

Wu, Ching-hsiung.
The science
ADY 3803

37103

THE SCIENCE OF JOY

科學之樂

A STUDY IN THE TEACHINGS OF
THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

吳經熊

By John C.H. WU (吳經熊)



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

<https://archive.org/details/scienceoflovestu00wuji>

THE SCIENCE OF LOVE

A Study in the Teachings of
THERESE OF LISIEUX

BY JOHN C. H. WU
Noted Convert Scholar of China

PUBLISHED IN U.S.A.

November 1, 1941

BY

OUR SUNDAY VISITOR PRESS
HUNTINGTON, INDIANA



Deacidified

To the Holy Trinity,
to Whom I owe everything,
this first confession of my Faith
is dedicated
with filial gratitude and love.



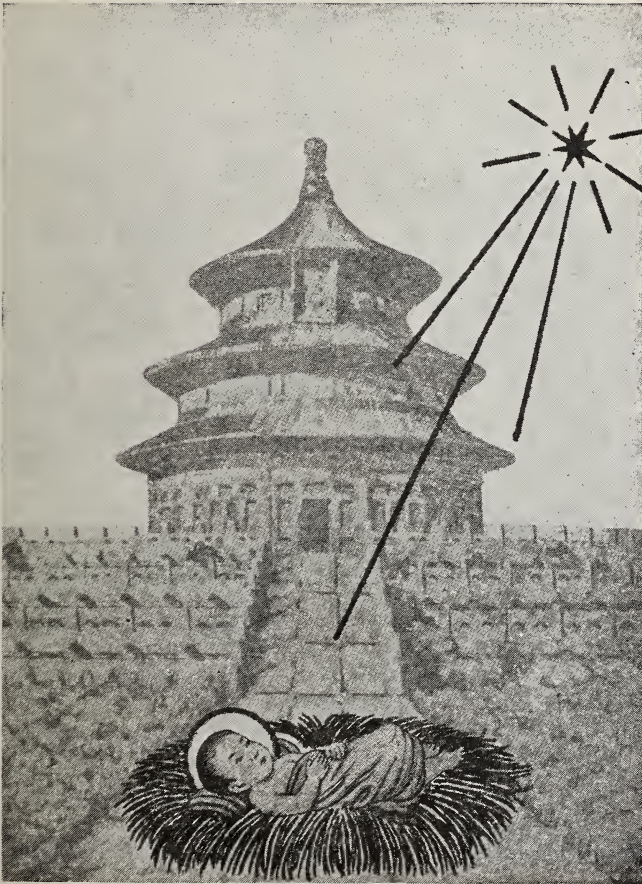
FCU - GI - PA

S. TERESA DEL BAMBINO GESÙ

© Pd. in Italy

O. 14

Chinese portrait of St. Therese of the Child Jesus,



The Temple of Heaven in Peking, China.

Nihil Obstat:

REV. T. E. DILLON

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:

✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.

Bishop of Fort Wayne

Table Of Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction	11
Preface	15
Love and Science	19
Some Types of Saints: Martha and Magdalen	22
Love: Natural and Divine	26
Sincerity as the Soul of Love	30
God as a Lover	33
The Martyrdom of Love	36
“A Baby Who Is An Old Man”	39
Emancipation Through Love	44
The Art of Life	48
A Self-Revelation	52
The Logic of Love	55
Life and Death	58

Introduction

“The mercies of God I shall sing forever!” (Psalm 88, 1). These words were carved on the tombstone of St. Therese in the Cemetery of Lisieux and epitomize perfectly the life and ideals of the great Saint. They also form a fitting introduction to this essay on the science of love as conceived by the Little Flower, as St. Therese is more lovingly known.

The author of these beautiful pages, Dr. John C. H. Wu, ⁽¹⁾ who was converted to the Catholic

(1) One of China's most brilliant legal minds, Dr. Wu is also a noted scholar and the author of many well-known books, both legal and literary.

Although only 42, he has held among other, during a distinguished public career, the posts of President of the Provisional Court (1929); Adviser on Municipal Affairs to the Shanghai Municipal Council (1931); and was Vice-Chairman of the Commission for Drafting a Permanent Constitution of China.

He has been a Member of the Legislative Yuan since 1933, and is, concurrently, the Chairman of the Law Codification Committee of the Legislative Yuan and Chief of the Editorial Department of the Sun Yat-sen Institute for the Advancement of Culture and Education.

He first studied law at the Comparative Law School of China at Shanghai, graduating with honors in 1921 with an L. B. Then he entered the University of Michigan, U.S.A., receiving his J. D. degree in 1922. His work was rewarded by a travelling fellowship in international law, given by the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace. This carried him to the University of the Sorbonne, and later, the University of Berlin.

He resigned the Presidency of the Provisional Court to prepare lectures to be delivered at Northwestern University Law School, Chicago, as a holder of the Rosenthal Foundation Lectureship. He also accepted an invitation to join the faculty of the Harvard Law School as a lecturer on comparative law. The illness of his wife prevented him from carrying it out and he returned to China in 1930.

Faith in the winter of 1937 through the influence of St. Therese of Lisieux, can justly join the little Saint in her pean of praise for the mercy of God. For it is to God's infinite mercy and love that he owes that wondrous peace which his soul now possesses through the revelation of the great truth on which the Church founded by Christ was built.

Adopting Protestantism about 20 years ago, Dr. Wu soon discovered the inconsistency and confusion of its vague theology, founded on the free interpretation of the Bible, and its appalling lack of unity and certainty. His mind, slowly but inevitably, wandered away unsatisfied and darkened by the shadow of uncertainty and doubt. He drifted dangerously towards atheism. But when his faith was at its lowest ebb, God's merciful hand lifted the veil and brought light to his soul.

A short pamphlet on St. Therese casually picked up gave him the key to the hidden treasures of a Faith which knows no doubt and brings human souls in loving confidence into the arms of God as into the arms of a most tender mother. Then followed the reading, also casual, of Newman's essay on the Infallibility of the Pope and the Church. This banished all his final doubts. It soon became evident to Dr. Wu that a Church which had produced an Augustine of Hippo, a Dante, a Pascal and a Thomas Aquinas, was the only logical and traditional inheritor of Christ's Church. His entry into it was a foregone conclusion.

In the spiritual school of St. Therese, Dr. Wu discovered that the true Catholic conception of life is not, as it is sometimes falsely represented, a mere bargain with God, or a dry series of "don't's" with heavy sanctions, but a simple, complete and loving

surrender of the creature to its Creator, a falling in love of man with God, and, to express it in his own words, "a kiss for a kiss, or rather a small kiss for a big kiss" between the soul and its Redeemer.

It is this keynote of a life of love which impressed him most in the writings of St. Therese and led him to embrace wholeheartedly the Religion that has given the world the sweet Little Flower.

Therefore, when one of his colleagues on the Board of Editors of the T'ien Hsia Monthly, (an English-language publication, which aims at bringing about a better cultural understanding between China and the West), asked him to write an article, he found he could choose no better subject than his newly-embraced Faith. The result was first published in the April, 1940 issue of the T'ien Hsia Monthly, which is published under the auspices of the Sun Yat-sen Institute for the Advancement of Culture and Education, Chungking.

The reception accorded it is ample justification, if any were needed, for this booklet. In passages of surpassing beauty, we find not a theoretical study of a mystic conception of life, nor the dry analysis of a religious system, but a deeply moving interpretation of the way of Christian love. It also reveals a profound insight into a soul vibrating with life and inflamed with love, a soul so deeply human and yet so divinely supernatural: the soul of Therese of Lisieux.

