24</sup>

Von Balthasar views nature and grace as necessarily distinct due to their representing others in relation.<sup>25</sup> “The supernatural existential ordering humanity to intimate union with God,” flowing from and expressing God’s divine creative and summoning decree is both, a “reality modifying humanity,” and “a necessary, ontological constituent of humanity’s concrete being, without belonging to its nature.”<sup>26</sup> Grace is only received by nature; grace’s freedom resides in God who is sovereignly free, and it is experienced as an eternally fresh, unexpected “I-thou” encounter.<sup>27</sup> This existence (we apprehend) is the one God chose.<sup>28</sup>

Von Balthasar used Thérèse in a phenomenological study on personhood.<sup>29</sup> Did he also draw from Thérèse to inform his thought on ‘grace’: the mercies of childhood as analogous to God’s grace? In his work, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, von Balthasar points to the young child as representing something distinctive.<sup>30</sup> Our early years resemble a “sphere of original wholeness and health;” human and divine goodness are felt as one.<sup>31</sup> Upon entering

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<sup>23</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 116, 117-118. At 119, God’s gratuity from above is maintained because God chose this order.

<sup>24</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 119.

<sup>25</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 122.

<sup>26</sup> Von Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, 454 in Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 122, 123.

<sup>27</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 124.

<sup>28</sup> With Rahner, von Balthasar holds that there has never been a “pure nature” in history; God’s grace has always been present, and there has always been only one “telos.” Pure nature is retained to prevent nature and the divine from collapsing into each other. Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 129.

<sup>29</sup> See Victoria S. Harrison, “Personal identity and Integration: von Balthasar’s Phenomenology of Human Holiness,” *Heythrop Journal*, XL (1999), pp 424-437, 429-435. For von Balthasar, Thérèse instantiates the call to die and be born again, meaning all ‘untruth’ in the ‘personality’ has to die making way for ‘personhood’ which is God’s ‘truth’. Finding Thérèse’s humility brings out her ‘truth’, he views humility as underpinning and equating truth; through humility a person arrives at precisely what they are in “God’s idea.” By living God’s idea, a person brings Christ back into the world. This leads to personal integration. Uniquely self-conscious, both limited and living within limits, yet open to the unlimited, the human’s radically different constituents of “spirit” and “nature” are integrated through “relation” to God – where wholeness may be found.

<sup>30</sup> Von Balthasar’s beginning point here is observing Jesus’ statements, “Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a child will not enter it” (Mk: 10: 15), and “Whoever welcomes such a child in my name, welcomes me” (Mt 18: 5). An echo of it is in 1 Cor 14:20. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 9-10, 12.

moral-autonomy, we may experience “definitive breaks” from this sphere, leading us to now feel this sphere’s goodness and truth as arbitrary, unnatural, impositions.<sup>32</sup> Jesus offers a solution: we may again become a child, by God’s “Spirit within our heart” integrating the “treasures of our original condition into our maturity” — enabling us to cry “Abba Father!”<sup>33</sup>

Using a phenomenology of early human development, von Balthasar then describes a archetypical trinitarian dimension in selfhood.<sup>34</sup> From its “very origin the child possesses... an incontrovertible faith instinct,” which provides an incalculable “capital” for absorbing the Christian faith, even after the separation in his consciousness between divine and human goodness.<sup>35</sup> Jesus offers his experience of filiation to others, through living human existence for our sake.<sup>36</sup> ‘Being a child’ involves an abiding looking up to the father “with eternal childlike amazement.”<sup>37</sup> While hard to preserve, “in the depths of the heart...eros can keep alive an awed amazement” at nature’s delights; “[for] the person who is open to the absolute... ‘The Father is greater than I’ lies hidden in all human experiences.”<sup>38</sup> “In everything the human child is dependent on free acts of giving by others: in him, plea and thanks are still indistinguishably one. Because he is needy he is always thankful in his deepest being, before making any... decision to do so.”<sup>39</sup> To ‘be child means to owe [our]

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<sup>31</sup> These “definitive breaks” are “due to original sin.” The infant is defenceless in the presence of powerful adults who might behave in egotistical ways, “unconscious” of the child’s receptivity to values. Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 12-13.

<sup>32</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 13-14. “This is what it means to receive from God the *instinctus Spiritus Sanctus* as Thomas Aquinas calls the gift grace gives the human heart for it to be able to respond to God’s movement of love. ...[the] adult, who has ... recovered at a higher level the concrete spontaneity of the child, is called ... ‘the synthetic child’.”

<sup>34</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 15-25.

<sup>35</sup> “Capital” aligns with the propensity for religious faith that Rizzuto and Mc Dargh refer to (in object relations theory). Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 42.

<sup>36</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 38-40.

<sup>37</sup> Jesus “knows himself to be sheer Gift that is given to itself and which would not exist without the Giver who is distinct from the Gift and who nonetheless gives himself within it. What the Father gives is the capacity to be a self, freedom, and thus autonomy, but an autonomy which can be understood only as a surrender of the self to the other.” Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Again we find *eros*, Hegel’s spirit of learning and exploration. Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 46-47. One of McDargh’s subjects, in a state of prayerful communion with God, reports once again entering such joyful awe over nature, an “oral stage” (mouthing) of learning. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 196-197, 243.

existence to another,” and this truth is never outgrown, because in relation to God we never outgrow our condition as children.<sup>40</sup> Von Balthasar makes no mention of Thérèse, yet this is implied in her writing.

Lonergan, the third post-Thérèse theologian we examine, writes of a “natural desire to see God,” evidenced in the human “search for meaning, truth, and value;” this, a quest for knowing, proportionate to its end, remains a potential obedient to (subject to) reception of grace.<sup>41</sup> Using Rahner’s notion of “sublation,” he states that grace sublates our knowing, that is, it puts all our previous knowing (effable) on a new basis (ineffable) – in service of the beatific vision, preserving the notion of one desire, yet two ends (“proportionate” and “supernatural”).<sup>42</sup>

*b. Was Grace Re-evoked as Relational?*

The above post-Thérèse theologians continue to describe grace as what God gives the human person to enable encounter with Godself. For von Balthasar and Lonergan, grace is the gift that fulfils capacity for that encounter (achieved self-dispossession, or self-transcendence, by ‘falling-in-love’), while for Rahner, grace, more ambiguously, is the apprehension of God’s offered self-communication, the capacity for this (capacity to sense mystery), *and* God’s self-communication itself. While implicit in all three theologies, relation is not a central focus, as it became in Protestant theology.<sup>43</sup> In accommodating Thomistic categories, all three retain elements of grace as ‘substantial’, *something* God provides, and, though softened in a climate of “turn to the subject,” there remains a disjunction with the ‘adjectival’ God-is graceful-to-us associated with felt-experience. We recall that God acts *graciously* in terms of a “Thou-I”

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<sup>39</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 48-49.

<sup>40</sup> Von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, 49.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Intellect’ includes ‘practical knowing’. In the Thomistic tradition, with its roots in Aristotle, this distinction is allied with that between discursive/analytical knowledge and intuitive/non-discursive knowing. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 121.

<sup>42</sup> Keeping with Aquinas, Rahner and von Balthasar, Lonergan preserves the possibility of a graceless world-order. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 122.

<sup>43</sup> “The Reformer’s notion of nature is more existential than substantialist; hence it is understood more in terms of the human relationship with God than in terms of alterations of structures of a prior and continuing existing identity or essence.. The true self is “excentrically” rather than “inwardly” located.” Stephen J. Duffy in “Our Hearts of Darkness: Original Sin Revisited” *Theological Studies* 49 (1968), pp 597-622, 604-605.



relation – where giver and receiver are not merged – and, acting graciously, God *gives* gifts. However, Aristotle’s essentialist influence led to emphasizing *the gift* (life, its telos, and provision for these) and giftedness (capacities, abilities, and vision toward ends: coming to know God in the revelation of Jesus, acquiring virtue, being endowed with charity, and union with God, a final unending bliss). Left as implied was the ‘adjectival’, where God *is* gracious *toward* persons (relation), which *defines* the ‘substantial’ (capacity, ability, transforming events). Substantial graces are only grace inasmuch as an able, more potent one offers these as help to the less able one. Yet while substantial graces carry persons toward levels or tasks of completion, ‘God-as-gracious’ encompasses the entire activity of the able one and the limited one inter-relating (responding to the one who awaits engagement toward fulfilling capacities, producing trust, confidence, joy and gratitude). Further, God, who creates all, created this *propensity* as the matrix and fabric of developing life, the place for ongoing interpersonal communion. *That* God and creation interact *is* grace. We find this in Thérèse’s appreciation of God’s entrance through her limitation.

Alluding to her life and its capacities as ‘given’, reminiscent of God-human dialogues in the ‘Prophetic’ and ‘Wisdom’ literature, Thérèse offers a more biblically based anthropology.<sup>44</sup> Her early experience, containing abundant valuing of her presence, parallels Genesis 1, where life is not incidental, or of dubious worth, but it is accompanied by God’s blessing “it is good” and God’s responsive presence.<sup>45</sup> The gestation-birth-infancy experience configures persons to increasingly become an other, a subject in relation, its realization dependent on another. Thérèse experiences this self-becoming in relation to various mothers, but when abandoned, finds the possibility of being an ‘other’ continues through bestowal of gracious help via analogies of a God-human dyadic relation.

Thérèse’s spiritual milieu leads her to think differently from Genesis 2:18, where God is concerned to give the human an embodied partner to not be “alone.” Beyond family harmony (felt on feast days), Thérèse hopes for union to God in spiritual marriage (the character of the human soul interpreted as feminine), sharing in the more literal practice of women imaging

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<sup>44</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 29-30. For example, at 181, “Your Mercy reaches to the heavens.” Ps 35:6. For Thérèse’s use of Biblical literature, see 305.

<sup>45</sup> Thérèse’s presence was awaited. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1198-1199. She was feted and placed in nature’s bounty. *Story of a Soul*, 30.

themselves as bride united to the male Christ.<sup>46</sup> Immersed in this symbolism, when she reaches puberty and discovers that Jesus needs her, wants her, has a right to her more than any other, and is attracted to her as martyr (Arminjon), she falls in love with him. She draws even closer to Jesus when she discovers her early childhood relating to be her truest, leading her to simply dwell in unity with her Christian family.<sup>47</sup> Before revisiting Thérèse, we introduce Lonergan's method.

## 2. Lonergan's Method in Theology

Bernard Lonergan, a Jesuit priest, philosopher and theologian, like Rahner, approaches the "world of history and human existence" with "meaning and existential responsibility" in the foreground.<sup>48</sup> Where Rahner is concerned with the substantive matters of theology, and offers a reinterpretation of the mystery of a self-communicating God, Lonergan is "concerned with the unveiling of the structural framework that underlies... every thinking operation, and in particular, the theological enterprise," and pursues a method.<sup>49</sup> Noting that

the problem of value judgments cannot be evaded by the theologian, it has to be met head on...

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<sup>46</sup> This was held by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Spiritual marriage, intended as asexual, in uniting in the heart, mind and will of God, was less asexual in the Medieval Beguines, especially in Hadewijch of Antwerp, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete who used the nuptial imagery of the Song of Songs. Thérèse's writing in some ways resembles theirs. See Abby Stoner, "Sisters Between: Gender and Medieval Beguines," 7-9 [http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~epf/journal\\_archive/volume\\_IV\\_no\\_2\\_sp\\_1995/stoner\\_a.pdf](http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~epf/journal_archive/volume_IV_no_2_sp_1995/stoner_a.pdf) accessed 14/01/12. "The notion of virginal perfection is rooted in the consciousness of the primitive Church, and, in fact, helped to establish that consciousness." Its importance "is exemplified in the casual but unequivocal statement of Epiphanius, writing about the year 375, that 'Virginity is the cornerstone of the Church'." John Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 4. Thérèse wrote, "It seems to me this is what [Jesus] must feel the most, ingratitude" from "souls who are consecrated to Him in so absolute a way... Celine, let us ... plant only lilies in our garden... and allow no other flowers, for other flowers can be cultivated by other souls, but it is virgins alone who can give lilies to Jesus..." "... you know that I myself ... think of the Heart of my Spouse is mine alone, just as mine is His alone, and I speak to Him then in the solitude of this delightful heart to heart..." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 708-709. Thérèse echoes Arminjon's request that her heart belongs to Jesus alone. Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, translated by Susan Conroy (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008), 316.

<sup>47</sup> Psalm Ps 133:1. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for kindred to dwell together in unity!" (הִנֵּה מַה טוֹב ( רַמְזָה זְעִים שְׂכָרָה אֶחָיִים גַּם יַחַד is sung at the Shabbat gathering. See *Story of a Soul*, 215.

<sup>48</sup> Lonergan's *Insight* and Rahner's *Geist in Welt* both characterise a "retrieval of being ... through the transcendental structure of knowing." Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2001), 179.

<sup>49</sup> Michael O'Callaghan writes that "Rahner is a theologian concerned with working out the general and special categories of foundational theology. Lonergan is a methodologist concerned with how these categories are to be worked out." Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 179.

Loneragan endeavours to uncover “value judgments along with their assumptions, their implications and their associations,” to offer in the “moral order” some equivalent to natural science in terms of its crucial elements.<sup>50</sup> Toward this, he sets the theologian eight tasks which incorporate the phenomenological, empirical, and deductive operations contemporary scientists employ in their disciplines.<sup>51</sup> Whether Lonergan’s method, which is not open “to revision,” is sensitive to theological issues depends on the adequacy of its categories.<sup>52</sup> For example, are they sensitive to grace as relational? To bring Lonergan’s thought into relief, we contrast his ‘doing theology’ (surrounding “conversion” in the individual) with a relational approach – levels of faith (in relation to an other) – as offered by Fowler. This is followed by an approach from Wolski Conn.

*a. Some Contrasts*

We begin with James W. Fowler (1940), from the more relationally oriented reformed tradition (United Methodist). In a project to discover human “faithing,” and its stages (as described by McDargh), Fowler proposed a pathway of increases, reflecting normative progress in this sphere.<sup>53</sup> While *evaluated* as individuals, persons are seen as representing their relational background. Circumscribing life as developing through fundamental trust, mimesis, pair-bonding, cognitive and skill advancement, value-sensing and mirroring, and identity-emergence,<sup>54</sup> Fowler shows faith stages largely “happen” in response to exterior factors, not to claim passivity, but to emphasize the weight of circumstance in faith: the

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<sup>50</sup> Inside cover, *Method in Theology*. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

<sup>51</sup> The tasks are: “research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications.” Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, xi, 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> “[T]he objectification of the normative pattern of our conscious and intentional operations does not admit to revision.” Or, revision must include conscious attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility. Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 181 -182. See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 18-20.

<sup>53</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 37 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Fowler uses the theories of Erik Erikson (psychosocial development), Jean Piaget (mental development), Lawrence Kohlberg (moral development), and to a lesser degree Robert Selman (on perspective taking). In relation to the nature of faith, he uses Cantwell Smith, Paul Tillich, H. Richard Niebuhr, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Michael Polanyi. Robert L. Browning and Roy A. Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy: An Ecumenical Model* (Birmingham, Alabama; Religious Education Press, 1985), 101.

“from whence” (“What are we finally up against?”).<sup>55</sup> His project, in terms of ‘faithing’, parallels ours of ‘gracing’.

In the Catholic tradition, theological emphasis is on the side of “Towards what?”<sup>56</sup> Joann Wolski Conn, a spiritual director whose concern is in spiritual development, shares this focus. In an article, where she uses a structural framework to promote Thérèse’s spirituality as characterizing maturity, she notes that Erikson’s life-span development is

rooted in tasks that arise inevitably, such as identity and intimacy, whereas advances in structural development may not happen at all. In a structural framework, development is a process of detaching oneself from embeddedness in restrictive relationships in order to love with more realistic self-knowledge and self-donation.<sup>57</sup>

She argues that while holiness might be found in fullness in every developmental stage, a “structural framework” is concerned with holiness in terms of maturity (spirituality as corresponding to psychological advancement), that is, in terms of co-operating “with grace by choices for greater self-knowledge, and surrendering love.”<sup>58</sup> Thus she introduces intentionality: the aim of improvement by deliberation-exertion.<sup>59</sup> Focusing on proficiency in relationship-skills, Wolski Conn searches for an objective increase in Thérèse.<sup>60</sup> Measuring Thérèse’s spiritual advancement, involves seeking evidence of effort that prompted psychological progress.<sup>61</sup> Distanced from the *fact* of persons replicating the duet orchestrated

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<sup>55</sup> John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 41. In the observation of persons occupying aspects of many if not all stages simultaneously, many now accept these ‘states’ as less ‘hierarchically’ progressive.

<sup>56</sup> “From Where?” and “Towards What?” are McDargh’s categories. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 41-44.

<sup>57</sup> Wolski Conn, “Far From Spiritual Childhood,” 69-70. At 85, Wolski Conn suggests “Milestones for Possible Self-Development,” adapted from Elizabeth Liebert *Changing Life Patterns* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), using Jane Loevinger, *Ego Development* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976), and Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>58</sup> Wolski Conn, “Far From Spiritual Childhood,” 69-70.

<sup>59</sup> Wolski Conn finds a shift in maturity: “within four years (1894-1897) Thérèse’s ‘little way’ underwent profound transformation.” Wolski Conn, “Far From Spiritual Childhood,” 78.

<sup>60</sup> “Though at first the ‘little way’ seems to espouse a romantic notion of childhood free of effort, on closer inspection this way emerges as the fruit of painful discernment, daring self-awareness, and generous self-donation.” Wolski Conn, “Far From Spiritual Childhood,” 84.

<sup>61</sup> Spiritual advancement is inseparable from and mutually supportive of psychological development if both are interpreted as “a process of differentiation for the sake of relationships that are ever more inclusive, complex and mutual.” Wolski Conn then seeks to demonstrate Thérèse moving toward a sense of mutual autonomy. (Wolski Conn, “Far From Spiritual Childhood,” 68, 77, 84). Wolski Conn, however does not take into account

by their ‘other’ in infancy, Wolski Conn concludes that Thérèse’s activity as “far from childhood.” Perhaps it is truer to say that Thérèse aimed to repeat the activity of childhood (confident trust, mutuality, magnanimity, sense of potency) in *circumstances* far from childhood (now tempted to suspicion, striving, and control).<sup>62</sup>

Where Wolski Conn places spiritual development in the realm of exertion, beyond ‘involuntary’ responses, Lonergan places intention-willing as inherent in human development. Lonergan bases his method for doing theology on individual cognitive progress as corresponding to advancing human consciousness in history. He is eager for his method to be “dynamic” (process sensitive, transcultural, meeting the diverse specializations in contemporary theology, and applicable to the progress of theology in history) and “transcendental” (concerned with the metaphysical: the “unrestricted” forward reach of human enquiry, representing the “unfolding of a single thrust, the *eros* of the human spirit”).<sup>63</sup> Acknowledging the developing character of this world resolves issues arising from the static Greek world-view.<sup>64</sup> Influenced by Hegel’s dialectic, Lonergan aligns the developing cognition of the individual (entailing four levels of consciousness), with a societal dialectic, where new phases of knowing resolve, or sublimate, the insufficiency and conflict in previous way of knowing.<sup>65</sup>

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the many letters written by Thérèse pressuring Celine to become a Carmelite at Lisieux (so that they might resume Thérèse’s happy memory of their spiritual bond) See Thérèse’s letters (LT 122, 129, 132, 135, 137, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 157, 161), *Letters of St Thérèse, Volume II*, 708-851. It also leads to Wolski Conn implying that Thérèse attempts to interact with the “unbelievers” whose table she shares, when Thérèse does not interact with any unbelievers in a concrete or physical way.

