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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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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.¹

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.² 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

¹ 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.

² 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.”³

Thérèse was sheltered during her formative years as a provincial *émigré de l’intérieur*⁴ 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’.⁵ 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

³ *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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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 culture⁶ 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).⁷ In Western Europe, and particularly in nineteenth century France, modernity coincided with the rise of secular institutions.⁸ 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.⁹

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.¹⁰ Self-understanding with emphasis on self-determination¹¹ 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.¹² Empiricism, rationally and sensibly evident criteria for truth, fanned an intellectual interchange and a scientific revolution.¹³

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 71.

⁹ Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 71.

¹⁰ Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 67-69.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols*, 69.

¹³ 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,”¹⁴ its associated experience (expressed in the arts), “modernism,”¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.”¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ The spirit of a people was a felt sense of

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

¹⁵ 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.”

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.”¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.”²¹ It, in turn, gave birth to individualism.²² 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.²³ Elevating originality as a moral good, they as much widened the horizons of thought as obscured them with fantasies, emotions, and ideals.²⁴ 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.²⁵

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.²⁶ Romanticism flourished in France, entering Marian

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume VII*, 18, 19, Quotes from Schlegel.

²⁰ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume VII*, 18, 19.

²¹ 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.

²² 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.

²³ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 796.

²⁴ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 796.

²⁵ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 796.

devotion, where Mary represented affective wisdom over-riding industrialism, commerce, bureaucracy, and rationalism.²⁷ Devotées, shaped by their experience, sought less to understand Mary than to idealize her.²⁸ Like the devotées of “courtly love,”²⁹ there was a surrender to fantasies and difficulty in distinguishing dreams from reality, confusing the good and the beautiful in a new way.³⁰ 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.³¹

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.³² 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.”³³ The notion that

²⁶ 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.

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

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

²⁹ As in the thematizing of Mary of Aquitaine’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 Aquitaine 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).

³⁰ 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.

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

³² William Washabaugh, *A life of Response: American Cultural Anthropology*, Chapter 5. 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.³⁴

d. Conversation and the Exceptional Self

Millhorn writes that a feature of the romantic period was the concept of the 'public sphere',³⁵ and Zeldin writes of the notion of the "genius."³⁶ 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*.³⁷ *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.³⁸ 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.³⁹ This convention contributed to women's intellectual freedom

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

³⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 207.

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ "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."

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

³⁹ 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.”⁴⁰

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,⁴¹ 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).⁴²

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.⁴³ Rousseau wrote in *Emile* that the child untouched by society was good and innocent,⁴⁴ 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).⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶

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

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

⁴² Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*, 179.

⁴³ Locke (1632-1728); Rousseau (1712-1788); Schopenhauer (1788-1860).

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

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."⁵⁰ 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

⁴⁷ Copleston, *History of Philosophy VII*, 273.

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

⁴⁹ Washabaugh, *A Life of Response: American Cultural Anthropology*, Chapter 5.

⁵⁰ 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.”⁵¹ 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.⁵² The uprising in 1789, a declaration of citizen’s rights and the attempt to realize them, was articulated as ‘revolution’ by its own people.⁵³

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.⁵⁴ 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

⁵¹ Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume VI: Modern Philosophy Part I*, 100.

⁵² 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.

⁵³ Mc Manners, *Lectures on European History 1789-1914*, 16.

⁵⁴ “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.⁵⁵ Religion subverted the human need to express the dissatisfaction of alienation.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ 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”),⁵⁸ proposed being human without God,⁵⁹ loving one’s fate, and realizing desires by willing.⁶⁰ Freud stripped away morally ordering religion to expose subconscious motivations.⁶¹ 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

⁵⁵ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Volume XII*, 311-312.

⁵⁶ 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.

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

⁵⁸ 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.

⁵⁹ 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.

⁶⁰ 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*.

⁶¹ 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.⁶² 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*.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵

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

⁶³ 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.

⁶⁴ 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.

