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A God With Many Names:  
An Exploration of the Naming of God  
In Showings by Julian of Norwich  

Submitted by  
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Abstract  

The naming of God is one approach to the theological endeavour. It allows not only for  
the emergence of a plethora of names which connote relationships, but also many images and  
metaphors that help us to glimpse who God is, and how God is experienced by humankind.  
This research studies the work of an fourteenth century mystic and theologian, Showings by  
Julian of Norwich, to try to grasp the understanding of God that came to her in a religious  
experience by being attentive to the names she uses for each person of the Trinity and the Trinity  
per se. Showings is comprised of two books known as the Short Text and the Long Text. The  
Short Text was written immediately after the religious experience. After twenty years of  
contemplation and reflection, Julian wrote not only of the experience, but of the theological  
understandings she had come to over the year. While in this research, reference will be made to  
the Short Text, the research’s main focus is the Long Text.  

What emerges from this study is an understanding of a God of love who is ever-present to
creation, especially humankind. Julian’s language, which defines her religious experience, leads us to name the persons of the Trinity as Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus and Holy Spirit/Lord. Each of the composite names encapsulates her understanding of God creating, redeeming, transforming and blessing creation. Further, a careful analysis of Showings not only presents a profusion of names, but leads the reader into a “vision” or “understanding” of God birthed in Julian’s religious experience.

The research seeks to articulate the relevancy of Julian’s theology to contemporary Christian theology. This is done by comparing and contrasting some of Julian’s doctrine of God with that of some contemporary Christian feminist theologians. It soon becomes apparent that even though there is a convergence of understandings of God, significant differences emerge. But what we do find in both Julian’s writings and those of contemporary Christian feminists theologians is an understanding of God that respects, cherishes and celebrates creation, especially humankind. God as Other is transcendence, God one with creation is immanent.
Dedicated to my mother

Catherine Anne Biollo

and in memory of my grandmother

Mary Sandra Haverstock

and my niece

Elena Marie Sorochuk

each of whom has been, for me, a revelation of Divine Love
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research would never have come to fruition if it were not for the assistance and support of many people. I would like to thank my religious congregation, Sisters of Charity, who have provided me with the opportunity to study and who have been unwavering in their support of me in good times and in times of struggle. I have received support from my many friends from all across Canada for which I am truly thankful. I would also like to thank my family, who consider it their vocation to keep me humble, for their support and encouragement over the years. During these years of research my colleagues have provided for me a community of support which has been invaluable. I would especially like to mention the Way Skinner family -- Michael, Christine, Beth and Anna, who have welcomed me into their family and whose friendship has been a source of joy for me during the years of study. A very special thanks is due my dissertation director, Mary Ellen Sheehan, IHM, who gave me many helpful suggestions and shared the months of research and writing with patience and an abundance of her time and support.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1373 CE a young woman, who came to be known as Julian of Norwich, had an experience of God that took her twenty years to understand. Immediately following the experience, she recounted it in what came to be known as the short text of Showings. Approximately twenty years later, after much prayer and reflection, Julian wrote another book which not only recounted the experience, but also contained the fruits of the twenty years of reflection on the experience. This second book, which had two editions, came to be known as the long text of Showings. Julian wrote these texts because she believed the message she received was for all humanity.

Julian was known by relatively few persons in her day. There are only three sources of information about Julian: her own texts, note of her in wills, and reference to her in The Book of Margery Kempe1, one of the women who sought spiritual direction from Julian. During her lifetime and for much of history, Julian remained in the shadows of fame. In modern times up until very recently, with the exception of specialists in Medieval English literature and authors in the history of Christian mysticism, few knew much about her even though some translations of her book or, at least parts of her book, appeared in print.

Little study was done on Julian’s work until the last half of the twentieth century. When it did begin, this research centred on spiritual themes. Scholarly research into writings of Julian of Norwich began with the publication of a dissertation by Paul

Molinari in 1958. In his dissertation, Molinari demonstrates Julian to be a woman of prayer and that her showings were experienced by someone with a sound, intelligent mind. In 1964, the famous Trappist monk Thomas Merton drew attention to Julian when he wrote that, along with John Henry Newman, Julian was one of the greatest English theologians. A useful and widely read small volume, which introduces Julian the mystic, is provided in the 1973 work edited by the Sisters of the Love of God with an Introduction by A.M. Allchin.

In 1978 a milestone was reached in Julian research with the publication of the critical edition of Showings by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh. With the publication of this edition the texts of Julian became far more accessible. Since that time the studies on Julian are growing and expanding in both devotional writing and scholarly research. A review of the literature reveals the scope of the research that has been done on her to date. Charles Brant Pelphrey reveals Julian’s theological depths and the similarity to Byzantine mystical theology and Greek Orthodox theology. In 1983,

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6 Brant Pelphrey, Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich (Salzburg: Institut Für Anglistik and Amerikanistik, 1982). Hereafter cited as Pelphrey, Love Was His Meaning.
Patricia Mary Vinje looks at Julian’s work from the perspective of love.\(^7\) 1988 saw the appearance of two books on Julian, one by Susan M. Thrift Mahan\(^8\) and one by Grace Jantzen.\(^9\) Thrift Mahan treats the Christian anthropology of Julian’s works while Jantzen integrates scholarly findings with contemporary spirituality. In 1989 Pelphrey published a second book\(^10\) which treats Julian’s image of Christ as Mother. A 1992 work by Margaret Ann Pelliser centres on mercy and compassion in Julian.\(^11\) A recent monograph to appear on Julian is the first historical assessment of Julian’s significance as a writer and thinker.\(^12\) 1997 welcomed a new book by Julian scholar Sheila Upjohn\(^13\) which wrestles with the question of why there is a renewed interest in Julian today.\(^14\) As well,


\(^14\) A non-academic reason for the continuing interest in Julian is the formation of a group of people dedicated to making her known. In 1991 a centre was opened which is operated by the Friends of Julian. Its goal is to make Julian and her writings better known and available to people. The centre is attached to the Church of St. Julian and includes a replica of Julian’s cell the original of which was destroyed in World War II.
about forty scholarly articles have been published on Julian through the years.\textsuperscript{15}

Although it is true that the publication of the critical edition of \textit{Showings} augmented the research done on Julian, it was not the only factor. Another reason for Julian’s emergence is the concerted effort by feminists and women theologians to explore history to reveal women who have been silenced or dismissed on the basis of their gender. Julian naturally emerges as one such woman to be researched. Contemporary Julian scholars include Joan M. Nuth, Grace Jantzen and Denise Nowakowski Baker.\textsuperscript{16} Note must be made of the appearance of Julian’s name in numerous indices of contemporary female writers, many of whom are feminist theologians. Julian is often alluded to but rarely discussed extensively in these works.\textsuperscript{17} and not always referred to in a positive light.\textsuperscript{18}

These studies have probed much of Julian’s theology from a number of perspectives. Nuth, for one, takes a systematic approach to Julian’s work and concludes that her work is “... a priceless gem of women’s theological scholarship and deserves to

\textsuperscript{15} See accompanying bibliography.


\textsuperscript{18} Johnson, \textit{She Who Is}, 34.
be recognized as such.”19 In her work, Nuth looks as Julian’s understandings of the incarnation, redemption, ecclesiology, the One Triune God, theological anthropology, creation and eschatology. In other words, she does an overview of the topics usually associated with systematic theology. In her work, then, Nuth necessarily addressed Julian’s doctrine of God, the focus of this study.

Nuth’s treatment of Julian’s doctrine of God in Showings studies God as Love and considers the effects of God’s love. Her work consists of three parts. Part One entitled “Preliminaries” provides the historical background and some of the underpinnings of Julian’s theology.

In Part Two of her book, Nuth develops Julian’s understanding of soteriology and doctrine of God. She looks first at salvation as expiation and then salvation as recreation.20 Salvation through the Church is discussed21 but the main symbol for soteriology, for Nuth, is Julian’s concept of the motherhood of Christ.22 For Julian, according to Nuth, it “expresses the very essence ... of Christ’s activities toward humanity.”23 Nuth then goes on to consider God as Love as seen in Showings. She considers the Trinitarian dimension of God and looks at the certain attributes of God: mercy, justice, being, goodness and joy. A tool Nuth uses to develop Julian’s

understanding of God as love is by considering the following triads: might, wisdom, love; joy, bliss, delight; maker, keeper, lover; and Mother, Father, Lord.

In Part Three of her work, Nuth considers the “Effects of God’s Love.” God’s love creates humanity in God’s image and “all the world for humanity.” It sustains all that is in existence while “holding the soul in eternal union with God.” Further, the love of God, through mercy, heals the damage caused by sin and increases God’s image in nature, through grace fulfills humanity by bringing it into union with the Godhead, “partially in this life, fully in the next.”

Nuth’s treatment of Julian’s theology is solid and a valuable addition to the consideration of Julian’s texts from the perspective of systematic theology. But it does leave scope for further development. Nuth herself writes: “Julian’s soteriology is composed of a plethora of themes and images working together.” and in her work introduces us to some of the complexity of Julian’s images and themes.

My purpose in this study is to give further consideration to the understanding of God that emerges from Julian’s religious experience and her theological reflection. To do this I study Julian’s texts in depth, as well as contemporary secondary sources which analyze, promote and critique her theological world view. I use Julian’s naming of God as an entry point into her thought because I believe, with Elisabeth Schüessler Fiorenza.

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24 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 97.
26 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 44.
that theology is best understood as the activity and practice of “naming the Divine.”

Julian was one of the many women who sought to name God out of their experience. Her articulation of her names for God present to us a profusion of names rich in meaning and in imagery. She provides us not only with a myriad of ways to name God, but also with an image of an androgynous God, a God expressed in both male and female symbols.

Although Julian’s texts were written in the fourteenth century, it is my contention that they have something to say to us in our day. Her images of God can speak deeply to a society, such as ours, that too often dismisses God as an archaic notion, unnecessary for persons who live in an enlightened, technological age. As some people do today, Julian struggled with the understanding of God in her experience and its dissonance with church teaching. Showings describe the process of her coming to personal insight and how she relates these insights to some of the most important theological understandings of the Christian tradition. One of the images of God that emerges from Julian’s texts is a God of tender love and compassion, both Mother and Father, a God who always encloses us in love. Julian’s God delights in creation and longs for the day when all will be one in God.

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28 Gerda Lerner speaks of such women when she writes, “They would speak to God, represent the Divine, give birth to the redeemer, assert the feminine element in the divinity and usurp, by ecstatic vision, made inspiration, simple faith or any means they could muster, the right to define the Divine and with it the right to define their own humanity.” Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 115. Hereafter cited as Lerner, *Feminist Consciousness*. 

-7-
This dissertation has four chapters. Chapter One, “Julian of Norwich, Her Texts, and Her Times,” provides a context for the reflection on Julian’s naming of God. Consideration is given to the historical context in which Julian lived and to the anchorite lifestyle in which she participated. However, Julian was not only an anchorite. She was also a mystic and a theologian and so attention to these aspects of her person must be addressed. This chapter introduces the reader to Julian’s writings, Showings, and traces their chronology, their genre, and their intended audiences. This chapter also explains Julian’s methodology.

In Chapter Two, “The Naming of God in Showings,” the reader is introduced to Julian’s texts and exposed to her understanding of God through the study of God’s activities, attributes, desires and longings. The chapter also considers the image of God portrayed in Julian’s parable of the lord and the servant. This chapter brings to light the many and varied ways Julian has of speaking of God.

In the third chapter, “Discovering the Mystery of the Trinity in Showings,” the triune God is named as Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus and Holy Spirit/Lord. Each of the persons of the Trinity is considered individually and then the Trinity itself is contemplated. Woven through this chapter is Julian’s understanding of creation, redemption and transformation as they relate to specific persons of the Trinity, as well as to the Trinity as a whole.

Although Julian cannot be considered a feminist, I believe that her writing contains seminal ideas that are echoed in some contemporary Christian feminist theologians. In the final chapter, “Julian’s Theology of God and its Resonances with
Some Contemporary Christian Feminists”. as the title suggests. I take three aspects of Julian’s thought on God that emerged for me during my study of her texts and look at them in light of some contemporary Christian feminist theologians. By doing so, I hope to demonstrate the rich resource that Julian is for contemporary theology, especially contemporary Christian feminist theology.

Finally, I consider Julian’s naming God as one without wrath and look at its relationship to the anger of God spoken about by some contemporary Christian feminists. Here I find a dissonance between Julian and some contemporary Christian feminists which I think opens the way to further dialogue and reflection.
CHAPTER ONE

JULIAN OF NORWICH, HER TEXTS, HER TIMES

Julian is an outstanding example of an integrated theologian, for whom daily life and religious experience and theological reflection are all aspects of the one whole.

Grace Jantzen

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore Julian of Norwich’s multifaceted means of knowing God in order to grasp her understanding of the Divine as revealed to her through her experiences and which she recounts in Showings. The purpose of this chapter is three-fold: first, to place her in the historical context in which she lived and wrote; second, to provide an appreciation for her life by attending to her anchorite lifestyle, her mystical experience and the recognition that has been given to her as a theologian; and third to consider Julian’s writings, Showings, in order to demonstrate the evolution that led to the critical edition of Showings, and its major components, the short and the long texts.

Little is known of Julian of Norwich, not even her name. Nevertheless, there are three sources of information about Julian: her own texts; note of her in legal documents, namely wills; and an excerpt from The Book of Margery Kempe written by a woman who sought spiritual counsel from Julian. In addition to these primary sources, Julian scholars have developed valuable secondary sources and compiled a cohesive body of literature on her. These scholars include: Riamary Bradley, Edmund Colledge

29 It was customary for an anchoress to take the name of the church to which her cell was attached. For Julian, that was the Church of St. Julian located in Norwich, England.

30 Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe, 33-34.
and James Walsh, C. Hugh Hildesley, Grace Jantzen, Robert Llewelyn, Susan M. Thrift Mahan, Paul Molinari, Joan Nuth, and Brant Pelphrey. For this chapter, I rely primarily on Colledge and Walsh, Nuth, Jantzen and Thrift Mahan for the following reasons.

Colledge and Walsh’s “Introduction” provides data which incorporates materials from the existing manuscripts of Julian’s work as well as insights from other Julian scholars. I draw from Jantzen’s writing because, in her work developing Julian’s spirituality, she incorporates a succinct understanding of Julian’s anchorite lifestyle. Nuth, a systematic theologian, demonstrates Julian’s theology as one which emerged from a disciplined reflection on her experience with a particular methodology. I draw on Thrift Mahan because her work gives a thorough analysis of Colledge and Walsh’s “Introduction” and a valuable study of Christian anthropology in the Julian texts.

Drawing on Julian’s writing, the long text, it can be deduced that she was born in late 1342 or early 1343. In May 1373, at thirty years and six months, Julian became seriously ill and received the last rites of the church. On the seventh day of her illness,
May 13, 1373, Julian received sixteen revelations which lasted into the night and the next day. She wrote two different editions of this experience which came to be known as the short text and the long text. The short text narrates the experience, the teaching received, and Julian's response to it; it was written shortly after her revelation. She tells us that when she wrote the short text, she was unable to describe or understand the experience completely. After many years, according to Colledge and Walsh, Julian wrote two editions of the long text: the first in 1388 and a second edition in 1393. Hence between 1388 and 1393, the long version of the text was expanded as Julian came to comprehend the full meaning of some of the most central and perplexing elements of her earlier writings. The complete work took over twenty years, which makes Julian approximately fifty by the time she finished writing the long text. The author of the

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12 Julian of Norwich, Showings, LT 2, 285:3-4. In this research I use the critical edition of the text: Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978). This book is divided into two volumes. The first volume is comprised of a detailed introduction and the short text. The second volume contains the long text. In this research, when referring to the "Introduction," hereafter it is cited as, "Colledge and Walsh, "Introduction."" With referring to a citation of the short text I use ST followed by the appropriate chapter, page and line(s) number(s) in Roman numerals; citations of the long text are LT followed by the appropriate chapter, page and line(s) number(s) in Arabic numerals. When I refer to the book in its entirety, it is hereafter cited as Showings. A translation of the Middle English into Modern English is given for long or more difficult passages. The Modern English translation is from Showings edited and translated into Modern English from the Critical Text by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). The page number is indicated after the citation.

Julian wrote at a time when inclusive language was not a concern for authors. However it is a concern in contemporary literature and a concern for me as a theologian who desires to write in a manner in which all persons are treated with profound respect. Because of this, I endeavour in my own writing to use language which is respectful to persons of both genders. Nonetheless I will not change language in quotations from Julian's texts but will cite them directly as they appear in the writings.

13 ST, xxiii, 273:62-64.
14 LT 51, 520:86.
15 Colledge and Walsh, "Introduction." 24-25.
preface to the extant\textsuperscript{36} short text indicates that Julian was still alive in 1413 and residing in the anchorhold in Norwich. \textsuperscript{37}

The second source of biographical data on Julian is evidence found in wills in the Norwich Consistory Court. On March 20, 1393/4, Roger Reed, Rector of St. Michael's Coslany in Norwich, bequeathed two shillings to "Julian anakorite." In 1404, Thomas Edmund, a chantry priest of Ayseleham in Norwich, left one shilling to "Julian anchorite apud St. Juliane in Norwice." In 1415, John Plumpton of Norwich left forty pence to "le ankeres in ecclesia santi Juliani de Conesford in Norwice," as well as money to present and past serving maids. Finally in 1416, Isabel Ufford bequeathed money to "Julian recluz a Norwich."\textsuperscript{38} From this, it be can assumed that Julian was still alive in the year 1416.

The third source of knowledge about Julian comes from Margery Kempe who went to see her seeking spiritual counsel.\textsuperscript{39} Julian counsels Margery to follow the urgings of her soul, to let go of all doubt, and to believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. She reassures Margery that, in the end, God will overpower the devil and evil. In her advice to Margery, Colledge and Walsh point out that Julian frequently alludes to scripture.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} "Careful writers distinguish between extant and existent. Both are used of that which exists at the present time but extant has a further connotation of survival. Extant is therefore used of that which still exists, although there would be reason for believing that it might have disappeared." \textsuperscript{37} LT I. 201:3.

\textsuperscript{38} Colledge and Walsh. "Introduction," 32-33.

\textsuperscript{39} Kempe. \textit{The Book of Margery Kempe}. 74.

\textsuperscript{40} Colledge and Walsh. "Introduction," 36.
They further maintain that the advice Julian supposedly gave to Margery was a model of prudence and completely consistent with Julian’s teaching. Ritamary Bradley, a contemporary Julian scholar, similarly acknowledges Julian’s wisdom in counselling Kempe. I now consider Julian’s life under three different aspects: anchorite, mystic and theologian.

I. Julian’s Historical Context

A. Fourteenth Century Europe

The centuries immediately preceding the fourteenth century could hardly have prepared Europe for what would come. The eleventh and twelfth centuries were a time of rapid development both intellectually and spiritually, a time of great literary achievement. Intellectual maturity and synthesis emerged in the thirteenth century, as well as centralization and reform in the church. During this century, universities arose and the western world knew relative calm. It was during the thirteenth century that comprehensive systems of thought were developed by such writers as Albert the Great, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and many others.  


42 “Julian’s counsel shows respect for Margery and delicacy in dealing with the intimate converse between the soul and God. While others were applying ecclesiastical and social rules to Margery — telling her to restrain her tears, stop her preaching, change her way of dress — Julian simply identifies the norm by which Margery can judge her own conduct. She makes her a friend and trusts her. The evidence in this encounter is enough for us to think of Julian as standing against the degrading type-casting imposed on medieval women.” Bradley, Julian’s Way, 24.

The fourteenth century in Europe can be called both a century of calamity and a century of advancement. It was a century of calamity because there was profound disruption and dissolution economically and politically. Social and religious institutions underwent complex upheaval, leaving a population characterized by fear and apprehension. Wars, diseases, and famine ravaged the troubled population.

Synchronously, the fourteenth century was a time of advancement. It produced such literary classics as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Langford's *Piers Ploughman* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and thinkers such as Duns Scotus and William of Ockham who wrestled with questions of knowledge and belief. As a result of the Hundred Years' War, both England and Scotland experienced a new sense of national identity. Religious fervour and mysticism thrived in a church torn asunder by dissent. Thus, in spite of the many crises of the century, it was not devoid of progress.


England in the fourteenth century was a land of turmoil and insecurity in which almost every aspect of life was affected. There was political instability because of the Hundred Years’ War, social devastation from the Black Death, and religious turmoil resulting from corruption in the church, as well as anti-clericalism. The relationship of

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England to Scotland and France was consistently tenuous. The situation became grave when, in 1334, Scotland and France formed the Franco-Scottish alliance and war with England seemed inevitable. The war that would span two centuries, the Hundred Years' War, was close at hand.

As with most wars, the cause of the Hundred Years' War was a mixture of the political, economic and psychological. England wanted to obtain ultimate sovereignty of Guienne and Gascony, the lower western corner of France, given over to England as part of a marriage settlement, but where the French monarch still retained control under the formula *superioritas et resortum* which allowed the inhabitants to appeal to him when disagreements arose. Inhabitants took advantage of this clause and usually the French sovereign sided with the people against England. As Barbara Tuchman maintains, "To the English *superioritas et resortum* was politically and psychologically intolerable." The dispute was old and deep and bound for war. England fared badly in this costly war and was forced to raise taxes. The people saw little benefit from this war and the morale of the country declined.

At the same time the war was waging, the Black Death came to England. The malnourished population was ravaged by this disease which, in two years, took one-third

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48 Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror.* 72.

to one-half of the population.\textsuperscript{50} It was so devastating that it brought with it a sense of a vanishing future, which Tuchman calls, "a kind of dementia of despair."\textsuperscript{51} Many saw the disease as a form of divine retribution for the sinfulness of humankind.\textsuperscript{52} As devastating as the plague was, it did not seem to cause panic or flight in fear. What it did was to intensify tendencies that were already at work.\textsuperscript{53}

While the war was being fought by the military and the Black Death was taking lives, there was unrest surfacing among the labouring class. Poll taxes were applied too often and, at times, unfairly, and even in an invasive or violent manner. Furthermore, the labourers resented the restriction on their wages and the amount of land a free person could till. The peasants had never accepted the feudal order that had been imposed on them at the time of the Norman conquest. After the third tax in four years a bloody revolt, the Peasant Revolt, erupted in 1381. This revolt shook the whole fabric of society.\textsuperscript{54} Although the revolt failed for the peasants, it revealed the intensity of unrest in the lower classes and the loss of confidence of the people in their government. The revolt did not kill the poll tax but it created an atmosphere of general nervousness which long outlasted its suppression.\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{quote}
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\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{51}Tuchman, \textit{A Distant Mirror}. 99.
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\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{52}Timeframe AD 1300-1400. 8.
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{53}McKisack, \textit{The Fourteenth Century}. 332.
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\textsuperscript{55}McKisack, \textit{The Fourteenth Century}. 299.
\end{quote}
The fourteenth century also saw religious turmoil in the rise of anti-clericalism. caused in part by social and political unrest. Many clergy died from the plague, so parishes were often left vacant or assigned priests who were uneducated, incompetent and underpaid. Some became priests hoping to better their position in society. Bishoprics were often designated as a reward for civil servants. Many bishops did not reside in their dioceses and took little interest in what was happening in the parishes. As well as the rise in anti-clericalism, controversies existed within the church, in the form of opposed ideas: the rights of the state versus the rights of the church, the value of mendicant life versus monastic life, and the anti-intellectualism of the century versus scholasticism. As well, questions arose with regard to predestination and salvation.

While the population at large may have been experiencing disillusionment with the institutional church, the fourteenth century saw an increasing heterogeneity in religious theory and practice. These differing elements were characterized by the search for direct harmony with God, either through mystical union or through contact with God in the Bible as the source of revealed truth and paradigm of Christian living. These elements form the dominant religious forces of the century and are expressed in a diversity of ways: on the one hand in striving for mystical experience and personal piety and, on the other hand, in the advocacy and pursuit of apostolic first principles through which the reformation of the church and religious life was challenged. The very raison

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56 Tuchman, A Distant Mirror. 27.
57 Leff, Dissolution of the Medieval Outlook. 119.
58 Leff, Dissolution of the Medieval Outlook. 118.
d'ètre of the church was questioned. In some instances, inner revelation or personal holiness came before the authority of the church. Christ's words and deeds in the Bible were contrasted to the words and deeds of the church practices and laws which were of human origin and which were found wanting. A new age was dawning in religious circles.

C. Norwich in the Fourteenth Century

Norwich, in the second half of the fourteenth century, was second only to London in terms of population. It enjoyed economic wealth, principally because of its dominant position in the wool trade. It was located in East Anglia on the River Yare and its tributary, the Wensum. This gave the city direct access to Great Yarmouth and the North Sea routes to the continent. Not only material goods, such as wool, passed through Norwich, but so too did new secular and religious ideas. Almost all the major religious orders - the Franciscans, Benedictines, Dominicans, Carmelites and the Austin friars, - had houses in Norwich. It is likely that each of these monasteries had a good library as they produced a significant number of scholars. There were also forty-six craft guilds and pious confraternities in Norwich, along with ninety-one different crafts.

The picture that emerges of Norwich is a city bustling with industry and activity

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61 Leff, *Dissolution of the Medieval Outlook*, 118.

62 For a detailed discussion, see: Norman P. Tanner, *The Church of Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984). Hereafter cited as as Tanner, *Norwich*.


64 Hildesley, *Journeying with Julian*, 23.
until it was profoundly affected by the Black Death which reached the city in November 1348.\textsuperscript{63} Between 1348-1406, the Black Death visited Norwich five times, claiming thousands of lives,\textsuperscript{64} including approximately fifty percent of the clergy.\textsuperscript{65} But the Black Death was not the only tragedy to visit Norwich. The cattle became plagued by disease. There was a series of very bad harvests and, as a result, the country was broken by famine. As tragedies augmented, tensions mounted and violence broke out in 1381 with the Peasants' Revolt. In a state of murderous frenzy, the peasants rebelled against their lords, secular and ecclesiastical.

Trouble began in Norfolk on June 17th when a rebel band, led by Geoffrey Lister, forced open the gates of the city of Norwich.\textsuperscript{66} Lister himself indulged in banqueting and revelling while his mobs plundered the city. Nothing was held sacred. Property was taken, monasteries pillaged, churches destroyed. Peace was eventually re-established by the Bishop of Norwich, Henry Despenser.\textsuperscript{67} However, with the peace came resentment because the revolt had been rooted in the desperation of the poor driven to extreme measures because of the famine.

In spite of all the turmoil, Norwich did not come to a halt; it endured the

\textsuperscript{63} At this time, Julian was a girl of six or seven.

\textsuperscript{64} Although Julian makes no mention of the Black Plague, in particular, she does struggle with the question of suffering in a world created by a God of love. Surely this question must have been reinforced as thousands of dead bodies were carried through the streets of Norwich to be buried in whatever way possible.

\textsuperscript{65} McKisack, The Fourteenth Century, 332.

\textsuperscript{66} Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 8.

\textsuperscript{67} Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian.
fourteenth century, a mixture of affluence and desolation, ingenuity and turmoil. It was here that Julian found a home.

II. Julian's Life

A. Julian, an Anchorite

Julian lived part of her life as an anchorite. No one is sure when she entered the anchorhold or what she was doing until then. In fact, there is sharp disagreement among Julian scholars as to the evolution of her life. Colledge and Walsh favour the view that Julian was a nun before entering the anchorhold, while C. Hugh Hildseley strongly objects to this conjecture saying that her understanding of sexuality was more likely to have been acquired as a married woman than as a celibate one.

The question of Julian's life prior to entering the anchorhold is often raised in conjunction with discussion of her education. Even though she describes herself as "unlettyrde," it is clear from her texts that she is a learned woman. Showings exhibit an acquaintance with scripture and Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory's Life of St.}

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68 Colledge and Walsh, "Introduction." 43.

69 Hildesley, Journeying. 84.

70 Gerda Lerner, writing on the internalization by women of their inferiority as projected on them by androcentrism, speaks of Julian of Norwich saying, that though she was a powerful English mystic, she used almost the same language as Mechthild of Magdeburg did in calling herself "ignota" (meaning an ignorant woman) by calling herself "unlettryde," when she meant that she did not know Latin. Gerder goes on to say that "while both male and female mystics used the same argument of their ignorance — the 'humility topos' as literary critics designate. — the same was not true for the almost inevitable apologies with which women writers prefaced their work. These are pathetic remnants of what must have been agonizing struggles each woman had to conduct within her own soul and mind." Gerder Lerner, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness (New York: Oxford University Press. 1993). 51. Hereafter cited as Lerner, Feminist Consciousness.
Benedict, The Ancrene Riwle, William of St Thierry and other sources.\textsuperscript{71} It was likely that she was influenced by numerous religious orders including the Franciscans, the Carmelites and the Dominicans\textsuperscript{72} all of whom were in Norwich. Even though she may have turned to other sources, Julian's style is unique and original, contributing to her being titled 'the first English Woman of Letters.'\textsuperscript{73}

As an anchorite, Julian retired from the world to pray, to seek God's presence and to live a life of holiness. The main concern of an anchoress was prayer centred on the Divine Office. She often lived in a cell or a small complex which was attached to the church. As Grace Jantzen notes, the anchorite was not to be "useless towards it [the world] and the usefulness entailed clear sighted awareness of its doings."\textsuperscript{74} As an anchoress, Julian was expected to intercede for the townsfolk, especially women, and counsel those who came to the anchorhold seeking help. Many came to find a quiet listener who was not tied down to the world.

There was no one prescribed rule for all recluses. Some may have been religious and simply carried on living their community rule. Other lay persons may have become recluses and required a rule to fit their circumstances. The best known rule for recluses is

\textsuperscript{71} For a thorough discussion of the literary influences in Julian's writings, see Anna Maria Reynolds, "Some Literary Influences in the "Revelations" of Julian of Norwich" in Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages, nos. 7 and 8 (1952), 18-28. Hereafter cited as Reynolds, "Literary Influences."

\textsuperscript{72} Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 19.

\textsuperscript{73} Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 19.

\textsuperscript{74} Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 29.
The Ancrene Riwle, which dates back to the twelfth century. It functioned as a handbook stipulating the practice of dress, food, manners, but especially the schedule of prayer the recluses were to follow. The central concern of The Ancrene Riwle is the inner life.

According to the The Ancrene Riwle, the lodging of the anchorite was to be very simple and scantly furnished. The anchorhold was to have two windows, one which opened to the altar of the church and one which faced the street. The time the anchorite spent at the window with visitors was minimal, and then only with women. Only by exception was the anchorite to entertain visitors, and again, solely women. Like other anchorites, Julian most likely had a servant or two, involved in her domestic life. In turn, the anchorite taught the domestics with great care and diligence.

Although the anchoritic lifestyle may appear to be very strange to the modern mind, it was looked upon as a proper vocation, perhaps even the highest office available to a lay woman in the church. It was recognized and regulated. One became an anchorite with the permission of the bishop who confirmed this vocation in ritual centering on the Requiem, because the person was understood to be ‘dead’ to the world. Once in the anchorhold, the individual no longer left it. In fact, (s)he was physically walled in.

The anchorite engaged in a ministry comparable to the modern psychotherapist or spiritual director. Her task was not to seek out persons for help but to be available to

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76 AR. 185.

77 Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 33.
them when they came to her. When people came, the anchorite offered time, prayer, a heart that listened with acceptance, as noted by Jantzen, to “tales of sin and sadness and brokenness, ... helping the person to find a path to healing.” Such a ministry required inner quietness, humility and discipline. The anchorite’s heart was to be “the place where the love of God patiently takes to itself the pain of the world and brings lasting healing.”

B. Julian, a Mystic

When mystical experience is understood to be related to a particular state of mind, a form of consciousness that transcends ordinary experience by reason of a felt union with God, then it follows that people who have these types of experiences are mystics. As far as we know, Julian had only one experience which can be termed “mystical.” But that one experience transformed Julian’s theological understandings and led her to a life of profound reflection and contemplation. Julian begins the account of her Showings by saying that, at some unspecified time in her early life, she had desired three graces from God. First, she wanted a “mynde of Chryse es passionne” so that she might share in his sufferings, as had Christ’s lovers, so that like them, she would see with her own eyes what Christ had suffered for her, so that she might be with him in his agony. Second, she desired “bodelye syeknes” in which she would experience every kind of pain except death except death

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78 Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 47.