In a previous article, Dr. Wu had written: "I have been searching all my life for a mother, and I have found her in the Catholic Church." And he has found in her not only a mother, but also the greatest gift a mother can give: *love*.

This inspired essay is his song of gratitude to

the mercy of God, Who has raised him from the depths and darkness of atheism to the heights and radiant light of Catholicism.

He may well sing in unison with Saint Therese these beautiful lines from Fra Luis de Leon's poem, "The Life of the Blessed":—

"From His sweet lute flow forth
Immortal harmonies of power to still
All passions born of earth,
And draw the ardent will
Its destiny of goodness to fulfil.

"Might but a little part
A wandering breath of that high melody
Descend into my heart
And change it till it be
Transformed and swallowed up, O Love, in
Thee!"

N. Maestrini

Preface

I heard the name of Therese of Lisieux for the first time at the home of my dear friend, Mr. Yuan Kia-hoang, a most zealous Catholic. In the Winter of 1937, I was living in Mr. Yuan's house, and I was impressed by the way the Yuans recited their family Rosary. Seeing a portrait of Saint Therese, I asked him, "Is this the Virgin Mary?" He told me that it was the "Little Flower of Jesus." "Who is this Little Flower of Jesus?" I asked. He looked surprised and said, "What! You don't even know Saint Therese of Lisieux?"

Then he gave me a French pamphlet entitled *Ste. Therese de l'Enfant-Jesus*, which contained a short account of her life and many specimens of her thoughts. Somehow I felt those thoughts expressed some of my deepest convictions about Christianity which I happened to entertain at that time. I said to myself, "If this saint represents Catholicism, I don't see any reason why I should not be a Catholic."

Being a Protestant, I was free to choose whatever interpretation suited best my own reason, and her interpretation was exactly the right one for me, and that made me a Catholic! When I confided my decision to Mr. Yuan, he almost fainted with joy, for, as he told me afterwards, he had been praying for my conversion for ten years! God answered his prayers in his own house. And the most remarkable thing about it is that no one could ever have foreseen the circumstances that led me to live with his family by that time.

Ever since my first acquaintance with the sweet

Saint, my love for her has been growing. She has taught me how to love Jesus and how to love our Mother the Blessed Virgin. In a most miraculous way, she has converted my wife.

One day my little daughter, "the little Teresa," was sick. The doctor said that it was a very serious case of pneumonia, and that it would take at least nine days for her to recover, during which period we had to be extremely careful. Being a most competent and honest doctor, there is absolutely no doubt that his diagnosis was right. So we were frightened; especially as my wife was on the point of delivering another child, and if she were to nurse the girl for nine days, she would be likely to collapse under the weight not only of the physical labor but also of the mental ordeal.

As for the girl, her fever was running high, and the doctor told us that it was just the beginning and everything depended upon later developments. After consulting my wife, I rang up Father Maestrini, requesting him to come to us and baptize the girl. He did so. Soon after, my wife knelt before Saint Therese with the sick baby in her arms, and prayed in deep earnestness. I could not hear her words. When she rose, I asked her what she had said to the Saint. She answered, "Oh, I just told her that Lan-hsien is too hard to bring up; I am not fit to be her mother, so I begged Saint Therese to be her mother."

Next morning, the doctor came again, and, taking the temperature of little Teresa, found that it was a little below one hundred! It had been a hundred and five on the previous day! Then he examined the lungs, and found the pneumonia gone!

The only words he uttered were, "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

I told him what had happened and asked him whether he would be willing to certify to my story if I were to write it out in detail someday. He said, "Certainly!" The story is too long to tell here. What interests me just now is the story of the conversion of my wife.

Some time ago, my wife met Madame H. H. Kung, and, as their friendship grew, the nobility of the latter's character impressed her deeply and opened her eyes to the beauties of Christianity; but it was Saint Therese who confirmed entirely her faith in Christ. As for me, my only function is to teach her the Catechism. I never have wanted to impose my own Faith upon my family, but God loves us so much that He has condescended to be the Host of our humble home. During my life God has showered one honor after another upon my head; it is beyond my power to requite Him in the slightest degree. But as if all His other blessings were not enough, He has given me the supreme honor of supping with us day in, day out! Now I have learned the art of prayer from my wife. I simply say to Jesus, "I am not able to pay my immense debt to God; pay it for me!"

Before concluding this preface, I wish to express my thanks to all my friends who have helped me one way or another in preparing this little pamphlet, especially to a very learned and wise Father and Miss Ailien Therese Wu, whose suggestions I have gladly incorporated into this paper. Above all I am grateful to the Blessed Virgin, to whom I prayed before I started my essay, "Mother, help me to paint a good portrait of your beloved

child Therese, my beloved spiritual sister." So, my gentle reader, if you like this essay, the credit is to be given to her; if you don't like it, the fault is mine; but if you like it and yet do not come to love Therese and her Divine Lover as I do, the fault will be yours.

J. C. H. Wu.

Love And Science

Shortly before his death, Goethe said to Eckermann, "Let mental culture go on advancing; let the natural sciences go on gaining in depth and breadth, and the human mind expand as it may—it will never go beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity as it glistens and shines forth in the Gospel!" ⁽¹⁾ Since these words were uttered, more than a century has passed during which the natural sciences have made tremendous progress, and psychology has probed deep into the darkest nooks and corners of the human mind. But have we gone beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity? No, Christianity still continues to shine as the Morning Star and will continue to shine to the end of time. In fact, as Pope Pius XI pointed out, "It might even be said that a knowledge of Nature will serve as an introduction to what is of far greater value, an understanding of things supernatural." ⁽²⁾ The more science grows, the nearer we shall be to a living Faith. Material civilization is a welcome fuel to the fire of love. If the fire is weak, it may be smothered by the fuel. But if the fire is strong, the more fuel it has to feed on, the brighter will be its flame.

(1) Eckermann, *Conversations With Goethe* (Everyman's Library), p. 423.

(2) *Saint Therese of Lisieux: An Autobiography*, translated by Rev. Thomas N. Taylor (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London), p. 268.
In the notes to this essay, this book will be cited as "Autobiography".

I have just read a love song of ancient China :

*A quiet girl,—oh, she is charming!
She gave me a roseate flute.
Oh, how splendid are the colors of the flute!
How they chime in with the beauty of the girl!*

*From the pastures she brought me rush-wool,
Beautiful and rare indeed!
Oh, rush-wool, you would not be so lovely,
If you were not the gift of my love.*

I wonder what a modern girl would present to her lover. Instead of a roseate flute, she might give a motor-car or a radio set. Instead of rush-wool, she might give a piece of brocade or even a gorgeous rug. The important thing is love, and so long as love is there, what difference does it make how it happens to manifest itself.

If there is any difference at all, one would prefer a radio to a roseate flute, and brocade to rush-wool. Love has nothing to lose and everything to gain by the continual progress of civilization. And how can science ever supersede Christianity, which is the Religion of Love *par excellence*?

To my mind, the most beautiful exposition of the philosophy of Love is that of St. Paul. ⁽¹⁾ Let me present it in my own paraphrase :

Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is free from envy, free from vanity, free from pride, free from ambition, free from self-seeking, free from anger, and free from resentfulness. Love finds no joy in the errings of others, but is gladdened by goodness and truth. Love bears all

(1) **The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter XIII.**

things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love is a living fountain that never dries up.

