

"I Desyred to Haue All Maner of Paynes":

A Study of the Function of Pain

in *The Showings* of Julian of Norwich

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael's College and the Department of History of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael's College.

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for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy,
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University of St Michael's College, Toronto, 1997

In *The Showings* there is almost no information about Julian of Norwich. There are only three personal references to Julian in the text, but each of these describes the anchoress's experience of pain as it played a part in her mystical vision. In studying these three references one is led to conclude that they are in no way unconscious components of Julian's text. Together they point to the vital role played by the anchoress's personal experience of pain as it formed her as a mystic, created her as an author, and opened her up to the pain of the world.

Given the significance of Julian's personal experience of pain, largely unnoticed until my work, it is a natural second step to broaden the horizon of inquiry and to explore the wider role of the image of pain in Julian's thought. A great part of Julian's text is occupied with the perennial question of the relationship between human suffering and original sin. Our pain purchases our eternal bliss in two ways. First, by drawing us closer to Christ in his suffering it invites us to live as perfectly as possible; second, each pain suffered on earth is rewarded in heaven with a corresponding joy by a God who suffers with us because of our earthly pain.

The crucified Christ is the central visual image for *The Showings*, so the pain which Jesus suffered in his humanity also occupies much of Julian's theology. She explores the intimate connection between humanity and God which is perfected in the

incarnation and in the crucifixion, and discovers a radiant joy at the heart of both moments. Through his pain Christ is joined not only to suffering humanity, but to all of creation, and salvation comes to everything through his joyful pain.

This study shows that the fact and image of pain provides an important heuristic key to understanding Julian's thought, one which she used quite unconsciously to emphasize God's vast love for humanity.

Dedication

To my parents, children and spouse:

Diana and Bradley Crawford,
who never asked if it would get me a job;
Martha and Norah Galea,
who think all mothers nurse and type at the same time;
Christopher Galea,
who gave unfailing support and nourishment.

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Introduction

Julian of Norwich is enormously popular right now, both in the academic circle of theologians and historians as well as in the wider circle of the Christian faith community, particularly among women and feminists. Her popularity springs in part from her optimistic theology: "alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele."¹ It may seem odd that I have focussed on what seems to be the darker side of this luminous thinker; however, a study of the function of pain in Julian's writing enhances our understanding of both her experience and her theology.

All may be well in the final tally for Julian but it is surprising that when one starts to look for it, pain is laced throughout her writing. It pervades her showings, what we know of her life and her theology. Because of this omnipresence it is fair to ask this question: What function does pain serve in *The Showings* of Julian of Norwich?² As we will see, the fact of her own pain makes Julian's sensual self as

¹ Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, eds. *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich* (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 1978). Unless otherwise noted, all references in Middle English will be to this edition of *The Showings*, with the chapter number given first, the page number second (27:405).

² Because the same word, 'showing,' is used of both Julian's individual visions and of the book she wrote describing those visions I have adopted the following conventions to distinguish between the referents: *The Showings* will mean the written text which Julian left unnamed, but which she refers to as "a reuelacion of loue that Jhesu Christ our endles blisse made in xvi shewynges" (1:281).

(continued...)

much an organ of learning as are either her reason or her understanding. Pain serves both to authenticate Julian as an author and it knits her theology together, providing a thread of unity throughout her thought.

As far as I know, no one has attempted to explore the image and fact of pain in Julian's work. Most of the secondary literature seems either to have ignored the issue altogether or to have simply summarized Julian's pains in order to describe them, without querying their role in the development of Julian's thought. This is the first work systematically to study Julian's personal pain and the theme of pain as it runs through her text.

Methodology

In the introduction to her book *Jesus as Mother*, historian Caroline Walker Bynum reflects on the changes in the study of medieval spirituality during the last fifty years or so.³ She notes that there has been a shift in the primary data being studied, away from the mystical treatises, sermons, collections of visions, and saints' lives which had previously been the object of scholarly research. The current trend, following the lead of the popular French initiatives of the *Annales* school, is toward a prosopographical analysis of popular piety as reconstructed through wills, donations to

²(...continued)

- . 'the showing' will refer to any vision, or to Julian's visions in general
- . 'the showings' will refer to all of the visions together
- . 'First Showing' will refer to the particular vision in question and/or its record in the text.

³ *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 3. She is speaking specifically of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the area of interest for the book, but I believe that the comments she makes are generalizable to the later Middle Ages as well.

religious orders, book acquisitions, parish registers and other artifacts of lay spirituality. Concerned about this shift away from the primary data, Bynum notes that:

the new history of spirituality is therefore in a curious situation. It has abandoned detailed study of most of the material medieval people themselves produced on the subject of religion in favor of far more intractable sources. It has done this partly from the admirable desire to correct the concentration of earlier scholarship on mainline groups, . . . partly, I suspect, from boredom and frustration with the interminable discussions of the soul's approach to God, which is the major subject of medieval religious writing.⁴

Her response was to return to the 'same old' medieval mystical treatises with a new methodology. Bynum has been stunningly successful in re-reading the medieval texts because she has focussed on the fabric of the texts themselves:

If we trace the networks of images built up by medieval authors and locate those networks in the psyches and social experiences of those who create or use them, we find that they reveal to us what the writers cared about most deeply themselves and what they felt it necessary to present or justify to others.⁵

Bynum's operating assumption is that the "emotional significance" of an image must be determined from its context, and cannot be assumed to be the same as in our own twentieth-century context. She also assumes that an image which diverges significantly from its traditional usage or denotation conveys "the needs, the anxieties, and the sources of repose" of the author or audience for whom the image was

⁴ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 5.

⁵ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 7.

evoked.⁶

Bynum's ground-breaking study examined the image of motherhood as used by certain twelfth-century Cistercian abbots in reference to their own role within their community.⁷ She found that they were consciously using maternal imagery to soften their own authority by calling it motherly, and appealing to the qualities of nurture and weakness that motherhood evoked for them. They were essentially proposing a new model of authority, coping with their own ambivalence over monastic leadership and expressing their own particular concern with dependence and independence within the Cistercian community.⁸

In this dissertation I follow Bynum's lead and examine an image within *The Showings* in order to reveal and to explore its emotional significance for Julian of Norwich. The image or theme that I have studied is pain. For Julian pain is both one image among the many she has chosen to describe her learning and it is a fact of her own lived experience. She more or less opens her text with pain. Her third chapter sets the physical scene: "And when I was xxxth yere old and a halfe, god sent me a bodily sicknes in the which I ley iij daies and iij nyghtes" (3:289). This bodily sickness is the frame within which all the showings occur. Pain also appears as a theme in her text, as the anchoress explores both the human condition and the mystery of redemption. By searching Julian's text I have been able to catalogue her

⁶ Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 7.

⁷ "Jesus as Mother and Abbot as Mother: Some Themes in Twelfth-Century Cistercian Writing," *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (July-October 1977): 257-84.

⁸ For a more comprehensive introduction to Bynum's work see my article, "Caroline Walker Bynum: Historian of Fragments," *The Toronto Journal of Theology* 11 (1995): 165-77.

use of both the word and the experience of pain and to draw conclusions about its significance in her thought.

In order properly to set Julian's thought in its social context, which is a significant aspect of Bynum's method, I offer a similar if less thorough study of several of Julian's contemporaries, *The Ancrene Riwe*, two of Richard Rolle's works in English, and *The Book of Margery Kempe*. As I link these three authors for the purposes of comparison with Julian of Norwich, I am aware that other scholars have focussed on the differences between these same four; however, I am not claiming that the works themselves are similar. I make the comparison because one work was likely known to Julian and influenced her thought, and the other two works are rooted in essentially the same mystical experience, the desire to communicate it, in the same general location and at roughly the same time. It is the externals not the contents which support the comparison.

Sources

The main primary source for this dissertation will be the book now commonly referred to as *The Showings* of Julian of Norwich.⁹ There are two versions of this work, called by scholars the Short and Long Text respectively. The Short Text

⁹ Because the earliest manuscripts of this work give it no title it has been called a variety of things by its various editors through the centuries, as a glance at my Select Bibliography will show. The title I will use is the one current in North American circles at the moment, and was publicly given to the work in the popular English translation by Colledge and Walsh. Most European and English commentators follow Marion Glasscoe's title for his edition of Sloane No. 2499, *A Revelation of Love*, which he takes from the beginning of the Long Text, "This is a revelation of love that Iesus Christ, our endless blisse made in xvi shewings or revelations particular . . ." (*Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love* [Exeter Medieval English Texts] ed. M. J. Swanton [Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1976], 1).

survives in only one manuscript, London British Library, Additional Manuscripts No. 33790, in a hand presumed to date from the late fourteenth century.¹⁰ The Long Text exists in three manuscript versions each presumed to depend on a single ancestor, now lost, which probably belonged to the Benedictine nuns at Cambrai. These three are Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Fonds Anglais No. 40 (Paris); British Museum, Sloane Manuscripts No. 2499 (Sloane 1) and No. 3705 (Sloane 2). Each of these is considered to be much later than Julian's day, with Paris dating to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century and both Sloane 1 and Sloane 2 dating to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. There are only two other manuscript attestations to Julian's work, one discovered recently at the St Joseph Seminary, Upholland in Lancashire, which is part of a mid-seventeenth-century collection of spiritual works most likely assembled by Augustine Baker (Upholland).¹¹ Lastly, there is a series of extracts from the Long Text believed to have been copied at the turn of the sixteenth century, London, Westminster Archdiocesan Archives MS (Westminster).¹²

The first printed edition of Julian's work was a copy of Paris made in 1670 by the expatriate English Benedictine Serenus Cressy. It was the only printed version available for two centuries and was reprinted three times. The first appearance in print of another manuscript version, Sloane 1, was as recently as 1877. The Short

¹⁰ For a discussion of the dating of the various manuscripts see Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 1-18; and Roland Maisonneuve, "L'univers visionnaire de Julian of Norwich" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris IV, 1979. Atelier National de Reproduction des Thèses, Université de Lille III, 1982), 4.

¹¹ H. W. Owen, "Another Augustine Baker Manuscript," in *Dr. L. Reypens-Album*, ed. Albert Ampe. (Antwerp: Ruusbroec-Genootschap, 1964), 269-80.

¹² See Betty Foucard, ed., "A Cathedral Manuscript: Exerpts from the 'Revelations of Divine Love' by Julian of Norwich" *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* (1956): 41-110.

Text, which had been thought lost, was discovered in 1909 in a newly acquired British Museum manuscript and was published two years later in modernized form.¹³ Only since 1911, then, has comparison between the Short and Long Texts been possible.

Critical editions of Julian's work have only recently begun to appear. The first remains unpublished, although it has had wide circulation as a Ph.D. dissertation for Leeds University, *A Critical Edition of the Revelations of Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416)* by Sr. Anna-Maria Reynolds, 1956.

Marion Glasscoe published an edition of Sloane 1 in 1976, choosing it "because its language is much closer to fourteenth-century English than that of P[aris]."¹⁴ This is a significant selection given that the current critical edition which attempts to give the oldest reading chose Paris in most cases where a choice of manuscript was necessary. This complete edition is that of Frs. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, which appeared in 1978. Glasscoe has persuasively pointed out the questionable nature of some of Colledge and Walsh's preferred readings, and the serious implications these have for a correct understanding of Julian's thought and meaning.¹⁵ Glasscoe's reservations about the Colledge and Walsh edition are widely although not universally

¹³ Harford, Dundas, ed., *Comfortable Words for Christ's Lovers: Being the Visions and Voices Vouchsafed to Lady Julian Recluse at Norwich in 1373, Transcribed and Edited from the Recently Discovered Manuscript (Brit. Mus. Addit. 37, 790)* (London: H. R. Allenson, 1911).

¹⁴ Glasscoe, *A Revelation of Love*, viii.

¹⁵ "Visions and Revisions: A Further Look at the Manuscripts of Julian of Norwich," *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 103-20.

accepted by Julian scholars.¹⁶ This means that a first and significant step in assessing the secondary material on Julian is to determine which edition has been used by the scholar in question. A critical edition of the Short Text, is also available, that of Francis Beer, *Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love: The Shorter Version Edited from B.L. Add. MS 37790*.¹⁷

For the purposes of this dissertation I shall be using the Colledge and Walsh critical edition despite its failings. Colledge and Walsh include all the readings in the apparatus, thus it is possible to consider any of the manuscripts while using their edition, although it is awkward to do so. The Colledge and Walsh edition is widely used by scholars in North America, which is my own academic context, and references to its pages will be both easy to locate and in harmony with much of the secondary material available. I have consulted the critical editions of both Glasscoe and Beer to balance my reading of Colledge and Walsh and note any instances where I have preferred either of their readings over that of Colledge and Walsh, giving my reason for doing so.

The Relationship between the Short and the Long Texts

Until recently the relationship between the Short and the Long Texts has been taken for granted by the scholarly community. When, in 1911, Dundas Harford published his modernization of the then-recently discovered Short Text he proposed

¹⁶ See for instance Ritamary Bradley, "Julian of Norwich on Prayer," in *Spätmittel-alterliche Geistliche Literatur in der Nationalsprache*, ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1983), 136-54.

¹⁷ [Middle English Texts, no. 8] (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978).

that it was an earlier version of the longer text already known.¹⁸ His assumption was based on the fact that the Short Text is almost fully contained in the Long Text, which is approximately six times its size.¹⁹

The material unique to the Long Text can be divided into two categories, visual detail added to the descriptions of individual showings, and theological reflection.²⁰ It is generally assumed that fairly soon after having received the showings in 1373 (2:285) the thirty year old Julian recorded them while they were fresh in her memory. Then at a later date she decided to revise and expand her work, thus creating the Long Text.²¹ This later date is presumed to be more than twenty years later, because Julian tells us that she spent two decades trying to understand the example of the lord and servant, which she did not even include in the Short Text:

For twenty yere after the tyme of the shewing saue thre monthys I had

¹⁸ Harford, *Comfortable Words*, 8.

¹⁹ Since Harford's time few have studied the question of the priority of the short text. Christina von Nolcken points out that it was only in the late 1970s that Barry Windeatt added anything to this understanding, in his study of the mature theological thinking of the long text ("Julian of Norwich and Her Audience," *Review of English Studies* 28 [1977]: 1-17); and in 1980 that A. V. C. Schmidt brought literary criticism to bear on the texts ("Langland and the Mystical Tradition, in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. Marion Glasscoe [Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980], 17-38). See Christina von Nolcken, "Julian of Norwich," in *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 102.

²⁰ For an excellent analysis of the internal structure of the showings as recorded in the long text, thus the guiding principle for the additions which Julian made see the last chapter in Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's "Showings": From Vision to Book* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

²¹ Julian tells us that she moved through three 'stages' of reflection on what she had experienced: The furst is the begynnyng of techyng that I vnderstode ther in the same tyme. The secunde is the inwarde lernyng that I haue vnderstode ther in sythen [since]. The thyrde 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 vnder sondyng. and theyse thre be so onyd, as to my vnder sondyng, that I can nott nor may deperte them (41:519-20).

techyng inwardly as I shall sey: It longyth to the to take hede to alle þe propertes and the condescions that were shewed in the example, though þe thyngke that it be mysty and indefferent to thy syght. I assentyd wylfully with grett desyer, seeing inwardly with avysement all the poyntes and the propertes that were shewed in the same tyme, as ferforth as my wytt and my vnderstandyng wylle serve (51:520-21).

Julian mentions another pivotal moment in the composition of the Long Text when she tells us that fifteen years or so following the initial showings, thus around 1388, she was given the interpretive key to understand her mystical experience:

And fro the tyme þat it was shewde, I desyerde oftyen tymes to wytt in what was oure lords menyng. And xv yere after and mor, I was answeyrd in gostly vnderstandyng, seyeng thus: What, wouldest thou wytt thy lordes menyng in this thyng? Wytt it wele, loue was his menyng. Who shewyth it the? Loue. (What shewid he the? Love.) Werfore shewyth he it the? For loue. Holde the therin, thou shalt wyt more in the same. But thou schalt nevyr witt therin other withoutyyn ende (86:732-33).²²

Most commentators have assumed that the insight of c.1388 led to a further five or more years of reflection on Julian's part and that some time around 1393 the Long Text was set down.²³

In 1993, Nicholas Watson published a ground-breaking study on the dating of the two texts, the implications of which have not yet been absorbed by the scholarly

²² Parentheses from Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings* indicating an addition from the Sloane manuscripts.

²³ Colledge and Walsh, however, deduce from this and from the fact that no mention is made in Julian's introductory summary chapter of the example of the lord and servant, which is obviously pivotal to the Long Text, that Julian revised her Short Text twice. The first 'edition' (the word is theirs) followed the revelation of 1388; the second 'edition,' when the example was then inserted, followed the twenty years of reflection, thus around or after 1393 (Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 25). I follow Nicholas Watson in wondering how Colledge and Walsh could imagine that a meticulous thinker like Julian would revise her work and then accidentally omit mention of a key point in her summary ("The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 675-77). The omission must be deliberate, and if so does not indicate a second edition of the Long Text.

community.²⁴ In this article, Watson challenges one of the foundational assumptions which has consistently been made by Julian scholars, that the Short Text was recorded by Julian quite quickly after she received the showings.²⁵ He builds a strong case for the inherently conservative nature of English piety and for Julian's isolation as a visionary. Her reticence about her authority to write and her defensiveness around the veneration of images Watson says, must be interpreted in light of an atmosphere charged with the Lollard trials of the late 1380s. He pushes the presumed date of composition for the Short Text as far forward as he can without transgressing the latest point it could have been composed, 1388, since the insight about love given in that year is not as significant part of the Short Text as it is in the Long. Further convincing support for this much delayed date of composition is gleaned from two comments in the Short Text which refer to the original showings as having happened in the not so recent past.²⁶ Watson also shows that there is good evidence that the Short Text is "a mature and carefully thought out attempt to articulate Julian's experience," which only needed revision into the Long Text to change its focus from

²⁴ Watson, "The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 637-83.

²⁵ For example, respected Julian scholar Ritamary Bradley says in the most recent book I know of published on *The Showings*: "The short-text has a crisp immediacy. The long-text is rich with some twenty years of [Julian's] reflection" (Ritamary Bradley, *Julian's Way: A Practical Commentary on Julian of Norwich* [London: Harper-Collins Religious, 1992], 1).

²⁶ Julian says, "this hath *evyr be* a comfort to me, that I chose Jhesu to be my hevyn" (19:371, emphasis mine following Watson). The words *evyr be* indicate a significant passage of time. She also records that "so ys my desyre that it schulde be to euery ilke manne the same profytte that I deyrede to my selfe and perto was styrryd of god in *the fyrste tyme* when I sawe itte" (ST 6:22, emphasis mine, following Watson). This also implies a passage of time since the showings occurred (Watson, "The Composition," 658)

sin to love.²⁷

If the composition of the Short Text took place, as Watson suggests, around 1386, it becomes less likely by far that Julian would have hurried to compose the Long Text following the insights of 1393, when the parable of the lord and servant was made clear to her. Watson deduces that many years pass between the composition of the two texts from the fact that in some instances Julian substitutes the Short Text for her original revelation when composing the Long Text. The Short Text has in some ways 'fossilized' and replaced the original showings as the source of meditation and inspiration.²⁸ Other external evidence also lends credence to the possibility that Julian was still composing the Long Text in 1413, when she was in her seventies.²⁹

Watson is too fine a scholar to put forward his theory as anything but a hypothesis, although this reader for one finds it a most convincing one. He proposes that we take it seriously. But the hypothesis does not have to be true for Watson's work to have a significant impact, for he has convincingly shown that there is a compelling level of doubt as to the original scholarly assumptions about the dating of the two texts. And as he points out himself,

S [the Short Text] itself emerges from this analysis as a vastly more interesting text than its general neglect by scholars suggests: not the

²⁷ Watson, "The Composition," 674. Baker also comments on the preoccupation of the Short Text with sin (Baker, *Vision to Book*, 64).

²⁸ Watson, "The Composition," 679.

²⁹ This evidence is the scribal notation added to the only surviving copy of the Short Text that Julian "is recluse atte Norwyche and 3itt ys onn lyfe, anno domini millesimo CCCC xiiij" (ST 1:201). Why would a scribe who knows the old woman well enough to assert with confidence that she is still alive bother to copy the unrevised text unless it is the only copy he/she knows of (Watson, "The Composition," 681)?

timid and youthful experiment that it has been presumed to be, but a mature and carefully thought out attempt to articulate Julian's experience — an attempt that is nonetheless, in important respects, a failure.³⁰

Watson convincingly shows that the Short Text of *The Showings* is not the fresh, unvarnished account of Julian's visions which scholars have normally assumed it to be. It is as much a product of the process of reflection and redaction that the Long Text is, without the benefit of the heuristic key revealed to the anchoress after fifteen years of meditation. Although a fascinating and perhaps useful study could be made of the role and function of pain in the Short Text could be made, I have chosen to concentrate on the Long Text for the work of this dissertation. The advantages of the Long Text are obvious: it is more complex and complete and is closer to what the anchoress herself wished to convey. Any presumed advantage in studying the Short Text has been called into question by Watson's work, and until his proposal has been given debate it would be unwise to presume either on the old model or on the new.

Interlocking Concepts: Pain, Punishment, and Penance

In focussing on Julian's experience and theology of pain I am implicitly aligning her with the long Christian tradition of sorrowing, known as contrition, compunction, the way of tears, or *penthos*.³¹ In this tradition pain is experienced as

³⁰ Watson, "The Composition," 674.

³¹ See Pierre Sempé, "Souffrance," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire*, eds. Marcel Villier et alii, vol. 14, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974).

sorrow for one's sins, and deep compassion for the death of the Saviour through a sense of personal responsibility. Julian certainly experiences these feelings, particularly contrition, which is one of the three gifts she asks of God (2:288). But her experience of pain goes beyond this empathetic suffering. In *The Showings* we learn of Julian's personal pains, especially the pain of her illness.

The anchoress weaves several related concepts together in her writing on this matter. The first, and apparently the most straightforward, is the idea of *pain*. One early layer of meaning in this word is that of punishment. The OED gives "suffering or loss inflicted for a crime or offense; punishment; penalty; a fine" as its first entry, now considered obsolete. When Julian says of our coming to heaven, "we shuld sodeynly be takyn from all our payne and from all our woo" (1:284) we must ask whether she is teaching that life is a punishment, because clearly life is pain.

Julian uses the concept and word *punishment* in *The Showings*, although only four times. Let us examine each instance to determine what she means by the word. The first instance comes in the Thirteenth Showing where God teaches Julian about sin by showing her that she would sin again after her privileged time with the godhead. She learns that the sins of those who love God will be rewarded in heaven:

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. (38:445)

(Just as there is indeed a corresponding pain for every sin, just so love gives to the same soul a bliss for every sin. Just as various sins are punished with various pains, the more grievous are the sins, so will they be rewarded with various joys in heaven to reward the victories over them, to the degree in which the sin may have been painful and

sorrowful to the soul on earth [242].)

Here pain, punishment and sin are closely related. Julian seems to be making reference to the scholastic notion of *poena*, the punishment for sin, as distinct from *culpa*, the guilt of sin.³² The 'dyuers paynes' suffered on earth are our punishment (*poena*) for sin, which earn joys in heaven because they comprise satisfaction for injury to God.³³

Julian next mentions punishment a little further on in the Thirteenth Showing. While speaking of contrition, compassion and true longing for God, she explores how these gifts cure the sickened soul:

For by theyse medycins behovyth that every synnfulle soule be helyd. Though that he be helyd, hys woundys be sene before god, nott as woundes but as wurshyppes. And so on the contrary wyse, as we be *ponysshed* here with sorow and with penannce, we shall be rewardyd in hevyn by the curtesse loue of oure god almyghty, that wylle that none that come ther leese hys traveyle in any degre. For he beholdyth synne as sorow and paynes to his louers, in whom he assignyth no blame for loue (39:452, emphasis mine).

(For every sinful soul must be healed by these medicines. Though he be healed, his wounds are not seen by God as wounds but as honours. And as we are *punished* here with sorrow and penance, in contrary fashion we shall be rewarded in heaven by the courteous love of our almighty God, who does not wish anyone who comes there to lose his labours in any degree. For he regards sin as sorrow and pains for his lovers, to whom for love he assigns no blame [245, emphasis mine].)

³² This distinction can be first traced to Hugh of St Victor (*Summae Sentent.* Tract VI. c.11), in the ongoing scholastic debate concerning the relationship between the power of God to forgive and the priestly power of the keys in the act of penitence. See Henry C. Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, Vol. 1 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1896 [rpt. 1968]).

³³ A century and a half following Julian's death the sacrament of penitence would be definitively divided into three parts, contrition, confession and satisfaction. See Henry C. Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, Vol. 2 *Confession and Absolution* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1896 [rpt. 1968]), 169.

Once again, punishment for sin is what we experience here on earth and it is greatly rewarded in heaven. But this time the punishment (*poena*) is not pain, rather it is sorrow and penance. God sees sin as sorrow and pain for those who love God and who, presumably, make proper confession for their sin. Therefore, the 'blame' is lifted because the guilt (*culpa*) is forgiven.

The next mention of punishment is made in the Fourteenth Showing. Julian realizes how God views our fallenness.

And then I saw that oonly payne blamyth and ponyschyth, and our curteyse lorde comfertyth and socurryth, and evyr he is to the soule in glad chere, lovyng and longyng to bryng vs to his blysse (51:523).

(And then I saw that only pain blames and punishes, and our courteous Lord comforts and succours, and always he is kindly disposed to the soul, loving and longing to bring us to his bliss [271].)

Only pain blames and punishes. It is not God who administers punishment, for God comforts and gives succour. Pain, which is the natural consequence of sin, is its own punishment. God uses that punishment to advantage, rewarding the moments of earthly suffering with heavenly joy.

Julian's last mention of punishment nuances this discussion by suggesting that God sends a different kind of pain, that of suffering. She also forges the link to the last interlocking concept, that of penance:

I knowe wele I haue deservyde payne; but oure lorde is almyghty, and may ponyssch me myghtly, and he is all wysdom, and can ponyssch me wysely, and he is alle goodnesse, and lovyth me tendyrly. . . . It is a fulle louely mekenes of a synnfulle soule . . . whan we wyll wylfully and gladly take þe skoryng and the cha(s)tyssyng that oure lorde hym selfe wylle geue vs. And it shalle be fulle tendyr and fulle esy, yf we

wylle onely holde vs plesyd with hym and with alle his werkes.
(77:691).³⁴

(I know well that I have deserved pain; but our Lord is almighty, and may punish me greatly, and he is all wisdom, and can punish me wisely, and he is all goodness, and loves me tenderly. . . . It is a most lovely humility in a sinful soul . . . when we are willing and glad to accept the scourging and the chastising which our Lord himself wishes to give us. And it will be very tender and very easy, if we will only keep ourselves content with him and with all his works [330].)

God may and can punish us for sin, but God is good and loves us, and so does not.

God may not send punishment to us, but Julian says God sends *scourging and chastising*. What are these if not punishment? These are the pains of suffering, sent to try and to strengthen us, not to punish us for sin. These pains of suffering she calls penance: "we shulde mekely and pacyently bere and suffer þat pennawnce þat god hum selfe gevyth vs, with mynde of hys blessyd passion" (77:692). Scourging and chastising are not punishment meted out against offenders (*poena*), but penances administered to make us strong and well. For Julian, *penance* is what cures us and makes us fit for heaven. God tells her that no matter what the individual does, there will be pain and suffering in life. They are not necessarily punishments. But if we see them as penances, "medycins," as she calls them elsewhere, "than shalt þou truly se that alle th(y) lyvyng is pennannce profytable" (77:693). All of the suffering of life is a penance, which earns bliss in heaven. She is careful to emphasize that God is present with us through the trials of life:

oure lorde is with vs, kepyng vs and ledyng in to fulhed of joy. . . .
He that shalle be oure blesse when we are there, he is oure keeper

³⁴ The parentheses around the *s* in *chastyssyng* indicate an editorial addition on the part of Colledge and Walsh to correct scribal error in the manuscript.

whyle we are here, oure wey and oure hevyn in tru loue and feythfulle trust (77:694).

[our Lord is with us, protecting us and leading us into the fulness of joy. . . . He who will be our bliss when we are there is our protector whilst we are here, our way and our heaven in true love and faithful trust (331).]

In the context of the medieval understanding of penance, Julian's emphasis on the penitential nature of the pains of life is significant. In the early church, canonical penance was a public act for public sins, and could only be performed once in a person's lifetime.³⁵ However, under the influence of Irish penitential practices, penance became a repeatable act, separated in time from the other parts of the sacrament of penance, which are contrition and reconciliation. Once separated in time from contrition and reconciliation, penance took on almost a life of its own, and people would perform acts of penance proactively, to store up merit, rather than reactively, on the instructions of a confessor to make satisfaction for a particular sin. Julian, however, has very little to say about the proactive performance of penance: "For that pennance that men takyth vppon hym selfe, it was nott shewde me; that is to sey, it was not shewde me specyfyed" (77:692). Instead, she focusses her attention on the simple penances of daily life, "þat pennawnce þat god hm selfe gevyth vs" (77:692). God tells Julian that life is penance enough.

This brings us back to the first question asked in this section, does Julian think that life is punishment if life is pain? Obviously not. Life is our time of curing, of becoming whole and healthy in the soul so that we may come to bliss and enjoy

³⁵ For a succinct history of penance see Bernhard Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*, tr. and rev. Francis Courtney (Freiburg and London: Herder and Burnes and Oates, 1965).

beholding God for eternity.

Structure and Content

The dissertation has four chapters. Each of the first three chapters explores one specific use of the image or fact of pain in Julian's thought. Chapter One is concerned with Julian's own pain; Chapter Two with the pain of humanity and creation; and Chapter Three with the pain of Jesus Christ.

Chapter One, concerning Julian's pain, is the only one to explore Julian's own experience. It presents a 'map' of Julian's personal pain as she has described it in *The Showings* and the learning she acquires as a result of this pain. This chapter also explores her encounters with the Devil as these also result in pain.

Chapter Two addresses Julian's ideas on pain and creation. Julian considers both human and non-human creatures, so this chapter examines sin, suffering, death, and penitence with regard to humanity, and more widely the question of sympathetic pain for all of creation. The question of Julian's anthropology is paramount here, what does the anchoress believe about human nature, the human soul, the human body?

Chapter Three concludes the study of pain in Julian's thought by exploring its function relative to Jesus Christ. The vivid and bloody visions of the crucifixion form the iconic framework for *The Showings*, but Julian explores Jesus' pain more thoroughly than simply through the Passion. His pain stems not just from his physical woundedness, but from his love, sorrow and compassion. This chapter

explores the issue of the connection between humanity and God through pain: the copious and efficacious nature of Jesus' blood; the paradox of a suffering God; Julian's three ways to view the Passion; the joys of the Passion for Jesus; his ghostly thirst; the intimate connection Julian makes between the Incarnation and the Resurrection; and her theology of Jesus as mother. In Julian's theology, the pain of Christ is more than his burden, it is his redemptive tool and the means by which all of creation is united.

The Fourth Chapter of the dissertation consists of a brief survey of the role and fact of pain in other late medieval documents related to Julian's own. In order to draw meaningful conclusions about Julian of Norwich's use of the image of pain it is necessary to compare her thought to that of her approximate contemporaries and spiritual peers. This is not to engage in the debate of whether Julian knew any of these authors' works, rather it is intended to contextualize Julian's use of an image within a particular historical time and a particular literary genre.³⁶

³⁶ I acknowledge the assistance I have received from many sources: Prof. Phyllis Airhart and Prof. Paul Fedwick have been consistently enthusiastic teachers; Emmanuel College has generously provided scholarships and awards; Anne Camozzi meticulously proof-read the completed thesis; Magaly Centeno Nuñez lovingly cared for Martha and Norah (and myself).

Chapter One

Julian's Pain Explored

Julian's physical pain is strung on the high points of *The Showings* like a drape, both covering and informing them. In our desire to understand the latter we have often overlooked the former, peering through this pall of pain, about which Julian herself is so explicit, mentally subtracting it from her experience of God.¹ And yet the pain is real. In its physical and spiritual aspects it is an integral part of Julian's conversation with God. We have not read Julian properly if we have not done as she has done, integrating both the dark and the light sides of her experience of God. It is her ability to do this which secures for her a position of authority among the spiritual giants of any age, and which keeps her triumphant "alle shalle be wele" from being pollyanna.²

This chapter will "map" Julian's personal pain by exploring her intentional inclusion of it in her account of the showings, which many have mistakenly thought of as purely ocular, aural and imaginative phenomena. In fact, Julian's whole body is

¹ Many medieval mystics, especially women, had painful experiences related to their mystical vision. See Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, ed., *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, *The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987). As will become clear, I will distinguish Julian's experience of pain from the traditional Way of Purgation, which forms but a small part of it.

² Kenneth Leech, "Hazelnut Theology: Its Potential and Perils," in *Julian Reconsidered*, eds. Kenneth Leech and Sister Benedicta [Ward] (Oxford: Sisters of the Love of God Press, 1988), 7.

drawn into service, both by God and by the devil, and it becomes alternately a theater and a battleground for their spiritual forces. The pain which the mystic experiences engages her body in a learning process which occupies her whole self, not just her mind or her soul.³

This first chapter will explore Julian's personal experience of pain, as she recounts it in *The Showings*. Her pain intrudes into the text primarily in three places: her preliminary illness, during the participatory Seventh and Eighth Showings, and during the return of her illness and the demonic temptations immediately prior to the Sixteenth Showing. The purpose of this chapter is to probe these few autobiographical moments for what they reveal about Julian's understanding of and response to the pain she experienced. We will find that Julian uses the fact of her physical suffering in significant ways to create and validate herself as an author, to structure her text, and to inform her theology.

Thre gyftes by the grace of god: Chapter 2

This reuelation was made to a symple creature vnlettyrde leving in deadly flesh, the yer of our lord a thousannde and three hundered and lxxiij, the xiiij daie of May, 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 (2:285).

(This revelation was made to a simple, unlettered creature, living in this mortal flesh, the year of our Lord one thousand, three hundred and seventy-three, on the thirteenth day of May; and before this the creature had desired three graces by the gift of God. The first was

³ As will be shown, Julian 'reinvents' the medieval idea of self to include both the physical and the spiritual aspects of the human person. See below page 109.

recollection of the Passion. The second was bodily sickness. The third was to have, of God's gift, three wounds [177].)⁴

Standing as the gateway to *The Showings* we find the longer of the only two autobiographical segments in this work. The second is close to the end of the book, at the start of the Sixteenth Showing. It functions as a second door, this one leading the reader out from the sacred space of Julian's text. Both 'gateways' use Julian's bodily pain to root themselves in the real time of history, as if her suffering ties her to the world of the reader through the force of common experience.

Thre gyftes by the grace of god. As narratrix, Julian will serve as the guide to the textual world of her visions and so it is significant that the first thing that she reveals about herself is that she had "desyred before thre gyftes by the grace of god." *Before* is an intentionally vague preposition indicating with the broadest verbal stroke possible that Julian had felt pious longings before the start of the showings in May of 1373.⁵ The lightness of her authorial touch may be shielding a profound familiarity with medieval affective piety. Denise Nowakowski Baker argues thoroughly and

⁴ All the modern English translations offered in parentheses are from Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, eds., *Julian of Norwich: Showings* (Classics of Western Spirituality) (New York, Ramsey, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1978). Page numbers to this edition follow the citation in brackets.

⁵ The actual date in May is still disputed. Colledge and Walsh read the manuscript evidence as *xiiij*, thus the thirteenth (*The Showings*, 285, note 4); but Glasscoe and other European scholars read the manuscript as *viii*, thus the eighth. The disagreement divides denominationally as well as geographically, with Roman Catholics celebrating a day in Julian's honour on May 13, Anglicans on May 8. Note that Colledge and Walsh artfully attempt to enlist the authority of Grace Warrack for their reading by citing her in a note and stating that she "observed (xviii, note 1) that in 1373 this was a Friday." Warrack's note actually reads, "The Eighth of May must have been a Sunday, for Easter Sunday of 1373 was on the Seventeenth of April (Old Style)" (*Revelations of Divine Love Recorded by Julian, anchoress at Norwich, Anno Domini 1373* (London: Methuen and Company, 1901). She is obviously expanding on her previous assertion that the showings occurred on May 8!

persuasively that the very nature of the gifts Julian had requested "reveal that they are not random wishes but steps in the [Franciscan] program of affective spirituality."⁶

This is significant in a discussion of Julian's experience of pain because it situates her request for three gifts in a fundamentally comprehensible historical context.

There was a tendency in the earliest scholarship to focus on what was perceived to be the pathological nature of Julian's desire to suffer and of her subsequent illness at the age of thirty. This earliest focus robs Julian of her dignity by masking her participation in the movement to imitate Christ through suffering, and demeans her spiritual mastery by reducing the origin of her pain to a hysterical mind. In fact, it has been shown that the desire to suffer which initiates the *imitatio Christi* is not a desire for pain *per se*, but is a desire for an experience of compassion for Jesus which will illumine the divinity of Christ. Julian's request for three gifts, then, reveals her early allegiance to a form of devotionism almost universal in her historical period.

Mynd of the Passion. Julian's first request was for the gift of "mynd of the passion" (2:285). From her choice of the word *mynd* one might be tempted to assume that she was asking for a purely intellectual gift. However, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) gives as the primary meanings 'memory', 'remembrance', 'recollection'. This is the Augustinian concept *memoria*, a much more active faculty

⁶ Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's "Showings": From Vision to Book*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.

than our modern English word suggests.⁷ Julian includes an element of conscious participation when she asks for *mynd of the Passion*:

For the first, me thought *I had sumdeele feelyng* in the passion of Christ, but yet *I desyred to haue more* by þe 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 (2:283-84, emphasis mine).