79 Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 47.

Finally, she desired three wounds: "contricyoun, compassyoun and wylfulle langgynge to god." The desire for the first two wounds subsided but the third, "wylfulle langgynge to god," remained constantly with her, indicating that she considered visions and physical phenomena secondary in importance to the love of God.

Illness did indeed befall Julian when she was thirty years and six months old. Julian thought, as did those around her, that she was going to die. She received the last rites but continued to weaken over the next two days and nights. On the third night, a priest was summoned to be with her during what were thought to be her dying moments.

The priest came and placed before her eyes a crucifix so that she might gaze upon it as death approached. Julian, who had been gazing upward, turned her eyes and fixed her sight on the cross. Her sight began to fail: darkness enveloped her. Only the crucifix itself remained in light. Everything was ugly to Julian except the cross which appeared as if surrounded by a crowd of devils. She felt the approach of death, a death she desired. Then much to her surprise, she was healed of her illness. As she looked at the crucifix, Julian suddenly felt that she should ask for a second wound that she might be filled with the feeling of the passion of Christ, so that his pains might be her pains. Compassion borne of such an experience would lead to longing for God.

\[^{81}\text{ST i. 201: 6-8.}\]
\[^{82}\text{ST i. 206: 51-54.}\]
\[^{83}\text{ST ii. 208:1.}\]
\[^{84}\text{ST ii. 208:22-23: 3. 289-293:1-50.}\]
\[^{85}\text{ST ii. 208: 18-37.}\]
Even though at this point Julian does not desire a bodily vision of the dying Christ, she is given one. The vision marks the starting point, not only of her visions, but of her whole theology.\(^6\) What follows is a series of vivid visual and auditory phenomena during which, as Jantzen writes, she "has both 'corporeal' vision of the suffering and dying Christ and 'spiritual sight' and understanding of the teachings which he conveyed to her."\(^7\)

Concurrent with the vision of the passion of Jesus, Julian receives another vision which she describes as a "gastelye of his hamy louynge,"\(^8\) in which she comes to understand that God "es to us all thynge pat is goode and comfortabylle to our helpe."\(^9\) In this vision she sees something no bigger than a hazelnut and wonders about its meaning. She reports utter amazement that the object did not fall into nothingness. Characteristically, Julian does not simply dwell on the vision but continually seeks to understand its doctrinal significance. She comprehends that creation continues to last and always will be "for god loueth it; and so hath all thing being by the loue of god."\(^10\) This assurance of God’s absolute fidelity becomes pivotal in Julian's theology. God’s neverending faithfulness to humanity is the assurance of our salvation.

With regard to reporting her visions and developing her theology, Julian has a

\(^6\)Nuth, Wisdom's Daughter, 12.

\(^7\)Jantzen, Mystic and Theologian, 75.

\(^8\)ST iv. 212:2. "... a spiritual sight of his familiar love."

\(^9\)ST iv. 212:2-3.

\(^10\)LT 3, 300:15-16.
marked concern that they be faithful to the rites, customs and teachings of the church. In both texts, Julian insists that her revelations and the reflections that flow from the revelations are consistent with church teaching. As Joan Nuth observes, "belief and trust in church teaching were an integral part of the revelations themselves." For Julian, God is Holy Church. He is its ground, its substance, its teaching, its teacher, its means and its end.

According to Evelyn Underhill, Julian's mysticism gives birth to a teaching that is healthy and vigorous with an affirmative character. Hers is a theology filled with hope and joy because she lives with the conviction that God, who is love, loves us with an eternal love that can never be destroyed, not even by sin. She lives in a confident happiness knowing that divine love has broken into the human condition and transformed it by love itself. Julian has learned well the teaching of John the Evangelist that "God is love." for love is the very meaning, the very being of God.

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93 ST xvi. 252:3-8. Julian's understanding of Holy Church as being God is problematic, especially if you consider that in Julian's time the "Church" was understood to be the clergy and the bishops. See Louis Bouyer, The Church of God (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), 40. While holding to this belief it is useful to remember that Julian used tradition selectively so that when her revelation was in tension with church teaching, she was unwilling to negate her experience or subordinate it to church teaching.
95 1 John 4:9. All biblical citations are taken from the New Revised Standard Edition.
C. Julian, a Theologian

As early as 1964, Thomas Merton wrote that along with John Henry Newman, Julian was one of the greatest English theologians. In 1983, Simone Tugwell wrote that "it seems to be generally accepted, at last, that Julian of Norwich was a very competent theologian." In 1991, Nuth puts forth her reasoning for calling Julian a theologian. She agrees with Colledge and Walsh that Julian's texts show a congruity of expression with many influential Middle English works of her day, but she also finds in Julian's writings indications of a knowledge of patristic writers like Augustine, Gregory and the works of William of St. Thierry.

Nuth notes that the visionary character of Julian's revelations places her in the tradition of thirteenth- and fourteenth- century visionaries. Drawing on the work of Elizabeth Petroff, Nuth comments on significant differences between Julian and other visionaries. First, unlike other visionaries' understanding of life as penitential, self-loathing, particularly of the body, and including a desire for humiliation, Julian sees life as a gift and her attitude toward the body is sound. She intentionally advises against rigid acts of asceticism and self-degradation. Second, while few of the continental mystics engaged in theological speculation as to the meaning of their visions, Julian could not rest

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until she discovered the meaning of her vision and how it responded to a particular theological dilemma she was experiencing. Third, mystics of Julian’s time had visions that arose from meditations on the life of Christ, Mary and the Saints. Julian experienced similar visions, especially as she meditated on Christ crucified, but she was never content to “rest” in the meditation. She “immediately moves on,” Nuth writes, “to consider the doctrinal significance.”

Finally, Julian, like other mystics, often experienced participatory visions, in which she actually participated in the life of Christ, particularly Christ’s passion. By the time she wrote the long text, Julian was not only able to describe the experience, but as Nuth argues, “to use it as a springboard for her development of its doctrinal significance.”

Another type of vision that was prevalent during Julian’s time was a vision of a hierarchical cosmic order with Mary reigning over all. When Mary is depicted as reigning over the cosmos, it is possible that what is functioning, Petroff writes, “is an inchoate, symbolic awareness of the feminine as the ordering principle of the cosmos.” For Julian it is Christ, not Mary who, reigns over the cosmos. The feminine emerged for Julian in a different way.


103 Later in the thesis, I show that Julian’s doctrine of the motherhood of God brings forth the feminine as principle of divine ordering.
As has been mentioned, Julian has an abiding concern to be in harmony with orthodox Christianity. Repeatedly, in both the short and the long text, Julian insists on her faithfulness to the rites, customs and teachings of the church. Julian is perplexed by an apparent contradiction within her own revelations and the church’s teaching. In her own words.

For I knew be the comyn techyng of holy church and by my owne felyng that the blame ov oure synnes contynually hangyth vppon vs, fro pe furst man in to the tyme that we come vpe in to hevyn. Then was this my mervele, that I saw oure lord god shewyng to vs no more blame then if we were as clene and as holy as angelis be in heaven. And between theyse two contraryes my reson was grettly traveyled by my blyndnes, and culde haue no rest for drede that his blessed presens shulde passe fro my syght, and I to be lefte in vnknowyng how he beholde vs in oure synne. For eyther me behoyd to se in god that synne were alle done awey or els me behovyd to see in god how he seeth it, wer by I myght truly know how it longyth to me and to see synne and the manner of oure blame.

Her experience told Julian that God did not see sin as a cause for damnation, whereas the teaching of the church appeared to be in opposition on this point. The dilemma that Julian was experiencing touched on a central understanding of Christianity, the mystery of salvation. Reconciliation was to come, for Julian, in the parable of the lord and the

104 Nuth. 16-22.
106 LT 50. 511:10-21. “For I know by the ordinary teaching of Holy Church and by my own feeling that the blame of our sins continually hangs upon us, from the first man until the time that we come into heaven. This, then, was my astonishment, that I saw our Lord showing no more blame to us than if we were as pure and as holy as angels in heaven. And between these oppositions my reason was greatly afflicted by my blindness, and I could have no rest for fear that his blessed presence would pass from my sight, and I should be left in ignorance of how he may look on us in our sin. For either I ought to see in God that all sin was done away with, or else I ought to see in God how he sees it, by which I might truly know how it is fitting for me to see sin and the way in which we have blame.” (266)
Julian's concern for orthodoxy may have been to avoid suspicion of a particular heresy of her times, the Free Spirit heresy. While not completely congruent with the Free Spirit heresy, there are two points of convergence between Julian's thought and the Free Spirit heresy. First, the Free Spirit heresy taught that once a soul had reached a certain stage of perfection, sin became impossible. While she is emphatic about saying that she is a sinner, Julian's understanding of sin diminishes in its significance if God does not look on sin with wrath and if it becomes a cause for glory rather than damnation. Second, Julian's understanding that "alle thynge schalle be wele" can seem to negate the existence of hell and purgatory. Those who adhered to the Free Spirit heresy did, in fact, deny the existence of hell and purgatory. So it is not out of the realm of possibility that Julian could have been identified with this heresy.

Nuth hypothesizes that the suspicion of heresy may have attended the early history of Julian's text, accounting for its limited circulation both during and after her lifetime. Furthermore, a theological text, written by a woman, may indeed have been suspected of heresy "especially since," as Nuth writes, "women who dared to preach or teach were frequently suspected of Lollardy." Reading the closing of the long text gives credence

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107 LT 38, 446-447:12-21.
109 Nuth, Wisdom's Daughter, 21. Lollards were followers of John Wyclif who was condemned as a heretic for, among other things, denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. See Barbara W. Tuchman, A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), 534-335.
to this theory. The scribe-editor writes:

I pray almyty god that this booke com not but to the hands of the(m) that will be his faithfull lovers, and to those pat will submett them to pe feith of holy church and obey the holesom vnderstanding and teching of pe men that be of vertuous life, sadde age and profound lerning, for this revelation is hey divinitye and hey wisdam, wherfore it may not dwelle with him that is thrall to synne and to the devill. And be ware pou take not on thing after thy affection and liking and leve another. for that is the condition of an heretique; but take every thing with other, and trewly vnderstonde: all is according to holy scripture, and growndid in the same, and that Jesus our very love light and truth shall shew to all clen soules that with mekeness aske perseverantly this wisdom of hym.\textsuperscript{110}

Julian's theology develops as the result of the process of addressing questions that arise out of experience. Slowly a unified system begins to emerge with the recurrence of interconnected themes and ideas in the discussion of specific theological issues.\textsuperscript{111} Hers is monastic theology, which has as its end not the construction of rational arguments for the truths of faith, but the nurture of the spiritual development of the believer. The hallmark of monastic theology is the emergence of image-filled descriptions of God and the human person before God.\textsuperscript{112} Characteristically, Julian's writings are replete with such images. To focus on the images of God is to remain true to the object of the

\textsuperscript{110} Showings, LT 734. "I pray almyte God that this book may not come except into the hands of those who wish to be his faithful lovers, and those who will submit themselves to the understanding and teaching of men who are of virtuous life, settled age and profound learning; for this revelation is exalted divinity and wisdom, and therefore it cannot remain with him who is a slave to sin and to the devil. And beware that you do not accept one thing which is according to your pleasure and liking, and reject another, for that is the disposition of heretics. But accept it all together, and understand it truly: it all agrees with Holy Scripture, and is found upon it, and Jesus, our true love and light and truth, will show this to all pure souls who meekly and perseveringly ask this wisdom from him." (343)

\textsuperscript{111} Nuth, Wisdom's Daughter. 23.

\textsuperscript{112} Nuth, Wisdom's Daughter. 24.
theological endeavour, the Mystery of Divine Incomprehensibility. Julian is consistently close to her theology's source, the experience of God in the midst of suffering and to its purpose, the pastoral solace of her suffering contemporaries.\textsuperscript{113}

I am in agreement with Nuth's evaluation of Julian as a theologian. If one takes seriously Anselm's understanding of theology as "faith seeking understanding," Julian was certainly involved in the theological enterprise. Her process involved three moments: experience, reflection on experience, and articulation of theological insights in written form. She brought to bear on these insights scripture and the tradition of the church, while remaining open to new learnings. As a theological thinker, Julian strove to understand and respond to God's revealing action. Of this, there can be no doubt.

\section*{III. Julian's Writings, The Book of Showings}\textsuperscript{114}

A. Chronology of Showings

As has been mentioned, Julian received her revelations circa May 13, 1373, and shortly thereafter wrote the short text. According to Colledge and Walsh, the long text had two editions, one, written in 1388, and the second in 1393.\textsuperscript{115} There is no original manuscript of either text in existence. The critical edition of Julian's Showings appeared in 1978 under the title, \textit{A Book of Showings to the Anchorite Julian of Norwich}.

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{113} Nuth. \textit{Wisdom's Daughter}. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{114} A précis of the sixteen showings Julian experienced can be found in Appendix 1.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Colledge and Walsh. "Introduction," 24.
\end{footnotes}
produced by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, who worked with six documents, called extant witnesses to the original text. There is one extant witness for the short text and five for the long text.\textsuperscript{116} Because the short text contains a particular structure and characteristics which make it a more primitive witness to Showings, it provides an invaluable point of comparison and allows one to follow the development of Julian's theology. Julian's editors point out that it is probable that as the long text moved into circulation, the short text was either suppressed or forgotten.\textsuperscript{117}

B. Julian's Theological Development as Witnessed by the Texts

Julian's theological understanding began with her earliest reflection on her mystical experience and its central image was the vision of the suffering Christ, which became the starting point for Julian's theology. She tells us that in this vision of the suffering Christ is revealed the trinitarian nature of the God of love, the meaning of creation and human nature, and the unity of God and humanity that is salvation. In her own words:

... ther in was conteined and specified the blessed trinite with the incarnacion and the vnithing between god and mans sowle, with manie fayer schewynges and techynges of endlesse wisdom and loute, in which all the shewynges that foloweth

\textsuperscript{116} A chart outlining the five extant witnesses to the long text can be found in Appendix II.

\textsuperscript{117} Colledge and Walsh, "Introduction," 11.
be groundide and ioynded.¹¹⁸

Gradually the doctrinal content contained in the vision of Christ on the cross unfolds and deepens. This becomes apparent if the short text is studied in contrast with the long text. An example is Julian’s shift in her understanding of God. In the short text, Julian talks about placating God’s anger,¹¹⁹ whereas in the long text, God is a God without anger.¹²⁰ Rather, “the trinitie is our maker, the trinitie is our keper, the trinitie is our everlasting lover, the trinitie is our endless ioy and our bleisse.”¹²¹ In the long text, God is not only not angry with humanity, God delights in us.

As previously mentioned, in the long text two key elements entirely missing in the short text are developed. First, is the parable of the lord and the servant.¹²² Julian was perplexed because in her showings she understood that God looks upon us only with love:¹²³ yet the church teaches that we are sinners and deserving of punishment. The two teachings seem contradictory. In the teaching of the lord and the servant, Julian comes to understand that God does not blame wo/man for the fall into sin, but looks on the person

¹¹⁸ LT 1. 281:4-7. “... in this was contained and specified the blessed Trinity, with the Incarnation and the union between God and man’s soul, with many fair revelations and teachings of endless wisdom and love, in which all the revelations which follow are founded and connected.” (175)

¹¹⁹ ST xix. 262:66-78.


¹²² LT 51. 513-545:2-331.

¹²³ LT 13. 346-350:3-49.
with pity. Second, the concept of God as mother, a prominent teaching of Julian, is particular to the long text, found in the fourteenth chapter.

C. Julian's Maturation as Witnessed in Showings.

As Julian matured, she grew from her initial devotionalism to an understanding of doctrine that can cope with any type of human experience in the Christian life. Her theological vision gives us space within which to be human and enables us to accept the sufficiencies and the insufficiencies of human life. In the words of Tugwell, "In her view, we do not need to flee from the ordinary terms of our existence in this world in order to accept and rejoice in our salvation, because our redemption is a redemption of this life, not a redemption from it."125

Julian's personal maturation can also be seen in comparing the two texts. She moves from being "a womann. leued [uneducated], febille and freylle," in the short text, to a woman who wrote with a strong sense of authority in the long text. In the short text, Julian claims there is no problem in reconciling her revelations to the teaching of the church, whereas in the long text she admits that Showings pose very serious problems to

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124 LT 57-63, 576-618.
126 ST vi. 222:41-42.
her faith, and she faces them head on. Unlike in the short text, in the long text Julian has become much more confident of her own intellectual power and she is not afraid to use it. She comes to understand that reason is not only not opposed to faith but is, in fact, one of the sources of our faith. Finally, in terms of growth that can be perceived in Julian herself, there is a transition from anxiety, in the short text, with regard to the understanding of sin and God's attitude toward sin, to a message of confident hope in the long text based on Julian's understanding of the locution that "thou shalt not be ovyr com." "

In examining the development which takes place between the short and the long text, one becomes aware of the distinction between the young Julian and the mature Julian. Even though the short text provides a point of perspective from which to trace Julian's intellectual and spiritual development, its limitations become apparent. In contrast to the short text, the long text forges together Julian's years of meditation and reflection, her insights into scripture, a knowledge of some of the Latin Fathers and a competence with rhetorical expression. What emerges is a profound theological evolution of thought. This study is an analysis of Julian's mature thinking regarding her naming of God and therefore focuses on the long text, with intermittent references to the short text for comparison.

129 LT 70, 651-653:17-40.
D. The Genre of the Texts and Julian's Intended Audiences

Julian set out to recount visions, locutions and other experiences which she underwent in one day and the following night. Gradually, she came to see that her experiences contained teaching on essential points of doctrine that she wanted to pass on to her fellow Christians so that they might live united to God, not by way of speculative knowledge, but through an intimate clinging to God revealed as love.

A distinction may be made between the audience for the short and long texts. In the short text, Julian seems to consider herself a contemplative who is writing for others wanting to live the contemplative lifestyle.\textsuperscript{130} whereas in the long text Julian indicates that what she is writing can be learned by all persons; she seems intent on making her teaching universally applicable.\textsuperscript{131} Julian wrote for the encouragement of her Christian sisters and brothers, people who long to know God better but who in weakness fall frequently and need to be continually rescued by an all-compassionate love.\textsuperscript{132}

E. The Methodology of Showings

Julian's primary method of study was \textit{lectio divina}, the monastic method of reading sacred texts, not to gain understanding, but to attain an appreciation of God

\textsuperscript{130}ST iv. 215:42.

\textsuperscript{131}LT 8, 319-320:22-24, 33-40.

whom the contemplatives desires. In this lectio method, the prayerful reading of sacred texts goes hand in hand with meditatio, the memorization and rumination of the texts. Both lectio and meditatio had as their goal the petition for God, and contemplatio, resting in the desire for God and the fruits of this desire, the prayerful penetration of the Christian mysteries. An example of Julian’s use of lectio divina can be seen in her coming to understand the meaning of the parable of the lord and the servant. She goes through a three step process. First, there was the revelation itself which provided the material for a rudimentary “reading,” the lectio. Then, some twenty years later, Julian received some inward instruction, or meditatio, after which the parable, through prayer or oratio, became part of Julian. This led to Julian’s third way of understanding, contemplatio, which goes beyond the ability of the mind to comprehend entirely or to express adequately in words. These “moments” of understanding, for Julian are “so onyd, as to my vnderstondyng that I can nott nor may deperte them.”

Julian’s main source for interpreting the revelations was scripture. In the monastic tradition the reader, through a process of rumination, became so imbued with the words and themes of scripture that a mere word or allusion could spontaneously elicit other passages from elsewhere in the Bible.

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133 For a more thorough discussion of Julian’s method, lectio divina, see Nuth. Wisdom’s Daughter. 34-37.

134 LT 51. 520:80-81.

135 Nuth. Wisdom’s Daughter. 34.
Julian always places her theological reflections in a context by which she ties together what has come before with new insights that are emerging. Theologically she emphasizes the interconnectedness of particular notions. Julian describes her subject matter rather than analyzes it. Through her use of images and symbols, she leads the reader to the heart of her teaching. Julian uses a process of recapitulation to outline her theology. In doing so, she returns repeatedly to a theological assertion and, each time she does this, brings forth new meaning and understanding of what she is trying to convey.

Julian is concerned with the paradoxical elements of reality. For example, God is both immanent and transcendent, and humanity mired in sin is redeemed. Julian does not seek to solve the dilemmas raised by the paradoxical elements of reality but holds them in creative tension. In the midst of the contradictions, Christ stands as the point of intersection. In him, all is reconciled.

By the time Julian has written the long text, she has become a master of rhetoric. So competent was her use of rhetoric that Julian deserves the title of Master of Ars Prosaica.\(^\text{136}\) The competence with which Julian employs various methods indicates not only an intelligent mind but also the ability to master the learning of past ages, to acquire new skills and to present thought in modes traditionally acceptable and comprehensible.\(^\text{137}\) Not being bound by any particular method, Julian chose various approaches, according to what she judged as best suited to her material and her purpose.

\(^\text{136}\) Colledge and Walsh, "Editing." 423.

\(^\text{137}\) Colledge and Walsh, "Introduction." 47.

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In her methodology, Julian was able to fuse the techniques of the philosophers and the writings of the tradition and scripture, thereby indicating a high degree of knowledge.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has given insight into Julian of Norwich’s historical context, her person and lifestyle, and introduced her writings: Showings. In a time of turmoil and upheaval in the land, where people were dying as the result of war and disease, Julian had an experience of God which challenged what she had learnt from her religious background and which brought her to a new understanding of God. Julian’s first account of the experience sets it forth, but it is the second account of the experience that produces a complex theological work that invites the reader to go ever deeper in her or his search for God. I have learned, from the cursory biographical knowledge that exists, that Julian is a mystic who found her voice and expressed it in her theological texts and that only a careful study of these texts reveals who she was, how she saw life, how she experienced and named God. It is to that message I now turn as I approach her writings in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER TWO

THE NAMING OF GOD IN SHOWINGS

The first expression of the unknowability of God is the proliferation of names, images and concepts, each of which provides a different perspective on divine excellence.

Elizabeth A. Johnson

Introduction

In her religious experience, as recounted in Showings, Julian is grasped by the mystery of divine love. Her writings are an attempt to put that experience into words and to draw from it an understanding of who God is and of what God is. Such an endeavour always falls short of its mark because, in the end, God is mystery who will only be known fully in heaven. Still it provides us with words and expressions to name God.

Through careful study of her texts, this chapter explores the many ways in which Julian names God. When Julian was writing, English was just beginning to have a written form. It was a language that was emerging, evolving, unfolding, changing and shifting boundaries, which was to Julian's advantage because it left her a great deal of freedom to express herself. Yet Julian was under one constraint that remains to this day. When one writes or speaks of God, it can only be done metaphorically, whether God is spoken of as a “lover,” “mother,” “powerful arm,” a “friend” or a “lord.”

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Julian does use a multitude of names for the Trinity and the persons thereof. For example, "Jhesu Christ our endless blisse," "our lord god almighty," "our lord god ... all souereyn being," 

"God is our keper, our everlasting louer, endless joy and our bleissee," "God of thy goodness," "our good lorde," to name a few. In some places where Julian articulates a belief, she uses a variety of names for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In her own words.

For the almyghty truth of the trynte is oure fader, for he made us and kepyth vs in hym. And the depe wysdome of pe trynyte is our moder, in whom we be closyd. And the hye goodess of the trynyte is our lord, and in hym we be closyd and he in vs. We be closyd in the fader, and we be closyd in the son, and we are closyd in the holy gost. And the fader is beclosyd in vs, the son is beclosyd in vs, and the holy gost is belcosyd in vs, all myght, alle wysdom and alle goodnesse, one god, one lorde.

Julian's multiplicity of names for God comes from the many ways in which she experienced God, from scripture and from the tradition. In addition to using names for God, she uses categories, images and metaphors, realizing the limitation of any language form to completely reveal the divine. Julian lives with the conviction that God wants to

\[140\] LT1, 281:1; 1, 282:10; 1, 283:32.

\[141\] LT 4, 295:12,13.

\[142\] LT 5, 302:37.

\[143\] LT 22, 382:2.

\[144\] LT 54, 563:20-27. "For the almyghty truth of the Trinity is our Father, for he made us and keeps us in him. And the deep wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother, in whom we are enclosed. And the high goodness of the Trinity is our Lord, and in him we are enclosed and he in us. We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Spirit. And the Father is enclosed in us, the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Spirit is enclosed in us. almighty, all wisdom and all goodness, one God, one Lord." (285)
be known as living a relationship of love with creation and she does her utmost to be a messenger of divine passionate love. Julian’s God is an immanent God who continuously encloses creation in steadfast love and faithfulness.

In this chapter, in order to bring out the naming of God in Showings, I consider three characteristics of God: the activities of God, the attributes of God, and the desires and longings of God. In addition, because of the centrality of the parable of the lord and the servant in terms of Julian’s theology, I present as well her understanding of God as described in the parable.

I. The Activities of God in Showings

In Julian’s understanding of the divine, God is the antithesis of a fixed entity. Rather God is like a mother constantly loving and caring for her child or a lover who is continually seeking new ways to lure the beloved. God is engaged in endless activities which sustain the link between the Holy and creation while revealing who God is for humanity. I think that if Julian were to encapsulate the epitome of the activity of God in a single action, she would say simply that God who is love, loves. God rejoices and marvels in all creatures. God’s steadfast love for humankind expresses itself through great tenderness and intimacy. Julian uses very homely images when she tells us of the closeness of God’s love. Her writing often also has a poetic quality as she tries to

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145 LT 86. 733:20.
146 LT 53. 484:15-16.
describe this closeness of God to us, as in this text, for example:

I saw that he es to vs alle thynge pat is goode and comfortabylle to oure helpe. He es our clethynge, for loove wappes vs and wyndes vs, halses vs and alle be teches vs, hynges a boute vs for tendry loove, that he maye nevere leve vs.147

A love of such great depth and intimacy is hard to grasp and often the only way it can be glimpsed is when it is seen in action. God’s love for creation can be seen clearly when consideration is given to God’s mighty acts in creating, redeeming, transforming and blessing or gifting.

A. God is Continually Creating

God is called “maker” or “creator” not simply because of an action done in the past which has been completed, but because God continues to make and to create.148 God, who is continually creating, is protecting, loving, embracing, enclosing us, and leading us.149 God is at the centre of all things and does all things.150 The Creator tells us:

See, I am god. See, I am in all thyngs. See, I do all thyng. See, I nevyr lefte my handes of my workes, ne never shalle without ende. See, I lede all thyng to the end pat I ordeyne it to. f(ro) without begynnyng, by the same myght, wysdom and

147 ST iv. 212:2-6. “I saw that he is to us everything which is good and comforting for our help. He is our clothing, for he is that love which wraps and enfolds us, embraces us and guides us, surrounds us for love, which is so tender that he may never desert us.” (130)

148 LT 1. 282:10-12.

149 LT 5. 300:19; 5. 299:5-6: 35. 433:16.

loue that I made it with; how should any thyng be a mysse?  

Rather than put a distance between the Godhead and its creation, God chooses, in the person of the Spirit, to dwell in the deepest recesses of the soul. In Julian's words, "oure lorde god dwellyth now in vs, and is here with vs, and colleth vs and beclosyth vs for tendyr loue, that he may neyvr leue vs, and is more nere to vs than tonge may telle or harte may thyngke." Just as there is a past dimension to creation, in that it came to be through God's desire, and a present dimension, in that the divine continues to work in creation, so there is a future aspect which promises that "all things shall be well."

Commenting on this, Julian writes, "For ryght as the blessyd trinite made alle thyng of nought, ryght so the same blessyd trynyte shalle make wele all that is nott welle."  

Even though the whole Trinity is at work in creation, Julian associates fatherhood with the act of creation which is consistent with the Cristian tradition. In the Father, we have our substance which has been ours from the time of creation.  

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151 LT 11. 340-341:51-56. "See, I am God. See I am in all things. See, I do all things. See, I never remove my hands from my works, nor ever shall without end. See, I guide all things to the end that I ordain them for, before time began, with the same power and wisdom and love with which I made them: how should anything be amiss?" (199)

152 LT 68. 643:33-34; 72. 662:32-33.


154 LT 32. 424:35-37.

155 LT 4. 295:11-12.

156 LT 58. 582:12.

God the Father, humankind has its “being,” or another way of saying it is that “we haue oure beyng of the endles myght of god.” Julian tells us that the substance humankind shares with God the Father endures in all persons of the Trinity. In her words: “And our substantnce is in oure fader god almyghty, and oure substantnce is in oure moder god all wysdom, and oure substantnce is in oure lorde god the holy gost all goodnes, for our substantnce is hole in ech person of the trynte, which is one god.” Hence humankind shares not only in the substance of the Father but of the Son and the Spirit as well. In other words, humankind is “onyd” with God at its deepest level.

Creation, heaven and earth were created great, generous, beautiful and good. They have these qualities because they share in the existence of Being itself which is God. Still they are contingent upon God its Creator without whom they would fall into “nothingness.” Creation’s enduring existence is guaranteed because of God’s providential love. We read, “fro without begynnynge, in which vnbegonne loue he made vs. In the same loue he kepyth vs, and neyvr sufferyth vs to be hurt.”

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158 LT 58, 587:56.
159 LT 49, 506:17.
161 “Onyd” is an expression Julian uses when she talks about one person united to. “made one” with another. human or divine. One person is “onyd” to another.
162 LT 8, 317:9-10.
163 LT 5, 300:15-16.
164 LT 85, 728-729:8-10.
everything that has been created; God \textit{delights} in humankind; God \textit{rejoices} in creatures.

Julian has the hierarchical understanding of creation that was an essential part of the medieval worldview, in which humankind is the pinnacle of creation. In the words of Julian.

For I saw in the same shewyng that ye pe blessyd trynyte myght a made mannys soule ony better, ony feyrer, ony nobeler than it was made. he shulde nott a been full plesyd with makyng of mannys soule. But for he made mannys soule as feyrer, as good, as precious as he myght make it a creature, therfore pe blessyd trynyte is fulle plesyd withoute ende in pe makying of mannys soule.

The rest of creation was made to serve us and God protects it "to serue vs and for oure love kepyth it."\

B. God is Continually Restoring and Transforming Creation

As has been noted, the hands of God are never removed from creation. God is continually at work, through the property of motherhood, at perfecting, restoring and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{LT 9, 322:14.}
\footnote{LT 68, 647:72.}
\footnote{LT 44, 484:16.}
\footnote{LT 68, 643-44:3843. "For I saw in the same revelation that if the blessed Trinity could have created man's soul any better, any fairer, any nobler than it was created, the Trinity would not have been fully pleased with the creation of man's soul. But because it made man's soul as beautiful, as good, as precious a creature as it could make, therefore the blessed Trinity is fully pleased without end in the creation of man's soul." (314) See also 1, 283-284:35-36 (176).}
\footnote{LT 42, 471:36.}
\end{footnotes}
saving humankind.\textsuperscript{170} It is through Jesus that the properties of the motherhood of God are most clearly discerned. Jesus our Mother\textsuperscript{171} works for our restoration and salvation, for he is our "moder, broder and savyoure."\textsuperscript{172} Jesus is the sole person of the Trinity that entered into the sensuality of humanity,\textsuperscript{173} which gives him a unique relationship with humankind: he is doubly our Mother, in our creation and in our redemption. In him, humankind has its reforming and restoring\textsuperscript{174} so that we might, in our entirety, share in the beatific vision.\textsuperscript{175} The restorative act of Jesus is a labour of love. He bears us to joy and endless life\textsuperscript{176} in his blessed dying upon the cross.\textsuperscript{177} He sustains us within himself in love and labour.\textsuperscript{178} The mother may suckle her child with her milk; Jesus feeds us with his very self.\textsuperscript{179} Even though the metaphor of the "motherhood of Jesus," expresses most clearly how God is for us in Jesus, it must be remembered that for Julian, wherever Jesus

\textsuperscript{170}LT 58. 584:24-27.

\textsuperscript{171}Julian’s theology of the motherhood of Jesus, touched upon in this chapter, receives further attention in chapter three.

\textsuperscript{172}LT 58. 584:26-27.

\textsuperscript{173}LT 58. 589:63.

\textsuperscript{174}LT 58. 587:57.

\textsuperscript{175}LT 58. 588:66-67.

\textsuperscript{176}LT 60:595:19-20.

