

Revelations of divine love : a study of the work of Julian of Norwich

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE : A STUDY OF THE WORK OF
JULIAN OF NORWICH

Thesis for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the School of English



by
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PREFACE

This is a study of the Revelations of Divine Love, written by the Fourteenth Century anchoress, Julian of Norwich, both in itself, its matter and form, and in relation to other works and contemporary trends of thought, as part of the English Mystical Tradition.

The principal concern of the thesis is the content of the book and how it is expressed. Here I am interested not so much in Julian's teaching on contemplation as in her more basic theme, the problem of suffering and evil. As well as considering how this is worked out in relation to Julian's concept of the nature of God and her teaching on the fall and exaltation of man, I have examined the manner in which it is presented: the structure of the book and how the ideas are organised, the form of "revelations", and the use of colloquy and of symbolism and allegory.

One may not, however, regard the book in isolation. Hence I have endeavoured to sketch in the historical and philosophical background, giving attention to issues of particular interest, such as the dispute on Predestination, as well as indicating parallels in ideas and in literary forms.

The object of the thesis is, therefore, a consideration of Julian's book as an effective piece of devotional writing, with regard to its genus and differentiae in the corpus of Mediaeval Literature.

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INTRODUCTION

The Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich is commonly classified among the works of the English mystics, particularly those of the Fourteenth Century – Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton and the author of the Cloud of Unknowing – and it is also connected, at least indirectly, with the writings of continental mystics of the same period.

It is partly on account of this classification that many readers approach Julian's book with certain expectations, even preconceived notions, of what they will find. Many are looking for what she has to say about contemplative prayer and all that leads up to it, all that is within the nimbus of "spiritual theology". There is evidence of this in the introductions to various editions of her work, from Grace Warrack's¹ to that of Clifton Wolters,² and in many (though not all) of the articles and books that have been written about it. The interest is in Julian herself, as a follower of the contemplative life, her experience in its pursuit, and her teaching about contemplation. Instances have been cited of quotations, or near quotations, of other mystical

¹ Revelations of Divine Love, ed. Grace Warrack, (Methuen, London, first published July, 1901).

² Revelations of Divine Love, trans. Clifton Wolters, (Penguin Classics, 1966).

writers,¹ and comparisons made between her teaching and theirs.² The most thorough examination of this aspect of Julian's work is given by Paul Molinari, who makes it the subject of an entire book.³

Although Julian's spirituality is a legitimate matter for enquiry, there is a danger that contemplative prayer should be regarded as the only thing with which her book is concerned. Those who approach the Revelations of Divine Love looking for mysticism will find what they seek, for Julian does write as one with experience in contemplation of a high degree, but they may run the risk of reading more into her words than ~~what~~ she intended. More important, the main thrust of her own interest may well be overlooked.

This absorption in the mystical elements of the Revelations tends to produce another unfortunate effect:- that interest in the book becomes restricted to specialists in spiritual theology and those whose piety is specifically "contemplative".⁴ Yet Julian herself makes it

¹ In particular Dionysius. A full list is given by ^{Sr.} Anna Maria Reynolds, "Some Literary Influences in the Revelations of Julian of Norwich (c 1342 - post-1416)", in Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages nos. 7 & 8, 1952, pp.18-28.

² e.g. Revelations of Divine Love, trans. J.Walsh, S.J., (London, Burns & Oates, 1961): Introduction, pp.11, 12.

³ P.Molinari, Julian of Norwich: the Teaching of a Fourteenth Century English Mystic, (1958).

⁴ Other Christians are dissuaded from reading the work by vague rumours of heresy, or the suspicion that she attaches more authority to visions than to the Bible or the teaching of the Church. The latter is definitely false, and the heresy charges are by no means adequately substantiated (see below, pp.23f. and ch. VI).

clear that she writes for all Christians, active and contemplative, the laity no less than the religious.¹ The book is for all those "that will be His faithfull lovris".²

For the main emphasis of her book is not on contemplation. The Revelations is concerned with much wider issues - the whole problem of evil as it concerns the individual believer, how he should deal with trouble and temptation in this life and what assurance he has, in view of the eternal purpose of God, manifest in the Incarnation, Passion and exaltation of Christ. In other words, the scope of Julian's book is no less than the Gospel itself, though its main purpose is not the consideration of doctrine, but rather the framing of a practical guide for day-to-day living - not the issuing of precepts, but the revealing of underlying principles.

Mysticism and contemplation is a part of this, a vital part, inasmuch as the Christian life is seen essentially as a personal relationship between the believer and his God, which involves the constant aspiration of the part of the Christian towards an ever closer and deeper knowledge and love of his Maker and Redeemer. But for all that Julian is not writing a book about contemplation, and certainly not in the manner of the Scale of Perfection or the Cloud of Unknowing. Rather, contemplative experience is assumed; frequently it is mentioned only incidentally. It

¹ viid, p.17 r, ff.

² Colophon, Sloane MS.

is seen as a part of the whole process of sanctification. Neither is Julian's book a treatise on visions and their various kinds. The visions are simply a means of presentation. As with Will Langland, the implications of the Visio must be worked out in the Vita.

What, then, is the book about? The assessment of a recent editor is interesting:

It is St. John of the Cross who describes more exactly the content of the Revelations, in his account of the knowledge granted to the soul in the transforming union:

"And then we shall go forth to the lofty caverns of the rock" ... The rock of which she here speaks, according to S. Paul is Christ. The lofty caverns of the rock are the lofty and high and deep mysteries of the wisdom of God which are in Christ, concerning the hypostatical union of human nature with the Divine Word, and the correspondence to this which is the union of men in God, and in the agreement which there is between the justice and the mercy of God as to the salvation of the human race in the manifestation of his judgements. ¹

The union of the human and the divine, the salvation of mankind, and the justice and mercy of God certainly form the substance of Julian's discussion. But whether she attained the "transforming union" and received her insight as a result is not the concern of this thesis. There are many more competent than the present writer to analyse Julian's spirituality and to judge what degree of contemplation she reached. What she has to say is more important (and far more relevant to the average reader) than her own life story. How her information and

¹ J.Walsh, op.cit., p.21, quoting The Spiritual Canticle, ed. Allison Peers (London, 1934), Vol.II, p.385.

insight came to her might be discussed at length, but what that information is and how it is expressed ought to be given more attention.

In the first chapter, therefore, I shall consider briefly the sources of Julian's material (which will involve a discussion of revelations) as well as outline such facts about Julian herself as may be established. This is preliminary to the main part of the thesis - a study of the Revelations of Divine Love with particular regard to content and form, and also in relation to other works of the period with which the book is usually classified. Chapter II will be a consideration of the major themes as they are outlined in the first twelve revelations; and it will be followed by an examination of Julian's treatment of certain problems of doctrine and Christian living; in Chapter III I shall look at the premises upon which her arguments are founded, and in Chapter IV follow the argument itself. Then in Chapter V I shall discuss the solution which is suggested in the last part of the book, with a closer investigation of certain assertions for which she has been most frequently criticised in Chapter VI. These five chapters together are concerned with the content of Julian's book.

I shall then turn to matters of form. After a brief analysis of the book's structure, which includes a comparison of the two versions, I shall look more closely at the pattern of symbolism in revelations I - XII, the quasi-debate form of the central section, and the use of dramatic representation in the last part of the book, with a view to making some assessment of the way in which Julian expresses her teaching.

Thus I hope to examine the main issues of Julian's book, and how she approaches them, and with what effect, so that her place among the fourteenth century English spiritual writers may be the more clearly defined.

CHAPTER I

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "REVELATIONS"

Biographical Details

Of the life of Julian of Norwich little is known. She is reticent about herself, being more concerned with pointing the reader to the One whom the visions reveal than to the one to whom they were given.¹ Some facts, however, have been established.

At the beginning of Chapter ii of the longer version she states formally, "This reuelation was made to a symple creature vnlettyrd levyng in deadly flesh the yer of our Lord a thousaunde and thre hundered and lxxiiij, the xiiij daie of May".² From the next two chapters one learns that this was in her thirty-first year ("when I was xxxth yere old and a halfe"),³ during an illness which had begun six days previously, i.e., on 8th May. This means that she must have been born towards the end of 1342, or possibly at the beginning of 1343 (if we take her at her word). In the longer version she makes two other references to dates on which she received further enlightenment: one "xv yere after and mor"⁴

¹ See chs. viii and ix.

² ii, 3 r.

³ iii, 5 r.

⁴ lxxxvi, 173 r.

(i.e., 1388-89), and the other "twenty yere after ye tyme of the shewyng saue thre monthys"¹ (i.e., February, 1393). Hence the longer version of the Revelations of Divine Love can not have been completed until after this date.

She is called "Julian" by the scribes of the Paris and shorter version manuscripts, from which we also learn that she was an anchoress at Norwich.² The Paris MS ends: "Explicit liber revelacionum Julyane, anatorite norwyche". The shorter version introduces her as "a deuoute woman and hir name es Julyan that is recluse atte Norwyche and jitt is on lyfe, Anno Dni millmo ccccxiiij".

It seems most likely that she was the "Dame Jelyan" whom Margery Kempe visited at Norwich,³ and she is probably also the anchoress to whom three wills, dated 1404, 1415 and 1416, refer.⁴ These wills indicate

¹ li, 96 v.

² There are five extant MSS of Julian's book: one in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Fonds anglais, No.40), three in the British Museum - Additional MS 37790 (mid 15th Century), Sloane 2499 (mid 17th Century) and Sloane 3705 (early 18th Century, and said to be a copy of Sloane 2499) - and a manuscript (unnumbered) in Westminster Cathedral Library which contains extracts. Of these, Add. MS 37790 is a shorter version, about 1/3 the volume of the others (for a comparison of the two versions, see below, ch.VII).

Sloane 2499 is favoured by most editors, since it "appears to preserve on the whole the idiom and vocabulary of a late 14th Cent. or early 15th Cent. original" (St. Julian, op.cit., p.19). As against that, it is very carelessly written. For the most part, I have used the earlier (16th Century), fuller and certainly much clearer Paris MS.

³ This view is held by St. Julian (introduction to her translation of the shorter version, p. xv), Molinari (op.cit., p.7) and Walsh (op.cit., p.2).

⁴ Molinari, op.cit., p.7, see also St. Julian "Some Literary Influences", note 1.

that she was an anchoress at the church of SS Julian and Edward at Conisford, Norwich, which belonged to the nearby Benedictine house of Carrow,¹ and lived there, at least from 1404, with a maidservant (or possibly two - the wills mention a Sarah and an Alice), and that she was still alive in 1416.

Apart from this, nothing is known for certain about her life or state, although there has been much conjecture. One does not know whether she was an anchoress before the revelations were granted to her, or whether she was a nun before becoming a recluse,² only that she was sufficiently dedicated to make the profession of a solitary life at some stage. One does not even know whether her real name was Julian³ - she may have adopted the name from the church to which she was attached.

Education

One point which demands explanation is that Julian describes herself as "a symple creature vnlettyrd", and yet her understanding of theology is extensive, her spiritual insight profound. Her book, which is permeated with the themes, language and imagery of Holy Scripture, reveals not only a high degree of intellectual ability, but also a sufficiently firm grasp of Christian doctrine to be able to discuss some of its most complex problems and even to attempt some kind of resolution.

¹ Molinari, op.cit., p.8.

² ~~Sr. Anna Maria Reynolds~~ and Molinari both argue that her revelations came before her enclosure, because of the presence of her mother.

³ A Shewing of God's Love, ed. Anna Maria Reynolds, introduction, p. xv.

From the account given by her contemporary, Margery Kempe, it is clear that she enjoyed a reputation for wisdom in spiritual matters - "For the ankress was expert in such things and good counsel could give".¹

In recent studies of her work it has been argued that "vnlettyrd" need not necessarily mean "illiterate", but possibly that she knew no Latin.² Both ~~S. Anna Maria~~ and Molinari quote her words in chapter li, "I haue techyng within me, as it were the begynnyng of an A.B.C., wher by I may haue sum vnderstandyng of oure Lordys menyng",³ as indicating that she at least knew how to read and write. On the other hand, literacy is not a prerequisite for wisdom and insight in spiritual matters. In this connection Sister Anna M. Reynolds refers to St. Catherine of Siena, who never learned to write, and Blessed Dorothea of Prussia, who was "almost illiterate", both of whom were Julian's contemporaries.⁴

One can be certain that Julian received at least some formal religious instruction. The decree Omnis utriusque sexus (1215), which made annual communion and confession obligatory on all Christians, had

¹ The Book of Margery Kempe: A Modern Version, ed. W. Butler-Bowdon (1940), pp. 72-74.

² S. Anna Maria Reynolds, (op.cit., p. xvi, also "Some Literary Influences", p. 20), and Molinari, op.cit., p. 10. Her use of the grammatically dubious phrase, "Benedicite Domini" is used to support this. It is not impossible that her familiarity with the Bible was obtained from vernacular translations.

³ li, 104 r.

⁴ A Shewing of God's Love, p. xvii.

been implemented in England by the synodal constitutions of the bishops in the Thirteenth Century.¹ The decree implied that both priests and laymen should receive at least enough instruction in Christian doctrine to make this communion and confession meaningful. Legislation dealing with such religious instruction was made in the constitutions of several bishops in the Thirteenth Century,² the most outstanding of which was Archbishop Pecham's decree, Ignorantia sacerdotum.³ Priests had to explain regularly to their parishioners the meaning of the creed, the commandments, the sacraments, the seven deadly sins, the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria.⁴ The priest could either do this himself or with the help of a more learned colleague.⁵ Instruction was given in sermons and also by private questioning and teaching during confession.⁶

The influence of this Thirteenth Century legislation lasted for some considerable time.⁷ Evidence for the continuation of the practice of

¹ W.A.Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge, 1955), p.191 ff; D.L.Douie, Archbishop Pecham, (Oxford, 1952), pp.133-142.

² Pantin, op.cit., pp.192-194.

³ Douie, op.cit., p.134 ff., Pantin, op.cit., p.193.

⁴ Some bishops added the Beatitudes. Pecham omitted the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria, but added the seven works of mercy. Douie, op.cit., pp.134-135.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Margaret Deansely, A History of the Mediaeval Church (London, 1925, reprinted with connections and appendix, 1965), p.204.

⁷ Douie, op.cit., p.139, Pantin, op.cit., p.194.

giving regular religious instruction to the laity in the Fourteenth Century is found in the numbers of manuals written for parish priests.¹ The existence of a laity educated in these matters is indicated by, among other things, the number of moral and religious treatises in the vernacular, written for their use.²

One may assume that Julian of Norwich had at least had this kind of instruction. If she had not been able to read the books available for laymen, or to have had them read to her,³ she would at least have been taught by means of sermons and by the personal instruction of her priest at confession.

One may suppose, also, that she had had teaching from her curate when he came to administer the Last Rites. The regular procedure of a priest visiting a dying person was to hear his confession and to exhort him to put his trust in the Passion and death of Christ.⁴

¹ For example, the Oculus Sacerdotis, the Speculum Curatorum, the Regimen Animarum, and Myro's Instructions to Parish Priests. Pantin, op.cit., ch.X, cf. Douie, op.cit., p.140 ff.

² Such as the Mirror of St. Edmund, the Aænbyrte of Inwyrt. Douie, op.cit., p.140, Pantin, op.cit., p.220 ff, cf. Francis' Introduction to the Book of Vices and Virtues (E.E.T.S., 1942).

³ It is quite likely that she, like Margery Kempe, had read, or heard read, the works of spiritual theology that were currently available in English (which included the Benjamin Minor of Richard of St. Victor, the Mystical Theology of the pseudo-Dionysius, as well as the works of the English mystics. "Some Literary Influences", p.22 ff). But the fact that she quotes, or seems to quote, some of them is not proof that she was acquainted with them in entirety, or that her ideas derive directly from them.

⁴ Margaret Deansely, op.cit., p.208: "'While thy soul is in thy body, put all thy trust in Christ His Passion and in His death, and think only thereon ... With His death mingle thyself, and wrap thee therein,

Other conjectures have been made about Julian's education, although nothing has been proved. It is possible that she was taught by the Benedictines at Carrow, where there was a boarding school for girls.¹ There is evidence of great preaching activity at Norwich, which was an important centre for both Franciscan and Dominican friars. An Augustinian friary stood in the same street as St. Julian's Church.² Norwich was also a centre of trade between England and the Continent, in particular of trade with the Low Countries, where a tradition of mysticism was flourishing. In short, many factors may have ~~combined~~ to provide Julian with a substantial religious education.

[footnote 4 cont'd]

nought thinking on thy wife, ne on thy children, ne on thy riches, but all on the passion of Christ.' The crucifix was placed before the dying person, who was encouraged to think thus: "I wot well thou art not my God, but thou art imaged after Him, and makest me have more mind of him after whom thou art imaged. Lord, Father of heaven, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, which is here imaged, I set between Thee and my evil deeds: and the deserts of Jesus Christ I offer Thee for all that I should have deserved." (See also English Fragments from Latin Mediaeval Service Books, ed. Henry Littlehales, E.E.T.S., extra series XC (London, 1903), p.6 ff, "From the Office for the Visitation of the Sick".)

This is exactly what happened in Julian's case: "Thay that were with me sente for the person, my curette, to be atte myne endynge. He come and a childe with hym, and brought a crosse ... The Persone sette the crosse before my face and sayde, 'Dow3tter, I have brought the the ymage of thy Sauicoure. Loke there opon, and comforte the here with in reverence of hym that dyede for the and me.'" (from the shorter version).

¹ Molinari, op.cit., pp.8-10.

² A Shewing of God's Love, p. xx.

Revelation

Julian herself makes the claim that most of her knowledge and insight came directly from God, that the teachings of her book were given to her by God himself in a direct revelation. She states that a substantial part of her material came in a series of sixteen visions and locutions, which are dated 13th May, 1373. The doctrine contained in her book is given as the interpretation of these visions. She says that her understanding of their meaning derived partly from her previous knowledge of the teaching of the Church and partly from subsequent meditation upon them, assisted by further insights received from God.¹

The claim that Julian makes is serious indeed. As a private revelation from God the status and authority of her doctrine would be extremely high. Such an assertion demands minute investigation before it can be accepted.² Thus the whole question of the possibility, authenticity and authority of private revelations is raised.

The orthodox Christian position is that the principal record of God's self-revelation to man is contained in the books of Holy Scripture. In the past, God "spoke" to the patriarchs, judges and prophets of Israel,³

¹ li, 96 r: "I saw and vnderstode that euery shewyng is full of pryvytes. And there fore me behovyth now to tell thre propertes in whych I am som dele esyd: the furst is the begynnyng of techyng that I vnderstode ther in in the same tyme; the secunde is the inwarde lernyng that I have vnderstond therein sythen; the thyrd is alle the hole revelation fro the begynnyng to the ende, whych oure Lorde God of his goodnes bryngyth oftymes frely to the syght of my vnderstandyng."

² This is in keeping with the principles outlined in I John 4:1.

³ Hebrews 1:1.

and his words are recorded in the books of the Old Testament. Likewise, God reveals himself in action in history, although the bare events show little without some interpretation and commentary. This is given in the historical books of the Bible. But the supreme revelation of God is said to have been given in the Incarnation, when the Word of God was "made flesh":¹

When in former times God spoke to our forefathers, he spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through the prophets. But in this the final age he has spoken to us in the Son ... 2

Jesus himself said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father".³ Further, he taught that there would be no other revelation of God after the coming of the Son into the world. The Holy Ghost brings no new revelation:

The Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears; and he will make known to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, for everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine. 4

This is the teaching of the Gospel: "The Son of God has brought us a revelation which is complete and definitive; we no longer have to wait

¹ John 1:14.

² Hebrews 1:1 ff. (N.E.B.).

³ John 14:9.

⁴ John 16:13 ff (N.E.B.).

for another from him; and this revelation is indispensable to us".¹ To seek another revelation from God today is like asking him to send Christ all over again, as if something were missing from what has already been given in him. There will be no other revelation; indeed, there is more here than we could ask or desire.

The way of obtaining adequate knowledge of God is through the record of this revelation in the books of Scripture, and through the teaching of the Church that is based on them. This does not mean that it is possible to know God completely, even through the information he has given. To a large extent he remains incomprehensible, simply because the infinite God is beyond the understanding of finite minds. Further, it is said that there are certain things which, in his wisdom, God keeps hidden from man. But it is asserted that the revelation recorded in the Bible is sufficient for man's needs.

Private Revelations

It might seem that, since the revelation given by Christ and recorded in the New Testament is "complete and definitive", the possibility of private revelations is ruled out. But this is not so. Certainly prophetic revelations, whereby some warning or instruction is given to the Church on earth, can still occur. A large number of people in the early Church possessed the gift of prophecy, after the time of the Incarnation.²

¹ J. Lebreton, "La Contemplation dans le Bible" in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, II.

² e.g. Acts 21:9, 10. Prophecy is mentioned as a gift in Ephesians 4:11.

It is still possible also that God may reveal his will in a specific circumstance to a particular individual for that soul's guidance. (It must be noted, however, that the revelations of Prophecy and Guidance will be consistent with God's will and purposes as generally revealed.)

But is it now possible, after the Incarnation, to receive a private revelation which gives information about the nature of God? Here ~~there~~ the coming of Christ has indeed made a difference: new information about the nature of God will no longer be given; no assertions will be made other than those which have already been made in the Revelation recorded in the Scriptures. But within these limits, a private revelation may still occur. It may serve to emphasise certain points, it may throw light on something which was previously obscure, but it will not depart from or contradict that which may already be found in the Biblical revelation.

It may even be argued that a certain amount of direct knowledge of God by this kind of personal experience is necessary for the spiritual life, since, it is claimed, it is only when God himself enlightens the soul that the revelation given in the Scriptures can become meaningful to the individual.¹ Certainly "mystical" knowledge of the divine, or "contemplation", belongs to the realm of private experience of God. Julian's "revelations" are, however, more propositional. The Revelations of Divine Love serves to explain and make clear parts of the Biblical revelation, that is, the faith of the Church.

¹ This is a common interpretation of II Corinthians 3:14-16.

If one accepts the possibility of private revelations, the question still remains whether Julian's were genuine. Joseph de Tonquedec¹ suggests that the authenticity of visions ought to be judged by three objective tests. Firstly one should determine whether something has really happened, and what. By definition, an experience of this nature is the object of a perception that is out of the ordinary, and is the preserve of certain people only. Consequently, one has to depend on the account of the person who had the experience. To find out whether his account is reliable, and to avoid being misled by something purely subjective, it is necessary to study the seer himself, his character, and his physical and mental health. This leads to de Tonquedec's second test, a psychological examination of the visionary, to see, in particular, whether he is subject to hallucinations.

In his study of the Revelations of Divine Love, Paul Molinari brings forward strong evidence to support his contention that both Julian's sickness and her visions are unlikely to be merely "neurotic phenomena", and that she is most probably reliable in her account of what happened. It seems unnecessary to reproduce his arguments here. One may observe, however, that de Tonquedec's second test is not conclusive. Even if Julian were suffering from some psychological abnormality, the possibility that her visions had a divine origin is not eliminated.

The third test, which de Tonquedec calls "ontological and theological" is concerned with the origin of the phenomena. Granted that they

¹ Joseph de Tonquedec, "Apparitions", in D Sp. I.

actually occurred, was their source natural, diabolical or divine? If the visions were really an objective experience, and not hallucinatory, then these are the only three possibilities: they came either from natural causes, from the devil, or from God.

A natural explanation of the phenomena Julian describes (other than that they were hallucinations) is brought into doubt by the fact that no one else present perceived anything apart from changes in Julian's own condition. For instance, during the account of the eighth revelation, when Julian saw a vision of the last agony of Christ, the people with her could only see a deterioration in her own physical state. Indeed, in the shorter version she says:

My modere, that stode emangys others and behelde me,
lyftyd vppe hir hande before me face to lokke myn
eyen, for sche wenyd I had bene dede or els I had
dyede.

Again, towards the end, she mentions the reactions of the people in the room:

The persons that were with me beheld me, and wett my
templys, and my harte beganne to comforte. And anon
a lyttyll smoke cam in at the doore with a great heet
and a foule stynch. And than I seyde, "Benedicite
Dominus! Is it alle on fyer that is here?" And I
went it had bene a bodely fyer that shuld a burne vs
all to deth. I asked them that were with me if they
felt any stynch. They seyde, nay, they felt noone.
I sayde "Blessyd be God", ffor than wyst I wele it
was the fende that was come only to tempte me. 1

Nowhere in her account is there any suggestion that the other people present noticed anything unusual. The visions seem to have been

¹ lxvii, 143 r.

perceived by Julian alone.

If the visions were of supernatural origin, they were either from the devil or from God. Her contemporary, Walter Hilton, discusses these alternatives in his Scale of Perfection,¹ and gives a test whereby one may tell whether such experiences are good or evil. He urges the visionary to be on guard, and to test the reactions of his soul:

If the pleasure that you feel leads you to abandon the thought and contemplation of Jesus Christ, and your spiritual exercises and prayer, so that you neglect self-examination and cease to long for virtue and the spiritual knowledge and love of God, then beware.

Julian's visions have quite the opposite effect on her spiritual life. Far from leading her away from thinking of and contemplating Christ, they are centred upon him, leading her to think even more deeply about him and to aspire towards union with him. From her reflections on the visions, one can see that they gave her a greater knowledge and insight than she had had previously, and a more intense longing for virtue and perfection. The teaching on prayer contained in her book² shows that she held it to be of very great importance. Her subsequent life as an anchoress and the reputation for devotion and wisdom that she enjoyed are evidence for her not abandoning prayer and contemplation.

Her experience falls more readily into the other category, whose effects Hilton goes on to describe:

¹ Walter Hilton, Scale of Perfection, I, 10 and 11.

² Especially Revelation XIV.

However, an experience of this kind may not discourage you from spiritual exercises, and may enable you to pray more fervently and devoutly, and to think more readily of spiritual things. If this be so, although it may be disturbing at first, it will later transform and quicken your heart to a deeper desire for virtue, increase your love towards God and your fellow Christians, and make you more lowly in your own eyes. By these indications you may know that it comes from God.

A second test of the good or evil origin of private revelations may be made by assessing their content. The eventuality of a diabolical source is eliminated if the teaching of the revelation is consonant with the Biblical doctrine.¹ In order to determine whether this is so with Julian's revelations a thorough examination is necessary, particularly of those points in which flaws and contradictions seem to occur.

One might be tempted here to try and distinguish the visions and locutions themselves, as the divine revelation, from Julian's interpretation of them.² The actual revelations may be from God, but Julian may have drawn the wrong inferences from them, so that one might attribute any heterodoxy to lack of understanding on her part and still maintain the divine origin of the visions. There is some support for this position in her own statement in chapter lxxiii:

Alle this blessyd techyng of oure Lorde God was shewde
by thre partys, that is to sey, by bodely syght, and
by worde formyd in myne vnderstandyng, and by gostely

¹ A private revelation from God carries a divine authority, yet in practice this is subordinate to the authority of the revelation given to the whole Church and recorded in the Bible.

² Clifton Wolters suggests this, op.cit., p.38.

syght. ffor the bodely syghte I haue seyde as I sawe
as truly as I can; and for the worde I haue seyde them
ryght as oure Lorde shewde them me; and for the
gostely syghte I haue seyde some dele, but I may nevyr
fulle telle it. 1

Nevertheless, one must weigh against this her words which indicate that
not only the visions but also their interpretation and the understanding
of them came from God:

I sawe and vnderstode that euery shewyng is full of
pryvytes. And there fore me behovyth now to tell thre
propertes in whych I am som dele esyd. The furst is
the begynnyng of techyng that I vnderstode ther in in
the same tyme. The secunde is the inwarde lernyng that
I haue vnderstode there in sythen. The thyrd is alle
the hole revelation fro the begynnyng to the ende,
whych oure Lorde God of his goodnes bryngyth oftymes
frelly to the syght of my vnderstandyng. And theyse
thre be so onyd as to my vnderstandyng that I can nott
nor may deperte them. And by theyse thre, as one, I
haue techyng wherby I ow to beleue and truste in oure
Lorde God, that of the same goodnesse that he shewed
it and for the same end, ryght so of the same goodness
and for the same end, he shall declare it to vs when
it is his wyll. 2

Even taking human fallibility into account, once one accepts
Julian's assertions literally it is difficult to fix the demarcation
between God's teaching and her own. In making any assessment of the
teaching of Julian's revelations in the light of the Biblical revelation,
this must be borne in mind.

¹ lxxiii, 152 v - 153 r.

² li, 96 r & v.

Julian's Attitude to her Visions

Julian's own attitude to her visions as expressed in her book is marked by a suitable caution. Evidently she regarded them as a private revelation from God which was to be made known by her to her fellow Christians.¹ She asserts quite definitely and frequently that God showed her the visions directly, and that he was the initiator of each one and of every part. Many times she uses the words "God shewed me", "our Lord shewed", and "our Lord said". The revelation is given, moreover, by the Son, the Word of God:

Right so, both God and Man, the same that sufferd for me, I conceived truly and mightly that it was him self that shewed it me, without anie meane. 2

But this statement does not come from gullible acceptance without careful thought. Even while she was actually undergoing the experience, she states, she was by no means prepared to receive anything contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures and the Church:

But in all thing I beleue as Holy Chyrch prechyth and techyth. For the feyth of Holy Church, which I had before hand vnderstandyng, and as I hope by the grace of God wylle fully kepe it in vse and in custome, stode contynually in my syght, wylllyng and meanyng never to receyve ony thyng that myght be contrary ther to. And with this intent and with this meanyng I beheld the shewyng with all my dyligence. 3

¹ Molinari, op cit., Part I, ch.3, gives a full discussion of Julian's evaluation of her visions.

² iv, 7 v.

³ ix, 19 r.

This resolution to hold steadfastly to the teachings of the Bible and the Church leads her to question whatever seems to her to contradict *them*. For example, in chapter xxxii she says:

In this syght I marveyled gretly and beheld oure feyth, menyng thus: oure feyth is groundyd in Goddes Worde, and it longyth to oure feyth that we beleue that Goddys Worde shalle be sauyn in alle thyng. And one poynt of oure feyth is that many creatures shall be dampnyd ... Stondyng alle thys, me thought it was vnpossible that alle maner of thyng shuld be wele as oure Lorde shewde in thys tyme. And as to thys, I had no other answer in shewyng of oure Lorde but thys: "That that is vnpossible to the is nott vnpossible to me. I shalle saue my Worde in alle thyng, and I shalle make althyng wele". And in thys I was taught by the grace of God that I shuld stedfastly holde me in the feyth as I had before vnderstond, and ther with that I shulde stonde and sadly beleue alle maner thyng shalle be wele as oure Lorde shewde in that same tyme. 1

Her questioning and examination of the teachings of the revelations in the light of the common beliefs of the Church produce a tension which frequently underlies the argument of her book. She states clearly that she believes the visions to be from God; but it is equally clear that she is not prepared to accept them without careful assessment. It is not a light thing for her to say, as she does in chapter ix, that her visions and the faith of the Church are a unity.

Julian never entertains the possibility that her revelations could be of diabolical origin. Their very content would seem to deny this, since one of the things explicitly taught is that the devil is overcome.²

¹ xxxii, 58 v ff. Italics are written in red in Paris MS.

² chs. xiii, xxxiii, lxxvii, etc.

But she does on one occasion doubt whether they were really from God or whether they were merely a part of her illness. After the fifteenth revelation had ended, she relates:

Anone my sycknes cam agene, ffurst in my hed, with a sownde and a noyse, and sodeynly all my body was fulfyllid with sycknes lyke as it was before, and I was as baryn and as drye as I had never had comfort but lytylle, and as a wrech mornyd hevyly for feelyng of my bodely paynes and for fantyng of comforte, gostly and bodely.

Then cam a relygyous person to me, and askyd me how I faryd. And I seyde I had revyd to day. And he loght lowde and inwardly. And I seyde, "The crosse that stode before my face, me thought it bled fast." 1

But this doubt is very shortlived:

With this worde the person that I spake to waxed all sad and merveyld. And anone I was sore aschamyd and astonyd for rechelesnesse. And I thought, "This man takyth sadly the lest worde that I myght sey, that sawe no more thereof". And when I saw that he toke it so sadly and with so grete reverence, I waxsid full grettly ashamyd and wolde a bene shryvyn. But I cowlde telle it to no prest, for I thought, "How shulde a preste belieue me, then I by seaying I raved shewed my selfe nott to belyue oure Lorde God?" Nott with standing I beleft hym truly for the tyme that I saw hym, and so was than my wyll and my menyng ever for to do without end. But as a fole I lett it passe oute of my mynde. A loo! Wrechyd I was; This was a grett synne and a grett vnkynndnesse, that I for folly of felyng of a lytylle bodely payne so vnwyssely left for the tyme the comfort of alle this blessyd shewyng of oure Lorde God. 2

The incident illustrates clearly how Julian regarded her visions. Her self-reproach at having doubted their genuineness is bitter. She

¹ lxvi, 141 r ff.

² lxvi, 141 v ff.

repents it as "a grett synne". In this regard the whole account of her temptation and the diabolical visitations is significant. It serves to emphasise and confirm her assertion that the visions were given by God himself. Henceforth, Julian remains firm in her conviction that the entire experience was a divine revelation, authentic, true and authoritative.

In view of this she is not over-troubled by the parts of it she cannot understand:

Nott with standing this, I sawe and vnderstode that
euery shewyng is full of pryvytes ... I haue techyng
whereby I ow to beleue and truste in oure Lorde God,
that of the same goodnesse that he shewed it and for
the same end, ryght so of the same goodness and for
the same end, he shall declare it to vs when it is
his wyll. 1

She realises that there are some things which will always remain obscure in this life,² and, in any case, "All shall be well". Even so, one is conscious, when reading her account, that it expresses a great thirst for knowledge and understanding. Because she has partial insight, she desires and seeks something more complete. The visions are said to have provided her with food for meditation for twenty years.

Evidently Julian regarded the revelations as more than something given for her benefit alone. Their message is for the edification and comfort of all her fellow Christians. She is only the instrument which

¹ li, 96 r.

² chs. xxxiii, xxxiv, lxxxv, etc.

God used to make it generally known. This is why an interpretation of the visions must be made and a clear understanding of their teaching becomes important. In this connection she says:

In alle this I was much steryde in cheryte to myne evyn cristen, that they myght alle see and know the same that I sawe, ffor I wolde that it were comfort to them. ffor alle this syght was shewde in generalle. 1

She takes pains to make clear that the revelation was not given to her for any merit that she had. She directs the reader's attention away from herself:

And therefore I pray yow alle, for Gods sake, and counceyle yow for yowre awne profyght, that ye leue the beholdyng of a wrech that it was schewde to, and myghtely, wysely and mekely behold in God, that of hys curteyse loue and endlesse goodnesse wolld shew it generally, in comfort of vs alle. 2

In the short version she is even more emphatic:

Botte God for bede that 3e schulde saye or take it so, that I am a techere, for I meene nouzt soo, no I mente nevere so. ffor I am a woman, leued, febille and freyll. Botte I wate wele this that I saye, I hafe it of the schewynge of hym that es souerayne Techare. Botte sothelys charyte styrres me to telle 3owe it, ffor I wolde God ware knawen and myn evyn crystene spede, as I wolde be my selfe, to the mare hatynge of synne and lovyng of God. Botte for I am a woman, schulde I therfore leve that I schulde nouzt telle 3owe the goodenes of God, syne that I sawe in that same tyme that is his wille that it be knawen? And that schalle 3e welle see in the same matere that folowes after, if itte be welle and trewlye takyn. Thane schalle 3e sone forgette me that am a wreche,

¹ viii, 17 r v.

² viii, 17 v - 18 r.

and dose so that I lette ^yowe nought, and be halde
Ihesu, that is Techare of alle. 1

In the last chapter, Julian speaks of God's purpose in giving the
revelation:

For truly I saw and vnderstode in oure Lordes menyng
that he shewde it, ffor he wyll haue it knowyng more
than it is; in whych knowyng he wylle geve vs grace
to loue hym, and cleve to hym. 2

His purpose is to bring solace and comfort to his people on earth,
because of his great love for them:

Loue was his menyng. Who shewyth it the? Loue.
Wherfore shewyth he it the? For loue. 3

This could explain the vivid, almost photographic detail that is
given in her account of the visions. If they contain a revelation from
God, then every part is important, and all must be recorded as accurately
as possible.

She says that the revelations came to her in three ways: "by bodely
syght, and by words formed in myne vnderstondyng, and by gostely syght".⁴

¹ Add. MS 37, 790. Pages are not numbered.

² 173 r.

³ 173 v.

⁴ The "sights" are what we would call "visions", and the "words" are
"locutions". Molinari (*op.cit.*, Part I, ch.2 and Appendix) compares
Julian's classification of her visions and locutions with the
traditional division into corporeal, imaginative and intellectual.
A "corporeal" vision is one of an object which is perceived by the

She continues:

ffor the bodely syghte I haue seyde as I sawe as truly
as I can; And for the worde. I haue seyde them ryght
as oure Lorde shewde them me; And for the gostely
syghte I haue seyde som dele, but I may nevyr fulle
telle it. 1

With regard to this inability to communicate to her readers what she saw
with "ghostly sight" she says in chapter ix:

But the goostely syght I can nott ne may shew it as
openly ne as fully as I would. But I trust on our
Lord God almightie that he shall, of his goodnes and
for iour loue, make yow to take it more ghostely and
more sweetly than I can or may tell it. 2

From this it is clear that Julian tried to give as complete an
account as she could of the visual and verbal elements of the revelations,
but when it came to conveying what she perceived in a more spiritual
manner, her powers of description failed. So she concentrated upon the
former, hoping that through it the reader might also, by God's grace,
receive an understanding of the latter.

[footnote 4 cont'd]

"exterior senses", i.e., seen, heard, felt, as if it existed objectively
outside the visionary. "Imaginative" visions and locutions are perceived
by the "interior senses" or imagination - colloquially we might say that
they are seen "with the mind's eye". Those called "intellectual" are
apprehended by the mind directly, without the means of images or words.

Molinari argues that Julian's visions do not exactly correspond to
these three classes. What she says she saw "bodily" was probably not
perceived with the exterior senses, and hence not a corporeal vision.
He indicates that her revelations were probably of the two higher
kinds (p.62 ff).

1 153 r.

2 19 v.

This also explains the form that her book takes. As a rule she gives first of all an account of the vision or locution, and then her interpretation, commentary and meditation follows. A full description of what she saw or heard is given, particularly where she herself does not fully understand the meaning of it, so that the reader might, if he can, work it out for himself. Thus the visions are primary, the source and starting-point for all the doctrine of the book, which is developed from them.

Fiction

All this assumes that Julian was genuine in her assertion that she received her information primarily in a series of sixteen visions or revelations from God. But there is another possibility which ought to be considered, namely that the story of sickness and visions is simply a fictional framework, a device employed by Julian in order to present her own teaching in a form more palatable to those who may be prejudiced against female theologians. This indirect technique, of giving doctrine in the form of dreams or visions, conveys a semblance of authority - in this case no less than a divine authority - to the writer's words. It was a device frequently employed in the later Middle Ages, for a variety of themes ranging from religion to courtly love. Julian's book may belong to the tradition of dream-vision literature, which includes works so apparently disparate as the Roman de la Rose and Piers Plowman. (The tone of Julian's book is, of course, more in keeping with that of the latter.)

The boldness of a claim to divine authority does not necessarily preclude this possibility. If she was convinced that the doctrine of her book was the truth, that it was not at variance with the teaching of Scripture or the orthodox belief of the Church (as it was understood at that time, at least), and that it needed to be stated once more in a forceful way for the benefit of her fellow Christians, Julian may well have considered such a procedure to be justified.

It may be argued that her care in recording exact times and dates is evidence in favour of the authenticity of her experience. If she was such a well-known figure in Norwich as Margery Kempe's account indicates, to give in the interest of verisimilitude specific details of an illness and of people present at the time would be an unnecessary risk to take. This is, however, far from conclusive. It has, in fact, proved to be notoriously difficult to discover or to verify biographical information about Julian of Norwich. She is deliberately self-effacing and vague. She never mentions the name of anyone present (or her own name), or where the illness occurred. As for the date and time, 13th May, 1373, from 4.00 a.m. onwards, it is surprising how many of the fictional dream-visions began on a morning in May. Such historical information may be used as evidence either way:

She is naturally at pains to establish the historicity of her Revelations. Though the place could be anywhere in England, and the "creature" any living Christian, what she tells is to be accepted as fact. Like the Great Revelation, the shewing of God's son at Bethlehem, it actually happened, it is an event in time, with a before and an after. 1

¹ Walsh, op.cit., p.3.

