

THE PUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS AND THE "HISTOIRE D'UNE ÂME"

A Critical Problem ?

SUMMARIUM. — Praesentatis S. Theresiae a Iesu Infante scriptis autographis prout a P. Francisco a S. Maria recenter editis, Auctor transcursum facit ad examinandum "problema criticum", relationis nempe autographa inter et opus cui titulus *Histoire d'une Âme*: S. Theresia quam hucusque ex "Historia Animae" novimus estne alia ab illa quae nunc "revelatur"? Doctrina "spiritualis infantiae" ad nostros usque dies tam late divulgata estne omnino authentica? Non negatis plurimis accidentalibus inter utrumque textum discrepantiis, Auctor conformitatem substantialem demonstrat, et opera non solum inter se non opponi sed et se mutuo complere luculenter ostendit.

The autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux first appeared on the anniversary day of her death, 30th September 1898, under the title: *Histoire d'une Âme écrite par elle-même*.¹ The Saint, who was fully aware of the exquisite harmony of her life, had an extremely keen sense of anniversary, and one feels that this was the right day for her book to see the light, and that she arranged it somehow. But, then, we remember that the book was put in order, and seen through the press, by her sister Pauline, Mother Agnes of Jesus, who, no doubt, had also a keen sense of the past in the present, and certainly knew that the choice of date would have pleased her sister. We have here in miniature the problem which has made necessary the publication of St. Thérèse's manuscripts exactly as they are. The published autobiography is the story of a soul written *not altogether* by herself, since it has not only been edited, but in a sense "rewritten" by her sister. Yet did not her sister know the Saint so well, that we can, in fact, say that the story was written by Thérèse herself? The portrait has been touched up, but so as to approach nearer to the truth; biography is often more

¹ Editio princeps: *Sœur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus et de la Sainte Face, Religieuse Carmélite 1873-1897. Histoire d'une Âme écrite par elle-même. Lettres. Poésies*, Bar-le-Duc 1898.

accurate than autobiography. But perhaps the touching up has aimed at edification rather than truth; perhaps we have been given a false portrait? This question can only be answered on the basis of what the Saint wrote herself and, for this reason alone, it was necessary to publish the originals. Yet there is a deeper reason for giving the Saint's manuscripts to the world. More and more it has come to be realised — through the eulogies of four successive Popes and the work of many grave theologians — that the young Carmelite is one of the most important *teachers* in the history of the Church, and this by a Divine charism showing itself in almost everything she did and said. Nobody any longer sees any exaggeration in the picture of Mother Agnes carefully noting down every word her sister spoke during the last months of her illness. Her least word is precious for the reason that she has become an instrument of the Holy Spirit in the work of renewing the face of the earth. It is not enough that *The Story of a Soul* should provide an accurate portrait of the Saint in words that are nearly or mostly her own; we must know the exact words she used, and we would even wish to see them as she wrote them, for it is clear that the finger of God is here.

The photocopy edition ²

The three manuscripts on which *The Story of a Soul* is based are now given to the world with such completeness as to make us feel we are handling the originals. The manuscript on which the first eight chapters are based is made up of 87 leaves, being simply two school exercise books bound together in a plain cardboard cover. The facsimile reproduces every detail except the quality of the original paper, which is extremely poor and thin. The second manuscript (B) is the letter to Sister Marie du Sacré-Cœur on which chapter xi of *The Story of a Soul* is based. Manuscript C, which contains 37 leaves, is an exercise book of smaller dimensions and better quality than the first; on it are based chapters ix and x. Finally, there is a packet containing some fragments including an unpublished text of the "Offering to Merciful Love." The printers responsible for this wonderful piece of work are Draeger frères, Montrouge (Seine). Manuscripts A and C are not very

² *Manuscrits Autobiographiques de Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus*, Carmel de Lisieux 1956. Four volumes, edited by R. P. FRANÇOIS DE SAINTE MARIE, O.C.D. (Here referred to as *Mss. Autob.*).

difficult to read, but the letter to Sister Marie du Sacre-Cœur has 45 lines per page of 20 centimetres, and the reader wishes heartily that in this case at least, a printed text had been provided in addition. Indeed, once he has recovered from the first shock of amazement at what printers and photographers can do, the reader may come to regret that the manuscripts had not been put together in one photostat book, since in any case we are not handling the originals; the demands of *textual* accuracy do not extend as far as exact reconstruction.

The present work not only reproduces the manuscripts; it also *presents* them, and that very fully, in three volumes. We are given everything: introduction, notes on the text, *vocabulaire*. This work of presentation has been admirably done under the editorship of Père François de Ste. Marie of the Paris province of the Discalced Carmelites. The first volume is mostly devoted to a very full introduction, which opens with a careful analysis of the *Textes Thérésiens*,³ and takes account, not only of the autobiographical manuscripts, but also of the manuscripts of the poems and prayers, and of the "Novissima Verba." For the letters, Père François is content to refer to the definitive edition of the Abbé Combes.⁴ There follows the Introduction proper,⁵ which deals with the history and nature of the autobiographical manuscripts, as well as their basic themes. We are told how the manuscripts came to be written: the first as the result of a conversation in the convent "chauffoir" on a winter's evening, in which Thérèse recounted some childhood anecdotes, and received a command from Mother Agnes, who was Prioress at the time, to write it all down;⁶ the second in answer to an urgent request from her eldest sister to set out the "Little Way" in writing;⁷ the third as the result of a piece of negotiation of quite extraordinary delicacy. Mother Agnes tells the story herself: "My term as Prioress was past, and Mother Marie de Gonzague was again in authority. I feared that she would not attach to my sister's compositions the same importance as I did, and I dared not bring up the matter with her. But, in the end, seeing that Sister Thérèse had become very ill, I decided to attempt the impossible. On the night of 2nd June 1897, four months before the death of Sister Thérèse,

³ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 5-32.

⁴ COMBES, ANDRÉ: *Lettres de Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus*, Carmel de Lisieux 1948.

⁵ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 43-95.

⁶ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 43-44.

⁷ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 45-46.

towards midnight, I went to our Mother Prioress. 'Mother', I said 'I cannot sleep until I confide a secret to you. While I was Prioress, Sister Thérèse wrote, in order to give me pleasure and under obedience, an account of her childhood. I read over it again the other day; it's quite nice, but you won't get much out of it to help you to write the circular after her death, for there is hardly anything about her life in religion. If it seemed good to you to command it, she could write something more serious, and I have no doubt that what you would have from her would be incomparably better than what I have.' The good God blessed my undertaking; the following morning our Mother commanded sister Thérèse to continue her recollections".⁸

P. François devotes a large part of his Introduction to what he calls the 'critical problem', that is, the problem of the relation between the original manuscripts and the published 'Story of a Soul'.⁹ There are 7,000 variations; "Mother Agnes has, in fact, *rewritten* the Autobiography".¹⁰ At the end of the Introduction we are given a list of passages omitted from the published text.¹¹ This list which includes only the omissions of more than one line runs to thirty pages. It was prepared by Mlle. Anne Green.¹²

The second volume is devoted to notes and tables. The notes are related to the text of the manuscripts; they run to 75 pages¹³ and are excellent, giving in the fewest words all the information the reader really needs, and avoiding all side-tracks. Indeed the one aside that the editor allows himself makes one wish that he had more often succumbed to the temptation. Speaking of the famous 'Christmas grace' by which at the age of thirteen Thérèse was changed from a pious child into a saint, P. François says: "It is a moving coincidence that on this same Christmas night, at Notre Dame de Paris, Paul Claudel experienced 'quite suddenly a heartrending sentiment of innocence, of the eternal childhood of God, an ineffable revelation' which led to his final conversion...".¹⁴ The notes are followed by a section headed *Expertises*¹⁵ in which the difficult passages are carefully deciphered by two hand-

⁸ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 47.

⁹ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 83-95.