⁶⁵ 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

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.⁶⁶ 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'.⁶⁷ 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 ends⁶⁸ From this emerged a new perspective on who the human person was in relation to God.

⁶⁶ 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.

⁶⁷ 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.

⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹

Martin was beaten in childhood by his overbearing, ambitious father, Hans, and by a mother 'overwhelmed' by her domineering husband.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ The sensitive⁷² 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).⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ As his mother was

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

⁷⁰ 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.

⁷¹ Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 66, 73-74.

⁷² Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 63

⁷³ 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."

⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵ His conflictedness was transferred to the public context of Roman-German Catholic relations.⁷⁶

Luther's argument with Rome gathered support by coinciding with German resentment of Roman rule.⁷⁷ A catalyst for revolt, by 1542 there was a clear schism that would permanently divide medieval Christendom.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ Where the Catholic Church resisted the treatment of scripture

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

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

⁷⁷ Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 23-29.

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

⁷⁹ Zeldin, *The Oxford History of Modern Europe: Volume II*, 794.

⁸⁰ 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,⁸¹ Protestants feared the possibility of doubt cast on “the word” as divinely inspired.⁸²

b. Counter Reform and Protestantism in France

In France, Lutheranism did not take hold as in Germany because there was little Roman rule.⁸³ 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.⁸⁴ 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).⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶ Pope Paul III (1468-1549) assigned to the Jesuits the duty of reclaiming what was being lost to Protestantism; subsequently the Calvinists and the

⁸¹ 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.

⁸² 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.

⁸³ 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.

⁸⁴ Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 120 -121.

⁸⁵ 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.

⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷ The Jesuit aim of deepening spiritual lives by education was redirected to uprooting ‘heresy’.⁸⁸

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.⁸⁹ Through *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), Calvinism took hold in France.⁹⁰ *The Institutes* approached human existence from God’s purposes, asserting that humanity’s chief aim in life was “to know God” who created humanity.⁹¹ 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.⁹² 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.⁹³ 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

⁸⁷ Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 201.

⁸⁸ Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 205.

⁸⁹ 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.

⁹⁰ 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.

⁹¹ Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 216.

⁹² Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 217.

⁹³ Elton, *Reformation Europe*, 236.

was contained in scripture, asserting that the Old Testament was not superseded but an earlier, less distinct revelation.⁹⁴ Some of this would be absorbed into Jansenism, such as the Sabbath observance, maintained by Thérèse's father, Louis, in his watch-making business.⁹⁵ 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."⁹⁶ Pilgrimages involving Marian shrines were popular as her miracle producing qualities were universally appreciated.⁹⁷ 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."⁹⁸ This invited symbolic imagery reflecting artists' insights, embellished by local beliefs.⁹⁹

From the sixteenth century, the tendency to displace Jesus with Mary met resistance from Protestants.¹⁰⁰ 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-

⁹⁴ 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.

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

⁹⁶ 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.

⁹⁷ Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 178.

⁹⁸ Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 186-187.

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

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

understanding.¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰² Calvin asserted that mutual love was as important as procreation, that sex was not unclean, and divorce was possible in some cases.¹⁰³ 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.¹⁰⁴ The power taken from Mary was given to individual women, who were expected to learn scripture and become teachers of their children.¹⁰⁵

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.¹⁰⁶ 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.”¹⁰⁷ Here, Mary was associated with the monarchy, and depictions of her wearing a crown reinforcing a particular social order, infuriated reformers.¹⁰⁸ During the French Wars of Religion (1652-98), Huguenots destroyed

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

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

¹⁰³ Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 202.

¹⁰⁴ Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 202.

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

¹⁰⁶ 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.

¹⁰⁷ Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 205.

¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹

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.¹¹⁰ 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.¹¹¹ 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 17th 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.¹¹² 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.¹¹³ John, newly ordained, and an earnest reformer, became the target

¹⁰⁹ 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.

¹¹⁰ Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 208-209.

¹¹¹ Cunneen, *In Search of Mary*, 211.

