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

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CHAPTER SIX

The Recovery Continues: Thérèse's True Self Image of God

Chapter Five, in Phases I and II, discussed how recalling her childhood experiences provided Thérèse with an opportunity to re-engage with her object-representations of God, allowing her True Self to be strengthened and, at times, her False Self to be interrogated. Chapter Six is concerned with Phase III where Thérèse recalls her life from fourteen onward, writing from mid 1895 (*Man A*) up to 1897 (*Man B* and *C*). Thérèse's spiritual "way" emerges in her writing through images of merciful love in childhood which represent the right way to proceed because, together with confirming Scriptural texts, they feel right. That 'right way' of feeling and proceeding, the present research argues, represents a return to the True Self. Thérèse finds her vocation (the God-ordained reason for her being, her quest, and her salvation) by turning to her felt being-in-relation – the well-received, affectionate child of indulging parents – to guide her human-God relating.

Present Experience of God in relation to Felt Mercy in Childhood

Thérèse, in this section of material, recalls two self-expressive decisions which, in their being felt as independent of others, may be classed as 'individuations'.¹ The first is the request to enter Carmel early. The second (in progress in *Man A* and recalled in *Mans B* and *C*) is her "Offering to Merciful Love," which initiates a quest to surrender to merciful love.² The second self-expression (offered as spouse to Jesus), will lead to *Man B* which involves images from childhood: helpless smallness in the face of overwhelming feelings and events, a sense of being weak and inconsequential, and an involuntary loss of 'seeing'. We turn to Thérèse to find whether she returns to her True Self or affirms False Self constructions.

¹ Here, 'individuation' is understood as a declaration of separate identity (I am 'me' and not 'you'). This does not necessarily coincide with True Self, yet it may (and often does) lead to it.

² The offering is dated 9th June, and is made public on 11th June 1895. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul. The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Clarke (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 276-277, 284.

A True Self is the source of the spontaneous gesture; only the True Self can be creative and feel real; a False Self is reflected in “greater than usual difficulties in connecting to others,” lack of healthy constructed artifices to protect the True Self, the “need to collect impingements from external reality” filling lived time “by reactions to these impingements,” and a poor ability to use symbols.³ The False Self, we recall, begins when the mother’s “holding environment” is not “good enough,” causing the child to withdraw from advantages to be gained.⁴ The child first protests against being “forced into a false existence” but, then, through a “False Self builds up a false set of relationships” that appear real, presenting in a number of ways.⁵ There is a distorted perception of how the world operates (negative expectations), an acceptance of messages about the self which are false, and an absence of an effective self-defence mechanism (a healthy form of False Self).⁶ The child shows greater than usual difficulties in connecting to others, and “a need to collect impingements from external reality,” filling their living with “reactions to these impingements.”⁷ In the previous chapter, we saw Thérèse suffer difficulty in connecting with others, with few defences to protect her True Self. This chapter will witness Thérèse searching for external impingements. Two things stand out: Thérèse having some awareness of seeking impingement (suffering), and treating losses and failures not as detractions but in her favour.

³Donald W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London, New York: Karnac, 1965, 1990), 148, 144, 149-150.

⁴ Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, 145-6.

⁵ Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, 146.

⁶ There is lack of a self-construction to safe-guarding the True Self. A ‘healthy’ False Self equates to the self-defence mechanism needed to operate in ordinary life, such as hiding intimate things which would render the person needlessly vulnerable to ‘insensitive’ others. In her school age years, Thérèse over-zealously employed the spiritual rules she was taught – scrupulously confessing all, and disclosing self-exposing realities so to allow ‘humbling’, classed as a good outcome in spiritual literature.

⁷ Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, 144, 150.

1. *Manuscript A*

a. *In Pursuit of Carmel: "After the Grace of Christmas"*

Thérèse writes that her Carmelite vocation (her first individuation) emerged through “the grace of Christmas,” the sign of Pranzini, her deep sharing with Céline (likened to Monica and Augustine’s experience at Ostia), a personal invitation from God such as found in St John of the Cross’s canticle, and Pauline’s example.⁸ Ending a time of “extreme touchiness,” and beginning “the third period of my life,” “the grace of Christmas” restored “the strength of soul she had lost at the age of four and a half,”⁹ removed what prevented her entry into Carmel,¹⁰ and offered the impetus for pursuing it. Thérèse describes herself after the grace of Christmas as ‘a young woman’ (“jeune fille”)¹¹ because she shed her need (like swaddling clothes) and began to initiate demonstrations of love (paradoxically resuming her infant-character).¹²

At almost fourteen years of age, Thérèse writes, she was unable to practice virtue without *merciful* praise being heaped on it. “I had a great desire... to practice virtue, but... [i]f Celine was unfortunate enough not to seem happy or surprised by my little services, I became unhappy and proved it by my tears;” still “in the *swaddling clothes of a child*,” a miracle was required to make “to make *me grow up*.”¹³ Thérèse describes this in spiritual terms, as ‘a divine exchange’:¹⁴ at his birth Jesus “made himself subject

⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 99-106.

⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 98.

¹⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 97. “I really don’t know how I could entertain the thought of entering Carmel when I was still in the *swaddling clothes of a child*!”

¹¹ *Story of a Soul*, 80. Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d’Une Ame*, 94. “Jeune fille” is an idiomatic expression meaning a ‘young woman’ rather than a girl who is young; ‘fille’ here equates with ‘miss’.
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/jeune+fille> accessed 16/may/2011.

¹² This is reminiscent of Thérèse who, at almost two years of age, spontaneously “comes to caress me [Zélie].” See , Thérèse of Lisieux, *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II 1890-1897*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988), 1218.

¹³ *Story of a Soul*, 97. At Christmas 1886 Thérèse is approaching her fourteenth birthday on January 2.

¹⁴ Jesus takes on a double weakness in relation to the Father: humanity and infancy. Through this double weakness, Jesus inaugurates full human dependence on the Father through the Holy Spirit.

to *weakness* and suffering” for her, so to now make her “*strong* and courageous,” to arm her with his weapons.¹⁵

She relates, “Papa, tired out after the midnight mass” annoyed over the expectation that he would still “baby” her this Christmas Eve, commented, “Well, fortunately this will be the last year!”¹⁶ Previously this would have resulted in tears, however “Jesus desired to show me that I was to give up the defects of my childhood and so he withdrew its innocent pleasures.”¹⁷ “The work I had been unable to do in ten years was done by Jesus in one instant, contenting himself with my goodwill which was never lacking.”¹⁸ Her “strength of soul” was restored in one movement of grace; God was more merciful to her than he was to his disciples because, with her, he “took the net Himself [and] cast it.”¹⁹ Upon seeing nothing other than the desire to love, God replied to her “good will” by casting the net himself; he undertook work toward success on her behalf.²⁰ Thérèse felt God supply her with his own capacity to love.

b. Evaluation of After Christmas

Attributing her new disposition to “grace,” a “complete conversion,” a surprising change,²¹ Thérèse goes on to describe it in terms of natural experience: the resumption

¹⁵ Thérèse uses Teresa of Avila’s words here. See *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016-1017.

¹⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 98.

¹⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 98.

¹⁸ “I took my slippers ... and withdrew all the objects joyfully.” *Story of a Soul*, 98.

¹⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 99.

²⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 99.

²¹ To missionary Roulland in 1896, Thérèse describes her “grace at Christmas” as “the night of my conversion,” and “decisive for my vocation.” *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016. This been interpreted as an event of moral conversion (see Joann Wolski Conn and Walter E. Conn, in “Conversion as Self-Transcendence Exemplified in the Life of St. Thérèse of Lisieux” *Spirituality Today*, Winter 1982, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 11303-3), and of psychic and affective conversion (see Tom Ryan SM in “Psychic Conversion and St Thérèse of Lisieux.” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 22/1 (Jan 2005), 3-18). A word infrequently used by Thérèse (*Story of a Soul*, 98, 167, and *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016), “conversion,” in “coming forth from the swaddling clothes and imperfections of childhood,” “transformed [by God] ... in such a way that I no longer recognized myself ... Without this change I would have had to remain for years in the world,” appears to mean an extraordinary event. *Letters of Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1016.

of her childhood resilience. She frames her problem in terms of God correcting an imperfection, and then elaborates on the natural aspect, a return to confident exploration and initiative.²² From the present Thérèse appears to be more concerned with telling Pauline about the divine eradication of her failings (being made “strong and courageous,” undefeated, victorious, “to run as a giant”),²³ than in their cause or justifiable presence – that for her vocation to proceed (ensuring sisterly approval and belonging) she needed to speedily grow up.

Some writers have focussed on Thérèse’s identification of her “Christmas grace” as a radical permanent change (over it as a recovery of character), exploring this as moral and psychic/affective conversion in the context of a phenomenology of conversion. Joann Wolski and Conn Walter E. Conn, to demonstrate a shift toward inner confidence (supporting Lonergan’s thought on transcendence), contrast Thérèse feeling a lack of recognition for intellectual talent whilst at Isidore’s home (a place where she feels “uncomfortable,” and is not cosseted as her cousin Marie is),²⁴ with later in Carmel where she feels confident in her independent theological thought. Our interest, however, is in a return to a former way of being as most true. This involves finding reports on Thérèse’s early character that show her as once confidently creative. Marie writes of Thérèse (at four years old) as in an environment of relational security and familiar affirmation which engenders audacity (or ‘sassy-ness’).²⁵ “All at home devour her with kisses... However, she’s so accustomed to caresses that she hardly pays any attention to them...;” “she comes here [to the May altar] to make her prayer, leaping with joy ... full of mischief... and yet not silly,” “You can see her imagination constantly at work.”²⁶

²² “[I]t wasn’t because I merited them [graces] because I was still very imperfect.” “I was quite unable to correct this terrible fault.The work I was unable to do in ten years was done by Jesus in one instant... ..God was able to extricate me from the very narrow circle in which I was turning...” *Story of a Soul*, 97, 98, 101.

²³ *Story of a Soul*, 97.

²⁴ Here she was “was taken as a little dunce...incapable and clumsy.” *Story of a Soul*, 82.

²⁵ There is an implication that Thérèse has been accused of being too bold, in her stating, as a three year old, “We must not get sassy...” *Letters of Thérèse: Volume II*, 1226.

²⁶ Thérèse of Lisieux, *General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890*, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 111. Earlier in her writing (phase II), Thérèse reflects her “original” approach in what appears to be an unimaginative environment (the Guérin’s household). Thérèse wryly comments, “...my spelling... was nothing less than original,” rather than noting it as a lack

Noting that weakness in the face of her good intent drew God to her aid, Thérèse has grace consistent with natural processes. Rather pointing to an ‘external’ event (adding to “Mary’s smile”) which, interrupting natural processes, might have an other-worldly connotation, she takes the experience of a familiar way of being (“strength of soul”) as the measure of grace. In the way that Rose/Zélie once inspired trust in her by meeting her failed good efforts with a forgiving smile, so she felt God ‘look’ forgivingly upon years of failed attempts of “good will” – reviving a once-felt power-to-impact and allowing her to go outside of herself. This understanding represents a True Self, while a voice that names pre-adolescent “touchiness” as a “fault”²⁷ to be corrected and outgrown (leaping over/denying psychic cause and effect), a False Self-construction.

c. *The Signs of Pranzini and Arminjon*

Thérèse recalls a desire to spend the mercy she felt bathed in, through an image of gathering up Jesus’ falling blood and pouring “it out upon souls.”²⁸ She begged for grace for Pranzini a convicted criminal: “I felt *charity* enter my soul, and the need to forget myself and to please others...,” “I wanted...to prevent him from falling into hell, and...I employed every means imaginable. ...I told God I was sure He would pardon ... Pranzini...absolutely confident in the mercy of Jesus.”²⁹ After finding Pranzini had kissed the crucifix (a sign that her actions were pleasing to Jesus), she was enthused to further mediate Jesus’ mercy, which she felt as “a true interchange of love...”³⁰ Her responsiveness to Jesus was rewarded by more desire to repeat God’s mercy (“...the more I gave Him *to drink*, the more the thirst of my...soul increased...”)³¹

of proficiency, showing in the present she is unperturbed by conventions. Aware, then, that she succeeded academically, Thérèse felt awkward because she was treated so (Marie and Pauline not here to mirror her ‘spark’), reflecting the young one’s inability to rise above the evaluation of adults. *Story of a Soul*, 82.