¹⁰ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 78.

¹¹ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 99-129.

¹² *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 2.

¹³ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, pp. 5-80.

¹⁴ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, p. 30 (note on folio 44v^o, line 21).

¹⁵ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, pp. 83-117.

writing experts, MM. Trillat and Michaud. In a few places what was first written has been pasted over, either by the Saint herself or by her sisters, and M. Michaud has marvellously succeeded in restoring the original. M. Trillat prefaces his *expertise* with a technical analysis of the Saint's handwriting,¹⁶ and at the end adds a 'personal impression' which is very interesting.¹⁷ "When I began to examine the manuscripts of St. Thérèse of Lisieux I had no knowledge of her character, her life or her personality, and indeed made no secret of my mistrust and scepticism in her regard. From my first contact with her handwriting I was amazed to see that the first appearance of great simplicity, impersonality and automatism covered an astonishing vitality, through which there radiated a strange force... The extreme lightness of touch, the lively, eager, dancing outlines of the letters, the appearance of joyousness of line and page: all show that Therese thought very rapidly, but that her means of writing were slow, and this explains the flourishes (*escamotages*) at the ends of words, the omission of letters, the negligences of orthography which occasioned, by her own or some other hand, so many corrections and retouchings. The basic quality is an extreme spontaneity implying in the ensemble a personal *jailissement*, which is the certain result of inspiration".

The tables¹⁸ which form the second part of the second volume include an analysis of the manuscripts (to facilitate reference), a chronology, a list of the Saint's contemporaries in the Lisieux Carmel, citation tables, and indices of proper names. The scriptural table¹⁹ is of particular interest in view of the thesis of Hans Urs von Balthasar that St. Thérèse was interested in Scripture only insofar as it assured her concerning her little way and suggested developments of it.²⁰ The table of contemporaries shows that the entry of a girl of sixteen was a unique event in the Lisieux Carmel. The Saint shared the name *Thérèse* with two other nuns; she was *Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus*.

The third volume is entitled *Table des citations*. Like the tables in the second volume it was prepared (the editor tells us) by the Dominican Sisters of Châtenay-Malabry. It provides a wonderful *instrument de travail* for the preacher and writer and for everybody who wants to discover easily and quickly what the Saint has to say on a particular

¹⁶ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, p. 83.

¹⁷ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, p. 154.

¹⁸ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, pp. 119-151.

¹⁹ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, pp. 133-136.

²⁰ *St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, English translation by Donald Nicholl, London 1952, chapter III.

topic. It proceeds alphabetically, and includes every sentence (or the significant part of every sentence) in which the particular word occurs. It is confined to the three manuscripts, and the references are to the manuscript pagination. It is matter for regret that the letters could not have been included in the survey. The spiritual physiognomy of the Saint reveals itself in her preference for certain words and in the avoidance of others, even when these latter are preferred by the spiritual writers of the time: the word *amour* occupies six whole columns while the word *mortification* occurs only four times and the word *obligation* once; the Saint suffered from spiritual aridity all her life yet the word *aridité* occurs only twice and the word *sécheresse* only four times, whereas *consolation* occurs more than forty times.

In his Preface to the three volumes the editor warns the reader that he will find the work 'objective to the point of dryness'.²¹ In such controverted matter this is an attitude demanding great self-denial. P. François must have frequently found himself in a position to bring heavy artillery to bear on the positions of some of the Saint's biographers, but he confines himself to elucidating the text. It is true that he refers to the famous article of Pere Ubald d'Alençon,²² but even here he is content merely to state the evidence. The 'flightiness' of Thérèse during the pilgrimage to Rome must be seen in relation to the solemn immobility of certain ecclesiastics, and the 'indiscretions' of the Abbé Leconte appear at most as an innocent attraction towards somebody whom not long afterwards the whole world was to love.²³

P. François and his helpers have earned the gratitude of all lovers of the greatest saint of our time. Too often the greatest saints have been badly served by their biographers. Here we have perfection in the service of perfection. The only reservation one might make is from the point of view of the limitations of certain readers: it is a pity that the reader is asked to use so many markers — four, sometimes five or more; for he has to change from the text to the editor's notes, and from that to the notes of the handwriting experts (which are set out in three different places) and he has to change to another volume to consult the list of 'passages omitted' in the published autobiography,

²¹ *Mss. Autob.*, p. 2: "On n'a pas craint dans ces pages de se montrer objectif jusqu'à la sécheresse".

²² *Sainte Thérèse comme je l'ai connue*, in *Etudis Francescans*, 20 (1926) t. 38, pp. 14-28.

²³ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, p. 39.

One wonders whether all or most of the information bearing on each particular text could not have been set down in one place. But the principal thing is that it should be all *there*; and it is.

Omissions

Most readers will turn immediately to the thirty pages of 'passages omitted from *The Story of a Soul*'²⁴ hoping, or fearing, that the existing portrait of St. Thérèse will be modified, or at least filled out. This hope, or fear, will gradually die away as the reader turns over page after page of charming childhood anecdotes, details and touches that are interesting but add nothing significant, expressions of affection for father or sister, points of interest only to those for whom the manuscripts were written. To those who have taken the Saint to their heart it is of course fascinating, like a long letter from a friend. There are all sorts of interesting happenings. One anecdote from the voyage to Rome is particularly charming and symbolic. It is prefaced by some remarks, which would have delighted Edith Stein, on the place of women in God's creation. On earth women are excluded from the Lord's sanctuaries, but in heaven God "will be very well pleased to show that His thoughts are not men's thoughts, for there the last shall be first". She continues: "More than once during the voyage I did not have the patience to await the next world in order to be first. One day when we were visiting a monastery of Carmelite friars, I was not satisfied to follow the pilgrims along external galleries but made my way into the interior cloisters. Suddenly I saw an old Carmelite in the distance who made a sign to me to withdraw; but, in place of taking myself off, I went towards him, and pointing to the pictures which adorned the cloister walls, I made a sign to him to show my appreciation of them. No doubt he saw from my long tresses and youthful appearance that I was only a child; he smiled in a kindly way, and went away, seeing that it was not an enemy he had before him. Had I been able to speak Italian I would have told him that I was a future Carmelite".²⁵

It soon becomes obvious that none of the omissions was motivated by the desire to show the Saint as better than she was. The only passage which arouses any doubt on this score is that in which the Saint

²⁴ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 97-129.

²⁵ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, pp. 118-119.

says that, when alone, the recitation of the rosary costs her more than would the wearing of an instrument of penance.²⁶ People who find the Rosary hard to say with attention will, of course, be comforted to read that the Saint 'could not fix her mind on it', and the admission does bring Thérèse nearer to us. Yet it does not diminish her stature as a Saint, once the situation is properly understood. It is clear that her difficulty arises not from the fact that her mind is far from God, and full of worldly or selfish preoccupations, but rather because her mind is fixed on God in a simpler and higher way. It is in fact a matter in which the Saint suffered from the lack of sufficiently skilled direction, which would assure her that Our Lady is more honoured by a simple loving regard towards herself, or her Divine Son, than by the repetition of set prayers. For her the rosary was, in fact, an instrument of penance. It is significant that Thérèse had no difficulty in regard to common, liturgical prayer. All this is clear to us *now*, but it would not have been clear to the readers of the autobiography of an unknown religious; and so the passage would have left a false impression. It still leaves a false impression on those who hastily assume that the Saint's distractions were at the same level as our own.

Indeed it is remarkable how faithfully Mother Agnes transcribed those passages in which Thérèse speaks of her feebleness and inconstancy. The passage in which the Saint admits that she is "feebleness itself" and that she "is not surprised to discover new imperfections every day"²⁷ in her soul is set down just as it is word for word, except that the word *imperfections* which occurs several times in the passage is in one place changed to *misères*. The same is true of the passage in which Thérèse admits that she frequently fails to make those little sacrifices which have such an important place in her Little Way.²⁸ Mother Agnes seems to have taken special care to give their full value to passages of this kind in the autobiography, understanding that the Saint for all the mighty graces she had received was somebody who could be followed and imitated even by *very little* souls. In this essential matter there seems to have been full understanding between the two sisters.

