

ST THERESE OF LISIEUX'S PERCEPTION OF GOD

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(i) The way her writing can inform us of how we come to view God

(ii) In this light, what might we learn from Thérèse today?

It is probably true to say that, at the level of 'popular' faith, Thérèse of Lisieux has been adopted by many as their 'go-to' person-in-heaven. As such, she has been experienced as someone who bestowed special, even miraculous, favours—something she gave permission for in her lifetime.¹ However, here we're not talking about a beyond-death Thérèse we might have personally experienced.² The Thérèse I will speak about is from research, specifically with respect to the feelings and events she recorded about her life.

It is well-known that millions have visited Thérèse's relics over the years. Why people pursue relics is not something I will address here—except that Thérèse herself took part in this pursuit. She kept bits and pieces from places and people from the past as souvenirs, feeling that by touching them she would be imbued with some of their qualities.³

What is Thérèse known for? Often referred to as 'the little flower,' Thérèse was a Carmelite nun, canonized in 1925, quite soon after her death at 24, from tuberculosis, in 1897. Her fame was brought about mainly by the widespread (and unexpected) impact of her spiritual autobiography *Story of a Soul*. This manuscript was written under obedience to her prioress, who also was her biological sister. Its impact, together with its testimony to Thérèse's holiness and her on-going influence in people's faith and their relationship with God, led John Paul II to declaring her a Doctor of the Church for her 'Mastery of the Spiritual

Life'.

To show Thérèse's developing perception of God (influencing how she viewed herself) in her writing, and what we might learn from her, I will give a brief biography that includes her theological context, then make a comment on the literary form of her work *Story of a Soul* and follow with an observation about hagiography in general. That will lead to a short discussion on Thérèse's psychological development, the value of her writing with respect to this, and what that might mean for us in our faith life and our understanding of God.

Biography

We know a lot about Thérèse because she wrote prolifically—as did her mother and sisters, both in and out of the convent. The youngest of nine children of whom only five survived, Thérèse was born in 1873 to Louis Martin (a watchmaker) and Zélie (a maker of fine Alençon lace). Both Louis and Zélie, before marrying, had attempted to enter the religious life, but were refused; Louis was informed that his latin was insufficient, and Zélie was supplied no reason at all. When they married and children arrived, in the background was something of the desire to retrieve an opportunity denied them: the ideals, and romance, of being a religious. Monastic ideals permeated their daily living. (Something that contributed to their recent canonisation, on 18th October 2015.) Their home was run according to these ideals. Louis and Zélie, and whichever children were old enough, attended mass early each morning, celebrated feast days with decorated home altars, walked feast-day

processions, and visited the needy with gifts of food. Louis further took part in Church meetings and pilgrimages. Later when Zélie became more pragmatic due to the demands of her business, Thérèse's older sisters Marie and Pauline (who attended a convent school where their aunt Sister Dosithee resided and worked as a nun) served as role models. Thérèse writes she wanted to be just like them.⁴

Tragically, the Martin family suffered the trauma of losing four children (Louis, in addition, lost a young sister) as at this time infant mortality rate was high. Thérèse herself nearly died in infancy. When Zélie stopped breast-feeding her, Thérèse developed what resembled life-threatening gastroenteritis. She was sent away for the next fifteen months of her life to a wet-nurse. It is interesting to note that Zélie travelled alone at night twenty miles to a farming village in Semallé to make this a possibility.⁵

Thérèse thrived in Semallé, experiencing the abundance of breast-milk and outdoor village life. It is better appreciated how this time with Rose Taillé will be pivotal in Thérèse's development—as will become clearer later. Further, one cannot help but note the contrast between this more 'earthy' phase of her life and the middle-class 'churchiness' of her biological family (a possible source of difference between Thérèse and her sisters). When she returned home, she readjusted and spent another two and a half years with her mother, before Zélie died from breast-cancer (soon after a painful and disappointing journey to Lourdes). Thus, after a fifteen-month separation from her mother, Thérèse's mother then died when Thérèse was only four years old.