<sup>62</sup> Wolski Conn, “Far From Spiritual Childhood.” 84.

<sup>63</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 125, 13. Lonergan’s “transcendental” aspect echoes Georg Hegel’s (1770-1831) romantic idealist position. See Coppleston, *A History of Philosophy: Volume VII*, 184, 199, 216-230.

<sup>64</sup> The “immobility of the Aristotelian ideal” conflicts with developing natural and human science, dogma, and theology. “In harmony with all development is the human mind itself which effects the developments.” Lonergan follows the idea of advancing historical consciousness from the “German Historical School.” Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 24, 84-85.

<sup>65</sup> Lonergan refers to Rahner’s use of ‘sublation’: “what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering from the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.” Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 141. Here Lonergan and Rahner are concerned to preserve theological tradition. See Murdoch, *Foundations of the Christian Faith?*, 33. Lonergan’s four levels of consciousness are: sense data apprehension and language, common sense/undifferentiated consciousness, theory, and self-appropriation of differentiated consciousness. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 84-85. See Petillo’s discussion on this. L. Matthew Petillo, “The theological problem of grace and experience: a lonerganian perspective,” *Theological Studies* 71.3 (2010) 586+, 5.

Lonergan sees the trajectory of human cognitive development as drawn by intentions.<sup>66</sup> He asserts that while humans share “empirical consciousness” with animals, for humans this serves as a “substratum” for particular intentions, to be attentive, rational, reasoning, and responsible, abiding operations underpinning its progress.<sup>67</sup> These “precepts”, he emphasizes, are an *a priori* drive; given intentions produce effort – we are not spontaneous responses to relationships or circumstances, but we are born aspiring, and must culture it further.<sup>68</sup> For Lonergan, a sense of ‘what ought to be’ (intention) supersedes the animal ‘what is’. Further, as higher beings, humans, consistent with these evident operations, should self-consciously strive to “be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible” – strikingly similar to Ignatian practice.<sup>69</sup> The activity of theology, for Lonergan, entails consciousness-heightened rational intentional subjects evaluating themselves, others, and human history. Relation, which John Macmurray and Martin Buber view is the primary goal that human agency is directed to, and which Erikson, Winnicott, and Fowler, view is critical for normative development, is for Lonergan simply the fabric or context of human life.<sup>70</sup>

Lonergan thus defines the theologian as a subject who heightens their conscious mind to reveal their intentional operations, so to answer, “What am I doing when I am knowing? Why

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<sup>66</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 8, 12. He notes that these intentions have many “objects.”

<sup>67</sup> Aristotle’s (and Aquinas’s) hierarchical taxonomy is evident here. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 10, 53.

<sup>68</sup> Lonergan stresses the necessity of effort in understanding. “[A]bsence of the effort to understand is constitutive of stupidity;” neglect of critical reflection “constitutes silliness.” Lonergan, who couples “behaviourists” with “positivists,” later refers to the dissimilarity between rats and humans (alluding to B. F. Skinner’s behaviourism), an undisclosed apologetic against behaviour as the sum of environmental conditioning, the threat of scientism in the American context. Lonergan, *Method*, 18, 16, 248-249. Skinner represented an extreme pole of behaviourism – yet behavioural science, in its attention to human behaviour, became a valuable approach to collecting data on normative behaviour, showing conditioning as a significant influence.

<sup>69</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 9. Rahner views the human as a “volitional, cognitional, affectional, composite.” Murdoch, *Foundations of the Christian Faith?* 18. Here is a meeting of Jesuit and German idealist lenses. There is a similarity between Lonergan’s imperatives and Ignatian spirituality. On ‘interiority’, Brian O’Leary SJ quotes from Cardinal Martini SJ, José M. de Vera S.J, *Jesuits: yearbook of the Society of Jesus* (General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2006), “there is one especially salient message Ignatius can give us: the great value of interiority. I mean by this everything that has to do with the sphere of the heart, of deep intentionality, of decisions made from within.” “The Call to Interiority” Catholic Ireland Net. <http://www.catholicireland.net/spirituality/ignatian/976-the-call-to-interiority> accessed 10/01/12. On “contemplation in action” see: See Ignatian Spirituality, Society of Jesus Oregon Province, <http://www.nwjesuits.org/JesuitSpirituality/IgnatianSpirituality.html>, accessed 24/12/2011

<sup>70</sup> Martin Buber views the human as an inherently relation-seeking subject. He places relation as primary: “Man becomes an I through a You.” See Buber’s discussion on the human person as primarily a relation-seeking being. Buber, *I and Thou*, 77-79.

is that knowing? What do I know when I do it?”<sup>71</sup> This proactive element has been welcomed by those in the discipline of spirituality like Mary Frohlich. In “Critical Interiority,” she notes the activity of “critical interiority” (“an agent of one’s own destiny reaching toward “the fullness of life,” as distinct from a “mere billiard ball knocked around by circumstances”) following Lonergan’s self-attentive imperatives.<sup>72</sup> Frohlich interprets Lonergan’s knowing “what we are doing when we are doing it” as consciously appropriating “the inner data of our consciousness at work.”<sup>73</sup> Thérèse engages in this at the level of making sense of her life, and, further, to express a True Self.<sup>74</sup>

Lonergan’s epistemological and cognitive dimensions are aimed to interact with theology’s concerns, but we wonder whether his means lead to an ‘I-it’ project, subverting theology’s *raison d’être* – Save me from death! Help me live! Hold me; remain with me; feed me! Why do I live? Who am I? Where did I come from? Where will it end? Why will it end? – the ‘I-thou’ project of Hebrew Scripture.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, does resolution of the ‘I-Thou’ quest render intellectual evaluation of it superfluous? Finally, Lonergan’s focus on ‘conversion’, with its cognitive connotation from Christian Scripture, appears to be to the detriment of earlier Scriptural expressions, such as, ‘change of heart’ and ‘repent’, or ‘turn away from sin’, sin as forgetting God who once helped us – analogous to remembering the mercies of childhood.

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<sup>71</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 24-25.

<sup>72</sup> Frohlich views spirituality as dealing “with the stories of such events and the choices they engender in concrete human lives,” where they are felt as “peak moments, conviction, and self appropriation... [and] unknowing;” as with “the living and concrete human person in dynamic transformation towards the fullness of Christ.” Mary M. Frohlich, “Critical Interiority.” *Spiritus* 7 (2007) pp77-81, 77-79.

<sup>73</sup> Frohlich, “Critical Interiority,” 78.

<sup>74</sup> In felt-powerlessness, Thérèse often concedes to God as controlling all. Clarke notes when Thérèse helped the bursar, “several Sisters... never ceased repeating that she was doing nothing, that she seemed to have come to Carmel to amuse herself.” Thérèse writes to Celine in 1893, “I will pray for her [a deceitful maid]; perhaps were I in her place, I would be less good than she is, and perhaps, too, she would have already been a great saint if she had received one half of the graces God has granted to me. ... Jesus is pleased to shower His gifts on some of his creatures ... to attract other hearts to Himself ... when... attained, He makes those external gifts disappear... He despoils the souls dearest to Him. ...these poor little souls ... [feel] they are good for nothing since they receive all from others and can give nothing. But it is not so: the *essence* of their *being* is working in secret.” She adopts Arminjon’s concept of adversaries, and God’s later vindication of her value. *Letters of St Thérèse Volume II*, 813-815.

<sup>75</sup> Using Archibald MacLeish’s play *J.B.* (a modern Job), Dunn illustrates limit experiences, where persons “fan into flame ... something within” to “find the strength to go on, to continue the search for “the meaning of it all”.” Edmund J. Dunn, *What is Theology? Foundational and Moral* (Mystic: Twenty-Third, 1998), 7-10.

b. Lonergan's Thought on Cognition

As he declared value-acquisition as critical to his aim, we expect Lonergan to begin with value-acquisition in human development (the origin of values as integral to evaluating values), but his account of human development is limited to Piaget's intellectual development (skill-formation), Scheler's observations of an original "we," and a mention of the phenomenon of 'being-in-love'. While asserting that "feelings" give

intentional consciousness is mass, momentum, drive, power. Without these.. our knowing and deciding would be paper thin,"<sup>76</sup>

Lonergan passes over their genesis in relation, observing only that they arise spontaneously, then are fostered, modified and educated. He describes one feeling worthy of fostering, a couple's being-in-love (serving to form a permanent and secure "we"), then turns to a feeling which ought not be fostered, to "ressentiment," a (re-felt) hostility toward the values of one's superior resulting in "a distortion of the other's whole scale of values."<sup>77</sup>

To equip the theologian with methodological tools, Lonergan lists the components of meaning. Adding 'intersubjective', 'linguistic' and 'symbolic', to 'rational' and 'intentional', indicating humanity's relational context, he describes a process: sense data provokes inquiry; inquiry leads to understanding, and understanding to language.<sup>78</sup> Accumulated insights supply the background for "critical" reasoning, and mounting data produces a concern for truth ("what is or is not so"), leading persons to meet "one another in a common concern for

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<sup>76</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Using Scheler's meaning of this expression, Lonergan concludes: that this distortion might spread through "a whole epoch." See Manfred S. Frings, *Max Scheler: A Concise Introduction into the World of a Great Thinker* (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1965), 81-102. 'Ressentiment' for Nietzsche is the "pessimistic mistrust" in "slave morality." The slave, suspicious of the virtues of the powerful" brings into prominence those qualities which serve to ease his suffering, "pity, the kind and helping hand, the warm heart, patience, industriousness, humility, friendliness," for here are the "means of enduring the burden of existence." Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), 178. Lonergan's preference for Scheler's 1913 existential schema addressing the nineteenth century loss of hierarchical social order ("ressentiment" a socio-economic malaise, a contagion of diminishing social values) over contemporary research on normative affective development reflects his emphasis on societal trends. On feelings, Lonergan advises: take cognizance of one's feelings otherwise "obtuseness, silliness, irresponsibility that gave rise to the feeling one does not want" are left unattended in the "conscious but not objectified." In suggesting that psychoanalysis is to feelings what transcendental method is to knowing (in transcendental method we appropriate our self in terms of knowing, in psychoanalysis our feelings), does he view feelings are not integral to knowing? Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 30-33, 34.

<sup>78</sup> Stating, briefly, that meaning's locus is "intersubjectivity," he lists Scheler's priority of a "we," followed by communicated "feeling, fellow feeling, psychic contagion and emotional identification." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 57-59.



values,” and to organize life on the basis of the precepts “intelligence, reasonableness, and responsible exercise of freedom.”<sup>79</sup>

‘Conversion’ names a change in one’s horizon (toward authenticity), bringing new conclusions.<sup>80</sup> Each of three spheres, intellectual, moral, and affective, has its own mode of conversion, or “self-transcendence.”<sup>81</sup> Unlike ‘intellectual’ and ‘moral’ conversions, which follow advancing phases, ‘religious conversion’ simply arrives. This, a falling-in-love with God, Lonergan observes, sometimes follows intellectual and moral conversion, but is more likely their inspiration.<sup>82</sup> Such an observation begs exploration, but none is offered. For instance, why does “religious-affective knowing’, unlike intellectual and moral progress, involve a different, and pervasive, quality of knowing which parallels an earlier form of operating (immediacy in infancy), in continuity with submerged relational ‘maps’?<sup>83</sup> In the next section, we turn to M. Scott Peck on ‘falling-in-love’ and Reinhold Niebuhr’s thought on ‘knowing as transcendence’.<sup>84</sup>

c. *Love: A Means for Transcendent Knowing*

For Lonergan, persons move from “common sense” to “theory,” then to “interiority,” entering transcendental method when they enter “the realm in which God is known and loved;” one’s capacity for self-transcendence is realized

when one falls in love. Then one becomes being in love.. [O]nce it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 10-11.

<sup>80</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 247-266. Lonergan assigns an order of progression for each object-driven phase (common sense, theory, interiority, self-transcendence).

<sup>81</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 242.

<sup>82</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 242-243.

<sup>83</sup> Lonergan describes ‘symbols’ as the carrier for affective-psychic operations (and includes forms of psychoanalysis available for interpreting them), but again fails to explore symbolic-knowing as originating in relation, or to note its ongoing influence. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 23, 64-65.

<sup>84</sup> Peck, a Christian psychiatrist, aims to dispel the “myth” that there is one person for each, the vehicle for its revelation being “falling in love.” He addresses problems arising from identifying ‘being in love’ with love: dependency, perfect unity, or self-sacrifice.. M. Scott Peck, *A Road Less Travelled: a New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (London: Arrow Books Limited, 1978), 96-98.

<sup>85</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 73-75, 82-83, 105.

Religious conversion is to be “in love in an unrestricted fashion,”

without qualifications or conditions or reservations or limits ... with someone transcendent... real to me from within me.<sup>86</sup>

Lonergan does not explain what he means by “real to me from within me,” but simply asserts fulfilment of intellectual-moral capacities is blissful “knowledge of him,” and the love of God, “not a product of our knowledge and choice,” transvalues our values, and the eyes of that love, transforms our knowing.<sup>87</sup> While elsewhere he asserts that “being-in-love” belongs between “persons that disclose their love to one another,” he tends to speak of a perspective, a surrender or gaining a heart of flesh, from a “gift of grace,” which is horizon changing.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, in speaking of being-in-love as an unsolicitable feeling state, he intuits what is observed by Peck – that it is an involuntary collapse of one’s ego-boundaries,<sup>89</sup> allowing reversion to the height of the heady happiness of mother-infant unity, of free and open response to a sense of the other valuing us to the uttermost, of undifferentiation in power.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105.

<sup>87</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 106, 107. At 109: “[T]he one that fulfils that thrust must be supreme in intelligence truth and goodness. Since he chooses to come to me by a gift of love for him, he himself must be love. Since loving him is loving attention to him, it is prayer, meditation, contemplation” which “overflows into love of all those he loves or might love. Finally...there wells forth a longing for knowledge, while love itself is a longing for union, so for the lover of the unknown beloved the concept of bliss is knowledge of him and union with him.”

<sup>88</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 283- 284, 241 -243. At 241: Love itself is “operative grace” and “effective good works,” coming from that new heart, is “co-operative grace.”

<sup>89</sup> Peck assigns a neutral value to ‘falling-in-love’ as it is not chosen, and, as such, does not ask to be maintained with effort in the face of difficulty. He writes, whilst a feeling “of ecstatic lovingness,” perhaps leading to love, falling-in-love is not love itself, but recalls the infant’s state of undifferentiation with its parent (when I kick my legs, the whole world moves, when I am hungry, the whole world is hungry). When an identity (Peck views the infant has “no identity,” but one could equally say it feels ‘I am everything’) defined by otherness eventuates, by gradually discovering that our will is not the other’s will, that we “are confined to the boundaries” of our “flesh and the limits” of our “power,” a “frail and impotent organism, existing only by co-operation within a group... called society,” in that isolation of separate “identities, boundaries and limits,” we find ourselves lonely. This loneliness, beginning physically (when the infant is hungry, the mother does not always appear), becomes psychic when the child realizes its wish is not the mother’s command, but clings to that “possibility” as “a sweet, sweet dream” even after several years of painful confrontation with one’s own omnipotence.” (Happy extensions of Thérèse’s will include, “mama” with each step, forgiveness, prayers and tucking-in.) M. Scott Peck, *The Road less Travelled*, 89-103.

<sup>90</sup> We “yearn to escape from behind [the] walls [of our identity]... [F]alling in love is a sudden collapse of a section of an individual’s ego boundaries, permitting one to merge his or her identity with that of another ... bringing a sense of the strength of this mutual love such that all darkness will disappear and problems overcome. The sudden release of oneself from oneself, the explosive pouring out of oneself into the beloved, and the dramatic surcease of loneliness accompanying this collapse of ego boundaries is experienced by most of us as ecstatic. We and our beloved are one! Loneliness is no more! ...The experience of merging with the beloved one” echoes “the time when we were merged with our mothers in infancy.” We “re-experience ...omnipotence...

Hence, the feeling of ease in doing things, as if carried on shoulders, *is* an un-anticipatable feeling-state phenomenon. Lonergan's sense of being "held, grasped possessed, owned" by a totally loving other fits this description.<sup>91</sup> Thérèse cultivates this as a feeling-image, likening it to parental grace: being responded to, lifted, carried, given some understanding, strength or hope.

Being-in-love's effect, to draw us into relation, is obscured in Lonergan's list of progresses. Thérèse, thwarted in her efforts to be in relation, turns to the permanent and undemolishable Other, who defends one's identity.<sup>92</sup> The unrepresented self senses God is for *them*. Re-engaging with her God-representations, she finds the face who loves and protects her becoming, and provides her with courage to be herself. It might be said that parents are in love with their infant, and their infant adores them in return. As Thérèse was once in love with parents and sisters who nourished her self, she now is in love with God. (Around Christmas 1886, she falls-in-love with one who is in harmony with her needs, loves, and aims – to become a Carmelite. Arminjon voices 'God's call' to pray for sinners; Carmelites do this; now she feels *God* wants her to become a Carmelite.) In falling-in-love with a God who loves and 'needs' her love, and feeling the familiar pattern of operating this entails, Thérèse retrieves her former happiness, continuing to operate in this pattern even when its rewards fall into darkness.

Peck writes that in the course of everyday living, the reality of separateness from the other in the diversity of desires, tastes, and prejudices, and timing, leads "to the sickening realization" that we "are not one with the beloved... the ego boundaries snap back into place;" one falls out of love.<sup>93</sup> For Peck *love* is an effortful "extension of one's limits or boundaries" to

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All things seem possible! United with our beloved we feel we can conquer all obstacles. We believe the strength of our love will cause the forces of opposition to bow down in submission and melt away." Peck, *A Road Less Travelled*, 92.

<sup>91</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, 242. "Operative grace" could be described as our being wholly carried, and "co-operative" as the hand guiding our effort.

<sup>92</sup> The intensity of God's entrance (psychically) perhaps occurs in relation to the degree of relational/identity destitution. Bernadette Soubirous was on the verge of extinction, when a loving woman-companion appeared to her. Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2000), 44-49.