The same criticism can be applied to Julian's book as to the books of the Bible. Either they are a genuine record of "the meeting-place of the eternal and the temporal", or, from whatever motive, they are a careful and deliberate hoax.

If this is so, the question of where Julian received her information, not to mention her perception and spiritual understanding, remains open. In any event, one cannot admit a facile interpretation of her self-description as "a symple creature vnlettyrd".

The Climate of Thought

The full significance of the form in which Julian's teaching is presented can only be appreciated as one regards the context in which her book was written. The Fourteenth Century saw a resurgence of that attitude which distrusts the subtleties of human reasoning and speculation in matters of faith.¹ The distinction between the simple, experiential knowledge of God, whose dynamic is love, and the academic knowledge of God conceived in philosophical terms and expressed in niceties of definition, was by no means new.² Crudely, it is the distinction between the mystic and the theologian, although one man might well be both and might possess the qualities and knowledge of both. The Fourteenth Century saw a marked turning to the one away from the other, because the theology of the schools³ had ceased to be fruitful, like a tree that is

¹ Pantin, op.cit., pp.132-134, 251-252.

² cf. I Corinthians I, etc.

³ Jean Leclercq draws a valuable distinction between scholastic and monastic theology, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God, Introduction.

attacked at the root.

There is no doubt that this barrenness in scholastic theology is in a large measure due to the immense influence and popularity in the universities of the teaching of William of Ockham,¹ who maintained that everything beyond the reach of man's practical experience was unknowable, since it was impossible to argue from the particular to the general. Pursuing the arguments of Duns Scotus, whose emphasis on the freedom of God's will led to the conclusion that God's ways were incalculable by human reason, Ockham held that God himself could not be known or his existence or attributes verified. These things were outside the realm of rational demonstration, at best only probable; they could be believed as a matter of faith, but not proved. The great theological systems of the Thirteenth Century, the Scholastic Summae, were founded upon a synthesis of faith and reason. All the Scholastic thinkers, from Anselm to Thomas, however divergent their views, had held to the validity of human reason in enlightening matters of faith, and of faith itself as a requisite for knowledge.² Now, through Ockham's epistemology, faith and reason were divorced; theology and philosophy went their separate ways, While this meant a great advance in studies that related to the sphere of

¹ G.Leff, Bradwardine and the Pelagians, (Cambridge, 1957), pp.3-20; D.Knowles, The Evolution of Mediaeval Thought (London, 1962), ch. xxviii.

² For a discussion of Augustine's view, which underlay the Scholastic tradition, see "Faith and Reason", by R.E.Cushman, in A Companion to the Study of St.Augustine, ed. by R.W.Battenhouse (New York, 1955).

human experience, like the natural sciences, which became autonomous disciplines without reference to theology, for theology itself it meant that the support of reason was removed, and one had to fall back on dogmatic assertion and authority.¹

Thus undermined, the theology of the schools could easily become dry and barren, and in the latter half of the Fourteenth Century, to a large extent, it had.² Hence the preference, on the part of many, for a knowledge of God based upon personal experience, imbued with love, informed by revelation. What might not satisfactorily be explained by reason could be worked out in practice. The authority of the Scriptures, and of the Fathers of the Church, came alive as the touchstone of devotion. Such a knowledge of God need not be confined to the schoolman, or even to the religious, but might equally be enjoyed by the uneducated and the layman (for the Fourteenth Century also saw the rise of a devout and literate laity as a class to be considered).³ This was an atmosphere in which Christian mysticism could flourish, and, in both England and the Continent, flourish it did.

It is easy to see affinities between this anti-intellectual attitude

¹ Also, as Knowles points out (op.cit., p.332), "By denying the possibility of a rational demonstration of the truths of 'natural' religion, and by regarding revelation as something arbitrary, to be accepted with unreasoning submission, and left without comment or explanation, Nominalism, under the guise of a devout humility, left the door open for agnosticism or incredulity as well as for a fideistic acceptance of religious teaching."

² Ibid., p.330.

³ Pantin, op.cit., p.253, etc. Also G.Lagarde, Le Naissance de l'esprit laïque au déclin du Moyen Age, (Paris, 1934).

and the spirit of the Revelations of Divine Love. As a woman, Julian was probably never in a position consciously to react against the theological technicalities of the schools, as her male contemporaries, Walter Hilton and the author of the Cloud, as well as the earlier Richard Rolle, no doubt were.¹ Nevertheless, her book may be seen as an expression of the positive values to which the reactionaries turned. Likewise, although the "recluse atte Norwyche" may not have actively participated in current theological controversies, her Revelations gives voice to one body of opinion, and takes a certain recognisable approach to the questions that were being discussed.² The assumptions that are made and the conclusions reached place her in a tradition.

So the significance of the form and content of the Revelations of Divine Love is seen more clearly against this background of contemporary thought. Although it has a more general application, the book is the product of a particular age, whose needs it comes to meet, and whose spirit, however unconsciously, it reflects. This consideration gives greater meaning to the fact that Julian gives her own arguments second place to the authority of a divine revelation, and that the teaching of the book is presented as the outcome of a personal experience and concerns the practical outworking of the principles thus derived. Whether Julian in fact received a revelation from God, or whether she chose to present her own conclusions in this form, there was a considerable

¹ Ibid., pp.251-252.

² See below, Ch.VI.

audience at that time more ready to accept revelation than the product of human reasoning, and a demonstration of God's love which inspired trust and confidence in him rather than an intellectually watertight system that answered all the academic questions.

CHAPTER II

MAJOR THEMES

The Revelations of Divine Love is a discussion, from a Christian point of view, of the problem of suffering. The fact of suffering is forcefully asserted, both in human sickness and death (particularly in Julian's own illness) and in the pains of Christ on the cross.¹ But suffering is considered in relation to the sovereignty and love of God. Julian's book examines the apparent paradox and attempts a resolution.

The Three Petitions

The first part of the book² tells how Julian asked God for three things, and how these requests were granted.

This reuelation was made to a symple creature ...
Which creature desyred before thre gyftes by the
grace of God. The first was mynd of the passion.
The secund was bodilie sicknes. The thurde was to
haue of Godes gyfte thre woundys. 3

¹ Pantin points out that devotion to the humanity of Christ, concentrated in particular on the Passion and on the Name of Jesus, was a characteristic of the 14th Century mystics (op.cit., p.251). See also R.W.Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages (1953), Ch. v.

² The following chapters are based upon the longer version of the Revelations. Quotations are taken from the Paris MS, unless otherwise specified. For the division of the book into three parts, see below, ch. VII.

³ ii, 3 r.

The first request was made so that, seeing the pains of Christ, she might suffer with him:

For the first me thought I had sumdeele feelyng in the passion of Christ, but yet I desyred to haue more by the grace of God, Me thought I woulde haue ben that tyme with Magdaleyne and with other that were Christus louers, that I might haue seen bodilie the passion that our Lord suffered for me, that I might haue suffered with him as other did that loved him. And therefore I desyred a bodely sight wher in I might haue more knowledge of the bodily paynes of our Sauour, and of the compassion of our Lady, and of all his true louers that were lyuyng that tyme and saw his paynes. For I would haue be one of them and haue suffered with them. 1

It has been pointed out² that the object of the request is "more true mynd in the passion of Christ", that is, compassion. The vision is only a means to this end.

The second petition was for a sickness:

I would that that sicknes were so hard as to the death, that I might in that sicknes haue vndertaken all my rightes of the holie Church, my selfe weenyng that I should haue died, and that all creatures might suppose the same that saw me. For I would haue no maner of comforte of fleshly ne erthely life in that sicknes. I desyred to haue all maner of paynes, bodily and ghostly, that I should haue if I should haue if I should haue died, all the dredys and temptations of fiendes and all maner of other paynes, saue the outpassing of the sowle. 3

Yet again the sickness is only seen as a means to an end. She

¹ Ibid.

² Molinari discusses this fully in the first part of his book, esp. pp.13-18.

³ ii, 4 r.

desires it so that she may become detached from the world and purified,
so as to live afterwards for God alone:

And this ment I: ffor I would be purgied by the
mercie of God, and after liue more to the worshippe
of God, by cause of that sicknes. 1

The third gift she desires is to receive "thre woundes in my life;
that is to say, the wound of verie contricion, the wound of kynd
compassion, and the wound of willfull longing to God".² It is evident
that the second and third "wounds" correspond to the first two petitions.
Julian says that she asked for these two conditionally ("If that it be
thy wille"), and that they soon passed from her mind; but the third was
asked without any condition, and "dwellid contynually".³ Nevertheless,
all three petitions were granted fully. Indeed, Julian was given far
more than she had ever asked.

The Petitions Granted

The first to be answered was the request for a sickness, which was
as severe as she had desired. Everyone, including Julian, thought that
she would die, and she was given the Last Rites. During the illness
she attained detachment from the world as she had desired, and, trusting
in God, she abandoned herself to his will:

When I was xxxth yere old and a halfe, God sent me a
bodily sicknes, in the which I ley iiij daies and iiij

¹ ii, 4 v.

² ii, 4 v.

³ Ibid.

nyghtes. And on the iiij nyght I toke all my rightes of Holie Church, and went not to haue leuen tyll day. And after this I lay two daies and two nightes, and on the third night I weened often tymes to haue passed, and so wenyd thei that were with me. ... And I vnderstode in my reason and by the feelyng of my paynes that I should die; and I ascentyd fully with all the will of myn hart to be at Gods will. 1

Then, at the crisis of her illness, extraordinary things began to happen. Suddenly all the pain left her, and then, she says, it suddenly came to her mind to ask for the second "wound" and the first gift that she had desired, that is, "that my bodie might be fulfilled with mynd and feeling of his blessed passion". She desired that "his paynes were my paynes, with compassion and afterward langyng to God". She emphasises that she no longer wanted any vision of the Passion, only "compassion". But it was at this point that the visions began.

Julian's three petitions all involve some kind of suffering, whether physical or spiritual. Yet this suffering is not viewed as something apart from the will of God; indeed, it is to be given by God, for a salutary purpose. Right from the beginning, therefore, pain is seen as something which may come from God. Further, this human suffering is closely bound up with the Passion of Christ. In the revelations Christ on the cross becomes, as it were, the type of human suffering, as the crucifixion is the great central fact around which the whole of Julian's teaching on the subject is woven. These principles, that suffering may come from God, and that it is related to the Passion of Christ, underly the arguments that are subsequently developed.

¹ iii, 5 r ff.

In the first twelve revelations Julian's petitions are granted fully. She sees "in bodily sight" Christ on the cross, the pains caused by the crowning with thorns,¹ the scourging² and his last agony.³ She sees these things with remarkable clarity and records them with vivid exactness. By the visions/of the crucifixion, her first request is granted, and she is given "mynd of the passion". During the sight of Jesus' dying agony she experienced the compassion she had desired:

The shewyng of Cristes paynes ffylled me fulle of peynes. For I wyste welles he suffyryde but onys, but as he wolde shewe it me and fylle me with mynde as I had before desyerde. And in all thys tyme of Cristes presens I felte no payne but for Cristes paynes. 4

The pain was worse than she had anticipated, as she goes on to say:

Than thought me I knew fulle lytylle what payne it was that I askyd, and as a wrech I repentyd me, thyngkyng if I had wyste what it had be, loth me had been to haue preyde it. ffor me thought my paynes passyd ony bodely deth. I thought, "Is ony payne in helle lyk thys?" And I was answeyrd in my reson, "Helle is a nother peyne, for ther is dyspyer". 5

¹ Revelation I. Walter Hilton speaks of such an experience as a "meditation" which is given to the soul by God, and describes just such a vision of the crucifixion (Scale of Perfection, I, 35).

² Revelation IV.

³ Revelation VIII.

⁴ xvii, 35 v.

⁵ Ibid.

Thus she discovers the true nature of compassion, that is, suffering with Christ:

Of all peane that leed to saluacion, thys is the most:
to se the louer to suffer. How myght ony payne be
more, then to see hym that is alle my lyfe, alle my
blysse, and alle my joy suffer? Here felt I stedfastly
that I louyd Crist so much aboue my selfe that ther was
no payne that myght be sufferyd lyke to that sorow that
I had to see hym in payne. 1

Following this she was able to see, in part, the compassion of all creatures, typified and supremely shown in that of Saint Mary, "for so much as she louyd hym more then alle other, her payne passyd alle other".² Not only did those who loved him suffer, but even those who did not:

Here saw I a grett onyng betwene Crist and vs, to my
vnderstondyng, ffor when he was in payne, we ware in
payne, and alle creatures that myght suffer payne
sufferyd with hym. ... tho that were hys fryndes
suffered payne for loue, and generally alle. 3

By means of the visions of Christ on the cross, Julian learned to suffer because she saw him in pain, and so to suffer with him. Having thus experienced compassion herself, she was able to see it in others, and so universally. Through suffering, in the Passion, God and man are united. It is at this point that the complementary doctrines of substitutionary atonement and identification with Christ are asserted, quite simply:

¹ Ibid.

² xviii, 36 r.

³ xviii, 36 v.

Thus was oure Lord Ihesu payned for vs; and we
stonde alle in this maner of payne with him ... 1

Two chapters later they are stated even more profoundly:

ffor every mannys synne that shalbe savyd he sufferyd,
and every mannes sorow, desolacion and angwysshe he
sawe and sorowd, for kyndnes and loue. ... for as long
as he was passyble he sufferde for vs, and sorowde for
vs. And now he is vppe resyn and no more passibylle,
yett he sufferyth with vs. 2

For this reason it is right for man to regard "the harde payne that
he sufferyd with a contricion and compassion",³ that is, with sorrow for
the sins that caused Christ to die as well as with grief for the pain
that the Lord suffered.

In this eighth revelation also, Julian received the third "wound",
that of true longing for God. She relates how she was given the
opportunity to choose between looking at Christ, and so continuing to
suffer with him, and looking up to heaven.⁴ She chose Christ:

"Nay, I may nott [look up], ffor thou art my hevyn!"
Thys I seyde for I wolde nott. ffor I had levyr a
bene in that payne tylle domys day than haue come to
hevyn other wyse than by hym. 5

A vague "longing" here finds a definite object. Christ on the cross,

¹ xviii, 37 v.

² xx, 40 r.

³ xx, 40 v.

⁴ xix, 38 r.

⁵ Ibid.

in whom the divine and the human meet and are particularised, is the one for whom she most truly longs. In the inmost soul, the true self, "alle the intent and the wyllle is sett endlesly to be onyd to oure Lorde Ihesu".¹

The choice also leads to a deeper understanding of the nature of suffering. Previously Julian had wondered whether any pain in hell was as bad as the pain of seeing Jesus' agony, and she was taught that "helle is a nother peyne". Now she learns that, in spite of the pain of compassion, to look at Jesus is heaven. The facile equations of pain and hell, pleasure and heaven, are explicitly denied, and a more complex view is asserted.²

The Positive Side

All this, however, presents only the negative aspect, just as Julian's petitions seem to be rather negative. There is another element which enters ~~right~~ from the first revelation, juxtaposed with the element of suffering, and becoming dominant. Paradoxically, this is joy.

The first revelation begins:

Sodenly I saw the reed bloud rynnyng downe from vnder the garlande, hote and freyssely plentuously and liuely, right as it was in the tyme that the garland of thornes was pressed on his blessed head. 3

It continues:

¹ xix, 39 r.

² C.S.Lewis seems to be moving in the same direction in the Problem of Pain, p.114 ff.

³ iv, 7 r & v.

And in the same shewing sodeinly the Trinitie fulfilled my hart most of ioy; and so I vnderstode it shall be in heauen without end to all that shall come ther.

Here, stated one after the other, are the two themes which run throughout the revelations.

Joy is to be found in the relationship between man and God, in the very fact that God has dealings with man, coming down to him in love.

Yet this descent involves pain on God's part:

For verely it is the most joy that may be, as to my syght, that he that is hyghest and myghtyest, noblyest and wurthyest, is lowest and mekest, hamlyest and curtysest. And truly and verely this marvelous joy shall he shew vs all when we shall see hym. And thys wille oure good Lorde that we beleue and trust, joy and lyke, comfort vs and make solace as we may with hys grace and with hys helpe, in to the tyme that we see it verely. ffor the most fulhede of joy that we shalle haue as to my syght ys thys marvelous curtesy and homelynesse of oure Fader that is oure Maker, in oure Lorde Ihesu Crist, that is oure Broder and oure Sauior. 1

Supremely, joy springs from the Passion. By the Passion of Christ, the devil is overcome,² which occasions great happiness, "ffor all that God sufferyth hym to do turnyth vs to joy, and hym to shame and payne". Nevertheless the terrible cost is sobering, for "he is overcome by the blessydfulle passion and deth of pure Lorde Ihesu Crist that was done in fulle grett earnest, and with sad traveyle".³

The sixth revelation, which immediately follows, is concerned with

¹ vii, 15 v.

² Revelation V, xiii, 26 v ff.

³ xiii, 28 v.

the joys of heaven; and the seventh springs from the two feelings, joy and pain, experienced alternatively. This, she says, was to demonstrate that

It is spedfulle to some soules to feele on thys wyse,
some tyme to be in comfort, and some tyme for to
fayle and to be lefte to them selfe. 1

Her conclusions here are significant:

God wylle that we know that he kepyth vs evyr in lyke
suer, in wo and in wele; and for profy3th of mans
soule a man is somtyme left to hym selfe, all thogh
hys synne is nott evyr the cause ... And both is one
loue. ffor it is Goddes wylle that we holde vs in
comfort with alle oure myght, for blysse is lastyng
with oujt ende, and payne is passyng and shall be
brought to nowght to them that shall be savyd.
Therefore it is nott Goddes wylle that we folow the
felyng of paynes in sorow and mownyng for them, but
sodayly passe ovyr, and hold vs in the endlesse
lykyng that is God. 2

Here joy and pain are seen in perspective. For the Christian, pain is a temporary experience, but the joy of heaven, which is his certain hope, is an eternal state. Whatever the source of his suffering in this life - it may come from God himself, and certainly it only comes with his permission³ - the Christian should realise that God preserves him just as much then as when he is happy. Seeing temporal pains in the light of eternal joy, he should not dwell on them, but try to rest in a tranquillity in keeping with his promised blessedness.⁴

¹ xv, 31 v - 32 r.

² Ibid.

³ This follows from Revelation III, in which it is stated that God "doth alle that is done" (xi, 23 bis r), see chs. III and IV below.

⁴ cf. Hebrews 12:1 ff.

It is significant that she reaches these conclusions immediately before the greatest vision of the dying Lord Jesus, and before her extreme sorrow and desolation at the sight, in which she is taught true compassion.¹

The power which reconciles the two contraries, pain and joy, and which transforms the one into the other, is love. Supremely, it is God's love for man, displayed in the passion of Christ.²

The loue in hym was so strong whych he hath to oure soule, that wyllyngfully he chose it with grett desyer, and myldely he sufferyd it with grett joy. 3

But by the grace of God and through the power of the passion, man's love for God likewise transforms pain into joy, as she goes on to indicate:

For the soule that beholdyth thus whan it is touchyd by grace, he shalle verely see that the paynes of Cristes passion passe alle paynes; that is to sey, whych paynes shalbe turned in to everlastyng joy by the vertu of Cristes passion. 4

The change is demonstrated symbolically at the end of the eighth revelation:

I lokyd after the departing with alle my myghtes, and wende to haue seen the body alle deed. Butt I saw him nott so. And right in the same tyme that me thought by semyng that the lyfe myght no lenger last, and the shewyng of the ende behovynd nedes to

¹ Revelation VIII.

² I John 4:9, 10.

³ xx, 40 v, cf. Hebrews 12: 2.

⁴ Ibid.

be nye,

sodenly, I beholdyng in the same crosse, he chaungyd in blessydfulle chere. The chaungyng of hys blessyd chere chaungyd myne, and I was as glad and mery as it was possible. Then brought oure Lorde meryly to my mynd, "Wher is now any poynt of thy payne or of thy anguyssse?" And I was fulle mery. 1

Her interpretation of this part of the revelation shows the place of compassion in the perspective of temporal suffering and eternal joy which she had indicated at the end of Revelation VII:

I vnderstode that we be now in our Lordes menyng in his crosse with hym, in our paynes and in our passion dyeng. And we willfully abydyng in the same crosse with his helpe and his grace in to the last poynt, sodeynly he shalle chaunge hys chere to vs, and we shalbe with hym in hevyn. Betwene that one and that other shalle alle be one tyme; and than shalle alle be brought in to joy. 2

It is by means of identification with Christ in his suffering that the Christian is brought to this joy:

And the cause why that he sufferyth is for he wylle of hys goodnes make vs the eyers with hym in hys blysse. And for this lytylle payne that we suffer heer, we shalle haue an hygh, endlesse knowyng in God, whych we myght nevyr haue without that. and the harder oure paynes haue ben with hym in hys crosse, the more shalle our worshchppe be with hym in his kyngdom. 3

By the grace of God, joy follows suffering as a consequence; the joy of heaven is consequent upon the passion of Christ. The two are

¹ xx, 40 v - xxi, 41 r.

² xxi, 41 r, cf. Galatians 2:20.

³ xxi, 41 v, cf. II Timothy 2:12.

inextricably bound together.

In the next four revelations¹ the element of joy is in the ascendant. Such great joy follows his suffering, the Lord Jesus "settyth at naught hys traveyle and his passion and his cruelle and shamfulle deth".² God the Father is "wele plesyde with alle the dedes that Ihesu hath done about our saluacion", the Son is crowned with glory and honour, and the Holy Ghost is filled with pleasure.³

Once again Divine Love is shown as the power that transforms suffering, as the temporal act whereby man's redemption was accomplished is set against the changeless attitude of God for his creation:

The loue that made hym to suffer it passith as far alle his paynes as hevyn is aboue erth. ffor the payne was a noble, precious and wurschypfulle dede done in a tyme by the workyng of loue; and loue was without begynnyng, and is, and shall be without ende. 4

God's joy in the passion is, as it were, increased by man's acceptance of and pleasure in his salvation:

If thou arte apayde, I am apayde. It is a joy, a blysse, an endlesse lykyng to me that evyr I sufferd passion for the. And yf I myght haue sufferyd more, I wolde a sufferyd more. 5

¹ i.e. Revelations IX-XII.

² xxii, 42 v.

³ chs. xxii & xxiii.

⁴ xxii, 43 v.

⁵ xxii, 42 r.

So man's fitting response is to rejoice also, with a pleasure that is like God's:

For it is Goddes wylle that we haue true lykyng with hym in oure saluacion, and ther in he wylle that we be myghtly comfortyd and strengthyd, and thus wylle he meryly with hys grace that oure soule be occupied ... A Ihesu wylle we take hede to thys blysse that is in the blessydfulle Trinytie of our saluacion, and that we desyre to haue as much gostly lykyng with his grace as it is before seyde. That is to say, that the lykyng of our saluacion be lyke to the joy that Crist hath of oure saluation. 1

The divine love which is displayed in the passion, and the joy which follows, are again stated in the tenth revelation:

With this oure good Lorde seyde well blessydfully, "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 Sauoure; my chylde, behold and see what lykyng and blysse I haue in thy saluacion, and for my loue enioye with me."

And also to more vnderstandyng thys blessyd worde was sayde, Lo, how I loue thee: as yf he had sayde, "Behold and see that I louyd thee so much or that I dyed for thee, that that I wolde dye for the. And now I haue dyed for the and sufferd wyllyngfully that I may. And now is all my bitter payne, and alle my harde traveyle turnyd to evyrlastyng joy and blysse, to me and to the ..." 2

A third vision of Saint Mary follows, in which Julian sees her as the supreme example of a soul loved by God; and this love of the Lord for his Mother is extended to all mankind:

Wylt thou se in her how thou art louyd? ffor thy loue I haue made her so hygh, so noble, so wurthy. And thys lykyth me, and so wille I that it do the. 3

¹ xxiii, 44 v f.

² xxiv, 46 v ff.

³ xxv, 48 r.

The twelfth revelation, which is a vision of Christ in glory ("wher in", she says, "I was lerned that oure soule shalle nevyr haue rest tylle it come into hym, knowyng that he is full of joye"), shows the element of joy supreme. There is no mention of pain -

The joy that I saw in the shewyng of them passyth
alle that hart can thynk or soule may desyre. 1

It is here that the first part of the Revelations ends, and the discussion of the problem of suffering takes a different turn.

In the first twelve revelations, centred on the figure of Christ on the cross, the fact of suffering is asserted, and set against the promise of an eternal joy into which pain may be turned by the power of divine love. The teachings of this part of the book are concerned with how one ought to regard suffering in this life, in particular seeing it as related to the Passion of Christ, and capable of leading to a union with him. Reasons for the existence of suffering are not discussed, although it is said that pain may be sent by God as part of his will and purpose. This question, as an element of the larger problem of the presence of evil in the creation, is raised in the chapters following Revelation XII.

Before considering how Julian deals with this problem, it is necessary to look at the rest of the premises from which her arguments develop. These are also given in the first twelve revelations (though they are elaborated later on), and may be summarised as her doctrine of the nature of God. An examination of this doctrine, in the light of the

¹ xxvi, 49 v.

teachings of the Biblical revelation, is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE SOVEREIGNTY AND LOVE OF GOD

It is only when one holds certain concepts of the nature of God that the fact of suffering becomes a problem. It is when one believes that there is a God who is both sovereign and loving that the existence of suffering in the world demands an explanation, for the fact of pain seems to contradict the belief. This is one of the perennial difficulties of Christianity.

Hence the reality of pain and death, which is presented so forcefully in the first part of Julian's book, is bound to challenge the assertions that are made about God in the same place. It will be convenient to examine these assertions first, before going on, in the next chapter, to consider the conflict which arises and how Julian attempts to resolve it.

It should be noted that Julian makes no attempt to prove the existence of God or his attributes: for her these things are axiomatic. Likewise, she does not set out her beliefs in an orderly schema, but makes only passing references to them as presuppositions in her general argument. They are supported, at times, by the authority of Scripture, but for the most part they are simply assumed.

The "Sovereignty" of God

Julian's concept of God is primarily of one who is "all-souereyn

Being",¹ that is, God is the One who is, eternally, from "without beginning" to "without end". Her concept, therefore, is the Biblical one:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God,
which is and which was and which is to come. 2

As to Moses on Mount Horeb, so the figure in the vision declares himself to Julian at one of the highest points of her book:

"I it am. I it am. I it am that is hyghest. I it am that thou lovyst. I it am that thou lykyst. I it am that thou servyst. I it am that thou longest. I it am that thou desyryst. I it am that thou menyte. I it am that is alle. I it am that Holy Church prechyth the and techyth thee. I it am that shewde me before to the." 3

Whatever is predicated, the almost hypnotic repetitio of this passage constantly brings one back to that theophany in which God's Name was revealed:

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. 4

¹ i, 2 r.

² Apocalypse 1:8: "Ego A et O, principium et finis, dicit Dominus Deus, qui est et qui erat et qui venturus est". cf. Isaiah 44:6, etc.

³ xxvi, 49 r, cf. lix, 126 v.

⁴ Exodus 3:13, 14: "Dixit Deus ad Moysen: EGO SUM QUI SUM. Ait: Sic dices filiis Israel: QUI EST, misit me ad vos." The concept is

The concept of God as "all-souereyn Being" implies the doctrine of his immutability. To Julian, God is unchanging and unchangeable; all his attributes are eternal:

For his goodnes fulfillith all his creaturs and all
his blessed workes without end. ffor he is the
endleshead ... 1

He chaungyd nevyr hys purpose in no manner of
thyng, ne nevyr shalle without end ... 2

The loue that made hym to suffer it, passith as far
alle his paynes as hevyn is aboue erth, ffor ...
loue was without begynnyng, is and shall be without
ende. 3

The belief in God's changelessness, which is an important foundation for much of the teaching of the book, finds clearest expression in later chapters, when Julian is dealing with problems of judgement and the "wrath" of God:

I saw no maner of wrath in God, neyther for shorte
tyme nor for long. ffor truly as to my syght, yf
God myght be wroth a whyle, we shuld neyther haue
lyfe ne stede ne beyng. ffor as verely as we haue
oure beyng of the endlesse myght of God, and of the
endlesse wyȝdom and of the endlesse goodnesse, also
verely we haue oure kepyng ... ffor I saw full truly
that alle oure endlesse frenschypp, oure stede, oure
lyfe and oure beyng is in God. 4

[footnote 4 cont'd]

cleverly conveyed by Julian's use of syntax. There is no complement to the "I am" except a pronoun. What is predicated is actually given in an adverbial clause.

1 v, 10 v.

2 xi, 24 v.

3 xxii, 43 v.

4 xlix, 89 v f.

The conclusion of this chapter is significant:

Thus is God oure stedfast ground, and shall be oure
full blysse, and make vs vnchaungeable as he is when
we be there. 1

It is from the belief that God is "all-souereyn Being" and
immutable, that she affirms that everything that is owes its existence
to him.² "We haue," she says, "oure beyng of hym".³ God is the Maker
of all things, and beside him she sees the whole creation as nothing, as
tiny as a hazelnut in the palm of the hand.⁴ All its significance and
value derive from him: "It lasteth, and ever shall, for God loueth it.
And so hath all thing being by the loue of God."⁵

For wele I wot that hevyn and erth and alle that is
made is great, large and feyer and good. But the
cause why it shewyth so lytylle to my syght was for
I saw it in the presence of hym that is the Maker.
ffor a soul that seth the Maker of all thyng, all
that is made semyth fulle lytylle. 6

So far, it is clear that Julian's concept of God, as essential and
immutable Being and the Creator of all that is, follows the Augustinian

¹ xlix, 91 v.

² The same corollary is implied in the first part of St. John's Gospel:
"In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat
Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt,
et sine ipso factum est nihil, quod factum est."

³ lix, 126 v.

⁴ v, 9 r ff.

⁵ v, 9 v.

⁶ viii, 16 v.

tradition:

He is the first and supreme existence, who is altogether unchangeable, and who could say in the fullest sense of the words, "I am that I am" ... so that all other things that exist ... owe their existence entirely to him. 1

Related to the belief that God is the creator of all things are the doctrines of divine omnipotence and omniscience. In her belief that God is all-powerful, again Julian keeps within the accepted tradition,² and it is at this point that her doctrine differs radically from that of the Fourteenth Century sceptics, who took God's potentia absoluta to mean his absolute freedom, to the extent of unpredictability.³ The proposition that literally nothing is impossible to God in his absolute omnipotence has enormous implications:

Any course was as likely as another in His infinite freedom; accordingly the sceptics refused to limit themselves in what could be said about Him; it enabled them to join the blasphemous to the devotional, to make black part of white, to consider the impossible as possible, all in the name of His freedom. ... As a result God was as He willed; His attributes dissolved before the blaze of His omnipotence, making Him unknowable not only in the wider and accepted sense, but in those traits which were virtually a precondition for belief. His goodness, perfection, mercy, justice and wisdom all faded from man's vision as beyond his ken. He could only be known by His ability ever to do differently than He had done. God, therefore, lost His certainty; He became identified with infinite possibility rather than with any fixed and ascertainable order. Hence anything could be posited of Him, for His potentia absoluta substituted speculation for understanding. 4

¹ Augustine, Christian Doctrine, I, XXXII, cf. Enchiridion IX ff.

² G.Leff, Bradwardine and the Pelagians, pp.130-139, 159-160.

³ Knowles, Evolution of Mediaeval Thought, p.329.

⁴ G.Leff, op.cit., pp.131-132.

But for Julian God's omnipotence is subject to his immutability. The whole tenor of her teaching, therefore, implies the traditional position: that God does not act in a manner contrary to his own nature, that he is fully able to do what his will decrees,¹ and that his will, free from internal necessity and external pressure, is wholly consonant with his goodness and love. While Ockham and his followers pursued God's omnipotence in its absolute sense so far as to make everything about him uncertain, Julian holds so firmly to her belief in his unchangeable goodness that for her, in marked contrast, his omnipotence is a great source of assurance. God is utterly steadfast and reliable, able to do all things for the good of those he loves, and hence one to be fully trusted. The achievement of his purpose is not hindered by sin or lack of co-operation on the part of his creatures;² he is able to overcome apparently insurmountable difficulties for their salvation:

That that is vnpossible to the is nott vnpossible
to me. ... I shalle make althyng wele. 3

Julian's concept of divine omniscience is also in keeping with the traditional view. In her book she is particularly concerned with God's

¹ See chs. xi, xxxv.

² ch. xxxvi, cf. Enchiridion C-cii. "However strong may be the purposes either of angels or of men, whether of good or bad, whether these purposes fall in with the will of God or run counter to it, the will of the Omnipotent is never defeated; ... The omnipotent God ... never does anything except of His own free-will, and never wills anything that He does not perform." (cii).

³ xxxii, 59 r, cf. Luke 18:27, "Quae impossibilia sunt apud homines, possibilia sunt apud Deum." Also Luke 1:37, Genesis 18:14, Job 42:2, Jeremiah 32:17, 27, etc.

foreknowledge, which she sees as complete and dependent upon nothing outside himself.¹ Again, she takes this as grounds for confidence, for "veryly we haue been in the forsyght of God lovyd and knowyn in his endlis purpose, fro without begynnyng".² But more than knowledge is contained in Julian's concept: for her, God is perfectly wise; he is "all-Wisdom".³

A third attribute frequently mentioned by Julian together with God's omnipotence and omniscience is his moral perfection. He is Almighty, All-Wisdom and All-Goodness,⁴ and Julian most commonly refers to him as "our good Lord". "He is God; he is Good; he is Truth".⁵ God is the absolute Good, from which all goodness derives,⁶ and in particular he is the standard upon which ethics are based:

ffor Crist hym selfe is the ground of alle the lawes of
Cristen men; and he taught us to do good aȝenst evylle. 7

¹ See ch. xi.

² lxxxv, 172 v, cf. Summa Theologica Q. 20, Art.2, "It is only in God that creatures have existed from all eternity, yet, since they have existed in himself from eternity, God has known their proper names from eternity, and for the same reason has also loved them from eternity."

³ i, 1 r, etc. In giving this title particularly to the Second Person of the Trinity, she follows the traditional interpretation of the Wisdom literature of the Bible, I Corinthians 1:24, etc. So Augustine calls God "unchangeable Wisdom", and especially relates this to God the Son (On Christian Doctrine I, viii - xiv, Treatise on Faith and the Creed, III, 3 & 4).

⁴ chs. i, lviii.

⁵ xlvi, 84 v.

⁶ chs. v & vi.

⁷ xl, 72 v f.

God's moral perfection causes him to hate sin,¹ and to combat evil with good.²

Julian's view of the absolute goodness, righteousness and holiness of God, clearly in line with the accepted Christian belief, is axiomatic in her discussion of the problem of pain and evil.

These, therefore, are the fundamental elements of Julian's concept of God, and, as we have seen, they are part of the traditional Christian belief. They are taken as basic assumptions in her arguments, and are presented in the first revelation:

In which shewyng I vnderstodd vi thynges ... The thurde is the blessydefulle Godhede that ever was and is and schalle be, Alle-Myghty, Alle-Wysdom and All-Loue. The iiij is all thyng that he hath made ... The vith is that God is alle thyng that is good as to my syght, and the goodnesse that alle thyng hath, it is he. 3

Further, these are the premises from which is derived the doctrine of Divine Providence. It is formulated in the third revelation:

I saw God in a poynte, that is to say in my vnderstandyng, by which syght I saw that he is in althyng. I beheld with avysement, seeyng and knowyng in that syght that he doth alle that is done. 4

¹ ch. xl.

² ch. lix, cf. Enchiridion, XI, "For the Almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good out of evil."

³ viii, 16 v - 17 r.

⁴ xi, 23 v ff (*italics mine*).

Immediately this raises the question of evil -

I merveyled in that syght with a softe drede, and
thought, "What is synne?" ffor I saw truly that
God doth alle thyng, be it nevyr so lytyle. 1

But Julian does not discuss this yet. Instead she considers another
implication:

And I saw veryly that nothyn is done by happe ne by
aventure, but alle by the forsayde wysdom of God.
Yf it be happ or aventure in the syght of man, our
blyndhede and vnforsyght is the cause. ffor the
thynges that be in the forsayd wysdom of God bene
fro without begynnyng, whych ryghtfully and
worshipfully contynually he ledyth to the best ende. 2

And, because God is good, there is a further corollary:

Wherefore me behovynd nedes to graunt that alle
thynges that is done is welle done, for our Lord God
doth all. (For in this tyme the working of creatures
was nott shewde, but of our Lord God in the creatures ...)

This brings her once more to the problem of evil, but again she
postpones discussion of it, except to say:

I was sewer that he doth no synne. And here I saw
verely that synne is na dede. ffor in alle thys,
synne was nott shewde.

Short as it is, this statement is immensely important, for it
immediately excludes any kind of dualism, by denying sin any positive
existence. The idea that evil is nothing other than the absence of
good, and hence that it is wholly negative and cannot exist in its own
right, is put forward by St. Augustine to counter the Manichean doctrine

1 Ibid.

2 cf. Summa Theologica, I, Q. 22, Art.2.

that good and evil are two opposing and equal forces.¹ Clearly Julian's explanation follows the same pattern. Further, it seems to be the only explanation compatible with the belief that the supremely good Creator is fully in control of all that is done, without making God himself the author of evil.²

Without dwelling upon this, Julian immediately gives a positive statement of the doctrine of Providence as it springs from the concept of a supremely powerful, wise and good God:

ffor as alle that hath beyng in kynde is of Gods
makyng, so is alle thyng that is done in properte of
Gods doying. For it is esy to vnderstand that the beste
dede is wele done. And so wele as the best dede that is
done, and the hyghest, so wele is the leest deed done;
and all in the properte and in the order that our Lord
hath it ordeynyd tofor withou te begynnyng. For ther is
no doer but he.

I saw fulle truly that he chaungyd nevyr hys
purpose in no manner of thyng, ne nevyr shalle without
end. ffor ther was nothyng vnknowyn to hym in hys
ryghtfulle ordenaunce fro with out begynnyng. And
therefore all thynges wer sett in ordyr or any thyng was
made, as it should stand with out ende. And no manner
thyng shalle feyle of that poynt, for he hath made alle
thyng in fulheed of goodnes.

And therefore the Blessed Trynyte is evyr fulle
plesyd in alle his workes.

Controversial as its implications may be,³ this statement is clearly in line with the Biblical revelation:

¹ e.g. Enchiridion X - XIV.

² See below, ch.IV. Bishop Bradwardine, writing a generation before Julian, had used the same explanation, but since his view of Divine Providence was much more rigid, in that he held that God actively participated in all the actions of his creatures, he comes dangerously close to the conclusion that God actually willed sin. (Leff, op.cit., pp.54-65).

³ See below, chs. IV and VI.

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure ... Yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it. 1

It is obvious that Julian's belief in the Sovereignty of God was very strong. When difficulties arise in connection with the existence of suffering in the world, it is also manifest that she was not prepared to let her belief go. In spite of the problems it causes, the doctrine of Divine Providence must be maintained, as we shall see.

Ultimately, however, the doctrine is a source of great assurance and comfort to Julian:

And all this shewyd he full blessedly, meanyng thus: "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 nevyr shalle without ende. See, I lede all thyng to the end that I ordeyne it to for without begynnyng, by the same myght, wysdom and loue that I made it with. How shoulde any thyng be a mysse?" ... Than saw I verely that my behovyth nedys to assent with great reverence and joy in God. 2

The Love of God

The other aspect of the nature of God which Julian's book is particularly concerned to make clear is his love. Its very title, the Revelations of Divine Love, indicates that love is the supreme subject

¹ Isaiah 46:9-11: "Recordamini prioris saeculi, quoniam ego sum Deus, et non est ultra Deus, nec est similis mei: annuntians ab exordio novissimum, et ab initio quae necdum facta sunt, dicens: Consilium meum stabit, et omnis voluntas mea fiet ... et locutus sum, et adducam illud: creavi, et faciam illud." cf. Ephesians 1:4 ff., Hebrews 6:17.

² xi, 24 v ff.

of its teaching.¹

Like the other attributes of God which Julian mentions, divine love is infinite and eternal, and, as God is immutable, so his love is "from without begynnyng" to "without end". It is a quality which may be seen in God himself, but its more obvious effects are shown in his dealings with the creation. Julian suggests, although she never enlarges on the point, that before anything was made the Trinity existed in love, and that love is the essence of the inter-relationship of the Three.² But it is in his creation that God's love is more clearly manifest. It is because of love that God made all things, and by love he takes care of everything that he has made, leading it to the end he appointed for it.

