

---

Theses

---

2012

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

Judith Schneider  
*University of Notre Dame Australia*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses>



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

---

Publication Details

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

This dissertation/thesis is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact [researchonline@nd.edu.au](mailto:researchonline@nd.edu.au).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **A Leading Out: Arminjon – “oil and honey in abundance”<sup>1</sup>**

To find an influence that might have led Thérèse away from a primary felt truth, we turn our attention to a book by Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*.<sup>2</sup> Thérèse read this in May 1887. On May 29 that year she asked Louis’ permission to enter the Carmelites, copying a passage on “Purgatory,” and then on June 4 and 5, on “Eternal Beatitude.” This book resonated with deep feelings, but did it also introduce false notions about herself and God?

Psychosocial development researcher Erik Erikson notes that the adolescent is open to discovering creeds, ready to commit to what will take them forward.<sup>3</sup> Till now, Thérèse had ingested a manual of restraint, *The Imitation of Christ*.<sup>4</sup> On reading Arminjon, hope, desire, and fidelity, to the point of (sexual) abandon, erupt in her. Feelings which sought shape found shape in Arminjon’s visions which, informed by Catholic-‘rightness’, centred on fidelity to God in an adversarial sphere. Here, where destructors of one’s familiar order make a bid for power, fidelity is expressed through pain, ignominy, and humiliation, to a judge-God who punishes defiance but rewards surrender. Alongside is a theme of expelling one’s ambivalences – physical urges, desire to explore, and attraction to ‘the world’ – a threat to familiarity (representing God). Directed to martyrdom, energy, in all its forms, physical and psychic, sexual, becomes inverted: its vibrancy and exuberance is spent on restraint, torture, and death. ‘Expelling ambivalences’ as one’s entire project, we note, will threaten to compromise the truth of one’s reality – a complexity of loyalties.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Arminjon, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life*, translated by Susan Conroy (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Browning and Reed in Robert A. Browning and Roy A. Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1985), 106-108. See Erik H. Erikson, *Toys and Reasons: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1964), 106-107.

<sup>4</sup> *Imitation* was aimed to help people live “the common life,” a devout life for lay persons. See Introduction in Thomas À Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, translated by Betty I. Knott (Great Britain: Collins, Fontana Books), 1963.

As our investigation seeks evidence for a ‘leading-away’ from Thérèse’s earliest felt-truth, we begin with that truth. Earliest felt-truth may be assumed to form *in utero*, where there is “an original sense of inclusiveness and mutuality with all that exists,” an “‘oceanic’ feeling.”<sup>5</sup> After birth, Rose, Zélie, Louis, and her sisters arouse positive affects in Thérèse, leading to her becoming adept at expressing these – charming affection becomes her ‘part’ in a conversation, Thérèse’s distinctive ability, central to her identity. Through this she sought peace, bargained for forgiveness and amused. Thérèse encounters God in her “mothers” approval and disapproval of behaviour (God named as the source of their judgment).<sup>6</sup> She is brought to their sacramental rituals, where she learns that ‘God wants’ Thérèse to recite prayers, give alms, restrain herself, make sacrifices, and absorb their books.

When Rose, Zélie, Pauline, and Marie, leave Thérèse, she loses the opportunity to take her part in a familiar dialogue (where to be outgoing, grand, charming, affectionate, and obedient gains the other’s company and approval). This results in losing her ability to ‘speak’ her usual love. Pauline and Marie persuade Thérèse to direct her love toward God through practicing self-sacrifice (which also served to make Thérèse agreeable toward their new undertakings). While God continued to exist for Therese, in Pauline and Marie’s absence, perhaps *God was now not felt to support her efforts*.<sup>7</sup> From her account, Thérèse seems to feel unnoticed, superfluous, her familiar self-identity under threat.<sup>8</sup> At fourteen (Christmas 1886), Thérèse’s confidence in being a lover returns.<sup>9</sup> In May 1887, she reads *The End of the Present World*.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Michael Balint called this the “harmonious interpenetrating mix-up.” John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 218.

<sup>6</sup> Faith, Rizzuto offers, develops via the “interaction between the theological ideas offered by [her] community’s tradition” and “the God and self-representations” a child brings “to confront these ideas.” McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> We have an early indication of God as together-with, or in a familiar other: during Zélie’s sickness, when Thérèse and Celine stay with Mme. Leriche, they feel odd at the prospect of no “Mama” to say prayers with. *Story of a Soul*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> See *Story of a Soul*, 91.

<sup>9</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 99, 101.

<sup>10</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102.

Despite its high millennialism and adversarial tone, Thérèse speaks of this book glowingly. She writes: after “the grace of Christmas,” freed from “scruples and its excessive sensitiveness,” “my mind developed.”<sup>11</sup> According to the instruction *Imitation* gives regarding the “vanity” of enquiry, “I confined myself to a certain number of hours [of study each day]... to mortify my intense desire to know things.”<sup>12</sup> Her “new desire for knowledge” leads to *The End of the Present World*, a religious work with the qualities of an adventure-romance (a genre she would otherwise disallow herself), which in 1895, she describes as a gift through which she became Jesus’ “own,” “beautiful in His eyes and...a mighty queen,” offering her “the means to love.”<sup>13</sup> Had Arminjon supplied her with a new conversation partner, and role – even allowed her to re-enter her familiar role, lost to her? If so, the book represented mercy, its author ‘noticing’ her and providing her with a purpose, recovering her possibility of self-becoming. She writes, “I wanted *to love*...”<sup>14</sup> The means were to be found in “... the *Imitation of Christ*, and in “Arminjon’s conferences” providing “*honey and oil in abundance*”.<sup>15</sup>

This reading was one of the greatest graces of my life. ... the impressions I received are too deep to express in human words.<sup>16</sup> All the great truths of religion, the mysteries of eternity plunged my soul into a state of joy not of this earth. I experienced already what God reserved for those who love him ... and seeing the eternal rewards had no proportion to life’s small sacrifices, I wanted *to love, to love Jesus with a passion*, giving Him a thousand proofs of my love while it was possible. I copied out several passages on perfect love, on the reception God will give His Elect at the moment *He* becomes their Reward... and I repeated over and over the words of love burning in my heart.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> “...at this epoch in my life I was taken up with an extreme desire for learning. Not satisfied with the lessons and the work my teacher was giving me, I applied myself to some special studies in history and science, and I did this on my own.” *Story of a Soul*, 101.

<sup>12</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 101, 102. “I was nourished for a long time on the *Imitation of Christ*... I knew almost all the chapters of my beloved *Imitation* by heart. ... At Aunt’s they used to amuse themselves by opening the book at random and telling me to recite the chapter before them.” *Imitation* adjures to give up “desire for knowledge, because it distracts you and leads you astray.” “A humble ignorant man who serves God is better than a proud scholar...” À Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, Book I: 2, 38, 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 101.

<sup>14</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102.

<sup>16</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, ix. Susan Conroy translates “too deep to express” into “too intimate and too sweet for me to express.”

<sup>17</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 102-103.

We investigate what in the book resonated with Thérèse's sense of herself as a recipient of mercy, and what diverted her from it.

## 1. Introduction

*The End of the Present World*, translated into English in 2008, is relatively new to English-language Thérésian research.<sup>18</sup> Many images assumed to be original to Thérèse may be traced to this book. Lent to Louis by the Carmelites, its symbols and aims were shared in the Martin home.<sup>19</sup> Through rhetoric, apocalyptic imagery, and hagiography, *The End of the Present World* appeals to Catholics to remain loyal to the doctrine of the Church with respect to the afterlife: heaven, purgatory and hell.<sup>20</sup> Arminjon names “pernicious” non-belief and a new eroding science as the enemy to the faith, contrasting the characteristics, plans, and demise of its perpetrators, with the characteristics, goal and reward of “the elect.” This supplies material for his thesis that justice relies on a finite opportunity to yield to God's mercy (which necessitates suffering), with endless damnation of those who fail to yield – ensuring God's overall power. Nine conferences argue “incontestable” truths via “reason” from doctrine and scriptures, accompanied by examples from saints and martyrs. Augustine's *The City of God* is felt in Arminjon's millennialism, generating excitement for a God who will soon bring justice.<sup>21</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Arminjon favours the writings of Augustine, who felt his ‘bodily’ and ‘spiritual’ being in conflict.<sup>22</sup> In *The City of God*, Augustine contrasts two cities – the

---

<sup>18</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, ix-xiv. “Conferences preached at Chambéry Cathedral” were “edited in 1881 under the title *Fin du Monde présent et Mystères de la vie future.*” *Story of a Soul*, 102.

<sup>19</sup> Arminjon's symbols were shared especially between Thérèse and Celine. See *General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 449-451.

<sup>20</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xx. Arminjon includes Augustine's Hellenist imagery. Hellenism is “best” expressed in Aristotle's “notion of entelechy,” an “operation filled with function and so perfection; *dynamis*, not merely a power but a power toward, almost a longing...” Theos (a “demonstrable and reconceptualised divinity”), “psyche,” and “logos the very entelechy” of Western thought. F. E. Peters, “Hellenism and the Near East,” *Biblical Archaeologist*, Winter, 1983, pp 33-39, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Millennialism refers to reading the times from the perspective of apocalyptic writings: the end of the world is imminent via a cataclysmic event, making way for God's judgment and a new world-order. This is cathartic in the light of France's recent revolutions. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 235.

<sup>22</sup> Augustine felt his longing, in relation to the spirit-psyche, as from God (“O Thou, the Power of my soul, enter into it and fit it for Thyself”), but his bodily/sexual desires as inherited from Adamic sin,

earthly city “pagan, self-centred and contemptuous of God and the heavenly, devout God-centred and in search of grace”<sup>23</sup> arguing that God’s intended order is based on charity, and not on desiring and possessing created things as ends in themselves.<sup>24</sup> Arminjon frequently refers to “the *City of God*” and to Augustine’s discussion on the world’s end, death, judgment, purgatory, hell and heaven. Arminjon employs similar rhetoric (“voice of the nations”) and hagiography (demonstrating the foolishness of those contemptuous of God), but his polemic on pagan (modernist) hubris is more sustained.<sup>25</sup>

*a. Some Questions*

Arminjon tenders dogmas to ground his ‘objective’ arguments, but his emotional exclamations and appeals, speak loudest.<sup>26</sup> Did his sense of triumph for Catholics through damnation for ‘God-haters’ enter Thérèse’s theology? Conceding its anti-Semitism as “noxious,” yet finding its extremity as “mere hyperbole,” Thomas Nevin dismisses Arminjon’s book as holding any serious negative influence.<sup>27</sup> Might its

---

hindering the satisfaction of his inner longing. Torn between inner longing and bodily desires, Augustine gave up his mistress. Though he speaks respectfully of her, he does not defend her worth, reducing that part of himself which needed her to “lust.” “I was simply a slave to lust. So I took another woman ... and thus my soul’s disease was nourished and kept alive as vigorously as ever, indeed worse than ever...” Augustine does not view the longing of his body as connected with his spirit. Augustine, *Confessions of St Augustine*, translated by F. J. Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 98-99, 124.