No one is more gifted than St. Paul, and no one knows better that all gifts are of no account if they are not lit up by the flame of Love. He expresses this perfectly when he says :

I may be able to speak all the languages of men and of angels, but if I have no love, I am no better than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. I may be able to prophesy, I may fathom all mysteries, I may possess all knowledge, I may even have such faith as would move mountains, but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may distribute all my goods to feed the poor, I may even offer my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, there is no virtue in these actions.

The whole trouble about modern civilization seems to me to lie just in this: *There is too much love of science and too little science of love.*

“The science of love!” exclaimed little Therese, “Ah! sweet is the echo of that word to the ear of my soul! I desire no other science than that. For the sake of love, *having given all my riches*, like the spouse in the Canticles, *I feel as though I had given nothing*. There is nothing except love which could render us agreeable to the good God. This is so plain to me that this love has become the sole treasure upon which I set my heart.” ⁽¹⁾

To give all and to reckon it as nothing—that is the acme of love!

(1) This passage I have translated from *Sainte Therese de l'Enfant-Jesus: Histoire d'une Ame* (Imprimerie St. Paul, Bar-le-Duc), p. 208.

Some Types Of Saints: Martha And Magdalen

Now, to Christians, there is no other way of loving God than by loving Jesus His Son, for it is through Jesus that God has revealed Himself to man. The Word took on flesh in order that all flesh might take on Divinity. The incarnation of the Word has humanized the relation between the Creator and the creature. For human purposes, to love Jesus is the same as to love God, for Jesus *is* God.

But what exactly is God to us? Is He our Father? Yes, He is our Father, but He is more than that. Is He then our Mother? Yes, He is also our Mother, but He is more than that. He is, besides, our Friend, our Brother, our Sister, our Spouse, our Lord, our Minister, our All!

His relation with us is so all-embracing that it includes all the five relations of men and something infinitely more. We may call Him this or that; but all these names are used analogically, for human language has its limits, beyond which it can no longer denote anything definite and can at best only hint. So long as we use them only as hints, all names of human relations can be applied to God, and with equal appropriateness.

Do you remember the question of Jesus, "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" Pointing to His disciples, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." ⁽¹⁾

(1) See Matthew, XII, 48-50 (Vulgate)

So Peter the rugged fisherman was to Him not only brother, but sister and mother as well! This is how God uses human language, which is intrinsically so poor that there is no adequate term to designate our relation with Him, with the result that He Himself has to resort to figures of speech, to borrow, as it were, from human relations.

Now, of all relations, the dearest and the most fundamental is, at least according to the Chinese way of thinking, that between man and woman. It is, then, no accident that many saints, and among them some of the greatest, purest and sweetest, speak of their relation with God in terms of the Bridegroom and the bride. This is the highest offering that human speech can make to God.

What fitter language can we use toward Him than what we find in the *Canticle of Canticles*? "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth: for thy breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments." "I found him whom my soul loveth. I hold him: and I will not let him go, till I bring him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who bore me." "My soul melted when he spoke."

All saints have one thing in common, their love of God; and yet there are saints and saints. Some love Him primarily as their Father, some as their Lord, some as their Friend, some as their Brother, and some as their Lover. From these initial differences in their ways of loving Him arise different types of saints, for whom He provides many mansions in His House. In the home in Bethany, for instance, Martha loved Him in one way, while her sister Mary Magdalen loved Him in another way. St. Luke has given us a very vivid account of these sisters:

“Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain town; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord’s feet, heard his word.

“But Martha was busy about much serving, and she stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord, answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.”⁽¹⁾

Both Martha and Mary are saints, but the former served Jesus as her Lord, while the latter loved Him as her heart’s adored. In the Feast of Life there are many dishes, and each of us will have to choose for himself, but there is no question that Mary Magdalen chose the best dish.

What a great lover Mary Magdalen was can be gathered from another account of her in St. Luke’s Gospel:

One of the Pharisees asked him to dinner, and entering the house of the Pharisee he reclined at table. Now there was a woman in the town who was a sinner, and when she found out that Jesus was at table in the house of the Pharisee, she brought an alabaster flask of perfume and stood behind him at his feet in tears; as her tears began to wet his feet, she wiped them with the hair of her head, pressed kisses on them, and anointed them with the perfume.

When his host the Pharisee noticed this, he

(1) The Gospel According to St. Luke, 10:38-42.

said to himself, "If he was a prophet, he would know what sort of a woman this is who is touching him; for she is a sinner." Then Jesus addressed him. "Simon," he said "I have something to say to you." "Speak, teacher," he said. "There was a moneylender who had two debtors; one owed him fifty pounds, the other five. As they were unable to pay, he freely forgave them both. Tell me, now, which of them will love him most?"

"I suppose," said Simon, "the man who was most forgiven." "Quite right," He said. Then turning to the woman he said to Simon, "You see this woman? When I came to your house, you never gave me water for my feet, while she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair; you never gave me a kiss, while ever since she came in she has kept pressing kisses on my feet; you never anointed my head with oil, while she has anointed my feet with perfume. Therefore I tell you many as her sins are, they are forgiven, for her love is great; whereas he to whom little is forgiven has but little love." ⁽¹⁾

Jesus appreciated the love of Mary Magdalen so deeply that after His Resurrection it was to her that He made the first appearance!

But why have I dwelt so long upon Mary Magdalen? Because she is the prototype of Therese of Lisieux. She knew the art of love. Having given all, she feels as though she had given nothing. Therese herself has said, "Most of all do I imitate the behavior of Magdalen, for her amazing—or rather I should say her loving—audacity, which delighted the Heart of Jesus, has cast its spell upon mine." ⁽²⁾

(1) *Ibid.* 7: 36-47.

(2) *Autobiography*, p. 194.

Love: Natural And Divine

Like Magdalen, Therese loves Jesus as her Betrothed. With touching candidness she writes, "Eight days after I had taken the veil our cousin Jeanne was married to Dr. La Néele, and at her next visit I heard of all the little attentions she lavished on her husband. I was greatly impressed, and I determined it should never be said that a woman in the world did more for her husband than I for my Beloved. Filled with fresh ardor, I strove with increased earnestness to please my Heavenly Spouse, the King of kings, who had deigned to honor me by a divine alliance." (1)

In a letter to her sister, Celine, she says, "Let us make of our heart a garden of delights, where our sweet Savior may come for repose; let us plant therein beautiful lilies of purity, for we are virgins . . . and then let us not forget that 'virginity is a complete indifference to all earthly cares; not only to useless care, but to *all cares* . . .'" (2)

Elsewhere she says, "The great Saints have worked for the glory of God, but I, who am only a very little soul, I work for *His pleasure alone*. I wish to be, in the hands of the good God, a floweret, a rose of no use, but of which the sight and fragrance will nevertheless be to Him a refreshment, a little joy superadded." (3) One seems to hear the voice of Magdalen herself.

(1) *Ibid.* p. 137.

(2) *The Spirit of St. Therese de l'Enfant-Jesus* (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London), p. 93-4. This book will be cited in this essay as "Spirit".

(3) *Ibid.* p. 9.

It often occurs to me that a woman's love, as a rule, is deeper and more constant than that of a man. For, as Laurence Housman so fairly puts it,

O! a man's love is strong
When fain he comes a-mating.
But a woman's love is long
And grows when it is waiting. ⁽¹⁾

Woman is not only more patient, but has also a greater capacity for suffering and self-sacrifice. No one has depicted her lot better than John Masefield:

I know a woman's portion when she loves,
It's here to give, my darling, not to take;
It isn't lockets, dear, nor pairs of gloves,
It isn't marriage bells nor wedding cake,
It's up and cook, although the belly ache;
And bear the child, and up and work again,

And count a sick man's grumble with the pain. ⁽²⁾
If only a woman would turn her natural capacity for unselfish love from man to God, she would already be at the very portals of Heaven.

