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

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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

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