²⁷ In original, “grande sensibilité,” and “défaut.” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d’Une Ame*, 112, 113.

²⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 99.

²⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 99-100.

³⁰ Thérèse does this via the image of slaking Jesus thirst by giving the blood of Jesus. *Story of a Soul*, 101.

³¹ *Story of a Soul*, 101.

Thérèse then tells of her hunger to learn, especially through reading, noting she restrained herself to emphasize God's part in drawing her to Carmel.³² Connecting to the present where she is taking care of Celine, now a novice, Thérèse reflects on God raising her to Celine's 'height'. Celine had told little Thérèse she needed to grow "as high a stool" to share in her secrets, but while this gave her extra height, it did not help her to understand Céline's secrets; it was the grace of Christmas that raised her to meet Céline so to share their "...aspirations of love [for Jesus]." ³³ Celine became "the confidante of my thoughts," thoughts surrounding heaven where God outdoes the love of his faithful (arising from reading Arminjon).³⁴ Thérèse describes a spiritual experience through the physical:

How sweet were the conversations we held each evening in the belvédère! With enraptured gaze, we beheld the white moon rising quietly behind the tall trees, the silvery rays it was casting upon sleeping nature, the bright stars twinkling in the deep skies, the light breath of the evening breeze making the snowy clouds float easily along; all this raised our souls to heaven whose "obverse side" alone we were able to contemplate.³⁵

Next to the soaring feelings about God, Thérèse recalls being offered regular communion from her confessor, because Jesus was "Aware of the uprightness of my heart..."³⁶ Further, to "ripen" her for Carmel, God acted in her "directly," without the need for a spiritual director. Thérèse imagines others witnessing the mysteries that had occurred in her:

Because I was little and weak He lowered himself to me, and He instructed me secretly in the *things* of his *love*. Ah! Had the learned who spent their life in study come to me, undoubtedly they would have been astonished to see a child of fourteen understand perfection's secrets, secrets all their knowledge cannot reveal because to possess them one has to be poor in spirit!³⁷

³² *Story of a Soul*, 102.

³³ *Story of a Soul*, 103.

³⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 103.

³⁵ This scene relates to childhood happinesses reported earlier: imagining (playing) with Céline, looking at the stars, enjoying songs and checkers with Céline, and papa on a winter's night in the belvédère. *Story of a Soul*, 103.

³⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 104.

³⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 105.

She recalls, while living with Céline in an “*ideal of happiness*,” the discouragement Pauline and Marie expressed over her becoming a Carmelite only served as encouragement.³⁸ With Céline’s support, and an appeal to the apostles to help the “timid child ... chosen by God,” Thérèse sought her father’s permission to enter Carmel.³⁹ He approved, but unexpected resistance followed; Isidore disapproved.⁴⁰ She recalls feeling nature in harmony with her disappointment (a bitter “dark night”), rain reflecting God’s will in unison with hers.⁴¹ Uncle Isidore then miraculously reassessed his position.⁴² When Carmel’s superior Fr Delatroëtte refused her entry, Thérèse experienced a storm (and rain followed).⁴³ Thérèse reflects that she was propelled to the “shore” of Carmel, as wind might steer a boat.⁴⁴

So simple and adventurous was this early love, so securely did she feel heaven “as none other than love,” that at that time she consented to see herself “plunged into Hell so that [Jesus] would be *loved* eternally in that place of blasphemy.”⁴⁵ She recounts Louis taking her to see the bishop at Bayeux,⁴⁶ turning to her experience – Louis’ familiar ways and appearance – to describe spiritual rightness: though not familiar with “the rules of polite society,” Louis conducted himself with simplicity and “natural dignity.”⁴⁷ Papa, against the Bishop’s advice, supported her desire to enter Carmel.

³⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 106

³⁹ In the imagery of the practice of the martyrs, Céline allowed Thérèse to go into “combat” first knowing she might be destined for greater things. *Story of a Soul*, 107.

⁴⁰ Thérèse places her request with God, and prayed for a miracle. *Story of a Soul*, 109.

⁴¹ “I have noticed in all the serious circumstances of my life that nature always reflected the image of my soul. On days filled with tears, the heavens cried along with me...” *Story of a Soul*, 109-110.

⁴² Pauline wrote to Isidore on Thérèse’s behalf. See *General Correspondence: Volume II*, 294-296.

⁴³ *Story of a Soul*, 111. Fr Delatroëtte conceded that the bishop could overturn his decision. Louis consoled her by assuring her that they would beseech the bishop at Bayeux, and if the bishop refused they would go to the Holy Father.

⁴⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 110-111.

⁴⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 112. She implies heaven, a place felt to be (a little too) predictable and secure, is a safe base from which to go forth and confront danger.

⁴⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 117.

⁴⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 117.

d. *Evaluation of Pranzini-Arminjon Recollections*

Thérèse retells the past consonant with her present feeling. In Celine's company, and under Pauline as prioress, she is "enjoying...a clear *faith*." Her past desire to draw repentance from a sinner (Pranzini's) to quench Jesus' thirst for souls, from gratitude for felt-mercy, is being replicated in the present, in her "Offering to Merciful Love."⁴⁸ Then she felt invigorated by Arminjon's call in *The End of the Present World*; now, she marvels at the way which God drew her, reliving feeling chosen/loved by God through receiving the signs she sought.⁴⁹ This sense of gratitude belongs to a True Self.

However, the sense that grace co-operates with the expectations placed on her points to a False Self construction. Thérèse asserts that the grace of Christmas removed her childish 'faults'; without their hindrance she succeeds at the self-renunciation Pauline and Marie require. This leads to unity with God's will, and 'achieving' Carmel (God's mercy toward her obedience). In truth, though, Thérèse had felt helpless to control her self in spite of good intention, her God – different from her sisters' God who rewards self-deprecation – nevertheless, meets their expectations (by this God she enters Carmel). Thérèse's sense that she won God's favour by her good intent amid weakness (failing Pauline and Marie's 'adult' rules) indicates a True Self. Next to this, a False Self claims God's favour, citing obedient self-denial, and God ridding her of a faulted character, brought her to Carmel where she is feeling her present light of faith, a sure path to the glorious community of the elect. A True Self recalls being with God and her family as her whole joy, the place of courage-inspiring love; another voice endorses martyrdom, parents willing to forsake their children, and children their parents,⁵⁰ blind to what lies in its wake (disruption of family joy).

Thérèse draws all together in a symbol from her context, the romantic orphan, a child faced with its effort alone (in place of a mother's face), against the reasoning of great

⁴⁸ This is made on 9 June 1895, in the year of writing *Man A*, which she is now half-way through. *Story of a Soul*, 211.

⁴⁹ Past and present signs are read through each other; the past confirms the present, and the present is written into the past.

⁵⁰ Cf Mt 19: 29.

faithless, “prudent” (fearful) adults who disregard the child. Casting herself in this role in her writing to Pauline, she performs before others (hagiography’s spectators) according to a plan revealed to her alone. (Consistent with romantic writing, the weather sympathizes with her feelings.)⁵¹ In relating God’s indulgent signs to her, such as that of Pranzini, Thérèse tells Pauline of her acceptability to God. After her sisters, and finally Louis on Christmas Eve, communicate that her neediness was a bother, God suddenly calls her to a mission. She feels that she is needed by Jesus, who has distinct a purpose for her, and reveals this intimately.⁵² She takes up a role like Arminjon’s innocent, like Jeanne d’Arc. However, in these images, God champions Pauline’s pretty self-forgetting child, rather than the scrupulous self-conscious Thérèse who aches to be ‘good’ so as to be noticed. Despite asserting that her childhood “strength of soul” never again left her, Thérèse’s graced tenacity (God achieving in Thérèse what her sisters failed to get from her) is fragile under the threat of “storms” thwarting God’s mission. Exterior obstructions to progress were felt interiorly – a drop in the momentum of her inner vision, as it were, collapses her sail.

We pause to acknowledge the problem of isolating Thérèse’s True Self. *Story of a Soul*, in demonstrating the fulfilment of a Carmelite vocation, resembles the hagiography of a circulaire. Prizing hiddenness, Thérèse avoids self-particularity, affirming principles from the lives and writings of favoured saints through stylized language and symbols; she imitates others – most significantly, Jesus. This appears to warrant a charge of “bad faith” in Sartre’s terms.⁵³ If we allow that imitating Jesus through a stylized role is her conscious aim, and proving fidelity to her culture by intense participation (reaching for its best – its agreed principles, and connected

⁵¹ Storms reflect God’s displeasure. Storms coinciding with the sufferer’s feeling indicate their connection with God, who is present in nature and within the hero.

⁵² Following the proceedings of Pranzini’s case involved surreptitiously reading a newspaper which she was forbidden, and getting Céline to offer a Mass for her intentions, secrecy which suggests intimacy between her and God. *Story of a Soul*, 99-100.

⁵³ “Bad faith” for Sartre involves abdicating one’s self-definition by playing out a set of scripted responses. Persons entering a role treat themselves as an object. For example, when a person waiting on tables takes up the automatic movement of a waiter (efficiency, etiquette, finesse), they suspend their real being. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 63-64, 55-56, 59-60.

authenticity) is appropriate for her age, we can concentrate on examining her creative movement within these.⁵⁴

Having qualified our search, we return to our analysis. Thérèse has her limitation (good-will without success) as the opening where God enters. God, with “grace” at Christmas, enters a psychological deadlock: “God ... extricate[d] me from the very narrow circle which I was turning without knowing how to come out.”⁵⁵ The circle Thérèse burst from resembles, arguably, Fitzgerald’s “impasse,” or the “darkness” of St John of the Cross (interpreted by Iain Matthew), in that its imprisoning defeat is due to an inability to see or do things another way, in spite of devoting all one’s energy to it.⁵⁶ Through a new ability (maternal grace toward Louis’ shortness), Thérèse felt self-determining agency return to her. “Freed from scruples and its excessive sensitiveness, my mind developed.”

Blending past and present emotion, Thérèse lists her responses to the grace that lifted her from her confining circle: (i) desire for Pranzini’s conversion (ii) deep impressions from reading *The End of the Present World*; (iii) union with Celine whilst talking about heaven in the belvédère, feeling they followed as the virgins of St John of the Cross’s canticle;⁵⁷ a feeling of Jesus directing her, by wordless secrets, and (iv) a sense described by stanzas 3 and 4 of St John’s *Dark Night* (surrounding St John’s escape from his prison cell into the life of Jesus) conveying what she learned from her director. St John of the Cross experienced a path forward in the unlikely event of imposed imprisonment.⁵⁸ He felt God enter his helpless imprisonment, and guide him to escape. Thérèse similarly feels God enter her deadlock and provide an escape. She allowed herself to be led by Jesus (by a light burning in the heart) toward himself.⁵⁹ *The End of*

⁵⁴ Here we described Fowler’s Stage III, which may be understood as a reprise of the toddler’s value sensitive phase, enlarged to create the fidelity needed to prepare to repeat one’s cultural matrix (without critique as no new culture has yet been encountered).

⁵⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 101.

⁵⁶ See discussion on “impasse” in Chapter Three, 30-31, 38.

⁵⁷ “Spiritual Canticle,” stanza 25. *Story of a Soul*, 105.

⁵⁸ Iain Matthew, *Impact of God: Soundings from St John of the Cross* (United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 51-66.

