

# The Wounded Nietzschean-Thérèsian Spirit

An Exploration of the Similarities and not between Nietzschean  
and Thérèsian Anthropologies

## Introduction

We seem to be faced by an urgent need to discern the important contribution spirituality can make at providing man today with a terminology and a horizon by which the twenty-first century human person can examine, first and foremost, the historical roots that shape the kind of anthropology he embraces today; secondly, the utmost need for dialogue (not just inter-religious but also beyond), and; thirdly, the nature and dynamics of the kind of anthropology that characterises being “wounded”, which we shall later define. We feel it superabundantly necessary to seek new language – and with it new horizons and insights – in this regard even within our Christian faith so as to really read the signs of the times.

As Philip Sheldrake explains, spirituality, by its very nature, seems to penetrate all kinds of disciplinary boundaries (be they historical, philosophical, psychological, anthropological, sociological, mystical, etc) and, for this reason, it has been accused of not defining its own method. This kind of disciplinary tension that characterises spirituality – continuing in the lines of Sheldrake’s exposition – is the moving force for this paper: “on the one hand, there is the concreteness of revelation in Jesus Christ and subsequent tradition and, on the other, the appropriation of the Gospel by each person within specific historical and cultural contexts.”<sup>1</sup> Both Friedrich Nietzsche and Thérèse of Lisieux were

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*

Christians. Both received the Gospel message and its appropriation in their own respective contexts. What we want to show is that although apparently different in language, viewpoint, and anthropology, the dialogical spirit – that is, taken analogically to refer to the way of existing in the world, a *dasein*, a “being there” – that seems to emerge when comparing both of these figures seems to be a fruitful contribution to the aims of spirituality outlined above. As Bridget Edman writes, the motivation that moves us is “man’s incessant quest for meaning in life, and the comparison with those who have received an answer to their question in the infinite mystery of God, stretching out his hand to us in Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

## Premises

### Language

Since man is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be discovered<sup>3</sup>, our use of technical language and metaphors in our attempt to describe the dynamic that takes place in man’s quest for the Truth, which some seem to have identified with God<sup>4</sup>, are limited. Nevertheless, it establishes us (the author) as believer in God.

Mostly striking in Thérèse’s writings is the kind of language she uses to speak of her own experience. As Jean Guittou comments, Thérèse’s direct, short, and pithy use of words is very typical of nineteenth century French Romantic literature. Her hyperboles and frequent use of the diminutive could easily be judged as “apparently inadequate”, and indeed are so if detached from context and the totality of her work. Yet, their use continues to sustain her *petite voie* even more.<sup>5</sup> Taken at a first glance, her choice of vocabulary does not evolve;

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(London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 2004), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Bridget Edman, *St Thérèse of Lisieux: Nietzsche is my Brother* (Washington D.C.: ICS, 2010), iv.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Louis Pamplume, “Gabriel Marcel : Existence, Being and Faith,” in *God and the Writer*, Yale French Studies, vol. 12 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 88-100. Christian existentialism will play an important part in this essay.

<sup>4</sup> This statement can be understood in the light of Karl Rahner’s notion of the “anonymous Christian”, which was developed “in the light that God wants to save all people (1 Tim 2, 4)”, see “Anonymous Christian,” in *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, eds., Gerald O’Collins and Edward Farrugia (London: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 12; and in view of Edith Stein’s statement to Sr Adelgundis Jaegerschmid to whom she writes, “God is truth. All who seek truth seek God whether this is clear to them or not.” See “Letter 25,” in Edith Stein, *Collected Works*, v/Self-Portrait in Letters 1916-1942, trans. Josephine Koepfel, (Washington D.C.: ICS, 1993), 272.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jean Guittou, *The Spiritual Genius of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (London: Burns & Oates, 1997), 19-23.

she speaks of “littleness”, “nothingness”, “devotions”, “offering”, and “salvation of souls” throughout her writings. However, the underlying motivation becomes gradually more profound: from one of “reparation”, “justice” or “that the Kingdom of God may come” to one of love, that Christ may love all of humanity through her.

### *Hermeneutical Tools*

Also, we feel that the interpretative tools to be used when reading historical figures must surely include the inter-textual method. The possibility of cross-referencing texts according to this method points out to the unity of the material with which the modern-day reader is presented and which, thus, serves as a ‘springboard’, so to say, unto a realm that enables us to interpret words both on a historical and a spiritual plane.

The present study deems it necessary to make use of the three hermeneutical levels that Friedrich A. Wolf suggests: the *interpretatio grammatica, historica, and philosophica*.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, we shall be taking note, mainly from a historical and logical point of view, of the writings of both figures so as to deduce, with some enlightenment from inter-textual references, the vision each had of “man”. We feel it is important to specify that the logic that will move our argument will be an equally *historical* and *spiritual* one; hence, we shall interpret facts in their own historical context as well as their spiritual implications.

### *Definition of “wound”*

The framework into which we propose to bring Nietzsche and Thérèse to dialogue is a “wounded” human life. This being wounded shows man is in ‘darkness’ or in an ‘abyss’ whose nature is existential. Both have experienced a ‘spiritual’ isolation in their shared existential search but they have given a different response to this experience, resulting consequently in ontologically different but complementary visions of man, respectively.

By the term “wounds” we mean the *effects* of the vulnerability that a person experiences when he or she is open for the other voluntarily, even though this may lead to either joy or pain. These wounds (in love) serve as the *cause* for experiencing a profound abyss, whose nature is *existential*. The metaphor of the abyss represents darkness and helplessness but also mystery, depth, and profundity. Hence, ‘abyss’ does not refer to any particular human achievement or

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Richard Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 81-83.

activity, not even a ‘now’ or ‘then’, but speaks to man of who he or she *is*. Just like the Johannine ‘dark night’ and ‘deep caverns’, the abyss is explained in terms of the lifelong journey of becoming aware of our depth. Indeed, understood in view of God’s goodness and man’s frailty, all of human life is an abyss.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, these wounds serve as a *doorway* leading either to closure or active abandonment in the Other even if His existence is doubted or not perceived. Both paths are characterised by a sense of *failure*.<sup>8</sup>

### The Nietzschean-Thérésian Dialogue: Or Is It?

There have been two major works that have brought Nietzsche and Thérèse systematically into dialogue. The first to be done was by Noëlle Hausman in a Beauchesne publication entitled, *Frédéric Nietzsche, Thérèse de Lisieux: Deux poétiques de la modernité* (1984). The second was Bridget Edman in *Roses have Thorns* (2002), a drama that won first prize in an international religious drama competition and which was published later as *Thérèse of Lisieux: Nietzsche is my Brother* (2010).