<sup>93</sup> Peck asserts "Falling in love is not an act of will. It is not a conscious choice" – not only is the feeling unexpected, but it can be "inconvenient and undesirable" if we are "ill-matched" to the object of this feeling. Peck, *A Road Less Travelled*, 93.

include another, but *falling-in-love* is an effortless “temporary collapse of them.”<sup>94</sup> This raises questions. If falling-in-love represents a temporary loss of control, is it worthy of elevation to God’s grace? Does Peck, however, reduce being-in-love (a re-infection of a “sweet, sweet dream” not “completely given up”), to a monadic feeling-state, rather than a dialogue (re-evoked by something associated with its former reality)?<sup>95</sup> Where Lonergan fails to acknowledge that falling-in-love recalls a past reality, Peck fails to represent being-in-love as the possibility of life. He concedes that, though falling-in-love “is an illusion which in no way constitutes real love,” it is “very close to real love, ...potent because it contains a grain of truth.” real love also involves ego boundaries, but rather than their collapse, their effortful extension.<sup>96</sup> Sainthood, Peck argues, cannot be retreated into via regression, yet, perhaps ‘falling in love’ asserts values through the force of its feeling and its expanded boundary, habituating real love.<sup>97</sup>

Lonergan and Thérèse’s ‘being-in-love’, reveal their respective spiritual context and wider social circumstances. Educated and occupying the socially dominant gender, Lonergan was far from destitution of relation or identity. He felt ‘authentic knowing and right judging’, the goal of his Jesuit vocation, came with God’s love, a gift giving wings to one’s belief in “the truths taught by religious tradition,” “fidelity to the word,” and “awe” of God’s “supreme intelligence, truth, reality, righteousness, goodness.”<sup>98</sup> He writes of passing through levels of consciousness. Then, entering interiority, he experiences, “a gift ... cultivated by a life of prayer and denial,” which results in, both, “the cloud of unknowing” and the “intensifying, purifying, clarifying,” of the objectives in all the “realms” he encounters.<sup>99</sup> Lonergan, in effect, here describes Ignatius of Loyola’s aim, to neither retreat into contemplation, nor be wholly taken up by the activity of action, but to combine these.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Peck, *A Road Less Travelled*, 94.

<sup>95</sup> Peck, *A Road Less Travelled*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Peck, *A Road Less Travelled*, 99, 101.

<sup>97</sup> Peck, *A Road Less Travelled*, 102.

<sup>98</sup> Describing love lyrically in it as “without conditions, qualifications, reservations; it is with all one’s heart and all one’s soul, and all one’s strength.” Without limitation, “it does not pertain to this world... It is other-worldly fulfilment, joy, peace, bliss,” in other places Lonergan supplies Pauline texts to illustrate this otherworldly love of God, fellowship, spreading the Christian message, and service to others. Rom 5:5, 8:38ff and Gal 5: 22. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 242, 243, 111, 105-106.

<sup>99</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 266

In contrast, Thérèse, a youngest girl-child ‘abandoned’ by those who most conveyed love toward her, sought rescue from felt-superfluosity. Her in-love experience, reflecting sexual maturation, appears as maternal (defending Jesus from others’ ingratitude), then expands into a quest to love impressively as a martyr virgin spouse.<sup>101</sup> From the height of sexual abandon, she inserts herself into Arminjon’s text of torture, passion and death, positively dripping the milk of magnanimity. The cloistered world she chooses represents the intimacy of God’s bed-chamber, the place of God’s in-and-outgoing, where women have God’s ‘ear’, reflecting marriage in Thérèse’s social context. Later, she nestles into God (as God’s kin, consummated and secure) confident that God can conduct his affairs without her help. She returns to her former confidence in being the effective child-lover of her father (his “queen” to her “king”), unequivocally valued, carried as an infant, engaged by admirers and empowered to impact in return. Her final expression, amid God’s absence, is sheer fidelity. A theology that emphasizes “conversion” to “a living and acting incarnation of the divine will,” in service to God – away from divine-human intercourse – reflects Lonergan and not Thérèse.<sup>102</sup> To clarify this further, we pursue what is submerged in *Method*.

Does Lonergan’s ‘transcending increases in knowing’ toward new heights allude to a Greek classicalist ideal: to participate in God’s knowing? Here we encounter a concept peculiar to ancient Greek thought which was not present in ancient Hebrew thought. Thorlief Boman argues that underlying the two cultures, embedded in language, was an epistemological difference: “dynamism in movement and relation” in Hebrew, contrasts with “stasis in immutable being” in Greek.<sup>103</sup> Hebrew conceptualizing (of such as goodness, grace, and

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<sup>100</sup> Ignatius sought to offer a “service” spirituality, wherein “prayer and religious experience” are not for their “own sake but as a means to seek, find and accomplish God’s will. The link between prayer, abnegation, and reformation of life, and seeking, finding, and executing God’s will (Ex., nos. 170-189)” is distinctive to Ignatian spirituality. It seeks to convert persons to “a living and acting incarnation of the divine will.” Commentators distinguish this from “bridal” spirituality, where “the divine-human intercourse at the soul’s centre is valued above all else.” Michael Downey ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Harvey D. Egan SJ, “Ignatian Spirituality” (Collegeville, Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1993), 523.

<sup>101</sup> Jesus needs her love and sacrifice, a role she feels prepared for. Her need for advocacy continues through felt powerlessness as a child, and as a female, male adults allowing her access to Carmel only on their terms.

<sup>102</sup> Downey, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 523.

<sup>103</sup> Boman argues that this epistemological difference is inherent in the structure and components of the two languages. Hebrew thinking on beauty was in terms of a moral dynamic (faithfulness), while Greek, in terms of beauty’s appearance ‘at rest’, represented in a scene or object. The ancient Hebrews, experiencing existence “by hearing and perceiving,” were concerned with material, motion, impressions, meanings, time, and psychological understanding; the Greek experience of “seeing” were concerned with form, rest, appearance, space, place, and logical thinking. In much Greek thought, *being* was inherently immovable and immutable; all becoming and

beauty) tended to be relational-dynamic, while Greek conceptualization, object/principle-static, or visual-apprehension. The first relates to “I-thou,” the second, Bruno Forte suggests, to conquering.<sup>104</sup>

Reinhold Niebuhr investigates this in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*.<sup>105</sup> Humans self-transcend through their “capacity for horizontal perspectives over the wide world, made possible by the height at which the human spirit is able to survey the scene. This height is none other than the human capacity to know God.” Niebuhr, however “recoils from making this capacity the basis for any mystical union with God...”<sup>106</sup> Naming two poles of sin, on one side, imagining ourselves as all spirit, we fall to pride over our knowing, and on the other, holding ourselves as physical and focusing on our bodily self alone we fall to anxiety over its limitation and loss, Niebuhr classes the above as falling on the side of pride in our spiritual capacity.<sup>107</sup> Achieving heights belongs to Lonergan’s milieu: the lived-reality of an educated priest-theologian identity, suffering neither the poverty of identity nor of relationships in his

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mere passing away is “equivalent to what is not, about which nothing positive can be said.” Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, translated by Jules L. Moreau (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), Inside cover, 27- 73, 51-52.

<sup>104</sup> Apprehending truth in the Greek mind, Bruno Forte writes, was in terms of “victory of vision” where “sight embraces the object, the thing in its totality;” this “thirst for an all-encompassing vision ... reaches its climax in the total embrace ... in Hegel’s monism of the Spirit.” In Greek thinking, “the vision of beauty, truth” is “exact correspondence between the object and the mind in the all-encompassing act of the idea.” (Thomas Aquinas inherited that Greek thirst to dominate by intellectual power, while, as Forte notes, his sense of the Word made flesh as the irruption of the other, of brokenness as the locus of beauty, is to be found in the Hebrew tradition of faithful relationship). In Hebrew, truth is about mutual fidelity. “[T]ruth stands originally for relationship; it is not you who seeks the truth, but the truth which takes you to itself; it is not you who embraces the idea, but you who listening... let yourself be received by truth. Here it is not ‘cogito ergo sum’ which triumphs, but ‘cogitor ergo sum’: I exist because the other thinks of me, because the other perceives and welcomes me, because the womb of another is my dwelling place - I live in a place which is not mine! The dwelling place, the welcoming womb of the other, is my place-which-is-not-mine: more than seeing the truth, we must do it, dwell in it, and let ourselves be guided into all truth...” Bruno Forte, Paul McPartlan, *The Portal of Beauty: A Theology of Aesthetics*, translated by David Glenday (Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 25-26.

<sup>105</sup> We follow Marjorie Suchocki’s study of Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man, Volume I* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1941, 1964) in *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: the Continuum Publishing Company, 1994).

<sup>106</sup> Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 25.

<sup>107</sup> Niebuhr asserts that all persons theoretically have the resources to respond to the sin of anxiety by trusting in God, and chooses to address the sin in response to the limits of our physicality, “anxiety.” Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*, 25-26.

power to both be recognized and to impact.<sup>108</sup> *Intending* to reason intelligently and to *act* virtuously (as fruitful) presumes (given) power.

Thérèse's lack of power is obvious. Facing the possible extinction of being herself (lover of God, and daughter at play), she sought to *be* in a relation that guaranteed her self-becoming (resuming what she felt achieved this), which involved naming it. Her affinity with Hebrew Scripture arises through her predicament, paralleling the felt-threat of extinction through no heir (the patriarchal stories), or in enslavement, occupation, exile, sickness, defeat or death (expressed by the Psalmist).<sup>109</sup> One's degree of agency influences one's intention-goals; a subliminal 'awareness' draws us to symbols representing solidarity with the threatened self.

*d. Review of Comparing Post-Thérèse Theologies*

Our research began with an account of human development. Sroufe, in a synthesis of behavioural and developmental research and psychoanalytic thought, demonstrates that cognitive and physiological advancement occurs inextricably with affective engagement, an intrinsically relational event. McDargh, responding to William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, investigates the 'irrational' deep senses humans have about God, which come to light as early relational experiences (reflecting the interior constructs described by Winnicott, and elaborated by Rizzuto). The deepest sense in humans (being held, called, rescued, forgiven, given a mission, vindicated), precedes, enlivens and corrects the doctrines and dogmas later encountered.

Lonergan's approach to theology shows sensitivity to the flux of human development, on the basis of a conversion process.<sup>110</sup> Progressing phases, in distinct spheres, finally transform "the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped possessed, owned through a

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<sup>108</sup> "... ever striving for a fuller richer apprehension of the yet unknown ... whole, universe..." Lonergan expresses freedom to withdraw from more "ordinary ways of living," to pursue goodness, truth, understanding, and beauty. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13, 83.

<sup>109</sup> For Thérèse's use of Hebrew Scripture, see *Story of a Soul*, 305.

<sup>110</sup> "Conversion, a movement toward authenticity is not some pure quality, some ...freedom from all oversights, all misunderstanding, all mistakes, all sins. It is ever precarious, ever to be achieved afresh, ever in great part a matter of uncovering still more oversights, acknowledging still further failures to understand, correcting still more mistakes, repenting more and more deeply hidden sins." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 252-266.

total ... love”, providing “a new basis for all valuing.”<sup>111</sup> While Lonergan’s aim is “to understand what human authenticity is and how to appeal to it,” he barely visits the influence of affective-relational development on faith. A focus on communication, reveals persons as passing from “unmediated immediacy” to “mediation by meaning,” to finally return to mediated immediacy of one’s “subjectivity reaching for God,” but does not explore the significance of ‘being-in-love’ as a reprise of infancy experience.<sup>112</sup> Lonergan sees a conversion component to theological investigation. Development “is largely through the resolution of conflicts,” and the investigator’s own “movements towards cognitional and moral self-transcendence” bring empathy to the other’s ambivalence, their work in overcoming conflicts, their conceptions as “misinformed, misunderstood, mistaken.”<sup>113</sup>

*e. Being-in-Relation and Self-becoming as Human Aims in Theology*

Behavioural research supports the idea that when all is well, persons progress to widen the boundaries of their concern, to self-transcend. Following relational fulfilment (good-enough nourishment, positive affective engagement, a safe “holding environment,” the uncompromised presence of a secure pair bond, a “circle of security,” primal others allowing a True Self), children joyously seek to explore their environment. Competency for success in future relationships, including God, is nourished in relation. If relating becomes an eroding experience, the developing child might retreat into the safety of controlling information by converting knowing to ‘it’ items, that is, they will seek to live in an “I-it” world, where they make a thing of themselves and of others.<sup>114</sup> Thérèse experiences relation as good but painfully unreliable. In Carmel, she reports reading less and less, turning to prayer where she

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<sup>111</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 242. For Lonergan, effects connected with relational-affective development are a matter for “depth psychology.” All persons “are subject to bias ... a block or distortion of intellectual development .... There is the bias of unconscious motivation ... There is the bias of individual egoism, and the more powerful blinder of group egoism. Finally, there is the bias of common sense ... [centring on] the particular and the concrete ... [which] usually considers itself omnipotent.” Lonergan believes persons can remove their bias by being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 231.

<sup>112</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240-242.

<sup>113</sup> The work of evaluation is reciprocal; the investigator comes to know him/her self, filling and refining their apprehension of values. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 252- 253.

<sup>114</sup> When relating is felt as a threat, we exclude the ‘you’, reducing ‘knowing’ to information-collection, owning and manipulation; becoming a form of control over a threatening environment. See Buber, “*I and Thou*,” 65. Persons may enter a role to make an object of oneself. For example, to preserve her freedom, in the face of another’s lust, a woman might conceive of a body-part as an object. A person may take up the exaggeratedly automatic movement of a waiter (according to society’s demand), suspending one’s real being. Sartre calls these expressions of “bad faith.” Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 63-64, 55-56, 59-60.



empowers the One who has the capacity to love her into being, increasingly relying on this ever-revealing reliable other.

Searching for the source of Thérèse's sense of mercy we examined emotional development and then used psychoanalysis for our analysis. We saw that affective engagement organizes and integrates all developing functions, including cognitive, and that a dyadic dialogue forms a secure familiar dyadic bond/holding environment, from which to explore, and to become a valued other/self capable of relation. When an intermediate goal (e.g., secure bond) is hindered, it is returned to and repeated.<sup>115</sup> We ascertained that an experience of mercy for the infant involved the able parent sensitively filling its capacities to become a new other, and that Thérèse experienced this. Our exploration of authenticity in the developing self, through McDargh's notion of selfhood (using Winnicott and Rizzutto) and the True Self/False Self paradigm, led us to note an experience in Hebrew Scripture which mirrored the shape of graciousness toward the limited one: God, like a parent, acts as advocate for the weak, threatened self. Limitedness appeared to invite God's gracious initiative. This context for relation, limitedness drawing help, remains an indelible sense in persons, with respect to physical and psychic survival.<sup>116</sup> Self-becoming, belonging to the "erotic thrust of the human spirit," is threatened by lack of grace (insensitivity, lack of restraint, apathy and neglect). When hindered by lack of grace, the self becomes distorted and gives witness to a distorted God (a God who harms). In the Psalms, Wisdom books, and Isaiah, Thérèse finds the self defended. However, Lonergan, testing a measure (for authentic values) that withstands cultural flux, would class these texts from an epoch of distant history as merely primitive.<sup>117</sup>

Influenced by Hegelian progress in consciousness, Lonergan lists advances on earlier forms of thinking; for example, a lack of "historically-mindedness" resulted in the errors of

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<sup>115</sup> Behaviourists observed this pattern in parent-infant behaviour. Sroufe, we recall, acknowledges a relationship between behavioural research and theoretic constructs offered by psychoanalysts and clinical psychologists. The behaviourist, refraining from applying causal mega-claims to data/trials, should not be viewed as representing positivism. Lonergan is in conflict with the behaviourist who, in the 1970's represented life as 'mere sum of behaviour'. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 16, 248-249.

<sup>116</sup> This sense is supported by William James: There persists "in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we might call 'something there'..." McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 117-118.

<sup>117</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 306. For example, Hebrew fidelity represents the symbolic thought of a primitive era.

“anachronism” and “archaism.”<sup>118</sup> However, did these errors arise from imposing Greco-Roman aims onto writings which did not address those aims, bringing to light a problem of identifying genre? Perhaps ‘ancient’ texts addressed events symbolically because this was the most apt approach to God-self or God-community dilemmas.<sup>119</sup> Paul Ricoeur’s psychoanalytic interrogation of Hebrew Scriptures has yielded results, by emphasizing archetypal relational issues in its narrative texts. When investigating Thérèse, we find she most values an early-life affective/religious experience. She treats theoretical knowing, gathering intellectual data and evaluating it, as of little importance, as even representing distraction that harms one’s relationship with God.<sup>120</sup>

We use Lonergan’s categories to organize our findings toward interpreting Thérèse’s activity as theology, taking up his invitation to use his method creatively,<sup>121</sup> noting that Lonergan’s method, less sensitive to Thérèse’s experience than McDargh’s, has been used by other authors to show shifts (in terms of “conversion”) that would not be markedly manifest without its categories.

## 2. Thérèse’s Writing under Lonergan’s Four Forms of Meaning

“Functions,” aiding in theology’s eight tasks, has four dimensions “cognitive, efficient, constitutive, and communicative.”<sup>122</sup> We will use these to convey Thérèse’s thought as

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<sup>118</sup>“Archaism,” a kind of literalist projection of the past onto the present is, however, reflective of a level of faith development present in all times of history. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 312

<sup>119</sup>Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 314. Lonergan’s application of Hegel’s historical-consciousness dialectic across epochs leads away from socio-psychological analysis, such as: did the Roman Church favour clerical writers, notables educated in Greco-Roman classicism, who treated relational matters in a remote, systematizing – conquering – manner?

<sup>120</sup>“The chapter in *Imitation* which speaks of knowledge came frequently to my mind, but I found ways of continuing [to study] all the same...” *Story of a Soul*, 101. “What is the point of great argument about abstruse and difficult matters, when no one will be charged at the judgment with being ignorant of them? It is very foolish of us to neglect what is profitable and necessary... Why do we trouble ourselves with theories about *genera* and *species*?” “When the day of judgment comes we will not be asked what we have read, but what we have done...” Thomas À Kempis, Trans Betty I. Knott, *The Imitation of Christ*, (Great Britain: Collins, Fontana Books, 1963), 41, 42. Thérèse refers to *Imitation* “nearly fifty times” in her writing. Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 321.

<sup>121</sup> See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, inside cover, xii.

<sup>122</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 76-81. At 356: “In so far as meaning is cognitive, what is meant is real. In so far as it is constitutive, it constitutes part of the reality of the one that means: his horizon, his assimilative powers, his knowledge, his values, his character. In so far as it is communicative, it induces in the hearer some

theology.<sup>123</sup> The idea of using “functions” in relation to Thérèse presented itself in Thérèse “writing herself,” in a dramatization of events and thoughts in relation to grace resembling John’s Gospel, “a divinely authored drama ... drawing believers into a dramatic experience.)”<sup>124</sup> Her “little doctrine,” recorded by her sisters as a felt-mission, meant to impress upon Christians in the future, may be also be viewed as a “way” which initiated a culture of response.<sup>125</sup>

(a) *Communicative Meaning*

Communicative meaning involves the intersubjective sharing of an experience. Thérèse joins an established community (the Lisieux Carmelites) which expresses a particular experience of God, at first to affirm it, but eventually she narrates a drama where she finds herself loved by God in her own way, re-authenticating the heart of Lisieux’s operation. This choice communicates the “content” of her faith experience, a felt call to retreat from the world in contrast to engagement with world, representing the dichotomies, “lay” and “religious,” and “active” and “contemplative,” within her Catholic tradition.<sup>126</sup> The “form” of her faith,

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share in the cognitive, constitutive, or effective meaning of the speaker. In so far as it is effective, it persuades or commands others or it directs man’s control over nature.” At 298, Lonergan applies it to “Doctrine” in *Method*.