(As to the first, it seemed to me that *I had some feeling* for the Passion of Christ, but still *I desired to have more* by the grace of God. I thought that I wished that I had been at that time with Magdalen and with the others who were Christ's lovers, *so that I might have seen with my own eyes the Passion* which our Lord suffered for me, so that *I might have suffered with him* as others did who loved him. Therefore *I desired a bodily sight*, in which I might have *more knowledge of our saviour's bodily pains*, and of *the compassion* of our Lady and of all his true lovers who were living at that time and saw his pains, for I would have been one of them and have suffered with them [177-78, emphasis mine].)

As can be seen from the points which I have emphasized, Julian was requesting an experience in which both her mind and her senses would be engaged. Originally, when she made her three requests, she already had some feeling for the passion but wanted a larger measure. At least one of Julian's earliest commentators understood her request for *mynd of the passion* to be for greater feeling of the same because the Cressy manuscript has the marginal gloss "feeling" opposite this line. There is more

⁷ Gerhard Ladner offers this summary of the Augustinian idea of *memoria*: "*Memoria* stands for the mind in so far as it is conscious of the external world, of itself and of God. . . . The mind (*memoria*) is the first member of the psychological trinity (just as the Father is the First Person in the divine Trinity)" (*The Idea of Reform, Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959], 199-200).

in her request than simply the gift of feeling, though. She wanted to be with the people at the foot of the cross *to see* the Crucifixion as they had done and *to suffer with him as they had done*. They suffered vicariously and it is this same vicarious suffering granted most poignantly to the spectators who also loved Jesus that she is requesting. She is specifically requesting a sight or recollection, which will involve her feelings and invoke a deep compassion. Through that compassion she will be united with the small group of Jesus' most loving companions in having experienced the most intense vicarious pain possible. This is the verbalization of an intense spiritual longing, here articulated as the desire to suffer in the same way as Christ's lovers did at the foot of his cross.

Bodilie sicknes. The second gift which Julian had requested of God was a bodily sickness. She specifically mentions that this "came to my mind with contricion, frely without anie sekyng" (2:286). It is almost as if Julian is carefully warding off potential criticism concerning the appropriateness of this particular request. Her defense is implied: God gave me this desire. The reader is clearly to understand that the illness which is the context for the showings is a gift of God in answer to a divinely inspired request, although Julian does not spell this out specifically.

She is quite clear about the kind of sickness she was inspired to request:

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 [believing] that I should haue died, and that all creatures might suppose be 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 died, all the dredys and temptations of fiendes, and all maner of other paynes, saue the out passing of the sowle (2:287).

(I wished that sickness to be so severe that it might seem mortal, so that I might in it receive all the rites which Holy Church has to give me, whilst I myself should think that I was dying, and everyone who saw me would think the same; for I wanted no comfort from any human, earthly life in that sickness. I wanted to have every kind of pain, bodily and spiritual, which I should have if I had died, every fear and temptation from devils, and every other kind of pain except the departure of the spirit [178].)

There are two distinct components to her request: that she and all others with her should believe she was going to die; and that the sickness should be painful. Julian tells us that she wanted to believe that she was on the brink of death, even to the point of receiving her last rites, so that she might turn from earthly comfort to God alone. What she had originally expected would be the effect of the illness she eventually experiences as the result of the showings instead. During them she truly learns to "haue no maner of comforte of fleshly ne erthely life" but to take her comfort in God alone.

Julian desired that her illness would lead to her receiving "all my rightes of the holie church." Colledge and Walsh have interpreted this to be a reference to what was traditionally the last ecclesiastical rite administered to a dying person, what is now called the anointing of the sick.⁸ They point out that by the twelfth century this act, designated extreme unction by Peter Lombard, was reserved for the critically ill, and served the purpose of preparing the individual for death and entrance into

⁸ Colledge and Walsh, 68.

heaven.⁹ However, this focus on anointing overlooks the other *rites* which were and are administered to the very ill, confession and the eucharist ('schrift' and 'housel' in Middle English). Eamon Duffy has effectively shown how fervently lay people sought the assurances of the final act of confession, and he points out the popular devotions which arose in an attempt to secure the comfort of that last confession in a time when death might come quickly and unexpectedly.¹⁰

The second component of Julian's request for a bodily sickness was that it be a painful one. "I desyred to haue all maner of paynes, bodily and ghostly . . . all the dredys and temptations of fiendes, and all maner of other paynes" (2:287). The anchoress carefully articulates the fears, pains and temptations that she wanted to experience in her illness. She will undergo them all, as she shows in her text, but, interestingly enough, they do not come to her during her illness. Rather they will be experienced during the course of the showings. Once again, as with her request to learn comfort through her illness, Julian seems to have gone out of her way to show us her earlier misconceptions about the spiritual life when she eventually came to record her book. It is as if she is saying to her readers, "Look how I thought I should learn, and see how God taught me despite that idea."

I would be purgied by the mercie of god. Julian's second request for a gift,

⁹ Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum libri quatuor* IV dist. ii 1; PL 192 841. Because of its association with death, anointing ('anneling' in Middle English) was feared by lay people. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 - c. 1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 313.

¹⁰ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 313 ff.

this one an illness which would drive her painfully to spiritual comforts, was made with a specific intention in mind: "for I would be purgied by the mercie of god, and after liue more to the worshippe of god by cause of that sicknes. For I hoped that it might haue ben to my reward when I shuld haue died" (2:287). The word *purgied* does not appear in the short text. In fact, the idea that the illness might have served specifically to purify the author does not appear there at all. In her original iteration of the text Julian explained that she had requested the illness "for I hoped that it my3t be to me a spede [help] whenn I schulde dye" (ST 1:204). The idea that the illness would function purgatively was consciously added after years of reflection in order to amplify the idea that this illness could be a help to Julian at the actual time of her death.

We may well ask what level of meaning is added to our understanding of this illness and its pains by this small alteration. The concept of purgation appears three other times in *The Showings*. In the Thirteenth Showing, where Julian is discussing the nature of sin, she says that

we be alle in part trobelyd, and we schal be trobeleyd, folowyng our master Jhesu, tylle we be fulle *purgyed* of oure dedely flessch, and of all oure inward affections whych be nott very good (27:405-406, emphasis mine).

(we are all in part troubled, and we shall be troubled, following our master Jesus until we are fully *purged* of our mortal flesh and all our inward affections which are not very good [225, emphasis mine].)

Here we learn that Julian feels that the Christian life, full of pain and trouble as Jesus' life was, is in fact purging humanity of its sinful finite part. In this instance,

purgation is an act which purifies the spirit.

The next instance of the idea of purgation is also in the Thirteenth Showing and the continued discussion of the nature of sin. Julian writes, "Synne is the sharpest scorge þat ony chosyn soule may be smyttyn with, whych scorge alle to betyð [beats] man or woman, and alle to brekyð hym, and *purgyð* hym in hys owne syght" (38:449, emphasis mine). Here purgation is once again an act of purification this time with a markedly physical manifestation. It is associated with a scourge which beats and breaks the person it is applied to.

The last instance of the concept of purgation is associated with physical illness. In the Sixteenth Showing Julian digresses from describing what she has seen in order to discuss the four fears which may possess an individual. Examining the first fear, fear of assault, Julian says, "This dreed [dread] doth good, for it helpyð to *purge* man, as doth bodely sycknesse or such other payne that is not synne" (74:671, emphasis mine).

If Julian added this concept of purgation so early in her revised text and in the specific context of her request for a bodily sickness it may have been to emphasize the penitential nature of this request. A sickness which caused suffering, requested for the love of God, would have been considered a penance in Julian's social and religious context. At the time she made the request, Julian would have anticipated that the penitential illness would earn her merit, and diminish the temporal punishment due to sin (*poena*) awaiting after her actual death. As we have already seen, however, during the course of the showings Julian learns that works of

supererogation have no place in what God has to show her.¹¹ Life itself is penance enough. This is another subtle example of Julian allowing us to deduce how she herself was changed by what she was shown. Her 'pre-showing' self was focussed on performing extra penance, but her 'post-vision' self transmits to her hearer/readers the new truth which she was shown.

The illness was to have mirrored Jesus' Crucifixion in Julian's visionary experience. What Julian could not have anticipated when she initially made this request of God was the way in which it would be subverted. She was to see this request fulfilled but overturned at the same moment, for it was not in her illness that Julian really felt pain, nor was it her illness which served to purge her as she had requested.

One last thought should be added on Julian's addition of the idea of purgation to her description of her second request. A level of meaning in the word *purge* beyond that of purification is that of emptying or evacuating. This has traditionally been known as *kenosis*. When the reader encounters Julian's actual illness in Chapter Three and recognizes it for the bodily sickness described in Chapter Two, he or she is predisposed to interpret this event as a self-emptying. Once again we find that Julian has subtly introduced an idea which buttresses her authorial position. By connecting the multivalent concept of purgation to the bodily sickness Julian is able to suggest that what follows her illness, namely the showings and the book by which we encounter them, did not originate with her. Her *self* has been drained away,

¹¹ See above, p. 3, 17.

evacuated, and the voice which remains is God's alone.

Julian tells us that she made these first two requests conditional upon God's will. We have already seen how these two requests are both fulfilled and subverted in the fulfillment, as Julian achieves her desired end separately from the means she had chosen. These two requests are also set apart in another way. They were forgotten during the period intervening between their conception and their fulfillment. This intriguing detail suggests one of two things. First, that the desire for a vision and the desire for an illness were suppressed from consciousness but still operative at an unconscious level. This option allows for the possibility that Julian's showings and actual illness were the result of auto-suggestion. It is perhaps because of this that scholars earlier in this century seemed so concerned about Julian's mental health. W. R. Inge, Evelyn Underhill, R. H. Thouless, Grace Warrack and even David Knowles all examined the possibility of mental instability in Julian of Norwich. It has been the unspoken concern of many of Julian's commentators that she be protected from suspicion of charlatanism. This concern has taken on a new dynamic since the rediscovery of the complete *Book of Margery Kempe*. Kempe was a contemporary and confidante of Julian's, herself subject to charges of deception, quackery, and hysteria in her spiritual life.

There is, however, another way in which to interpret Julian's statement that her first two requests of God were forgotten, a way less coloured by an understanding of Freudian psychology and therefore perhaps closer to Julian's intention. It is to take at face value Julian's statement that she forgot these items. She says, "This

sicknes I desyred in my jowth, that I might haue it when I ware xxxth yeare olde" (2:288). Some scholars seem to feel that "in my jowth" refers to "xxxth yeare" and indicates that Julian thought of thirty as a youthful age. It is just as likely, though, that "in my jowth" modifies "I desyred" and indicates that Julian made her requests of God as a young person, perhaps even as a child. This would explain the bold and formulaic nature of her requests and would also illumine the rather playful stance she has taken to them in her text, showing how they were eventually superfluous to her actual goals. Colledge and Walsh comment in a note that they prefer this latter interpretation of "jowth" and in their contemporary translation, *Showings*, they render the phrase "when I was young I desired to have this sickness when I would be thirty years old" (178). If it is the case that Julian made her requests many years prior to their fulfillment, then it is entirely natural to understand how she might quite simply have forgotten them. If so, there is no room for suspicion of auto-pathogenesis, nor need for scholarly defense of Julian's sanity.

Thre woundes in my life. Julian's last request was for three wounds in her life, contrition, compassion and longing for God. The word *wound* is charged with meaning in the devotional context in which Julian is using it. It immediately evokes the wounds of Christ and situates Julian's desire incarnationally. She is asking for spiritual gifts in a metaphorical and devotional language rooted in the Passion.

It is interesting to see how scholars in our own day have struggled to understand Julian's requests. Distinguished Julian scholar Ritamary Bradley, in her

recent and innovative book says, "By her preliminary prayer for the *wound* of natural compassion Julian meant that she desired a *bodily feeling* of sharing in Christ's pains (emphasis mine)."¹² But we have seen that Julian requested a "bodely sight" to have "more knowledge of the bodily paynes of our sauour" in order to have more "feelyng in the passion." She did not request to share Christ's pains at any point, and certainly not in her request for the second wound, compassion.

In another vein, Debra Scott Panichelli, not nearly so thorough or competent a critic as Colledge and Walsh or Bradley, determines the following:

By 'contrition' I believe Julian means to refer to prayer; by 'compassion' I believe she refers to God's sending of the revelations; by 'true longing' I believe she refers to the experience of reliving the revelations after her denial. It is only after the denial and loss of what she had that she can long to have it again.

Surely it is not too blunt to suggest that Julian intended *contrition* to mean contrition, *compassion* to mean compassion and *true longing* to mean just what it seems to mean as well.

The doctrine of contrition was especially important in Julian's day, particularly in the debate on penance. Historically speaking, once the sacrament of penance became private and repeatable, and once absolution became joined to confession rather than to penance, certain questions arose around personal motives in the rite of penance.¹³ In order to safeguard the integrity of the sacrament, scholastic theologians insisted that the only appropriate, indeed the only efficacious state for the sacrament

¹² Bradley, *Julian's Way*, 171.

¹³ Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*, 157.

was one of true contrition.¹⁴ This was characterized by perfect remorse for one's sins motivated by genuine love of God, rather than fear of punishment (*timor servilis*). Perfect remorse and genuine love of God are rare states of mind, so rare that some theologians suggested that perfect contrition is unattainable, and a lesser motive, attrition, must suffice in bringing us to true confession.¹⁵ God's grace will perfect contrition in the suppliant if attrition is present. Within the context of this discussion, Julian's request for "the wound of veri contricion, the wound of kynd compassion and the wound of willfull longing to god" (2:288) clearly represent the anchoress's desire for complete penance and its fruit, justification.

Julian has already alluded to these three wounds in her request for her first two gifts. When she asked for "mynd of the passion" she prayed that it would include "more knowledge . . . of the *compassion* of our lady and of all his true louers . . . for I would haue be one of them and *haue suffered with them*" (2:286, emphasis mine). When asking for her second gift, Julian reports that it "came to my mind with *contricion*, frely without anie sekyng" (2:286, emphasis mine). The whole purpose of this devotional exercise, explained by Julian as "the more true mynd in the passion of Christ" (2:286) and a desire "to haue ben soone with my god and maker," (2:287) may be summarized as "willfull longing to god" (2:288). In other words, the third

¹⁴ For instance this from Peter Abelard, "With this cry [contrition] and compunction of the heart, which we call true repentance, sin does not remain, that is, contempt of God or the consent to evil. . . . Wherever then there is true repentance, prompted that is by the love of God alone, no contempt of God remains (*Ethics* 19 [PL 178, 664f]; cited in Paul F. Palmer Palmer, *Sacraments and Forgiveness: History and Doctrinal Development of Penance, Extreme Unction and Indulgences*, Sources of Christian Theology 2 [Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959], 185).

¹⁵ The first to define the nature of attrition was William of Auvergne. See Palmer, *Sacraments and Forgiveness*, 199.

gift requested by Julian is actually a summary of the first two gifts. The three *wounds* are the first two *gifts*, stripped of their means and reduced only to ends.

Shortnes of breth and faielyng of life: Chapter 3

A bodily sickness. In her thirty-first year, Julian of Norwich fell ill. Coming as it does in her account, immediately following a declaration that she had prayed to fall ill when she was thirty, it is no surprise to her readers. Julian has subtly invited her readers to interpret this illness as an answer to prayer. There is some evidence, though, that the illness may have been unexpected when it occurred, and only later put into the framework of the pious requests of youth. Julian has already told us that she forgot her first two prayer requests soon after they were made conditional on God's will (2:288). In describing her illness she tells us that "on the iiij nyght I toke all my rightes of holie church, and went not to haue leuen tyll day" (3:289). She could scarcely have believed that she was dying if she had remembered that she had earlier prayed for an illness which would give her that same belief. That recollection alone would destroy belief.

Other indications of the genuine nature of her belief in her impending death are her willingness to receive the sacraments of the sick, and the conviction of those with her that she was dying. It is one thing wilfully to deceive oneself in order to attain spiritual insight, but quite another matter to deceive the Church and one's closest family members. Julian's radiant and gracious personality permeates her book

and mitigates against any suggestion that she might have been involved in such a deception.

A last point supporting the suggestion that Julian truly believed she was dying is that she tells us further on that "it cam sodenly to my mynd that I should desyer the second wound of our lordes gifte and of his grace . . . as I had before praied" (3:292). This recollection of the gift of three wounds, which had not been chased from active memory may indicate a realization on the part of the sick woman that there might be a devotional framework for her illness. The sudden coming to mind that Julian refers to may include the unexpected return of her memory of the first two requests and the flash of understanding which must have accompanied that return.

Louthsomnes to die. Here is a woman who at some point prior to her thirty first year had begun to practice *ars moriendi*, the art of death.¹⁶ She anticipated the possibility of visions on her eventual death bed and prayed for an illness to train her how to die well. So confident was she of her salvation that even later in life she could recall that she had "desyred to haue ben soone with my god and maker" (2:287). Much further along in her text Julian revisits this theme and says "Afore this tyme I had grete longyng and desyer of goddys gifte to be delyuerede of this

¹⁶ It was not uncommon for lay people of Julian's day to prepare for a good death by reciting certain prayers as a guarantee of last confession. This prayer from the York Book of Hours gives one example: O glorious Jesu, O mekest Jesu, O moost swetest Jesus, I praye the that I may have true confesyon, contrycyon and satisfaction or I dye, and that I may se and receyue they holy body God man Savyour of al mankynde, Cryst Jesu without synne, and that thou wylt, my Lorde God, forgyve me all my synnes for thy glorious wondes and passyon, and that I may end my lyfe in the true fayth of holy churche, and in perfyte love and charyte with all myn even crysten (*Horae Eboracenses: The Prymer of Hours of the Blessed Virgin mary According to the Use of the Illustrious Church of York*, ed. C. Wordsworth, Surtees Society, CXXXII, 1919; cited in Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 320).

worlde and of this lyfe" (64:619). Julian gives every indication that at the point in time when she made her three prayerful requests she looked toward her own death serenely, perhaps even excitedly, as towards something long rehearsed and eagerly awaited. Renée Neu Watkins reflects this understanding of Julian's frame of mind regarding her own death when she says,

[Julian] taught a desire for suffering that was not a matter of choosing wretchedness as such, or of training oneself to indifference, but of transforming suffering into joy. In relation to death in particular, [she] expressed hope, not only of entering transcendent light or bliss, but of a transformation of pain and death into bliss, of suffering into joyful union. . . . [She] presented the death process as acceptable, even desirable . . . [and] preached a desire for death that was not suicidal, for it was patient, but that was strong enough to counteract the usual deep fear.¹⁷

As laudable as this sounds it is not actually what happened when Julian came to face what she apparently believed was to be her death. With an honesty that reveals her humanity much more than her devotionism had done, Julian confesses that she "felt a great louthsomnes to die" (3:289). She tells her readers that it was neither love of the world nor fear of pain that caused her to feel this way. Rather, it was that she wanted to glorify God in her life as long as possible. Slightly further on in her ordeal Julian will follow her curate's advice and move her eyes to behold the cross "for my thought I might longar dure [endure] to looke even forth then right vp" (3:291). Here again she is doing everything in her power to stay alive. It seems that by thirty and a half Julian has come to see that one's life may serve God as well as

¹⁷ Renée Neu Watkins, "Two Women Visionaries and Death: Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich," *Numen* 30 (December 1983): 175.

one's illness and death may do.

We should note in passing that Julian is careful to tell us early in her text that there was "no payne that I was afrayd of, for I trusted in god of his mercie" (3:289). Considering the amount of pain which Julian endures both prior to and during the showings, this statement is quite significant. By the time she came to record her text Julian knew not only the depth of pain she would experience, but also that this pain would drive her to repent of her original prayer requests: "as a wrech I repentyd me, thyngkyng if I had wyste what it had be, loth me had been to haue preyde it" (17:364). She also would have known at the time of writing that the pain had ultimately caused her to deny the truth of the showings themselves: "This was a grett synne and a grett vnkyndnesse, that I for foly of (f)elyng of a lytylle bodely payne so vnwysely left for þe tyme the comfort of alle this blessyd shewyng of oure lorde god" (66:634). The fact that she includes the statement that there was no pain which she feared, a statement rooted in the blithe ignorance of the younger woman, indicates that Julian is inviting her readers to identify with that 'pre-showing' self. It is yet one more masterful authorial gesture on Julian's part to make her whole message accessible by making herself, its bearer, more approachable.

Loath as she was, Julian was able to reach a point of cooperation with what she understood was inevitable. "I vnderstode (by) 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" (3:290, emphasis mine). From the phrase which I have emphasized it is clear that Julian was not approaching her death as a passive spectator. She did not

regard her death as something that would be *done to* her so much as something that would be *done with* her.

This act of assent and cooperation is Julian's first 'Yes' to God. It stands squarely at the beginning of her spiritual ordeal and marks everything which follows with the colour of consent. The question has been raised how it could be that God could inflict pain intentionally on anyone, particularly on such a gracious and gentle soul as Julian's. Here is Julian's own answer to that question: I agreed to it. This act of willing consent does more than just explain the mystery of Julian's pain. It also implicates her as an active participant in what is about to happen. Julian understands, for she has conveyed this in her text, that she is partly responsible for what she suffered. She is making it clear that there are two actors in *The Showings*: God and Julian of Norwich.

Then was my bodie dead. At this point Julian begins to describe what seems to be a creeping paralysis, the advance of which must certainly have been the factor which presaged approaching death. Her description of this paralysis is interwoven skillfully with the events of the days of illness, stretching out the reader's experience of her malady in a way which parallels her own.

Julian's illness lasts a week, after which her capacities begin to shrink. The first thing of which she is deprived is mobility: her body dies "from the miedes [middle] downward." Clearly, her legs are no longer able to move. Immobilized in her bed she has no choice but to undergo what is about to occur. The cinematic

equivalent of this is the grand gesture of locking the door. There is no avenue of escape. Theologically, we may interpret this immobilization as God's initial gesture of possession. Before the showings may begin Julian is caught and held by God. We may also interpret this fact in its literary context. This is the first step in the narrowing of the textual horizon, a narrowing which will draw Julian and her readers into a smaller and smaller sphere, so that by the time the showings begin we are focussed entirely on one small part of a hand-held crucifix.

Julian's choice of the word *dead* to describe her paralysis is intensely suggestive. She is demonstrating to us in that one word the wealth of emotion that must have accompanied her own realization of the fact which she was describing. Preparing for her expected death, Julian requests that she be "holpen to be set vpright, vndersett with helpe, for to haue the more freedom of my hart to be at gods will, and thinkyng on god while my life laste" (3:290). Her intention in sitting upright was to fill her last moments with thoughts of God.¹⁸

Vndersett with helpe. Julian tells us that her curate was sent for, but that "before he cam I had set vp my eyen and might not speake" (3:291). The dying woman has consciously fixed her eyes upwards, she tells us, "into heauen, where I trusted to come by the mercie of god" (3:291). It is as if she feels that by the strength of her glance, by focussing what remains of her powers on her goal, she

¹⁸ Since she is being so particular about her physical disposition on her sick bed, and since she makes no mention of being moved again, we can only presume that this is the position she retains for the duration of the showings, sitting propped in bed.

may attain her desire.¹⁹ Julian's mobility has been reduced to her ability to direct her gaze, but this she does most fervently.

This fixing of the eyes should be understood as another great act of will by Julian, similar to and affirming the assent of her heart to God's will discussed above. Colledge and Walsh (Classics) obscures this second 'Yes' of Julian's by translating the verb in question in the passive voice: "my eyes were set upwards" (180). There is one manuscript, MS British Museum Sloane 3705, which offers "mine eyes were set" but it stands alone and is passed over both in Colledge and Walsh and in Glasscoe, who often disagrees with Colledge and Walsh in their selection of manuscript attestations.²⁰ Given that Colledge and Walsh rejected the Sloane 2 reading in their critical edition of Julian it is both odd and disappointing that they should have chosen it for their more popular edition. Their choice veils an important flash of Julian's will and the consequent insight into her personality which it provides.²¹

Julian has told her readers one other significant thing about herself at this point: she is unable to speak. Through her choice of verb, she says "I . . . *might*

¹⁹ Tugwell calls this Julian's "upward piety" and contrasts it with what she learns about God's presence through the showings ("Julian of Norwich," in *Ways of Imperfection: An Exploration of Christian Spirituality* [London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984], 188). Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross make a similar observation: "Heaven is physically distant, materially visible and occupied by a Father who is hierarchically superior and distant from the Son. This is contrary to the enfolding and unitary dynamic of her showings" ("The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: The Exeter Symposium*, 5, ed. Marion Glasscoe [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992], 76).

²⁰ Glasscoe, *A Revelation of Love*, 3.

²¹ W. R. Inge also erases Julian's great act of will in this moment by reducing her role to nothing: "we should note especially the state of hypnotism induced by steadily gazing at the Crucifix" ("The Ancrene Riwe and Julian of Norwich," in *Studies of English Mysticism* [London: John Murray, 1906], 57).

not speake" (3:291, emphasis mine), Julian conveys to her readers that she does not have the strength, ability or power to say a word. It is not a question of choosing to remain silent. Immediately before the showings begin Julian is not able to speak. How striking it is, when one stops to reflect on this statement, that this woman who speaks so eloquently across so many centuries began her spiritual odyssey as a mute.

Julian's voicelessness is rich with meaning. She has prayed for an illness which would purge her and put her at God's disposal. Emptied now, after seven days of illness, she is completely open to the God who is Word.²² This moment of speechlessness is like a passage which she must make, a journey from her mundane life of ordinary words to the spiritual plane of the showings, where she will converse with God and speak for humanity.²³ Even as readers encounter Julian's moment of imposed silence, they hold her text in their hands: the text which is her great speech. This silence serves to ensure that Julian's readers understand that her text is not just words, but Word, that is to say, the word of God as transmitted to her in the showings, and through her in the book.

My sight began to feyle. The curate who has been called to attend her bids

²² See John 1:1-2 (NIV): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

²³ As has already been noted, this is not to say that Julian is emptied of *initiative*. I have tried to emphasize those acts of will which betray the continuous involvement of Julian's self in the process she underwent. However, it is fair to state that like all mystics, Julian is in the process of discovering her true self in relation to God through this process. See F.C. Happold, *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 119-122; and Petroff, *Visionary Literature*, 23. For the awakening of the self as the first step in the mystical way see Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* 1910 (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), 176-97.

Julian to turn her eyes to the cross, which she does.²⁴ Then her sight begins to dim:

It waxid as dark aboute me in the chamber as if it had ben nyght, saue in the image of the crosse, wher in held a comon light; and I wiste not how. All that was beseid the crosse was oglye and ferfull to me as it had ben much occupied with fiendes (3:291).

(It grew as dark around me in the room as if it had been night, except that there was ordinary light trained upon the image of the cross, I did not know how. Everything around the cross was ugly and terrifying to me, as if it were occupied by a great crowd of devils [180].)

Julian's world is drawing in upon her, imploding upon her, inch by inch. The reader is swept into this diminishing space as into a whirlpool. With a clever juxtaposition of light and darkness Julian trains the reader's attention on the cross. Just as the loss of voice was narratively significant, so too is Julian's loss of sight. Her text is full of visual allusions, with sight and seeing being her key metaphors for understanding and learning. Although Julian 'loses' her sight at this point in her ordeal, this serves to emphasize that it is through her eyes and the eyes of her mind that she will receive the showings.²⁵

²⁴ This would have been standard practice at the time. Baudri de Bourgeuil (d. 1130) recommends showing a crucifix to the sick person and helping her or him to recall the passion of Christ and the rewards which it has won (*De visitatione infirmorum*, PL 40, 1147-58). The following prayer in Middle English was used by priests offering succour to the sick. It is very similar to what Julian tells us her priest advised her:

Put alle thi trust in his passion and in his deth, and thenke onli thereon; and non other thing. With his deth medil the and wrappe the therinne . . . and have the crosse to fore the, and sai thus; I wot wel thou art nought my God but thou art imageden afir him, and makest me have more mind of him after whom thou art imageden. Lord fader of hevene, the deth of oure lord Jhe Crist, thi sone, which is here imageden, I set betwene the and my evil dedis, and the desert of Jhu Crist I offre for that I shuld have desevid, and have nought (W. Maskell, *monumenta Ritualia*, III pp. 357-8; cited in Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 315.)

²⁵ Oliver Davies suggests that "the timing of the visions is therefore itself liminal: night is passing into day and Julian is herself poised between life and death" ("Transformational Processes in the Work of Julian of Norwich and Mechtilde of Magdeburg," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: The Exeter Symposium*, 5, ed. Marion Glasscoe [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992], 39).

The over part of my bodie began to die. The next step in Julian's great diminishment is the advance of paralysis to her upper body. In the long text Julian simply reports that her upper body began to die, but in the short text she had included these poignant details: "Myne handdys felle downe on aythere syde, and also for vnpowere my heede satylde [slumped] downe onn syde" (ST 2:209). One has the impression of a rag doll sitting limply, inert. Julian's word for this, surely, would be a *noughting*. She is poured out, drained away. First her movement, then verbal expression, then visual communication with the external world and now lastly even touch, all have been pared away.²⁶

What remains? Julian has dwindled down to her intelligence, her will, her feelings and her imagination. She has been narratively dis-membered and reduced to the capacities of her mind. For the purposes of the text she is essentially bodyless. Perhaps this literary erasure assisted her readers in overlooking the woman in order to focus on God, which Julian tells us is her fervent desire: "Thane schalle 3e sone forgette me that am a wrecche, and dose so that I lette 3owe nought, and behalde Jhesu that ys techare of alle" (ST 6:222). This moment is the apogee of Julian's illness. Not only does she lose the feeling in her upper body but she experiences "shortnes of breth and faielyng of life" (3:291-92) and believes that this is the very

²⁶ One of the characteristics of mysticism outlined by William James is that of passivity: "Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power" (*The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* [New York: Mentor Books, 1958], 293). Note, however, that James' idea includes passivity of the will. I argue that Julian willed what occurred to the degree that she cooperated with God's action. I am not arguing, however, that the showings were the result of her act of willing.

end of her life.

Scholars have mused greatly on the nature of the illness which Julian was experiencing. Early in this century W. R. Inge considered the possibility of catalepsy and Evelyn Underhill, normally an admirer of Julian's, admitted the "pathological side" of her experiences.²⁷ Conrad Pepler was prepared to grant that Julian's revelations "are not purely neurotic ravings," but he wondered provocatively whether they were "purely in the imagination of this sickly Norwich nun?"²⁸ In the first book-length study on Julian of Norwich, Paul Molinari devoted an entire chapter to an examination of the anchoress's state of health, probing the possibilities of hypnosis and hysteria before finally concluding somewhat hollowly that:

from the purely medical point of view it seems more probable that her sickness was due to a temporary abnormal condition of her psychophysical system, and not to a purely organic and permanent deficiency already affecting Julian.²⁹

Even Colledge and Walsh felt the need to delve into medical etiology, consulting "specialists in diseases of the heart" who concluded that Julian must have undergone severe cardiac failure.³⁰ The last of the medical opinions on Julian appeared as recently as 1984 in the *Journal of Medical History*. Here James T. McIlwain concluded after an extensive study that Julian must have been suffering from

²⁷ Inge, *Studies of English Mysticism*, 58; and Ward, "Faith Seeking Understanding," 188.

²⁸ Conrad Pepler, "Mother Julian and Visions," in *The English Religious Heritage* (London: Blackfriars, 1958), 313.

²⁹ Paul Molinari, *Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a Fourteenth Century English Mystic*, (London: Longmans, Green, 1958) 25.

³⁰ What else would heart specialists conclude? See Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 69.

botulism.³¹ This seems to have laid the matter to rest, or at least to have exhausted interest in the subject.

Scholars have been taking another tack more recently, emphasizing the symbolic importance of Julian's experience. In an intriguing but exceedingly odd study published in 1992, Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross apply the theories of semiotics to Julian's illness and suggest that, "she is becoming a signifier, a means for the transmission of God's message in the way she opens herself to be read by God and by her readers. . . . She becomes the word spoken by God."³² Respected Julian scholar Marion Glasscoe makes a similar claim about Julian's entire experience of sickness and of healing. It is that through this experience she herself becomes 'emblematic' of the process of redemption, which is the quintessential act of healing.³³

All my paine was taken from me. We have reached and passed the climax of Julian's illness. What happens to her from now on has the quality of denouement about it, even though the showings, the very purpose of the book, have yet to be reported. It is most important to take note of Julian's statement at this point that "all my paine was taken from me" (3:292). She has crossed over to the other side of her illness through the doorway of her suffering, and now rests, free from pain, in the

³¹ James T McIlwain, "The 'Bodelye syknes' of Julian of Norwich," *Journal of Medical History* 10 (September 1984): 167-80. This study seems to have been largely ignored by succeeding scholarship.

³² Gillespie and Ross, "The Apophatic Image," 69. I have made essentially the same claim in this chapter in suggesting that Julian's illness functioned to purge her of herself kenotically, in the manner of a dark night of the senses. See above, p. 43.

³³ Marion Glasscoe, "Julian of Norwich: 'Endles Knowyng in God,'" in *English Medieval Mystics: Games of Faith* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), 225.

space which God has clearly created for her. The sickness which has just passed has served as a test, a trial by fire, and now Julian, purged by her pain, is ready for what is about to occur.³⁴

Julian tells us that "I was as hole, and namely in þe over parte of my bodie, as ever I was before" (3:292). The fact that she is so precise in detailing that the *upper* part of her body is restored draws careful attention to a continued paralysis of the lower body. No where in her text does Julian imply that she ever again moved from her bed, although it seems exceedingly unlikely that she remained confined during her years as an anchoress.

Julian is quite clear that she is free from her illness. She will not mention suffering from it again until the period following the Fifteenth Showing when the revelations seem to have stopped.³⁵ At the start of the Sixteenth Showing she reports,

I haue sayde at the begynnyng, wher it seyth: And in this sodeynly all my payne was taken fro me; of whych payne I had no grefe ne no dysesses as long as þe xv shewynges lastyd in shewyng. And at the ende alle was close, and I saw no more. And soone I felt that I should life longer. And anone my sycknes cam aȝene, furst in my hed, with a sownde and anoyse. And sodeynly all my body was fulfylleyd with sycknes lyke as it was before, and I was as baryn and drye as I had nevyr had comfort but lytylle, and as a wrech mornyd hevyly for feelyng of my bodely paynes, and for fautyng of comforte gostly and bodely (66:632).

³⁴ Happold comments on the painful initiation which often accompanies the start of mystical experiences: "No one chooses to be a mystic of his own volition. He must undergo some sort of experience which is of sufficeint intensity to lead to an expansion of normal consciousness and perception, so that there comes to him a new vision of reality which dominates his life and thought. He must experience some sort of 'conversion'" (*Mysticism*, 52).

³⁵ Note, however, that in the midst of the Eighth Showing Julian's mother moves to shut her eyes, which indicates that although the mystic may have *felt* restored, she must not have seemed so to those who were looking on (ST 10:234).

(I have told of this at the beginning, where it says: Suddenly all my pain was taken from me, and I had no sorrow or distress from this pain so long as the fifteen revelations were being shown. And at the end all was hidden, and I saw no more; and soon I felt that I should live longer. And presently my sickness returned, first in my head, with a sound and a din; and suddenly all my body was filled with sickness as it was before, and I was as barren and dry as if the consolation which I had received before were trifling, and, as the wretched creature that I am, I mourned grievously for the bodily pains which I felt, and for lack of spiritual and bodily consolation [310].)

It can be concluded, therefore, that any pain which Julian feels during the showings is *itself* a showing, a creation or gift of God meant to aid in her instruction, as all the showings are intended to do, and not simply a part of her illness, which serves as the framework for the showings.

A privie working of god. Julian is astonished by the sudden change in her health and speculates that it is a secret act of God: "I merveiled of this sodeyn change, for my thought that it was a privie working of god, and not of kynd" (3:292). Colledge and Walsh draw attention to the fact that Julian seems to have intended her readers to draw a particular conclusion from this sudden return to health:

Julian treats her cure as miraculous, in the strict theological sense, by applying the criteria demanded, then as now, in causes of canonization: it was so sudden as to be outside the natural processes of recovery; it was not a medicinal cure; and it was complete.³⁶

We may also add that at a later point in *The Showings* when Julian does describe the miraculous her description allows for her cure to fit into that category:

³⁶ Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 69. They also claim that this miraculous cure was "God's immediate preparation for her to receive the showing," a preparation which I have discussed above (Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 73).

It is knowyn that before myracles come sorows and angwyssch and trobyll, 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 þat of the hygh myght and wysdom and goodnesse of god, shewyng hys vertu and the joyes of hevyn, so as it may be in thys passyng lyfe, and that for the strengthyng of our feyth, and encrese oure hoope in charyte (36:440-41).

(It is known that before miracles come sorrows and anguish and trouble, and that because we ought to know our own weakness and the harm that we have fallen into through sin, to humble us and make us cry to God for help and grace. And afterwards great miracles come, and that is from God's great power and wisdom and goodness, showing his might and the joys of heaven, so much as this may be in this passing life, and that is for the strengthening of our faith, and as this may increase our hope in love [240-41].)

By appealing to these theological categories Julian was influencing her readers to the fullest extent possible to accept her as an appropriate vehicle for the revelation of God.

Julian tells us that "by the feeling of this ease I trusted never the more to haue liued, ne the feeling of this ease was no full ease to me" (3:292). Her immediate explanation of this lack of ease with her apparent cure is that she had set her heart to accept death and felt a little cheated by the outcome. However, I think there is more underlying her discomfort than simply frustrated piety. In her presentation of the vision of the little thing no bigger than a hazelnut Julian says that humanity will never be satisfied by resting in anything less than God:

And this is the cause why that no sowle is in reste till it is noughted of all thinges that is made. When she is wilfully noughted for loue, to haue him that is all, then is she able to receive ghostly reste (5:301).³⁷

³⁷ Note the similarity between Julian's description of the soul being "noughted of all thinges that is
(continued...)