In the absence of her mother (and Rose Taillé), Thérèse attached herself to her sisters, viewing as mother figures first Pauline, and then Marie, but one by one they left to enter the local Carmelite convent at Lisieux. For Thérèse, visiting her sisters proved to be even more wrenching than their leaving, as during their visits Pauline seemed to forget how

special Thérèse was to her. In the psychological language of Attachment theory of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth,⁶ one might state that Thérèse struggled to form secure attachments, needed for 'self-forgetful' exploration. In *Story of a Soul* she writes that attending school was a misery—from the age of eight up to thirteen, she lacked resilience and the ability to be light-hearted.⁷ At ten years of age she fell sick, and lived in a kind of delirium for six weeks. In an article on her development, Vitz and Lynch show in the light of Bowlby's attachment theory that Thérèse suffered from 'Separation Anxiety'—validating the sense of weakness that she describes in her writing.⁸

Not having the benefit of this theory and its psychological terms, Thérèse employs spiritual language to describe her griefs, joys, challenges and successes, inheriting the Carmelite psychological tradition of St John of the Cross. Thus we do have a language here, and Thérèse's psycho-spiritual self-evaluation makes for good reading, especially when illuminated by insights from cotemporary psychological theory.

Context

Thérèse was a person of her time—contending with Jansenism's God, portrayed as stern and scrupulous, requiring persons to ascertain whether, and in what way, they were predestined by grace. If you had a vocation as a vowed religious (discovered through signs, personally or via others), you might find an original way of expressing this—the prevailing religious aim being to assuage God's wrath directed against a secular population who cared little for poor suffering Jesus (images and verse of this time often depicted Jesus as wan and effeminate)⁹. Waning Catholicism in France was, among Catholics, understandably, evaluated with passion. Popular at this time was the devotion of St Margaret Mary Alacoque (newly beatified) to the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus' (to allay God's anger

toward ungodly France).¹⁰ Popular, too, was the young Joan of Arc, who in the 15th century returned French territory to Godly France.¹¹

Hagiography

Recent research has highlighted that Thérèse wrote about herself through the elements of the hagiography of her time (narratives that elevated persons through selecting certain personality traits and life events).¹² The saintly person, in some sense alone in the world, is portrayed as an innocent soul whose every good action in the face of various oppositions and difficult circumstances is observed by God—in the form of a benevolent, omnipotent, parental narrator—vindicating their every step. Today we might mock such narratives, viewing them as naive, but such writing, beyond its romantic strokes, can be explained in developmental terms.

Such hagiographical narratives may be viewed as constructed around the 'true self' who is under threat. The self under threat wants their good intentions recognized. In effect, they are saying: 'I'm the one who tried hard to do well, but my efforts went unnoticed; however, I did not give up.' The hagiographer transfers, in no small way, concern for the saint's plight onto a watching, rescuing, omnipotent other, thus expressing the sufferer's profound desire to be acknowledged.¹³ Constructing her own hagiography in *Story of a Soul*, Thérèse's story could be summarised as: 'I am a lover of Jesus. My expressions of love toward Jesus seem pretty ordinary, but a lot goes into them'.¹⁴ An ambitious streak leads her to declare that she is great, not in expressing love best of all, but in her desire to express love. Her desire is bigger than anyone else's. To use a simple analogy: if her desire to express love were currency, she'd be a billionaire—her desires are 'immense'; they 'reach even into infinity'; and the object of her love, God, she intuitively, is very pleased with this.¹⁵

Another feature of hagiographic writing is



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a sense of 'everyone is watching me.' We find this in Thérèse's writing. She feels endowed with immense purpose—self-consciously wearing it as a gift for all—in a vocation she invented for herself in response to a 'divine call': to be a victim of God's mercy, rather than of justice, the prevailing fashion (generally interpreted as wrath).¹⁶ This represented a shift from what was accepted in her time, from seeing God as to be feared, from avoiding hellfire as a motivating force, and from expiatory work as necessarily involving (self-imposed) suffering.¹⁷ Her unique assuaging of Jesus' suffering at first entailed seeking to endure pain so that others would, unknowingly, benefit from his mercy, but, later, it involved a reversal: allowing Jesus to accommodate her weakness would demonstrate her gratitude for his mercy.¹⁸ Thérèse's use of ironies, e.g., of reversal, underlines their importance in hagiographies. The weak one is strong; the young one is wise;¹⁹ the insignificant one is enormously significant—found in Biblical narratives and later stated explicitly by the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12: 10b.²⁰