Furthermore, numerous studies have been made along the years but the focus (up to our knowledge) never seems to regard the two figures exclusively. Michael Gallagher has taken up the role of bringing these two figures in dialogue in a short reproduction of Edman’s play in *The Human Poetry of Faith: A Spiritual Guide to Life* (2003). Gallagher’s work presents a shorter version of Edman’s play, which to our judgement is an enhancement of the stand Edman takes. Ferdinando Castelli’s report of the play does not seem to do justice to the Edman-Gallagher thought when it says that the play seeks to *contrast* Nietzsche and Thérèse and, hence, shows how they are one another’s “thesis and antithesis”: “[his] negation of God and [her] filial faith in Him, [his] power of will that crushes and [her] gift of love which embraces, [his] fear of the infinite and [her] joyous trust in which God secretly dwells, [his] nothing which devours and [her] God who saves.”<sup>9</sup> As the introduction to the play itself claims, “Comparison not contrast [...] *Nietzsche Is my Brother* is the rejection of any kind of condescension on the part of the believer towards unbelievers.”<sup>10</sup> In his work, Gallagher enhances this

<sup>7</sup> Cf. John of the Cross, 2 “Dark Night,” XVII, 6, in *Collected Works*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington D.C.: ICS, 1991), 437-438. Hereafter, cited as *Collected Works*.

<sup>8</sup> An insight taken from: John of the Cross, “Ascent of Mount Carmel, Dark Night, Living Flame of Love,” in *ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> Ferdinando Castelli, “Al Concorso di Drammaturgia Religiosa: Teresa di Lisieux incontra Nietzsche,” in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 150, no. 2 (2000): 141.

<sup>10</sup> Edman, *Nietzsche is my Brother*, iv.

“existential search which they share”<sup>11</sup> and shows how the attentive reader of both figures is led to a gradual recognition that both stand on a common ground which we shall call, in conformity with Carmelite spirituality,<sup>12</sup> an *existential abyss* or *empty space* that marks them as “strange companions.”<sup>13</sup>

Nietzsche and Thérèse’s respective [self-]portraits come from the vital moments that have shaped the life and thought of each of them. To help us admire these “portraits” we will use here Adélaïde Labille-Guiard’s 1785 “self-portrait with two pupils” as a hermeneutical tool. Although Labille-Guiard’s portrait might seem irrelevant to our two figures of study, the truth is that her



pupils, Marie-Gabrielle Capet and Carreaux de Rosemond, suit our purpose well in grasping how both Nietzsche and Thérèse’s lives and visions speak to us today. Capet and de Rosemond feature in their own portrait but they did not draw it themselves. The subject they represent is artistically created by the artist who is simultaneously portraying herself in relation to them as well as to the viewer. Like Labille-Guiard’s enigmatic exercise in portraiture, what we are after in this Nietzschean-Thérésian dialogue is our involvement or, rather, man’s involvement today in reconstructing and re-interpreting this Nietzschean-Thérésian Spirit for the twenty-first century ‘viewer’.

## The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Context

As Mary Gauvain explains:

Our species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, has the longest period of physical dependency by the young on mature members of the group. The lengthy period provides protection for the young, along with warmth and food – all of which are critical to survival. It is also sufficiently long to support the extensive process of social, emotional, and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> It is to be made clear that the comment here on Carmelite Spirituality is due to the fact that Thérèse herself was a Carmelite.

<sup>13</sup> Michael P. Gallagher, *The Human Poetry of Faith: A Spiritual Guide to Life* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2003), 68.

intellectual learning that prepares children for mature participation in their community.<sup>14</sup>

Both Nietzsche and Thérèse are naturally imbued by their intrinsic dependence upon their social and family context; this formed their learning and participation in the community. A close examination of the figures in question must, therefore, start at analysing the respective groups that formed them.

### *The Western Philosophical World at Large*

Armand Maurer understands the nineteenth century to be philosophically characterised by a series of *reactions* and a certain sense of *irrationality*. With the rise of interest in mathematics, natural science (Renaissance), and “the character of the mind” (with the Rationalists, Empiricists, and the Kantian synthesis in the Enlightenment), the nineteenth century ushered in new philosophical problems and new conceptions of what philosophy ought to do which, hence, produced great philosophical diversity.<sup>15</sup>

Maurer points out some historical facts that brought this change of philosophical traits about:

- a. the *Romantic Movement*, which was a poetic revolt against reason in favour of feeling; this movement influenced both German idealism and the philosophers of irrationalism;
- b. the maturation of the *Industrial Revolution* as well as the *revolutions of 1848* in Paris, Germany, and Vienna, which caused untold misery, the consciousness of the bourgeoisie and proletariat classes, and prompted a multitude of philosophies of social reform such as the ameliorative social philosophy of English utilitarianism and the revolutionary doctrines of Karl Marx (1818–83); and
- c. the *great surge in biological science* following the publication of Charles Darwin’s (1809–82) work on the theory of evolution, which provided the prerequisites for American pragmatism.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly enough, within such a complex social and philosophical context, we find Nietzsche, “a highly idiosyncratic thinker” placed with the “new

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<sup>14</sup> Mary Gauvain, *The Social Context of Cognitive Development* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Armand Maurer, “The 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” in “Western Philosophy,” ed. Kurt von Fritz in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed April 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1350843/Western-philosophy>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*



philosophers of the irrational.”<sup>17</sup> Poetic, social, and scientific traits in his writings are a commonplace ground upon which he forms his vision of man.

### *The Catholic Church*

Barbara C. Pope points out two essential features that capture the profile of the Catholic Church in this century, especially its second half, the time when Nietzsche and Thérèse lived: “[...] an evolving Catholic culture that was both *feminised* and profoundly *anti-modern*.”<sup>18</sup>

On the one hand, the historical “feminisation” of Catholicism was brought about by (i) the increasing ratio of female churchgoers (as high as 75%); (ii) the migration of male sociability from religious confraternities to intellectual gatherings, the tavern, and political activity; (iii) women were increasingly organised into “Catholic education sodalities and charitable pursuits”; and (iv) many female Religious Orders were abounding in new vocations.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, Roberto Rusconi, in his study on the criteria of holiness present in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sustains especially the modernist-reaction emphasis.<sup>20</sup> According to Rusconi, the *evolution* from Vatican Council I – characterised by the proclamation of the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope – to the end of papal temporal powers in 1870 by the opening of Porta Pia, marks a significant step in the modern wake of the Church.<sup>21</sup> Bruno Secondin, however, is more hesitant in speaking of this evolution. His synthesis of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brings forth the idea that both currents – in favour or against the modernist progress – were present *simultaneously*, that is, the *Syllabus* (1864) and Pope Pius X’s *Pascendi* (1907) were contemporary to the Catholic Romanticist movement and the involvement of the Church in the development of its social doctrine, pioneered by Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (1891).<sup>22</sup> Secondin calls these

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Corrado Pope, “A Heroine Without Heroics: The Little Flower of Jesus and her Times,” in *Church History* 57, no.1 (1988): 52.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. François Lebrun (et al.), *Histoire des catholiques en France du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Pluriel, 1980), 321-452, as quoted by Pope, *A Heroine without Heroics*, 53.