The omission of the passage on the recitation of the Rosary was regrettable from a point of view other than that of Thérèse's difficulties,

²⁶ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 128.

²⁷ *Manuscrit C*, fol. 15r^o. Henceforth we refer to the originals as *Ms. A, B, C*.

²⁸ *Ms. C*, fol. 31r^o.

for the manuscript text expresses an aspect of the Saint's devotion to the Blessed Virgin that is not mentioned explicitly elsewhere in the autobiography. All the saints who knew the Blessed Virgin have had a deep devotion to her and have loved her, yet, even among the saints this love and devotion has varied in mode and degree. For some Mary has been Lady and Queen, for others Heavenly Mother, for others Model of all virtue, for others the Bride of the Canticle according to the various aspects of her immense perfection. But there are some holy souls for whom Mary is a constant companion, a mother that watches over her child every moment, a helper in small affairs as well as in great, a friend always real and present; and this not through a mere effort of imagination or as a pious exercise repeated, but naturally, effortlessly almost, as a style of life or constant atmosphere, the result of great graces and great fidelity to grace. Such a soul was St. Thérèse: this is clear from a careful study of her writings. But the autobiography as published, while it showed abundantly that Thérèse is a truly Marian saint, nowhere provided an explicit statement of this sense of the presence of Mary. Hence the importance of the following words which follow on the admission about the difficulty of saying the Rosary: — "For a long time I was greatly cast down by this lack of devotion which really astonished me, *for I so love the Blessed Virgin* that it should have been easy for me to recite in her honour a prayer which is so pleasing to her. Now I am less cast down for I consider that since the Queen of Heaven is *my Mother* she must see my good intentions and be content with them . . . Indeed the Blessed Virgin shows me that she is not angry with me, for she never fails to protect me as soon as I invoke her. Whenever I am troubled by some anxiety or difficulty I turn to her at once and always, like the most tender of Mothers, she takes my affairs into her hands" ²⁹ (the words in italics are underlined in the original).

In the ensemble the omitted passages provide a fuller knowledge of the Saint's background, both in her own family and in the convent. The figure of her saintly mother is a little clearer; the figure of her 'incomparable father' is *much* clearer. Indeed, after the self-portrait, the portrait of Louis Martin is by far the most successful and memorable in the autobiography as it was written; perhaps the Saint wanted to recall for her sisters that 'saintly father' in all his 'patriarchal simplicity'.³⁰ As regards the spiritual physiognomy of the Saint, the

²⁹ Ms. A, fol. 24v^o (The words in italics are underlined in the original); Mss. *Autob.* vol. I, p. 128.

³⁰ Ms. A, fol. 54r^o.

new passages underline the dominant traits of a portrait already known : a burning love of God and an unlimited trust in His mercy, an unwearying fraternal charity. But in a few instances this underlining introduces an almost audacious note : Pranzini converted at the guillotine went " to receive the merciful sentence of Him who has declared that there will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner that does penance than for ninety-nine that need not penance " ;³¹ in her *Billet de Profession* Thérèse is bold enough to ask " that to-day all the souls in purgatory shall be delivered (*sauvées*) " .³²

Not a few of the omitted passages show the Saint in some of her lighter moments, wishing to amuse her sister or Mother Gonzaga, and one imagines that she succeeded even in the latter difficult feat, for she had considerable talent as a raconteuse. Even more revealing is the delicate irony that sparkles beautifully here and there on every second page. There are the more obvious touches as when in the Catechism class the priest asks everybody the same question and they all fall to answer until Thérèse is asked last of all ; " in my profound humility this was exactly what I wanted " .³³ Then there is the final twist to the story of the " sister who managed to irritate me in everything she did " . It will be remembered that the Saint managed the situation so well that the sister wondered what Thérèse found so attractive in her. We now know the Saint's reply to this question : " I answered that it always gave me pleasure to see her (though I did not add that it was an entirely supernatural pleasure) " .³⁴ A note on this passage tells us that this sister testified after the Saint's death : " From the moment we met we felt an irresistible attraction one for the other " .³⁵ Even more characteristic is that very gentle, almost wistful, irony that is perhaps best exemplified by the passage in which the Saint tells of the discovery of her fatal malady. She is filled with joy, for she will be soon in Heaven. " I simply could not believe that there were impious people who had no faith, and was persuaded that in denying the reality of another world they did not really mean what they said " .³⁶ Then, quite suddenly, her own soul is invaded by that darkness which was to continue until her death, a darkness so deep and terrible that she leaves

³¹ *Ms. A*, fol. 46r^o ; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 112.

³² *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 121.

³³ *Ms. A*, fol. 37v^o ; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 109.

³⁴ *Ms C*, fol. 14r^o ; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 126 ; cfr. *Histoire d'une Ame* (edition 1955), chapter IX, p. 134.

³⁵ *Mss. Autob.* vol. II, p. 73.

³⁶ *Ms. C*, fol. 5r^o ; *Histoire*, cg. IX, p. 122.

the description of it unfinished lest she be guilty of blasphemy. This very delicate, very feminine, irony is the salt that preserves her childhood memories in all their sweetness for this woman who "has suffered more than can ever be understood here below".³⁷ She is the 'little Queen' surrounded by affection and attention, running easily along the paths of virtue and sacrifice shown her by her beloved sisters, entering Carmel as a child to rejoin her 'little mother'. It's all so easy and inevitable, and the Saint is content to use the language of happy childhood and to entitle her first manuscript: "*The Spring-time of a Little White Flower*". Yet there are constant touches to remind us that what is really being described is the laying of the granite foundations of a mighty edifice. In the course of her whole childhood Thérèse "never once received a compliment"³⁸ in her own home; when she entered Carmel she had no illusions as to what awaited her — *aucune illusion* and *aucune* is doubly underlined.³⁹ Thérèse used the language of 'happy childhood' as she used the language of 'littleness' in a sincerity, yet with a certain detachment, being fully conscious all the time of the Christian paradox, that true happiness is found in suffering and true greatness in littleness.

The reader who is sensitive to this fine irony, or reserve, in the Saint's writing, will find much to delight him in the original manuscripts. The story of Thérèse's first priest-brother which is to be found in chapter ten of *Histoire d'une Ame* and in Ms. C, pages 31 *verso* and following, provides a good example of what we mean. Thérèse, it will be remembered, had always wished for a priest brother, but, alas, all her little brothers had died in infancy so there seemed no hope of her wish being fulfilled. Until . . . on the feast of her great patron and Holy Mother, St Teresa, in the year 1895, the Prioress, who was then Mother Agnes, came to her in the laundry, took her aside and told her that a young seminarist had written to ask for a sister who would pray for him and his work constantly and whom he would remember each morning in offering the Holy Sacrifice. The Saint's description of the joy she felt at this news is one of the loveliest pieces of writing in the autobiography: — "It is impossible to tell how happy I felt. Here was my desire fulfilled in a way that was entirely un-

³⁷ Ms. A, fol. 31r^o: "Ce que j'ai souffert, je ne pourrai le dire qu'au Ciel!..."

³⁸ Ms. A., fol. 21v^o; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 104.