We find, then, in Thérèse's writing a sense that all are watching her, that all revolves around her. While this may sound egotistical, such disclosure to her reader, which includes God as a listening participant, engages the issue of how one might possess a healthy self. When our value is felt to be eroded, a significant primary other capable of defending us (God) might demonstrate that they value us as a precious distinct other. She writes

about her Clothing Day:

What thoughtfulness on the part of Jesus! Anticipating the desires of his fiancée, He gave her snow! What mortal bridegroom, no matter how powerful he may be, could make snow fall from heaven to charm his beloved? Perhaps people wondered and asked themselves this question. What is certain, though, is that many considered the snow on my Clothing Day as a little miracle and the whole town was astonished.²¹

Early on in Carmel, in being given lowly tasks, Thérèse was given to think that she was of little consequence. There was talk of her not having a true vocation (she simply followed her sisters, she was the prioress's favourite, and, worst, by entering the convent she broke her father's heart),²² so Thérèse had a need to be acknowledged in order 'to be real'. This was a matter of survival. Before suffering loss and the anxiety of separation, she experienced being the centre of attention at home with her family, and she eventually retrieves this through attention from her biological sisters in the Convent. The tenacity Thérèse's expresses in her retrieval (and its accompanying hope) may be traced to the strength of her primary-care relationships, with Rose and Zélie, that informed her perception of God as lovingly indulgent. When she discovers that she is suffering from tuberculosis, she interprets this as her being so special to God that God has called her home to Himself.²³ Perhaps now her sisters will see how special she is.

Poignant, yet helpful to us, is the transparency of Thérèse's self-development in her writing.²⁴ We read that as a child she is fêted, but when she loses her childish cuteness, she's overlooked.²⁵ After a time of intense suffering, she retrieves this attention, which embodies a homecoming of sorts. In a book *The End of the Present World* (by Charles Arminjon) owned by her father, she discovers images (that remain with her) of an ultimate home-coming: heaven as a family reunion around the hearth while snow falls outside,

where God the great father listens to saintly travellers tell their stories of spiritual conquests in the world below, and pronounces 'well done'. All are blissful united harmony in front of the crackling fire.²⁶

In these, Thérèse's psychological vulnerability is exposed to the reader. If we were seeking to measure spiritual maturity by employing markers of healthy self-development, such as aimed by Joann Wolski Conn,²⁷ using demonstration of confident trust as a gauge, Thérèse may be described as spiritually mature. Additionally, Thérèse appears to display a psychological acuity when she observes, in Augustinian humility, that all that she has, and is, is first given by God—meaning she feels confident trust is not something she could generate independently.²⁸ (We discover, however, that Thérèse does not fully appreciate this as a universal principle when she asks others to also express confident trust²⁹ without sufficient regard for their emotional-psychological capital as first 'given by God'). But our purpose here is not to measure Thérèse's spiritual maturity. She perhaps remains in a state of self-absorption, simply reflecting her circumstance of being in need of a watching other to bring her to psychological health.³⁰

Her Little Way

Thérèse is perhaps best known for her assertion that each person's efforts in the name of love—no matter how small—are of value to God. The expression 'Little way' (attributed as unique to Thérèse) was commonly employed among Carmelites of her time and earlier times, especially in obituaries called *circulaires*.³¹ It was a bit like saying 'I did it my way!' except the diminutive effect of 'little' lent a tone of humility. The aim was to suggest, if not an original path, a distinctive one in spiritual terms, which nevertheless conformed to the formula of noting features praiseworthy in the Carmelite life. Thus

Thérèse's little way (*petite voie* or *petit chemin*) did not specifically refer to the notion of spiritual childhood. However, accepting a child's qualities was part of her way. The metaphor considered unique to her was that God might lift her up to himself as an elevator lifts persons, bypassing stairs—good news for those who cannot negotiate stairs such as a child or an invalid!³²