⁵⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 105.

the Present World sent her spiritual imagination in flight, resulting in soaring hopes – sharing these in conversation with her play-companion Céline invigorates her. Suddenly all things become possible: she reads new things, she feels God responding to her, and new life enters her and Celine’s relationship, all of which reach Pauline and Marie in Carmel. God’s rescue from helplessness results in a self-descriptive decision: to make Jesus, felt-as-merciful-toward-her, known and loved.

e. Trip to Rome and The First years in Carmel

Thérèse recalls during her trip to Rome (a final attempt to gain permission for early entry into Carmel) observing the shallowness of titled persons and the weakness of priests, discovering both to be ordinary.⁶⁰ In Paris, she asks Mary and Joseph to watch over her purity. Recounting their fellow pilgrims admiring her (and Céline) with her “handsome and distinguished... beloved King,”⁶¹ Thérèse then attributes Louis’ natural grace to God. Interpreting a barricade at the Colosseum to be like the one Mary got around at the tomb of Jesus, Thérèse entered the forbidden area, kissed the soil of martyrdom, and returned promptly.⁶² “Papa, seeing us so happy, didn’t have the heart to scold us and I could easily see he was proud of our courage.” Ascribing like favour to God, she adds: “God visibly protected us, for the other pilgrims hadn’t noted our absence.”⁶³

To gain the Pope’s permission for Carmel, Thérèse recalls entreating him as a father: “... instead of kissing [his hand] I joined my own and ... cried out: “Most Holy Father, I have a great favour to ask you!”⁶⁴ Permission was not granted.⁶⁵ Her hope was now in

⁶⁰ The souls of priests were not as “pure as crystal” as she had thought. *Story of a Soul*, 121-122.

⁶¹ Thérèse comments that she felt Fr Révérony carefully study her actions to see whether she was capable of becoming a Carmelite. *Story of a Soul*, 123-124.

⁶² *Story of a Soul*, 130-131.

⁶³ *Story of a Soul*, 131.

⁶⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 133-134. Pauline instructed Thérèse to be bold in her request, to say: “in honour of your jubilee, permit me to enter Carmel at fifteen.” *General Correspondence: Volume I*, 315.

⁶⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 135-6. She recalls feeling “peace” as she had succeeded in expressing her call. To endure the bitterness, she offered herself to the child Jesus as a ball, open to the attack of investigation. She then imagined Jesus abandoning her after becoming tired from play. Thérèse engages with these

God alone.⁶⁶ Thérèse recalls the riches they further encountered could not alleviate her pain.⁶⁷ Even so she still took an interest in things. As the smallest in the pilgrimage group, she was given the role of reaching relics. Recalling her efforts as “brazen,” she explains she was “like a *child* who believes everything is permitted and looks upon the treasures of his Father as his own.”⁶⁸ Observing that women were constantly refused entry to sacred places in Italy (suppressing their fervour),⁶⁹ Thérèse reflects love for Christ’s passing traces was misunderstood; and that in this life, in spite of their faithful devotion, women had to suffer being “last.”⁷⁰

With her entry into Carmel, Thérèse writes, peace descended; “suffering opened wide its arms to me and I threw myself into them.”⁷¹ She suffered for five years.⁷² At the outset, Fr Pichon (her director), upon her general confession, offered “the most consoling words I ever heard in my life ... *YOU HAVE NEVER COMMITTED A MORTAL SIN.*”⁷³ In his ongoing absence, she held Jesus as her director, learning a “science hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to *little ones.*”⁷⁴ She came to fathom the suffering face of Christ, who desired to “be unknown and counted as nothing.”⁷⁵

symbols (the ball and the child Jesus) introduced by Pauline (as if Pauline consoles herself with the memory of Thérèse’s infancy).

⁶⁶ “It was better to have recourse to Him than to his saints.” *Story of a Soul*, 139.

⁶⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 137-9.

⁶⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 139-140.

⁶⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 142-143.

⁷⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 140.

⁷¹ *Story of a Soul*, 147-151. She understood then, and maintains now, that suffering was the means by which her goal, saving souls, was to be attained.

⁷² *Story of a Soul*, 149-150. Marie de Gonzague’s severity, she feels, was a grace which led her to obey from a motive of pure love rather than natural affection.

⁷³ Had God “‘abandoned you, ... you would have become a little demon.’ ... I had no trouble believing it...and gratitude flooded my soul.” *Story of a Soul*, 149.

⁷⁴ Pichon left for Canada, sending her one letter a year in reply to her twelve. *Story of a Soul*, 151.

⁷⁵ She was inducted into this piety by Pauline. *Story of a Soul*, 152.

I thirsted after suffering and I longed to be forgotten. ...*Never* has He given me the desire for anything which He has not given me, and even His bitter chalice seemed delightful to me.⁷⁶

Thérèse then speaks of Louis' deterioration, likening his spiritual progress during this to that of Francis de Sales.⁷⁷ She narrates two gifts: Louis' visit against all expectations, and finding snow upon the reception of her habit, when this seemed a hopeless desire.⁷⁸

Perhaps people wondered and asked themselves...[why snow?] What is certain, though, is that many considered the snow on my Clothing Day as a little miracle and the whole town was astonished. Some found I had a strange taste, loving snow!⁷⁹

f. Evaluation of Trip to Rome and First Years in Carmel

In the imagined comments of watching persons, Thérèse validates her special relationship with Jesus. This is reminiscent of admirers of Louis and her at mass, and while travelling. Later, in her devotion to the traces of martyrs and Jesus' presence, she casts herself as a courageous follower of Jesus – its goodness and rightness based on Louis' example. Thérèse arranges her interior story (with scripted audience affirming her sense of being watched) as a drama for Pauline.⁸⁰

Thérèse looks back on her path to Carmel as guided by God. Grace, producing needed growth, enabled her entry; now God celebrates her 'arrival' (with snow). She feels refusals and abandonment as grace, too, as they contribute to the disposition needed to be a Carmelite. In this drama there are dimensions of a False Self. From what has been asked of her – purity, innocence, martyrdom – Thérèse identifies what life is and what God wants from her, supplying connections between these as present in her and God's

⁷⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 152.

⁷⁷ Thérèse raises up Louis as he once raised her up. *Story of a Soul*, 153.

⁷⁸ She names this "*incomprehensible condescension*." *Story of a Soul*, 154-156. Snow out of season, and a flower out of place, are received with joy as she once received little valueless gifts with joy. See *Story of a Soul*, 56.

⁷⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 156. At 161, Thérèse concludes that Louis is absent from her profession (he died), which (in a play on words) turned her attention to "Our Father... in Heaven..."

⁸⁰ *Story of a Soul* could be aptly named '*Drama of a Soul*'. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 229. Thérèse has persons watch like a mother watching in the background.

approval of her. This is realized in an interior drama, a story (and form of self-determination) which cannot be contested by others.

g. *Profession and Offering to Merciful Love*

Thérèse begins by attributing her aridity in Carmel to “little fervour and lack of fidelity,” rather indicating sanctity.⁸¹ Gathering no remorse for sleeping during prayer, she reflects that Jesus (so fatigued by having to attend to others) hastened to her as she allowed him to sleep in her “boat:”

I should be desolate for having slept (for seven years) during my hours of prayer... well, I am not desolate, I remember that *little children* are as pleasing to their parents when they are asleep as well as when they are wide awake⁸²

Earlier, Zélie wrote she was not only charmed by Thérèse’s activity but by her sleep.⁸³ Thérèse experiences from God Zélie’s attitude to her sleeping (ungrudging concern for her welfare).

Thérèse recalls God offering her moment to moment grace (not a once-only provision), giving her thoughts as to what to do from his position as residing within her.⁸⁴ On the day of her profession, she felt as a queen who would obtain “favours from the *King* for His ungrateful subjects,” deliver “all the souls from purgatory, and convert all sinners.”⁸⁵ She then recalls Mother Geneviève, from whom she sought spiritual thoughts, offering her one, describing the closeness they shared. Sensing Jesus in her, Thérèse had declared: “Mother, you will not go to purgatory!”⁸⁶ Again reporting to Pauline her felt-specialness to God, she tells how she felt Mother Geneviève imparted some of her joy at the moment of entering heaven, that she obtained a tear from her as a relic, and was given a dream where Mother Geneviève stated three times that she gave

⁸¹ *Story of a Soul*, 165.

⁸² *Story of a Soul*, 165. At 173 Thérèse writes that her absence of fear was due to forming happy thoughts from her miseries.

⁸³ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1211, 1122.

⁸⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 165.

⁸⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 167. She felt herself as “the Little Blessed Virgin,” with great anticipation of the coming consummation of eternal happiness as she gazed up at the starry night sky.

⁸⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 170.

her heart to Thérèse.⁸⁷ She remembers during the Influenza epidemic receiving communion each day: “Jesus spoiled me for a long time, much longer than he did His faithful spouses, for He permitted me to receive Him while the rest didn’t have this same happiness;” further, God allowed her to touch the sacred vessels and cloth which were to touch Him.⁸⁸

Thérèse recounts her lack of optimism in what Fr Prou – reputed to be helpful to great sinners and not for devout religious – might achieve at their retreat.⁸⁹ However, his informing her that her “faults caused God no pain,” and God was very much pleased with her, was of great benefit.⁹⁰ Entirely new to her, she felt this was true, because “was God not more tender than a mother?” – Pauline, for example, “always” pardoned her “little involuntary offenses.”⁹¹

h. Evaluation of Profession and Offering to Merciful Love

A True Self may be seen in Thérèse expressing confidence in Jesus not being displeased over distractions and sleepiness, and feeling supplied from moment to moment, both recalling a time of nourishment in infancy. We also encounter two kinds of False Self. A continuum, the False Self spans Thérèse’s conscious construction of a self for operating in her faith community, to joining with others’ rejection of parts of her self. At the first end, she maintains an effective “social self even while aware ...of the discrepancy between the public self and the secret self” (such as ritually conceding to accusations of fault, while a secret True Self knows no harm was intended).⁹² At the other end, the False Self sets up as real a pattern of relating (accepting her spirited

⁸⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 170-171.

⁸⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 172.

⁸⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 173.

⁹⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 174.

⁹¹ *Story of a Soul*, 174.

⁹² McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 233.

behaviour as wilful), beginning “a nagging and debilitating sense of personal unreality, a sense of the betrayal of an inner truth, or failure to realize a potentiality for living.”⁹³

1. *The Social Self*

Thérèse adopts a “social” self for the Carmelite life that safely accommodates its ritual nature. Its ‘operating currency’ (purity and self-denial) to secure merit (a place with God in heaven), outlined in hagiography, is drawn from a world-view like Arminjon offers, where persons are called by God to overcome Satan’s evil, then face an after-death judgment over their earthly performance. Christ’s life, passion, and death, is offered as the preeminent template,⁹⁴ but exemplary Christians in Neo-Platonic hagiography sense their mission in ‘perfections’, defending (to the death) qualities consistent with Hellenist heroism. Romantic Christians respond to God’s call from their unremarkableness, subverting the evil of the powerful. Simple innocence, representing a formidable strength, is venerated. A drama declares: God is at work here! Implied is its corollary, God is less present in the ambivalences entailed in growth.⁹⁵

2. *The “Nagging Unreality”*

The above images were accepted by the Martins as ideals guiding their expression of Catholic behaviour. They were also used to modify Thérèse’s behaviour. Did the remembrance of their insufficiencies represent a “nagging unreality” in her? The images, arising from the Visitandine convent Marie and Pauline attended, were supported by Zélie and Louis, but their use varied between parents and sisters. Zélie and Louis expressed pleasure and wonderment over little Thérèse, while Marie and Pauline used the imagery, at times, to protest felt-injustices (Marie against Thérèse’s lavish

⁹³ McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 233.