³⁹ Ms. A, fol. 69v^o: "Les *illusions*, le bon Dieu m'a fait la grâce de *n'en avoir aucune*".

expected . . . There welled up in my heart a joy which I can only describe as childish, for I should have to go right back to my childhood days to discover memories of those joys that are so vivid that the heart is too small to contain them; not once in the years between had I tasted this kind of happiness. I felt that in this matter my soul was new; it was as if one had touched for the first time musical chords that had until then been forgotten".⁴⁰

This is wonderful, but Thérèse is perfectly in control of her mood of exaltation, and she continues with almost disconcerting practicality: — "I well understood the obligations that I was taking on myself, and I set to work by trying to redouble my fervour".⁴¹ Now the text up to this point will be found reproduced in the *Histoire d'une Ame* with one or two insignificant changes. But the next few lines are omitted, and it is in these lines that the Saint's wholesome and delightful irony manifests itself. Here is the omitted passage: — "It must be admitted that at the start I did not receive any consolations to stimulate my zeal. Having written a charming letter full of feeling and noble thoughts to thank Mother Agnes of Jesus, my little brother did not show any sign of life for almost a year, except for a card to say that he was entering the camp for military service".⁴² In a note the editor gives us a sample of these 'noble thoughts': the young seminarist says how touched he has been by the charity and devotion of Sister Thérèse, "charity and devotion that has been drawn from the most pure source of divine love".⁴³ Clearly the Saint views with a certain detachment not only the effusions of the good seminarist but also her own lyrical feelings. The joy she felt though deep and genuine belonged nonetheless to this the present corruptible and illusory world; Thérèse valued it as she valued all pure and genuine feelings and affections, yet with a salutary reserve and detachment.

The manuscript addressed to Mother Gonzaga — manuscript C — is rather more affectionate in its tone than is the corresponding part of *Histoire d'une Ame*; for instance the *Mère bienaimée* of the original sometimes becomes *Mère vénérée*. Perhaps Mother Agnes made allowance for the fact that it was written for a woman who was rather sensitive in the matter of the loyalty and affection of her spiritual children, and

⁴⁰ Ms. C, fol. 31v^o-32r^o; *Histoire*, cg. X, pp. 153-154.

⁴¹ Ms. C, fol. 32r^o; *Histoire*, cg. X, p. 154.

⁴² Ms. C, fol. 32r^o; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 128.

⁴³ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, p. 78.

toned it down accordingly. Yet Thérèse had assured her that her affection for the Prioress who had treated her with such severity (*très sévère*:⁴⁴ double and triple underlining) was genuine.⁴⁵ One wonders whether even her beloved 'little mother' understood all the significances of the verb "to love" as the Saint used it. The little postulant who had so "loved" her Prioress that she had to pass by the latter's office rapidly lest she succumb to the temptation of going in, became in a few years of constant self-sacrifice and immense graces one of those rare human beings whose love is all *giving* and therefore supremely free and independent though still tender, human and personal. She did not love according to nature, but neither did she love according to cold duty; she loved from out of a heart transformed into the Heart of Christ. It is this love that breathes from every page of the manuscript addressed to that extraordinary woman whom Divine providence had placed over Thérèse for the greater part of her life as a Carmelite. The reader who has been prejudiced by the various more or less unflattering portraits of Mother Gonzaga that have appeared will find this third manuscript uncomfortable reading as long as he retains this prejudice; there is no avoiding the fact that Thérèse is writing for somebody whom she loves really and deeply.⁴⁶

In order to appreciate what is new in the manuscripts it is by no means sufficient to read, however carefully, the list of omitted passages. Especially in the case of the shorter omissions it is necessary to look at the omission in its context in the manuscript and to compare the whole passage with its counterpart in *Histoire d'une Ame*. For example, there are certain brief omissions from the well-known passage on fraternal charity in the third manuscript whose counterpart is to be found in the latter part of chapter nine of *Histoire d'une Ame*. Read as they stand in Mlle Green's list of omitted passages,⁴⁷ these omissions seem unremarkable, being for the most part repetitions of what is already expressed in the *Histoire*: the love of Christ for His apostles as the model of all fraternal charity. Nevertheless a careful comparison of the manuscript⁴⁸ with the printed counterpart⁴⁹ shows that an important

⁴⁴ Ms. A, fol. 70v^o.

⁴⁵ Ms. C, fol. 2r^o; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, p. 66; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 120.

⁴⁶ A very fruitful study might be undertaken on what may be called 'the analogy of love' in St. Thérèse's writings, that is, her faculty of giving her heart — already transformed into the Heart of Christ — to *each* of those she loved *entirely* yet in a *different* way. Cfr. the Table des citations under *Mère*.

⁴⁷ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 126.

⁴⁸ Ms. C, fol. 11v^o.

⁴⁹ *Histoire d'une Ame*, ch. IX, pp. 128-129.

change has taken place. In the original passage Thérèse wants to say something concerning fraternal charity which has come as a grace to her quite recently — *this year*, that is, at the end of her life — and which she thinks is very important. What she wants to say is that true fraternal charity must be modelled on the love which animated Our Lord at the Last Supper “when He had just given Himself to the His apostles in the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist”.⁵⁰ In other words, true charity is at once very tender and very practical, an entire *giving* of the self as Jesus gave Himself in the Eucharist. Now it is easy to give ourselves to those that are amiable and attractive, but we must do more than that if we are to do as Jesus did. What qualities had these “poor, ignorant, worldly fishermen”⁵¹ to attract the Son of God? And yet He called them His friends and He died for them. Our love must be like to that, and that is what is meant by the second commandment being *like* to the first.

This is indeed a light and a grace, and a very important spiritual doctrine. But this is not at all the point that stands out in the text of *Histoire d'une Ame*. What emerges rather is this: we must put up with and even love the difficult people around us, and this is possible as Thérèse shows from her own experience — for it is here she introduces the story of the “sister who managed to irritate me in everything she did”. The manuscript does say all this, but it is entirely secondary and relatively unimportant since there is question of *a grace received this year*, whereas the story of the irritating sister (as well as the other experiences related at this point) belongs to the past, to the early days of her religious life. What is true is that the years of striving to love the unlovable had prepared Thérèse for the great grace she mentions, which is a grace of knowing and uniting with the Heart of Christ in Its love for men. In the text of the *Histoire* the original vision and “grace” is almost lost, and instead we have a little treatise on how to live with difficult people, the kind of passage that, imperfectly understood and tactlessly followed, has occasioned all sorts of parodies of the “Little Way” . . . The misunderstanding seems to begin with the Scripture text at the head of the passage: *Le second commandement est semblable au premier*. Mother Agnes seems to have overlooked or failed to appreciate the fact that the word *semblable* is firmly underlined; what

⁵⁰ Ms. C, fol. 11v^o: «... lorsqu'Il sait que le cœur de ses disciples brûle d'un plus ardent amour pour Lui qui vient de se donner à eux, dans l'ineffable mystère de son Eucharistie...”.

⁵¹ Ms. C, fol. 12r^o; cfr. *Histoire*, ch. IX, p. 128.

Thérèse has discovered is that the two commandments of love are *alike*, that we must give our neighbour a love *like* to that which we give to God and receive from Him.

This kind of reshaping of the text is not very common, at least not to this extent; nevertheless a careful comparison of the manuscript and the *Histoire* reveals various differences of shape, some of them important and interesting. We soon discover that we must go beyond the list of omitted passages, useful and accurate though it is, and work out for ourselves what is new and significant. There are places where there is no substitute for the manuscript, as, for example, that last page of the third manuscript put down painfully in pencil in the very presence of death, ending incomplete with the words *confiance et amour* and a heavy full stop. (All three manuscripts, the editor notes, end on the word *amour*). But apart altogether from this intimacy and immediacy which the original alone can convey, there is the important consideration that Mlle Green's list is confined to omissions of a line or more, yet omissions or changes of single words or phrases are often very significant. The story of the interview with Pope Leo XIII is given a new shape by the added fact that Thérèse had to be removed by force from the Pope's presence — *ce fut de force* (underlined) *qu'ils m'arrachèrent de ses pieds*.⁵² Another story that is retold is that of Thérèse's persecution by an older girl when she entered the Benedictine *pensionnat* at the age of eight. There is question of a type to be found in schools all over the world, characterised by two traits especially: a real talent for ingratiating themselves with authority, and a penchant (which is sometimes almost a compulsion) for persecuting those that are refined and physically weak. We know from M. Michaud's *expertise* that the Saint had begun by setting down the first trait of her persecutor — *sachant se faire écouter des maîtresses*; then, since she had through inadvertence skipped a page of the exercise book, she gummed on a piece of paper over what she has written, and started again on the correct page, now softening the phrase to: *savait en imposer aux élèves et même aux maîtresses*.⁵³ Mother Agnes finally set it down as: *savait en imposer aux pensionnaires*.⁵⁴ With great, perhaps excessive benignity

⁵² *Ms. A*, fol. 63v^o; cfr. *Histoire*, ch. VI, p. 81; *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 118: "Les deux gardes-nobles me portèrent pour ainsi dire jusqu'à la porte et là un troisième me donna une médaille de Léon XIII..."