Therese was born with a genius for love, extraordinary even for a woman. Her affection for her parents, her sisters, her cousins, and her neighbors, was as deep as it was strong. Her sympathy for the poor, her compassion for sinners, revealed itself early in life. She had a heart on fire with love, and she was destined to be united with God.

Even as a child, she was conscious of her high destiny, but she was not proud, because she knew that her high destiny was a free gift from her Lover. She was as humble as she was gifted. Nature and

(1) From "The Two Lovers."

(2) From "The Widow in the Bye Street."

grace conspired together to make a great saint of little Therese, for nature prepared her to be a great lover and grace led her to love the Holy Face. It was not Jesus transfigured on the Mount of Tabor, it was Jesus on His way to Calvary, that especially captivated her soul. As she said, "My devotion to the Holy Face, or rather all my piety, has been based on these words of Isaias :

"There is no beauty nor comeliness in him; we have seen him, and there was no sightliness in him . . . Despised and most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity; his face was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. I too desire to be without glory or beauty, 'to tread the winepress alone,' unknown by any creature." ⁽¹⁾

This confession is of paramount importance, for it seems to me to constitute the keynote of her character. I even think that there is a tinge of chivalry in her love of Jesus. "For many serve Him when He gives them consolation, but few consent to bear Him company *when he sleeps on the storm-tossed waves*, or when He suffers in the garden of Gethsemani. Who, then, will serve Jesus for Himself? Ah! it shall be Therese." ⁽²⁾

What a gallant lover this woman was! It was St. Francis de Sales who said, "Love equalizes lovers"; ⁽³⁾ and I have a suspicion that Jesus appre-

(1) *Novissima Verba: The Last Conversations of St. Therese of the Child Jesus* (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London) p. 112.

(2) *Spirit*; p. 24.

(3) *Library of St. Francis de Sales: Works of this Doctor of the Church translated into English by Rev. Henry Benedict Mackey. II. Treatise on the Love of God* (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London), p. 211.

ciates loving audacity much more than cold courtesy on the part of His friends. Therese called her Divine Spouse a thief, a fool, a blind lover who is ignorant of arithmetic; and Jesus loved her all the more, because on the lips of little Therese, they were terms of endearment.

How deeply she felt for Jesus can be inferred from a little anecdote. Someone gave her a crucifix. She kissed it with tenderness, and said, "He is dead. I like it better when He is represented as dead, because then I think that he suffers no more." ⁽¹⁾ Only a woman could have felt that way.

(1) *Novissima Verba*, p. 139.

Sincerity As The Soul Of Love

Therese loves her Divine Spouse for His own sake, not for the sake of His diamonds. All that she desires is to rejoice the Heart of Jesus. She wins Him by her secret caresses, for she knows that He is a bashful Bridegroom who would blush at caresses too dramatically performed. She gently insinuates herself into His Heart, until she knows all its ins and outs.

The wise serpent that she is, she bores sinuously into the deepest recesses of the Sacred Heart of her Beloved, and yet she never wearies Him by overloading Him with attentions. She holds Him by not using any ropes or "hoops of steel." ⁽¹⁾ She even confides this to Mother Mary:

All that He hath given me may Jesus take again,
O tell Him, Mother, ne'er to feel in aught constrained with me;

He may hide Him if He will, in peace shall I remain

Till the Day that knows no setting, when faith shall cease to be. ⁽²⁾

(1) Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act 1, Scene 3):

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.

Lao Tzu would say:

Good tying makes no use of rope and knot,
And yet nobody can untie it.

This comes nearer to Therese's philosophy than Shakespeare does.

(2) *Spirit*, p. 36.

These lines are so touching that I want to reproduce here the French original:

Tout ce qu'il m'a donné, Jesus peut le reprendre,
Dis-lui de ne jamais se gener avec moi ;
Il peut bien se cacher, je consens a l'attendre
Jusqu'au jour sans couchant ou s'éteindra ma
foi. ⁽¹⁾

This was written when she felt Jesus was far away from her. But love has hopes unknown even to faith. She knew Him too well to fear that He would ever desert her. The subtle child wrote to her sister Pauline, "The glory of Jesus, that is my whole ambition; my own I abandon to Him, and if He seem to forget me—well, He is free to do so, since I am mine no more, but His. He will weary sooner of making me wait than I of waiting for Him!" ⁽²⁾

Not that she relies upon her own charms, but that she has a boundless confidence in His goodness. The Almighty is incapable of being unfaithful to His lovers. Just because the little Therese did not want any reward, how amply He has rewarded her! She did not want to shine like jades and resound like bells. She wished to be an obscure grain of sand, too small to be trodden upon even by the feet of men; she wished to remain a hidden flower whose fragrance is for Him alone.

But He is not to be outdone in generosity. He has transformed the grain of sand into a radiant star gleaming with a thousand fires; he has filled the whole universe with the fragrance of the little fugitive flower. One wonders what she feels now. I

(1) *Histoire d'une Ame* (cited in note 4), p. 429.

(2) *Spirit*, p. 37.

should think that she would still feel as she did when she was on earth, "I am but a tiny soul whom Almighty God has loaded with His favors—Still I cannot boast. See how this evening the tree-tops are gilded by the setting sun. So likewise my soul appears to you all shining and golden because it is exposed to the rays of Love. But should the divine Sun no longer shine, it would instantly be sunk in gloom." ⁽¹⁾

Is this false modesty? No, she is only telling the truth and nothing but the truth. Any one who knows the power and love of God as intimately as she does, any one who has a glimpse into the infinite greatness of God and his own nothingness, simply can no longer boast, even if he would.

(1) *Autobiography*, p. 297.

God As A Lover

I sometimes think of God as a Lover who knows how to tease. For it frequently happens that if you want a thing, He will purposely hold it back from you, and if you do not want a thing, He will purposely give it to you. Like all true lovers, He wants to know whether your love for Him is genuine and pure. But unlike other lovers, He can never be deceived by any insincere manifestations of love. The slightest intention of self-seeking will estrange Him. If He really seeks you out, He will send trial after trial until you are completely emancipated from all earthly ties and worldly desires.

But Therese was such a teachable child that for her a whispered hint was enough where for others God would have had to send thunderous warnings, if not hailstorms. She turned every little experience of her brief life to good account. Her mind was like an extremely sensitive film that records the slightest movement of grace. No lesson was lost on her. She was so thoroughly saturated with the Holy Spirit that everything became for her a parable of the Truth and a symbol of Love. In twenty-four years she learned more about God than mankind has been able to do in twenty centuries. Indeed, as she says, "Love can take the place of a long life." ⁽¹⁾

"It seems to me that the good God has no need of years to accomplish His work of love in a soul; one ray from His Heart can, in an instant, cause His flower to blossom for eternity." ⁽²⁾

(1) **Ibid.**, p. 353.

(2) **Spirit**, p. 200.

How many of us, for instance, have been emancipated from the dominion of that hydra-headed monster called Public Opinion? But little Therese killed the monster at the very first encounter when she was sixteen. Here is what a Sister records about her:

It often happened that painful remedies had to be applied to her side, and one day, having suffered from them more than usual, she was resting in her cell during recreation, when she overheard a Sister in the kitchen saying: "Soeur Therese will not live long, and really I wonder sometimes what our Mother Prioress will find to say about her when she dies. She will be greatly puzzled, for though the little Sister is very good she has certainly never done anything worth speaking about."

The infirmarian, who had also overheard what was said, turned to the Saint and remarked: "If you relied on the opinion of creatures you would certainly be disillusioned to-day."