⁹⁴ See J. Warren Smith, “Martyrdom: Self Denial or Self-Exaltation? Motives For Self-Sacrifice from Homer to Polycarp: A Theological Reflection,” *Modern Theology*, 22/2 April 2006, pp170-196, 171-178. Hagiography often refers to winning a victory palm, or a crown, and favours apocryphal writings for its support. Thomas Nelson, *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Inc., 2008), p. XI. The “Apocrypha” a Hellenist component of the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament bible, includes the Book of the Maccabees, featuring Jewish legends and heroism of a distinctly Hellenistic style.

⁹⁵ The romantic imagery of Joan of Arc (its “dream” and language) adopted as a child, ‘grows with her’ in Carmel. *Story of a Soul*, 72, 193, 283. A year earlier (January 1894) Thérèse wrote a pious recreation on Joan of Arc with herself in the role of Joan. She will include in Man B hagiography copied from Arminjon, and later hopes to emulate the martyr, Théophane Vénard, a French priest who suffered martyrdom in Saigon, whose life she reads of the year after writing Man B, in November, 1896.

treatment, and Pauline against Zélie's vicarious wishes). Marie implemented strict asceticism; Pauline constrained Thérèse to a caricature of idealized innocence,⁹⁶ preferring her childlikeness. Marie 'corrected' Thérèse (in respect of rose ownership, 'feigning sleep', and 'refusing Louis a kiss on the swing') telling her she was wilful. Pauline adds the 'refusing kiss' incident to Man A, to clarify Thérèse was *not* spoiled, but well brought up, preserving a perception of right behaviour in the Martin family.⁹⁷ We witness "nagging unreality" when Thérèse accuses herself of wilfulness, and when she offers Pauline, next to asserting felt-goodness, proofs of God's acceptance. Thérèse lists God's special responses to her (snow, flowers, a handsome father who is proud of her), stating she feels loved by God. Some special responses, however (from holy figures⁹⁸ and in 'objective' facts – virginity, a declaration of sinlessness, an esteemed nun's dream, relics, admiring onlookers), affirm Pauline's values to gain the approval of 'Pauline's God'. These represent a less true sense of mercy.

Pointing out to Pauline her mistake in preferring her vocation over Thérèse's companionship indicates a True Self, but listing God's favours in the colour of Pauline's values involves compromise (a "nagging unreality"). Thérèse tries to reclaim something Pauline and Marie took from her: her right to be good. In an Augustinian world-view, one's sense of being good was questioned from the time of emerging value sensitivity. Adults drew attention to 'naughtiness' without impunity as it reflected a religious fact. Thérèse, however, senses that goodness is something she once happily owned (critical positive self-formation gathered earlier).⁹⁹ She tries to retrieve this through the words and actions of holy others.

⁹⁶ We note that the sisters, however, mirror Zélie, as children mirror back the parent's own attributes, both desirable and undesirable, accepted or unaccepted (McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 224). The parent instinctively affirms an accepted aspect ("that's my girl"), and rejects a denied aspect ("do not be this") exposing the need for re-integrating that denied part of their personality (split-off self). Zélie repeated some of her mother's favouring, moralizing, and intolerance with Pauline and Marie, who would in turn have repeated it.

⁹⁷ Pauline had certain ambitions in the (institutionalized) spiritual sphere. *Story of a Soul*, 19.

⁹⁸ In telling Pauline that she feels herself holding a special place in Mother Geneviève's heart (who, with Louis, she has 'sent' straight to heaven), Thérèse pursues the approval of 'holy' persons.

⁹⁹ McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 218-219.

3. *Thérèse's God Object-Relation informed by Louis*

Thérèse's object-representation of the person of Jesus matches attributes of Louis that support fashionable piety. Feeling like a "queen" who obtains "favours from the *King* for his ungrateful subjects" recalls Louis, where he does Thérèse's bidding, and she admires him as "King." Louis' character evokes the generous but easily wounded Jesus of nineteenth century piety, allowing Thérèse to form a representation in harmony with this.¹⁰⁰ The Martin women tacitly agree (an unspoken contract) that the affective, retiring Louis is to be protected from his daughters' impositions (do not ask at whim to visit the Pavilion, his place of retreat) to prevent his generous spirit from being taken for granted.¹⁰¹ When Marie sees Thérèse play the queen game too liberally ("come and get [my kiss] if you want it"), she chastises her ("You naughty little girl, how bad it is to answer one's father in this way")¹⁰² to make her obey this contract.¹⁰³ Thérèse experiences Jesus as she did Louis – as sensitive, hurt by the 'sin' of refusal, by 'careless disdain', and bothered by too difficult requests. Not robust enough to withstand ordinary thoughtless behaviour, Thérèse thoughtfully acknowledges Jesus' gifts, and tenderly accommodates him (offers him repose in her boat).

Thérèse's sense of being especially responsive to Jesus is tied with her experience of being the (youngest) favoured, affectionate one. As a toddler, she charmed and soothed Louis, seldom refusing him. Marie ensured that Thérèse did not refuse either of her parents' overtures for her affection, conveying that refusing parental overtures of love, she 'sinned' by careless hurting.¹⁰⁴ Charming and soothing, however, did not spare

¹⁰⁰ By entering a tacit agreement over what each member's role is, family members together forestall an unwanted reaction.

¹⁰¹ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1226.

¹⁰² *Story of a Soul*, 19. "One day when I was swinging contentedly, [Papa] passed by and called out to me: 'Come and kiss me my little Queen!' ... I didn't want to budge, and I answered boldly: 'Come and get it, Papa!' He paid no attention to me... Marie was there. She said: 'You naughty little girl! How bad it is to answer one's father in this way!'"

¹⁰³ This also reflects Marie's feeling; if nowadays she only received Louis' love sparingly and formally – Thérèse now occupying the place she understands best – then she will appoint herself guardian of Louis' generosity, ensuring that it be carefully absorbed and not wasted.

¹⁰⁴ Marie's action echoes French Catholic sensitivity to loss of respect for God-representing monarchs. Parents, like monarchs, were to be respected, keeping 'God' enthroned. Through this, parental grace would be hallowed.

Thérèse from Louis' absence, or save him from suffering. Thérèse might have outgrown such representation, but Louis' final vulnerability to humiliation, and Zélie's untimely death, both evoking defenceless goodness, preserve images relating to persons she does not want to fail – leading to a False Self.

Jesus slept peacefully in *Thérèse's* boat, and not others', because others fatigued him. Thérèse consoles Jesus, defends him from persons who spurn his love, and makes no demands on him, but does a God whose love is elicited by the soothing affections of an acquiescing child, betray an inner truth? – she was lovable at other times. Jesus defends her threatened self against those who punished her and forgot her, rescuing her from being forgotten and irrelevant, allowing her sleepiness and distractions – while she is a self-effacing, virginal, well-intentioned, Catholic, child. Though charmed by her ingenuous admiration, Jesus is hurt by the 'ingratitude' of unbelief.

i. A Further Self-description: Offering to Merciful Love

Thérèse describes a God who knows his daughter's tastes. Beyond the unseasonal appearance of snow, she sees field flowers again and Celine entering her Carmel, in spite of opposition to another 'Martin' entry.¹⁰⁵ With Celine's entry, her "childish desires" end.¹⁰⁶ Arriving at the present time, she writes her goal is to "love Jesus unto folly."¹⁰⁷ So surrendered to Jesus does she feel, she prefers neither suffering nor death; "I can no longer ask for anything with fervour except the accomplishment of God's will in my soul."¹⁰⁸ Reaffirming that God speaks from within her when she needs guidance, she writes – flagging a new aim – that if all were to experience such "graces" then all would love God through love, and not fear, "and no one would consent to cause Him any pain."¹⁰⁹ Though she accepts that variations in souls must exist so that different facets of God's perfections (justice and mercy) may be "adored," in her being granted

¹⁰⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 175- 178.

¹⁰⁶ She means the gifts of indulgent signs. *Story of a Soul*, 178

¹⁰⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 178, 181. This sense of surrender is in relation to the possibility of being sent to the Carmel in Hanoi, Saigon. "Perhaps the little flower will be... transplanted to other shores!"

¹⁰⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 178-9.

¹⁰⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 179, 180.

“infinite Mercy,” Thérèse contemplates perfections such as justice “through” mercy.¹¹⁰

Through mercy

His Justice...seems to me clothed in *love*. What a sweet thing it is to think that God is *Just*, i.e., that He takes into account our weakness, that he is perfectly aware of our fragile nature. What should I fear then?¹¹¹

Questioning why God’s justice (sin deserving punishment), alone attracts victims,¹¹² she writes:

On every side this [Merciful] love is unknown, rejected; those hearts upon whom You would lavish it turn to creatures, seeking happiness from them with their miserable affection; they do this instead of throwing themselves into Your arms and of accepting your infinite *Love*... Is your disdained Love going to remain closed up within your heart?¹¹³

If God’s justice *is* mercy, then it “demands” a sacrifice that results in opening person’s hearts. Thérèse offers a solution.¹¹⁴ Amid the ingratitude God is faced with, she will enter with a spirit of receptivity:

I want to console You for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of You to take away my freedom to displease you. ... In order to live in one single act of Perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, asking you to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of *infinite tenderness* shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a *martyr* of your *Love*, O my God!¹¹⁵

j. Evaluation of Self in Offering

Thérèse’s offering is a new self-expressing initiative. Made with Céline, it fulfils Arminjon’s call to suffer a poignant and glorious martyrdom, in imagery that suits her soaring feelings. Arminjon wrote that God is powerless to surmount his creatures’

¹¹⁰ This recalls her introduction where she refers to different flowers. *Story of a Soul*, 180.

¹¹¹ *Story of a Soul*, 180.

¹¹² Oblations to justice were popular in the Lisieux Carmel’s tradition. See Nevin, *God’s Gentle Warrior*, 118.

¹¹³ *Story of a Soul*, 180- 181.

¹¹⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 276-277.

¹¹⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 276-277.

angers and disbeliefs, on earth,¹¹⁶ but Catholics can assuage the hurt that anger and disbelief bring to Jesus. Thérèse replaces Jesus ‘pained by faults’ with Jesus ‘thirsting for gratitude’. Non-reception of Jesus’ love (felt to be ingratitude) opens the need for consolation. She will console Jesus over his love being refused.¹¹⁷ Having felt rejection, to be in solidarity with Jesus’ experience of rejection is to be in solidarity with her self. She will respond to Jesus’ love, in the place of all who do not respond, in her spousal role. As to what constitutes “ingratitude,” this is left unsaid. Thérèse, earlier, excused her inattention to Jesus (sleeping at prayer), treating it as forgivable infant-thoughtlessness, but the possibility of her misjudging *other* inattentions (non-responsiveness) is not raised.

Diverging from the person of God (as Father) as outraged, Thérèse asserts him as not to be feared because he takes weakness into consideration – resembling Zélie who is sensitive to her children’s limitations, compensating for their variances in character. Thérèse characterizes the person of Jesus with Louis’ affective sensitivity, and asks God (Father) for an abundance of love to console Jesus, corresponding to what Zélie/Rose once supplied. Finally, she speaks of reciprocal feeding: just as she consumes Jesus, so might Jesus consume her when she gives herself to him.¹¹⁸ Thérèse ‘eats’ Jesus; Jesus ‘burns away’ her (imperfect) life until she ‘becomes’ God. Thérèse enters Arminjon’s landscape and declares a great allegiance, repeating mercy with a magnanimity in proportion to sexual abandon. In Man B we see how elements of her offering evolve into a truer self-representation.

2. *Manuscript B*: “My Vocation is Love”

Much happens between completing *Man A*, during which she wrote *Offering to Merciful Love* (June 1895) and writing *Man B* (September 1896).¹¹⁹ Thérèse discovers

¹¹⁶ See Arminjon, *The End of The Present World*, 178-181.

¹¹⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 277.

¹¹⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 276. “If through weakness I sometimes fall, may Your *Divine Glance* [communion] cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.”