<sup>20</sup> “Da parte della Chiesa cattolica, in particolare, si apre un inesausto confronto con la società contemporanea [...] si apriva in tal modo la strada a ogni genere di nostalgia per un cristianesimo perduto che, nel clima culturale dell’epoca, si andava soprattutto cercando in quella mitica età medievale in cui sarebbe esistita una società cristiana [...]”, Roberto Rusconi, “Una Chiesa a confronto con la società,” in Anna Benvenuti et al., *Storia della santità nel cristianesimo occidentale* (Rome: Viella, 2005), 331-332.

<sup>21</sup> Rusconi, *Una Chiesa a confronto con la società*, 332.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bruno Secondin, *Storia della Spiritualità*, appunti per gli studenti, 275-276. *Pro Manuscripto*.

polarities “typical characteristics” within the Catholic Church, which either saw modern society in an “intransigent” manner, choosing to fight off all forms of dechristianisation in view of restoring the *ancien regime*, or else in an “intuitive” manner, which saw the need to dialogue intelligently and audaciously with society.

On a more spiritual note, given such historical facts and points of view, Secondin provides the following traits that characterise the spirituality of the century, most of which provide the cultural and familial *humus* for Thérèse’s upbringing: (i) a commitment to build the Church anew from below, on a local-parish level; (ii) the necessity of the formation of clerics; (iii) the founding of new Congregations; (iv) a reawakening of the laity; (v) a Christocentrism that focused on Jesus’ passion and death; (vi) the multitude of devotions to the Passion, the Eucharist, and Our Lady; (vii) clericalism; and (viii) the great missionary appeals.<sup>23</sup>

### “Self-Portrait with Two Pupils”

#### *Nietzsche’s wounds*

Although many features characterise Nietzsche’s life and thought, we shall reduce these to the three most significant ones: (i) his (highly feminine-Lutheran) upbringing; (ii) his view of Christianity; and (iii) his experiences of friendship betrayals. We shall attempt at answering a fundamental question: what exactly lies beneath the alleged enigmatic claims made by Nietzsche?

As Bernd Magnus explains, Nietzsche’s home was a stronghold of Lutheran piety. His father and grandfather were both named Lutheran Pastors by no less than King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia for their great defence of Protestantism. His father died before Nietzsche’s fifth birthday, leaving the boy to be raised in a household with an entirety of five women until the age of 14 at which point he moved to Schulpforta, a leading German Protestant Academy, to further his studies.<sup>24</sup>

“Confronted with the legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century European *Zeitgeist*, in which materialistic and positivistic tenets supplanted the belief in God [...] he eventually acknowledged that the traditional Christian doctrine was irreconcilable with modern mentality.”<sup>25</sup> Taking nothing of his great admiration for Christ away,

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Secondin, *Storia*, 278-287.

<sup>24</sup> Bernd Magnus, “Friedrich Nietzsche,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed 25 April 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/414670/Friedrich-Nietzsche>.

<sup>25</sup> Nel Grillaert, “A Short Story about the Übermensch: Vladimir Solov’ev’s Interpretation of and Response to Nietzsche ‘Übermensch,’” in *Studies in East European Thought* 55, no.2 (2003): 158.



Nietzsche felt disillusioned by Jesus' followers. He felt they did not live up to his message, they distorted it. In *The Antichrist* he says

There was only one Christian and he died on the cross [...] He suffers, he loves, *with* those, *in* those who are doing evil to him. It is not a 'belief' which is the mark of a Christian: the Christian is distinguished by a different way of acting. It is not penance or prayer for forgiveness that leads to God; only living according to the gospel leads to God [...] Faith *lives*, it resists formulas.<sup>26</sup>

As a matter of fact, the affirmation "God is dead" in *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as explained by Samuel Stumpf, signifies that although Nietzsche did away with religious values and objective moral codes, he did not do away with *all* values altogether. Nietzsche replaces *religious* values for *aesthetic* ones<sup>27</sup> so that the proper values are lived when there is a fusion of order and passion,<sup>28</sup> and the seat for this choice is man. A nihilistic interpretation of all that Nietzsche wrote, therefore, is, to our judgement, unfounded. As Bernd Magnus puts it, "He was especially interested in probing analysis and evaluation of the fundamental cultural value of religion and morality, which he characterised as expressions of the ascetic ideal."<sup>29</sup> True that what claims Nietzsche makes, regarding God's existence, remain unsure as he chose to remain enigmatic and

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<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 39, 33, 32, trans. and introduced by R. J. Hollingdale, Michael Tanner (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 172, 165, 164. According to Solomon and Higgins, what Nietzsche really criticised was 'Christendom' and the 'Christian mob', "those unthinking conformists who superficially accepted the words of the Gospel without believing them in any deep sense or living their lives according to them" and not Christianity *as such*. "Nietzsche admired those exceptional Christian souls who really lived and suffered what they believed, Jesus in particular." Cf. Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins, *What Nietzsche Really Said* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), 25-26.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Schacht insists as a matter of fact, "Nietzsche was concerned above all to discover a way *beyond the nihilistic* reaction he believed to be the inevitable consequence of the impending collapse of traditional values and modes of interpretation to *a new affirmation and enhancement of life*": Richard Schacht, "Friedrich Nietzsche," in *The Philosophers: Introducing Great Western Thinkers*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 177.

<sup>28</sup> His influence from the Greek culture is evident. "Dionysius represented the dynamic stream of life, which knows no restraints or barriers and defies all limitations. Apollo symbolises order, restraint, and form. Therefore, Dionysius represents the negative and destructive dark powers of the soul, which, when unchecked, culminate in that disgusting mixture of sensuality and cruelty typical of the most savage beasts of nature. Apollo, by contrast, represents the power to deal with the powerful surge of vital energy, to harness destructive powers, and to transmute these into a creative act." See Samuel E. Stumpf and James Fieser, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 380-381.