So the love of God for the creation is presented in the first revelation:

And in this he shewed a little thing the quantitie of an haselnott lying in the palme of my hand, as me semide, and it was as rounde as a balle. I looked theran with the eye of my vnderstanding and thought, "What may this be?" And it was answered genereelly thus, "It is all that is made". I marvayled how it might laste, for me thought it might sodenly haue fallen to nawght for littlenes. 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." 3

In this revelation the love of God is closely associated, if not identified, with his goodness:

¹ ch. lxxxvi.

² li, 101 v, "The Lorde is God the Father; the Servant is the Sonne Iesu Cryst; the Holy Gost is the evyn loue whych is in them both."

³ v, 9 r ff.

The goodnesse of God is ever hole and more nere to vs with ouzte any comparison ... ffor oure soule is so presciously louyd of hym that is hyghest that it ouer passyth the knowyng of alle creatures. That is to say, ther is no creature that is made that may witt how much and how swetely and how tenderly that oure Maker lovyth vs. And ther fore we may with hys grace and his helpe stande in gostly beholdyng with euerlastyng marveylyng in this hygh ouerpassyng vnmesurable love that oure Lorde hath to vs of his goodnes. 1

So, at the beginning of her book, before there is any discussion of the problem of suffering, this doctrine of the goodness and love of God is clearly stated:

His goodnes fulfillith all his creaturs and all his blessed workes without end. ffor h~~e~~ is the endless-head, and he made vs only to him selfe, and restored vs by his precious passion, and ever kepeth vs in his blessed loue: and all this is of his goodnes. 2

When later on she does come to deal with the question, it is necessarily considered in the light of this statement. Her firm belief in the love of God as his eternal and immutable character is the greatest reason for an outlook that is ultimately optimistic, even though the difficulties are substantial. Because she believes that God's love for man is everlasting,³ she, like the Old Testament prophets,⁴ is able to trust that God will eventually make all things well.

Even more significantly, in Julian's book the problem of suffering

¹ vi, 12 v ff.

² v, 10 v.

³ This is best expressed at the end of the book, where she says (ch. lxxxv), "We haue been in the forsyght of God lovyd and knowyn in his endlis purpose fro without begynnyng." (p.172 v)

⁴ Especially Jeremiah 31:3 ff., "Et in caritate perpetua dilexi te, ides attraxi te, miserans."

can never be considered apart from the Passion of Christ; indeed, the Passion is the point at which the whole discussion begins. And just as Christ's Passion is seen as the extreme case of human suffering,¹ so it is the supreme example of divine love:

With a good chere oure good Lorde lokyd in to hys syde, and behelde with joy ... And ther with he brought to mynde hys dere worthy blode and hys precious water, whych he lett poure out for loue. ..

And with hys enjoyeng he shewed to my vnderstandyng in part the blyssydfulle Godhede, as farforth as he wolde that tyme, strengthyng the pour soule for to vnderstand as it may be sayde: that is to mene, the endlesse loue, that was without begynnyng, and is, and shalbe evyr.

And with this oure good Lorde seyde well blessydfully, "Lo, how I loue the!"²

The historical act by which Man's redemption was accomplished is offered both as proof of God's love³ and as reason for confident trust in him:⁴

And also to more vnderstandyng thys blessyd worde was sayde, "Lo how I loue thee!" As yf he had sayde, "Behold and see that I louyd thee so much or that I dyed for thee, that that I wolde dye for thee. And now I haue dyed for the and sufferd wyllingly that I may. And now is all my bitter payne, and alle my harde traveyle, turnyd to evyrlastyng joy and blysse to me, and to the. How schulde it not be that thou

¹ Revelation VIII, esp. p.39 v, ff (ch. xx).

² Revelation X, xxiv, 46 r, ff.

³ I John 4:9, 10: "In hoc apparuit caritas Dei in nobis, quoniam filium suum unigenitum misit Deus in mundum, ut vivamus per eum. In hoc est caritas: non quasi nos dilexerimus Deum, sed quoniam ipse prior dilexit nos, et misit filium suum propitiationem pro peccatis nostris."

⁴ Romans 8:32: "Qui etiam proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum: quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?"

shuldest any thyng pray me that lykyd me but yf I
 shulde fulle gladly graunte it the? ffor my lykyng
 is thyne holynesse an thy endlesse joy and blysse
 with me." 1

So Julian's examination of the problem of suffering is one which takes into account that God has already acted towards bringing about some kind of solution. Further, in this very act, the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, God's love is given clear and remarkable demonstration. For Julian, the difficulty is not simply that the omnipotent, all-loving God has allowed his creation to fall and remain in misery. The redemptive work of Christ must also be considered.

She approaches the antinomy as a Christian, one who has already accepted the reconciliation offered in Jesus Christ. She seeks a clearer understanding of God's purposes in allowing evil and suffering to enter the order of the universe, so that she may know how the individual Christian ought to regard pain and sin in his own experience. Ultimately, as we shall see, she finds the answer in a deeper understanding of the Atonement effected by the Incarnation and Passion of Christ.

The Christian's Response

Julian's approach to the problem is by no means academic. Whether her visions were authentic or not, it is clear that her examination of the problem is not divorced from her experience as a Christian, or from her spiritual life. So the doctrines of divine sovereignty and divine love are something more than premises in a philosophical argument.

¹ xxiv, 46 v, ff., cf. Ephesians 2:4 ff.

Belief in them involves for Julian not merely an intellectual assent, but a response of the will, an attitude and worship appropriate to the concept of God's nature that they imply.

Julian sees God as great and almighty, the Creator, exalted and holy, in respect of whom everything else is as nothing. Hence he is for her supremely "reverend and dreadful", the object of awe and deferential fear. Julian commends the "wisdom and truth" which realises this greatness of God and the littleness of the creature, shown by the example of Saint Mary,¹ and indicates that this is where true humility and charity begin.² Because God is holy and perfectly just, it is right, Julian says, to fear him and tremble at his presence.³ But equally she sees him as unchangeably good and loving, and consequently he is the one who is completely trustworthy.

Her clear concept of the majesty and greatness of God affects her response to his goodness and love. God's love, for Julian, is the most gracious love of a superior for an inferior - of a lord for his servant, of a king for a beggar.⁴ Therefore, although the Lord God is most worthy

¹ iv, 8 v.

² vi, 13 v: "ffor of alle thyng, the beholdyng and the lovyng of the Maker makyth the soule to seme lest in his awne syght, and most fyillyth hit with reuerent drede and trew meknesse, and with plente of charyte to his eyn crysten."

³ chs. lxxiv, lxxv.

⁴ ch. li, ch. vii. Consequently, unlike many of her contemporary spiritual writers, she very seldom speaks of divine love in terms of Eros. She does little more than mention that Christ is the Bridegroom and the soul his bride, and she does not dwell on it (li, 106 v; lii, 106 v; lviii, 123 v). The terms she uses convey much more accurately the Biblical concept of Agape.

of love, and man's truest response is to love him with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, yet one must never take liberties with him, or be unduly familiar.¹ The prerogatives are all God's, just as his is the initiative in loving.²

Julian's characteristic term for this relationship is "courtesy". It recalls (to the mediaeval reader much more than to a reader of today) the whole ethos of the court, the chivalrous ideal of the perfect king, and in particular his gracious and thoughtful demeanour towards his subjects.³ So Julian very frequently refers to God as "our courteous Lord".

This concept of courtesy makes the other term which she characteristically uses to describe divine love even more remarkable. This term is "homeliness". It conveys the singular tenderness of a love that is most intimate - that of a man for his friend,⁴ or of a mother for her child.⁵ Just as the word "courteous" evokes the whole mediaeval tradition of courtoisie, and is no doubt intended to convey all the associations of high noblesse that it could carry, so the word "homely" has connotations of all that is dear and familiar.

¹ ch. lxxvii, 162 r: "ffor oure curtese Lorde wylle that we be as homely with hym as hart may thyngke or soule may desyer. But be we ware that we take not so rechelously this homelyhed for to leve curtesye."

² As in I John 4:10.

³ Revelation VI, ch. xiv.

⁴ ch. xiv.

⁵ chs. lvii ff., esp. ch. lx.

Julian teaches that the Lord, in his humility, does not disdain to serve man in the simplest ways:

He comyth downe to vs to the lowest parte of oure nede. ffor he hath no dispite of that he made, ne he hath no disdeyne to serue vs at the sympylest office that to oure body longyth in kynde, for loue of the soule that he made to his awne lycknesse. ffor as the body is cladd in the cloth, and the flessch in the skynne, and the bonys in the flessch, and the harte in the bowke, so ar we, soule and body, cladde and enclosydde in the goodnes of God. Yee, and more homely: for all they varyssch and wast away, the goodnesse of God is ever hole and more nere to vs with ou te any comparison. 1

In view of his majesty and greatness, the homeliness and courtesy of God is a source of wonder as well as of joy to Julian:

Full greatly was I a stonned for wonder and mervayle that I had, that he that is so reuerent and so dreadfull will be so homely with a synnfull creature liueing in this wretched flesh. 2

And of all the syght that I saw, this was most comfort to me: that oure good Lorde that is so reverent and dredfulle is so homely and so curteyse; and this most fullyllyd me with lykyng and syckernes in soule. 3

The proper response to a God like this involves both rejoicing and confident trust:

For verely it is the most joy that may be as to my syght, that he that is hyghest and myghtyest, noblyest and wurthysses, is lowest and mekest, hamlyest and curtysest. And truly and verely this marvelous joy shall he shew vs all when we shall see hym. And thys wille our good Lorde that we beleue and trust, joy and lyke, comfort vs and make solace

¹ vi, 12 r f.

² iv, 8 r.

³ vii, 15 r.

as we may, with hys grace and with hys helpe, in to
the tyme that we see it verely. ffor the most fulhede
of joy that we shalle haue as to my syght ys thys
marvelous curtesy and homelynesse of oure Fader that
is oure Maker, in oure Lorde Ihesu Crist, that is oure
Broder and oure Sauour. 1

As the attributes which evoke it are immutable, so man's right
response to God does not change, but grows more complete as his knowledge
of God is perfected. Always it is a glad and trusting love, combined
with a deferential fear:

As good as God is, as grett he is. And as moch as it
longyth to his godhed to be louyd, so much it longyth
to his grett hyghnesse to be drad. ffor this reverent
dred is the feyerrer curtesy that is in hevyn before
Goddys face. And as moch as he shall be knowyn and
lovyd ovyr passyng that he is now, in so much he shall
be drad ovyr passyng that is now. 2

Above all, Julian's concept of the nature of God, as the almighty
Creator of everything that is and the all-wise Lover of all that is made,
leads her inevitably to affirm that man must love God above everything
else in order to fulfil his proper destiny in the centre of God's will:

Our good Lord shewed that it is full great plesaunce
to him that a sely sowle come to him naked, pleaynly
and homely. ffor this is the kynde dwellyng of the
sowle by the touchyng of the Holie Ghost, as by the
vnderstandyng that I haue in this shewyng.

God, of thy goodnes, geue me thy selfe, for thou
art inough to me, and I maie aske 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. 3

¹ vii, 15 v.

² lxxv, 158 v.

³ v, 10 r & v.

"All that is beneth him", she says, "suffyseth not to vs."¹

Julian's examination of the problem of suffering and evil must therefore be seen in the context of a spiritual experience of God and a devotion to him. Her questioning and arguments are not separate from the activity of worship. The will plays a part as well as the intellect. Hence it is appropriate that the discussion of the problem is presented as a dialogue between Julian and God.

¹ v, 10 r, cf. St. Augustine, Confessions I, Christian Doctrine I, XXII, that God alone is to be loved for his own sake, and oneself and one's neighbour for God's sake. See also St. Bernard, De diligendo Dei, VII.

Note: Although this chapter deals with Julian's concept of God as "one substance", it is clear that she held the orthodox belief in the Trinity. She sees the Three Persons as different aspects of the divine Essence; so, for instance, she speaks of the Father as "All-Might", the Son as "All-Wisdom" and the Holy Ghost as "All-Love". Each has his own function in the creation and in the redemption of mankind (ch. lviii, etc.). It is obvious that this is a basic part of her Christian understanding.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

And aftyr thys oure Lorde brought to my mynde the longyng that I had to hym before. And I saw nothyng lettyd me but synne. And so I behelde generally in vs alle. And me thought, yf synne had nott be, we shulde alle haue be clene and lyke to oure Lorde as he made vs. And thus in my foly before thys tyme often I wondryd why by the grete forseide wysdom of God the begynnyng of synne was nott lettyd. ffor then thought me that alle shulde haue be wele. 1

With these words, at the beginning of the thirteenth revelation, the discussion of the problem of evil² is introduced. It is worthwhile following Julian's discussion in detail, to see what insight is gained and what kind of solution is offered, and also to compare her teaching with the traditional views.

The immediate answer that she is given is:

Synne is behouely, but alle shalle be wele; and alle shalle be wele; and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele. 3

Before considering the implications of this answer, Julian examines the nature of sin and its relation to suffering:

¹ xxvii, 49 v.

² Thomas Aquinas formulates the problem thus: "Every wise provider, so far as he is able, preserves those in his care from defect and from evil. But we see many evils in things. Hence either God cannot prevent evil, and is not omnipotent, or not all things are under his care." (Summa Theologica I, Q. 22, Art. 2, Obj. 2.)

³ xxvii, 50 r.

In this nakyd word "synne", oure Lord brougte to my mynde generally alle that is nott good; and the shamfull despyte and the vttermost trybulation that he bare for vs in thys lyfe, and hys dyeng and alle hys paynes; and passion of alle hys creatures, gostly and bodely - for we be alle in part trobelyd, and we schal be trobelyd, followyng our Master Ihesu, tylle we be fulle purgyd of oure dedely flessch, and of alle our inwarde affections whych be nott very good - and the beholdyng of thys with alle the paynes that evyr were or evyr shalle be. And with alle thys, I vnderstode the passion of Criste for the most payne and ovyr passyng. 1

In this passage sin and the Passion of Christ are so juxtaposed as to suggest some kind of identification between them;² and all pain is seen in relation to the sufferings of Christ, which were the greatest pains of all.³ Here once again the doctrines of substitution and identification with Christ are implied: he suffered tribulation and death vicariously, for the sins of man, and the suffering of Christians comes "folowyng our Master Ihesu".⁴ The Passion of Christ, therefore, lies at the centre of her discussion.

She continues:

But I saw nott synne. ffor I beleue it had no maner of substaunce ne no part of beyng. 5

¹ xxvii, 50 r & v.

² Cf. II Corinthians 5:21: "Eum, qui non noverat peccatum, pro nobis peccatum fecit, ut nos efficeremur justitia Dei in ipso."

³ Cf. Isaiah 53:4: "Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit ..."

⁴ Cf. I Peter 2:21: "... quia et Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini vestigis ejus."

⁵ xxvii, 50 v.

This recalls the teaching of Revelation III, that since the Lord does all that is done, then "synne is na dede".¹ Nevertheless, sin is in a causal relationship to pain, and pain does have a place in the loving purposes of God:

It [i.e. sin] myght not be knowen but by the payne that is caused therof. And this payne is somthyng as to my syght for a tyme, ffor it purgeth and maketh vs to know oure selfe and aske mercy. 2

Here it is argued that sin does not exist in the same sense as pain does. If it did, then the God who made all things must have created sin too,³ a proposition which contradicts his essential immutable goodness. But pain exists, and its very existence implies that it comes from God. Yet the love of God is not denied by this when one remembers that Christ suffered the greatest pain himself in the Passion, and on man's behalf. This is why the Passion is central in Julian's discussion: "ffor the passion of oure Lorde is comfort to vs agenst alle thys".⁴

The chapter closes with a reassertion of the promise made at the beginning:

"It is tru that synne is the cause of alle thys payne; but alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele." 5

¹ xi, 23 bis v, see above, p.61.

² xxvii, 50 v. C.S.Lewis argues in a similar way in The Problem of Pain (p.80): "Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he knows that he is in some way or other "up against" the real universe: he either rebels ... or else makes some attempt at an adjustment which, if pursued, will lead him to religion."

³ But see Isaiah 45:7: "Formans lucem, et creans tenebras, faciens pacem, et creans malum: ego Dominus faciens omnia haec."

⁴ 50 v.

⁵ 51 r.

Julian explains that

Theyse wordes were shewde fulle tendyrly, shewyng no maner of blame to me ne to none that shalle be safe. Than were it grett vnkyndnesse of me to blame or to wonder on God of my synne, sythen he blameth nott me for synne. 1

This raises another aspect of the problem, the question of judgement. She discusses this at length later on, but here she simply asserts that God does not blame the elect for sin (she does not speak about the reprobate).

She says that the reason why sin was allowed to come is a "pryuyte", a secret to be disclosed to us in heaven, but she adds the assurance that the disclosure will be a cause of endless joy. In this way she abnegates the consideration of a more abstract question, and in the chapters that follow she concentrates on the more immediate problems of a suffering and sin in the lives of Christians.

In the next chapter the teaching on compassion is taken still further as she indicates God's attitude to the suffering of his people, as well as how the Christian ought to regard his pains and those of his fellow Christians:

Thus I saw how Crist hath compassyon on vs, ffor the cause of synne. And ryght as I was before, in the passion of Crist, fulfyllid with payne and compassion, lyke in thys I was in party fulfyllid with compassion of alle my evyn cristen.

For fulle wele he lovyth pepylle that shalle be savyd, that is to seye, Goddes servauntes. Holy Chyrch shalle be shakyd in sorow and anguyssch and trybulacion in this worlde, as men shakyth a cloth in the wynde. And to thysoure Lorde answeryd shewyng

on this maner: "A grett thyng shalle I make herof in hevyn of endlesse wurshyppe and of evyrlastyng joye".
 3e, so farforth I saw our Lord enjoyeth of the tribulacions of hys servauntes with pyte and compassion. 1

God's love for his people is not denied by the suffering that is and shall be theirs.² On the contrary, that love is demonstrated both by the compassion he has for them and by the promise of everlasting joy which shall be given to them in heaven. Once again, God's love turns suffering into joy. Indeed, as Julian goes on to say, God lays tribulation on those he loves in order to turn them and purge them from their sins. In this way, she is able to show that it is by God's grace that ~~sin~~ causes pain.

To ech person that he lovyth,³ to his blysse for to bryng, he leyth on him somthyng that is no lacke in his syght, wherby they be lohyd and dyspyssed in thys worlde, scornyd and mokyd and cast out. And thys he doth for to lett the harm that they shulde take of the pompe and of the pryde and the veyne glorie of thys wrechyd lyffe, and make ther wey redy to come to hevyn in blysse without ende evyrlastyng. ffor he seyth: "I shal alle to breke yow from yowre veyne affeccions and yowre vyscious pryde, and aftyr that I shalle gader yow and make yow meke and mylde, clene and holy by onyng to me." 4

Two further assertions are made. With regard to compassion another

¹ 51 v.

² Christ promised suffering to his followers (Matthew 10:24 ff., 16:24; John 15:18 ff; 16:20, 33).

³ Hebrews 12:5-6: "Fili mi, noli negligere disciplinam Domini, neque fatigeris dum ab eo argueris. Quem enim diligit Dominus, castigat: flagellat autem omnem filium quem recipit." cf. Proverbs 3:11, Apocalypse 3:19, II Corinthians 12:7.

⁴ Cf. Deuteronomy 8:2,3,5; 30:1-6, Ezekiel 11:16-20 (51 v ff.).

point of identification with Christ is indicated, for, she says, "Ech kynde compassion that man hath on his evyn cristen with charyte, it is Crist in hym".¹ More important at this stage, she says that one can be comforted in one's pain by remembering the joy that is to come by virtue of the passion:

ffor he wille that we wytt that is alle shalle be turned vs to wurschyp and to profy^yte by the vertu of hys passyon. And that we wytte that we sufferyd ryght nought aloone, but with hym; and see hym oure grounde. And that we see his paynes and hys trybulacion passe so ferre alle that we may suffer that it may nott be full thought. 2

Thus she is able to say that although man deserves pain because of his sin, God's love, through the merits of the Passion of Christ, excuses him. By the Passion the blame of sin is done away, but not the pain sin causes. She implies here, as she explains in detail later on, that pain is not given to man by God in revenge for sin, but in order to bring him back to his true happiness, and that in this very process Christ has compassion on man in his sufferings:

Of hys gret curtesy he doth away alle our blame, and beholdeth vs with ruth and pytte as chyldren innocens and vnlothfulle. 3

Even so, the difficulties have by no means been solved. Julian raises another question:

"How myght alle be wele, for the gret harme that is come by synne to thy creatures?" 4

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- ¹ xxviii, 52 r.
² xxviii, 52 v. cf. Hebrews 4:15, 5:7-9.
³ xxviii, 52 v - 53 r.
⁴ xxix, 53 r.

To find an answer, one is once more returned to consider the passion of Christ. It is asserted that the sin of Adam was the greatest harm that was ever done or ever will be. But the remedy for it, the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, is out of all proportion to the harm.¹ So she is answered:

"Sythen that I haue made welle the most harm; than it is my wylle that thou know ther by that I shalle make wele alle that is lesse." 2

On the basis of the way in which God has acted in the past, one is urged to have confidence in him for the future. It is asserted that the truth about man's Saviour and his salvation is open and manifest, but that other things, which do not immediately concern him, are kept hidden, and that one would do better by not trying to discover them.³ Here again one is discouraged from abstract speculation and thrown back on faith.

And thus oure good Lorde answeryd to alle the questyons and dowstys that I myght make, sayeng full comfortabely: "I may make alle thyng wele; and I can make alle thyng welle; and I shalle make alle thyng wele; and I wylle make alle thyng welle; and thou shalt se thy selfe that alle maner of thyng shall be welle." 4

From the very nature and character of God as he has revealed himself there is sufficient reason for assurance that all shall be well: God is all-mighty, and thus able to bring it about; he is all-wise, and knows

¹ xxix, 53 v, cf. Romans 5:12-21: "... Sed non sicut delictum, ita et donum: si enim unius delicto multi mortui sunt: multo magis gratia Dei et donum in gratia unius hominis Jesu Christi in plures abundavit..." (v.15).

² xxix, 53 v.

³ Ch. xxx.

⁴ xxxi, 54 v ff.

how to accomplish it in the best way and at the most fitting time; and he is all-loving, and thus entirely desires it.

Once again she returns to the Passion of Christ, this time to give an interpretation of his words from the cross, "I thirst".¹

ffor thys is the gostly thyrst of Cryst, the loue
longyng that lastyth and evyr shall tylle we se that
syght at domys day. ffor we that shalle be safe, and
shalle be Crystes joy and hys blysse, ben yet here,
and some be to come, and so shalle some be in to that
day. Therefore this is his thurste and loue longyng,
of vs all to geder here in hym to oure endlesse
blysse. 2

In this a further aspect of compassion is shown: both Christ and his people suffer "ghostly thirst" for mankind to come to him; and here is another point in which Christ and his people are made one.³ Yet this can only be seen by faith, as further grounds for confidence. Nevertheless, she adds,

He hath ruthe and compassion of vs, and he hath
longyng to haue vs, but hys wysdom and hys loue
suffer nott the ende to come tyll the best tyme. 4

Further, she says, one ought to trust that God will make well the least thing as surely as the greatest.⁵ Although one's spiritual

¹ John 19:28; Revelation VIII, xvii, 33 v ff.

² xxxi, 55 r, cf. xxviii, 51 v ff.

³ xxxi, 56 r.

⁴ xxxi, 57 r.

⁵ xxxii, 57 r.

blindness and weakness may prevent one from seeing how, one should still have confidence that God will perform what he has promised:

The use of oure reson is now so blynde, so lowe and so symple that we can nott now know the hygh marvelous wysdom, the myght and the goodnes of the blyssedfull Trynyte. And thus menyth he where he seyth, "Thou shalt se thy selfe that alle manner thyng shall be wele", as yf he seyde, "Take now feythfully and trustely, and at the last end thou shalt se verely in fulhede of joye". 1

On the Last Day, she says, all will be made well by means of a great deed that the Lord will do, but which will remain secret until that time:

This is the grett deed ordeyned of oure Lorde God fro without begynnyng, tresured and hyd in hys blessyd brest, only knowen to hym selfe, by whych deed he shalle make all thyng wele. ffor ryght so this same blessyd Trynyte shalle make wele alle that is not welle. 2

The objection she then considers is far more serious:

Oure feyth is groundyd in Goddes Worde, and it longyth to oure feyth that we beleue that Goddys Worde shalle be sauwd in alle thyng. And one poynt of oure feyth is that many creatures shall be dampnyd, as angelis that felle ouzt of hevyn for pride whych be now fendys; and many in erth that dyeth out of the feyth of Holy Chyrch, that is to sey, tho that be hethyn, and also many that hath receyvyd cristondom and lyvyth vnchristen lyfe, and so dyeth ouzte of cheryte. All theyse shalle be dampnyd to helle without ende, as Holy Chyrch techyth me to beleue. And stondyng alle thys, me thought it was vnpossible that alle maner of thyng shuld be wele as oure Lorde shewde in thys tyme. 3

1 xxxii, 57 r.

2 Ibid., 58 v.

3 Ibid.

Here the teaching of the revelation appears to contradict the plain teaching of God's Word,¹ and thus the whole revelation given to Julian is brought into doubt. Julian herself has stated, at the beginning of her book, that she would not accept anything that went against the common faith of the Church,² and here her resolution is put to the test.

Yet the problem arises from Julian's concept of the nature of God, which is itself Biblical. It is in keeping with his omnipotence, wisdom and love, that all should be well in the end. If something were to remain eternally wrong, then this concept of God is destroyed. Hence the difficulty is more than an apparent contradiction between her revelations and the Word of God. It is a problem inherent in the beliefs of Christianity.³

No attempt is made to answer the question. One has no choice in the situation but to accept both sets of propositions. The only course available is once more an act of faith:

I had no other answer in shewyng of oure Lorde but
thys: "that that is vnpossible to the is nott vn-

¹ Matthew 25:41-46, 13:40-42; II Thessalonians 1:8,9: "In flamma ignis dantis vindictam iis, qui non noverunt Deum, et qui non obediunt Evangelio Domini nostri Jesu Christi Qui poenas dabunt in interitu aeternas a facie Domini, et a gloria virtutis ejus ..." etc.

² ix, 19 r.

³ Augustine, for example, attempts to give an answer in the Enchiridion (Chs. XCVII ff). It seems as though the will of God to save all men is overlaid by the will of men not to be saved. Augustine answers that God can change men's evil will for good if he wants to. When he does, he displays his mercy by giving an undeserved grace; when he does not, he exerts his justice, because the sinner's judgement is deserved. Neither can he that is pardoned glory in any merit of his own, nor he that is condemned complain of anything but his own demerit (ch. XCIX).

possible to me. I shalle saue my Worde in alle thyng; and I shalle make althyng wele." 1

The attitude of faith is further demonstrated in the next chapter, in which Julian turns to consider the reprobate. She is given no more understanding of their fate than what was shown in the fifth revelation:²

Wher that I saw the devylle is reprovyd of God and endlessly dampned. In whych syzt I vnderstond that alle the creatures that be of the devylles condiscion in thys lyfe and ther in endyng, ther is no more mencyon made of them before God and alle his holyn then of the devylle. 3

In spite of this lack of information, Julian says that "I was nott drawn ther by from ony poynt of the feyth that Holy Chyrch techeth me to believe".

The principles that she sets out in this and the following chapter are important. Firstly, the basis for trust in God is what he has done in the past:⁴

It is Goddes wylle that we haue grete regarde to alle the dedys that he hath done; for he wille ther by we know, trust and beleue alle that he shalle do. 5

¹ xxxii, 59 r.

² xiii, 27 v: "ffor hys myght is alle lokked in Gods hande. But in God may be no wrath as to my syght. ffor our good Lorde endelessly havynge regard to his awne worshyppe, and to the profyghte of all them that shalbe savyd, with myght and ryght withstondyth the reprovyd, the whych of malyce and of shrewdnes besye them to contrary and do against Goddes wyll."

³ xxxiii, 60 r.

⁴ A principle which is constantly being applied in the Bible, e.g. Psalm 105:5 (104:5 Vulgate).

⁵ xxxiii, 60 v.

In particular, this refers to the act of redemption whereby amends was made for Adam's sin.¹ Seeing that God has made well the greatest harm, by means of the Passion of Christ, one should indeed have confidence thereby that he will likewise make well everything else.

For Julian, trust in God is more important than complete knowledge and understanding, and it is the activity on man's part that honours God the more. Hence she is content to commend a reverent agnosticism with regard to the means by which God will finally fulfil his promise. Here is the realisation that one's understanding of such things will never be complete in this life, but it will be sufficient:

ffor alle that is spedfulle to vs to wytt and for to
knowe, ffulle curtesly oure good Lorde wyll shew vs
what it is ... 2

Secondly, she affirms that it is essential for the Christian to hold fast to what the Church teaches. Here she appeals to the most exalted concept of the Church, that it is no less than one with Christ himself:

ffor he it is Holy Chyrch; he is the Grounde, he is
the Substaunce, he is the Techyng, he is the Techer,
he is the Ende and he is the Mede wherfore every
kynde soule travelyth. 3

As the teaching of the Church is grounded in God's Word,⁴ and as Christ

¹ Ch. xxix.

² xxxiv, 61 v.

³ Ibid., cf. Revelation XII, xxvi, 49 r.

⁴ xxxii, 58 v.

himself is the head of the Church, with whom its members are in a vital relationship,¹ this assertion is not unreasonable.

Clearly the attitude of the believer is considered^{by} her to be far more important than the academic discussion of a philosophical problem. No neat solution to the problem to satisfy the intellect is offered, but the more immediate need of a suffering soul is met by the offer of comfort and assurance, based upon the character of God as he has revealed it and upon the great deeds which he has already performed, in particular the act of redemption through the Passion of Christ. The means whereby this assurance is obtained is not through knowledge, but by faith.

Alle thys that I haue now seyde, and more as I shalle sey after, is confortyng ageynst synne. ffor in the thyrdde shewyng, whan I saw that God doyth all that is done, I saw nott synn, and than saw I that alle is welle. But whan God shewde me for synne, than sayd he, "Alle shalle be wele". 2

Providence and Predestination

The doctrine of Providence itself is taken as grounds for assurance:

ffor by the same blyssyd myght, wysdom and loue that he made alle thyng, to the same end oure good Lorde ledyth it contynually, and ther to hym selfe shalle bryng it. 3

It is to a closer examination of this doctrine that Julian now turns. Firstly, she makes a distinction between God's commanding and his permissive will:

¹ xxxi, 56 r, cf. li, 103 r & v, Ephesians 1:22, 23, etc.

² xxxiv, 62 r.

³ xxxv, 62 v.

Alle that our Lorde doyth is ryghtfulle, and alle that he sufferyth is wurschypfulle; and in theyse two is comprehended good and evylle. ffor alle that is good our Lorde doyth, and that is evyll oure Lord sufferyth. 1

She quickly explains that it is not evil itself but God's sufferance that brings honour to him; "Wher by hys goodnes shalle be know without ende, and hys mervelous meknesse and myldhed by thys werkyng of mercy and grace".²

With this distinction in mind, she reiterates the teaching of Revelation III:

Ryghtfulhed is that thyng that is so good that may nott be better than it is. For God hym selfe is very ryghtfulhed, and all hys werkes be done ryghtfully as they be ordeyned fro without begynnyng by hys hygh myght, hys hygh wysdom, hys hygh goodnesse. And ryght as he hath ordeyne it to the best, ryght so he werkyth contynually and ledyth it to the same ende. And he is evyr fulle plesyd with hym selfe and with alle hys workes. 3

¹ Ibid.; perhaps a play on words is intended? Cf. Augustine, Enchiridion XCVI: "Nor can we doubt that God does well even in the permission of what is evil. For he permits it only in the justice of his judgement ... For if it were not a good that evil should exist, its existence would not be permitted by the omnipotent Good, who without doubt can as easily refuse to permit what he does not wish as bring about what he does wish. .. For he is not truly called Almighty if he cannot do whatsoever he pleases, or if the power of his almighty will is hindered by the will of any creature whatsoever."

The position which Bradwardine adopted in his defence of the Doctrine of Providence, a generation before Julian, leads to grave difficulties in explaining the existence of sin and evil. He maintained that there was no distinction between God's commanding and permissive will but that God could never permit some act without actually participating in what he permitted. (Leff, op.cit., pp.46, 57-65).

² xxxv, 63 r.

³ Ibid.

From this point the doctrine is explored in its specific application to the souls of men. Particularly, Julian discusses its implications with regard to God's preservation of his elect. She begins with a synopsis:

Alle the soules that shalle be savyd in hevyn without ende be made ryghtfulle in the syȝt of God, and by hys awne goodnesse; in whych ryghtfullnes we be endlessly kepte, and marvelously, aboue all creatures. And marcy is a werkynge that comyth of the goodnes of God, and it shalle last wurkyng as long as synne is sufferyd to pursew ryghtfulle soules. And whan synne hath no lenger leue to pursew, than shalle the werkynge of mercy cees. And than shalle alle be brought into ryghtfulnes and ther in stonde withoute ende. By hys sufferaunce we falle, and in hys blessed loue with hys myght and hys wysdom we are kept. And by mercy and grace we be reysyd to manyfolde more joy. ¹

Three statements are made here, on which the arguments of the following chapters are centred. Firstly, she says that the souls of the elect are "made ryghtfulle" in God's sight by his own goodness. Secondly, those souls are "endlessly kepte" in righteousness. Thirdly, God's mercy is a temporary dispensation which will only last as long as sin is allowed to pursue those souls.

The doctrine of predestination is strongly manifest in these propositions. It is important to emphasise that Julian is speaking here of the elect, those that "shalle be savyd in hevyn without ende". She has nothing to say about the reprobate; indeed, she says in the next chapter that it is more profitable for the Christian to concentrate upon

¹ Ibid., 63 v.

God and salvation than to speculate about their fate.¹ The teaching contained in her revelations is offered for assurance in time of suffering, particularly in time of contrition and sorrow for sin, and it is offered to those who are already Christians. Moreover, the basis for her assurance is none other than the Biblical teaching,² that those who are to be saved are preserved by God, and sanctified, and eventually made perfect in heaven.

Such confidence comes from a knowledge of the character of God. It is "by hys sufferance we falle, and in hys blessed loue and with his myght and hys wysdom we are kept; and by mercy and grace we be reysyd to manyfolde more joy". All honour is given to God, and there is no ground for self-assurance.³

One implication of this is developed in the next chapter:

And I shalle do ryght nought ~~but~~ synne; and my synne shalle nott lett his goodnes workyng. 4

¹ xxxvi, 65 v: "And as long as we be in this lyfe, what tyme that we, by oure foly turne vs to the beholding of the reprovyd, tendyrly oure Lorde towchyth vs and blysydfully callyth vs, seyeng in oure soule, 'Lett me aloone, my derwurthy chylde, intende to me; I am inogh to the; and enjoy in thy Sauour and in thy salvation.'"

² II Thessalonians 2:13: "Nos autem debemus gratias agere Deo semper pro vobis fratres dilecti a Deo primitias in salutem in sanctificatione spiritus, et in fide veritatis." Cf. Ephesians 1:3-15, 2:1-10; Romans ch.8 - "Nam quos praescivit, et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus. Quos autem praedestinavit, hos et vocavit; et quos vocavit, hos et justificavit; quos autem justificavit, illos et glorificavit." (vv 29, 30).

³ Cf. Ephesians 2:8,9: "Gratia enim estis salvati per fidem, et hoc non ex vobis: Dei enim donum est, non ex operibus, ut ne quis gloriatur."

⁴ xxxvi, 64 r. Cf. John 1:5: "Et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt." Augustine makes a similar point in the Enchiridion, chs C-CII.

This is the principle behind another secret "deed" that the Lord will do:

Oure Lorde God shewde that a deed shalle be done, and hym selfe shalle do it; and it shall be wurschypfulle and mervelous and plentuous. And by hym it shall be done, and hym selfe shalle do it. 1

The nature of this deed is not revealed, but it is shown to be further cause for assurance in time of trouble. Connected with this is yet another reason for trust in God, the working of miracles:

It is knowyn that before myracles come sorows and angwyssch and trobyll.² And that is that we shuld know oure owne febylnesse and mysschef that we be fallen in by synne, to meke vs, and make vs to cry to God for helpe and grace. And grett myracles come after and that of the hygh myght and wysdom and goodnesse of God, shewyng hys vertu and the joyes of hevyn. 3

One ought not to be discouraged, but trust God for deliverance, for the very trouble may be the sign of a miracle to follow. One may infer that the great Deeds of which Julian speaks are such miracles.

Then follows a more detailed examination of the doctrine of the preservation of the elect. This time the problem of evil is brought home to Julian herself, and through her to every man, as God reveals that she, and every Christian, will sin.⁴ "In thys", she says, "I

¹ xxxvi, 64 r.

² Just as great tribulations herald the Last Day (Matthew, ch. 24, etc.).

³ xxxvi, 66 r.

⁴ xxxvii, 66 v.

conceyvd a softe drede". But to it God answers with tenderness, love and assurance, "I kepe the fulle suerly".

The reason for his preservation, she asserts, is this:

ffor in every soule that shalle be savyd is a godly wylle that nevyr assentyth to synne, nor nevyr shalle. Ryght as there is a bestely wylle in the lower party, that may wylle no good, ryght so there is a godly wylle in the hygher party whych wylle is so good that may nevyr wylle evylle, but evyr good. And therfore we be that he lovyth and endlesly we do that he lykyth. And thys shewyde oure good Lorde in the hoolhed of loue that we stand in in hys syght; yeea, that he lovyth vs now as welle, whyle that we be here, as he shalle do when we be there, before hys blessyd face. But for feylyng of loue in oure party, therfore is alle oure traveyle. 1

In making this assertion, many feel that Julian comes dangerously close to heresy, if, indeed, she does not overstep the limits.² It is certainly a statement that ought not to be taken out of its context, or without regard for other parts of her teaching which balance it. This particular statement certainly carries with it the warning given by the scribe of the Sloane MS in his Colophon,³ not to take one part of her teaching and neglect another.

The assertion is made in order to show Christians a cause for confidence in time of trouble. If it were made in the context of a doctrine of Christian liberty, or to those not yet committed to the Christian life, then one might well regard it with suspicion. But here

¹ xxxvii, 67 r.

² See, for example, Walsh, op.cit., p.24 ff.

³ Sloane, f.57 v.

it is offered to comfort the Christian who has sinned and knows that he will sin again. It is important to note that Julian does not deny the sinfulness of man. On the contrary, she affirms it in this very passage, by saying that in the lower part of man's soul there is a "bestely wylle" which "may wylle no good". She by no means claims that there is any merit for man in his "godly will". Her statement follows whole chapters in which the strongest assertions are made about the sovereignty and the grace of God, and the godly will is itself created by God.

The cause of ambiguity may be that Julian is looking at the situation from an eternal viewpoint. Yet, in doing this, she is only following the example of the New Testament writers who make statements which are remarkably similar. Speaking of the same subject, St. Paul writes in the beginning of his letter to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ... 1

¹ Ephesians 1:3-7: "Benedictus Deus et Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi qui benedixit nos in omni benedictione spirituali in coelestibus in Christo, sicut elegit nos in ipso ante mundi constitutionem, ut essemus sancti et immaculati in conspectu ejus in caritate. Qui praeordinavit nos in adoptionem filiorum per Jesum Christum in ipsum: secundum propositum voluntatis suae, in laudem gloriae gratiae suae, in

He goes on to say:

But God, rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved). 1

Elsewhere, St. Paul specifically uses the doctrine of predestination to eternal life in order to reassure those who are in trouble,² and yet by no means to encourage the self-assurance that leads to carelessness.

St. John goes even further, saying;

We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God³ keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. 4

Just as these statements cannot safely be isolated from their context, nor should such emphasis be laid on them that other teachings of the same apostles are overlooked, so Julian's teaching about the godly will, which echoes them, should be regarded as only one part of a complex whole.

[footnote 1 cont'd]

qua gratificavit nos in dilecto Filio suo. In quo habemus redemptionem per sanguinem ejus, remissionem peccatorum secundum divitias gratiae ejus. .."

The significance of "in Christo" is developed by Julian in the third part of her book, ch. li ff.

- ¹ Ephesians 2:4,5: "Deus autem, qui dives est in misericordia, propter nimiam caritatem suam qua dilexit nos et cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo (cujus gratia estis salvati)."
- ² II Thessalonians 2:13-17, 3:3: "Fidelis autem Deus est qui confirmabit vos, et custodiet a malo". Yet in the rest of the chapter St. Paul urges them to persevere in good works.
- ³ i.e., the Son of God, cf. John 1:18.
- ⁴ I John 5:18: "Scimus quia omnis, qui natus est ex Deo, non peccat, sed generatio Dei conservat eum, et malignus non tangit eum." cf. I John 2:29, 3:5-9.