¹¹⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 166. This is the anniversary of her profession.

she has tuberculosis and loses her ability to envision heaven. With involuntary feelings (loss of control of an interior kind), her offering acquires new values. *Man B* replies to Marie's request for Thérèse's dream and her "little doctrine," and adds a cover letter.¹²⁰ We begin with the dream which addressed her losing a sense of heaven.¹²¹ Amid this "darkest storm," Thérèse dreamt that Venerable Anne of Jesus caressed her, and assured her that God would come for her soon.¹²² To Thérèse's question whether she was content with Thérèse's "poor little actions and desires"? Anne de Jesus became "*incomparably more tender*," and replied "God asks no other thing from you. He is content, very content!"¹²³ These words were consoling, but her smile and her caresses were her sweetest answers. Thérèse was reassured that there *was* a heaven; she felt its existence and knew it was peopled by souls who loved her, who considered her their child.¹²⁴

a. Vocation to Love

Recalling how she comes upon her vocation, Thérèse begins by describing her love for Jesus as desires which "reach" into "infinity."¹²⁵ Enthusing over the many possibilities for expressing this, she quotes Arminjon, imagining herself enduring some of the extraordinary means by which Christians were martyred. Conceding her hopes (to love invincibly with powers she does not possess) resemble a child's, she feels it is because of her weakness that it pleases God to grant her desire.¹²⁶ Abasing herself to the "depths of nothingness," she discovers her vocation: love itself – its motivating force inspiring all other vocations.¹²⁷ With her powerlessness and weakness in view, she writes, "... it is my weakness that gives me the boldness of offering myself as a victim of your

¹²⁰ This "little doctrine" (September 8), or "way," is prefixed by a cover letter, written September 12. *Story of a Soul*, 189.

¹²¹ *Story of a Soul*, 187, 284. She had this dream on May 10, 1896. Her sense of losing heaven was around April 5.

¹²² *Story of a Soul*, 190-191.

¹²³ *Story of a Soul*, 191.

¹²⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 192.

¹²⁵ Unresolved, these desires cause "a veritable martyrdom." *Story of a Soul*, 192-193.

¹²⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 193.

¹²⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 194.

love.”¹²⁸ Echoing her “Oblation to Merciful Love,”¹²⁹ she observes that the “soul” suited for a holocaust to love must be a “nothingness” for “Love” to “lower Itself to;” that one is her.¹³⁰

In reply to God’s love, Therese will offer what motivates “all vocations:” love itself.¹³¹ But, how will she muster enough for God?¹³² With her excess of desire, she made friends with those in heaven; she will now get them to adopt her and ask for a double measure of *their* love – whatever she merits by this will be to their glory.¹³³

Acknowledging her request amounts to childish impulse, she reminds Jesus that parents “do not hesitate to satisfy the desires of the *little ones* whom they love as much as themselves”¹³⁴ Thérèse takes up the place of “*a little child*” who “stays very close to the *throne* of the King and Queen; she will “strew” flower petals and sing “the canticle of *Love*,” recalling her childhood pleasure in her petals touching Jesus in the monstrance held up during the Corpus Christi procession. “Unpetalling” symbolised making sacrifices for love of Jesus – like the actions required to be with Celine, which involved sitting patiently (difficult considering her exuberant nature), and holding back her tears when help was not forthcoming. “Unpetalling” in the present will appear similarly innocuous, but she is confident that these “nothings will please.”¹³⁵

Thérèse uses the metaphor of a chick to explain how she will possess “the plenitude of love.”¹³⁶ While it has the heart and eyes of an eagle, the chick is unable to fly. This is

¹²⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 194-195.

¹²⁹ In this, the “law of love” replaces the “law of fear.” *Story of a Soul*, 195.

¹³⁰ She reasons that this may be her, “a weak and imperfect creature.” *Story of a Soul*, 195.

¹³¹ *Story of a Soul*, 195. Thérèse echoes St John of the Cross in “love is repaid by love alone.”

¹³² *Story of a Soul*, 195.

¹³³ *Story of a Soul*, 195. Luke 16: 9. At 170, Gaining the spirit of another (as Elisha requested from Elijah) is reminiscent of Thérèse feeling herself receive “happiness” from Mother Geneviève after her death.

¹³⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 196.

¹³⁵ They will please because heaven is “desirous of playing with her little child.” *Story of a Soul*, 196-197.

¹³⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 197-198.

reason for it to give up, but it doesn't. Alluding to her "darkness," she writes neither wind, nor clouds, or darkness frighten it; it joyfully remains "gazing at the Invisible Light which remains hidden from its faith!"¹³⁷ Distracted by the simplest, earthbound things, it does not hide but "recounts in detail all its infidelities," and if the eagle is deaf to its chirping, the chick accepts the suffering it has brought upon itself.¹³⁸ It is happy to be small as 'bigness' would prevent it from being bold enough to appear in God's presence, drifting to sleep, all the while oblivious to sleeping.¹³⁹ The chick hopes in, and lives for, the eagle (Jesus) who it adores, seeking to be fascinated by its glances.¹⁴⁰ In this way she will be accepted as love's victim, sure that God will lovingly stoop to lift anyone abandoning themselves with confidence in God's mercy.¹⁴¹

b. The Cover Letter

Thérèse introduces her "science of love," as something God taught her from the "*book of life*."¹⁴² She learnt that love alone makes one acceptable to God; the only love which she ambitions, "is the *surrender* of the little child who sleeps without fear in its Father's arms," leading to the "Divine Furnace."¹⁴³ To Isaiah's words "*As one whom a mother caresses, so I will comfort you; you shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they will caress you*" – "there is nothing to do but to be silent and to weep with gratitude and love."¹⁴⁴ "Jesus does not demand great actions" from weak and imperfect souls but "simply surrender and gratitude." To be receptive to God's mercy is to desire his love, to love his love. Jesus is thirsty for receptivity "as he meets only the ungrateful and

¹³⁷ Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, 198. This alludes to the darkness of unbelief. Jean-François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months in the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), 78-80.

¹³⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 199

¹³⁹ "asleep in front of you." *Story of a Soul*, 199.

¹⁴⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 199-200. "Glance" is Jesus as host giving "life from one moment to the next."

¹⁴¹ *Story of a Soul*, 199. God's "unspeakable condescension" will pour itself out on anyone abandoning themselves with total confidence to God's infinite mercy.

¹⁴² *Story of a Soul*, 188.

¹⁴³ *Story of a Soul*, 188.

¹⁴⁴ Isaiah 66:12-13. She also quotes Proverbs, 9:4; Wisdom 6:7; Isaiah 40:11, showing mercy toward the little child, nourishment, sheltering simpleness, and God's concern for the lowly. *Story of a Soul*, 188.

indifferent among his disciples in the world;” few hearts “surrender to Him without reservations” or understand the “tenderness of his infinite love.”¹⁴⁵

c. Evaluation of Man B

Dreaming of Anne of Jesus represents approval for Thérèse’s way of ‘being’ Carmelite through an embodiment of it. Anne of Jesus might also represent a nurturing relationship now unavailable to Thérèse, an experience of approval formerly felt with Zélie, and, even more so, with Rose.¹⁴⁶

I was, up until then, *absolutely indifferent to Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus*. I never invoked her in prayer and the thought of her never came to my mind except when I heard others speak of her, which was seldom.¹⁴⁷

As valued, Zélie and Rose have the capacity to give approval. With ‘heaven’, the epitome of parental presence, alongside ‘vocation’ – both uppermost in mind – Thérèse’s subconscious ‘casts’ her experience of Zélie/Rose’s reassuring approval as Anne of Jesus.

In *My Vocation is Love*, Thérèse continues with imagery of St John of the Cross. To discover her vocation, she abases herself to “nothingness,” to where God alone is felt to achieve her end.¹⁴⁸ She empties herself (desiring her beloved from the motive of love alone) to possess his “flame,” so it might ignite and penetrate her, and transform her into fire.¹⁴⁹ However, she feels it is not her effort of emptying that makes her suitable

¹⁴⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 189.

¹⁴⁶ If a principle of dream economy is used (where the dreamer casts each aspect of self in the form of a known person to most economically identify that aspect), then Anne of Jesus represents the face of loving esteem.

¹⁴⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 192.

¹⁴⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 194, 195.

¹⁴⁹ His “Beacon” alone attracts her boat. *Story of a Soul*, 195. For imagery of wood taking up fire see *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, 144, 416-417.

for manifesting God's mercy, but emptiness caused by her limitation.¹⁵⁰ In this, Thérèse conveys a crucial transition.

Where earlier she feels the abundance of her desires makes her suitable as the offering to "Merciful Love," now she feels helpless limitation makes her suitable for conducting love's outgoing movement. In her acknowledgment of a new limitation/"impasse" (losing sight of heaven), we are presented with a True Self dimension. Accepting helpless limitation allows her to resume a former way of operating (when very young) that preceded the implementation of a False Self; its appropriateness discovered in Isaiah 66:12-13. It recalls her being physically lifted up, and valued for her ability to charm by expressions of affection and earnest effort. Then her imaginative initiatives were accepted, and when she tried to imitate adult behaviour, unsuccessfully, she was forgiven.

Already welcoming her illness, she now accepts her loss of vision without guilt or fear,¹⁵¹ experiencing it as a childly limitation. She views her ability to love God as contingent on God's help, conceding that she is essentially 'child', making no recriminations, nor agitating over what she might, or ought to be. Invented suffering holds no longer interests her.¹⁵² To impact her darkness, she declares aspirations of love. Sweet symbols and gestures,¹⁵³ now unfelt, are used to make love present, affirming faith-in-the midst-of-suffering doubt (actualizing a hidden fidelity to Jesus).

Such activity, however, could lead to using others as a means to express fidelity, strengthening intimacy with a God who secretly favours us. From an interior world, we might treat others as objects (souls) enabling our salvation, rather than disclosing

¹⁵⁰ This recalls the impasse that led to the "grace at Christmas."

¹⁵¹ Six, *Light of the Night*, 8.

¹⁵² *Story of a Soul*, 196.

¹⁵³ See Guy Gaucher OCD, *The Passion of Thérèse of Lisieux*, translated by Anne Marie Brennan OCD (NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 51. Gaucher argues that the thought within "the pious religious clichés of her day concealed burning confidences. At each stage of her interior adventure Thérèse put her whole heart and soul into these verses."

ourselves, only to find them sharers in our limitation.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, hiding her good intentions to prevent them from being misunderstood (such as hiding her beads from Zélie, from the ‘great one’ who imposes upon the child in its defencelessness), represents a healthy False Self. In contrast, treating others as a means for ‘salvation’ whilst remaining untouched by them points to a destructive False Self, as it projects tendencies we all share, external to us.¹⁵⁵ Was there an element of this in Thérèse?¹⁵⁶

Thérèse, in her cover letter, expresses relief that for one like her (in the tiring struggle with darkness)¹⁵⁷ receptiveness to help is all that is expected (revealing a True Self). She concludes, though, observing that “few hearts... surrender to Him without reservations.”¹⁵⁸ Viewing herself as one of few (repeating the sentiment of her time) is a false sense, but her feeling that receptivity to love is little practiced or valued (citing Jesus as rejected by his own) is true in that she felt her offers of companionship ignored, and those close to her (Louis) unappreciated.

The chick metaphor appears to refer to feelings evoked¹⁵⁹ from Thérèse’s childhood when she mothered pet birds (the earliest mention, a rooster) and watched their habits and frailties.¹⁶⁰ She projects onto God her own maternal care for orphaned chicks. The chick’s movement from helplessness (aspiring to much without any means to achieve it apart from its parent’s help), to surrender to a beloved (prey to love), leaves an impression of Thérèse realizing “oedipal” desires.¹⁶¹ The chick is lifted by the eagle to

¹⁵⁴ This leads to: ‘Christ beside me creates a barrier between us’ instead of ‘in Christ, I am with you’.