<sup>29</sup> Magnus, "Friedrich Nietzsche."

aphoristic in his claims even in the mature phase of his philosophy.<sup>30</sup> However, his claims regarding man whom he calls the “übermensch” are very much clear: “Dead are all the gods. Now do we desire the superman to live.”<sup>31</sup> As Pavel A. Florenskij notes in one of his lectures, “in essence [Nietzsche] aspired for his whole life towards Christ whilst distancing himself from a Christianity that was overly befriended with evil. [He is] the thinker before whom the recent past is to blame.”<sup>32</sup>

Also, keeping in mind the high ideal of friendship that he upheld, clearly a direct influence from Greek philology, which for years was the object of his study<sup>33</sup>, one can understand Nietzsche’s disillusionment for Wagner’s conversion to Christianity, a move that broke their friendship for good and resulted in a harsh critique of the latter’s music. In *The Case of Wagner* we read, with regards to Nietzsche’s intentions, “That the stage should not become master of the arts. That the actor should not become the corrupter of the genuine. That music should not become an art of lying.”<sup>34</sup> Magnus also points out a significant

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<sup>30</sup> As a matter of fact, just like his claims, the reactions to these have also been contradictory, opposing, and widely interpreted. Nihilists like Martin Heidegger, on the one hand, have taken it to signify the end of metaphysics and philosophy itself: cf. Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Heidegger und Nietzsche: Nietzsche-Interpretationen III* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000); Michael Allen Gillespie, “Nietzsche and the Anthropology of Nihilism,” in *Nietzsche Studien* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 141. Some Christian and Jewish theologians like Paul van Buren, Gabriel Vahanian, and Robert Rubenstein, on the other hand, have taken the claim to signify the loss in the modern era of the sense of the sacred. For example, Rubenstein argues that with the Holocaust, “the idea of a theistic God may no longer be possible; rather, God is a historical process”, see Robert Rubenstein, “God after the Death of God,” in *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 293-306.

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, 22, 3, trans. Thomas Common (Mineola: Dover, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Pavel Aleksandrovič Florenskij, “Il corpo dell’uomo e il mondo (16 settembre 1921),” in Antonio Maccioni ed. *La concezione cristiana del mondo* (Bologna: Pendragon, 2011), 119. Maccioni notes that Florenskij also refers directly to Nietzsche’s works in *Iconostasis, Dogmatism and Dogmatics*, and in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*.

<sup>33</sup> The Greeks held friendship in a high esteem. The criteria for the best enduring friendships were: honesty, holding nothing back, seeking the good *qua* good of the other, and an engagement in the quest for a higher Truth/Beauty. Such a relation was only between equals (*inter pares*, hence, between two men) and the relation was not based on utility or passing pleasure. “Desire for friendship develops rapidly but friendship does not”, writes Aristotle. Cf. Plutarch, *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*, 51; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and commented by Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), VII, 1-5 (1155a3, 1156a16-1156b23).

<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, trans. and commented by Walter Kaufmann (New

event in the 1879-89 decade. Nietzsche's contacts in this time were scarce<sup>35</sup> and furthermore his relationship with Paul Rée was undermined by 1882 by their mutual if unacknowledged affection for Lou Salomé as well as by Elisabeth, Nietzsche's jealous, meddling sister.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, the following judgment posited by Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins strikes us with a particular interest as it brings out both Nietzsche's hurt/anger and solution:

We see Nietzsche not as the "atheist by instinct" he claims to be in his autobiography but as a religious *desperado*. If one understands by "religious" the effort to integrate one's life with what is larger than oneself, Nietzsche rejects Christianity for religious reasons. His many complaints about the ideology that the Christian Church has foisted on its members express his conviction that it harms our ability to love and to be responsive to others in the world and to nature. If a critic, he is also a seeker and he believed that his society was in desperate need of a new spiritual focus. He advances some positive suggestions for helping to construct this new focus and to restore harmony to our sense of ourselves in the world.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, the loss of the sense of self that Nietzsche saw brewing in the European culture of his time – and part of the blame, he thought, was due to Christianity's repudiation of human nature – angered him and forced him to insist on the will to power, or the impulse to enhanced vitality. As he saw it

Early Christianity was popular among the powerless because it represented a healthy gesture of self-assertion, if only inwardly. However, this improvement developed potentially dangerous psychological mechanisms that flourished when Christianity itself

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York: Vintage Books, 1967), sec. 12.

<sup>35</sup> In Irvin Yalom's historical novel *When Nietzsche Wept* (1992), the psychiatrist depicts a conversation that took place between Dr Josef Breuer [a Swiss physician and, together with Sigmund Freud, discoverer of the first modern scientific method that treated hysteria] and Nietzsche in which he brings out the latter's feelings about the cause of his stress. Although the historicity of the discussion is unfounded, the psychoanalysis made by the psychiatrist help us understand Nietzsche's solitude more. He states his stress was beneficial to him because (a) during the attacks he was relieved temporarily from writing; he was cleansed in order to continue his quest into *darkness*; and (b) his poor vision and hence the difficulty of reading gave him the opportunity to write on what he truly believed, being *cut off* from all external influences: cf. Irvin Yalom, *When Nietzsche Wept* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2003), 94-95.

<sup>36</sup> Magnus, "Friedrich Nietzsche."

<sup>37</sup> Solomon and Higgins, 86.

became a pervasive and powerful social institution, undermining the healthy self-assertion that earlier it had promoted.<sup>38</sup>

### *Thérèse's wounds*

Thérèse's self-portrait<sup>39</sup> is divided into three phases: (i) the age of separations (1873-82); (ii) the age of depression, sickness and mysterious recovery (1882-87); and (iii) the age of the ever-deeper mystical thicket (1887-93).

The first phase is characterised by the separation from her mother to be taken to live with a wet-nurse (Rosalie Taillé) with whom she stays for eleven months. Once she is taken back to her biological mother, Zélie passes away when Thérèse is only four years old. As she describes it, "I once so full of life became timid and retiring, sensitive to an excessive degree."<sup>40</sup> "I was really unbearable because of my extreme touchiness."<sup>41</sup> Interestingly enough, this mother wound accompanies her all her life. She seeks for the mother figure first in her elder sister Pauline, then in the Blessed Virgin, then in her sister Celine, then the Prioress, and lastly also the Church. With the death of her mother she had lost her "strength of soul."<sup>42</sup> Moreover, with the departure of her sister Pauline to the Carmel of Lisieux, Thérèse explains how "she suffered when she heard her dear Pauline speaking one day to Marie about her coming entrance into Carmel [...] she *was going to leave me* to enter a convent, she *would not wait for me*, and hence I *would lose my second mother!*"<sup>43</sup>

As a result of a great separation anxiety, repressed feelings and psychological fragility<sup>44</sup> which Thérèse suffered, her second age is characterised by a physical and spiritual collapse: poor health, scruples, etc. She herself attributes the recovery of such a phase to the Virgin whom she calls "of the Smile."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Story of a Soul*, Letters 95, 98, 129, Prayers 12, 16 to deduce the phases within which Thérèse's transformation of character and spirituality is mostly evident.

<sup>40</sup> Thérèse de Lisieux de l'Enfant Jésus et de la Sainte-Face, "Histoire d'une âme," Manuscript A, 13r, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Cerf-DDB, 2006), 89. Hereafter, the *Oeuvres complètes* will be cited according to the standard French form.

<sup>41</sup> Ms A, 44v.

<sup>42</sup> Ms A, 45r.