The implications of this statement about the nature of man are not explored until much later.¹ Here Julian is primarily concerned to show how God preserves his chosen people. In the next chapter she pursues the argument still further, saying that

The soule that shalle come to hevyn is so precyous to God, and the place so wurshypfulle, that the goodnes of God sufferyth nevyr that soule to synne fynally that shalle come ther. 2

Again the statement is controversial, but it follows logically from what goes before, and it may be defended on the same grounds.³ But she goes even further than this.

God shewed that synne shalle be no shame, but wurshype to man. ffor ryght as to every synne is answeryng a payne by truth, ryght so for every synne to the same soule is gevyn a blysse by loue. Ryght as dyuerse synnes be ponysschyd with dyuers paynes after that ~~it~~ be greuous, ryght so shalle they be rewardyd with dyvers joyes in hevyn for theyr victories, after as the synne haue ben paynfulle and sorowfulle to the soule in erth. 4

The justice and the grace of God are here shown in remarkable juxtaposition, so that, indeed, one might object that Julian was uttering self-contradictions. The key to the passage is in the last phrase: it is according to how painful the sin is to the soul on earth that the heavenly joy is given. The pain Julian means here is contrition. To make this clearer, various examples are given of people whom God allowed

¹ ch. liii, ff.

² xxxviii, 68 r.

³ cf. II Thessalonians 3:3, I Corinthians 1:8,9, Colossians 1:22,23, etc.

⁴ xxxviii, 67 v ff.

to fall, but preserved so that they did not perish, and finally raised to greater joy because of their sorrow for sin.¹ The sin itself is evil, and it is fitting that it should be paid for with pain; but the love of God rewards the pain of contrition with joy in heaven. Thus, out of evil, by means of pain, God brings a complex good by his grace and love.² Julian is therefore able to say that in heaven "the tokyn of synne is turnyd to worshyppe". The grace of God, by which all this is achieved, is once more triumphantly displayed, just as the joy and the honour which he brings out of evil is out of all proportion to the offence.

Nevertheless, the seriousness of sin is by no means minimised. In the next chapter, Julian makes the strongest assertions about its effect on the Christian that she has yet made:

Synne is the sharpest scorge that ony chosyn soule may be smytten with; whych scorge alle to betyth man or woman, and alle to brekyth hym and purgyth hym in hys owne syght - se ferforth that othyr whyle he thynkyth hym selfe he is nott wurthy but as it were to synke in to helle. 3

To the mature Christian, one who is filled with love for God, sin itself is a pain worse than any other.

The process of repentance is then outlined. Significantly, Julian

¹ Including David, Mary Magdalene, Peter, Paul, Thomas, Jude and John of Beverley, cf. Walsh, op.cit., p.26 ff.

² Contrition may be termed a secondary good, for it cannot exist unless sin precedes it. Likewise compassion is a secondary good, coming after suffering.

³ xxxix, 69 r.

says that it is "by touching of the Holy Gost" that the sinner's remorse is turned to the more salutary attitude of contrition. The humility which undertakes open confession and accepts any penance which may be imposed is pleasing to God. It is only in the light of this chapter that one should judge the statements she makes in the chapter before. And it is with this view of sin in mind that she goes on to say:

ffulle preciously oure good Lorde kepyth vs whan it
semyth to vs that we be neer forsaken and cast away
for our synne, and for, we say, we haue derseued it.
And because of the meekenes that we gett here by, we
be reysed fulle hygh in Goddes syght by his grace. 1

In this context she indicates the part played by contrition, compassion and longing for God, in the full significance and connotation that they have now taken on:

By contryscion we be made clene; by compassion we be
made redy; and by tru longyng to God we be made
wurdy. Theyse be thre menys as I vnderstode wher by
that alle soules com to hevyn. 2

So she reiterates the teaching of the previous chapter, that the soul that shall be saved will have joy in heaven, just as his sins were painful to him on earth. Now it is a man's sins that are seen as wounds, while contrition, compassion and longing for God are the medicines that heal him:³

ffor he beholdyth synne as sorow and paynes to his
louers, in whom he assignyth no blame for love. 4

¹ xxxix, 69 v.

² Ibid., 70 r.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 70 v.

Further, she says,

Oure curtesse Lorde wyllle nott that hys seruauuntys
dyspeyer for ofte fallyng ne for grevous fallyng;
for oure fallyng lettyth nott hym to loue vs. 1

The love of God is the basis for confidence and sure trust, and provides the answer to the temptation to despair.² Yet there is no reason for man to have self-satisfied confidence in his own merits. Once again, Julian repeats that sins are forgiven by God's mercy and grace, and the soul is only reconciled to him "by the gracious werkyng of the Holy Gost, and the vertu of Cristes passion".³

Finally, Julian herself anticipates the conclusion which may too hastily be drawn from this teaching, that "If this be tru than were it good for to synne to haue the more mede",⁴ or that one need not take sin seriously.⁵ She declares emphatically that this is a temptation of the devil and is most to be avoided. The very love of God teaches that one must hate sin. Indeed, she goes on to say:

ffor if it were leyde before vs alle the payne that is in
hell and in purgatory and in erth, deed and other than
synne, we shulde rather chese alle that payne than synne. 6

¹ xxxix, 70 v.

² Cf. Romans 5:1-11.

³ xl, 71 v.

⁴ Ibid., 72 r.

⁵ xl, 72 r, cf. Romans 6: "Quid ergo dicemus? permanebimus in peccato ut gratia abundet? Absit!"

⁶ xl, 72 v. It is interesting to compare this remarkable assertion with Eadmer's recollection of how St. Anselm regarded sin (Eadmer's Life of St. Anselm, ed. R.W.Southern, (Nelson, 1962), Book II, ch. xv, p.84):

This is the final word on the nature of sin and evil. This section of the book is concluded by a summary of the positive aspects of the teaching of the thirteenth revelation. The assurance is repeated, that "as myghty and as wyse as God is to saue man, as wylling he is".¹ Then Julian adds that the Christian should imitate Christ in his attitude to sinners:

No more than hys loue is breken to vs for oure synne,
no more wylle he that oure loue be broken to oure
selfe nor to oure evyn cristen; but nakedly hate
synne, and endlessly loue the soule as God loueth it. 2

Julian's approach to the problem of pain is one which tends to abandon abstract speculation and to deal with those aspects which immediately affect the Christian in his spiritual life. On some points she is content to remain agnostic, but her teaching always strongly upholds both the sovereignty and the love of God in spite of the fact of suffering. Further, her approach is Christocentric, and in particular her consideration of pain and evil constantly returns to the Passion of Christ. The solutions offered do not always satisfy the intellect, but are intended to comfort the Christian and give him sufficient reassurance in time of trouble, when sin and pain are very present realities to him.

[footnote 6 cont'd]

"For he was more afraid of sinning than of anything else in the world. We have often - and, upon my conscience, this is no lie - heard him solemnly protest that if he should see before his very eyes the horror of sin on the one hand and the pains of hell on the other and was obliged to plunge into one or the other he would rather choose hell than sin."

¹ xl, 72 v.

² Ibid., 73 r.

This reassurance is based on the character of God as he has revealed himself to mankind, especially, once more, in the Passion of Christ. Such confidence is obtained by faith rather than by complete knowledge.

Even so, the full implications of the solution offered are not made clear in this section of Julian's book. Particularly unsatisfactory are the remarks made about judgement in chapters xxvii and xxviii,¹ to the effect that God does not blame the elect. It is to this aspect of the question that Julian returns after the fourteenth revelation.² Here is another point at which the teaching of the visions apparently contradicts the teaching of the Church:

The furst dome whych is of Goddes ryghtfulnes and that is of his owne hygh endlesse loue; and that is that feyer swete dome that was shewed in alle the feyer reuelation, in whych I saw hym assygnye to vs no maner of blame. And though theyse were swete and delectable, ytt only in the beholdyng of this I culde nott be fulle esyd, and that was for the dome of Holy Chyrch, whych I had before vnderstondyng and was contynually in my syght. And therefore by this dome, me thought that me behovyth nedys to know my selfe a synner; and by the same dome I vnderstode that synners be sometyme wurthy blame and wrath. And theyse two culde I nott see in God. 3

¹ xxvii, 51 r: "Theyse wordes were shewde fulle tendyrly, shewyng no manner of blame to me ne to none that shalle be safe." xxviii, 52 v-53 r: "Jett hys loue excuseth vs, and of hys gret curtesy he doth away alle oure blame and beholdeth vs with ruth and pytte as chyldren innocens and vnlothfulle."

² The fourteenth revelation deals with another implication of the doctrine of providence, its relation to prayer. She discusses various aspects of prayer: its relation to grace, feelings of barrenness in prayer, thanksgiving, and higher kinds of contemplative prayer up to mystical contemplation, in ch. xliii. As in revelation XIII, divine providence is shown as a reason for assurance - one may trust God to answer prayer, or else that "we byde a better tyme or more grace or a beter gyfte".

³ xlv, 82 r ff.

The central difficulty is that although the Church teaches that man is a sinner, worthy of God's blame and wrath, nevertheless it is inconsistent with the character of God, and particularly it is against his immutable goodness, ever to be wroth:

And nott withstondyng alle this I saw verely that oure Lorde was nevyr wroth, nor nevyr shall. ffor he is God; he is Good; he is Truth; he is Loue; he is Pees; and hys myght, hys wysdom, hys charyte and hys vnyte sufferyth hym nott to be wroth. ffor I saw truly that it is agaynst the propyrte of hys myght to be wroth, and agaynst the properte of hys wysdom, and agaynst the propyrte of hys goodnes. God is that goodnesse that may nott be wroth. ffor God is nott but goodnes. 1

Further than this, she sees that "yf God myght be wroth a whyle, we shuld neyther haue lyfe ne stede ne beyng".²

Her pursuit of the problem throws light on the nature of mercy and forgiveness; mercy prevents Man from falling too far, and God forgives the wrath which is all on Man's part. At the same time, Julian begins to develop a doctrine of the nature of Man; and it is here that a resolution of the conflict is ultimately found. Essentially the answer to all her difficulties lies in a clearer understanding of Man, both as created by God in his image, and as he is after the Fall, and in a deeper realisation of the implications of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, how Man is united to and identified with him. The solution given not only makes more understandable the eternal status of the elect before God, but provides the final answer for the Christian to the whole problem of suffering.

¹ xlvi, 84 v.

² xlix, 90 r.

CHAPTER V

MAN

Julian's doctrine of Man is expounded in the chapters which come between the fourteenth and fifteenth revelations.¹ It may be seen as derived from reflections on the first fourteen revelations and on the Parable of the Lord and his Servant, which lies at the centre of this section of the book. Her psychology and her understanding of the Incarnation and the Atonement are not presented in a systematic form, but are slowly developed as she investigates the question of judgement. It will, however, be convenient to consider the main points of her teaching in the following order: the nature of Man as he is seen eternally, the result of the Fall, the person and work of the incarnate Christ, and the process of sanctification.

Sub specie aeternitatis

In keeping with the traditional concept, Julian says that Man has both body and soul. The body, she says, is made of the "slyme of the erth, whych is a mater medelyd and gaderyd of alle bodely thynges".²

¹ i.e., chs. xliv - lxxii.

² liii, 112 v, cf. Genesis 2:7, "Formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae, et inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae, et factus est homo in animam viventem."

But the soul is created ex nihilo, so that there is nothing at all between God and Man's soul. In this way, God and Man are united:

But to the makynge of mannys soule he wolde take ryght nought, but made it. And thus is the kynde made ryghtfully onyd to the Maker, whych is substauncyall Kynde vnmade, that is, God. And therfore it is that ther may ne shall be ryght noughte betwene God and mannys soule. 1

This implies that the "kind",² or "substance",³ of Man is an image of God, as close to the Exemplar as it can be.⁴

Further, she says that Man's substance is "in" God:⁵

... 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 vnderstandyng toke that oure substance is in God: that is to sey, that God is God, and oure substaunce is a creature in God. 6

- ¹ liii, 112 v, cf. xlvi, 84 v: "ffor oure soule is so fulsomly onyd to God of hys owne goodnesse, that betwene God and oure soule may be ryght nought." See also ch. v, 9 v.
- ² i.e., nature.
- ³ i.e., essential quality.
- ⁴ Genesis 1:26: "Et ait: Faciamus Hominem ad imaginem, et similitudinem nostram." St. Augustine (De Trinitate XI, 5, 8) explains "image" thus: "Not everything which is in some way like God in creatures is also to be called His image, but only that to which He alone is superior; namely, that which has been expressed from Him, and between which thing and Himself no other nature has been interposed."
- ⁵ See John 14:10, 11, 17, 20; 15:5, for similar uses of "in", e.g. (14:20), "In illo die vos cognoscetis quia ego sum in Patre meo, et vos in me, et ego in vobis."
- ⁶ liv, 114 r. Here Julian differs from Meister Eckhart, who held that the highest point of the soul, which he called the "scintilla", was in fact divine. See below, ch. VI,

With the elect, at least, this is an eternal state, for, she says, "oure kyndely substaunce is now blessydfulle in God, and hath bene sythen it was made, and shalle be withoute ende".¹ So God's commendation of Man is an affirmation of his eternal status:

God demyth vs vpon oure kyndely substance, whych is evyr
kepte one in hym, hole and safe without ende. 2

The soul of Man, she states, is made in the image of the Trinity,³ with faculties corresponding to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. She explains this trinity in two ways.

In chapter lv she says that when the soul is first made, God gives it the faculties of reason and "stedefaste mynde" and "kynde loue".⁴ Together the three constitute the image of the Trinity: by reason one may see God, and by "mind" one may understand what one sees; from this sight and understanding there proceeds a love of God. The three faculties in this way correspond to the Father (Truth), the Son (Wisdom) and the Holy Ghost (Love).

The other explanation is more fully developed. She takes as an example her first vision of Saint Mary,⁵ in which she saw the essential

¹ xlv, 83 r.

² xlv, 81 v.

³ lv, 116 v, "Oure soule is a made trynnye lyke to the vnmade blessyd Trynnye, knowyn and lovyd fro without begynnyng, and in the making onyd to the Maker."

⁴ lv, 115 v.

⁵ iv, 8 r & v, "In this he brought our Ladie Sainct Mari to my vnderstanding ... the wisdom and the truth of her sowle, wher in I vnderstode the reuerent beholding that she beheld her God ..."

truth and wisdom of her soul. Truth is the faculty by which God is clearly seen, and wisdom, which perceives God, is the means whereby the sight is understood, and God is known to be great, high, mighty and good. Once God is seen and perceived, he is loved. Thus, from truth and wisdom the love of God proceeds.

Truth seeth God, and wisdom beholdyth God, and of theyse two comyth the thurde, and that is a meruelous delyght in God, whych is loue. Where truth and wysdom is verely, there is loue verely comyng of them both, and alle of Goddes makyng. 1

These three qualities correspond to the Father, the Son (who is "begotten" by the Father) and the Holy Ghost (who "proceeds" from them both):

ffor God is endlesse souereyne Truth, endelesse souereyne Wysdom, endelesse souereyne Loue vnmade. And a mans soule is a creature in God, whych hath the same propertes made. And evyr more it doyth that it was made for: it seeth God, and it beholdyth God, and it louyth God. Wherefore God enjoyeth in the creature, and the creature in God, endelesly mervelyng. 2

Julian implies that this trinitarian image is constantly and eternally in the substance of the soul. Further, she says that in this activity of seeing, beholding and loving God "man werkyth evyr more his wylle and his wurschyppe, duryngly, without styntyng".³ But the distinction between creature and Creator is nevertheless strongly maintained:

¹ xliv, 81 r.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 80 v - 81 r.

In whych mervelyng he seeth his God, hys Lorde, hys Maker, so hye, so grett, and so good in regarde of hym that is made, that vnnethys the creature semyth ought to the selfe. But the bryghtnes and clernesse of truth and wysedome makyth hym to see and to knowe that he is made for loue, in whych loue God endlesly kepyth hym. 1

It is clear that this analysis of Julian's follows the accepted tradition, which sprang from the teaching of St. Augustine.² But there

¹ Ibid., 81 v.

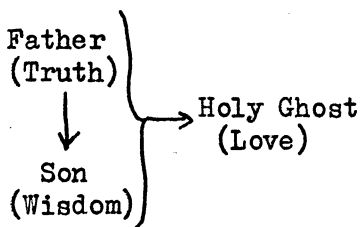
² See J.E.Sullivan, O.P., The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and its Influence (Iowa, 1963).

St. Augustine says that the image of the Trinity, which remains in Man after the Fall, although defaced by original sin and needing to be restored by grace, is found in the highest part of Man. He calls this part the mens, or intellectual soul, that is, the rational mind, which distinguishes man from the beasts and where knowledge of God can exist (De Trinitate XII, 7, 12). The mens includes the faculties of reason and understanding, the "intellectual memory" and the will (Sullivan, op.cit., pp.45-47). St. Augustine equates the mens with what St. Paul calls the "inner man" (Ephesians 3:16), and it would seem to correspond to what Julian calls the "substance" of Man's soul.

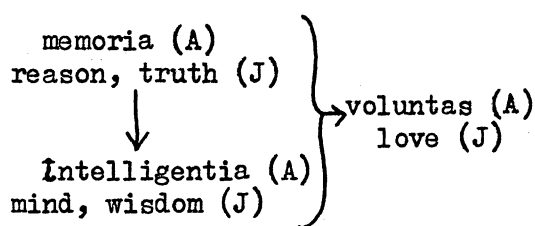
St. Augustine teaches that the faculties of memory, understanding and will in the mens, when they are directed towards the knowledge and love of God, constitute the image of the Trinity in the soul of Man. That is to say, the truest image of the Trinity is present when the mind remembers God (i.e., recollects God, or has him "in mind"), understands what is recollected, and, because of this, loves God. Memoria begets intelligentia, and voluntas proceeds from them both (De Trinitate XII, esp. 11, 16).

It is easy to see the correspondence between this and Julian's teaching, in which truth sees God, wisdom "beholds" (i.e., perceives or understands) God, and a love of God is caused by the two:

The Trinity



The Image in Man's Soul



are aspects of her concept of the nature of man which diverge radically from the conventional explanations. Such is her assertion about the "godly will".¹

It is in the substance of Man's soul that she says there exists a godly will which never assents to sin. Julian first speaks of this in her discussion of God's preservation of the elect in the thirteenth revelation,² but she examines it more closely later on:

I saw and vnderstode full suerly that in ech a soule that shall be safe is a godly wyllle that nevyr assentyd to synne ne nevyr shall; whych wyll is so good that it may nevyr wyllle evyll, but evyrmore contynuly it wylllyth good and werkylth good in the syght of God. 3

This godly will is never separated from God, because, indeed, it is identical with his will. The only difference is that it is created, it is "a creature in God".⁴

Julian adopts the position that there must be in the elect something which is not corrupted by the Fall and which remains united to God.⁵

¹ Julian's teaching on the godly will compared with the accepted tradition and in relation to contemporary discussion will be considered in the next chapter.

² xxxvii, 67 r.

³ liii, 111 r. St. Paul appears to be referring to something similar in Romans 7:15 ff: "quod enim operor, non intelligo: non enim quod volo bonum, hoc ago: sed quod odi malum, illud facio. ... Nam velle, adjacet mihi: perficere autem bonum, non invenio. Non enim quod volo facio: sed quod nolo malum, hoc ago." In his inner struggle, the godly will is the protagonist, and is constantly being defeated by what Julian would call the "beastly will".

⁴ liv, 114 r.

⁵ This follows from St. Augustine's view that evil is nothing other than the absence or deprivation of good. Some good must be present for evil to exist at all. Some good must remain in man's soul, or it would cease to be. (Enchiridion XII). Those who hold this view with regard

For that ech kynde that hevyn shall be fulfyllyd with behovyd nedys of Goddys ryghtfulnes so to be knytt and onyd in hym that there in were kepte a substaunce whych myght nevyr nor shulde be partyd from hym - and that thorow his awne good wyll in his endlesse forseyde purpose. 1

What remains united to God is the very essence of Man's soul, his "substance", which is enclosed in God,² and, more especially, it is his godly will, which is one with the will of God.³

So far the soul of Man has been considered as something purely spiritual, apart from the body. This may be as it is when first created ex nihilo and as God sees it even before it is made, in his foreknowledge.⁴ But Julian sees Man as a unity of body and soul, a unity made and kept by God.⁵ When the soul is, as it were, "breathed into" the body, Man is,

[footnote 5 cont'd]

to the nature of man after the fall, defend it by saying that if man were totally corrupted he could never turn back to God of his own free will, and even if redemption were offered to him, he would never avail himself of it. Again, the Incarnation of the Son of God, in which he took upon himself complete human nature, would be impossible, since God could not become something inherently evil and corrupted. Thirdly, if whenever man was faced with a moral choice he always took the evil alternative, then it would not be a real choice at all, he would have no "free will". (See also Leff, op.cit., p.153 ff.)

¹ liii, 111 v. To forestall any wrong conclusions, she immediately adds, "And nott withstonding this ryghtfull knyttyng and this endlesse oonyng, yett the redemcion and the agayne byeng of manne kynde is nedfull and spedfull in every thing."

² liv, 113 v ff.

³ See below, ch. VI.

⁴ liii, 113 r, "ffor he wyll that we know that oure soule is a lyfe, whych lyfe of hys goodnesse and his grace shall last in hevyn without ende, hym lovyng, hym thankyng, hym praysyng. And right the same that we shulde be without end, the same we ware tresured in God and hyd, knownen and lovyd fro without begynnyng."

⁵ Genesis 2:7; lv, 117 r.

she says, "made sensual";¹ that is, when the substance of a man's soul is united to his body, his sensuality is formed. Man is neither pure spirit nor wholly animal but a combination of the two. This is the essence of his human nature, his humanity, and it is at this point that Julian discerns what she calls the "sensuality" or the lower part of the soul.

She therefore sees the soul of Man as having two parts, a higher and a lower, the substance and the sensuality, which are joined by God.² It is important to emphasise that Julian does not envisage separation of the soul from the body once they have been united; body and soul together are brought to perfection.³ In this she holds to the Biblical concept of Man, and the orthodox belief in a bodily resurrection.⁴

Just as it was God who first joined substance and sensuality, so it is he who maintains this union:

He is grounde in whome oure soule standyth, and he is mene that kepyth the substaunce and the sensualyte to geder, so that it shall nevyr departe. 5

-
- ¹ lv, 115 v, "And what tyme oure soule is enspyred in oure body, in whych we be made sensuall ..."
- ² lvi, 118 v, "And as anemptis oure substaunce, it may ryghtly be callyd oure soule; and anemptis oure sensualite, it may ryghtly be callyd oure soule, and that is by the onyng that it hath in God."
- ³ lv, 116 v, "... oure soule with oure body, and oure body with oure soule, eyther of them take helpe of other tylle we be broughte vp in to stature as kynde werkyth."
- ⁴ New Testament writers avoid the idea that the body is evil, the prison of the soul. On the contrary, nowhere in the Bible is the view that a man's soul ever exists normally apart from some kind of body; and there is a clearly stated belief in a bodily resurrection (I Corinthians 15:42-52; I Thessalonians 4:13-18, etc.).
- ⁵ lvi, 118 r.

Further, she says that just as the substance of the soul is in God eternally, so, once it is made, God is in the sensuality:

ffor I saw full suerly that oure substaunce is in God. And also I saw that in oure sensuallite God is. ffor in the same poynt that oure soule is made sensuall, in the same poynt is the cytte of God, ordeyned to hym fro without begynnyng.¹ In whych cytte he comyth and nevyr shall remeve it; for God is nevyr out of the soule in whych he shall dwell blessydly without end. 2

Julian's view of Man as substance, sensuality and body is in keeping with the Biblical concept, although there is no ordered, defined psychology set out in the Scriptures. None of the Biblical writers, not even St. Paul, develops such a system as Julian has in her book in any detail. There is the assertion that Man is made in the image of God,³ but this receives no further explanation. There is the belief that Man is a composite unity of body and spirit, and that the spiritual element is always normally "clothed" in some kind of body.⁴ Both elements are created by God, and thus both are good.⁵ There is even a hint, in certain

¹ Revelation XVI.

² lv, 116 r.

³ Genesis 1:26, 27.

⁴ I Corinthians 15:35 ff; II Corinthians 5:1-4.

⁵ Genesis 1:31. In this context, St. Paul's use of the word "flesh" (carnis) is confusing. Frequently he employs the term to denote that part of man which is occupied with the life of this world (Romans 8:8, 13); and he contrasts it with "spirit", which denotes the personality that is concerned with eternal values and turned towards God. He sees both present in the regenerate man, and they may be called respectively the higher and lower natures. These two natures are incompatible, and at war with one another. He teaches that the lower nature is to be killed, put off, abolished as something evil. So when he speaks of being "crucified with Christ", it is the old, sinful nature ("flesh")

New Testament passages, that Man has a tripartite nature,¹ although the interpretation of these passages is disputed. The Biblical teaching on the subject does not go much further than this, and it was left for post-Apostolic writers to develop a doctrine of the nature of Man which would be consistent with the statements made in the Scriptures.

Julian's doctrine of the nature of Man has so far been considered without reference to the Fall. The nature of Man outlined above may have been true of Adam in Paradise, but a different situation now obtains. After the Fall Julian sees a radical change, not in Man's substance, which remains endlessly united to God, but in his sensuality.

The Results of the Fall

It is clear that Julian holds the orthodox belief that Man has somehow fallen from his original state of perfection, and that he is now inclined to do evil. Without going into details of how Original Sin is transmitted, she takes as a basic assumption the doctrine that all men are

[footnote 5 cont'd]

which is put to death, and the new, holy nature ("spirit") which is raised (Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:1-11, Colossians 2:11-13, ch.3, etc.). But with Julian the sensuality, although weaker than the substance, is nevertheless good, and will be saved as well as the substance. St. Paul does not use "flesh" in this sense to mean man's physical body. If he were, he would flatly contradict what he has to say elsewhere about the excellence of the body. Indeed, he says that it is here that the Holy Spirit dwells (I Corinthians 6:13-20).

¹ I Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 4:1,2. Julian most probably follows St. Augustine, who saw man's nature as tripartite (Sullivan, op.cit., p.46 ff). He says (On Faith and the Creed X, 23), "There are three things of which a man consists, namely, spirit, soul and body, which again are spoken of as two, because frequently the soul is named along with the spirit, for a certain rational portion of the same, of which beasts are devoid, is called spirit: the principal part in us is the spirit (animus); next, the life whereby we are united with the body is called the soul (anima); finally the body itself, as it is visible, is the last part in us."

involved in the sin of the first man, and that all are personally guilty of disobeying God - "in Adam all die". As a result, all men are subject to change, decay and death.

Hence, she says, although Man's substance is preserved whole and safe in God, his sensuality is weak, changeable and fallible.¹ As a result of the Fall, the sensuality is "blinded" so that it is unable to see God.² In this way, Julian indicates that there can be no image of God in the sensuality of fallen Man; because it can no longer see God, it can no more understand or love him. This blindness is what causes Man actually to sin:

Man is chaungeabyll in this lyfe, and by sympylnesse
and vncunnyng fallyth 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 is blynes, for he seeth not God. ffor yf he
saw God contynually, he shulde haue no myschevous felyng,
ne no maner steryng, no sorowyng that servyth to synne. 3

This blindness even prevents the sensuality of fallen Man from knowing its own substance, that is, in this life Man in an unregenerate state is only conscious of his sensuality, his lower nature, and even a regenerate man does not know what his true nature is except by faith.⁴

Further, there is in the sensuality a "contrariousness" that leads Man into wrath:

¹ lvii, 120 v, "And thus in oure substaunce we be full; and in oure sensualyte we feyle."

² cf. II Corinthians 3:14 ff, 4:4, Ephesians 4:17 ff, I Corinthians 2:14.

³ xlvii, 85 v - 86 r.

⁴ xlvi, 83 r, "But oure passyng lyvyng that we haue here in oure sensualyte knowyth nott what oure selfe is but in our feyth."

... we fayle oftymes of the syght of hym. And anon we falle in to oure selfe, and than fynde we felyng of ryght nowght, but the contraryous that is in oure selfe; and that of the olde rote of oure furst synne with all that folowyth of oure owne contynuaunce. And in this we be traveyled and temptyd with felyng of synne and of payne in many dyverse maner, gostely and bodely, as it is knowyn to vs in this lyfe. 1

Again she related this to the image of the Trinity which, because of the Fall, is broken in the sensuality:

ffor wrath is nott elles but a frowerdnes and a contraryousnes to pees and to loue. And eyther it comyth of feylyng of myght, or of feylyng of wysdom, or of feylyng of goodnesse, whych feylyng is nott in God, but it is in oure perty. ffor we by synne and wrechyddnesse haue in vs a wrath and a contynuant contraryousnes to pees and to loue. 2

It is this contrariousness that causes all man's trouble and sorrow in this life. Earlier, in the thirteenth revelation, Julian made reference to a "bestly will" in the sensuality which can will nothing good.³ This and Man's "contrariousness" are possibly the same thing. They are parts of Man's lower nature which must be forsaken and destroyed.

This, then, is the state of Man:

In as moch as we fayle, in so moch we falle; and in as much as we falle, in so moch we dye. ffor vs behovyth nedys to dye in as moch as we fayle syghte and felyng of God that is our lyfe. Oure faylyng is dredfulle; oure fallyng is shamfull; and oure dyeng is sorowfull. 4

¹ xlvi, 86 v - 87 r.

² xlvi, 87 v.

³ xxxvii, 67 r & v, "Ryght as there is a bestely wylle in the lower party that may wylle no good, ryght so there is a godly wylle in the hygher party ..."

⁴ xlvi, 88 r.

Julian's analysis is in keeping with the traditional Christian teaching. The doctrine of original sin - that all men are somehow involved in the sin of Adam and are all guilty of actual offences against God - is fundamental to Christianity, and is axiomatic in the writings of the New Testament.¹ It is, however, post-Apostolic theologians who explain the consequences of the Fall in a systematic way. In particular, Julian's teaching has close affinities with the Augustinian schema.²

Hence, although Julian maintains that the substance of man's soul is never separated from God, her teaching about the consequences of the Fall is the orthodox one: redemption is necessary:

And for the worschypfull Conyng that was thus made of God between the soule and the body, it behovyd nedys to be that mankynd shuld be restoryd fro doubyll deth. Whych restoryng mygt never be in to the tyme that the Seconde Person in the Trynyte had takyn the lower party of mankynd, to whome that hyst was onyd in the furst makynge. 3

Only when the sensuality is restored, or "brought up into the substance",⁴ that is, when one's blindness is healed so that one can have knowledge of God and of one's true self, only then can one be holy and perfect. And this is accomplished for all mankind by the Incarnation and

¹ e.g. Romans 1:18 - 3:20.

² Augustine saw Man's evil as "the falling away from the unchangeable good of a being made good but changeable". This is the primary cause of his sin. The secondary causes are ignorance of duty and lust after what is hurtful, which in turn lead to error and suffering. (Enchiridion XXIII & XXIV). So Julian sees Man as changeable, falling by "sympylnesse" and "vncunnyng" into sin, and this in turn leads him into "sorow and woe". xlvi, 85 v - 86 r, etc.

³ lv, 117 r.

⁴ lvi, 119 r.

Passion of Christ, and applied to the individual by the working of mercy and grace.

Deus Homo

We knowe in our feayth, and in our beleue, by the teachyng and the prechyng of Holy Church, that the blessyd fulle Trinitie made mankynd to his ymage and to his lykenes. In the same maner wyse we know that when man fell so depe and so wretchedly by synne, ther was no nother helpe to restore man but thorow hym that made man. And he that made man for loue, by the same loue he woulde restore man to the same blysse and ovyr passyng. And ryght as we were made lyke to the Trynyte in oure furst makyng, our Maker would that we should be lyke to Ihesu Cryst oure Sauour in hevyn without ende by the vertu of oure wane makyng. Then betwene these two he would, for loue and for worshipec of man, make hym selfe as lyke to man, in this deadly lyfe, in our fowlhede, and in our wretchednes, as man myght be without gylt. 1

This statement, which summarises the common Christian belief about the reason for the Incarnation of Christ, is made as early as the second revelation. But it is in the attempt to answer the questions of human sin and divine judgement, which arise from her discussion of the problem of suffering, that she explores at greater depth the doctrines involved. The answer to her questions is offered in a fuller understanding of the union of God and Man in Jesus Christ.

As the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ is one with God and endlessly holy. His very being, that is, his substance, partakes in the Godhead. In the Incarnation, when he was "made flesh" and took the body of a man, he became sensual, or, as Julian expresses it, "in that same tyme that God knytt hym to oure body in the Meydens wombe he toke oure

¹ x, 21 v - 22 r.

sensuall soule".¹ Thus he took on complete human nature, and, like all men, the incarnate Son of God has substance, sensuality and body. But the higher part, his substance, is his divinity, and the lower part, the sensuality, is his humanity. The two are united in him to form one soul.² This is how Julian understands the hypostatic union of the divine and the human in Christ.³

The result of this is that both parts of Man's soul are now united to God - the substance in its creation, and the sensuality by the Incarnation - since both parts are united in Christ:

For oure kynde whych is the hyer party is knytt to God in the makyng. And God is knytt to oure kynde whych is the lower party in oure flessch takyng. And thus in Crist oure two kyndys be onyd, for the Trynyte is comprehendyd in Crist, in whom oure hyer party is groundyd and rotyd; and oure lower party the Secund Parson hath taken ... ffor in that same tyme that God knytt hym to oure body in the Meydens wombe he toke oure sensuall soule; in whych takyng he vs all havyng beclosyd in hym, he onyd it to oure substaunce; in whych oonyng he was perfit man. 4

Thus, she says, our substance "dwell in" God, and God "dwells in" our sensuality:

That wurschypfull cytte that oure Lorde Ihesu syttyth in, it is oure sensualyte in whych he is enclosyd. And oure kyndly substance is beclosyd in Ihesu with

¹ lvii, 122 r.

² lv, 117 r, "Theyse two pertyes were in Crist, the heyer and the lower, whych is but one soule."

³ Cf. the Quincunque Vult.

⁴ lvii, 121 r, 122 r.

the blessyd soule of Crist, syttyng in rest in the
Godhead. 1

Further, Jesus Christ is the only perfect man in whom the substance
and the sensuality are truly united, since he alone has not sinned,
whereas in the rest of mankind the sensuality has fallen and needs to be
restored.²

ffor oure substaunce is hole in ech Person of the
Trynyte, whych is one God. And oure sensuallyte is
only in the Seconde Person, Crist Ihesu, in whom is
the Fader and the Holy Gost. And in hym and by hym
we be myghtly takyn out of hell; and oute of the
wrechyndnesse in erth, and wurschypfully brought vp in
to hevyn, and blyssydfully onyd to oure substaunce,
encresyd in rychesse and nobly, by all the vertu of
Crist, and by the grace and werkynge of the Holy Gost. 3

The union of all men in Christ was not achieved by the Incarnation
alone, but by means of Christ's death and Passion. This was the very
purpose of his becoming a man, to die on Man's behalf, and so to save him
from death and hell:

For the worshypfull conyng that was thus made of God
between the soule and the body, it behovyd nedys to
be that mankynd shuld be restoryd fro doubtyll deth.
Whych restoryng mygt nevyr be in to the tyme that
the Seconde Person in the Trynyte had takyn the lower
party of mankynd, to whome that hyst was onyd in the
furst makynge. And theyse two pertyes were in Crist,
the heyer and the lower, whych is but one soule. The
hyer was evyr in pees with God, in full joy and blysse.
The lower perty, whych is sensuallyte, sufferyd for the
saluacion of mankynd. 4

¹ lvi, 118 v.

² lvi, 119 r, "For in to the tyme that it is in the full myghtis, we may
nott be alle holy; and that is, that oure sensuallyte, by the vertu of
Cristes passion, be brought vp in to the substance."

³ lviii, 125 v - 126 r.

⁴ lv, 117 r.

The doctrine has already been indicated in the first part of the book, and especially in the eighth revelation:

And thus saw I oure Lorde Ihesu languryng long tyme;
for the vnyng of the Godhed gaue strenght to the
manhed for loue to suffer more than alle man myght ...
And in thys he brought to mynd in parte the hygh and
the nobylte of the glorious Godhede, and ther with
the precioushede and the tendyrnesse of the blessydfulle
body, whych be to gether onyd; and also the lothfulness
that in our kynde is to suffer peyne. ffor as much as
he was most tendyr and clene, ryght so he was most
strong and myghty to suffer. And ffor every mannys
synne that shalbe savyd he sufferyd, and every mannes
sorow, desolacion and angwysshe he saw and sorowd, for
kyndnes and loue ... for as long as he was passyble he
sufferde for vs, and sorowde for vs. 1

Two things are clear in the above passages. Firstly, Julian believed that it was in his humanity, the sensuality, that Christ suffered. His divinity remained impassible, "ever in peace with God, in full joy and bliss".² Secondly, she clearly believes that Christ's suffering was vicarious, and thus holds to a substitutionary doctrine of the atonement.

This is remarkably demonstrated in the Parable of the Lord and his

¹ xx, 39 v - 40 r.

² This is in accord with the accepted theological teaching on the subject which denies that Christ ever suffered in his divinity. For example, St. Anselm says (Cur Deus Homo I, viii), "We assert that the Divine nature is undoubtedly incapable of suffering, and cannot at all be humbled from its lofty estate, or toil in anything it wills to do. But we say that the Lord Jesus Christ was true God and true man, one Person in two natures, and two natures in one Person. Wherefore, when we say that God suffers any humiliation or infirmity, we do not understand it of the loftiness of his impassible nature, but of the infirmity of his human substance* which he assumed. .. Thus we indicate that there was no humiliation of the Divine substance; but we show that there was one Person, both God and man. So that in the Incarnation no humiliation of God is understood to have taken place, but the nature of man is believed to have been exalted." (* Anselm uses "substance" in a more general sense than Julian does.)

Servant.¹ The figure of the Servant has all the associations of the one referred to in the Servant Songs of Isaiah,² and is, in one respect, the suffering Messiah who should "bear the sins of many". Here Julian's question about God's blaming the elect is answered:

Thus hath oure good Lorde Ihesu taken vppon hym all oure blame. And therefore oure Fader may nor wyll no more blame assigne to vs than to hys owne derwurthy Son Ihesu Cryst. Thus was he the Servant before hys comyng in to erth, stondyng redy before the Father in purpos tyll what tyme he wolde sende hym to do the wurschypfull deede by whych mankynde was brought agayn in to hevyn. That is to say, nott withstondyng that he is God, evyn with the Fader as anenst the Godhede, but in his forseying purpos that he woulde be man to saue man in fulfylling of the wyll of his Fader. So he stode before his Fader as a servant, wyllfully takyng vppon hym alle oure charge. 3

The substitution is effective because somehow, by means of the Incarnation and Passion, Christ and mankind are identified: "Ihesu is in all that shall be safe; and all that be savyd is in Ihesu".⁴ So she is able to say:

Ande for the grete endlesse loue that God hath to alle mankynde, he makyth no depertyng in loue between the blessyd soule of Crist and the lest soule that shall be savyd. ffor it is full esy to beleue and truste that the dwellyng of the blessyd soule of Crist is full hygh in the glorious Godhede. And truly, as I vnderstode in oure Lordes menyng, where the blessyd soule of Crist is, there is the substance of alle the soules that shall be savyd by Crist. 5

¹ ch. li.

² Isaiah 42:1-4 (5-7), 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53: 12.

³ li, 102 r & v.

⁴ li, 103 v.

⁵ liv, 113 v.

This is again symbolized by the Servant, who is both Adam (Everyman) and Christ:

The Servaunt that stode before hym, I vnderstode that he was shewed for Adam, that is to sey, oone man was shewed that tyme and his fallynge, to make there by to be vnderstonde how God beholdyth alle manne and his fallynge. ffor in the syghte of God alle man is oone man, and cone man is alle man ...

In the Servant is comprehendyd the Seconde Person of the Trynyte, and in the Seruant is comprehendyd Adam, that is to sey, all men. 1

So, Julian says, regenerate man participates in the natures of both Adam and Christ:

We haue in vs oure Lorde Ihesu Cryst vp resyn, and we haue in vs the wrechydesse and the myschef of Adams fallynge. Dyeng, by Cryst we be lastynly kept, and by hys gracyous touchynge we be reysed in to very trust of saluacyon ... 2

All this is true of the individual Christian, but it is also clear that Julian's teaching involves a corporate view of mankind, just as the figure of the Servant in her parable, as his Biblical archetype, may be seen as the personification of a collective unity: "ffor in the syghte of God alle man is oone man, and oone man is alle man". Christ suffered and died on behalf of all men, and the consequence is that all who are saved are, as it were, incorporated into him, the perfect Man: "For Crist havyng knytt in hym all man that shall be savyd is perfete man".³ Identification with Christ, therefore, occurs on a corporate as well as an individual level.