¹⁵⁵ Jesus effectively condemns keeping the law (rendering one ‘clean’ or holy) at the expense of mercy: touching them in healing, feeding, or eating with them. See Lk 14: 5.

¹⁵⁶ Six argues that Thérèse does not enact a role of “redemptive compassion” but participates “in the ‘infinite mercy’ of God, a participation which can be lived out here below and also in Heaven.” Yet Thérèse saw herself as occupying a special place in this participation. Six argues that Thérèse identifies with sinners, but we observe that she does not identify with ‘deliberate’ rejection of God, only involuntary loss. Six, *Light of the Night*, 49.

¹⁵⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 213. “I want to rest my heart fatigued by the darkness...”

¹⁵⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 189.

¹⁵⁹ See McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 145-146.

¹⁶⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 113-114.

its nest (“in the centre of the Sun”) and consumed in the flames of love (“...remontant avec lui au Foyer de l’Amour...”).¹⁶² The image of fire taking up matter (used by Arminjon and St John of the Cross), might have evoked in Thérèse the feeling of being mesmerized when gazing into the family hearth – representing warmth and completion in familial unity.

3. *Manuscript C*

a. *The Trial of Faith*

Completing her ‘song of mercy’ to Prioress Marie de Gonzague, Thérèse begins with her life-long desire to be a saint. Asserting “God cannot inspire unrealizable desires,” she will explain how this might occur, given her “littleness” (“it is impossible for me to grow up”).¹⁶³ “[T]oo small to climb the rough stairway of perfection,” she will reach heaven through the invention of the elevator.¹⁶⁴ Searching the scriptures for some sign of an elevator, she discovers Proverbs 9, which refers to the “little” one, the perennially simple, and Isaiah 66, how God treats the “little one” who answers his call. God is toward little ones as a mother is toward her infant. Jesus’ lifting arms become the “very straight, very short, and totally new” elevation¹⁶⁵ (recalling her father carrying her in the garden and the rain).¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Her images may be explored as follows: fulfilment with one’s complementary parent is inadvertently encouraged by the Martin women limiting inter-gender love to relatives (especially Louis) and celibate religious, to bypass ordinary ‘concupiscent’ sexual feelings. The chick becoming one who is consumed suggests a child-spouse; without assuming equality, she imagines consummation through images of being carried, transformed by penetration, plunged into, absorbed and consumed. These suggest a passive consummation of love, like the parent-child interaction where the greater part of the infant’s activity is reception. Sensitive responsiveness gives the child an impression of potency. The eagle represents the source and the object of Thérèse’s desire, and brings her desire to fruition. In this image, sexual surrender converges with the infant’s experience of unity with its mother, suggesting desire for union as bound up with the primal experience of union. This leads to fusion with the beloved, to amplifying the beloved’s love, and confidently mothering the beloved.

¹⁶² “...remontant avec lui au Foyer de l’Amour, tu le plongeras pour l’éternité dans le brûlant Abîme de Cet Amour auquel il s’est offert en victime.” Sainte Thérèse, *Histoire d’Une Ame*, 229.

¹⁶³ *Story of a Soul*, 207.

¹⁶⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 207.

¹⁶⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 207- 208.

¹⁶⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 19.

Thérèse demonstrates this in practical terms. She recounts agreeing from obedience to Marie de Gonzague's request to take care of the novices.¹⁶⁷ As God once revealed his secret to "little ones" (to Jesus), so he did with Thérèse, supplying wisdom for her task. Since her "trial" (Easter 1896), however, she is conscious of her "littleness and impotence" with respect to wisdom.¹⁶⁸ She recalls her hemoptysis (a felt-call from heaven, her home) and her previous "lively faith," and how this ended in losing her vision of heaven,¹⁶⁹ placing her with people who have no faith (people she formerly felt were simply speaking against their inner convictions).¹⁷⁰

Thérèse describes her "trial:" obscured by a "fog," she feels none of the reality of heaven that she formerly felt. She now feels how (she imagines) the faithless feel, and, as "a soul who loves [God]" through former enlightenment, she "begs pardon for her brothers."¹⁷¹ Her 'unseeing' brings her to sit at the sinners' table (eating "the bread of sorrow") for the purpose of saying, in her own "name and in the name of her brothers, 'Have pity on us O Lord for we are poor sinners!'"¹⁷² If it be God's desire, as one who loves God, she accepts the role of purifying a table soiled by others: to ask, on their behalf, that all may be enlightened by faith. In her trial, Thérèse 'hears' voices taunting that what she hopes for is an illusion.¹⁷³ Fatigued and tormented by its effects, she makes "acts of faith."¹⁷⁴ Avoiding her adversaries' faces, she affirms God's presence by

¹⁶⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 209. As with Mother Geneviève, Thérèse offers Marie de Gonzague future help from heaven, suggesting felt-confidence in her powers to impact God.

¹⁶⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 210.

¹⁶⁹ Six, *Light of the Night*, 38-41. Six argues that Thérèse's milieu portrayed secularism as part of a spiritual war waged by demonic forces over heaven's existence. He argues that her felt loss of heaven was due to Leo Taxil revealing (on 19 April 1897) that Diana Vaughan, the woman whose conversion Thérèse had been praying for, and who she hoped would enter Carmel, was a hoax.

¹⁷⁰ Perhaps alluding to Taxil, she is now convinced that there are those who, through "the abuse of grace," have no faith. *Story of a Soul*, 211.

¹⁷¹ *Story of a Soul*, 212.

¹⁷² *Story of a Soul*, 212.

¹⁷³ *Story of a Soul*, 213

¹⁷⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 213-214.

composing poems expressing what she wants to believe.¹⁷⁵ She emphasizes this trial does not discourage her as it came upon her when she was ready to bear it.¹⁷⁶

b. Evaluation of Trial of Faith

In her “Offering to Merciful Love” Thérèse sought a share in suffering that uniquely answered her desires. She accepts illness, then a “trial” as God’s response to her request to love him in accord with her desires.¹⁷⁷ Her ability to be a sacrifice for merciful love (abundant desire, limitation and weakness) she believes is due to God’s arranging it (preparing her for a trial), and its success as due to God aiding her surrender. God supplies her desire, provides the occasion to love, and fulfils it. Significantly, Thérèse’s premises that “God doesn’t inspire unrealizable desires,” and that what God gives to her he previously gives a taste for,¹⁷⁸ are consistent with seeking for something once had with a significant other in infancy. In the light of Winnicott’s observations that impingements felt in infancy are again sought, in the next paragraph we point to an experience in Thérèse’s early life that evokes a sense of God who withdraws all visibility of his heaven.

We suggest that heaven (peopled by Zélie, Louis and her deceased siblings) represents Thérèse’s home environment. Heaven is constituted by those who love her. Heaven’s truth is the familiar ways of home: the structures of how “the world” (relationships) operates and the scenery for it to make sense. Here all is well. This environment engenders a “germ” in Thérèse, which animates her responses. The early experience that Thérèse waits to reprise (what God gave her a taste for) is the ‘darkness’ of losing her entire Alençon surroundings (at Rose Taillé’s cottage), and, later, Rose Taillé’s surroundings (on her return to Alençon). The second, leaving Rose Taillé’s

¹⁷⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 213-14.

¹⁷⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 214. This interior suffering brings her joy, especially averting or making “reparation for one single sin against *faith*.” We draw attention to Thérèse speaking in strong terms of reparation as late as 1896.

¹⁷⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 216-217. Desire to make God’s merciful love known brought a trial which became the place to express gratitude for God’s mercy. This led to relieved resignation to imperfection and impotency.

¹⁷⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 207, 152, 250.

environment and resuming her place in Alençon, will be explored in the following paragraph to show an object representation of a God who withdraws.

From all accounts, Thérèse flourishes in Semallé. She appears happy, nourished and stimulated. Her sisters like to visit, not just her, but Semallé itself. The Taillés, as farming people, would have given little attention to social niceties, or to ascetic practices. She charms them and they include Thérèse in their daily chores. With Rose, Thérèse finds forgiving treatment, and begins to form a self. One day, Thérèse is taken from this and inserted in new environment (she is fifteen months of age). Rose/Semallé vanishes. Lost to her is the pattern of contingent responses that represent comfort and home. The second occasion of such an experience,¹⁷⁹ Thérèse tries to recreate her familiar interaction by responding with a repertoire that belongs to the environment that fostered it. She tries to charm the Martins, who express love in other ways. At a table with people occupied with values ‘oblivious’ to the Semallé way, Thérèse (at a value-sensitive age) is equipped with only her “spark” to lighten it. This takes great effort, as there are new less forgiving ways; no-one here knows Rose’s cues, threatening to ‘deny’ the memory of her goodness.

We turn to what led to a parallel experience of “darkness” in Carmel, requiring Thérèse’s light. Thérèse, Six argues, was deceived by imposter Leo Taxil into praying for the conversion of the fictional Diana Vaughan, even for her to enter Carmel. Echoing Thérèse’s prayers for Pranzini, which were instrumental in cementing her vocation and pivotal to her growing bond with Jesus, the Diana Vaughan prayers, instead of confirming a special bond or revealing God as authoring spiritually significant events, led to betrayal and humiliation. Disturbed, then beset by unbelief, Thérèse, however, fixes on herself as a believer suffering unbelief for good yet to come. Unlike other unbelievers, her desire is to believe. As in her infant experience, sensory evidence informs Thérèse that her trust was betrayed. But, as she did then, Thérèse fights off the semblance of abandonment through a True Self: the memory of herself as good, and of ‘God’ as loving her goodness.

¹⁷⁹ In the first, after Zélie had encouraged Thérèse’s responsiveness, providing a “holding-environment,” at two and a half months of age, Zélie’s smell, taste, and sound, were replaced by those of Rose. Now Rose’s environment generated life in Thérèse.

c. *Charity*

In following Pauline's advice to write "on charity, on the novices and so on," Thérèse, in the remainder of *Man C*, tends to be instructive. We look for signs of her self-sense.¹⁸⁰ First she recalls feeling conflicted in Carmel with regard to feelings for her natural sisters (sadness over the possibility of Pauline going to Saigon).¹⁸¹ She then speaks of her own desire to go there, to be poor, unknown, and without affection,¹⁸² sacrificing herself "for Him in the way that would please him." She felt her "yes" to the "cup" Jesus offered was all he asked of her; he then removed the cup.¹⁸³ This leads to her to reflect that religious obedience offers freedom from anxiety.¹⁸⁴

Thérèse recounts some of her past efforts to love her sisters in religion that were "misunderstood for imperfections."¹⁸⁵ Seeing her efforts misunderstood, she resolved not to judge another's motive.¹⁸⁶ Confessing she hasn't got much better at this but rises more quickly after she has fallen, she relates some efforts to show where it was hardest (in weaknesses and failures which now amuse her).¹⁸⁷ Responding to Jesus' call to love all, she found that by surrendering her rights, and not being ruled by feelings of attraction or distaste, though difficult in anticipation, once accepted, felt like a "yoke... sweet and light."¹⁸⁸ In all this, Thérèse enjoys the child's liberty of not having the burden of responsibility, or its failure.

¹⁸⁰ Pauline advised Thérèse on what to write for *Man C*. Six argues that Thérèse indicated she wished to write about charity through a commentary on Song of Songs, but lost that opportunity in being directed otherwise by Pauline. Six, *The Light of the Night*, 127-130.

¹⁸¹ Thérèse mention herself in bed, indicating the progress of her illness. She apologises for needing the prioress's care, yet is pleased to be as God wishes: broken by love. *Story of a Soul*, 215, 216.

¹⁸² *Story of a Soul*, 217-218. This is reminiscent of St John of the Cross's own final months of life.

¹⁸³ *Story of a Soul*, 218.

¹⁸⁴ With her superior's will as her compass, she will not wander outside of "the water of grace." *Story of a Soul*, 218.