⁵³ *Ms. A*, fol. 22v^o.

⁵⁴ *Histoire*, ch. III, p. 27.

of judgement Thérèse sees her persecutor as motivated by "jealousy such as one pardons in a schoolgirl".⁵⁵ Mother Agnes puts a full stop after 'jealousy'. (Those who think that Thérèse was a 'spoilt child' would do well to read a note on this text which tells us that she was unhappy if anybody tried to put a stop to the petty tyranny).⁵⁶

One of the most interesting of these smaller omissions is that of a phrase which seems at first sight merely repetitive (and therefore omitted for the sake of economy). The saint is talking about those irregular and excessive attachments, which are a false light to attract souls as the flame of the candle attracts the moth. Her words are: — "I have seen so many souls seduced by this false light, flying towards it like poor moths and burning their wings; then, I have seen them turn back *towards the true, the sweet light of love which gives them new wings, lighter and more brilliant, so that they might fly* towards Jesus, that Divine Fire that burns without consuming".⁵⁷ Mother Agnes omitted the words in italics.⁵⁸ As it stands the original is a rather confused piece of writing, and it is obvious that the omission helps to make it clear. Nevertheless something essential has dropped out. What Thérèse wishes to say is that the experience of the bitterness of false (presumably selfish) love may lead a person to appreciate 'true and sweet' love; through this second experience the soul grows strong in love so as to be able to ascend to a third experience of love, in which the Divine Fire burns the soul without consuming it. There is question not of *two* but of *three* experiences; this is borne out by the fact that the word *amour* is underlined in the original. The saint's doctrine here is far more human and consoling than would appear from the text presented by Mother Agnes, and it is all the more precious in that there is so little in spiritual books that is really helpful to the soul that is struggling with human attachments. There is little use in telling such a soul: 'give all your love to God, and stifle all sentimental attachments', for the soul cannot do that unless it pass through a purification of love by way of experiencing and understanding 'true and sweet' love. This is the experience of the growth of the heart and it is all-important in the lives of many generous, holy souls. It is of such people (and *for* them) that Thérèse is writing here.

⁵⁵ Ms. A, fol. 22v^o.

⁵⁶ Mss. *Autob.*, vol. II, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Ms. A, fol. 38v^o; Mss. *Autob.*, vol. I, p. 110.

⁵⁸ Cfr. *Histoire*, ch. IV, p. 47.

Additions

We have seen in a general way what the omissions amount to. Let us now take a look at the *additions* made by Mother Agnes. In the first place Mother Agnes *tidied* the manuscript for publication as Thérèse would undoubtedly have done, making the division into chapters, breaking up into paragraphs what was a continuous narrative, sometimes transposing observations and anecdotes, correcting the punctuation and sometimes the syntax. (We are not concerned with the final chapter telling of the saint's death nor with the Appendices, for this part of the published book lies outside the manuscript).

Coming to the material additions, there are in the first place the mere details, a word or phrase thrown in to fill out a sentence or to achieve a certain rhythm. On the first page of Manuscript A the Saint speaks of great sinners, such as St Paul and St Augustine, "whom the Lord forced, as it were, to receive graces". Mother Agnes adds 'and St Madgalen',⁵⁹ recalling, no doubt, her sister's special devotion to this saint. (Probably Thérèse felt that the great penitent was not exactly *forced* to receive graces). An addition of the same kind will be found in the passage where the Saint describes her childhood emotions as she saw the sea for the first time. The sun was setting beyond the waves leaving a luminous furrow in which she imagined her soul as a little barque of delicate white sail "making its way in peace, towards the heavenly fatherland".⁶⁰ Mother Agnes adds: 'and rapidly'⁶¹ recalling Thérèse's deep assurance that she would die young.

A more interesting type of addition is by way of filling out the narrative. The published text gives extra details about Thérèse's childhood illness,⁶² the incident of the card-players during the pilgrimage to Rome⁶³ is expanded, the hurtful words of the Saint's father which opened the way to the 'Christmas grace' are given more fully and more understandably.⁶⁴ Under this head might also be mentioned certain 'complimentary' additions acknowledging the kindness of friends, especially the Guérins. There are also a few places where the Saint's

⁵⁹ *Histoire*, ch. I, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Ms. A*, fol. 22r^o.

⁶¹ *Histoire*, ch. II, p. 25.

⁶² *Ms. A*, fol. 27-30; cfr. *Histoire*, ch. III, pp. 32-37.

⁶³ *Histoire*, cg. VII, p. 94; cfr. *Ms. A*, fol. 71v^o.

⁶⁴ *Histoire*, ch. V, p. 56; cfr. *Ms. A*, fol. 45r^o.

modesty had rather obscured the truth, as when she is silent concerning her real motive for choosing Pauline (Mother Agnes) as her 'little mother' after the death of Mme Martin: Céline had chosen Marie who had had most to do with the little Thérèse prior to this; Thérèse chose Pauline who had been away in school and whom she hardly knew, only because she felt that Pauline would be hurt otherwise.⁶⁵

Finally there are the places in which Mother Agnes seems to take the pen into her own hand for a moment. When Thérèse tells us that she felt no sorrow in leaving Alençon, because "children like change", Mother Agnes adds: "and whatever is out of the ordinary".⁶⁶ When her beloved Pauline entered Carmel Thérèse was heart-broken; she now sees that this grief was excessive, "but", she explains, "I was very far from maturity; and I had many trials to face before my desire (of entering Carmel) would be fulfilled".⁶⁷ This is rewritten to read: "I was very far from maturity and I had many trials to face before arriving at the shore of peace, before tasting the delicious fruits of total abandon and perfect love".⁶⁸ Mother Agnes' language here is not basically insincere or much exaggerated, for she too had given up all to follow Christ in Carmel, yet it is conventional and somewhat perfunctory, and not at all quite according to the Saint's style. This type of interference with the text is not very common; it would be difficult to find a half-a-dozen examples of it in the whole book.

Changes

There is question here of what might be called *bilateral* changes, involving both omission and addition. It is in assessing changes of this nature that a close comparison of manuscript and *Histoire* is most necessary.

There are, in the first place, the insignificant changes which may be illustrated by the following parallel passages, the first of which is from the manuscript: — *Jésus ne m'a pas donné un cœur insensible et c'est justement parce qu'il est capable de souffrir que je désire qu'il donne à Jésus tout ce qu'il peut donner.*⁶⁹ *Je n'ai pas un cœur insensible ; et c'est*

⁶⁵ *Histoire*, ch. II, pp. 14-15; cfr. *Ms. A*, fol. 13r^o.

⁶⁶ *Histoire*, ch. II, p. 15; *Ms. A*, fol. 13v^o.

⁶⁷ *Ms. A*, fol. 27r^o.

⁶⁸ *Histoire*, ch. III, p. 31.

⁶⁹ *Ms. C*, fol. 10r^o.