\textsuperscript{177}LT 63. 616:31.

\textsuperscript{178}LT 60:595-596:20-21.

\textsuperscript{179}LT 60:596-597:29-31.
is in the Trinity is, and so she can write,

I vunderstode thre manner of beholdynges of motherhed in god. The furst is
grounde of our kynde makng, the seconde is takying of our kynde, and ther
begynnyth the moderhed of grace, the thurde is moderhed in werkyng. And therin
is a forth sp(r)edyng by the same grace of lengt and brede, of hygh and of
depnesse without ende; and alle is one loue.\textsuperscript{180}

Motherhood is not only the exercise of one property of the Godhead but is essential to its
being.

The activity of Jesus did not end with Pentecost but continues to this day. He is
continually active, working for the reformation and restoration of creation, especially
humankind. He kindles persons’ understanding, draws them to himself, directs their
ways. eases their consciences, comforts their souls, lightens hearts so that he might give
humanity knowing and loving, and Jesus actively makes all love everything that he
loves.\textsuperscript{181} When persons fall, he raises them up, lovingly calling each one’s name and
touching them by grace.\textsuperscript{182}

C. God is Continually Gifting Humanity

Fatherhood is a property of the Creator, motherhood is a property of Jesus and

\textsuperscript{180}LT 59, 593:43-48. "I understand three ways of contemplating motherhood in God. The first is
the foundation of nature’s creation: the second is his taking of our nature, where the motherhood of grace
begins; the third is the motherhood at work. And in that, by the same grace, everything is penetrated, in
length and in breadth, in height and in depth without end; and it is all one love." (297)

\textsuperscript{181}LT 61, 601-602:2-6.

\textsuperscript{182}LT 61, 602:10-11.
lordship is a property of the Holy Spirit. Humankind was created by the great power of the Father, the wisdom of our true Mother Jesus, and the supreme goodness of the Holy Spirit. As Lord, the Holy Spirit is continually rewarding and gifting humanity for our living and our labour in a manner which far surpasses our desire and what we may deserve. In the Spirit, humankind is kept in true faith, hope and love with a living contrition and devotion, and also contemplation, and every kind of true joy and sweet consolation.

The Holy Spirit, supreme goodness, gifts humanity with grace. This grace keeps us in the true faith with hope and love. It leads humankind to contrition, devotion and contemplation, giving us every kind of joy and consolation. With the gift

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183 LT 58, 584:27.


185 As Nuth points out “lordship” is an unusual image for the Holy Spirit. It is not used in scripture except for one instance in Second Corinthians where Paul writes, “Now the Lord is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:17). The Holy Spirit is also referred to as Lord in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life.” Or as Nuth argues, “Julian’s connecting the Spirit with the work of escatological fulfillment could have its source in the Pauline notion of the Spirit as the ‘guarantee’ of salvation (2 Cor1:22).” Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 192. n. 42. All biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Edition.

186 LT 58, 584:27-30.

187 LT 71, 658:40-44.

189 LT 63, 616:30.


191 LT 71, 658:40-44.
of grace comes the gift of peace. Grace strengthens persons through it humanity is transformed. The grace of the Holy Spirit acts as light illuminating our way. The light that is received now through grace will be perfected at the end of the time. Julian reassures her sisters and brothers: "sodeynly oure eye shalle be opynyd. and in clernes of syght our lyght shalle be full. whych lyght is god, oure maker, fadyr, and holy gost in Crist Jhesu oure savyour." By considering these properties of fatherhood, motherhood and lordship which are expressed in activity, Julian synthesizes essential aspects of her understanding of God. To reiterate what she has been trying to say, she writes the following:

Thus in oure fader god almyghty we haue oure beyng, and in oure moder of mercy we haue oure reformynge and oure restoryng, in whome ourys partyse be onydyd and all made perfyte man, and by yeldyng and gevying in grace of the holy gost we be

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192 LT 48. 500:3.
193 LT 74. 671:8.
197 As has been noted. Julian usually associates the term "Lord" with the Holy Spirit. Usually we tend to think of the Lord as Jesus. Although Julian does name Christ as Lord (LT 80, 710:28), it is not the strongest image that she uses for him. As we have seen, the strongest image that Julian uses for Jesus is Mother which connotes loving care. Drawing on the work of Dorothee Sölle. I suggest the absence of the emphasis on Jesus as Lord is consisent with mystical language. As Sölle writes, "Here [in mystical language] religion is the feeling of oneness with the whole, intimate connection, not subjugation; human beings do not honour God because of his power and lordship but submerge themselves in him, or as they always say, in his love. He is the ground, as Meister Eckhart [and Julian] says, love, depth sea. Such natural symbols are preferred where God demands no obedience but union, where a distant other does not demand sacrifice and renunciation of self, where harmony and oneness with the living become the theme of religion." Dorothee Sölle, "Mysticism, Liberation and the Names of God." Christianity and Crisis (June 22, 1981), 183.
fulfyllyde. And our substance is in oure fader god almyghty, and our substance is in oure moder god al wysdom, and our substance is in oure lorde god the holy gost all goodnes, for our substance is hole in ech person of the trynyte. which is one god. And our sensuality is only in the seconde person, Crist Jhesu, in whom is the fader and pe holy gost; and in hym and by hym we be myghtly taken out of hell and oute of the wreccheysdnesse in erth. and wurschypfully brought vp in to hevyn, and blyssdfuly onyd to oure substance, encresyd in rychesse and nobly by all the vertu of Crist and by the grace and werkyng of the holy gost.198

Thus for Julian. God's activity is primarily described as creating, redeeming, transforming, and blessing, of which all are revelatory of a God who is continually loving.

By contemplating God's activity on behalf of humankind, we glimpse the attributes of God. The terms, fatherhood, motherhood and lordship do not speak to the relations within the Trinity itself. they refer to God's relations to humankind. Nuth points:

(These terms) refer to God's relations to humans. As such, they refer to God's unity of essence and not to the distinction of persons within God. It can therefore be inferred that the one and triune God, not only the first person, relates to us as Father in the creation of our being or our nature; the one and triune God, not only the second person, relates to us as Mother in our recreation through the work of mercy; the one and triune God. not only the Holy Spirit, relates to us as Lord in our fulfillment through the work of grace.199

As much as Julian is aware of the "properties" of God not "persons," she is ever

198 LT 58. 587-588:56-68. "Thus in our Father, God almighty, we have our being, and in our Mother of mercy we have our reforming and our restoring, in whom our parts are united and all made perfect man, and through the rewards and the gifts of grace of the Holy Spirit we are fulfilled. And our substance is in our Father, God almighty, and our substance is in our Mother, God all wisdom, and our substance is in our Lord God, the Holy Spirit. all goodness. for our substance is whole in each person of the Trinity, who is one God. And our sensuality is only in the second person, Christ Jesus, in whom is the Father and the Holy Spirit; and in him and by him we are powerfully taken out of hell and out of the wretchedness on earth. and gloriously brought into heaven. and blessedly united to our substance, increased in riches and nobility by all the power of Christ and by the grace and operation of the Holy Spirit." (294-295)

199 Nuth. Wisdom's Daughter. 93.

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conscious of the oneness of God.

II. The Attributes of God in Showings

Showings begins and ends with the proclamation of God as love. To begin her text, Julian writes: "This is a revelacion of love." As she brings her text to closure, Julian tells us that after years of reflection, she was gifted with the spiritual insight that the very meaning of God is love.

What, woldest thou wytt thy lordes menyng in this thyng? Wytt it wele, loue was his menyng. Who shewyth it the? Loue. (What shewid he the? Love.) Wherfore shewyth he it the? For Loue. Holde the therin, thou shalt wytt more in the same. But thou schalt nevyr witt therin other withoutyn ende.

But questions arise: How did Julian experience this love? How is this love of God manifested to humankind? Julian's answers to these questions come as she names God in many and diverse ways. This can be shown by considering the way Julian describes God's attributes.

A. God is Love

1. God's Homely Love

In the first showing, Julian understands that "the trinitie is our maker, the trinitie

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\[200\] LT 1. 281:2.

\[201\] LT 86. 732-733:15-19. "What do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well. love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love. Why does he reveal it to you? For love. Remain in this, and you will know more of the same. But you will never know different, without end." (342)
is our keper, the trinite is our everlasting louver and she is overwhelmed at the felt closeness of God. She tells us, "This I sayd for reuerence in my menyng, with a mightie voice, and fulle greatly I was stonned for wonder and marvayle that I had that he that is so reuerent and so dreadfull will be so homely with a sinful creature." In Julian’s day to be homely meant to be “intimate” or “familiar.” As she reflected on her religious experience, her understanding of this intimate or familiar love of God deepened. “The love of God is a paradox which filled Julian with astonishment and delight.” In her own words, “of all the syght that I saw this was most comfort to me, that our good lorde, that is so reverent and dredfulle, is so homely and so curteyse, and this most fulfyllyd me with lykng and syckernes in soule.”

God’s homeliness is an active, loving presence to us, a closeness, warmth and tenderness. God does not despise anything that has been created. Nor is God reluctant to serve the simplest functions of our bodies because God loves humanity that has been fashioned in likeness to the divine. For just as the body is clad in clothes and the flesh

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202 LT 4, 295:11-12.
203 LT 4, 296:16-19.
205 Reynolds, “Courtesy and Homeliness,” 16.
206 LT 7, 313:31-34. “...in all this vision which I saw, what gave me most strength was that our good Lord, who is so to be revered and feared, is so familiar and so courteous, and most of all this filled me full of delight and certainty in my soul.” (188)
in skin and the bones in flesh, so are we, body and soul, clothed and wrapped around in the goodness of God. The goodness of God is always whole and more near to us than any created reality. Julian is awestruck with the closeness of God to humankind.

Julian also speaks of God's homely love with the analogy of friendship. She tells us our relationship with God is an endless friendship. Our place, our life, our very being are in God. We are to rejoice that we dwell in God but an even more profound reason for rejoicing is that God dwells in us. Our soul is created to be God's dwelling place. This is even more astounding.

God's homely love wants persons to hold fast to God and cling to divine goodness. God's homely love is willing to lower itself to consummate its love with the beloved. It is God's will to have us, to hold us, to possess us so that we might possess the love that pours itself out for humankind. In the incarnation it became clear that God is willing to be friend and companion to human beings, to share their lot totally and equally.

Later Julian tells us that, even though humankind dwells in God and God encloses us with tender love that never leaves us, still persons are not at rest because they do not yet have complete union with the Holy. Moreover, sin has marred humanity, the

\[\text{LT 6. 306-307:37-46.}\]
\[\text{LT 49. 507:23-24.}\]
\[\text{LT 54. 561-562:9-16.}\]
\[\text{LT 6. 307-308:47-48.}\]
\[\text{LT 72. 661-662:25-31.}\]
dwelling place of God. But once restored, it will be God’s “homelyest home.”  

2. God’s Courteous Love

In mid-fourteenth century England, the word courtesy was associated with the virtues of knighthood or the chevalier: exercising prowess, loyalty, and largesse; being well-bred, polite and urbane in conversation and behavior; showing deference to all women; being tactful, gentle, modest and self-effacing. When Julian uses the word courteous, she subsumes and sublimates all these earlier meanings to a new understanding: lordship, fidelity, gentleness, generosity and service.

In gentleness and tenderness our Lord protects us, whilst we are still in our sin, and shows us our sinfulness by the light of mercy and grace. Through the courtesy of God, sinners are able to look at their sins in the light of God’s love, and when they are able to do that they realize that the power of sin is destroyed by the power of love. When we do fall, our courteous Lord reaches out to us. Julian writes,

And when we be fallen by freelite or blyndnes, than oure courtesse lord touchyng vs steryth vs and kepyth vs. And than wylle he that we se oure wrecchyndnesse and mekely be it aknowen: but he wylle nott that we abyde therwith, ne he wylle nott pat we besy vs gretly aboute oure accusyng, ne he wylle nott that we be to wrecchyndfulle on oureselfe. But he wylle pat we hastely entende to hym, for he stondyth alle aloone, and abydyth vs contynually, monyng and mornyng tylle whan we come. And he hath haste to haue vs to hym, for we are his joy and his

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213 LT 68. 641:16.


216 LT 40. 454:2-5.
delyght, and he is our salue of oure lyfe.\textsuperscript{217}

While the person, in her or his sinfulness, may experience pain, blame or punishment, the courteous Lord grieves with us, comforts us, loves us, all the while longing to bring us to happiness.\textsuperscript{218} To give us comfort and patience, our courteous Lord says to us:

Sodeynly thou shalte be taken from alle thy payne, from alle thy sycknesse, from alle thy dyseses and fro all thy woe. And thou shalte come vp abone, and thou schalt haue me to thy mede, and thou shalte be fulfylled of joye and blysse and thou shalte neyvr more haue no manner of paynne, no manner of sycknes, no manner mysselykyng, no wantyng of wylle, but evry joy and blysse withoute end.\textsuperscript{219}

God’s courteous love is protection against sin, the traditional enemy of God and humanity. This love of God manifests fidelity to creation that cannot be foiled by the power of sin. Still we need to be willing to admit our sinfulness. When we do we are embraced in a compassionate and gentle way. As God, in mercy, reveals to us our sinfulness and our weakness, God wants us to understand four things: first, that in spite of our sinfulness, God is our foundation from whom we have our life and our being; second, that during the time that we are in sin, God continues to protect us lest our enemies

\textsuperscript{217} LT 79, 705-706:31-39. "And when we have fallen through weakness or blindness, then our courteous Lord, touching us, moves us and protects us. And then he wants us to see our wretchedness and meekly to acknowledge it; but he does not want us to remain there, or to be much occupied in self-accusation, nor does he want us to be too full of our own misery. But he wants us quickly to attend to him, for he stands all alone, and he waits for us continually, moaning and mourning until we come. And he hastens to bring us to him, for we are his joy and his delight, and he is the remedy of our life." (334-335)

\textsuperscript{218} LT 51, 523:117-119.

\textsuperscript{219} LT 64, 620-621:14-20. "Suddenly you will be taken out of all your pain, all your sickness, all your unrest and all your woe. And you will come up above, and you will have me for your reward, and you will be filled full of joy and bliss, and you will never again have any kind of pain, any kind of sickness, any kind of displeasure, no lack of will, but always joy and bliss without end." (306)
prevail: third, how courteously God protects us; fourth, God makes us know when we are
going astray and how steadfastly God waits for us. The Holy One's love remains
steadfast because God wants us to be converted and united to the Holy in love, just as the
Holy is united to us. God does not want us to focus on our sinfulness but wants us to
experience a merciful compassion and a courteous promise of our complete
deliverance. Furthermore, God's courteous love rewards us for our struggle with sin
which he regards as sorrow and pain for God's lovers to whom, for love, God assigns no
blame. Shame shall be turned to honour and we shall experience joy because it is the
will of our courteous Lord that we should not despair for, when we fall, God is not
hindered from loving us. Our reward will be great. Even while we are in sin our
courteous Lord, in a mark of supreme friendship, touches us with great tenderness.

Our courteous God, who is faithful in loving, manifests joyfulness in loving. Through mercy and grace, God gives to us much more than our labour or love deserve,

displaying great generosity and wonderful courtesy. Yet, humankind finds it difficult

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220 LT 78. 696-697:6-14.
221 LT 64. 624:43-45.
224 LT 40. 454:2-3.
225 LT 79. 703:15-16.
226 LT 40. 454-455:10-12.

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to accept this love. The courtesy of God meets humankind's inability to understand how much God actually wants to serve it, be with it and love it.

3. God's Compassionate and Merciful Love

In speaking of God's compassionate love for humankind, Julian tells us that God responds to human sorrow, desolation and anguish with compassion and love. Sin also evokes the compassion of God. As God has compassion on us, so he longs for us and we for God. It is this mutual longing, born of compassion, that draws the person to God. The closer one gets to God, the more the longing, the desire for God increases.

Our longing for God is met by mercy, a compassionate quality of God, that protects, endures, vivifies and heals with all the tenderness of love. God's longing, God's thirst for us will endure as long as we have need, but it will not be satisfied until humanity is united to divinity.

Compassion is a grace which readies us to see God. It does this by revealing to

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229 LT 28. 408:2.
230 LT 31. 420:41-44.
231 LT 46. 490:5-7.
us our need of God by showing us our sinfulness most gently.\textsuperscript{235} Sin is not to be a cause of despair because it is always to be seen in light of God's compassionate love\textsuperscript{236} made known to us in the crucifixion of Jesus. Our sin is no impediment to God's loving us.\textsuperscript{237} It is when we forget this and focus on our own sinfulness that we are drawn into despair and desolation.\textsuperscript{238} Still, Julian tells us, "he is here aloone with vs alle; that is to sey, only for vs he is here."\textsuperscript{239} We are to know that we are sinners and to acknowledge our own wretchedness and turn to God. But we are not to stay in our sin. The remedy for pain and woe is God's compassion. Julian assures us,

... oure lorde is with vs, kepyng vs and ledyng in to fulhed of joy. For this is an endlesse joy to vs in oure lorde's menyng, that he that shalle be oure blesse when we are there. he is oure keper whyle we are here, oure wey and oure hevyn in tru loue and feythfulle trust.\textsuperscript{240}

The quality of God's compassionate love is such that it is endless, enduring even beyond the grave. The purposes, the designs of God, never change: God remains steadfast in loving.

Julian's understanding of the mercy of God is linked to her understanding of the

\textsuperscript{235} LT 82. 718:10-15.

\textsuperscript{236} LT 78. 696:2-5.

\textsuperscript{237} LT 39. 453:30-37.

\textsuperscript{238} LT 80. 712:38-39.

\textsuperscript{239} LT 80. 711-712:37-38.

\textsuperscript{240} LT 77. 694:42-46. "...our Lord is with us, protecting us and leading us into the fulness of joy for our Lord intends this to be an endless joy; that he who will be our bliss when we are there is our protector whilst we are here, our way and our heaven in true love and faithful trust." (331)
compassion of God. She writes: "For the ground of mercy is in loue, and the wekyng of mercy is oure kepyng in loue; and this was shewed in such a manner that I culde not perceyve of the property of mercy other wyse but as it were all loue in loue." Mercy is, for Julian, a compassionate property which belongs to the motherhood of God.

Through the tenderness of love, mercy works -- protecting, enduring, vivifying and healing. It turns everything to good. It is God’s mercy that allows us to know when we have fallen, protecting us even when we are blinded by our evil propensities. Moreover, Julian often links mercy with grace. Together they tenderize our being, making us meek and mild; they enlighten us and vivify our faith. It is God’s goodness that allows us to receive both grace and mercy. The mercy of Christ Jesus leads us to grace and cleanses us. Julian links grace and mercy to our life in the Trinity. In our Creator, we have our protection and our bliss, which is ours by creation; in our mother, brother and saviour, we have our protection as regards to our sensuality; and in our good Lord the Holy Spirit we have our reward and our gift of our living and our labour. In the first person, the Creator,

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241 For extensive study on the attribute of mercy in Showings see Palliser, Christ our Mother of Mercy.


243 LT 48. 502:28-29. This is Julian's first reference to the motherhood of God, which she later develops and appropriates to Jesus.

244 LT 49. 508-509:42-43.

245 LT 83. 724:19-20.

246 LT 61. 608:64-65.
we have our being, our nature. In the second person, Jesus, we have our increasing through mercy. In the third person, the Holy Spirit, we have our fulfillment through grace.247

God’s mercy is available to humanity as long as it struggles with sin. It endures until all who desire to be united to God are completely secure in God’s righteousness; Julian informs us and “in ryghtfulnes and in mercy he wyll be know and lovyd, now and withoutz ende.”248

B. The Goodness of God

The homely love of God, the courteous love of God and the compassionate love of God are one in the goodness of God.249 Goodness is so central to Showings that Ritamary Bradley argues that it is the unifying subject of the work.250 Julian begins to speak of the goodness of God in the first chapter, saying that by the goodness of God all things came into being, and by that same goodness, all that is not well will be made

247 LT 58. 584-585:22-33.
248 LT 35. 435:43-45.
249 LT 83. 723:8.
This goodness of God is entire, lacking in nothing. It meets us in the very least of our needs and quickens the soul and brings it to life. We are clothed and wrapped in the goodness of God; it is always complete and close to us. Our proper response to the God of goodness is to cling to God; for this is what he desires.

Julian points to God's goodness when she speaks of our union with God, "Oure soule is onyd to hym, vnchanneable goodnesse." She refers to God's goodness in speaking of mutual indwelling, "the hye goodnesse of the trynyte is our lord, and in hym we be closyd and he in vs." Julian speaks of the goodness of each person of the Trinity. The Creator fills creation with goodness of his very being, or as God says: "I it am: that is to sey: I it am. the myght and the goodnes of faderhode." Jesus "is alle goodnesse." and in that goodness, Jesus "sufferyth vs neyvr to be a loone but lastyng

256 LT 46. 493:36.  
257 LT 54. 563:22-23.  
260 LT 77. 691:19.
he is with vs and tendyrly he excusyth vs. and evyr kepyth vs from blame in his syght."

In closing Showings, the scribe-editor tells us that Jesus gives to us out of his endless love, mercy and goodness. Goodness is most frequently of all given as the proper name of the Holy Spirit. Julian writes: "oure substannce is in oure lorde god the holy gost all goodnes." Or again, "in oure good lorde the holy gost we haue oure rewardyng and oure yelding for oure lyvyng and oure traveyle."

When speaking of the different roles and attributes of the Trinity she writes: "Thus in oure very moder Jhesu oure lyfe is grounded in the forseeeyng wysdom of hym selfe fro with out begynnyng, with pe hye myght of the fader and pe souereyne goodnesse of the holy gost."

In contemplating the goodness of God, Julian came to the realization that in God there can be no wrath because wrath is the antithesis of goodness. She writes:

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261 LT 80, 712:41-43.
262 Showings, 734n.23.
For I saw full truly that where oure lorde aperyth, pees is takyn and wrath hath no stede: for I saw no manner of wrath in god neyther for shore tyme nor for long. For truly, as to my syght, yf god myght be wroth a whyle, we shuld neyther haue lyfe no stede ne beyng; for as verely as we haue oure beyng of the endless myght of god and of the endlesse wysdom and of the endlesse goodnesse, aso verely we haue our kepyng in the endles myght of god, in the endlesse wysdom and in the endlesse goodnesse. For thowe we fele in vs wrath, debate and stryfe, yett we be all mercyfully beclosyd in the myldehed of god and in his mekehed, in his benyngnite and in his buxomnesse.  

Julian does not excuse us from sin. In fact, we are deserving of blame and wrath, but God has never been wrathful with us and never will. Because God is goodness, truth, love, and peace, God’s power, wisdom, charity and unity do not allow God to be wrathful. If God was to be furious it would go against the very being, the very essence of who God is. “God is that goodnesse that may nott be wroth, for god is not but goodnes.”  

We are so united to God, unchangeable goodness, that nothing can come between God and the person. neither wrath nor sin. The same endless goodness that protects us when we sin draws us constantly into peace, enabling us to experience our need of salvation through God’s forgiveness.

Ritamary Bradley writes that there are four kinds of goodness that God wants us

266 LT 49, 506:13-22. “For I saw most truly that where our Lord appears, peace is received and wrath has no place; for I saw no kind of wrath in God, neither briefly nor for long. For truly, as I see it, if God could be angry for any time, we should neither have life nor place nor being; for as truly as we have our being from the endless power of God and from his endless wisdom and from his endless goodness just as truly we have our preservation in the endless power of God and in his endless wisdom and in his endless goodness. For though we may feel in ourselves anger, contention and strive, still we are all mercyfully enclosed in God’s mildness and in his meekness, in his benignant and in his accessibility.” (264)

267 LT 46, 493:35-36.


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to be aware of: one, God is the ground of our being in whom we have our life and our existence; two, God protects us from our enemies and in time of sin always leads us toward peace and joy; three, God upholds us even as we are made aware that we have gone amiss; four, God waits for us, never changing his demeanor, and longs for us to be united to him. For Julian, God is a God of goodness. It is God's goodness that overflows into creation, that becomes incarnate in Jesus our Mother and transforms us by the supreme goodness of the Holy Spirit. It is as inconceivable to think of God as being without goodness as it is to think of God as being without love. Goodness is the essence, the being of God, as Julian experienced the Trinity.

C. The Wisdom of God

Divine wisdom apprehends reality in its entirety, from before the beginning into the fullness of time. When God created, wisdom was there; the same wisdom will be there when all things are made well. Nothing happens by chance: all comes to be by God's prescient wisdom. If we do not understand, and if it seems to us that things happen randomly, it is only because we, in our blindness, lack prescient wisdom. If we could truly see, through wisdom, we would know that God does all things and that God

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who is the centre of everything is guiding all to the best possible conclusion.\(^{272}\)

As Julian pondered the prescient wisdom of God, she became perplexed. If divine wisdom is present to all reality and guiding it to the best possible conclusion, then why was sin not prevented?\(^{273}\) Julian tells us that Jesus instructed her in this matter. She came to see that sin, which is all that is not good, is necessary.\(^{274}\) It is when we have fallen that we experience the tenderness and love of God, a love that cannot and will not be broken because of offences.\(^{275}\) Sin leads to self knowledge and to the knowledge of God’s love. When we sin, we are afraid and filled with shame. It is then that we are to turn to God our gracious father and are to believe, that in spite of all appearances to the contrary, all will be well and every kind of thing will be well. The wisdom of God holds the exalted and wonderful mystery that will be known in heaven and which will explain why God allowed sin. When this mystery is revealed to us it will be a source of great joy and rejoicing.\(^ {276}\)

Julian associates the prescient wisdom of God also with Jesus as Mother.\(^ {277}\) Both

\(^{272}\) LT 11. 338:19-20.

\(^{273}\) LT 27. 404:6-8.

\(^{274}\) In saying that “sin is necessary.” Julian is not speaking of it as an ontological necessity but “rather a fact of human temporal existence, universally affecting the whole human race, that must be accepted and endures.” Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 121.

\(^{275}\) LT 61. 602:10-14.

\(^{276}\) LT 27. 407:39-42.

\(^{277}\) LT 58. 582:13.
the incarnation and the redemption are linked to her understanding of Jesus as wisdom. Wisdom prepared a place for herself in the womb of Mary. In taking on flesh, Jesus becomes our Mother in nature and our Mother in grace. As Mother, he bears for us pain and death, birthing us for joy and endless life. Tenderly he feeds us with himself. Taking us into his very being, he reveals to us a part of the Godhead, the joys of heaven and endless bliss.

Jesus our Mother births humankind spiritually with great tenderness. When it falls, he raises it up with a loving embrace and gracious touch. Persons fall again, but need not despair because in healing their sinfullness, Jesus our Mother reveals to us the marvellous knowledge of love in God without end. Our Mother Jesus can never allow her children to perish because, as Julian came to understand, the Trinity is almighty, all wisdom and all love. The flood of God's mercy, flowing from the side of Jesus, makes

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276 LT 60, 594:7.
278 LT 60, 595:19-20. Elizabeth Johnson rightly points out the cognitive dissonance that occurs in Julian's writings when the noun mother is linked with the pronouns he or himself. Johnson, She Who Is. But what Julian does is delink motherhood from gender asking us to move beyond our habitual understandings to an understanding that is not dictated by the use of language alone.

280 LT 60, 596-597:30-31.
281 LT 60, 598:40-41.
282 LT 61, 601:2.
283 LT 61, 602:11.
284 LT 61, 603:26.
285 LT 61, 605:40.
everyone fair and clean: the wounds of Jesus heal humanity. In Julian’s words. “It is his office to save us. it is his worshippe to do it. and it is his will we know it: for he will we love him sweetly and trust in hym meekly and myghtly. And this shewde he in these gracious wordes: I kepe the full surely.”

In Jesus our Mother, the wisdom of God, humanity and divinity are joined, never to be separated; not even sin can break this union. Seen from the perspective of wisdom, sin is nothing. By the passion and death of Jesus our Mother, sin has been conquered. redemption has been realized, humanity has been transformed. For Julian, the incarnation is an ongoing process that is now realized in the Body of Christ the church. and Jesus will not be fully glorified until all humanity is taken up into divinity, in Christ.

D. The Delight of God

Julian begins chapter fifty-two of Showings with these words:

And thus I saw that god enjoyeth that he is our fader. and god enjoyeth that he is our moder. and god enjoyeth that he is our very spouse. and our soule his loydy wyfe. And Crist enjoyeth pat he is our broder. and Jhesu enjoyeth that he is our savyour. Theyse be v hye joyes, as I understonde, in whych he wylle that we enioye. hym praysyng, (hym) thankyng, hym lovyng, hym endlessly blessyng, alle

266 LT 61. 608-609:70-73. “It is his office to save us. it is his glory to do it. and it is his will that we know it: for he wants us to love him sweetly and trust in him meekly and greatly. And he revealed this in these gracious words: I protect you safely.” (302)

257 LT 51. 537:254-256.

258 LT 31. 419-420:34-36.
that shall be savyd. 289

She tells us that, of all the works of creation, the Trinity rejoices without end in the human person. 290 It is not only in the act of creation that God rejoices. Salvation, realized through the passion and death of Jesus, is a source of great joy for the Trinity. 291 God asks only that we be well satisfied with what has been accomplished on our behalf. That is enough joy and delight for him. 292

To help us understand God’s great joy and delight in us, Julian reflects on the joyful giver whose only desire is to please and comfort the one to whom she or he is giving. If the receiver accepts the gift gladly and gratefully, the courteous giver counts as nothing the expense and the labour involved in the giving. 293 So it is with God. God does not count the cost of our redemption. It is accomplished and that gives God great joy. No longer does Jesus need to suffer. Humanity has been delivered from the torments of hell and, in Christ, has been brought into heaven. We have become God’s crown and everlasting bliss. 294

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289 LT 52. 546:2-8. “And so I saw that God rejoices that he is our Father and God rejoices that he is our Mother, and God rejoices that he is our true spouse, and that our soul is his beloved wife. And Christ rejoices that he is our saviour. These are five great joys, as I understand, in which he wants us to rejoice, praising him, thanking him, loving him, endlessly blessing him, all who will be saved.” (279)

290 LT 68. 642:21-23.


292 LT 23. 391-392:30-36.

293 LT 23. 392-393:37-44.

294 LT 23. 393:45-51.
God rejoices in the person that has been created out of love, and who rejoices in God the Creator and marvels at God the Lord, the Maker who is so exalted, so great and so good. So pleased is God with humanity that the Holy chooses to dwell within it. God is here with us now, embracing us, enclosing us with tender love and God will never leave us. But God's rejoicing will not be complete until our joy is completely in God. Until then, God awaits with joy the glorious fulfillment of all who will be saved.

III. The Desires and Longings of God

Julian tells us that she saw three kinds of longing in God. The first is that God longs to be known and loved. The second is that God wants to be united to us in bliss. The third is that God desires to fill us full of bliss for all eternity.

A. God's Desire to be Known and Loved

In chapter five of the long text, Julian speaks of God's desire to be known and

\[^{295}LT\,44,\,484:15-18.\]
\[^{296}LT\,68,\,643:33-34.\]
\[^{297}LT\,72,\,661-662:25-27.\] Julian's experience of God resonates with words from the Prologue of John: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)
\[^{298}LT\,72,\,661:18-20.\]
\[^{299}LT\,75,\,679-680:9-16.\]
loved. She begins by writing of God's closeness to us, God's endless love for us and our Creator's desire to love and protect us. Julian tells us that, even though we are as nothing compared to God, our destiny is to be so united to divinity that no created thing comes between God and the creature. Until that happens, persons will remain unsatisfied. Then Julian tells us that God wants to be known, and it pleases her that we should find rest in God because we will only be at rest when we are united to God.

This God, who has created humanity to be one with the Godhead, desires to be known by those called to a relationship of love. This longing of God to be known and loved is reflected in the longing of the person to be at rest in God. Julian prays, "God of thy goodness give me thy selfe, for thou art enough for me, and I maie ask nothing that is lesse that maie be full worshippe to thee. And if I aske anie thing that is lesse, ever me wanteth: but only in thee I haue all."

There are, for humanity, two kinds of mysteries: the one that God will keep hidden until the end of time and the one that God will make known to us through the
preaching and teaching of the church. The great mystery that God reveals to us through the church is that God is the ground of our being, its very substance. God is our teacher. God is the end for which every soul longs: God is our reward. God wants us to know that the noblest thing ever made is humankind; the fullest substance and the highest power is the person of Jesus Christ. This will be known by all to whom the Holy Spirit speaks.