¹⁸⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 221. Thérèse states that she grasped a new understanding of charity. Charity sees through God's eyes, "not being surprised" by others' "weakness," and thus bears with others' faults.

¹⁸⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 221-222.

¹⁸⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 222-224. She writes that on one occasion she stated she was "pleased" to come upon a sister she disliked (but meant "pleased" in a spiritual sense). On another, rather than argue in her own defence, she ran away.

d. *Those You have Given Me: Novice Care, Power of Prayer and Sacrifice*

Reaffirming her role as child,¹⁸⁹ Thérèse explores the idea of having no rights over what is felt as owned, as God first lends to us what we have.¹⁹⁰ God aided and guided her (in her efforts to practice self-detachment) as an artist might move a paintbrush.¹⁹¹ Through early “combat” with self-satisfaction, she overcame the attractions of “human consolations,” readying her for the novice care she would be assigned. At that the commencement of this office, seeing that she was not equal to it, she looked to God as a child toward its mother:

I saw immediately that the task was beyond my strength. I threw myself into the arms of God as a little child, and hiding my face in His hair, I said: “Lord, I am too little to nourish Your children; if You wish to give through me what is suitable for each, fill my little hand and without leaving Your arms or turning my head, I shall give Your treasures to the soul who will come and ask for nourishment.”¹⁹²

In the arms of God, Thérèse is shielded from the task’s enormity. Nourishment for her novices is placed in her “little hand,” even while her head is turned away.¹⁹³ If it is distasteful to them, she does not lose her peace, but explains that it has been prepared by God. She is protected from “complaint” because she feels herself as only the messenger (“From the moment I understood that it was impossible for me to do anything by myself, the task you imposed on me no longer appeared difficult”).¹⁹⁴ Since taking up her place high “in the arms of Jesus,” she felt “like the watchman observing the enemy from the highest turret of a strong castle.”¹⁹⁵ From here she worked, acting

¹⁸⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 225-268. Thérèse relates that the poor are reduced to asking for indispensable things, yet “... are not surprised” over rebuke as they do not feel anyone “owes them anything.” She describes feeling liberated when giving up her rights, and sense of ownership to the point of being relieved when asked for something. However, she only comprehends that this freedom is true; its successful practice eludes her.

¹⁸⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 233.

¹⁹⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 234.

¹⁹¹ *Story of a Soul*, 337.

¹⁹² *Story of a Soul*, 238.

¹⁹³ *Story of a Soul*, 238.

¹⁹⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 238.

¹⁹⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 239.

on Jesus' behalf without seeking to "attract their hearts," suffering hostility from the person reproved.¹⁹⁶ Others simply saw her as an informed, guiding sister.

Sensitive to the diversity of souls, Thérèse recalls serving bitter medicine to one to draw remorse, and honey to another for encouragement, but felt prayer as most efficacious: reaching God as a "queen" accesses a king.¹⁹⁷ Here she did as children do. Dispensing with formal prayers, "I say very simply to God what I wish to say."¹⁹⁸ Unable to muster fervour during the recitation of formal prayers, she feels that Mary, her mother, sees her goodwill and is satisfied with her.¹⁹⁹ Any good impression the novices have of Thérèse is for the sake of God's task, and not herself; the 'remembrance of who she is' is always close to mind.²⁰⁰ Her taste for humiliation is satisfied when her novices tell her what they think of her.²⁰¹ Thérèse then relates her efforts to be charitable toward sisters in her community felt to be unattractive, experiencing her activity as (through God's eyes) an elegant feast in a drawing room.²⁰² She turns to her (God-given) sense of smallness, which disposes her to never fear God, but to gratefully receive all she is sent.²⁰³ Though this disposition seemed to offer God no means to try her interiorly, God nevertheless sent a "trial" without changing her.²⁰⁴

e. Evaluation of Novice Care, Power of Prayer and Sacrifice

The analogy of being held in Jesus' arms flows from *Man B*. Admitting powerlessness means the happy necessity to rely on help from the parent. Thérèse avails herself of the advantage of the parent's ability, height, and strength, and clings close to their heart.

¹⁹⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 239.

¹⁹⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 240-241.

¹⁹⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 242.

¹⁹⁹ *Story of a Soul*, 242-3.

²⁰⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 243-4.

²⁰¹ *Story of a Soul*, 244-46.

²⁰² *Story of a Soul*, 246-250.

²⁰³ *Story of a Soul*, 250. Or, to put it another way, God "has made me desire what God wants to give me."

²⁰⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 250. She accepts the "salutary bitterness," sent to mingle with her joys.

Held aloft in protective arms, Thérèse willingly embodies her parent's love in the world, passing on what she receives. Once Louis had supplied her with alms for the poor; he also lifted Thérèse and gave to her abundantly:

When he [Papa] came home I used to run and sit on one of his boots; then he would carry me in this way all around the house and out into the garden. Mama said laughingly to him that he carried out all my wishes; and he answered: 'Well, what do you expect? She's the Queen!' Then he would take me in his arms, lift me very high, set me on his shoulder, kiss and caress me in many ways.²⁰⁵

It perhaps also means that she will offer her novices the corrections Marie and Pauline dealt in early life. Thérèse was admonished for refusing Louis a kiss in her queen game.²⁰⁶

Thérèse is confident in spending God's gifts, without owning them, attributing to God their outcomes, and from her efforts at charity. She reasserts her taste for suffering, correction, injustices (later vindicated), and the drama of abandonment, which correspond to childhood experiences. Through events which echo earlier experiences, God is able to offer her the interior trial she seeks – making God consistent with nature, of concern to her.

f. Two Missionaries and "Draw me, we shall run"

Next to her hoped-for interior trial, Thérèse tells of a joyful childhood hope eventuating – to have priest brothers.²⁰⁷ Concerned over such pleasure, she reflects on the practice of obedience, detachment, and authoritative approval.²⁰⁸ At first suggesting that her writing under obedience might "rekindle" Marie de Gonzague's "fire," she thinks the

²⁰⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 19.

²⁰⁶ Marie replies to Thérèse's game-play with "You naughty little girl! How bad it is for you to answer ones father in this way!" instead of explaining that now is not the time/ this is not the way to play this game.

²⁰⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 250-251.

²⁰⁸ *Story of a Soul*, 251-252. Thérèse reflects that one ought only take up communication with another sister when repugnant and not pleasing, to avoid temptation to spiritual pride in self-reflection.

better of this (“I am only joking”) and reflects that the prioress might also do good by burning what was produced under obedience.²⁰⁹ To make a decision over whether to correspond with the seminarians, fearing that this would be too much for her, Thérèse had asked her prioress whether agreeing under “obedience” would “double” her “merits.”²¹⁰

Ultimately, the task of spiritual care does not overwhelm Thérèse, as Jesus gave her a “simple means” of accomplishing it.²¹¹ As she follows Jesus’ fragrance, her missionary brothers and novice sisters are pulled along together, as “little ones,” in her wake.²¹² Daring to “borrow” Jesus’ “words,” she asks that they be spared from the world just as he does not belong to the world, “before flying into his arms.”²¹³ She reminds Jesus that he has permitted her boldness with him, feeling he addressed the words from the parable of the prodigal son, “EVERYTHING *that is mine is yours*,” to her (the one who was always with him).²¹⁴ To explain “draw me” Thérèse refers to John 6:44; no-one can follow the Father unless they are drawn, which involves asking and seeking (Mt 7:8, John 16:23). Thérèse, who has asked to be drawn, feels that it means to be united with, and “penetrated” by the fire of God’s own desire which animates one to active love.²¹⁵ She feels she expresses her love the way that Mary Magdalene gives herself to Jesus by absorbing his words.²¹⁶ She seeks the last place, repeats the publican’s prayer, and

²⁰⁹ This “would cause me no pain.” *Story of a Soul*, 253.

²¹⁰ *Story of a Soul*, 253. A reply of “Yes” decided this for her.

²¹¹ *Story of a Soul*, 254. She found this through Song of Songs 1:3.

²¹² *Story of a Soul*, 254. God, she feels, will them draw forward as children together. “When drawing me, draw the souls whom I love.”

²¹³ *Story of a Soul*, 255. John 17:4ff.

²¹⁴ *Story of a Soul*, 256. She reflects on her ambition to love God, and the chasm between God’s love for her and hers for God. Jesus attracts her love by his love, but she would have to borrow from God’s own love for her to love God as God loves her. Concerned with a possible accusation of pride, Thérèse states that she is not ambitious for glory, but asks that they reach heaven together; later she may discover her charges merit more love than she does, but on earth she feels she, without merit, has received an “immensity of love.”

²¹⁵ *Story of a Soul*, 257-258. Modifying Arminjon, Thérèse describes Jesus as the fulcrum by which the saints, through prayer, have moved the world.

²¹⁶ *Story of a Soul*, 258.

imitates the Magdalene who by charming the “Heart of Jesus” with audacious love is received as “the prodigal child.”²¹⁷

g. *Evaluation of Two Missionaries and “Draw me, we shall run”*

Though in the pursuit of God’s voice alone (via Marie de Gonzague), these reflections, ironically, amount to spiritual tallying.²¹⁸ “Doubling my merits,” a False Self, asks: by doing this, am I then good? Thérèse’s undisguised desire to be held as good is pervasive. Ambiguously, Thérèse asserts a sense of God unconditionally loving her, or of being charmed by her, but she also wants it known that there is goodness in her intent, and in the actions she chooses – neutralizing the self-doubt her religion mandated. To be approved by God, Thérèse projects her grateful, receptive, and audacious character onto the Magdalene.

h. *Thérèse’s Novice and Missionary Correspondence*

We further examine Thérèse expressing her “little way” in her correspondence to her missionary brothers (some time after she ceased *Man C* in June, 1897). Thérèse instructs Maurice Bellière and Adolphe Roulland and her novices in her “way.”²¹⁹ She writes to Bellière how she admires repentance and audacious love, how her faults invite her think of mercy and love; she wants him to follow her way, committed to expiate others’ faults and not her own (leaving herself behind).²²⁰ She writes that she will not let God rest till he gives her what she wants, and God treats her as a spoiled child.²²¹

²¹⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 259. Here, Thérèse was taken to the infirmary, unable to complete her manuscript.

²¹⁸ The incongruence of tallying relational ideals (which refer to unconditional acceptance, and lead to inherent rewards such as happiness and freedom) is typically found in the writings of de Sales, Bérulle, and De Paul.

²¹⁹ Thérèse writes to Roulland, “To be just is not only to exercise severity in order to punish the guilty; it is also to recognize right intentions and to reward virtue. I expect as much from God’s justice as from His mercy. It is because he is just that ‘He is compassionate and filled with gentleness, slow to punish and abundant in mercy, for He knows our frailty. He remembers we are only dust. As a father has tenderness for his children, so the Lord has compassion on us!’” Her way leaves great endeavours to great souls, but she, recognizing her nothingness, abandons herself as a child in God’s arms, to enter the mansion awaiting those who resemble children. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1093.

²²⁰ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1133-1134.