(And this is the reason why no soul is at rest until it has despised as nothing all things which are created. When it by its will has become nothing for love, to have him who is everything, then is it able to receive spiritual rest [184].)

The Showings is a book about the comfort and the rest that is God. The illness and pain which Julian suffers serve as a foil to her message, highlighting and giving importance to the peace which she feels called to reiterate. When God takes away her pain and restores her to *bodily rest*, the 'post-showing' author looks back at that moment and realizes that this kind of rest is no longer sufficient. This bodily ease is not full ease, now that rest in God has been revealed.

I would that his paynes were my paynes. Just as suddenly as Julian experiences ease, does a thought come to her mind: "that I should desyer the second wound of our lordes gifte and of his grace" (3:292). Here she mentions the "second wound". We need to remember that Julian requested three *gifts* of God (to see Jesus' pain, to feel a sickness and to be wounded) and that the third gift comprised three *wounds* (contrition, compassion and longing for God). When she says that it came into her mind to ask for the second wound, we naturally assume that she means compassion. But she confuses us by describing this "second wound" in this way: "that my bodie might be fulfilled with mynd and feeling of his blessed passion." This is a

³⁷(...continued)

made" and the cloud of forgetting as described in *The Cloud of Unknowing*: "just as this cloud of unknowing is above you, between you and your God, in the same way you must put beneath you a cloud of forgetting, between you and all the creatures that have ever been made." *Cloud* LI, 128. This is a traditional instruction in the Western type of apophatic mysticism stemming from the Dionysian tradition. I am not suggesting that Julian of Norwich advocated the Dionysian method, because she certainly sees God in all things made. For an exploration of this possibility see Gillespie and Ross, "The Apophatic Image."

description of both the first and the second gifts, the former for *mynd* of the Passion and the latter for a painful illness. This is *not* a description of the second wound, compassion.

To confuse things even more, Julian describes the request as a desire for "feeling of his blessed passion, *as I had before praied*, for I would that his paynes were my paynes (emphasis mine)." She makes it sound as if she had prayed to feel the pains of Jesus in her own body, yet when she had reported the request for the second gift earlier she had clearly asked to be like a watcher at the Crucifixion ("I would haue be one of them and haue suffered with them" [2:286]), as I have already shown.

How are we to understand Julian's words "I would that his paynes were my paynes"? She helps us out with this herself. The first clue is her phrase, "as I had before praied." As we have seen, in her own account of her requests she did not ask for Christ's pain, but for the pain of Jesus' mother and lovers at the Crucifixion. The second clue is her use of the word *wound*, not *gift* and, later in this same paragraph that we are studying, the word *compassion*. She says, "I would that his paynes were my paynes, with compassion and afterward langyng to god." Compassion and longing for God are the second and third wounds she requests from God in the third gift, the first being contrition. We are not dealing with her first two requests at all, but with her third request for three wounds. Lastly, Julian says, "in this I desyred never no bodily sight ne no maner schewing of god, but compassion as me thought that a kynd sowle might haue with our lord Jesu" (3:292-93). She may say "I would

that his paynes were my paynes" but as we tease apart what she means in this paragraph all the clues point to the conclusion that she intends us to understand that she has not asked *to participate in* but *to watch* the Crucifixion and to feel it as she watches.³⁸ This is an important conclusion and one which we will refer to below in the discussion of the Eighth Showing when Julian speaks of suffering pain with Jesus.³⁹

My deadly body. The last thing that Julian says in this third chapter is, "with him I desyred to suffer, liuyng in my deadly bodie, as god would giue me grace" (3:293). Having just asked for compassion, we understand that Julian's longing to suffer with Jesus is a repetition of the desire for vicarious suffering. What is interesting here is the additional idea of "deadly bodie." Julian has just used this adjective *deadly* in the previous sentence, referring to Jesus' great sacrifice in becoming "a deadly man." Here the meaning is clearly 'mortal,' or 'finite.' The immediate reiteration of the adjective draws this meaning forward with full force, so that the reader comprehends that Julian is speaking about her own mortal body. She uses this phrase, "deadly flesh," and its companion phrase, "deadly life," throughout her text with the clear connotation of mortality. However, in the context of chapter three, this first iteration of "deadly bodie" resonates with yet another layer of meaning. Julian has invoked her own death and has been brought to its brink by a

³⁸ Colledge and Walsh also noticed the difficulty in this section, but they treat it very quickly concluding that Julian has merged a description of the first gift with a prayer for the second wound. They do not draw any implications from this (*A Book of Showings*, 73).

³⁹ See below p. 60.

mysterious illness which has invaded her body with a creeping mortification. Now she speaks of suffering "liuyng in my deadly bodie." She has been partially restored to health but sees her body, which has so recently failed her, as traitorous, fallible, perhaps even 'other' than her true self, which will endure beyond the demise of that deadly body.

Often tymes feeling of wele and of wooe: The Seventh Showing

Since it is the project of this chapter to explore Julian's personal experience of pain we will advance through the text from Chapter Three to Chapter Fifteen, where her own pain intrudes again in the Seventh Showing. The first six showings are the crowning with thorns, the discolouration of Jesus' face, God in a point doing all things, the scourging of Jesus' body, the fiend overcome and the heavenly thanks of God for the souls of the saved. In these first six showings, Julian has functioned as a witness, as the recipient of images, words and impressions, and as an occasional interlocutor. Her participation in the showings has been at the level of a spectator. It is the Seventh Showing, with its alternating feelings of comfort and of pain, which will break open the protective shell within which Julian has rested untouched and start to draw her personally into the process of the showings. This process of integration will continue and deepen in the Eighth Showing.

Evyrlastyng suernessee. Julian tells us that the Seventh Showing was "a sovereyne gostely lykyng in my soule" (15:354). As Nicholas Watson points out,

this is an unusual description of subtle finesse.⁴⁰ Julian speaks elsewhere of the three modes of the showings she experienced, but none of these quite comprehends the feelings she experiences in this Seventh Showing: "All this was shewde by thre partes, that is to sey by bodyly syght, and by worde formyde in my vnderstandyng, and by goostely syght" (9:323).⁴¹ In this same chapter she will call what she experiences a "vision" (15:355), and yet there is nothing even remotely visual about what takes place.⁴² Clearly the "soveryene gostely lykyng" (15:334) is a fourth mode of revelation or level of communication beyond either images or words. Julian is precise in saying, however, that it takes place "in my soule."

The first feeling that flashes over Julian she describes in detail:

In thys lykyng I was fulfyllde of the Evyrlastyng suernesse, myghtely fastnyd without any paynefulle drede. This felyng was so glad and so goostely that I was all in peese, in eese and in reste, that ther was nothyng in erth that shulde haue grevyd me (15:354).

(In this delight I was filled full of everlasting surety, powerfully secured without any painful fear. This sensation was so welcome and

⁴⁰ Nicholas Watson, "The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: The Exeter Symposium 5*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), 90.

⁴¹ The classic categorization for visionary modes comes from Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, 12.6.15 where he divides the modes into intellectual, imaginary and corporal forms. Julian's three modes do seem to correspond to Augustine's "bodyly syght" (corporal), "worde formyde in my vnderstandyng" (intellectual), "goostely syght" (imaginary). Spiritual counsellors have traditionally warned about visions and locutions because of their unverifiable nature and the danger of demonic origins or influence. Hilton says, "they are not greatly to be desired or carelessly recieved, unless a soul can by the spirit of discretion know the good from the evil, and so escape beguilement" (*Scale* 1.10.82). As usual, Teresa of Avila's advice in this regard is both pithy and to the point: "Do not think, even if the locutions are from God, that you are better because of them, for He spoke frequently with the Pharisees" (*The Interior Castle*, tr. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez [The Classics of Western Spirituality] [New York: Paulist Press, 1979], Sixth Dwelling Place 3.4.120).

⁴² Watson uses this as an example both of the subtlety of Julian's language and as a warning against textual fundamentalism or literalism which he feels mars much of Julian scholarship. I am inclined to agree with him ("The Trinitarian Hermeneutic," 80).

so spiritual that I was wholly at peace, at ease and at rest, so that there was nothing upon earth which could have afflicted me [204].)

The impression of this description is a feeling of great comfort. Here Julian opposes peace, ease and rest, the great triad promised in her text to all those who shall be saved, with "paynefulle drede." *Drede* is an important concept for Julian. In the Fifteenth Showing she tells us that the soul that trusts in God shall fear nothing but God, "alle other dredes, she [the soul] set them among passions and bodely sicknesse and imaginations" (65:630). These "other dredes" Julian describes in more detail following the last showing. They are dread of a fray, dread of pain, and doubtful dread. The only proper and beneficial dread is reverent dread, fear of the Lord (74:673).⁴³ The dread mentioned here, though, is not one of these specific forms of dread, but just generally painful dread.

In her second description of the joyous feeling Julian adds a further level of description. She calls it, "the comfort and the rest in soule, lykyng and suernesse so blyssydfully and so myghtely that no drede, ne sorow, ne no payne bodely ne gostely that myght be sufferde shulde haue dyssesyde me" (15:355). There is a suggestion in the way in which Julian has phrased this ("no drede . . . that *myght* be sufferde *shulde* haue dyssesyde me") that she is claiming more than a feeling of ease. She seems to be saying that not only did she feel no pain or sorrow, but that anything of this sort which might be present would not have caused her discomfort. In other words, Julian is not setting up an opposition here simply between the absence or

⁴³ A proper fear of God was considered a necessary part of contrition and thus of justification because of Eccles 12:13: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whold duty of everyone." See Anselm of Canterbury, hom 1; *Summ Sententiarum* 6, 10; PL 176, 146.

presence of pain. She is opposing comfort, perhaps despite pain, and despair. A look at her description of the pain involved in this showing will clarify this point.

Irkenes of my selfe. After the feeling of comfort passes the first time, Julian tells us that "I was turned and left to my selfe in hevynes and werynes of my life and irkenes of my selfe, that vnneth [scarcely] I could haue pacience to lyue" (15:354). This is, perhaps, not quite what the reader expects. In the first movement of this showing, Julian has been given a feeling of comfort. In the next movement, we anticipate that she will be *given* another feeling, but this is not the case. Instead, the feeling of comfort is withdrawn, and Julian is left to herself. It is her raw, stark self which we and she encounter here, and with her characteristic honesty and humility she has not adorned it at all. She describes herself, without the comforting presence of God, as heavy, weary of life, and irksome, qualities scarcely recognizable in the joyful author who lovingly draws her readers towards God.⁴⁴ Julian calls this self-without-God "payne." Pain, in this sense, does not mean physical discomfort, such as Julian experienced during her illness when there was so much pain she feared that she was dying. This is pain of spirit which comes as desolation, depression, or despair.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Hilton describes this same experience of the withdrawal of grace and the stark self with which the contemplative is confronted: "It often happens that because of the corruption of human frailty this grace partly withdraws, allowing the soul to sink into its own carnal nature as it was before; and then the soul is in sorrow and pain, for it is blind and insipid and knows nothing good. It is weak and powerless, encumbered with the body and all the bodily senses; it seeks and longs for the grace of Jesus again; and it cannot find it. . . . His [Jesus Christ's] hiding is only a subtle testing of the soul; his showing is most merciful goodness for the comfort of the soul" (*Scale* 2.41.285).

⁴⁵ It is possible that Julian was experiencing what John of the Cross would later call the passive night
(continued...)

Now that oonn and now that other. The pain and the comfort alternate "about twenty tymes" (15:355) so that Julian is tossed from confidence to despair repeatedly and suddenly.⁴⁶ Neither the joy nor the pain are the point of this showing, but the alternation between the two.⁴⁷ Julian aptly draws the conclusion that "God wyll that we know that he kepyth vs evyr in lyke suer, in wo and in wele" (15:355).⁴⁸ She carefully points out that there was not enough time for her to sin between the moments, so that it was not her sin which brought on the pain. This is a most significant conclusion. Julian is forthrightly claiming that not all pain is caused by sin. There is pain in life and we must do more than just bear it. We must rise above and "pass ovur and holde vs in the endless lykyng that is god" (15:356).⁴⁹ Brant

⁴⁵(...continued)

of the spirit, a necessary phase if God is going to draw the soul to godself in mystical union. However, I am inclined to agree with John P. Clark and Rosemary Dorward when they say, concerning Hilton but just as applicable in the case of Julian of Norwich, "We must refrain from trying to impose upon the medieval contemplatives a pattern derived from a sixteenth-century model" ("Introduction," *Scale*, 49).

⁴⁶ Compare this with Underhill's description of what she calls the "Game of Love:" "rapid oscillations between a joyous and a painful consciousness seem to occur most often at the beginning of a new period of the Mystic Way . . . for these mental states are, as a rule, gradually not abruptly established. Mystics call such oscillations the 'Game of Love' in which God plays, as it were, 'hide and seek' with the questing soul" (*Mysticism*, 383).

⁴⁷ Happold gives this experience of Julian's as an example of the precarious nature of progress in the Mystic Way, from Purgation through Illumination to Union (*Mysticism*, 56). I think this mis-represents the nature of Julian's experience, which does not seem to be a flickering between states, so much as an actual showing in itself. Treating it as such, Julian gleans the important lessons which I adduce in this section.

⁴⁸ A similar conclusion about God's constancy through pain and joy is drawn by Bernard of Clairvaux: "He pretends to pass by, but he goes only to be recalled, for the Word is not irrevocable. He comes and goes as he pleases, as if visiting the soul at dawn, and suddenly putting it to the test. His going is part of his purpose; his return is at his will. Both are in perfect wisdom. Only he knows his reasons" (*Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G. R. Evans, [The Classics of Western Spirituality] [New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987], 254). See all of Bernard's Sermon 74, which expounds Song of Songs 2:17, *revertere dilecte mi*.

⁴⁹ Colledge and Walsh feel that Julian's instructions here are solely for contemplatives and address "how the contemplative is to conduct himself in times of dereliction" (*A Book of Showings*, 90). This misses the point entirely that this showing was not about either desolation or consolation but about the alternation

(continued...)

- Pelphrey, a thoughtful commentator on Julian's theology, summarizes her instruction this way: "God is seen to work *in* the circumstances of ordinary life, rather than in spite of them."⁵⁰

Julian also reveals another aspect to this revelation, that "blysse is lastyng without ende, and payne is passyng, and shall be brought to nowght to them that shall be savyd" (15:356). Unlike the first part of her understanding from this showing, this moral is not evident from what she has just experienced. It is also partially inconsistent with her learning from the Ninth Showing. There she sees Jesus' face turn from agony to joy and she hears him ask, "Wher is now any poynt of thy payne or of thy anguyss?" (21:379). She understands from him at that point that the pains we feel on earth unite us to Jesus on the cross, and earn honours for us in heaven almost, it would seem, on a one-to-one basis:

And for this lytyle 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 worschyppe be with hym in his kyngdom" (21:381).

(And for this little pain which we suffer here we shall have an exalted and eternal knowledge in God which we could never have without it. And the harder our pains have been with him on his cross, the greater will our glory be with him in his kingdom [215].)

⁴⁹(...continued)

between the two. Julian's conclusion rises above the narrow moral proposed by Colledge and Walsh, and is certainly not restricted to a contemplative readership.

⁵⁰ Brant Pelphrey, *Christ Our Mother: Julian of Norwich*, vol. 7 in *The Way of the Christian Mystics*, ed. Noel Dermot (Wilmington, Del: Michael Glazier, 1989), 190. Pelphrey comments in another work, "God does not visit us with pain from time to time because of our 'sins,' but pain is the milieu in whcch (sic) we live, because we live in sin" (*Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich*, [Salzburg Studies in English Literature 92 no. 4] ed. James Hogg [Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1982], 257).

Here, pain is not "brought to nought" but plays a significant part in determining what we shall experience in heaven. I cannot explain this inconsistency in a writer whose thought is otherwise impeccably uniform, unless it is to suggest that by the phrase "shall be brought to nought" Julian intends that the pains *per se* will be felt no more, and only their rewards shall exist in paradise.

It is Julian's personal experience during this showing and the realizations that spring from it which authorize her to speak, even to instruct her readers. The fact that this showing involved Julian's own self, that it became part of her lived experience, means that it is *she* who is speaking to us in the hortatory section and not simply God's voice being parroted by a passive visionary. The Seventh Showing has created Julian as an author in a way which the previous showings did not; the Eighth Showing will push her even further.

The last paynes of Christ: The Eighth Showing

The Eighth Showing is both long and complex. It comprises five chapters and has both a main bodily showing as well as a number of tangential thoughts, conversations, events and ghostly showings. For our purposes we will focus our attention at the point where Julian speaks of suffering pain with Jesus on the cross, at the end of the Eighteenth Chapter and the beginning of the Nineteenth.

Cristes paynes fylled me fulle of peynes. Julian tells us that she was shown "a parte of hys passyon nere his dyeng" (16:357). This prompts her to reflect on the

process of Jesus' dying, through dehydrating, hanging and bleeding, after which reflections she tells us about her own participation in this showing:

The shewyng of Cristes paynes fylled me fulle of peynes, for I wyste welles he suffryde but onys, but as he wolde shewe it me and fylle me with mynde, as I had before desyerde. And in alle thys tyme of Cristes presens, I felte no peyne, but for Cristes paynes (17:364).

(This revelation of Christ's pains filled me full of pains, for I know well that he suffered only once, but it was his will now to show it to me and fill me with mind of it, as I had asked before. And in all this time that Christ was present to me, I felt no pain except for Christ's pains [209].)

Julian is telling us about her own pain in watching this piercing vision of the dying Jesus. But what kind of pain is it? Is she sharing the pain of Jesus on the cross, as she seems to say in the last phrase cited? Or is Julian feeling the pain of compassion which she had prayed for as a youth? Scholars are divided on this question. Enid Dinnis, an early and extremely perceptive commentator on Julian, states that the anchoress' deepest learning is based "upon the bodily sufferings, so unswervingly encountered, and shared."⁵¹ Colledge and Walsh clearly agree, saying that it is a "ghostly sight" that Julian "begins herself to feel his sufferings, *as I had before desyerde* (93, emphasis theirs, indicating citation). And most recently Karma Lochrie has reiterated this opinion in her discussion of this passage, speaking of "a certain physical and affective re-enactment of the Passion [which] attends mystical recollection."⁵²

Julian does say, "the shewyng of Cristes paynes fylled me fulle of peynes,"

⁵¹ Enid Dinnis, "Juliana's Bread," *Catholic World* 116 (1923): 609.

⁵² Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 34.

and "I felte no peyne, but for Cristes paynes" (17:364). But she also says, "he wolde shewe it me and *fylle me with mynde, as I had before desyerde*" (17:364, emphasis mine). We have already clarified that what Julian originally desired in her request for the first gift, "mynd of the passion" (2:285), was a feeling of compassion engendered by the experience of attending the Crucifixion. With the use of the phrase "fylle me with mynde" and the reference to her earlier requests it seems as if Julian is deliberately glossing her statement about feeling Jesus' pains. Her readers should hear the echo of her earlier requests and understand that in this instance it is the pain of compassion which she is feeling, not a participatory pain.

Other scholars have interpreted Julian in this way. Grace Warrack comments that "the Saviour's bodily pain is felt by Julian so fully in 'mind' that she feels it indeed as if it were bodily anguish she bore."⁵³ Grant Pelphrey takes pains to clarify that Julian does seek and suffer pain, but that it is the pain brought on by compassionate love, not the pain of Crucifixion *per se*.⁵⁴ Most recently Ellen Ross remarks that "the intensity of [Julian's] pain in watching Christ suffer reveals to her the depth of her love for Christ."⁵⁵

We have more than simply the echo of the first request to assist us in interpreting Julian's statements about feeling Christ's pains.⁵⁶ At the beginning of this

⁵³ Warrack, *Revelations of Divine Love*, lxvi. She also says, "Julian had prayed to feel Christ's dying pains . . . and the visionary sight of His pain in the Face of the Crucifix filled her with pain as it grew upon her" (lxv). I have shown why I cannot agree with this reading of Julian's earliest request, but Warrack's second claim is substantiated in the text.

⁵⁴ Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning*, 259, 260. Recall Underhill's comments about mystics deliberately seeking pain in order to purify the self, cited above, p. 26, note 7.

⁵⁵ Ross, "She Wept and Cried," 55.

⁵⁶ In the short text Julian reports that it was at this point that her mother moved to shut her eyes,

(continued...)

Eighth Showing Julian introduces a subsidiary showing of Jesus' face and describes the changes it exhibits as he dies. She says of this process, "this was a peynfulle chaungyng, to se this depe dying" (16:357). It is possible that this *painful changing* is what is experienced by Jesus; but it seems much more likely that Julian is not describing Jesus' feelings here but her own. She is saying that simply to watch the changes that attend his dying is a painful process for her.

Again, in Chapter Seventeen, Julian mentions her own suffering while watching the Passion unfold before her eyes. She sees that the skin on Jesus' forehead is ragged and torn, hanging down as if it would drop. She says, "that was grete sorow and drede to me, for me thought that I wolde nott for my life haue seen it fall" (17:362).

Twice already in the Eighth Showing Julian has recorded that she is suffering great pain and sorrow in seeing what is before her eyes. This fact, coupled with the verbal echoes of her first request in Chapter Two almost certainly indicates that she is not suffering Jesus' own pains in her body, but rather that she is suffering vicariously because of her compassion.⁵⁷

As a wrech I repentyd me. Returning to the end of Chapter Seventeen, we will continue to explore the intrusion of Julian's own experience into her text. Filled with

⁵⁶(...continued)

believing that she had died (ST 10:234). This lends weight to the thesis that the pains which Julian was feeling were not bodily, for she would certainly have cried out or indicated in some other way that she was alive and suffering greatly.

⁵⁷ One might also mention Julian's summary comment concerning this showing, made in the course of her report on the Thirteenth Showing: "[The Eighth Showing] wher in I had in part *felyng of þe sorow* of oure lady and of *hys tru frendys* that saw hys paynes" (333:428, emphasis mine).

the pain brought on by the activity of her own awakened sense of compassion, Julian suffers the deeper pain of regret:

Then 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 pryede it. For me thought my paynes passyd
ony bodely deth. (17:364)

(Then it came to me that I had little known what pain it was that I had asked, and like a wrech I regretted it, thinking that if I had known what it had been, I should have been reluctant to ask for it. For it seemed to me that my pains exceeded any mortal death [209].)

As understanding unfurls in her mind, Julian realizes that the great pain which she is suffering was brought on by the pious requests of her youth. With the same unvarnished honesty which we have encountered before the anchoress reports her spiritual weakness at this point in her text. She does this firstly because her honesty compels her to, but also for the reason alluded to above. The reader comes to believe that if Julian could have 'undone' her youthful desires at this point in the showings she would gladly have done so. In thus touching Julian's remorse the reader touches her or his own, and the text effects what it describes.

We should note that at this point of greatest pain, the anchoress essentially repudiates the work of God in herself. She has presented this perfectly so that we should understand. No detail has been omitted. Julian requested three gifts but forgot two of them. As the granting of the requests began, the memory of all returned and it is clear that Julian is interpreting her illness and the showings in light of these requests. At the point of her deepest involvement in the gifts of God, which have unexpectedly implicated her in the pain of the Passion through the action of compassion, Julian wishes to renounce her involvement in the revelation of God. It

seems too much. The inclusion of this aspect of Julian's experience in her text accomplishes two things for the author. First, it narratively reinforces the reality and depth of the pain which Julian was suffering; for, surely she who had longed so much for God would only repudiate God under extreme duress. Second, it uses Julian's own experience gently to instruct all of her readers on the nature of pain. She is tacitly acknowledging, and allowing all Christians to acknowledge, the reality and seriousness of suffering in one's life. Her interlude of remorse permits any of her readers or hearers who have suffered a great pain to realize how this can drive a wedge between oneself and God, just as it has done here for Julian, even if momentarily.⁵⁸

Helle is a nother peyne. Torn by a pain worse than dying, Julian wonders, "Is ony payne in helle lyk thys?" (17:365). Her question implies others to which she gives no voice: Am I in hell now? What have I done to deserve this? Even having to ask the question is a kind of hell of its own, and marks one of the lowest points in Julian's spiritual experience as recorded in *The Showings*.

Julian is answered, "Helle is a nother peyne, for there is dyspyer. But of alle peyne þat leed to saluacion, thys is the most, to se the loue to suffer" (17:365). This response contains two interesting nuances. The first is the implicit qualification of the pain which Julian is suffering. She has already told her readers that she thought the pain exceeded even bodily death; but here she is learning that there is indeed a greater

⁵⁸ Petroff also speaks of pain functioning as a wedge, but she is speaking of the way the mystic can separate herself from the experience of pain so that in suffering with Jesus her pain may be redemptive, as his pain was redemptive (Petroff, *Visionary Literature*, 12).

pain, a spiritual one, which by implication she is *not* suffering at that moment: despair.⁵⁹

The second nuance that may be read in God's answer to Julian concerns the statement "of all the payne þat leed to saluacion . . . " (17:365). Seeing the loved one suffer is the greatest of all the pains which lead to salvation. One is immediately drawn to question *how* this pain might lead to salvation and *which other* pains also lead to this end. It is Jesus' suffering which brings salvation to humankind, and Julian is in full agreement with this.⁶⁰ However, she sees a role in salvation history for human pain and suffering, as we shall explore more fully below in Chapter Two.⁶¹ It will suffice here to draw attention to this brief summary of Julian's thought and to show how it is integrated throughout her text, while deferring further discussion of this point until later.

To se the louer to suffer. Julian concludes her interlude of suffering with a significant realization: "that I louyed Crist so much above my selfe that ther was no payne that myght be sufferyd lyke to that sorow that I had to see hym in payne" (17:365). The full implications of the operation of compassion in her soul are becoming clear to the mystic. We have noted how it is the presence of compassion

⁵⁹ For Julian's teaching on despair see the Sixteenth Showing, where she makes a connection between the third great fear and despair: "Doughtfulle drede, in as moch as it drawyth to dyspeyer, god wylle have it turnyd in vs into loue by tru knowyng of loue, that is to sey that þe bytternesse of dou3te be turned in to swetnes of kynde loue by grace, for it may nevyr plese oure lorde that his servanntes dou3te in his goodnesse" (74:673).

⁶⁰ For the development of this doctrine in the Middle Ages see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, 3: The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 90-92; 136-37; 113-114.

⁶¹ See below, p. ?.

which causes her to suffer when she first sees Jesus suffering (17:364); here Julian is understanding for the first time that she will never have more pain than the sorrow which compassion creates in her. This is not Jesus' pain, it is her own pain, created not by Crucifixion but by empathy. It surpasses all bodily pain including the pain of death and surely it is a pain which she must live with, although she herself does not say this, each time she looks on her crucifix and sees "hym that is alle my lyfe, alle my blysse, and alle my joy suffer" (17:365).

Thou art my hevyn. In Chapter Eighteen, which immediately follows this agony of compassion, Julian understands that she is experiencing the same feeling which grieved Mary and all of Jesus' disciples and true lovers at the time of his Crucifixion (18:366). She also learns that all of creation was in some way caught into this moment of pain so that the suffering extended to every living thing (17:367).⁶²

With her usual interweaving of reportage, commentary, and subsequent reflection, Julian has led us away from the actual events of the Eighth Showing. At the beginning of Chapter Nineteen she draws us back to her moment of agony with the words, "In this tyme . . . ", referring back to her pain-filled gaze on the cross. She tells us that she dared not remove her eyes from the crucifix "for besyde the crosse was no surenesse fro drede of fendes" (19:370).

Then a voice seems to speak in her mind, inviting her to shift her gaze from the cross before her eyes to heaven above her, where God must surely be. This

⁶² See below p. 129,

recalls the scene, examined above, where on her death bed Julian sets her eyes upward "into heauen, where I trusted to come by the mercie of god" (3:291).⁶³ She was instructed at that time by her cleric to lower her eyes and she complied, thinking that she might "longar dure to looke even forth then right vp" (3:291). The current invitation is for Julian once again to look to heaven. The anchoress tells us that she fully understands that nothing is going to harm her, but even so she refuses to remove her gaze from her suffering Lord:

I answeyrd inwardly with alle the myght of my soule, and sayd: Nay. I may nott, for thou art my hevyn. Thys I seyde for I wolde nott; for I had levyr a bene in that payne tylle domys day than haue come to hevyn other wyse than by hym. For I wyst wele that he that bounde me so sore, he shuld vnbynd me whan he wolde (19:371).

(I answered inwardly with all the power of my soul, and said: No, I cannot, for you are my heaven. -I said this because I did not want to look up, for I would rather have remained in that pain until Judgment Day than have come to heaven any other way than by him. For I knew well that he who had bound me so fast would unbind me when it was his will [211-12].)

She chooses Jesus for her heaven. He becomes her portal to a spiritual dimension which co-exists with her own. She has but to desire and to choose. Both desire and choice are deliberate actions of the will which she exerts "with alle the myght of [her] soule." Just as Julian's earlier assent to be at divine disposal marked a great 'Yes' to God (3:290), so too here do we find a mighty 'Yes,' in which Julian heartily commits herself to the process in which she is involved.⁶⁴

Julian has progressed an enormous amount psychologically and spiritually in

⁶³ See above p. 41.

⁶⁴ She reiterates later in her text the importance for all Christians to choose Jesus: "and thus I vnder stode that what man or woman wylfully chosyth god in this lyfe for loue, he may be suer pat he is louyd without end" (65:627).

just a very short time narratively, although this compactness of text may hide many years of fruitful reflection. She has come from a point at which she could repent of her desire for compassion because the pain it engenders in her is so great, to a point at which she can say that she would sooner suffer that same pain for all of eternity than come to heaven in any other way than by her newly found portal, the face of the suffering Christ. She knows that there are other ways to heaven. She has just been offered one in her reason: simply look up. But she has found the way that is right for her, and painful as it may be spiritually, she would sooner suffer that than opt for what would be to her, a lesser way.

Only in payne. Julian has not just exerted her will to choose Jesus as her heaven, she has chosen him "in alle this tyme of passion and sorow" (19:371). The author makes a point of this to draw it to her readers' attention. Gripped by a pain deeper than any she had imagined possible, transfixed by the vision of her saviour in the throws of his own punishing agony, Julian learns that despite the reality of pain she can choose the good. In so choosing she also effects good by participating in the working out of her own salvation. Her deepest message to all is to do the same themselves, "to chese Jhesu only to [your] hevyn in wele and in woe" (19:371). Commenting on this aspect of Julian's learning, Marion Glasscoe adds this thought: "Julian senses that there is no way to [Jesus'] bliss (sustaining love, truth, health and joy) except through suffering in time."⁶⁵ Julian is integrating the reality of pain-as-

⁶⁵ Glasscoe, "Endles Knowyng in God," 234. Glasscoe also adds, "this truth has its epiphany in her physical inability to take her eyes from the cross." If Julian had been physically unable to remove her eyes from the cross, then she could not have truly chosen Jesus for her heaven by refusing to lift her eyes to the

suffering and her growing knowledge of God as love in a way which does not demean either truth⁶⁶.

And anone my sycknes cam a3ene: Chapters 66, 67 and 69

Once more we will move quickly forward through the text to the next point at which Julian's physical pain emerges as a factor in her account. In the interlude between the agony of the Eighth Showing and what she experiences at the hands of the devil immediately prior to the Sixteenth Showing Julian does not mention any personal physical suffering at all. She does tell us about her mental anguish on several occasions, primarily at the point where she is seeking to understand how it could be that God does not blame humanity for sin (50:512). It is this quest for understanding which leads directly to the example of the lord and servant and to all that she learns from that. It is only towards the end of the showings that Julian undergoes another experience of pain which draws her physical self into the learning process.⁶⁷

⁶⁵(...continued)

celestial heaven. Glasscoe's interpretation not only nullifies the force of Julian's choice, it also defies the literal interpretation of her words and the point of her consequent pride: "this hath evyr be a comfort to me, that I chose Jhesu to be my hevyn by his grace" (19:371).

⁶⁶ Glasscoe draws attention to this, saying, "For Julian the most crucial element in her visionary experience is her identification with the reality of pain and sin . . . and her growth during this experience in assurance that, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, 'al shal be wel' all shall be redeemed" (107, 104). Julian is learning that heaven is large enough to encompass both our pain and Jesus' suffering. It is for the whole person. See also Ritamary Bradly, "Julian on Prayer," in *Peace Weavers*, eds. Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols, vol. 2 of *Medieval Religious Women*, (Cistercian Studies Series 72) (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 297, 299; and Tugwell, "Julian of Norwich," 197.

⁶⁷ Instances in the text where Julian mentions her mental suffering include 29:412; 37:442; 47:497; 50:511; 50:512; 64:619.

All my body was fullyllyd with sycknes. As preface to the Sixteenth Showing, which Julian tells us is "conclusyon and confirmation to all the xv" (66:632), the mystic experiences an ordeal of pain, doubt, treason and torment. She humbly ascribes what occurs to her own failings: "furst me behovyth to telle yow as anenst [concerns] my febylnes, wretchydnes and blyndnes" (66:632). It is highly unlikely that any reader having followed Julian thus far in her experience would describe her as feeble, wretched or blind, but these are the ways in which she describes herself, even after many years have passed and she has had the opportunity to modify or remove her self-castigation. Obviously, the event which gave rise to these feelings struck a deep chord of shame which lingered with her ever after.⁶⁸

The accomplished narratrix reminds her readers of the original illness which opened the door to the showings so many pages ago. "I haue seyde at the begynnyng, wher it seyth: And in this sodeynly all my payne was taken fro me; of whych payne I had no grefe ne no dysesses as long as þe xv shewynges lastyd in shewyng" (66:632). The mention of the sickness at the beginning of her account has the effect of drawing that moment and this into proximity, so that the former may inform the latter.⁶⁹ The reader is reminded of Julian's advancing paralysis, of her belief that she was going to die, and of her willingness to surrender piously to God's will for her. Holding these in mind, as well as the graces and comforts Julian has received from God during the showings, highlights her despair and misery at the

⁶⁸ This stark representation of herself recalls the self-without-God which she experienced as part of the Seventh Showing. See above, p. 57.

⁶⁹ Panichelli suggests that it is not the same illness which returns but a different one, this one caused by Satan's return "and his fiends of doubt and denial" (Panichelli, "Finding God," 308). This does not honour Julian's own statement that links this illness and the first one, "my sycknes cam aȝene" (66:632), and destroys the clever comparison established between the two which I am suggesting was quite intentional.

return of the illness. She realizes not only that she is going to live, rather than being caught up to heaven as she has anticipated, but also that she is still in pain. This is too much:

And anone my sycknes cam aȝene, furst in my hed, with a sownde and anoyse. And sodeynly all my body was fulfyllied 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 hevvyly for feelyng of my bodely paynes, and for fautyng of comferte gostly and bodely (66:632).

(And presently my sickness returned, first in my head, with a sound and a din; and suddenly all my body was filled with sickness as it was before, and I was as barren and dry as if the consolation which I had received before were trifling, and, as the wretched creature that I am, I mourned grievously for the bodily pains which I felt, and for lack of spiritual and bodily consolation [310].)

Julian makes it clear that two things are operating together to drive her to despair. One is the return of bodily pain and feelings of illness accompanied by a beating in the ears. This in itself is not enough reason for Julian to lose heart, for we have seen her suffer physically both at the beginning and in the middle of her experience without any hint of demoralization. It is the sudden feeling of abandonment by God which attends the physical symptoms which is the decisive factor at this point.⁷⁰ The effect of the feeling of spiritual aridity is to decrease her

⁷⁰ In the classic terminology of mysticism as established by John of the Cross, this experience of abandonment by God is called the Dark Night of the Soul. For a satisfactory introduction to the experience in the work of a number of mystics see Underhill, *Mysticism*, 380-412. Bernard McGinn mentions the Dark Night of the Soul in relation to Julian of Norwich, but not at this point in her experience. He suggests that her flash of despair in Chapter Sixty Four is "as close as Julian comes to something like a 'dark night'" ("The English Mystics," in *Christian Spirituality: The High Middle Ages and the Reformation*, eds. Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, vol. 17 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* [New York: Crossroad, 1988], 204, note 17):

Afore this tyme i had grete longyng and desyer of goddys gyfte to be delyuerde of this worlde and of this lyfe. For oft tymes I behelde þe woo that is here and þe wele and the blessyd beyng that is there; and if there had no payne ben in this lyfe but the absens of oure lorde, me thought some tyme þat it was more than I myght bere, and this made me to morne and besely to longe, and also of my owne wretchydnesse, slowth and werynesse, þat my lykyd not lo lyue and to traveyle as me felle to do (64:619-20).

(continued...)

resiliency as regards the physical suffering, so that the bodily pains become a significant source of demoralization, where originally they had been heralded as sure signs of the working of God in her life.⁷¹

Not only does Julian interpret her pain differently during this interlude, but the physical suffering has a different effect on her. In its first iteration Julian's pain was a purge to make her clean, a tool to draw her spiritually closer to God, a sign of God's favour, and a kind of unspoken testing ground to prepare her for the showings. Here, at the point in time which Julian must have believed was the end of the showings, her pain washes over her as the glorious presence of God recedes, a return to frail humanity after intimate consort with the divine. The disparity between the two pushes the mystic to a betrayal of her God so profound that she seems not to have forgiven herself even after many years. She may, however, have come to understand it, for she has left the clues in her text for her readers to piece together the cataclysmic loss she was experiencing, as we have just done.

A religious comes to Julian and in asking how she was feeling elicits the response that "I had ravyd to day" (66:633). The word *raving* is aptly chosen because it allows an explanation of the fifteen showings experienced thus far, without

⁷⁰(...continued)

(Before this time, I had great longing and desire of God's gift to be delivered from this world and from this life. For often I beheld the woe that there is here and the good and the blessed being that is there; and if there had been no pain in this life except the absence of our Lord, it seemed to me sometimes that that was more than I could bear, and this made me to mourn and diligently long, and also over my own wretchedness, sloth and weariness, so that I had no pleasure in living and labouring as way my duty [305-306].)