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

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

of resentment by members of his own order.¹¹⁴ 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.”¹¹⁵ After a daring escape, he fled to a nearby Carmelite convent where he became a spiritual director and wrote a commentary to his poems.¹¹⁶ Teresa’s injunction to her nuns to become as “men”¹¹⁷ 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.”¹¹⁸ 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 century¹¹⁹ – 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

¹¹⁴ Matthew, *Impact of God*, 5-7.

¹¹⁵ Matthew, *Impact of God*, 10.

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

¹¹⁷ 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.

¹¹⁸ 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.

¹¹⁹ 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.¹²⁰ 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.¹²¹ 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.¹²² This heritage entered Louis and Zélie’s household,¹²³ to surround Thérèse with a sense of ‘right’ Catholic thinking on military virtue.¹²⁴ 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

¹²⁰Isidore 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.

¹²¹ 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.

¹²² 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.

¹²³ Piat, *The Story of a Family*, 13.

¹²⁴ 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 Lacauve 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.¹²⁵

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.”¹²⁶ 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.¹²⁷ 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.¹²⁸

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.¹²⁹ Influenced by Olier, he arrived at a Trinitarian pattern of contemplation in the form of “adoration, adherence and co-operation.”¹³⁰ 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.¹³¹ Conforming to these dispositions served to strip “interior idols.”¹³² Beginning with

¹²⁵ Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 210.

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

¹²⁷ Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 211.

¹²⁸ Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 211-212.

¹²⁹ Minton, “The Spirituality of Bérulle,” 212.

¹³⁰ 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.

¹³¹ 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.

¹³² 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.¹³³

While Bérulle did not return Calvinists to Catholicism, his identification of the reigning monarch with Christ drew Catholic allegiance to the French monarchy.¹³⁴ 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.

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

¹³⁴ Minton, "The Spirituality of Bérulle," 214.

In a political rivalry with Calvinism, certain Jesuits promoted a particular interpretation of sin (held by de Molina).¹³⁵ By defining it in relation to circumstance, sin could be dealt with case by case, allowing its ‘severity’ to be reduced.¹³⁶ Concern that this would undermine a sense of sin and lead to formalism in approaching the sacraments (together with the rising conversion to Calvinism)¹³⁷ 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.”¹³⁸ 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.¹³⁹ 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*;¹⁴⁰ 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

¹³⁵ 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.

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

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

¹³⁸ 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.

¹³⁹ De Hauranne and Bérulle were friends. Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132.

¹⁴⁰ 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.”¹⁴¹ Both spiritualities supported a disposition of passivity, and had as their guiding principle: to “not...worry about one’s progress in the spiritual life.”¹⁴² 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.”¹⁴³ Caricatured as “contemplative quiet and passivity” over and against “discursive meditation and active virtue,”¹⁴⁴ 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.”¹⁴⁵ Thérèse would distance herself from Quietist spirituality and mysticism on principle,¹⁴⁶ 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.¹⁴⁷

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.¹⁴⁸ 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

¹⁴¹ Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132.

¹⁴² Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality* 132.

¹⁴³ Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 141.

¹⁴⁴ Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132 -134.

¹⁴⁵ Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 132-133.

¹⁴⁶ De Meester, *Power of Confidence*, 290.

¹⁴⁷ Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 141.

¹⁴⁸ Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 127.

only be infused through an irresistible movement by God.¹⁴⁹ 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.”¹⁵⁰ 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.¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵²

Those who took up Jansenist spirituality saw themselves as “continuing and intensifying spiritual trends that were anchored in Catholic orthodoxy.”¹⁵³ They wanted to critique *and* be assimilated, but fear of a judgmental God instead made them vulnerable to spiritual rivalry.¹⁵⁴ 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

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

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

¹⁵¹ Dupre and Saliers, *Christian Spirituality*, 128.