The knowledge of God draws believers to continually seek and recognize the meaning of God in their lives. Prayer enables believers to do this. As we pray, God wants us to understand three things: first that God is the ground from which our prayer springs; second, that a desire of God is that our will be truly united with the Lord's will; and finally that God wants humankind to be united with the Godhead. If we truly grasp these desires of God, we will trust that the Lord wants to gift us with all that we yearn for and more. Furthermore, if we truly know God as he is revealed to us, we shall have great patience and be at rest.

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305 LT 34. 430-431:2-14.
306 LT 34. 431:17-19.
308 LT 34. 431:19-20.
310 LT 42. 468:2-14.
311 LT 65. 630-631:30-32.
B. God’s Desire to be United to Us in Bliss in Time

As has been previously noted, God is one who gives with joy and gladness. It is God’s will that we have true delight with him in our salvation. God wants us to be greatly comforted and joyfully God wishes us to be filled with grace. We were made for bliss. Knowledge of our salvation is to be the source of our joy. Julian writes: “... the lykyng of our saluacion be lyke to the joy that Crist hath of oure saluation, as it may be whylle we be here.” Our salvation comes to us through the mercy and gift of God. We would never have known this except for the goodness of God revealed to us in Jesus. In him, the goodness of God triumphed over the wickedness of evil and so we rejoice.

Our capacity for bliss is endless because our capacity for God is infinite: the more bliss we experience the more bliss we long for. The greatest bliss that there is is to possess God in the clarity of endless light, truly seeing God, sweetly feeling him, peacefully possessing God in the fullness of joy. Sin is the greatest opposition to this type of experience. so much so that, as long as we have anything to do with sin, we will never see clearly the face of God. Still, even if we are in sin, the Holy One will never leave us in our misery but will remain with us. But God will never have full joy in us

\[12\] LT 45, 489:40.
\[11\] LT 23, 391:27-29.
\[14\] LT 59, 589:5.
\[15\] LT 46, 490:6-7.
\[16\] LT 72, 659-660:6-8.
until we have our full joy in God, truly seeing the Holy as God is. For this we were ordained by nature, and brought to by grace.  

C. God’s Desire to be United to Us in Bliss for Eternity

We are the bliss of God because God endlessly delights in us and, with his grace, we delight in God. As has been said, we are made for bliss but we will never be completely filled with bliss in our earthly existence. Julian understood this very early on and, in time, came to see that the joy that we experience now will reach its fullness in eternity.

Julian ached to be with God. She wanted to be delivered from the world of woe and to be united with God. Jesus comforted her with these words:

Sodcnly thow shalt be takcn out of all thy payne, from all thy skcknes, from all thy dyseses and fro alle thy wo. And thow shalt come vp abone, and thy schalt haue me to thy mede, and thow shalt be fulfylled of joye and blysse, and thou shalt nevyr more haue no manner of paynne. but evyr joy and bIysse withoute end.  

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117 LT 72, 660-661:17-21.

118 LT 23, 390:15-19.

119 LT 64, 621:15-20. “Suddenly you will be taken out of all your pain, all your sickness, all your unrest and all your woe. And you will come up above, and you will have me as your reward, and you will be filled full of joy and bliss, and you will never again have any kind of pain, any kind of sickness, any kind of displeasure, no lack of will, but always joy and bliss without end.” (306)

As her editors note, the understanding of God as one who rejoices in humanity has a strong biblical basis. It echoes the words of Isaiah: “you shall be called My Delight ... the Lord delights in you.” Or again, “as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.” The author of the letter to the Hebrews puts these words in the mouth of Jesus: “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” “Suddenly you will be taken out of all your pain, your sickness, all your unrest and all your woe. And you will come up above, and you will have me for your reward, and you will be filled full of joy and bliss, and you will never again have any
The pain and the woe that we experience in this life will seem like nothing when we are taken into everlasting bliss. God will be our reward and we will be full of joy.

In the fullness of time, we shall at last see clearly the reason for everything God has done: we shall see the reason for all that God has permitted. Our bliss and our fulfilment will be so deep and so high that, out of marvelling and wonder, we will all proclaim that all creatures ought to have a reverent fear and tremble before their God. This fear and trembling is not rooted in pain but emerges because of a great joy that marvels at the greatness of God, the Creator, and at the smallest part of all that is created. The contemplation of such marvels makes the creature meek and mild. God wants us to have knowledge of this so that we might desire the vision and the toil of God. Glimpsing this will lead us in the right way, keeping us true in this life and uniting us to the Holy.

In a moment of great marvel, Julian came to see that, despite our foolish living and our blindness on earth, our courteous Lord beholds us all the while rejoicing in us. In all things we can please God most by believing in God’s delight in us and truly rejoicing along with our God. For just as sure as we shall be in the bliss of God, giving praise and kind of pain, any kind of sickness, any kind of displeasure, no lack of will, but always joy and bliss without end.” (306)

120 LT 64. 622:28-30.
121 LT 64. 624:48.
122 LT 75. 681-682:24-34.
123 LT 75. 682:35-39.
thanksgiving, so also we have been in God’s prevision, loved and known. In this love without beginning God created us, and in the same love God keeps us and will never allow us to be hurt in such a way that our bliss will be diminished. Therefore, when the judgment is given and the mysteries of God revealed, then we shall see God in the very mysteries that are now hidden from us. Then none of us will want to say: “Lord, if only it had been this way, then it would have been well.” But we will all say: “Lord, blessed may you be! For it is as it was meant to be; it is well and now truly we see that everything is done as it was always ordained by you before anything was made.”

IV. The Parable of the Lord and the Servant

The parable of the lord and the servant is an allegorical story, or exemplum, which is the lynchpin for Julian’s solution to the problem of evil. It is absent from the short text because Julian tells us, at the time she was writing the short text, she did not understand its meaning. Julian was perplexed by what she saw to be a contradiction between the teaching of the church and what had been revealed to her: the church teaches that we are sinners and deserving of punishment, yet she saw that God does not punish us but looks on us with only love. She cries out: “A lorde Jhesu kyng of blysse, how shall I esyde, who shall tell me and tech me that me nedyth to wytt, if I may nott at this tyme se it in

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324 LT 85. 728-730:2-17.
325 LT 51. 519:66-67.
the?" The parable of the lord and the servant was the answer to her cry.\textsuperscript{327} Because of the centrality of the teaching of the parable of the lord and the servant in Julian's theology, it has received considerable attention by scholars.\textsuperscript{328} In light of the task of this research, which is to explore the naming of God in Julian's writings, our reading of the parable will focus on the understanding of God developed in the allegory.

Julian begins by telling us that the parable was hard for her to understand. It was manifested in two parts: in one part in a spiritual way with a bodily likeness, and in a second part, in a spiritual way without a bodily likeness.\textsuperscript{329} Furthermore, Julian identifies three levels of understanding: the first is the beginning of the teaching which she received at the time the revelation was given: the second is the inward instruction which she has received since then: the third is the whole revelation from the beginning to the end, which the Lord freely and often brings to her understanding.\textsuperscript{330} These "moments" of comprehension, for Julian, form a unified whole which cannot be divided. From the time she received the parable, Julian had some understanding of its message. However

\textsuperscript{125} LT 50. 512:36-38.
\textsuperscript{127} LT 51. 513-514:2-4.
\textsuperscript{129} LT 51. 514:5-7.
\textsuperscript{130} LT 51. 519-520:76-80.
the fullness of its message developed over time. This development becomes apparent in reading the parable. Julian moves from her bodily experience to her immediate response and finally to her interpretation.

As the parable commences. Julian sees a great lord sitting in state, and a servant standing before him, ready to do his will. Surprisingly the relationship between the lord and the servant is a benevolent one. The lord sends the servant on a mission and the servant goes out eagerly. As he does, he falls into a ditch injuring himself to such an extent that he cannot help himself. Julian tells us that his fall is the result of his zealousness to obey his lord and the haste with which he does so. Julian looks closely at the servant to study his personal motivation. He suffers seven pains: bruising, heaviness in his body, feebleness, blindness in his reason and perplexity in his mind, inability to rise, loneliness and isolation. But his greatest suffering is that, in the dell, the servant was unable to turn and see the lord whom he loved.

Julian looks toward the lord. The lord, in turn, looks toward the servant. "with a double aspect." Outwardly, he shows compassion and pity; inwardly, he rejoices because of the joy the lord intends for the servant. The lord recognizes that the servant fell as a consequence of his good will. This, in turn, demands of the nobility and goodness of the

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111 LT 51. 514:10-12.
113 LT 51. 516:32-37.
lord, that the servant be rewarded to a greater extent than if he had not fallen. 335

At this point the vision ceases. Julian is unclear about its meaning. She thinks that the servant represented Adam, but many things about the servant did not correspond with church teaching. 336 Twenty years less three months later, Julian received instruction on the meaning of the parable. 337 All that follows emerges as a result of Julian’s reflection.

Julian focuses on every detail of the parable, on the lord’s position and appearance and on the servant’s position, appearance and task. 338 She identifies the lord with God: the servant with Adam representing all humanity. 339 The servant suffers as the result of his fall, but his fall was not the result of rebellion or disobedience. He fell because he desired to do the lord’s will. The injured servant cannot climb out of the dell to execute the lord’s will. He is blinded. His lord continues to look on him with love because of the servant’s good will. But the servant cannot see his lord, nor how his lord looks upon him. 340 From this, Julian derives a profound insight: God is always kindly disposed

13 LT 51. 520:86.
14 LT 51. 521:89-99.
16 LT 51. 522:107-112.
towards sinners and longs to bring them to bliss\textsuperscript{341} but we do not always believe this.

Julian contemplates the various details of the allegory to understand their significance. The lord, alone in the wilderness, symbolizes how the human soul which was made to be God’s dwelling place, could not through Adam’s fall, realize it destiny. But God is content to wait until such a time that the Holy can dwell with humankind. The blue of the lord’s clothing represents steadfastness. Its breadth signifies God’s desire to restore humanity to its proper place. The lord’s comportment is merciful, revealing love and compassion.\textsuperscript{342} The lord’s loving gaze has a double meaning: part compassion and pity, part joy and bliss. The compassion and pity are for Adam: the joy and bliss are for the falling of God’s beloved Son, equal to the Father in every way.\textsuperscript{343}

Julian begins to see a double significance to the servant as well. Exteriorly the servant is ready to work, but poorly clad, hardly fit to be a servant of an important lord. But inwardly, the servant is filled with love for his lord, which mirrors the love the lord has for him. The wisdom of the servant enables him to see that there is one thing which will honour his lord, and out of love, forgetting about himself, he hastens to do the lord’s will.\textsuperscript{344}

Gradually Julian begins to understand the servant’s mission. There was a treasure

\textsuperscript{341}LT 51. 523:117-119.
\textsuperscript{342}LT 51. 524:130.
\textsuperscript{343}LT 51. 524:134-136.
\textsuperscript{344}LT 51. 528-529:172-180.
hidden in the earth which the lord loved, a food that was pleasing to him. The servant is to be a gardener, tilling the earth, making streams to run and fruit to grow. He is not to return until he has prepared the food in a manner which is pleasing to the lord.

Meanwhile, the lord stays in the wilderness, waiting for the servant's return. 

Julian was perplexed and wondered from where the servant came. Finally, she tells us, she came to a new level of understanding. Julian realizes that the servant who represents Adam, and in him all humanity, is also typological for the second Adam, Jesus. When Adam fell, God's Son fell. Adam fell from life into death and hell. Jesus fell with Adam to save him from hell. Jesus and Adam are joined by an eternal union that can never be broken. Jesus has taken unto himself human blame, and God does not ascribe any more blame to sinners than to Jesus. When God looks on humankind, God sees all in Christ. Jesus was equal to God in his divinity, but he willingly took on himself all human sinfulness, discounting any pain he would have to suffer. All who will be saved by the incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ are embraced in his humanity.

Julian tells us that in this parable she comes to understand some of our Lord's

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145 This understanding of Julian's corresponds to Phil. 2:5-7, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave and being born in human likeness."
146 LT 51, 532-538:211-265.
meaning. The parable holds within it all the keys for its interpretation, even though all revelation is full of secrets. She goes on to unlock some of the meanings she discovered. The servant’s wisdom and love represents his divinity, and his poor clothing his humanity. His dashing symbolizes the eagerness of divinity to take on human nature. The hurt he suffers as a result of his fall represents human flesh in which he undergoes deadly pain. The white tunic symbolizes Christ’s human flesh; its scantiness signifies that nothing at all separates divinity from humanity. Christ’s torn flesh is represented by the torn tunic. By the writhing, groaning and moaning of the servant is understood that Christ might not rise until he died and abandoned his soul to the Father’s keeping, with all humankind whom he had been sent to save. It was then that Christ began to show his might. He went into hell and joined the souls there, taking them with himself into heaven. On Easter morning, his suffering ended.

Human flesh, Adam’s tunic, is no longer straight, threadbare and short, but new.

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151 LT 51. 534:225-228.
152 LT 51. 539-540:278-280.
153 LT 51. 540:280-282.
154 LT 51. 535-536:244-245.
155 LT 51. 541:288-291.
156 LT 51. 541-542:294-298.
157 LT 51. 542:299.
158 LT 51. 542-543:302-308.
white, bright, clean forever, more rich than even the clothing of the Father.\footnote{LT 51. 543:304-308.} While the clothing of the Father was blue, Christ’s is a many-coloured mix, so marvellous it cannot be described.\footnote{LT 51. 543:308-311.} The lord now sits in a rich and noble seat;\footnote{LT 51. 543:312-313.} the Son sits at the lord’s right hand, richly clothed, with a crown upon his head. Humanity is the crown: the Father’s joy, the Son’s glory, and the Holy Spirit’s delight.\footnote{LT 51. 544:315-316.}

As we have seen, the mystery that perplexed Julian was to be found in chapter fifty before the actual exposition of the parable of the servant and the lord, which is in chapter fifty-one. Chapter fifty-two gives further understanding to the parable’s meaning. Here we learn what the restoration of Christ into glory means for Adam and all humanity. In this chapter, Julian is able to reconcile the contradiction between the inevitability of human sinfullness and God’s promise of salvation to all who will be saved. Like the servant in the parable, persons have a dual identity: they are both Adam and Christ. She writes:

\begin{quote}
For pe tyme of this lyfe we haue in vs a meravelous medelur both of wele and of woe. We haue in vs oure lorde Jhesu Cryst vp resyn, and we haue in vs the wrechynnesse and the myschef of Adams fallyng. Dyeng by Cryst we be lastyng kep, and by hys gracysous touchyng we be reysed in to very trust of saluacyon. And by Adams fallyng we be so broken in oure felyng on dyverse manner by synne and by sondry paynes, in whych we be made derke and so blynde that
\end{quote}
Humanity feels itself caught in the struggle of life but we are now in the Risen Christ. The love and joy of God indicates his vindication of the substance of the person, the substance that is eternally united to the Creator. Humans see only their sensuality and blame themselves for sin. God sees the person as a whole and can excuse human frailty. God, who is all goodness and who knows no wrath, embraces persons in love. Julian professes obedience to church teachings, but her revelations have given to her an understanding of God that negates malevolence towards sinners.

Having outlined the parable, it is now time to review the understanding of God that emerges from it. First and foremost, Julian’s God looks upon humankind only with love and not with blame. When God looks upon humankind, God sees all in Christ. The Holy One longs to bring us to divine bliss. God made humankind to be the dwelling place of the Holy. God was willing to enter into humankind so that we might be transformed and taken into divinity. In God, there is a place of rest and peace for all humanity.

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363 LT 52. 546-547:9-16. “During our lifetime here we have in us a marvellous mixture of both well-being and woe. We have in us our risen Lord Jesus Christ, and we have in us the wretchedness and the harm of Adam’s falling. Dying, we are constantly protected by Christ, and by the touching of his grace we are raised to true trust in salvation. And we are so afflicted in our feelings by Adam’s falling in various ways, by sin and by different pains, and in this we are made dark and so blind that we can scarcely accept any comfort.” (279)

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Conclusion

A primary observation about Julian’s ways of speaking of God is that no words, names, expressions or statements can ever fully explain God, who is ultimately mystery. God is a God of longing. God longs to be known and to be loved and has revealed himself in creation, in Jesus Christ and in the church. God is revealed as Father/Creator, Mother/Jesus and Holy Spirit/Lord. There is only one God and that God is Trinity. God is the source of all that is, the ground of all being. God always is. God always was and still is involved with creation. Creation, especially humankind, is for God a source of delight and rejoicing. God is unchangeable goodness and merciful love.

God loves humanity passionately and longs to have humankind united to him in time and in eternity. God is a God of relationship. Humankind dwells in God and God dwells in it. In Jesus, we have a God who walks with us, and in the Spirit we have a God who is ceaselessly engaged in our transformation. God’s love for humankind is familial and courteous. Our courteous God grieves with us, comforts us, embraces us with great tenderness. He knows us in our weakness but never withdraws his love. God responds to human sorrow, desolation and anguish with compassion and love. He looks on humanity with pity not blame. In God’s gazing, he sees all humankind in Jesus. God is never embarrassed by humankind but delights in it. He is a place of rest for all humanity and the satisfaction of every human longing. God is a God of superlatives who can never really be grasped by language, but who can be glimpsed by love.
CHAPTER THREE

DISCOVERING THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY IN SHOWINGS

For the great images of God fashioned by [humankind] are born not of imagination but of real encounters with real divine power and glory. 

Martin Buber

Introduction

Julian has approached her own experience in faith, broken it open, considered it in the light of scripture, church, and her own insight, and written it down for all believers. In the previous chapter, I have unraveled Julian’s tapestry by isolating different elements or threads of her understanding of God. I have discovered that when trying to convey her experience of God, Julian uses many and varied ways of naming God. It has become clear that, in the mind of Julian, to try to depict God by a single noun, verb, adjective or adverb is not only impossible but futile. The manifestations of God are as plentiful as the fruits of the earth, as rich as an assortment of gems, and as brilliant as the hues of a rainbow. Still, they are more beautiful than all this, for they are far greater and more bountiful that we can conceive or imagine.

But God is not simply a constellation of names, activities, desires and longings. For Julian, Creator/Father is a living being, the source of all that is, who has manifested himself in time in the Mother/Jesus, who sends us the Holy Spirit/Lord for our transformation: still one God, the Trinity. Because Julian’s God is essentially a Trinitarian God, I now wish to turn to Julian’s understanding of the persons of the Trinity in themselves, and also the Trinity as a whole to further understand Julian’s naming of
I. God as Creator/Father

A. God Who is Uncreated Charity

In chapter eighty-four of Showings we read,

I had iij manner of vnderstondynges, in this lyght of (c)ha(r)ite. The first is charite vnmade, the seconnde is charyte made, the thyrd is charyte gevyn. Charyte vnmade is god, charyte made is oure soule in God, charyte gevyn is vertu, and pat is a gracious gyfte of wurking, in whych we loue God for hym selfe, and oure self in god. and alle pat god lovyth for god.\textsuperscript{364}

As her editors point out, in speaking of God as uncreated charity, Julian follows the footsteps of other theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas.\textsuperscript{365} As uncreated charity, God is infinite being and source of all charity. For Julian, God is transcendent, not in the sense that God is distant, but in that God is Other. Even though God is Other, God does not operate from "without" in relationship to creation and humankind, but from "within" it. God, as uncreated charity, is a dynamic circle of love which encompasses created charity and humankind, and bonds one person to another and to creation through the virtue of charity. As uncreated charity, God is the creative source of all things.\textsuperscript{366} the

\textsuperscript{364} LT 84. 727:10-15. "I had three kinds of understanding in this light. The first is uncreated charity, the second is created charity, the third is given charity. Uncreated charity is God, created charity is our soul in God, given charity is virtue, and that is a gift of grace in deeds, in which we love God for himself, and ourselves in God, and all that God loves for God." (341)

\textsuperscript{365} Collledge and Walsh, "Introduction." 727 n. 10.

\textsuperscript{366} LT 1. 282:10-12.

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sustaining ground of all that is, and the divine force that leads creation to a future of divine goodness. The divine activity permeates creation, especially humankind, which is rooted in endless love.

Uncreated charity is in continual kenosis, giving itself to creation in a relationship of love. God gives himself through power -- creating, redeeming and sanctifying. For Julian, divine power is not a power over but is most completely expressed in divine weakness as Jesus hangs upon the cross imparting life. God confers with wisdom in that the Holy One fully comprehends creation and guides it to its proper end. God gives love, pouring out divine life and goodness to all. Power, wisdom and love are to be understood in the light of charity, which is divine activity and divine essence for the God who gives in love, who is goodness, truth and love.

B. God Who Never Takes His Hands From Creation

In the preceding chapter, it has been noted that God as Creator never removes his

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167 LT 56. 571:11-12.  
168 LT 53. 433:15-17.  
169 LT 56. 571:15-16.  
170 LT 63. 616-617:30-32.  
172 LT 46. 493:31-36.  
-90-
hands from creation, but remains intimately linked to it because God loves creation with passion. Because of the centrality of this belief in Julian's theology, it bears further elaboration. She expresses the same idea in other words: God is "the maker, the keeper, the lover." For Julian, God is the essence of everything that exists, particularly humankind. In her words:

A hye vnderstandyng it is inwardly to se and to know that god, whych is oure maker dwellyth in oure soule, and a hygher vnderstandying it is and more, inwardly to se and to know oure soule that is made dwellyth in god in substance, of whych substance by god we be that we be.

And I sawe no dyfference between god and oure substance, but as it were all god: and yett my vnderstandying toke that oure substance is in God. that is to se that god is god and oure substance is a creature in god.

All that God makes is good, down to the smallest particle of being. How can it be otherwise if all is of God? As Maker, God is near to us and in us and we are in God.

As Protector, God keeps us when we are in distress, constantly working to bring us to peace. God's protection is to be an endless source of strength for us.

171 LT 11, 340-341:52-56.
172 LT 5, 300:19.
173 LT 54, 562-563:12-20. "It is a great understanding to see and to know inwardly that our soul, which is created, dwells in God in substance, of which substance, through God, we are what we are. And I saw no difference between God and our substance, but as it were, all God; and still my understanding accepted that our substance is in God, that is to say that God is God, and our substance is creature in God."
174 LT 9, 322L:2; 75, 682:33-34.
175 LT 72, 662:33.
176 LT 49, 508:40-42.
177 LT 40, 459:54-55.
Julian, we are protected through mercy: "For the ground of mercy is in loue, and the werkyng of mercy is our kepyng in loue." God's love is our protection.380

As Lover, God created us in that same love and redeemed us.382 and God's love for creation is steadfast.383 Creation, especially humankind, is the object of God's love.384 God's love for humankind preceded its creation, for before God made us, God loved us.385 God as love and lover is essential to Julian's understanding of God. Unlike other authors of her time, she does not use erotic imagery to speak of God's love; rather, she speaks of God as "her courteous Lord." However, she does speak of our union with God as a spousal one when she writes, "and in the knyttyng and in the onyng he is oure very tru spouse and we his lovyd wyfe and his feyer meydyn. with which wyfe he was nevyr displesyd; for ie seyeth: I loue the and thou louyst me, and our loue shall nevyr parte in two." God's love for us is beyond our comprehension, but in the fullness of

381 LT 84. 727:8
382 LT 56. 573:29-31.
383 LT 43. 479:32-33.
384 LT 57. 576:4-5.
385 LT 54. 479:32-33.
387 LT 58. 583:14-18. "And in the joining and the union he is our very true spouse and we his beloved wife and his fair maiden, with which wife he was never displeased; for he says: I love you and you love me and our love will never divide in two." (293)
time. Julian assures us, we will grasp the marvelous and enduring love God has for creation.\textsuperscript{388}

C. God, Ground of Our Beseeching and Being

When Julian writes of God as the ground of our beseeching, as well as the ground of our being, she is writing truths that are very different, though both share the word “ground.” In the first instance, when she puts these words into the mouth of God: “I am the ground of thy beseking,”\textsuperscript{389} which, Edward Peter Nolan points out, could be translated as “I am both the reason for and the object of thy seeking and entreaty.”\textsuperscript{390} “beseking” is a gerund (verbal noun). In this case the emphasis is on the “beseking” and not the “grounde.” When she uses “beseking” in this way, she employs what in Middle English is referred to as a “homophonic pun,” or an amalgam of two of our modern words: beseeching and be seeking. In doing so, Nolan notes that she brings together prayer and trust: “we ‘seek’ as we ‘pray’ and insofar as we ‘trust’ they will be answered.”\textsuperscript{391} In other words, as the “ground of thy besekyng,” the Trinity both urges us to pray and answers our prayer. This understanding has a biblical basis: Paul tells us that

\textsuperscript{388}LT 61, 603:22-27.
\textsuperscript{389}LT 86, 732:7.
\textsuperscript{391}Nolan, Cry Out and Write, 185.
"God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba Father.’" In the gospel of Luke, we are given a parable about the disciples’ need to pray always and not to lose heart, and the story of a widow whose persistent cries eventually move an unjust judge to vindicate her claim. Jesus comments on the latter incident, "Will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them."

In chapter fifty-five of Showings we read, "Thus I understood that the sensuality is grounded in nature, in mercy and in grace, which grounded us to receive gifts that lead us to endless life." Shortly after, we read that our soul is deeply "grounded" in God. "Oure reson is grounded in god." God is the "grounde in whome oure soule standyth." In this case the emphasis is on "grounde" and denotes *our rootedness in God*. God is the foundation of all that is, and, as foundation God is very near to creation. Here, again, Julian speaks of an immanent God like the author of Acts who says God is the one in whom "we live and move and have our being."

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\[sup2\] Galatians 4:6.


\[sup4\] LT 55, 566:21-23. "So I understand that our sensuality is founded in nature, in mercy and in grace, and this foundation enables us to receive gifts which lead us to endless life." (287)

\[sup5\] LT 56, 570:4.

\[sup6\] LT 56, 574:39.

\[sup7\] LT 56, 571:12; 62, 611:14.

\[sup8\] Acts 17:28.
D. God is One With Humanity

1. In Creation

Much has already been said about the relationship between God and creation. The following is included for purposes of emphasis and brief elaboration. All of creation comes from God: all is God's doing. It is an expression of the love and goodness of God. and the same love that begot it will preserve creation. Even though creation is great, generous, beautiful and good, in comparison to the Creator it is minuscule. God is endless supreme truth, endless supreme wisdom, endless supreme uncreated love, and the soul, which is a creature in God, shares in these same properties. Humanity is doubly bound to its Creator, in nature and in grace. The person contemplates and loves God and, in turn, God rejoices in humanity.

Even though Julian speaks of the revelatory aspect of creation, she is not naive about creation. She recognizes its limitations. At the same time that creation is glorious, good, loved and protected, it is small, dependent, impoverished, blind and loathsome. An

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LT 8: 14: 86. 733-734:20-27.

LT 8. 317:10-11.

LT 44. 484:11-14.

LT 62. 612:22-23.

LT 44. 484:14-16.
example of this becomes apparent as Julian considers the human body. She tells us that it is marvelously made right down to the minute detail.\textsuperscript{406} Body and soul are enclosed in God. However, she does describe the body as "a swylge stynkyng myrre."\textsuperscript{407} What accounts for the difference is the presence of sin. In its creation, the body is good but it also represents, as Susan Thrift Mahan tells us, "the miseries which are part of mortal life."\textsuperscript{408}

Julian describes life as a prison and a penance\textsuperscript{409} because of the presence of sin. However, sin does not sever the unity between God and humanity, nor cause God to withdraw divine love for it; rather, in God's infinite wisdom, sin becomes a path which opens up a fuller experience of this unity. All is good if it directs the person to God. Anything that leads one away from God is part of the corruptibility of creation. Jesus, who shares in our humanity, is the link between the Trinity and creation.

2. In the Incarnation

It is important to keep in mind that whenever Julian writes of Jesus, the Trinity is present to her.\textsuperscript{410} But Jesus, in his humanity, is bound to humankind in a unique manner. As has been observed, Julian sees this most clearly in the parable of the lord and the

\textsuperscript{406}LT 6. 306-307:35-44.
\textsuperscript{407}LT 64. 622-623:32-33. "pit of stinking mud." (306)
\textsuperscript{409}LT 77. 693:41.
\textsuperscript{410}LT 4. 295:15.
servant. In the parable, the servant, Jesus as savior, is depicted as a gardener who is to work the soil with great effort in order to bring forth the fruits of the earth. Here Jesus is identified with Adam, who has fallen into sin and is unable to help himself. The image of Jesus is very human. He became fully human to ascribe to himself our blame for sin. In him, we are able to see the extent to which God will go to save humankind.\footnote{LT 51. 532-538:211-267.}

Commenting on Julian’s understanding of the incarnation, Nuth maintains, and I agree, that Julian intimates that the incarnation had a purpose apart from restoring humankind from the damage inflicted by sin. Nuth writes.

Sin is a fact of human existence which cannot be denied and God actually uses it as one of the vehicles for human salvation, but it is not the cause of the outreach of God to humanity through the works of mercy and grace. Salvation involves more than the forgiveness of sins or the restoration of fallen human nature to its original state of justice. God willed that humankind be created in its “natural substance” and then be “increased” and “fulfilled” by being raised up into the very life of God. Viewing the incarnation as the fulfillment of God’s plan for the increase of human nature places a very positive value upon human life in time. God intends earthly life to be the means of human glory. This is salvation, something which Julian intimates would have occurred whether or not sin was a reality.\footnote{Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter. 59 is commenting on LT 56. 574-575:39-44.51-56 which reads: “Our reason is founded in God. who is nature’s substance. From this substantial nature spring mercy and grace. and penetrate us, accomplishing everything for the fulfillment of our joy. These are our foundations, in which we have our being, our increase and our fulfillment. For in nature we have our life and our being.}
Further credence can be given to this interpretation of Julian in considering another
citation from *Showings*. In chapter fifty-three she writes,

> For I saw that God began nevyr to loue mankynd; for ryghte the same that
> mankynd shalle be in endlesse blesse, fullfyllyng the joy of god as anemptis his
> werkys. ryghte so the same mankynd hath be in the forsyghte of god known and
> lovyd from without begynnynge in his ryghtfull entent. And by the endless entent
> and assent that the full acorde of all the tynye, be myd person wolde be grounde
> and hed of this feyer kynde out of whom we be all come. in whom we be alle
> enclosyd, into whom we shall all goo, in hym fyndynge oure full hevyn in
> everylasting joy by the forseyeng purpose of alle that blessyd trynyte fro without
> begynnynge.\(^{413}\)

What is clear from this passage is that it was always in the intent of the Trinity that the
second person of the Trinity, Jesus, was to be the foundation of humankind, the link
between humanity and divinity. Sin becomes a vehicle of God’s mercy and love, but it is
not the sole reason for the incarnation. The incarnation is inevitable because of God’s
love, but not necessary because of humanity’s sin. Furthermore, Jesus’ death is not a
sacrifice for sin but a moment when the Son reveals most clearly the identity of the
Creator/Father. Jesus’ death expresses God’s love for the world and heals the severance

\[\text{(283)}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{413}}\text{LT 53. 557-558: 26-35. "For I saw that God never began to love mankind; for just as mankind}
\text{will be in endless bliss, fulfilling God’s joy with regard to his own works, just so has that same mankind}
\text{been known and loved in God’s prescience from without beginning in his righteous intent. And by the}
\text{endless intent and assent and the full accord of the Trinity, the mediator wanted to be the foundation and}
\text{the head of this fair nature, out of whom we all come, in whom we are all enclosed, into whom we shall all}
\text{go, finding in him our full heaven in everlasting joy by the prescient purpose of the blessed Trinity from}
\text{without beginning." (283)}\]
between divinity and humanity.

In Julian’s theology, the incarnation is incomplete and is still to be lived out in the Body of Christ, the church. In her words, “For all mankind that shall be saved by the swete incarnacion and the passion of Crist, alle is the manhode of Cryst. For he is the heed, and we be his membris.” The church is Christ coming into his fullness; the church is in the act of becoming. Hence it has both a perfect and an imperfect dimension. Even though the church contains a flawed humanity, it is never destroyed by sin but becomes an instrument of overcoming sin and a means of grace. In his humanity, Christ continues to suffer and, because of that the longing, the thirst of Christ remains unsatisfied.