*justement parce qu'il est capable de souffrir beaucoup, que je désire donner à Jésus tous les genres de souffrance qu'il pourrait supporter.*⁷⁰ Clearly the two passages say the same thing in the sense that what the attentive reader will take away is the same. There are thousands of these small nonsignificant changes, and it is well to bear this in mind when told that there are 7000 variations.⁷¹

Thérèse might have written the second of the two passages cited above just as well as the first; indeed she uses the phrase *genres de souffrance* elsewhere in the manuscript.⁷² There is one difference, however, by which the attentive reader of the manuscript could judge with some assurance that it was the first passage that Thérèse in fact wrote — the fact that the Holy Name occurs twice in the first passage and only once in the second. The constant use of the name of Jesus is one of the most striking characteristics of the manuscript: the citations under *Jésus* in the *Table des citations* occupy ten columns. Jesus is never referred to as *Our Lord* and is only once referred to as *Christ*.⁷³ Now although Mother Agnes does not adopt any policy of changing the Saint's nomenclature, as is clear from the passage cited above, nevertheless *Jésus* is very often changed to *Notre Seigneur* or *Dieu* or some other variant.⁷⁴ Less common, yet also significant is the change of Thérèse's *le Bon Dieu* into *Dieu, le Divin Maître* etc.⁷⁵ The Saint's direct and loving approach to God and to God-become-man expresses it self through this terminology, and a certain *fragrance* is lost through the changes. Not that Mother Agnes misses the central point which so many clever writers have missed — that the *Story of a Soul* is the story of a great love, neither more nor less: the love of Jesus for Thérèse and of Thérèse for Jesus. The *Histoire* shows this no less than the manuscript, yet the manuscript has an added fragrance, a certain innocence and childhood simplicity of affection which those who are sensitive to the more delicate modes and beauties of love will appreciate.

Thérèse, in her genius for loving and understanding love, began to discover very young the connection between love and suffering, and by

⁷⁰ *Histoire*, ch. IX, p. 127.

⁷¹ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 78.

⁷² *Ms. C*, fol. 9r^o.

⁷³ *Ms. A*, fol. 62r^o.

⁷⁴ *Ms. A*, fol. 2v^o; *Histoire*, ch. I, p. 2; *Ms. A*, fol. 75v^o; *Histoire*, ch. VIII, p. 101; *Ms. A*, fol. 76r^o; *Histoire*, ch. VIII, p. 102; etc.

⁷⁵ *Ms. A*, fol. 45v^o; *Histoire*, ch. V, p. 57; *Ms' A*, fol. 47r^o; *Histoire*, ch. V, p. 59; etc.

the end of her short life she had reached an astonishing height of wisdom in this matter. Mother Agnes, good and wise religious that she was, understood a good deal about suffering, understood, for example, that it is a joy to suffer for one we love, so that suffering becomes joy. This joy is sometimes felt and becomes an experience of great sweetness; at a higher level suffering invades all the faculties of sensible feeling and the joy is entirely in the intellect and will knowing the suffering to be for the beloved and willing it. This is an advanced state, and is more often achieved in isolated acts which are peaks as it were in man's response to God's love. Where suffering causes felt joy, the soul may become attached to this joy and develop morbidities; not so in the case of the purely spiritual joy. It is therefore interesting to compare the following:—(1) . . . *je suis véritablement heureuse de souffrir* . . .⁷⁶ (2) . . . *je savoure tous les fruits amers* . . .⁷⁷ The second phrase which recalls 'the delicious fruits of total abandon'⁷⁸ is that of Mother Agnes, and it is the conventional language of that felt joy in suffering which can so easily become morbose. For Thérèse joy in suffering was the simple joy of giving to the beloved, even when all that there was to cause joy was the bare fact of this giving.

Joy that is unfelt, in the sense that it is only in the intellect and the will, is still truly joy, and the suffering which it accompanies is not pure suffering. Beyond it there is a more elevated union of suffering and love, where the beloved seems dead or non-existent, so that the very joy or satisfaction of suffering for the beloved is absent: yet the lover can suffer this too for the beloved. Now this 'pure' suffering is part of the story of Thérèse's love for Jesus especially during that last eighteen months when her beloved seemed not only absent but non-existent. Her faith was strong, and she accepted the suffering joyfully. Nevertheless it was pure suffering, without joy. She found her joy in suffering without joy for the sake of Jesus. Here are her exact words:— "In spite of this trial which deprives me of all enjoyment (*toute jouissance*: underlined) I can nevertheless make my own the words of Psalm 91: Lord thou dost fill me with *joy* by all that thou dost. For surely there is no joy greater than that of suffering for the beloved".⁷⁹ Now Mother

⁷⁶ *Ms. C*, fol. 4v^o.

⁷⁷ *Histoire*, ch. IX, p. 121.

⁷⁸ *Histoire*, ch. III, p. 31 (cfr. supra note 68).

⁷⁹ *Ms. C*, fol. 7r^o. It must be remembered that there is question precisely of a trial of *faith*, i.e., a fight against the assertion that the beloved does not exist at all. We are not concerned here with searching after the distinctions by which the paradox of this joyless joy can be resolved. Those who have

Agnes changed the phrase *toute jouissance* to *tout sentiment de jouissance*,⁸⁰ thinking there was question of that unfelt joy which has its seat in the intellect and will. But Thérèse's suffering was far deeper and 'purer' than even her 'little mother' understood, and this gives an added poignancy to those last few pages of *Novissima Verba* where the Saint's words come from regions of suffering which those about her have never entered.

One of the most interesting of the smaller changes has to do with a capital letter merely. At a very early age Thérèse felt assured that God had destined her for holiness, for great sanctity. Such an assurance is ambiguous, stated in these terms. Does she mean simply that God wants her to be very holy as He wants every soul He has created to be holy? Or does she mean that she will be raised to the altars of the Church and rival St. Jeanne d'Arc and the other great saints she admired? The manuscript makes it clear that this is what she meant, for the term is *une grande Sainte*:⁸¹ she was to become a great Saint; in the *Histoire* the phrase becomes — understandably — *une grande sainte*.⁸²

Thérèse's consciousness of her own sanctity has been a source of scandal to some, even among her admirers. They see it as a sort of narcissism. She is, they say, far too self-analytical, too given to examining her soul under a microscope.⁸³ Now there is a passage in the manuscripts which is of great interest from the point of view of this charge, since it is the best example we have of the Saint's use of the *third person* in speaking about herself. This tendency to objectify the self shows itself in her constant use of the terms *mon âme*, *ma petite âme*, *ma pauvre petite âme* etc. It shows itself too in the title she herself gave to her first manuscript: *The History of the Springtime of a Little White Flower*. But it is most evident in the passage mentioned above, a long passage at the end of manuscript B in which the Saint compares herself to a "feeble little bird, having as yet no feathers but only a light

read M. Jean Guittou's *Essay on the Spiritual Genius in the Doctrine of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, Sicut Parvuli* 18 (1956) 158-174; 19 (1957) 33-48, will recall the authors remarks on the phrase "effortless effort" which he applies to the Saint.

⁸⁰ *Histoire*, ch. IX, p. 124.

⁸¹ *Ms. A*, fol. 32r^o: "... une grande Sainte ..." (sic).

⁸² *Histoire*, ch. IV, p. 40.