<sup>23</sup> Augustine, born in an African Roman province, studied Greco-Roman classicism, rhetoric and Neo-Platonism in Carthage. He converted from Manichaeism to Christianity. *City of God* grew out of his analysis of Rome’s collapse in 410, becoming a treatise of “Christianity versus the official pagan religion of imperial Rome.” Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods. With an Introduction by Thomas Merton, (New York: Random House, 1950), ix-x. For Augustine’s work in terms of two ‘stories’ of love, see Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Augustine observes congruence between the writings of Paul and the apocalypticists and Plato, Plotinus, and Aristotle, drawing inferences from nature, and citing biblical texts as support. *The City of God*, xii, 249-258. He holds, as an end, contemplation of God (perfect and ‘other’) above sensory engagement with the imperfect corporeal. God who embodies perfect reason is the God who fulfils us. “Platonists...had the wit to perceive that the human soul, immortal and rational, or intellectual, as it is, cannot be happy except by partaking of the light of that God by whom both itself and the world were made.” See also 303, 305-306.

<sup>25</sup> Arminjon’s use of dogmatic formulations reflects a Catholic anti-Modernist stance. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 227. *The City of God* offers a counterbalance of meditations on mercy. *The City of God*, 309.

<sup>26</sup> His emotion conveys: ‘justice for us Catholics, presently suffering in France!’ Arminjon aspires to follow Augustine; he “yearns” to have the “pathos” of his “voice on his lips!” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 235.

conceptions of “right,” however, be so embedded, Thérèse assumes them? Did those conceptions support imagery (combat, the opportunity for glorious martyrdom) that offered a new potency to impact on her ‘environment’, something she had lost?<sup>28</sup> We turn to the first of Arminjon’s “conferences.”

## 2. The End of the Present World: Beginning Conferences

Arminjon presents a drama that gives Catholics reason to shun “the world.” Joining “Catholic” voices, he defies “the rationalists,” who promote “accidental and meaningless evolution,” the “naturalists” who live self-indulgent lives without a care, and the idealist philosophers who hold history as the judge; unlike them, *we* await God’s justice, aware that “nothing can last beyond a finite duration.”<sup>29</sup> “Christian reason and the assent of all the nations bear witness that the world must end,” due to the will of God (and not natural causes), when the measure of saints, a finite predetermined elect, has been filled up.<sup>30</sup> From the outset, Arminjon sees the familiar as ‘right’, and shows God to have adversaries, represented by contemptuous, foreign ways of thinking. To this, he adds scarcity, namely, there is a limit to God’s patience.

Asserting that the end will be marked by “the good news” having been proclaimed throughout the world (the Church with her solemnities established uniformly), the Jews converted, and the Antichrist’s reign as begun, Arminjon begins his onslaught.<sup>31</sup> The Gospel must be preached to all with urgency, especially in the light of limits to God’s patience and of the final Judgment. With “innumerable multitudes” still “sunk in darkness,” the Gospel first needs to be preached until persons are left with no “excuse

---

<sup>27</sup> Nevin writes that it “informed her attention to suffering” and “taught her of the compensation God’s faithful would receive in exchange for the sacrifices they would make in this life.” He reflects “fortunately ... unsavoury pages seem to have passed by one young reader’s notice altogether.” He then notes that Thérèse perhaps drew “needed assurance or reassurance” from Arminjon’s description of heavenly bliss, and that it was fortuitous that she lost this particular vision of heaven where Jews and Freemasons were inadmissible. Dismissing much of Arminjon’s severity as hyperbole, Nevin suggests Arminjon captures his listener’s attention by giving attention to the “disquiet” “true saints feel in the midst of their own happiness and prosperity ....because they distract one from the thought of God.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 177-180.

<sup>28</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xi, xii.

<sup>29</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xix, xvii-xviii, 9, 10.

<sup>30</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 11-15.

<sup>31</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 15-16.

to refuse to obey it.”<sup>32</sup> As all will be destroyed, Arminjon adjures, why build ourselves beautiful houses – as all that matters is whether on the “Day of Judgment” we are found to have possessed virtue?<sup>33</sup>

Thérèse would have heard this in Zélie’s cautions not to invest oneself in building a grand home (to her sister-in-law).<sup>34</sup> The idea of election was also familiar, given her Jansenist environment. For fourteen year old Thérèse, “election” probably amounted to a desire to be spared rather than being sunk in darkness, and, as desire to *be* one of the elect was already an indication of predestination, comfort could be found here, along with the certainty that she was neither “a rationalist” nor “a naturalist.” Finally, Thérèse indicates a sense of election in her felt-suitability to save Pranzini from the fires of hell.<sup>35</sup>

Arminjon warns his reader to await the persecution foretold in Daniel and Revelation.<sup>36</sup> God will “unleash” the “antichrist,” a human personifying evil, who must be born both a Jew and illegitimate, the opposite of Mary’s immaculate birth, “to punish the infidelity of men” and the “incredulity of the Jews” (who will be attracted to his “impious deeds and doctrine” and dissolute life).<sup>37</sup> The antichrist, converting “unbelievers and free-thinkers,” removing “Sunday observance,” and turning the liturgical year into a secular

---

<sup>32</sup> Arminjon writes, “All heresies and schisms will be overcome, and the true religion will be practiced in all places...” Like “Noah’s day,” there will be no more faith on the earth, and, as persons had enough time to obtain the grace of repentance, God’s “patience [will be] finally exhausted.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 18-23, 25, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 33.

<sup>34</sup> When a neighbouring couple’s home collapses and the occupants die Zélie comments: “It’s a bad sign when all is going well. God in his wisdom has willed it thus, to make us remember that our home is our true country.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Shortly after reading Arminjon, Thérèse would pray for the conversion of Pranzini, a young criminal sentenced to death. *Story of a Soul*, 99-100.

<sup>36</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 41.

<sup>37</sup> In an “impious and foolish war,” the antichrist will circumcise and reintroduce bloody sacrifice in temple worship in Jerusalem, which almost conquers the “entire universe.” Ordaining priests, and conducting “impious rites,” “he is motivated by hatred.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 41-45. Confused as to what “sufficient grace” means, Arminjon writes, “...he will not be deprived of the assistance of his guardian angel, nor of the necessary help of sufficient grace, which God bestows in this life upon every single man; but his hatred of God will be so violent [that]... grace from above will never penetrate his heart.”

one, will bring about a secular society; and, unable to tolerate homage to anyone but himself, will become a treacherous despot who profanes the cross.<sup>38</sup> This time, marked by the zenith of science and discovery with the east the centre of politics and learning, will be a test for the elect, with many apostatizing.<sup>39</sup> With France representing his apocalyptic scenario, Arminjon pronounces apostates (the “impious” or “reprobates”) as the enemy, imbuing them with virile power.<sup>40</sup> When the celebration of the Mass ceases, the antichrist will be at his most violent.<sup>41</sup>

The “empire of evil” will arise through the mingling of races and surging military powers, and built upon “upon the ruins of the suppressed nationalities,” which is drawn to Jerusalem (the Jew’s ideal and hope, refusing integration into other nations).<sup>42</sup> Arminjon asks – viewing this “chaos,” progress, and ideas – is it not too difficult to imagine an antichrist rallying the minds of millions of “misled, seduced peoples?”<sup>43</sup> There will be unparalleled bloodthirstiness and tortures of unheard of refinement but this will produce glorious martyrs. There will be a great apostasy, but the antichrist, in also persecuting Jews, schismatics, heretics, deists, and every theistic sect, will serve

---

<sup>38</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 46-49.

<sup>39</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 50, 48.

<sup>40</sup> The 1880 meaning for “impious” emerges through Arminjon’s writing. “Impious” in “*Le Grand Croix Larousse du XIX siècle* (1873) is “Someone who has no religion, who is opposed to the idea of religion;” and P. Larousse goes on to specify: “*Impious* is stronger than *irreligious* and that is stronger than *incredulous*.” So *impious* is the height of unbelief, for there is a desire in it to combat God and religion: “The impious takes pleasure in attacking religion and even blaspheming against God...” Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*. Translated by John Bowden, (London: SCM Press, 1995), 26. Arminjon describes “reprobates” as once faithful “faithless men” who occupy themselves with “ruses and machinations,” despotism and force, making dark, arrogant, and intimidating threats against the good who suffer violence and oppression, rights unrecognized and trampled underfoot. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 104.

<sup>41</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 52, 54 – 56.

<sup>42</sup> Arminjon describes the mingling of races as occurring through the Chinese “hurling” themselves upon “our Europe, enfeebled and forsaken by God.” He further describes Judaism as “Christianity without its apex.” Instead of having “a real motherland,” Jews have only an “ideal motherland, Palestine.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 59-62.

<sup>43</sup> Such rallying, ironically, occurred in history through Adolph Hitler, not a Jew. Arminjon writes that the antichrist’s aim will be the annihilation of Christianity. Pretending to be the messiah, he will lure support through riches, “signs and lying wonders,” captivating attention by “the passions and lust of women,” and perform miracles that parody Christ’s, but do not “transcend the laws of nature” because they reflect a sham doctrine. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 62-66.

God's justice, by removing Judaism, Islam, Freemasonry, and all subversive societies.<sup>44</sup> In heaven, "the voices of angels and of virgins ... confessors and holy martyrs will hail Christ...for the extermination of the wicked."<sup>45</sup>

Arminjon, thirsty for justice, reveals, in his simple eagerness for retribution, his level of 'development'.<sup>46</sup> Employing a self-preserving logic, that all is justifiable if it is 'for Israel or Israel's God', and the rationale of Rom 11:13-15 as guiding history, he advocates annihilation of non-Catholic expressions.<sup>47</sup> Such thinking, for young Thérèse, in a family which at its core felt that 'free-thinking' would threaten fealty to one culture, was perhaps not ill-fitting. Removed from any conflicting loyalties, without a loved one suffering over the struggle for an authentic creed, she might not have noticed its inadequacy. Arminjon's theodicy – violent means serving God's end – however, appears to feed on torture and destruction rather than quelling it; "unheard of refinement" of torture is now sought by martyrs.

### **3. The Resurrection of the Dead and the General Judgment**

During the dates of reading Arminjon, Thérèse (writing to Jeanne Guerin in June 1887) intimates she was particularly taken by the subject of death and resurrection.<sup>48</sup> We may infer from, "I suppose you are very happy not to be listening to my sermons on death [anymore]...", that Arminjon's conjectures excited Thérèse in her desire for learning, especially "science."<sup>49</sup> On the continuity of life beyond death, Arminjon writes, "Once it is taken ... that the destinies of man are limited to the bounds of this present life, there

---

<sup>44</sup> Jesus will then destroy him by his breath, whereupon the Catholic Church will "once again enter upon a period of prosperity and triumph." Converted, the Jews will "enrich" the "Church Militant." Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 57-58, 68.

<sup>45</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 68, 69.

<sup>46</sup> Was Judaism's (intellectual) autonomy, next to Catholicism's constraint to 'authority', felt as provocative? Arminjon aligns this freedom with arrogance, academic and material success, and pits these against innocence, good-will, genuineness, and deep affect.

<sup>47</sup> Romans 11:13-15 refers to the Jewish rejection of Jesus opening a time of favour for Christians; conversion of the Jews will then follow. Violence could be justified by a literalist interpretation of Lk 12: 49-53.