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

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

¹⁵⁴ 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).¹⁵⁵ 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.¹⁵⁶ 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.¹⁵⁷ Catholic Restorationism in 19th 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.¹⁵⁸ Spiritual Jansenism, for example, shunned people and activities not overtly God-oriented, identifying these as “the world.”¹⁵⁹ “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.”¹⁶⁰ Pieties characterized by defensiveness against social secularization grew. Pope Pius IX (1846-

¹⁵⁵ 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.

¹⁵⁶ 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.

¹⁵⁷ 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.” 19th 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.

¹⁵⁸ I am indebted to Dr David Ranson, a reader of this research, in his observations with respect to 19th 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.

¹⁵⁹ 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.”

¹⁶⁰ 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.¹⁶¹ 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).¹⁶² 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.¹⁶³ 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;"¹⁶⁴ 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'.¹⁶⁵ Freethinking (autonomy) came to be identified with 'anti-religion', and those who attended Sunday mass (obedience) were assumed as religious. A divide would have

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

¹⁶² "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).

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

¹⁶⁴ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 1031-1032.

¹⁶⁵ 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.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷

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.¹⁶⁸ In spite of this, in 19th Century France there was vigorous renewal in religious life.¹⁶⁹ 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.¹⁷⁰ 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.¹⁷¹ 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,

¹⁶⁶ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 994.

¹⁶⁷ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Vol II*, 995.

¹⁶⁸ 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.

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

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

¹⁷¹ 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.¹⁷² 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.¹⁷³ 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,¹⁷⁴ 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.¹⁷⁵ 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

¹⁷² Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 7, 45.

¹⁷³Theodore 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.

¹⁷⁴ Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 377.

¹⁷⁵ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 285.

existence in a women's community (approaching Hôtel Dieu at Alençon).¹⁷⁶ 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."¹⁷⁷

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.¹⁷⁸ In the main, marriages were contracts between equal wealth, and alliances between families, and not independent individuals.¹⁷⁹ 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.¹⁸⁰ (When Zélie finds that she is not to be a nun, she conscientiously works to become a favourable 'asset'.)¹⁸¹ 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.¹⁸²

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

¹⁷⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 2.

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

¹⁷⁸ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 286-287.

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

¹⁸⁰ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 287.

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

¹⁸² Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 286-288-289.

the doors of the infinite.¹⁸³

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.¹⁸⁴

b. Social Expectations

Susan K. Foley states social expectation was determined by the categories, “elite,” “urban working,” and “peasant.”¹⁸⁵ 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.¹⁸⁶ Before the Revolution there were divisions based on social status; women of means exercised freedom and influence such as by hosting salons.¹⁸⁷ After it, there was the “citizen,” conceived of through biological science via the ‘evidence’ of rationalism and Rousseauian naturalism.¹⁸⁸ 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

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

¹⁸⁴ 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.

¹⁸⁵ 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.

¹⁸⁶ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 27-28

¹⁸⁷ 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.

¹⁸⁸ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 4.

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

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.¹⁹¹ While he was an autonomous universal, she was defined as 'the sex', there to be governed.¹⁹² 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.¹⁹³ 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).¹⁹⁴

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.”¹⁹⁵ 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.¹⁹⁶ Though Thérèse would experience herself as a

¹⁸⁹ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 1-3.

¹⁹⁰ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 4.

¹⁹¹ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 5-6.

¹⁹² 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.

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

¹⁹⁴ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Volume I*, 345.

¹⁹⁵ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 28.

¹⁹⁶ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 28.

combination of gender characteristics, her education and expected response to God was framed in this romantic ideal.¹⁹⁷ 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.¹⁹⁸ Many women did challenge these complementary, separate, gender spheres, finding them “unsustainable in reality.”¹⁹⁹ Thérèse would, observing her powerlessness against this expectation, while seeming to allow it, step under its barrier.²⁰⁰

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.²⁰¹ 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.²⁰² 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.”²⁰³ 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.²⁰⁴ The impression from this time was that entry into the convent was gained by a combination of publically visible virtue (hailing

¹⁹⁷ 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.

¹⁹⁸ Harris, *Lourdes*, 229.

¹⁹⁹ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 28.