"The opinion of creatures!" she replied, "happily God has given me the grace to be absolutely indifferent to it. Let me tell you something that showed me once and for all how much it is worth. A few days after my clothing I went to our Mother's room. 'Mother', remarked a lay-sister who happened to be there, 'this novice certainly does you credit. How well she looks! I hope she may long be able to observe the Rule.'

I was feeling really pleased at the compliment when another Sister came in, and looking at me, said: 'Poor Soeur Therese, how very tired you look, you quite alarm me. If you continue like this I am afraid you will not be able to keep the Rule very long.' I was then only sixteen, but the incident made such an impression on me, that I never again set store on the variable opinion of creatures." ⁽¹⁾

(1) *Autobiography*, pp. 220-1.

Confucius once said, "He who feels no irritation when others misunderstand him,—is he not a gentleman?" ⁽¹⁾ But this is easier said than done. Only when one is completely attached to God can one achieve a complete detachment from the world and from one's self. Little Therese, whose great passion was the love of God, could afford to disregard all other things. All her virtues are streamlets flowing from one living Fountain. Happy soul who could say, "Our Lord's will fills my heart to the brim, and if anything else be added it cannot penetrate to any depth, but, like oil on the surface of limpid waters, glides easily across. If my heart were not already brimming over, if it needed to be filled by the feelings of joy and sadness that follow each other so rapidly, then indeed it would be flooded by bitter sorrow; but these quick-succeeding changes scarcely ruffle the surface of my soul, and in its depths there reigns a peace that nothing can disturb." ⁽²⁾

(1) *The Analects*, Book I.

(2) *Autobiography*, pp. 222-3.

The Martyrdom Of Love

The more I study the character of Therese, the more she fascinates me, and the more I adore that supreme Artist of Souls, Jesus. What a remarkable girl she must have been who could write at fifteen words like these: "Love can do all things. The most impossible tasks seem to it easy and sweet. You know well that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, or even at their difficulty, as at the love with which we do them. What, then, have we to fear?"

This reminds me of a Chinese proverb: *So long as man and wife love each other, what if they are beggars together?* For the sake of her Divine Spouse, she was willing to suffer any form of martyrdom and reckon it as nothing. To her, life becomes a continual martyrdom, a great bundle of little sacrifices. She wants to be a martyr without appearing to be one. Her heroism reaches such a height that it no longer seems heroic but quite ordinary. She has, by precept and example, deepened, subtilized, and broadened the idea of martyrdom, and she has achieved it for herself and for other souls by subordinating everything to Love. "Far from being like to those great souls who, from their childhood, practice all sorts of macerations, I made my mortification consist solely of *breaking my will, keeping back a word of retort, rendering little services without making much of them, and a thousand other things of this kind.*" ⁽¹⁾

With her, martyrdom is not simply to be be-

(1) Spirit, p. 150.

headed or to face the firing squad, or even to jump into boiling oil. Such opportunities are, after all, very rare, and given only to the privileged few. But there is the daily life to live; and as love feeds on sacrifices, it would be starved to death if we should wait for chances of making big sacrifices. In her hands, our everyday life acquires a new dignity and a new meaning. What George Herbert had sung she put into practice:

Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th'action fine.

For God really does not need our sacrifices, they are useful only as proofs of our love for Him. If we love Him with a burning passion and single-hearted devotion, everything we do or refrain from doing, every word we speak or refrain from speaking, becomes a little sacrifice, which may be likened to a fragrant flower, because we offer it with a cheerful countenance and a sweet smile that captivate the Heart of God.

There is a Chinese saying: *If you fail in painting a tiger, the result is liable to turn out a dog; whereas if you fail in carving a swan, the result may at least resemble a duck.* It is safer for little souls to imitate little Therese, than to imitate the giant saints of yore. For the swan and the duck are birds of one feather; while the tiger and the dog, according to our Chinese notion, belong to entirely different orders.

And after all, is our blood so valuable that it can add anything to the Blood of Christ? What does a tiny little drop mean to an infinite ocean? And yet, when necessary, our blood is useful as a humble token of our love for God, but only as a token and

not as an end in itself. In other words, the Martyrdom of Love absorbs all other forms of sacrifice and mortification and adds something new, over and above. "Many make themselves victims to Justice, while none think of making themselves victims to love."

Needless to say, she was not the first to practice this form of martyrdom. All saints are more or less martyrs of love. But there is no denying that she or rather the Holy Spirit working in her brought this fundamental aspect of Christian doctrine to an intenser focus and clearer articulation.

Sanctity is like a pyramid. The higher the apex, the broader the base, and the larger the bulk. The pyramid of Therese has Love for its apex, Nature for its base, and all the circumstances of our everyday life for its bulk. With her the greatest simplicity goes hand in hand with the greatest diversity. By embracing the One, she embraces all!

In a truly remarkable essay on "What Religion Means to Me," Madame Chiang Kai-shek has presented the nature of Christian simplicity in a nutshell. "Life is really simple, and yet how confused we make it. In old Chinese art, there is just one outstanding object, perhaps a flower, on a scroll. Everything else in the picture is subordinated to that one beautiful thing. An integrated life is like that. What is that one flower? As I feel it now, it is the will of God." ⁽¹⁾ I quote these words, because they seem to fit the life of Therese like a glove.

(1) See *China in Peace and War* (Kelly and Walsh, Shanghai), p. 73.

“A Baby Who Is An Old Man”

Her life was not a simple melody, but a marvelous symphony. If she is a child, she is a subtle one. If she is as simple as a dove, she is also as wise as a serpent. Her little way of spiritual childhood is really the most mature way, and she seems to be aware of it. During her serious illness, she once said, “Let God play the part of Papa; he knows what is best for baby.” (1)

Her eldest sister Marie asked her, “Are you a baby?” Therese looked serious and said, “Yes,—but a very wise baby! A baby who is an old man.”

Is she then proud? No, no one realizes better than she where all her wisdom comes from. “My special favorites in Heaven are those who, so to speak, stole it, such as the Holy Innocents and the Good Thief. There are great Saints who won it by their works. I want to be like the thieves and to win it by stratagem—a stratagem of love which will open its gates to me and to other poor sinners. In the Book of Proverbs the Holy Ghost encourages me, saying: *‘Come to Me, little one, to learn subtlety!’*” (2)

The charming thing about it is that it is an open theft. God allows her to steal into Heaven because she allows God to steal herself. “How willingly would I help the ‘Divine Thief’ to come and steal me. I see Him in the distance, and I take good care not to

(1) See Petitot, *Saint Therese of Lisieux* (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London), p. 155.

(2) *Autobiography*, pp. 294-5.

cry out, 'Stop, Thief!' On the contrary, I call Him, saying "This way, this way!" (1)

Lao Tzu said, "Established Virtue looks like a thief." (2) I suspect that there is something thievish, illusive or paradoxical about the Spirit of Truth, and perhaps that is why all His children are, as Paul says, "as deceivers and yet true; as unknown as yet known; as dying and behold we live; as chastized and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing and possessing all things." (3)

The subtlest truths can only be felt or experienced, but cannot be reasoned about, still less talked about. Therese the subtle child knows it. "It is related in the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert that one of them converted a public sinner whose misdeeds had scandalized the entire country. Touched by grace, this sinful woman was following the saint into the desert, there to do rigorous penance, when, on the first night of her journey, before she had even reached the place of her retreat, the links of life's chain were broken by the vehemence of loving contrition. The holy hermit at the same time saw her soul borne by angels into the bosom of God. That is a most striking illustration of what I would express, but these things are beyond words." (4)

Her mind is truly like Providence in a watchful state. It is not she, but the Holy Ghost that is speaking through her.