<sup>48</sup> *General Correspondence Volume I*, 274-275, 276.

<sup>49</sup> Her self-deprecation also alludes to her unusual interest (for a young woman). *General Correspondence Volume I*, 274-275, 276.

is no happiness in the world except in the crassest and most brazen materialism;” but, “the Catholic creed” assures that the resurrected will keep the bodies that were indwelt on earth.<sup>50</sup> Conceding that the body is of value, even the epitome of God’s works as the interpreter of both the visible and invisible order, Arminjon, however, leaps toward its capacity to emerge as spirit-life.<sup>51</sup> Arminjon’s interest in post-death embodiment<sup>52</sup> and his assertion that God is only concerned with great suffering and trials, perhaps leads to Thérèse losing interest in her silkworms and birds.<sup>53</sup>

God’s judgment, central to Arminjon’s concern, is envisioned as public. During one’s life, like “a divine telegraph,” each thought, the “moment it is conceived” (including what “people concealed from themselves”), each word, as “it is uttered, is ... transcribed in indelible letters, with frightening accuracy...” to be revealed “in detail” as public “spectacles.”<sup>54</sup> The “sons of Voltaire,” repent only when exposed;<sup>55</sup> in contrast, a priest who cured the sick, restored the sight of the blind, and refused offered wealth, “majestically ... raise[es] his head” with “nobility and virtue.”<sup>56</sup> Arminjon’s comparison is based on caricatures.

---

<sup>50</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 76 -77.

<sup>51</sup> Without a body (to engage with the physical world), the spirit has no instrument to animate. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 81-82, 83-85.

<sup>52</sup> Separated molecules, the body’s essential material, will be reconstituted by angels, and our spirit infused by God (our present physical properties allow for this). Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 90, 91, 88.

<sup>53</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 130-131. Thérèse mentions her interest in death and afterlife between amiable concerns, and humour in her interests – the death of her silkworms, and Celine’s finch going to the taxidermist. *General Correspondence Volume I*, 274-275, 276.

<sup>54</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 105, 101-102. There is a sense that this judgment would be unsatisfactory without publicity.

<sup>55</sup> “[T]he sons of Voltaire, the leaders of free-thought and revolution who ... are hatching dark ... plots against Christ and his Church...will be terror-stricken, and ... appear with unspeakable horror, when they see ...Him whom they had wished to crush... [W]orshippers of the golden calf and the chameleons of wealth and power... drifting along with opinion and doctrine, with no ... compass than that of their ambition, ready to ride roughshod over their conscience and principles ... This hideous, repellent type [who] recurs ...at every period of crisis and social unrest... will exclaim: ‘we have erred then’. ... [It] is an absolutely certain truth that those ... who defy God and deride His threats will one day have a minute and rigorous account to render to His justice... the wicked who called the just fools, who glutted themselves on their tortures and tears, like starving men devouring bread, will learn ... that God does not suffer Himself to be mocked ... and all wrongs will be strikingly redressed.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 103-104, 106.

As Thérèse may have allowed Arminjon's evaluation, we examine it in terms of moral development. When is such thinking normative? Erik Erikson notes the appeal of clear representation of right and wrong, "clarity of faith" to the young adolescent: adolescents need, and are nourished by, the opportunity to demonstrate faith in what is right with the perception of 'right' as external to them.<sup>57</sup> "The crucial issue for adolescents is to begin to find a great faith – someone or something to which they can give themselves – a faith which will help them to organize themselves and give them a sense of purpose and direction."<sup>58</sup> This phase corresponds to faith "Stage III," one of six stages proposed by faith development researcher James W. Fowler.<sup>59</sup> "Stage II" is defined by making judgments by way of a narrative, where symbolic representation is the central means for understanding right and wrong but limited to consistent archetypes who, fixed in their persona and their narrative, simply win or lose. Upon the capacity to think abstractly, subject to experiencing "diverse values, patterns of life, and loyalties," persons are ready to adopt an "independent identity."<sup>60</sup> Here faith provides a coherent centre

in the middle of ...conflicting norms... the adolescent period is the time for finding great fidelity, someone or something to which the adolescent can give him or herself in order to give the self a sense of identity and in relation to get which the person can a sense of direction and purpose.<sup>61</sup>

But while able to engage in abstract thought, Stage III persons are inclined to treat matters of peace and justice from the narrow perspective of how they are impacted, and

---

<sup>56</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 107.

<sup>57</sup> Though able to abstract the ideas of good and bad, they are not yet ready to *practice* abstracting virtue or moral behaviour (acknowledging the capacity of good and bad within all).

<sup>58</sup> Browning and Reed in Robert A. Browning and Roy A. Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 97. At 98, Erikson observes that some persons, in their desire for this, fall into a state of "totalism," "a fanatic ... preoccupation with certain ideals within a very tight and legalistic system."

<sup>59</sup> Fowler's six stages of faith are: Intuitive – Projective; Mythic – Literal; Synthetic – Conventional; Individuative – Reflective; Conjunctive; and Universalizing. Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 98, 104-113.

<sup>60</sup> The figures of the narrative are not investigated for dimensions or instances of good or bad but taken as fixed sequences to be taken literally. Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 158-159, 107.

<sup>61</sup> Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 107-108. Responding to synthesizing experiences of the world thus far, the person in Stage III asks "who am I?" However, without stepping outside of belief systems long enough and fully enough for independent reflection and evaluation to take place, they remain conformist and conventional.

still locate authority “outside of the self” and “in the persons who represent the beliefs offered.”<sup>62</sup> At fourteen, Thérèse might have located authority in Arminjon, and have been drawn to his call to belong to

apostles, martyrs, Doctors, and thousands of the just, who have fought for the honour of God, and for the interests of the faith, [who] will unite with their leader in proclaiming the truth of his sentences and the equity of his judgments,<sup>63</sup>

a culture of familiar heroes. These “just” warriors are endowed with military courage and contemplative zeal, characteristics valued by the Martins. A ‘black and white’ scenario allows Arminjon to mete judgment to thoroughly different types: the “wicked,” who will be found to possess obdurate and cowardly hearts, ‘evident’ in free-thinking and secular politicking (reprobates “will no longer dare to oppose his justice”), and the “elect,” who possess courageous and responsive hearts (“the good in their turn will feel drawn to him in deeper trust”).<sup>64</sup>

Confronted with God’s “definitive and irrevocable” judgement, which allows no negotiation, one’s disposition becomes painfully important.<sup>65</sup> But, does such judgment resonate with Thérèse’s once-felt mercy? Arminjon’s condemnation of a negative disposition is an ill-informed evaluation. A negative disposition might indicate the (often lasting and pervading) involuntary mimesis of neglect or rebuff in infancy;

---

<sup>62</sup> Browning and Reed, *The Sacraments in Religious Education and Liturgy*, 108. Stage III stay subject to the authority of systems they engage with. Few people move to Stage IV, Fowler found, because “symbols of the sacred – their own and others – are related to in ways which honour them as inseparably connected to the sacred...Any strategy of mythologizing, therefore, threatens the participation of symbols and symbolized and is taken, consequently, as an assault on the sacred itself.” Also, concrete security is often found in affirming the rightness of systems they are affiliated with. To make the transition to Stage IV (characterized by “taking seriously the burden of responsibility for their own commitments, beliefs, attitudes, and style of life”) a profound upheaval is needed, in the form of “clashes or contradictions between valued authority sources” leading to the discovery of how relative beliefs are to each group, disillusionment with authority figures, or finding a previous position inadequate to a new circumstance.

<sup>63</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 101.

<sup>64</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 102, 99.

<sup>65</sup> Arminjon writes “[T]here is no level of jurisdiction higher than God’s, and there can be no appeal from absolute justice to relative and limited justice... there will be no reinstatement, no partial or complete amnesty. Divine sentences are irrefutable, unchangeable, and He... who has foreseen the crux and conclusion of human destiny in the eternal decrees of predestination is not a being likely to go back on His judgments.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 104.

alternatively, refusing a person or their creed may represent a positive self-assertion. Perhaps for Thérèse, Arminjon's reprobates simply represented the dark forces of a romantic battle – an indistinct 'out-there' opposition enabling a new sense of self, now felt-loved-by-God because she is willingly and decisively Catholic. Thérèse later reveals (in 1897) she formerly accepted the notion of the reprobate's 'no-faith' insincerity, believing "impiety" was acting against an underlying faith.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4. The Place of Immortal Life and Glorified Bodies after Resurrection

Locating immortal life in a universe in stasis ("at rest") after the "complete destruction of the present physical order," Arminjon offers a flight into the fantastical.<sup>67</sup> Against the "rationalists and pantheists," who "imagine" future-life in terms of "useless erratic figures, wandering around in ethereal, undefined space, shadows bereft of consciousness and personality, immersed in that supreme being called the *all in all*," he envisions a new earth "bedecked with new and evergreen species and incorruptible flowers" in a "perpetual springtime."<sup>68</sup> Here God is the source of light, "nothing profane shall enter;" here all desires are "fully quenched" with "no goods to covet," as God "will give Himself wholly to each in accordance with the degree of his merits."<sup>69</sup> Freed from the earth's physical laws, the elect will adopt "subtility," "agility" and "brightness," the capacity to pass through physical objects, move across distance instantaneously such as electricity or light does, and emit brilliance according to the degree of "their merits."<sup>70</sup> The difference between this earthly and the resurrected state

---

<sup>66</sup>"Reprobate," here connoting apostasy, informs Thérèse's expression "impious," explaining why she thought persons of no-faith were culpable. "I believed [impious people] were actually speaking against their inner convictions when they denied the existence of heaven..." *Story of a Soul*, 211.

<sup>67</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 116. Using Isaiah's "perpetual and absolute" permanence, Arminjon proposes new physical laws: "... the sun and the heavenly bodies will no longer execute their revolutions, and the heavens and the earth will remain stable and at rest." "False science vainly protests against the affirmations of the Sacred Books and alleges that they are at variance with the laws of matter and the principles governing the elements; but how do we know that movement is an essential property of the elements and matter?"

<sup>68</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 115 -117.

<sup>69</sup> Arminjon quotes from Rev 21: 11-21. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 118.

<sup>70</sup>"Our flesh at present weak ... will become impassable, endowed with strength, solidity and consistency that will free it forever from all change, weariness and alteration." Levitation, bilocation, and illumination by halo in this present life indicates ascent to God. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 119-121, 122.

– omnipresent and undiminished as Christ is in his Eucharist, able to travel to earth and beyond, residing in a realm above all created things – will be “infinitely greater than ... between the purest gold and the foulest murkiest slime.”<sup>71</sup> Arminjon offers NeoPlatonic eschatology: Christ, choosing to enter our “inferior and limited planet,” raised it up by making it the centre of the supernatural sphere.<sup>72</sup> Troubled, it will eventually undergo transforming fire to bring it into a “clearer and purer image of the idea God realized in it,” a “city of God” developing unseen.<sup>73</sup> Arminjon concludes with Monica and Augustine’s contemplative experience at Ostia.<sup>74</sup>

There is some indication that Arminjon encouraged a distaste for the embodied present in Thérèse. Arminjon also promotes a God who rewards according to merit. Did this fit with Thérèse’s early experience? Thérèse *did* once count sacrifices with beads, but she was also given blessed bread without attending its ‘feast’ as she was too young; supplied with alms to give ‘not earned by her own hand’; her play garden-altar was praised as if a masterpiece – in short, she was favoured by those who loved her.<sup>75</sup> With effort depending on her capability, reward was in proportion to sensitive mercy toward her limitation. In the excitement of ‘growing up’ and reaching forward, was Thérèse forgetting her earlier defeat? Led by Arminjon, she reads her conversational sharing with Celine through Augustine’s Ostia experience, sharing in Augustine’s sense of unbounded creative vision.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 121- 124.