<sup>123</sup> Kelly and Moloney, for example, use “functions” in *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, to show the dimensions of meaning operating in the Johannine community’s response to the “Word.” They write, i) the cognitive dimension of meaning “implies a definable content grasped in an objective judgment;” ii) “meaning functions in a *constitutive* manner,” by the Word affecting “the experience of human identity,” forming it “in the light of the divine meaning,” and constituting an “awareness of ourselves as “the children of God;” iii) “the meaning of the word is *communicative*” – a shared possession of the Word results in “a community of common experience conviction, and identity;” iv) “the Word is *effective*” in the sense that through “a conversion” it enables “Christians to transform the world in new and hopeful ways.” Kelly and Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, 55-56.

<sup>124</sup> For “writing herself,” see Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux: God’s Gentle Warrior*, 161. For “divinely authored drama,” see Kelly and Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, 9-10. Thérèse’s self-dramatization (for Pauline, Marie, and Marie de Gonzague, in *Story of a Soul*) is due, in part, to writing within the convention of the Carmelite *circulaire* (self-hagiography), and, further, to a desire to be cradled and watched by her family as a way to make her self valued and real. “[F]or some persons God functions as that all accepting other, who...is the guarantor and preserver of that background of safety which makes possible play. ...God serves as a transitional object which allows the person to experience and express the True Self.” In her writing, Thérèse surrounds herself with God as an interested watching “background” to all she does. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 144-5.

<sup>125</sup> Pauline records, “...I think God has been pleased to place things in me which will do good to me and to others.” Thérèse of Lisieux, *Her Last Conversations*, translated by John Clarke (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1997), 131. At 142: With reference to her manuscript, Pauline reports Thérèse as saying: “... there will be something in it for all tastes, except for those in extraordinary ways...”

<sup>126</sup> Thérèse has some awareness of events outside Carmel and, even, engages with the world through prayer. She prays for Pranzini and Loyson, she has ‘met’ in newspaper articles, without meeting them physically, only knowing what is printed about them. Her photo and letters to Diana Vaughan, who didn’t exist, were mediated

discerning and responding to this call, is represented by her writing, especially in *Story of a Soul*. Written under “religious obedience” (unlike her vocation itself, her self-offering, poetry, and familial correspondence), the three manuscripts in *Story of a Soul* comprise of a reply to Marie’s request for her “little doctrine” (*Man B*), a review of her religious life (*Man C*), and a redirection of Pauline’s assignment (*Man A*), to record her reminiscences. An animated telling of childhood reminiscences during recreation (triggering Pauline’s request for them to be written), results in the drama of her ‘home-ward’ journey from a projected God-perspective (an exteriorization of her inner life).<sup>127</sup> Addressed to Pauline, Marie, and Marie de Gonzague, and the heavenly community, this writing appears to be conscious of a further readership, perhaps of its function in supplying material for a *circulaire*.

Whether Thérèse intended, in her writing, to influence only some close to her, or many others, after her death, not known to her, cannot be ascertained. What is certain is that she aimed to proclaim God’s mercy in a subjective light, to move her reader to experience God as she experienced God. While acknowledging there are patterns and purposes not unique to Thérèse (shown by Thomas Nevin’s research on Carmelite *circulaires* of her time), thousands since have ‘felt’, with Thérèse, her sense of God’s mercy – one she hoped would draw others to God. One aim in communicating this experience of God was toward keeping God-within alive and present, to preserve and reinforce the communal bonds which this God stood for.

To Roulland and Bellière, her missionary correspondents, Thérèse emphasized an eschatological dimension, revealing the extent of her felt-potency in relation to God. Conscious of the heavenly community – vividly alive to her – she addressed its inhabitants with a sense of belonging to them.<sup>128</sup> For her, the Church is a movement in time, peopled by living and spirit persons in relation to Jesus.<sup>129</sup> This is evident in her letters to her priest

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by Marie de Gonzague. “Beside her superiors, l’abbé Youf, two other religious made up the narrow circle of her daily contacts.” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 703.

<sup>127</sup> “Marie...said: ‘Ah, mother, what a pity we don’t have this in writing; if you were to ask Sister Thérèse to write her childhood memories for you, what a pleasure this would give us!’” *Story of a Soul*, xv.

<sup>128</sup> For example, *Story of a Soul*, 93, 131-132.

<sup>129</sup> Thérèse writes in 1897; “I really count on not remaining inactive in heaven. My desire is still to work for the Church and for souls. I am asking God for this and I am certain He will answer me. Are not the Angels continually occupied with us...Why would Jesus not allow me to imitate them?” “...your messages for heaven... you will only have to tell me...in a whisper...” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1143-1144.

brothers, where she implements her role as “love at the heart of the Church”<sup>130</sup> (promising to accompany Bellière, as a spirit of encouragement, in his missionary work in Africa.)<sup>131</sup>

(b) *Cognitive Meaning*

‘Cognitive meaning’ is the evaluation of experience into “meaning and language,” to become “a definable content grasped in an objective judgement.”<sup>132</sup> With respect to Thérèse’s thought, this process has not yet been brought to completion, and is our present project. Nevertheless, cognitive meaning is already in her writing in terms of assimilated meaning, ‘objective’ statements, and brief deductions, both categorical and theoretical. Thérèse makes objective assertions when she explains how a doctrine or Scriptural text underpinned an experience, serving as a principle or precedent upon which to rest her experience.<sup>133</sup> She asserts doctrinal positions, interrogates/supports her tradition’s understanding and articulation of its beliefs, via Scripture, and speaks analogically about herself and God, using metaphors ‘proven’ by experience.<sup>134</sup>

In relation to cultural influences, Thérèse affirms Carmelite values coloured by Jansenism (the mortification of humiliations seemed also to serve as a cure for an underlying ‘rebellious condition’) when she accuses herself of infractions (“faults”) to break inclination to self-

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<sup>130</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 194.

<sup>131</sup> Thérèse writes to Bellière, “... I shall be very close to him, I shall see all that is necessary for him, and I shall leave no rest to God if He does not give me all I shall want!... When my dear little brother leaves for Africa, I shall no longer follow him by thought...; my soul will always be with him, and his faith will be able to discover the presence of a little sister whom Jesus gave him... *right up to the last day of his life*. ...you must begin to realize that God has always treated me like a spoiled child.” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1140.

<sup>132</sup> Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 55.

<sup>133</sup> Thérèse argues using Song of Songs 5:2, Mt 17: 19, Jn 11:3, 2:4 to describe how enduring trial (no entry yet into Carmel) ended in great reward (a symbolic gift and affection), *Story of a Soul*, 142. To find what one most desires – the impossible – she bends low and peers in the darkness as Mary did at the tomb of Jesus. Jn 20: 11. *Story of a Soul*, 130.

<sup>134</sup> For example, Thérèse affirms the doctrine of purgatory, as a place of purification of fault after death. She hoped her prayer might shorten another’s suffering in purgatory. “I wanted to deliver all the souls from purgatory.” *Story of a Soul*, 167. Support found in Scripture: The sublimity of her calling was aroused in the grandeur of nature’s beauty which gave her a foretaste of heaven, an idea of “*what Jesus has reserved for those who love Him*.” 1 Cor 2:9. Metaphors: As a plant stores water in its calyx for later use, so Thérèse stores some supply of wisdom or kindness for later. As a plant pulled up with its roots intact has the capacity to regrow in new soil, so her removal, entire, allowed her to put down roots in Carmel (from moss to fertile soil). As her pet linnet tried to imitate its surrogate canary mother in song, so she worked hard to ‘sing’ the same Canticle as Pauline. *Story of a Soul*, 206, 112, 113-114.

will.<sup>135</sup> Desire-for-God (Augustine) draws her to God, its inspiration.<sup>136</sup> Finally, she affirms Arminjon's eschatology: that suffering is the means God chose to arrive at her destination, union with God will take place in a heavenly realm upon resurrection. She concurs with the Augustinian sense of remorse over sin, and Arminjon's 'noble' feelings in being one of the elect,<sup>137</sup> hope in vindication for Catholics, retribution for deriders of the faith, and desire to transcend the lure of 'base' physicality and the shallowness of the present.

Overall, Thérèse's theology, in its cognitive dimension, asserts that God is true to what God makes persons to be and sets in motion. In particular, God has attracted Thérèse by grace by ordaining her circumstances, which includes the desire in her to draw others to God. In the Augustinian X position, grace sustains "human love for God ... the perfection of nature itself," and "[t]he chief reason for grace is not the sublimity of the end sought but the feebleness of the will seeking it."<sup>138</sup> The powers of human nature are unable to be lost, as "they are the very substance of human life," and grace's role is to direct these intrinsic powers to God in all situations, and to support them, lest in their mutability they defect from their true end, God.<sup>139</sup> Thus Thérèse awaits God's grace to make her efforts in obedience, poverty, and chastity effective. Alternatively, she refers to Augustinian-Thomistic Z notions, in being lifted up to an unattainable end, infused by charity, and illuminated by wisdom, by (inexplicable) supernatural help,<sup>140</sup> yet these do not preclude X, as her experience attests to both. Z gives an impression of grace lifting one up upon some completion of effort after which a person can go no further. Thérèse, however, intimates that grace lifts up simply when

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<sup>135</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 138-139. "I was unable to meet her without kissing the floor." *Story of a Soul*, 150, 206.

<sup>136</sup> For "...God cannot inspire unrealizable desires..." (God underlies our desires) echoes Augustine. *Story of a Soul*, 207. "He always made me desire what he wanted to give me." *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1140.

<sup>137</sup> Thérèse is recorded in July 1897 (Thérèse of Lisieux, *Last Conversations*, 102) as saying: "I can't rest as long as there are souls to be saved. But when the angel declares 'Time is no more!' then I will take my rest, because the number of the elect will be complete and because all will have entered into joy and repose." Clarke attributes this, in a footnote, to Apocalypse 10: 6 ("And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them ... and said, "There will be no more delay!"), perhaps unaware of Arminjon's writing: "...human destinies will be brought to a close when... the number of the elect consummated." Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 15.

<sup>138</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 17. Duffy, usefully for us, draws this wording for the X position from John Healey, *Jansenius' Critique of Pure Nature* (Rome: Universities Gregoriana, 1964), 71-77.

<sup>139</sup> Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 17.

<sup>140</sup> For example, *Story of a Soul*, at 179, "certain lights." At 99, "I felt *charity* enter into my soul."

lifting is needed (like an elevator “un ascenseur”), arriving as a response to a call accompanied by willing reliance on help.<sup>141</sup>

Her X position resembles von Balthasar’s “from above” anthropology: God ordains all events, and brings them to completion by his grace. Next to X, Thérèse includes what appears to a Z idea (from Arminjon’s *The End of the Present World*), the “poor savage” and “the child” enjoy a simple end, and not a great one, which pleases God,<sup>142</sup> to support a metaphor which describes how God loves his diverse creatures (satisfying concern over gratuity and justness): God enters the “poor savage” and the child’s heart to humble Godself; such exist for love to become manifest.<sup>143</sup> Grace, in its quality of stooping down (an attribution of God), is Thérèse’s ordering principle here, showing what God’s glory consists of. (This divine condescension or lowering is later echoed in von Balthasar’s kenotic emphasis.) As glasses of varying capacities may all equally achieve fullness via their capacity for being filled,<sup>144</sup> so God ‘conceived of’ fullness of grace in terms of simplicity – representing the fullest in humility, responsiveness, and gratitude. Here Thérèse alludes to the doctrine of “divine exchange,” or the “exchange of natures:” by entering humanity through Jesus, God raises, or divinizes, the human state. In “It is to their hearts [“the child,” “the poor savage”] that God deigns to lower Himself,” Thérèse adds, God does not merely divinize humanity, but the simple (childlike) state.

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<sup>141</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 207 -208. “The elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus!” At 238, “I threw myself in the arms of God as a little child...” and at 239, “I took my place in the arms of Jesus...like the watchman observing the enemy from the highest turret...”

<sup>142</sup> In speaking of God lowering himself into their hearts, Thérèse does not speak of ends in the sense of after-life reward, but in relation to God’s present purpose and pleasure. *Story of a Soul*, 14. Arminjon’s concern is with after-life. The simple one’s end is not *inharmonious* with God. Yet as “vision of God” is “not connatural to Man,” coming in no way “from the forces of nature,” and “does not correspond to any desire or necessity in our hearts,” he assigns them eternal bliss without vision of God, rather than hell, consistent with Abelard’s notion of “Limbo.” Arminjon has human history passing from the “law of nature” to the “Mosaic Law,” to the “law of grace.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 218-219,14.

<sup>143</sup> Ormerod notes that human existence is social and historical, which means it involves “social constructions.” He writes, the “poor savage,” a naive adult, is a romantic notion, popularized by Jean Jacques Rousseau in the myth of the “noble savage,” one “freed from all social and cultural accretions.” Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, Redemption*, 35.

<sup>144</sup> Concerned that all the elect would not be equally glorified in heaven, Thérèse was shown by Pauline that the human person is related to God’s glory like the capacity in a “tumbler” is to water. *Story of a Soul*, 45.

Kelly and Moloney state the *cognitive* dimension “implies a definable content grasped in an objective judgment. It is inherent in faith’s answers to the questions: Who is the one true God? How is God revealed? How is the divine will to be discerned?”<sup>145</sup> To answer this, we turn to Thérèse’s experience of God, constitutive of her faith, where Thérèse’s early-childhood identity-forming experience (producing God-object representations), as felt-knowing, tempers any ‘objective’ religious teaching that threatens her identity.<sup>146</sup>

(c) *Constitutive Meaning*

For Kelly and Moloney, meaning functions in a *constitutive* manner by the Word affecting “the experience of human identity,” forming it “in the light of the divine meaning,” and constituting an awareness of ourselves as “the children of God.” Here we speak of Thérèse’s experience and its recall, through symbolic imaging, as meaning (meaning “constitutes part of the reality of the one that means:” their horizon, assimilative powers, knowledge, values).<sup>147</sup>

In Thérèse’s writing, her experience from earliest memory (embellishing the portraits from her mother’s correspondence to Pauline), we access developmental continuity in an ‘experience of God’, uncommon in analytical accounts of self-God experience in older Catholic literature.<sup>148</sup> Testimonies, to be spiritual, were generally presented from an adult perspective by religious in a monastic setting,<sup>149</sup> in an environment disconnected from

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<sup>145</sup> Kelly and Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, 55.

<sup>146</sup> Her affective-knowing corrects a necessity to be “great” (spectacular) in one’s martyrdom of love for God, to cower on a steep “staircase of fear,” to recite beautiful prayers, to fear God’s justice, and to seek painful obstacles as mortifications. This supports William James. God’s existence is prior to humanity, but experience of God is prior to intellectual operations such as creeds and formulations about God – which “presuppose immediate experiences as their subject matter.” James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 433.

<sup>147</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 356.

<sup>148</sup> Augustine, the most famous Christian self-analyst, in an autobiographical account, influenced by his post-conversion feeling, offers childhood experiences from a somewhat negative perspective to illustrate his theological view. But more positive (and very early) first-hand portraits such as we have from Zélie Martin, Augustine states are unavailable to him. Augustine, *Confessions of St Augustine*, translated by F.J. Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 7-19.

<sup>149</sup> Pierre Abelard’s (1079-1142) *Historia Calamitatum*, Chapter VII, refers to this in Heloise’s opposition to their marriage. Appraising married life as “intolerable annoyances” (citing Paul and Ambrose) and the presence of children bothersome (“whining,” a “noisy confusion,” with nurse’s “lullabies,” and “continual untidiness”), Heloise prefers to be his mistress. Merging philosophy and the religious life as solitary in quality (citing Pythagoras of Samos, in Augustine’s *City of God*, that the philosopher was first identified as a “wise man” due to “virtue”), she reasons a philosopher’s success is connected with theological success, associated with the unmarried state. Accessed 31/12/2011, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/abelard-histcal.asp>.



mothers, babies, sisters, the whole domestic garden of growing human, integral to the experience of God.<sup>150</sup>

It is through her aim to show her life wholly guided and encompassed by God's mercy from its outset, that Thérèse reads her early family life through a theological lens, offering a glimpse of the passage of her religious faith. Her enculturation into the monastic virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience, is revealed, along with the fact that she wanted to be like Pauline,<sup>151</sup> who practiced these toward a hoped for 'espousal' to Jesus. Thérèse recalls, in her early years, a happy freedom to love God, and easy forgiveness, feeling herself allowed to extract forgiveness by a pre-emptive firm confession, the process according to her impression of things.<sup>152</sup> She projects these characteristics onto God;<sup>153</sup> forgiveness is not just hoped for, but confidently relied on, and actively sought.<sup>154</sup>

Though she speaks of a "conversion,"<sup>155</sup> Thérèse describes being attracted to God and a God-oriented life – aiming to become a saint – from her earliest awareness (embedded in a culture which promotes this).<sup>156</sup> There are no divergences from this aim, but experiences of hindrance to it (her illness from 'demonic forces') and feelings that prevent her from looking away from herself (needing praise for her 'selfless' efforts). Thérèse's conversion is not intellectual, turning from a previous knowing, as Augustine turned from Manichaeism to

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<sup>150</sup> This is the environment McDargh explores toward self-becoming, via Winnicott and Rizzuto. See McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 214-236.

<sup>151</sup> "At the age of two," she thinks "I will be a religious." At three, "she wants at times to join in the practices [of virtue];" at four, "I shall be a religious in a cloister." *Letters of St Thérèse, Volume II*, 1220, 1226, 108. "The one who was my ideal from childhood was Pauline." *Story of a Soul*. 20.

<sup>152</sup> *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1224-1225.

<sup>153</sup> God (as a representation) has as much of a developmental history as the historical individual who believes in him or who denies his existence. Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Psychological Foundations of Belief in God*, in James Fowler & Vergote, Antoine et. al. *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity*. NJ: Silver Burdett, 1980), 116-117.

<sup>154</sup> De Meester, Conrad. *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the "Way of Spiritual Childhood" of St Therese of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), 310-321.

<sup>155</sup> In relation to herself, Thérèse seldom uses "conversion:" once in *Story of a Soul* (p 97) and once in a letter to Bellière, where she speaks of St Teresa calling her nuns to be as "strong men", armed ... for war." *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1016.