<sup>43</sup> Ms A, 25v.

<sup>44</sup> For a brief but precise work see Marc Foley, *The Context of Holiness: Psychological and Spiritual Reflections on the Life of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (Washington D.C.: ICS, 2008) or see also Jacques Maître, "Essai d'un lecture psychanalytique de 'L'Offrande à l'Amour miséricordieux' de Thérèse Martin," in *Mélanges Carmélitains: histoire, mystique et spiritualité* 2 (2004): 140-164.

<sup>45</sup> Ms A, 30v.

The “grace of Christmas” (1886) marks the beginning of a third phase, within which significant development in the girl’s psyche and spiritual life is noticed. Although she explains this event as her “complete” conversion, we know in hindsight that the “grace of Easter” (1896) and the subsequent trial of faith (1896-97) truly shaped and consolidated the saint’s spirituality for the simple reason that it was in the context of a consolation-less faith in Carmel that Thérèse struggled to *keep the faith*. Her oft-depicted flowery life is characterised in this last phase by “more thorns than roses”.<sup>46</sup> Spiritual dryness characterised her since the day she entered Carmel, only to be followed by temptations of blasphemy and suicide,<sup>47</sup> disbelief in God’s existence, tuberculosis and, hence, prohibition to receive Communion.<sup>48</sup> She did not often speak of such a dynamic, especially the crisis that characterised the last eighteen months of her life. In the last few weeks, she says to Pauline, “It is because of the delicacy of God to me that exteriorly I am overwhelmed but interiorly I am constantly in trial ... yet also in peace.”<sup>49</sup>

However, Thérèse’s life is not about exalting negativity and suffering at its best. The underlying element that seeped through everything she was and did is love, not emotional<sup>50</sup> or devoid of action, but a love that she receives at home by her family members, especially her father, whom she used to call her “king”<sup>51</sup> and which she reciprocates by donating herself to close relatives, her sisters in community who were the most resentful to her,<sup>52</sup> and also to God “in sacrifice”.<sup>53</sup>

When taken as a whole, Thérèse’s works seem to propose an evolution in how she saw reality. Manuscript A of her *Story of a Soul* manifests primarily how she took up the spirit of the time; hence, the closure of family relations and its idealist depiction, the closure of the Church, the strong Jansenist attitudes in scruples, the many devotions to the Passion of Our Lord, to the Eucharist, to the Holy Face, and the reparative spirituality to “please God” or “offer herself up” for the salvation of sinners’ souls.<sup>54</sup>

However, through her trial of the “dark” faith, this outlook changed

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<sup>46</sup> Ms A, 69v.

<sup>47</sup> DE, *Autres paroles* (August), 1178.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Guy Gaucher, *La passion de Thérèse de Lisieux* (Paris: Cerf-DDB, 2002), 100-115.

<sup>49</sup> DE, *Carnet jeune de Sr Agnès* (8 September 1897), 1124.

<sup>50</sup> The hyperbolic language Thérèse uses to speak and write about herself, as we shall see in the next section, is often abounding in emotional, feminine jargon. However, the aim of this is to bring forth more clearly the image of God and man that she beheld.

<sup>51</sup> For example, in Ms, 55r.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ms B, 8r-13v; Ms C, 12r-14r.

<sup>53</sup> Ms A, 69v.

<sup>54</sup> In Ms A, 69v, Thérèse even mentions that her motivations for entering Carmel were to save souls and pray for priests.

significantly. She manages to transform the *Zeitgeist* of justice<sup>55</sup> and reparation for sins<sup>56</sup> to one of hope and love. Manuscripts B and C of her *Story of a Soul* as well as some of her later prayers demonstrate how, in practice, this is so:

- i the *petite voie* is but an acceptance of man's fragile and helpless nature, it is "human frailty, unworthiness, and fear coming to accept God's sustaining strength, mercy, and grace-induced trust so that they are transformed into hope, confidence, and a response of love;"<sup>57</sup>
- ii she expressed her love in the simple, everyday life situations with her sisters in the monastery;<sup>58</sup>
- iii her *Offering to Merciful Love* (1895) was a voluntary act to never deny God's will, which was then taken up again by Mother Teresa of Calcutta;
- iv the supposed "absence of God" towards the end of her life, whose traces of suffering she already had started to experience since her first months in Carmel, was brought about primarily by the degeneration of her own idea of God;
- v her strong commitment to living fraternal love with much intensity;
- vi in a retreat on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1896, she discovers her vocation to be Love "in the heart of the Church;"<sup>59</sup>
- vii her last words, "My God! I love you, my God!" are but "a reiteration of all other simple acts of love,"<sup>60</sup> by which she does not close herself despite of the darkness of faith. Steadfast love does not depend on personal feelings, comforts, thoughts, or pleasures, but merely upon God's silent otherness.

### The Nietzschean-Thérèsian Spirit

The notion we have defined as "Nietzschean-Thérèsian Spirit" in the title is hence an emerging view of man, based upon the respective anthropologies of each figure which takes into consideration the utmost need of man's autonomy, on the one hand, and his inherent inclination for relatedness, on the other hand. Although Nietzsche and Thérèse express themselves on different levels and through varying uses of language, we seem to glimpse in their respective views

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<sup>55</sup> Ms B, 3v.

<sup>56</sup> Ms A, 45v-46v.

<sup>57</sup> John Sullivan, "Teaching from the Table of Sinners," *Spiritual Life* 46, no.3 (2000): 162.

<sup>58</sup> Benedict XVI, *General Audience* (6 April 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Ms B, 3v.

<sup>60</sup> Benedict XVI, *General Audience*.



a resulting connection between them provided for by their “existential search”<sup>61</sup> that takes into consideration the basic needs of man. The Nietzschean-Thérésian Spirit is, therefore, paradigmatic of man’s needs which place him in a kind of bipolar tension within which his whole life moves, that is, between autonomy and relatedness.

### *Man as the “übermensch”*

Essentially reacting to an overly-feminine upbringing as well as a highly pessimistic Lutheran anthropology, Nietzsche holds that man, as a seeker of the truth, is duty-bound to engage in meaningful events that are however relative to him alone. Truth is not given, it is made, it is relative. This view of reality underpins Nietzsche’s whole critique of morality, of the sovereignty of human persons, and most of all of culture. In his opinion, the European *Zeitgeist* of his time needed a total “transvaluation [hence, not *annihilation*] of values.” Nietzsche “conceived the world as an interplay of forces without any inherent structure of final end, ceaselessly organising and reorganising itself in *eternal recurrence*, guided by the fundamental human disposition which he called *the will to power*.”<sup>62</sup>

There is no one kind of human nature whose direction can be prescribed by one set of rules. The only thing that characterises human nature is the drive to dominate the environment, the will to power. Judaism and Christianity, as he saw it, sought to deny the fullest expression of people’s vital energies because they emphasised the alienating values of a *slave* morality. He thought the positive affirmation of life in the *master* morality was made to seem “evil” and something for which one should have a sense of “guilt.”<sup>63</sup>

The solution to the crisis he saw in his contemporary culture was the emergence of the “übermensch”, man in the fullest sense. This *genius* is a regulative norm for humanity. He is precisely the individual who recognises that the world is essentially becoming. He understands that values are not found or given; they are created. All is pointed towards the “production of the finest flower of the human race.”<sup>64</sup>

As opposed to his contemporary sociologists August Comte (1798-1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who suggested a social theory that did not

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<sup>61</sup> Edman, *Nietzsche is my Brother*, iv.