<sup>72</sup> Referring to higher and lower heavens, Arminjon encourages the reader to reject any science that limits life to this earth, and to consider instead that the stars and planets are populated by higher spiritual beings who serve God (a location for the drama between God and Lucifer). Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 124-126, 127-128.

<sup>73</sup> Arminjon writes, when we see God face to face, we will be united to God by the light of his faces, as “iron” unites “with fire.” Fire (in the process of refining precious metals) can only purify what is originally potentially valuable. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 128-129.

<sup>74</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World* , 132-133.

<sup>75</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 38, 26-27, 37.

<sup>76</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World* , 132-133. “Celine had become [my] confidante ... Jesus, wanting us to advance together, formed bonds in our hearts stronger than blood. ... lightly we followed in Jesus’ footprints. ...How sweet were the conversations we held each evening in the belvedere ! With enraptured gaze we beheld the white moon rising quietly behind the tall trees... rais [ing] our souls to heaven, that beautiful heaven whose obverse side alone we were able to contemplate. ...it seems to me the outpourings of our souls were similar to those of St Monica with her son when at the port of Ostia, they were lost in ecstasy at the sight of the creator’s marvels!” *Story of a Soul*, 103-104.

## 5. Purgatory

Arminjon's purgatory, a place of atonement where "divine severity and rigour" is exercised, had the potential to inspire fear in Thérèse.<sup>77</sup> "God's justice gains compensation for the portion of sacrifice and love refused Him here," but "courage, hope and true resignation" draws mercy.<sup>78</sup> Those in purgatory are buoyed up by a sense that "a merited crown awaits," by 'knowing' that we "love God, and hate [our] faults" (unlike the reprobate who "neither loves God, nor hate their sins"), by the happy realization that those in a state of mortal sin are not here (were cast into hell),<sup>79</sup> that here will be no more relapses into sin, and "terrifying doubts" over one's predestination has ended. Asserting that purgatory's torments are "ordained" with "love and equity," Arminjon exclaims a desire to be purged of faults.<sup>80</sup> We ask: while perhaps attractive to a perfectionist troubled by failure, what kind of creator-saviour is satisfied by tortuous pain? Far from Thérèse's later sense that God's mercy defines his justice,<sup>81</sup> Arminjon seeks repayment of a debt – God's honour offended – reminiscent of Anselm's symbolism.<sup>82</sup> Arminjon's language suggests a 'wounded' monarch,<sup>83</sup> when Thérèse's

---

<sup>77</sup> "Consumed, alternately, by fire or impenetrable blackness, feeling happiness and anguish simultaneously, persons become aware of the degree of evil found in faults once felt "slight and unimportant." *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 141, 142. Thérèse implies a past fear of purgatory: "I need have no fear of purgatory." *Story of a Soul*, 181.

<sup>78</sup> This is felt as an "unshakable certainty in salvation." *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 142.

<sup>79</sup> Relief is felt at not hearing blasphemies (indicating hell). *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 145.

<sup>80</sup> "I should prefer my torments to the delights of heaven... All that God wishes, as He wishes it ... with thy paternal hand, purify an ungrateful and unfaithful soul! ...cut deep into the flesh, drain the unimaginable cup of Thy torments! Listen only to Thy honour and the interest of Thy justice, and until this is fully satisfied, pay no heed to my groans or my complaints." *Arminjon, The End of the Present World*, 146, 158-159.

<sup>81</sup> Thérèse's sense of God's justice in 1895 is: "All of these [God's] perfections appear to be resplendent with love, even His Justice (and perhaps this so more than the others) seems to me clothed in love. What a sweet joy it is to think that God is *Just*, i.e., that He takes into account our weakness, that He is perfectly aware of or fragile nature." *Story of a Soul*, 180-181. An 1890 letter attributed to Thérèse, stating "How good it is ... to pray and to appease God's justice," John Clarke suggests is not authored by her. A following letter focuses on Arminjon's beatitude. "Death will pass also, and then we shall enjoy life... with repose and happiness. ...you know that I do not see the Sacred Heart as everybody else..." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 707, 709.

<sup>82</sup> Anselm writes, By sinning, humanity robs "God of the complete devotion due him; only a human being can fittingly recompense God for what humanity has defaulted upon." However, "only God-become-human has the capacity to make such an offering of sufficient worth. ... Devotion to God is the sole and entire honour we owe God, and God requires of us... One who does not render this honour to God takes away from God what belongs to him, and dishonours God, and to do this is to sin. ...as long as

experience of justice from her primary carers weighed on the side of speedy and indulgent forgiveness.

Here also is a stress on inhuman perfection, on bodiliness obstructing our way to God.<sup>84</sup> In purgatory persons “... are freed from the body that, like a thick veil, darkened their view and understanding of the invisible, supernatural things...”<sup>85</sup> Clogged with venial faults, the

pure rays of His divinity ... could not penetrate...the dross and the remains of that earthly dust and mire with which ...[persons] are sullied. [But] ...having been cast in into a consuming crucible, they should lay aside the rest of human imperfections...<sup>86</sup>

Consumed “dross, dust and mire” evokes the ridding of experiences. The erasure of sin – memories of error – however, is problematic; inextricable from the body, these underpin the process of moral development. If we lose our growth narrative, can our identity remain? The process of identity formation appears to be under threat here. The image of refining precious metals by fire does little justice to the complexity of human experience and developing trust via embodiment – leading to acting from love.<sup>87</sup>

Arminjon writes that humanity’s limited time on earth is its opportunity to make “satisfaction” for sins; “souls which have not entirely satisfied God’s justice in this life” will “endure, in the life to come, penalties proportionate to the number and gravity of

---

he does not repay what he has stolen, he remains at fault. And it is not enough merely to return what was taken away; in view of the insult committed, he must give more than he took away... everyone who sins must repay to God the honour that he has taken away, and this is the satisfaction that every sinner ought to make to God.” (McIntosh prefers “dishonour” as disregard for God’s creation, rejecting the often suggested interpretation of Anselm’s image of God as a feudal lord.) Mark McIntosh, *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2008), 91-92.

<sup>83</sup> Anselm’s imagery harmonizes with the humiliation a spurned demoted sovereign might suffer. McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 91-92.

<sup>84</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 146.

<sup>85</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 155.

<sup>86</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 147.

<sup>87</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 148. Thérèse will later use this imagery. “If through weakness sometimes I fall, may your *Divine Glance* cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.” *Story of a Soul*, 276.

their sins” and “the fire of purgatory.”<sup>88</sup> Recalling a time when penance given by the Church was more in tune with its final punishment,<sup>89</sup> he follows with disturbing images of extreme physical, emotional, and psychological pains, illustrating purgatory’s effect with a mother whose child has died.<sup>90</sup> From the moment the child has left “there is no joy or pleasure in the world capable of filling the deep, unfathomable void the...loss... has created in her heart. How much more bitter and heart-rending are the cries of the unfortunate soul [in purgatory]?”<sup>91</sup>

It is useless to for me to seek Him [God] on this bed of flames where I feel only gloom and emptiness! O beloved of my heart, why keep me in this long suspense? Increase my torments – if necessary put centuries of punishments into the minutes.<sup>92</sup>

Describing the mother’s loss as “gloom and emptiness,” is inadequate, and seeking an increase in the pain of this separation denies the essentiality of bodiliness in loving. Zélie sought purgatory, not for torments; her abandonment to God was obedience to her circumstance from a measure of helplessness. “Her wish to die... was a plea that she be relieved of suffering their [her babies’] loss.”<sup>93</sup> It raises the question: was Thérèse

---

<sup>88</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 149, 156.

<sup>89</sup>“...canon law was applied in its full rigor. ...Penance and works of satisfaction were imposed strictly according to what was required ... to satisfy ... the justice of God...A thief... was sentenced to two or five years’ penance, a blasphemer to seven years, an adulterer to ten, often twelve years of fasting, tears, and public prostrations... On this frightful calculation, an entire life spent in the macerations of the Anchorites ... would scarcely be enough to atone for the ordinary, habitual sins of the men of our time. O, you whose lives are so lax, who do not fear to stain yourselves with a thousand faults in order to please the world or spare your body a moment’s trouble, tell us: have you understood the mystery of God’s justice...have you meditated upon the length of the torments that awaits you?” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 159-160.

<sup>90</sup>The effect of physical suffering is not evaluated realistically by Arminjon. In acute pain, persons will suffer regression on all fronts, including moral. Further, acute physical pain is engaged with intermittently, with persons losing awareness, or even consciousness, in its extremity. In extreme psychological suffering persons will disassociate from themselves.

<sup>91</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 155. When a mother and child’s psycho-biotal tuning (the mother’s physiology responding to her infant child’s bids) is considered in the event of the child’s death, Arminjon’s treatment of bearing with loss seems shallow and unreal. By losing the person she interacts with through her physical self, there is a sense of that part of her being dead.

<sup>92</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 156.

<sup>93</sup> Zélie writes, “O I would like to die, too! I’ve been completely exhausted for two days, have eaten virtually nothing, and was up the whole night in mortal anguish.” Nevin comments that Sr. Marie-Dosithée’s urge to treat her dead infant as a “celestial soul” with “special power,” but “All that she [Zélie] expressed was fathoms down in bitterness. She dignified raw hurt by not seeking the familiar anodynes of faith.” Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 92-93.

conscious of the depth of Zélie's losses? Swept along by Arminjon's words on the effect of the fire of divine love, Thérèse copies this passage out – pain representing an extremity of passion, suffering counted as nothing next to one's surge of love.<sup>94</sup>

## 6. Eternal Punishment and the Unfortunate Destiny

Rejecting salvation for all (preferring God as conqueror), Arminjon affirms the value in being driven by fear – noting the practice of public execution before summoned spectators, and Jesus' dissuasion by warning of impending judgment and fearful punishment.<sup>95</sup> He argues that as reprobates refuse surrender to God, neither repent nor see evil as absolute, choosing unceasingly to obtain satisfaction outside God, to allow them death would be an offence against justice.<sup>96</sup> They are never forgiven by God, because once dead they are unable to repent, and, thus, God is *unable* to release them from a death that can never be consummated.<sup>97</sup>

Reversing the understanding of hell as representing a rupture between self and other, where God is felt to be that rupture's cause, Arminjon argues that a place of infinite suffering must exist to provide something from which Christ saves us – preventing us from saving ourselves by our own amends (possible if punishment were finite) and placing us in a boundless debt of gratitude; these serve as a foundation for moral order.<sup>98</sup> With moral order relative to finite choice and the existence of hell,<sup>99</sup> and sin

---

<sup>94</sup>This was found in amongst her papers dated May 30, 1887. Arminjon quotes John Chrysostom: "The man who is inflamed with the fire of divine love is as indifferent to glory and ignominy as if he were alone and unseen on earth. ... He is no more troubled by pincers, gridirons, or racks than if these sufferings were endured in a body other than his own. What is full of sweetness for the world has no attraction for him, no taste; he is no more liable to be captivated by some evil attachment than is gold seven times tested, liable to be tarnished by rust. Such are the effects even on this earth, the effects of divine love when it firmly takes hold of a soul." Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 148. Later, Thérèse writes to Marie, in relation to Man B: "... when we love a thing the pain disappears." "My desires for martyrdom *are nothing*; they are not what give me the unlimited confidence that I feel in my heart. They are the spiritual riches [consolation] that *render one unjust*, when one rests in them with complacence and ... believes they are *something great*..." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 999.