<sup>156</sup> "I have always wanted to be a saint." *Story of a Soul*, 207. 'Saint' was part of the Martin family day-to-day familiar vocabulary. See *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1201.

Christian beliefs, nor moral, as he forsook his bodily passions.<sup>157</sup> Becoming ‘maturely’ in command of her feelings (and so, her self) to independently own her family values has been described as psychic, affective, or structural.<sup>158</sup> ‘Conversion’ for Thérèse denotes God steering all toward his own “from above” purpose.

In her writing about it, evidence of God in all aspects of Thérèse’s life intensifies, like a pattern becoming visible.<sup>159</sup> “Grace” at Christmas leads to reading *The End of the Present World* (the nourishment of “oil and honey” from God) which invigorates her and initiates a quest for Carmel, via an urge to intercede for sinners for Jesus’ sake. Thérèse’s ‘experiences of God’, revealing her identity-formation, witness to a transparently consistent Thérèse. For example, while penning being as a “child” in *Man A*, she writes in corresponding letters (July 1895) “I who am and want to remain always a child,” and (October 1895) “I am converted and ...too bold in my requests” (“converted” referring to a resumption of her childhood talkativeness).<sup>160</sup> These images, unique to this date, show interaction between felt-remembrances and her current perception and expectations of God.

Thérèse’s writing is an exercise in constituting meaning. She makes sense of the theological doctrines of grace, God’s free election, and end, through affective-knowing, namely, less as truths needing affirmation, than as values that are appreciated.<sup>161</sup> For example, to reach her end she needs to become, by surrender to grace, most perfectly what she is ordained to be, which involves recognizing one’s shape - as this inscribes one’s end (pointing to a “personalist” particularity: her unique history shapes her subjective value.) Being most

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<sup>157</sup>See “Book Three,” “Book Four,” and “Book Five,” *Confessions*, 30-79.

<sup>158</sup> Tom Ryan argues Thérèse’s conversion as affective in Tom Ryan SM. “Psychic Conversion and St Thérèse of Lisieux.” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 22/1 (Jan 2005), 3-18.

<sup>159</sup> Von Balthasar notes this as Thérèse’s emerging sense of mission in Von Balthasar, *Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Mission*.

<sup>160</sup> *Letters of St Thérèse, Volume II*, 908, 916. Also, in July, she writes “remaining as calm as a little child in its mother’s arms...”, and, in October, to Leonie, “...I was not mistaken and even Jesus was content with my desires, my total abandonment.”

<sup>161</sup> In *Man C* Thérèse relates some characteristics of charity which she has encountered that reveal to her God’s “from above” ways. She has discovered, through experience of others’ reception of it, her well-meant behaviour as insufficiently reflecting her good intention: all is not at it appears outwardly. Further, in her practice of daily poverty, chastity, and obedience, Thérèse grasps the purpose of preferring poverty (attributing her perspicuity to illumination), and giving up her will, as a path to interior freedom (confessing that only sometimes she succeeds in practice). *Story of a Soul*, 159, 226-227.

herself in relation to God means to know herself. Knowing herself is attained through the practice of ‘self-forgetting’, which paradoxically evokes self-remembering.<sup>162</sup> Ultimately, however, Thérèse finds her identity (lover of and loved by God) as disconnected from practices, however worthwhile. Initially feeling ‘aspiration to greatness’ as defining her identity in relation to God,<sup>163</sup> Thérèse settles for being ‘indulged by God’, in extravagant spousal gifts like snow, then favour, in permission to sleep, finally returning to being one “dandled on God’s knee” and treated gently (“difficult things not allowed for me”) as a youngest daughter. She once felt great desires augured greatness in action (exclaiming in martyrdom, in Arminjon’s words, ‘let me suffer more!’), but she found greatness not pursuant on great desires. Indeed, to enact great desires (travel to the Saigon Carmel) would render her not-Thérèse (she is to be cosseted and spared from danger). Thérèse acknowledges that invented physical suffering is not to her taste;<sup>164</sup> ‘ordinary’ endurance is heroic enough for her. Yet, while accepting her limits with respect to enduring suffering, Thérèse endures what overtakes her (accepting suffering as from the hand of God), welcoming and surrendering to God in “darkness” and pain, feeling God in God’s absence as much as in physical impact.<sup>165</sup>

Meaning is also constituted for Thérèse through experiencing God in a dialogue. When beset by a problem and asking for help, or after a loving bid, Thérèse awaits an answer, looking out at her physical environment and searching within. God’s reply is felt when unexpected circumstances arise, without manipulation, to meet her expressed desires, such as Celine’s entry into Carmel. This activity points to Lonergan’s “dialectic of transcendence and limitation operating within the individual person,” further explored by Robert Doran, who

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<sup>162</sup> In searching for God, Thérèse “abased herself to nothingness.” There she discovers (remembers) who she most is, ‘lover’. *Story of a Soul*, 194.

<sup>163</sup> Harking back to early feelings of treated as good and adored by her family, Thérèse exteriorizes her desires early – she wants to become great, a great saint, to visibly realize her ample desire.

<sup>164</sup> “...when I am reading certain spiritual treatises in which perfection is shown through a thousand obstacles, surrounded by a crowd of illusions, my poor little mind quickly tires; I close the learned book which is breaking my head and drying up my heart. ... I see it is sufficient to recognize one’s nothingness and to abandon oneself as a child into God’s arms...” *Letters of St Thérèse, Volume II*, 1093-1094.

<sup>165</sup> *Story of a Soul*, Close to death, in great suffering she is recorded as wishing to say with respect to more suffering: “so much the better!” Thérèse of Lisieux, *Last Conversations*, 224. Thérèse, early in life, made a strong connection between suffering and goodness. Rose/Zélie’s face serves as a critical transitional object. Mary Frohlich’s article “Your Face is My Only Homeland,” notes how this gave her a sufficiently strong sense of self, saving her from falling apart during her suffering, and her crisis of faith due to the ‘absence of God.’

speaks of persons seeking purpose in their lives through “the confluence of inner affect and outer events.”<sup>166</sup>

In relation to her dialogue, we note that amid acute desire for relation, when estranged from embodied interaction, a person may conjure up fantastical projections using inner-world images.<sup>167</sup> When inclined toward an absolute listening-other in prayer, however, a person may also encounter their affective memories, consolation, fear, felt-inabilities, self-dissatisfaction, and felt-distance between self and others, to re-represent God through re-engagement with their God-representation. Rather than a move towards the fantastical, there is a deeper and wider engagement with the ‘real.’ While repetitious interaction with one group and their thoughts (Thérèse is largely enclosed by her past relationships) could be detrimental to self-becoming,<sup>168</sup> in facing herself through God (as witness to her authenticity), Thérèse’s inner working is laid bare – we see God at work in her self-becoming, defending her from uselessness, condemnation, and valuelessness.

Thérèse’s ‘constitutive meaning’ has a further element. Her experience of limitation is significant and productive, evoking analogical imagery in terms of calling for a reply from a more able one. In infancy, the able one (Zélie/Rose) represented ‘outside’ help. Sensory-affective responses to help were recorded,<sup>169</sup> making up what Winnicott proposes is an “inner world,” whose symbols have an abiding sustaining quality, serving as an indispensable operating mechanism. When new limitations are encountered, this inner world is entered by way of a prayer conversation, and felt-help from the able one is accessed. Calling to the one whose earlier help constituted grace in a literal-concrete sense generates a renewed felt-

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<sup>166</sup> Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, Redemption*, 31, 60. Referring to Robert Doran, Tom Ryan notes this dialectic of transcendence and limitation as operating between conscious and unconscious. Tom Ryan, “Psychic Conversion and St Thérèse of Lisieux,” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 22/1 (Jan 2005), pp3-18.

<sup>167</sup> Doran states that “to deny the limitation of matter and psyche... [we add: or to live disconnected from its reality] is to invite escape into manic fantasy.” Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, Redemption*, 31. For an example of Thérèse sharing her fantasy, see *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 925-930.

<sup>168</sup> Ormerod uses Silvia Plath’s imagery from “The Bell Jar” (1963): “sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air.”

<sup>169</sup> For example: Zélie made milk available to Thérèse, through her own breasts, bottle, and through Rose; response to Thérèse’s gestures were ensured by proximity through Rose making herself available to Thérèse by securing Thérèse to the cow she was milking, and through Zélie arriving at each step of the staircase.

confidence, or openness to external help. Help arrives in a convergence of the psychological and spiritual.

Experience of limitation calls for grace. Grace lies in between two persons: one needing help limitation and another offering help. Limitation, not the same as suffering evil, is integral to the activity of grace.<sup>170</sup> Emphasis on the giver (whether “uncreated” or “created” grace, or God’s self-communication) leads to the impression that grace might be present regardless of limitation. Thérèse’s understanding of her experience highlights grace as not absolute but as in-relation. Though not precisely as in-between, theologian Romano Guardini (1885-1968) describes grace as an *atmosphere* which is generous, creative and sensitive.<sup>171</sup> Grace is beauty as sensitive to limit. Without limitation in human experience, grace would be irrelevant and superfluous.

From his perspective, Von Balthasar argues that there must be two descriptives (grace and nature) to differentiate between the giver and receiver of grace.<sup>172</sup> We suggest, rather than ‘giving’ as *grace*, and ‘receiving’ as *nature*, viewing giving and receiving as in response to one condition, ‘limitation’. The interplay of giving and receiving manifests God’s grace to humanity. In mutual interchange these positions are adopted in turn by both.<sup>173</sup> *Limitation* calls for giving and receiving: grace is pursuant upon limitation. Thérèse’s analogical thinking, that the small child relates with the parent, via a plaintive appeal,<sup>174</sup> attractive to one who is inclined toward them, suggests that capacity for God is through the characteristic of human limitation. Thus, though the human experience of limitation may be felt as one of

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<sup>170</sup> Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 13.

<sup>171</sup> For Guardini a graced atmosphere is an environment which is free, generous, creative, sensitive and not mechanical, surprising, even contradictory. Romano Guardini, *Freedom, Grace, and Destiny: Three Chapters on the Interpretation of Existence* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), 101-116. It should be kept in mind that Aquinas describes grace, amongst other things, as experiencing “a “certain sweetness” which leads to a level of self-knowledge.”” *Summa Theologica* 1-2 q. 112, a5. (See Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 124.)

<sup>172</sup> See “The Absolute Gratuity of Grace: Hans Urs von Balthasar ‘From Above’,” in Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 122.

<sup>173</sup> John Paul II, discussing marriage, speaks of giving and receiving as represented by both persons in the couple because of the mutual, reciprocal, interpenetration of gifting. Active reception of another’s gift is, itself, a *giving*. The gift giver, in turn, *receives* that active reception. John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston, Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 71.

<sup>174</sup> An analogy is the adult’s attraction to the dilated eyes of a newborn baby – dilated because they are as yet unable to focus (limitation).

deficiency, this is the ground of the human's attractiveness to God (as a baby is to its parent), and its occasion for communion with God. Limitation is the locus for grace, and the very condition of its possibility.

Thérèse's theology, then, is grounded on a strong theme in the Hebrew Scriptures: God is the one called upon by the simple, poor and lowly, the helpless ones, who by their need and openness to help are, metaphorically, children, and, in relation to God's power and responsiveness, existentially, children. Consciousness of limitation and need, in Hebrew Scripture, is the opening for God as the mercifully favouring divine parent God, advocate for those in need,<sup>175</sup> the God who forms a strong identity from within the person as loved, listened to, protected, taught, and sustained.

Within this analogy, Thérèse expresses little concern with preserving God's freedom. The God who declares Godself to *be* love may be counted on as loving. The connection between parent and infant and their developing relationship – the basis for mutual responsiveness – leaves nothing to be desired.<sup>176</sup> The gains felt peculiar to each side of this two-way interaction is a conversation of grace and benediction.<sup>177</sup> The child absorbs parental valuing of him/her and learns skills, and the parent is consoled and healed by the infant's mirroring back the value shown. It is a being-in-love. Attributing this created dynamic to the God-human relation, challenges us to rethink the meaning of limitation in the context of embodied relating, where we are a valued, loved, forgiven, wanted 'I' searching the face of the 'You'. Thérèse, as the Hebrew Scriptures do, places God in a powerfully immanent position: God replies to human need from within, interacting there with persons in an infinite way, reinstating in each generation an inviolable ("it is good" - you are good) self-identity, for the purpose of blessing the other (Jesus' forgiveness was a form of this benediction).<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Exodus 22: 23: "when they [widow or orphan] cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry..."

<sup>176</sup> In searching the physical world to find instances of operations as evidence, for God's truth (flowers provide pleasure through their beauty), Thérèse implicitly affirms the created order as good.

<sup>177</sup> Glenn Morrison, "Building Jewish-Christian Friendship," in a CCJWA (Council for Christians and Jews in Western Australia) lecture delivered 20/09/2011, speaks of the notion of benediction as between persons, in the initiating smile of friendship.

<sup>178</sup> Thérèse's growing conviction about limitation and divine power is reflected in Jesus. In his humanity (Col 1: 19) he receives the fullness of God. Paul prays that we be "filled with the utter fullness of God." (Eph. 3: 19). Interacting in an unrestricted way captures the mystery of how human limitation is *capax dei* – it offers a limitless capacity to share in God's knowing, loving, and joy.

Her experience of God leads Thérèse to fall in love with who she truly is. By meeting the all-powerful other, who loves her without limit; she no longer flees from who she is, from her foibles and neuroses. When she imagines God as sympathetic with all that she desires and in command over all that happens externally, she ‘empowers God’ (waits on God) to bring her undisclosed inner desires to fruition, and to surprise her with unexpected events. Thérèse ascribes a love perspective in her favour, to all that occurs.<sup>179</sup> Conceiving of God as a merciful mother, she views all through what she once felt mercy consist of. As God ordains and governs all, and acts only from tender merciful love, all in the universe may be construed to abide by this natural order of mercy toward limitation (a “confluence of inner affect and outer events”), and God may be felt this way in all.<sup>180</sup>

Thérèse’s spiritual imagining allows the inclusion of existential limits. From her imagining (remarkably like von Balthasar’s later anthropological formulation where he returns to analogical attributions of God), we ascribe intrinsic goodness to this-world limitation (in felt phenomenologies and operations) as a created reality, particularly when understood in relation to God who only loves. If God brings all to good in a spiritual sense (Rom 8: 28), existential parameters, felt as hardship, must also be purposed for good. Processing embodiment, in a single affective subject, where the vulnerability and sensitivity required for nurturing and self-becoming give rise to ‘weakness’, may, through love, be comprehended as *the* ground for relation where hope and fidelity might be expressed, in sum, *the* ultimate realization of love. Grace, found in lifting up, belongs to the human experience of limitation. From the perspective of anthropocentricity (the anthropic principle), limit is God’s principle for relation to occur.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Missing in Peck’s somewhat Pelagian *The Road Less Travelled*, Thérèse holds two notions in tension: virtue based interior work (fruitful in that it reveals to her who she is) against not owning the task of ‘fixing’ herself to be acceptable, because that, she senses, is encompassed by God’s transcendent help – which will come to her by way of affective preconscious operations.

<sup>180</sup> Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 31.

<sup>181</sup>The Anthropic principle is a cosmological principle where all creation evolves, or develops, toward human consciousness. In Teilhard de Chardin’s thinking, the epitome of this is represented by God entering humanity in Christ, the divine exchange. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 25, 76.

f. *Effective Meaning (praxis)*

Here we look at the ethical implications of Thérèse's experience of God.<sup>182</sup> We begin with her vocational life choice. Expected to choose between a life in "the world" and a religious life, Thérèse chooses a *desert* monastic life ("I felt Carmel was the *desert* where God wanted me to go ... to hide myself").<sup>183</sup> Carmel's blend of eremitic and cenobitic was an option for those of a contemplative disposition. Thérèse alludes to being of a sensitive disposition, and socially awkward at school;<sup>184</sup> later she expresses distaste of worldly ways, and speaks of wanting to leave "the world" to be alone with God (as Zélie and Louis had wished). The Carmelite life, in its solidarity with Elijah's "suffering and lone service to God," its passivity, yet preparing to receive God,<sup>185</sup> its vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, expressed a form of liminal existence.<sup>186</sup> Though the French Carmels had strong connections with Teresa of Avila's reform and mysticism, in Thérèse's time, distancing from the world reflected the Jansenist ideal of maintaining moral and religious standards by being removed from compromising secular life.<sup>187</sup> The Carmelite environment provided elements through which women could express perfect charity to neighbour, and perfect love to Jesus.<sup>188</sup> While Thérèse's motivation issued from a fragile self which yearned to be healed and protected (her "intense affectivity" untiringly recreates "Jesus within the terms of her emotional needs"), the

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<sup>182</sup> How does Thérèse's experience of God inspire a "new and hopeful" way to "transform the world?" Kelly and Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John*, 56, 57.

<sup>183</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 58.

<sup>184</sup> "Sometimes I felt alone, very much alone, and as in the days ... as a day boarder when I walked sad and sick in the big yard, I repeated these words: 'life is your barque not your home'." *Story of a Soul*, 83.

<sup>185</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 116.

<sup>186</sup> Adapting anthropologist Arnold van Gennep's theory of "rite of passage," Victor Turner proposed the categories, "separation, liminality and reaggregation." Persons (by way of a ritual) separate themselves from the ordinary of life to experience the *liminal* ('limin' - threshold). While sensitized to nature, or the sacredness of others, persons reach a level of communion which usual social structures inhibit, through a loss of ego boundaries, a powerful sense of at-oneness, an awakening of the transcendent dimension. Liminality also refers to "living on the edge," that is, seeking the invigoration felt in great risking the possibility of death to experience events of "utter life." Hunger, silence, cold, sleep deprivation, and being shut in, in Carmel produce a *liminal*, or desert experience. Michael Drumm in *Passage to Pesach: Revisiting the Catholic Sacraments* (Dublin: The Columbia Press, 1998).

<sup>187</sup> See Louis Dupre and Don E Saliers, with John Meyendorff (editors), *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 122-123. Also, Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Place of Jansenism in French History". *The Journal of Religion* 1/7 (Jan 1927), 16-42.

<sup>188</sup> Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 117.



Carmelite life in a Jansenist atmosphere was vulnerable to negative aims,<sup>189</sup> allowing ambivalent motives. There is some confluence between a desire for self-becoming in a sheltered environment, and, in viewing embodiedness as a this-world fault and its wills as disordered, a desire for detachment from these through a reliable, self-possessed, God-oriented will. There is, however, tension between self-appropriation by self-knowing, and by ruling over one's affective life through any means.