<sup>62</sup> Kenneth Wain, *The Value Crisis: An Introduction to Ethics*, (Msida: Malta University Publishers, 1995), 129.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Stumpf, *Philosophy*, 420.

<sup>64</sup> Frederick Copleston, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosopher of Culture* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1942), 39.

take the starting point for social development to be the individual but society at large, Nietzsche, being himself an heir of German idealism, studied “under what conditions the individual grows strong and increases his or her autonomy.”<sup>65</sup> Clearly, as Robert Rubenstein suggests, with Nietzsche traditional *theism* seems to have shifted emphasis from the traditional personal (Christian) God (Gr. *monos-theos*) who offers objective universal meaning to man of all spaces and times to a relative significance of the meaning of life dependant on one’s own disposition, will, and history.<sup>66</sup> Hence, a kind of “objectivity” and “universal law”, although not in the moral sense, remains.

Stumpf explains the view of the “*übermensch*” as follows:

The superman will be rare, but he is the next stage in human evolution [...] But the superman will not be [merely] the product of a mechanical process of evolution. Only when the superior individuals have the courage to revalue all values and respond with freedom to their internal Will to Power can the next stage be reached. “Man is to be surpassed,” and it is the superman who represents the highest level of development and expression of physical, intellectual and emotional strength. The superman will be the truly free man for whom nothing is forbidden except what obstructs the Will to Power. He will be the very embodiment of the spontaneous affirmation of life.<sup>67</sup>

### *Man as the Object of God’s Love*

Coming out with a completely personal, intimate language, which is diametrically the opposite of Nietzsche’s approach, Thérèse addresses man’s need for relatedness. The *Consecration to the Holy Face* (Pr 12) and the *Act of Oblation to Merciful Love* (Pr 6) contain the essence of who God and man are for the Little Flower. For the saint, man cannot but be in relation to God because, firstly, God is Trinity and, secondly, because He thirsts for man’s love. “From Your Adorable Lips we have heard the loving plaint: “I thirst”. Since we know that this thirst which consumes you is a thirst for love, to quench it we would wish to possess an infinite love [...] Give us, O Lord, this love! Then come to your spouses and satisfy your thirst.”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Patrik Aspers, “Nietzsche’s Sociology,” *Sociological Forum* 22, no.4 (2007): 478.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Rubenstein, “God after the Death of God.”

<sup>67</sup> Stumpf, *Philosophy*, 429.

<sup>68</sup> PR 12, v.

Her anthropology is intrinsically linked to the doctrine of the relational Trinitarian God, which is so central to the Christian faith. The unending interpenetration of love (or more technically in Greek, “perichoresis”) within the Trinity is the image of God upon which man is created. “The Trinity is not an abstract idea but the Life that orients, prioritises and organises her whole existence.”<sup>69</sup>

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1894, she writes to Celine for the last time before the latter enters Carmel

The one crime charged against Jesus by Herod was that He was *mad* ... and I agree with him! Yes, it was *folly* to seek the poor little hearts of mortals to make them his thrones, He, the King of Glory, who is throned above the Cherubim! He whose presence is mightier than the Heavens can contain. Our Beloved was mad to come down to earth seeking sinners to make them His friends, His intimates, to make them *like unto Himself*<sup>70</sup>

Alas! Christ’s being *le divin mendiant d’amour*<sup>71</sup> lies in the paradox that Almighty God seeks man for the gift of human love.<sup>72</sup> Understood from a mystical perspective, Bernard Bro comments:

[God] places Himself, so to speak, at our mercy, He does not want to take anything unless we give it to Him, and the smallest thing is precious in His eyes [...] He does us the honour of sharing the thought of his Son and henceforth we are invited to look at everything as Christ does. God needs our love as he needs his

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<sup>69</sup> Bernard Bro, *St Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Family, her God, her Message* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 74; see also *ibid.*, 84-91. Enhancing her relational conception of God more, the Saint writes in her poem *Mon Ciel à Moi!* (1896), “Mon Ciel est de sentir en moi la ressemblance / du Dieu qui me créa de son Souffle Puissant / Mon Ciel est de rester toujours en sa présence / de l’appeler mon Père et d’être son enfant / entre ses bras Divins, je ne crains pas l’orage / le total abandon voilà ma seule loi. / Sommeiller sur son Cœur, tout près de son Visage / Voilà mon Ciel à moi!”: PN 32, 4; and also in 1897 she says to her sister Pauline, “Cette parole de Job: ‘Quand même Dieu me tuerait j’espérerais encore en lui’, m’a ravie dès mon enfance. Mais j’ai été longtemps avant de m’établir à ce degree d’abandon. Maintenant j’y suis; le bon Dieu n’y a mise, il m’a prise dans ses bras et m’a posée là...”: DE, *Carnet jeune de Sr Agnès* (7 July 1897), 3.

<sup>70</sup> LT 169, 2r.

<sup>71</sup> LT 172, 1v.

<sup>72</sup> “We should not confuse this intuition with the Nestorian statement on the ‘vulnerability of God’ or the recent approximation about the weakness or suffering of God. No. If God’s begging expresses the essence of Christianity, it is in the name of love and of what is the very essence of love in the perfect state: the need for reciprocity.” See Bro, *St Thérèse of Lisieux*, 92.

Son, and this is no longer optional that He has decided, and he has decided it eternally.<sup>73</sup>

This is quite a strong statement, it seems, but one which also Blessed Elisabeth of the Trinity assimilates from this Thérésian view of man and develops it in her *Elevation to the Holy Trinity* in asking the Holy Spirit, the “Consuming Fire”, to make of her “une humanité de surcroît”.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, in her last retreat, Thérèse writes to her sister, Marie, “How fortunate we are, dear Sister, to understand the secrets of our Spouse.”<sup>75</sup> Clearly, like her elder sister in Carmel, St Teresa of Jesus, as well as Nietzsche, Thérèse too intuitively grasps Christ’s standing alone or, rather, his being *solus*. However, in the case of Nietzsche, Jesus is deserted by the deviations of his followers, whereas in the case of the two Carmelite sisters, Jesus is alone because he *gazes on* (St Teresa) or *thirsts for* (St Thérèse) humanity.<sup>76</sup> He calls on his Bride, “Return, return, O Sulamitess, return, return, that we may behold thee” (Cant. 6:13).