<sup>95</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 173-4.

<sup>96</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 175-6.

<sup>97</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 176, 177.

<sup>98</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 178.

<sup>99</sup> Without a finite choice, Arminjon writes, one could slowly make amends – by the opportunity of thousands of years. If this opportunity is granted, "morality, public order, and all semblance of honesty

(chosen defiance) as freely preferred, Arminjon insists God must present a threat: “if crime went unpunished,” God would cease to be great; “greatness” would belong instead to “sinful man.”<sup>100</sup> Further, infinite damnation is necessary because, reckoning with infinite desires, humans are only swayed by something in proportion to these.<sup>101</sup> Finally, hell’s punishment is suitable in another way: upon the loss of our body (which obscured the soul’s aim), it becomes clear to the soul that God is its only treasure and end.<sup>102</sup> In their separation from God, the damned continue to live and experience as if they have bodies, but lose what gives them dignity – degraded by God, they have no reason or virtue.<sup>103</sup> We ask: without body, reason, or virtue, how does this remain a being at all? What profit does God draw from degrading his own creation?

Addressing how “the implacable severity of divine justice” might “be reconciled with its infinite mercy,” Arminjon reasons, God’s mercy is to be found in the restrictedness of human life; through limits, some are found to be obdurately unrepentant.<sup>104</sup> God, supreme in all things, is supreme in compassion, and if God were *able* to feel pain God *would* suffer supremely over humanity.<sup>105</sup> He describes the quandary as he sees it: to

---

[will] disappear from the earth. Justice is stripped of its sanction; conscience will become a mere prejudice, virtue and sacrifice stupid exertions. Remove the fear of eternal punishment from mankind, and the world will be filled with crime; the most execrable misdeeds will become a duty whenever they can be committed without risk of prison or sword.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 180.

<sup>100</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 183-184. Those who reject God will say “we possess a tolerable enough existence for us to agree to do without You forever...we have a quality of life and repose that is our own work, and we are content with it; if we are not radiant like Your angels, at least we are not Your subjects; we do not serve You or obey You. ... If hell is not a deluge and overwhelming onslaught of unspeakable and eternal sufferings...man will forever be the victor, and the Lord of heaven will be the loser... It is a prime necessity... that the man who has insulted Him...should be subjected to extreme, endless, and incomprehensible torments in proportion to the offense against divine glory. He must endure unbroken heartache and pains, together with...desolation and terror...so that ...the extremity of his anguish ...[forces] the homage that goodness was unable to obtain...They would prefer little to surrender” – “were God in order to alleviate the misery of ...the damned, to allow them but a shadow of good, a slender hope, or a drop of water to refresh them, they would cling to that... with all the strength of their exhausted, gasping will; they would strive with their whole soul after that crumb of solace...rather than bend the knee to submit.”

<sup>101</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 185.

<sup>102</sup> Does the body obscure the soul’s aim? Contemplation alone can lead to retreat into felt-memories, rather than facing the other who calls a response from us. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 186.

<sup>103</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 187-188.

<sup>104</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 192.

<sup>105</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 193. “If God were able to suffer, no anguish would be comparable to the sorrow His heart would feel when he is compelled to condemn a soul... as He damned

abolish hell is to abolish heaven, as it belittles the effect fear of hell had on the “martyrs, virgins, hermits and saints,” who refused “seductive pleasures, trampled upon worldly snares... and braved the hangman and the sword”<sup>106</sup> “Without these fears, the City of God would never have filled up; no one would have done good.”<sup>107</sup> “[G]race and redemption [should] be excluded from hell” so that no “ray of mercy” may “fall upon...[the] unfortunate man who would grasp [God’s hand] with a love and gratitude proportionate to the immensity of God’s deliverance,” because God would lose his “infinite dignity.”<sup>108</sup> By way of explanation, Arminjon asserts: love might be set “against justice if it were justice that punished,” but love, in the face of unabated “contempt,” “never forgives.”<sup>109</sup> How was it that Thérèse kept silent over “damnation issues from love?”<sup>110</sup> Did she allow it until she wrote (in 1895), the only thing to “sustain me” (next to *Imitation*) was “Holy Scripture,” a “solid and very pure nourishment” – and no longer “oil and honey?”<sup>111</sup>

---

a soul He would be gripped with the same horror and the same tremor as a mother who was herself compelled to let the blade of the guillotine fall upon the neck of her child.”

<sup>106</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 194.

<sup>107</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 194-195, 196. To the question “...is God just?’ when God goes beyond all proportion, punishing a passing fault committed in a single moment with an eternity of pains?” he answers: “Here reason is powerless for God is the greatest of mysteries. Sin is a mystery as unfathomable as the majesty of him who it offends; and the punishment due to its evil is another immeasurable mystery that the human mind will never succeed in solving.”

<sup>108</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 195-196.

<sup>109</sup> “Justice,” Arminjon notes, “was propitiated” on Calvary, forgiving debts persons had incurred. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 199. At 200, “Go then, ye cursed the Saviour will say on the day of His judgment...I gave you my life, my blood...you have constantly spurned me...with these words: ...I prefer my gross interests and my brutish sensual pleasures to You. ...It is not I who condemn you; it is you who have condemned yourselves. You have chosen, of your own free will, the city where egotism, hatred and revolt have established their dominion. I return to heaven... and [there] I bring back this heart... Be the children of your own choice, stay with yourselves...with the fire that is never extinguished.”

<sup>110</sup> Did Thérèse’s desire to save Pranzini issue from this? “... I burned with desire to snatch them from the eternal flames.” *Story of a Soul*, 99.

<sup>111</sup> In the final pages of Man A, surrounding her “Oblation to Merciful Love,” Thérèse writes of justice informed by Ps 117:1; 35: 6; 113: 13-14. Stating that in her aridity, Jesus provides “lights,” she declares that the experience of mercy gives rise to love, and not fear; that those gifted by mercy spontaneously love, that God’s justice “takes into account our weakness; that He is perfectly aware of fragile nature.” Since her oblation, “Merciful Love renews me,” and “I need have no fear of Purgatory.” *Story of a Soul*, 179-182.

Arminjon's impoverished understanding of human relations assumes punishment as the ground for the human-God relation, with all human motivation based on evasion of suffering/punishment. He places true goodness in God alone; human goodness amounts to admitting to and overcoming one's depravity, somehow connected to infinite capacity for desire (and thus sin?).<sup>112</sup> God, acting from finite, tired and tried mercy (from trying to break the human spirit into submission), is able to draw surrender only with threat. This God is antithetical to the joyful abundant self-giving One who lifts their child above fear of limitation and scarcity, and who expresses confidence in their creation.<sup>113</sup> Arminjon has humanity, as imperfect, tend toward "evil inclinations," but this weakness does not mitigate God's judgment; only self-deprecation draws pity.<sup>114</sup>

Arminjon's circumscription of the elect allows Thérèse to include herself. While reassuring at fourteen, will a concept of salvation based on damning persons remain satisfactory? In 1887, Thérèse is taken up with offering Jesus the gratitude she feels due to him. There is no evidence of vengeful triumph in her writing in her effort to save Pranzini, or in her later prayers for Loyson who she considers culpable.<sup>115</sup> Is Arminjon's theology of hell submerged – uncontested, because nothing in her circumstance challenges it? When writing *Man A*, she 'recalls' that as a young child she imagined Zélie rescuing her from hell regardless of fault, and that Louis played her

---

<sup>112</sup> Arminjon is disturbed by persons deriding God over his impunity ("if You are weary of waiting for us, we are not weary of cursing You and of managing without You"). Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 198.

<sup>113</sup> See McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 108-110.

<sup>114</sup> This 'pity theology' provoked a strong response from Nietzsche. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translation, Introduction and Commentary, by R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 188-189.

<sup>115</sup> Four years on, in 1891, Thérèse underlined Père Hyacinthe Loyson's words in a newspaper clipping: "if the Church were to prove me wrong, I will gladly acknowledge my error and take my place once again humbly in Christian unity." Thérèse writes to Celine: "... Is it surprising that we are so favoured, we whose only desire is to save a soul that seems to be lost forever?... The unfortunate prodigal went to Coutances...It appears he intends to travel all over France...in this way, Celine. And with all this they add that remorse is *gnawing* at him. He goes into a Church with a huge Crucifix and he seems to be making great acts of adoration... His wife follows him everywhere. Dear Celine, he really is culpable, more culpable than any other sinner who was converted. But cannot Jesus once do what He has not ever yet done? And if he were not to desire it, would he have placed it in the heart of His poor little spouses a desire that he could not realize. No, it is certain that He desires more than we do to bring back this poor stray sheep to the fold.... Let us never grow tired of prayer; confidence works miracles. ...One just soul has so much power over my heart that it can obtain pardon for a thousand criminals." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 728-730.

game in the garden, on her terms, without any loss of dignity.<sup>116</sup> Here, affection was won spontaneously. Correspondence about Thérèse, however, also reveals that her sisters chastened her for spurning love, accused her of duplicitous motives, with Marie extracting respectful gratitude from her in a forced expression of affection, feeling this due to her parents.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps ‘spurning love’ represented the unforgivable.

## 7. “Eternal Beatitude: Heaven’s Glory”

Arminjon’s writings on heaven are echoed in Thérèse’s own writing. He begins in the following way. Confused by the present apparent disorder, the fool accuses God of injustice, not recognizing the mechanics of the present as serving a future end. The Catholic, too, might find the “mystery of suffering,” pointlessly harsh, but if we understood our end in terms of the joy of heaven, we might understand present honours and favours as “evil,” and so develop a “thirst” for “martyrdom,” lifting us when “we are no longer equal to the sacrifices the law of God requires” of us.<sup>118</sup>

Arminjon writes: in our weakness, we can only describe “the City of God” poorly, but divine grace comes to our aid.<sup>119</sup> This inability to express oneself on earth is a theme in Thérèse’s writing, shared in correspondence with her sisters. The future, revealed to John as a crystalline city, replete with throne, lamb, running water, the tree of life, white robed servants, wealth, glory, intoxication by sweet wine, a “splendour” pleasing the “human intelligence” to the “point of ecstasy,” Arminjon writes, is a pale image compared to its reality.<sup>120</sup> The elect, “subtle, immortal, impassable, and clothed in sweet light,” will dwell in unfading light, taste, music and fragrance.<sup>121</sup> All God’s thoughts are occupied with *heaven’s* creation, a perfection of present ecclesial culture, a great Sabbath (the repose of God’s intellect and heart) upon the completion of Jesus’

---

<sup>116</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1226. *Story of a Soul*, 36-37.