We explore the implications of this for effective meaning in Thérèse. Self-becoming constitutes the subconscious momentum of Thérèse's motivation. With her conscious objective as nearness to God, she communicates feeling this as possible through pleasing those who give value to her – becoming her True Self (her sense of Arminjon conveying Jesus' need for her, which echoes Zélie's acceptance of suffering, and the image of the child as powerful in the eyes of God). Apart from Marie de Gonzague and some incidental spiritual figures, Thérèse's evaporating family remains almost entirely the source of her value. There is no clash between clearly distinguishable entities, such as between cultural beliefs and Thérèse's family affective-value traditions because in Carmel these form one environment (they inhabit each other). Her whole environment has the power to threaten self-becoming by denying her value (affective and embodied) by positing a False Self. In Thérèse, Catholic tradition does not critique Martin ways, or Martin ways the Catholic tradition. Nevertheless, what plays out in Thérèse is, for all that, valuable in itself.

At times, attributing high value to the religious virtue of obedience gives rise to a conflict between Thérèse's self-becoming and supporting the family 'contract' (what each member's role and value is).<sup>190</sup> We note two periods when Thérèse distances herself from obediently absorbing others' devaluing her, by appointing God (indirectly re-affirming earlier value felt through Rose/Zélie) in their place to be an advocate for her self-becoming. At ten, Thérèse,

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<sup>189</sup> Ormerod writes about a moralizing spirituality based on repression: "not being content with the grounded reality of human bodily existence," persons succumb to the temptation of "...*libido dominandi*, a desire to dominate, to control, often resulting in violence against the other; ...limitation denied will eventually demand recognition." Ormerod gives the example of denying sexual desire, through viewing it as base and defiling, as leading "to an eruption of sexual irresponsibility," for a person "simply has no way of controlling what he or she denies." The attempt to escape from one's sexual identity through celibacy will lead to an uncontrolled clumsy assertion of this dimension. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 48.

<sup>190</sup> See Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*. Translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1995), 1-16. Six's thesis is that Pauline imposes an infantilizing spirituality upon Thérèse by her "corrections" (additions and erasures).

familiar with feeling her value as “sweet,” “small,” “innocent,” “intelligent” and independent (“stubborn”), hears that she is clingy, no fun, difficult, and “too soft-hearted.”<sup>191</sup> Subsequent illness causes her to be inaccessible to all around her. Further troubled self-becoming (up till fourteen years of age) manifests in a ‘rebellion’ of sickness, scruples, and tears.<sup>192</sup> Then, from her entry into Carmel up until Pauline becomes prioress (between fifteen and twenty years of age), Thérèse evades self-disclosure to Pauline (representing another hindrance to self-becoming) by strictly appealing to the rule of obedience. In this, for the sake of self-becoming, and succumbing to desire to control the demeaning feeling associated with compromise and ambivalences (failure), she tends to objectify those around her.

To “grow up more” (a False Self ambition) at Carmel, so as to be equal alongside Pauline and Marie, meant divesting herself from the felt need for attention and affection from Marie de Gonzague (received at ten years of age after the “virgin’s smile”).<sup>193</sup> This included a refusal to acknowledge to her novice sisters that she competed with them for attention (sharing her weakness), thus refusing ordinary connections.<sup>194</sup> Yet Thérèse’s need (True Self) involves completing a necessary bond, interrupted when she was taken from Rose, revisited with calling Zélie at each stairway step, and with knocking on Marie’s door, when Marie was to leave for Carmel. Nevertheless, in removing herself from others’ mirroring unsatisfactory self-images, Thérèse allows God to be her only mirror (aptly described by Fitzgerald), thus completing a bond with one whose name she can always call upon and whose door she can always knock on – finally fusing with this positive mirroring.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 53-54, 60.

<sup>192</sup> See Kathryn Harrison, *Thérèse of Lisieux*, 44-49. At 48, Harrison writes: “Marie offered Therese some water and she cried out... ‘They want to poison me!’ It was a hysterical cry, certainly, but one with explicit content; that Therese later insisted she never lost her reason makes it impossible to dismiss her words as meaningless. Even if we resist forcing a literal gloss upon her accusation – ‘poison’ a metaphor of toxic despair, all she was expected to swallow rather than express – the Martin family’s faith asked much of a child. When Zélie died, Therese had been taught to turn a face of sweet acceptance to an unappeasable God ... What was the cost of continuing to perceive that God as good, a God of Love?”

<sup>193</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 155, 160, 286. *Story of a Soul*, 67, 237.

<sup>194</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 223-224, 235-36.

<sup>195</sup> Fitzgerald, Constance. “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux.” *The Way Supplement* (Summer, 1997), 75- 77.

Later, recognizing her ambition to control, even manipulate, her sense of God, Thérèse asks to be robbed of anything standing in the way to love God (in her “Offering,” a prayer whose fulfilment she awaits).<sup>196</sup> By trusting that God will attend to this weakness, Thérèse spares herself from an excess of self-scrutiny, counter-productive to relation. Through this dialectic prayer-conversation, God’s role in the interior operation of self-becoming (confirming Jesus’ teaching, that relation be held above legality, mercy above obeying the law as a mere principle), is visible to the reader. Thérèse’s conversation with God, via affective memory, does not result in narcissism (idolizing herself as an object), but in an honest defence of her self as a relational other (as commanded by Jesus).

Nevertheless, Thérèse remains needy – in needing to have her good named, struggling against the Jansenist suspicion of the self as deceitful when it regards itself well, the sickness of her time. From desire to be in relation (entailing obedience), she subordinates herself to her family’s trust in the validity of a Catholic culture (*the way to come to God*), where distorted views of the self in relation to God have infiltrated self-understanding.<sup>197</sup> She defines herself in terms of her relation to her sisters (and their perception of the world), giving up her life for them – remaining in the noviciate, agreeing to give up her hope of writing a commentary on Song of Songs (relinquishing recognition for her creative ability), and accepting that suffering most elicits God’s love.<sup>198</sup> Yet by viewing this as a mission felt given to her by God (a True Self in the sense that God would never abandon her to an aimless existence, but provides her a dignifying purpose) and fleeing into ‘the arms of God’ through hoped for death, she simultaneously obeys God and escapes False Self constraints.

In sum, Thérèse restates to her sisters, and the novices in her care, what she felt stated to her: be undividedly given to God, poor, chaste and obedient; this brings us to God. Recalling a relational dimension in devotion to God,<sup>199</sup> Thérèse urges Celine to join her in Carmel, then

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<sup>196</sup> Cf Mt 12: 7-13.

<sup>197</sup> Thérèse tests the truth of this culture by her experience – insofar as she accepts her experience. For example, she reflects that a poor person, after asking, has no expectation to receive. But the truly hungry are more likely to snatch at what they need. When she hungered for acknowledgment for her good efforts from others, she ‘snatched’ it by her tears.

<sup>198</sup> Six, *Light of the Night*, 127-139, especially 127-130.

<sup>199</sup> Celine represented the one who did not abandon Thérèse, when all others did. Thérèse, herself, though, simply repeated the abandoning pattern she felt by Zélie, Pauline and Therese’s leaving.

pledges herself as an “Offering to Merciful Love.” Later, speaking of forgiveness, she heartens all, especially her seminarian correspondent Bellière, to take up God’s offer of mercy, not in terms of ‘wrongs’, but as a happy occasion to be indebted to God, so to be in a state of enjoying God’s favour. In insisting ‘avail yourself of mercy as I do!’ (rather than offering a kind of self-justification as though free and total forgiveness is not really expected), Thérèse takes up the Reformers’ bold hope.<sup>200</sup> Whilst taking pains to avoid sin, scruple-prone Thérèse advises others to ‘press on’, to maintain the flow of loving interaction.

In considering effective meaning and the relationship of vocation to Thérèse’s attitudes and behaviour, we return to the underlying dynamic in Thérèse’s life. In response to her own painful lack (from her experience of attempting to retain a role in the family when she was small and neither useful nor helpful – presenting as a False Self), Thérèse constructs a permanent identity to fulfil the role she envisages God has given her. This ‘truer self’, a happy infant, she offers to others as an identity they too might take up. In sharing in her identity, they may enjoy relief from a burden of high self-expectations, self-accusation of failure, or being a non-entity (Mt 11: 25).<sup>201</sup> She invites others to share in her freedom, by sharing her disposition and actions in obtaining forgiveness, and in her affirming that their efforts to love will be accepted by God in their surrender to desire for relation (with Jesus) alone. Thérèse shares the fruit of her psycho-spiritual reflection towards self-becoming, meeting those who suffer likewise. If modelling this process is not enough, Thérèse is so confident in knowing how God feels, she lends her ‘self’ confidence to others to take as their own, offering the pattern of a self-identity as completed by God.<sup>202</sup> She evokes in others:

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<sup>200</sup> The Protestant Reformer’s hope was a *felt* conviction of being saved – discouraged by Trent in the anathemas pronounced on persons who articulated such conviction, and supported by the Catholic Catechism in the light of an extrinsicist milieu. See Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 123-124.

<sup>201</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 105. Thérèse uses Mt 11:25 a number of times: “I praise you Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” - referring to her kind of knowing as like Jesus’ knowing. Also, on p 225, verse 30 (“... the yoke of the Lord is sweet and light.”).

<sup>202</sup> Thérèse borrows from *Avis spirituality pour la sanctification des âmes*: “Look at a little child who has just annoyed his mother...if he comes to her holding out his little arms smiling and saying “Kiss me, I will not do it again,” will his mother be able to not press him to her heart tenderly and forget his childish mischief?”... she knows her dear little one will do it on the next occasion, but this does not matter...” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 966 -968, 1153. Thérèse shares her confidence: “...I shall be more useful to you in heaven than on earth ... you will [thank] the Lord for giving me the means of helping you more effectively... I am asking God for this and I am certain he will answer me.” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1141.

“you are good” (Gen 1:31).<sup>203</sup> Before we explore dimensions of existential suffering as part of an experience of God’s love, we turn to Lonergan’s idea of conversion as a reorientation of one’s experiential knowing.

### 3. Conversion in Thérèse

Does a focus on self-transcendence as ‘conversion’ lead to demonstrating psychic advancement, and, implying this as the goal of the human dialectic, displace relationship as its goal? Joann Wolski Conn and Walter E. Conn use Thérèse’s life and writings to exemplify ‘conversion shifts’ (manifesting as a consistent redirection of intention) in Lonergan’s three spheres, cognitive, moral, and religious/affective, in “Conversion as Self-Transcendence Exemplified in the Life of St Thérèse of Lisieux.”<sup>204</sup>

For “cognitive conversion,” Wolski Conn and Conn suggest that Thérèse shifts her locus of authority from exterior sources to an interior one: to “a gentle but firm trust in her own judgments.”<sup>205</sup> We argue Thérèse, however, was outspoken with regard to her own interpretations of God from an early age.<sup>206</sup> For “moral conversion,” the Conns state that self-transcendence depends on self-possession, and that “the primary characteristic of moral conversion is the shift from concern for self-satisfaction” to desire for a life devoted to value, an “about face,” toward committing one’s self (in love) to something.<sup>207</sup> Earlier, we noted that the capacity for self-possession involves the gift of empowerment in infancy, through the parent guiding the infant’s affect in a dialogue, parental response giving the infant a sense of

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<sup>203</sup> *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1093.

<sup>204</sup> The Conns ask whether, through conversion, the “possible and sporadic” drive for self-transcendence becomes a “probable and regular one” – viewing conversion as redirecting intentionality from self interest to “what will I do from moral responsibility” and to “what, finally, am I going to commit myself in love?” They affirm self-transcendence as “normative for the spiritual life,” and as occurring “whenever we respond to the radical, questioning drive of the human spirit for meaning” via “reflective questioning.” Joann Wolski Conn, Walter E Conn, “Conversion as Self-Transcendence Exemplified in the Life of St Thérèse of Lisieux.” *Spirituality Today* 34/4 (Winter 1982), pp303- 311, 1-2.

<sup>205</sup> Wolski Conn and Conn, “Conversion as Self-Transcendence,” 2.

<sup>206</sup> Much was made of it by Zélie and Marie. Zélie writes in May 1877, Thérèse “has answers that are very rare for her age; she gives advice to Celine who is twice her age.” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1234. She remained independent in thought, temporarily losing this character when Zélie (upon her death) and Marie’s affirmation of it ceased (upon her leaving). *Story of a Soul*, 88.

<sup>207</sup> Moral conversion is a shift away from “self-centred or illusory attempts to deny the self or to meet its desires.” Wolski Conn and Conn, “Conversion as Self-Transcendence,” 1-3.

impacting the other. The Conns cite Thérèse's "complete conversion" at Christmas 1886 as a "shift from self-pity to concern for others," an experience of "adult decision-making," and "strength and freedom of decision."<sup>208</sup> But, are these not the very characteristics Pauline's religious culture promoted (grow up! think of others not yourself! act from love! be useful for God and others!), which compromised her "self's authentic realization," to make her acceptable?

Thérèse overcame 'failure' by suddenly being able to do what she yearned to do – to love according to the standards (obstacles) set for her.<sup>209</sup> Her earlier inability was due to loss of maternal valuing and physiological immaturity and not due to previously being absorbed in shallow self-amusement. The hyper-sensitive Thérèse tries hard to please, but fails at it, falling to tears when not praised enough, then crying over her crying because she cannot do what essentially flows from the kind of "circle of security" she lacks.<sup>210</sup> Though in 1895, she writes of being strong and undefeated, ever after (the source of her tears "dried up"), she cries many more tears.<sup>211</sup> God, however, was now felt to take up her cause.<sup>212</sup> Thérèse's new found strength was not a shift from self-absorption to a sense of value; she now felt equipped ("armed") to practice what she valued.<sup>213</sup>

The Conns, lastly, show "religious-affective conversion" in Thérèse's love shifting from the desire to "snatch" sinners (adolescent) from "the eternal flames" to "sisterhood" with

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<sup>208</sup>Wolski Conn and Conn, "Conversion as Self-Transcendence," 3.

<sup>209</sup> Thérèse's account of "complete conversion" for Pauline is complicated by her aim to demonstrate to Pauline that God values her, by way of supernatural signs, and that God realized in her what she already wanted but could not achieve *alone*. (With Pauline and Marie both in Carmel, her only companions to confess her problems to were her deceased siblings in heaven; she was tearful and sensitive without their praise for her efforts to be selfless.) She changed "in an instant" from being a girl who "was really unbearable because of [her] extreme touchiness" to "strong and courageous." *Story of a Soul*, 97. See also *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1016.

<sup>210</sup> See Vitz and Lynch, "Thérèse of Lisieux From the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety." *The International Journal For the Psychology of Religion* 17/1 (2007), 61-80.

<sup>211</sup> This portrayal symbolizes her 1895 hope to be a martyr-saint. She cries in the presence of the bishop and the pope, and on other occasions. A subtext for Pauline might read: 'you left me behind but God, to whom I matter, grew me up (in your absence), and here I now am'.

<sup>212</sup> Thérèse names her tears as "self-pity," a "fault." But self-pity arises when *others* do not pity (show mercy) toward the needy one Her tears reveal the need for affirmation to reach a critical mass to form a self that could tolerate being forgotten and overlooked amid meeting the expectations of the adult world.

<sup>213</sup> With God on her side she is undefeated. God armed her with "His weapons," and gave her legs to "*run as a giant*." *Story of a Soul*, 97.

unbelievers at whose table she is “content to eat the bread of sorrow” (mature).<sup>214</sup> We find more continuity than a shift.<sup>215</sup> In 1897, Thérèse writes that she now accepts that there really are souls who have no faith.<sup>216</sup> But, while identifying herself as a sinner (in feeling no faith), she does not feel herself as “impious,” viewing herself as sinner only insofar as she has a ‘no faith’ feeling. Thérèse feels herself seated here by God’s design as God’s instrument.<sup>217</sup> Her brothers “soil” the table; she purifies it.

Thérèse’s sense of mercy is circumscribed by her experience. She accepts ‘no faith’ in others to the degree that she accepts it in herself (doubt must not be entertained, certain actions lead to ‘no-faith’).<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, what mercy Thérèse *does* enjoy (as the origin of ‘no faith’ feeling, God knows her helplessness in it), she passes on.<sup>219</sup> In embracing God’s broader view, it is probable that Thérèse would have come to an even greater appreciation of human helplessness – as her retrieval of self in a deepening conviction of her goodness, with God as ‘Thou’, rests in the dynamism of God stooping down to lift the weak and limited to share in his own life.

The Conns’ article (identifying a movement toward self-sufficient adulthood), does not reveal Thérèse’s developing authenticity – *how* she recovers from the absence of a loving

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<sup>214</sup> Wolski Conn & Conn, “Conversion as Self-Transcendence,” 4.

<sup>215</sup> Whilst suffering over Leo Taxil’s deception (he threw scorn on her over her prayers for Diana Vaughan), Thérèse reasserts the sense of her “Oblation to Merciful Love,” an offering to absorb God’s love in the place of those who refuse it (for their redemption). See *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 986-987.

<sup>216</sup> Perhaps contrasting her own position with Leo Taxil’s, Thérèse now accepts that there really are souls who have no faith “who, through the abuse of grace, [have] lost this precious treasure.” She recalls she once felt “impious people who had no faith,” “were actually speaking against their own inner convictions.” *Story of a Soul*, 211. “...je ne pouvais croire qu’il y eût des impiés n’ayant pas de foi. Je croyais qu’ils parlaient contre leur pensée en niant l’existence du ciel...” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D’une Ame*, 241.

<sup>217</sup> Thérèse’s self-perception raises the question: Why were instances of ‘no faith’ in others an “abuse of grace” (bearing in mind Sartre’s experience), yet not hers? While others’ intentions amid ‘no-faith’ were felt to be foreign, Thérèse felt her good intentions over-rode her ‘no faith’. She writes “Your child... begs pardon for her brothers.... Can she not say in her name and in the name of her brothers, ‘Have pity on us, O Lord, for we are poor sinners!’ ‘If it is needful that that the table soiled by them be purified by a soul who loves you, then I desire to eat this bread of trial... until it pleases you to bring me into Your bright Kingdom’.” *Story of a Soul*, 212.

<sup>218</sup> Thérèse would not have known that children who suffered abusive parenting lack a sense of God as present for them, or that they lack the ability to organize their emotions in terms of self-restraint.

<sup>219</sup> See *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 998-1000.

‘you’, needed in order to self-transcend.<sup>220</sup> Suggestion of a need for her child-state to be conquered threatens an emerging recognition of the vitality of infancy’s intensely dialogic interaction.<sup>221</sup> Lonergan’s “conversion dialectic” perhaps belongs to knowledge, power, and secure relations, while Thérèse’s ‘I-Thou’ dialogue belongs to one ‘done unto’, forgotten, without a ‘you’ to impact. For her, the poor one, the one whose identity is under threat, God becomes ‘You’. In this state, she senses the privilege of God’s ‘ear’. While experiencing powerlessness, she has, paradoxically, “the power of confidence,” a stubborn conviction that her ‘You’ values her and will come for her, echoing the Hebrew experience of grace.<sup>222</sup> There, God is felt as taking the side of the “poor and needy one,” God mercifully raising them up – confirming (the True Self) the person is created as “good,” and Jesus’ witness to God as “Abba.”<sup>223</sup>

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In theology post-Thérèse, Lonergan, with Rahner, responded to the effects of substantialist metaphysics and stasis in Greek thought (by “turning to the subject,” engaging with Kant’s thought, the early German Idealists, and the existentialists of Thérèse’s time), with transcendental theology. They redefined the human as a self-conscious enquiring subject, and God as the mysterious self-communicating knowing and loving the human accesses. Acknowledging an incomprehensible dimension to God, ‘human-as-inquiring’ took precedence over ‘human-as-relation’ and the structure and norms of faith development. Von Balthasar, in his exploration of the Trinitarian life, Anthropology, and Christology,

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<sup>220</sup> The infant’s ability to love depends on the previous presence of a loving ‘you’, who demonstrates love and acknowledges its effort to love; its offer of love cannot surmount an absence of response.