The progress of psychology in our age has made man self-aware to a degree never before reached.

(1) Spirit, p. 196.

(2) Toa Teh Ching, Chapter 44.

(3) II. Corinthians, VI, 8 (Vulgate).

(4) Novissima Verba, p. 54.

The remedy is not to return to unconsciousness, which is impossible, but to go a step forward until we find God in the most secret chamber of our heart. To cure ourselves of urbanity, it is useless to dream of returning to the country. Even if we should go to the country, we would still carry the city with us. We have already gone too far to retrace our steps. We must be so urbane that we become citizens of the City of God, which exists before both the city and the country ever did.

My only wish is to see people so thoroughly sophisticated as to be aware of the utter worthlessness of their sophistication, so thoroughly sceptical as to be able to doubt their own doubts, and so thoroughly disillusioned as not to fall in love with their own disillusionment, but with something greater than themselves.

J. W. N. Sullivan says in his *Limitations of Science*: "Certainly the most significant factor in the development from amoeba to man seems to us to have been the increase in consciousness." "The great artist, painter, poet, or musician, makes us aware as we have never been aware before. He extends and subtilizes certain elements of our experience and so gives us greater knowledge and mastery of life."

To my mind, Therese is so significant to the spiritual life of our age, precisely because she is a saint fully aware of her mental states. She is charmingly subtle and subtly charming. She is ingenuously ingenious, and she is holy. She is as complicated as she is simple. She is delicately audacious, and audaciously delicate. She has the head of a witch, and the heart of an angel. She is as

flexible as water, and as passionate as fire. She is a genius who knows how to hide her genius gracefully. She knows the masculine, but keeps to the feminine.⁽¹⁾ She is as sharp as a two-edged sword, but she always keeps her sword in its scabbard. She was a precocious child; but she pasteurized her precocity by always remaining like a hidden sprout and not rushing to early ripening. Even now, after she has become a veritable prodigy of miracles, she is still a hidden sprout at heart; and, in spiritual things, as we know, a sincere disposition of heart is all that matters. I think that now more than ever she has realized the truth of what she said before she had shed her mortal coils, "It is Jesus who does all, and I . . . I do nothing."

I suppose that Lao Tzu would have said, "It is the Tao (the Word) that does all, and I . . . I do nothing." But the Tao is such an impersonal entity that it appears to me to be of the ice, icy: whereas Jesus is such a living flame of love that He enkindles every fibre of my heart.

To me as a Chinese, the great thing about Christianity is that it combines the profound mysticism of Lao Tzu with the intense humanism of Confucius. It differs from Taoism in that the Tao

(1) Lao Tzu said:

Know the masculine,
 Keep to the feminine,
 And be the Brook of the world.
 To be the Brook of the world is
 To move constantly in the path of Virtue
 Without swerving from it,
 And to return again to Infancy.

Tao Teh Ching, Chapter 29.

The idea is that one should know how to be manly but act always gently like a woman. Therese could be a man if she wanted to. "Kindness must not degenerate into weakness." But most of the time, she was a woman.

or the Word has taken on flesh and a warm pulsating heart. It differs from Confucianism in that it is the Word, and nothing short of the Word, that has done so.

Confucius said, "One who has given offense to God prays in vain."⁽¹⁾ Lao Tzu said, "Why did the ancients prize the Tao? Is it not because, through It, whoever seeks finds, and whoever is guilty is relieved of punishment?"

The Confucian idea of God is personal but narrow, while the Taoistic idea is broad but impersonal. In my humble opinion, God is more than a Person, and for that very reason He is capable of assuming a Personality. Those who think otherwise seem to place themselves above God. They presume that they alone can possess personalities, but not God.

Only Christianity can satisfy my mind completely, because its idea of God is at once broad and personal. And it is Therese who has confirmed my faith in my Religion, for her mind is as subtle and detached as that of Lao Tzu, while her heart is as affectionate and cordial as that of Confucius.

(1) Spirit, p. 55.

Emancipation Through Love

By choosing to be a willing captive of Love, she becomes as free as a bird in the air. As she grew more attached to her Bridegroom, she became more and more detached from everything else. From her early childhood she possessed a deep insight into "the hollowness of things that pass away." (1) "Was Jesus not my only friend?" she wrote about her early days: "To Him alone could I open my heart. All conversation with creatures, even on holy subjects, wearied me. True, sometimes I felt sad because of the indifference shown me, but I would console myself by repeating this line from a beautiful poem Papa often recited for us:

"Time is thy barque and not thy home'." (2)

Thus, she looked at the world *sub specie eternitatis* (in the light of eternity). This general outlook on life prepared her for detachment from particular things, however much she might be affected toward them in her heart. She detached herself successively from dependence upon creatures, from love of the beauties of Nature, from the allurements of Art, and from the possessive instinct, not only in regard to material things, but also in connection with what she calls "spiritual riches."

"If I had been rich, it would have been impossible for me to have seen a poor hungry man without giving him straightway something of my goods. So also in the measure that I gain my spiritual treasure, I at the same instant think of

(1) *Autobiography*, p. 103.

(2) *Novissima Verba*, p. 62.

those souls who are in danger of falling into hell, and I give them all I possess, and I have never yet found the moment in which I could say: 'Now I am going to work for myself'. " (1)

A novice has recorded a little anecdote about her: "I was regretting a pin which I had been asked for, and which I had found most useful. 'How rich you are,' she said, 'you will never be happy!'" (2)

What volumes of meaning are contained in this gentle reproach! A person may be rich with a pin, but poor with a million. So long as one is not spiritually detached from matter, the possession of a single pin would bar him from the highest Heaven. On the other hand, if one regards matter as only a means of helping others, the possession of even the whole world could do no harm to his soul, for he is still "poor in spirit." To another novice, she expounded her doctrine of empty-handedness:

"There is but one means to compelling God not to judge us: we must take care to appear before Him empty-handed. It is quite simple: lay nothing by, spend your treasures as fast as you gain them. Were I to live to be eighty, I should always be poor, because I cannot economize. All my earnings are immediately spent on the ransom of souls. Were I to await the hour of death to tender my trifling coins, Our Lord would not fail to discover in them some base metal, and they would certainly have to be refined in Purgatory." (3)

According to her, one must be detached even from one's religious exercises: "You ought to de-

(1) *Ibid.* pp. 82-3.

(2) *Autobiography*, p. 316.

(3) *Ibid.* p. 310.

tach yourself from your own personal labors, conscientiously spending on them the time prescribed, but with perfect freedom of heart. We read that the Israelites, while building the walls of Jerusalem, worked with one hand and held a sword in the other. This is an image of what we should do: avoid being absorbed in our work.”⁽¹⁾

Is this not what Lao Tzu meant when he said: “Do your work without setting any store by it?” What the hoary philosopher of China learned from the experience of a long life the green maid of France learned from the School of Love. Love, generous love that knows no measure, set her free and gave wings to her soul. “O my little sister,” she said to Celine, “let us be detached from earth, let us hover over the Mount of Love, where dwells the beautiful Lily of our souls. *Let us detach ourselves from the consolations of Jesus, that we may be attached to Him alone!*”⁽²⁾

In her hands, detachment has reached a heroic degree. I have an impression that she is detached even from the idea of detachment! The fact is that she is detached even from herself. “That which concerns Therese,” she said, “*is to abandon herself, to surrender herself completely.*”⁽³⁾ And as she has immolated herself, there is nothing to which even the idea of detachment can be attached. She is a vessel, pure and simple, of the Holy Ghost, that’s all. God alone has taught his little spouse “to scale the sublime heights of perfection with the agility of a fawn!”⁽⁴⁾

(1) *Ibid.* p. 313.