<sup>117</sup> See the ‘swing incident’ (*Story of a Soul*, 19), and ‘under the blankets’. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1231-1232).

<sup>118</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 205- 207

<sup>119</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 208.

<sup>120</sup> A “shadow and reflection of the ideal.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 209-212.

<sup>121</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 212- 213.

perfect work as architect, where God will “in all truth say: This is well done.”<sup>122</sup> (God’s previous “It is good,” referred only to creation, not the “City of God.”) Here, the state of bliss will be “beyond all natural happiness.”<sup>123</sup> Thérèse, so taken by Arminjon’s illustration, copies it on June 4 and 5, 1887.<sup>124</sup> She refers to it in her paroxysm of desires in *Man B*, in “now my turn!” to Celine, and quotes parts from it in numerous ways.<sup>125</sup>

This “poetic dream” of “*the vision of God*” images the wholly supportive, knowing love of a mother toward an infant, and the outgoing abandon of sexual love.<sup>126</sup> Curiously, while to the rebellious, God presents as a stern judge, to the elect in heaven, God embodies a parental relation.<sup>127</sup> Such imagining, however, troubles Arminjon. Directing himself to “true doctrine,” and not “mysticism,” he examines “when we see God as He

---

<sup>122</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 213, 214.

<sup>123</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 213.

<sup>124</sup> “As no mother ever loved her dearest son, the Lord loves His predestinate. He is jealous of his dignity, and could not permit himself to be outdone by His creature on the score of fidelity and generosity. Oh! The Lord cannot forget that the saints, when they once lived on earth, paid homage to Him by the total donation of their repose, their happiness and their whole being; that they would have liked to have had an inexhaustible flow of blood in their veins, in order to shed it as a pledge of their faith; that they would have desired a thousand hearts in their breasts, so as to consume them in the unquenchable fires of their love, and to possess a thousand bodies, in order that that they might deliver them to martyrdom, like victims unceasingly renewed. And the grateful God cries out : “Now , my turn! The saints have given me themselves: can I respond other than by giving myself without restriction and without measure? If I place in their hands the sceptre of creation, if I surround them with the torrents of my light, that is a great deal; it is going beyond their highest hopes and aspirations, but it is not the utmost endeavour of my Heart. I owe them more than paradise, more than the treasures of his knowledge; I owe them my life, my nature, my eternal and infinite substance. If I bring my servants and friends into my house, if I console them and make them thrill with joy by enfolding them in the embrace of my charity, this satisfies their thirst and their desires superabundantly ... but it is not enough for the gratification of my divine Heart, for the repletion and perfect satisfaction of my love. I must be the soul of their souls. I must penetrate and imbue them with my divinity, as fire penetrates iron; by showing myself to their spirits, undisguised, unveiled ... I must unite myself to them in an eternal *face-to-face*, so that my glory illuminates them, exudes and radiates through all the pores of their being, so that, ‘knowing me as I know them, they may become like Gods themselves.’” “O my Father,” exclaimed Jesus Christ, “I have asked of you that, where I am those whom I have loved may be there with me. May they be engulfed and lose themselves in the oceans of your splendours; may they desire, possess, enjoy, and then desire again; may they be plunged into the bosom of Your beatitude, and may it be as if nothing remained of their personality except the knowledge and experience of their happiness.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, xi-xii, 215-216.

<sup>125</sup> For example, see Thérèse’s paroxysm of desires in *Man B*, *Story of a Soul*, 192-93. “It’s my Turn!” *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 841. “...as fire penetrates iron” *Story of a Soul*, 257.

<sup>126</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 216.

<sup>127</sup> Thérèse writes to Marie in 1896: “... nothing but confidence ... must lead us to Love... does not fear lead us to Justice...(such as it is portrayed for sinners, but no[t] *sic* this *Justice* that Jesus has toward those that love him)”. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1000.

is we shall know Him in integrity and without restriction” through Thomistic writing, as follows.<sup>128</sup> Humans, with only knowledge through senses (natural capacity) to contemplate God as spirit, receive “a new faculty” at baptism.<sup>129</sup> Freed from sin, they will behold God; by the “light of glory:”

souls... will no longer know through their own knowledge, but from the very knowledge of God,...no longer see with their...limited eyes, but with the... eyes of God. ...The transports that the divine vision will arouse ... will make their Hearts superabound in the most unutterable joys; it will be a flood of delights and raptures, life in its inexhaustible richness and the very source of all that is good in life...like a gift from God of His own heart, so that we may love and rejoice with all the energy of the love and joys of God Himself.<sup>130</sup>

This imagery alludes to the most embodied and affective knowledge: a child’s experience of their parent infusing life through their capacity for mutual interaction, or the experience of lovers when they offer and exchange their energies in love-making. Eternal life

is a source, forever fertile, where the soul will drink substance and life in abundance. It is a marriage, in which the soul will clasp its creator in an eternal embrace without ever feeling any diminution of the rapture it felt on that [first] day...it...pressed Him to its bosom.<sup>131</sup>

Such imagery would have resonated with Thérèse’s earliest experience. But Arminjon cautions, “even so, the elect will not comprehend” God. An “ever ascending progression” of coming to know God is required because of God’s limitless immensity.<sup>132</sup> Knowledge of God here appears to be an increasing grasp of the ‘laws’ of the universe, rather than subjects in dialogue. Previously, Arminjon pointed to an

---

<sup>128</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 217. Cf, 2Cor 13:12, 1John 3:2.

<sup>129</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 218 -19. Though deficient in knowledge of supernatural things as animals are, the unbaptised (without the imprint of the “vision of God”) will be united with God through the limits of nature (a “sweet consolation” for mothers whose babies have died without baptism).

<sup>130</sup> Those free from sin will behold God, but, *unable to rise to knowledge of God by reason*, they are given “a created quality and a supernatural virtue of the intellect, infused into the soul,” expanding “the soul’s capacity for knowledge to ... apprehend immense and boundless good.” Italics mine. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 220, 221.

<sup>131</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 221.

<sup>132</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 222-223.

infinite human capacity, in God satisfying our taste for “forever more pure and more intoxicating delights” – realizing the desire for a continuing dialogue.<sup>133</sup> Continuing with ‘factual’ knowing, Arminjon describes an “illiterate, uneducated” Catholic villager unsullied “by the poisoned breath of any passion,” upon death, “with a single turn of his thoughts” fathoms all “in a twinkling,” including “the properties, secrets and innermost forces of the elements,” quenching any previous “thirst for knowledge.”<sup>134</sup>

He observes that such knowledge in this life would crush us, but spirits do not have this hindrance; they will understand God in a “glance.”<sup>135</sup> Sharing in Arminjon’s sense of bodiliness as hindering communication (once feeling nuanced abundance in a gaze between herself and another, she now felt frustrated in communicating herself), Thérèse takes up the use of the word “glance,”<sup>136</sup> accepting this hindrance is overcome by the spiritualization of bodies upon resurrection. Finally, Arminjon proposes the sight of God will not occupy our full attention, because we will be freed from the limitation of attending to one person at a time (human “energy and penetration” will be increased a “hundredfold”) – an ability Jesus enjoyed when he was on earth. This idea threatens Jesus’ human ‘being’ as a subject – produced by the experience of bodiliness and bodily extents when interacting with another self-aware being.<sup>137</sup> Arminjon intimates that embodiment defeats interpersonal love; however, it is embodiment that produces subjectivity – needed for love.

---

<sup>133</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 223.

<sup>134</sup> The wise men of this world “who devise futile theories” and indulge in “speculation and useless research” will be envious when they see the just man who “set his heart on true wisdom.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 224-5. Thérèse has this sense of being watched in her writing. She imagines herself admired, her taste puzzled over, her unlikely wisdom noticed. Proximity to God gives advantage, whose pleasure involves others noting it.

<sup>135</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 226.

<sup>136</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 226. Thérèse writes, “I cannot tell you all I am thinking about .... Ah! HEAVEN!!!!!!Then a single glance and all will be understood!...” *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II* 620.

<sup>137</sup> Arminjon states that all knowledge leads a person to knowledge of God; when a person reaches God, objects that are ‘not God’ can no longer make us see God more fully. A person may equally know God yet know nothing of the created universe, but he is happy. These statements raise epistemological questions with respect to the relationship between embodiment/experience and knowledge, and of the relationship between human participation in Trinitarian life and how God ‘makes space’ for creation itself within the divine life. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 222- 23, 224.

Turning to ‘affection’ Arminjon observes that in heaven “We shall love God with that love He has for Himself.”<sup>138</sup> He writes that ‘love of God’ leads not to the annihilation of human friendships, but to their resumption in heaven.<sup>139</sup> Arminjon’s following image influences Thérèse deeply. A facet of heaven’s experience is the sharing of happy reminiscences, such as experienced at home while seated in front of the hearth, listening to the travels of older folk. How much greater it is when we sit at the hearth of our heavenly Father, listening to his stories of leading persons to the harbour of repose.<sup>140</sup> This happy vision, meeting Thérèse’s hunger to reunite with those she has lost, in coming from a renowned priest, frees Thérèse from fearing her hope is unacceptably self-interested. Further, noting uneven sanctity in the elect in heaven, Arminjon suggests different ranks operate in harmony; mutual happiness is found in unity, producing one heart and one body; each will mirror the good of the other.<sup>141</sup> This image is central to Thérèse finding her place as ‘a permanent youngest daughter’, the least (and “smallest”) of the heavenly saints.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 226-227. Thérèse will later assert that God himself will provide her with love to love him, in her poems: “Ah! Give me a thousand hearts to love You!” from “Remember” and “I’ll love you with that very love with which You have loved me...” from “How I Want to Love.” Conrad de Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure the “Way of Spiritual Childhood” of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), 270-271.

<sup>139</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 227-229. Those who have gone ahead of us wait to embrace us, for us to recognize and love them. On earth, love follows gratitude; in heaven this is doubly so, on seeing the cost our benefactor’s graces where the good actions of our beloved will be revealed. “Others will learn of your ... pious strategies to detach a friend from vice and irreligion, and to catch by innocent allurements, a soul, the object of your holy yearning.” *Heaven, for Arminjon, is the objective locus for vindication*. Thérèse perhaps feels this sanctions her strong persuasion to get Celine to become a Carmelite. See *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 702.