¹ li 97 r, 101 r & v.

² lii, 107 r, cf. I Corinthians 15:22: "Et sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur, ita et in Christo omnes vivificabuntur."

³ lvii, 122 r & v.

ffor all mankynde that shall be savyd 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. 1

This is none other than the idea that is developed in the Pauline Epistles, that the Church, the company of the redeemed, is the Mystical Body of Christ, of which he is the Head.² Julian has already made reference to this concept before she comes to examine it more closely in this section of her book. In the thirteenth revelation she asserts the identity of Christ and the Church - "For he it is holy Chyrch: he is the Grounde; he is the Substaunce,"³ and she relates this particularly to the Passion:

ffor as aneynst that Crist is oure Hede, he is glorifyed
and vnpassible. And as anenst his body, in whych alle
his membris be knytt, he is nott yett fulle glorifyed ne
all vnpassible. 4

All who shall be saved may therefore be seen as one complete person, the Head of which is already perfect while the Body is to be made perfect in heaven. It is for this perfection that Christ thirsts and Christians long. One may see a further analogy here: in the same way as in the incarnate Son of God the substance remained with God while the sensuality suffered for mankind, so now the Head is at rest, at the right hand of the Father, but the Body, of which individual Christians are members, still

¹ li, 103 r & v.

² Ephesians 1:23, 2:16, 4:4, 12, 16, 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24, 2:19, 3:15, etc.

³ xxxiv, 61 v.

⁴ xxxi, 56 r.

suffers.¹ Thus identification with Christ by means of compassion is a corporate as well as an individual experience, as is the longing of the members to come to the Head, in which the spiritual thirst of Christ continues. In heaven this suffering and longing will end, and the Atonement will be complete.

For this is how she understands the Atonement: by the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, God and Man are made one, as in the person of Christ the divinity and the humanity are one soul. Manhood is taken up into God, just as the sensuality is to be brought up into the substance of Man. This is already accomplished in Christ, the perfect man,² and it is to be perfected in all his people "by mercy and grace, thorow vertu of his blessyd passyon."³

Thus Man is seen to be something very noble and significant indeed. Not only is he first made in the image of the Trinity, but he is united to and identified with the Second Person himself by virtue of the Incarnation and Passion.⁴

Julian refrains from speculating about what would have happened if Man had never fallen (sub specie aeternitatis this question might well be meaningless), but she says:

¹ One may easily see how this corresponds with the nature of man as an individual:

God the Son:	divinity	humanity
<u>The corporate Christ</u>	Head (Christ)	Members (Church)
<u>Every man</u>	substance	sensuality
	<u>With God, at peace.</u>	<u>Suffers & longs.</u>

² Ch. lvii.

³ lvi, 119 r.

⁴ x, 21 v.

When Adam felle Godes Sonne fell; for the ryght onyng
 whych was made in hevyn, Goddys Sonne myght nott be
 seperath from Adam (for by Adam I vnderstond all 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 to the slade of the Meydens
 wombe, whych was the feyerest doughter of Adam; and
 that for to excuse Adam from blame in hevyn and in
 erth, and myghtely he fechyd hym out of hell. 1

It is with God's foreknowledge and eternal purpose in mind that she
 describes the situation:

ffor I saw that God began nevyr to loue mankynde; for
 ryghte the same that mankynd shall be in endlesse
 blesse, fulfylling the joy of God as anemptis his werkes,
 ryghte so the same mankynd hath be in the forsyghte of
 God, knowen and lovyd fro without begynnyng in his
 ryghtfull entent. 2

So she continues:

And by the endlesse entent and assent, and the full acorde
 of all the Trynyte, the Myd Person wolde be ground 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. 3

Because of the unity, potential and actual, between God and Man, and
 because of the Incarnation of the Son of God, she is able to say:

The nobelest thyng that evyr he made is mankynde; and
 the fulleste substaunce and the hyst vertu is the blessyd
 soule of Crist. And ferthermore he wyll we wytt that this
 deerworthy soule was preciously knytt to hym in the making,
 whych knott is so suttell and so myghty that it is onyd in
 to God, in whych onyng it is made endlesly holy. ffarther-
 more he wyll we wytt that all the soulys that shalle be

¹ li, 101 v - 102 r.

² liii, 111 v - 112 r.

³ liii, 112 r.

savyd in hevyn without ende be knytt in this knott and
onyd in this conyng and made holy in this holynesse. 1

The true destiny of Man is to be united to God, and in this union all men are made one. Even after the Fall, Man's substance is not separated from God, and by means of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ the sensuality may be restored and reunited to its substance. In this way the individual's wholeness and integrity is restored, and mankind as a whole is brought into a unity with God. And here Julian says that by the power of the Passion and death of the Son of God, mankind is not only brought back to his original joy, but also is raised to a nobility and a greatness for surpassing that which he would have had if he had not fallen, in the same way as the Servant in the Parable is exalted:²

In the Lorde was shewde the hye noblyte and the endlesse
wurschyppe that mankynde is come to, by the vertu of the
passyon and the deth of his deerwurthy Son. And therfore
myghtely he enjoyeth in his fallyng, for the hye reysyng
and fulhed of blysse that mankynde is come to, ovyr
passyng that ~~he~~ shuld haue had yf he had nott fallyn. 3

It is in the light of all this that one must interpret her words in chapter ix:

ffor yf I looke syngulery to my selfe, I am ryst nought.
But in generall I am, I hope, in onehede of cheryte with
alle my evyn cristen. ffor in thys oned stondyth the
lyfe of alle mankynd that shalle be savyd. ffor God is
alle that is goode, as to my syght; and God hath made alle
that is made; and God lovyth alle that he hath made. And
he that generally lovyth all hys evyn cristen for God, he
lovyth alle that is. ffor in mankynd that shall be savyd

¹ liii, 113 r & v, cf. John 17:21.

² li, 105 v ff.

³ lii, 108 v.

is comprehendyd alle, that is to sey, alle that is made and the Maker of alle. ffor in man is God, and in God is alle; and he that lovyth thus, he lovyth alle. 1

Sanctification

At the same time as she discusses the reuniting of man as a corporate whole to God, Julian considers how the Atonement becomes effective for the individual. For she sees that individual Christians, even though they are members of the Body of Christ, still suffer from spiritual blindness, and still fall into trouble and sin as a result. Healing and restoration are begun here, and shall be completed in heaven, but in the meantime there is always the struggle in the Christian's soul between the lower and higher natures. Just as all mankind is represented by the Servant, who is both Adam and Christ, so each of God's servants individually participates in the natures of both Adams:

ffor the tyme of this lyfe we haue in vs a mervelous medelur both of wele and of woo. We haue in vs oure Lorde Ihesu Cryst vp resyn; and we haue in vs the wrechydesse and the myschef of Adams fallng. 2

The normal state of the regenerate man in this life is still one of spiritual blindness: he is unable to see God (and so the image of the Trinity in his soul is obscured) or even to know his own substance.³ But the work of the Servant is to open his eyes,⁴ that is, to lead him

¹ ix, 18 v.

² lii, 106 v - 107 r.

³ Chs. xlvi, lvi.

⁴ Cf. Isaiah 42:6,7, "Ego Dominus vocavi te in iustitia, et apprehendi

into knowledge and love of God:

Dyeng, by Cryst we be lastynly kept, and by hys gracyous touchyng we be reysed in to very trust of saluacyon. And by Adams fallynge 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 vnnethys we can take any comforte. But in oure menyng we abyde God, and feythfully trust to haue mercy and grace, and this is his owne werkyng in vs. And of his goodnesse openyth the ey of oure vnderstanding by whych we haue syght, some tyme more, and somtyme lesse, after that God gevyth abylyte to take. And now we be reysed in to that one, and now we are sufferyd to fall in to that other. 1

The operative phrase here is "feythfully trust". One might say that the Christian actively participates in the nature of Christ when his will is united to God's; and the means by which both God and the true self (the Godly Will) are known in this life is by faith:

But that ech holy assent that we assent to God when we fele hym, truly wylling to be with hym, with all oure herte, with all oure soule and with all oure myghte; and that we hate and dyspise oure evyll steryng and all that myghte be occasion of synne, gostely and bodely. And yett nevyr the lesse, whan this swetnesse is hyd, we fall ayeen in to blyndnesse and so in to woo and trybulacion on dyuerse manners. But than is this oure comfort, that we knowe in oure feyth that by the vertu of Crist, whych is oure Keper, we assent nevyr therto, but we groge ther aȝenst... 2

It is through faith, that is, belief and trust in God, that the Christian may be assured that Christ is with him at all times:

[footnote 4 cont'd]

manum tuam, et servavi te. Et dedi te in foedus populi, in lucem gentium: ut aperires oculos caecorum, et educeres de conclusione vinctum de domo carceris sedentes in tenebris."

¹ lii, 107 r.

² lii, 107 v - 108 r.

He wyll we trust that he is lastyngly with vs, and that in thre manner: he is with vs in hevyn, very man, in his owne person vs vpdrawyng (and that was shewd in the gostely thyrst); and he is with vs in erth, vs ledyng (and that was shewde in the thyrde, wher I saw God in a poynt); and he is, with vs in oure soule endlesly wonnyng, rewlyng and gydyng vs. 1

The understanding of God's love which comes through faith, and which is given to the Christian by grace, leads him to hate sin.² Yet, if he should fall into sin, he ought not despair, but quickly repent, turn to God and trust in his forgiveness,

And neyther on that one syde fall ovyr lowe, enclynyng to dyspeyrs, ne on that other syde be ovyr rechelesse, as yf we geue no forse. But mekely know oure febylnes, wyttyng that we may nott stonde a twynglyng of an ey but with kepyng of grace, and reverently cleue to God, in hym oonly trustyng. 3

So both judgements, which previously she had seen as conflicting,⁴ are found to be appropriate:

ffor other wyse is the beholdyng of God, and other wyse is the beholdyng of man. ffor it longyth to man mekely to accuse hym selfe; and it longyth to the propyr goodnesse of oure Lorde God to curtesly to excuse man. 5

¹ Ibid., 108 r.

² Ibid., 108 v, "The creature that seeth and felyth the workyng of loue by grace hatyth nought but synne."

³ l ii, 109 r & v.

⁴ ch. xlv ff.

⁵ l ii, 109 v.

Once again she indicates that the proper response comes from faith and trust in God. It is to know one's sin and the harm that comes from it, to realise that one can never make amends for it, and yet to know God's everlasting love and plenteous mercy, supremely displayed in the redemption he has made for man.

Finally, Julian suggests that the Atonement involves much more than the "excusing" of the sinner:

ffor in the lower perty be paynes and passions, ruthis
and pyttes, mercis and forgevenesse, and such other whych
be profytable. But in the hyer perty be none of theyse,
but all one hye loue and mervelous joy; in whych marvelous
joy all paynes be holy dystroyed. And in this nott only
oure good Lorde shewde our excusyng, but also the
wurschypfulle noblyte that he shall breng vs to, tornyng
alloure blame into endlesse wurshyppe. 1

All this is outlined in the chapter immediately following the Parable of the Lord and his Servant. In subsequent chapters Julian develops certain aspects in more detail. In particular, she examines the nature of faith and the part it has to play in the growth of the individual Christian in holiness and spiritual maturity.

She commends faith in God, taking the example of Adam once more as grounds for assurance:

And thus I saw that he wyll that we know he takyth no
herder the fallyng of any creatur that shalle be savyd
than he tok the fallyng of Adam, whych we know was
endlessly lound and suerly kepte in the tyme of all
his nede and now is blyssydfully restoryd in hys ovyr
passyng joyes. 2

In the next chapter she examines the nature of faith:

¹ lii, 110 v.

² liii, 110 v.

And oure feyth is a vertu that comyth of oure kynde
substaunce in to oure sensuall soule by the Holy Gost.
In whych vertu alle oure vertuse comyn to vs, for
without that no man may receyue vertues. ffor it is
noug^t eles but a ryght vnderstandyng with trew beleue
and suer truste of oure beyng, that we be in God and he
in vs, whych we se nott. And this vertu with all other
that God hath ordeyned to vs comyng ther in, werkyth in
vs grete thynges. ffor Cryst marcyfully is werkyng in
vs, and we graciously accordyng to hym, thorow the yefte
and the vertu of the Holy Gost. This werkyng makyth
that we be Crystes chyldren and cristen in lyvyng. 1

Significantly, faith comes into the sensuality from the faculties
which constitute the image of the Trinity in the substance of the soul:

Oure feyth comyth of the kynde loue of oure soule, and
of the clere ly³te of oure reson, and of the stedfaste
mynde, whych we haue of God in oure furst makyng. 2

It is bound up with God's mercy and grace which work in the sensuality:

And what tyme oure soule is enspyred in oure body, in
whych we be made sensuall, as soone mercy and grace
begynne to werke, havyng of vs cure and kepyng with
pytte and loue. In whych werkyng the Holy Gost formyth
in oure feyth hope that we shall come agayne vp abovyn
to our substaunce, in to the vertu of Crist, encresyd
and fulfyllyd throw the Holy Gost. 3

It is by faith, through the mercy and grace of God, that the spiritual
sight of the Christian is restored, so that he is able once more, in faith,
to know God and to know his own soul.⁴ This is the means by which the

¹ lv, 114 v - 115 r, cf. Hebrews 11:1,6, "Est autem fides sperandarum
substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium. ... Sine fide autem
impossibile est placere Deo. Credere enim oportet accendentem ad
Deum quia est, et inquietibus se remunerator sit."

² lv, 115 v.

³ lv, 115 v.

⁴ ch. lvi.

sensuality is "brought up into" the substance.

And thus in oure substaunce we be full, and in oure sensuallite we feyle; whych feylyng God wylle restore and fulfyll by werkyng of mercy and grace, plentuously flowyng in to vs of his owne kynde goodnesse. And thus this kynde goodnesse makyth that mercy and grace werkyth in vs; and the kynde goodnesse that we haue of hym ablyth vs to receyue the werkyng of mercy and grace. 1

It is significant that his mercy and grace towards the Christian on earth come from God's own intrinsic goodness. Likewise, a Christian's faith has its source in this "kind goodness" of God:²

The nexte good that we receyue is oure feyth,³ in whych our profetyng begynnyth,⁴ and it comyth of the hye rychesse of oure kynde substaunce in to oure sensuall soule. And it is groundyd in vs and we in that throw the kynde goodnes of God by the werkyng of mercy and grace. And therof come alle oure goddys by whych we be led and savyd. 5

More specifically, it is by faith that a Christian receives knowledge of God's will:

ffor the commawndementys of God come ther in, in whych we owe to haue two manner of vnderstondyng: that one is, that we owe to vnderstand and know whych by his byddyngs,

¹ lvii, 120 v.

² Cf. Ephesians 2:8, "Gratia enim estis salvati per fidem, et hoc non ex vobis; Dei enim donum est." Galatians 2:16, I Peter 1:5, Romans 4; 5:1-2, "Justificati ergo ex fide, pacem habeamus ad Deum per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum; per quem et habemus accessum per fidem in gratiam istam, in qua stamus, et gloriamur in spe gloriae filiorum Dei."

³ By "faith" she means here the articles of the Christian belief as well as the capacity to believe them.

⁴ MS has "begynnyth".

⁵ lvii, 121 v.

to loue them and to kepe them; that other is that we owe to knowe his forbyddynges, to hate them and refuse them. ffor in theyse two is all oure werkyng comprehendyd. 1

Likewise, the sacraments and all God's gifts come to the Christian in faith, by the grace of God, through the work of the Holy Ghost.

The sanctification of the individual Christian is therefore primarily a gift of God. The initiative belongs to God here, just as he was the first to act by sending his Son to die on that person's behalf (and on behalf of all men). Yet the process requires the Christian's active co-operation:

For it is his lykyng to reigne in oure vnderstandyng blessydfully, and syttyth in oure soule restfully, and to dwell in oure soule endlesly, vs all werkyng in to hym. In whych werkyng he wylle we be his helpers, geuyng to hym alle oure entent, lernyng his lawes, keepyng his lore, desyeryng that alle be done that he doth, truly trustyng in hym. 2

It is in keeping with this belief that Julian tends to avoid, here as elsewhere, an abstract discussion of the doctrine of sanctification, returning continually to a practical application of the principles involved in the spiritual life of the Christian. Frequently she exhorts her readers, if not directly then by implication, to keep themselves in a vital and responsive relationship to God, thereby actively uniting themselves to him. This occupies the remaining chapters of her book.

¹ lvii, 121 v - 122 r.

² Ibid., 122 v - 123 r.

The Answer to the Problem

It remains to consider how the doctrine of Man as it is developed in this section of Julian's book answers the problems that have been raised.

The immediate difficulty was the apparent conflict between the judgement of God and the judgement of Man,¹ that is, that although the teaching of the Church, confirmed by one's own experience, is that Man is a sinner and worthy of God's blame and wrath, it is nevertheless inconsistent with God's immutable goodness ever to be wroth with those whom he has chosen, in his love, to be with him for ever.² This difficulty is seen as a conflict between the teaching of the revelations and the common doctrine of the Church. It arises, however, from principles which are themselves Biblical, and is, in fact, a problem that is inherent in the Christian belief, as we have seen. It is solved by taking into account another Biblical doctrine, the whole teaching of the implications of the Incarnation and Passion of the Son of God, the principle of identification with Christ.³

The answer is that God does not blame his chosen people any more than he blames his own Son, because they are as one in his sight, and that, on the other hand, it is fitting for the Christian to recognise that he is a sinner and humbly ask God for mercy. So he should never despair because

¹ ch. lxxv.

² See above, pp. 98-99.

³ As stated, for example, in Romans 5-8.

of his sin, but trust God, who makes no distinction between Christ and the least soul that shall be saved.

And thus Crist is oure wey, vs suerly ledyng in his lawes; and Crist in his body myȝtely beryth vs vp in to hevyn. 1

Julian's original question, which she posed at the beginning of the thirteenth revelation, has therefore at last been answered:

And me thought, yf synne had nott be, we shulde alle haue be clene and lyke to oure Lorde as he made vs ... Often I wondryd why by the grete forseide wysdom of God the begynnyng of synne was nott lettyd. ffor then thought me that alle shulde haue be wele. 2

Because of his identification with Christ (which is both a status conferred upon him and a process continuing within him) the Christian is not only restored to his original state of purity, and his sensual soul brought up into his substance as an image of the Trinity in truth, wisdom and love, but he is also remade in the likeness of the Second Person.³ Further, by God's grace, he is raised to even greater honour than that which he would have had if he had not fallen:

ffor oure substaunce in hole in ech person of the Trynyte, whych is one God. And oure sensuallyte is only in the Seconde Person, Crist Ihesu, in whom is the Fader and the Holy Gost. And in hym and by hym we be myȝtly takyn out of hell and oute of the wrechydenesse in erth, and wurschypfully brought vp in to hevyn, and blyssydfully onyd to oure substaunce,

¹ lv, 115 r, cf. John 14:6.

² xxvii, 49 v - 50 r.

³ x, 21 v.

encresyd in rychesse and nobly, by all the vertu of
Crist and by the grace and werkynge of the Holy Gost. 1

It is in this whole process that Julian sees the goodness of God
triumphing over sin and evil:

And all this blysse we haue by mercy and grace, whych
manner blysse we myght nevyр haue had and knowen but
yf that properte of goodnesse whych is in God had ben
contraryed, wher by we haue this blysse. ffor wyckyd-
nesse hath ben sufferyd to ryse contrary to that
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.
ffor it is that properte in God whych doth good
agaynst evyll. 2

This is how God may, in spite of the presence of sin and suffering,
still be "evyr fulle plesyd with hym selfe and with alle hys workes",³
for the redemption of Man is the supreme example of how God works out his
endless purpose, bringing everything to the best end for which it was
ordained. From this example one may have sure trust in him:

ffor sythen that I haue made welle the most harm;
than it is my wylle that thou know ther by that I
shalle make wele alle that is lesse." 4

Thus a much clearer insight has been gained into the answer that she
was immediately given in Revelation XIII, "Synne is behouely, but alle
shalle be wele; and alle shalle be wele; and alle maner of thyngе shalle
be wele."⁵

¹ lviii, 125 v - 126 r.

² lix, 126 r.

³ xxxv, 63 r.

⁴ xxix, 53 v.

⁵ xxvii, 50 r.

One must accept the fact that the chosen soul does sin, and will sin, in this life. Yet this by no means affects God's love for him:

We shalle verely see in hevyn without ende that we haue greuously synned in this lyfe. And notwithstanding this, we shalle verely see that we were nevyr hurt in his loue, nor we were nevyr the lesse of pryce in his syght. And by the assey of this fallyng we shalle haue an hygh and a marvelous knowyng of loue in God without ende; for hard and marvelous is that loue whych may nott nor wyll not be broken for trespas. 1

No more than the mother allows her child to perish will God allow his chosen to be lost, although he may well chastise them for their good.² Rather,

It is his office to saue vs; it is his worshyppe to do it; and it is hys wylle we know it. ffor he wyll we loue hym swetely, and trust in hym mekely and myghtly. 3

Thus one is shown the full meaning of God's words, "I kepe the fulle suerly."⁴

Even so, not all the questions are answered. There remains, for instance, the whole problem of the reprobate, to which no solution is offered. The answer that is given is for Christians. It is not a complete answer, although it is one sufficient for peace of mind and one which both requires and encourages belief and trust in God. It is not an academic answer, but one which demands an active response from the one to whom it is revealed, an outworking of its principles in his own

¹ lxi, 131 v.

² Ibid., 132 r ff.

³ Ibid., 133 v.

⁴ xxxvii, 67 r.

spiritual life. Similarly, indulgence is not given to speculation on the philosophical implications of the problem of evil. She simply shows that God, in his power and love, brings out of evil a complex good, and in the Incarnation and Passion of Christ and the means whereby one may become identified with him one is given some understanding of how this may be so. For the rest, one is thrown back on faith, to trust God that

Alle shalle be welle; and thou shalt see it thy
selfe that alle manner thyng shall be welle.

CHAPTER VI
POINTS OF CONTROVERSY

Having considered in some detail the teaching of the Revelations of Divine Love on the sovereignty and love of God, maintained in his dealings with sinful men and supremely displayed in the Incarnation and Passion of his Son Jesus Christ, bringing good out of evil ("for he judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist"),¹ one must now make some kind of assessment of Julian's doctrinal position.

As we have seen, her concepts of the nature of God and the nature of man are founded in Biblical presuppositions and, for the greater part, are developed along traditional lines. In particular, close affinities may be seen between her ideas and those of St. Augustine, which is not surprising, since Augustine's works had perhaps the greatest formative influence on the theology of the Western Church. Other more recent theologians may have helped to form Julian's views, even if they only contributed to the milieu of thought in which her ideas developed.² But whatever the immediate source of Julian's

¹ Enchiridion XXVII.

² Her understanding of the love of God, for example, probably owes much to St. Bernard, as does her devotion to the humanity of Christ, at least indirectly (R.W.Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages, ch.V). Sister Anna Maria Reynolds suggests several possible influences which include, besides the Bible and St. Augustine, the pseudo-Dionysius,

doctrine may have been, it is clear that the greater part of it follows the accepted teaching of the Church.

There are, however, certain points on which Julian's orthodoxy is questioned. It is over the subject of election, particularly with regard to God's attitude towards his chosen when they sin and the reason for their preservation, that the reliability of her teaching is considered dubious, and it is towards this that her opponents level their criticism. Obviously, any claim concerning the divine origin of the revelations must be defended here.

One of the more recent translators of her book, Clifton Wolters,¹ provides a typical example of this criticism. He indicates that difficulty arises from the conflict between the Church's teaching that many shall be damned and the locution "All shall be well". From this he turns to her assertions that God is never wroth and that man has a "godly will", both of which he condemns as heresy.

Universalism

The insistence that "all shall be well" in spite of the teaching of the Church that many shall be damned has caused some to suspect Julian of universalism. Julian herself, however, was well aware of the difficulty in reconciling the two, affirming the orthodox position strongly as she gives expression to her doubt:

[footnote 2 cont'd]

the Ancrene Riwe, and the works of Continental mystics, especially Meister Eckhart ("Some Literary Influences in the Revelations of Julian of Norwich", Leeds Studies in English, nos. 7 & 8, 1952, pp.18-28).

¹ Penguin Classics, 1966.

In this syght I marveyled gretly and beheld oure feyth, menyng thus: oure feyth is groundyd in Goddes Worde, and it longyth to oure feyth that we beleue that Goddys Worde shalle be sauyd in alle thyng; and one poynt of oure feyth is that many creatures shall be dampnyd ... And stondyng alle thys, me thought it was vnpossible that alle maner of thyng shuld be wele as oure Lorde shewde in thys tyme. 1

The Church's teaching is upheld in the next chapter:

I vnderstond that alle the creatures that be of the devylles condiscion in thys lyfe and ther in endyng, ther is no more mencyon made of them before God and alle his holyn then of the devylle, notwythstondyng that they be of mankynde, wheder they haue be cristend or nought. 2

There is no further or more definite teaching in her revelations about the fate of the damned, just as she is not granted any vision of hell or purgatory.³ This is in keeping with the whole tenor of the book, that a Christian's first responsibility and proper concern is his own relationship to God. Consequently he must deal with his own sins and not be cautious about any one else's.⁴ A more positive behaviour is enjoined:

As long as we be in this lyfe, what tyme that we by oure foly turne vs to the beholdyng of the reprovyd, tendyrly oure Lorde towchyth vs and blysydfully callyth vs, seyeng in oure soule, "Lett me aloone, my derwurdy chylde. Intende to me - I am inogh to the - and enjoy in thy Sauour and in thy salvation." 5

1 xxxii, 58 v, ff.

2 xxxiii, 60 r.

3 ch. xxxiii.

4 chs. xxxv, lxxvi, lxxix.

5 xxxvi, 65 v.

Although her book has very little to say about those who are not saved, Julian's claim that she was not drawn away from any point of the faith taught by Holy Church¹ in this respect is not hard to substantiate. The answer given - "That that is vnpossible to the is nott vnpossible to me. I shalle saue my worde in alle thyng; and I shalle make althyng wele."² - may not satisfy the curiosity, but there is no suggestion that making all things well necessarily means that everyone will go to heaven in the end.

The "Wrath" of God

The next objection to Julian's teaching goes deeper, questioning her statement that God is never wroth.³ Here, it is argued, she "sets aside the teaching of the Bible in both Testaments".⁴

It is clearly taught in Scripture that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"⁵ and that there is a "wrath to come" from which Jesus Christ delivers.⁶ On the other hand, the Bible also plainly teaches that God's mercy is greater

¹ xxxiii, 60 r.

² xxxii, 59 r. It is interesting to compare this with Jesus' words about the salvation of the rich in Matthew 19:23-26 (Luke 18:24-27).

³ xiii, 27 v, "But in God may be no wrath as to my syght", cf. chs. xlv - l.

⁴ Wolters, op.cit., pp.36,37.

⁵ Romans 1:18, "revelatur enim ira Dei de coelo super omnem impietatem, et injustitiam hominem eorum, qui veritatem Dei in injustitia detinent."

⁶ I Thessalonians 1:10.

than his wrath.¹ The God revealed in the Old Testament is one "gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy";² and in the New Testament he is shown as the one who, "being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ".³ The real bone of contention is, however, that Julian says God is never wroth.

Before condemning this as a direct contradiction of Scripture, one must consider the premises from which it is derived. The most important is the doctrine of God's immutability, that God is unchanging and unchangeable in his attributes,⁴ and this is a doctrine which is clearly taught in the Bible.⁵ Hence the love of God for man is not a fitful emotion but "an everlasting love".⁶ It is not broken by the sins of man; indeed, it is because of his everlasting love that God seeks to reconcile sinful man to himself.⁷ And this is exactly how Julian

¹ Isaiah 54:7,8.

² Joel 2:13, etc.

³ Ephesians 2:4,5.

⁴ ch. xlix.

⁵ Malachi 3:6, "Ego enim Dominus, et non mutor"; James 1:17, "omne datum optimum, et omne donum perfectum desursum est, descendens a Patre luminum, apud quem non est transmutatio, nec vicissitudinis obumbratio." cf. Hebrews 6:17 ff.

⁶ Jeremiah 31:3.

⁷ John 3:16, I John 4:10, Ephesians 2, Romans 5, etc.

understands the eternal love of God, "for hard and mervelous is that loue whych may nott nor wyll not be broken for trespas".¹

But equally Julian sees that God eternally hates sin,² which is utterly contrary to the divine nature, "wurse, vyler and paynfuller than hell without any lycknesse".³ Consequently, from man's point of view,

When we se oure selfe so fowle that we wene that God were wroth with vs for oure synne, than be we steryd of the Holy Gost by contriscion in to prayer, and desyer amendyng of oure selfe with alle oure myght, to slake the wrath of God, vnto the tyme we fynde a rest in soule and softnes in consciens; and than hope we that God hath forgevyn vs oure synne, and it is true. 4

Although God does not change, man is changeable and so experiences God in different ways. Julian is therefore able to distinguish two kinds of judgement: that of God, which reflects his unchanging love, and that of man;⁵ and the two appear to conflict:

And thus in alle this beholdyng me thought it behovyndedys to se and to know that we be synners and do many evylles that we ougte to leue, and leue many good dedys vndone that we ougte to do. Wherefore we deserve payne, blame and wrath. And nott withstondyng alle this, I saw verely that oure Lorde was nevyr wroth, nor nevyr shall. ffor he is God; he is Good; he is Truth; he is Loue; he is Pees; and hys myght, hys wysdom, hys charyte and hys vnyte sufferyth hym nott to be wroth. ffor I saw truly that it is agaynst the propyrtie of hys myght to be wroth, and agaynst the properte of hys wysdom, and agaynst the propyrtie of hys goodnes. God is that goodnesse that may

¹ lxi, 131 v, cf. ch. xxxix.

² chs. xl, lxiii.

³ lxiii, 135 v.

⁴ xl, 71 r & v.

⁵ chs. xlv, xlvi.

nott be wroth, ffor God is nott but goodnes. Oure soule
is myyd to hym, vnchaungeable goodnesse; and betwen God
and oure soule is neyther wrath nor forgevenesse in hys
syght. 1

In order to understand Julian's position, one must consider her own
definition of "wrath", and consequently what she sees God's forgiveness to
be.

ffor I saw no wrath but on mannes perty, and that
forgevyth he in vs. ffor wrath is nott elles but a
frowerdnes and a contraryousnes to pees and to loue;
and eyther it comyth of feylyng of myght, or of feylyng
of wysdom, or of feylyng of goodnesse, whych feylyng is
nott in God, but it is in oure perty. ffor we by synne
and wrechydenesse haue in vs a wrath and a contynuont
contraryousnes to pees and to loue. 2

In Julian's understanding of the terms, wrath is entirely contrary
to the character of God.³ In this, moreover, she is not alone, but *she*
follows a recognised tradition:

When God is said to be angry, we do not attribute to
him such a disturbed feeling as exists in the mind of
an angry man; but we call his just displeasure against
sin by the name "anger", a word transferred by analogy
from human emotion. 4

James Walsh, a sympathetic reader of Julian's book, points out that
she is speaking here of the ~~elect~~, and in particular of those Christians

¹ xlvi, 84 r & v.

² xlviii, 87 r & v.

³ Nevertheless, her own misgivings about the conflict still remain, and
are not stilled until she has examined far more deeply the doctrine
of the Atonement, ch. li ff.

⁴ St. Augustine, Enchiridion XXXIII; see also Aquinas, Summa Theologica
I, Q. 19 Art. 2, Q. 20 Art 1, that God has no passions.

who are very conscious of their sins and failings in the service of God.

The self-blame and agitation which attaches to our failing and sinning, this, Julian had thought, was God's judgement and wrath, and his mercy, the forgiveness of his wrath ... For if what we feel is true, that all "unpeace" is God's judgement, God's wrath, then many good souls might live in a state of chronic despair. 1

Julian is speaking of "those who shall be saved", and in the Bible God's "wrath" is reserved for those who are not. She does not see God as wrathful, but for all that her revelation teaches that the devil is overcome by God in the Passion of Christ, put to scorn, and all his strength is brought to nothing.² Likewise, "alle the creatures that be of the devylles condiscion in thys lyfe" share the devil's reproof.³

Further, she says that even the elect experience a retribution for sin.⁴ This is not the revenge of vindictiveness but a loving chastening whereby the sinner is brought to realise his weakness and his dependence upon God; and all the while God is preserving that soul, which he endlessly loves. It is the blame of sin that is removed by virtue of Christ's Passion, as God assigns no more blame to his chosen than to his own Son, with whom they are identified,⁵ and in this belief Julian is once

¹ Walsh, op.cit., p.29 ff.

² ch. xiii, Revelation V.

³ xxxiii, 60 r.

⁴ xxxix, lxi, etc.

⁵ li, 102 r & v.

more strictly orthodox.¹

Any criticism of Julian's position must take into account the context in which the statement "God is never wroth" is made. She is careful to present both aspects, man's variable judgement of himself and God's unchanging love. She by no means sets aside, in all this discussion, her very strong view of the horror and vileness of sin,² which is, if anything, intensified by her realisation of God's goodness and patience, his grace and mercy. She reserves as her final authority the teaching of the Church as it is derived from Scripture, just as the doctrines of God's immutability and endless love from which her assertion follows are Biblical. If there is a contradiction in her analysis, it is one which may also be seen in the Scriptures:

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer. 3

The Godly Will

Context is also important when discussing Julian's teaching on the godly will, the third matter in which her orthodoxy is disputed. The existence of a godly will in the higher part of man's soul is put forward to explain God's preservation of the elect. The main objection is that this would deny the necessity for God's grace, by attributing to man some

¹ II Corinthians 5:21, "Eum, qui non noverat peccatum, pro nobis peccatum fecit, ut nos efficeremur justitia Dei in ipso."

² ch. lxiii.

³ Isaiah 54:6,7 (R.V. mg.).

objective ground of merit on the strength of which he can claim eternal life.

In trying to answer this charge of heresy, one must first take into account what else Julian says when the godly will is mentioned. In the first instance, she begins with the realisation of sin and the assurance of God's keeping. She goes on:

ffor in every soule that shalle be savyd is a godly wylle that nevyr assentyth to synne, nor nevyr shalle. Ryght as there is a bestely wylle in the lower party that may wylle no good, ryght so there is a godly wylle in the hygher party, whych wylle is so good that it may nevyr wylle evylle, but evyr good. And therfore we be that he lovyth, and endlesly we do that he lykyth. And thys shewyde oure good Lorde in the hoolhed of loue that we stand in in hys syght - yeea, that he lovyth vs now as welle, whyle that we be here, as he shalle do when we be there, before hys blessyd face. But for feylyng of loue in oure party, therfore is alle oure traveyle. 1

The godly will in the higher part of man's soul is countered by a "beastly will" in the lower part, which can will nothing good, that is, it is completely opposed to God's will. Later Julian says that in this life man has no knowledge of his substance except by faith,² and lives on the level of his sensuality. One may therefore infer that, at least in an unregenerate state, man is more conscious of his beastly will, and his godly will is, in practice, more often frustrated than gratified.

Once more Julian indicates that this is seeing things from God's eternal viewpoint, which includes a knowledge of the future and is bound up with his endless love. It is contrasted with the "feylyng of loue in oure party".

¹ xxxvii, 67 r & v.

² xlvi, 83 r.

The second time she mentions the godly will, she explains further:

I saw and vnderstode full suerly that in ech a soule that shall be safe is a godly wylle that nevyr assentyd to synne ne nevyr shall; whych wylle is so good that it may nevyr wylle evyll, but evyrmore contynuly it wyllyth good and werkyth good in the syght of God. There fore oure Lorde wylle we know it in the feyth and the beleue, and namly and truly that we haue all this blessyd wylle hoole and safe in oure Lorde Ihesu Crist.

For that ech kynde that hevyn shall be fulfyllid with behovynd nedys of Goddys ryghtfulnes so to be knytt and onyd in hym that ther in were kepte a substaunce whych myght nevyr nor shulde be partyd from hym; and that thorow his awne good wylle in his endlesse forseyde purpose. And nott withstanding this ryghtfull knyttyng and this endlesse conyng, yett the redempcion and the agayne byeng of manne kynde is nedfull and spedfull in every thyng as it is done for the same entent and the same ende that Holy Chyrch in oure feyth vs techyth. 1

In this passage the statement about the godly will is balanced by an affirmation of the necessity for man's redemption. Further, it is stated that it is in Christ, in particular, that the godly will is preserved; that is, Christ exemplifies the existence of the godly will, and as the Christian is united to him by faith the effects of Christ's will become effective for him.² That the godly will is closely bound up with union with God and identification with Christ Julian makes even more clear the third time it is mentioned:

¹ liii, 111 r & v.

² See Walsh, *op.cit.*, p.39, "The godly will is that 'blessed will' which is kept whole and safe in our Lord Jesus Christ: it is in man's kind, i.e., all those that shall be saved, in general and not in special, which 'is so knit and oned to him, that in it must be preserved a substance which never could nor should be separated from him'. She has nothing to say of the precise way in which the individual predestined soul, in this life, participates in this blessed will."

God the blyssydfull Trynyte, whych is evyrlastyng beyng, ryght as he is endlesse fro without begynnyng, ryghte so it was in his purpose endlesse to make mankynde; whych feyer kynd furst was dyght to his owne Son, the Second Person. And when he woulde, by full accorde of alle the Trynyte, he made vs alle at onys. And in oure making he knytt vs and onyd vs to hym selfe, by whych onyng we be kept as clene and as noble as we were made. By the vertu of that ech precyous onyng we loue oure Maker and lyke hym, prayse hym and thanke hym and endlesly enjoye in hym. And this is the werkyng whych is wrought contynually in ech soule that shalle be savyd, whych is the godly wylle before seyde. 1

In all three passages emphasis is laid upon the changeless love of God for mankind. Julian is considering the predestined soul as God sees it, asserting, as she does, that in his foreknowledge God loves such a soul even before it is made, and continues to love it even when it falls into sin, and without end. Part of the soul, the godly will, is eternally united to God and continually renders to him the love, praise and thanks which are his due, "and therfore", she says, "we be that he lowyth, and endlesly we do that he lykyth". Yet this higher part is still "a creature in God",² which derives its being from him: the godly will is "a werkyng whych is wrought contynually in ech soule that shalle be savyd". Thus man has no reason to be proud of his godly will, as if it were his own doing. Rather, it is a gift of God to man. Furthermore, even if, in his heart of hearts, man loves and desires what is good, what he actually does is all too often evil.³ That is why the

¹ lviii, 123 r & v.

² liv, 114 r.

³ Cf. Romans 7:15 ff, "Quod enim operor non intelligo: non enim quod volo bonum, hoc ago: sed quod odi malum, illud facio."

redemption of man is still necessary. The need for grace is by no means denied.

The difficulties in the teaching of Julian's book largely spring from the attempt to see man's spiritual life from a double viewpoint. In man's lowly discernment, which is limited by his weakness and spiritual blindness and subject to his variable nature, frequent falling into sin lays him open to God's just rejection, and consequently he experiences self-disgust, blame and fear. But sub specie aeternitatis, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, the chosen soul is loved and saved eternally. This is the essential paradox:

And by the tempest and the sorow that we fall in on oure
perty, we be ofte deed as to mannes dome in erth. But
in the syght of God the soule that shall be safe was
nevyr deed, ne nevyr shall. 1

One may also attribute some of the difficulties to the fact that Julian's revelations are not a complete resumé of Christian doctrine, but only an examination of certain aspects of it, as she herself realised.² It is intended to help Christians as they work out their faith in practice and so the argument about some points is not pursued beyond what is necessary for the Christian's peace of mind. Some questions remain unanswered, and Julian herself indicates that the deficiency is to be made up from the common teaching of the Church and from God's Word.

If Julian does not quite succeed in showing the harmony between the two viewpoints, she does not at all take, as it has been alleged, the

¹ 1, 91 v.

² e.g. chs. lxxx, lxxxii.

easy road of "wishful thinking".¹ The difficulty she encounters and tries to solve is one which is inherent in the doctrine of divine providence and predestination. In assessing the solution she puts forward one must not isolate her words from the purpose for which they were written. From what she says elsewhere it is quite clear that they were not intended to encourage spiritual indolence and a careless attitude towards sin, but rather to prevent committed and serious Christians from falling into despair because of their failures.² To take one part of her teaching and to neglect another, "that is the condition of an heretique",³ but one must consider it in its entirety: no honour is taken from God, no merit is falsely attributed to Man. On the contrary, the glory of God is abundantly displayed in his love, mercy and grace towards Man who is completely helpless in his sin. Julian's teaching has its Biblical archetype:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places with Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ... 4

¹ Wolters, op.cit., p.37.