While it is true that Julian held the church and its teaching in high esteem, it is also true that she was unwilling to simply dismiss her own experience and simply defer to church teaching when the two were in tension. An example of this can be seen in her attempt to reconcile her revelation that God is totally loving and compassionate, one

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414 LT 51, 537:254-257. “For all mankind which will be saved by the sweet Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, all is Christ’s humanity, for he is the head, and we are his members.” (276) Here Julian is clearly influenced by Paul. In 1 Corinthians 12:12,27 we read, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ ... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

415 LT 31, 419-420:34-36.


417 LT 60, 597:34-37.

418 LT 31, 420:36-40.
without wrath, with the church's practice of passing judgement on sinners and blaming them for their actions. She is, therefore, torn between the church's teaching that a sinner deserves blame and punishment and her experiential knowledge that God does not blame the sinner. Julian desired to reconcile this apparent contradiction. As previously mentioned, she comes to a clearer insight into this dilemma in the parable of the lord and the servant which took nearly two decades to contemplate and comprehend. In the end, what Julian comes to is the insight that sin, rather than calling down the wrath of God, is a fortunate fault of the elect. This is clear in chapter fifty-nine:

And all this blysse we haue by mercy and grace, whych manner blysse we myght neyvr haue had and knoven, but yf that properte of goodnesse whych is in god had ben contraryed, wher by we haue this blysse. For wyckydnesse hath ben sufferyd to ryse contrary to pat goodnesse: and the goodnesse of mercy and grace contraryed agaynst that wyckydnesse, and turnyd all to goodnesse and wurshyppe to all that shall be savyd.

Julian's understanding of sin as a fortunate fault of the elect mirrors words from the Easter Proclamation: "O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"

3. In Faith

In the first revelation, Julian notes that our life is grounded in faith, hope and

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420 LT 59. 589:2-8. "And we have all this by mercy and grace, and this kind of bliss we never could have had and known, unless that property of goodness which is in God had been opposed, through which we have this bliss. For the wickedness has been suffered to rise in opposition to that goodness; and the goodness of mercy and grace opposed that wickedness, and turned everything to goodness and honor for all who will be saved." (295)
love and that, because of this, we are able to grasp some of who God is. It is faith that enables Julian to hold on to the teaching she has received in the revelations. Faith is for Julian a possibility for every human being because it is knitted into our very nature. She writes.

The nexte good that we receyue is oure feyth, in whych oure profetyng begynneth: and it comyth of the hye rychesse of our kynde substannce in oure sensuall soule, and it is groundyed in vs and we in that throw the kynde goodness of god by the werkyng of mercy and grace. And therof come alle our go(o)dys by whych we be led and savyd.

Our faith is actualized by God's grace. The foregoing passage is clear that faith needs to imbue both our “kynde substannce,” (which is our intellectual capacity) and our “sensuall soule” (which includes our feelings and our thoughts towards others). That is to say, faith must be of the heart as well as of the mind. It involves our total being.

It is through faith that we understand the event of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In chapter thirty-one, we read.

For we know in oure feyth, and also it was shewde in alle, that Crist Jhesu is both god and man: and aneyst the godhed he is hym selfe hyghest blysse, and was fro without begynnynge, and shalle be without end, whych very endlesse blesse may

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421 LT 7. 315-316:59-60.
423 LT 57. 578-579:26-31. “The nexte good which we receyue is our faith, in whych we begin to profit; and it cometh from the great riches of our natural substance into our soul, which is sensual; and it is founded in us and we in it through the natural goodness of God by the operation of mercy and grace. And from that comes all good, by which we are led and saved.” (291)
nevry be hyghed nor lowyde in the selfe.424

Our faith further tells us that not only did God alone take on our nature in Christ, who realized our salvation but the same God *dwells here with us* now caring for us in this life and bringing us to eternal bliss.425 This faith, which is God’s gift to humanity, takes the form of light, leading us through the darkness of this life. In Julian’s words,

Oure feyth is a lyght, kyndly comyng of oure endlesse day that is oure fader, god, in whych lyght oure moder, Cryst, and oure good lorde the holy gost ledyth vs in this passyng lyfe. The lyghte is cause of oure lyfe, the nyght is cause of oure payne and oure woo, in whych we derve endlesse mede and thanke of god, for we with mercy and grace wyfully know and beleue oure lyghte goyng therin wysly and myghtely. And at pe end of woe. sodeynly oure eyse shalle be opynyd, and in clernes of syght oure lyght shalle be fulle, whych lyght is god. oure maker. fadyr. and holy gost in Crist Jhesu oure savyour.

And I sawe and vnderstode that oure feyth is oure lyght in oure nyght, whych lyght is god. oure endlesse day.426

As well as being a light that leads us through the darkness, faith is also a power coming to us from the Holy Spirit that works great marvels within us — because it is, in fact, the

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424 LT 31, 418-419:21-25. “For we know in our faith, and it was also revealed in this, that Christ Jesus is both God and man: and in his divinity he is himself supreme bliss, and was from without beginning, and he will be without end, which true everlasting bliss cannot of its nature be increased or diminished.” (230)


426 LT 83, 723-725:14-25. “Our faith is a light, coming in nature from our endless day, which is our Father, God in which light our Mother, Christ, and our good Lord the Holy Spirit lead us in this passing life. This light is measured with discretion, and it is present to us in our need in the night. The light is the cause of our life, the night is the cause of our pain and all our woe, in which woe we deserve endless reward and thanks from God: for we by his mercy and grace willingly know and believe our light, walking therein wisely and mightily. And at the end of woe, suddenly our eyes will be opened, and in the clearness of our sight our light will be full, which is God, our Creator, Father and the Holy Spirit, in Christ our saviour.

So I saw and understood that our faith is our light in our night, which light is God, our endless day.” (340)

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mercy of Christ at work in us. Christ’s faith is our faith.

God dwells with us not only in an interiorized faith, but also in the church. Julian always kept before her the teachings of the church and she ascribed to them in faith. In the epilogue which closes Showings, the editor-scribe prays that Julian’s writings are read by Christ’s faithful lovers and those who are willing to submit themselves to the faith of the Holy Church.

E. “I saw god in a poynste”

In chapter eleven of Showings Julian writes.

... I saw god in a poynste. that is to say in my understandyng, by whych syght I saw that he is in althyng ... in this tyme the workyng of creatures was not shewd, but our lord god in creatures; for he is in the myd poyn of all thynges, and all he doth. ... See. I am god. See. I am in all thyngs. See. I do all thyng. See. I nevyr lefte my handes of my workes, ne neve shalle without ende.

As can be seen in the footnote, Colledge and Walsh translate the word “poynste” as “in an instant of time,” maintaining that this is more accurate than envisioning God as the...

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428 Pelphrey makes explicit the idea that Christ’s faith is our faith. He argues that “The Son of God has perfect faith in the Father and in the incarnation, has lived in the light of faith, in human nature. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ himself comes to live in us, and his faith becomes ours.” Pelphrey. Christ our Mother. 178.

429 LT 9, 323:22-25.

430 Showings. 734.

431 LT 11, 336:32; 338:19-21; 340:51-53. “I saw God in an instant of time, that is to say in my understanding, by which vision I saw that he is present in all things ... at this time the work of creatures was not revealed, but the work of our Lord God in creatures; for he is at the center of everything, and he does everything ... See. I am in all things. See. I do all things. See. I never remove my hands from my works.” (197, 199)
centre of the circle, or the universe, both of which postulate a geometrical image. On this particular translation, I disagree with Julian's editors. For me the more correct translation of the "poynte" is "point." This is supported by Julian scholars John Skinner, Sheila Upjohn and Ritamary Bradley, all of whom translate "poynte" as "point." I draw attention to the translation of this particular word because the way in which it is translated affects not only the word's meaning, but also the meaning of the whole passage in which it is enclosed. This can be clearly seen by looking at various commentaries on this passage. I have chosen to examine more carefully Nuth's and Pelphrey's works.

First I consider Nuth's interpretation. Even though Nuth writes, "Julian 'saw God in a point.'" the meaning she gives to the passage seems closer to the translation by Colledge and Walsh. She writes, "When Julian 'saw God in a point' in the third revelation, she received a fleeting glimpse of God's point of view." In this context it makes more sense to say "Julian saw God in an instant of time and received a fleeting glimpse of God's point of view" than to say "Julian saw God in a point and received a fleeting glimpse of God's point of view." Developing the idea of God's perspective, Nuth goes on to say: "The basic difference between God's perspective and ours lies in the fact that God is eternal being and we are temporal beings. For God is everything and is always ordered to a purpose which never changes."
Pelphrey gives a different perspective to the concept of seeing God in a point, which I favor over Nuth's explanation. He refers back to chapter five, where we read of Julian's insight into the mystery of the small object the size of a hazelnut (it too could be called a point), which Julian comes to understand as creation. Suddenly Julian became fearful that creation, which seemed so fragile, would fall into nothingness and disappear. But in the midst of her fear she began to feel reassured that creation would not disappear because "god made it, ... god loueth it." As Pelphrey explains,

This unspoken assurance did not have to do with the nature of the tiny point itself, but with the nature of God, the Trinity. Specifically, Julian learned that the God who is "dreadful" and who made and controls all things, is also "homely" and therefore related to this tiny "point" in the universe.

He further maintains that it means that God is to be found in the tiniest of particles of matter that exist, the smallest of which contemporary physics recognizes as the quark. This interpretation means that all of reality, right down to the particles which can only be seen by powerful microscopes, contain God. For me, this interpretation is consistent with Julian's emphasis on the immanence of God. God could never be a distant Creator or "an irrelevant first cause of the universe." As Pelphrey argues, "God is the intimate Love of all that is, and the act of creation -- far from taking place in the distant past -- is taking place continually, at every point in space and time in the love of God."

The idea of God in a "point" is not new with Julian, but her interpretation is new. In the Middle Ages, it was thought that everything that existed had a "centre point." The

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45a LT 5. 300:17-18.

457 Pelphrey, Christ our Mother. 109.

458 Pelphrey, Christ our Mother. 112.
centre point remained in a fixed position while something like a stone swung around it in a circular manner. Even though the centre of the circle does not move, it is responsible for the motion of the stone.\textsuperscript{439} Pelphrey notes, “Philosophers and theologians compared the idea of the moving stone to that of the universe. God, they said, is like the centre of the circle, or a *point which does not move, but which causes everything else to move by its power.*\textsuperscript{440} For me, Julian's insight goes beyond past philosophers and theologians, because the important thing that Julian has gleaned is that God is immediately present to creation: and not only is God like the centre of a circle, God is the central point of all, and human life is only a point in God. Furthermore, God, in the act of creation, put all this in motion. God is in all things, as maker, keeper and lover, leading them into the mysterious future. In Julian’s own words,

For by the same blyssd myght, wysdom and loue pat he made all thyng, to be the same end oure good lorde ledyth it continually, and ther to hym selfe shalle bryng it, and when it is tyme we shalle see it. And the ground of tyhs was shewyd in the furst, and more openly in pe thyrde, wher it seyth: I saw god in a poyn[t].\textsuperscript{441}

Even though humankind is woven together by God's very being, the divine remains truly Other from what God sustains in being. Divinely immanent, God remains transcendent.

\textsuperscript{439} Pelphrey. Christ our Mother, 113.

\textsuperscript{440} Pelphrey. Christ our Mother, 208.

\textsuperscript{441} LT 35, 333:15-19. “For by the same blessed power, wisdom and love by which he made all things, our good Lord always leads them to the same end, and he himself will bring them there, and at the right time we shall see it. And the foundation of this was shown in the first revelation, and more plainly in the third, where it says: I saw God in a [point].” (280)
F. God Without Wrath

From Showings it is very clear for Julian, that there is no wrath in God. The only wrath there is, is found in us when we choose to isolate ourselves from God. God desires only to help us and to heal us. God is not angry with humankind nor does God want to punish us. Julian observes.

...I saw verely that oure lorde was nevyr wroth nor nevyr shall. For he is god, he is good, he is truth, he is love, he is pees; and hys myght, hys wysdom, hys charytye and his vnyte sufferyth hym nott to be wroth. For I saw truly that is agaynst the propytre of hys myght to be wroth, and agaynst the preperte of hys wysdom, and agaynst the propytre of hys goodnes. God is that goodnesse that may nott be wroth, for god is nott but godnes. Oure soule is oneyd to hym, vnchanngeable goodness. And betwen god and oure soule is neyther wrath nor forseveness in hys syght. For oure soule is so fulsomly onyd to god of hys owne goodness that between god and oure soule may be ryght nought.\(^{442}\)

If God were ever to be angry with humankind, we would be obliterated for "we shud neyther haue lyfe ne stede ne beyng."\(^{443}\)

God's judgement is the judgement of Jesus, one based completely on love, in a way totally distinct from the judgement and justice of the world. God's justice is a saving one and not a punishing justice. God's judgement is based on an infinite love for all created things, irrespective of their thoughts or actions. Because of this there is no forgiveness with God because forgiveness presupposes blame. God's judgement is based

\(^{442}\) LT 46. 493-29-39. "I saw truly that our Lord was never angry, and never will be. Because he is God, he is good, he is truth, he is love, he is peace; and his power, his wisdom, his charity and his unity do not allow him to be angry. For I saw truly that it is against the property of his wisdom and against the property of his goodness. God is goodness which cannot be angry, God is nothing but goodness. Our soul is united to him who is unchangeable goodness. And between God and our soul there is neither wrath nor forgiveness in his sight. For our soul is wholly united to God, through his own goodness, that between God and our soul nothing can interpose." (229)

\(^{443}\) LT 49. 506:16. "...we should neither have life nor place nor being."
on an infinite love for all created things, irrespective of their thoughts and actions. Because of this there is no forgiveness with God, because forgiveness presupposes blame. Julian's understanding of God as a God without wrath is consistent with the rest of her theology. God always sees with a different perspective than persons do. In the same way, the judgement of God is different from the judgement of the world. Where there is punishment and dread in worldly justice, there is love, healing and reconciliation in God's mercy.

An understanding of a God without anger may seem to be at odds with some biblical texts. In scripture there are many examples of God becoming angry. In Exodus the anger of the Lord is kindled against Moses, 444 in the book of Numbers against Israel, 445 and in the book of Hosea against Samaria. 446 However, the psalmist tells us that "his anger is but for a moment: his favour is for a lifetime." 447 Or, in other words, it is God's steadfast presence that marks our lives far more than any anger God may feels toward us. For Julian, even these fleeting moments are nonexistent.

As has been mentioned, wrath does exist in humankind, which is divided against itself. Commenting on this Julian writes,

For I saw no wrath but on mannes perty, and that forgevyth he in vs. for wrath is nott elles but a frowerdenes and a contraryousnes to pees and to loue. And eyther it comyth of feylyng of myght or (o)f feylyng of wysdom or of feylyng of goodnesse, whych feylyng is nott in god, but it is in oure party. For we by synne and

444 Exodus 4:14.
446 Hosea 8:5.
447 Psalms 30:5.
wrechydness haue in vs a wrath and a contynuant contraryousnes to pees and to loue ...But yet in all this th sweet eye of pytte and of loue deperteth nevr from vs, ne the werkyng of mercy cesyth nott.\textsuperscript{448}

Julian sees wrath as our inability to do what we would like to do because of a lack of knowledge or wisdom, or as to our inability to respond with love as we would like to respond. It is grounded in our sense of helplessness; it is part of our sinfulness.

Humankind is inconsistent and fickle and does not even appreciate its capacity to love consistently. Julian notes,

Man is chanengeably in this lyfe, and by symyplesse and vnctunnyng fallith in to synne. He is vnmyghty and vnwyse of hym selfe, and also his wyll is ovyr leyde in thys tyme he is in tempest and in sorow and woe. And the cause of blynnes, for he seeth not god; for yf he saw god continually, he shulde haue no myschevous felyng ne no manner steryng, no sorowyng that servyth to synne.\textsuperscript{449}

How does God look upon our wrath? In the same way in which God looks upon all our sin: with pity not with blame, for this passing life does not require us to live wholly without sin.\textsuperscript{450} With great tenderness we are reassured that "in fallyng and in rysyng we are evyr preciously kepeth in o(ne) loue."\textsuperscript{451} Our sinfulness calls down God's compassion: our failing does not hinder God from loving us.

\textsuperscript{448} LT 48. 500-502:6-12, 25-26. "For I saw no wrath except of man's side, and he forgives that in us for wrath is nothing else but a perversity and an opposition to peace and to love. For it comes from a lack of power or a lack of goodness, and this lack is not in God, but it is on our side. For we through sin and wretchedness have in us a wrath and a constant opposition to peace and to love ... But yet in all this the sweet eye of pity is never turned away from us, and the operation of mercy does not cease." (262)

\textsuperscript{449} LT 47. 496:16-21. "Man is changeable in this life, and falls into sin through naivete and ignorance. He is weak and foolish in himself, and also his will is overpowered in time when he is assailed and in sorrow and woe. And the cause is blindness, because he does not see God; for if he saw God continually, he would have no harmful feelings nor any kind of prompting, no sorrowing which is conducive to sin." (260)

\textsuperscript{450} LT 82. 717-718:9-11.

\textsuperscript{451} LT 82. 720:28-29.
II. The Motherhood of Jesus and the Mystery of Salvation

A. Jesus Our Mother

The concept of the motherhood of Jesus is not unique to Julian, but she is the first woman to develop it into a theology. The idea of motherhood, but not the word itself, has biblical roots. The Hebrew texts describe God as being in labour, giving birth, and offering motherly care.\(^4^{52}\) The Christian texts likens Jesus to a mother hen, and describes God parabolically as a woman looking for a lost coin.\(^4^{53}\) In the Hebrew Bible, the shekinah presence is a recognition of the Spirit as feminine. This is further developed in the Wisdom literature where, in Greek, Wisdom is Sophia. In fact, it is only in the west that the Holy Spirit becomes masculine as the Spiritus Sanctus.\(^4^{54}\) Some medieval writers used maternal imagery in their theology and devotional material.\(^4^{55}\)

\(^{452}\) Isa. 42:14; Deut. 32:18; Isa. 63:13; Jer. 31:20.


\(^{454}\) Jantzen, Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism, 297.

\(^{455}\) See Caroline Walker Bynum, Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). Hereafter cited as Walker Bynum, Jesus As Mother. This meditation by Anselm of Bec in the twelfth century is a good example of maternal imagery in devotional material:

And you, Jesus, are you not also a mother:
Are you not the mother who, like a hen,
gathers her chickens under her wings?
Truly, Lord, you are a mother:
for both they who are in labour
and they who are brought forth
are accepted by you.
You have died more than they, that they may labour to bear.
For if you had not been in labour
you could not have borne death;
and if you had not died, you would not have brought forth.
For, longing to bear sons into life,
you tasted death
and by dying you begot them...
And you, my soul, dead in yourself.

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Caroline Walker Bynum states that Julian’s use of feminine imagery for God is among the most sophisticated that exists. Part of the reason for this is that, for Julian, motherhood does not express inconsequential aspects of who Jesus is, but expresses the very essence of Christ’s activity toward humanity. For Julian, motherhood was anything but a creative sub-theme, subordinate to a first dominant theme. Commenting on this, Nuth writes,

It [motherhood] includes the whole economy of both incarnation and redemption, and it is linked to her understanding of the second person of the trinity as God’s Wisdom. Thus Julian raises the image of Christ’s motherhood to a new level of significance, allowing it to summarize her whole soteriology.

In considering the motherhood of Jesus, it is necessary to remember that, in the text, it follows the parable of the lord and the servant. Like the parable, Julian’s understanding of the motherhood of God helps to resolve the ever-present conflict between the unconditional love and goodness of God, which is experienced in her revelations, and the Church’s teaching on the wrath of God towards sinful humanity. As run under the wings of Jesus your mother and lament your griefs under his feathers. Ask that your wounds may be healed and that, comforted, you may live again ... Mother, know your dead son [Anselm], both by the sign of your cross and the voice of his confession. Warm your chicken, give life to your dead man, justify your sinner. Let your terrified one be consoled by you; and in your whole and unceasing grace let him be fashioned by you.


457 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter. 65.
Julian begins to develop the motherhood theme. She goes back to the parable, particularly to the vision of Mary, stating that when Adam fell, Christ, out of compassionate love, fell into the womb of Mary. Julian writes:

For in the same tyme that god knytt hym to oure body in the meydens wombe, he toke oure sensual1 soule, in which takyng, he vs all havyng becloysed in hym, he onyd it to oure substance. In which oonyng he was perfite man, for Crist, havyng knytt in hym all man shall be savyd, is perfete man.

Thus oure lady is oure moder, in whome we are all becloysd and of hyr borne in Crist, for she that is moder of oure savyoure is mother of all pat be savyd in our sauyoure; and oure savyoure is oure very moder, in whome we be endlesly borne and nevyr shall come out of hym.458

Julian, then, moves the image of motherhood from Mary to Christ: Christ is truly the mother of all who will be saved. Even though she continues to allude to Mary as mother and to “Holy Mother Church,” the property of motherhood belongs to Christ and to the Trinity as a whole. In her words,

Oure hye fader, almyghty god, which is beynge, he knowyth us and louyd vs from before any tyme. Of whych knowyng in his full mervelous depe charyte by the forseeng endlesse counsel of all the blessed trynyte, he woulde that the seconde person shulde become oure moder, our brother and our savyoure. Where of it folowyth that as verely as god is oure fader, as verely go is oure moder.459

Or as Paula Datsko Baker states, Julian “affirms the motherhood of the second person of

458 LT 57. 579-580:41-50. “For in the same time that God joined himself to our body in the maiden’s womb, he enclosed our soul, which is sensual, and in taking it, having enclosed us all in himself, he united it to our substance. In this union he was perfect man, for Christ, having joined in himself every man.

So our Lady is our mother, in whom we are all enclosed and born of her in Christ, for she who is mother of our savior is our true Mother, in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come. (292)

459 LT 59. 591:23-29. “Our great Father, Almighty God, who is being, knows us and loved us before time began. Out of this knowledge, in his most wonderful deep love, by the prescient eternal counsel of the blessed Trinity, he wanted the second person to become our Mother, our brother and our savior. From this it follows that as truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother. (296)
the Trinity was ordained deliberately by the triune Godhead in eternity.\textsuperscript{460}

Julian considers the motherhood of Jesus under three aspects: Jesus our mother gifts us with our humanity, sustains it, and guides it to maturity. She writes:

\begin{quote}
I understoode the manner of beholdynges of motherhed in god. The fist is grounde of our kynde makynge, the seconde is takynge of oure kynde, and ther begynnynth the moderhed of grace, the thurde is moderhed in werkyng. And therin is a forth sp(r)edyng of the same grace of lengl and brede, of hygh and of depnesse withoute ende; and all is one loue.\textsuperscript{461}
\end{quote}

I now consider these three maternal actions in Julian's work.

1. Jesus Our Mother Gifts Us With Our Humanity

As previously mentioned, Julian links the Motherhood of Jesus with Wisdom. She writes, "And thus is oure makynge god almyghty is oure kyndly fader, and god alle wysdom is oure kyndly mother, with the loue and the godness of the holy gost, whych is alle one god, onne lorde."\textsuperscript{462} In linking Christ with Wisdom, Julian's writings resonate with biblical tradition. In scripture, Wisdom consistently performs female roles wherein she symbolizes transcendent power ordering and delighting in the world. Wisdom is a transcendent power that is always close to creation. She was there when the earth was created and is engaged in its recreation.\textsuperscript{463} Furthermore, she is involved in the work of


\textsuperscript{461}LT 59, 593:43-48. "I understand three ways of contemplating the motherhood in God. The first is the foundation of our nature's creation; the second is his taking of our nature, where the motherhood of grace begins; the third is the motherhood at work. And in that, by the same grace, everything is penetrated, in length and in breath, in height and in depth without end; and it is all one love." (296)

\textsuperscript{462}LT 58, 582-583:12-14.

\textsuperscript{463}Prov. 8:22-31; Wis. 7:27.
salvation: "in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God.\textsuperscript{464} In the New Testament, Paul names "Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God."\textsuperscript{465} For Julian, Wisdom is not simply related to God: Wisdom is God, the second person of the Trinity, become flesh in the person of Mother Jesus in whom we are enclosed.\textsuperscript{466}

In the incarnation, Christ took upon himself our human flesh, and in espousing our nature, gave us life; and as a mother births her child in pain, in his blessed dying on the cross, Jesus bore us to endless life.\textsuperscript{467} In the parable of the lord and the servant, the servant is described as "walowyng and wrythyng, gronyng and monyng."\textsuperscript{468} Is this not an apt description of childbirth? Or as Nuth puts it, "the pain and shedding of blood endured by Christ in his passion finds a ready parallel in the pain of childbirth."\textsuperscript{469}

In the incarnation, a new birth is taking place as Jesus transforms our sensuality joining it with divinity and clothing us with a new garment. As Julian notes, "the second person of the trynyte is oure moder in kynd in oure sustanncyall making, in whom we be groundyd and rotyd, and he is oure moder of mercy in oure sensualyte takyng."\textsuperscript{470} This fusion of Jesus with humanity is so complete that not even sin can rend it; Christ is

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{464}Wisdom 7:27.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{465}1 Cor. 1:24.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{466}LT 54. 563:21-22.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{467}LT 63. 616-617:30-32.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{468}LT 52. 541:294.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{469}Nuth, Wisdom's Daughter, 67.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{470}LT 58. 586:42-44.}
\end{footnotes}
2. Jesus Our Mother Sustains Us in Our Humanity

On our earthly journey, Christ holds us, uniting us to the Trinity. Through the church, Christ nourishes us and heals us. We are "enclosed" in Christ as a child is enclosed in the womb. In Christ, "we be endlessly borne and neyvr shall come out of hym." Julian tells us that Christ as Mother participates in the work of transformation attributed to the Spirit:

Ande in oure gostly forth bryngyng he vsyth more tenderness in kepyng without ony comparyson. by as moch as oure soule is more pryce in his syght. He kyndelyth oure vnderstondyng, he prepareth oure weyes. he esyth oure consciens. he conforyth oure soule. he lyghteth oure harte and gevthy vs in party knowyng and lousyng in blessyful godhede, with gracysous mynde in his swete manhhood and his blessed passon, with curtesse mervelyng in his hye ovyr passyng goodnesse. and makyth us to loue all that he louth for his loue. and to be well apayde with hym and with alle his werkes.

Julian’s most extensive use of maternal imagery occurs when she is giving practical instructions on the spiritual life. This can be clearly seen in Julian’s treatment of dread and its relation to the spiritual life. Julian names the main obstacle in the spiritual life to be an overwhelming dread towards God that leads to despair and despondency.

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471 LT 80. 712:40-44.

472 LT 60. 596-597:28-33.

473 LT 57. 580:50.

474 LT 60:601-602:2-10. “And in our spiritual bringing to birth he uses more tenderness, without any comparison, in protecting us. By so much as our soul is more precious in his sight, he kindles our understanding, he prepares our ways, he eases our conscience, he comforts our soul, he illumines our heart and gives us partial knowledge and love of his blessed divinity, with gracious memory of his sweet humanity and his blessed Passion, with courteous wonder over his great surpassing goodness, and makes us to love everything which he loves for love of him, and to be well satisfied with him and all his works.” (299-300)
"This concern." Datsko Barker suggests, "represents the practical side of her theological problem of how to reconcile the seemingly contradictory dispositions of wrath and endless love in God." In an effort to help believers deal with any fear that might be there in the face of God, Julian points to the imagery of the motherhood of God, so that the fear might be transformed into holy dread, which is a proper stance of the person before the divine. She writes: "It longyth to vs pat are his servanntes and his children to dreade hym for lordshypppe and faderhed." But only dread tempered by love is permitted. Holy dread directs the person to the motherhood of God. In Julian's words:

Alle dreedys other than reverent drede pat are proferyd to vs, though they come vnder coloure of holyynesse, they are not so tru: and here by may be knowen on sonder. That dreed that makyth vs hastely to fle fro all that is nott goode and falle in to oure lordes brest, as the chylde in the moders arme, with alle oure entent and with all oure mynde, knowyng oure febylnes and oure greate nede, knowing is everlastyng goodnesse and his blessyd loue, only sekynge in to hym for saluation, clevyng to with felythfulle trust. That dreed that bryngth vs in to this wurkyng, it is kynde and gracious and good and true: and alle that is contraryous to this, eyther it is wrong or it is medylde with wrong. Than is this the remedy, to know them both and refuse the wrong.477

In commenting on Julian's use of maternal imagery, Datsko Barker writes,

... she employs the idea of motherhood to offset the terrifying features commonly associated with lordship and with fatherhood. It is the maternal aspect of God that


475 LT 74, 675-676:31-42. "Whatever kinds of fear be suggested to us other than reverent fear, though they disappear disguised as holiness, they are not so true; and this is how they can be recognized apart. The fear that makes us hastily flee from everything that is not good, and to fall into our Lord's breast, as the child into the mother's arms with all our intention and with all our mind, knowing our feebleness and our great need, knowing his everlasting goodness and his blessed love, seeking only in him for salvation, cleaving to him with faithful trust, that fear which leads us in this direction is gentle and gracious and good and true; and all that is opposed to this is either wrong or mixed with wrong.

So this is the remedy, to recognize both and to refuse the wrong." (325)
contributes the quality of tenderness to, and thereby guarantees the loving character of, the entire Trinity.\textsuperscript{478}

While this may be an interesting interpretation, it fails to acknowledge that, in Julian, neither the lord nor the father is betrayed with terrifying features.

3. Jesus Our Mother Guides Us to Maturity

According to Julian, our growth into God will not reach its fullness in this life. Even as we die, “we shall dye in longyng for loue.”\textsuperscript{479} But then we shall come into the Lord knowing ourselves clearly and have a marvellous knowledge of God’s endless love. We shall see God face to face, “homely and fulsomly.”\textsuperscript{480} In heaven, we shall see that we have sinned gravely but we shall know that we have never been deprived of God’s love.\textsuperscript{481}

On that day in endless love, Jesus will say to each one of us:

Lo how I loue the: as yf he had seyde, my darlyng, behold and see thy lorde, thy god, that is thy maker and thy endlesse joy; see thyn owne brother, thy sauyoure; my chylde, behold and see what lykyng and blyss I haue in thy saluacion, and for my loue enioye with me.\textsuperscript{482}

As well, our eyes will be opened and, with clear sight, our light will be full and we shall know that our light is God, our Creator, Father and Holy Spirit. God of goodness. in


\textsuperscript{479} LT 43, 481:49.

\textsuperscript{480} LT 43, 481:43.

\textsuperscript{481} LT 21, 381:25-26.

\textsuperscript{482} LT 24, 395-396:15-19. “See how I love you, as if he had said, my darling behold and see your Lord, your God who is your Creator and your endless joy; see your own brother, your saviour, my child behold and see what delight and bliss I have in your salvation, and for my love rejoice in me.” (221)
Christ Jesus our saviour, brother and mother. It is then that the work of the incarnation will be complete.

Mother Christ as Wisdom and mercy is our Mother in a three-fold sense. In the act of creation, when humanity came into existence, Christ as Wisdom was present. In the human journey through the Spirit, Christ is present to help us on our way and, finally, Jesus, through mercy, bears us to eternal life. Everything that was necessary for our physical and spiritual life, Jesus did. Julian heard Christ asking her if there were anything more that he could do for her, even suffer more for her out of love. In the same way that a mother is ready to endure all suffering for her child, Christ our Mother took upon himself the pain of death to bring us to spiritual life. In him and by "hym myghtly takyn our of helle and ouite of the wrecchyndness in erth, and wurschpfuully brought vp in to hevyn, and blyssfully onyd to oure substannce, encreseyd in rychesse and nobly by all the vertu of Crist and by the grace and werkyng of the holy gost."

Julian’s use of the term “motherhood” of God is introduced, not because she feels the need to balance gender in the naming of God, but because, in searching for an image to encapsulate her considerations of the salvific work of Christ, the notion of mother seemed to suit her purposes best. Her experience inspired her language. In Julian, far from being a merely incidental image, the motherhood of God is a vital part of the solution to her fundamental theological problem.