<sup>140</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 230. “Avec combien plus de charme, assis au grand foyer de notre Père céleste, nous entendrons le récit que nous feront frères, de leurs tentations si séduisantes et si multipliées, des assaults que leur livra.” Charles Arminjon, *Fin du Monde Présent et Mystères de la Vie*, 83, accessed [http://www.a-c-r-f.com/documents/Abbe\\_ARMINJON-Fin\\_monde\\_present.pdf](http://www.a-c-r-f.com/documents/Abbe_ARMINJON-Fin_monde_present.pdf) 06/04/2012. “Foyer evokes a central glowing domestic hearth with the family gathered around it, and all the rich associations of warmth, nourishment, generation and regeneration, joy, peace, security and intrinsic belonging.” For Thérèse love is essentially God, where she wants to be and live. “Five times [in Man B] throughout her allegory of the little bird, Thérèse “uses the beautiful French word ‘foyer’. ... Unfortunately there is no equivalent English word, and... we have used the words ‘Furnace’ and ‘Fire’.” See G. Gennari, *An Echo of the Heart of God and Studies of the Self-Offering of Thérèse of Lisieux* (Nedlands, WA: Carmelite Monastery, 2002), 212.

<sup>141</sup> “[E]ach will be rich in the richness of all.” Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 231, 232.

<sup>142</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 196.

Continuing, Arminjon observes that on earth, good is always mixed with “conceit and selfish satisfactions.”<sup>143</sup> On earth, a contented soul withdraws into itself, but in heaven, as happiness is one with God, its contentment inspires

souls to soar upward with inexhaustible energy [to] lose themselves in the ever closer embrace of God, who imbues them with His fullness through all their senses and penetrates every pore of their being.<sup>144</sup>

We note this resembles a return to original unity with our life-giving parent-creator. Arminjon reasons that peace multiplies because it is assured. Certainty of possessing God, a sense of secure control in a “perpetual present,” is the cause lasting joy.<sup>145</sup> On earth “our joys are [only] successive;” here God portions Himself out, and here we long for the events of the past – let us rise above temporality and “material things,” to the “city of God,” where every moment is an intoxicating delight, and seek after power and pleasure in imperishable fullness, by seeking their source.<sup>146</sup> Yet Arminjon invokes, and evokes, our bodily loves and remembrances, our physical felt-recollection, to generate a forward reaching hope, unaware of any contradiction.

## 8. Christian Sacrifice and the Means of Redemption

Here Arminjon proposes a metaphysics of transubstantiation to describe God’s operations in this life.<sup>147</sup> He further promotes a piety where the priest is elevated, inferring that priests, in bringing God “down upon the altar,” are ontologically superior.<sup>148</sup> In *Man A*, Thérèse intimates she once thought highly of priests, believing their souls “to be as pure as crystal.”<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 232.

<sup>144</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 232-233.

<sup>145</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 233-234.

<sup>146</sup> As creatures who “love power and glory ... pleasure and joy,” we should seek after their source. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 235- 236.

<sup>147</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 243-249. He asserts that the Eucharist bestows grace to achieve an otherwise unachievable “supernatural life.”

<sup>148</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 251. At 251, The priest ranks above Mary as Jesus obeyed Mary once, in a passable state, but obeys the priest each day in an “impassable” state. Arminjon betrays pride in his own priestly identity. He argues the priest cannot be vanquished in spite of attempts. After the

Arminjon explains that each day Jesus annihilates himself by making himself captive to his minister.<sup>150</sup> Reducing himself to a “speck” (host), he endures human forgetfulness, negligence, coldness and indifference, thus suffering “abandonment, loneliness and disdain.”<sup>151</sup> Silent, he betrays no indignation when tabernacles have been desecrated, but tries to restrain his Father’s wrath by showing his wounds.<sup>152</sup> “Ignorant and illiterate people” can rise to great insights meditating on his self-annihilation, as it guides them as to how they, too, can offer themselves as victims.<sup>153</sup> The priest is somehow exempted, as power and mystery lies in this office – without the priest Jesus is unable to reoffer himself.

Listing the effects of the Eucharist,<sup>154</sup> Arminjon comments that proximity to the sanctuary helps voluntary captives in the cloister, whose detachment from a life of the senses shows a godless society God lives in this valley of misery to dry their tears and heal their wounds, wage “combat” over the sadness of leaving their loved ones.<sup>155</sup> Jesus, as a speck (host), scorned, and ignored, in need of welcome, was perhaps a role

---

Revolution, a new week with a “legal rest” was proposed, and a civil priest was ordained. However, he was ridiculed because he did not bear “that divine ray, that cast of features,” which “God alone can give to a man” and “which no royal appointment or any lay kind of selection” will ever “bestow upon him.” Further, the Protestants have only “men clad in black” who “make decorous speeches.”

<sup>149</sup> She held this until her trip to Rome. Thérèse looks back on her vocation, to pray for priests. *Story of a Soul*, 122.

<sup>150</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 256.

<sup>151</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 253- 254.

<sup>152</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 255.

<sup>153</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 256.

<sup>154</sup> Arminjon lists the effects in a functional way. Equal to Jesus’ original sacrifice, the Mass, while infinite in value, has finite effects, “unable to bestow an indefinite multitude of merits and satisfactions,” as Jesus fixed “the sum and measure of grace” that could be accrued, when he instituted his sacrifice.” The Eucharist is an objective source of power and transformation (little is owed to the communicant’s disposition), and functions as a form of insurance. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 259.

<sup>155</sup> Some (who treat themselves as mere “physical strength and activity,” “as tools and machines”) accuse Mass communicants of laziness when they are exercising their faith. Yet its celebration influences human endeavours and physical events with power equal to “the sweat of man, rainfall and dew from the sky to... increase our industry.” They say: “Those who eat every day should work every day. Sunday ...and its futile ceremonies,” holds up the tide of industry “for twenty-four hours; the workman’s wages reduced by a seventh; destitution in the workshop; bread and clothing taken away from the child and from the wife of the tradesman and the indigent.” Yet God protects the grain from mildew, “more than ...industrial advances.” Arminjon adds, “Where do we find prosperous families, and strong developed races, except among those who go up to the altar...?” The daily descent and ascent of Jesus’ real presence assures his continuous presence on earth. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 262- 266, 267, 270.

Thérèse could identify with. She could fuse her own fragile, forgotten self with the helpless, forgotten, unseen Jesus, who was, however, at the same time gloriously potent.<sup>156</sup> In correspondence (until her Profession), Thérèse likens herself to a grain of sand underfoot (representing hidden suffering), which shares in the ‘grain’ imagery of sacrifice and humbling oneself into a “speck.”<sup>157</sup>

### **9. The Mystery of Suffering in Its relationship with the Future Life**

In choosing suffering as a means to reach her goal, Thérèse may have been influenced by Arminjon’s theodicy: Jesus “could have abolished pain at a single stroke,” and “restored man to the state of complete unmixed bliss that he enjoyed in the paradise of innocence, but he judged, rather, that suffering, for some, be a source of merit, glory, renewal, triumph ‘and for the greater number’, a necessary expiation.”<sup>158</sup> By choosing to appear among us not in splendour, but stained with blood, united with suffering, Jesus removed part of its bitterness, “implanting Himself as an inexhaustible instrument of mercy, life, and health,” for “souls... eager to escape from their coarse, sensual aspirations.”<sup>159</sup>

Asserting that undergoing accepting suffering brings moral sublimity, Arminjon offers insights on the good of surrendering to hardship.<sup>160</sup> Suffering poverty teaches us to retain value amid plenty; suffering ingratitude and exile reminds us to discern worth beneath rags.<sup>161</sup> Our fluctuations from joy to gloom are caused by the repugnance we feel toward suffering. By refusing slight hardship, small injury, and things to any degree demanding, we fall into a tyranny of avoidance.<sup>162</sup> Thérèse echoes this in *Story of a Soul*: once accepting giving up her will, she finds it sweet.<sup>163</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 104-105.

<sup>157</sup> This was introduced to Thérèse by Pauline from a prayer quoted by Fr Pichon. *General Correspondence Volume I*, 406-407, 427, 440, 441, 537, 547, 551, 552, 580, 612, 613, 663.

<sup>158</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 276.

<sup>159</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 277-8.

<sup>160</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 282.

<sup>161</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 280 -281.

Arminjon adds the notion of reparation. The fruits of Jesus' suffering, admitted at baptism, lose their fullness through sins after baptism, to become conditional on our "energetic" efforts of penance.<sup>164</sup> As Jesus' suffering was proportionate to our sin, so must our reparation be in proportion to it; there must be "a measure of pain equal to the measure of pleasure and sweetness relished amid iniquity and crime" – not mere restraint, but a deprivation of something useful or necessary.<sup>165</sup> Finally, not only are we to partake in Jesus' suffering, but we are to complete it.<sup>166</sup> Christ's body models the process. While not needing thirty-three years to secure human salvation – Jesus "could have leapt from his mother's womb in dazzling splendour... to astonish heaven" with an "unexpected entry" – but the way that attracted him was not the "shortest and easiest way;" he chose "the bloody stages of ... ignominies and searing pains," to giving his whole body over to its "murderous assaults."<sup>167</sup> It is not fitting that the faithful "body" of Christ soar into glory, suffering less than their head.<sup>168</sup> Thérèse shares Arminjon's heady response to the above suffering, but, later, "short and easy way" will appear in her writing, describing the path she finds most suitable for herself – a path affirming how things operated in the past; when filled with high desires, she was carried by others.<sup>169</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> Those who do battle with suffering, carry a sanctuary of peace within themselves, because they see events governed by God's providential wisdom. The one who evades suffering becomes an enfeebled frivolous, effeminate character who is easily dominated. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 282-3.

<sup>163</sup> *Story of a Soul*, 225-227.

<sup>164</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 285- 286.

<sup>165</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 286. See *Story of a Soul*, 226.

<sup>166</sup> As Jesus did not suffer pain in all its aspects, we must complete what is lacking. While suffering the malice of men, he did not suffer the loss of a beloved child in death, or the delirium overwhelming a sinner – these are to be added through his members. The "incorporation of our life in the divine life of Jesus Christ" forms the "Mystical Body of Christ," which grows by incorporating the elect, only complete when the last predestinate has entered the Church. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 287-88; 290- 294.

<sup>167</sup> Again, Arminjon fails to affirm Jesus' humanity. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 288

<sup>168</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 288-289.

<sup>169</sup> Thérèse seeks out a means of going to heaven by "a way that is very straight, very short..." an elevator. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, 207.

Asserting “*Trial produces hope,*” Arminjon concludes with an appeal.<sup>170</sup> When all is well we are “lulled to sleep,” but when we suffer trial, we break from the bonds of space and time and seek transcendent mercy; bereft of everything, we find reasons for love and trust.<sup>171</sup> Thus, let us bless the “paternal hand” that “strikes us,” as it was in desolation that we most felt most moved by God.<sup>172</sup> God cuts off health, reputation, and all which draws us to love earthly things, so “that what is mortal may be absorbed by [God’s] life,” so that what is tainted emerges from “the crucible of suffering” as crystal, allowing God to be “all and in all.”<sup>173</sup> Arminjon aims to turn souls “away from the limited concerns of time,” to the good to come, as a “skiff [sailboat] that may help us reach the shores of heaven,” the “eternal meeting place which awaits us ... in the heart of Christ!”<sup>174</sup> Thérèse takes up these images: “the skiff,” her life/body, bears her to her true home, reuniting her with her loved ones in heaven, “spouse” expresses faithfulness to Jesus, and suffering (likened to the crucible) represents God’s chosen means for earthly progress. With “grain of sand” these harmonize with Pauline’s spirituality and feature in her correspondence till 1895.<sup>175</sup>

## 10. Discussion of Concepts in Arminjon

The “oil and honey” of *The End of The present World* appear to be images which carry Thérèse to her sought-for desert (sharing in Zélie, Louis, and Pauline’s desire to be there with God). Arminjon revives an evaporated hope, by placing before her a vision representing a primordial experience of satisfied union, and mutual delighting, in relation to God, accompanied by a call. At the possibility of reunion with her loved ones (sacrifice its means), Thérèse redoubles her efforts to please God,<sup>176</sup> allowing

---

<sup>170</sup> Italics in original text. Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 294.