(2) *Spirit*, p. 34.

(3) *Novissima Verba*.

(4) *Autobiography*, p. 268.

Therese has not superseded the other saints, but she has brought sanctity up to date. She is a revolutionary who knows how to effect reforms by way of transformation. The Holy Catholic Church is a living organism, it grows with the centuries, and our twentieth century, which may be called the age of psychological subtlety, has need of a saint like Therese, for she is one of the keenest psychologists and the most ruthless analysts that I know of. In her hands, sanctity is no longer merely sublime, it has seeped down like water into the *subliminal* regions.

The Holy Ghost has always raised new saints to forestall and cope with the needs of a new age. It was no accident that in the sixteenth century, the age of dawning individualism, He raised Teresa of Avila, a woman who was a man. ⁽¹⁾ Nor is it for nothing that this time He has raised "a baby who is an old man." For our century is an old man who wants very much to be a baby, and the little Therese has shown the way. Sensitive, intuitive, paradoxical, humorous, subtle, flexible and ethereal, she did for spiritual life what some of the greatest contemporary minds have done in their own spheres of activity.

(1) See Alice Lady Lovat, *The Love of Saint Teresa*.

Fr. P. Hernandez, after an interview with St. Teresa of Avila, said: "They told me she was a remarkable woman; it is nothing of the sort. She is a man, and a man such as I have never seen before". (p. 311.)

I have often thought that Therese of Lisieux is to Teresa of Avila what Einstein is to Newton.

The Art Of Life

When the Little Flower was in Rome, she made a visit to the famous cemetery "Campo Santo." She has left us a beautiful word-picture of the place:

The "Campo Santo" filled us with rapture. The whole vast enclosure is covered with marble statues so exquisitely carved as to make one fancy that the chisel of genius has actually imparted life. The apparent negligence with which these wonders of art are everywhere scattered is but an additional charm. Their expression, too, so perfectly portrays a calm and Christian sorrow, that one is almost tempted to console them. Here it is a child throwing flowers on its father's grave, and as the delicate petals seem to fall through its fingers, the solid nature of the marble is forgotten. Elsewhere a widow's light veil, and the ribbons that bind some young maiden's tresses, appear to float at the bidding of the breeze.⁽¹⁾

What genius had done to those marble statues, the Divine Sculptor was to do to her character. At first glance, she, too, appears "to float at the bidding of the breeze," but in reality no one could be more solid than this "Little White Flower" of Jesus.

It was her hard living that made her so easy to live with. If Therese had been a member of the home in Bethany, she would have served Jesus as carefully as Martha did and at the same time cast furtive glances at Him to see whether He was completely happy with Magdalen sitting at His feet.

(1) *Autobiography*, p. 107.

She would also have loved her sister all the more for having loved Jesus so much. This I infer from what she said herself, "If, by an impossibility, God Himself did not perceive my good acts, I should not be troubled. I love Him so much that I would give Him pleasure by my love and my little sacrifices without His perceiving that they come from me. Seeing and knowing, He is, so to speak, obliged to make me a recompense . . . and I would not put Him to that trouble!"

The heavier her tasks, the more cheerful she would have appeared. How easy it is to overlook solid virtue hidden beneath an exterior of charming simplicity!

In the art of letters, it is said that hard writing makes easy reading. For true profundity looks limpid. The azure sky is unfathomable, and yet how clear it looks! Justice Holmes, for instance, was not only a great jurist but also a great writer. Justice Frankfurter once wrote about his judicial writings, "In their impact and sweep and freshness, his opinions have been a superb vehicle for the views they embody. It all seems so easy . . . brilliant birds pulled from the magician's sleeve . . . but it is the delusive ease of great effort as well as great art."⁽¹⁾

Holmes himself wrote to me about style in writing, "When you read Tennyson you feel that he has been carefully searching for the exquisite. When you read Shakespeare you feel as if the splendid speech came without effort, because that was the way he wanted to talk. Stevenson searches for a happy word. Kipling rips an unusual word out of

(1) See Mr. Justice Holmes, edited by Frankfurter, p. 116.

the bowels of the dictionary, and on his lips it sounds as natural as slang.”⁽¹⁾

Indeed, the greatest art is to conceal art. On the other hand, there is a great deal of truth in what Popocurante in Voltaire's *Candide* remarked *a propos* a concert: “This noise is amusing for half an hour; but if it last longer, it wearies everybody although nobody dares to say so. - Music nowadays is merely the art of executing difficulties, and in the end that which is only difficult ceases to please. Perhaps I should like the opera more if they had not made it a monster which revolts me.”⁽²⁾

What is true of music, sculpture and writing is also true of the Art of Life. No one could be more fastidious than little Therese in observing the severe Rule of the Carmel. And yet she always appeared light-hearted and contented. As her sisters have testified, “She always appeared gracious and smilingly cheerful, and unless one knew her more intimately, one might imagine that she pursued an easy path full of consolations. This is how it is that many who read her life do not discern the meaning of her smile: they overlook the cross so carefully hidden under the flowers.”⁽³⁾

In a very real sense, to take the holy order or to enter a Carmel is already martyrdom. What bigger offerings can one make than to sacrifice all the pleasures of the world and cut off all earthly ties for the sake of God? That Therese did not regard her vocation as a sacrifice but a privilege did not make it less a sacrifice in the accepted sense of the word.

(1) Letter dated Oct. 7, 1924.

(2) Chapter XXV.

(3) See Petitot, *St. Teresa of Lisieux*, p. 263.

But how shallow are the hearts of men, and how easily taken in are their minds!

Even now, as Father Mateo Crawley-Boevey says, some people still imagine that our sweet saint lived her Carmelite life a nightingale in a grove, singing of our Lord's tenderness to her and of her own love for Him. ⁽¹⁾ She is, indeed, like a nightingale, but let us not forget that, like a nightingale, she sings with her throat against a thorn! "Should my roses be gathered from amid thorns," she says, "I will sing notwithstanding, and the longer and the sharper the thorns, the sweeter will grow my song." ⁽²⁾

(1) See *Jesus, The King of Love*, p. 200.

(2) *Autobiography*, p. 205.

A Self-Revelation

On one occasion a Sister remarked to little Therese, "They say that you have never suffered much." With a smile she pointed to a glass which contained some medicine of a bright red color. "Do you see this little glass?" she said. "One would suppose it contained a most delicious draught, whereas in reality it is more bitter than anything I take. Well, it is the image of my life. To others it has been all rose color; they imagine that I have drunk of a most delicious wine, but to me it has been full of bitterness. I say bitterness, yet, after all, my life has not been sad, because I have learned to find joy and sweetness in all that is bitter."⁽¹⁾

I think this is the fullest self-revelation Therese has given us in a moment of self-forgetfulness. It allows us to have some glimpse into her evasive personality. I seem to see three different layers in her wonderful soul. The layer that lies nearest to the surface is symbolized by her sweet smile. To all appearances, she is a carefree sprite! This aspect of her puts me in mind of a poem by Tu Fu:

Rows upon rows of flowers
In the little garden of Madame Huang!
All the branches are heavy-laden
With the countless clusters of flowers.
The carefree butterflies loiter around them,
And start dancing from time to time.
The lovely orioles are intoxicated with freedom.
"Cheerio, cheerio!" they sing.

(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 221-2.