⁸³ "Is it really necessary or possible to be talking about oneself so constantly, to be setting oneself in the limelight so much?" asks Dr. Hans Urs Von Balthasar in his study of the Saint, *Thérèse of Lisieux*, English translation by Donald Nicholl, London 1953, p. 51.

down".⁸⁴ This passage is reproduced faithfully in the *Histoire* (in the eleventh chapter) except that it is transposed into the first person.⁸⁵ The change is a very natural one for the retention of the third person throughout the whole passage — it runs to about five hundred words — seems at first sight artificial. But Thérèse's writing is never artificial, and there is question here of a very deep trait or attitude of her personality — *her sense of being loved*. To know oneself as loved is to know oneself as the object of another's love, and when this love means everything in one's life, the tendency to objectify the self is very strong. The 'little white flower' is cherished by the Divine gardener, the 'feeble little bird' rests secure under the sun of merciful love, just as the 'little Queen' rests secure in the love of her 'beloved King'. Thérèse is like the child that has not yet learned to use the first person because it does not see itself as distinct from its protecting and loving family environment. There is all the difference in the world between the self-regard which only sees the self and the self-regard which sees the self in the light of the Divine love. It is in this light that Thérèse sees herself. She can write of herself in the third person with the same naturalness as St. John wrote of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. This sense of being loved shows itself clearly in the *Histoire* as well as in the manuscript, but here again the manuscript has a delicate fragrance all its own. The reader who sees Thérèse as an egoist is surely insensitive to this, as to much else besides.

The Critical Problem

It might seem that once the manuscript photographs have been published the only critical problem that can arise is that of estimating the significance of the area of difference between the original and the version presented in the *Histoire*. This, unfortunately is not the case. For when we are looking at the photograph text we are not always looking at what Thérèse wrote in the first place. The text itself has been worked over more than once and from several points of view. The task of deciphering the original — that is, what left the Saint's hand — is all the more difficult because Thérèse herself made many small corrections, either at first writing or later. "At that time", the

⁸⁴ Ms. B, 4v^o: "Moi je me considère come un faible petit oiseau couvert seulement d'un léger duvet".

⁸⁵ *Histoire*, ch. XI, p. 171 sqq.

editor tells us, "the eraser was part of the writing equipment of every good Carmelite".⁸⁶ These corrections are of course part of the original, but they create the problem that the fact that a correction has been made does not necessarily mean that we have established Thérèse's text: the phrase 'retouch of doubtful origin' occurs repeatedly in M. Trillat's *expertise*. Nevertheless, the labours of the experts as well as the editor's very thorough presentation of the text and clear explanations of how the changes took place allow us to have practical certainty that the area of difference between the original and what we have is not large enough to include anything of great significance. Most of the more striking changes arise from the fact that when the *Histoire* was published Mother Gonzaga insisted that all of it should be addressed to herself; later somebody wanted to see the original, and Mother Gonzaga would have destroyed the manuscript addressed to Mother Agnes had not the latter persuaded the Prioress that she could change the text to make it appear as if it were addressed to Mother Gonzaga. This decision involved considerable interference with the original, but the restoration of the text is not difficult, and P. François feels that the 'intelligent reader' will be able to recognise the original without difficulty.⁸⁷

Fr. Etienne Robo, in a second edition of his book on the Saint,⁸⁸ makes much more of these changes than does P. François or the handwriting experts. He suggests that, for at least one important passage, there was a "different and earlier text rubbed out by Mother Agnes in 1898, reconstituted twelve years later to satisfy Rome's demands and written out by Sister de la Trinité, whose writing was a faithful replica of that of St. Teresa".⁸⁹ The passage that Fr. Robo refers to is to be found in Manuscript A, folio 70 verso, lines 1 to 5. But there is no basis for this charge in the evidence of the handwriting experts. P. François regards the passage as authentic and provides full notes on it. Fr. Robo provides no evidence for what is after all "only a suggestion" beyond the fact that he finds the wording of the text "not clear".⁹⁰

⁸⁶ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 90: "A l'époque, le grattoir se trouvait dans l'écrivoire de toute bonne Carmélite".

⁸⁷ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 92.

⁸⁸ *Two Portraits of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, second edition, London 1957. (The first edition appeared in 1955).

⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

⁹⁰ This 'suggestion' of Fr. Robo's becomes in the London *Catholic Herald* of August the 30th, 1957 the following: "Pauline, who appeared to have disliked the Prioress, inserted a passage purporting to show the Saint's dislike for the Prioress". The passage is that mentioned above.

It seems clear that the Saint's sisters regarded the manuscript as a family or community possession which they had the right to touch up and present in the best way possible. Yet it must be said immediately that this touching up was almost entirely of a material and insignificant order — grammar, punctuation, spelling. Here and there a word is changed, but without change of meaning.⁹¹ There is one passage, however, where the touching up was more than grammatical, that in which the Saint quotes a letter of her mother's saying that the baby Thérèse was very nervous and subject to fits of uncontrollable rage.⁹² For the phrase *bien nerveuse* of the original was substituted *exubérante* and *furies épouvantables* was softened to *états à faire pitié*, while the phrase *elle se roule par terre comme une désespérée* is entirely rubbed out. Thérèse herself gives a hint that Madame Martin's description of her childhood fits of rage is somewhat exaggerated, since she introduces it with the words: — "Here is a passage in which my faults shine forth with great clarity".⁹³ One has only to read the quotation from the same source that is given immediately after in the manuscript to see that Thérèse could not truthfully be described as a 'nervy' child: in this later passage we have a picture of 'the poor little angel sitting quietly for two or three hours' during Céline's lessons. Had Mother Agnes wished to show the young Thérèse to have been a perfect angel she would surely have erased other passages as well — those for instance which tell of her extreme timidity and tearfulness.⁹⁴ It would seem then that the text was changed in the interests of truth rather than for the purpose of presenting a pious portrait. It is unlikely that Mother Agnes or anybody else foresaw that the passage would be used later to support the contention that Thérèse was a neuropath.⁹⁵

The modern scholar, for whom manuscripts are sacred and inviolable, will not easily forgive the Saint's sisters for this rewriting of the text in

⁹¹ Cfr. *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 94.

⁹² *Ms. A*, fol. 8r^o.

⁹³ *Ms. A*, fol. 7v^o.

⁹⁴ *Ms. A*, fol. 13r^o.

⁹⁵ Fr. Robo's thesis in the book already quoted is that Thérèse was a neuropath who became a saint through an indomitable will to achieve sanctity in spite of the odds. This thesis does not concern us here. For a discussion of it the reader may be referred to the Irish Dominican review *Doctrine and Life*, 1956, nos 3 and 5. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that when Fr. Robo, having dealt with the passage concerning Thérèse's nervousness which was erased from the manuscript, goes on to speak of passages "which have been likewise rubbed out of the picture" (p. 53) there is question of passages which were *not* tampered with in the manuscript but which were omitted from the printed *Histoire*.

a good imitation of Thérèse's handwriting. Yet it must be remembered that Thérèse had given full and explicit permission for this. Her words were:—"Add or subtract as you wish; it shall be as if I had done it myself".⁹⁶ Mother Agnes did nothing that she was not fully entitled to do. But, perhaps the manuscript has been tampered with all through? If this were so the careful analysis of the handwriting experts would surely have revealed it or at least raised queries. It is worth remarking that the 'rewriting' of the passage concerning Thérèse's childhood nerves and fits of temper is done so carelessly and unskilfully that any attentive reader will notice it. Because of this the passage is to some extent a guarantee of the authenticity of the rest of the manuscript, and the same may be said of the changes made in addressing the first manuscript to Mother Gonzaga. But the passage we have been examining provides a more important guarantee. For the experts have succeeded in restoring the original of this passage, and *the result agrees exactly with the copies made from the first manuscript for the ecclesiastical tribunal concerned with the canonisation process*.⁹⁷ It is clear that in the matter of the canonisation of her sister Mother Agnes acted with complete sincerity and objectivity.

It can be said then with certainty that we have what Thérèse wrote; there has been some interference and some touching up, but it is without significance except for one passage which has been restored. But the other part of the critical problem remains—the problem of the relation of the manuscript to the *Histoire*. This question is important for the reason that St. Thérèse has become known to the world through the *Histoire*, and the book itself has become the best of 'bestsellers' and was coming to be regarded as a spiritual classic. Must we now banish it from our shelves as a spurious production, or give it a new title, calling it "*Mother Agnes' Life of St. Thérèse*"? Have we been given a touched up, 'idealised', sentimental portrait of the Saint? Must we review our notions of Thérèse's spiritual doctrine?