Hilton describes a similar sense of divine abandonment: "a person has first to suffer many temptations, and by the malice of the Enemy these temptations often come to some men and women in various ways after comfort is withdrawn. For instance, when the devil perceives that devotion is greatly removed, so that the soul is left naked, as it were, for a time" (*Scale* 1.37.107).

⁷¹ Pelphrey sees Julian's despair at this moment as the actualization of compassion in her "for her fellow-men by suffering their despair herself" (*Love Was His Meaning*, 211).

conceding God's part in any of them.

The response of the religious, who "loght [laughed] lowde and interly [entirely]" (66:633), serves immediately to validate Julian's dismissive interpretation of the showings. It is the laughter of approval, of collusion, of understanding and appreciation, even of sympathy, which Julian has evoked. She has but to remain silent at this point and she will have won an ecclesiastically powerful ally in dismissing the visions. But she does not remain silent. We cannot know if it was in a further effort to solicit support for her rash interpretation of events or if it was in response to an unspoken uneasiness over her manipulation of the showings that drove her on. She speaks one more sentence and suddenly the religious takes her seriously:

And I seyde: The crosse that stode before my face, me thought it bled fast; and with this worde the person þat I spake to waxsed all sad, and merveylyd. And anone I was sore ashamyd and astonyd for my rechelesnesse, and I thought: this man takyth sadly the lest worde that I myght sey, that saw no more thereof (66:633).

(And I said that it seemed to me that the cross which stood in front of my face bled profusely; and when I said this the cleric I was speaking to became very serious, and was surprised. And at once I was very ashamed of my imprudence, and I thought: This man takes seriously every word I could say, who saw no more of this than I had told him [310-11].)

In commenting on this small drama Felicity Riddy suggests that the religious takes Julian's tale of a bleeding cross seriously because he is part of the clerical community which has access to visionary literature, and so he understands the repertoire of mystical behaviour and language:

He may well have owned a preaching handbook containing Latin miracles of the Virgin far stranger than what Julian says she has seen. His reading of her experience locates her in the visionary tradition established by such women as Elizabeth of Schönau, Mechtild of Hackeborn and Bridget of Sweden, and enables her to enter a textual

community. Outside that community, she feels herself to be isolated and meaningless.⁷²

Riddy's suggestion is insightful, and helps us to understand how it can be that a person of obvious honesty and integrity such as Julian can deny her Lord so quickly at the close of the revelations. Not only has Julian been plunged into *accidie* and pain, not only is she suffering a sort of withdrawal from the mystical presence of God, but also she has little comprehension of what has just happened for she may not be versed in visionary literature to know that she has spiritual colleagues.⁷³ The withdrawal of the showings has probably left her feeling bereft not only of God's presence but also of confidantes. After all, she even believes that she may not make confession to a priest, who of all people should be able to believe her tale (66:633).

A, loo how wrechyd I was! Julian attributes the "grett synne and [the] grett vnkyndnesse" of her betrayal of God to the pain that she is suffering: "that I for foly of felyng of a lytyle bodely payne so vnwysely left for þe tyme the comfort of all this blessyd shewyng of oure lorde god. Here may yow se what I am of my selfe" (66:634). Once again, she identifies the operations of her *self*, her soul stripped of the presence of God, as inadequate and distasteful.

Riddy says that the religious has "enabled [Julian] to become a member of a

⁷² Felicity Riddy, "Women Talking About the Things of God: A Late Medieval Sub-Culture" in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale, vol 17 in *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*, ed. Alastair Minnis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 115. Note that the continental women mystics' texts were being translated into Middle English by the 1390s (Baker, *Vision to Book*, 135, 139).

⁷³ Watson comments that Julian's request to see a dear friend in one of her visions suggests that she is familiar enough with visionary literature to know that insights of this sort are occasionally granted by God to a mystic (Watson, "The Composition," 649). I am inclined to agree with him, but this need not imply that she knew any more than one account, which would mean that Riddy's observation is still true.

group which authorizes her to speak . . . to assume her voices of power."⁷⁴ This is not apparent here at all. There is no glimmer yet that Julian is feeling empowered as a result of the external validation given to her experience by the religious. The only flicker of hope that she leaves us with, as her narrative moves from this transitional conversation to the dream-encounter with the devil, is the statement that she rested in her bed until night, "trustyng in his mercy" (66:634). There is a part of Julian's soul which has not despaired, which has not acquiesced to the denial of God, and which is prepared to hold tenaciously to trust when all else but pain and has abandoned her. The peaceful image of her waiting in trust is reinforced by her comment that she "ley styлле." Her body and her soul await the next event.

Me thought the fende sett hym in my throte. What occurs next is described by Julian as "this vgly shewyng" (67:636). In contrast to the other, presumably beautiful showings, this one comes dreamlike at night while she is sleeping, "and so was none other" (67:636).⁷⁵ Julian has taken pains to draw the readers' attention to the differences between what she is about to describe and the events she has already presented, as if to separate them clearly in the readers' minds from the working of God.

In the Short Text Julian writes simply, "And in my slepe atte the begynnyng me thought the fende sette hym in my throte and walde hafe strangelede me, botte he

⁷⁴ Riddy, "Women Talking," 115.

⁷⁵ Glasscoe points out how the chronology of *The Showings* follows the canonical hours of prayer. He comments that Julian's experience of sickness and doubt "represents in its own way both the desolation of the loss of Christ and his power to harrow hell not inappropriate to the Canonical time of day" ("Endles Knowyng in God," 222).

myght nought" (ST 21:267). In the Long Text this is expanded to include lurid details of the devil's face, hair, teeth and shape (LT 67:635-36). Even the simple word *strangelede* becomes "stoppyd my breth and kylde me" (67:636). The details are clearly intended to draw the reader more fully into Julian's experience, to feel with her the horror of the demonic encounter and to fear with her for her very life.⁷⁶

Ritamarly Bradley describes the impact of Julian's description in this way:

The attack is like a rape. She [Julian] feels overpowered. She resists with all her might, yet knows she cannot be safe without the help of others. Her experience epitomizes all the violence attempted on women in particular.⁷⁷

This is an intriguing simile. It is arresting to find that at least one early scholar dismissed Julian's obviously terrifying encounter with the devil in a manner reminiscent of the way in which critics scoff at a victim's experience of being physically violated. W. R. Inge reduced the encounter to "an ordinary nightmare," an observation which disregards or does not understand the significance which Julian placed on it.⁷⁸ As Richard Kieckheffer notes, demonic assaults were not uncommon in fourteenth-century spirituality and were probably based on the patristic model of

⁷⁶ Hilton warns his readers that "these temptations (of the Enemy) often come to some men and women in various ways after comfort is withdrawn" (*Scale*, 1.37.107). Teresa of Avila warns her nuns against this very event: "The Lord it seems, gives the devil license so that the soul might be tried and even be made to think it is rejected by God. Many are the things that war against it with an interior oppression so keen and unbearable that I don't know what to compare this experience to if not to the oppression of those that suffer in hell, for no consolation is allowed in the midst of this tempest" (*Interior Castle*, Sixth Dwelling Place 1.9.112). Duffy points out that demonic attacks were to be expected at the moment of death, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 316.

⁷⁷ Bradley, *Julian's Way*, 166. Bradley goes even further, relating violence against women to "their being reduced to powerlessness in the ecclesiastical and social order," but I feel that this exceeds the indications of the text and introduces ideas quite foreign to Julian's own.

⁷⁸ Inge, *Studies of English Mysticism*, 59.

incubi and succubae.⁷⁹ However, there is an unacknowledged sexual tension in the accounts by medieval women when they describe the attacks of the male devil on themselves, which Bradley has correctly identified in the case of Julian: "Body ne handes had ne none shaply, but with hys pawes he helde me in the throte, and woulde a stoppyd my breth and kylde me" (67: 636).⁸⁰

Bradley draws our attention to another intriguing aspect of this encounter, namely the fact that the devil attacks Julian at her throat. Apart from being the conduit for air, and thus for life, the throat is an organ of communication in so far as it is vital for the production of speech. The attack on her throat may also be understood as an attack on Julian's power of speech, even a perceived attack on her right to speak or to record *The Showings*. Julian may be conveying to us her own anxiety about being an organ for the word of God.⁸¹

A lyttyll smoke cam in at þe dorre. Smoke, heat, and a strong smell come also to assail the mystic and she fears that her room is being consumed by fire. But no, she is reassured, these things are imperceptible to those who are with her (67:637). This is one of the very few occasions when Julian records communication with the people who have obviously remained in her room to attend to the sick woman.⁸² In

⁷⁹ Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 177. See also Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 174; and Pelikan, *Growth of Medieval Theology*, 134-35.

⁸⁰ See also Petroff, *Visionary Literature*, 7; and Elizabeth Robertson, "The Corporeality of Female Sanctity in *The Life of Saint Margaret*" in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, eds. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 269.

⁸¹ Bradley, *Julian's Way*, 17.

⁸² Bradley makes the interesting suggestion that the "softe whystryn [whispering]" which so distracts
(continued...)

this instance, as perhaps with the religious who spoke to her before the devil's attack, her verbal exchange seems to serve as a touchstone of reality which she uses to orient herself appropriately.

The assurance by her attendants that the smoke, fire and smell are not visible to them gives Julian exactly the piece of information she needs with which to combat her spiritual assailant on its own terms. She tells us that she immediately blessed God, "for than wyst I wele it was the fende that was come only to tempte me" (67:637-38). The word *only* in Julian's text is a telling addition, which alerts us to an important change of heart which she has experienced. Her description of the devil at the beginning of this chapter, with his toothy grin and his "shrewde loke" was designed to convey her own sense of horror at the encounter she was experiencing. Here, however, she shows her own mastery of the situation by explaining that she was *only* being tempted, not actually threatened.⁸³ And, in contrast to the scene with the religious of just a few hours previous, in this instance of temptation Julian holds firm to her faith and does not renounce the showings: "And anon I toke me to thatoure lorde had shewed me on þe same daye with alle þe feyth of holy church, for I behelde it as both in one, and fled ther to as to my comfort" (67:638). Julian 'fails' the 'easy test' of witnessing to her spiritual encounter with God before the religious person; but she passes the harder test, the first demonic assault, with flying colours.

⁸²(...continued)

Julian in the next demonic interlude (69:648) may be the gentle recitation of beads by those attending her bed (*Julian's Way*, 167). If this is so it seems an odd note of ingratitude from one so considerate, for she makes no apology for being annoyed by the jangling and "besynes."

⁸³ She is acting out of the knowledge she gained in the Fifth Showing, where she learned that the power of Christ's Passion conquers the devil: "Here with is the feende ovyrcome" (13:347).

Grete reste and peas. The test being passed, her faith being proven, all vanishes away and she is "brought to grete reste and peas, without sycknesse of body or drede of conscience" (67:638). Julian's illness, which had returned at the cessation of the showings and persisted throughout this period of temptation, once again subsides so that the last showing may occur. The Sixteenth Showing follows immediately. The first failed temptation had resulted not in a feeling of peace and rest, but had concluded with Julian berating herself as a wretch, sinful and unkind to God (66:634). The 'rightness' of Julian's response to the second temptation is expressed both physically and spiritually with a body healed and a mind calmed.

The feende came agayne with his heet and with his stynch. The Sixteenth Showing is revealed to Julian in her newly purged state following her triumph over the devil. In this showing she is gently chastised by Jesus, "Wytt it now wele, it was no ravyng that thou saw to day, but take it and beleve it and kepe thee ther in and comfort thee ther with and trust therto, and thou shalt not be overcome" (68:646). At the close of this showing, when we expect Julian to rest in peaceful reassurance she is once again assailed by the devil, as though she comes to herself after her proximity to God in a weakened spiritual state, which the devil uses to advantage.

This attack is not like the first, in which an apparently corporeal being molested Julian's body. Here, the mystic is made "fulle besy," or distracted by stench, heat and noise. She speaks of these being vile, painful, dreadful, "traveylous" and understands that they are intended "to sterve me to dyspere" (69:648). This is the third temptation to deny her Lord, clearly reminiscent of Peter's denials following

Jesus' arrest (Luke 22:54-62), although Julian has already resisted this temptation once.

Mi bodely eye I sett. In this last temptation Julian is strengthened by God to cling to her faith, essentially by launching a counter-offensive of business of her own:

.Mi bodely eye I sett in the same crosse there I had seen in comforte afore þat tyme, my tong with spech of Cristes passion and rehersyng the feyth of holy church, and my harte to fasten on god with alle the truste and þe myghte (70:650-51).

(I set my eyes on the same cross in which I had seen comfort before, my tongue to speaking of Christ's Passion and repeating the faith of Holy Church, and my heart to clinging to God with all my trust and strength [316].)

With her eye set, her tongue engaged and her heart fastened on God Julian wrestles control of her faculties back from the forces trying to distract her and thus to bring her once again to abandon God in despair. The strategy of gazing fixedly on the cross brings us neatly back to the beginning of *The Showings*, where Julian had engaged in this behaviour twice, once setting her eyes up to heaven, and once setting them, as here, on the crucifix, which action prompted the initial showing of the bleeding head of Jesus to begin. In this final instance the fixed gaze accomplishes what is intended, by focusing Julian on the crucifix and keeping the business of the devil at bay. It does not, however, open the mystical doorway again.

There is a hint of regret that this should be so. Julian tells us that at the devil's departure he "lefte nothyng but stynke; and that lastyd styll a whyle" (70:651).

But the last of the showings has left nothing but memories:

He [God] lefte with me neyther sygne ne tokyn where by I myght know it. But he lefte with me his owns blessyd worde in tru vnderstanding,

byddyng me fulle myghtly that I shulde beleue it, and so I do, blessyd mott he be (70:652).

(He [God] left me with neither sign nor token whereby I could know it. But he left with me his own blessed word truly understood, commanding me most forcefully to believe them [sic], and so I do, blessed may he be [317].)

The lesson wrestled from the devil, and perhaps more fully learned because so hard won, is reaffirmed by Jesus after the devil's departure: "take it, and lerne it, and kepe thee ther in, and comfort the ther with, and trust thereto, and thou shalt nott be ovyr com" (70:653).

Conclusion: Pain as Gift

This chapter has mapped the physical pain experienced by Julian of Norwich as recorded in *The Showings*. This pain intruded into the text at three points: in the illness prior to the showings, as part of the Seventh and Eighth Showings, and in the illness and torments prior to the Sixteenth Showing. It is a seemingly insignificant aspect of her experience and one which has been almost entirely overlooked by her commentators. By a close reading of the text I have attempted to show that the experience of pain was no mere accompaniment to the showings, but was an integral part both of Julian's preparation for and her learning during the revelations of God.

At the beginning of her text Julian informs us that she had requested a painful illness from God, and it is this illness which brackets the showings. Spiritually, the illness draws Julian closer to Jesus in the tradition of *imitatio christi* and purges and empties her in preparation for the experience of God. Narratively, the illness functions to reduce Julian's horizon of consciousness to the cross, and unites the

author to her readers through the bond of shared experience. At the symbolic level, Julian experiences a move from sickness into health which, as Glasscoe says, "is both the initial condition for the understanding of the redemptive process and emblematic of it."⁸⁴

During the Seventh and Eighth Showings pain becomes an instrument of Julian's instruction. Having been driven to despair by the experience of alternating joy and suffering Julian discovers that even in the worst moments one can and must choose Jesus. She is able to speak authoritatively about the fact of pain in life and to acknowledge the reality of suffering in her theology of comfort. It is in the middle showings that Julian truly becomes an author, in the sense of one who is authorized to speak, for it is her experience of pain, despair, and the denial of God which will compel her to speak to her suffering "evyn christen" through her text.

The return of her illness and the painful torments of the devil surrounding the Sixteenth Showing also serve their purposes in the text. Julian is driven to the point of despair by her renewed infirmity and the sudden feeling of the loss of God. She denies the showings and experiences the desolation of having denied her God. However, her failure is not the final word, and in a last painful encounter with the devil Julian triumphs over him and invites her readers to do the same.

The most important thing to remember about Julian's experience of pain is that she was a willing participant. She had asked for the pain, admittedly not realizing what it would mean to her when it was given. Julian understands the pain to be God's gift, just as much as she ascribes her learning, her healing and her triumph

⁸⁴ Glasscoe, "Visions and Revisions," 103.

over the devil also to God's grace. Since Julian invites us to interpret her pain as a gift, it is in this light that we can evaluate its contribution to her spiritual growth.

Chapter Two

The Pain of Creation Explored

Julian of Norwich lived in a place and a period of time rife with pain and suffering. Although perhaps removed from this universal human fact during the unknown number of years she spent as an anchoress, she can have been no stranger to the pains of the human journey. The Black Death and the Peasants' Rebellion both claimed lives needlessly and caused untold suffering during Julian's lifetime in her own community.¹

With these facts in mind, one might expect to find Julian mirroring the standard theological position of her day regarding life and human suffering. Richard Kieckhefer summarizes it this way in his study of the fourteenth-century religious milieu: "Life on earth was a vale of tears that called for patience, penitence, assimilation to the suffering Christ, and fervent yearning for escape."² It is not this attitude, however, which we find underlying the anchoress's thought. Having suffered deeply in her own person, as we have seen in Chapter One, she takes the

¹ Ward suggests that Julian might even have lost a child in the plague, citing the power of the image of the stinking body of death (64:622) as a possible clue ("Julian the Solitary" in *Julian Reconsidered*, eds. Kenneth Leech and Benedicta [Ward] [Oxford: Sisters of the Love of God Press, 1988], 25). This suggestion has not sparked any scholarly interest, probably because it can be nothing more than speculation. On the Black Death plague see in general Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978); Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Markham: Penguin Books, 1969, rpt. 1984); N. P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984).

² Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, 12.

fact of human suffering completely seriously but does not allow it to sound the dominant note in her thinking. Pain is an undeniable part of life, but it is only a part. The final truth about humanity is that God can use everything for good, even pain.

This chapter will explore the three kinds of pain in the earthly domain which Julian describes: the pain which humanity experiences; the pain which creation experiences; and the pain which the devil experiences. Julian gives the greatest weight of her concern and attention to the pain of humanity, so it shall be examined here under several aspects: life, human nature, and bliss.

The Pain which Humanity Experiences: Life

We were created to delight God. The first and most important thing that Julian has to say about life and its purpose is that the creation of humanity was and is a delight to God: "we are his joy and his delyght" (79:706). In the Sixteenth Showing, where Julian sees Jesus sitting in the soul as in a fair city, she learns that the soul is the only proper dwelling for God on earth:

And in this he shewde the lykyng that he hath of the makynge of mannes soule; for as wele as the fader myght make a creature, and as wele as þe son myght make a creature, so wele wolde þe holy gost that mannys soule were made, and so it was done (68:641-42).

(And in this he revealed the delight that he has in the creation of man's soul; for as well as the Father could create a creature and as well as the Son could create a creature, so well did the Holy Spirit want man's spirit to be created, and so it was done [313].)

At the same time as she realizes the beauty of the creation of the soul Julian learns that the trinity "enjoyeth without ende" that act of creation, for that which was cause

for its delight once is always cause for its delight (68:642). The implications of this are far reaching. Julian is saying that God never regrets the creation of humanity, no matter how foul or evil or far from God the individual might be. Our primary purpose remains true, to delight God.

At several places in her book Julian insists that God has made the soul as well as it could be made. In her summary introduction she speaks of "the excellence of manes making" (1:283). Later, in the Fourteenth Showing she says, "in oure furst makynge God gaue vs as moch good and as grete good as we myght receyve onely in oure spryte" (56:575). And again, in the Sixteenth Showing, she reiterates "he made mannes soule as feyer, as good, as precious as he myght make it a creature" (68:645). These are obviously qualified statements. She refers to "oure furst makynge", i.e. at the act of creation, from which state we have fallen and are in need of a "second making," the atonement, to return us to that state. She also says that the human soul is as precious "as he myght make it a creature." A creature is necessarily partial, imperfect, liable to change, unlike the creator who is complete, perfect and immutable. Nonetheless, the foundational conviction is clear. The human soul is as perfect as God could make it.

Because much of what will be examined below will focus on the pain and failure of human life it will be well at this point to draw out from Julian's text statements which make it clear that she understands that it is indeed possible for humanity to please God even in its frail and broken postlapsarian state. Lying on what she believed was her own death bed Julian asks rhetorically of God, "Good lorde, may my leuyng no longer be to thy worshippe?" (3:290). Examining this

statement for a moment we may deduce that Julian believes that the purpose of her life to that point had been to honour and to glorify God, and it is perhaps because this purpose is no longer being served her life is being ended. Remember that at other points Julian describes herself as feeble, wretched and blind (66:632); lewd, and frail (ST 6:222). Even as a frail and broken human being she has understood the purpose of her life to be the glory of God.

In the Fourteenth Showing Julian puts this conviction slightly differently: "God" shewed in all the reuelations ofte tymes that man werkyth evyr more his wylle and his wurschyppe duryngly without styntyng" (44:483). At another point, in the Fifteenth Showing, Julian makes it clear that anyone may experience true faith and secure hope which are sweet and delightful and bring joy to this life. All that is required is that the Christian must willfully choose God.

And euer the more likyng and joye þat we take in this sekernesse, with reverence and meekenes, the better lyketh him. . . . For these vertues are had endlesly to þe louyd of god, and it may now be seen and felt in mesure by the gracious presence of oure lord whan it is. Which presence in all thing is most desyrid, for it worketh that mervelous sekernesse in true faith and seker hope by greatnes of charitie in drede that is sweet and delectable (65:628).

(And always, the more delight and joy that we accept from this certainty, with reverence and humility, the more pleasing it is to God. . . . For these virtues are endless brought [sic] to God's beloved, and when this happens, it can now to some extent be seen and felt through our Lord's gracious presence. In every circumstance this presence is most desired, for it creates that wonderful security in true faith and certain hope, by a greatness of love in fear which is sweet and delectable [308].)

The last, and perhaps most important thing that can be said about the joyful purpose of human life is that its final end is eternal bliss. "We are ordeyned therto in kynde and getyn therto by grace" (72:661). Our *kynde* is our nature, that which was

given us in our first creation. By grace are our failings overcome and God's eternal purpose for us is realized. Not even sin can thwart this divine intention for humanity. Julian's choice of word, *ordeyned*, seems most apt, carrying as it does the double connotation of destiny and ecclesiastical appointment. Both God and the church are working to help humanity attain its blissful end.³

Our fallenness separates us from God and allows pain. The divine intention for humanity is bliss. But our own failings separate us from the love of God, and open the door to temporal pain and suffering. "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 [part], therfore is alle oure traveyle" (37:444). Julian is very clear that the failing of love is humanity's, not God's. Pain is not wrecked upon the human race as punishment by an angry God, as shall be seen below.⁴ It is the natural consequences of our own imperfect ability to love.

Far from repudiating this inherent tendency of ours, we are to overcome it by owning up to it. The individual's role is to be aware of failure, while God's role is to be merciful: "Thus wylle oure good lorde þat we accuse oure selfe wylfully, and truly se and know (our fallyng and all þe harmes þat cum thereof" (52:553).⁵

³ Note that elsewhere Julian equates God and the church: "so means he in these blessed words, where he said: I it am that holy church preaches you and teaches you. That is to say: All the health and the life of sacraments, all the virtue and the grace of my word, all the goodness that is ordained in holy church to you, I it am" (60:597). See also 80:707.

⁴ See below, pp. ?-19.

⁵ The parenthesis is present in Colledge and Walsh to indicate an inclusion they have made to the Paris manuscript from the two Sloane manuscripts. I concur with their addition and include it here.

Blindness. Julian specifies that humanity suffers from impatience, doubt and a doubtful dread which causes despair (73:666 and 74:673). But far worse than these, more pernicious to us and more prevalent in Julian's text is the human failing she calls blindness. She speaks of it in many ways, but primarily it is our human inability fully to believe the good that God has planned for us.

He wylle in alle thyng þat we haue oure beholdyng and oure enjoyeng in loue. And of this knowyng are we most blynde, for some of vs beleue that god is allmyghty and may do alle, and that he is alle wysdom and can do alle, but that he is alle loue and will do all, there we fayle (73:668).

(He wants us in all things to have our contemplation and our delight in love. And it is about this knowledge that we are most blind, for some of us believe that God is almighty and can do everything, but that he is all love and wishes to do everything, there we fail [323].)

This blindness to God's love is the root of much of our temporal unhappiness. It makes us changeable, simple, stupid, weak and foolish (47:496). The blindness could be overcome in time, and in fact will be overcome at the end of time, when we can "se oure fader god as he is" (51:525).

The paradox of human blindness is brilliantly contained and presented in the example of the lord and servant, which Julian includes in the Long Text only in her account of the Fourteenth Showing. Simply retold, the example speaks of a lord who commands his servant to go on a task. While ardently wishing to serve the lord the servant falls inadvertently into a pit from which he cannot extricate himself. In the pit he suffers greatly because although he longs to serve he is impeded by circumstances from doing so. The lord, who can see the servant, pities him and, understanding that his mishap is not his own fault but rather was incurred in the

lord's own service, decides to reward his servant for his faithfulness.⁶ Julian learns that the lord stands for God and the servant represents both Jesus and Adam, or humanity. This paradoxical symbolism captures what she is teaching about human blindness as well. Whereas "the febilnesse and blyndnesse that we haue is of Adam" (51:534), our redemption from the same is of Christ. In Adam we fell and were broken by sin and pain, becoming blind to God's comfort; in Christ we are raised up, sustained and saved from the very curse brought on by Adam (52:547).⁷

Contained within the paradox of human blindness is another theological truth. Julian clearly understands that while blindness keeps the individual from seeing God, it does not keep God from seeing and loving the individual. Once again, the weakness lies on our part, not on God's. "Whan we be fallen by freelte or blyndnes, than oure curtesse lord touchyng vs steryth vs and kepyth vs" (79:705). In her summary statements in the penultimate chapter Julian repeats this conviction slightly differently: "nott with stondyng oure sympylle lyvyng and oure blyndnesse heer, yett endlessly oure curtesse lorde beholdyth vs, in this wurkyng enjoyeng" (85:728).⁸ She

⁶ Compare Julian's example with a similar one used by Anselm of Canterbury:

Suppose one should assign his slave a certain piece of work, and should command him not to throw himself into a ditch, which he points out to him from which he could not extricate himself; and suppose that the slave, despising his master's command and warning, throws himself into the ditch before pointed out, so as to be utterly unable to accomplish the work assigned; think you then that his inability will at all excuse him for not doing his appointed work? (*Cur Deus Homo* in *Anselm of Canterbury: Basic Writings*, trans. N. S. Deane [La Salle, Ill: Open Court Publishing, 1962], 233).

For close comparisons of this text with that of Julian see Lillian Bozak-Deleo, "The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich" in *Theology and the University*, ed. John Apczynski (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987); and Baker, *Vision to Book*, 92-94.

⁷ The exquisite balance which Julian strikes between our fallen and our redeemed natures prefigures Luther's *simul justus et peccator* (Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger [Toronto: Anchor Press, 1961], 53). Note that Julian's theology is driven by an understanding of God as love, and that Luther's moved from a youthful fear of God as judge to a more mature appreciation of the same loving nature in God.

⁸ Note the implied visual contrast between our blindness and God beholding us.

goes on to invite her readers to pass over from blindness to a state of true belief in God which can accept the love and forgiveness which God offers in Jesus, and in so doing to pass over to the same joy in God which God feels in us.

There is an interesting poignancy to Julian's use of the concept of spiritual *blindness*. Julian's text is laden with images, metaphors and other figures of speech relating to sight. She *sees* when she learns, when she understands, when she receives a showing and when she meditates on that showing later in time. The anchoress sees Jesus, sees God in heaven, and sees the Virgin Mary. She even qualifies some of her thinking with the colloquial phrase, "as to my sight," indicating to her readers a small measure of uncertainty or hesitancy concerning those conclusions, compared to her supreme certainty with what God has clearly revealed. The role of sight is strikingly significant in a text so unequivocally associated with the anchorhold, surely a place outstanding in its limitations on sight and visual communication.⁹ This juxtaposition of divine sight and human limitation can hardly be accidental, and serves as another indication of Julian's skill as an author.

Life is pain, travail and suffering. Julian invariably describes this life in terms unequivocal in their severity. Because of our blindness, the inability to see God truly, "we may nevyr leue of mornyng ne of wepyng" (72:663). When the time comes for us to die "we shuld sodeynly be takyn from all our payne and from all our woo" (2:284). In heaven we will have left behind the difficulties of this life: "thou shalte nevyr more haue no manner of paynne, no manner of sycknes, no manner

⁹ See *Ancrene Wisse* on sight (in *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson [New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991], 67-72).

mysselykyng, no wantyng of wylle" (64:621).

This burden of pain and suffering is laid upon humanity by Adam's fall (52:547), but is confirmed for each individual in "oure fraylte and oure fallyng, oure brekynges and oure noughtynges, oure dispytes and oure chargynges [burdens]" (62:610). We fail to do what we should, and do what we should not, "wherfore we deserve payne, blame and wrath" (46:493). Our wretched failing is so great that "we be so sore adred and so gretly ashamyd of oure selfe that vnnethis we witt where pat we may holde vs" (61:605).

This being the case, humanity naturally anticipates the wrath of God, and swift punishment, but these are not God's responses.¹⁰ "Nott withstandyng alle oure felyng, woo or wele, god wyll we vnderstond and beleue that we be more verely in hevyn than in erth" (55:567). We are the servant, both Adam and Christ, a "medelur [mixture]" of good and bad wherein the good shall always be deemed to be dominant by our loving God (52:549). Any who assume human nature, Christ included, must suffer the deadly pains of being human (51:539).¹¹ But all are redeemed in that flesh by the universal redemption he accomplished.

If it is in the nature of fallen humanity to suffer pain, then there must be some purpose to human suffering. Surely God would not permit suffering unless it served some end, is the obvious argument, but what end? Julian must confront this problem,

¹⁰ The classic understanding of the wrath of God comes from Augustine: "Because it is difficult for a man to avenge something without anger, the authors of scripture have decided to use the name *wrath* for God's vengeance, although God's vengeance is exercised with absolutely no such emotion" (*Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David Mosher, [The Fathers of the Church, 70] [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982], 89). See also Pelikan, *Growth of Medieval Theology*, 20, 141.

¹¹ Pelphrey says of this fact, "Once we understand that suffering is part of the 'given' in our human situation, we can see, in fact, how it is possible for Jesus to suffer pain at all." It is because pain is not associated with guilt or punishment in Julian's thinking (*Christ Our Mother*, 257).

and in fact Jesus asks her in the Ninth Showing, "Wher now is any poynt of thy payne or of thy anguyssse?" (21:379). The very posing of the question becomes a sort of answer, and Julian understands immediately that suffering unites humanity to Jesus on the cross, as though in some timeless moment of crucifixion:

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 wyllfully abydyng in the same crosse with his helpe and his grace in to the last poynt. sodeynly he shalle chynge hys chere to vs, and we shal be with hym in hevyn (21:379-80).

(I understood that in our Lord's intention we are now on his cross with him in our pains, and in our sufferings we are dying, and with his help and his grace we willingly endure on that same cross until the last moment of life. Suddenly he will change his appearance for us, and we shall be with him in heaven [215].)

United to him through the tribulations of our existence, our lives are transformed into the same redemptive act accomplished once and for all by Jesus.

Julian adds an interesting subtlety in her thinking. The Ninth Showing is one in which she expects to see Jesus die on the cross, but instead he turns his face to her and it is radiant with joy. Seeing his countenance she tells us that she is immediately filled with a surpassing joy herself. This leads to the question posed above, "Wher now is any poynt of thy payne or of thy anguyssse?" (21:379). She realizes that the divine face has a strange power over pain:

And here saw I verely that if he shewde now to vs his blyssedfulle chere, there is no payne in erth ne in no nother place pat shuld trobylle vs, but alle thing shulde be to vs joy and blysse. But for he shewyth vs chere of passion as he bare in this lyfe hys crosse, therefore we be in dysees and traveyle with hym as our kind askyth (21:380-81).

(And here I saw truly that if he revealed to us now his countenance of joy, there is no pain on earth or anywhere else which could trouble us, but everything would be joy and bliss for us. But because he shows us his suffering countenance, as he was in this life as he carried his cross,

we are therefore in suffering and labour with him as our nature requires [215].)

Julian is saying that God not only permits suffering, but in some way participates in its administration by showing his *chere of passion* to us during our lives. If he were to show his *blyssedfulle chere* it is not that pain would be no more, but that it would have no hold over us. It would presumably continue to exist but its power would be eradicated. It is only when we come finally to the bliss long prepared for us that we will be able to behold this *blyssedfulle chere* and receive the benefits from that beatific vision.

In Julian's thought there are two clear reasons why God not only permits but also participates in the administration of human pain. In God's plan, pain is didactic. Suffering teaches. In the Seventh Showing, where Julian herself experiences the dreadful alteration between bliss and torture, she learns from her experience 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 left to them selfe" (15:355). They, like she, are invited to understand that God is with them through both good and bad, comfort and pain. But the lesson is deeper than simply that. Julian consistently teaches that the individual is to disregard what ever pain and suffering might be present in life and to focus instead on God alone: "God wylle that we know that he kepyth vs evyr in lyke suer, in wo and in wele" (15:355). We are willfully to rise above pure physical and mental suffering because ultimately they are not the truth about humanity. Since we are the heirs of Christ (Ro 8:17) we are invited to share our inheritance even now,

overlooking pain in order to participate in the ongoing bliss of knowing and loving

God:

He wylle that we take our abydynges and oure dyssesys as lyghtely as we may take them, and sett them at nought. For the lygtlyer that we take them, and þe lesse pryce that we sett at them for loue, lesse payne shalle we haue in þe feelyng of them, and the more thanke and mede shalle we haue for them (64:626).¹²

(He also wants us to accept our tarrying and our sufferings as lightly as we are able, and to count them as nothing. For the more lightly that we accept them, the less importance we ascribe to them because of our love, the less pain shall we experience from them and the more thanks and reward shall we have for them [307-308].)

The first aspect of pain, then, is that it is a necessary part of life but that we are called to use it to draw us closer to God by willfully overlooking it. The second aspect of pain is that it teaches patience and humility.¹³ In the Thirteenth Showing Julian learns that God enjoys the tribulations of his servants because it is through suffering that we are purified "of the pompe and of the pryde and the veyne glorie of this wrechyd lyffe" (28:409). Jesus himself is our exemplar of patient endurance in the face of suffering (72:667). In fact, by meekly accepting the vagaries of life as God's gift, and by patiently abiding, we are joined with him in his suffering, just as his friends were who were at the cross to watch him die (77:691). A cheerful endurance of this life is thus the supreme act of compassion, since Julian understands this concept as vicarious suffering with Christ, as we saw in Chapter One.¹⁴

¹² See also 16:356; 21:380; 39:451; and 74:671.

¹³ Patience and humility are the classic virtues of the Christian life (Cousins, "Humanity and the Passion," 387).

¹⁴ Julian's understanding of patience differs significantly from the more commonly accepted sense of the virtue, which stressed passive conformity to God's will (Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, 50). Julian consistently includes an assertion of will in the proper response to suffering: "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 (continued...)"

There is one consolation other than the knowledge that pain is our purifying ground. It is that the pain which we suffer is as temporary and fleeting as life itself. "It shall last but a whyle" (10:335) is Julian's constant assurance. Endure in faithful trust and God's sure promise is "thou shalt not be ovyrcom" (68:647).

It should be underlined that Julian's theology gives human life an important part in the redemption story. The anchoress is not teaching mere *contemptus mundi*. Her enclosure is no flight from pain-as-suffering. She sees that in God's plan our very living fits us for heaven. And more than that, our living is what we bring to heaven and offer to God. As Simon Tugwell puts it so succinctly: "our redemption is a redemption *of* this life, not a redemption *from* it."¹⁵

The Pain which Humanity Experiences: Human Nature

In this examination of pain in the human experience we must necessarily ask what Julian of Norwich presupposes about human nature. What is her understanding of the human soul? This question arises from our need to probe both the place and the function of pain in life. Does Julian see the human soul as predisposed to cope with pain? What is the connection between sin and the fact of pain-as-suffering? What is the natural end of human life?

Christian theology has drawn heavily upon Platonic dualism in describing the

¹⁴(...continued)

crosse with his helpe and his grace in to the last poynt" (21:379-80, emphasis mine)

¹⁵ Tugwell, "Julian of Norwich," 201. See also Joan Marie Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 59.

human person as a union of body and soul.¹⁶ In this dichotomist or dualistic model, the body is considered to be the lower or less perfect member, mortal, changeable and sinful. The soul is cast as the higher or more perfect component, immortal, perfectible and capable of communicating with the divine. Brant Pelphrey claims that Julian does not make this dualistic distinction but concerns herself instead with the whole person, in whom the Holy Spirit resides.¹⁷ His point is an important one, and worth considering because he is such an insightful reader of Julian.

The first dualism: inner and outer. When we search through *The Showings* we find four significant dualisms. The first of these is the dualism between the inner self and the outer.¹⁸ In the Eighth Showing, wherein she chooses Jesus for her heaven, Julian comes to a sudden understanding of the operation of the will. She realizes that she both desired to suffer with Jesus in his pain and that she repented of that desire, fearing the enormity of the hurt. Seeing both the desire and the repentance at work in herself she realizes the following:

Repentyng and wyffulle choyse be two contrarytes, whych I felt both at that tyme; and tho be two partes, that oon outward, that other inwarde. The outwarde party is our dedely flessch, whych is now in payne and

¹⁶ This is usually traced to Plato, particularly *Phaedo*, entering the Christian tradition through Augustine's appropriation of the theory in *De immortalitate animae*. For a fuller discussion of this see Etienne Gilson, "Christian Anthropology," in *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, trans. A. H. C. Downes. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1950), 168-88.

¹⁷ Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning*, 86. A similar point is also made by Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (London: SPCK, 1987), 144.