² ch. lxxiii ff.

³ Sloane 2499, Colophon.

⁴ Ephesians 1:3 ff.

The New Pelagians

But these are Twentieth-Century opinions. In order to come to a truer understanding of the significance of Julian's teaching one must take into account the intellectual and theological context in which her book was written. In the Fourteenth Century, both in England and on the Continent, the subjects which occupy so great a part of the Revelations of Divine Love - God's foreknowledge and providence, predestination, justification and grace - were issues in a lively theological controversy.¹ In England those involved in the debate included, among the older generation, such public figures as Thomas Bradwardine (1290-1349), Fellow of Merton, Chancellor of St. Paul's and, at the end of his life, Archbishop of Canterbury, another Mertonian, Thomas Buckingham, who was Chancellor of Exeter Cathedral from 1346 to 1350, and the great preacher, Richard FitzRalph (c 1300-1360), Archbishop of Armagh.² Bradwardine took up an extreme position in his defence of the doctrines of divine providence, predestination and grace in his De Causa Dei contra Pelagium. The "Pelagians" against whom he wrote were the Sceptics, William of Ockham and his followers, who, since they restricted knowledge to experience and so regarded theology and metaphysics as outside the realm of rational explanation, centred their attention upon man and the natural order.³ A more moderate and traditional view was expressed by

¹ See P.Vignaux, Justification et prédestination au XIV siècle, (Paris, 1934); G.Leff, Bradwardine and the Pelagians, (Cambridge, 1957).

² Pantin, op.cit., p.131.

³ Leff, op.cit., pp.126-139. M.D.Knowles labels their position "Theological Positivism" (The Religious Orders in England, Cambridge, 1957, Vol.II, p.76).

Thomas Buckingham in his Quaestiones, "showing that a middle, catholic way can be found between the errors of Pelagius, Cicero and Scotus, and that the eternal predestination, preordination, prevolition and concurrence of God is consistent with the free-will and merit of the creature".¹ The "reverend doctor" whose arguments Buckingham sets out to refute is possibly FitzRalph.²

In the next generation the debate continued. Bradwardine's rigorous views on providence and grace were largely adopted by John Wycliffe (1329-1384), but the Ockhamist teaching continued to gain ground in the schools in spite of Bradwardine's De Causa Dei. The Benedictine Uthred of Boldon developed a theory of his own, entering the field in a dispute with the friars in 1366-68.³ That a knowledge of the issue was not restricted to clerics is indicated by Chaucer's reference to it in the "Nun's Priest's Tale"⁴ - the educated laity also had some understanding and awareness of the matter.

With this dispute, as with numerous others, the difference in the latter half of the Fourteenth Century was one of temperature. While earlier discussions had been conducted calmly and with respect, in later years, particularly after the Wycliffe controversy, intolerance mounted, moving towards all the bitterness and violence of a heresy hunt.⁵ It is

¹ Pantin, op.cit., p.114 ff.

² Ibid.

³ Knowles, op.cit., p.85 ff. Uthred's idea was that everyone, Christian or pagan, at the moment of death was given a clear sight of God, and his fate for eternity was determined by the acceptance or rejection he then made.

⁴ Canterbury Tales, VII, 3234-3250. A discussion of some of the points is given in Troilus and Criseyde, IV, 953-1078.

⁵ Pantin, op.cit., pp.134-135. On the Continent at the same time,

during this later stage that Julian's book was being written, and with this atmosphere in England her own statements about predestination and the godly will were being made.

As we have seen, Julian's position with regard to the sovereignty of God and divine providence is the traditional, Augustinian one, and so is her understanding of the existence of evil in creation.¹ Her difficulties are the old ones which are caused by trying to take into account both the eternal and the temporal points of view; but she does not try to solve them, as an Ockham or a Bradwardine, by emphasising one at the expense of the other. At a time when expression was being given to many new ideas, Julian with determination held on to "the common teaching of Holy Church". What she has to say, therefore, is not remarkable for its originality; it is simply a reaffirmation of what has always been said. (Even the question of the "wrath" of God would not unduly disturb anyone brought up on the Augustinian idea that to ascribe the emotion of anger to God is an anthropomorphism.)

But where she speaks about a "godly will" in the substance of the soul of every man that shall be saved, on account of which God loves him and he endlessly pleases God, she steps beyond conventional explanations. It is here that the same issues of predestination, grace and merit, which were so hotly disputed outside her anchorhold, become objects of controversy in her own teaching.

[footnote 5 cont'd]

methods of dealing with heterodoxy increasingly involved active persecution, punitive action, and all the tools of the Inquisition.

¹ See above, p

It has been suggested that there is a connection between Julian's teaching on the godly will and that of the German Dominican mystic, Meister Eckhart (c 1260-1328) on the highest point of man's soul.¹ Eckhart saw this highest point as "something uncreatable as well as uncreated"² and of it he said:

It is called synderesis, and is all one with the soul's nature, a spark of the divine nature. It cannot abide what is not good. It is without stain; perfectly pure and wholly superior to temporal things it dwells in unchanging stability, like eternity. 3

There is a certain resemblance to this in Julian's godly will, but the two do not correspond. The most important difference is that Julian maintains the distinction between creature and Creator by emphasising that the substance of the soul is "a creature in God";⁴ but the teaching of the Dominican virtually meant the divinisation of man, as the synderesis "is none other than a spark of the divine nature, a divine light, a ray, an imprint of divinity". This is saying a great deal more than that there is something in the soul than remains uncorrupted by the Fall, and several of Eckhart's propositions were condemned.

The concept of the synderesis, or higher part of the soul, and its supreme point, or scintilla, did not belong exclusively to Meister

¹ Sr. A.M. Reynolds, "Some Literary Influences", p.27.

² R.C.Petry (ed.), Late Mediaeval Mysticism (the Library of Christian Classics, Vol.XIII), London, 1957, p.173 ff.

³ Franz Pfeiffer (ed.), Meister Eckhart, Vol.II, 1857, trans. by C. de B. Evans, London, 1st Ed. 1931, repr. 1952, p.110.

⁴ ch. liv.

Eckhart, but was a great topic for theological discussion in the Thirteenth Century.¹ It sheds light on much of what Julian says about the substance of the soul, although the correspondence is not exact. Many believed, for example, that it was in the synderesis that mystical union with God took place, and a similarity between this and Julian's teaching that the substance of the soul dwells in God is not hard to find.² It is more significant, however, that Julian's assertion about the godly will is made with particular reference to the preservation of the elect.

The charity which justifies us, is it a divine Person, the uncreated Spirit himself, or something created, a habitus, a form added to the substance of the soul in order to incline it towards a determined act? 3

This, according to Paul Vignaux, was one of the major questions in the Fourteenth-Century discussion of predestination: is there anything in the soul itself, a predisposition to love God above all things, which determines that soul's justification? The main objection to the existence of such a "habitus" in the soul is on the grounds of Man's need for grace. The opinion that Man has some intrinsic merit by virtue of which he can claim salvation is one which Bradwardine would readily label "Pelagian".

The original Pelagians considered Man and his salvation from a human point of view, and gave no place to predestination or election. They maintained that Man was responsible for his own fate. Adam's disobedience

¹ Walsh, op.cit., p.37 ff.

² Walsh, op.cit., p.38.

³ Vignaux, op.cit., p.5.

affected only himself - so they denied the doctrine of the Fall and original sin. They regarded Man's natural powers as unimpaired, and held that a man could avoid sin and obey God's commands of his own accord and by his own powers, thereby earning the favour of God.

St. Augustine, in contesting their assertions, formulated what was to become the accepted doctrine. It was based upon a clear idea of the Fall: Adam's sin had affected the whole human race; in Adam's choice to do evil every man's will to do good was weakened. Consequently, by himself no one could avoid sin or fulfil all that God required. Man needed God's grace, both to heal his infirmity of will and to enable him to do good, and he needed special grace to help him persevere to the end. With regard to predestination and election, Augustine taught that God in his mercy chose who was to be given grace, and in his justice who would stand condemned.

In the Fourteenth Century, the position of the neo-Pelagians was virtually the same as that of their Fifth-Century namesakes, although they got there by a different route. Generally speaking, they held that in his absolute omnipotence God could accept any one he pleased, even a sinner who hated him - grace was unnecessary. In combating their view Bradwardine reasserted the traditional teaching on grace and predestination, but he took it even further, maintaining that Man cannot act at all without the direct will of God moving him. Consequently no place was left for man's free will.¹

¹ A detailed comparison of the respective positions of Bradwardine and the Pelagians with the traditional teaching is given by Leff, op.cit., ch. IX.

How does Julian's teaching fit into this pattern? All that she has to say about the substance of the soul and the godly will, it must be emphasised, is asserted of the soul that shall be saved. From the eternal point of view, therefore, she says,

I saw that God began nevyr to loue mankynde; for ryghte the same that mankynd shall be in endlesse blesse fulfylling the joy of God as anemptis his werkes, ryght so the same mankynd hath be, in the forsyghte of God, knowen and lovyd fro without begynnyng in his ryghtful entent. 1

Far from denying man's need of God's mercy and grace, she says that mercy and grace preserve the one who shall be saved from the time that his soul and body are joined.² Her chapter on mercy and grace should alone be sufficient to clear her from any suspicion of Pelagianism.

For grace werkyth oure dredfull faylyng in to plentuousse and endlesse solace; and grace werkyth oure shamefull fallyng in to hye wurschyppefulle rysyng; and grace werkyth oure sorowfull dyeng in to holy blyssyd lyffe. ffor I saw full truly that evyr as oure contraryousnes werkyth to vs here in erth payne, shame and sorow, ryght so on the contrary wyse grace werkyth to vs in hevyn solace, wurschyp and blysse ovyrpassyng. 3

She comes much closer to the Bradwardinian side where she says that "We may nott stonde a twynglyng of an ey but with kepyng of grace".⁴ On the other hand, she does not follow Bradwardine so far as to exclude

¹ liii, 111 v - 112 r.

² lv, 115 v.

³ xlviii, 88 v - 89 r.

⁴ lii, 109 v.

man's part. The individual is responsible for what he does, and, seeing it from the human point of view, man has a definite choice.¹ She brings the argument down to a practical level - how can a person know that he is one of the elect?

I vnderstode that what man or woman wylfully chosyth
 God in this lyfe for loue, he may be suer that he is
 louyd without ende, with endlesse loue that werkyth
 in hym that grace. ffor he wylle we kepe this trustly,
 that we be as seker in hope of the blysse of hevyn
 whyle we are here, as we shalle be in suerte when we
 ar there. 2

Predestination and man's choice are two sides of the same coin; Julian tries to show them both:

When we be strenthyd by his swete werkyng, than we
 wylfully chose hym by his grace to be his seruauntes
 and hys lovers lestyngly with out ende. 3

Did Julian consciously enter the debate? We do not know, but it seems unlikely. In her humility she does not presume to instruct theologians and teachers, much less to take that role upon herself - "I say nott thys to them that be wyse, for they wytt it wele; but I sey it to yow that be symple, for ease and comfort, for we be alle one in loue".⁴

¹ She does not speak of "free will" as such, but rather of the conflict between the godly and the beastly wills. Nevertheless, when she speaks of man's "contrariousness" after the Fall she refers to the same situation as that which Augustine saw as man's bondage to sin. For both Augustine and Julian, righteousness of will is the gift of God.

² lxxv, 139 v.

³ lxi, 131 r.

⁴ ix, 18 r.

Her very withdrawal is typical of an attitude. There were those who saw in intellectual controversies on points of theology a spiritual aridity. Scholasticism had been undermined, nominalism was unsatisfactory; in the Fourteenth Century there were many who looked back for something more simple, and more relevant.

Indeed, one would feel it to be out of keeping for Julian to enter the field. Her whole approach is different ^{from} ~~to~~ that of the theologians of the schools;¹ theirs is by the gate of philosophy, hers is by devotion. Their appeal is to the intellect, although on their own terms Man is incapable of knowing God by reason. Julian speaks to experience, to one's consciousness of sin and failure and awareness of suffering, and she calls for a response of love and faith.

It is not without significance that Julian sees the supreme point of man's soul not as his intellect but as a godly will. There was a tendency in the Fourteenth Century for all theologians to move away from a concept of the universe governed by divine Reason to that of one governed by divine Will. For Duns Scotus this meant God's love, but for Ockham it was a pure Liberty, no longer certain.² Julian sees God supremely as Divine Love, unchanging and unchangeable, and that the whole purpose and proper destiny of man is to love God, without which the soul is never happy.

Julian's Revelations are wonderfully intimate and personal. The theologians began from a concept of the eternal God, omnipotent and all-

¹ Knowles, Religious Orders in England II, 75.

² Ibid., pp.76-77.

sovereign, but Julian finds him through Christ on the cross, suffering and glorious; Her starting point and centre and the source of all her teaching is the place where God meets Man in his need. Consequently, while the controversy about fore-ordination and election, justification and grace need not descend from the purely academic plane, Julian's treatment of the same topics has a purpose that is above all practical. Perhaps she says nothing new - why, then, does she say it?

Truly I saw and vnderstode in oure Lordes menyng that
 he shewde it ffor he wyll haue it knowyng more than it
 is. In whych knowyng he wyll geve vs grace to loue
 hym, and cleve to hym. ¹

¹ lxxxvi, 173 r.

CHAPTER VII

THE FORM OF THE REVELATIONS

Although the subject matter of Julian's book may not stand out for its originality, the manner in which her teaching is presented is both remarkable and highly interesting. Immediately one can see the contrast between the Revelations of Divine Love and the formally ordered, carefully defined works of the schools. It differs also from more openly didactic works of the English mystics with which it is normally grouped, such as the Cloud of Unknowing or Walter Hilton's Scale of Perfection. If one were to place it in a literary convention, it could more readily be accommodated with the products of Dream Vision literature than with more formal works of theology, or with biography. It certainly contains elements of biography and much theology, but in its manner it more closely resembles works like Piers Plowman and even the Roman de la Rose than the Scale of Perfection or the Book of Margery Kempe.

The resemblance lies in the presentation of teaching by means of symbolic or allegorical visions and by instruction given to the Dreamer by some authority he sees in his dream. In such works, therefore, the teaching is (not offered) as the writer's own, but as coming from a superior source. One might conclude that Julian deliberately chose to use this less direct method as being more appropriate to "a woman,

leued, febille and freyll" than the more didactic form of a theological treatise. But whatever the reason, her teaching is presented in the form of visions and locutions followed by interpretation and subsequent reflections upon them.

Outwardly she keeps to a chronological order, an account of her experience of May, 1373. The events of those few days are carefully recorded with a meticulous regard for times and dates. Everything else is related to this occasion - her spiritual state before, and her reflections and insights after it occurred. (The latter are usually included with the appropriate revelation.)

Yet there is a more complex structure within this framework. The disposition of the sixteen revelations and accompanying commentary regulates, in effect, an orderly development of theme and argument. This is not to say that the teaching is necessarily presented in its briefest, or even its clearest form. On a superficial reading the book appears to be circular and repetitive, proceeding by a kind of suggestion as one train of thought leads to another. It is on a closer examination that a purpose and direction emerges.

The Two Versions

There is an important difference here between the two versions of the Revelations. Generally speaking, the shorter version is more episodic in structure and less developed in doctrine. Although certain points are given, particularly with reference to circumstances attending Julian's experience, which are not included in the longer version,¹ the

¹ e.g., the reference to the child who came with the curate, and the mention of her mother in Revelation VIII.

shorter describes in far less detail the sights themselves,¹ and gives less interpretation of the visions and locutions. Certain doctrines which are of great importance in the longer version, particularly those of divine providence and predestination, are not developed at any length in the shorter,² where also many of the exempla and striking images used for purposes of illustration in the longer version are missing.³ Especially significant, for both the teaching and the structure of the book, is the absence of two large sections, one coming between Revelations XIV and XV (chapters xliv - lxiii) and the other at the end of the Revelations themselves, after the consideration of the four "dreads" (chapters lxxv - lxxxvi). These sections largely contain what appears to be the fruit of later reflection upon the revelations.⁴ The first section contains her examination of the proposition that God is never wroth and that he does not blame the elect,⁵ which leads to her considera-

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- ¹ e.g., visual details of the bleeding of Christ's head (I), the discolouration of his face (II), the scourging (IV) and the last agony, particularly regarding the crown of thorns (VIII), the vision of the heart of Jesus (X), and the sight of the devil (ch. lxvii, L.V.).
 - ² Revelations III (on providence), XIII (on predestination) and XIV (on perseverance in prayer).
 - ³ Apart from the Parable of the Servant after XIV, exempla missing from S.V. are: (I) God is our clothing, (II) the sea bed and the vernicle, (VI) the Lord in his house, (VIII & XIII) the cloth in the wind, (XI) "if a man love a creature singularly", (XV) the body and the child, and (after XVI) the pillars of heaven.
 - ⁴ Julian mentions specifically two occasions on which insight came to her: nearly 20 years (ch. li) and 15 years (lxxxvi) after the experience took place.
 - ⁵ The latter statement itself does occur in the S.V. as part of the 13th revelation (where it is also introduced in L.V.), and so does the assertion that man has a godly will. The S.V. does not wholly avoid controversial statements, but it does not discuss them or dwell upon them.

tion of the nature of man and a closer study of the doctrine of the Atonement and the implications of the principle of identification with Christ.¹ Most conspicuous is the absence of the Parable of the Lord and his Servant which is the climax, focal-point and pivot of the whole argument in the longer version. Also missing is the theme of the Motherhood of Christ,² which is developed at the end of the section. The second ^{large} part omitted from the shorter version is the teaching on faith, hope and love which brings the book to a conclusion by applying the doctrine of the Revelations to the spiritual life of the reader.

In the longer version the teaching of these sections is drawn from the revelations which precede them, and in the ^{passage} ~~one~~ that comes between Revelations XIV and XV reference is also made to the visions which follow. This use of recapitulation and anticipation serves to bring the revelations together into a more complex unity. Although there is a certain amount of this cross-reference in the shorter version, its effect is not nearly so great.

One may therefore see that as well as being less profound in theology (or, at least, leaving most of its potential undeveloped and many important points undiscussed) the shorter version is ordered on much simpler lines. Although they share the ~~same~~ chronological sequence of

¹ Earlier references to this doctrine are left undeveloped in S.V.; e.g., in Revelation VIII, on suffering with Christ (compassion), and Revelation XIII (L.V. ch. xxxi), on the ghostly thirst (longing).

² For a discussion of the history of devotion to the "Motherhood" of Christ, and of Julian's contribution, see A.Cabassut, "Une Dévotion médiévale peu connue: la dévotion a «Jésus notre Mère» " in Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, 25 (1949), pp.234-245.

the visions, the two differ greatly in structure, movement and balance. Whether or not the shorter version represents an earlier draft of the work which Julian subsequently rewrote at greater length and depth, as most students of her work seem to agree,¹ the longer version is certainly the more important of the two for purposes of literary, as well as theological, evaluation. It is the more complete, the more artistically satisfying, the one in which a measured and balanced organisation can more clearly be discerned.

The Pattern of the Revelations

The longer version of Julian's book falls readily into three parts,² following the first chapter which is in the nature of a table of contents. The first part (chapters ii - xxvi) contains the first twelve revelations, which are centred upon the figure of Christ on the cross, both in suffering and in glory. Here the two themes of pain and joy are explored as Julian tells how her three requests were granted. It is an examination of the nature of human suffering as it is related to the Passion of Christ, seen in the perspective of the promise of eternal joy. In this part also the premises for the arguments which follow are stated: as well as the fact of suffering, the love of God and his sovereignty are asserted.³ The second part (chapters xxvii - l) contains Revelations XIII and XIV, and reflections upon them, leading up to the Parable of the

¹ J.J.Lawlor, Revue of English Studies, N.S. II (1951), pp.255-258; Walsh, op.cit., p.1 (footnote), etc.

² Walsh, op.cit., p.18 ff.

³ See above, chs. II and III.

Lord and his Servant. Here questions implied by the teachings of the first part are made explicit and discussed, all of them having to do with God's providence and predestination, in particular the problem of the existence of evil in creation, and the judgement of the elect. The third part (chapters li - lxxxvi), from the Servant parable to the end, consists in a resolution of these problems and a practical application of the teaching of all sixteen revelations to the spiritual life of the Christian. This section may be subdivided: first there is the Servant parable and an examination of the doctrine of the Atonement (li - lxxiii), and this is followed by the last two revelations, Julian's testing, and closing reflections upon the whole experience (lxiv - lxxxvi), in which the teaching of all the Revelation is brought home to Julian, and through her to every Christian.

One may see in this division that the two "shewings" which are obviously climactic in the experience are also points of great significance in the structure of the book - Revelation XII, in which she sees Christ in glory pronouncing the words most indicative of his sovereign deity, and the Parable of the Lord and his Servant, in which the Atonement is allegorically presented.

In the pages that follow I shall consider each of the three sections separately, concentrating upon matters of form and presentation, particularly the symbolism of the first part, the use of debate in the second, and the place of allegory in the third.

PART I : "MIND OF THE PASSION"

The first part is introduced by a brief account of Julian's spiritual state before the revelations occurred, in which she is seen to be already a devout and loving Christian. The three petitions are made, and what follows is really a report of the answers that were given, her sickness, the visions, and the three "wounds". The first twelve revelations are carefully recounted, with a certain amount of comment and reflection upon them, but on the whole this does not go very much further than a simple interpretation of what is seen or heard.

These twelve revelations are unified by the "bodily sight" of Christ on the cross, on which the visions are centred, just as Julian's gaze remains fixed on the crucifix before her. Although the vision changes, as different aspects of the Passion are considered, the central figure remains the same. She sees no other vision with "bodily sight"; all the rest are more spiritually perceived.¹ Nine of the first twelve revela-

¹ For an explanation of the different kinds of vision, see above, p. 28.f.

In Revelation I, the Godhead is seen "in my vnderstanding", Saint Mary "ghostly in bodily lykenes", and the hazel nut "with the eye of my vnderstanding". In the second, she sees the sea bed with the understanding, and the third is wholly "in my vnderstandyng", as is the vision of God as a Lord entertaining his friends in the sixth. The feelings of "weal and woe" in the seventh are again spiritually experienced. The vision of Saint Mary in the eighth is of the state of her soul - Julian does not see her again in person. The three heavens in Revelation IX are again perceived with the understanding, as is the vision of the heart of Jesus in the tenth. The third vision of Saint Mary in the eleventh is once more a "ghostly sight".

In later chapters, Revelations XIII and XIV are in the form of locutions, the Servant parable is "gostly in bodely lycknesse" and "more gostly withoute bodely lycknes". Revelation XV is a locution, followed by the exemplum of the body and the child; the manner in which

tions are directly concerned with the figure of the crucified Christ. The other three (III, VI and VII) are not related to any "bodily sight" at all, but it is interesting to note that the visions which immediately follow involve particularly vivid sights of the Passion.¹

Just as the bodily sight which underlies all twelve revelations is the figure of Christ on the cross, so the principal theme of the first part of the book is the Passion. In Revelations I, II, IV and VIII, physical aspects of Christ's sufferings are presented, as well as their spiritual implications, which are further seen in Revelations V, IX and X. Moreover, one may see in these a kind of chronological sequence of incidents in the Passion; the crowning with thorns, the mocking, the scourging, the last agony with the words "I thirst", and the piercing of his side.² This is followed by Jesus' exaltation and glorification, beginning at the sudden change to joy in Revelation VIII.³ The spiritual teachings of these Revelations are thus brought to a focus in the figure of the crucified Christ. Even while the eternal qualities of God, his sovereignty and love, are being presented, this bodily sight continues,

[footnote 1 cont'd]

she saw this is not specified, but since the example is not mentioned in the shorter version, which gives a careful description of the bodily sights and primary experiences, one may infer that it is not a "bodily sight". The devil is seen in a nightmare. The vision of the city of the soul in Revelation XVI is seen with her "ghostly eye".

¹ The scourging in Revelation IV, and the last agony of Christ in Revelation VIII.

² cf. John 19:1-3, 28, 34.

³ chs. xx - xxi, p.41 r.

just as it is in the Passion of Christ that these attributes of God are supremely manifested.¹

In this Julian's method becomes clear. The "shewings" themselves are primary: a particular doctrine is, as it were, embodied in a vision or locution, and is expounded in the interpretation which follows, and this in turn leads to a discussion of its implications. It is the visions and locutions which, besides presenting facts for consideration, initiate trains of thought, provoke questions, and also provide the answers. They are the point of departure for argument, and the constant frame of reference. The material given in the revelations, combined or contrasted with the teaching of the Scriptures, is the whole substance of Julian's book. Hence the form of the book is entirely dependent on them.

The Bodily Sights

Each of Julian's visions is emblematic of some spiritual truth. The crucifix which comes to life before her very eyes represents the Passion of Christ and all that the Passion entails. Even before the revelations began the crucifix could have no other meaning: the cross is the symbol par excellence of the Gospel. Significantly, it is at this point in Julian's narrative that the natural and the supernatural meet.

The first four of the bodily sights show aspects of Jesus' suffering - the crowning with thorns, the discolouring of his face, the scourging and the last agony.² Julian's account of what she sees is remarkable for its

¹ Acts 2:23, I John 4:9, 10.

² The piercing of his side comes after the change to joy in Revelation VIII and belongs more to the visions of Christ in glory.

vividness. She takes care to record the sight in exact detail.¹ So, for instance, when she describes the bleeding of Christ's head under the crown of thorns, she says,

The grett droppes of blode felle downe fro vnder the garlonde, lyke pelottes semyng as it had comynn ouȝte of the veynes. And in the comyng ouȝte they were brome rede, for the blode was full thycke; and in the spredyng abrode they were bryght rede ... The plentuous hede is lyke to the droppes of water that falle of the evesyng of an howse after a grete shower of reyne that falle so thycke that no man may nomber them with no bodely wyt. And for the roundnesse they were lyke to the scale of heryng, in the spredyng of the forhede. 2

She is particularly concerned to describe colours exactly:

I saw the swete face, as it were drye and blodeles with pale dyeng, and deede pale langhuryng, and than turned more deede into blew, and after in browne-blew, as the flessch turned more depe dede. 3

The garlonde of thornes was deyde with the blode, and that other garlond and the hede all was one colowre, as cloteryd blode when it was dryed. The skynne and the flesshe that semyd of the face and of the body was smalle rympylde, with a tawny coloure, lyke a drye bord whan it is agyd, and the face more browne than the body. 4

The product of this minute exactness is what must be the cruelest description of Christ's death in English literature. Even though one is

¹ Her purpose in doing this may well be to convey to the reader what she saw as completely as possible, as a communication from God (see p. 28 above)

² vii, 14 r & v.

³ xvi, 32 r.

⁴ xvii, 34 v.

reminded by certain abnormal details¹ that these are supernatural sights, there is nevertheless a harsh reality about them. Julian's words express great love and pity, yet her account of the sight is so factual and lacking in sentimentality/it is almost shocking. Its effect upon the reader is to evoke a response of pity and compassion such as she says she experienced herself.

Herein lies the purpose of the visual details Julian gives. Unlike the details of the Servant parable, they have no symbolic meaning in themselves. Spiritual significance is to be found in the sight taken as a whole.²

Of the four bodily sights of the Passion, the first and the last³ are

¹ E.g., the blood from Christ's head vanishes when it comes to the eye-brows (vii, 14 r), as does the blood from his body before it reaches the ground (xii, 25 v), "If it had ben so in kynde and in substance for that tyme, it shulde haue made the bedde all on bloud and haue passyde over all about"; ^{or again,} she sees the discolouration of Christ's face one half at a time (x, 19 v).

² Occasionally, however, Julian makes use of an image which has been suggested by these details. For instance, in Revelation VIII, one of the reasons given for the drying of Christ's flesh is that "he was hangyng vppe in the eyer as men hang a cloth for to drye" (xvii, 35 r), and she mentions that there was a sharp wind blowing. Later on she says, "Holy Chyrch shalle be shakyd in sorow and anguyssch and trybulacion in this worlde, as men shakyth a cloth in the wynde" (xxviii, 51 v). ^{use of the image} The context of both is a discussion of compassion. After the first, she says, "The shewyng of Cristes paynes ffylled me fulle of peynes" (35 v), and she goes on to speak of the Christian's participation in the sufferings of Christ. The second discussion is explicitly related to the first, as she says, "Ryght as I was before in the Passion of Crist fulfylllyd with payne and compassion, lyke in thys I was in party fulfyllled with compassion of alle my evyn cristen." (51 v) The image of a cloth in the wind is unusual enough to be easily recalled when it is used the second time; and it has ~~been taken~~ ^{taken} on a significance in chapter xvii which it retains in the similar context of chapter xxviii. But whereas the first time it is used of the suffering of Christ, the second time it is applied to the tribulation of the Church. Thus in the use of this image one may see a hint of the principle of identification of Christ and the Church which is later stated explicitly (xxxiv, 61 v).

³ i.e., Revelations I & VIII.

given no further interpretation; indeed, no explanation is needed, since the account itself would be sufficient to recall to any Christian all the associations and the significance of the Passion and death of Christ.

But the other two are explained. The second is of

Dyspyte, spyttyng, solewyng and buffetyng and manie
languryng paynes, mo than I can tell, and often
chaungyng of colour. 1

The "parte of his Passion" receives no further comment, but she explains the discolouring of Christ's face as "a fygur and a lyknes of our fowle blacke dede, which that our feyre, bryght, blessed Lord bare for our synne".² The example of St. Veronica's handkerchief is given to illustrate the same thing.³ In the fourth revelation, the vision is of the copious shedding of Christ's blood. She takes this to be emblematic of God's love in cleansing Man from sin:

God hath made waters plentuous in erth to our servys,
and to our bodely eese, for tendyr loue that he hath
to vs. But yet lykyth hym better that we take full
holksomly hys blessyd blode to wassch vs of synne.
ffor ther is no lycour that is made that lykyth hym
so wele to yeue vs. ffor it is most plentuous as it
is most precious, and that by the vertu of the blessed
Godhead. And it is our owne kynde; and blessydfully
ovyr flowyth vs by the vertu of his precious loue. 4

Although the actual sight of Revelation VIII, of the last pains of Christ, stands without further explanation, Julian does offer a double

¹ x, 19 v.

² 21 r.

³ Ibid.

⁴ xii, 25 v - 26 r.

interpretation of the words of Christ from the cross which the vision illustrates, "I thirst".¹ The literal meaning is given in the vision itself;² "And I vnderstode by the bodyly thurste, that the body had feylyng of moyster". Later on she gives a spiritual interpretation: the "thirst" of Christ is his longing for beloved souls to be with him, and, derivatively, the longing of chosen souls to be with Christ.³

Corresponding to the sudden change in Revelation VIII, the emphasis in the later sights of Christ on the cross shifts from his suffering and humanity to his exaltation and divinity. In the tenth revelation she sees Christ look into his side.⁴ This is with "bodily sight", but the vision of the "feyer and delectable place" within and of the heart of

¹ John 19:28.

² xvii, 33 v.

³ ch. xxxi.

Julian's interpretations are not without Biblical parallel. Her explanation of the discolouration of Christ's face recalls the N.T. teaching on the purpose of the Incarnation (e.g. Hebrews 2:14-16, Romans 8:3), but the imagery is to be found in the O.T. prophecy of the suffering Servant: "Sicut obstupuerunt super te multi, sic inglorious erit inter viros aspectus ejus, et forma ejus inter filios hominum ... non est species ei, neque decor: et vidimus eum, et non erat aspectus, et desideravimus eum". (Isaiah 52:14, 53:2).

Christ's blood-shedding also has similar associations in Scripture as in the Revelations, particularly in the Apocalypse, where he is the one "who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (1:5, cf. ch. 7:14, and also I Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:5, Matthew 26:28, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 9:13-14, I John 1:17).

The use of thirst to signify spiritual longing is found in both Testaments (e.g. Psalms 41:2, Amos 8:11, John 7:37, cf. 4:13, 14, 6:5; Apocalypse 21:6, 22:17), but an explicit application of this idea to Christ's words from the cross is not made.

⁴ xxiv, 46 r ff.

Jesus "clovyn on two" are perceived in her understanding. The water and blood, "whych he lett poure out for loue", are not seen at all, but are "bourght to mynde". In the visions which follow, the figure on the cross becomes more and more glorified, until in Revelation XII only his divinity can be seen. Significantly, the detailed descriptions of Christ cease with the eighth revelation, and by the twelfth all she can say is "Oure Lorde shewyd hym more gloryfyed, as to my syght, than I saw hym before".¹ The bodily sight is engulfed by something greater, seen more spiritually, and is mentioned no more.

But the bodily sight of Christ on the cross is only the beginning of Julian's experience, the gateway, as it were, to a more spiritual perception. At the same time as she sees "bodily" the figure of Christ, she perceives other things in a more "ghostly" way. When these two kinds of visions and the locutions are considered together, a more complex structure of theme and argument becomes apparent.

The Structure of Part I

The first revelation begins with the crowning with thorns, but also, "ther in was conteined and specified the blessed Trinitie with the Incarnacion, and the vnithing betweene God and mans sowle, with manie fayer schewynges and techinges of endelesse wisdom and loue, in which all the shewynges that foloweth be groundde and ioyned".² The first

¹ xxvi, 49 r.

² i, 1 r.

revelation contains in embryo all the themes which are developed and examined at length later in the book. So, in the sight of Christ's suffering and the spiritual vision of the Trinity which immediately follows, the double motif of pain and joy is introduced. Here also the persona and role of Jesus Christ as the Word of God, revealing him to the world, is asserted:

Right so both God and man, the same that sufferd for
me, I conceived truly and mightly that it was him
selfe that shewed it me, without anie meane ... The
Trinitie is our endlesse ioy and our bleisse by our
Lord Jesu Christ and in our Lord Jesu Christ; and this
was shewed in the first syght and in all; for wher
Ihesu appireth the blessed Trinitie is vnderstand, as
to my sight. 1

Here, too, the relationship of the Trinity to Man, in his three-fold function of Maker, Keeper and Lover is established, as well as man's response to God, of wonder, humility and love. It is also stated here that in the Passion of Christ there is strength enough for all that shall be saved "against all the fiendes of hell, and against all ghostely enemies".²

The relationship between God and Man is presented symbolically in the visions which follow. Man's response to God is portrayed by the sight of Saint Mary:

God shewed me in part the wisdom and truth of her
sowle, wher in I vnderstode the reuerent beholding
that she beheld her God. 3

¹ iv, 7 v.

² 8 r.

³ 8 v.

God's "homely louyng" of man is illustrated by the example of clothing:

I saw that he is to vs all thing that is good and comfortable to our helpe. He is oure clothing that for loue wrappeth vs, and wyndeth vs, halseth vs, and all becloseth vs, hangeth about vs for tender loue, that he may never leeuue vs. 1

God's relationship to the creation as Maker, Keeper and Lover is even more strikingly demonstrated in the vision of the hazelnut which follows:

And in this he shewed a little thing the quantitie of an haselnott lying in the palme of my hand as me semide, and it was as rounde as a balle. I looked theran with the eye of my vnderstanding 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 littlenes. 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." In this little thing I saw iij properties: the first is that God made it, the second that God loueth it, the thirde that God kepyth it. But what behyld I therin? Verely, the Maker, the Keper, the Louer. 2

This immediately introduces the theme of union with God, "For till I am substantially vnited to him I may never haue full reste, ne verie blisse..."

Here is indicated the nature of God in himself, as compared with his nature in relation to his creatures. He is All-mighty, All-wise and All-good.³ This is followed (in chapter vi) by some discussion on prayer, in

1 9 r.

2 9 r & v.

3 This threefold description becomes a keynote in the book. Once Julian has established her reference to the Trinity as Might, Wisdom and Goodness (or Love), she is able to recall it by the use of corresponding verbs: may, can and will (e.g. xxxi, 54 v ff, cf. xl, 72 v). See Grace Warrack's introduction to her edition of the Revelations, pp. li ff.

which the principles of the love and goodness of God are practically applied, and on the natural desire of the soul to "have" God.¹ The revelation closes with a further interpretation of her vision of Saint Mary, and a more detailed description of the bodily sight, with more remarks on the "homeliness" of God.

Thus in the first revelation the seeds of all the themes which are subsequently developed are sown. Julian herself notes that "the strenght (sic) and the grounde of alle was schewed in the furst syght".² It is fitting, therefore, that she pauses here, before continuing her account of the visions, to discuss the purpose of the revelations and their relation to the faith of the Church.³

The next two revelations take up certain points and develop them further. Revelation II, which is a bodily sight of the discolouration of Christ's face, speaks more of Man's desire for God, in particular for knowledge of God. In this she introduces the imagery, common to many writers about the spiritual life, of light and darkness, blindness and sight, in terms of which the plight of fallen Man is stated:

This saw I bodely, swemly and darkely. And I desyred
mor bodely light, to haue seen more clerly. And I was
answeryde in my reason: "If God will shew thee more, he
shalbe thy light. Thou nedyth none but hym". ffor I
saw him, and sought hym. ffor we be now so blynde and
so vnwyse that we can never seke God, till what tyme
that he of his goodnes shewyth hym to vs. And whan we
see owght of hym graciously, then are we steryd by the

¹ 13 r.

² 13 v.

³ chs. viii and ix.

same grace to seke with great desyer to see hym more
blessedfully. And thus I saw hym and sought him;
and I had hym, and wantyd hym. And this is, and
should be, our comyn workyng in this life, as to my
syght. 1

This is illustrated by a vision of the "uttermost parts of the sea",
where to see God would still mean continual safety and comfort. She goes
on from there to point out that Man must have faith that God is indeed
always with him:

ffor he will that we beleue that we see hym
contynually, thow that vs thynke that it be but
litle; and in the beleue he maketh vs evyr more to
gett grace. 2

Then follows an interpretation of what she sees with bodily sight.
Here, in her outline of the reasons for the Incarnation and Passion (that
Man was made in the image of the Trinity but became defiled, and that
Christ took upon himself Man's nature, though without sin, so that Man
might be restored in his likeness), Julian first begins her unfolding of
the doctrine of Atonement, summarised so tersely in the first revelation
by the words "both God and man, the same that sufferd for me" and
"restored vs by his precious passion".³ The revelation concludes with
reflections, apparently made subsequently, upon the meaning of the vision --
that one ought to seek God constantly and gladly, and put one's trust in
him, and that he will reveal himself to all those who love him when it is
his will to do so.

1 x, 20 r.

2 20 v.

3 10 v.

In the construction of this chapter one may see a good example of Julian's artistry. First there is a description of what she saw. The vision itself introduces the imagery of light and blindness, and leads naturally to a discussion of Man's search for God and God's abiding presence with Man. This is then illustrated with an exemplum that incorporates the image of the sea bed, after which Julian gives an interpretation of the vision, which is also illustrated by the example of the Vernicle. This leads to a further discussion of the soul's search for God. A satisfying balance is thus achieved between the two related themes, the discolouring of Christ's face and the soul's search. Each is presented, and then each is further explained, alternately.

The third revelation states the doctrine of divine providence and fore-ordination, which is a corollary of the proposition that God is the Maker, Keeper and Lover: that God is in all things, and that he does all that is done. From this, one is compelled to admit that everything done is well done, and that God is always fully pleased with all his works. Here, very briefly, the question of sin is raised, but no answer is given, except the very important statement that "synne is na dede". It is here also that Julian first draws the distinction between the judgement of Man and that of God, saying that, in his spiritual blindness and lack of foreknowledge, Man sees some things as well done and others as evil; but God, who by his providence does everything, sees that all things are equally well done according to his eternal purpose. In this chapter, therefore, the sovereignty of God is stated positively - his immutability, his foreknowledge, and his control of all things.

Thus in the first three revelations the principal themes and doctrines of the book are introduced, and the main premises of the arguments which follow are put forward. Julian goes on from here to deal with various ideas in more detail.

The following revelations up to the twelfth develop and continue the motif of pain and joy as related to the Passion. The idea of union with God is likewise taken further as Julian penetrates more deeply into the meaning of the Atonement. The fourth revelation, where she returns once more to the sight of Christ on the cross, shows the effect of the shedding of his blood in love for the cleansing of man's sin. The fifth, which is the first to come in the form of a locution, follows immediately from the sight and points to another achievement of the Passion: "Here with is the feende ovyr come".¹ Here is first made the statement that God is never wroth, in the context of his "scornynge hys (i.e., Satan's) malys, and nowghtynge hys vnmyght".² From this, one is returned once more to the motif of joy and pain: Julian laughs for joy, and yet, she says, she did not see Christ laugh. The devil is overcome, but at the terrible price of the Passion and death of Christ.