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

²⁰¹ 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.

²⁰² 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.

²⁰³ *Story of a Soul*, 87.

²⁰⁴ 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,²⁰⁵ the corollary being that unrefinement, ignorance, and social inappropriateness (bold confidence or manifest weakness), was taken as lack of virtue.²⁰⁶ (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.)²⁰⁷ 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.²⁰⁸ 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.”²⁰⁹ 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.²¹⁰ 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.²¹¹ The practice of resignation was inculcated in

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

²⁰⁶ Harris, *Lourdes*, 43, 90-91.

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

²⁰⁸ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 50-55.

²⁰⁹ 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.

²¹⁰ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 30.

²¹¹ 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."²¹²

The young woman was not free to take walks outdoors, nor read what she pleased.²¹³ She was encouraged to write in her diary and to engage in light correspondence.²¹⁴ Finally, and significantly, the young woman was discouraged from reading, as her "imagination and aspirations" needed to be disciplined.²¹⁵ This was especially so of romantic books which might inspire daring hopes rather than prepare them for a marriage of convenience.²¹⁶ The romantic novel presented the complexity of two ill-fitting ideals.²¹⁷ 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.²¹⁸ 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

²¹² Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 31.

²¹³ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 32-34.

²¹⁴ 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.

²¹⁵ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 35.

²¹⁶ 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.

²¹⁷ 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.

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

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

Catholic manuals affirmed the civil code which required the wife to be obedient in marriage.²²¹ A fictitious woman illustrates the ideal form of obedience, “I am happy to be submissive, even more happy because affection makes obedience easy.”²²² 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.²²³ 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.²²⁴ There was also the appeal to the “authority of tenderness,” in the ideal union where “a wife obeys without her husband commanding.”²²⁵ The course of natural desire resonated with the spiritual goal of willing submission.²²⁶

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

²¹⁹ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 36.

²²⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 179, 298.

²²¹ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 36.

²²² Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 36.

²²³ *Story of a Soul*, 30.

²²⁴ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 37.

²²⁵ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 37.

²²⁶ 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.²²⁷ Spiritual marriage was an extension of the practice of virginity, where the soul (its quality feminine)²²⁸ was freed to unite, contemplatively, with the object of its desire: God. (Louis perhaps aimed for this in a celibate bond with Zélie.)²²⁹ In a natural marriage, sexual response to one person alone represented fidelity; in relation to God, virginity represented fidelity, while carnal satisfaction, infidelity.²³⁰ This was not stoicism, but employed the erotic language of Song of Songs and the “idea of spiritual fecundity.”²³¹ 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.²³² 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.²³³

²²⁷ 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.

²²⁸ 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 accessed 14/01/12

²²⁹ “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.

²³⁰ 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.

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

²³² “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.

²³³ 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.²³⁴ 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.²³⁵ 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.²³⁶ They occupied themselves with lessons, letter writing, reading, taking walks, visiting, attending mass, celebrating the liturgical calendar feast days, and charitable works.²³⁷

Louis and Zélie reflected the marriage ideals of the day, as child-centred,²³⁸ with child-raising as governed by gentle but firm correction.²³⁹ 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

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

²³⁵ Patricia O'Connor, *Thérèse of Lisieux*, 8-9.

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

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

²³⁸ 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.

²³⁹ 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.”²⁴⁰ Advised by Catholic and secular writers alike, this would have been consistent with the spiritual principles that Louis and Zélie held to.²⁴¹ 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.”²⁴² We read Zélie attempting this in her letters referring to Thérèse and Céline’s development.²⁴³

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.²⁴⁴ 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,²⁴⁵ or serve a household. The elite woman might offer tutoring, or produce skilled piecework, as Zélie did.²⁴⁶ Sewing was recommended as keeping the woman, useful, productive, and occupied at home.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁰ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 46.

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

²⁴² Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 323.

²⁴³ “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.

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

²⁴⁵ 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.