¹⁸ In her project to understand the inner workings of herself Julian joins the long Delphic tradition in Christianity of *nosce teipsum*, on which see briefly Etienne Gilson, "Self-Knowledge and Christian Socratism," in *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, 209-28. See also the excellent introduction to the theology of the *imago dei* by Bernard McGinn, "The Human Person as Image of God: II. Western Christianity," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, vol. 16 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 312-30.

now in woo, and shalle be in this lyfe, where of I felte moch in thys tyme; and that party was that I repentyd. The inward party is a hygh and a blessydfulle lyfe, whych is alle in peece and in loue, and this is more pryvely felte; and this party is in whych myghtly, wysely and wyllfully, I chose Jhesu to my hevyn (19:372).

(Repentance and deliberate choice are in opposition to one another, and I experienced them both at the same time; and these are two parts, one exterior, the other interior. The exterior part is our mortal flesh, which is sometimes in pain, sometimes in sorrow, and will be so during this life, and I felt it very much at this time; and it was in that part of me that I repented. The interior part is an exalted and blessed life which is all peace and love; and this is more secretly experienced; and it was in this part of me that I powerfully, wisely and deliberately chose Jesus for my heaven. [212, rev.]

Here Julian has divided the willing person into two, with an inner and an outer part each of which parts accounts for particular aspects of human behaviour.¹⁹ The outer self, or *dedely flessch*, is the self which suffers pain and experiences contrition.²⁰ The way Julian describes the inner self, *a hygh and a blessydfulle lyfe, whych is alle in peece and in loue*, makes it sound as if part of us is already in bliss with God.²¹ It is the inner self which works good in us, and using this stronger part Julian was able to overcome her fear of pain and choose Jesus for her heaven.

The inner, more godly part of the self is stronger than the fallible outer part, and is not swayed by the various desires of the flesh from its intention to be united with God. Even more than this, the inner part "drawyth the outward party by grace"

¹⁹ This would appear to put Julian in the Cistercian intellectual tradition of Bernard of Clairvaux, who sees the *imago dei* in human free will (*Bernard of Clairvaux: Treatises III*. [Cistercian Fathers Series 19] [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977]).

²⁰ See Romans 7: 15-19 (NRSV): "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing."

²¹ This is in fact true in Julian's theology. In the Fourteenth Revelation Julian learns that "god will we vnderstond and beleue that we be more verely in hevyn than in erth" (55:566).

(19:373) and so contributes to the ultimate perfection of the individual in which the person is united to God in bliss.

The last thing that Julian says of this inner/outer dualism is most significant: "both shalle be onyd in blysse without ende by the vertu of Christ" (19:373). If in the state of perfection this division does not exist then it is not an inherent characteristic of our immortal being. It is a function of mortal existence and shall be succeeded by a united existence. We should note that the outer part is not to be abandoned or lost when the person is perfected, rather the outer part, where fear and pain exist, is perfected and merged with the inner to create a new, undivided being through the grace of God.

In the Fifteenth Showing Julian sees a stinking dead body lying on the earth out of which a beautiful little child emerges to go up to heaven.²²

And in thys tyme i sawe a body lyeng on þe erth, whych body shewde heuy and feerfulle and with oute shape and forme, as it were a swylge stynkyng myrre; and sodeynly oute of this body sprong a fulle feyer creature, a lyttyle chylld, full shapyn and formyd, swyft and lyfly and whytter then the lylie, which sharpely glydyd vppe in to hevyn (64:622-23).

(And in this time I saw a body lying on the earth, which appeared oppressive and fearsome and without shape and form, as it were a devouring pit of stinking mud; and suddenly out of this body there sprang a most beautiful creature, a little child, fully shaped and formed, swift and lively and whiter than the lily, which quickly glided up to heaven [306].)

From this she learns that our deadly flesh shall be left behind us while our pure soul is united with God. The child is taken from pain so that pain will never return to it:

"It is fulle blesfulle man to be taken fro payne, more than payne be taken from man:

²² This image is also discussed below, p. 119.

for if payne be taken from vs, it may come agayne" (64:624). This lesson is a bit different than what we see in the inner/outer dualism, where our deadly flesh is drawn to perfection by the blissful inner self and not left behind or discarded.

Julian's primary aim in writing down her showings was to teach about God, not about humanity. Inconsistencies in her theological anthropology must be accepted as a natural function of its secondary status in her thought.

The second dualism: higher and lower. It is difficult to be certain whether the second dualism which Julian articulates in speaking of the human soul is a distinct idea in her mind or is actually part of the first or the third dualism. There are many similarities between the higher part of the soul and the interior part described in the first dualism; and between the lower part and the exterior part of the soul described in the same dualism. Also, when Julian first introduces the higher/lower division, in the Fourteenth Showing, it stands alone and has no other conjoined idea; however, in subsequent discussions this higher/lower dualism is closely associated with the sense/substance dualism, which is the third dualism, about which she is quite particular. With this in mind, I would like to treat this idea separately because it shows a distinct aspect of Julian's thinking about the human soul. The concepts of *higher* and *lower* implicitly contain value judgements which are not clearly conveyed in the more technical terms *sense* or *substance*. It is the fact of valuation which is significant, particularly in light of Pelphrey's comment about a lack of Platonic dualism in Julian's thought which initiated this exploration.

In her long consideration of the example of the lord and servant, Julian learns

much about human nature. She sees that God considers the fallen servant with two "cheers," the one of mercy and pity, the other of love and righteousness. With neither aspect does God look upon his servant in condemnation or judgement, which is what one would naturally expect, given that the fallen servant represents sinful humanity (51:535). Julian learns that we are to look upon ourselves in the same way as God does, meekly accepting our brokenness. If we do, then God will be present, working with us, "and this is the lower party of mannys lyfe" (52:553). This is the first mention which Julian makes of the lower part of life, and it seems as though she is referring to human humility or contrition.

Just a few lines further on we learn more:

the lyfe and þe vertu þat we haue in the lower perty is of the hyer, and it comyth downe to vs of the kynde loue of the selfe by grace. Betwene þat one and þat other is ryght nought, for it is all one love, whych one blessyd loue hath now in vs doubtyll werkyng; for in þe lower perty be payns and passions, ruthis and pyttes, mercis and forgyvenesse and such other, whych be profytable. But in þe hyer perty be none of theyse, but all one hye loue and mervelous joy, in whych marvelous joy all paynes be holy dystroyed (52:553).

(The life and the virtue that we have in the lower part is from the higher, and it comes down to us from the natural love of the self, by grace. In between the one and the other is nothing at all, for it is all one love, which one blessed love now has a double operation in us; for in the lower part there are pains and passions, compassions and pities, mercies and forgiveness and other such, which are profitable. But in the higher part are none of these, but all is one great love and marvellous joy, in which marvellous joy all pains are wholly destroyed. [282, rev.])

Here we discover that the lower part of the soul is the one profitable to us, for it is in this part that pains and passions are suffered, in the didactic and perfecting functions which we have already seen; and where mercy, pity and forgiveness are also experienced. In other words, it is in the lower part of the soul that God's tenderness

towards us is expressed. The higher part experiences none of this growth and amelioration because it is already perfect: "It longyth to man mekely to accuse hym selfe, and it longyth to the propyr goodnesse of oure lorde god curtesly to excuse man" (52: 552). The life and virtue inherent in the higher part of the soul imbue the lower part with shadows of themselves, presumably serving both as inspiration and orientation as the lower part is engaged in the struggles of life.²³

At this point we might be excused for thinking that Julian is using a different set of words to describe the first dualism which she has already introduced, that of the inner and outer parts of the self. We see that, like the inner part the higher part infuses the lower with its own goodness; and like the inner part also, in the higher part there is no pain. In fact, Julian describes the higher part very much like the inner part in saying of it:

in þe hyer perty be none of theyse [i.e. pains and tribulations], 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 all our blame into endlesse wurshchyppe (52:553).

(in the higher part there are none of these [i.e. pains and tribulations], but all is one great love and marvellous joy, in which marvellous joy all pains are wholly destroyed. And in this our good Lord showed not only that we are excused, but also the honourable nobility to which he will bring us, turning all our blame into endless honour [282].)

In this description of the higher part of the soul we have the sense that like the inner part, it is actually in bliss with God already, where there is no pain but only joy.

If we look to the second and third passages which mention the second dualism, however, we are able to add information which subtly distinguishes this from the first

²³ Augustine in *De trinitate* distinguishes between *ratio superior* and *ratio inferior* laying the groundwork for the dichotomist understanding of the soul.

dualism.

In the Fourteenth Showing Julian learns that Jesus had to take on both the higher and the lower part of the soul in order to redeem the whole human person. The higher part has always been united with God, even from "the furst makyng" (55:568), and so Jesus also took on the lower part: "and theyse two pertyes were in Crist, the heyer and þe lower, whych is but one soule. The hyer perty was eveyr in pees with god in full joy and blysse. The lower perty, whych is sensualyte, sufferyd for the saluacion of mankynd" (55:569). The higher part never parted from God and so, one might say, was impassible; but the lower part suffered on the cross and worked out human salvation in this way. The union of the two effected in the Incarnation allowed for the complete redemption of them both at the Resurrection and will allow for it for all people at the Parousia. In this example there is no sense at all of the higher part of the soul ameliorating the lower, which we saw above, as well as with the inner and outer parts. Instead we find that the redemption of both parts is accomplished by two external events, the Incarnation and the Resurrection.

The third significant mention of the higher/lower dualism is once again in the Fourteenth Showing, the Fifty Seventh chapter. Here, in a discussion of the substance of the human person, which we will examine next, Julian says,

oure kynde whych is the hyer party, is knytte to god in þe makyng, and god is knytt to oure kynde, which 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 second parson hath taken, whych kynd furst to hym was adyght (57:577-78).

(our nature, which is the higher part, is joined to God in its creation, and God is joined to our nature, which is the lower part in taking flesh.

And so in Christ our two natures are united, for the Trinity is comprehended in Christ, in whom our higher part is founded and rooted; and our lower part the second person has taken, which nature was first prepared for him [291].)

In this beautifully circular statement Julian is attempting to explain the truth which she has learned, that Christ has united and redeemed both parts of the human person. Somewhat confusingly she says of our *kynde*, or nature, that it is our higher part when knit to God in creation, but that it is our lower part when we assume flesh. I think what she is trying to get at is the idea that we are no less natural when "in the flesh" than when we are perfected and united to God in bliss. Julian obviously associates the lower self with the fleshly self, although without any pejorative overlay. In fact, she proposes that the lower self was prepared specifically for Jesus (57:578), in anticipation of the Incarnation from the beginning of time, a city waiting for him to occupy it, to use an image for the soul which Julian later introduces (68:639).

The higher self is eternally united to God, enjoying bliss. The lower self is the fleshly self, the locus for us to work out our perfection through pain and suffering, mercy and grace. Christ is present in both selves, uniting both in the Incarnation and redeeming both in the Resurrection. He does not scorn the lower, in fact, it is specifically his from the moment of its very creation.

The third dualism: substance and sense. We come now to the most complex and best developed of Julian's dualisms, that of substance and sense. She uses these concepts with exactitude and in a manner which betrays stringent thought, and which probably gives evidence of some familiarity with philosophical ideas, although this is

by no means certain.²⁴

The anchoress's theory of the soul is largely contained in her reflections on the example of the lord and servant. Here she explains that the soul has two aspects, "sensualite" and "substance" (56:572). In the first great act of creation the substance was made and united with God.²⁵ It has never been sundered from God.²⁶ The first act of creation makes God our natural mother, for it is the mother's role to bring to life (59:593). This is the first of the three modes of God's motherhood which Julian will describe.²⁷ At our birth, that is, at the birth of each individual, which we might call particular rather than general creation, the substance is joined to the sensual part of the soul through inspiration: "And what tymeoure soule is enspyred in our body, in which we be made sensuall, as soone mercy and grace beynne to werke"

²⁴ The first attestation of the word *substance* in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) is 1398, slightly later than the presumed date of the Long Text and at least 15 years after the date of the Short Text. It apparently came into English as a translation of the Latin *substantia* and may in itself indicate a familiarity in Julian with philosophical thought. The debate about the nature of the soul in terms of sense and substance occupied much of medieval theology. For a succinct outline of the solutions posed by Augustine (the soul is the rational substance which rules the body) and by Aristotle (the soul is the form of the body) and the respective problems for Christian theology generated by each see Gilson, "Christian Anthropology," 168-88.

²⁵ "Oure feyth comyth of the kynde loue of oure soule, and of the clere ly3te of oure reson, and of the stedfaste mynde which we haue of god in oure furst making The holy gost formyth in oure fayth hope that we shall come agayne vp abovyn to our substance" (55:566).

²⁶ Julian actually says, "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 substance is a creature in god" (54:562). Note how carefully Julian maintains the distinction between the soul and God. When speaking of the mystical experience of Union with God, what is sometimes called deification, some visionaires have blurred or lost the distinction altogether. This has laid them open to condemnation by ecclesiastical authorities. Consider the cases made against Meister Eckhart and Marguerite Porete, both of which turned on their claims to have been united with God during a mystical experience. Julian is not here speaking of her own experience of mystical union, but of the state of one part of the human soul. For deification see Underhill, *Mysticism*, 415-28. For Eckhart see *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. and trans. Bernard McGinn with Frank Tobin and Elvira Borgstädt, (Classics in Western Spirituality) (New York / Mahwah / Toronto: 1986). For Porete see *A Mirror for Simple Souls: The Mystical Work of Marguerite Porete*, ed. and trans. Charles Crawford, (Spiritual Classics) (New York: Crossroad, 1990). See also Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

²⁷ "I vnderstode thre manner of beholdynges of motherhed in god. The furst is ground of oure kynde making, the seconde is taking of oure kynde, and ther begynneth the motherhed of grace, the thurde is moderhed in werkyng . . . and alle is one loue" (59:593).

(55:566).²⁸ At this point we become divided. During mortal life the human soul is divided between substance, still united with God, in fact, enclosed in God, and sensuality, in which God is enclosed: "Oure substanncce is in god, and also I saw that in oure sensualyte god is" (55:567).

We might be inclined to think of the sensual part of the self as the lower, less perfect or fallen part. Julian does say that "in oure substanncce we be full and in oure sensualyte we feyle" (57:576-77); however, this failing does not indicate a culpable lack in human sensuality. Godself will make good that failing through the working of mercy and grace, a phrase which in Julian indicates the presence of both Jesus Christ (mercy) and the Holy Spirit (grace). Julian learns that this human sensuality is fit for God. At the instant of our particular creation, our second creation, when substance and sensuality are joined together, Jesus comes to reside in our sensual self, which was prepared for him:

for 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. In whych cytte he comyth, and never shall remove it, for god is nevyr out of the soule, in whych he shalle dwell blessydly without end (55:567).

(in the same instant and place in which our soul is made sensual, in that same instant and place exists the city of God, ordained for him from without beginning. He comes into this city and will never depart from it, for God is never out of the soul, in which he will dwell blessedly without end [287].)

It is the sensuality and not the substance that becomes the radiant city in which Jesus

²⁸ Compare this apparently dual concept of creation with Augustine's theory which has three acts of creation: *creatio*, in which matter is made; *informatio* in which human souls are created in germ form; and *conformatio*, the creation of each being in time. See Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Women in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Charles H. Talbot (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981).

sits eternally, ruling and guarding the world in peace and rest: "þe soule . . . is a wurschypfulle cytte, in myddes of that cytte (sitts) oure lorde Jhesu, very god and very man. . . . He syttyth in þe soule evyn ryght in peas and rest, and he rulyth and 3e(m)yth [guards] hevyn and erth and all that is" (68:639-40).²⁹ As he takes up his abode in our sensuality, at our very core, Jesus becomes our mother in a second and significant manner, he is our mother of mercy, for it is because of his mercy for us that he encloses himself in us: "he is oure very moder in grace by takyng of oure kynde made" (59:592).

We must take note that while the substance is enclosed in God and never parted therefrom, the sensuality encloses Jesus, who never leaves his homely home (55:567). This mutual enclosure of the self in God and God in the self is the very heart of Julian's understanding of human nature.³⁰

There is a third manner in which God is our mother, which has to do with the working out of human life. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that substance and sensuality are brought together, and immediately the Holy Spirit visits the individual with grace: "and what tyme oure soul is enspyred in oure body . . . as

²⁹ Elizabeth Robertson argues that it is not simply in human sensuality that Jesus makes his dwelling, but specifically in feminized sensuality. "Julian's emphasis is on Christ's redemption, not only of humanity, but also of that aspect of humanity which male writers repeatedly designate and condemn as particularly feminine, sensuality" ("Medieval Medical Views," 157).

³⁰ It is a commonplace in mystical discourse to speak of Jesus being enclosed or conceived in the soul. See Meister Eckhart, Sermon I, a sermon preached at Christmastide: "We intend therefore to speak of this birth as taking place in us: as being consummated in the virtuous soul, for it is in the perfect soul that God speaks his Word" (cited in Happold, *Mysticism*, 215). Compare with Hilton: "My dear children, whom I bear as a woman bears a child until Christ is again shaped in you. You have conceived Christ through faith, and he has life in you inasmuch as you have a good will and desire to serve and please him" (*Scale* 1.91.159-60). See also H. Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt: die Zehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen des Gläubigen," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 59 (1935): 333-418.

soone mercy and grace begynne to werke" (55:566).³¹ The most important gift of the Spirit is that of faith, which invades the sensual part of the soul from the substantial, that is to say, comes to the striving part from the perfect part. It is this gift of faith which draws the two parts of the soul together and holds them united through the vagaries of human life, with God being the midpoint: "God is mene that kepyth þe substaunce and the sensuallite to geder" (56:571; also 11:238). Eventually the two parts will be united irrevocably through the power of the death and Resurrection of Jesus: "thus oure moder is to vs dyverse manner werkyng, in whom oure pertys be kepte vndeputyd; for in oure moder Cryst we profyt and encrease, and in mercy he reformyth vs and restoryth, and by the vertu of his passion, his deth and his vprysyng onyd vs to oure substaunce" (58:586). This journey of life as touched by the grace of the Holy Spirit is necessary for each person as they participate in their own salvation. This gift makes God our mother in a third sense, our mother of grace (59:593).³²

The fourth dualism: body/soul. Julian's three dualisms, inner/outer, higher/lower and substantial/sensual are woven together in her thinking so that it is difficult to tease them apart. They were obviously not intended for the sort of

³¹ Julian is speaking here in terms of particular creation, or the creation of each individual. It is in particular creation that the Holy Spirit unites sense and substance. In an eternal sense, Jesus definitively united the sense and substance of humanity, making particular creation possible. See 57:580.

³² Baker's excellent analysis of Julian of Norwich's use of the traditional concept of *imago dei* concludes in this way, concerning her incorporation into it of the three modes of Jesus' motherhood: [Julian's] distinction between substance and sensuality, though derived from Augustine's differentiation between the higher and lower reason, not only rejects the gendered model of the soul but also ennoble the lower reason by identifying it as an integral part of being human. Her exemplarist cosmogony thus entails a radical revision of the prevailing androcentric anthropology. By enhancing the status of the sensuality or lower reason in the human soul, Julian also elevates the bodily and the feminine. . . . So substance and sensuality, stripped of any identification by gender, constitute the human soul (*Vision to Book*, 130).

examination they have received here, but were devised to explain the mystery of the human soul and God's relationship with it. They are equally obviously a significant part of the anchoress's theology, as I have shown.

We may safely say, *pace* Brant Pelphrey, that dualisms do figure in Julian's thought. We must now turn to his specific claim about Julian, that she did not concern herself with the dualism of body and soul. In fact she does, but she avoids disparaging the body and situating all the good in humanity in its soul.

As part of her discussion of the three modes of Jesus' motherhood Julian considers the nature of being human, the role which redemption plays in our natural existence, and the manner in which Jesus redeems the human person. In an exceedingly dualistic proposition the anchoress says that from the moment "oure soule is enspyred in oure body, in whych we be made sensuall, as soone mercy and grace begynne to werke . . . the holy gost formyth in oure feyth hope that we shall come agayne vp abovyn to our substannce" (55:566). It seems quite clear from this that for Julian the soul and body are indeed separate entities, temporarily united for the purposes of human life and redemption.³³

Our body and our soul grow and learn together, "eyther of them take helpe of other tylle we be broughte vp in to stature as kynde werkyth" (55:567). Julian deduces from this that the soul is "a made trynyte lyke to the vnmade blessyd trynyty, knowyn and lovyd fro with out begynnyng, and in þe makynge onyd to the maker" (55:568). Her claim that the soul is a trinity is based on her earlier affirmation, that "the sensuallite is groundyd in kynde, in mercy and in grace" (55:566). It must also

³³ This is a very Augustinian position, although as we have seen, Julian does not accept Augustine's solution without significant modification. See Baker, *Vision to Book*, 128-134.

certainly rest in the Augustinian formulation of the psychological trinity, although Julian makes no overt reference to Augustine at this point.³⁴ Because of the "worschyupfull oonyng" which God has effected between soul and body humanity is restored from death, "whych resoryng myȝt nevyr be in to the tyme that þe seconde person in the trynȝte had takyn þe lower party of mankynd, to whom that hyst was onyd in the furst makynge" (55:568-69).

The body and soul work together in mutual aid for the restoration of the whole person to bliss.³⁵ Julian describes the union between body and soul as *worschypfull*, a positive thing, not the imprisonment of the soul in the body. Brant Pelphrey's secondary claim, that Julian is concerned for the whole person "as a living union of body/soul" is indeed correct, although it does not rest on his first claim, that she "does not make a Platonic distinction between body and soul."³⁶

Pain and Sin. As we continue our examination of Julian of Norwich's understanding of human nature we come now to some of the central questions concerning the soul and the experience of pain. Throughout her experience of God

³⁴ See *De trinitate* 10.11-12.15, in which Augustine speaks of the triad *memoria, intelligentia, voluntas* in the human soul, a created trinity that is the image or reflection of the uncreated Trinity. Colledge and Walsh consider that Julian's thought "seems to be derived from William of St. Thierry," and cite *De natura coporis et animae* II, (PL 180 721). Baker more reasonably acknowledges the Augustinian root of the theory and says, "the pervasiveness of this topos through the Middle Ages precludes identification of her specific source" (Baker, *Vision to Book*, 107).

³⁵ In a recent article Gina Brandolino examines Julian's theory that the body is the chief and principal means by which humanity and God are brought together ("The 'Chiefe and Principal Mene': Julian of Norwich's Redefining of the Body in *A Revelation of Love*," *Mystics Quarterly* 22 [Sept. 1996]: 102-110). She shows that, according to Julian, "the body has an inherent divinity. . . . [It] is a kind of divine cloak that makes humans presentable to God. . . . The very handiwork of God, it has an elemental, consecrated goodness". (107).

³⁶ Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning*, 86.

Julian is assured that God "doth alle that is done" (11:336). She realizes that if this is true then God must participate in some way in sin, since sin is also "done," and this is clearly a problem: "I saw veryly that nothyn is done by happe [chance] ne by aventure, but alle by the for(seeing) wysdom of god . . . and I was sewer that he doth no synne" (11:337-38, parentheses in Colledge and Walsh). "What is synne?" wonders the anchoress, confronted by apparently contradictory truths in the teachings of the church, and the showings of God:

The furst dome whych is of goddes ryght fulnes . . . is that . . . I saw hym assign(e) to vs no maner of blame. And though theyse were swete and delectable. 3ytt 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 vnderstondyn and was contynually in my syght. And therefore by this come me thought that me be hovyth nedys to know my selfe a synner (45:487).

(The first judgment, which is from God's justice . . . is that . . . I saw him assign to us no kind of blame. And though this was sweet and delectable, I could not be fully comforted only by contemplating it, and that was because of the judgment of Holy Church, which I had understood before, and which was continually in my sight. And therefore it seemed to me that by this judgment I must necessarily know myself a sinner [257].)

The solution was presented to her in the example of the lord and servant, from which Julian learns two significant things about sin and pain. First, that sin itself is the only unbearable pain, but it is a sickness from which we can be healed. Second, that sin and the pains which accompany it serve God's purpose.³⁷

We have already seen that Julian has a compassionate understanding of pain-

³⁷ Because Julian's insights are not confined to the pages of the Fourteenth Showing nor the pages following it, but are woven throughout the text my illustration of these two points will be taken from the whole work.

as-suffering. Now she shows us more. Sin, she says, is unlike the pain of life in every way:

Syn is so vyle and so mekylle for to hate that it may be lyconnyd to no payne whych payne is not synne. And to me was shewed none harder helle than synne, for a kynd soule hatyth no payne but synne; for alle is good but syn, and nought is yvell but synne (40:458).

(Sin is so vile and so much to be hated that it can be compared with no pain which is not itself sin. And no more cruel hell than sin was revealed to me, for a loving soul hates no pain but sin; for everything is good except sin, and nothing is evil except sin [247].)

This is a pain apart, distinguished from the pains of life which teach us humility by its quality as much as by its degree.

Julian is shown two things about the pain associated with sin. While we may have a deep sense that the pain we suffer is well deserved, it is not meted out to humanity as punishment for sin (*poena*).³⁸ As we have already noted above, the pain associated with sin is a penance. It is "the sharpest scourge þat ony chosyn soule may be smyttyn with" (39:449).³⁹ It beats us, almost breaks us and purges us so that we are driven to true contrition and dependence on the Holy Spirit alone.⁴⁰ Because of this, God "doth away alle oure blame, and beholdeth vs with ruth and pytte, as chyl dren innocens and vnlothfulle" (28:411).⁴¹

³⁸ See above, pp. 14-19.

³⁹ See above, p. 30.

⁴⁰ For Julian sin is a scourge that by itself has no substance: "it has na manere of substannce, na partye of beyng, na it myght nought be knowenn bot be the paynes that it is cause of" (ST 13:245).

⁴¹ Note here that Julian makes mention of the life of the Church, presumably referring to the sacramental system as a means of conveying the grace of the Holy Spirit before mentioned. Elsewhere, Julian refers to the inseparable relationship between God and the Church, whereby she makes it clear that the Church never acts apart from the second person of the trinity:

The moder may geue her chylde sucke hyr mylke, but oure precyous moder Jhesu, he may fede vs wyth hym selfe, and doth full curtesly and full tendyrly with the blessyd sacrament, that is precyous fode of very lyfe; and with all the swete sacramentes he systeynyth vs full mercyfylly and graciously,
(continued...)

The second thing Julian is shown about sin and pain is that

synne shalle be no shame, but wurshype to man, for ryght as to every synne is answeyng 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 (38:445).

(sin will be no shame, but honour to man, for just as there is indeed a corresponding pain for every sin, just so love gives to the same soul a bliss for every sin. Just as various sins are punished with various pains, the more grievous are the sins, so will they be rewarded with various joys in heaven to reward the victories over them, to the degree in which the sin may have been painful and sorrowful to the soul on earth [242].)

In God's plan, not only is sin useful in driving us to depend on God, it is actually rewarded in heaven.⁴² As Julian explains the accounting, each sin is met with a pain on earth but will be met in heaven with *a blysse* or a joy. Pains will be transmuted into joys one for one.⁴³

Julian tries to answer the obvious objection to this theodicy by saying that we must not therefore assume that it is good to sin because we will be rewarded for it

⁴¹(...continued)

and so ment he in theyse blessyd wordys, where he syde: I it am that holy chyrch prechyth the and techyth the. That is to sey: All the helth and the lyfe of sacramentys, alle þe vertu and þe grace of my worde, alle the goodnesse that is ordeynyd in holy chyrch to the, I it am (60:596-97).

(The mother can give her child to suck of her milk, but our precious Mother Jesus can feed us with himself, and does, most courteously and most tenderly, with the blessed sacrament, which is the precious food of true life; and with all the sweet sacraments he sustains us most mercifully and graciously, and so he meant in these blessed words, where he said: I am he whom holy Church preaches and teaches to you. That is to say: All the health and the life of the sacraments, all the power and the grace of my word, all the goodness which is ordained in Holy church for you, I am he [298].)

⁴² See Romans 8:18 (NRSV): "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

⁴³ Julian speaks to god's lovers who, as participants in the sacramental system, are understood to attain heaven absolved and reconciled with God thorough the last rights. The pains of sin are rewarded in heaven because they have caused the soul to become contrite and "buxom" to God (48:500).

(40:456). Nor must we conclude that sin is not all that bad after all. This thinking is "folly" according to Julian and must not be indulged in:

Because of alle thys gostly comfort that is before seyde, if any man or woman be steryd by folly to sey or to thynke: if this be tru, than were it good for to synne to haue the more mede, or elles to charge the lesse to synne, beware of this steryng. For, if it come, it is vntrue and of the enemy (40:452).

(Because of all this spiritual consolation which has been described, if any man or woman be moved by folly to say or to think 'If this be true, then it would be well to sin so as to have the greater reward, or else to think sin less important', beware of this impulse, for truly, should it come, it is untrue and from the fiend [247].)

In her own words sin is "sorow and paynes to [Christ's] louers" (39:452) and "so vyle and so mekylle for to hate that it may be lyconnyd to no payne whych payne is not synne" (40:458). It is a grievous falling which befouls "the feyer ymage of god" (39:450).

This connection between the pain of sin and human bliss leads the conclusion that "Synne is behouely" (27:405). Most commentators have followed Colledge and Walsh in understanding this to mean sin is *necessary*.⁴⁴ This has led to much discussion amongst the scholars of the highly unusual claim Julian appears to be making about the necessity of sin. However, an early anthologist of Julian's, Franklin Chambers, has pointed out that this may not be a correct rendering of Julian's sense.⁴⁵ Her word in the Paris manuscript is *behouely*, which *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) lists as obsolete in Julian's day. The Cressy and Upholland texts gloss this marginally as *behoveful*, which the OED says was extremely common

⁴⁴ Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 225.

⁴⁵ Chambers, *Juliana of Norwich*, 51.

between 1400 and 1700. The two Sloane manuscripts both have *behovabil*, the first occurrence of which is listed as 1460, several decades after Julian's death (although not before the recording of the Sloane manuscripts). Each of these words listed in the OED, as well as the verb *behove*, has 'useful', 'profitable' and 'advantageous' as the primary meaning, and 'needful' and 'necessary' as secondary meanings only. It seems highly probable that Jesus was telling Julian not that sin is necessary, but that sin is useful. We have already seen how this is true in Julian's thinking. Sin and its pains are useful because they drive humanity to despair of its own abilities and to rest in God alone (39:449); because they serve God's purposes (27:405); and because they are rewarded in heaven with joy (38:445).

Julian uses medical and medicinal imagery in reference to sin. To her sin is a sickness from which we can be healed. There are two cures. The first is found in "the blessed woundes of oure sauour [which] be opyn and enjoye to hele vs" (61:608). In this Julian sees that Jesus "vsyth the very office of a kynde norysse [nurse], that hath not elles to done but to entende about the saluation of hyr chylde" (61:608). The second cure comes from God as well but resides in our own soul. It is the threefold gift of contrition, compassion and true longing for God, the three wounds of the third gift begged by the young Julian before her illness. She says of these, "by thyse medycins behovuth that every synnfulle soule be helyd" (39:452). Much later in the text she refers to these again and says that through our own contrition and the grace of the Holy Spirit we are broken and cured and united to Jesus: "thorow contrycion and grace we shall be broken from alle thyng þat is not oure lorde; and than shalle oure blessyd savyour perfetely cure vs and oone vs to

hym" (78:698-99).

The significance of the sickness metaphor for sin lies in its emphasis on the transitory nature of the condition. Illness is not an inherent part of being human, it is a temporary condition which is peripheral to existence.⁴⁶ A sick person is not going to be sick forever, and may be good, bad or evil quite apart from her or his illness. Julian's use of this metaphor not only emphasizes the relative unimportance of the state of sin to the essential qualities of humanity, but also clearly underlines the healing nature of redemption.⁴⁷

The godly will. One last point should be made concerning Julian's understanding of human nature, and this concerns the role of the godly will. It is important to draw attention to this at this point in our discussion, as it relates to the matter of sin and our willful participation in it. We have seen that in Julian's theology sin plays a significant but quite untraditional part in human existence. One objection to Julian's apparent diminution of the power of sin is that it does not take account of the perverse nature of the human will.

Julian does not completely accept the proposal that it is our perverse will which is the root of sin. A careful reading of the example of the lord and servant reveals that the servant, Adam, does not willfully fall into the pit which is sin but rather accidentally arrives in that place, from which he fervently desires release.

⁴⁶ Grace Jantzen says that to Julian sin is "parasitic" (*Mystic and Theologian*, 183).

⁴⁷ Jesus tells Julian that "Alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele" (27:405), and one might be inclined to understand the healing connotation in this context. However, the sense of hale good health which now attaches to the word 'well' is not recorded in the OED until the mid-sixteenth century, far too long after Julian's time to be relevant. The primary sense of 'well' in Julian's day was of happiness or well-being.

"Only hys good wyll and his grett desyer was cause of his fallyng. And he was as vnlothfull and as good inwardly as he was when he stode before his lorde, redy to do his wyll" (51:516).

Not only does the servant *not will* to fall but Julian learns that he *will not* to fall: "In every soule that shalle be savyd is a godly wyll that nevur assentyth to synne, nor nevyr shalle . . . there is a godly wyll in the hygher party, whych wyll is so good that it may nevyr wyll evylle, but evyr good" (37:443). This godly will seems quite unlike the idea of a perverse human will which opposes God intentionally.⁴⁸ Julian teaches that the godly will is "wrought contynually in ech soule that shalle be savyd" by God (58:582), who unites us to himself and keeps us "as clene and as noble as we were made" (58:582). Specifically, the godly will is located in the second person of the trinity, as he indwells us: "in hym we haue this goodly wyll, hole and safe without ende, both in kynde and in grace, of his owne propyr goodnesse" (59:592). Also, "oure kyndely wyll is to haue god, and the good wyll of god is to haue vs" (6:308). Julian's idea of the nature of the elect, therefore, includes this beautiful core, the godly will, which protects them from true participation in sin, since they never fully assent to it.⁴⁹ It does, however, leave open

⁴⁸ An early editor of *The Showings*, Roger Hudleston, dismissed the concept of a godly will in Julian as being inconsistent with the teaching of the church. However, as both Colledge and Walsh and Baker show, it has Pauline roots, and can be found in such medieval thinkers as William of St Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux. See Romans 8:28-29 (NRSV): "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

⁴⁹ The godly will protects the elect because they are eternally united with Christ: he wyll we wytt that this deerworthy soule was preciously knytt to hym in the making, whych onyng it is made endlessly holy. Farthermore he wyll we wytt that all the soulis pat shalle be savyd in hevyn with out ende by knytt in this knott, ad onyd in this oonyng, and made holy in this holynesse (54:560).

the question of whether those who are not to be saved, the unrepentent sinners, have perverse wills which oppose the divine will.

The Pain which Humanity Experiences: Bliss

On several occasions already we have made reference to the association between human suffering and the bliss of heaven. In this last section on the pains which humanity experiences we shall address this connection in Julian's thinking. Julian learns four things about the relationship between pain and bliss. She learns that we are taken from pain when we leave this life. She learns that bliss is the opposite of pain, expressed as union with God. She sees that there is a direct connection between the pains of human experience and the joys in heaven, although the nature of that connection seems to be unclear in her thought. Lastly, she learns somewhat paradoxically that God will thank us for the pains we suffer.

We are taken from pain. In the Fifteenth Showing Julian sees the image of the body lying on the earth with a beautiful child arising from it (64:622-23).⁵⁰ This she interprets in reference to human destiny. In her reflections on this image Julian reveals that the body represents the "grette wretchydnesse of oure dedely flessch", and that the child is "the clennes and the puernesse of oure soule" (64:623).⁵¹ The anchoress carefully explains that the fact that none of the foulness of the body adheres

⁵⁰ See above, p. 101.

⁵¹ See Romans 6:6 (NRSV). "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless." Jantzen notes that Julian has carefully named the *wretchedness* of the flesh, and not the flesh itself, indicating a more favourable view of the body than many of her theological contemporaries (*Mystic and Theologian*, 145). See also Nuth's perceptive comments in the same vein (*Wisdom's Daughter*, 125).

to the child reveals an important theological insight. "It is fulle blesfulle man to be taken fro payne, more than payne be taken fro man; for if payne be taken from vs, it may come agayne. Therefore this is a soueryene comfort and a blesful beholdyng in a longyng soule, that we shall be taken fro payne" (64:624).

This is an important point for Julian, and one which she does not omit reiterating (75:679). When we move from earthly life (pain-as-suffering) to eternal life (bliss) it is *we* who are taken away, not pain. The pain remains 'behind' on a level of existence removed from that to which we are taken. The implication seems to be that pain can have no continuing existence in the state of bliss.⁵²

The actual moment of 'taking' Julian refers to at one point as "the ovyr passyng, that is to sey fro the payne þat we feele in to the blysse þat we trust" (82:716). This will be a sudden passing over for those who love God at the moment of their deaths when "they be sodeynly delyverde of synne and of payne, and taken vp to blysse and made evyn with seyntes" (39: 451).⁵³

The nature of bliss. It is a not unremarkable feature of Julian's thinking that bliss is the complete opposite of life and pain. In her writing she often opposes "þe woo that is here and þe wele and the blessyd beyng that is there" (64:619-20). She uses the concept of joy freely and quite traditionally to describe the experience of the saved in bliss (6:309; 28:409; 64:621; 71:656 among many others). What is

⁵² In an article which seriously misunderstands much of Julian's thinking Neu Watkins offers this intriguing suggestion: that the image of the child ascending from the body may be interpreted as "death as birth." It is intriguing because of the positive layer of meaning which it adds to the image of the body and the child, an image which Julian clearly found uplifting and hopeful in her understanding of death ("Two Women Visionaries and Death," 194).