Following this oblique reference to the joy which is in heaven, the sixth revelation deals with it directly. There has been mention of joy before, especially in the first revelation, but here it is seen from an eternal point of view and asserted positively against the pain and trouble

¹ xiii, 27 r. This takes up her statement in the first revelation, that the sight of the Passion "was strenght inough to me ... against all the fiendes of hell".

² 27 v.

the Christian suffers on earth in God's service. The seventh revelation follows logically from this. It consists simply in two feelings, of great happiness and overwhelming misery, experienced alternately several times. In this, joy and sorrow are viewed side by side, and it is seen that both come from God, and that he preserves and sustains the Christian in both. Nevertheless, grief is a passing thing, while joy is everlasting. For this reason, one ought never to dwell upon one's sufferings, but look to the eternal joy of God.

In the next five revelations these two feelings are brought to a focus and are sharply portrayed in the figure of Christ on the cross. The eighth, of his dying, is the most powerful presentation of suffering in the book. In the course of this revelation, Julian's request for compassion is answered, as the idea of union with God is pursued. In this also she reaches a clearer understanding of the Atonement, as she concludes:

Thus was oure Lord Ihesu payned for vs, and we stonde
alle in this maner of payne with hym, and shalle do
tylle that we come to his blysse. 1

From this statement the idea follows naturally that, as the expression of Jesus in the crucifix changed from suffering into joy,² so the Christian shall suddenly be brought into the joy of heaven.³ Thus the last part of the eighth revelation recalls the seventh and reinterprets it, for now the sufferings of this life are shown as the Christian's spiritual

¹ xviii, 37 v.

² xxi.

³ This anticipates Revelation XV.

crucifixion, by means of which he comes to the glory of the resurrection.

From this point the element of joy is dominant. In the ninth revelation she tells of the pleasure of God in the Passion. It begins with the locution,

It is a joy, a blysse, an endlesse lykyng to me, that
evyr I sufferd passion for the; and yf I myght haue
sufferyd more, I wolde a sufferyd more. 1

At the same time, in her understanding, she sees "three heavens", corresponding to the three Persons of the Trinity. In the first, the Father "is wele plesyde with alle the dedes that Ihesu hath done about our saluacion",² and gives mankind to him as a reward and as his "crown". Because of this joy, Jesus "settyth at naught hys traveyle and his passion and his cruelle and shamfulle deth".³

Before telling of the other two heavens, Julian returns to explain further the saying which begins the revelation. "If I myght suffer more I wolde suffer more" indicates the infinite love of Christ, which in turn corresponds to the second "heaven", viz., the love of Jesus which made him suffer and which "passith as far alle his paynes as hevyn is aboue erth".⁴ Then she further explains how the words "it is a joy, a blysse, an endlesse lykyng" correspond to the three heavens, and to the three Persons. The

¹ Revelation IX, xxii, 42 r.

² 42 v.

³ Ibid., cf. Hebrews 12:2.

⁴ 43 v.

third heaven, she says, is the joy and bliss of the Passion.

In these chapters Julian considers alternately the words spoken and their meaning and the more spiritual vision of the three heavens, a procedure similar to that which is used in Revelation II,¹ but here she brings the two parts closely together at the end. The conclusion she draws is parallel to that of Revelation VIII, that one ought to experience compassion and spiritual crucifixion with Christ, but it goes a step further: as God rejoices in the Passion and in Man's salvation, so ought the Christian to have joy.

The revelation finishes with the example of the cheerful giver, who disregards all his effort if the receiver is pleased with the gift. This returns one to the locution: "Yf thou arte welle apayd, I am welle apayde".² Lastly, she enumerates the joys of Christ that follow his Passion, that "he hath done it in dede, and he shalle no more suffer", that "he hath ther with bought vs from endlesse paynes of helle", and that "he brought vs vp into hevyn and made vs for to be hys crowne and hys endlesse blysse."³

Joy is stated again in the tenth revelation, in which the bodily sight is still of Christ on the cross, but with more spiritual sight Julian is led

by the same wound in to hys syd with in, and ther he shewyd a feyer and delectable place, and large inow for alle mankynde that shalle be savyd and rest in

¹ See above, pp 175-177.

² 45 v.

³ xxiii, 46 r.

pees and in loue. And ther with he bourght to mynde
hys dere worthy blode and hys precious water whych he
lett poure out for loue, and with the swete beholdyng
he shewyd hys blessyd hart clovyn on two. 1

All these things are symbols of God's love for man, but then Julian
passes beyond symbols to a perception more spiritual still:

And with hye enjoyeng, he shewed to my vnderstandyng
in part the blyssydfulle Godhede, as farforth as he
wolde that tyme, strengthyng the pour soule for to
vnderstand as it may be sayde, that is to mene the
endlesse loue that was without begynnyng and is and
shalbe evyr. 2

The accompanying locution is, "Lo, how I love thee". The revelation
gives the supreme reason for the joy of the one before, that it was God's
love for man that made Christ suffer, and rejoice to suffer, for man's
sake. Correspondingly, the love of Man for God makes him rejoice for
Christ's joy, just as he suffers for and with Christ's suffering.

Saint Mary

The response of the Christian to the love of God is shown in this
first part of the book in the person of Saint Mary. There are three
visions of the Mother of Christ, each perceived spiritually.³ It is
significant that Julian saw no other individual in her visions,⁴ and that

¹ xxiv, 46 r & v. For a discussion of this Revelation in the history of
devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, see J.-V. Bainvel, La dévotion
au Sacré-Coeur de Jésus: doctrine - histoire, (Paris, 1921), p.270.

² 46 v.

³ The first is described as "ghostly in bodily lykenes" (iv, 8 v), the
other two are shown without bodily likeness (36 r, 48 v).

⁴ xxv, 48 v.

she saw Saint Mary three times.

The first time, which is part of the first revelation, Julian sees her at the time of her conception:

In this he brought our Ladie Sainct Mari to my vnderstanding. I saw her ghostly in bodily lykenes, a simple mayden and a meeke, yong of age, a little waxen aboue a chylde, in the stature as she was when she conceivede. Also God shewed me in part the wisdom and the truth of her sowle, wher in I vnderstode the reuerent beholding that she beheld her God, that is her Maker, marvayling with great reuerence that he would be borne of her that was a symple creature of his makynge. ffor this was her marvayling, that he that was her Maker would be borne of her that was made. And this wisdom and truth, knowing the greatnes of her Maker and the littlehead of her selfe that is made, made her to say full meekely to Gabriell, "Loo me here, Gods hand-mayden". In this syght I did vnderstand verily that she is more then all that God made beneth her, in wordines and in fullhead, for aboue her is nothing that is made but the blessed manhood of Crist, as to my sight. 1

The most important part of the vision is not Saint Mary herself, but the qualities of her soul, her wisdom and truth. These are manifested in her humility and her reverence for God. True wisdom in the creature is nothing other than the recognition of the vast difference between herself and her Creator.² The threefold repetition of this in the passage makes it obvious. Saint Mary is the supreme example of this wisdom, for all Christians to emulate. In this respect she is even a better example than Christ, for she is always a creature, while he, in his divine nature, is the begotten Son of God.

¹ iv, 8 r - 9 r.

² cf. Psalm 110:10, etc., "Initium sapientiae timor Domini".

For this reason, Julian later returns to this vision of Saint Mary to explain how the human soul may be an image of the Trinity:

God shewed ... that man werkyth evyr more his wylle and his wurschyppe. And what thys werking is ... was shewed in the werkyng of the blessydfull soule of our Lady Sent Mary by truth and wysedom ... Truth seeth God, and wisdom beholdyth God, and of theyse two comyth the thurde, and that is a meruelous delycht in God, whych is loue. Where truth and wysdom is verely, there is loue verely comyng of them both, and alle of Goddes makyng. ffor God is endlesse souereyne Truth, endlesse souereyne Wysdom, endelesse souereyne Loue vnmade. And a mans soule is a creature in God, whych hath the same propertes made. 1

In this activity the soul does that for which it was made, and so pleases its Maker. And from this "werking" spring the greatest spiritual virtues, charity and humility:

ffor of alle thyng, the beholdyng and the lovyng of the Maker, makyth the soule to seme lest in his awne syght, and most fyllyth hit with reuerent drede and trew meknesse, and with plente of charyte to his eyn crysten. 2

Julian sees these virtues perfected in the soul of Saint Mary:

This wysdom and truth made her to behold hyr God, so gret, so hygh, so myghty and so good. This gretnesse and this nobylnesse of her beholdyng of God fulfyllid her of reverend drede. And with this she sawe hyr selfe so lytylle and so lowe, so symple and so poer in regard of hyr God, that thys reuerent drede fulfyllid her of meknes. And thus by thys grounde sche was fulfyllid of grace and of alle maner of vertuous, and passyth alle creatours. 3

¹ xliv, 80 v f.

² vi, 13 v.

³ vii, 13 v - 14 r.

It is significant that the vision which follows in the first revelation is that of the hazelnut, in which the relation of God to his creatures is made even more plain, and the conclusion drawn is that "all that is beneth him suffyseth not to vs".¹

Saint Mary is not seen here as a Queen, not even in her physical appearance, but as simple and young. This only emphasises the main point, the enormous difference between her and the Creator. Her greatness, paradoxically, lies in her recognition of this fact, and in her consequent humility, reverence and obedience. She personifies the anti-thesis of Pride. The greatest sin is deliberately to ignore the distinction between Creator and creature, to set oneself up in the place of God, to say, "I will not serve". Saint Mary, fully recognising the greatness of the Maker and her own relative smallness, says "Loo me here, Gods handmayden". This is what makes her "more then all that God made beneth her, in wordines and in fullhead", higher than the whole creation except for the human nature of Christ.

Just as she is the supreme example of reverence and humility, so the honour shown to her is the greatest manifestation of God's homeliness and courtesy. Jylian is astounded by "the wonder and mervayle" that "he that is so reuerent and so dreadfull will be so homely with a synnfull creature liueing in this wretched flesh".² How much more is Saint Mary filled with wonder because "he that was her Maker would be borne of her that was made".

¹ 10 r.

² iv, 8 r.

The second vision of Saint Mary comes in the eighth revelation:

Here I saw in parte the compassion of our blessed Lady Sainct Mary for Crist; and she was so onyd in loue that the grettnes of her loue was cause of the grettnes of her payne. ffor in this I saw a substance of kynde loue contynued by grace, that his creatures haue to hym, which kynde loue was most fulsomly shewde in his swete Mother, and ovyypassyng; for so much as she louyd hym more then alle other, her payne passyd alle other. ffor ever the hygher, the myghtyer, the swetter that the loue is, the more it is to the lover to se that body in payne that he lovyd. 1

Here Saint Mary is shown as the one who felt the most com-passion, or suffering with Christ. Compassion, Julian points out, springs from love, and by the two Christ and Man are united. As his Mother, Saint Mary loved Christ more than anyone else did, and so her compassion was greatest. Even so, she is taken as the representative of "alle hys dyscyples and alle his tru louers".² Her union with Christ stands for theirs: "In this I saw a substance of kynde loue contynued by grace, that his creatures haue to hym". From this one instance, Julian goes on to generalise:

Here saw I a grett onyng betwene Crist and vs, to my vnderstandyng. ffor when he was in payne, we ware in payne, and alle creatures that myght suffer payne sufferyd with hym. 3

The third time, Saint Mary is shown in glory:

And with thys chere of myrth and joy our good Lord lokyd downe on the ryght syde, and brought to my mynde where oure Lady stode in the tyme of hys passion, and

¹ xviii, 36 r & v.

² 36 v.

³ Ibid.

seyd, "Wilt thou see her?" And in this swete word, as yf he had seyde, "I wott welle that thou wilt se my blessyd Mother, for after my selfe she is the hyghest joy that I myght shewe the, and most lykyng and worchyppe to me, and most she is desyred to be seen of alle my blessyd creatures. 1

The third "shewing" of Saint Mary is made as if Christ were letting Julian into a secret, and through her confiding it to all Christians:

And for the marvelous hygh and syngular loue that he hath to thys swete mayden his blessyd Mother, our Ladye Sainct Mary, he shewyth her blysse and joy, as by the menyng of thys swete word. As yf he seyde, "Wylte thou se how that I loue her, that thou myght joy with me in the loue that I haue in her and she in me?" 2

But things are taken even further than this:

As yf he sayde, "Wylt thou se in her how thou art louyd? ffor thy loue I haue made her so hygh, so noble, so wurthy. And thys lykyth me, and so wille I that it do the. 3

Just as in the second vision Saint Mary's love for Christ represents that of all Christians for him, so here she is seen as the representative of all who are loved by Christ. In her one sees how all Christians are loved. It follows from the words "Lo how I loue the",⁴ the climax of Revelation X. Her glorification is somehow a demonstration of Christ's love for all his people. And it is also shown that he wishes all

¹ xxv, 47 r & v.

² xxv, 47 v.

³ 48 r.

⁴ xxiv, 46 v.

Christians to share in his pleasure in her:

And so he wylle that it be knowen that all tho that lycke in hym, shuld lyke in her. And to mor vnderstandyng he shewed thys exsample: as yf a man loue a creature syngulary a boue alle creatures, he wylle make alle other creatures to loue and to lycke that creature that he lovyth so much. 1

And so Julian says,

After hym selfe she is the most blessydfulle syght. But here of am I nott lernyd to long to see her bodely presens whyle I am here, but the vertuse of her blyssydfulle soule: her truth, her wysdom, her cheryte; wherby I am leern to know my selfe and reuerently drede my God. 2

By these words Julian indicates that the vision of Saint Mary in her "bodely presens" is not an end in itself, however "blessydfylle" that sight may be. In this respect it immediately differs from the sight of God, which in itself, Julian constantly affirms, is most to be desired.³ One must go beyond the vision of Saint Mary to see its spiritual meaning, "the vertuse of her blyssydfulle soule", which is nothing other than the image of the Trinity within her in truth, wisdom and love.⁴ This applies to all Christians, for in such qualities and by the knowledge of one's own soul which follows, one may also obtain the same virtues of humility and "reverent dread".

It is only then that the showing itself follows:

¹ 48 v.

² 48 r.

³ As, for example, in Revelation II.

⁴ As in Revelation I.

I went to haue seen her in bodely lykyng, but I saw her nott so. And Ihesu in that worde shewd me a gostly syght of her. Ryght as I had seen her before, lytylle and symple, ryght so he shewyd her than, hygh and noble and glorious, and plesyng to hym aboue all creatures. 1

There is no doubt that Saint Mary occupies a very high position in Julian's regard, second only to God himself. And yet, because of what the first vision of her shows, it is clear that Julian nevertheless sees a very great difference between the Virgin and God. She is blessed, but still a creature. In the Revelations she has only a passive role to play: she is the one shown (she does no revealing herself), and all that she has, her joy, her sorrow and her glory, is given to her by God.²

Throughout the book, Saint Mary is taken as symbolising the perfect Christian. In the third vision she is the type of the Christian soul made perfect in eternal glory and splendour. The Revelations of Divine Love teaches of Man's creation in the image of God, his union with Christ by love and by participation in his death and resurrection, and his eventual sanctification and glorification. In the three visions of Saint

¹ 48 r & v.

² It is interesting to note that Julian's three visions of Saint Mary correspond to the three groups of the Mysteries of the Rosary - Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious. But Julian seems to avoid making any of the assertions about the Blessed Virgin that Protestants reject. She does not say, for example, that the Mother of Christ is sinless, but lays emphasis upon her humility in recognising the difference between herself and the Creator. St. Mary is shown to have wisdom and truth, as well as self-knowledge thereby, and she is filled with love for God. But all these things are also asserted of every soul that shall be saved, at least in a perfected state. She occupies a special place in Jesus' love, appropriate to his Mother, but Jesus shares that love with all Christians. Her state of glory is great, but it is implied that every Christian will participate in that glory, when the sensuality is brought up into the substance, and the whole man is created anew in the image of Christ.

Mary one is given an example of how this actually works. She is shown as the one who has undergone the process, and who has been brought by the grace of God to fulfilment and perfection. Thus she is a pattern for every Christian to follow.

The Conclusion of Part I

After the third vision of Saint Mary, which is given in the eleventh revelation, having demonstrated the love of Christ as it is displayed in the events of the Passion, Julian returns in Revelation XII to consider the Lord in his eternal qualities. The vision is of Christ in glory, and the words pronounced are indicative of his everlasting being and deity, and of man's proper relationship to him: "I it am, I it am; I it am that is hyghest. I it am that thou lovyst..."¹

What was taught by the vision of the hazelnut in the first revelation is repeated here, "that oure soule shalle nevyr haue rest tylle it come into hym, knowyng that he is full of joye, homely and curteys and blessydfulle and very lyfe".

In this revelation, she says, the experience passed beyond what she is able to describe:

The number of the worde passyth my wyttes and my vnderstandyng and alle my myghtes. ffor they were in the hyghest as to my syght. ffor ther in is comprehendyd - I cannot telle what. But the joy that I saw in the shewyng of them passyth alle that hart can thynk or soule may desyre. 2

It is on this exalted, almost ecstatic note, that the first part of the Revelations of Divine Love ends.

¹ xxvi, 49 r.

² Ibid.

PART II : PROBLEM AND DEBATE

While in the first part of the book Julian's role is more or less a passive one, as the recipient of the "shewings", in the second it becomes more active. The initiative still remains with the divine Teacher, as the beginning of the section indicates,

And after thys oure Lorde brought to my mynde the
longyng that I had to hym before ...

but at this stage the work takes on more of the form of a debate as Julian begins to ask questions and raise objections.

As we have already seen, the problems which are discussed in this part of the book arise from assertions which are made in the first, particularly in Revelations I - III.¹ Fundamentally, they all spring from the doctrine of divine providence and predestination. This, with the concept of God as supremely good and loving which conflicts with the fact of suffering and evil in the world, produces the discussion of Revelation XIII.² Revelation XIV³ is concerned with the purpose of prayer in view of God's providence and foreknowledge. Finally, in the seven chapters that follow the fourteenth revelation, problems associated with God's judgement of the elect are raised.

Use of the Debate Form

The second part differs from the first in several respects. One of

¹ See above, pp. 60ff.

² chs. xxvii - xl.

³ chs. xli - xliii.

the more obvious is the greater use of dialogue. The presentation of teaching in the form of a debate between two or more persons is a familiar device in mediaeval literature. It is at least as old as Plato, and was employed by theologians for centuries; Augustine used it for some of his works; Anselm found it a suitable medium for his Cur Deus Homo.¹ The more contemporary writers of Dream Vision literature also frequently used dialogue and debate in order to present their teaching, as the Dreamer is instructed by persons in his dream in the meaning of the things he has seen. So, for example, Will in Piers Plowman is seen questioning and listening to various persons, beginning with the Lady, Holy Church. Direct instruction by authoritative and often allegorical figures is a device frequently used in the Dream-Visions.

The debate in the second part of Julian's book resembles this more closely than it does the rather formal, platonic dialogue used by Anselm. In the latter, the argument is presented as a colloquy, using direct speech throughout. This allows an economy of words, and also promotes clarity because of the obvious distinction between the teacher and the disciple, and hence between two points of view, or between the doctrine itself on the one hand, and, on the other, the questions that are raised and objections that are lodged. Because the argument is presented dramatically, the reader's attention is held more immediately than by the

¹ The debate form is immediately different from the more formal manner of the Scholastics, e.g. Thomas Aquinas's arrangement of doctrine into different sections, each sub-divided into "Questions" and still further into "Articles". The latter certainly has the advantage of clarity and logic.

less personal, oratio obliqua reasoning of an Aquinas. The reader is more readily able to identify with the disciple, and thus, perhaps, to participate in the argument in a more personal way himself. The Dream-Vision debates go further still. While the element of colloquy is maintained, it is presented in the form of a narrative rather than a drama. Thus the reader is given the disciple's thoughts as well as the questions he actually asks.

The colloquy in the Revelations is of this kind. Julian describes her thoughts and feelings at the time and the conclusions she reached upon reflection afterwards. The passages of direct speech are much sparser. An example of this is to be found in chapter xxix:

In this I stode beholdyng generally swemly and meruyngly, seyyng thus to oure Lorde in my menyng with fulle gret drede, "A, good Lorde, how myght alle be wele, for the gret harme that is come by synne to thy creatures?" And here I desyeryd, as I druste, to haue some more opyn declaryng, wher with that I myght be esyd in thys.

And to thys oure blessyd Lorde answeryd fulle mekely and with fulle louely chere, and shewd that Adams synne was the most harme that evyr was done or evyr shalle in to the worldes end. And also he shewde that thys is opynly knowyn in alle Holy Church in erth. fferthermore, he lernyd that I shulde beholde the glorious Asseeth for thys. Asseeth makynge is more plesyng to the blessyd Godhed, and more wurschypfulle for mannys saluacion, withoute comparyson, than evyr was the synne of Adam harmfulle. Then menyth oure blessyd Lorde thys, and in thys techyng that we shulde take hede to thys: "ffor sythen that I haue made welle the most harm, than it is my wyll that thou know ther by that I shalle make wele alle that is lesse." ¹

Here the actual question is given in direct speech, following a

¹ xxix, 53 r & v (*italics are in red in Paris MS*).

comment on Julian's own feelings as she asked it. Then she makes a statement about the intention of the question before reporting the answer she was given. As she does so, she describes the Teacher's expression as he answers - "fulle mekely and with fulle louely chere". Most of the answer is recorded in oratio obliqua. She reserves direct quotation for the most forceful point of the argument, which is introduced by words which draw it to the reader's particular attention. It comes in a prominent position, as the conclusion: "ffor sythen that I haue made welle the most harm, than it is my wylle that thou know ther by that I shalle make wele/^{alle}that is lesse."

Hence, although the movement of this kind of debate is slower, and the argument may be less clearly organised than in the direct exchange between an Anselm and his Boso, it allows a greater variety of emphasis. The direct quotations stand out; and Julian frequently uses this to highlight the main points of the argument, and in particular the most important words of her divine Teacher. One is also able to distinguish clearly her own reflections and explanations, with which the dialogue is interspersed, and the actual instruction she is given.

This kind of debate has another effect as well. As Julian describes her own feelings - wonder, perplexity, fear, joy - and thus gives expression to her own personal involvement in and concern for the issues in question, she invites a more personal response from the reader on the emotional level, as well as an intellectual assent. As we have seen, to elicit a response of the will, and, in particular, to encourage the reader's love and trust in God, is part of the intention of Julian's whole teaching on

the spiritual life.

So the reader's interest is engaged on two levels. While the doctrinal implications of divine sovereignty are argued out in various aspects, Julian's own deep personal involvement in the problems, springing from her commitment to God in love and service, makes the finding of a resolution a matter of impelling concern. This is the tension which underlies the theological debate, the force which gives her search for knowledge of the truth such urgency. And she communicates at least some of this to her audience.

It is conveyed not merely by Julian's description of her own feelings, but once more by a skilful blending of passages which record her own thoughts and reflections and the direct quotation of the conversation between her and her Teacher. This is particularly noticeable at the beginning and the end of the second part of the book. In the chapters following the fourteenth revelation, for example, Julian expresses a great desire for the resolution of the apparent conflict between God's judgement of the elect as revealed to her in the "shewings" and the teaching of the Church. This question lies at the root of the discussion of six chapters, during which her doctrine of man is first developed and light is shed upon the nature of God's mercy and forgiveness, but by the seventh chapter the question itself remains unanswered. It is worth considering this chapter¹ in more detail.

First she states the conclusions reached by the preceding arguments,

¹ ch. 1, pp.91 v ff.

on mercy and forgiveness, the nature of man, and the two kinds of judgement:

And in this dedely lyfe mercy and forgevenesse is oure way, that evyr more ledyth vs to grace. And by the tempest and the sorow that we fall in on oure perty, we be ofte deed as to mannes dome in erth. But in the syght of God the soule that shall be safe was nevyr deed, ne nevyr shall.

Having thus stated what the two judgements are, she goes on to outline her difficulty, framing it as a direct question to her Teacher:

But yet here I wondryde and merveilyd with alle the dyligence of my soule, menyng thus: "Goode Lorde, I see the, that thou arte very truth; and I know truly that we syn grevously all day and be moch blame wurthy. And I may neyther leue the knowyng of this sooth, nor I se nott the shewyng to vs no manner of blame. How may this be?"

Then she elaborates upon this question, stating her difficulty again in stronger terms:

for I knew be the comyn techyng of Holy Church and by my owne felyng, that the blame of oure synnes contynually hangyth vppon vs fro the furst man in to the tyme that we come vppe in to hevyn. Then was this my merveyle, that I saw oure Lorde God shewyng to vs no more blame then if we were as clene and as holy as angelis be in hevyn.

She describes her own feelings in the matter, her urgent desire to have the question answered, before asking it yet again:

And betwene 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. ffor eyther me behovyd to se in God that synne were alle done away, or els me behovyd to see in God how he seeth it, wher by I myght truly know

how it longyth to me to see synne and the manner of oure blame. My longyng endured, hym contynuantly beholdyng. And yet I culde haue no pacience for grett feer and perplexite, thyngkyng, "Yf I take it thus, that we be no synners nor no blame wurthy, it semyth as I shulde erre and faile of knowyng of this soth. And yf it be tru that we be synners and blame wurthy, good Lorde, how may it than be that I can nott see this truth in the, whych arte my God, my Maker, in whom I desyer to se alle truth?"

She then gives three reasons for her asking the question, which again contribute to the urgency of her request:

ffor thre poyntes make me hardy to aske it. The furst is, for it is so lowe a thyng; ffor if it were an hye, I shulde be adred. The secunde is, that it is so comon; ffor if it were specyall and prevy, also I shulde be adred. The thyrde is, that it nedyth me to wytt, as me thyngkyth, if I shall lyve here, for knowyng of good and evyll, wher by I may by reson and by grace the more deperte them a sonder, and loue goodnesse and hate evyll as Holy Chyrch techyth.

Finally, she gives vent to her exasperation at not being able to work out by herself a solution to the dilemma, breaking out in a cry for help:

I cryde inwardly with all my myght, sekyng in to God for helpe, menyng thus: "A, Lorde Ihesu, Kyng of blysse, how shall I be esyde? Who shall tell me and tech me that me nedyth to wytt, if I can nott at this tyme se it in the?"

This chapter contains no dispassionate weighing of alternatives. The conflicting assertions are repeated again and again, in ever-stronger terms, conveying a mounting anxiety and frustration. The repetition of key words, such as "truth", "truly", "sooth", "tru", and the repeated use of the concept of sight to signify spiritual understanding, as well as the subtle variety of meanings she gives to the word "see", the economical

and simple use of language - all contribute to the amount of feeling she is able to convey, and she ends the chapter at the point where the emotional element is at its height.

One should not, however, form the impression that Julian works wholly on the emotional level and abandons the use of reason. Intellect and will work together, and the framework of the debate itself makes this so. It is not a discussion between two human beings, but between man and God. The relationship between the two is much deeper and closer than that which normally exists between a teacher and his disciple. It is stated from the beginning that Julian's Teacher is God, the Creator, Preserver and Lover of all that is, and, moreover, that Julian stands before him as a sinner who has been justified at great cost, and of this the reader is being constantly reminded. It is impossible, in these circumstances, for the argument to remain detached and dispassionate, since it is about that very relationship between the two who are arguing. On the intellectual level alone the disparity between Teacher and disciple is enormous - the Teacher is omniscient.

Julian has the use of reason, whereby she seeks for truth, but information must come to her by revelation. The framework of the debate in the Revelations of Divine Love may be seen as a dramatic presentation of the Christian's search for knowledge of God by the use of reason, informed and directed by divine revelation and impelled by love of God and a personal devotion to him.¹

¹ It is, in effect, an expression of the Augustinian theory of knowledge, that it must be enlightened by God, that it is bound up with faith and

Locutions

It is interesting to note that this part of Julian's book does not contain any "sights", either ghostly or bodily, but the shewings are given in the form of locutions. These most often come as answers to Julian's questions, forming a most important part of the Lord's side of the colloquy. Like the locutions of the other parts of the book, they are cryptic utterances which require further elucidation. So the exchange of question and answer is further slowed down as time is taken to analyse what has been said. It is a dialogue interspersed with much explanation and digestion of the words actually spoken. Here another contrast with the first section may be seen: the passages of interpretation and analysis of Revelations XIII and XIV are much longer than those relating to the first twelve. One may discern also that a considerable amount of this interpretation comes from later reflection, and does not belong to the experience of May 1373.

As with the earlier locutions, it is the nature of these utterances to admit several interpretations at once, and so they may answer more than one question. For example, in chapter xxxi the words "And thou shalt se thy selfe that alle maner of thyng shall be welle",¹ are taken to signify "the comyng of alle man kynde that shalle be sauyd in to the blyssedfulle Trynite".² In the next chapter she gives another interpretation:

[footnote 1 cont'd]

moved by the will (see R.E.Cushman, "Faith and Reason" in A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine, ed. R.W.Battenhouse, New York, 1955, pp.287 ff.)

¹ xxxi, 55 r.

² Ibid.

And thus menyth he where he seyth, "Thou shalt se thy selfe that alle manner thyng shall be wele", as yf he seyde, "Take now feythfully and trustely, and at the last end thou shalt se verely in fulhede of joye". 1

It is not hard to see that these two revelations are based on a number of key locutions. The thirteenth is centred on two: "All shall be well", and "I keep thee full surely".

All shall be well is first given to answer Julian's question about the existence of sin in creation:²

Often I wondryd why by the grete forseide wysdom of God the begynnyng of synne was nott lettyd. ffor then thocht me that alle shulde haue be wele.

Her own words are given back to her:

"Synne is behouely, but alle shalle be wele; and alle shalle be wele; and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele."

It is "in theyse same wrdes",³ Julian says, that she perceived that the reason for the admission of sin was a mystery "hyd in God" and to be revealed in heaven. These words also provoke her question about the "gret harme that is come by synne",⁴ the answer to which provides an assurance of the fulfilment of the promise that these words contain. Two chapters later, Julian says that God answered all her "questyons and dow tys" with a further pledge that the Christian will see that "all shall

¹ xxxii, 57 v.

² xxvii, 49 v.

³ 51 r.

⁴ xxix, 53 r.

be well" that is based upon his threefold nature as almighty, all-wise and all-lóving. This locution is essentially a variation of the original formula:

"I may make alle thyng wele; and I can make alle thyng welle; and I shalle make alle thyng wele; and I wylle make alle thyng welle; and thou shalt se thy selfe that alle maner of thyng shall be welle." 1

"All shall be well" prompts her objection, in the following chapter, that this does not seem to agree with the plain teaching of the Word of God that many shall be damned. The only answer is a reaffirmation of the promise:

"That that is vnpossible to the is nott vnpossible to me. I shalle saue my worde in alle thyng, and I shalle make althyng wele." 2

All the first part of Revelation XIII is therefore somehow related to this one saying; and in a similar way one may see how the teaching of the second part is all derived from the words "I keep thee full surely".³ Furthermore, Julian continues to make reference to these sayings after the thirteenth revelation has ended. She uses the locutions to elucidate various points, and as her doctrines are developed they are related back to them. Thus the locutions become, as it were, the stem of the argument, upon which many different branches of thought grow. In the complexities of her argument they are a source of unity.⁴

1 xxxi, 55 r.

2 xxxii, 59 r.

3 xxxvii, 67 r.

4 "All shall be well" is mentioned in chs. lxii and lxviii; "I keep thee"

The element of debate is not uniformly present throughout the second part of the Revelations. In Revelation XIV Julian reverts to the pattern followed in the first part, of "shewing" followed by interpretation, although the explanation and discussion which follows is longer than those relating to Revelations I to XII. The break is not only in the manner of presentation, but also in the subject matter, which concerns the nature and purpose of prayer (a topic which is mentioned briefly in Revelation I). It may seem that a discussion about prayer at this point is an unnecessary digression and that the discontinuity is too great. On the other hand, it fits into the general theme of divine providence and the love of God, while being sufficiently different to provide some relief from the intense argument of the previous chapters on the subject of sin, after this has reached some sort of terminus in chapter xl and before it takes a new turn in chapter xliv with the question of judgement. It is here that the debate begins again, building up to the crisis of chapter l.

In this middle section the pace of the narrative (i.e., the account of what happened on 13th May, 1373) is considerably retarded, largely because of the longer passages of explanation and discussion of the "shewings". The retardation need not, however, be condemned, since the narrative is only a framework, and the doctrine itself is more important than the experience through which it is communicated. In the first part, however, doctrine and experience are very hard to separate, as we have

[footnote 4 cont'd]

in lxi, lxxxii. She makes similar references to many other locutions, e.g. "I it am" in xxxi, lix, lx, lxxii, lxxxiii; "If I might suffer more" in xxxi, lx; "Lo how I love thee" in lx. She even does it in anticipation: "thou shalt have me to thy meed" is mentioned in ch. xli, more than 20 chapters before the locution is actually given in the sequence of events of her experience.

seen; indeed, the teaching is embodied in the sights and sayings, which are presented with little more than a simple interpretation. But in the second part, Julian begins to explore implications more thoroughly. Further, since there are no visions in Part II, the sense of immediate contact between Julian and Christ is, as it were, reduced by one dimension.

At one point she seems to abandon her narrative framework altogether. For twenty chapters,¹ following the discussion of prayer in Revelation XIV, she continues to develop lines of teaching which arise from the first fourteen revelations. It is here that her doctrine of the nature of man is worked out, and a clear understanding of the Atonement is reached. But these chapters, a considerable portion of the whole, are not included in her list of revelations at the beginning (and are entirely absent from the shorter version of her book). One might classify them as later reflections upon the first fourteen revelations, yet some of them at least belong to the account of that particular experience of May, 1373: the colloquy between Julian and God goes on, and new material is given in the form of a "shewing", namely, the Parable of the Servant and the Lord. A dislocation of the framework story certainly occurs here.

Yet one might easily overlook this in view of the importance of these chapters. In them the debate between Julian and God in her search for

¹ chs. xliv - lxiv.

This raises once more the issue of the authenticity of the revelations. If the Servant Parable was shown to her on 13th May, 1373, it seems strange that there is no mention of it in chapter i, either as part of one of the other revelations or as a separate one. And why is it omitted from the shorter version? As the longer version stands, this section, and especially the Parable, is of central importance, both thematically and structurally. It has been suggested, however, that the vision of the Servant was granted to her on a later occasion, after the shorter version or "first draft" had been written.

the truth reaches its height; in them doctrines are presented which have the most profound importance. The crisis and turning-point of the whole book is placed in their midst; the greatest of the "shewings" and the most skilful piece of allegory - the spiritual vision of the Lord and his Servant - in which the complexities of her theology are gathered together and moved towards a resolution.

PART III : SOLUTION, ALLEGORIES OF LOVE

Outline

In the third part of Julian's book a solution is brought forward that is intended to answer (not only) the immediate question of God's attitude towards the elect, but also to solve the wider problem of how the Christian ought to regard and deal with suffering in his life, the problem with which the Revelations began. The implications of this solution are worked out as Julian develops her doctrine of the nature of Man and once more considers the relationship between Man and God.

As one might now expect, the solution is first presented in the form of a symbolic vision, the parable or exemplum of the Lord and his Servant. In the twelve chapters that follow, the implications of this vision and its meaning are discussed, and are brought to bear on what has been said before about the nature of Man and his relationship with God. She goes on to examine in particular the process of sanctification by mercy and grace, and the special relationship between Man and the Second Person of the Trinity as that between a child and its mother. The consideration

of these matters culminates in another "shewing", in which attention is once more drawn to the consummation of God's purpose by the promise of a sudden end to suffering and the beginning of eternal joy.

With this reminder, which once more sets the suffering of the Christian in its true perspective, the account returns to Julian's sickroom, where the last scene of her drama is enacted. In the context of actual suffering and temptation, embodied in nightmare visitations, the final assurance of victory is presented by a sight of the City of God. In the closing chapters of the book the teaching of the whole is reconsidered in the light of the last Revelation, and it is once more applied to the life of the Christian.

The themes and doctrines which are developed in the third section of Julian's book have already been considered.¹ It remains here to examine the manner in which they are presented. Primarily, it is by means of three visions, that of the Lord and his Servant, and those of the fifteenth and sixteenth revelations, and also by the two diabolical visitations and their attendant circumstances. For in this part the visual element of the revelations returns again, and dramatic presentation, followed by interpretation and discussion, takes precedence over dialogue. Once more the visions are primary, as the source of information and the starting-point for the teaching that follows.

Julian says that these visions were received on a more spiritual level of perception than those of Christ on the Cross in Part I. Those

¹ See above, ch. V.

were "bodily sights", but these are described as "ghostly", or seen with her "ghostly eye". The expression of this "ghostly sight" in her writing is by a more complex use of symbolism. In Part I, the intended teaching of a vision is generally conveyed by the sight taken as a whole. The details given serve to present that sight more vividly to the reader. This is clearly the case with the "bodily sights" of the crucified Christ, but it is also true of the more imaginative visions, such as the hazel nut or the sea bed. One fairly simple object is taken to represent or embody one spiritual truth. The visions of Saint Mary are more complex, as we have seen, because the important thing perceived is incorporeal - the quality of her soul - and the physical appearance itself is incidental. But the visions of the third part everything seen is important, and many symbols are combined. The Parable of the Lord and his Servant, in particular, reaches the level of a highly-wrought allegory, where every detail has significance.

Yet although they operate on this deeper plane, one may see that these visions in fact run parallel to those of the first part. Both present the suffering and exaltation of Christ and its implications for mankind. The same truths are shown again, embodied in different symbols, so that their significance might be more clearly apprehended. To see how these things work in detail is the object of a closer study of these last visions.

The Lord and His Servant

The context of the vision of the Lord and his Servant is the problem of God's attitude towards his elect, his not blaming them when they sin,

which occupies Julian for seven chapters after the fourteenth revelation. The climax of her frustrated attempts to find a solution from the premises that have already been given, her urgent questioning, expressed in direct speech, is its introduction. At this point of heightened emotion, where, as it were, verbal argument has failed, the visual element is abruptly resumed. The truth that is sought is presented "in bodily likeness"; the answer is given in the form of a parable.

The story of the Servant who runs to do his Lord's command and falls into a ravine is told twice, first in outline, and then in more detail as its full significance is made clear. The figures of the Lord and the Servant exhibit qualities which have previously been shown as belonging respectively to God and Man. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the two, which is the same as that which Julian has seen to exist between God and the Christian soul. It is a relationship characterised by love: on the part of the Servant, love is expressed in reverence for his Lord and in willing obedience; the Lord's love is seen in his "grett rewth and pytte" for the fallen Servant, and his joy at the reward he intends to give him.

The state of the Servant after he has fallen corresponds to the condition of fallen Man, which Julian has described in preceding chapters.¹ He is in pain, weak and unable to help himself, "blyndyd in his reson and stonyd in his mynde",² and therefore unable to see his loving Lord. Yet there is no fault in him, and the Lord ascribes to him no blame. Here is

¹ xlvii, xlviii, etc.

² li, 94 r.

presented the very cause of Julian's difficulty.

"Lo, my belouevyd Seruant! What harme and dysses he hath had and takyn in my servys, for my loue, yea, and for his good wylle! Is it nott reson that I reward hym his frey and his drede, his hurt and his mayme and alle his woo? And nott only this, but fallyth it nott to me to geve hym a gyfte that be better to hym and more wurschypfull than his owne hele shuld haue bene? And ells me thynkyth I dyd hym no grace." 1

Under these circumstances, Julian can only agree. But these are not the exact circumstances of the fall of the Christian, although he loves God and tries to serve him, and although he has a "godly will". For the Christian falls in spite of, and not because of, these things. As Julian has already made clear, his sin is caused by the wrath and contrariousness of the "bestly will" in the lower part of his soul, and it is aggravated by the weakness and spiritual blindness which come as a result.² 2

So, as it stands, the simple story provides no answer to the problem. As Julian says, "The merveylyng of the example went nevyr fro me. ffor me thought it was gevyn me for answeere to my desyer, and yet culde I nott take there in full vnderstandyng to my ees."³

The contradictory qualities in the Christian's nature which cause the difficulty are given expression by certain incongruities seen in the figure of the Servant:

ffor in the Servaunt, that was shewed for Adam, as I shall sey, I saw many dyuerse properteys that myght by no manner be derecte to syngell Adam. 4

1 Ibid., 95 r.

2 chs. xlvii, xlviii, see pp. 109-113 above.

3 li, 95 v.

4 Ibid.

In order to examine these "properteyes" Julian reviews the parable again in more detail, and as she gives closer consideration to the appearance, dress, behaviour and attitudes of the Lord and the Servant, the truth becomes manifest.