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483 LT 58.588:65-68. "... him we are taken out of hell and out of the wretchedness on earth, and gloriously brought up into heaven, and blessedly united to our substance, increased in riches and nobility by all the power of Christ and by the operation of the Holy Spirit." (295)
B. Creation, Incarnation, Salvation and the Trinity

Reference has already been made to Julian's thought on the work of the Trinity in creation, the incarnation and salvation, but it needs to be made more explicit. According to Julian, Christ reveals the whole Trinity a claim which cannot be overemphasized: "For wher Jhesu appireth, the blessed trinitie is understand, as to my sight."

In a penetrating understanding of the Trinity, Julian forms several triads to describe the relationships in the Trinity and their involvement in eternal salvation. God is Father, Mother, Lord:


I beheld the werkyng of all the blessyd trnyyte, in which beholldyng I saw and vnderstode these thre properties: the properte of faderhed and the properte of the mother hed, and the properte of the lordschypp in one god. In oure fader alymyghty we haue oure kepyng and oure blesse, and a nemptys oure kyndely substance whych is to vs by oure makng from without begynnyng: and in the seconde person in wytt and wysdom we haue oure k(e)pyng, and anemptys oure sensuallyte, oure restoryng and oure savyng, foe he is oure moder, broder and savyoure: and in oure good lorde the holy gost we haue oure rewardynbg and oure yeldng for oure lyvyng and oure traveyle, and endlessly ovyrpassyng alle that we desyer in his mervelous courtesy of his hye plentous grace.

What we have here is not an abstract divine ontology, but one which connects at every point with the Christian experience of life. While distinguishing the persons of the Trinity and the involvement of each one in our salvation, Julian also accentuates the unity

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484 LT 4, 295:15.

485 LT 58, 583-585:19-33. "I contemplated the work of all the blessed Trinity, in which contemplation I saw and understood these three properties: the property of the fatherhood, and the property of the motherhood and the property of the lordship in one God. In our almighty Father we have our protection and our bliss, as regards our natural substance, which is ours by our creation from without beginning; and in the second person, in knowledge and wisdom we have our perfection, as regards our sensuality, our restoration and our salvation, for he is our Mother, brother, saviour; and in our good Lord the Holy Spirit we have our reward and our gift for our living and our labour, endlessly surpassing all that we desire in his marvelous courtesy, out of his great plentiful grace." (293-294)
of the Trinity. Very early in Showings, Julian states: "For the trinitie is god, god is the trinitie." It is the whole Trinity that was very pleased with creation and not just the Creator/Father. Even though our sensuality is particular to the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, our substance is whole in each person of the Trinity, who is one God.

All the Trinity worked in Christ’s passion. It is the entire Trinity that dwells eternally in our soul in Christ Jesus and we “be closyd in the fader, and we be closyd in the son and we are closyd in the holy gost ... all myght, alle wysdom, and alle goodnesse, one god. one lorde.”

Succinctly put: the whole Trinity has always been, is and will continue to be involved with creation, especially humankind, in its birthing, its nurturance, its redemption and transformation. Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus and Holy Spirit/Lord are one in a relationship of love which endlessly gives itself, in love, to all that has being and life.

C. Salvation As a Process Not a One-Time Event

In order to understand Julian’s theology in terms of a process rather than a series of events, it is necessary to grasp her notion of time/space. Pelphrey has given considerable attention to this dynamic and so I am drawing on his work as a background.

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487 LT 4. 295:11.
489 LT 58. 588:62.
490 LT 23. 391:30.
to understanding salvation as a process in Julian's work.

Julian's Showings present a God who is present *here and now*. Paradoxically, she works out of the assumption that in God there is no time and space. God is present in time and space but is not bound by either of them. Because of this it makes no sense to think in terms of past, present and future when it comes to God's action. God is active and present only in the *now*. Thinking this way tends to collapse our way of thinking of the Christian mysteries. For example, creation is not an event that happened in the past but is a process that began in the past, continues in the present, and will move into the future. In the same way, Pelphrey writes, "salvation is not an either/or category, or an instantaneous decision or judgement, but a process of growing into the fullness of humanity in the image of God." He argues:

... the question "When were you saved?" could be answered, for Julian, equally well by a reference to the past ("On Good Friday, when Christ descended into Hell:" or perhaps, "On Easter morning when he arose from the dead") to the future ("I am saved in his merciful judgement, which is not yet") or in the present ("I am being saved, by God's grace").

This dynamic is clarified by revisiting segments of the parable of the lord and the servant, in which the whole story of salvation is told from the beginning of humanity into the future. The following citation encapsulates basic elements of Julian's soteriology.

When Adam felle godes sonne fell; for the ryght onyng whych was made in hevyn, goddys sonne myght not be seperath from Adam, for by Adam I vnderstond alle man. Adam fell fro lyfe to deth, in to the slade of this wrechyd worlde, and aftyr that in to hell. Goddys son fell with Adam in the slade of the meydens wombe, whych was the feyerest doughter of Adam, and that to excuse

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492 Pelphrey, *Christ our Mother*, 115.

493 Pelphrey, *Christ our Mother*, 115.
Adam from blame in hevyn and in erth: and myghtely he fychyd hym out of hell.  

For Julian, humanity and Jesus are morally and ontologically united and have been since creation with a "onyng which was made in hevyn." As Adam became alienated from God, falling into this wretched world, Jesus became alienated from God in taking on human flesh. Jesus' incarnation, suffering and death redeemed humankind and removed from it the blame for sin. Through the paschal mystery, Jesus heals the wounds of separation and, in him, humankind is again oned with God as it was at the time of creation. This dynamic of redemption, which was previsioned by the whole Trinity, began with creation, was made manifest in history in the life of Jesus Christ, continues today, and will continue into the future. Again, it is not bound by time and space as we are. It is a process that is happening in the "now," the "eternal now of God."

III. The Holy Spirit, Giver of Grace

A. God of All Goodness

In the previous chapter, the Holy Spirit has been named "the God of supreme

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494 LT 51, 533-534:218-225. "When Adam fell, God's Son fell; because of the true union which was made in heaven, God's Son could not be separated from Adam, for by Adam I understand all mankind. Adam fell from life to death, into the valley of this wretched world, and after that into hell. God's Son fell with Adam, into valley of the womb of the maiden who was the fairest daughter of Adam, and that was to excuse Adam from blame in heaven and on earth: and powerfully he brought him out of hell." (274-275)

495 LT 51, 539-40:278-280. "His stertyng was pe godhed, and the rennyng was pe manked: for the godhed sterte fro fader in to pe maydysnys wombe, fallynge in to the takynge of oure kynde, and in this fallynge he took grete soore." "His rushing away was from the Father into the maiden's womb, falling to accept our nature, and in this falling he took great hurt." (277)

496 Julian can say this because, for her, sin is not a deviation from an original sacred order but an inadvertent separation from God.
Here I consider the manifestations of the goodness of the Spirit. In Julian’s theology, humankind is united to its Creator because it shares in the substance of God. It is one with Jesus who shares our sensuality. Humankind was created by the Father, in the Son and by the desire of the Spirit. While we are on our earthly sojourn, the Spirit who is endless life is dwelling with us, leading us through faith, transforming us by power and grace.

Faith is a power which comes to us from the Spirit. It enables us to believe that we are in God, and God is in us, because we cannot understand this on our own. Our faith is also a light that enables us to discern what is of God and what is not. Julian gives us an example of this as she actively discerns how to reconcile the teaching of the church with her own revelations. She writes that it is the action of the Spirit that enables her to discern by bringing her in touch with her feelings. For Julian, knowledge of ourselves leads us to knowledge of God, and it is the Spirit who is the instrument of our learning.

God desires that the soul come before him in simplicity and with familiarity. It is the Spirit who awakens the yearning of the persons that leads them to pray: “God of thy goodness give me thy selfe, for thou art inough for me, and I maie aske nothing that is

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497 LT 68. 641-642:17-20.
498 LT 48. 500:2; 83. 724:16.
lesse that maie be full worshippe to thee. And if I aske anie thing that is less, ever me wangeth: but only in thee I haue alle."502 While drawing the soul to God, the same Spirit teaches and counsels persons.503

When persons become aware of their sinfulness they may be prone to despair, thinking that they are not fit for anything except damnation. It is the action of the Spirit that leads them to contrition and transforms any bitterness within them into hope of God’s mercy.504 It is also the Spirit who teaches us to hate sin for all its vileness and horribleness more than all the pain which is in hell.505 The Spirit, through contrition, leads persons to prayer.506 All the while the Spirit protects us most faithfully, giving us the peace and grace that leads to obedience and reconciliation with God.507

Julian describes the strength of the Spirit as a “softe conforte."508 It is this gentle strength that enables us to face our fears and turn from all except a reverent fear of God, which is proper to humankind. Times in life when we are overcome by fear are to be expected. However, Julian argues there is a remedy for this.

... to knowe them both, and refuse the wrong,

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502 LT 5. 302:37-40. “God of your goodness give me yourself, for you are enough for me, and I can ask for nothing which is less which can pay you full worship. And if I ask anything which is less, always I am in want: but only in you do I have everything.” (184)


505 LT 76. 684:5-6.

506 LT 40. 454:7.

507 LT 48. 500:2-4.

508 LT 74. 671:8.
For the kynde propytre of drede whych we haue in this lyfe by the gracious werkyng of the holy gost, the same shall be in hevyn afore god, gentyley, curtyse, fulle swete; and thus we shalle in loue be homely and here to god, and we in drede be gentylle and curtesse to god, and both in one manner lyke evyn.509

In Julian’s theology, God is joy, bliss and delight. Humanity is spoken of in terms of the Father’s joy, the Son’s bliss and the Holy Spirit’s delight. In chapter fifty-one we read, “For it was shewede that we be his crowne, whych crowne is the faders joy, pe sonnes wurshyppe. the holy gostys lykyng, and endless mervelous blysse to alle that be in hevyn.”510 While the Spirit delights in humankind, he brings it to fulfillment by bestowing on it the rewards and gifts of God.

B. Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus and Holy Spirit/Lord in a Mutual Bond of Love

In Julian’s theology, the Holy Spirit is the mutual love between the Father and the Son.511 She speaks of the Holy Spirit being the love both of the Father and Jesus. When commenting on the parable of the lord and the servant, she writes. “The lorde is god the father. the servant is the sonne Jesu Cryst. the holy gost in the evyn loue whych is in them both.”512 The Spirit is the love with which the Father and the Son love human beings

509 LT 74. 676:42-47. “... to recognize them both and to refuse the wrong: for the natural attribute of fear which we have in this life by the grace-giving operation of the Holy Spirit will be the same in heaven before God, gentle, courteous, most sweet; and thus in love we shall be familiar and close to God, and in fear we shall be gentle and courteous to God, and both the same: in the same way.” (325)

510 LT 51. 544:317-320. “For it was revealed that we are his crown, which crown is the Father’s joy, the Son’s honour, the Holy Spirit’s delight, and endless marvellous bliss to all who are in heaven.” (278)

511 Here we have an example of how Julian drew on Augustine for some of her theological understandings. Nuth has done extensive work on the influence of Augustine on Julian as it relates to the Trinity. see Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 85. 91-92. 95-96.

and the bond of love that constitutes the life of the Christian community, unifying persons
to one another. Through that same love, all who will be saved are called into communion
with the triune God. The Creator loves us by loving Jesus in the Spirit and Jesus loves
humankind by loving the Father through the Holy Spirit. Humankind is caught up in the
divine dynamic of love. Julian writes.

And thus Crist is our way. vs suerly ledynge in his lawes, and Crist in his body
myztyly beryth vs up in to hevyn: for I saw that Crist, vs alle havyng in hum that
shall be savyd by hym, wurschypfully presentyth his fader in hevyn with vs, whych
present fulle thangkfully hys fader recevyth, and curtelsy gevyth it vnto his sonne
Jhesu Crist. Whych gyfte and wekyng is joy to the fader and blysse to the son and
lykyng to the holy gost, and alle thynge that longyth, it is most lykyng to oure lorde
that we enjoye in this joy, which is in the blessyd trnyte of oure saluacion
[emphasis mine].

Not only is the Holy Spirit the mutual love between the Father and the Son, in Julian, all
who will be saved are included in the gift of the Spirit that the Father and Son offer to
each other. This reiterates one of Julian’s most basic teachings that, since creation, the
triune God is one with humanity. Furthermore, the persons of the Trinity do not act in
isolation from one another hence, creation, incarnation and sanctification are the action of
the one triune God manifested as three persons in the salvific mysteries for humankind.

Again we need to remember, Julian’s assertion that “wher Jhesu appireth the
blessed trinitie is vnderstand.” so that when she speaks of Jesus or the Trinity, we

513 LT 55, 565:2-10. “And so Christ is our way, safely leading us in his laws and Christ in his
body bears us up into heaven: for I saw Christ, having us all in him who shall be saved by him, honorably
presents his Father in heaven with us, which is present his Father most thankfully receives, and
courteously gives to his Son Jesus Christ. This gift and operation is joy to the Father and bliss to the Son
and delight to the Holy Spirit, and everything which is our duty, is the greatest delight to our Lord and we
rejoice in this joy which the blessed Trinity has over our salvation” [emphasis mine]. (286)

514 LT 4, 295:15.
remember that the Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus and Holy Spirit/Lord are all active and present. Even though it is by the sanctification of the Spirit that humankind is transformed, humanity dwells in the plentitude of the Trinity. Julian assures us.

We be closyd in the fader. and we be closyd in the son. and we are closyd in the holy gost. And the fader is beclosyd in vs. the son is beclosyd in vs. and the holy gost is beclosyd in vs. all myght. alle wysdom and alle goodnesse. one god. one lorde.515

It is in this certainty that the Christian faith is grounded, for Julian, and it is the source of her great confidence in the Holy One.

IV. The Trinity, Endless Love

While most of Julian's understandings of the Trinity have already been addressed in chapter two, and earlier in this chapter, I now present a series of three claims about her teaching on the Trinity in an effort to bring some further coherence to her thought.

A. A Circle of Love

While it is true in Julian's theology that the Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus and Holy Spirit/Lord are distinct and unique, they act as one: the three persons of the Trinity share in creation: while only the Mother/Jesus becomes incarnate, all are present in the crucifixion: and all are active in the process of sanctification. All persons of the Trinity are creating, saving and loving as One. In Julian's words.

515 LT 54. 563:23-27. "We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Spirit. And the Father is enclosed in us, and the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Spirit is enclosed in us, almighty, all wisdom and all goodness, one God, one Lord." (285)
The trinitie is our maker, the trinitie is our keper, the trinitie is our everlasing louer, the trinitie is our endless joy and our bleissee, by our lord Jesu Christ, and in our lord Jesu Christ. And this was shewed in the first syght and in all, for wher Jhesu appireth the blessed trinitis vnderstand, as to my sight.¹⁶

The works of the Persons of Trinity cannot be taken in isolation from one another because the Trinity is an ontological oneness. Therefore, Julian speaks of the Persons of the Trinity together. She notes God is “maker, keper, louer”; “endlesse souereyn truth, endelesse souereyne wisdom, endlesse souereyn loue vnmade;” and “our substannce is in our fader god almyghty and our substannce is in our moder god all wysdom, and our substannce is in our lorde god the holy gost all goodnes, for our substannce is hole in ech person of the trynyte, which is one god.”¹⁷ Or again Julian writes. “And thus in our makyng god almyghty is our kyndly fader, and god alle wysdom is our kyndly mother, with the loue and the goodness of the holy god, which is alle one god onne lorde.”¹⁸ The work of each Person needs the presence of the other two Persons for it to be complete.

All works of the Trinity are intrinsically joined one to the other. Creation by the Creator/Father leads to recreation by the Mother/Jesus and transformation by the Holy Spirit/Lord. The glorified Jesus speaks of the unity of the Godhead:

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¹⁶ LT 4, 295-296:11-16. “The Trinity is our maker, the Trinity is our protector, the Trinity is our everlasting lover, the Trinity is our endless joy and our bliss, by our Lord Jesus Christ and in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this was revealed in the first vision and in them all, for where Jesus appears the blessed Trinity is understood, as I see it.” (181)

¹⁷ LT 58, 587:59-63.

¹⁸ LT 58, 582:12-14. “And so in our making, God almighty is our loving Father, and God all wisdom is our loving Mother, and with the love and goodness of the Holy Spirit, which is all one God, one Lord.” (293).
God’s love is like a circle. It flows from the Creator/Father to the Mother/Jesus and this love is expressed in the Holy Spirit/Lord who loves the Creator/Father. So it continues.

B. God At Rest

While it is true that for Julian, God is in constant motion, continually creating, redeeming and sanctifying, paradoxically God is also at rest and in peace. In the parable of the lord and the servant, Julian writes.

Now stondyth not the sonne before the fader on the lyfte syde as a laborer, but he syttyth on the faders ryght hande in endlesse rest and pees. But it is not ment that the sonne syttyth on the ryght hand besyde, as one man syttyth by an other in this lyfe, for ther is no such syttyng, as to my syght, in the trynyte: but he syttyth on his faders ryght honde, that is to sey syttyth in the lyest nobylete of the faders joy. Now is the spouse, goodys son. in pees with his lovyd wyfe. whych is the feyer maydyn of endlesse joy. Now syttyth the son. very god and very man. in his cytte in rest and in pees. whych his fader hath dyzte to hum of endlesse purpose. and the fader in the son. and the holy gost in the fader and in pe son.520

519 LT 59. 590:14-19. “I am he. the power and the goodness of fatherhood; I am he. the wisdom and the lovingness of motherhood; I am he. the light and the grace which is all blessed love; I am he. the trinity; I am he. the unity; I am he the great supreme goodness of every kind of thing; I am he who makes you to love; I am he who makes you to long; I am he. the endless fulfilling of all true desires.” (295-296)

520 LT 51. 544-545:321-331. “Now the Son does not stand before the Father on the left like a laborer, but he sits on the Father’s right hand in endless peace and in rest. But this does not mean that the Son sits on the right hand side as man sits beside another in this life, for there is no such sitting, as I see it. in the Trinity: but he sits as his Father’s right hand, that is to say right in the highest nobility of the Father’s joy. Now the spouse, God’s son. is at peace with his beloved wife. who is the fair maiden of endless joy. Now the Son, true God and true man. sits in his city in rest and in peace. which his Father has prepared for him by his endless purpose. and the Father in the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Father and in the Son.” (278)
Julian's understanding of God as a God at peace and rest signifies the immutability of God. Unlike humankind, which experiences chaos and change, God does not change.521 Although Julian maintains strongly that God was intimately involved with creation and so is in continual activity, the immutability of God is fundamental to her theology. If, in fact, God did change, nothing would be predictable and our salvation would have been impossible. Julian's understanding of God's mercy is also linked to the immutability of God. As Pelphery has pointed out regarding Julian's teaching on God's immutability: "God's mercy lies precisely in the fact that God's judgement is not changed by our actions."522 In Julian's theology, God is moved by compassion when humankind suffers. God does not suffer, though God did suffer when Jesus died on the cross; the whole universe suffered, and still agonizes in the suffering body of humanity.

As well, Julian's understanding of a God at rest is linked to her notion that in God there is no wrath. Wrath is the opposite of true peace, and implies change. God loved humanity with an immutable love from the moment of creation and God remains steadfast in that love. God never changes his attitude toward nor his purpose for humanity. Julian records.

I sawe fulle truly that he channgyd nevyr hys purpose in no manner of thyng, ne nevyr shalle without end. For ther was nothyng vnknown to hym in hys ryghtfulle ordennance from without begynnynge, and therefore all thynges wer sett in ordyr, or any thyng was made, as it should stand without end. And no manner thyng

521 LT 47. 496:16-21; 13. 349:33-34.

522 Pelphrey. Christ our Mother. 127.
God is steadfast in mercy and in love.  

This immutable, peaceful God is, according to Julian, constantly working to bring humankind to endless peace. When we reach that point of peace, we will be healed of our anger and the conflicting pulls within our heart. Then we shall be "full plesyd with god and with alle his werkes and with alle his domys, and loyng and plesabyl with oure selfe and with oure evyn christen and with alle that god louth." This will not be fully realized until eternity. However, even on earth we can be at peace and rest because of the realization that our salvation has been assured. Julian herself came to this point of peace:

An after thys he shewde a sovereyne gostely lykynge in my soule. In thys lykyng I was fulfyllde of the evyrlastyng suernesse, myghtely fastnyd without any paynefule drede. This felyng was so glad and so goostely that I was all in peese,

523 LT 11, 340:44-49. ”I saw truly that he never changed his purpose in any kind of thing, nor ever will eternally. For there was nothing unknown to him in his just ordinance before time began, and therefore all things were set in order, before anything was made, as it would endure eternally. And no kind of thing will faith in this respect, for he had made everything totally good.” (198-199)

524 For Julian all creation reveals the Creator, but persons will never find rest, peace and fulfillment in anything other than God. They will never be satisfied with anything less. Echoing Augustine’s words, “you have made me for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Julian states, “God will be known, and him lyketh that we rest vs in him; for all that is beneth him suffyseth not to vs.” In one of her prayers, she prays: “God of thy goodness geue me thy selfe, for thou art suffyseth to me, and I maie aske nothing that is lesse that maie be fulle worshippe to thee. And if I aske anie thing that is less, ever me wanteth; but only in thee I haue all [emphasis mine].” Part of this prayer bears close resemblance to one line of the prayer Ignatius of Loyola penned some two centuries later:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will — all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it back to you. O Lord. All of it is yours. Dispose of it according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for that is enough for me.

Julian knew very clearly that the peace and rest she yearned for were gifts of a gracious God who desires the happiness of all people.

525 LT 49, 508:35-38. ”... wholly contented with God and with all his works and with all his judgements loving and content with ourselves and with our fellow Christians and with everything which God loves.” (265)

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Julian realized that this peace can come and can go while we are on earth. Furthermore, she understood that a “felt sense of peace” is not completely within our control. There may be times when the peace ebbs from us and we are tempted to doubt God’s love, but she wants us to know that we are kept safe in God’s love in times of sorrow as well as in times of joy. Furthermore, for it is goddes wylle that we holde vs in comfort with alle oure myght: for blysse is lastyng withouzt ende, and payne is passyng, and shall be brought to nowght to them that shall be savyd. Therfore it is not goddes wylle that we folow the feylng of paynes in sorrow and mow(r)ng for them, but soday(n)ly passe ovyr and holde vs in the endlesse lykyng that is god.

In Julian’s understanding of God, paradoxes abound and are held in creative tension. She feels no need to explain away all the mystery that is God.

C. Trinity as Ecstatic Love

In the book of Genesis, the story of creation culminates with these words: “God

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5LT 15. 354-355:2-7, 12-15. “And after this he revealed a supreme spiritual delight in my soul. In this delight I was filled full of everlasting surety, powerfully secured without any painful fear. This sensation was so welcome and so spiritual that I was wholly at peace, at ease and at rest, so that there was nothing upon earth which could have afflicted me ... God gave me again comfort and rest for my soul, delight and security so blessedly and so powerfully that there was no fear, no sorrow, no pain, physical or spiritual that one could suffer which might have disturbed me.” (204-205)  


5LT 15. 356:29-35. “For it is God’s will that we do all in our power to preserve our consolation, for bliss lasts forevermore, and pain is passing, and will be reduced to nothing for those who will be saved. Therefore it is not God’s will that when we feel pain we should pursue it in sorrow and mourning for it, but that suddenly we should pass it over, and preserve ourselves in the endless delight which is God.” (205)
saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”\(^{529}\) In similar words, Julian writes, “... the blessed trynyte is evyr fulle plesyd in alle his workes.”\(^{530}\) The goodness of God fills all of creation and God loves it. Not only does God love creation, but the Trinity rejoices and endlessly delights in it, especially humanity. The Trinity rejoices in our salvation and wants us to have true delight in the mighty deeds of God from the incarnation to the resurrection on Easter morning.\(^ {531}\) Over and over, Julian writes that God delights in humanity, that the Trinity rejoices in us because we are the very bliss of God. The image that emerges is one in which the Trinity is ecstatic when it looks upon humanity which it created and redeemed out of love. God is passionate about creation that was birthed in *kenosis*.

Even though Julian recognizes that “this place is pryson, this lyfe is pennannce.”\(^{532}\) still she urges us to rejoice, knowing that there is sure remedy for our pain in the God who rejoices in us.\(^ {533}\) When we truly recognize, trust and rejoice in our salvation in Christ, the Trinity also rejoices. We are God’s joy and delight and God is the remedy of our life. God will not have full joy in us until we have our full joy in God: until then the work of salvation is incomplete because God’s enduring longing is to bring

\(^{529}\) Gen. 1:31.

\(^{530}\) LT 11. 340:50.


\(^{532}\) LT 77. 693:41.

\(^{533}\) LT 77. 649:42-46. “The remedy is that our Lord is with us, protecting us into the fullness of joy: for our Lord intends this to be an endless joy, that he who will be our bliss when we are there is our protector whilst we are here, our way and our heaven in true love and faithful trust.” (331)
us into the fullness of joy.\textsuperscript{534} The Holy has chosen to need humanity to complete God’s happiness. But as one in love, God waits with joyful expectation for the moment when creation is one with the divine. Julian’s understanding of humankind being God’s delight echoes the words of Isaiah “you shall be called My Delight is in Her and your land Married for the Lord delights in you.”\textsuperscript{535}

While it is possible to analyze Julian’s perceptions of God as Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus, Holy Spirit/Lord, and considered the Trinity as she understood it, it becomes clear that in the end, the conclusion must be that the Trinity acts as one in creating, redeeming, transforming and blessing.

V. Conclusion

Having journeyed with Julian and analyzed her text, it becomes clear that for Julian, God is love, a love that creates, redeems, transforms and blesses. This love touches our life with great intimacy, filling it with promise. Yet Julian’s theology is not a Pollyanna theology that fails to recognize the sin and brokenness of persons or the corruption, injustice and violence in society. While it is true that Julian did not speak directly to the deplorable social conditions that surrounded her or to the corruption of the church that existed at the time, she did speak to the struggles and longings of those who came to her, mostly poor women, and she sought to give them a sense of worth and dignity that was theirs because they were born of God. As Julian matured, she came a

\textsuperscript{534} LT 72, 611:18-19: 40, 456:25.

\textsuperscript{535} Isaiah 62:4.
long way from her initial devotionalism, displayed in the short text, to an understanding of doctrine, developed in the long text, that can cope with any type of human experience. Julian’s understanding of God is much more reminiscent of the God of scripture than the God of some philosophers. Hers is a God who has reached into the heart of struggling humanity and taken it into God’s very self. This is not a God born only of intellectual speculation, but also the God of her experience, especially as she understood it in the crucified Jesus.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESONANCES OF JULIAN’S THEOLOGY OF GOD WITH SOME CHRISTIAN CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST THEOLOGIANS

The existence of mutuality between God and [persons] cannot be proved any more than the existence of God. Anyone who dares nevertheless to speak of it bears witness and invokes the witness of whom [s]he addresses -- present or future witness.

Martin Buber

Introduction

It is now time to consider Julian’s understanding of God from the perspective of those of us who prepare to usher in a new millennium. The question that I now ask is: Is there meaning in Julian’s naming of God that can be articulated and which has relevance in any way for our contemporary context? Endeavouring to answer that question forms the framework for the following chapter.

I began this study with the conviction that Julian had a positive contribution to make to theology today. I saw in her naming of God a sound and well thought out schema for the development of a doctrine of God. In doing my research, one of the things that struck me was how often Julian’s theology resonates with themes in contemporary feminist theology. Over and over, I was led from Julian to writings by such contemporary women as Rita Nakashima Brock, Joan Chittister, Elizabeth A. Johnson and Katherine Zappone. Even though Julian was not a feminist theologian, it is interesting to read her in light of emerging directions in contemporary Christian feminist theology. Such a reading is the task of this particular chapter. I take four themes -- mutuality, inclusivity and fidelity, wrath. In studying mutuality, inclusivity and fidelity, I consider them first as
understood in Julian’s texts, then in some contemporary Christian feminist theologians and the juxtapose the two.

 Julian is not always of the same mind of contemporary Christian feminist theologians. One of the most obvious dissonances is in Julian’s understanding of God being without wrath in dialogue with some of the contemporary Christian feminist theologians who write of the understanding of God, as a God who is indeed capable of wrath. In this research, I recognize that wrath and anger are not interchangeable. Wrath is anger driven to its extreme which leads to annihilation of the object. That being said, it is important to consider Julian’s understanding of God without wrath to dispel any misconceptions of God’s stance before humanity as it relates to judgement and the question of hell.

 The purpose in doing this chapter is to demonstrate that Julian’s Showings can indeed be a source for contemporary Christian theologians especially contemporary Christian feminist theologians. But to illustrate the basic tenents of contemporary Christian feminist thought and analysis, Julian’s Showings would be found wanting.

 I. Mutuality as an Essential Element of God’s Relationship With Humankind

 A. Mutuality as Understood in Julian’s Theology

 In Julian’s theology, the persons of the Trinity are in a constant dynamic of love, giving and receiving from each other. The Creator/Father gives to the Mother/Jesus, and the Lord/Holy Spirit is the mutual bond of love between them. Theirs is the relationality of the persons of the Trinity that makes them unique persons. In the Trinity, Julian does
not see any competition, domination, or assertions of superiority. Frances Beer describes Julian's understanding of the love in the Trinity, as a love which is wholly egalitarian. The persons of the Trinity, although we speak of them as individuals, cannot really be taken in isolation from one another. The uniqueness of each one is seen in the person's relationship to the other two. Relationship is the very principle of their being. Hence, when we speak of the persons of the Trinity in isolation from one another, it is in part untrue. The Trinity is one, and wherever one person of the Trinity is, the whole Trinity is present.

It is important to remember that Julian's concept of the mutuality between God and humanity is rooted in her understanding of the Trinity. In her theology, humanity is drawn into the circle of divine love. It is in Mother/Jesus, and through the Lord/Holy Spirit, that we are caught up in the circle of mutual love and given to the Creator/Father. As noted, the Holy Spirit is the mutual love between the Creator and Jesus, and the love by which they love creatures. Further, as Nuth points out, the Holy Spirit is also the means by which all who will be saved are included in the love and life of the Trinity. God who is a circle of mutual love enters into a mutual relationship with humankind. That is not to say that the relationship is equal, but that there is a reciprocal gifting of one to the other. For example, God dwells in creation and creation dwells in divinity: God gifts us with love and, even in our woundedness, we can give our love to God. God longs

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537 Nuth, Wisdom's Daughter. 87.
for us and we long for God. What we give is always insignificant in comparison with the
gift of God: still God welcomes it and appropriates it. As has been noted, in Julian’s
concept of God there is no progression or hierarchy; nor is there any indication of
hierarchy in her concept of the church or society.

To more fully comprehend Julian’s understanding of the mutual relationship
between God and humankind, it is helpful to ask three questions. First, what is the
experience of the fearful heart of humanity as it comes before a vulnerable God? Second,
what is the experience of the contrite heart of humanity as it comes before a forgiving
God? Third, what is the experience of the longing heart of humanity as it encounters a
healing God?

1. A Fearful Heart Meets a Vulnerable God

In Julian’s theology, sin wounds the human heart, but sin never triumphs over
God’s mercy and love. In fact, our very woundedness evokes God’s steadfast love.
Julian reminds us that this wounded part of us is not all of us, that there is a part of us
which shares in the substance of God that is always whole and eternally united to divinity.
In comparison to our substance, which is in God, our woundedness is of little
significance. Julian tells us that we need to trust, knowing that God is all goodness,
mercy and love.

An obstacle which may prevent us from coming humbly before our God is fear. It
can gnaw away at the human heart and, at times, leads to spiritual paralysis. In Julian’s

538 LT 61. 603:22-27.
theology, fearfulness is one manifestation of our woundedness.\textsuperscript{539} It can be evident as blindness, doubt, or an inclination to despair.\textsuperscript{540} God does not desire that we live with these symptoms of fear. The only fear that is helpful to us is a reverential fear before God, such as is proper to the creature. God wants to be known, and when we have grasped the mystery of God’s love, we can live in peace and rest.\textsuperscript{541} Further, Julian passes on the belief that it is indeed possible for us to attain union with God. Knowing this certainty can free persons not only of fear, but also from an internalized sense of oppression, an inordinate sense of unworthiness, or insurmountable guilt.