<sup>221</sup> While growing older allowed her to *act* other-centredly, it did not yet cure her thinking that limitation was a deficiency with respect to her relation to God. Later she understands that desire to love alone is enough, as long as the object of one’s desire recognizes that desire. Zélie’s correspondence in *Man A* shows she understands Thérèse’s desire to love. *Story of a Soul*, 17.

<sup>222</sup> The New Testament’s recourse to Old Testament documents “... seems to be indispensable...” God in a new light cannot be explained without the “Law and the Prophets.” “Without the Old Testament, who Jesus is apparently remains completely hidden. The same is true for what is given in him as a gift and also the knowledge of how man is to be rightly related to him.” Hans Walter Wolff, Trans Wilbur A. Benware, “The Kerygma of the Yahwist,” in Walter Brueggeman, *The Vitality of the Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 41.

<sup>223</sup> Exodus 22: 23: “when they [widow or orphan] cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry...” “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Proverbs 31: 8-9. God defends the poor in Mosaic law: Exodus 22: 22, Deut 10: 18. Created “good” from Gen 1: 30. For “Abba, Father...” see Mk 14: 36.



envisioned an “above” Creator-parent view of human reality. He appears to have been influenced by Thérèse in his ideas on ‘personhood’, and being as a child in the Christian life. Thérésian writers following Lonergan’s thought, such as Wolski Conn and Conn, while attending to developmental structures, are led by Lonergan’s notion of advances through ‘conversion’. Our final consideration in this chapter concerns Thérèse thought on grace, God, and the human person.

## **6. A Thérésian Anthropology: Limitation as the locus of love**

### *a. Grace as Operating Interiorly*

Thérèse projects her interior representations of God onto events and existential effects (limitation, suffering, death). In her desire to attribute all God-ward movements to God, she points to God manipulating the usual processes. (“God would have to work a little miracle to make me *grow up* in an instant, and the miracle He performed on that unforgettable Christmas day.”) Amazed at bursting through a barrier, for so long an obstruction, Thérèse, without the benefit of awareness of psychic processes, while sensing that change came from within, thought in terms of a “miracle.” However, her change involved a process whose dynamic is submerged. This investigation has been able to uncover that the interior processes noted by Sroufe, Winnicott, and Rizzuto, themselves originate in God and deserve a more central place in theology – as these processes illustrate the ontological equation, God is the source of all good, and all the good which is created includes humanity as capacity for God.<sup>224</sup> Knowledge of human developmental operations leads to a deeper understanding of how God conveys God-self, in a way more profound and fluidly integrated than that conveyed by prior theological approaches based on the limited psychological and philosophical models of Thérèse’s time.

### *a. God’s Graciousness: A This-World Attribute*

The metaphysical arguments of Thérèse’s time had God’s being-in-relation to humanity as a composite of ‘entirely other and unknowable’ and anthropomorphic images. Love, hope, trust, and freedom, belonging to the time-space continuum, were imagined as perfections

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<sup>224</sup> God was understood through a perception of God as “first cause” and “secondary causes” based on an *ex nihilo* creation premise (a monarchical dominating view), rather than *creatio ex deo* where God simultaneously creates and sustains.

when inhabiting omniscience, immortality, and omnipresence.<sup>225</sup> Love and freedom removed from history did not do justice either to Greek metaphysics or to the analogical nature of language. Thérèse's True Self returned to God the dynamic attribute found in Hebrew Scripture: tenderly merciful.

While Thérèse does not explicitly object to these distortions, her subjective interior engagement with God challenges them. She makes peace with her limitations (sickness, tiredness, inability to concentrate, inability to perform certain duties, loss of hereafter-vision), by viewing them in terms of their value in infancy.<sup>226</sup> The limitation between herself and God she finds to be like the one between herself and her (M) Others – a locus for receiving help – the primordial ground for relation.<sup>227</sup> Through her God-object representations, God becomes an enabling, and forgiving, God.<sup>228</sup> From felt-knowing on her own and God's behalf, Thérèse affirms God as merciful (True Self statement). She offers 'her God' to others, describing God as unperturbed by neuroses and foibles (refusing a False Self), and shows childly limitations as the means for continuing this relation. Within interiority, or mental prayer (mediated by God-representations), a True Self is asserted in favour of a False Self. This activity encounters sin, not as biology, justice, or concupiscence, but in Alice Miller's terms of "victimhood."<sup>229</sup> The effects of another's devaluation of us (sin) stubbornly 'stick' to

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<sup>225</sup> When removed from their dynamic, embodied, relational context, properties involving flux such as sexuality, creative drive, and desire, become distorted. Absolutizing restraint (virginity, obedience, docile receptiveness), removes their relational character. Grace is restraint or extension for the sake of alleviating, stimulating, relating to another in love. Faint, floating, transparent, ethereal beauty cannot feed, warm, defend or console. Unlimited receptivity is too vulnerable; a new resilient self cannot form. No consummation or bringing to birth leads to physical and relational extinction.

<sup>226</sup> Pauline records the following in August 1897. Distressed by the thought of succumbing to temptations against the faith, through pride over self-sufficiency, and self-satisfaction, Thérèse views herself as not mastering any virtue. By remaining "humble" and "little," she retains the "right of doing stupid little things until my death. ...Look at little children: they never stop breaking things, tearing things, falling down, and they do this even while loving their parents very, very much. When I fall in this way, it makes me realize my nothingness more ..." If she were to rely on her own strength (the virtue of a strong love for God), her "temptations [against the faith] would become more violent, and I would certainly succumb to them." Thérèse of Lisieux, *Last Conversations*, 140 -141.

<sup>227</sup> We use (M)Others as Fitzgerald does, to name Zélie, her wet nurse, Pauline. Fitzgerald, "The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux," 76.

<sup>228</sup> Offered "empty hands," she feels, delights God (like a mother) because, when open, gifts may be placed in them. In her sickness, toward the end of her life, Thérèse discovers herself again in Pauline's care; the sick child who is watched over, allowed to sleep in her bed, given gifts, and wheel-barrow rides. *Story of a Soul*, 44.

<sup>229</sup> Augustine's description of original sin (blurring concupiscence with sin itself) has traces of Manichaeism: humanity trapped under a spell of evil, where good and evil are exterior forces 'under' a God who is not omnipotent. Then, in the Middle Ages a conception of "original justice" (a special grace), was proposed, lost at

our self-identity – resulting in the devaluation of our particular being, potential, and in devaluing the general materials of human existence, in bodily and spiritual components, and the capacity to become an outgoing, creative subject-in-relation in harmony with the world.

In Lonergan’s perspective, the momentum of being-in-love (accompanied by attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness, and responsibility in interiority) sustains a dialectic of self-transcendence toward authenticity. Mary Frohlich notes that for Thérèse, this dialectic occurred in the symbolic sphere.<sup>230</sup> We connect Thérèse’s attention to the Hebrew parent-child metaphor, guiding her interior human-God dialogue, where she awaits merciful approval for who she is (loved sinner), to the existential plane, and to the phenomenology of human development. Human subjectivity, a product of existential limits, leads to an experience of God which cries out for more, and new, true glimpses of God’s face, mirroring our value. Thérèse felt her impotence when she experienced herself not big enough to impact the invisible God with her love, when she was unable to save her mother, to transcend her sadness, to act without thanks, to overcome others’ decisions obstructing her desire, to save her father, express remarkable courage, die impressively, and feel great love and faith.<sup>231</sup> She presents these to the God who imbues her with felt-potency, as her mother once did, in a “lift” of confident love (supporting de Lubac’s idea that humanity, in principle, does have the means for that existence; grace arouses “and sustains the activity that one is capable of by

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Adam and Eve’s “fall,” where the will lost its ordering power over the passions (restored by practice of virtues and supernatural grace). This idea bears some analogical resemblance to a child’s development. Alfred Vanneste suggested original sin as simply naming the fact of the universality of sin, while Sebastian Moore, more realistically, described sinners as first victims of sin. “Vatican I enjoined theologians to find analogies for the mysteries of faith (DS 3016)” so Ormerod takes this up, using Alice Miller’s understanding of the state of the abused child. From the misplaced sense of self-guilt accrued over the “myriad of minor humiliations and cruelties” a child endures, imprinting a distorted, “diminished, distorted sense of self,” sin – that inferior self-worth – is perpetuated. We see Thérèse in her autobiography refusing self-devaluation; God is charmed by her confidence in God’s love for her. Becoming one who is thoroughly valued by God liberates her to love with great magnanimity. This is consistent with “It is good” as underpinning human identity. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace and Redemption*, 71-72. 79- 80.

<sup>230</sup> See Mary Frohlich, “Thérèse of Lisieux and Jeanne D’Arc: History, Memory, and Interiority in the Experience of Vocation.” *Spiritus* 6/2 (Fall 2006), 173-194.

<sup>231</sup> Thérèse writes to Bellière, “I understand... the degree to which your soul is sister to my own, since it is called to raise itself to God by the ELEVATOR of love and not climb the rough stairway of fear... the practice of familiarity with Jesus...” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1152.

nature...”).<sup>232</sup> Dialoguing with our affective remembrance of the God of the past opens us to the living God of the future.

Thérèse finds her demeanour and tastes meet the events she encounters, in a way that confirms God means well in all things,<sup>233</sup> removing despair over an idea of perfection where to be *not* omnipotent, not omnipresent, not omniscient, means to be flawed by virtue of not being able to love in proportion to the infinite.<sup>234</sup> God integrates all operations, physical and non-physical, to form consistency in the created sphere. Thérèse ‘recalls’ from infancy-experience, the relief of help, the invigoration of encouragement, and the sense of impacting her all-powerful loving other, and draws on its sustaining presence. Response to this interiorly felt God has exterior consequences. Confidence in her own value (conveyed by the Other’s face) emboldens her to ask forgiveness for anything. This boldness is present in Judaic thought, where humans mirror God-given principles back to God in questioning and remonstrance. God, in chosen contingency to his created ones (God chooses to limit Godself), waits for us to speak. God also awaits the recognition of his grace, self-limitation in the form of contraction and restraint so that we might have life and freedom, expressing faith in humanity).<sup>235</sup>

The Thérèse-God interaction reveals God as immanently potent. Thérèse experiences God’s transcendence in the metaphysics of relation: in the phenomenon of self-formation, a continuum of identity whose continuous thread is ‘I value because you value me’.<sup>236</sup> God

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<sup>232</sup> While “ascenseur” is the invention of a vestibule carrying people upward, Thérèse makes a connection between this and Jesus lifting arms (“l’ascenseur qui doit m’élever jusqu’au Ciel, ce sont vos bras, ô Jésus!” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire D’Une Ame*, 237). “The elevator which must raise me to heaven is your lifting arms, O Jesus!” *Story of a Soul*, 208. For de Lubac, see Duffy, *The Graced Horizon*, 15.

<sup>233</sup> Thérèse writes to Bellière, “[God] always made me desire what He wanted to give me.” *Letters of St Thérèse: Volume II*, 1140.

<sup>234</sup> Arminjon’s God punished children with purgatory or hell, for an unconfessed misdemeanour (This was Zélie’s concern in her prayers for daughter Hélène who died at five and a half years of age. *Story of a Soul*, 64.

<sup>235</sup> Jacob Chinitz, “Creation and the Limitations of the Creator,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol 134, no 2, 2006, 129. Though we cannot “fathom” the overall “reasoning” of events, we have the ability to argue with God about our position of not understanding all. Humanity’s activity, in turning God’s logic back to God (“my children have triumphed over me”), leads to “consoling” God. Six sees Thérèse as offering to help God, in God’s limitation, like Etty Hillesum, who died in Auschwitz. Six, *Light of the Night*, 177-178.

<sup>236</sup> God is free to create other orders, but God created and entered *this* self-revealing order. The speculation ‘God is free to choose entirely otherwise’ echoes nontheistic ‘multiverse’ theorizing (where “a large, if not infinite number of alternative universes, each with vastly different laws and physical conditions. Among this large

participates in human identity. What in the theological anthropology of Thérèse's time was explained as God's effect from outside, Thérèse demonstrates as occurring from within her. God, present and available within, supplies from within. Positive affect experienced in the context of mercy shown toward limitation, generates hope to experience this again, consistent with the realities of this created existence. What occurs interiorly withstands expansion to a transcendental "above" order, yet mediates that order within the realm of the immanent.

*b. Final Remarks*

Like von Balthasar, Thérèse takes an "above view," viewing all through God's eyes, via analogical images of earlier parental care. But unlike the fatalism found in Jansenism, she does not passively suffer these "above" ways. To impact God with her love, and to feel God in return, she gives value to this-world processes, in both happenings and absence of happening. Her theology is a quest for self-hood in relation, finding a Thou who validates her original/early childhood 'I'. Finitude's effects when felt as painful are avoided by most, but Thérèse, insisting on God's benevolence, experiences them positively and searches them out.<sup>237</sup> This allows God to be free to be Godself, and for her to experience God that way. For example, the retreating and reappearing face symbolizes the limitation felt by the infant, a sense in the 'memory' of all human persons.<sup>238</sup> To the growing child, all feels like a waiting for an other to value them anew. Experience of valuing inspires hope for its reappearance. The other's freedom, the ground for being an other, is eventually understood. As Thérèse suffered in waiting for the other's presence, so she felt God, awaiting it from us, suffers by our withholding. Her sense of reciprocity is palpable.

Thérèse's optimism may be extended to the existential plane. Hope, trust and fidelity, belonging to embodied life, describe the in-between time of waiting for a reply to one's

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number of universes, ours happens to be one where life is possible, but there are others where no life evolved") to eliminate life's importance. Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, Redemption*, 26.

<sup>237</sup> From an early age, Thérèse learned that the pains of waiting, involving restraint, endurance, feelings of abandonment, loss of autonomy, or humiliation were the cost of engaging in a desired relation. Though valuing suffering is not specifically her idea, as she is imbued with its 'good' from many quarters, Thérèse gives it her own interpretation.

<sup>238</sup> Her endurance through God's absence, noted by Mary Frohlich in "Desolation and Doctrine in Thérèse of Lisieux," occurs through her fixing on the meaning of the retreating and reappearing face. See Mary Frohlich HM. "Desolation and Doctrine in Thérèse of Lisieux," *Theological Studies* 61/2 (Jun 2000), 261-279.

reaching out to the other. This waiting is not a by-product of a faulted existence, to be superseded by something instant and permanent, but is intrinsically connected to being a free subject in procession, the one means for love. If the created world is God's intended way (and not depleted by loss of "preternatural gifts"), then time-space 'limitations' may be understood as the condition for free interchange between persons.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>239</sup>The anthropic principle, where the universe's physical constants are "fine-tuned" for sustaining life, dignifies embodied consciousness within this world as God's intended.

## CONCLUSION

### **Findings, Significance, Implications for Further Research**

This chapter will restate the research question, give a summary of the findings, some implications and further research directions.

We asked: What are the implications of Therese of Lisieux's experience of filial love, mercy and limitation, psychologically, autobiographically and theologically? For its methodology, the research used 'filial love', the core metaphor and integrating principle in Thérèse's thought, as both its hermeneutic lens and investigative tool. Filial love [and its components of grace/mercy and limitation] was applied in three forms:

a) Psychologically, using Sroufe's model of emotional development, and McDargh's model of religious development [Chs. 2 and 3];

Ch 4 represented a possible diverting influence, carrying Thérèse into adulthood;

b) Autobiographically, the interpretative window through which Thérèse comes to understand God in the light of her life experiences [Chs. 5 and 6];

c) Theologically, as a tool to explore the implications of Thérèse's interpretative account in terms of the theology of God and of the human person [Chs. 7 and 8].

### **1. Summary of the Findings**

#### *Context*

Chapter One set the stage for Thérèse's entrance. Philosophy, science, and politics, responding to physical and social factors such as health, freedom/governance, industry, and learning, gave rise to rationalism, empiricism, romantic idealism and the beginnings of the disciplines of psychology and anthropology. Such movements affected European Christianity, where individual figures expressed publically their inner response to God, sometimes prompting support, sometimes opposition. Diverse experiences, and their expressions (e.g., Calvin, Ignatius, Bérulle and Jansenius) led to clashes over doctrinal formulations, to varied spiritualities for living the faith, to frustration, even scorn (Voltaire), over parental harshness associated with Jansenist Catholicism and 'the Church hindering scientific research'. There was both resistance

to modernism (yearning for a God-oriented society), and disillusion over a punishing paternalistic Church and its God. Luther, felt and shaped by his father's harsh 'fairness', confronted it, uncompromisingly, in the Church. Alternatively, Ignatius, Bérulle, Teresa of Avila and de Hauranne sought reform within by various felt-missions. Using Erikson's study, we showed a link between Luther's parent-child relations and his theology, anticipating its presence in Thérèse. Finally, Thérèse entered a society and family where her course as a woman, if she was to be favoured by the God/the Catholic Church, was closely prescribed.

### *Psychological*

Chapter Two strengthened the link between early-life experience and one's theology, introduced by Erikson in relation to Luther, via McDargh's research on religious development. Through Sroufe's paradigm of emotional development, we showed Thérèse experienced uniquely, and in a general way, mercy toward her limitation which could be understood as grace. Lastly, we proposed that Thérèse deviated from her 'true' infancy 'self', but, via suffering, gradually returned to it. In anticipation of theological grace and mercy (God's response to humanity), grace and mercy were explored in their non-theological form.

Human development was examined from the perspective of psychological/behavioural research through Sroufe (Ainsworth, Bowlby), and from the formation of basic trust leading to religious faith, through McDargh (Niebuhr, Winnicott and Rizzuto). Graciousness was found to be the caregiver/parent's characteristic disposition and behaviour toward their infant's limitation. Parent-infant dialogue organized and integrated the infant's complex of physical, cognitive, and affective growth, engendering basic trust, the basis for religious faith. In Sroufe's model for development, we noted that the (M)Other attends to her child so to be familiar with its needs, moods, limitations, capacities. In her desire to 'grow the child', the (M)Other relieves the child's limitation via a sensitive and merciful/gracious dialogue, to which the child responds. She bends down and lifts the infant, 'catches' its attention, holds it with her loving gaze (Fitzgerald), guides its affect, physical movement, and knowledge on its behalf, allowing herself to be impacted by the child's responses, so that it feels a sense



of being in control, until its capability is filled. This mutual contingency, a unique familiar ‘to and fro’ in what Winnicott terms as a “holding environment,” producing an inner psychic reality,<sup>1</sup> leads to a sense of security, and allows the child’s innate push to explore.