<sup>171</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 295, 297.

<sup>172</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 297-30.

<sup>173</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 301-302.

<sup>174</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 304. On 305, “*The time is near...when the celestial spouse ...will say to us: Cross, come to me and enter into bliss and eternal repose!*” Italics in original text.

<sup>175</sup> For example, Thérèse, a grain of sand, persuades Celine to welcome suffering as a gift. In reply, Celine states she is an “imperceptible atom” next to Thérèse. See *General Correspondence Volume I*, 537, 539.

<sup>176</sup> See de Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 79-125.

Arminjon's concepts, some at odds with the activity of merciful love she experienced early in life. While theological "concepts" are "clean and easy to analyze," what persons do with them, McDargh notes, is complex.<sup>177</sup>

Arminjon's concepts, illustrated by images, may be collected into two groups. The first involves loving one person, or seeking one way, as necessitating forsaking another. Is this the crux of 'being with God'? Who or what must we forsake for 'God'? Collapsing all into one project, Arminjon forms a group that represents the "impious" and unyielding (Jews, rationalists, anticlericals) which he damns, helping him to vindicate fidelity to the familiar (Catholic culture). The second involves Arminjon's hagiographic examples. Heroes and their enemies are placed in the presence of watching others: God, and an envious crowd. The hero (self) emerges through contrast to one's enemy, and elevation. The envy of the once proud and well-off elevates (vindicates) the down-trodden one. These form a passage in self-becoming: security in familiar culture (where the foreign other is distanced, punished and banished) and the restoration of one's eroded (failure to 'measure up') or forgotten (abandonment) value.<sup>178</sup> Some elements of these concept-images follow.

*a. The Reprobate*

The 'reprobate' represents corruption away from the Catholic faith – yielding to "evil inclinations" the lure of pleasure, laziness, or lust for power.<sup>179</sup> Hostility to Catholic culture due to different enculturation, or to it posing a God which threatens one's self, are not considered. Reprobates, by refusing his sacrifice, do not lovingly receive Christ; thus, they offend God. Thérèse allows Arminjon's representation, 'confirmed' by supporting newspaper reports. Her vocation relies on the reprobate's existence, in rescuing persons from their grasp, or from the lure of their way of being (such as the

---

<sup>177</sup> McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 117. Theology as "concepts" are "clean and easy to analyze." However, the occasions of felt (primal) experiences, "their subtlety disqualified from psychological or theological analysis," "co-existent with the more conceptually refined dogmatic expressions of religious belief or unbelief," ... "demand to be taken into our analysis of human faith."

<sup>178</sup> This state eventually needs to give way to the (courageous) meeting and exploration of others in relation.

<sup>179</sup> Arminjon, *The End of the Present World*, 243.

fictional Diana Vaughn). Thérèse does not take Arminjon's vengeful stance, but so immersed is she in the pattern of her given faith, she can, without loss of integrity, agree to 'in heaven, *we* will be found to have been misunderstood', vindicating disapproval of *them*.<sup>180</sup> Toward the end of her life, helpless in her loss of feeling and vision, Thérèse re-values intention as critical to actions.<sup>181</sup>

*b. Bounded Mercy*

Arminjon's God of justice suggests a paternalistic husband, who offers his acquiescing wife (a maternal Jesus) to his uncaring children. The husband, angered over his children's cavalier approach to her generosity/mercy (taking it for granted) – and feeling his authority under threat – guards her generosity/mercy (which seems unable to cure their wayward children) by setting fear-inspiring punishments. The idea of superabundant merciful-love as ineffectual, causing wilfulness, however, misconstrues parental mercy. The young child imitates a sense of how they are treated. Ingratitude, or 'selfishness', mirrors some aspect of parental attitude. Does Arminjon endow the material of Christian faith with his experience of a domestic household where parents portrayed these roles? If we apply this analogy to Thérèse's experience (Jesus and the Father as analogous to a parent-couple's operating), we find little about a need to appease; Louis does not insist his authority.<sup>182</sup> Through Arminjon, Thérèse is held to ransom over Jesus being pained by sin; she responds with an image of Jesus as a beggar whose thirst can only be quenched by souls who love him.<sup>183</sup> Her later desire to be a

---

<sup>180</sup> Our paraphrase of Arminjon's thought. Thérèse, writing to Celine in 1894, echoes Arminjon in how *our* (the Catholic's) goodness is often mistaken (against *they* who are "senseless") by others: "What a joy it is to suffer for Him who loves us unto folly and to pass as fools in the eyes of the world. We judge others as we judge ourselves, and since the world is senseless, it naturally thinks we are the ones who are senseless!" "Senselessness" is embodied by the "world." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 882.

<sup>181</sup> Thérèse writes that one ought not be surprised by human (her Carmelite sisters') faults. *Story of Soul*, 220, 221. See also de Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 282-283. In 1891 Thérèse considers the external evidence with regard to Loyson, and assumes wrongdoing, but suspends her judgment over his 'sin' – hoping for his "return." (Loyson will later protest his innocence, stating he only felt sincerity in relation to God.) *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 728-29.

<sup>182</sup> During the sermon, "I looked more ...at Papa than the preacher, for his *handsome* face said so much to me! His eyes, at times, were filled with *tears* which he tried in vain to stop..." *Story of a Soul*, 41-42.

<sup>183</sup> Later, in 1891, at a retreat with Father Prou, she is released from being held to ransom over Jesus' vulnerability. *Story of a Soul*, 283.

victim of love perhaps echoes Zélie and Louis' giving, sadly unappreciated, and ending in untimely death.<sup>184</sup>

*c. Supplementing Divine Atonement*

This involves whether one is acceptable to God, and the complexity of ways this might be achieved. Rejecting any notion of universal salvation, Arminjon has God bound by rules of justice, and this justice requires humans to accept, and supplement, Christ's sacrifice. To merit heaven, persons are to welcome the suffering God sends; all that can be suffered, should be. Sin, felt to ceaselessly erode goodness, necessitates that one act well to regenerate the potency of Jesus' redemptive work. Acting well (which assumes an effective will) is attributed to grace (which supplies motivation/vision), but when it is absent, it appears to be the person's fault. Arminjon attributes objective value to acts of restraint and surrender (Thérèse affords this to virginity), rather than promoting their intersubjective value.

*d. 'Ethereal Being' Preferred to 'This World' Bodiliness*

Sin is to be avoided. Beyond the hubris of the impious, Arminjon points to it as arising from affect, bodiliness, and subjectivity. Perfection, as if antithetical to process, touch, speech, weight/density and physical limits, is found in floating light-effusing figures (for whom speech is unnecessary), consistent with Romantic art depictions of this time's NeoPlatonic eschatology.<sup>185</sup> Thérèse enters such imagining with respect to purity and communication.<sup>186</sup> She holds that virginity is her "native land,"<sup>187</sup> but it was

---

<sup>184</sup>Louis' name was pronounced "in a whisper as though it were the name of a man almost in disgrace." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 701. Recalling early childhood interaction with her parents, however, brings confidence to the foreground.

<sup>185</sup> Thérèse speaks of Louis flying about in the heavens to secure a place for Celine in Carmel (1894). *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 882.

<sup>186</sup> On whiteness and virginity, Thérèse wrote "Let us always remain the lilies of Jesus... that He withdraw us from the world before the pernicious wind of the earth has detached a single particle of the pollen from their stamens, pollens that could yellow a little the brilliance and whiteness of the lily... there is nothing so easy as to tarnish the lily... the tears of Jesus are ... mysterious pearls [which] have the power to whiten lilies, to preserve their brilliance..." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 732.

<sup>187</sup> Thérèse writes, "Virginity is a profound silence from all the cares of this earth," not only from useless cares but from all cares... to be virgin we must think only of the Spouse who allows nothing around Him that is not a virgin "since He willed to be born a virgin mother, to have a virgin precursor, a virgin foster-father, a virgin favourite, and finally, a virgin tomb." It is said: "Each one naturally loves his native land,

embodiment, wet and weighted, a dialogic progression of ‘learning by error’ that brought Thérèse into existence, that produced familial bonds, revealing the pattern of love. The rejected aspect of humanity here is not only embodiment-dynamism, but its effects, paradoxes and ambivalences arising through exploration of one’s world, and in sexual maturation.

*e. Family in Heaven*

Arminjon’s heaven is echoed in an image Thérèse shared with Celine in 1891,

the image of this world is passing, the shadows are lengthening, soon we shall be in our native land, soon the joys of our childhood, the Sunday evening, the intimate chats... all this will be restored to us forever and with interest. Jesus will return to us the joys which He has deprived us of for one moment!... Then, from our dear Father’s radiant head, we shall see waves of light coming forth and each one of his white hairs will be like a sun that will give us joy and happiness!<sup>188</sup>

This hope, approved of by Arminjon, places Thérèse on the path of a ‘return’, even as she accepts negative concepts (that she might greatly impress God with her sacrificial love, to draw the response: “Now, my turn!”). Arminjon’s concepts – but more so his images – serve as a way forward for Thérèse, rendering her of value, offering a sense of security (she has the characteristics of the elect, not of the condemned), and permitting her to pursue reunion with her lost beloveds. In the next chapter, we examine Thérèse’s developing self-view in her writing, using Winnicott’s True Self/False Self paradigm as our method to determine whether there is a ‘return’ from Arminjon’s negative aspects, namely, distortions of justice, reparation, inhuman perfection.

---

and since the native land of Jesus is the Virgin of virgins, and since Jesus was born by his will of a Lily, He loves to find himself in virgin hearts.” Celine later writes, “I am unhappy... [N]ot being accustomed to living with boys, it seems strange to me to be spending my days in their company. As holy and pure and candid as they are, I cannot get used to it. ... These past days I have scruples and everything all mixed up, with the privation of my spiritual exercises, makes me dry and sad...” When the recently married Jeanne and Francis disapprove of Celine’s decision to enter Carmel, Thérèse writes that they “have chosen a vocation so different from ours that they cannot understand the sublimity of our vocation! ... After this life of one day, they will understand who will have been the most privileged, *we* or *they*...” as if virginity is objectively better. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 708-709, 868, 881.

<sup>188</sup> *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 732. To Leonie, Thérèse writes: There we will be reunited never to leave each other, there we shall taste family joys eternally. We shall find our dear father again who will be surrounded with glory and honour for his perfect fidelity, and especially for the humiliations that were showered upon him; we shall see our good Mother, who will rejoice at the trials that were our lot during life’s exile; we shall take delight in her happiness as she contemplates her five religious daughters, and we shall form, along with the four little angels who await us up above, a crown adorning the heads of our dear Parents. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 816.