Therefore, Thérèse’s mystical image of Christ, like that of Carmelite Christology itself, interplays between the two inter-related meanings of the Latin word “solus”. On the one hand, Christ is *alone* because man can only in this world be inclined – in an already-but-not-yet tension – towards “one single act of perfect Love” until the moment of transformation in glory wherein “[the soul] may be able to tell [Him] of [her] Love in an *Eternal Face to Face*.”<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, it is with Christ *alone* that the soul strives to be in interior solitude. As Thérèse writes to Celine, “What do the things of the world matter to us? Could the slime, so unworthy of an immortal soul, be our Homeland? And why should we care that wretched human creatures reap the musty harvest that grows from the slime? The more our heart is in heaven, the less we feel these pin pricks”<sup>78</sup> evoking Jesus’ own words, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” (Mt 16:26). Elsewhere, she writes again to Celine, “You know that I myself do not see the Sacred Heart as everybody else. I think that the Heart of my Spouse is mine alone, just as mine is His alone,”<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>74</sup> Elisabeth de la Trinité, “Élévation de la Sainte Trinité,” in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Cerf-DDB, 2002), 200.

<sup>75</sup> Ms B, 1v.

<sup>76</sup> LT 165.

<sup>77</sup> PR 6, 2v.

<sup>78</sup> LT 81.

<sup>79</sup> Along the same lines, Thérèse takes after her spiritual master in Carmel, John of the Cross, who in his *Avisos Espirituales* writes, “Míos son los cielos y mía es la tierra; mías son las gentes, los justos son míos y míos los pecadores; los ángeles son míos, y la Madre de Dios y todas las

and I speak to Him then in the solitude of this delightful heart to heart while waiting to contemplate Him one day face to face.”<sup>80</sup> John of the Cross expresses this poetically in his *Living Flame of Love*

[...]

Tear through the veil of this sweet encounter!

O sweet cautery,  
O delightful wound!  
O gentle hand! O delicate touch  
that tastes of eternal life.

[...]

How gently and lovingly  
you wake in my heart,  
where in secret you dwell alone.<sup>81</sup>

Alberto Neglia synthesises Thérèse’s anthropology very clearly.<sup>82</sup> The paradigm for Thérèse’s view of man, he says, is the moment she is appointed Mistress of Novices, as she feels *incapable* but nonetheless *willing* to cooperate in God’s will.<sup>83</sup> God’s benevolence and mercy is complemented not by man’s passive resignation but by his active abandonment to serve as “instrument” in the hands of the one and only Artisan.<sup>84</sup> For this little saint, man’s relatedness is essentially mystical because, as she writes, “When I understood it was impossible for me to do anything by myself, I saw the work I had to do was not difficult. The only necessary thing is to be united more and more to Jesus and the rest will be given in addition.”<sup>85</sup>

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cosas son mías; y el mismo Dios es mío y para mí, porque Cristo es mío y todo para mí. Pues qué pides y buscas, alma mía? Tuyo es todo esto, y todo es para ti. No te pongas en menos ni repares en meajas que se caen de la mesa de tu Padre. Sal fuera y glóriate en tu gloria, escóndete en ella y goza, y alcanzarás las peticiones de tu corazón”: Juan de la Cruz, “Dichos de luz y amor,” 26, in *Obras completas* (Madrid: BAC, 2005), 155.

<sup>80</sup> LT 122, 2v.

<sup>81</sup> John of the Cross, “1º, 2º, 4º Flame,” in *Complete Works*, 52-53.

<sup>82</sup> Alberto Neglia, “In compagnia degli uomini: Testimone del Dio vivente,” in Chiara Vasciaveo ed. *Teresa di Lisieux: Sorella nel dubbio e nella fede* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2002), 103.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Ms C, 22r-v.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Ms C, 20v-21r.

<sup>85</sup> Ms C, 22v.

In essence, Thérèse's bridal chamber of the interior abyss of her wounded spirit is prayer, hence, *scientia amoris*. Contrary to Nietzsche, who eventually abandoned the Christian faith altogether, she sought to keep taking the leap of faith – even when she did not understand it – inside the Church because as she saw it “the Church had a Heart and this Heart was burning with love.”<sup>86</sup> As Bro points out, this was Thérèse's “secret”, love, driven by a twofold wish towards its accomplishment. On the one hand, Bro explains, the wish not to be alone, hence to make of the other, truly, a partner, and, on the other hand, the wish to let herself be drawn by the other so as to be but one with him. “If we need the other to exist, it is indeed in order that he might be yet more capable of amusing and attracting us, arousing in us the attention, magnetisation, and the blessed “wound” that makes it impossible to do without him.”<sup>87</sup> Thérèse, as a matter of fact, in her *Act of Oblation to Merciful Love*, “offer[s] the infinite treasures of the Son's merits to [God] with gladness begging [Him] to *look upon* [her] *only in the Face of Jesus* and in his heart burning with love.”<sup>88</sup>

Numerous scholars have traced the unfavourable context within which Thérèse's spiritual life flourished. Commenting on the change of her name on the day she took her habit, Patricia O'Connor explains how she, “in a convent steeped in abstract, elaborate, prayers, mortifications and the justice of a stern God, Thérèse turned to one strong, concrete, personal image: the human face of the suffering Christ.”<sup>89</sup> In general, the community was characterised by a certain tension – “a pure conflict, sublime, but real nonetheless” – between a bérullian ascetic rigour proposed by Mother Gonzague and a de Salesian abandonment proposed by Mother Agnes of Jesus and Marie Genevieve<sup>90</sup> resulting in two visions and diverse ways of governing the monastery, one in which “lack of culture, psychological illnesses, and the unhealthy environment did not favour human relationships.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ms B, 3v.

<sup>87</sup> Bro, *St Thérèse of Lisieux*, 75.

<sup>88</sup> PR 6, 1r. “The double nature of the person of Jesus Christ the Son makes it possible for God and humanity to behold each other in the act of ‘looking’, ‘seeing’, ‘observing’, or ‘fixing the gaze’ upon Christ. The seer beholds the object of his vision. From God's perspective, to gaze at the Son, ultimately means to see reflected in him divinity and to behold humanity. From humanity's perspective, to gaze at the Son, ultimately means to see reflected in him perfect humanity and to behold the divinity”: Charlò Camilleri, “To be is to Gaze and be Gazed at: Vision in Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's Mysticism,” in *Studies in Spirituality* 19 (2009): 38.

<sup>89</sup> Patricia O'Connor, *Thérèse of Lisieux: A Biography* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1983), 76.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Giorgio Papàsogli, *Teresa di Lisieux*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Rome: Città Nuova, 1990), 444-455.