The wounds of fear taken to the extreme lead to despair. This Julian sees as the most serious of all sin because it denies the belief that God, who is all goodness, will bring all to a place of peace and joy. Still, according to Julian, when we do find ourselves caught in the midst of depression and despair, God embraces us in love. Never will God turn away from the weak and the wounded. When Jesus was the most vulnerable — as he hung upon the cross, when he seemed most alone and deserted, it was at this time the Creator/Father touched humanity in its depths. It was from this death that Christ would be rescued, and so it is with us. It is for this reason that our hope is to remain firm, anchored in faith, and nourished by love.

Julian presents us with an alternative to dualistic thinking concerning the relationship between God and creation that dispels fear. In one of her most quoted

\textsuperscript{539} LT 51, 516:41.
\textsuperscript{540} ST xxiv. 275:26; LT 42, 474:68-69; ST xxiv. 274:3-4.
\textsuperscript{541} LT 65, 630-631:30-31.
passages. Julian says.

And in this he shewed a little thing, the quantitie of an haselnott lying in pe palme of my hand. as me semide, and it was as rounde as a balle. I looked theran with the eye of my understanding, and thought: What may this be? And it was answered generaelly thus: It is all that is made. I marvayled how it might laste. for me thought it might sodenly haue fallen to nawght for littenes. And I was answered in my vnderstanding: it lasteth and ever shall. for god loueth it: and so hath all thing being by the loue of god.⁴²

Rather than being in opposition to creation. God brings to birth. cares for. and preserves creation. For Julian. God. who is ultimate goodness creates a material universe which reflects God’s goodness. God has an intrinsic value but so has creation in that it shares in the very substance of the Creator. There is no opposition between the Creator and creation. even after sin. However. there is alienation which needs to be healed by the compassion of God. There is no struggle between the mind and the body in Julian’s thought. When this new way of naming reality emerges. there is no need for fear. Julian sees God as immanent in the world. thereby dismantling the cosmic dualism that sets God apart from the universe. The incarnation of God in Jesus liberates us from a fear of the flesh. And the Spirit of God poured out upon all flesh -- women and men. slaves and free. Gentiles and Jews -- transforms it. Thought such as this deconstructs myths of superiority and fearsomeness and enables mutuality and inclusiveness to become a reality.

While it is true that Julian’s writings. in some ways. cuts through dualistic thinking. it is important to acknowledge that there are instances of dualistic thinking in

⁴² LT 5. 299-200:9-16. "And in this he showed me something small. no bigger than a hazelnut lying in the palm of my hand. as it seemed to me. and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that it could last. for I thought that because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: it lasts and always will because God loves it. and thus everything has being through the love of God." (183)
Julian that reflect the thinking of her time. For example, she understands death as the soul departing from the body and speaks of the soul as having been joined to the body for a time. Commenting on the inclusion of dualistic ideas in Julian’s theology, Jantzen is quick to point out that “although to the extent she retained the doctrines prevalent in her time, she also pushed hard against them.” Julian does not speak of the need for spiritual mastery over the flesh nor the need to somehow transcend the body: she speaks rather to the need to unify our substance, which is in God, and our sensuality which is experienced on earth. For her, spiritual growth encompasses receiving and trusting God’s faithful love in the totality of who we are, not as split persons. Julian’s conception of God as One who is in constant, loving relationship with creation helps to eradicate some notions of power associated with dualistic thinking. There is no longer a sense of a “power over” but more a sense of “relational power.” God’s power is not manifested in being controlling and demanding, but rather is found in being vulnerable, open and caring, in relationship with creation.

In some strands of classical theism, God was not depicted as being vulnerable: God being “perfect” was emphasized. Complete in the Godself, God had no need of humanity and was not open to either the joy nor the pain of the world. A God who is vulnerable is the antithesis of a “perfect” God who is self-enclosed, detached, self-sufficient and predominantly transcendent. A vulnerable God gives of the Godself unconditionally, intimately, interdependently, and immanently. God does not exist as an overshadowing presence but rather, as Julian tells us, as the ground of our being.

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bestowing on us freedom, walking with us in our struggling humanity, leading us to the fullness of life. Working within this framework of relational power, God takes a risk with humankind because God is not in complete control of persons, but awaits their free response of love to quell the urgent longings of divinity.

2. A Longing Heart is Embraced by a Fierce and Tender God

Julian tells us that until the time we are truly one in God, Christ longs and thirsts for us with the same longing and thirsting that he had upon the Cross.\textsuperscript{544} The longing and thirsting of God flows from God’s goodness and will remain as long as we are in need.\textsuperscript{545} In this sense, God needs us for complete happiness and fulfillment; it is another instance of the vulnerability of God. Being vulnerable, God does not preclude the ability to absorb our pain. God loves with a fierce tenderness and without any fear.

The longing that God has for us draws us up into bliss and is mirrored in our longing for God.\textsuperscript{546} So profound is our longing for God that even if we had all of life’s gifts but did not see the face of God, we would not be satisfied.\textsuperscript{547} The deepest need we have is for the Holy and, because of this, we wait for God.\textsuperscript{548} Humankind is made for God and will not rest until we are in the embrace of the divine. Nothing, not even sin.

\textsuperscript{544} LT 31, 420:36-40.

\textsuperscript{545} LT 31, 420:44-46.

\textsuperscript{546} ST i. 206:52-54.

\textsuperscript{547} LT 72, 664:42-48. “For the natural desire of our soul is so great and so immeasurable that if all the nobility which God ever created in heaven and on earth were given to us for our joy and our comfort, if we did not see his own fair blessed face, still we should never cease to mourn and to weep in the spirit, because, that is, our painful longing, until we might see our creator’s fair blessed face.” (321)

\textsuperscript{548} LT 52, 547:16.
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of sin. asserts that "in sharp contrast to the Augustinian view of sin as overweening pride and concupiscence, Julian views our bondage to sin primarily as our entrapment in an overwhelming sense of fear and worthlessness and as manifest in pain, not pleasure." Because sin causes pain, I agree with Julian when she says that we need to be healed, not punished for our sin.

Before Julian had the experience of the revelations, she believed that God forgave sins because of divine mercy. This was confirmed both through her personal experience and by the teaching of the church that taught her she was blameworthy for sins. God’s mercy alone saved the sinner from the painful consequences of divine wrath. So Julian marveled when she could find no hint of blame or wrath in God in her revelations. She was shown nothing of divine wrath, purgatory, or hell. For Julian, there is no condemnation of sinners. Not even those persons who had crucified Jesus were cast aside. To reiterate, Julian is very clear: in God there is no wrath. Wrath is the opposite of God who is love, wisdom and goodness; and wrath would have to come from a failing either of might, wisdom or goodness, and in God there is no such failing. To condemn anyone would mean that God would have to turn away from God’s very being and become someone else. For Julian, only persons experience change and wrath, not God.

As we have already seen, the discrepancy between Julian’s prior understanding of God’s mercy and the content of her showings perplexed her. Because of her mystical

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44 LT 46, 493:29-36.
experience. She came to a new understanding of divine mercy and sin. Prior to her showings, Julian had seen herself as blameworthy and divine mercy as God "giving up" a justified wrath. She came to see that the mercy of God had much more to do with God's unity, rightfulness, and the unchanging ability of God's purpose than any change of attitude on God's part.

Jesus reveals God's response to sin and suffering. Jesus is able to be the compassion of God made visible because of his incarnation, where he took unto himself our sensuality. Since the incarnation Jesus is able to compassion, suffer with us. The compassion of God takes the form of tender protection and guidance by Jesus, our mother of mercy and pity. In the Jesus of history, we encounter the divine face-to-face, a person like other persons who was historically and socially situated in a world of sin and struggle, and with whom there can be genuine solidarity. This is clear in the healing stories of the gospels. It is the sheer compassion of Jesus that urges him to heal the demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics.555

Is Jesus, who has compassion on the sick, able to heal sin? In Julian's theology, the answer to that question is a resounding "yes." She writes, "Thus I saw how Crist hath compassyon on vs for the cause of synne."556 God excuses our sin, seeing only our good will, and our desire for loving service. The compassionate love that heals us of our woundedness is the same love that rewards us for desiring to do God's will. God has one response to suffering and that is endless and steadfast love. God concentrates not on our

555 Mt. 4:23-25.
556 LT 28. 408:2.
faults, but rather on the pain that we experience in our falling. Even when we judge ourselves as worthy of punishment, God's compassion and love endures with tenderness, so abundant is it. When we turn to God with a contrite heart, the most serious sinner is embraced and the woundedness that comes from sin is healed. As great as is God's healing love for us, we still know by our suffering that we are not yet existentially oned to God. The divine response to our sin and its consequent suffering is one of compassion and pity, not blame. God wants to reward repentant sinners with a great festive banquet made all the larger because they have sinned and now know their need of God.

Julian's God is a God of relationality who loves humankind with a steadfast and passionate love, and will not let us, nor our relationship to the Holy, be destroyed by sin no matter how grave. Such a teaching would have been a healing balm in a society that had an excessive preoccupation with sin. Julian's conception of sin carries with it a strong pastoral dimension because it offers the assurance of God's love as we struggle with the reality of sin in life. In her writings, sin and suffering are not diminished in importance, but are relativized when seen in the light of God's love.

In light of Julian's insistence that God looks on humankind only through the eyes of love, divine justice and retribution take on a new meaning. For Julian, God's justice is God's truth. God sees us in the truth of who we are, in the beauty of God's created love, and not in the distortion that has entered into the human condition through sin. Hence, when God looks upon humanity and marvels at creation, God is never filled with wrath, only love.

\[LT 77, 692-694:26-46.\]
B. Mutuality as Understood in Some Contemporary Christian Feminist Theologians

Elizabeth A. Johnson, a Sister of St. Joseph, drawing on scripture, classical theology and Christian feminist theology, speaks of the centrality of a mutuality of persons in the Trinity. Johnson, who traces the roots of the understanding of Trinity-as-community back to Augustine and Aquinas, states very clearly that God is not one divine person but a community. Each of the persons is distinct in identity and equal in quality, so that they cannot be interchanged. Furthermore, Johnson argues, "The triune symbol safeguards the idea that the distinctiveness or self-transcending uniqueness of each person is essential, belonging to the very being of God." Johnson also emphasizes very clearly that the equality-yet-distinctiveness of persons in the Trinity is so essential to the feminist vision of shalom because, "it points to patterns of differentiation that are nonhierarchical, and to forms of relating that do not involve dominance." Johnson chooses the model of mutual friendship as mirroring most completely the type of relationships that comprise the Trinity stating that "... the love of friendship is the very essence of God."

Johnson's understanding of Trinity as a community of equals related in mutuality

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558 Johnson, She Who Is, 216.
559 Johnson, She Who Is, 219.
560 Johnson, She Who Is, 219.
561 Johnson, She Who Is, 219.
562 Johnson, She Who Is, 219.
563 Johnson, She Who Is, 219.
serves as an ultimate paradigm of personal and social life.\textsuperscript{564} Further, "the Trinity as pure
relationality ... epitomizes the connectedness of all that exists in the universe."\textsuperscript{565} As
well, the Trinity as a community of equals in relation to one another stands as a critique
of patriarchal domination in church and society.\textsuperscript{566} But as Johnson points out.

Human community in a relationship of equals has yet to be realized save in isolated and passing instances. Yet the central notion of divine Trinity, symbolizing not a monarch ruling from isolated splendor but the relational character of Holy Wisdom points inevitably in that direction, toward a community of equals related in mutuality.\textsuperscript{567}

Johnson does not stand alone in developing the centrality of mutuality in theology. A second example of it can be found in the work of Katherine Zappone. Zappone describes herself as a feminist theologian who is a white woman, middle-class, highly educated, and an American citizen.\textsuperscript{568} Moreover, she has been exposed to theology and feminism in both Australia and Ireland and has been influenced by both.\textsuperscript{569}

According to Zappone, mutuality represents a reality that directly opposes the hierarchical relations found within dualism.\textsuperscript{570} Mutuality is needed for genuine integrity

\textsuperscript{564} Johnson, \textit{She Who Is}, 222.
\textsuperscript{565} Johnson, \textit{She Who Is}, 222.
\textsuperscript{566} Johnson, \textit{She Who Is}, 223.
\textsuperscript{567} Johnson, \textit{She Who Is}, 223.
\textsuperscript{569} Zappone, \textit{The Hope for Wholeness}, vii-viii.
\textsuperscript{570} Zappone, \textit{The Hope for Wholeness}, 68.
and requires from us an openness to change. Zappone rejects an individualistic image of salvation. In her understanding, salvation is not simply a “God and I” experience; what we do and who we are affects, and is affected by, the character and activity of the rest of the human community. We are linked together in a communion of such depth that our capacity to receive God is not simply an individual notion but rather linked to the capacity of all humankind, and the earth as well, to receive the blessing and salvation of God. Foundational to this thinking is the conviction that we human persons cannot make it on our own. We need one another and that need moves us outside of ourselves, mirroring the self-giving God.

Zappone links mutual relationships in humankind to the transformation of social systems. For her, living in mutual relationships affects not only individuals but also provides a powerful source of energy to transform social systems that ravish and enslave persons, especially socially powerless ones. Living in mutual relationships nourishes our imaginations allowing us to envision a world of peace, justice and freedom.

Zappone points out that other feminist theologians see Jesus’ life as a depiction of God’s mutuality with humanity and God’s call for humanity’s mutual love for one another.

Carter Heyward develops the thesis that Jesus’ ability to heal and redeem depended on his mutual intimacy with the Creator and openness to the healing intimacy of others. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and others observe that the Sophia-God of Jesus especially loves the socially powerless. Jesus’ own

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571 Zappone. The Hope for Wholeness. 70.
572 Zappone. The Hope for Wholeness. 69.
573 Zappone. The Hope for Wholeness. 82.
friendship with social outcasts challenges the powerful to live in some form of equality with “the least.” Rosemary Radford Ruether describes the ways Jesus broke the socially-set hierarchical patterns of relation. It is this kind of activity that redeems, heals and liberates humanity. Jesus’ vision and praxis invites others to do the same.  

With the naming of these feminist theologians, the list of those who see mutuality as central in theological reflection on God is not exhausted. What is clear about this feminist theology is that the vision of mutuality stands as a reminder that we cannot transform the world alone, and that God cannot do it alone either.

A theology of mutuality rejects dualism, replacing it with an alternate vision. Dualistic anthropology sees human nature embodied in two essentially different and unequal ways. In patriarchal, dualistic anthropology, the male is superior to the female and he alone is capable of imago Dei. This anthropology predominates throughout the history of Christian thought, although it was always in tension with some texts which did grant participation in the imago Dei to women. The combination of dualistic anthropology and the understanding of God as separate from and ruling over creation birthed a theology in which God was depicted as male, distant and essentially unrelated to humankind. Feminist theology replaces this theology with one in which all persons are

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576 Johnson. She Who Is. 70.
equal and capable of *imago Dei*, and in which all are in a relationship with God characterized by immanence and tender care.

For some Christians, the mystery of the incarnation suggests that in the Christian perspective, there can be no elemental split, no ultimate dualism in the world. There is no longer any room to think in terms of a matter/spirit, body/spirit or female/male split in which one member of the pair is inferior to the other. Nor is there, in incarnational theology, a hierarchical dualism between humankind and the rest of creation. In the words of Anne Carr, a contemporary feminist theologian, "The relationship of the divine and human and of God and creation in the incarnation is rather a relationship of irrevocable union, reverence, and compassionate love."

If we are in a relationship of irrevocable union, reverence and compassionate love with God, there is no reason to fear. Gone is the enormous gap between an all-perfect God and an imperfect human being who can never hope to attain union with God without a mysterious divine intervention. In its place is the tender embrace of divine love.

Incarnational theology overcomes dualistic thinking, and so does a theology of the Creator Spirit. The Spirit, rather than being removed from the world, dwells in creation and draws it into a place of mutuality and inclusivity. Matter is not seen as being divorced from spirit and consigned to the realm separate from the Holy. In Johnson's words, "it is an intrinsic part of the cosmic community, vivified, indwelt, and renewed by

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577 Carr, *Transforming Grace*, 149.

the Creator Spirit. " Matter is imbued with the Holy. " Hence the world is holy, nature is holy, bodies are holy ... For the Spirit creates what is physical ... The whole complex, material universe is pervaded and signed by her graceful vigour. " Furthermore, if we say that all matter is imbued with the Spirit and is Holy, we can also say that creation has in its very being the capacity to reveal God. Again the gap between creation and divinity is closed and in its place is a relationship of union and love.

Rita Nakashima Brock criticizes doctrines of sin for not going deep enough, not touching the core of our capacity to hurt ourselves and each other. Attacking realities such as pride, evil, alienation, greed, racism and war has not led to action against child abuse, battering, rape, sterilization or forced pregnancy. When, in fact, Christians have addressed such problems as poverty and oppression, they have often done so in a paternalistic manner. Brock points out that "it is safer to identify with victims and want to help them than to look at our own participation in systems of oppression and our responsibility for changing ourselves and the systems from which we benefit. " If we are to change, to heal, and to embrace our damaged selves, we need to be willing to acknowledge our primal relatedness and take responsibility for the living out of relationships. Further, we need to cease looking outside of the realities of our daily life for the incarnation and redemption to take place. These mysteries are realized in the context of the relationships we have with one another and with creation.

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*79 Johnson, "Remembering Creator Spirit." 378.
*80 Johnson, "Remembering Creator Spirit." 378.
The damaged heart that Brock speaks of never ceases to long for wholeness, for God. This longing can take many and varied forms: a search for happiness, meaning, peace, life after death, the beyond. In all these ways, the person yearns for God. Contemporary authors continue to write the story of the longing heart. Maria Boulding speaks of the universal longing of humankind.\textsuperscript{582} She tells us that no part of the longing of humankind is in vain, mocking or doomed to frustration because it is God who created human beings with this longing; God intends to be our absolute fulfillment.\textsuperscript{583} Our longing and our desire for God are already gifts of God. Because the Holy longs to give of the Godself to us and, because God’s glory is not in isolation but in self-giving love, God creates in human beings the capacity to receive God.

Because of how humanity is created, our longing is not dispelled even by the most intense religious experience. On the contrary, the more profound our religious experience, the deeper is our longing. Our desire and our longing for God come as gift. God longs to give the Godself because God’s nature is in self-giving love. God creates in us the desire, capacity and receptivity to receive God’s gift. The Holy One, who longs for humanity, desires to fill our longing because God wants to satisfy us with the greatest of riches, the very life of the divine.

It has become clear that the theme of mutuality, identified in Julian’s texts, appears in some contemporary Christian feminist theology. In both Julian and the

\textsuperscript{582} Maria Boulding, \textit{The Coming of God} (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982). Hereafter cited as Boulding, \textit{The Coming of God}.

\textsuperscript{583} Boulding, \textit{The Coming of God}, 3.

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feminist theologians considered, we see a number of similar themes: the Trinity as a community of equal persons in a mutual relationship; an alternative vision to dualism; the concept of sin as brokenness; the longing of God and the human heart; and persons as vulnerable. But even though there are resonances between Julian’s writings and the feminist theologians considered, there are also significant differences between them.

C. Julian Juxtaposed With Some Contemporary Christian Feminist Theologians on Mutuality

As we have seen, the understanding of God as a Trinity of individual, unique, equal persons is foundational in Julian. The persons of the Trinity are caught up in a circle of mutual love and intimate relationship. By God’s gracious design, humanity is enfolded in the circle of divine love. In Johnson as well, the Trinity is a community of distinct and equal persons who are in a relationship of love. In Johnson’s theology, as in Julian’s, the persons of the Trinity are in patterns of relationship in which there is no hierarchy or dominance. For both these theologians, relationality is the very essence of God. Moreover, in both their writings there is no hierarchy or dominance in the Trinity. Not only are equality and mutuality constitutive of the relations in the Trinity, they are to be essential elements of the human community. But Johnson develops the understanding of relationship as the essence of God as a model of human community more than does Julian. For Johnson, the mutuality of relationship of different equal persons in the Trinity is not only the paradigm for human community, it is to be its reference point as well.
Furthermore, "... personal uniqueness flourishes not at the expense of relationship but through the power of profound companionship that respects differences and values them equally: an aim mirrored in the symbol of the Trinity."  

Finally, as Johnson notes, the central notion of divine Trinity as a relationship of equals and mutuality stands as a critique of patriarchal domination in the church and society, and as critical prophecy in the midst of patriarchal rule.  

Thus while there are similarities between Julian's vision of the triune God with Johnson's, there are differences. These differences are not minor and can be related to the differing purposes that Julian and Johnson have in writing. Julian writes to share her religious experience and the fruits of reflection on that experience. Johnson writes to serve the cause of the "emancipatory praxis of women and men, and to the benefit of all creation, both human beings and the earth." Johnson's concern for the liberation of humankind and the earth is absent in Julian and makes explicit a difference between Julian and feminist theology in general.  

Zappone's understanding of mutuality gives us yet a further development and difference with Julian. Zappone underscores the interconnectedness of humankind and the effect we have on one another, stressing the communitarian dimension of salvation. We need one another and this need causes us to reach out to others and receive from them. This very action of reaching out to others reflects the action of a self-giving God.

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"^" Johnson. She Who Is. 219.

"*" Johnson. She Who Is. 223.

"*" Johnson. She Who Is. 8.
Julian lived the life of an anchorite whose main concern was prayer, both personal and liturgical. While she ministered to the women who came to her anchorhold, she did not get involved in action for the transformation of church or society. This is in sharp contrast to Zappone who links the mutuality of humankind to the transformation of social systems. Her concern is not so much with the individualist interpretation of the doctrine of God, but rather its communitarian consequences. Further, mutuality is not simply a way of being: it is a source of empowerment that allows persons to act collectively for the good of all, especially the poor.

Dualism, which is rejected by feminist theologians, is almost absent in Julian’s theology. There is no matter/spirit, body/spirit or female/male split in Julian’s thought. Even though our sensuality and our substance are not yet completely unified, the incarnation has transformed our sensuality, joining it to divinity in the person of Jesus. So in him, we are one with God, and what we shall become is a source of delight and rejoicing for the Trinity. But Julian’s theology does reflect a hierarchical dualism between humankind and the rest of creation, although she never speaks of the dominance of humankind over creation even though her God takes special delight in humanity. In fact, Julian uses creation as a source for her reflection. She learned from reflecting on the small object she held in the palm of her hand that God, who made her, loves her, protects her and will never let her fall into nothingness.

Julian’s understanding of God is not that of one who is removed far from creation, but rather of one who is immanent, living within it. She does not separate divine power from compassion and love. Like some contemporary feminist theologians, she sees “love
as the shape in which divine power appears." The power of God, as seen in Julian, is similar to Brock's understanding of erotic power as the power of connectedness, which alone can heal the brokenheartedness of humanity. The power of God, made known in Jesus, is not the power of a sovereign monarch but the power of a mother tenderly caring for her children: it is the power of love.

Both Julian and Brock write of sin as woundedness that needs to be healed, but they come at it from very different perspectives. For Julian, sin is a fact of human existence that effects everyone and that must be accepted and endured. In Julian's theology, sin is everything that is not good, including bodily and passions which lead us away from God. The main effect of sin, for Julian, is that the image of God in human nature is obscured and weakened. Furthermore, sin stops us from truly experiencing the fullness of God's love. While Julian stresses the effects of sin on our relationship with God, Brock stresses the effects of sin on relationships in the human community. Sin, for Brock, is not something that is a constitutive experience of human existence: it is something that is historically and socially produced. It is a symptom, Brock tells us, "... of the unavoidably relational nature of human existence through which we come to be damaged and damage others." Hence, we can say, our brokenness is a result of our ontological relational existence. Brock goes on to tell us that

Sin emerges because our relationships have the capacity to destroy us and we participate in destruction when we seek to destroy ourselves or others. Hence sin

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"" Johnson, She Who Is, 269.
"" Brock, Journeys By Heart, 27-35.
"" Brock, Journeys By Heart, 7.
is a sign of our brokenheartedness, of how damaged we are, not of how evil, willfully disobedient, and culpable we are. Sin is not something to be punished, but something to be healed.\footnote{Brock, \textit{Journeys By Heart}, 7.}

Sin for Julian and Brock has different consequences. For Julian, because of sin we are not able to grasp the fullness of God’s love while, for Brock, we are damaged by and damage our relationships with others. However, neither names sin as greed, pride or lust. Both reject these conventional categories for sin and introduce other perspectives on it.

Another point of comparison between Julian and some contemporary feminist theologians is vulnerability. Although Julian does not use the word “vulnerable” in describing God, her descriptions of God and her Christology can certainly lead one to call her God a vulnerable God. In Jesus, we come to know and understand in a profound way the vulnerability of God. God chose not to come in a display of power and might. Rather, Jesus came humbly, compassionately, into the pain, passion and wonder of creation. Jesus took upon himself the vocation of being truly human. His power was the power of the Spirit, and it is made most fully known on the cross.

In contemplating the vulnerability of divinity in Jesus, we come to see that when God freely chose to enter into humanity, God came only with the power of love. In this, power comes to be seen not as something that places one over and against another, but something which joins us in solidarity with the other, in a relationship of love. In this way, power is seen as good: it unites, not divides. From the crib to the cross, Jesus’ power was found in love. He was as powerful as love can be. Jesus’ power was not the
power that comes with being in command, but one that risked suffering. So profound was our alienation from God. it could only be healed by Jesus taking on flesh and showing to humankind a power that confounds those who do not understand it. In emptying himself, Jesus not only took to himself all the limitations of human existence, revealing to us a God of vulnerability, but Jesus also freely participated in the mystery of the cross and went willingly to his death.\(^{591}\)

The ultimate embodiment of the vulnerability of God is Jesus on the cross. In the person of Jesus, the divine surrenders to the suffering condition of humanity in a liberating solidarity that reveals the extent and meaning of divine love. The time that Jesus hung on the cross and his surrender to the mystery of death effects an immutable solidarity with humankind. In Jesus, divinity suffered, and in the continued suffering of humanity, oned with the Creator, God continues to languish in pain.

Contemplating the vulnerability of God gives a new meaning to our own vulnerability. It ceases to be a source of discouragement or fear, but rather becomes our capacity to be filled and healed by a God of love in the Christian community, the body of Christ. Further, when we experience the vulnerability of the other, it becomes an opportunity for us to witness to and be Christ for one another. Pondering the vulnerability of God transforms our whole notion of it. Vulnerability becomes positive, rather than a sign of weakness. When persons truly and freely enter into the vulnerable dimension of life, they come to understand the mystery of human life in a new way. To be human is not to be perfect, but to be willing to enter into the mystery of life believing

\(^{591}\)Lit 10. 328:40.
that it is revelatory of the divine. By recognizing the giftedness of vulnerability, personhood takes on a whole new dimension, and our understanding of power is transformed. Rather than being power over someone or something, power is understood as self-giving, vulnerability, openness and caring.

Still we must remember that vulnerability is not an end in itself. Love is the end and vulnerability is at the service of love. God is vulnerable because God loves, and so it should be with us. God’s power is the power of love which does not seek to control or dominate, which does not act erratically, but acts consistently in love which authentically concerns itself with others. If we contemplate the Christ crucified, we cannot help but see the vulnerable God.

The concept of vulnerability in God appears in feminist literature. Even as humankind is transformed by the incarnation and recreated through the Spirit’s transforming love, humanity is vulnerable. Try as we might, we cannot remove the vulnerability that is so much a part of the human condition. As much as we may struggle against our vulnerability, we need to come to prize it as a great gift. Vulnerability not only reveals our humanity to us, but it opens us to creation as well. An appreciation of vulnerability is an affront to patriarchy. Joan Chittister, a Benedictine, puts it well when she writes:

... nothing is more reprehensible to a patriarchal world than the weakness of those who own their own limitations without shame and suffer unashamedly for the oppression of others, as well. Such types are not easily tolerated. The culture has, on the contrary, devoted itself instead to the crafting of personalities in whom weakness, the acknowledgment of feeling, and the display of emotion had little or
We need to remember that beneath the facade of our contemporary society that valorizes material success, position, and education, there are present vulnerable, wounded persons needing to be loved into wholeness and healing. Vulnerability serves as a reminder of our need for God and one another. No matter how successful we become in the eyes of society, our vulnerability will never leave us. Hence, we need to find ways to befriend and allow vulnerability to be a gift for us. In moments of great tenderness, our vulnerability comes to the surface and gently reminds us that we need community to make us whole. So we can say that community is built, not by striving to overcome our vulnerability, but by having the audacity to share it with another. If we desire to deepen our relationship with God and ourselves, we need to risk being vulnerable with each other. Chittister points out, "Nothing is more indicative of spiritual depth than a vulnerability that counts weakness as the opportunity to learn from the model of those before us." Vulnerability becomes the means of growth and bonding. Our vulnerability bonds us to the vulnerability of God which is experienced today in the poor and the suffering.

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593 Chittister. *Heart of Flesh.* 143.
II. Inclusivity and Fidelity as Essential Elements of God’s Love

Inclusivity and fidelity, although not terms specifically used in Julian’s writings, are very much intimated in her texts. Even though they are not as developed as Julian’s God of mutuality, I draw attention briefly to them because I think that the notions of inclusivity and fidelity as implicated in Julian’s thought, also resonate with the thought of some contemporary feminist Christian theologians. I use the word implicity to name an understanding of God which excludes no one and nothing and for whom love knows no bounds. I understand fidelity as God’s enduring love.

A. Inclusivity and the Fidelity of God in Julian’s Theology

1. God’s All-Embracing Love for Humankind

Early in the long text, Julian tells her readers that her Showings revealed the depth of divine love. Divine love is limitless, or as Julian writes, “unmeasurable.” God is at the centre of all that exists and God who does everything is pleased with creation. In the unmeasurable love of God, humankind is one. God never leaves humanity, in whom God has chosen to dwell.

As has been explained, the insight Julian received in her revelations that “alle shalle be wele” seemed to be in conflict with the teaching of the church which maintained

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that the "many creatures shall be dampnyd, as angelis that feele outzt of hevyn for pride ... and meny in erth that dyeth out of the feyth of holy chyrch." Her insight and the church's teaching seemed irreconcilable. For Julian, if all is to be well how can anyone be damned? Although Julian does not actually say that no one will be condemned, her revelations strongly suggest it. She sees all as good and preserved in the loving power of God whose love is inclusive; it excludes no one or nothing. She does not claim to understand how her insight can be reconciled with church teaching. The answer lies hidden in God. Only at the end of time will we truly understand the mystery of God's all-inclusive love. In the meantime, we are to be at peace and disregard everything that can frustrate our true joy.

We are to abandon ourselves to the love of God, trusting that all shall be well.

Julian ends the long text with a witness to God's love for us from the beginning, in time, and into eternity. It is noteworthy that when Julian speaks of the love God has for persons, she makes no distinctions between persons. For Julian, all are endlessly and completely loved by God. In an age of insecurity, war, and illness, she helps people to see that there is security, peace, and healing in God's love for all of humankind.

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599 LT 86, 733-734:20-26. "So I was taught that love is our Lord's meaning. And I saw very certainly in this and in everything that before God made us he loved us, which love was never abated and never will be. And in this love he has done all his works, and in this love he has made all things profitable to us, and in this love our life is everlasting. In our creation we had beginning, but the love in which he created us was in him from without beginning. In this love we have our beginning, and all this shall we see in God without end." (342-343)
2. God’s Love for the Cosmos

After coming to the insight that God is everything that is good, Julian has in her hand an object no bigger than a hazelnut. Pondering the object and its hidden mystery, Julian recognizes that it is held in existence and protected by the love of God. The small object symbolizes creation which is held in existence, loved and protected by the Creator/Father. Without the love of the Creator/Father, creation would fall into nothingness. Creation is good because it shares in the goodness of God and the goodness of God is active in all of creation. God is at the centre of creation and does everything.

Julian had a hierarchical understanding of creation which was prevalent in the medieval world view. All is seen in relation to humankind. Humankind is the pinnacle of God’s creation. Whatever was “below” humankind, in the chain of being, was to serve us and had God’s protection. God created the human soul as beautiful, as good and as precious as possible, and the Trinity rejoices in the creation of the human soul. The nobility of persons is enhanced by their transformation into Christ.

Julian never advocates any necessity to withdraw from creation in order to be in relationship with the Holy, thereby speaking indirectly of the positive value which she ascribes to all of creation, even to the smallest particle. Furthermore, Julian never advocates a disdain for the body, nor does she urge people to engage in stringent ascetical practices. She reminds us we must be humble in the face of creation, ready to celebrate it

"LT 5, 299:2-8.