But probe a little deeper, and you come to the second layer, the layer which is composed of bitterness and sandy desolation. It makes me think of an autumnal song by Hsin Ch'i-chi:

When I was young and a stranger to Sorrow,
I loved to gaze from a high terrace:
I loved to gaze from a high terrace
To give my new poems a spice of Sorrow.
Now I have drained Sorrow to the bottom,
I can find no words for it:
I can find no words for it,
But merely say, "What a nice cool Autumn!"

What pathos, what desolation, what loneliness, what macerations of the heart are revealed by this second stanza, which borders almost on silence! And this is exactly what I find in the second layer of the soul of Therese. But, my patient reader, let us probe yet a little deeper, and we shall find in the depths of her soul a fathomless tranquillity and serenity, completely unruffled by all the stormy disturbances she experienced a little higher up in her extremely sensitive mind. It is here that we find the hidden Fountain of her joy, a joy that filters patiently through a sandy strata and issues finally in distilled smiles and sometimes even in spontaneous spurts of congenial humor.

Without the sandy strata, the smile would not be so pure and sweet. Without the hidden Fountain of joy, the smile would have been pathetic, like the silver lining of a black coffin, or like the hysterical laughter of a mad person. But having both the sandy strata and the Fountain of joy within her, she is at once inebriated and sober! And she is aware of it herself. "Deep down in my soul there is, I

own, a joy and transports of delight.”⁽¹⁾ With what moderation and mellowness she owns her secret joy! In her little bosom are borne the sorrows of all time and the joy of eternity.

(1) Petitot, p. 273.

The Logic Of Love

I confess that at times I am astonished by some of the lightning-like flashes of St. Therese's insight. But no one could be more astonished than herself. "Since I have taken up my position in the arms of Jesus, I am like a watchman observing the enemy from the highest tower of a fortress. Nothing escapes me; often I am astonished at seeing so clearly." ⁽¹⁾

Hers is a humility that is not only felt by the heart but founded upon the solid knowledge of her own nothingness apart from her Lover. She felt and thought with constant reference to God. Her vision was so clear that she had to resort to parables. Here is one of them that a Sister has scribbled down for us:

She often spoke to me of a well-known toy with which she had amused herself when a child. This was the kaleidoscope, shaped like a small telescope, through which, as it is made to revolve, one perceives an endless variety of pretty, colored figures.

"This toy," she said, "excited my admiration, and for a long time I wondered what could produce so charming a phenomenon. One day, however, a careful examination showed that it consisted simply of tiny bits of paper and cloth scattered inside. Further scrutiny revealed three mirrors inside the tube, and the problem was solved. It became for me the illustration of a great truth.

(1) Spirit, p. 195.

“So long as our actions, even the most trivial, remain within love’s kaleidoscope, the Blessed Trinity, figured by the three mirrors, imparts to them a wonderful brightness and beauty. The eyepiece is Jesus Christ, and He, looking from outside through Himself into the kaleidoscope, finds all our work perfect. But, should we leave that ineffable abode of love, He would see nothing but the worthless chaff of worthless deeds.”⁽¹⁾

Love opened the eyes of little Therese to new truths and new reasons for loving Jesus. She was not such a great sinner as Magdalen, and, logically speaking, she did not need as much forgiveness from God as Magdalen. But does it follow that she loved Him the less? No, on the contrary, she loved Him all the more. Love has its own logic that mathematicians have no notion of.

“I love Him,” she reasoned, “because He has forgiven me, not much, but *all*.”⁽²⁾ “He has forgiven me *beforehand* the sins which I could have committed.”⁽³⁾

She seems to know by intuition what very few theologians have arrived at by their long-winded reasonings. St. Thomas Aquinas had, indeed, pointed out that it is “also a divine benefit that God should keep a man from sins, just as He forgives his past sins.”⁽⁴⁾ St. Augustine had also confessed, “I put it down to Your grace and mercy that You melted the ice of my sins; I put it down to Your grace also all the sins that I did not, that I could not, com-

(1) *Autobiography*, pp. 317-8.

(2) *Spirit*, p. 115.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 115.

(4) Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings* (Everyman’s Library), p. 3.

mit.”⁽¹⁾ But little Therese went a step further than these great lights of the Church! She spoke, not in terms of “also,” but in terms of “all the more”; and she gave us a very simple illustration of this deep truth:

Let us suppose that the son of a very clever doctor, stumbling over a stone on the road, falls and breaks his leg. His father hastens to his aid, and binds up the fractured limb with all the skill at his command. When cured, the son shows the utmost gratitude . . . and with good reason.

But, on the other hand, suppose that the father, knowing that a large stone lies on his son’s path, anticipates the danger, and, unseen by anyone, hastens to remove it. Unconscious of the accident from which such tender forethought has saved him, the son will not show any mark of gratitude for it, or feel the same love for his father as he would have done had he been cured of some grievous wound. But if he came to learn the whole truth, would he not love his father all the more?⁽²⁾

I can imagine Jesus putting His hand gently on her shoulder and saying, “The truth is that you, My dear child, love Me, and want to love Me as I have never been loved before; and you are never at a loss to find reasons in justification of your love. What a subtle logician love has made of My little child!”

(1) See *Ibid.*, p. 3.

(2) *Autobiography*, p. 79.

Life And Death

With a faith enlivened by such intense love and enlightened by such a transparent vision, it is no wonder that she even conquered death before she died. When a Sister asked her permission to weep upon her death, she said in tender reproach, "You will be bewailing my happiness"! ⁽¹⁾ When the Chaplain asked her, "Are you quite resigned to die?" she answered with a gentle retort, "Ah! my Father, I am even resigned to live! To die, that is the joy I would experience." She actually rose above life and death:

- What matters it then whether life or death?
My only joy is to love Thee. ⁽²⁾

This was possible because she had attained a spiritual state where her own will was merged into the Will of God. "I do not like one thing better than another; what the good God likes best and chooses for me, that it is which pleases me most." ⁽³⁾

During the last months of her life she said something, which touches the very core of my heart: "Suppose that the good God should say to me, 'If you die now you shall have a very high degree of glory; if you die at eighty years of age your glory shall be much less, but the pleasure to Me far greater.' Oh, then I would not hesitate to reply, 'My God, I wish to die at eighty, for I do not seek my glory, but only Thy pleasure'." Her love for God is gen-

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 321.

(2) *Spirit*, p. 141.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 142.

erous to such a degree that she is even willing to sacrifice Heaven for His sake, if this were indeed possible.

She would now be sixty-eight, if she had lived. She would be quite happy in remaining a hidden flower in the Carmel of Lisieux, unknown of men. But God wanted her to go back to Him at the age of twenty-four, and make a great saint of her. Is she resting in the arms of her Beloved now? No, for "souls on fire cannot remain inactive."⁽¹⁾ She wished to spend her heaven in doing good upon earth. Her mission is just beginning. "There can be no rest for me," she says, "until the end of the world. But when the angel shall have said: 'Time is no more!' then I shall rest, then I shall be able to rejoice, because the number of the elect will be complete."⁽²⁾

In heaven as on earth, the Little Flower of Jesus loves Him with such an abysmal love that she feels her own love is not enough. She wants millions and millions of other souls to love Him as she does. "I invite all the angels and saints to come and sing canticles of love." Even were the whole of creation to participate one day in the living concert of love, she would hardly think of it as more than a tiny drop of water lost in the Infinite Ocean of Divine Love. She would still feel as a little child towards its mother:

Who says that the heart of an inch-long grass
Can ever requite the full splendors of a whole
Spring?

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 13.

(2) *Autobiography*, p. 231.