So, what else was distinctive and inspiring in Thérèse's way? To envisage God as valuing all our efforts no matter how small, or ordinary, to love Him and our neighbour, by self-effacement, especially by enduring other persons' irritating actions and little injustices. These Thérèse readily encountered, being the youngest (from her teens and into early twenties) in a convent, which at times resembled a geriatric facility (the unreasonableness of some elderly nuns perhaps symptomatic of the onset of dementia). For example, Thérèse describes how when she helps a particularly demanding aged sister, and is rewarded by irritability, this in God's eyes resembles a scene from grand 'feast' in a society 'drawing room.'³³

Importantly, from the bank of her life experience, and her spiritual imagination, Thérèse describes a Father-God before whom we should not cower ('run back from' in Jansenist fashion), but, rather, spontaneously run toward. Today, God continues to be portrayed as exacting when we assert God wants us to conceive of him as this, and not that, or expects this from us, and not that, when God is bigger than our narrowing projections. Ultimately, Thérèse did practice resignation of the will to Church teaching regarding God's character, but not in a spirit of timidity or passivity; it was, rather, through a lens of confidence in God's love for her as being like her early parental experience.

Links to Psychoanalysis and Developmental Theory

Thérèse's writing tells us something about

how we interpret our lives with God in mind. Psychological insights into human development since her time have allowed deeper understanding of her spiritual activity. For example, it has been shown that before we come into formal contact with the God of our tradition, we bring our own God—constructed from our experience of parental care.³⁴ Indeed, we arrive at childhood having constructed a map of relationships in our mind—a map of how the world works and what to expect from others.³⁵ In our faith life, we reconfigure that map—taking early relationships and their images, via the objects and persons that represent these (*e.g.*, parents and, importantly, the mother), and draft them into other forms (named 'transitional objects' in post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory). In this interior map, God becomes the guardian, and our quest is to develop into our true selves—in harmony with God. We interact with this map through prayer, where we readjust our expectations in the relational sphere, to express, and experience, hope and courage where previously we lacked hope and courage.

This way of looking at things tells us a lot about a person's emotional health. So frank and transparent is Thérèse's writing that we can see the God she brings to that of her tradition. Her God has the elements of a hard-working mother who sacrifices a lot for her children and husband, and of an often-absent father, who when present, is extravagant in his affection and gifts. Through her mother's correspondence relating how Thérèse was indulged emotionally and materially (in being readily forgiven, and supplied things that brought her joy—*e.g.*, hot chocolate, a swing, a puppy), we can readily identify young Thérèse's God as correspondingly quick to forgive, and powerfully provident (just as Zélie effectively impacted Thérèse's environment in response to her requests). Later on, when we find Thérèse's attentive, self-giving God often absent, this may be seen as reflecting Zélie's after death absence, or Louis' absence due to his travel and staying at the Belvedere (his

spiritual hide-away). Next to affirming what the Church taught about God's character, Thérèse includes, consistent with her early felt experience, the idea that after her death God would empower her to fulfil prayers addressed to her,³⁶ confident that in her eager responsiveness to him, her desires were in unity with God's will. In assenting to formal teaching about God's character, many of Thérèse's contemporaries were subdued and unimaginative in their faith projections. Thérèse stood out in her irrepressible confidence.

Why was Thérèse able to express such confidence in God's mercy for her—was it because she remembered instances of it, and longed for it again for herself? Her primordial experiences of being loved (Rose, mother, father's dotting) and of 'mercy' did give her a sense of inner strength and of being a 'true' self, but her experience of parental abandonment also formed part of how she experienced God. She later felt herself in a 'dark tunnel'; the thought of heaven as 'no longer anything but the cause of struggle and torment.'³⁷ A sense of inner strength and of being a self meant that she could sustain these 'absences'—even absence of God. We find this phenomenon exemplified in some other prominent spiritual figures. An example of childhood experience influencing her sense of God, in both positive presence and unfathomable painful absence, may be seen in Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. While expressing magnanimity and business acumen (on behalf of God) in her spiritual endeavours, she also increasingly felt that God deserted her (an experience of 'darkness, coldness and emptiness...' not unlike the 'dark night of the soul,' an expression from St John of the Cross).³⁸ This corresponds to elements in her early life. Her father, a successful businessman

who was often away on business, died when she was 'about eight,' whereupon her mother capably took charge. The qualities of generous presence and profound absence reappear in her faith-life. Such observation is not meant to reduce spiritual journeys to a sum of influences, but to find how through prayer we transform absence and loss into a constructive self-sense that fosters hope.