"LT 5, 299-300:9-16.

"LT 68, 644:41-43.
and witness to its splendour. Before creation, Julian is in awe.⁵⁰³

But just as humankind is wounded by sin, so also is creation flawed: just like humankind, creation needs to undergo a re-creation. All of creation shares in the pain of the Passion of Christ.⁵⁰⁴ The salvation won through Christ’s suffering and death is not complete: even creation, in the words of Paul, is groaning in the pains of giving birth.⁵⁰⁵ In Julian’s theology, creation, while flawed, is good and worthy of love and respect. Furthermore, creation, because it shares in the goodness of God, has the capacity to reveal the Trinity to humankind.

3. The Fidelity of God

Julian’s firm conviction that “alle shalle be wele” was based on her belief in the enduring presence of God with creation since before its inception into eternity. Using the metaphor of clothing that wraps us round, Julian tells us of the closeness of God’s love for us.

I saw that he is to us all thing which is good and comforting to our helpe. He is our clothing that for loue wrappeth vs and wyndeth vs and all becloseth vs. hangeth about vs for tender loue, pat he may never leeue vs. And so in this sight I saw that he is all thing that is good. as to my vnderstanding.⁶⁰⁶

A God who cares about humanity with such tenderness will never abandon us.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰³ LT 75, 682:33-34.
⁵⁰⁴ LT 18, 367:14-16.
⁵⁰⁵ Romans 8:22.
⁶⁰⁶ LT 5, 299:2-8. “I saw that he is to us everything which is good and comforting for our love. He is our clothing, who wraps and enfoldus for love, embraces us and shelters us and surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us. And so in this sight I saw that he is everything which is good, as I understand.” (183)
⁵⁰⁷ LT 11, 340-341:51-56.
Trusting in God’s love, we walk by faith which is grounded in God’s word and the belief that God’s word will be preserved in all things. There are some mysteries that are not made known to us in our day but will be made clear at the end of time. In the end, all that is not well will be made well; good will triumph over evil. God is faithful and will never abandon creation.

B. Inclusivity and Fidelity in Some Contemporary Christian Feminist Theologians

A fundamental principle of feminism is the recognition that patriarchy is a basic cause of women’s oppression. But not all feminists define patriarchy in the same way, nor do they all attribute the same role to patriarchy in social organization as a whole, and to the oppression of women in particular. As Sandra Schneiders points out, how a feminist defines oppression and its role in social organization as a whole determines whether the feminist is a liberal feminist, a cultural feminist, a socialist feminist or a radical feminist. While each of these categories of feminism has distinctive features, they share a common understanding that, in Schneider’s words, “sexism [which is rooted in patriarchy] is properly seen as the paradigmatic form of oppression.” Furthermore.

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611 Schneiders. Beyond Patching. 18.
612 Schneiders. Beyond Patching. 18-25.
613 Schneiders. Beyond Patching. 27
patriarchy is not only the root of women’s oppression “but also the source of the interconnectedness of sexism with all other forms of hierarchical domination.”

Patriarchy has been a distinctive feature of western culture. A consequence of this is that western culture has been less than inclusive in its embrace of humankind; it has rendered half of the human race, women, invisible. Not only does the invisibility of women and their giftedness wreak havoc in society, this concealment of women and their contribution undermines the capacity of humankind to truly be the image and likeness of God. Patriarchy has had disastrous effects on our world. It has led to a limited world vision in which personal comfort, exploitation, control, individualism, and dominance are the defining characteristics.

Of particular interest to this study is how patriarchy has influenced how God has been named in the past. God has been associated with persons in power such as kings, lords, masters, and in the household, fathers. In doing so, patriarchy has put God on the side of the powerful and not the poor. When God is understood to be father, God is reduced from the reality of God to a male being. As Anne Carr points out, “The idol of a male divinity in heaven issues in a divinizing of male authority, responsibility, power, and holiness on earth, despite pious avowals of religious leaders about women’s equality.”

Can it possibly be true that only men are the sparks of the divine and fragments of

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the face of God? If so, women are exiled to a nowhere land which leaves the homeland bereft of women’s experience and understanding of God. Not only do feminists denounce such thinking, they attribute to it a blindness to half of the world’s insights and the image of half a God. No longer can the imposition of the patriarchal mind on all of humankind be tolerated. The totality of persons need to be seen and recognized as the expression of God’s love. No longer are the marginalized, women, children and some men to be defined and treated as inferior to persons in power. All of humanity is to be empowered and seen to be capable of revealing the image and likeness of God. All need to speak and be heard, for our world needs the giftedness of each one.

With the exception of reflection on the image of God that has come to us through women such as Hildegard, Julian, Catherine and Teresa, the image of God that has been taught is the one that comes to us primarily through men’s experience. That needs to be corrected. We need, as well, images of God that come to us through women’s experiences, such as the giving of birth and tenderly caring for the young. Johnson draws on four metaphors related to women’s experiences to speak of God: birth, justice and

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\[\text{\textsuperscript{617} Chittister. Heart of Flesh. 113.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{618} It needs to be acknowledged that there are female images for God in scripture such as Isaiah 42:14-15: “For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself: now I will cry out like a woman in labour, I will gasp and pant.” There are also female images for God that come from the tradition. Both Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux use maternal imagery to describe Jesus, especially in a nurturing role. Walker Bynum. Jesus Our Mother. 113-114. But there were significant periods of time that there was absence of female imagery for God. Walker Bynum notes that the first flowering of the maternal image for God that appears after the patristic period does not appear until the twelfth century. Walker Bynum. Jesus Our Mother. 111-112. I think it is accurate to say that while there are instances of female imagery for God in both scripture and tradition, they are more the exception than the norm.}\]
anger, grief, and degradation. The image that emerges from her reflections is that of a suffering God who is in solidarity with all who suffer. McFague proposes three models of God appropriate to our ecological, nuclear age: God as Mother, Lover and Friend. Images of God that emerge from women's experience provide an alternative to the God of patriarchy which has given us such names for God as: God the lawgiver, God the judge, God the king, God the warrior and God the omnipotent being. In their place is revealed a tender, compassionate God who stoops to be close to the weak, the vulnerable and the suffering.

As contemporary Christian feminist theologians endeavour to find new ways to name the Holy which speak of the relationality between God and humankind, there is also an emerging awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings in creation. Hence, the world of relationality is greatly enlarged. So when the term inclusivity is used today, it extends far beyond anything we would have imagined a century ago. From the smallest amoeba to the majestic mountain, from the raging sea to humankind, everything and everyone is in relationship to one another. Here again mutuality is envisioned. This realization of the interconnectedness of all of creation is challenging every discipline to rethink even its most basic understandings and that includes theology. Theology is undergoing a radical transformation. It is beginning to reflect a contemporary realization in the sciences that insists on the interconnectedness of all of the cosmos and the

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"19 Johnson, She Who Is, 255-264.


"21 Zappone, The Hope for Wholeness, 12.

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importance of a healthy earth if our planet is to survive.\textsuperscript{622} Feminist theologians like Sallie McFague, Elizabeth Johnson and Rosemary Radford Ruether are reflecting on cosmology and its relationship to Christian theology.\textsuperscript{623} The understanding of the interconnectedness of all creation finds expression in the words of Sallie McFague:

In the closing years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century we are being called to do something unprecedented: to think holistically, to think about "everything that is," because everything on this planet is interrelated and interdependent and hence the fate of each is tied to the fate of the whole.\textsuperscript{624}

When we come to see creation as interconnected, we begin to see with new eyes. If we truly believe that creation is the dwelling place of God, our attitude toward it should be one of reverence and awe. Exploitation of the earth can never be tolerated or accepted, not even in the name of progress. Humankind is to work with creation to further life and life forms. Science has proven that the cosmos was in existence long before the appearance of humankind. Therefore, it is erroneous to believe that humanity is the centre of the universe. It is only a member of its magnificent order and a rather small one at that. Moreover, any diminishment of creation diminishes humanity, for we


\textsuperscript{624} McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," 328.
are part of creation. We who are part of creation have the potential to be co-creators with God.

If human persons are, in Johnson’s words, “cantors of the universe,” what will be our song? Will it be a song of lament for our planet that is bruised because of our lack of stewardship? Or one of praise where we applaud God for the wondrous creation which is continually being brought to birth? The answer to these questions is determined by how we perceive the interconnectedness of all of creation and its relationship to the Creator.

C. Julian Juxtaposed With Some Contemporary Christian Feminist Theologians on Inclusivity and Faithfulness

Nowhere in Julian’s writings is there even an intimation that women are inferior to men or incapable of imaging God. For Julian, all humankind is to be a source of rejoicing for the Trinity. Recognizing our beauty and worth is a source of delight for us, just as it is for the Trinity. Julian tells us of the great profit we receive by contemplating the mystery of our beauty and worth. Because we become what we contemplate, if we contemplate the Trinity we become like unto God and we learn to take pleasure in ourselves. Hence, our contemplation of the Trinity leads to greater self knowledge. What is significant for our purposes is that, in this discussion of Julian, there is no mention of gender. She applies the acquisition of self-knowledge to both women and men. Jantzen tells us that this is nothing short of audacious. She writes:

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Women. after all were exhorted in the Bible and throughout patristic and medieval writing to ‘learn humility, in all subjection,’ not to learn to delight in themselves. Since it was through Eve that sin entered into the world, and since women were still held to be the locus of temptation, especially sexual temptation, the path to holiness for women would be the path of penitence, humility and self-renunciation. Self-knowledge would be knowledge of oneself as related to Eve, the source of temptation and a snare to men.¹²⁶

The self-knowledge that Julian proposes for women as well as for men is an increasing sense of self-worth that comes from an acceptance of who we are as embodied persons. capable of sin but also of great love. Sin is not to be the source of consuming guilt.

Julian writes for all her “even Christians,” women as well as men. What she wants us to know is not only the graciousness of God’s love, but also how God sees us. She expresses this exquisitely:

And right the same pat we shulde be without end, the same we ware tresured in god and hyd, knowen and lovyn fro withoutz begynnyng. Werfore he wyll we wytt pat pe nobelest thyng that evyr he made is mankynde, and the fullestes substannce and the hyest virtu is pe blessyd soule of Crist. And furthermore he wyll we wytt that this deerwurthy soule was preciously knytt is so suttell and so myghty that it is onyd to god. In whych onyng it is made endlesly holy. Furthermore he wyll we wytt that all the soulys pat shalle be savyd in hevyn with oute ende be knytt in this knott, and onyd in this oonyng, and made holy in this holynesse.¹²⁷

If all of humanity is so loved and joined to the divine, all persons are sparks of the divine and fragments of the face of God. Julian’s theology excludes the discrimination inherent


¹²⁷ LT 53. 559-561:54-64. “And just as we were to be without end, so we were treasured and hidden in God, known and loved from without beginning. Therefore he wants us to know that the noblest thing which he ever made is mankind, and the fullest substance and the highest power is the blessed soul of Christ. And furthermore, he wants us to know that this beloved soul was preciously knitted to him in its making, by a knot so subtle and so mighty that it is united in God. In this uniting it is made endlessly holy. Furthermore, he wants us to know that all the souls which will be saved in heaven without end are knit in this knot, and united in this union, and made holy in this holiness.” (284)
in patriarchal theology. Her theology enhances all of humankind and is a source of solace as we struggle with the reality of sin.

Julian lived in a patriarchal society and church where women were regarded as inferior to men and incapable of imaging God. While it is true that as far as can be surmised from her texts, Julian treats all persons with equal dignity and as having the same capacity to image God, she does not demonstrate a consciousness that names patriarchy as the source of oppression for women or the weak, as contemporary feminist analysis does. Although Julian recognizes that we shall sin, she provides us with an understanding of sin that does not uphold disproportionate shame or guilt as a healthy response to sin. God, who has given us the remedy for sin, desires that, once we amend ourselves according to the teaching of the church, we go on our way with God, in love, trusting in the protection that God gives to us. But Julian does not go as far as contemporary Christian feminist theology does in naming social sin as the root cause of the oppression of women and other disenfranchised groups. She does not point to the corruption in her society and church and call for change. She ministers to the poor women of her city but does not look to the causes of their poverty and address them. As Jantzen points out, “Although Julian liberated herself from self-contempt based on gender, she was not able to liberate herself from strict subservience to male-defined ecclesiastical dogma.”628

Sallie McFague develops the image of God as mother and links it to justice.629

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628 Jantzen, Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism, 183.

629 McFague, Models of God, 97-123.
She argues that if we see God as mother-creator rather than king-redeemer, we come to a very different understanding of judgement and justice. In the picture of king-redeemer, judgement is passed on those who rebel against the monarch and ascribe to themselves the status that only the king deserves. They are found guilty and punished. In the picture of the mother-creator, McFague argues “the goal is neither the condemnation nor the rescue of the guilty but is the just ordering of the cosmic household in a fashion beneficial to all.”\(^{30}\) Just as the birth is the concern of the mother-creator, so is nurturance and fulfillment. As parent, the primary interest is to give life to another -- not oneself -- to nurture and bring that life to fulfillment. Furthermore, the heart of the ethic of justice implicit in God as mother-creator is the establishment of a just social, political and economic order\(^{31}\) that creates the conditions needed for all to live and benefit from the bounty of our creation. McFague develops an understanding of mother-creator that goes beyond that of which Julian speaks, but for both, mother-creator is not simply an accidental notion of God. it is of the very essence of God.

**III. Julian’s Understanding of A God Without Wrath and its Dissonance**

**With Some Contemporary Christian Feminists**

There is a point in Julian’s theology that is seemingly at odds with some feminist thinkers and that deserves careful consideration. While, for Julian, in God there is no wrath, some feminists see wrath as a necessary quality for the divine. For Julian, in God


there is no wrath, and as far as her vision allowed her to see, no one is condemned to hell. Julian knew that church teaching did say that persons who lived a life of sin could be condemned to hell. Julian’s query into how to reconcile the insight - namely, that her God is a God without wrath and that as far as she knew, no one was condemned to hell - with the church’s teaching of damnation of sinners, has not gone unnoticed. Julian scholars have addressed the discrepancies, supplying various explanations. Clifton Walters argues that Julian’s understanding of divine wrath must be considered, at the very least, heterodox in relation to the scriptural tradition. Brant Pelphrey maintains that Julian uses “wrath” in reference to the “fiend” which is the destructive anger that depicts all that is not God, in contrast to the steadfast love of God. Margaret Palliser, after a careful analysis of both Walters and Pelphrey, offers still another explanation:

Simply put, the reality of God’s absolute opposition to evil is experienced by us as wrath. It is not so much that Julian’s doctrine lacks orthodoxy; rather, in choosing to highlight one particular aspect of God’s attitude toward us (God’s steadfast and unconditional love), she does not, perhaps, do full justice to the concept of God’s unwavering and total opposition to sin, i.e., to all that hinders our experiencing that love.

While I find all of the above explanations plausible, especially Palliser. I think that the question needs to be revisited from yet another perspective for two reasons. First, Julian’s understanding of God as a God without wrath is so central to her work that it deserves further consideration. Secondly, in my perception of Julian, she is a very

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634 Palliser, Christ our Mother of Mercy, 217.
careful theologian who would not develop such an understanding without a firm basis for so doing. To let go of Julian's understanding of God as one without wrath, in my opinion, is to compromise her teaching, which I am unwilling to do. Drawing on the works of some of my contemporaries, I propose a further explanation as to why it may be difficult to let go of the notion of a wrathful God.

Elizabeth A. Johnson and Beverly Wildung Harrison have both looked at anger and wrath from a feminist perspective. Wildung Harrison argues that anger is a signal that something is amiss in a relationship. It indicates that change is called for or that transformation in the relationship is required. Anger is not a negative emotion which in any way diminishes persons; rather it is a power that keeps us in the struggle against oppression and injustice. Wildung Harrison points out that anger is to be taken seriously and that "we should not make light of the power to rage against the dying night. It is the root of the power to love."635

Johnson, in constructing a new understanding of God which speaks to women's experience, maintains that the wrath of God is a symbol of holy mystery that we can ill afford to lose because it discloses God's outrage at the harm done to those God loves. Furthermore, she says, "Passion that often accompanies action on behalf of justice is a righteous wrath."637 Just as the depth of God's care for us is immeasurable, so is God's


637 Johnson, She Who Is, 257.
anger in the face of injustice. Johnson sees in "... images reflective of women’s experience of anger over injustice, the female symbol of the suffering God who cares for the oppressed and is strengthened by a feminist retrieval of the wrath of God." In this line of thinking, the notion of a suffering God awakens hope that moves us beyond historical failure. It reassures us that, in the end, all will be well, and so the energy to resist despair arises out of anger.

While many feminists talk about anger in this way, a feminist rooted in Julian’s theology might approach the realities of anger and justice in the following way. Sin is caused by brokenness. God looks upon the person, sees that brokenness (which we cannot see), and feels no anger. What is present, in the place of anger, is a fierce compassion rooted in an absolute understanding and knowledge of the brokenness of the human heart and its need for healing. Perhaps our difficulty with seeing God in this way is rooted in our inability to truly grasp the reality of God’s unconditional love and unconditional knowledge of a person’s heart. Unconditional love is hard for us to fathom because we tend to judge ourselves and others through the eyes of our wounded humanity, rather than through the eyes of God who loves and knows us unconditionally. Julian told us that when we enter heaven we shall know that we have sinned grievously in this life: however, we were never deprived of God’s love. God’s love for us is enduring and marvelous and will never be broken because of our offenses.

Some may argue, as Johnson does, that the concept of a God who is filled with

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* Johnson, She Who Is, 259.

LT 60. 603:22-27.
anger in the face of oppression and injustice "... stands as an antidote to sentimentality in our view of God's holy mystery as love, and as a legitimation of women's anger." It is my contention that it is not an overly sentimental concept that needs to be corrected. I believe that Julian's position is a better one: God looks upon all human beings, all sinners, with a love which is capable of healing the wounds of the most damaged, the weakest. God never gives up on a person. As a woman, I have not escaped the constant crippling effects of sexism in our society and violation and violence in my own personal life. If I am true to my experience, I need a God who is tender love and who calls me from brokenness to wholeness, and from the purges of violence and pain to safety and healing. I do not need a God to legitimize my anger, but a God who calls me beyond my anger to a place of wholeness and freedom. Carolyn Osiek, speaking of the need to love even those who have hurt us, writes,

The point here is to love those who oppress and oppose us. Such a call does not mean ignoring or discarding the deep sense of indignity felt by women or pretending that nothing wounding has happened. Rather, it is the call to stretch beyond anger and pain for the good of even the ones who have attempted to undermine us as persons.

Knowing that I need not deny my anger, but need to move to a place of freedom within myself, provides a difficult challenge to me and to all disciples of Jesus. At the same time, I know that those who have been perpetrators of violence need to be healed of their sin and embraced in love, so that they might be empowered to cast aside the evils of sin

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640 Johnson. She Who Is. 258.

and walk in the way of truth. Discipleship demands that all of us endeavour to see all of reality as God sees it, and at times, this means moving beyond our personal suffering.

Drawing on Julian, we can say that when the sinner with a contrite heart turns to God, she or he is met with compassion and healing. The compassion that is God never changes but remains steadfast and enduring. Because we believe this with certainty, we can live, not in fear, but in peace. This theology is one that is open to all, believing that the pain of sin can lead to healing and that God is not angry but compassionate.

Conclusion

Julian is not a feminist theologian and it is unrealistic to expect Julian to have the same level of consciousness as do contemporary Christian feminist theologians. But like most of these contemporary thinkers, she is a proponent of respect for others, equality, mutuality, and nurturance. Julian developed a theology based on her experience, a theology that spoke to the heart as well as to the mind. She used metaphors particular to women's experience such as birthing and motherhood. Julian challenged the understanding of sin that was prevalent in her time. Furthermore, she did not distinguish, by gender, humanity's potential to image God.

In comparing some of the key elements of Julian's theology with a sample of the writings of some contemporary Christian feminist theologians, it has become clear that she shares some of their concerns. But the constituent element of feminist theology - namely critique of patriarchy as a world view which excludes and oppresses women and
other disenfranchised persons - is absent in Julian. Furthermore, Julian does not share feminists' passion for the transformation and even elimination of social structures which are the means for such oppression. Even though Julian speaks of her 'even Christians' and her desire that they too might benefit from her religious experience, there is no mention of community in her writings.

The question that was posed at the beginning of this chapter was: Is there meaning in Julian's naming of God that can be articulated and which has relevance for our contemporary context? The means that I chose to answer that question was by reading Julian in light of contemporary Christian feminist theologians who are redefining theology and giving it new meanings. Having considered some of the points of resonance between Julian and some contemporary Christian feminists, as well as the points of dissonance, I suggest that Julian can be a resource for contemporary feminist theologians by providing a rich alternative to the normative tradition.
CONCLUSION

Julian begins her last chapter with the statement that her work, which was written because of God’s gift and grace, is not completed; it is a work in progress. For Julian, no theology can be finished until we are all one in God. It took Julian twenty years of prayer and reflection to come to a full understanding of her religious experience and to be able to name God in a way that was true to her experience. She never set out to refute any doctrine but simply to pass on to other Christians what she had learnt from God. While being cognizant and respectful of scripture and tradition, she held fast to her experience that suggested to her that God’s stance before the sinner was one of complete acceptance and steadfast love. The richness of her experience and the clarity with which she was able to record it witness to a theology born of mystical experience.

In this thesis, I set for myself the goal of entering into Julian’s understanding of God through her naming of God. Having introduced Julian and her times in the first chapter, in chapter two I began a study of the text by focusing on the activities, attributes and desires of God. What emerged in this chapter was a rich exposé of the identity of God and how God relates to us in history. In the naming of God, the relational aspect of who God is clearly brought to life. The third chapter considered God in terms of God’s relationality to creation as Creator/Father, Mother/Jesus and Lord/Holy Spirit, as well as Julian’s understanding of the Trinity. When taken together, the second and third chapters clarify the central tenets not only of Julian’s doctrine of God, but also other aspects of her theology such as her soteriology. Reflection upon these chapters led me to inquire as to the meaningfulness of Julian’s theology for the contemporary person. Further, I found
myself led from Julian’s theology to the theology of some contemporary Christian feminist theologians. This movement toward contemporary Christian feminist theologians provided me with a framework to examine Julian’s relevancy for the contemporary believer.

I set out in chapter four to explore links between contemporary Christian feminist theology and Julian’s theology. This exploration led me to conclude that Julian’s doctrine of God is a solid theology in the tradition that can serve in many ways to enrich our understandings of the Holy. For example, the dimension of relationality which is central in contemporary Christian feminist theology has a prominent place in Julian’s theology. Julian’s understanding of relationality as creation sharing in the very life and love of God establishes a relationship at the deepest possible level, the level of life. God is not someone who stands outside of creation to control and dominate it, but one who is within it as its source of life and vitality. God empowers creation to be. Such an understanding of God evokes in us an aesthetic and ethical response: we stand in awe at the immensity, complexity, richness and diversity of creation, and respond with gratitude and care for all life. We focus on our dependence on God as present and continuing creator. This understanding of God does not probe the how and why of the history of creation, but it suggests to the person of faith that creation is one organic whole that is loved and sustained-in-being by the Creator. Rather than relegating God to a world outside of creation, this understanding of God redefines both divine immanence (God is the foundation and source of all life) and divine transcendence (God is the love that empowers all that is). Furthermore, it demonstrates the interrelatedness of all in God.
As has been shown, by the consideration of a God without wrath, not all of Julian’s theology correlates with contemporary Christian feminist theology. Rather than dismissing the points of dissonance, I suggest they provide an occasion for further theological reflection. What is lacking in Julian that is essential in feminist thought is any systematic analysis of the structures of oppression. Julian’s theology does not name God as God is experienced within the struggle against injustice resulting from oppression. In that way, Julian’s theology lacks a consciousness that is integral to contemporary Christian feminist theology.

The plethora of names that Julian gives to God speaks of the splendour of the Godhead as well as the familiarity of God’s love. Like the scribe in the gospels who is able to bring out of his treasure the old and the new, Julian draws on her personal experience, scripture and the tradition to help her readers enter into the mystery of the God of infinite mercy and steadfast love. The most all-embracing name that Julian had for God was love, a love she knew experientially. I do not think there is any better way to bring my study of Julian’s theology of God to its end than with the words of Julian herself. What, do you wish to know your Lord’s meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love. Why does he reveal it to you? For love. Remain in this, and you will know more of the same. But you will never know different, without end.

So I was taught that love is our Lord’s meaning. And I was certainly in this, and in everything that before God made us he loved us, which love was never abated and never will be. And in this love he has done all his works, and in this love he has made all things profitable to us, and in this love our life is everlasting. In our creation we had beginning, but the love in which he created us was in him from without beginning. In his love we have our beginning, and all this we shall

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642 Mat. 13-51-52.
see in God without end.543

541 LT 86. 342-343
Appendix I

Précis of Showings

Julian of Norwich's Showings both recount her mystical experience and develop her theological understandings as they emerge from the experience that prompted the writings. Julian wrote two versions of Showings, one called the short text (ST) presumed to have been written shortly after the experience, a second one called the long text (LT) written in two versions, one appearing approximately fifteen years after the revelations and one twenty years after the religious experience. In chapter three of the long text Julian relates a sudden illness that leaves her weak, seemingly dying. She writes that her confessor, thinking that she was going to die, held before her eyes a crucifix. Without any explanation, Julian experiences a sudden recovery and then experiences sixteen showings. Showings are a combination of bodily sights, intellectual visions and spiritual understandings. It is from these showings that Julian's theology evolves. Below is a very brief summary of each of Showings.

The First Showing (LT 4-7; ST iii-vii)

In this showing, Julian sees Jesus crowned with thorns bleeding copiously from his head. In this vision is revealed the Trinity, the incarnation and the relationship between God and humanity. While speaking of the greatness, omnipotence and plentitude of God, this revelation also reveals God's closeness, protectiveness, and love of all creation.

"For a complete and detailed summary of Showings see Colledge and Walsh, "Introduction," 71-196. The following summary indicates the chapters in the long text (LT), which they encompass, and the chapters of the short text (ST), to which they correspond.
The Second Showing (LT 10; ST vii)

Julian has a vision of Jesus' head discoloured in the Passion. She comes to understand that, in this life, we have only a glimpse of who God is: that if humanity saw fully God’s love for it, it would know it was safe; and that the most people can do is to seek God, to suffer, and to trust in God.

The Third Showing (LT 11; ST viii)

In this revelation, Julian comprehends that God is present in all things. The question arises: What about sin? Julian comes to understand that our vision of reality, including sin, is not the same as God’s. She concludes that sin is “no dedevide,” meaning that it has no existence in itself, but rather shows itself through pain and human weakness.

The Fourth Showing (LT 12; ST viii)

The fourth showing presents Julian with a vision of Jesus bleeding copiously from his body as the result of scourging. She comes to understand that God poured out Jesus’ blood to wash away our sins. Jesus’ blood poured forth is symbolic of the outpouring of God’s plentiful love.

The Fifth Showing (LT 13; ST viii)

In this revelation, Julian “hears” that with the Passion of Christ, the fiend is overcome. The woes and tribulations which the devil has caused will be turned into eternal joy. Julian sees clearly that in God there is no anger. God works with power and

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LT 11. 338:22.

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justice to oppose those who work to frustrate God’s will.

The Sixth Showing (LT 14; ST viii-ix)

In her understanding, Julian sees God as a king who holds a banquet for God’s friends. She comprehends that in “homely love” God expresses gratitude for persons’ service to God.

The Seventh Showing (LT 15; ST ix)

Julian repeatedly moves from a time of consolation to a time of desolation. She learns that whether persons are in consolation or desolation, they are safe in God’s care. Desolation is not necessarily the result of sin nor something to be dwelt on. Bliss lasts forever and pain is passing. Our task is to pass over pain and dwell in endless delight.

The Eighth Showing (LT 16-20; ST x-xi)

In this showing, Julian sees in vivid detail the gruesomeness of Christ’s Passion and dying. She desires to see the suffering of Christ fulfilled. There is no way to comprehend the depth of God’s love for humanity except in the unity between humanity and Christ.

The Ninth Showing (LT 21-23; ST xii)

Julian, watching the cruelty of Christ’s Passion, expects him to die but he is transformed to an appearance of joy. Like Christ’s, our sufferings shall be turned into joy. The greater the pain, the greater shall be our glory. There is no end to the suffering Jesus would endure so that we might believe in his love. All the persons of the Trinity are active in the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The desire of the Trinity is that we accept, with joy, the salvation that has been given to us.
The Tenth Showing (LT 24: ST xiii)

Julian sees the wounded heart of Jesus. In his side there is a space large enough for all humanity that will be saved and which will rest in peace and love. Not a morbid showing, Jesus is shown to be joyful as he tells of his great love for humanity.

The Eleventh Showing (LT 25: ST xiii)

Julian receives an intellectual vision of Mary in a description of her virtues. She is presented as the human being par excellence. The love Jesus has for Mary is representative of the love God has for humanity. Mary is seen in delight, honour and joy.

The Twelfth Showing (LT 26: ST xiii)

This showing summarizes three learnings from the first showing: the goodness of God is all; there is no true rest except in God; and this showing, like the rest, is given for all who believe. Julian understands again that Christ is God; Christ is all.

This concludes the twelfth showing and the first part of the long text.

The Thirteenth Showing (LT 27-40: ST xiii-xviii)

Julian deliberates and meditates on her understanding of sin which is all that is not good. Jesus comforts her by saying that even if sin is the cause of pain, still *alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele*. God is at work in creation and redemption: God will make all things well.

The Fourteenth Showing (LT 41-63: ST xix)

This showing, particular to the long text, is the longest and most complex of

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*LT 27:407:34.
Julian’s revelations. It centres on prayer, and the key to understanding this showing is “I am the grounde of thy beseking.” Our beseeching, our desire, is given to us by God, not to be frustrated, but to be fulfilled. For Julian, this beseeching redefines prayer.

Julian sees that in God there is no wrath.

Chapter fifty-one contains the exemplum of the lord and the servant. Through it Julian comes to understand that God responds differently to sin than do humans. God never blames or punishes but always comforts and succours.

In this showing the doctrine of the Motherhood of God is introduced. Julian places the Motherhood of God in the context of her understanding of the Trinity. Christ is the wisdom through whom we were born. Taking on flesh, Christ became our mother sensually. Through his Passion, death and resurrection, Jesus unites us to his substance and to the substance of the Trinity. In the womb of Christ our Mother, we become reformed and renewed. As our Mother, God is the “grounde of oure kynde makyng. the seconde is takyng of oure kynde, and ther begynnyth the moderhed of grace. the thurde is moderhed in werkyng.”

*The Fifteenth Showing (LT 64-65; ST xx-xvi)*

This showing has a strong eschatological dimension as Julian compares the pain we suffer to the eternal bliss we shall share in eternity. It is God's desire that we contemplate the transformation from sin to glory because it is blissful and to the glory of

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^4LT 41, 461:11

^5LT 59, 593:44-45.
God. God wants us to continually hold before us the reality of eternal life and so count our pain as nothing. Our appropriate response in pain is to hope, to be certain that our sufferings will be rewarded.

*The Sixteenth Revelation (LT 66-86; ST xxii-xxv)*

Julian sees that the Trinity delights in the soul it has created. God wants us to trust in Love no matter what happens because God loves us in our wellness and in our woe. The Trinity, in Jesus, dwells endlessly in us: nothing can overcome us. The meaning, the being of God, is Love.651

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650 LT 64, 626:61-67.
651 LT 86, 733:20-27.
## Appendix II

**EXTANT WITNESSES TO THE TEXTS**

### One Extant Witness to the Short Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst Text</td>
<td>London British Museum Additional 37790</td>
<td>Mid 15th Cent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Five Extant Witnesses to the Long Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Westminster Cathedral</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Mid 15th Cent.</td>
<td>Selections only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Paris. MS Bibliothèque Nationale Fonds Anglais 40</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>ca. 1650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. British Museum Sloane MS 2499</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Mid 17th Cent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. British Museum Sloane MS 3705</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Late 17th or early 18th Cent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. St. Joseph's College, Upland</td>
<td>U:MS</td>
<td>Mid 16th Cent</td>
<td>Selections only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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"Data for the chart is taken from Colledge and Walsh. "Introduction." 1-10."
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