<sup>91</sup> Gaucher, *La passion de Thérèse de Lisieux*, 33.



The proposal of love for God and her sisters in community – or *confidence*, as Conrad de Meester would call it – is a constant in Thérèse's life, even during her darkest of trials wherein "she enters into a 'dark tunnel', fog surrounds her, envelopes her, penetrates her soul and hides the comforting image of the land of light, Heaven. The thought of heaven, up until then so sweet, becomes 'a source of struggle and torment [...] a wall which rises to the very heavens and shuts out the starry sky.'"<sup>92</sup> Measuring more accurately "the heroic character of her love",<sup>93</sup> the saint writes to her Prioress Mother Marie de Gonzague, "Never have I felt before how sweet and merciful the Lord really is, for He did not send me this trial until the moment I was capable of bearing it; a little earlier I truly believe it would have plunged me into a state of discouragement."<sup>94</sup> It seems that the heart of her trial of faith was to learn the true meaning of Christian love:

I understood how imperfect was my love for my Sisters. I saw that I did not love them *as God loves them*. I understand now that charity consists in bearing with the faults of others, in not being surprised at their weakness, in being edified by the small acts of virtue we see them practice. But I understood most of all that charity must not remain hidden in the bottom of the heart. ... "No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel basket, but upon the lamp stand so as to give light to ALL in the house." It seems that this lamp represents charity, which must enlighten and rejoice not only those who are dearest to us but ALL who are in the house without distinction.<sup>95</sup>

Thérèse takes after her spiritual master, John of the Cross, in considering the heart of Christian love in terms of "knowing the world through God."<sup>96</sup> Thérèse transcends, sees beyond the concrete difficulties of human relationships to see in her Sisters "God [who] dwells secretly in all souls and is hidden in their

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<sup>92</sup> Conrad de Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the "Way of Spiritual Childhood" of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. Susan Conroy (New York: Alba House, 2005), 184.

<sup>93</sup> De Meester, *The Power of Confidence*, 185.

<sup>94</sup> Ms C, 7v.

<sup>95</sup> Ms C, 12r.

<sup>96</sup> "[...] Aunque es verdad que echa allí de ver el alma que estas cosas son distintas de Dios, en cuanto tienen ser criado, y las ve en él con su fuerza, raíz y vigor, es tanto lo que conoce ser Dios en su ser con infinita eminencia todas estas cosas, que las conoce mejor en su ser que en las mismas cosas. Y éste es el deleite grande de este recuerdo: conocer por Dios las criaturas, y no por las criaturas a Dios; que es conocer los efectos por su causa y no la causa por los efectos, que es conocimiento trasero, y esotro esencial": Juan de la Cruz, 4 Ll (B), 5, in *Obras Completas*, 1030.

substance.”<sup>97</sup> She confides in Mother Gonzague of her incapability of such a degree of love; she could only love her Sisters “if Jesus loved them in me.”<sup>98</sup>

Thérèse thus thrusts herself into practical acts of love. As Abbé Pierre Descouvement says, “Thérèse lets her feather flow”<sup>99</sup> to entrust us with all the exigencies of fraternal charity that she discovered by meditating on the Gospel<sup>100</sup> giving us the following Decalogue in Manuscript C: do not judge (12v-13v); do not give in to your antipathies (13v-14r); do not justify yourself (14v-15r); glorify yourself of your weakness; love your enemies (15v); give to whosoever asks of you (15v-16r); if one takes what is yours, do not ask it back (16r-v); give without expecting anything back (18r-v); your spiritual graces do not belong to you (19r-v); do not be jealous of God’s ways (20r).<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusion

The exposition of Jesus as the “Last Man” by the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in his *Introduction to Christianity* exemplifies this Nietzschean-Thérésian *dasein* which we have called “Spirit”. Ratzinger writes:

[Jesus is] the man in whom the breakthrough out of the limited scope of humanity, out of its monadic enclosure, has occurred; the man in whom personalisation and socialisation no longer exclude but support each other; the man in whom perfect unity and perfect individuality are one; the man in whom humanity comes in contact with its future [...] the [Johannine] crucifixion appears as a process of opening in which the scattered man-monads are drawn into the embrace of Jesus Christ, into the wide span of his outstretched arms.<sup>102</sup>

Also, seeking to work out a post-liberal Catholicism, Robert Barron puts forward an idea of Christianity that is essentially non-competitive, relational, and non-invasive. Taking into consideration the “modern valorisation of the prerogatives of the modern individual and [his] freedom” as well as the vicinity of the Christian God of love, his view seems to illustrate well the aforementioned

<sup>97</sup> John of the Cross, “4<sup>o</sup> Flame,” XIV, in *Collected Works*, 713.

<sup>98</sup> Ms C, 12v.

<sup>99</sup> In Ms C, 12v-20r.

<sup>100</sup> Pierre Descouvement, *Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux, Docteur de l’Église: Guide de lecture* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 271.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 271-274.

<sup>102</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 234-43.

Spirit – hence, the mutual communication of autonomy and relatedness – in terms of the Incarnation of the Son, the metaphysical relationship and “mutual indwelling” of the Trinity, and the participative nature of creation in a “coinherent nexus”. His line of thought, therefore, illustrates in a particularly new language the inter-connectivity between the *possibility of a mutual relationship between God and man* (brought about by the “non-violent” Incarnation of the Son of God), the *restorative forgiveness* (of God to man as well as man to himself) brought about by the “surprise of the Paschal Mystery”, and the *participation of all creatures in divinity*, which are essentially the elementary foundations of the Nietzschean-Thérésian Spirit we have sought to propose.<sup>103</sup>

Therefore, man today, as has always been the case, is driven by a need for autonomy as well as for community, which is mystical in its essence. By now the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century motto “unity in diversity” has become a classic but it captures the spirit that has been the object of this study. Unity does not equate uniformity and diversity does not equate exclusion. The great message of the Nietzschean-Thérésian synthesis which we have proposed seems to put light on the balance for which man is to strive. Be they proactive or reactionary, the words of Nietzsche and Thérèse are very much relevant today because they “testify to God’s ‘absence’, to the spiritual dilemma that man faces”,<sup>104</sup> no longer in contrasting ways but complementarily so as to reconsider the nature of an intelligible quest for the contribution of spirituality today. In Bro’s words, the trial that man faces is whether or not to “receive, accept, and love to the end the life that God proposes [...] it is no longer a question of being strong but of being humble enough for love to triumph in our life.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Towards a Postliberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2008), 16-18.

<sup>104</sup> Noelle Hausman, *Frédéric Nietzsche, Thérèse de Lisieux: Deux poétiques de la modernité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), intro.

<sup>105</sup> Bro, *St Thérèse of Lisieux*, 227.