What might Thérèse give us today?

Thérèse's writing, in today's somewhat less religious world, remains valuable because it allows us insights into value acquisition, and into how persons change their outlook through prayer, such as through the kind of interaction Thérèse had with God. Unfortunately, there's still a perception that psychology and spirituality, rather than paralleling, or mutually informing each other, oppose each other in their descriptions of causes and solutions, for fear of psychological explanations finding God superfluous.

From our discussion here, I suggest we steer the two disciplines to speak to each other in a mutually enhancing way. An important connection between Thérèse's psychological and spiritual trajectories is that the more Thérèse felt her limitations (and she felt them acutely—first in her school years, then in Carmel, and finally in her sickness), the more she felt God accommodate her, lift her up, and compensate for her lack. It was as if her limitations, felt to be caused by God, indebted, or compelled God to come to her aid. She found this liberating, and was audacious in her expectation that God would respond. Thérèse hoped and trusted God against evidence pointing otherwise. She felt human limitations and failures were, in God's eyes, assets, attractors of God's love and mercy.

NOTES

1. Such invitations (to request favours from her after her death) are attributed to Thérèse by her

sister Pauline in *Her Last Conversations*. However, as they are filtered through a hearer, some Thérésian

scholars, such as Jean François Six, *Light of the Night: The Last Eighteen Months of the Life of Thérèse of Lisieux* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1996) dispute their authenticity. Nevertheless, invitations are recorded in Thérèse's correspondence to the seminarian Maurice Bellière.

2. This article develops an address presented on 22 August, 2014, at 'Fridays at Fairweathers', a bi-monthly scholarly address at The University of Notre Dame Fremantle.

3. Thérèse collected objects when she travelled to Rome at the age of 14. Thérèse of Lisieux, translator John Clarke OCD, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 130-133, 139.

4. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 20. 'You were my ideal. I wanted to be like you...' Dosithée, Zélie's older sister, belonged to the Visitation convent at Le Mans. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 2.

5. The name of her wet nurse was Rose Taillé.

6. John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth 1991.

7. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 53-93. In this passage, some markers of Asperger's or Autism spectrum disorder may be observed, in Thérèse's preference for telling stories, collecting and imparting knowledge, and concerning herself with objects, rather than participating in games. She tends to aim for correctness, and competes rather than interacts.

8. Vitz, Paul C. and Lynch, Christina P. 'Thérèse of Lisieux from the Perspective of Attachment Theory and Separation Anxiety.' *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 17/1 (2007), 61-80.

9. For example, see popular versions of Pompeo Batoni's 1767 depiction of the 'Sacred Heart of Jesus.' Images of Romantic heroes like this provoked disdain from such as Friedrich Nietzsche.

10. Margaret Alacoque was a visitation nun from the late 17th century. Her devotion stemmed from visions she had.

11. Interest in Joan of Arc was rising. She would be beatified just 12 years after Thérèse's death.

12. See, for example, hagiographies of the saints Thérèse invested in: Théophanie Vénard ([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_\(1913\)/Bl._Th%C3%A9ophane_V%C3%A9nard](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Bl._Th%C3%A9ophane_V%C3%A9nard)); for Joan of Arc, see Maree-Edmée Pau, *Histoire de Notre Petit Sœur Jeanne D'Arc*, also Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (UK:

Oxford University Press, 1981).

13. For this sense (narrating other persons), see, for example, St John of Egypt, *Lives of the Saints*, by Alban Butler, Benziger Bros. ed. [1894], at sacred-texts.com. See also 'Humility' in *Spiritual Diary: Selected Sayings and Examples of Saints* (St Paul Books & Media; 2nd edition, 1990).