²²¹ Thérèse similarly promises her after-death presence to Roulland, and to M. and Mme. Guérin. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1140, 1141-1142, 1145. Reflecting *Man C* she writes that she has a

Bellière, she suggests, should act as the child who climbs upon the parent's lap seeking forgiveness in childlike confidence.²²² Of two brothers needing forgiveness, one trembles and draws away, but the other

throws himself into his father's arms, protesting that he is sorry for hurting him, that he loves him, and that to prove it he will be good from now on...I doubt that the heart of the happy father will be able to resist the childlike confidence of the son of whose sincerity he is sure. He's well aware that the child will often fall back into these same faults, but he's always ready to forgive him, provided the boy always grasps him by the heart.²²³

This action resembles Thérèse's early behaviour from Zélie's letters. Thérèse reasserts her advice in another letter, "do not *drag* yourself ...to *His feet*," but "follow that first impulse into his arms,"²²⁴ and, in her final letter to him, she writes that the saints, sharing in both human frailty and God's mercy, show "great compassion" and "fraternal tenderness."²²⁵ Thérèse's advice involves her using felt-images evoking a sense of herself in infancy (True Self). It also explicitly asks Bellière to follow her "way."²²⁶

4. Conclusions

Thérèse recounts two distinct self-expressions in her adult life; the first is her entrance into Carmel, the second is an expression within her Carmelite vocation that further defines it. This second involves a return to the place of the heart (*Redire ad Cor*), to the familiar ground of the early self which guides how she is to act, through her particular

taste for suffering. She then tells Bellière to be as a child, while sailing the stormy sea, trusting in a father who is unable to leave his child in the hour of danger. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1152.

²²² *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1152. Thérèse advocates he take her "ELEVATOR of love" rather than "the rough stairway of fear."

²²³ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1153. While understanding herself as "spoilt child," Thérèse seems unable to suffer with the pained elder brother, who "trembles and draws away."

²²⁴ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1164.

²²⁵ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1173.

²²⁶ "You are *forbidden* to go to heaven by any other way except that of your poor little sister." *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1164.

'being', a youngest child with great desire to express love.²²⁷ We retrace this return to early self, informed by Thérèse's False Self/True Self constructions.

a. The Path

Zélie described Thérèse as highly responsive in infancy: smiling, and "singing" in response to her. At two years of age she promises Zélie, "Mamma, I will be very good."²²⁸ In her toddler years, certain role-playing events (hiding under the blankets feigning sleep, and playing queen – "if you want my kiss, come and get it") were interpreted as disdainful, and punished. In reports of Thérèse being an "imp," a "thief," and "naughty" (judging her spiritedness through religious moral values), while in half-jest, Zélie, or Marie project their own desire to be free to sin without culpability. Uncomprehended by the child, this instead thwarts their natural desire to feel that they are good. A judgment is felt – a false one – it is wrong to joy in your freedom; this-life goodness (pleasure), finite and scarce, is to be accepted tentatively.²²⁹ Through admonishment and praise, Thérèse senses God as forgiving baby faults, but pained by ingratitude, pride, unbelief, and attachment to physical things. Zélie and Louis, who themselves experience a God who asks for surrender (rewarding it with heaven), recreate the sphere they experienced. God, further, owns the sexual arena; intimacy and communion belong to God.

An early protest, gathering strength, cries (in paraphrase): I am good; never mind my amusing ineptitudes; I mean well.²³⁰ I don't mind my mistakes, but accusations cause me to feel upset and shame. Further on is: I am proud of myself – I have big ideas and plans. This expands into: I have great felt-knowing, poetry, and I understand the tragic-drama of my loss and feeling myself as not-belonging. Still later: when I mimic and expose the ironic, I make people laugh, and they can see how funny we are and the rules we keep. Thérèse develops a powerful sense of the symbolic. When she articulates

²²⁷ McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 240.

²²⁸ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1214.

²²⁹ See Mark A. McIntosh, *The Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 101-104.

²³⁰ See *General Correspondence Volume I*, 113-114.

her “lights,” feelings of melancholy, and sense of the ironic, in *Story of a Soul*, Thérèse expresses her True Self.

From early on, Thérèse creatively engages with her God-representation. Much is also *taught* about God’s characteristics. In middle childhood, there are instances of difficulty in connecting with others, and evidence of a weak self-defence mechanism to protect her from others. When she feels abandoned, Mary smiles at her; when she feels awkward, Jesus, needing her, calls to her and becomes her inner teacher and lover. Father-God watches and bestows merit on her good effort. Thérèse determines to go to Carmel where Jesus and her surrogate mothers are. Homesick for the hearth of Alençon, she longs for heaven – its door, suffering, loving reparations, and death. In her adult years, there is a search for external impingements, in symbols which serve to safeguard her True Self. Thérèse observes that God supplies her with a taste for what he gives: “preference” for solitariness, sickness, misunderstanding, and humbling – to remind her of who she is.²³¹ Inviting scenarios that caused her suffering, Thérèse rewrites their meaning as positive, as a place where God operates toward overall good.²³²

b. Loss of Heaven

Thérèse’s loss of heaven seems to reprise a withdrawal of true/familiar surroundings (Semallé), her object-relation for heaven. Lost to her were nourishing others with familiar ways, yet she felt herself bringing joy to a new place. Bringing joy through sacrifice is felt in the present and retrojected into past experiences. She brought joy to foreign environments as an infant, as a child,²³³ and as a young adult in Carmel. Thérèse felt that she had come home when she arrived in Carmel.²³⁴ With Pauline as

²³¹ McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 232. Thérèse is relieved that God gave critics. Might she otherwise have taken herself to task? In Freudian terms, Thérèse identifying with her aggressor pre-empts an anticipated attack, before it is thrust.

²³² McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 245. McDargh proposes that God may be the source of the sense of “God,” attributing to Niebuhr, “that wherever we see faith pushing towards inclusive love and genuine charity, and challenging penultimate loyalties and idolatries, we see the activity of God, the One beyond the Many.”

²³³ Thérèse brought joy to foreign environments, such as when she performed bird burials, narrated stories at boarding school, and collected flowers after dancing quadrilles.

²³⁴ Nevertheless, she applied the rule of detachment strictly in relation to Pauline and Marie, and, via Carmelite rule, resumed finding fault with herself to break “self-will.”

prioress, and Celine's arrival, Thérèse expresses, in a second individuation, her gratitude for God's mercy by offering herself as a victim to it, hoping to be sent to Saigon.

Her offering, which anticipates a victimhood, followed by the loss of a sense of heaven, leads to her "way" – illustrating herself as a child the arms of God. Her metaphor emphasizes the plenitude of parental merciful love, leading forward and outward. She interprets her first hemoptysis (April 2-3, 1896) positively, as a call from Jesus, death felt as the portal to her heavenly home. Her experience of 'loss of heaven' follows around April 5. Though painful, this sought for "trial," an opportunity for reparation for sinners, also serves to relieve her from the responsibility of conditions she has no power over (faith and desire itself),²³⁵ allowing her to bypass the difficult "stairs" of working for approval. A significant dream (May 10) approves of this approach.²³⁶ In her trial, which lasts up until her death, she offers 'merely' her smile (its inspiration now absent) to those in Carmel who have no "spark" (no experience of a mercifully forgiving other).

c. False Self Constructions

To the end of *Man C*, Thérèse holds 'disdaining offered love' as a category of sin she did not commit. She, however, through her own experience of doubt, removes "unbelief" as a characteristic of persons who disdain Jesus' love, interpreting her loss of belief (joining the table of unbelievers) as for the purpose of reparation (saving unbelievers).²³⁷ Holding herself separate in this way points to her youth, and to a need to hide her feelings and reasoning from those who misunderstood her, and accused *her* of spurning love. There were signs of overcoming this as she increasingly proposed

²³⁵ McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 235. Now God may be felt as fully in control, and not Thérèse as responsible for God. As a dying, 'blind' victim, she can no longer hurt Jesus. She can now also, justifiably, be utterly dependent on God.

²³⁶ McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 242. Fairbairn states that dreams are usefully regarded by analysts as "'state of the nation reports' on the vicissitudes of an individual's object relations."

²³⁷ *Story of a Soul*, 214. Her trial allows her to make "reparation for one single sin against *faith*." We note Thérèse allows herself the freedom to doubt, but avoids the sin of "cursing God," reminiscent of Job's righteousness. See Job: 1:22, 2:9-10.

God as finding playfulness endearing (True Self).²³⁸ In her example of the two brothers, to Bellière, sin belongs less to a type of person, than to a type of response (she appears to not comprehend the pain of the cowering brother).²³⁹

d. Death a Positive Horizon

Thérèse interprets death positively. Through her early experience of Rose, Zélie and Louis, she felt that a speedy confession of wrongdoing and confident expectation of mercy would culminate in family reunion, even in heaven (reinforced by Arminjon). As a child (adopting Zélie's values), she imagined death as pleasing inasmuch as it is the entry to happiness, and, so, wished Zélie dead.²⁴⁰ (Zélie at that moment perhaps was despondent; there she will be happy). Thérèse now applies this death-wish to herself.

e. Thérèse's Positivity

Positivity plays an important role in Thérèse activity.²⁴¹ Though she agrees with the feeling of her time, preferring a 'heavenly later' over a 'passing now', her intense desire to interact with an immanent God leads to viewing the physical present as conveying God's love for her, and her actions as demonstrating love for God. Watching the 'now' for how God is there for those who love him, she attributes extraordinary value to physical events, both in the present and the future.

²³⁸ Thérèse writes to Bellière: "Regarding those who *love* Him and come with each indelicacy to ask His pardon by throwing themselves into His arms, Jesus is thrilled with joy," reminiscent of her childhood habit of declaring her 'faults' to make sure her relationships remained intact. *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1164-1165. See 1223, 1225, for "I pushed Celine" and "Tell Papa that I tore the [wall]paper."

²³⁹ See dimensions of the elder brother in Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (N.Y.: Image, Doubleday, 1992), 67-76.

²⁴⁰ *Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Volume II*, 1218 -219.

²⁴¹ H. Richard Niebuhr views persistent positivity as attributable to God. McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory*, 245.

5. Overall Conclusion for Chapters Five and Six

Winnicott's True Self/False Self paradigm, a sensitive indicator of change in notions of self, other, and God, has shown Thérèse corrected certain self/God-perceptions by reasserting her earliest happy realities, informed by felt mercy in her early relationships. This shaped her theology.²⁴²

Thérèse's Sense of Self and a Metaphor for Mercy Toward Limitation

Our investigation, firstly, showed that, in her imagery, Thérèse underwrote much of the Carmelite, Jansenist, and romantic piety of her time. Yet, by engaging with her God-representations, and treating her desires as emerging from God, she describes a felt-God and aligns her Catholic faith with her needs toward 'self-becoming'. Against the background of her felt-circumstance (a youngest daughter, once treated as special, desperate to 'outgrow' her inconvenience and looming inconsequentiality), and inspired by references to the predicament of smallness in Hebrew and Christian literature, she overcomes her impasse by surrendering to its terms. God will protect her and provide for her because, and *when*, she is a little one. This leads to her declaring, be as I am; it works!

Thérèse describes her self in terms of the characteristics of early human interaction, in particular, felt-mercy. Tensions between her freedom (initial parental love) and restriction (sisterly constraints), her vast desires and obvious limitation, are represented in a religious drama which has her in a filial relationship with God (while child-spouse to Jesus). Her desire to impact God/Zélie (all) is gradually shrouded in the mist of helpless impotence (nothing), yet 'all' remains to be had, just by asking. Using her 'youngest daughter' experience as an overarching metaphor for her relationship with God, the effects of limitation are resolved by recalling her own parents' responses to these in childhood. As her parents did, through a familiar, forgiving presence, God is now felt as supplying knowledge, confidence and courage.

²⁴² Asserting her True Self led to healing "the rigours and fears of Jansenism." John Paul II, *Divini Amoris Scientia*, 8, 1997. <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2THERE.HTM>

In her ‘youngest daughter’ metaphor, Thérèse creates a correspondence between this-present-life and a transcendent God-for-her reality. An imagined God-perspective – God acting as an ultimately benevolent parent – provides *existential* meaning, meaning to the physical boundaries of existence, imparting courage to face incomprehension, powerlessness, and death. This metaphor also sustains, as a parallel, the passage of human development, supporting the Augustinian premise that ‘longing for God’ is an *a priori* state (God previously implanting desires in her) and Thérèse’s sense that she is supported with life “from one moment to the next” (rather than depending on a stockpile of provisions). A theology derived from this, with a focus on mercy toward limitation, will be taken up in Chapter 7.