Thérèse’s holding environment was deemed to be “good enough” (Winnicott’s term for enabling a normative development) through the evidence of her confident outgoing bids for affection, and exploration. Chapter Three, then, supplied further evidence for experiencing grace/mercy in toddlerhood, in Zélie and Thérèse’s sister/mothers furthering Thérèse’s intentionality and value sensitivity (here Zélie transmitted some high expectations, channelled further through her sisters Marie and Pauline who Thérèse was eager to please/emulate) and in preschool years with father Louis in role play (an intermittent event). This would impact Thérèse’s self-development, the implicit subject of Chapters Five and Six.

#### *Chapter Four*

In an effort to demonstrate a return to a former sense of self, we showed Thérèse, through her engagement with Arminjon’s thought, diverting from an early dialogue of grace and mercy. Thérèse drew symbols from Arminjon, which had negative aspects. God was ‘dangerous’ for those who did not act with self-deprecating docility, did not reject secularism and its proponents, or did not fastidiously seek purity. Bodiliness itself seemed an obstacle to God, as sin coincided with products of bodiliness such as being a relational subject in space and time, possessing sexual and survival drives, incomplete mastery of affects, and partial knowing.

#### *Autobiographical*

McDargh’s elaboration of Winnicott’s True Self/False Self paradigm (a collection of positive and negative constructs about the self) was applied to Thérèse’s self-perception (predominantly in *Story of a Soul*) in chapters Five and Six. A contrast emerged between a True Self and a False Self in Thérèse’s own sense of self and God. The True

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<sup>1</sup> Donald W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London, New York: Karnac, 1965, 1990), 45.

Self represented a sense of being ‘good’, through the prenatal symbiotic union with another (Balint), confirmed by a valuing gaze (Fitzgerald), and by a dialogue where the caregiver empowers the limited one to initiate affective-engagement; the False Self represented a poor sense of being of value, a sense of limitation as dangerous, distasteful, and a hindrance to (maintaining) relations with another, ‘the rules for operating in relation’ as self-destroying. In the True Self, limitation is perceived as eliciting tenderness; in the False Self as refusal and rejection.

We found in Thérèse’s writing no pronounced diversion away from, and return to, her early self, but found she held her True Self and False Self constructs together. Her False Self constructs (e.g., I am childish in my neediness and should ‘grow up’, I am proud and should learn humility through humiliations, I must strive to be perfect to be acceptable to God) diminished through a dialogue with God which increasingly resembled her holding environment – where limitation was graciously eased or tenderly smiled upon. It also emerged that Thérèse’s self-becoming involved the projection of the drama of an inner world onto exterior persons and events, the resolution of which was often found by fulfilment of expectations. Early experiences repeated themselves in different guises (God/Zélie as abandoning, Thérèse as a stranger in her own family, her true family in heaven/elsewhere). Further, Thérèse felt this drama watched like the hagiographer’s narrative, where a divine-parent benevolently watches “heaven’s” child.

In her reliance on an affective knowing of the past, we found Thérèse rejected her culture’s theology of striving to *prove* acceptability to God through a kind of morbid, shrinking adulthood. The research hoped to find signs of her refusing images devaluing this-world processes (perpetual pre-sexual vulnerability, an ethereal state, with ultimate order oriented around purgatory’s purification and hell’s punishments, preferring symbols – relics, statues – mediating the non-embodied over bodily encounters), and of her refusing to succeed in what amounted to the religious ambitions of others (being an unobtrusive “flower”). Our investigation showed that while these remain in Thérèse, she does return to knowing that a child’s love for God (unacknowledged by Pauline when she is eight) is still love for God, and that her ‘unimpressive’ (unnoticed) efforts to love, her ‘immature’ ways (running away from failure, getting others to decide things) are well received by God. Images such as sexual

abstinence as ‘perfection’ fade into the background behind an emphasis on God’s parent-like advocacy for the ‘small’ one.

Thérèse’s ‘youngest daughter’ state became a metaphor for her relationship with God – allowing a correspondence between her this-life experience and a transcendent God-for-her reality. A projected God-perspective gave meaning to the physical boundaries of existence. By imagining God as ultimate parent, she re-engages with the God-object representations of her holding environment, to experience God as a living presence who enables, empowers, responds, imparts courage to her. In her sense of ‘longing for God’ as pointing to God previously implanting desires in her, and feeling sustained “from one moment to the next” rather than depending on a store of provisions, Thérèse intuitively grasps the phenomenology of human development. Longing represents a conditioned desire for one’s parent, and feeling sustained, the secure base a parent provides. Sudden knowing (“lights”) – owed to the miracle of subliminal mind activity – is valued for its opening a new pathway from darkness/pain to possibility.

#### *Theological – Toward a Thérésian Anthropology*

Toward deriving a Thérésian theology, we noted that Thérèse’s experience of God as within pointed to God’s transcendence as immanent. In the activity of prayer, a person enters their “inner world,” which reliably attests to their unique history and objective fact of their development. This living and organic ‘world’, constituted by experience felt as certainty – as prior and true – encapsulates a concrete primary, or foundational, experience of grace. Change occurs in relation to this; here the felt-dimensions of God are reaffirmed or reassessed. Here Thérèse interacted with Jesus – early-experience symbols informing her of the true character of mercy. Responding to the Other blessing from within resembles the Holy Spirit’s effect on a person. From here ‘inspiring’ wisdom welled up, such as sensing that practicing virtue is aided by external means, and motivation flowed (to sustain all vocations). From here arose a sense of limitation and vulnerability as the good ground of human relating – leading Thérèse to assert these as pivotal to her reception of God – and from here, during her loss of feeling and vision with respect to the things of heaven, Thérèse drew the tenacity to persevere in confident trust in God to continue to ‘the shore (heaven’s hearth) to where her sailboat was

aimed'. Constructively re-engaging with transitional objects for God (one's loving Other) restored self-becoming and revived relations with the Other as gracious.

Chapter Seven observed three types of self-understanding in relation to God, represented by the metaphor of Hebrew Scripture, existential self-examination (universalising the human "condition"), and scholastic Aristotelian substantialism. We noted that Thérèse's shift from substantialism (especially its rigid/mechanical nineteenth century form) to the relational metaphor of Hebrew scripture resonated with William James' research, and with the thought of John Macmurray and Reinhold Niebuhr. James asserted that creedal formulations are derived from experience. Macmurray proposed that knowing is at the service of relation, our being's primary aim (as opposed to relation at the service of the primary aim of knowing.) Niebuhr noted that humans self-transcend through the height at which the human spirit is able to survey the scene, none other than the human capacity to know God. Rejecting this as the basis for any mystical union with God, he names two poles of sin: on one side, imagining ourselves as all spirit we fall to pride over our knowing (our spiritual capacity), and on the other, holding ourselves as physical and focusing on our bodily self alone we fall to anxiety over its limitation and loss.

Chapter Eight critically reviewed Lonergan's underlying anthropology: human consciousness, equipped with four *a priori* transcendent aims, is progressing in history (Hegel), and has the capacity to be enlightened to a transcendent knowing, by love. It stated Thérèse's thought according to Lonergan's four forms of meaning, and argued that Lonergan's categories might encourage a focus on "conversion" as a phenomenon rather than observing the inherently relational nature of the process involved in becoming authentically human. It finally noted von Balthasar's writing in relation to Thérèse regarding personhood. His thought on holiness and mission sometimes imposed on her rather than drew from her. While not acknowledging Thérèse in his writing on "becoming a child," his thought here relates to hers.

## 2. The Significance of the Findings

Original to the research was an attempt to make an explicit connection between Thérèse of Lisieux's childhood experience and her felt-sense of mercy, a corrective for the spiritual practices and non-merciful ideas of God around her.

While psychological insights with respect to Thérèse have been previously offered, this study focused on a return to what is most real (felt-knowing via transitional object-representations), using McDargh's work on religious faith-development. Thérèse's 'most real' was found to surround being-in-relation, critical to human goals, and important to theology in sensitizing us to the poverty of human-being apart from relation. Further, an exploration into Arminjon's influence on Thérèse revealed a sense of heaven (hope in the future drawn from the past) emanating from the memory of her family gathered around the hearth (*foyer*).

It is also significant, as we saw through Sroufe and the studies of McDargh, Macmurray and Fairbairn, that being in relation opens the opportunity for being real (to impact our environment). What Thérèse senses as most real (her True self) affirms the felt-realities of filial-favour, a metaphor in the Hebrew tradition, which is ultimately the privilege of unconditional relation, and belonging to one's parent-creator. This is central to a contemporary psychological understanding of confidence generated from an inner-world construct, needed for self-becoming, and the development of our God-representation.

Finally, as indicated at the start of this investigation, we have endeavoured to offer a *preliminary* study in making Thérèse's thought available to theological anthropology. We see in Thérèse an affirmation of an original 'you are good' (in place of an Aristotelian-Thomistic 'good from one's final end' perspective) as the matrix and continuance in life. Such a perspective respects life as progressive and allows psychological insights to be integrated with theology in a positive way.

## 3. Implications

The first implication concerns the experience of and the theology of grace. Thérèse's activity and written thought shows grace is felt along a continuum of the developing

self, first as indispensable help given in the face of early-life limitation, but then, when needed, as a conscious existential sense (of God our universal help in the wide bounds of embodied existence in time in this universe). This understanding of grace has three significant implications. First, it reveals *prayer* as critical to our self-becoming in relation to God, our ultimate other, and the neighbour we are estranged from. Second, to feel ourselves/our goodness as defended by God's gracious (merciful) activity, impels us *to offer likewise to others* from a wellspring of (transcendent) grace. Finally, we are called to *share* the reality of our *limitation*, which was/is the beginning ground for grace (concrete in history). In this world, limitation binds us together in relation; here we partake in God's gracious action. Limitation precedes grace, and, as its intended locus, leads to one necessary thing: relation.

#### 4. A Mediated Theology, and Further Research

To bring this research to a close, all may be brought into synergy via Lonergan's second phase in his methodology, 'mediated theology', comprised of: Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics, and Communications.<sup>2</sup>

*Foundations: What has Been Attended, Interpreted, and Evaluated. What is my commitment to the matter under discussion?*

Thérèse felt joy through a sense of God valuing her. She felt God's "grace" and mercy consonantly: both described what she received as an infant from her parents. The Biblical call to not forget God in a time of sufficiency is a call to remember our origin of entire dependence on another and the mercy we then received. Dependence on another who sought to interact with us, and delighted to treat us mercifully made our life's procession possible, physically, intellectually, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. It was where communion began.

Our agency first emerges through parental grace. Later, when it is thwarted, it is enabled through feeling 'God's gracious mercy', noted by Fitzgerald and Matthew in their exploration of "impasse" and "impact," respectively. There is value in

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 127-132; 267- 368. Supplementing the four forms of meaning earlier used in this thesis, "mediated theology," will be used to convey Thérèse's activity and thought as theology. Foundations, Doctrines, Systematics, and Communications, are preceded by "Research, Interpretation, History, and Dialectic," which lead to "foundations" whose central concern is 'conversion'. Consistent with our argument in Chapter Eight, we will name Thérèse's progress not 'conversion', but: True Self realization based on felt remembrance.

incorporating the processes visible in Thérèse into the theology of grace, similar to Dom Sebastian Moore's incorporation the phenomenon of victimhood into the theology of sin. Many of us, on reading *Story of a Soul*, were relieved to find that, in spite of apparent failure in expressing goodness, our sense of being good and desire to increase in it, is itself of value. Thérèse shows that this feeling is not futile. In realizing our efforts were distorted by a compromised agency, resulting from less than merciful relationships, we found ourselves healed of a poor sense of self. Further, by recognizing our own limitation and its causes, we might better respond to the call to 'love our neighbour'. Comprehending others' limitation through our own, we become forgiving, and humble with regard to what we can do, lessening the tendency to accuse others of bad intent.

*Doctrines (How do I express my new commitment?)*

God, as Thérèse gives witness to, is indeed gracious. God is the source of one human valuing another, and like a warming hearth ("foyer") that we gaze into, in the passage of self-becoming.<sup>3</sup> Here is an opportunity to appreciate God's creative work – God's valuing us is central to unfolding human existence. As Thérèse endeavoured to, we should promote an environment conducive to valuing the other, a sign of God in our midst.

*Systematics (How am I to make sense of this new commitment?)*

God, the source of our value, communicates our value through human care, from one generation to the next, through birth and during the infant's development. We see God in the psychic structures that form in human self-development. These structures ensure agency toward forming new relationships, ultimately allowing us to value others into self-hood, and fullness of life. All humans are born into a life where mercy is integral to the possibility of survival, let alone happiness. Parental mercy, a repeating behaviour, in its most sensitive shape may be described as 'graciousness': the one who has ability, helps, with restraint, humour, lightness, and generosity, the one who is limited in some way. Human grace is not felt as a mere chore by the parent, but giving favour is pleasurable– the giver also receives. If, analogically, God is like us (humans created in God's likeness) the argument as to whether God's freedom is compromised when

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<sup>3</sup> This metaphor suits the winter temperatures of Normandy. For biblical regions, cool running water is apt.

responding to limited creatures fails to appreciate human parent-child relation. All that the parent-child relationship entails might be brought into the discussion on God-human relation, Theological Anthropology.

*Communications (How do I enter my new commitment into dialogue with the contemporary situation?)*

With psychology and theology in tandem, the subject of grace may become relevant to all persons. Instead of 'losing' people of faith to psychology as a rival, psychological truths may be transferred to faith practice, especially in the meeting between psychoanalysis and spirituality. Lonergan's merging agency with intentionality, under four imperatives, should be qualified to accommodate the fact that those who experienced a graceless infancy are being entirely reasonable in directing their adult energies to finding a face whose gaze values them.

We must continue to critique religious and existential writing from the perspective of the fully fledged mature male, barely aware of his growing years, let alone of the significance of his mother's help given in his infancy. Theology should welcome the efforts in psychology and psychoanalysis to understand the human process of becoming. Moral theology could rethink notions of good in the light of humans pursuing a fundamental God-originating goal: to be in a relation with one who gives us value.

In the light of the above, further investigation could be directed

- i. to consciously incorporating the metaphors of Hebrew Scripture that aid self-development and renewed trust in God's mercy, into our present day liturgy/pastoral practice.
- ii. to the insight from psychological studies that show neglect (rejection) or violence imposed on the infant is assimilated into its sense of self. Felt by some (Augustine, Luther) to be an original 'condition', this tends to be projected as an expectation. Thérèse, while not immune from such assimilation, tried to assert something other with regard to how God views us. A thorough theological exploration into psychological research on infants and into Alice Miller's comments about self, sin and victimhood is



needed to bring theology in line with current understanding on the helplessness of the victim who sins.

- iii. To Abrahamic inter-faith dialogue in the light of the findings.<sup>4</sup> We are bound together in God's gracious love. In common, we can hold Jesus (increasingly claimed by the Jewish community as one of their own) as pre-eminently sensing goodness as originating from/connected with God. In this understanding, God's spirit is a metaphor for grace, the 'holding environment' that enables life's continuance.
- iv. To the shape of priesthood as less the administration of Sacraments and molding of creedal fidelity in the Catholic 'citizen', and more of ministering grace, using filial imagery. We should perhaps reclaim the familial God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (giving wisdom from the mother's 'lap'), lost to the Hellenistic God of the citizen (in the public training of a good kingdom member).
- v. To rethinking a moral theology which focuses on an 'other', an *exterior* assessor, expertly evaluating our activity. The role of the other, rather, should be remedial – mercifully restoring our value. Evaluation, an *interior* mechanism, will then function properly.

### Conclusion

In Chapter One of this study, John McDargh sets the scene. An understanding of human development follows from the "metaphor of the world as a stage," where human birth is "like the entrance of a new character onto the stage. The drama is one that began well

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<sup>4</sup> Chapter Four highlighted the underlying psychology in certain points found in Arminjon's *The End of the Present World*. For example, its desire for vengeance, and negative generalizations about those it castigates – Jews, secularists, and atheists – reflects an adversarial disposition. While Thérèse does not repeat this aspect of Arminjon's millenarism, *The End of the Present World* is now advertised under the guise that, because it inspired Thérèse, it remains of value. See <http://www.susanconroy.com.com/endoftheworld.shtml> and <http://www.spiritdaily.net/theend2.htm> , accessed on 16/02/2013. A concern is that anti-Semitism lingers in some circles. Where the Christian Scriptures are interpreted as a timeless text, first century Jewish quarrels are read as though they belong to our present day.

before his or her arrival and will continue indefinitely after the character utters his or her last lines...”<sup>5</sup>

Upon its entrance on to that stage, the infant develops an inside as well as an outside, an “inner psychic reality,” (Winnicott) via a “holding environment:” a place of mutual contingency between itself and a maternal other, a familiar and unique ‘to and fro’ (Sroufe) towards a sense of self, enabling a separate initiative and the innate push to explore.

Thérèse’s mother’s face functions as the first “mirror” into which Thérèse looks to discover her own identity, Fitzgerald observes; “her own reflection in a loving gaze of total *regard* is foundational for ... [her] life and her experience of God.”<sup>6</sup> At three years of age, Thérèse exercises her sense of self and initiative.<sup>7</sup>

What Therese receives from her mother she then gives; her texts mother the reader and the drama, begun before her birth, continues beyond her death. We leave the final words to Thérèse.

I am a child and ...their parents...do not hesitate to satisfy the desires of the little ones whom they love as much as themselves...(1896),

You have said to me as the father of the prodigal son said to his older son:  
EVERYTHING that is mine is yours (1897),

leading her to confidently say in the year of her death (1897):

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<sup>5</sup> John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the imaging of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 214.

<sup>6</sup> Constance Fitzgerald, “The Mission of Thérèse of Lisieux,” *The Way Supplement* (Summer 1997), 74-96.75-76, At 86, Fusing mother-regard with God, she becomes the “‘heart’ of all that there is... the ‘core’ within the core,” of God imaged as “the body of Mother-God, that is, “that which supports all life [and is] the matrix out of which everything evolves.”

<sup>7</sup> Thérèse states (Zélie reports), “...if I were not good, I would go to hell... but I know what I would do. I would fly to you who would be in heaven. What would God do to take me?” Zélie adds “I saw in her eyes that she positively believed that God could do nothing to her if she were in the arms of her mother.” Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1226.

I really count on not remaining inactive in heaven. My desire is to work still for the Church and for souls. I am asking God for this and am quite certain He will answer me. Are not the angels continually occupied with us without their ever ceasing to see the divine Face and to lose themselves in the Ocean of Love without shores? Why would Jesus not allow me to imitate them? ... I shall see all that is necessary for him [you, my little brother], and I shall leave no rest to God if he does not give me all I shall want!

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