14. See 'Manuscript B', Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 187-200.

15. *Story of a Soul*, 192, 215. See also: Conrad De Meester OCD, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the 'Way of Spiritual Childhood' of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1998), 195, 201, 274-5.

16. See 'Act of Oblation to Merciful Love,' Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 180, 276- 277.

17. Conrad de Meester, *The Power of Confidence: Genesis and Structure of the 'Way of Spiritual Childhood'* (Staten Island, NY, Alba House, 1998), 134ff; Ida Görres *The Hidden Face* (New York: Pantheon, 1959), 297-306; John Clarke, Translator, *St Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1997), 127,130,178., Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 159. Thérèse ceased wearing a prickle-cross which she found it distracted her from prayer.

18. Jesus 'meets only the ungrateful and indifferent...' Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 189. See also 180.

19. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 105.

20. This is also a Romantic device: the innocent primitive one has the truth naturally (as did Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes). Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (New York: Penguin, Compass, 2000), 145-150, especially 150.

21. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 155-156. Also, '...everyone seemed to think it so wonderful to see such a handsome old man with such a little daughter that they ...'41.

22. Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux: God's Gentle Warrior* (Oxford, New York: University Press, 2006), 47, 56. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume I, 1877-1890, translated by John Clarke OCD (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1982), 416.

23. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 210-211: She experienced the coughing up of blood as '... a sweet and distant murmur that announced the bridegroom's arrival.'

24. Nevin aptly entitles a chapter of his book:

- 'Thérèse Writes Her Self.' Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 161- 206.
25. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 75, 84, 88, 91, 93, 97-98.
26. Charles Arminjon, translator, Susan Conroy, *The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of Future Life* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2008), 229-230.
27. See Conn's discussion on Thérèse's spiritual maturity. Conn, Joann Wolski, 'Rereading Spiritual Classics Thérèse of Lisieux: Far from Spiritual Childhood,' *Spiritus* 6/1 (2006), 68-89.
28. Thérèse relates this helplessness (because God gives all) mostly in terms of her felt-desires to love. It can however be extended to include qualities of sure conviction, of clear vision, as given entirely by God, through her writing around her trial of faith. See Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 211-213.
29. Thérèse suggests to Bellière to act with confident trust just as she would, but this request may be unreasonable given his own limiting familial experiences. See John Clarke, translator, *Letters of St Thérèse of Lisieux: General Correspondence Volume II, 1890-1897* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1988) 1163-5 in reply to Bellière, 1156-8.
30. Further, some have observed that the 'largeness' of a person's interior life seems to also correspond to a sense of alone-ness and separateness that is a marker of Asperger's syndrome.
31. Nevin, *God's Gentle Warrior*, 63-66; 147-159.
32. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 207.
33. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 248-249.
34. Ana Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 8.
35. L Alan Sroufe, *Emotional Development: The Organization of emotional Life in the Early Years* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 230. See also John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and The Study of Religion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 121-122.
36. Thérèse's invitations to ask for after death-favours are found in John Clarke, translator, *Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1997), [see 119, 214] and in her correspondence to the seminarian Maurice Bellière.
37. Clarke, trans, *Story of a Soul*, 211-12.
38. Thomas M. King SJ, 'Endmatter: Believers and Their Disbelief,' *Zygon* Vol. 42, no 3 (September 2007), 782-3. For biographical material, see 'Political Assassination' in Renzo Allegri, *Conversations with Mother Teresa: A Personal Portrait of the Saint, Her Mission and Her Great Love for God* (Maryland: The Word Among Us Press, 2011).

How shall I show my love is proved by deeds? Well—the little child will strew flowers...she will embalm the Divine Throne with their fragrance, will sing with silvery voice the canticle of love. Yes, my Beloved, it is thus that my life's brief day shall be spent before Thee. No other means have I of proving my love than to strew flowers; that is, to let no little sacrifice escape me, not a look, not a word, to avail of the very least actions and do them for Love. I wish to suffer for Love's sake and for Love's sake even to rejoice; thus shall I strew flowers. Not one shall I find without shedding its petals for Thee...and then I will sing, I will always sing, even if I must gather my roses in the very midst of thorns—and the longer and sharper the thorns the sweeter shall be my song.

—Story of A Soul, Chapter XI