⁵³ Julian refers to the suddenness of this moment repeatedly. See 21:380; 49:508; 64:622; 83:724.

intriguing is her idea that some of the joy of bliss is God's enjoyment of those whom God has brought there (51:527). Joan Nuth elucidates this point nicely:

To my knowledge, no one else has ever described heaven in quite this way. Traditionally, heaven indicates the state of joy experienced by the blessed in the beatific vision, that is humanity's enjoyment of God. Julian uniquely extends the meaning of heaven to include the joy which the saved bring to God. Indeed, all the saved are the mutual gift exchanged between Father and Son in heaven.⁵⁴

Apart from this idea of the mutual enjoyment in heaven of God and humanity, Julian's idea of bliss is fairly conventional. She speaks of union or intimacy with God (7:315; 31:418), fulfillment (6:309; 75:679), and beatific vision (72:660), just as one might expect of a thinker of her day.⁵⁵

Pain rewarded in bliss. A most significant aspect of Julian's thinking on bliss is that in heaven we shall be rewarded for our pains on earth. In her most complete statement of this Julian says,

synne shalle be no shame, but wurshype to man, for ryght as to every synne is answeyng 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 greuouse, ryght so shalle they be rewardyd with dyuers joyes in hevyn for theyr victories, after as the synne haue ben paynfulle and sorowfulle to the soule in erth (38:445).

(sin will be no shame, but honour to man, for just as there is indeed a corresponding pain for every sin, just so love gives to the same soul a bliss for every sin. Just as various sins are punished with various pains, the more grievous are the sins, so will they be rewarded with various joys in heaven to reward the victories over them to the degree

⁵⁴ Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 90.

⁵⁵ For the medieval theology of the beatific vision of God see Pelikan, *Growth of Medieval Theology*, 303-307.

in which the sin may have been painful and sorrowful to the soul on earth [242].)

Here the anchoress is offering her audience the word of hope and comfort which was given to her by God. The question which this explanation begs is, Is there any point to earthly human suffering? Julian's answer, shown to her by God, is a resounding Yes. Let us explore this more fully.

In the citation above Julian explains that sin is met with pain on earth but rewarded with joy in heaven. In other iterations of this thought she modifies her terminology slightly so that it is not sin *per se* which is rewarded in heaven. In the Fifth Showing it is "woo and tribulacion" (13:350). In the Ninth Showing it is "oure paynes" (21:381), and in the Thirteenth Showing it is just generally "alle" (28:411). In the Fourteenth Showing we find both "oure contraryousnes" (48:503) and "all our blame" (52:553) are what is rewarded. All these concepts share the sense of 'that which is suffered on earth as a result of our fallenness.' The suffering of this life, however caused, is rewarded in bliss.

Julian uses three words to describe the settlement which God makes on us at the end of our lives: "profy3te," "mede" and "reward." Each of these carries the strong implication of merit or desert, which seems incongruous given Julian's clear understanding that we do not deserve God's graces so freely given. However, it seems more likely that Julian is saying not that we ourselves deserve reward but that the pain which we experience earns it for us. It is the very fact of human suffering, even the suffering brought on by sin, which vouchsafes the joy of bliss.

In describing the nature of the reward which shall be given, Julian again uses a

variety of concepts to sketch broadly the richness of what is awaiting the souls that will be saved. She says it is "hygh, glorious and wurshyppfulle" (39:452), "swete and delectable" (49:509), "feyernessee and endlesse wurschype," "an hygh endlesse knowyng in god" (21:381), "a blysse," and "ioy." In her reflections on the Thirteenth Showing Julian comes closest to explaining fully what this joyful reward is: "[God] is the ende and he is the mede wherefore every kynde soule travelyth" (34:431).⁵⁶ Whether we are to be rapt in beatific vision of God or united with God in some existential fashion seems unclear. At times Julian implies both, and perhaps the workings of the union to be anticipated include aspects of both for the anchoress. What is clear, however, is the connection between earthly pain and eternal joy.

As with so many other aspects of Julian's thought, the example of the lord and servant holds an important key to its understanding. While she is still considering the example and interacting with both it and God, trying to distill meaning from the example, Julian searches the servant for any sign of fault or blame for what has befallen him. Not only does she see none, she realizes that the lord himself assigns no blame to the servant. The lord explains his position:

Lo my belouyd servant, what harme and dysses he hath had and takyn in my servys for my loue, yea, and for his good wylle. Is it not reson that I reward hym his frey and his drede, his hurt and hys mayme and alle his woo? And not only this, but fallyth it nott to me to geve hym a 3yfte that be better to hym and more wurschypfull than his owne hele shuld haue bene? And ells me thyngkyth I dyd hym no grace (51:517-18).

⁵⁶ This not un-traditional idea of the joys of heaven can be found rooted in Augustine's thought. "When the vision of God will be perfect then there will be a perfect likeness to God in the image" (*De trinitate* 14.17.23). See also I Corinthians 13:12 (NRSV). "Now we see but a poor reflection: then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

(See my beloved servant, what harm and injuries he has had and accepted in my service for my love, yes, and for his good will. Is it not reasonable that I should reward him for his fright and his fear, his hurt and his injuries and all his woe? And furthermore, is it not proper for me to give him a gift, better for him and more honourable than his own health could have been? Otherwise, it seems to me that I should be ungracious [268-69].)

The lord is prepared to recompense the servant for any hurt suffered in his service beyond what he might have received otherwise. The servant must have the advantage. When the lord is understood as God, and the servant's fall as humanity's fall into sin this takes on its striking meaning. Julian is shown that God does not blame us for our fallenness, and wishes to reward us for the pain which results from it. This is why earthly suffering is rewarded in heaven.

In the passage which opened this small section on the rewards for pain in heaven, there is a significant subtlety: "ryght as to every synne is anweryng a payne *by truth*, ryght so for every synne to the same soule is gevyn a blysse *by loue*" (38:445, emphasis mine). As my emphases show, the demands of truth are served on earth. Sin is met with pain. But in heaven the law of love is served, and God can reward earthly suffering, especially when accompanied by genuine contrition (48:500), with joy. This gives ultimate and beneficial meaning to earthly suffering for those who are both penitent and good.

We are thanked for pain. The last connection Julian is shown between earthly pain and heavenly bliss is the apparently incongruous one that we are thanked for our pain by God. The first time she mentions this is in her reflections on the Sixth Showing, where she herself is thanked by God for the travail of her youth and caught

up to heaven to see God "in hys awne howse" (14:351). She is shown that there are three degrees of bliss for the souls which have served God willfully at any point in their lives:

The furst is the wurshyppe and thangke of our lorde God that he shall receyve when he is delyverde of payne. This thangke is so hygh and so wurshyppfulle that hym thyngkyth that it fyllyth hym, though ther were no more For the secunde: that alle the blessyd creatures that be in hevyn shalle se the wurschypfulle thangkynge. And he makyth hys servys knowyn to alle that be in hevyn And for the thurde: that as new and as lykyng as it is vndertaken that tyme, ryght so schalle it laste without ende (14:352-53).

(The first is the honour and thanks from our Lord God which he will receive when he is delivered from pain. The thanks is so exalted and so honourable that it may seem to him that this suffices him, if there were no more. . . . As to the second degree, it is that all the blessed in heaven will see the honour of the thanks. God makes the soul's service known to all who are in heaven. . . . And for the third degree: It is that the first joy with which the soul is then received will last forevermore [203-204].)

Here we have the apparently unseemly even presumptuous prospect of God thanking humanity for the pain suffered during earthly existence. Father John-Julian draws our attention to this in a short and easily over-looked article in *Mystics Quarterly*.⁵⁷ He reflects on what he has learned about the Middle English word *thangke* as a translator of Julian of Norwich. "In every translation of which I know (including my own), this word *thankyng* is here translated – seemingly properly – as 'thanksgiving.'" Giving the matter more study, and comparing the many times Julian uses the word with a definition she herself provides, John-Julian concludes that the Middle English word has been improperly translated with a "false cognate".⁵⁸ The translation does not

⁵⁷ "Thankyng in Julian," *Mystics Quarterly* 15 (June 1989): 70-74..

⁵⁸ Julian's own definition is "a true, inward knowyng, with grett reuerence and louely drede turnyng
(continued...)

carry the full weight of meaning of the older word, which in his opinion is "an awareness or perception which directs us towards the behavior God wishes us to undertake."⁵⁹ When the *thankgyng* is being done by God and not us he proposes "approval, grace, favor, or good-will" as a more appropriate translation. This softens the thought that God thanks us for pain and opens the notion that our reward for pain in heaven is divine approval or favour. As John-Julian points out, this seems much more appropriate and consistent with the whole of Julian's thinking on the matter.

The Pain which Creation Experiences

In this chapter on Julian's thinking on the pain which is experienced in the earthly domain there are two loci of pain other than humanity which we should turn to briefly in conclusion. The first is the pain of creation itself, and the second is the pain experienced by the devil and the damned.

The union of creation. Julian makes it eminently clear that her primary concern and audience is her fellow Christians who wish to be considered "Christus louers." She has little to say about the damned, although what she does say we will consider below. She also has surprisingly little to say about the natural world around her. She uses images from nature skillfully (a hazelnut, rain dripping from eaves, the bed of the sea) but passes almost no comment on the world or its creatures.⁶⁰ I

⁵⁸(...continued)

oure selfe with alle oure myghtes in to the werkyng that oure lorde steryd vs to (41:466).

⁵⁹ "Thankyng in Julian," 72.

⁶⁰ *pace* Bradley who suggests that Julian "had that closeness to nature which was the special heritage
(continued...)"

indicate that this is surprising since there are strong traditions in mystical writing both of apophatic mysticism, which tends to overlook the world in order to find God, and of nature mysticism, which finds God immanent in nature or creation.

There are, however, unobtrusive suggestions in Julian's text that, had she addressed the matter overtly, she would have given evidence of a theology of the union of creation in God. The closest she comes to speaking of this is in her recounting of the First Showing, when she tells of a secondary showing she was given:

And in this he shewed a little thing, the quantitie of an haselnott, lying in þe palem 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 generally thus: It is all that is made It lasteth and ever shall, for god loueth it; and so hath all thing being by the loue of god_(5:299-300).

(And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: What can this be? [And I was answered generally in this way: It is all that is made.] . . . It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God [183].)⁶¹

This is a succinct image of the unity of being, all things receiving their being through the sustaining love of God. It is a powerful summary of a complex philosophical idea.⁶²

⁶⁰(...continued)

of the recluse" (Bradley, *Julian's Way*, 76).

⁶¹ The words in brackets have been accidentally omitted in the modern translation by Colledge and Walsh. I have supplied them myself.

⁶² Compare with Hilton:

It is commonly said that a soul shall see Our Lord within all things, and within itself. It is true that our Lord is within all creatures, but not in the way that a kernel is hidden inside the shell of a nut, or as a little bodily thing is hidden inside another big one. But he is within all creatures as holding and keeping them inside their being, through the subtlety and power of his

(continued...)

Julian attempts to express the goodness of God in ordering the world the way it is, which she learns is the best way it can be. "[God's] goodness fulfillith all his creaturs and all his blessed workes (and) ouer passith without end" (5:303, parenthesis from Colledge and Walsh). "[God] is in althyng God doth alle thyng, be it nevyr so lytyle" (11:336). "He is in the myd poynt of all thynges, and all he doth" (11:338). These statements show that Julian does have a sense of creation being united by God's participation and goodness which is resident in each thing.

In one statement she speaks approvingly of the world as the work of God and as an appropriate means to discover God, quite the opposite of the apophatic spirituality advocated by someone like the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.⁶³

our lord wylle haue the sowle turned truly in to the beholdyng of hym, and generally of all his workes. For they be fulle good, and alle his domys be esy and swete. . . . For as alle that hath beyng in kynde is of gods makying, so is alle thyng that is done in properte of gods doying (11:339).

(our Lord wants to have the soul truly converted to contemplation of him and of all his works in general. For they are most good, and all his judgments are easy and sweet. . . . For everything which exists in nature is of God's creation, so that everything which is done has the property of being of God's doing [198].)

As these citations show, Julian's sense of the unity of creation is rooted in her understanding of God as the sustainer of the world. All things have being through

⁶²(...continued)

own blessed nature and invisible purity (*Scale* 2.33.262).

See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I q. 43 a. 3.

⁶³ Happold calls this the Contemplation of Immanence, in which God "is seen as very near and very dear, 'closer to us than our most inward part'." He opposes this the Contemplation of Transcendence in which "God is apprehended as the 'naked Godhead,' as the 'Nameless Being of whom naught can be said'" (*Mysticism*, 88). See also Romans 1:20 (NRSV). "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

God, and since God has created them they are well created. All things in creation share the properties of being, goodness and contingency.⁶⁴

The pain which creation experiences. Julian makes an interesting statement early in the Eighth Showing, where she is shown the Crucifixion.

Here saw I a grett onyng betwene Crist and vs, to my vnderstandyng; for when he was in payne we ware in payne, and alle creatures that myght suffer payne sufferyd with hym. That is to say, alle creatures that god hath made to oure servys, þe fymamente and erth, feylyd for sorow in ther kynd in the tyme of Cristes dyeng, for it longyth kyndly to ther properte to know hym for ther lorde, in whom alle ther vertuse stonyth (18:367).

(Here I saw a great unity between Christ and us, and I understand it; for when he was in pain we were in pain, and all creatures able to suffer pain suffered with him. That is to say, all creatures which God has created for our service, the firmament and the earth, failed in their natural functions because of sorrow at the time of Christ's death, for it is their natural characteristic to recognize him as their Lord, in whom all their powers exist [210].)

At the moment of the Crucifixion, the death of God, the whole world convulsed in sorrow.⁶⁵ This understanding comes to the anchoress immediately following her own painful experience of compassionate suffering on behalf of her God which she experienced in the Eighth Showing. She is shown right away that she is not alone in this. The whole world suffered as she has just done, sharing the pains of the dying Christ. Each part of creation, firmament and earth, "feilyd for sorow in ther kynd." The pain which seared through creation was experienced by each creature in the way

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Dreyer says of Julian's theology of creation, "Julian's extraordinary positive regard for God's creation is, in its rarity and in its presentation, a delightful discovery" ("Julian of Norwich: Her Merry Counsel," *America* 139 [1978], 113).

⁶⁵ See Romans 8:22 (NRSV). "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

natural to it, because it is in the nature of each to know Jesus as its lord.⁶⁶

Julian's use of the ancient word *kynd* to refer to the nature or inherent properties of a thing allows for the sympathetic *double entendre* which we hear in the word. When Jesus died, then all things failed with him "for kyndnes." They failed in their nature, but they also failed because of the gentle or benevolent feelings which all things have for their maker.⁶⁷

Julian explains that Christ's friends suffered for him because they loved him, but the world that didn't know him suffered also "for feylynge of all maner comfort, saue the myghty pryve kepyng of god" (18:367). We may turn this around, so to speak, and deduce that it is the comfort of Christ which unites and sustains us normally. At the moment of crucifixion that comfort was withdrawn, the inner support of the world was removed, and if it had not been for the continued *pryve kepyng* of God the Father, the world might have failed altogether. We have already seen this "radical contingency of created reality," as Joan Nuth calls it, in the hazelnut vision, where Julian sees that the thing is sustained by God's love alone (5:299-300).⁶⁸

⁶⁶ This idea can be found as far back as Leo the Great: "While the Creator was hanging on the gallows, all creation was in tears, and all the elements together felt the nails of the cross piercing them" (*Sermo* lvii, 4; PL 54, 330).

⁶⁷ This idea in Julian's thought is remarkably like what would come to be known as the "gospel of all creatures," in the Radical Reformation. All the world is united in suffering the Crucifixion, which to the radical reformers was an ongoing contemporaneous event in which all are called to participate. For a fuller explanation see Timothy George, "The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt, vol 17 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Spiritual Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 339.

⁶⁸ Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 99.

The Pain which the Damned Experience

There is one last kind of pain which is suffered in the world, according to Julian's theology, the pain of the devil and the damned. It may be argued that these are not suffered "in the world," for they are suffered in hell, but for the sake of simplicity I follow Julian in considering them a part of creation.

Hell. Although hell is a reality in Julian's thinking, and she mentions it a number of times in her text; it has an ineffectual presence. She mentions it largely to show how its power is overcome through Jesus Christ. In her Fourth Showing Julian says "Beholde and see the vertu of this precious plenty of hys dere worthy blode. It descendyd downe in to helle and brak her bondes, and delyuerd them all that were there which belong to the courte of hevyn" (12:344).⁶⁹ As part of her reflection on the lord and servant example Julian speaks of the intimate union between Adam and Jesus which was shown her in the person of the servant. "Goddys son fell with Adam in to the slade of the meydens wombe, . . . and that for to excuse Adam from blame in hevyn and in erth; and myghtely he fechyd hym out of hell" (51:534). In the Fourteenth Showing Julian reiterates that Jesus has "mightly takyn" us out of hell and brought us up to heaven (59:588). In each of these instances it is noticeable that hell's power is nullified by the power of Jesus Christ.

⁶⁹ Julian is articulating the traditional teaching that Jesus descended to hell for the three days prior to his Resurrection. For an excellent summary of the earliest theological thinking on this subject, itself a late article of faith, added to the creed during the Arian controversy, see Berard L. Marthaler, *The Creed* (Mystic, Conn: Twenty-third Publications, 1987), 167-71.

This is not to say, however, that in Julian's thinking hell has no influence at all. When she herself is in fear of her life she thinks she may be put to a temptation, but she sees that the Passion has saved her and all Christians: "I knew well that it was strenght (sic) inough to me, ye, and to all creaturs livyng that sould be saued, against all the fiendes of hell, and against all ghostely enemies" (4:297).⁷⁰ She knows of hell as a place of pain (40:457), of death and of sorrow (72:660). However, she consistently mitigates the apparent power of hell, in this case the power of the fear of pain, by juxtaposing it with a greater power:

it semyth to vs oftyn tymes as we were in parelle of deth and in a party of helle for the sorow and þe payne that synne is to vs, and thus we are deed for the tyme fro the very syght of oure blessydfulle lyffe. But in all theis I sawe feythfully that we be nott deed in the syght of god, ne he passyth nevyr from vs (72:660-61).

(it often seems to us as if we were in danger of death and in some part of hell, because of the sorrow and the pain which sin is to us, and so for that time we are dead to the true sight of our blessed life. But in all this I saw truly that we are not dead in the sight of God, nor does he ever depart from us [320].)

On at least two occasions she speaks of the pain of sin being worse than that of hell.

In the Fourteenth Showing she says, "we shall se verely that synne is wurse, vyler and paynfuller than hell without ony lycknesse" (63:615). Similarly, in the Sixteenth Showing she says,

I wott þe soule þat truly takyth þe techyng of þe holy gost, it hatyth more synne for þe vyelnesse and þe horyblyte than it doyth alle the payne that is in helle. For the soule that beholdeth þe kyndnesse of oure lorde Jhesu, it hatyth no helle but helle's synne, as to my syght (76:684).

⁷⁰ As has been noted, this fear of temptation on the death bed was a common part of lay piety in Julian's day (Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 316). See above, p. 77.

(I know well that the soul which truly accepts the teaching of the Holy Spirit hates sin more, for its vileness and horribleness, than it does all the pain which is in hell. For the soul which contemplates the kindness of Jesus does not hate any hell, but the sin of hell, as I see it. [328, rev.])⁷¹

Julian does ask to have a vision of hell and purgatory, not out of a prurient interest, but to learn to love God the more: "In this I desyeryd as I durste that I myght haue had som sy3t of hel and of purgatory; but it was nott my menyng to take pre(f)e of ony thyng that lonyth to oure feyth. . . . But my menyng was pat I myght haue seen for lernyng in alle thyng that longyth to my feyth, wher by I my3t lyue the more to goddes worschyppe and to my profy3te" (33:427, parentheses from Colledge and Walsh). The vision is not given. Her attempt to direct the showings is thus fruitless.

Why is hell given no presence in the showings? The anchoress does not speculate on this at all, falling back rather on what she has learned about hell in the Fifth Showing where she learned that the devil is scorned and overcome by the Passion: "the passion of hym is the ovyrcomyng of the feende. . . . Also I saw oure lorde scornynge hys malys and noughtyng his vnmyght" (13:347). In Julian's thought hell's power is systematically opposed by the greater powers of Jesus' death and of the love of God. She may not see hell. Hell has neither power nor visual presence, and consequently little theological presence for Julian, either.

⁷¹ Note that Colledge and Walsh have emended the Middle English "helle's synne" so that the modern translation reads "sin of hell" in the last phrase.

The damned. Julian knows from the teaching of holy church that there are damned:

angelis that felle ouȝt of hevyn for pride, whych be now fendys, and meny 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 vncristen lyfe and so dyeth ouȝte of cheryte (32:425).

(angels who fell out of heaven because of pride, who now are devils, and many men upon earth who die out of the faith of Holy Church, that is to say those who are heathen and many who have received baptism and who live unchristian lives and so die out of God's love [233, rev.])

Her faith teaches her that there are residents of hell, but the showings do not touch on these at all. How can all be well, she wonders, if some are to be damned eternally?

God answers her cryptically, "That þat is vnpossible to the is nott vnpossible to me.

I shalle saue my worde in alle thyng, and I shalle make althyng wele" (33:426). This is essentially an instruction to leave well enough alone, and Julian wisely does so.

She reiterates in her text over and over that her words are for Christ's lovers and

"them that shal be savyd" (13:348) only, not for those in jeopardy of their eternal

lives.⁷² The most that she is able to discover is that God does have a plan for the damned, which will be executed at the end of time:

There is a deed the whych the blessyd fulle trynyte shalle do in the last day, as to my syght, and what the deed shall be and how it shall be done, it is vnknown of all creaturys whych are beneth Crist, and shall be tylle whan it shalle be done . . . by whych deed he shalle make all thyng wele. For ryght as the blessyd trinite made alle thyng of nought, ryght so the same blessyd trynyte shalle make wele alle that is nott welle (32:423-24).⁷³

⁷² See also 38:448; and 76:684 for other examples of her disclaimer.

⁷³ The other great deed of God is more fully shown to Julian, and consists in reconciling those who love and fear God with god both on earth and in heaven:

Owre lorde god shewde that a deed shalle be done and hym selfe shalle do it. . . . This dede shalle be begon here, and it shalle be wurschypfulle to god and plentuously profetable to alle hys lovers in erth; and evyr as we come to hevyn we shalle se it in marvelous joy, and it shalle last thus in werkyng to the last day (36:436-7).

(There is a deed which the blessed Trinity will perform on the last day, as I see it, and what the deed will be and how it will be performed is unknown to every creature who is inferior to Christ, and it will be until the deed is done . . . through which deed he will make all things well. For just as the blessed Trinity created all things from nothing, just so will the same blessed Trinity make everything well which is not well [232-33].)

The devil's frustration. In Julian's discussion of the underworld she speaks of pain in relation to the devil. But Julian learns in the Fifth Showing that the devil's power "is alle lokked in gods hande" (13:347). The devil is as malicious as before the Incarnation, but powerless because of it.⁷⁴ The paradox which Julian is shown is that the devil is as frustrated when he acts as when he does not: "and he hath as mech sorow when god gevyth hym leue to werke as when he workyth nott. And that is for he may nevyr do as ylle as he wolde" (13:347). If he acts, the results are turned to joy for us in heaven. If he does not act, he has no influence at all. "And that is his sorow; and full evyl is he ashamyd" (13:347).⁷⁵

In two places Julian indicates that the devil suffers pain in hell. The first

⁷³(...continued)

(Our Lord God revealed that a deed will be done, and he himself will do it. . . . This deed will be begun here, and it will be honour to God and to the plentiful profit of all his lovers on earth; and as we come to heaven each one of us will see it with wonderful joy; and it will go on operating until the last day [238].)

⁷⁴ Compare with Hilton: "The soul finds it wonderful that the devil has so much malice and so little might. No creature is as powerless as he, and therefore people are great cowards to fear him so much, for he can do nothing without leave of our Lord Jesus, not so much as go into a pig, as the gospel says: far less can he trouble any man. . . . His mouth is stopped with his own malice, and his hands are bound like a thief who deserves to be judged and hanged in hell" (*Scale* 2.45.299-300).

⁷⁵ Hilton has two references to shaming the devil by focussing one's thought on God: "Do as I have said, and better if you can, and by the grace of Jesus I think you will make the devil ashamed" (*Scale* 1.91.159). "The devil is greatly ashamed and confounded in himself when treated like this by a pure soul" (*Scale* 2.45.300).

mention of this is in the same chapter, where she concludes that "all the payne and the sorow that he wolde haue brought them [the saved] to shalle for evyr goo with hym to helle" (13:350). She seems to be indicating that the only place where pain has an eternal reality is in hell with the devil.⁷⁶ This is even more clearly articulated in the Sixteenth Showing, where Julian says that the Resurrection of Christ "is to hym [the devil] so great sorow and payne, for the hate þat he hath to oure soule, that he brynneth [burns] contynually in envy. And alle this sorow þat he would make vs to haue, it shall turne in to hym selfe" (77:690).

Conclusion: The Didactic Nature of Pain

This chapter has examined Julian's ideas on the fact of pain in creation, particularly within human existence, from a number of angles. It has considered the role of pain in human life and growth; the ways in which we are equipped and strengthened to deal with pain; the lasting effect of earthly pain as heavenly reward; the pain shared in creation; and the pain suffered by the devil and the damned.

In Julian's luminous thought all things work together for good, even pain and suffering. Pain is a part of human life, to be certain, but it is neither punishment nor burden to those who will be saved. Suffering is the penance whereby humanity is drawn closer to God through the working of the Holy Spirit. Humanity is rewarded in bliss for suffering endured contritely on earth, so that no act of endurance is lost.

Julian has answered some of the classic questions of theology concerning pain

⁷⁶ Paula Datsko Barker interprets Julian to be saying that sin has no eternal reality because it has no continued existence in God ("The Motherhood of God in Julian of Norwich's Theology," *Downside Review* 100 [October, 1982], 293).

and suffering. How are pain and sin related? What is the purpose of pain in life? How can God allow suffering? Is pain punishment? Each of Julian's answers to these questions, explored above, depends on an unrelenting insistence on God's nature as love. She does not shy away from the dark reality of pain in life, and does not diminish the fact of human suffering in doing so. Rather, she is prepared to allow for a certain level of mystery to rest at the core of her understanding of God's plan for the world. God is love. All shall be well. Holding these foundational concepts together the anchoress allows suffering to be in the service of the good.

In summary, Julian introduces us to the idea of pain being part of the human process of redemption. Other theologians address this idea, particularly within the context of *imitatio Christi*. In following Christ by suffering as he suffered, we can participate in Christ's Passion and redemption more fully. But Julian pushes beyond the level of simply aligning our suffering with the pain of Christ. Our pains actually earn our eternal happiness, and this is the gift which God has given to compensate us for the horrors of sin. Pain is not to be sought, nor is it to be glorified. The anchoress is quite aware that suffering can distract one, contract the mind from God and create bitterness in the heart. This sort of pain is sent from the devil and has no part in redemption:

It is oure enmye þt wylle put vs aback with his false drede of oure wrechydenesse, for payne that he thretyth vs by. for it is his menyng to make vs so hevy and so sory in this þat we schuld lett outt of mynde þe blessydfulle beholdyn of oure evyrlastyng frende" (76:688).⁷⁷

(It is our enemy who wants to retard us with his false suggestions of fear about our wretchedness because of the pain which he threatens us with. For it is his purpose to make us so depressed and so sad in this

⁷⁷ See also 77:689; 78:697; 79:705

matter that we should forget the blessed contemplation of our everlasting friend [329].)

But we can rise above our travails and lock our minds on God's unwavering presence in our soul, turning what is temporally a torment into an eternal joy.

Chapter Three

The Pain of Jesus Christ Explored

Because of the centrality of the Passion to affective piety, part of the milieu out of which Julian's visions arose, the challenge of this chapter will be to draw attention to the uniqueness of Julian's use of its images. Using specific showings as a framework, just as Julian does, will allow us to explore Julian's theology *in situ*, so to speak, connected to the showing from which it arose. In this manner we will examine, among other things, the copious and efficacious nature of Jesus' blood; the paradox of a suffering God; Julian's three ways to view the Passion; the joys of the Passion for Jesus; his ghostly thirst; the intimate connection Julian makes between the Incarnation and the Resurrection; and her theology of Jesus as mother. Each of these will reveal a delicate handling of the traditional theology of the Passion whereby Julian transforms an image of pain and suffering into a promise of great love and joy. As we shall see, the anchoress is primarily concerned to emphasize certain truths about Jesus which she has been shown, most significantly that he is full of a generous love for humanity. She is not overlooking the depth of his suffering and his sacrifice, but knowledge and consideration of these were commonplace in Julian's day. She would not necessarily feel spurred to take the unprecedented step of recording a book in order to teach about Jesus' suffering. She did feel impelled to record her certain

knowledge of his great love, and it is this which she emphasizes over and over in her discussion of each showing.

The First Showing: His Precious Crownynge of Thornes

The pleuntuous bledynge of the hede. Although Julian describes the First Showing as being of Jesus' "precious crownynge of thornes" (1:281) in actual fact it is not the crowning itself but the effects of the crowning which Julian is shown. With an element of surprise at which a reader can only guess, Julian watched as the crucifix being held before her eyes began to bleed: "sodenly [she] saw the reed bloud rynnyng downe from vnder the garlande, hote and freyshely, plentuously and liuely, right as it was in the tyme that the garland of thornes was pressed on his blessed head" (4:294). Julian meditates on the "grett droppes of blode" which appear to her like brown and red pellets dropping straight from a vein. She watches the drops of blood appear on the forehead "and whan it camme at the browes, ther they vanysschyd" (7:311). In a wonderful meditation on the copiousness of the blood Julian says,

The plentuousshede is lyke to the droppes of water that falle of the evesyng [eves] 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 roundesse they were lyke to the scale of heryng in the spredynge of the forehede (7:312).

(The copiousness resembles the drops of water which fall from the eaves of a house after a great shower of rain, falling so thick that no human ingenuity can count them. And in their roundness as they spread over the forehead they were like a herring's scales [188].)

These visual details serve to draw the blood to the center of one's attention so that its

hot, fresh coursing remain imprinted on the imagination. But it is not the blood itself which Julian wishes to emphasize. Her interest lies with the theological truths which were revealed to her in association with that "grete shower" of blood.¹ She tells us, "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" (4:294-95).

• She goes on then to expand her praise of the Trinity: "For the trinitie is god, god is the trinitie. The trinitie is our maker, the trinitie is oure keper, the trinitie is our everlasting louer, the trinitie is our endlesse ioy and our blesse, by our lord Jesu Christ, and in our lord jesu Christ" (4:295).

The movement from the showing of blood to the joy and love of the Trinity is not made clear, and perhaps there is no intellectual connection between the two at all. What is clear is that Julian herself felt the connection to exist: "*in the same shewing sodeinly the trinitie fulfilled my hart most of ioy*" (4:294-95, emphasis mine). For Julian, Jesus' blood is first of all a symbol of the joy of eternal life and of the love of God for the human soul.

Another of Julian's descriptions also 'washes' in blood. The Fourth Showing is of Jesus' "body plentuous bledying in semyng of the scoregyng" (12:342). The visionary dwells on the blood running from wounds so copiously "that ther was neyther seen skynne ne wounde, but as it were all blode" (12:342). She watches it disappear before it might reach the ground, but she notes that "this was so plentuous to my syght that me thought if it had ben so in kynde and in substance. for that tyme

¹ Gina Brandolino says, "the blood is so abundant that it essentially preempts Christ, taking on an identity almost independent of him" ("The Chiefe and Principal Mene': Julian of Norwich's Redefining of the Body in *A Revelation of Divine Love*," *Mystics Quarterly* 22 [1996], 102). She indicates that the purpose of this is to allegorize the blood (103).

it shulde haue made the bedde all on bloude, and haue passyde over all about" (12:343).

There is an oddly surreal quality to the liquid which Julian's Christ bleeds. In the First Showing it is 'domesticated' by being compared to mundane things like pellets, rain and the scales of a fish. In the Fourth Showing it is made familiar with the metaphor of water: "Than cam to my mynde that 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 holsomly hys blessyd blode to wassch vs of synne" (12:343). She also calls it a "lycour" that God enjoys giving to us. We may understand the connotation here of a beverage, in this case one given to restore health.²

These poetic, visual allusions about Jesus' bleeding were included in both cases for the same reason: to draw attention to the plenteousness of the blood. In the First Showing where she tells us that the blood is like drops of rain falling from the eves, she emphasizes "that [they] falle so thycke that no man may nomber them with no bodely wyt" (7:312). In the Fourth Showing she also underlines this fact: "for it is most plentuous, as it is most precious The dere worthy bloude of our lorde Jhesus Crist, also verely as it is most precious, as verely it is most plentuous" (12:343-44).

In both showings Julian's graphic emphasis of the superfluity of the saviour's blood serves as a source of great comfort and joy as she draws from it the theological

² *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), 'liquor' sense 3.

conclusion that the redemption offered in that blood is equally as plenteous. In the

First Showing she declares that:

thys shewyng was quyck and lyuely and hidows and dredfulle and swete and louely; 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 fulfyllyd me with lykyng and syckernes in soule (7:313).

(This vision was living and vivid and hideous and fearful and sweet and lovely; and in all this vision which I saw, what gave me most strength was that our good Lord, who is so to be revered and feared, is so familiar and so courteous, and most of all this filled me full of delight and certainty in my soul [188].)

This response might strike one as overly lugubrious until one understands that it is not the vision of the blood itself which has filled the anchoress with such joy and comfort, but the theological truth which she perceives based on that blood. That truth is that God, who can seem transcendent in lordship, is actually immanent in affection for humanity. This is an unusual interpretation of the blood of Christ, although one not inconsistent with traditional theology. It was Bernard of Clairvaux who nuanced the ancient teachings on the blood of Christ. Until his day Jesus' blood was primarily a symbol of his suffering (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) and of his sacrifice (John 6:53-56). Bernard moved the symbol beyond mere humility to compassion and love, and it is in this tradition that Julian stands.³

Another glissando from image to theology is found in the Fourth Showing, where Julian moves us from considering a bed which should be dripping with blood to a refined and carefully crafted reflection on the powers of Jesus' blood:

³ Quoted in Réginald Grégoire, "Sang" in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: doctrine et histoire* 91 (1988), col. 326.

It descendyd downe in to helle and brak her bondes, and delyuered them all that were there which belong to the courte of hevyn. The precious plenty of his dere worthy blode ovyrflowyth all erth, and is redy to wash all creatures of synne which be of good wyll, haue be and shall be. The precious plenty of his dereworthy blode ascendyth vp into hevyn in the blessed body of our lorde Jesu Crist, and there is in hym, bledyng, preyeng for vs to the father, and is and shal be as long as vs nedyth. And ovyr more it flowyth in all heauen, enjoying the saluacion of all mankynd that be ther and shall be, fulfylling the number that faylth (12:344-45).

(It descended into hell and broke its bonds, and delivered all who were there and who belong to the court of heaven. The precious plenty of his precious blood overflows all the earth, and it is ready to wash from their sins all creatures who are, have been and will be of good will. The precious plenty of his precious blood ascended into heaven in the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is flowing there in him, praying to the Father for us, and this is and will be so long as we have need. And furthermore, it flows in all heaven, rejoicing in the salvation of all mankind which is and will be there, and filling up the number which is lacking [200].)

In his article on the image of the Harrowing of Hell in *The Showings*, Karl Tamburr comments on Julian's dexterity in presenting this traditional image.⁴ In Julian's writing it is not Christ who descends to hell, but his blood which does so. It is his blood which delivers the damned into heaven, which flows over the earth washing all of sin, and which ascends into heaven in the body of Christ, interceding for humanity and filling the complement of the saved. This blood is the instrument of the second birth of humanity, our deliverance into eternal life. As Tamburr points out, this linking of blood, birth and the humanity of Christ gives evidence of the

⁴ Karl Tamburr, "Mystic Transformation: Julian's Version of the Harrowing of Hell," *Mystics Quarterly* 20 (June 1994). See also Domenico Pezzini: "neither the ideas nor the images are original, but the way she connects and amalgamates them is peculiar to her" ("The Theme of the Passion in Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich," in *Religion in the Poetry and Drama of the Late Middle Ages in England*, eds. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti [The J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Perugia 1988] [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990], 64).

degree to which Julian's theology of Christ as our Mother pervades *The Showings*, even when it is not overtly discussed.⁵ Once again, the copiously bleeding body of Jesus has become a source of great consolation, this time in the image of the blood descending to Hell. Julian perceives that the blood of Christ is working to bring all people who shall be saved to their rightful home.⁶

The Second Showing: The Discoloring of his Fayer Face

The Second Showing which Julian is given is triggered by her continued looking "in the face of the crucifixe that hyng before me" (10:324). She mentions that she is shown "a parte of his Passion: dyspyte, spytyng, solewyng [contempt] and buffetyng, and manie languryng paynes" (10:324) but she does not describe any of these to her lector. What she does describe with her usual meticulous attention to

⁵ Tamburr, "Mystic Transformation," 65.