²⁴⁶ 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.²⁴⁸ Venereal disease, especially syphilis, was rife and there was very little acknowledgment of its presence, let alone successful treatment.²⁴⁹ 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.²⁵⁰ In 1875, 93,000 children were abandoned.²⁵¹ 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.²⁵² 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.²⁵³

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

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

²⁴⁷ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 31.

²⁴⁸ 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.

²⁴⁹ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 303-305.

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

²⁵¹ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume I*, 315.

²⁵² Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 50-55.

²⁵³ Foley, *Women in France Since 1789*, 50-51.

entirely at odds with secular creeds.”²⁵⁴ 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.²⁵⁵ 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.²⁵⁶ 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.²⁵⁷ 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.²⁵⁸ This campaign continued a Catholic discourse over France’s moral decline and the need for a

²⁵⁴ Harris, *Lourdes*, 11.

²⁵⁵ Harris, *Lourdes*, 3-12, 55-82.

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

²⁵⁷ Harris, *Lourdes*, 210.

²⁵⁸ 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 Catholicism²⁵⁹ (begun during its wars and revolutions, when it swayed between romantic philosophical aspirations and a stronghold of royalist Catholicism).²⁶⁰ 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.²⁶¹

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.²⁶² When the papacy came under threat, they sought to defend papal authority now felt to be essential to "independence in spiritual matters."²⁶³ 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.²⁶⁴

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.²⁶⁵ Francois Picard took charge of the Assumptionists in Paris, exerting influence especially over women.²⁶⁶ From here he initiated national pilgrimage. Bailly

²⁵⁹ Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence, 56-62.

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

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

²⁶² Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence," 61.

²⁶³ Jonas, "Anxiety, Identity, and the Displacement of Violence," 61-62.

²⁶⁴ 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.

²⁶⁵ Harris, *Lourdes*, 215-219.

²⁶⁶ 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.²⁶⁷ 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.²⁶⁸ 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.²⁶⁹ 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.²⁷⁰ 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.²⁷¹ 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.²⁷² 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.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ 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.

²⁶⁸ Harris, *Lourdes*, 222

²⁶⁹ Harris, *Lourdes*, 221.

²⁷⁰ Harris, *Lourdes*, 224.

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

²⁷² Harris, *Lourdes*, 227.

²⁷³ 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.²⁷⁴ 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.²⁷⁵ 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.²⁷⁶ 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."²⁷⁷

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.²⁷⁸ 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.²⁷⁹ The more physical the pilgrimage became (in death and disease – the physical touch between the helpers and the sick, the immersions), the

²⁷⁴ Harris, *Lourdes*, 336.

²⁷⁵ Harris, *Lourdes*, 236-239.

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

²⁷⁷ 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.

²⁷⁸ Harris, *Lourdes*, 242.

²⁷⁹ 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.²⁸⁰ 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.²⁸¹ 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.²⁸² Salvation was a smiling girl who consoled Bernadette by offering companionship to her alone, lifting her by a happy, and excluding, intimacy.²⁸³ 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.²⁸⁴

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.²⁸⁵ In spite of obedience, superiors and clerics were to patronize

²⁸⁰ “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.

²⁸¹ 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,

²⁸² Harris, *Lourdes*, 44-49.

²⁸³ Harris, *Lourdes*, 7-9.

²⁸⁴ Harris, *Lourdes*, 156-157, *Story of a Soul*, 67.

²⁸⁵ 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.²⁸⁶ 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.²⁸⁷ In the nineteenth century the Freemason's lodge became a place for republicans to meet and to share ideas.²⁸⁸ 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.²⁸⁹ 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

²⁸⁶ Harris, *Lourdes*, 153-156.

²⁸⁷ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945 Volume II*, 1032.

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

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

Protestantism.²⁹⁰ Taking spousal intimacy seriously, she excluded the subverting effect of the cleric's personal aims,²⁹¹ 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.

²⁹⁰ 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.

²⁹¹ 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.²⁹² 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.²⁹³ 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.

²⁹² 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.

²⁹³ 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."