First she states in so many words what has now become obvious, the identity of the two figures:

The Lorde that satt solemply in rest and in peas, I vnderstonde that he is God. The Seruaunt that stode before hym, I vnderstode that he was shewed for Adam; that is to sey, oone man was shewed that tyme and his fallyng to make there by to be vnderstonde how God beholdyth alle manne and his fallyng. ffor in the syghte of God alle man is oone man, and oone man is alle man. 1

After this statement, the conclusion she reaches, though startling, is inevitable:

In the Servant is comprehendyd the Seconde Person of the Trynyte, and in the Seruaunt is comprehendyd Adam, that is to sey, all men. 2

The apparent incongruities are caused by the combination of two identities in one allegorical figure, and so they may be explained:

The rewth and the pytty of the ffader was of the fallyng of Adam whych is his most lovyd creature. The joy and the blysse was of the fallyng of hys dæerwurthy Son, whych is evyn with the Fader. 3

By the nerehede of the Seruaunt is vnderstand the Sonne; and by the stondyng of the lyft syde is vnderstond Adam ... By the wysdom and the goodnesse that was in the Seruaunt is vnderstond Goddys Son;

¹ Ibid., 97 r.

² Ibid., 101 v.

³ li, 98 r.

by the pore clothyng as a laborer stondyng nere the
lyft syde is vnderstonde the manhode of Adam, with
all the myschefe and febylnesse that folowyth. 1

Only one fall is shown to demonstrate that

When Adam felle, Godes Sonne fell, for the ryght
onyng whych was made in hevyn, Goddys Sonne myght
nott be separath from Adam (for by Adam I vnderstond
all 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 to the slade of the
Meydens wombe, whych was the feyerest doughter of
Adam, and that for to excuse Adam from blame in
hevyn and in erth, and myghtely he fechyd hym out of
hell. 2

Since the figure of the Servant also represents every Christian,
Julian is able to draw the conclusion that

The vertu and the goodnesse that we haue is of Iesu
Crist. The febilnesse and blyndnesse that we haue is
of Adam. 3

The representation of the qualities of both in the figure of the
Servant illuminates at last the truth which answers Julian's dilemma:

Thus hath oure good Lorde Ihesu taken vppon hym all oure
blame. And therfore oure Fader may nor wyll no more blame
assigne to vs than to hys owne derwurthy son, Ihesu Cryst. 4

The interpretation of more and more of the details of the vision
serves to confirm this conclusion, and a fuller and richer significance of
the Incarnation and Passion, in the identification of Christ with mankind,

¹ Ibid., 101 v, 102 r.

² Ibid.

³ 102 r, cf. lii, 107 r ff.

⁴ li, 102 r - v.

is correspondingly revealed:

ffor all mankynde that shall be savyd by the swete
incarnacion and the passion of Crist, alle is the
manhode of Cryst... 1

Julian does not stop there, although the immediate problem has been solved, but goes on to speak of the end of the Servant's suffering and the completion of his task, and his exaltation. It is expressed in terms of the triumph, resurrection and glory of Christ, but by implication it speaks of the exaltation of every Christian:

He myght nevyr ryse all myghtly fro that tyme that he
was fallyn in to the Maydyns wombe: tyll his body was
sleyne and dede, he yeldyng the soule into the Fadyrs
hand with alle mankynde for whome he was sent. And at
this poynt he beganne furst to show his myght, for then
he went into hell, and whan he was ther than he reysyd
vppe the grett root oute of the depe depnesse, whych
ryghtfully was knyht to hym in hey hevyn. The body ley
in the graue tyll Ester morow; and fro that tyme he ley
nevyr more. ffor ther was ryghtfully endyd the
walowyng and the wrythyng, the gronyng and the mornyng.
And oure foule dedly flessch that Goddys Son toke vppon
hym, whych was Adams olde kyrtyll, streyte, bare and
shorte, then by oure Savyoure was made feyer, new, whyt
and bryght and of endlesse clenness... Now stondyth
nott the Son before the Fader as a servant before the
Lorde, dredfully, clothyd in perty nakyd; but he stondyth
before the Fader evyn ryght, rychely clothyd in blyssefull
largeness, with a crowne vpon his hed of precyous
rychenes ... 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 ... 2

And, in imagery which anticipates the sixteenth revelation, the chapter closes with a picture of Christ in glory:

Now is the Spouse, Goddys Son, in pees with his lovyd
wyfe, whych is the feyer Maydyn of endlesse joy. Now

¹ Ibid., 103 r.

² 105 r, ff.

sytttyth the Son, very God and very man, in his cytte
in rest and in pees, whych his Fader hath dygte to hym
of endlesse purpose; and the Fader in the Son; and the
Holy Gost in the Fader and in the Son. 1

Not all the details of the Parable are fully explained. Julian is concerned with those that indicate the identity of the two figures and illustrate the parable's central teaching. The details of position, clothing, and so on, which are minutely examined, provide cumulative evidence for the double personality of the Servant, as well as represent the double nature of the incarnate Son of God.² Others, such as the meaning of the food which the Servant was sent to prepare, are left unexplained, but once the main intention of the parable has been made clear, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions from his knowledge of the Gospel story.

The teaching of the Parable is corroborated by that of Scriptural analogies which the imagery suggests. The figures which portray in their relationship the spiritual reality would have been familiar enough to mediaeval readers (indeed, the master-servant relationship is not so alien to Twentieth-Century thinking as to have lost all meaning). Once this is stated, certain expectations are aroused as to what is proper in the situation and how the two should behave towards each other. Anything out of the ordinary will be noticeable. So, for instance, Julian is able to comment on the propriety of the Servant's clothing, or one might remark

¹ 106 r & v.

² e.g., "The wyth kyrtyll is his fleshe; the singlehede is that ther was ryght noght betwen the Godhede and the manhede. The strayghtnesse is poverte, the olde is of Adams weryng, the defautyng is the swete of Adams traveyle, the shortnesse shewyth the Servant laborar."
(102 v - 103 r).

that the love between the Lord and the Servant was of an unusual degree. But as well as this everyday frame of reference, the Parable contains definite allusions to the Biblical writers' use of the same pattern of imagery. The Lord's words, "Lo, my belouevyd Servant", echo the opening phrases of Isaiah's Servant Songs:¹

Behold my servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen, in whom my soul delighteth. 2

Clearly there are many parallels between the messianic Suffering Servant and the figure in Julian's parable, which thus acquires a wealth of association in the mind of the reader. Julian's explanation of the allegory is further coloured by the New Testament interpretation of Isaiah's prophecy, of which the Christian reader would be well aware. Here again, Julian's words echo those of Scripture:

Nott withstondyng that he is God, evyn with the Fader as anenst the Godhede, but, in his forseynng purpos, that he would be man to saue man in fulfylling of the wyll of his Fader. So he stode before his Fader as a Servant, wylfully takyng vppon hym alle oure charge. And than he sterte full redely at the Faders wyll, and anon he fell full lowe in the Maydyns wombe, havyng no regarde to hym selfe ne to his harde paynes ... 3

... Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even into death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him... 4

¹ Isaiah 42:1-4 (5-7); 49:1-6 (7); 50:4-9; 52:13— 53:12.

² Isaiah 42:1.

³ li, 102 v.

⁴ Philippians 2:5-9.

Her teaching has Biblical roots, and is frequently expressed in Biblical terms, but this does not necessarily mean that Julian derived her symbolism directly from the Scriptures, or even that an understanding of the parable depends upon an acquaintance with them. Rather, the significance she points is strengthened and enriched by the connotations that may thus be brought into play.¹

The Parable of the Lord and his Servant is a skilful piece of allegorical writing. The central device, of representing all mankind, including the incarnate Christ, as one man, is remarkably simple, and yet it is a strikingly apt means of presenting the doctrine of identification, with all that it involves. The position of the Parable in the framework of Julian's book is also worth noting. Not only does it provide a relief in a very long section of theological discussion, but it is also a turning-point in that discussion, and gives the material necessary for a satisfactory conclusion. It is typical of the Revelations that this material should first be presented in vision form, as God's answer to the questions that have been raised.² Yet this material is not entirely new. The symbolic representation of the Fall and exaltation of man is, in fact, a commentary on what has already been seen in the visions of Christ on the cross, leading to a clearer understanding of the implications of his

¹ Similarly, one might consider other parts of the allegory in the light of Biblical analogies, e.g. the nature of the work that the Servant was sent to do (Adam was also a gardener - Genesis 2:15) or the significance of the city of God (see below).

² It is appropriate that the solution should be thus offered, not discovered by human reasoning, as Julian points the reader away from herself to her Sovereign Teacher.

Incarnation and Passion. From this more elevated standpoint, a re-appraisal of the teaching of the preceding revelations provides the material for a further twelve chapters in which the nature of man and his relationship to God are elucidated.

Those doctrines have already been considered. It is necessary now to turn to the visions with which the Revelations close.

Victory over Evil; The City of the Soul

The last section of the Revelations of Divine Love presents the Christian's victory over suffering and over the temptations of the devil, by the power of Christ. Julian takes herself as the example to show how this is true for all Christians: from her own experience a general application is made.

The account of this experience begins with the "shewing" of the fifteenth revelation, which marks the end of the long theological discussion springing from Revelations XIII and XIV and the Servant Parable, as her narration of the events of 13th May, 1373 is resumed. The fifteenth revelation, it is indicated, was given for grounds of assurance in times of difficulty and temptation. Julian is then immediately subjected to such temptation by a renewal of her sickness, and she succumbs, though she afterwards repents. The sixteenth revelation repeats the assurance, so that when temptation comes again, immediately afterwards, Julian does not fall. Thus the issues which she discusses and the teaching she offers to every Christian reader are dramatised at the beginning, and thereby shown to have relevance in an actual situation.

As always, Julian is more concerned for her readers to make a response that will affect their way of life than to give an intellectual assent to certain propositions.

To examine her account more closely, the fifteenth revelation teaches that the most salutary way to deal with suffering is to remember that it is transitory and that the promised joy is imminent. The locution, which is the main part of the revelation, states this in so many words:

"Sodeynly thou shalte be taken from all thy payne, from alle thy sycknesse, from alle thy dyseases, and fro alle thy woo; and thou shalte come vp aboue, and thou schalt haue me to thy mede, and thou shalte be fulfyllyd of joye and blysse. And thou shalte nevyr more haue no manner of paynne, no manner of sycknes, no manner mysse lykyng, no wantyng of wylle, but evyr joy and blysse withoute end. What shulde it than agrevyn thee to suffer a whyle, sythen it is my wylle and my wurschyppe?" 1

The vision of the beautiful child coming out of the hideous body, reminiscent of many mediaeval death-bed pictures, is given as an illustration of this "curtesse behytyng of cleene delyuerance."² The lesson that Julian draws from this is that one should not dwell upon one's sufferings but keep one's attention and aspiration fixed on God, in the certainty of his continuing love and preservation, trusting that "we be as seker in hope of the blysse of hevyn whyle we are here as we shalle be in suerte when we ar there."³ She adds:

¹ lxiv, 137 r & v.

² Ibid., 138 v.

³ lxv, 139 v.

ffor it is his wyll we know that all our myght of our enemy is loketh in our Frindes handes. And therfore the sowle that knoweth this sekerly, she shall nott dred but him that she louyth. Alle other dredes, she set them among passions and bodely sickensse (sic) and imaginations. And therfore, though we ben in so much payne, woo and dysese that vs thynkith we can thinke ryght nought but that we are in or that we feele, as soone as we may, passe we lightly over and sett we it at nought. And whi? ffor God will be knowen. ffor if we know him and loue him, and reverently drede him, we shall haue patience and be in great rest. And it shuld bin great likyng to vs all that he doth. 1

This is sound advice, but how does it work out in practice? In the chapters that follow, Julian demonstrates the difficulties by telling of her own case. The visions cease, all returns to normal, and immediately, she says,

My sycknes cam agene, ffurst in my hed, with a sownde and a noyse, and sodeynly all my body was fulfyllid with sycknes lyke as it was before; and I was as baryn and as drye as I had nevyr had comfort but lytylle, and, as a wrech, mornyd hevyly for feelyng of my bodely paynes and for fantyng of comforte, gostly and bodely. 2

In view of what she has just been taught, Julian fails the test dismally. But worse is to follow, for when an enquiry is made about her health she rejects the whole revelation, dismissing her visions as "ravings". Although she regrets this the minute after, her recognition of her "grett synne" and "grett vnkyndnesse" only leads to despair. "I waxsid full grettly ashamyd and wolde a bene shryvyn", she says, "but I

¹ Ibid., 140 r & v.

² lxvi, 141 r & v.

cowlde telle it to no prest; for I thought, 'How shulde a prest belieue me,
 then I by seaying I raved I shewed my selfe nott to belyue oure Lorde
 God?'¹ Mercifully, God intervenes:

But here in woulde oure curtesse Lorde nott leeue me;
 and I ley styлле tylle nyght, trustyng in his mercy,
 and than I began to slepe.

The nightmare which follows is simply a representation, in a more
 dramatic and pictorial form, of what has already happened.² - what, in
 fact, Julian had expected at the beginning:

Me thought it might well be that I should, by the
 sufferaunce of God and with his keping, be tempted
 of fiendes before I should die. 3

The trial has come, and not by any devil in a dream, but when she
 is wide awake. It is a temptation to reject the very promise that was
 given for assurance and strength against the assaults of the enemy.
 When she can no longer see God, when she is subjected to pain and
 distress, when, indeed, she is under the very pressures she has so often
 described, Julian fails to practise what she has preached. It is the
 dream that brings her back to what she rejected, with "grete reste and
 peas" as a result.⁴

¹ 141 v ff.

² Julian is careful to show the difference between this and the divine
 revelations: "This vgly shewyng was made slepyng, and so was no other."
 (142 v)

³ iv, 8 r.

⁴ 143 r & v.

This is the context of the sixteenth revelation, the "conclusyon and confirmation" of all the others, given for repeated assurance of final victory. In its symbolism it refers back to and is a continuation of the Parable of the Lord and his Servant. As we have seen, the Parable ended with a picture of Christ, his mission completed, sitting in glory at the right hand of God,¹ enthroned "in rest and in pees" in his city, the City "whych his Fader hath dy te to hym of endlesse purpose."² The sixteenth revelation presents this situation again, underlining the reminder that the work of redemption has already been completed.³ But now the City in which Christ sits is shown to be nothing other than the human soul - not the soul of the perfected saint, but Julian's own - the soul of a sinner still living in this earthly life.

The picture is all the more striking in view of the Biblical associations which are once more brought into play. The city she sees has distinct affinities with the heavenly Jerusalem,⁴ but it is re-located, by including the Biblical concept of divine indwelling.⁵ These connotations only reinforce the teaching of the vision, that the eternal joy, to which the Christian looks forward in heaven, is, by virtue of the finished work of Christ, a present reality.⁶

¹ cf. Hebrews 1:3, etc.

² li, 106 v.

³ cf. xlii, 77 v.

⁴ Apocalypse 21, etc.

⁵ John 14:20, 21, 23, etc.

⁶ cf. Ephesians 1:3, 19-23, 2:6.

Assurance comes from the implications of this sight, that it was God's "endlesse purpose" to make man's soul for his divine dwelling-place. Man is the apex of God's creation, the "hygest of all his werkes", in whose making "the Blessyd Trynyte is fulle plesyd withoute ende".¹ Therefore the soul of man is the place most fitting for God to dwell in, and where he is most willing to stay:

The place that Ihesu takyth in oure soule, he shall nevyr remoue withouten ende, as to my syght; ffor in vs is his homelyest home and his endlesse dwellyng. 2

From this, it follows that

Oure soule may never haue rest in thing that is beneth it selfe. And whan it comyth aboue alle creatures in to it selfe, yett may it not abyde in the beholdyng of it selfe, but alle the beholdyng is blyssydfully sen in God, that is Maker, dwellyng ther in. 3

Thus briefly, Julian traces the traditional path of detachment from the world and introspection, to perception and contemplation of God within. Contemplation in this life is a foretaste of the joys of heaven, for which the Christian has been created and redeemed. Further, it leads to nothing less than a transfiguration of the soul into the likeness of God,⁴ for "the soule that thus beholdyth, it makyth it lyke to hym that is beholde".⁵ Even this is seen as a present reality, as "the soule is alle occupied with the blessyd Godhed that is souereyne Myghte, souereyne Wysdom and

¹ 145 r.

² 144 r.

³ 144 v.

⁴ cf. II Corinthians 3:18.

⁵ 145 v.

souereyn Goodnesse"¹ - Man's soul is an image of the Trinity.

The words which accompany the vision reaffirm its message of assurance:

"Wytt it now wele that it was no ravyng that thou saw to day; but take it and beleve it, and kepe thee there in, and comfort thee ther with, and trust therto, and thou shalt not be ovyrcome."

It is no coincidence that the last words spoken echo the first, concerning the Passion, "Here with is the fende ovyrcome", for they are their corollary. Julian explains their full significance for the person who is faced with suffering and temptation:

He seyde nott, "Thou shalt not be trobelyd; thou shalt not be traveylyd; thou shalte not be dyssesyde", but he seyde, "Thou shalt not be ovyrcome". God wylle that we take hede at this worde, and that we be evyr myghty in feytfull trust, in wele and wo, for he louyth vs and lykyth vs, and so wylle he that we loue hym and lyke hym, and myghtely trust in hym, and all shall be welle. 2

In the second temptation, which immediately follows, Julian is not overcome.

Faith, Hope and Love

It is only then that she proceeds to make the general application of her teaching to all Christians which occupies the last sixteen chapters.

No new assertions are made in this last part, but the main precepts are reiterated, concerning how one should live in this world, regarding

¹ 144 r.

² 146 r.

suffering and trouble as temporary, looking for the end and longing for God. She repeats that the Christian ought to trust God at all times, and especially when convicted of sin. She points again to the difference between the judgement of man and the judgement of God as a reason for assurance. She returns once more to the theme of spiritual blindness as the cause of sin and sorrow, and repeats that the light that dispels it is knowledge of God and of oneself, both as a sinner and as a being eternally loved and holy in God's sight. She reiterates that the sight of God means the end of pain. And she reaffirms the teaching on the right attitude of man to God, of love, humility, and "reverent dread".

"Be humble, trust in God" is the teaching of these chapters.

Alternatively, one can see them as developed around the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love. At the end of the book this becomes explicit:

Thus charite kepyth vs in feyth and in hope, and feyth
and hope ledyth vs in charite. And at the ende alle
shalle be charite. 1

Divine sovereignty and divine love, the doctrines which are held firmly throughout her whole discussion, are asserted triumphantly at the end, bringing all the themes together in a final statement:

Nott withstondyng oure sympylle lyvyng and oure
blyndness heer, yett endlessly oure curtesse Lorde
beholdyth vs in this wurkyng enjoyeng. And of alle
thyng we may plese hym best wysely and truly to
beleue it and to enjoy with hym, and in hym. ffor
as veryly as we shulle be in blysse of God without
end, hym praysyng and thankyng, as veryly we haue

¹ lxxxiv, 171 v 172 r.

been in the forsyght of God, lowyd and knowyn in
his endlis purpose fro without begynnyng ... 1

The last chapter of all is a kind of postscript, in which she explains why the revelation was given. But here the same idea is continued and repeated, and the book finishes with a joyful affirmation of the omnipotence, immutability and eternal steadfastness of Divine Love:

I saw fulle surely, in this and in alle, that or God
made vs he lowyd vs, whych loue was nevyр slekyd ne
nevyр shalle. And in this loue he hath done alle
his werkes. And in this loue he hath made alle
thynges profytable to vs. And in this loue oure
lyfe is evyr lastyng. In oure makyng we had
begynnyng; but the loue wher in he made vs was in
hym fro without begynnyng; in whych loue we haue oure
begynnyng. And alle this shalle we see in God with
outyn ende. 2

¹ lxxxv, 172 v.

² lxxxvi, 173 v.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE REVELATIONSLiterary Qualities

Having considered the content and form of Julian's book, the major themes and doctrines and how they are presented, what assessment can one make of the Revelations of Divine Love?

What Julian says is not original, but in the Middle Ages originality was not prized. Indeed, if she were to be so, she would exceed her brief. The problems with which she deals are perennial and the answers offered are those of traditional Christianity. The teaching of her book is simply a reaffirmation of rather basic tenets of the Christian belief, in effect, the Gospel. It is in the manner in which this is presented that the Revelations of Divine Love differs from most other works on the same subject.

Here one may feel some dissatisfaction with the book. As a theological treatise it lacks clarity and definition, it deals with only half the problem (because it says virtually nothing about the reprobate), it leaves so many questions unanswered and so many issues apparently abandoned. On the other hand, as a record of personal experience, by any normal standard, it fails again. It is very bad biography: Julian actually says very little about herself, and quite often she appears as

no more than a typical figure.¹ The narrative of events is slowed down by innumerable interruptions and digressions, and for a quarter of the book it is suspended altogether. But it is obvious that Julian has no intention of writing a treatise or an autobiography. It is clear that her work belongs to quite a different category.

It is not, however, a work sui generis. Perhaps the most obvious precedents for the Revelations are to be found in the Holy Scriptures with which Julian displays a deep acquaintance, particularly in the writings of the Prophets. Like them, she is one to whom the Word of the Lord came, as a medium by whom his message is sent to all his people. To her, as well as to them, the message is sometimes given in plain words, but often it is in the form of symbolic visions, like Ezekiel's wheels or Daniel's beasts, which require further explanation.

What of her claim to a divine revelation? We have seen that the visions play an essential part. They are basic to the structure of her work, and the primary source of information and imagery, but this is not conclusive evidence. Her making such a claim has awakened an interest in Julian herself. But the soundness of her teaching is more important than the psychological oddities of the writer, however interesting these may be.

¹ She makes this plain in chs. viii & ix, where she says that what is said of herself applies to every Christian: "Alle that I sey of me I mene in person of alle my evyn cristen. ffor I am lernyd in the gostely shewyng of our Lord God that he meneth so. And therfore I pray yow alle for Gods sake, and counceyle yow for yowre awne profyght that ye leue the beholdyng of a wrech that it was schewde to, and myghtely, wysely and mekely behold in God, that of hys curteyse loue and endlesse goodnesse woldd shew it generally in comfort of vs alle." (viii, 17 v - 18 r)

To spend too much time upon them is to miss the whole intention of her work, which is to be entirely self-effacing. Ascribing her revelation to a divine source certainly has an effect. It indicates that what Julian has to say must be treated with the utmost seriousness. If a Christian reader indeed wishes to accept the Revelations as a message to him from God, as genuine as the Old Testament prophecies, then he must as far as possible prove their divine origin, at least by allowing no apparent contradiction between them and the Revelation generally given, which is the faith of the Church, to remain unresolved.¹ As Julian's own approach to such conflicts shows, the Revelations must agree with "the common teaching of Holy Church" or be rejected. The fact that the teaching of the Revelations may be reconciled with that of the Scriptures and has parallels in the writings of the Fathers and later theologians of Western Christendom supports her contention but does not prove it. Here is not the place to pursue theological implications further, but it is within our scope to estimate how effective the use of "revelation" is as a manner of presentation.

Julian does not primarily use the direct method of moral instruction by precept. The presentation of doctrine in the Revelations is, first of all, dramatic. One is shown figures, objects and situations which embody certain principles. It is teaching by demonstration: a parabolic method. Such means of instruction were, of course, familiar in Julian's day, not only in sermons and homiletic writings where the exemplum was a

¹ See above, ch.I, pp

recognised mnemonic device, but also in many varieties of allegorical literature, and particularly in the drama itself, which was frequently used as a means of teaching: the characters of the Morality plays were most often personifications of abstract qualities. (Furthermore, all these were forms of vernacular writing.)

It is beyond the scope of the present study to weigh the merits of direct and indirect teaching methods. Certainly a dramatic presentation can leave a lasting imprint on the memory. It is difficult indeed to forget the photographic clarity of the sights of the Crucifixion, or Julian's agony of mind over the problem of sin, or the apocalyptic vision of the City of God within the soul of man. But does she give the reader anything more than impressive mental pictures? There is a danger with parables of dwelling upon the image and not seeing the exemplary points. Sometimes a symbol may obscure rather than illumine and convey to the understanding the transcendent reality it typifies.

Julian's book is deceptively simple, in language, in imagery and in ideas. The words she uses are common, the expressions down-to-earth, and yet they are pregnant with meaning. Frequently their significance grows deeper and richer as the work proceeds; words such as "home" or "night", and more complex word patterns, like the reference to the Trinity as Might, Wisdom and Love, accumulate connotations. She expresses complicated ideas in commonplace terms, such as the "homeliness" and "courtesy" of God, and this is an aid rather than a hindrance to understanding.¹ Sometimes she uses traditional symbolism which has been

¹ Her analogy between the office of Christ and that of a mother is perhaps the most striking example of this.

hallowed by hundreds of precedents, like that of blindness and light.

Sometimes her imagery has Biblical roots, like the reference to "pillars of heaven" -

And the blysse and the fulfylling shalle be so depe
and so hygh that for wonder an merveylye all creatures
shulde haue to God so grett reuerent drede, ovyr
passyng that hath be sene and felte before, that the
pyllours of hevyn shulle tremyle and quake. ¹

Some imagery is more fully her own, such as the comparison of God's goodness with clothing² or the description of tribulation as the shaking of a cloth in the wind.³ In each case she takes ordinary, even commonplace things, and uses them to point to and explain a reality that is far from easy to comprehend. The relationship between God and man, the complexities of fore-ordination and providence, are presented with remarkable lucidity in the love of a mother for her child and the smallness of a hazelnut in the palm of the hand. It is in her simplicity that Julian is most profound.

One may see Julian's book as repetitive and circular. In the previous chapter we have seen the extent of this repetition: the main points are reiterated again and again; the seeds of all sixteen revelations are contained in the first; the visions of the third part on the Passion and exaltation of Christ parallel those of the first; the Servant parable is told twice. There is an extensive use of anticipation and recall, as

¹ lxxv, 158 r, cf. Apocalypse 3:12.

² v, 9 r; vi, 12 v.

³ xvii, 35 r; xxviii, 51 v.

Julian relates her teaching to the different revelations. Her return to certain key sayings makes them almost a refrain.

There is indeed repetition, but there is progress as well. Each time a theme or an idea is recalled there is some variation which leads to a deeper understanding, as, for example, in the second telling of the Servant parable. Anticipation and retrospection are used to point out the connections between "shewings" and meditations whose relationship is not immediately apparent, and so to reveal an underlying unity. In mediaeval rhetoric, repetition was a recognised device which could be employed in many different ways, but always with a purpose, for clarity or emphasis. Julian's is repetition with development. The movement of the book is not so much circular as spiral; or (to take a musical analogy) the work resembles a fugue.

Does Julian deserve the title of "the first Englishwoman of letters"?¹ Certainly she has produced a highly-wrought piece of literature which would be praiseworthy in any generation. It is not a biography or narrative or a theological treatise, or even an allegorical dream-vision as such, but a combination of elements from them all. Both her profound understanding of the issues about which she writes and the manner in which she presents them cannot but arouse one's admiration for this "symple creature vnlettyrd".

Ultimately, however, one cannot judge her work without taking into account the purpose for which it was written. Its appeal, as we have

¹ Evelyn Underhill in Cambridge Mediaeval History, Vol.VII, p.807.

seen, is not only to the reason (and there is plenty to occupy the sharpest intellect) but also, and more markedly, to the will. She is concerned to evoke a response from her readers of faith and trust in God. She writes to comfort them in time of adversity, spiritual as well as physical. Whether she succeeds or fails in this aim can only be determined by the individual reader.

Julian's Place in the English Mystical Tradition

Here es a vision, schewed be the goodenes of God
to a deuoute woman, and hir name es Julyan ... In the
whilke visyon es fulle many comfortabyll wordes and
gretly styrande to alle that desyres to be Crystes
looverse. 1

Comfortable words, greatly stirring words to all who desire to be lovers of Christ - here lies Julian's connection with the English devotional writers, and in particular with the Fourteenth-Century English Mystics. Above all, theirs is a personal approach to theology; not ~~one which~~ ^{one which seeks} views it as a philosophical system, but to put it into practice, so that the individual Christian might be encouraged in his spiritual life in the knowledge and love of God. Supremely, these writers held in common the belief that man's true purpose and destiny lies in devotion to God, to the exclusion of everything else. And this, of course, is central to all spiritual theology:

Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts know
no rest until they find their rest in thee. 2

¹ Shorter Version, introduction.

² Augustine, Confessions I.

They believed that God could be experienced in a real and vital way, that the soul could be lifted above all earthly things and above herself to contemplate God, and that such experience, brief and intermittent, was a foretaste of heaven, given by grace. This is the heart of mystical belief, shared by all the Mystics of the Western Church. Here Julian, with Rolle, Hilton and the author of The Cloud are in the line of Augustine, Benedict, Bernard, the Victorines and the pseudo-Dionysius, and they have affinities with contemporary mystics on the Continent, the Dominicans of the Rhineland - following Eckhart (though they do not share his pantheistic tendencies) and Tauler - and the Contemplatives of the Low Countries, and women like Briget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena. Their theology could not be that of the contemporary universities which was coloured, to a greater or less degree, by Nominalism.

Renunciation of the world and concern for the inner life was characteristically expressed by the Fourteenth-Century English Mystics in the solitary life. In this they differed from many of those on the Continent, like St. Briget or St. Catherine, who had a more public ministry. They follow a great English eremitical tradition:¹ Rolle was a hermit, Walter Hilton and the author of The Cloud wrote mainly for enclosed contemplatives (although the former addressed one of his works to "a devout man of secular estate"), and Julian was an anchoress. This kind of life never appealed to many people, and the English Mystical school is correspondingly small. By the world outside they might very easily be overlooked.

¹ Knowles, The Religious Orders of England, Vol. II, p.121.

And what was happening outside?

The latter half of the Fourteenth Century was a period of great ferment and activity in Western Europe. Outwardly it appeared that the old order of society was breaking down.¹ and there is evidence of clamouring complaint from many quarters. The events of that era, disturbing and often tragic, may be taken as the outward manifestation of a spiritual unrest which marked the end of the Middle Ages.

In England, Julian's lifetime ~~saw~~ the sordid end of the reign of Edward III, the unhappy rule of his grandson, Richard II, which finished in deposition and murder, and the troubled reign of Henry IV. Throughout this period, England was embroiled in the long-drawn war with France, and her campaigns after the glories of Crecy and Poitiers had faded into futility. The Hundred Years War drained the resources of both countries and achieved little but bitterness and the fear of invasion. At home, smouldering dissatisfaction among the lower classes broke out in 1381 in the Peasants' Revolt, during which, among others, the Archbishop of Canterbury was murdered; and among the gentry there was continual discord between the magnates and the Court, the commons and the Lords, ~~between~~^{among} the lords themselves. Political events may not affect the common people, but the general situation at this time somehow involved all levels of society, just as the Black Death of 1348-50 had smitten high and low alike.²

¹ See J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages.

² B.L.Manning, "England: Edward III and Richard II", in Cambridge Mediaeval History, Vol.VII, ch. xv.

Although it was in many ways a hopeful age, a period of new enthusiasm, which saw in particular the sudden expansion of lay literacy and the flowering of vernacular literature,¹ it was also marked by decline and decadence, which was aggravated by the depressing mediocrity and increasing incompetence of many powerful men, who, exploiting and abusing their power, remained deaf to the loud demands for reform.

This decay is especially noticeable in the life of the Church, where also it was particularly dangerous, since here claims were laid to deepest and highest loyalties and to what was of eternal significance. Whereas the Thirteenth Century had been a period of basic stability enhanced by the enlightened reform which is associated with the name of Innocent III and the Lateran Council of 1215, the Church in the Fourteenth Century, by contrast, was marked by a too-rigid institutionalism, a decline in competence in the face of many difficulties (which came with increasing urbanisation and a growth in the number of educated laymen) and an involvement in frequent and numerous controversies, of which the issue of neo-Pelagianism was only one.² This decline was apparent in all levels of the hierarchy, in the religious orders as well as among the secular clergy. The Papacy itself was in the most difficult of positions. After 72 years in Avignon, the Curia was now divided in two, and the nations were likewise divided in allegiance (usually for reasons of

¹ Knowles, The Evolution of Mediaeval Thought, p.333 ff. G.Lagarde, La naissance de l'esprit laïque au déclin du Moyen Age.

² Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century, p.2 ff.

political expediency) between two Popes - an unhappy state of affairs which did not end until 1417. There is little evidence of spirituality in the secular clergy,¹ either in the hierarchy, many of whose members lived in un-apostolic magnificence, or in the lower ranks. Their lack of spiritual concern is manifested, for example, in the tendency to regard a benefice not as a number of duties and responsibilities to be fulfilled but as a piece of property worth so much a year, the income from which could support the incumbent as a scholar or civil servant while a vicar performed the actual offices. Even the outspoken Wycliffe had no objection to holding several benefices at once. The monastic orders, drastically depleted in numbers by the Plague, had apparently ceased to play an eminent role in the life of the Church, but were involved in a quarrel with the friars over Apostolic Poverty, which split the ranks of the Mendicants themselves.² The friars were also at odds with the secular clergy over the rights and privileges of preaching, confessing and receiving alms.

It is a black picture, even though, of course, it was not uniformly dark everywhere. Yet there is evidence of life and health remaining in some members of the Church, including certain laymen, in insistent demands for reform. Denunciation of abuses in the Church as well as of social evils was material for satirist, poet and preacher alike. Unscrupulous, worldly and vicious churchmen are objects of the most severe censure in Piers Plowman, whose author comments, "Drede is at þe laste,/ Leste Crist

¹ Ibid., p.35 ff.

² Knowles, Religious Orders in England, II, ch. V.

in consistorie acorse ful manye".¹ More gently, Chaucer in the General Prologue to his Canterbury Tales measures the Monk, the Friar, the Summoner and the Pardoner against the saintly ideal of the poor Parson and finds them wanting. Archbishop FitzRalph inveighed against abuses from the pulpit at a time when sermons were popular and influential.² Criticism of a particularly vehement and bitter kind is associated with John Wycliffe.³ Men of like opinion carried on and developed after his death the movement he began, a movement of religious protest among the laity - an impossibility in an earlier age.⁴ No serious-minded individual could ignore all that was wrong with the Church, or fail to be disturbed by it.

Widely differing parties had a common desire for restoration and renewal, both in the Church and in society at large. But there were others who gave priority to a personal reformation, seeking individual perfection before that of society in general, and turning away from temporal unrest to the eternal values of the spirit. Such a withdrawal from the world which was in so disturbed a state could not simply be accomplished by entering a religious order or becoming a cleric, but only

¹ Ibid., ch. VII, Piers Plowman, B version, Prologue.

² Knowles, op.cit., p.95 ff. FitzRalph was particularly concerned ~~with~~ the issue against the friars.

³ Knowles, op.cit., p.98 ff.

⁴ Cambridge Mediaeval History, VII, p.284.

by the inward embracing and pursuit of a way of life: the way of contemplation. In England a number of souls were called at this time to join one of the stricter, more contemplative orders, such as the Carthusians,¹ to be enclosed as anchorites or to live apart as hermits. In the latter half of the Fourteenth Century, when the pursuit of sanctity had apparently departed from so many of the "religious" ways of life,— monastic, mendicant and priestly, this seems to be the state of life in which true devotion continued to thrive. Although the actual number of solitaries and contemplatives was never very large, the quality of their devotion and spirituality was high. It is to this eremitic movement that the English mystics belong.

In spite of outward appearances, therefore, a serious practice of religion was continued within the framework of the Church, by people who thus gave themselves to the contemplative life, whether they were actually enclosed solitaries or laymen living "in the world", although others, like Wycliffe, felt themselves obliged to break away from the Church Catholic. There were those whose Christian concern for society as a whole and for the Church in particular, caused them to raise their voice in complaint against the existing order. There were others who turned away from these conditions, and sought to turn others, towards that which is stable and permanent and of eternal value. The same conditions of disturbance and outward decline which provoked in many cases violent reactions of hysteria and heresy, also produced the quiet but intense personal devotion and sanctity of the mystics.

¹ Knowles, op.cit., pp.129-138.

Within their writings there is no mention of these disturbing affairs. They did not enter the controversies which were currently raging. The fact that they wrote much of their work in English is significant, because by doing this they cut themselves off and were dissociated from the thedlogy of the schools, whose tongue was Latin.¹

On the other hand, they are established thereby in a great tradition of homiletic prose writing which has been traced back to Anglo-Saxon times.² It was in the field of devotional literature that the English language kept its precedence over Latin and Norman-French when after the Conquest those languages became the medium for every other kind of prose writing, sacred or secular. For those who could not understand Latin or French, sermons still had to be given in English.³ More important perhaps, there were works being written in English for recluses, and particularly for nuns (since monks would have been expected to know Latin). Of necessity, these were not the theological treatises of the schools, but literature of a more "devotional" kind, such as lives of the saints and moral tracts.⁴ To this tradition belongs the Ancrene Riwe, a rule for female recluses, which enjoyed remarkable popularity for some three hundred years after it was written in the early Thirteenth Century.

¹ Knowles, Religious Orders, p.121.

² R.W.Chambers, The Continuity of English Prose, p. xc ff.

³ See G.R.Owst, Preaching in Mediaeval England.

⁴ For example, the lives of St. Katherine, St. Juliana and St. Margaret, Hali Meðhad and Sawles Warde.

This literature developed in England, but it had links with Continental spiritual writings, as indicated by the translations which were included in it. The Ancrene Riwe, for example, contains passages from St. Bernard, and Sawles Warde is a free rendering of the De Anima of Hugh of St. Victor.

The works of the Fourteenth Century English Mystics are in the same line. When Richard Rolle, and later Hilton and the others, wrote books in English, the language had long been explored and developed as a vehicle for expressing complex theological ideas and for inspiring faith and devotion. With them the development continued. But by this time vernacular prose was once more being used for an increasing number of purposes besides the devotional. This and the growth of lay literacy go hand in hand, and the works of the Fourteenth Century English Mystics would have found an audience in these newly-educated "devout men of secular estate". There is evidence that Rolle and Hilton were widely read in these circles,¹ and their command of style and English expression as well as their spirituality no doubt left its mark.

Julian of Norwich is one of those female recluses who would have drawn sustenance from such devotional works in English, written as they were especially for such "symple creatures vnlettyrd". In her work the seeds sown by their authors came to fruition. For here is a woman, who confesses herself to be "unlearned, feeble and frail", writing with a facility of expression and a great beauty and clarity of style about

¹ Chambers, op.cit., p. ci ff.

subjects which have proved a challenge to the most acute intellects in Christendom. The Revelations of Divine Love would be noteworthy in any age; as the product of an East Anglian anchoress in the Fourteenth Century it is remarkable indeed.

The problems which were so pressing at that time, which commanded so much attention and were so publicly disputed, now excite little more than an historic interest. The Fourteenth-Century English Mystics do not mention them, because theirs is a more fundamental problem: the sinfulness of man. Their writings have a more lasting appeal than those which have to do with the current controversies, for they have a universal relevance. And more, perhaps, than the others, Julian of Norwich speaks to every Christian.

For Rolle, Hilton and the author of The Cloud, and even Julian's neighbour, the emotional Margery Kempe, write about the contemplative life. Hilton and the author of The Cloud, in particular, write as teachers and spiritual directors, to give guidance in the way of contemplation, although it is certain that they had travelled at least part of that way themselves and write from their own experience. Richard Rolle speaks more of the experience itself, its joys and delights, and Margery Kempe's book is a spiritual autobiography. For them, Christian doctrine is the background and foundation of contemplation. But Julian writes from the viewpoint of contemplation about Christian doctrine; she speaks from within the mystical experience to all "Christ's lovers". Her book is not necessarily intended exclusively for enclosed contemplatives,¹ but

¹ Here I do not wholly agree with Sr. A.M. Reynolds, who indicates that the book is effectively restricted to the "proficients" in the contemplative life. Month XXIV (1960), p.136.

it is intended for the benefit of all Christians: not only those within cloister and cell, but also those whose (much harder in many ways) vocation is to remain in the world. "This place is prison", she wrote, "this life is penance", and her words reach far wider than an anchorite cell.

But perhaps only the contemplatives take heed. The circulation of the works of the English mystical writers has never extended far beyond the cloister. Although the book of Julian of Norwich is intended to have universal relevance, it appears to have limited appeal.

Except the Lord of Hosts had left to us a very small
remnant,
We should have been as Sodom,
We should have been like unto Gomorrah. ¹

If Julian belonged to that "very small remnant" in the troubled years of the late Fourteenth Century, her witness to the Light of the World has gone, as yet, very largely unheard.

¹ Isaiah 1:9.

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Quotations from the text of the longer version are taken from the Paris MS. Shortened forms, such as "w^t" for "with", have been written out in full. Italics, unless otherwise specified, are written in different coloured ink in MS. Punctuation is mine.