⁶ It would be wrong to close this discussion of the plenteousness of Christ's blood in Julian's text without commenting briefly on the effect that this same has had on contemporary feminist scholars. Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that medieval women found unique, female ways of identifying with Christ in his woundedness and his brokenness, even in his bleeding. By focussing on Jesus' suffering, essentially his humanity, women could associate themselves with him through their own broken, suffering, bleeding humanity. (Caroline Walker Bynum, "...And Woman His Humanity': Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages" *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, eds. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, Paula Richman [Boston, Beacon Press, 1986]). Perhaps even more directly than Bynum, Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff proposes that medieval women mystics were identifying psychologically and physically with the crucified Jesus: "I think we can say that the violence of the crucifixion becomes erotic and Christ's transfixed body becomes the body of the visionary, possessed by her divine lover" (Petroff, *Visionary Women*, 15). Of particular interest to us in the context of our discussion on Julian's presentation of the blood of Christ are comments which Petroff makes in regard to medieval women mystics in general: "Their visions have reinterpreted the image of the male bleeding Christ in such a way that the hierarchy of male dominance is subverted; and the feminine, the all-nurturing blood, is discovered to be the origin of the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ" (18-19). These moderately feminist positions have been accepted and built upon by such scholars of Julian as Ritamary Bradley and Felicity Riddy (Bradley, *Julian's Way*, 175; Riddy, "Women Talking," 112). However, there is a 'deeply feminist,' approach to interpreting Julian which reaches beyond Bynum and Petroff's initiatives. In this group I locate Renée Neu Watkins and Elisabeth Robertson, both of whom draw direct parallels between Christ's blood and menstrual blood, as well as Karma Lochrie who draws on the work of anthropologist Julia Kristeva to discuss the impact of Christ's bleeding woundedness on medieval women (Watkins, "Two Women Visionaries, 181; Robertson, "Medieval Medical Views," 154; Lochrie, *Margery Kempe*, 26).

detail is almost an icon of the dying face of Jesus:

And one tyme I saw how halfe the face, begynnyng at the ere, over
 zede with drye blood, tyll it closyd in to the myd face, and after that
 the other halfe beclosyd on the same wyse; and the(re) whiles it
 vanyssched in this party, evyn as it cam (10:324-25, parentheses in
 Colledge and Walsh).

(At one time I saw how half his face, beginning at the ear, became
 covered with dried blood, until it was caked to the middle of his face,
 and then the other side was caked in the same fashion, and meanwhile
 the blood vanished on the other side, just as it had come [193].)

This is not the hot, wet, plenteously dripping blood of the First and Fourth
 Showings which Julian is describing, but dry and caking blood. We encounter this
 dry blood again in the Eighth Showing which shows a part of Christ's Passion very
 near to his dying.⁷

His blessed face, which is the feyerest of heauyn. Although Julian says that
 the Second Showing included "manie languryng paynes, mo than I can tell" (10:324),
 she mentions none of Jesus' pains in her description of what she saw. What she does
 mention repeatedly is the almost abstract "offten chaungyng of colour" which she
 perceives in the face before her (10:324). She compares the face to another iconic
 image of Jesus' dying face, Veronica's veil. This was the kerchief imprinted with a
 human face which legend held was the face of Jesus: "It made me to thynke of the

⁷ The Second Showing is brief and seems to have initially confused the anchoress who received it. At one point she says, "this saw I bodely, swemly [mysteriously] and darkely, and I desyred mor bodely light to haue seen more clerly" (10:325). At another point she reiterates her confusion saying, "this secounde shewyng was so lowe and so little and so symple that my spirytes were in great traveyle in the beholdyng, mornyng, dredfull and longyng; for I was some tyme in a feer wheder it was a shewyng or none" (10:327). This must have been a considerable concern for her to mention it, demonstrating the genuine nature of her desire to convey in her book only the showings of God and what she had learned as a result of them.

holie vernacle of Rome, which he portrude [imprinted] with his one blessed face, when he was in his hard passion, wilfully goyng to his death" (10:328).⁸ In this comparison Julian adds texture to her own description of the changing colour: "the brownhead and the blackhead, rewlyhead and leenhead" (10:328), and asks what seems to be the pivotal question of this showing: "Then how myght this ymage be so dyscolouryde and so farre from feyerhead" (10:329)? Surely Jesus' face, "which is the feyerest of heauyn, flower of earth and the frute of the maydens wombe" (10:328-29) should be a thing of beauty, not discoloured and made ugly by pain.

Meditating on this, Julian discerns that there is a theological truth being epitomized in this agonized face. She uses the face of Jesus which hung before her caked in dry blood to introduce a discussion of another other face of Jesus, the *imago dei*, in which each of us was created:

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 þat made man (10:329).⁹

(We know in our faith and in our belief, by the teaching and preaching of Holy Church, that the blessed Trinity made mankind in his image and his likeness. In the same way we know that when man fell so deeply and so wretchedly through sin, there was no other help for restoring him, except through him who created man. [194, rev.]

⁸ Colledge and Walsh give an excellent synopsis of the evolution of the legend of Veronica and offer helpful references. Their summary comment is this:

We see from this that she [Julian] had received the Vernicle legend in its most modern form: that she believes that Christ's image was miraculously transferred to the kerchief as he went towards Calvary, that it is now preserved in Rome, and that it is there the object of great veneration. She suggests that her visions may be compared with it, in that she has been filled with the same reverent compassion. To all else, to the veil's wonder-working properties and the indulgences, she seems quite indifferent (*A Book of Showings*, 56-57).

⁹ See also above pp. 109 and 112.

This other 'face,' the *imago dei* in us, is also disfigured, just as Jesus' face is disfigured. Julian sees that God intends us to become like Christ "by the vertu of oure (geyn) makynge" (10:330, parentheses from Colledge and Walsh), that is, by our redemption. But because we are not yet made perfect, with the *imago dei* restored in us, Jesus had to be 'disfigured' in becoming human: "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" (10:330). There are already three faces in this showing: Jesus' face as initially described; Jesus' face as imprinted on the popularly known veil of Veronica; and the image of Christ, his "face," which we all should be.

A fourth kind of face is suggested when Julian interprets the face of the bleeding Christ. For Christ to become like us he had to take on our 'face,' or reality, which is death: "it was a fygyr and a lyknes of our fowle blacke dede, which that our feyre bryght blessed lord bare for our synne" (10:327-28). Her use of the word *fygyr* in this context suggests comparison to the French *figure*, meaning face.¹⁰ She is suggesting that what she is seeing on Christ is the face of human death, a mask of our own death, which is what is so hideous to behold. Reinforcing this reading of our death as a mask, the fourth face in this short showing, is Julian's statement that it was in our death "where in our feyer bryght blessyd lorde hyd his godhede" (10:330).¹¹

¹⁰ *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) does not give this as a possible connotation of the English 'figure' until the eighteenth century, but the examples under II.10.b, 'figure' as the greater part of the human form, allow this understanding. The first of these dates to Julian's era.

¹¹ This discussion of the interlocking nature of the face of Jesus and the *imago dei* recalls the Pauline doctrine of reconciliation: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. . . . God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:19, 21 [NRSV]).

The Fifth Showing: The Feende is overcome

The Fifth Showing does not involve an image of the Passion in any way, but makes a meaningful allusion to it. Julian tells us that she was able to continue looking at the images being shown her as long as was necessary for her to glean understanding from them, "as the sympylnes of the sowle myght take it" (13:346). Then Jesus spoke to her "without voys and openyng of lyppes." Presumably the crucifix was still within her visual field and she was aware that it was not the actual figure on the cross speaking to her, but Jesus as omnipresent spirit. He said, "here with is the feende ovyr come," and Julian explains, "this worde sayde our lorde menyng his blessyd passyon, as he shewed before" (13:346). A line or two later she reiterates that "the passion of hym is the ovyrcomyng of the feende" (13:347).

In the Fourth Showing Julian had been shown that Jesus' plenteous blood descended down to hell "and brak her bondes, and delyuerd them all that were there which belong to the courte of hevyn" (12:344). Here in the Fifth Showing she learns that Jesus' power over that nether region is greater than he had first revealed. It extends beyond simply releasing those who should not be restrained there to enslaving the devil himself: "hys myght is alle lokked in gods hande" (13:347).

Interestingly, Julian attributes the defeat of the devil both to Jesus' Incarnation and to his Passion.¹² She says, "the feend hath nowe the same malyce that he had before the incarnacion" (13:347), linking Jesus' mortal life with the devil's demise. She also says, "he [the devil] is overcome by the blessydfulle passion and deth of

¹² For a more complete discussion of this point see below, p. 173.

oure lorde Jhesu Crist, that was done in fulle grette earnest and with sad traveyle" (13:350).

Early medieval theories of the atonement were premised on what Bernard McGinn calls the "rights-of-the devil" theory of redemption.¹³ In this 'transaction' between God and humanity the devil is a third party, whose power over humanity was established at the Fall. The devil and his authority must be conquered by a powerful saviour, Jesus Christ. By Julian's day this theology was no longer current, largely because of the brilliant work of Anselm of Canterbury in articulating the satisfaction theory of redemption, in which the demands of God's justice and honour are met by Jesus.¹⁴ However, traces of the older theory lingered, especially in the popular imagination where the idea of the devil's power remained strong. Although Julian herself certainly does not subscribe to the rights-of-the-devil theory of redemption, we see a hint of its influence here in the Fifth Showing.¹⁵ The fact that she deals with the devil's defeat and stresses his impotence can be interpreted as an answer to the older theory. It is as if she is perhaps unconsciously rebutting the theory neatly before introducing her own thought on the atonement.¹⁶

¹³ Bernard McGinn, "The Role of Christ: II. Christ as Savior in the West," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, eds. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq, vol. 16 in *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 254.

¹⁴ Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo*. For a fuller explanation of Anselm's theology of redemption see Pelikan, *Growth of Medieval Theology*, 139-44.

¹⁵ Julian is much closer to what Pezzini describes as "the theory of *recapitulation*." As he summarizes it, "the Fall is mainly seen as an ontological cosmic disorder, creating a fragmentation of being. . . . The union of divinity and humanity in Christ is already in itself the beginning and the founding principle of a great work of reconciliation which repairs the damage caused by sin. Redemption is included in the Incarnation of the Son of God" (Pezzini, "Theme of the Passion," 34).

¹⁶ Julian specifically mentions the atonement twice in *The Showings*, in both instances to contrast it favourably to the magnitude of the Fall: "he lernyd that I shulde beholde the glorious asseeth [atonement], for thys asseeth makynge is more plesynge to the blessyd godhed and more wurshchypfulle for mannys saluacion with
(continued...)

This Fifth Showing introduces a key point in Julian's thought which runs throughout her text, namely the power of the Passion of Jesus Christ. In this showing, the power of the Passion defeats the devil. In other showings and in her descriptions of them, Julian shows how the power of the Passion balances the lack of power, virtue and goodness in humanity.¹⁷ In the Fourteenth Showing Julian says of our fallen sense of judgement that Jesus' Passion rectifies it: "in as moch as it is hard and grevous, oure good lorde Jhesu reformyth it by mercy and grace thorow vertu of his blessyd Passion, and so bringyth in to þe ryghtfulnesse" (45:486-87). In a much more pictorial presentation of this idea, Jesus' Passion restores his city, our soul, to beauty: "by [God's] grace hys deerwurthy sonne [brings] agayne hys cytte in to the nobyll feyernesse with his harde traveyle" (51:526).¹⁸ Again in the Fourteenth Showing, Jesus is the image of humanity, restored to perfection by the Passion: "in the lorde was shewde the hye noblyte and the endlesse wurschyppe that mankynde is come to by the vertu of the passyon and þe deth of [God's] deerwurthy son" (52:549-50). Lastly, Julian says that we are brought into union with God by virtue of the Passion itself:

we shulde be in longyng and in pennance into the tyme that we be led
so depe in to god that we verely and trewly know oure owne soule; and

¹⁶(...continued)

oute comparyson than evyr was the synne of Adam harmfulle" (29:412-13). Regarding the two dispositions with which God views humanity, she says that Jesus' work has been accomplished in our lower part, which is showed in God's outward disposition: "And hym selfe wurkyth there it is, and this is the lower party of mannys lyfe; and it was shewde in þe outwarde chere, in whych shewyng I saw two partes. The one is the rufull fallyng of man; that other is þe wurshuypfull asseth that oure lorde hath made for man" (52:553).

¹⁷ Compare this with *The Cloud*, where the emphasis is on redemption from sin. "For all those who desire to forsake sin and ask for mercy are to be saved through the power of his passion" (*Cloud* XXV, 172).

¹⁸ Compare with Hilton, who sees the Passion of Jesus restoring the *imago dei* in the human soul: "This passion of our Lord and this precious death are the ground of all the reforming of man's soul, without which it could never have been reformed to his likeness or come to the glory of heaven" (*Scale* 2.2.195).

suerly I saw that in to this hye depnesse our good lorde hym self
 ledyth vs, in þe same loue he made vs and in þe same loue he bouzte
 vs, by mercy and grace thorow vertu of his blessyd passyon (56:573).

(we must necessarily be in longing and in penance until the time when
 we are led so deeply into God that we verily and truly know our own
 soul; and I saw certainly that our good Lord himself leads us into this
 high depth, in the same love with which he created us and in the same
 love with which he redeemed us, by mercy and grace, through the
 power of his blessed Passion [289].)

Julian is exploring the fullness of redemption which is guaranteed in the
 Passion and Resurrection by revealing that it is the power of the Passion which
 reforms us while we live, which purifies us and which unites us to God in eternity.¹⁹
 She does not belabour Jesus' suffering or wield it against humanity to instill a fear of
 earthly pleasures.²⁰ Rather, Julian is underlining for her readers the past, present and
 future power of Jesus' Passion so as to emphasize it as a source of comfort, joy and
 consolation.²¹

The Eighth Showing: The Last Paynes of Christ

The last paynes of Christ. This brings us to the Eighth Showing and returns us
 to the minutely detailed examination of the suffering face of Jesus which Julian has
 been exploring with such acuity. This is the most extreme point of her vision of the

¹⁹ Cousins cites Julian as one of the few examples of late medieval spiritual writers for whom the
 balance between the power of the Passion and the other Christian mysteries is not lost. Frequently the Passion
 came to dominate to such a degree that the redemptive character of Jesus' Incarnation, life, teaching and
 Resurrection are lost ("Humanity and the Passion," 387).

²⁰ Pezzini, "Theme of the Passion," 59.

²¹ Kieckheffer notes that the Passion rarely served as a source of consolation in the fourteenth century
 in what we might think of as the obvious way, by pointing to the Resurrection. This seems to be so in Julian's
 theology, where the Passion points to God's desire to unite us to the godhead (*Unquiet Souls*, 96).

approaching death of Jesus. She calls this "a parte of hys passyon nere his dyeng" (16:357), and at the end of Chapter Sixteen she betrays that she thought she was watching "the last of his Passion" (16:359).²²

Like the Second Showing, this Eighth Showing is markedly bloodless as compared to the First or Fourth Showings which ooze blood. Matching her creative abilities in describing the hot, dripping, plenteous and lively blood, Julian is vivid in her descriptions of the drying of Jesus' body. She reflects on the various shades of blue his lips turn, the brown and black of his body, the tawny colour in his bloodless face.²³ She evokes a cold and bitter wind which sucks moisture from the dying man and increases his pain. She draws for us in words the picture of his parched nose, the crown of thorns caked in dry blood and desiccated flesh, the forehead thick with matted hair, flesh and blood. Each of these details is intentional and allows Julian two freedoms. The first, which she exercises in this Eighth Showing, is to explore Jesus' pain. The second she takes up at a later point, in Chapter Thirty One. It is the freedom to explore "the goostly thyrist of Cryst" (31:419), which is the theological partner to his "bodyly thurst that the body had feylyng of moyster" (17:360).²⁴

²² The long text makes two significant additions to the descriptions of this vision, changing the general character of the showing. The attention of the reader is forced to rest much longer on the suffering of Jesus because of the nature of these additions. Following editorial clues in the text, it is possible to "disassemble" the first part of the Eighth Showing to understand more clearly what Julian has done. She begins by telling us that "Crist shewde a parte of hys passyon nere his dyeng" (16:357). What follows is a series of visual details, common to both the short text and the long text, prefaced in both by the words, "I saw" (16:357). This is what she saw in the original showing. Details on dryness and pain of Jesus have been added in the the long text, probably because it became evident in Julian's years of meditation on the showing that these were the very heart of the message: pain through drying. Her second addition (starting at 17:360) also emphasizes the drying of the body and the pain of the drying.

²³ Windeatt makes particular note of Julian's use of colour in this showing ("Her Audience," 11).

²⁴ See below, p. 157.

The shewyng of Cristes pain. In the short thirty-line chapter which opens her description and discussion of the Eighth Showing Julian uses the word 'pain' eight times, six of them in the last ten lines. It is "bitter and sharp, yet it was fulle longe lastyng" (16:358). It "drye[s] vppe alle the lyuely spyrites of Cristes flessch" (16:358). It is "mervelous," "long," and seems to Julian to be "the most peyne and the last of his Passion" (16:359).

This is the one showing where Julian both sees and describes for us the suffering of Christ. It is this showing which draws Julian herself into the experience of Christ's pains, as was described in Chapter One of this thesis. Without an adequate description of his pain, Julian's own experience of suffering would lack depth and meaning.²⁵ In the eight lines which precede Julian's statement in Chapter Seventeen that "the shewing of Cristes paynes fylled me fulle of peynes" (17:364) she once again intensifies her focus on Jesus' pain, mentioning it five times. She even amplifies the pain wordlessly by claiming that she cannot adequately discuss other aspects of his pain beyond the two which she describes: "alle is to lytylle that I can sey, for it may nott be tolde" (17:364). This leaves the reader's imagination to fill in details which are better left 'offstage,' as effective theatre directors know so well.²⁶

Another aspect of Julian's focus on Christ's pain is the way in which it serves

²⁵ Colledge and Walsh suggest that Julian amplifies Jesus' pain for two reasons: "First, she wishes to show how completely her first prayer was answered, to have recollection of the Passion. . . . [Second, she seems] to suggest that she thought that the moment of her own death might coincide with the sight of Christ's" (*Showings*, 43-44). I am suggesting other reasons for this concentration on his physical suffering.

²⁶ Brandoline argues that Julian is teaching that "Christ endured the crucifixion to destroy the need for human suffering. . . . Christ's suffering obliterated the need for Julian to suffer" ("Chiefe and Principal Mene," 105). I cannot agree with her. As I am trying to show in this thesis, Julian believes that there is an important role for human suffering. Although Christ's suffering alone purchases our redemption, we participate in that redemption through suffering, which is rewarded in heaven.

to underline the fullness of his humanity. Julian opens her Twentieth Chapter by making this point exactly:

And thus saw I oure lorde Jhesu languryng long tyme, for the vnyng of the godhed gaue strenght (sic) to the manhed for loue to suffer more than alle man myght. I meene nott oonly more payne than alle man myght suffer, but also that he sufferd more payne than all man of saluacion that evyr was from the furst begynnyng in to the last day myght telle or fully thynke (20:374).

(And so I saw our Lord Jesus languishing for long, because the union in him of the divinity gave strength to his humanity to suffer more than all men could. I mean not only more pain than any other one man could suffer, but also that he suffered more pain than all men who are to be saved, from the first beginning to the last day, may tell or fully think [213].)

In the Fourteenth Showing where Julian is explaining the mysterious example of the lord and servant, she reiterates the fullness of Christ's humanity by saying that "when Adam felle gods sonne fell; for the ryght onyng [union] whych was made in heveyn, goddys sonne myght nott be seperath from Adam, for by Adam I vnderstond alle man" (51:533). Further on in the same showing Julian explains a little of what she understands about the actual mechanics of the Incarnation, how it could be that Christ could take on humanity in "the worshypfulle oonyng [union] þat was made of god between the soule and þe body" (55:568). Jesus took both the lower and the higher parts of the human soul, not disdaining to assume our sensuality as well as our substance, for only in this way could he be fully human. Julian does not stress Jesus' humanity in order to bridge the gap between the godhead and humanity. She stresses his humanity in order to understand the mystery of redemption, how one man can stand for so many in his suffering and in his dying.

Despite this emphasis on Christ's humanity, Julian never loses sight of his dual

nature as both human and divine.²⁷ She makes the connection between Jesus' humanity and divinity in connection with his suffering. It is the strength of the godhead which allows the humanity of Christ to suffer so greatly: "the vnyng [union] of the godhed gaue strenght to the manhed for loue to suffer more than alle man myght" (20:374). As she says several lines further on, "the hyst poynt that may be seen in his Passion is to thynke and to know that he is god that sufferyd" (20:375). She does not actually mean that God, the first person of the Trinity suffered, although in this short citation it seems as though she might. Julian takes great care to reiterate that the godhead does not suffer. "Alle the trinite wrought in the Passion of Crist, mynystryng [administering] habonnance of vertuse and plente of grace to vs by hym; but only the maydyns sonne sufferyd, wereof alle the blessed trinite enjoyeth" (23:392-93). She carefully reminds her readers that Jesus' divinity never did suffer: "Crist Jhesu is both god and man; and aneynst [as concerns] the godhed he is hym selfe hyghest blysse, and was fro without begynnyng, and shalle be without end, whych very endlesse blesse may nevyr be hyghed nor lowyde in the selfe" (31:419).

Since she knows for a fact that "in the godhede may be no traveyle" (51:539) it is the humanity of Christ which bore his suffering and allowed the work and power of the Passion.²⁸ She makes this distinction between his natures most carefully: "as aneynst [concerning] that Crist is oure hede, he is glorified and vnpassible; and as aneynst his body, in whych alle his membris be knytt, he is nott 3ett fulle glorified ne

²⁷ This is called the doctrine of the hypostatic union, and was defined at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD (John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982], 35).

²⁸ Pelphrey includes a succinct summary of Christian thought on the *circum-incessio* and *circum-insessio* of God as it relates to Julian's coupling of an impassible God with a suffering second person in the trinity. See his *Christ Our Mother*, 124-26.

all vnpassible" (31:419-20). This is so because his humanity continues to long for us to be reunited with him, which will happen at the end of time: "the same thurst and longyng that he had vppe on the rode tre . . . the same hath he 3ett and shalle in to the tyme that the last soule that shalle be savyd is come vppe to hys blysse" (31:420). Julian goes so far in distinguishing the work of the two natures of Christ as to clarify that "Crist in his body myztely beryth vs vp in to hevyn" (55:565, emphasis mine). It is "the workes of Cristes manhed" (31:419) to suffer and to die and thus to redeem humanity through the Passion. This brings us back to the first point in this small section, which is that the freedom Julian has provided for herself to explore Jesus' pain serves her desire to emphasize his humanity, although not at the expense of his divinity, as can be seen.

A dowbylle thurst. The second freedom I alluded to above where I showed that Julian has deliberately emphasized Jesus' pain and his dryness is the freedom to explore his thirst. Julian divides Jesus' thirst on the cross neatly in two, dealing with what she calls his "bodyly thurste" in the Eighth Showing, and dealing with what she refers to as his "gostely thurst" in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Sixteenth Showings.²⁹ The bodily thirst we have already discussed fairly fully, as it is one of the number of physical manifestations Julian describes of Jesus' desiccation on the

²⁹ This division into both bodily and spiritual thirst is not uncommon. Another instance of it can be found in the *Meditationes vitae Christi* by Pseudo-Bonaventure:

Although he undoubtedly thirsted for the health of man's soul, nevertheless he also thirsted bodily; and that was no wonder, for through shedding of his precious blood so profusely, and for great anguish that he suffered without ceasing . . . he was all inwardly dry and thirsty" ("The Privy of the Passion: Bonaventura de mysteriis passionis Jesu Christi," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and His Followers*, ed. C. Horstman, 2 vols. [London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1895], I:207).

As Baker points out, however, Julian's version is uniquely detailed and intimate (*Vision to Book*, 50).

cross. Like the other kinds of dryness, it serves to emphasize the weakness of Jesus' flesh, his frail humanity which we share.

The spiritual thirst of Christ is actually a metaphor. It is

the loue longyng þat lastyþ and evyr shall tyll we se that syght at domys day; for we that shalle be safe, and shalle be Crystes joy and hys blysse, ben yet here, and some be to come, and so shall 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, as to my syght (31:418).

([Jesus'] longing in love, which persists and always will until we see him on the day of judgment, for we who shall be saved and shall be Christ's joy and bliss are still here, and some are yet to come, and so will some be until that day. Therefore this is his thirst and his longing in love for us, to gather us all here into him, to our endless joy, as I see it [230].)

Julian learns that this love-longing of God for us "shalle last tyll domys day"

(63:616) but not beyond, for on that day all of the chosen will have been united with God and the longing is turned to joy: "For the same thirst and longyng that he had vppe on the rode tre . . . the same hath he 3ett and shalle in to the tyme that the last soule that shalle be savyd is come vppe to hys blysse." (31:420). Jesus' longing or thirst for us should be matched by our own deep desire for him: "ther is a properte in god of thirst and longyng; and of the vertu of this longyng in Crist we haue to long a3ene to hym, without whych no soule comyth to hevyn" (31:420).³⁰

In her concluding chapters Julian returns to the theme of the thirst of God in order to remind her readers of its importance and to add nuance to her description of it. In Chapter Seventy Five she perceptively comments that as long as time endures

³⁰ Richard of St Victor also speaks of the soul thirsting for God: "In the first degree [of the mystical life] the soul thirsts for God, in the second she thirsts to go to God, in the third she thirsts to be in God, in the fourth she thirsts in God's way" (*The Four Degrees of Passionate Charity*, trans. Clare Kirchberger in *Richard of St Victor: Select Writings on Contemplation* [London: Faber and Faber, 1957]).

"evyr [God] drawyth and dryngkyth, and yett hum thurstyth and longyth" (75:679).³¹

This is a most succinct and picturesque way to explain that although chosen souls are always being united to God at their deaths through the power of Christ, until the conclusion of time there will always be more souls for God to long for and to thirst after.

Succumbing to her passion for theological trinities, Julian says "I saw thre manner of longyng in god, and alle to one ende" (75:679). These are not hinted at in her first discussion of the spiritual thirst of Jesus in Chapter Thirty One and really only serve to add subtlety to her concept of the longing of God. The first is that God longs for us to know and love God; the second is that God yearns for us to be in heaven; the third is that God longs to fulfil us in bliss: "and nott only we shalle receyue þe same blysse that soules afore haue had in hevyn, but also we shall receyve a new, whych plentuously shalle (be flowing) oute of god in to vs and fulfyllle vs" (75:680).³²

Interestingly, Julian goes on at the end of her work to introduce a second form of God's longing, beyond the thirst being discussed here. This is "monyng [moaning] and mornyng [mourning] till whan we come . . . for we are his joy and his delyght" (79:706). It appears again in Chapter Eighty, where Julian explains, "and there I sey he abydyth vs, monyng and mornyng, it menyth alle þe trew felyng þat we haue in

³¹ The imputation of longing, a kind of suffering, to God may seem to compromise the impassibility of the godhead. Origen of Alexandria struggled with just this point, trying to hold in balance what McGinn calls "the tension between the realization of God's yearning for the world and the power of the Parmenidean notion of the absolute unchangeability of the Ultimate" (*Foundations of Mysticism*, 120). Julian also tries to hold the two in tension, but her conviction that God longs to be united with us certainly prevails here. For a discussion of her assertions of divine impassibility see above, p.156.

³² Parentheses indicate that Colledge and Walsh have corrected all the ms with these words, and give adequate explanation for doing so.

oure selfe, in contricion and in compassion, and alle monyng and mornyng for we are nott onyd with oure lorde" (80:710). In this second instance the moaning and mourning stand for our own longing for God, but as before she quickly couples our longing with God's own and introduces the image of Jesus waiting patiently and longingly for us: "and what tyme þat we falle in to synne and leue [leave] þe mynde of hym and þe kepyng of oure owne soule, than beryth Cryst a loone [alone] alle þe charege of vs. And thus stondyth he monyng and mornyng" (80:711).

Brant Pelphrey provides us with a concise summary comments for this section with his reminder that:

the 'thirst' of God, which was enacted by Christ on the cross, defines what Julian means by divine compassion. It is God suffering with us, and also God being compassionate in the sense of looking upon us with pity and understanding. . . . God does not suffer in his own divine nature; but God has taken our suffering into his own nature, through the fact of the incarnation.³³

The Ninth Showing: The Lykyng in the Blessed Trinitie

In the Ninth Showing once again we are confronted with an image devoid of pain, although not without insight into Jesus' suffering. As Julian is watching the "long peyne" (16:359) of the Eighth Showing she tells us that "I lokyd after the departyng with alle my myghtes, and wende [believed] to haue seen the body all deed" (21:379). Instead, and clearly to her surprise, Jesus brightens, and begins to speak to her:

sodenly I beholdyng in the same crosse he channgyd in blessydfulle chere. The channgyng of hys blessyd chere channgyd myne, and I was as glad and mery as it was possible. Then brought oure lorde meryly

³³ Pelphrey, *Christ Our Mother*, 142-43.

to my mynde: Wher is now any poynt of thy payne or of thy anguyse (21:379)?

(suddenly, as I looked at the same cross, he changed to an appearance of joy. The change in his blessed appearance changed mine, and I was as glad and joyful as I could possibly be. And then cheerfully our Lord suggested to my mind: Where is there now any instant of your pain or your anguish? [214-15, rev.]

The question seems to beg a comparison between Jesus' pain and anguish, which Julian and her reader have just been immersed in throughout the Eighth Showing, and the pain of human living, the "thy payne" of the query. Julian seems to have interpreted it this way for she immediately offers her own reflection on what it might mean, saying that "we be now in our lordes menyng in his crosse with hym in our paynes and in our passion dyeng, and we willfully abybdyng in the same crosse with his helpe and his grace in to the last poynt" (21:379-80). It is at the last moment that Jesus' face shall change towards us, as it just has for Julian, and we shall be taken to our bliss: "sodeynly he shalle channge hys chere to vs, and we shal be with hym in hevyn" (21:380).

Thre manner of cherys of oure lorde. This conclusion, that Jesus' joyful face shall translate us and welcome us to heaven, is an obvious point to draw from what she has just seen, but Julian pushes beyond the obvious and draws a second conclusion, not so evident as the first. She tells us that she has learned from this showing that Jesus actually chooses not to show his joyful face to us before the end of time, but to show "chere of Passion as he bare in this lyfe hys crosse" (21:380-381). If he were to show his joyful face, then no pain or suffering could trouble us, but likewise we would have no reason to cling to him in our suffering. "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" (21:381).

Julian may never have seen an artistic rendering of a smiling or joyful crucifix, for the convention in her day and prior was for the crucifix to depict the suffering of Christ.³⁴ Her showings, however, are making her aware of the depth of love and tenderness in God for humanity. She is struggling now with the disjunction between what holy mother church shows, sorrowful crucifixes, and what she is learning, that God loves us as tenderly as a mother. Her conclusion is that the second side of Jesus, his "blyssedfulle chere" (21:380), is not shown for our own good, and by his choice.

This is an idea which Julian chooses to reiterate in the concluding section of her text, but once again we find the original notion altered in its second appearance. In Chapter Seventy One Julian is wrapping up her comments on Jesus' instruction to her to "Take it," (71:655) meaning his teachings. She says he means that we should rest in the faith of the Church, and in what ever else Jesus has taught us, presumably through the showings, and be safe and comfortable in these things. This leads her to say, "glad and mery and swete is þe blessydfulle louely chere of oure lorde to oure soulys" (71:656). These are intended as words of comfort and assurance, drawing to a close her comments on finding strength in staying close to Christ.

This evocation of "þe blessydfulle louely chere of oure lorde" seems to have reminded our author of the other mention of Jesus' cheers in the Ninth Showing, so she turns immediately to them, with this quantitative difference: "I haue menyng of

³⁴ See P. Lasko, and N. J. Morgan, eds, *Medieval Art in East Anglia 1300-1520* (London: Thames and Hudson in association with Jarrold & Sons, 1974).

th(re) manner of cherys of oure lorde" (71:656, emphasis mine). There are only two "cherys of oure lorde" mentioned in the Ninth Showing, his *blessydfulle chere* and *chere of Passion*. Where does Julian find the third? There is a chance that it comes from her own trigger thought, in which she compounds three adjectives: "glad and mery and swete is þe blessydfulle louely chere of oure lorde" (71:656). It is more likely, however, that in the context of her discussion of clinging to faith in order to get through life Julian found it theologically expedient to add a third face of Christ, one more specifically designed to show Jesus' support of us. Her summary of the three faces of Jesus is as follows:

The furst is chere of Passion, as he shewde whyle he was with vs in this lyfe dyeng; and though this beholdyng be mornyng and swemfulle, yet it is glad and mery, for he is god. The seconde manner of chere, it is pitte and ruth and compassion, and this shewyth he to all his louers with sekernesse of kepyng that hath nede to his mercy. The thyrde is þe blessydfulle chere as it shalle be with outyn ende, and this was oftenest shewyd and longeste contynuyd (71:656-57).

(The first is that of his Passion, as he revealed when he was with us in this life, dying; and although to contemplate this be sorrowful and grievous, still it is glad and joyful, because he is God. The second is pity and ruth and compassion, and this he reveals to all his lovers, with the certainty of protection which necessarily belongs to his mercy. The third is that blessed demeanour as it will be without end, and this was most often revealed, and continued the longest time [319].)

She says that the first face is shown to us when we are in pain. This corresponds to what she has said in the Ninth Showing. The second face, the one which is new in this chapter, is shown "in tyme of oure synnyng . . . myghtely kepyng vs and defendyng agaynst all oure enmys" (71:657). Like faith, which is the subject of the beginning of this chapter, the face of pity, mercy and compassion will keep us safe. The third face of Jesus corresponds in its description with the second

face in the Ninth Showing. It is "þe blessydfulle chere" and is clearly linked with eternal bliss. However, once again Julian has made a change, for she says that the first two faces of the Seventy First Chapter are mingled with the third, and that it "werkyth it [joy and comfort] in vs by grace" (71:658). This blissful face is not withheld until our death but is shown to us and works in us all through our lives.

Given the evidence we have of Julian's careful crafting of her text it seems highly unlikely that the change from two faces to three is an accident or that it is an incorrect recollection on her part. It is difficult to imagine what purpose the changes might serve, although they obviously soften the idea that Jesus chooses not to show his blissful face to us in order to drive us to depend on him. Perhaps ultimately Julian was unsatisfied with the thought that our lives are overshadowed by the face of Jesus' Crucifixion alone and she found a way to allow his other sides to inform our living as well.

Iij maner of beholdyng of his blessyd Passion. At the close of the Eighth Showing Julian includes this paragraph:

It is gods wylle, as to my vnderstandyng, that we haue iij maner of beholdyng of his blessyd Passion. The furst is the harde payne that he sufferyd with a contriccion and compassion; and that shewde oure lorde in this tyme, and gaue me myght and grace to see it (20:378).³⁵

³⁵ These three manners by which we may understand the Passion should not be confused with the five manners in which the Passion was showed to Julian:

the furst in þe bledyng of the hede, the seconde dyscolowryng of his blessyd face, the thyrde is the plennous bledyng of the body in semyng of scorgyng, the iijth is the depe drying – theyse iij as it is before seyde for the paynes of the passion – and the fyfte is thys that was shewyth for the joy and the blysse of the passion. (23:389-90).

(the first is the bleeding of the head, the second the discolouration of his blessed face, the third is the copious bleeding of the body in the furrows made by the scourging, the fourth is the deep drying - these four ways, as is said before, were for the sufferings of the Passion - and the fifth is this which was revealed for the joy and the bliss of the Passion [218].)

(It is God's will, as I understand it, that we contemplate his blessed Passion in three ways. Firstly, that we contemplate with contrition and compassion the cruel pain he suffered; and our Lord revealed that at this time, and gave me strength and grace to see it [214].)

It is not until the Ninth Showing that she explains what the other two manners of beholding the Passion are, and so we shall examine all of them here in our discussion of the Ninth Showing.

The first manner to behold the Passion is "harde payne". This understanding is introduced by Julian at the close of the showing most occupied with Jesus' pain and makes eminent good sense. In the context she has provided it seems self-evident. The pains suffered by Christ are an obvious and evocative focus for meditation and form the backbone of the affective spirituality so common in England at this time.

Two chapters later Julian returns to her incomplete list and introduces the second manner of beholding the Passion: "the loue that made hym to suffer it passith as far alle his paynes as hevyn is aboue erth" (22:386). The second theme she wants to emphasize is love, the motive for the sacrificial suffering. Julian says that although the pain was great the love which supported it was greater: "The payne was a noble precious and wurschypfulle dede done in a tyme by the workyng of loue. And loue was without begynnyng, is and shall be without ende" (22:387). Her mode of comparison is essentially temporal. Yes, the pain was a great deed, but it was limited by time, it was "done in a tyme." The love which supported or underlay that great pain, however, "was without begynnyng, is and shall be without ende." It is unlimited temporally and therefore exceeds the temporally limited aspect of the Passion in at least that one regard.

One chapter further on again, but still in her telling of the Ninth Showing,

Julian gives the last manner of beholding the Passion: "the joy and the blysse that makyth hym to lyke it" (23:389). This Ninth Showing, in which Jesus' face turns to joy and in which Julian meditates on the kinds of bliss in heaven, is a good one in which to introduce the thread of joy, which otherwise is not an obvious part of the Passion. Towards the end of this chapter Julian explains that Jesus' joy in the Passion is not without variation. There are three aspects to his joy:

One is that he joyeth that he hath done it in dede, and he shalle no more suffer. That other is that he hath ther with bought vs from endlesse paynes of helle. A nother is that he brought vs vp in to hevyn and made vs for to be hys crowne and hys endlesse blysse (23:393).

(One is that he rejoices that he has accomplished the deed and will suffer no more. Another is that he has by it redeemed us from endless torment in hell. Another is that he brought us up into heaven and made us his crown and his everlasting bliss [220].)

It is this theme of joy running throughout *The Showings* that has probably given Julian of Norwich her contemporary appeal.³⁶ For Julian the final word about the Passion is not that it was a locus of great redemptive suffering, although she does not deny the truth of this at any time. Her dominant interpretation of the Passion is that it was a joyful event because its outcome was productive of such great joy.³⁷ Jesus tells Julian, "and now is all my bitter payne and alle my harde traveyle turnyd

³⁶ Glasscoe speaks of "a continuum of joy running between God and man and man and God" which Julian's juxtapositioning of joy and pain in the Passion evokes ("Endles Knowyng," 226).