It is well to consider separately the questions of portraiture and of doctrine before going on to deal with the question of the status of the *Histoire*.

As regards portraiture it is doubtful whether anybody who knows well the Thérèse of the *Histoire* will find the Thérèse of the manuscript

⁹⁶ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 72: "Ma Mère, tout ce que vous trouverez bon de retrancher ou d'ajouter au cahier de ma vie, c'est moi qui le retranche et qui l'ajoute. Rappelez-vous cela plus tard, et n'ayez aucun scrupule à ce sujet".

⁹⁷ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. II, p. 86 and p. 112.

the least bit strange or different. On the contrary he will have the delightful experience of knowing more about somebody already well known. The manuscript brings Thérèse nearer to us, but it is the same Thérèse: the lover of Jesus and of Mary, the child that rests secure in the arms of the Good God, the same purity and tenderness and delicacy of affection, the same virginal ardour and sweetness that was without the least alloy of that sentimentality in which sweetness is but a cloak for concupiscence and selfishness, the same finesse and clarity of intelligence, also that final heroism of dark mind and racked body — and the indefinable personality behind it all. Certain facets of that personality stand out more clearly, especially that gentle and flexible irony of which we have spoken. But the personality itself is the same.

As regards doctrine, it is clear even from the general survey of omissions and changes given above that our knowledge has been considerably augmented. Nothing of what we had learned from the *Histoire* has to be relinquished, but some of the main traits stand out more clearly, even more boldly, and there are all sorts of little touches that give a more finished spiritual doctrine. The manuscript is a quarry in which commentators will be always making discoveries. Although many books have been written on Thérèse many more will be written, for she has given a brilliant solution to the only question that matters: how can man (i. e. modern man) love God with his whole heart? According as men see that this is the only question that matters they will turn towards the little Carmelite for guidance, and in these few pages written under obedience on cheap exercise books they will find each the light which he needs. It is only gradually that the hidden treasure will be discovered, but it will not render counterfeit what is already given in the *Histoire*. So far indeed was Mother Agnes from presenting another doctrine that she was the first to recognise that the manuscript is a real treasure-house of spiritual doctrine, and that the *Histoire* had by no means opened up every part of it. "It all fits together", she wrote to Mgr Teil, "and sometimes the smallest detail expresses a most profound reflexion".⁹⁸

There remains the problem of the status of the *Histoire*. We have seen that Mother Agnes not only omitted passages but made a great

⁹⁸ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 93: "... je n'ai pas eu le courage de rien barrer, même au crayon! parce que tout s'enchaîne et le moindre détail amène une réflexion parfois si profonde!"

many changes and additions. Indeed P. François does not hesitate to say that she *rewrote* the autobiography. In a review of the photostat edition in the *London Tablet* of the 22nd September, 1956, Mr. Lancelot Sheppard goes as far as to say that the Saint's words "have been bowdlerised almost beyond recognition". Mother Agnes has treated the manuscripts of her 'little child' as a sort of schoolgirl's exercise to be corrected and improved. In an article-review of the same photostat edition in the *Furrow* of November, 1956, Fr. Michael O'Carroll, C.S.Sp. disagrees with Mr. Sheppard, and claims that the French reviews "took no such gloomy attitude". For his own part he doubts "that there is one important remark bearing on the saint's teaching to be found in the series of omitted passages here reproduced".⁹⁹

Clearly the question is one on which one can only state personal impressions. It seems to the present writer that many of the reviews of the photocopy edition which have appeared to date have given first or superficial impressions on a matter in which really valuable judgement should wait on careful and minute study. Fr. O'Carroll's article gives a very fair and balanced first impression of the manuscript and its relation to the *Histoire*, and most of what he said will bear the closest scrutiny. Yet the more one gets into the text of the manuscript the more apparent it becomes not only that there are many new aspects of doctrine but that there is a definite difference of character or spirit between it and the *Histoire*. One is gradually forced to accept the judgment of the editor that Mother Agnes *rewrote* the autobiography, and that the *Histoire* differs from the original manuscript "to the extent that the temperament of Mother Agnes is not that of Thérèse".¹⁰⁰ The Saint gave full and explicit permission for this rewriting, and it seems certain that she would have been glad to accept the final version as her autobiography. We can only be grateful for a good proportion of the additions since they tell us more about the saint and her background. But those who find the personality of the Saint in her characteristic choice of words and turns of phrase and in a certain directness, freshness and detachment from the conventional language of rosegarden piety that she had to use — those, that is to say, who really *know* Thérèse can only regret the rewritings even when the text gains

⁹⁹ *Truth about St. Thérèse*, in *Furrow* 7 (1956), p. 660.

¹⁰⁰ *Mss. Autob.*, vol. I, p. 78: "Sans doute, la matière du récit reste sensiblement la même, le fond de la doctrine aussi, mais la forme est différente dans la mesure où le tempérament de Mère Agnès de Jésus n'est pas celui de Thérèse".

in tidiness or clearness. And, of course, Mother Agnes sometimes missed the point in the original: we have examined some examples of this.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that there is no question at all of a 'pious fraud' or of 'bowdlerising'. The modern mind reacts violently against the 'edifying' falsehood, and such violence sometimes blinds judgement: we see the enemy where no enemy is. At first sight it looks as if some sort of 'pious fraud' had been perpetrated here — so many of the conditions are present. (This seems as far as one can go towards providing an explanation of the review in the *Tablet*). But it is only necessary to look at the situation steadily a second time to see that the portrait of Thérèse which the *Histoire* provides is quite exact, and that there is no question at all of making her seem other than she was. Even if it be maintained that Thérèse's mention of her difficulty in saying the Rosary was omitted for reasons of 'edification', this solitary omission could hardly be said to change the whole picture. It is simply untrue and very unfair to say that the *Histoire* is in any sense a spurious or propaganda version of the manuscript.

What, finally, is the status of the *Histoire*? It is a true portrait of St. Thérèse and an accurate statement of her spiritual doctrine, but it is a work of joint authorship. It is primarily autobiography, and Thérèse is the principal author, but it is not only presented but interpreted by Mother Agnes. It is the Thérèse she knew, and she knew Thérèse better than anybody else. For this reason the book is important and will not be banished by the publication of the manuscript. It is the book to give to the person who has not yet met Thérèse, and it will continue to make friends for the most loved saint of our time. The fact that it has the stamp of Mother Agnes' personality does not by any means condemn it, for there is question of a religious personality of nobility and originality, as is clear from the accounts of her life that have been published.

Mother Agnes understood her 'child' well, but she did not understand her fully. There was far more to Thérèse than any of those about her understood, and there is certainly far more to her than appears even in the more intelligent of the many biographies of the Saint that have been written. When there is question of a personality so greatly enriched by the gifts of creative and transforming love the full glory of it can only be known to God. For the rest, each person's knowledge of the Saint will be measured by his or her faculty of apprehension.

The same personality appears different to different people, not because the personality changes but because the people are different — the philosophical principle of relativity has a place here: 'the known is in the knower according to the measure of the knower'. So many portraits of Thérèse are portraits of their authors, showing us what repose there is in *them* to the many-sided wonder of the woman who loved Jesus as He asks to be loved. The *Histoire* is Mother Agnes' portrait of the Saint — and of herself too. Mother Agnes saw what was there, *for her*, just as, in the portraits Sister Geneviève saw what was there for her — a certain sweetness and repose which the camera sometimes missed. There is question in one case as in the other not of distortion but of impression. Those who wish to form their own impressions will prefer the photographs and the photostats, and they are right. But we would be very much the poorer for it if we were to put aside or ignore the impressions of those who lived and talked with Thérèse, and entered personally and intimately into the miracle of her life of love.

Loughrea, 1957.

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