³⁷ This recalls the *felix culpa* in which Adam's fall is celebrated because without it there would have been no need for Jesus' Incarnation, life, Passion and Resurrection. This idea is presented in slightly modified form in the fifteenth century Middle English carol, "Adam Lay Ybounden:"

Ne had the apple taken been
The apple taken been,
Ne had never our lady
Abeen heavenè queen

(From British Library Sloane MS. 2593, in *The Oxford Book of Carols*, Percy Dearmer, R. Vaughan Williams, Martin Shaw, eds. [London: Oxford University Press, 1928, rpt. 1964], 180).

to evyrlastyng joy and blysse to me and to the" (24:396). This is the final word on the Passion for Julian.

The Tenth Showing: His Blessed Hart

His blessyd hart clovyn on two. The Tenth Showing gives Julian's version of what we currently call the theology of the Sacred Heart.³⁸ As the mystic continues to gaze at the crucifix before her and to learn from its subtle changes she sees Jesus direct his own eyes to his wounded side. The very first sentence of this chapter introduces the theme of joy which is the dominant note of this showing. "Wyth a *good chere* oure good lorde lokyd in to hys syde and behelde *with joy*, and with hys swete lokyng he led forth the vnderstandyng of hys creature by the same wound in to hys syd with in" (24:394, emphasis mine).

The *good chere* and *joy* mentioned in this short showing are emphasized several times by the anchoress. As her mind is drawn to consider the blood and water flowing from Jesus' pierced heart Julian relates that "with hys *enjoyeng* he shewyd to my vnderstandyng in part the blyssydfulle godhede as farforth as he wolde that tyme" (24:395, emphasis mine). The vision was given to teach Julian to "behold and see thy lorde, thy god, that is thy maker and thy *endlesse joy* . . . for my loue *enioye* with me" (24:395-6, emphasis mine). It was also given to underline the

³⁸ Although it is popularly believed that devotion to the Sacred Heart began in the seventeenth century with the visions of Margaret Mary Alacocque, it is actually a medieval devotion. In England it can be traced back as far as Bede and flourished in Julian's day (Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 57-58). See also Eric Colledge, ed., *The Mediaeval Mystics of England* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 11-13; and Riehle, *Middle English Mystics*, 76.

lesson that Jesus' suffering is now turned to rejoicing: "And now is all my bitter payne and alle my harde traveyle turnyd to *evyrlastyng joy and blysse* to me and to thee" (24:396, emphasis mine). And to underline what is obviously the most important point for her about this showing Julian states explicitly in her last sentence that "this shewydoure good lorde to make vs *glade and mery*" (24:397, emphasis mine).

The iconography of the Man of Sorrows, which this Tenth Showing describes, frequently depicts a mournful Christ gesturing toward his wounds, inviting consideration of his great suffering.³⁹ Julian changes the tenor of that meditation by presenting Jesus with a joyful demeanor. His wounds symbolize both his own delight at what he has been able to accomplish for humanity and our joy in him and in our salvation: "behold and see thy lorde, thy god, that is thy maker and thy endlesse joy" (24:395-6); "my lykyng is thyne holynesse and thy endlesse joy and blysse with me" (24:396).⁴⁰

The other theological point being emphasized in this showing is more traditional, the love of Jesus for humanity. Julian does not connect this explicitly with his suffering, although given the visual context she might easily have done so.

³⁹ Many medieval depictions of the Man of Sorrows show Jesus standing in his sarcophagus, gesturing with pathos to his fresh wounds (Richard Kieckheffer, "Late Medieval Devotion," 86).

⁴⁰ Baker suggests that Julian is following the traditional pattern (*Vision to Book*, 59); but I am inclined to agree with Colledge and Walsh who draw attention to the joyful nature of this vision: "Julian was shown not the Man of Sorrows but a joyful, glorified Christ" (*A Book of Showings*, 99-100).

Instead she makes the link with the sacrifice of his death.⁴¹ Her attention is drawn to

⁴¹ Feminist scholars have attempted to make a connection between Julian's description of Jesus' wounded side as "a feyer and delectable place, and large jnow [enough] for alle mankynde that shalle be savyd and rest in pees and in loue" (24:394-5) and the sacrificial love often epitomized in motherhood. Debra Scott Panichelli uses precedents in other forms of English literature in order to draw the conclusion that "the womb of Jesus is the wound of Jesus" ("Finding God," 312, emphasis hers). Drawing most heavily on work done on the Renaissance author Edmund Spenser and his poem *The Faerie Queene* Panichelli uses "the idea of the displaced womb/wound" in order to discover covert traces of Julian's theology of Jesus as mother in this Tenth Showing. She concludes that in Julian's suggestion that we enter into Christ's wounded side in order to find our rest and peace "the birth process is reversed: here is Christ being rent open so that he can draw us inside." Yet we can only be drawn inside through the formation of the wound, a symbol of our sin, which is thereby dignified by its role in the salvific process" (313).

Two other commentators also use this particular image in order to show how Julian may have been trying to feminize Jesus, that is, to present him in subtly female ways in order to increase female identification with his image. Brad Peters suggests that the spear wound in Jesus' side signifies his "implicit sexual subordination" and "turns negative feminine experience into a means of sexual empathy. Accordingly, Julian rewrites the feminine body, so that women especially may read her words and see themselves inscribed upon their Lord" (Brad Peters, "Julian of Norwich and the Internalized Dialogue of Prayer," *Mystics Quarterly* 20 [December 1994], 126). Peters provides no further evidence for this claim than I have cited here, and in the context of his discussion on the role of dialogue in Julian's text it seems inappropriate.

A much better substantiated suggestion can be found in the work of Elizabeth Robertson ("Corporeality of Female Sanctity"). She draws on the work of both Luce Irigaray and Wolfgang Riehle in order to show that there were devotional precedents for perceiving Christ's wound as a vagina. Robertson cites Riehle's discussion of the Franciscan mysticism of the *Stimulus Amoris*. He shows that there was

a typical and quite consciously intended analogy between this wound of Christ and the female pudenda: the *vulva*, as the place of sexual ecstasy, has, so to speak, been transformed into the *vulnus* of Christ as the place of mystical ecstatic union of the soul with its divine beloved (*Middle English Mystics*, 46-47).

Riehle shows that the comparison of the wound to a vagina is not unprecedented and Robertson's use of this in her discussion of another work opens the possibility of applying it to Julian's text. Is there any evidence that Julian was consciously making this analogy, as the author of *Stimulus Amoris* certainly was?

Immediately following Julian's discussion of the wound, with the blood and water and broken heart which she sees inside it, she moves to a reflection on Jesus' words to her, "Lo, how I loue the" (24:395). In her two repetitions of this phrase Julian uses her editorial flag, "as yf he had seyde" to introduce her own gloss on his words, making clear how she had received and understood them when they were spoken. The first gloss uses both amorous and intimate language to express Jesus' love for humanity (Julian would remind us that whenever Jesus spoke to her he was speaking to all of humanity):

my darlyng, behold and see thy lorde, thy god, that is thy maker and thy endlesse joy; see thyn owne brother, thy sauoure; my chyld, behold and see what lykyng and blysse I haue in thy saluacion, and for my loue enioy with me (24:3996).

(my darling, behold and see your Lord, your God, who is your Creator and your endless joy; see your own brother, your saviour; my child, behold and see what delight and bliss I have in your salvation, and for my love rejoice with me [221].)

The second gloss is less overtly familiar but it uses a traditional focus on Jesus' sacrificial act to evoke a deep sense of indebtedness in the hearer/reader, and to express Jesus' overwhelmingly indulgent love for humanity: behold and see that I louyd thee so much, or that I dyed for thee, that I woulde dye for the. And now I haue dyed for the, and sufferd wylllyngfully 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 now be that thou schuldest any thyng pray me that lykyd me, but yf I shulde fulle gladly grannte it the? For my lykyng is thyne holynesse and thy endlesse joy and blysse with me (24:396).

(continued...)

"hys dere worthy blode and hys precious water whych he lett poure out *for loue*" (24:395, emphasis mine). After showing her his pierced heart Jesus speaks to the anchoress, saying, "Lo how I *loue* the" (24:395, emphasis mine). As Julian reflects on this statement she draws two conclusions from it. First, that this is a multivalent love, for the one who died is her lover, lord, god, brother, saviour, and parent: "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" (24:394-95). Her second conclusion is that God's love is not contained in the fact of his death on her behalf, but extends even now to wanting to provide the best for her in her lifetime:

I loud thee so much, or that I dyed for thee, that I wolde dye for the.
And now I haue dyed for the, and sufferd wyllingly that I may. . . .
How schulde it now be that thou shuldest any thyng pray me that lykyd
me, but yf I shulde full gladly grannte it the? For my lykyng is thyne
holynesse and thy endlesse joy and blysse with me (24:396).

(I loved you so much, before I died for you, that I wanted to die for you. And now I have died for you, and willingly suffered what I could. . . . How could it now be that you would not pray to me for anything pleasing to me which I would not very gladly grant to you? For my delight is in your holiness and in your endless joy and bliss in me [221].)

⁴¹(...continued)

(behold and see that I loved you so much, before I died for you, that I wanted to die for you. And now I have died for you, and willingly suffered what I could. And now all my bitter pain and my hard labour is turned into everlasting joy and bliss for me and for you. How could it now be that you would not pray to me for anything pleasing to me which I would not very gladly grant to you? For my delight is in your holiness and in your endless joy and bliss in me [221].)

The two glosses contribute Julian's sense of Jesus' intimate proximity and of his fond love for humanity. Can we draw from this a connection to a female reproductive organ? It seems highly unlikely. Even if the vagina were a medieval devotional symbol for female sacrificial love, perhaps through birthing, the connection to Julian's thought would be tenuous based on what she herself adds to the text. And we cannot even show definitively that the vagina was understood or interpreted in this way. This line of interpretation does not seem valid, although I suspect that some scholars believe it to be so simply because Julian is a female author and mystic.

A point of interest regarding Julian's lessons on love in this Tenth Showing is the connection she discerns between her vision of the pierced heart and the godhead:

And with the swete beholdyng he shewyd hys blessyd hart clovyn on two, and with hys enjoyeng he shewyd to my vnderstandyng in part the blyssydfulle godhede as farforth as he wolde that tyme . . . that is to mene the endlesse loue that was without begynnyng and is and shal be evyr (24:395).

(And in this sweet sight he showed his blessed heart split in two, and as he rejoiced he showed to my understanding a part of his blessed divinity, as much as was his will at that time . . . that is the endless love which was without beginning and is and always shall be [220-21].)

Just as the cloven heart leads the anchoress to consider the power and extent of God's love, it leads her to an understanding that God is love, thus the heart which symbolizes love also shows forth the godhead, which otherwise is ineffable.⁴²

The Fourteenth Showing: The Lord and the Servant

Vij grett paynes. As Julian attends carefully to the example unfolding before her she sees the servant fall into a pit in which he experiences seven kinds of pain.⁴³ In the interpretation of this event which follows, the anchoress makes explicit the connection between the servant and Jesus: "whan I sey the servannt, it menyth Crystes manhode whych is ryghtfull Adam. . . . 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 alle man" (51:533).

⁴² Wolfgang Riehle draws our attention to the fact that the medieval English mystics eschewed anthropomorphic language for God, preferring abstract concepts like *godhede* and *deite* (*Middle English Mystics*, 85).

⁴³ An outline of the example of the lord and servant has already been given above, p. 90.

Lying in the pit, the servant experiences seven distinct kinds of pain, which

Julian enumerates and describes:

The furst was the soore brosyng that he toke in his fallyng, whych was to hym moch payne. The seconde was þe hevynesse of his body. The thyrde was fybylnesse that folowyth of theyse two. The iiij was that he was blyndyd in his reson and stonyd in his mynde so ferforth that allmost he had forgeten his owne loue. The v was þat he myght nott ryse. The vj was payne most mervelous to me, and that was that he leye aloone. I lokyd alle about and behelde, and ferre ne nere ne hye ne lowe I saw to hym no helpe. The vijth was that the place whych he ley in was along, harde and grevous (51:515-16).

(The first was the severe bruising which he took in his fall, which gave him great pain. The second was the clumsiness of his body. The third was the weakness which followed these two. The fourth was that he was blinded in his reason and perplexed in his mind, so much so that he had almost forgotten his own love. The fifth was that he could not rise. The sixth was the pain most astonishing to me, and that was that he lay alone. I looked all around and searched, and far and near, high and low, I saw no help for him. The seventh was that the place in which he lay was narrow and comfortless and distressful [268].)

In summary these are bruising, heaviness, feebleness, ignorance, immobility, loneliness and difficulty. In her double revisiting of the example, once for Adam and once for Christ, Julian either deliberately or by hazard does not explore the metaphorical meaning of the seven pains of the servant as they relate to Christ.⁴⁴

The anchoress does make it clear that the servant's plunge into the pit stands for humanity's fall into sin in Adam. In Christ, it stands for the Incarnation: "Adam fell fro lyfe to deth, in to the slade [pit] of this wrechyd worlde, and aftyr that in to hell. Goddys son fell with Adam in to the slade of the meydens wombe . . . and that for to excuse Adam from blame in hevyn and in erth; and myghtely he fechyd hym out of hell" (51:533-34).

⁴⁴ The closest she comes, in my opinion, to addressing these seven pains is in the brief summary statement "the soore that he toke was oure flessch, in whych as sone he had felyng of dedely paynes" (51:541).

Once in the pit, Adam experiences the seven pains listed above. Bruising, heaviness, feebleness and immobility are very physical sores, pains which are related to having a body and to being confined by its limitations, and its propensity to being hurt. When we relate these pains to Jesus, fallen into his humanity, we see that Julian is describing not the Passion, the usual focus of discussions of his pain, but the Incarnation. If Jesus also suffered bruising, heaviness, feebleness and immobility it is because he willingly sacrificed the limitlessness of his pure divinity in order to take on full humanity.

The other three pains, ignorance, loneliness and difficulty, comprise an interesting commentary on human frailty. To be human is to suffer from feelings of isolation and loneliness, and separation from God. Julian is teaching that Jesus assumed more than our physical failings in the Incarnation. He assumed our spiritual alienation as well, and of course, in the assuming conquered it through his Passion. This is Julian's interpretation of the creedal statement that Christ is "alike to us in all things save sin."

The swete incarnacion and the Passion of Crist. In Julian's blurring of the distinction between Adam and Jesus through their common humanity, she emphasizes an important theological juxtapositioning between the Incarnation and the Passion, which can be seen to run throughout her thought.⁴⁵ In the passage examined just above, where Adam and Jesus are compared in terms of their respective "falls" we

⁴⁵ Park says, "what is happening is that Julian is presenting a surface narrative of the Passion whilst simultaneously signifying the Incarnation" (Tarjei Park, "Reflecting Christ: The Role of the Flesh in Walter Hilton and Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: The Exeter Symposium 5*, ed. Marion Glasscoe [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992], 34).

have already seen how Julian invokes the Incarnation: "Goddys son fell with Adam in to the slade [pit] of the meyden's wombe" (51:534). She links this immediately with the work of the Passion, which is to open the gates of hell: "and that for to excuse Adam from blame in hevyn and in erth; and myghtely he fechyd hym out of hell" (51:534).

A little further on in the same chapter Julian links the Incarnation and the Passion less overtly: "and anon he fell full lowe in the maydyns wombe, havynge no regard to hym selfe ne to his harde paynes" (51:535). Once again, the falling into the womb is the Incarnation. The Passion is most probably what is being signalled by "his harde paynes," although this could simply refer to the pains of human life which Jesus has undertaken in our flesh.

In her presentation of her theology of Jesus as our mother Julian again introduces the intimate connection we are exploring between the Incarnation and the Passion. Jesus is "oure moder of mercy in oure sensualityte takyng" (58:586). The taking of our sensuality occurred at the Incarnation, making Jesus our *moder* because of the new life this act bestowed upon us. This is reiterated and reinforced in the next sentence where Julian says, "in oure moder Cryst we profyt and encrease, and in mercy he reformyth vs and restoryth, and by the vertu of his Passion, his deth and his vprysyng onyd [united] vs to oure substance" (58:586). Christ's motherhood has just been linked to the Incarnation, here it is linked also to the Passion which is the means by which we are reformed and restored. The motherhood of mercy is one of the three ways in which we can understand Jesus' motherhood, grace and nature being

the other two.⁴⁶ To Julian the motherhood of mercy signifies the Incarnation, because it was through his mercy that Christ took on our sensuality and became human: "he is oure moder of mercy in oure sensualyte takyng" (58:586). But he is our mother of mercy in the Passion as well: "in mercy he reformyth vs and restoryth, and *by the vertu of his passion, his deth and his vprysyng* onyd vs to oure substatnce" (58:586, emphasis mine).

In the following sentence we find Julian subtly combining this motherhood-as-Incarnation image with the Passion: "Thus he susteyneth vs with in hym in loue and traveyle, in to the full tyme þat he wolde suffer the sharpyst thornes and grevous paynes that evyr were or evyr shalle be, and dyed at the last" (60:595-96). She starts the idea strongly with the image of Jesus as our mother, sustaining us within himself, as a pregnant woman does her unborn child. This continues "in to the full tyme þat he wolde suffer the . . .". We expect Julian to continue the metaphor and to conclude the thought saying ". . . pains of childbirth." However, it is not labour which delivers us into life. It is the Passion: ". . . sharpyst thornes and grevous paynes that evyr were or evyr shalle be, and dyed at the last" (60:596). What she started with the Incarnation (Jesus as mother) Julian ends quite naturally with the Passion (his death as our new birth).

A last example makes this connection quite explicit: "And in the takyng of oure kynd he quyckyd vs, and in his blessyd dyeng vppon the crosse he bare vs to endlesse lyfe" (63:616-17). Janet Grayson points out the synchronous nature of Julian's analogy: "the servant's fall into the ravine and the tearing of his kirtle,

⁴⁶ See below p. 178, note 52.

Adam's fall into sin and the rending of his body, Christ's fall into the womb and his tearing in the Passion are completed in one instant."⁴⁷ In some ways, Julian seems to be presenting the Incarnation and the Passion as one redemptive event.⁴⁸ What unites these two theological moments in Julian's understanding is the humanity of Christ which makes both possible. Her intimate connection between the Incarnation and the Passion is viable because of the emphatic concentration on the humanity of Christ throughout her theology. Two further citations will make this clear.

In clarifying the connection she has been shown in the servant between Adam and Christ Julian says, "Wher fore this menyng was shewed in vnderstandyng of the manhod of Crist. For all mankynde that shall be savyd by the swete incarnacion and the Passion of Crist, alle is the manhode of Cryst" (51:537). The Incarnation gave Christ his manhood, our flesh, and allowed the Passion. Thus the Incarnation serves the purposes of salvation almost as much as, but not unconnected from the Passion. It was the manhood of Christ which suffered during the Passion, as we have shown.

In the Ninth Showing Julian makes her clearest statement of the parenthetical nature of the Incarnation and the Passion to Christ's life.

Alle that he doyth for vs and hath done and evyr shalle was nevyr cost ne charge to hym ne myght be, but only that he dyed in our manhede, begynnyng at the swete incarnation, and lastyng to the blessyd vprysyng on Ester morow. So long duryd the cost and the charge abowt our redempcion in deed, of whych dede he evyr joyeth (23:391).

(All that he does for us and has done and will do was never expense or labour to him, nor could it be, except only that he died in our

⁴⁷ Janet Grayson, "The Eschatological Adam's Kirtle," *Mystics Quarterly* 11 (December 1985), 157.

⁴⁸ Both Joan Nuth and Lillian Bozak-DeLeo mention the incarnational nature of Julian's soteriology (Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* [New York: Crossroad, 1991], 43; Bozak-DeLeo, "Soteriology of Julian of Norwich," in *Theology and the University*, ed. John Apczynski [Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1987], 46).

humanity, beginning at the sweet Incarnation and lasting until his blessed Resurrection on Easter morning. So long did the labour and expense of our redemption last, in which deed he always and endlessly rejoices [219].)

Thus Christ's humanity is what links Incarnation and Passion; or, to turn this around in a more Julian-esque fashion, the Incarnation and the Passion demonstrate Christ's humanity.⁴⁹

Oure savyoure is oure very moder. Julian's theology of Jesus as our mother has been amply examined by modern scholars within the last twenty years and will not be fully explored here.⁵⁰ However, in so far as Julian uses this image to probe the pains of Christ it does pertain to the discussion of this chapter. Along with so much other new material in the Long Text, Julian introduces her thinking on the motherhood of Jesus in the Fourteenth Showing. It flows from the exploration of the example of the lord and servant, although it is not shown in the example: "Oure hye fader, almyghty god . . . woulde that the seconde person [of the trinity] shulde become oure moder, oure brother and oure savyoure. . . . Oure fader wylllyth, oure

⁴⁹ Bozak-DeLeo interprets Julian this way: "It is the Incarnation itself that is salvific, not just the Passion and Death. We are redeemed precisely by being brought into union with God through our participation in the one who unites the divine and human natures" ("Soteriology of Julian of Norwich," 42).

⁵⁰ Some works specifically devoted to this topic are the following: M. A. Albert, "The Motherhood of God," *Life of the Spirit* 7 (1952): 85-96; Kari Elisabeth Børresen, "Christ notre mère, la théologie de Julienne de Norwich," in *Das Menschenbild des Nikolaus von Kues und der Christliche Humanismus: Die Referate des Symposions in Trier von 6 - 8 October, 1977 und weitere Beiträge*, eds. Martin Bodewig, Josef Schmitz, and Reinold Weier (Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft B) (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1978); Ritamary Bradley, "The Motherhood Theme in Julian of Norwich," *Fourteenth Century English Mystics Newsletter* 2 (1976): 25-30; Ritamary Bradley, "Mysticism in the Motherhood Similitude of Julian of Norwich," *Studia Mystica* 8 (Summer 1985): 4-14; Jennifer Perone Himmel, "God is Our Mother": *Julian of Norwich and the Medieval Image of Christian Feminine Divinity* (Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 92:5) ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1982). See my Select Bibliography for others.

mother werkyth, oure good lorde the holy gost comfyrmyth" (59:591-2)⁵¹

One connection between Jesus' motherhood and his pain has already been discussed.⁵² This is the pain brought on by his assumption of our humanity, in his motherhood of mercy.⁵³ The other connection to pain comes about through Julian's more naturalistic exploration of the role of mothering and birthing as it relates to the second person of the Trinity. We have already quickly mentioned Julian's analogy of Jesus' redemption of us to a natural birth in which we are born at the moment of his Passion through the tearing pains of his death (60:596).⁵⁴ Julian elsewhere speaks of the fact that Jesus "beryth vs to joye and to endlesse levyng" (60:595) and makes reference to "oure gostly forth bryngyng" in which "he vsyth more tendernes in kepyng without any comparyson" (61:601). In fact, Julian uses a pun to weave the motherhood image more firmly into the whole of her text, so that we find the words *labour* and *travail* with their double connotations throughout *The Showings*.⁵⁵ Jesus'

⁵¹ Julian's theology of divine motherhood is not limited to the second person of the Trinity, although this aspect of her thought has received the most scholarly interest. Because the anchoress is such a committed trinitarian, she easily transposes statements made about one person in the Trinity to others. Thus, we find her claiming that God, as distinct from Jesus, is our mother: "god enjoyeth that he is our fader, and god enjoyeth that he is our moder, and god enjoyeth that he is our very spouse, and our soule his lovyd wyfe. And Crist enjoyeth þat he is our broder, and Jhesu enjoyeth that he is our savyour" (52:547). We also find her making a similar claim about the Holy Spirit: "the depe wysdome of þe trynity is our moder, in whom we be closyd" (54:563). At one point she even claims that Mary is our mother: "oure lady is oure moder, in whome we be all beclosyd and of hyr borne in Crist, for she that is moder of oure savyoure is mother of all þat ben savyd in our sauyour" (57:580). Mary's universal motherhood is dependant on that of her son, and not an inherent quality of her own, as is that of the three persons of the Trinity.

⁵² See above, p. 174.

⁵³ Julian tells us that the three modes are motherhood of mercy, of grace and of nature; however, she herself seems to confuse these in her various explanations of them. They are essentially the assumption of our nature, our redemption, and the continued working of the Holy Spirit in us. See 58:586 and particularly 59:593.

⁵⁴ See above, p. 175.

⁵⁵ Labour: 51:527, 529, 530, 534, 536, 540. Travail: 10:331; 13:347, 350; 14:352; 22:385, 386; 23:396; 51:526, 530, 531, 536, 539, 540; 60:596; 84:726. Note the overlap in the Fifty First Chapter of these (continued...)

pain is strongly associated with the image of birthing for the anchoress, which draws attention to the life-giving aspect of his suffering.

The idea of us being enclosed in Jesus, as in a nourishing and sustaining womb, is also found in the Fourteenth Showing, and is strongly connected to the birthing idea: "all that (shall) be sa(fe) is in Jhesu" (51:538).⁵⁶ "Crist, vs alle havyng in hym that shall be savyd by hym, wurschypfully presentyth his fader in hevyn with vs" (55:565). "In oure makyng he knytt vs and onyd vs to hym selfe" (58:582).⁵⁷ Julian even merges the two images of bearing and of being eternally enclosed into what becomes an image of eternal gestation: "oure savyoure is oure very moder, in whome we be endlesly borne and nevyr shall come out of hym" (57:580). This strengthens and plays upon another idea of Julian's, already explored in this chapter, that it is the humanity of Jesus which brings us to heaven at the last: "Crist in his body myȝtely beryth vs vp in to hevyn" (55:565).⁵⁸

Julian's use of the motherhood image for Jesus is neither sentimental nor saccharine. She is forthright about the pains of childbirth, and beyond these includes the idea of parental discipline (61:602) as well as the softer qualities of "kynd, loue, wysdom and knowyng" (60:599). Her connection of the pains of Jesus to the image

⁵⁵(...continued)

two concepts. See also 37, 44; 164; 67.

⁵⁶ The parentheses indicate ms merging on the part of Colledge and Walsh. See above, p. 108, note 30, for a discussion of the mutual enclosure of us in God and of God in us in the context of Julian's anthropology. For scholarly discussion of the image of enclosure in Christ as in a womb see Christine Allen, "Christ our Mother in Julian of Norwich," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 10 (Fall 1981), 426; H. P. Owen, "Experience and Dogma in the English Mystics," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven T. Katz, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983), 637; Riehle, *Middle English Mystics*, 130.

⁵⁷ For other references to us being enclosed in Christ see 49:506; 53:558; 54:563.

⁵⁸ See above, p. 156.

of motherhood does is allows the anchoress to highlight the theological themes which are so important to her: the sacrificial quality of the Incarnation, the life-giving nature of the Passion, and the immanence of God.

Conclusion: Pain Earns Redemption and Joy

- Allowing Julian's descriptions of the showings to guide us, we have explored the images of Christ's pain which appeared in her text, and have discovered the deeper levels of truth which these were designed to serve. Julian diminished the emotional impact of the pain and suffering in almost all of the showings, the Eighth being the exception. In this way she involves her readers more effectively and imaginatively in her theological conclusions, each of which she grounds firmly in images from the Passion.

What we have found in Julian's consideration of the pains of Jesus is that they form a vital backbone to her theology. What we have not found is that they function to stir an emotional response in the reader other than deep appreciation. This lack of affective engagement serves to separate Julian's text from most contemporary devotional works and puts it firmly in the realm of theology.

Julian's theology is extrapolated, perhaps over the space of years, from what she saw or experienced in her night of illness. From static images of blood, bone, desiccation and brokenness Julian moves us to consider the vibrant theological concepts of the plenteousness of redemption, God's homely affection for humanity, the defeat of death, the humanity of Christ, God's longing for us, and the generous ways in which Jesus is our mother, bearing us to eternal life.

The overriding note in her exploration of Jesus' pain is that of great joy.

First, the joy of Jesus himself, that his Passion has brought the rich benefit of eternal joy to humanity; second, the joy of God as God delights in the human soul; third, the joy of humanity as it considers its redemption and the eternal life which awaits in bliss. The Passion cleanses, restores and unites humanity with God for eternity.

Like so many before her, Julian has concentrated on Jesus' human side in relation to the Passion, for only his humanity could suffer, his divinity being impassible. In taking on our broken physicality, Jesus also assumed the alienation from God, or spiritual loneliness, which characterizes human existence. In Julian's thought, the humanity of Jesus is the key to the power of the Passion, and she uses it to draw the Incarnation and the Passion into such proximity that they almost seem to be one single redemptive moment.⁵⁹

The Passion is an image of tender love for the anchoress, a love so vast that it would suffer the most grievous pain for the beloved, the soul that will be saved. Jesus says to her: "it is a joy, a blysse, an endlesse lykyng to me that evyr I sufferd Passion for the; and yf I myght suffer more, I wolde suffer more" (22:382). This suffering unites Christ to us, both in his humanity which suffers as ours does, and in eternity, for his pains purchase our salvation. Julian's deep conviction that this union

⁵⁹ Pezzini comments this way on how Julian used the Passion in constructing her theology: [Julian] views the Passion first within the whole life of Christ (Incarnational aspect), then in the whole process of creation and restoration of a fallen world (Creational aspect), and finally in the whole work of the Trinity (Trinitarian aspect), thus going beyond any limit of space and time and flowing into eternity. The Passion comes gradually to be seen as the center of a series of widening concentric circles, and cannot be properly evaluated without considering the whole setting and the movement leading to and originating from the death of Christ ("Mystical Transformation," 65).

has been effected at the historical moment of the Passion of Christ allows her to focus
* more on it and the joy that it produces, than the pain which made it so.

Chapter Four

The Function of Pain in Contemporary Works: A Comparison

The greatest challenge for the historian of ideas is to uncover the power and impact of a concept in its historical context. The work by Caroline Walker Bynum serves as a warning to all medieval historians of the dangers of reading back into the thought of the period ideas taken for granted in our own day.¹ In order to avoid an unconscious modernization of a medieval idea we will examine the concept of pain in three works which are roughly contemporary and comparable to Julian's text. By doing this we will be able to compare Julian's thought with what we find written by her contemporaries, providing a useful contextualization.

The obvious challenge in this regard is to determine who Julian's textual peers might be, given that so little is known or can be deduced about influences on the anchoress.² Three Middle English sources have been chosen for counterpoint and

¹ For this in particular see Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (Autumn 1986): 399-439. Bynum challenges Steinberg's sexual interpretation of artistic renderings of Jesus' penis in medieval painting. See also her *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, where she unlocks the multivalent symbolism of food to medieval women. For an overview of Bynum's method see Galea, "Caroline Walker Bynum."

² Julian refers to herself as "a symple creature vnlettyrde" (2:285) but it is by no means clear what she actually means by this. Her text is meticulously written, as well as theologically complex and orthodox. Colledge and Walsh make the most extravagant claims of any of her editors for Julian's learning. They propose that she had been a nun for a large portion of her life (*A Book of Showings*, 43); that some benevolent scholar "passed on to her the learning of the schools" (45) and that she "read widely in Latin and vernacular spiritual classics" (44). As Baker points out, their copious annotations suggest that the anchoress borrowed just about everything from prior sources, contributing only her rhetorical skills and the underlying structure (*Vision to Book*, 9)!

comparison to *The Showings*. These are the anonymously authored *Ancrene Wisse*, the *Meditations on the Passion and Form of Living* by Richard Rolle of Hampole and the eponymous *Book of Margery Kempe*.³ The same method of reading will be used for these texts as was used for reading *The Showings*. Each will be studied carefully for examples of pain or suffering in any aspect or function, which examples will then be further studied for their significance. This is not to imply that complete systems of thought are being held up to Julian's writing. What is being undertaken here is the more modest project of comparing certain relevant works from her period to the thought of the anchoress.

After introducing the texts for comparison and justifying their selection for our purpose this chapter will examine the three broad categories of pain outlined by Julian and explored in this thesis.⁴ These categories are the personal experience of suffering, from Chapter One of this thesis; the suffering of humanity, from Chapter Two; and the suffering of Jesus, from Chapter Three. Within the second broad category, the suffering of humanity, we will focus on the now familiar themes of sickness, the body, temptation, the world, the world to come, and sin. Within the third category the themes which are pertinent in the contemporary literature selected for comparison are woundedness, blood, thirst, and patience.

³ Works in other vernacular languages have not been considered because there is no evidence that Julian knew any language other than Middle English and perhaps Latin. For arguments against linking these four authors stylistically or in content see Reynolds, *Some Literary Influences*, 18, 24,25; and Coleman, "The Lady Julian," 131-52. Wilson compares Julian with Richard Rolle and Margery Kempe from the point of view of prose and finds Julian to be the most accomplished of the three ("Three Middle English Mystics," 87).

⁴ The categories chosen for the exploration of Julian's text were found to be valid organizing principles for this supporting study only after the initial reading of the secondary sources. They were not imposed from the first.

Introduction to the Works

The Ancrene Wisse. Little is known for certain of the provenance of *The Ancrene Wisse*,⁵ although much has been artfully surmised in our own century, particularly by Geoffrey Shepherd and E. J. Dobson.⁶ The work is a rule or guide to living written in Middle English for an indeterminate number of women who have chosen to become anchoresses. In eight parts it presents a possible schedule of prayer and work, outlines the perils to their souls of the particular form of life these women have chosen, offers encouragement and support for their vocation and provides simple guidelines on other matters concerning their material existence. The longest and most evocative parts are those concerning the five senses and the sins particular to each.

The oldest extant manuscripts of *The Ancrene Wisse* are part of a group of six texts composed and copied for the daily use of anchoresses dating from between 1225 and 1250.⁷ Dobson has attempted to prove that the original work was composed not much before these copies, between 1190 and 1230, by the Augustinian canon Brian of Lingen of the West-Midland priory, Wigmore abbey. Within two decades of its composition more than a dozen copies of *The Ancrene Wisse* were in existence, a testimony to the immediate and practical popularity of the work. By the time of the

⁵ Middle English citations from this source are from J. R. R. Tolkien, ed., *Ancrene Wisse* (The Early English Text Society, no. 249) (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). The English translations which are included in square brackets are from *Ancrene Wisse*, in *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (Classics in Western Spirituality) (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991.)

⁶ Geoffrey Shepherd, *Ancrene Wisse: Parts Six and Seven* (New York: Manchester University Press and Barnes and Noble, 1972); E.J. Dobson, *The Origins of Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

⁷ For detailed particulars on manuscript evidence see Savage and Watson, *Ancrene Wisse*, 7-32.

enclosure of Julian of Norwich, at least two hundred years later, the text had become a standard one for anchoresses and part of their daily reading.

There is no way to ascertain whether Julian was given a copy of *The Ancrene Wisse* as her guide, as was frequently done, or perhaps one of the other works outlining the anchoritic life which were only slightly less popular in her day.⁸ Of these, the two which circulated most widely were Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum* and *The Form of Living* by Richard Rolle of Hampole. Colledge and Walsh suggest that Julian must have known *The Ancrene Wisse* well enough to reflect some of its cadences in her own language, and they offer forty two examples of what they consider to be parallels with the older text.⁹ They find little evidence of familiarity with the work by either Aelred or Rolle.¹⁰

I have selected *The Ancrene Wisse* for comparison with *The Showings* because of the strong possibility that Julian knew the work and read from it. Even if she did not, it was a foundational document of the day for the anchoritic life and at least some of Julian's confessors and ecclesiastical visitors would have been familiar with the work and might have discussed it with her.¹¹ Like *The Showings*, *The Ancrene Wisse*

⁸ Reynolds underlines the significant number of copies of *The Ancrene Riwe* which circulated following the thirteenth century, and reminds us of its influence on vernacular devotional prose as well as on other Rules composed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Anna Maria Reynolds, *Some Literary Influences in the Revelations of Julian of Norwich* [The Leeds Studies in English and Kindred languages, nos. 57 & 58] [no place, 1952], xxxiv).

⁹ Only nine of these are distinctive enough that they may indicate that Julian borrowed an idea from *The Ancrene Wisse*. None of these nine evidences anything more than possible influence. There are no citations and no verbal echoes (Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 48, 77). See also their "Index of Authors and Titles."

¹⁰ Two possible echoes of Aelred are noted while none are found for this particular work of Rolle's.

¹¹ Other scholars who accept the possibility that Julian knew *The Ancrene Riwe* include Grace Warrack, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 152 note 2; Mary Eileen, "The Place of Lady Julian of Norwich in English Literature," in *Julian of Norwich: Four Studies to Commemorate the Sixth Century of "The Revelations of Divine Love"* (continued...)

was written in Middle English.

Two Works by Richard Rolle of Hampole. Richard Rolle was a near contemporary of Julian of Norwich's, a layman, a hermit, and a mystic who wrote in Middle English. He was born at the turn of the fourteenth century and died relatively young in 1349, probably a victim of the Black Death.¹² Careful analysis of details concerning his life in the Office of Lessons prepared for the incomplete process of his canonization and of historical records available have led to some degree of certainty concerning his activities.¹³

Born in Yorkshire to a family of tenant farmers, Rolle went to Oxford through the patronage of Thomas de Neville who later became archdeacon of Durham. After four or five years of study Rolle left university without matriculating in order to pursue independently a vocation as a hermit. He spent thirty-one years as a hermit, first on the land of his family's overlord and then in various locations attempting to find peace and quiet. During these years of retreat Rolle experienced the powerful and sensual mystical encounters which underlie his spiritual writings, and which he described in some of his works.

¹¹(...continued)

of *Divine Love*" [Oxford: Sisters of the Love of God Press, 1973], 7; and Anna Maria Reynolds, *Some Literary Influences*, 24.

¹² These and other details taken from Rosamund S. Allen, ed., *Richard Rolle: The English Writings* (Classics of Western Spirituality) (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988), 9-63. Julian was born c. December 1342, given that her illness was in May of 1373 and that she was 30 1/2 years old at the time (2:285).

¹³ The earliest work was done by Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole and Materials for his Biography* (The Modern Language Association of America, Monograph Series 3) (New York: D. Heath and Co., 1927). See also Frances Comper, *The Life of Richard Rolle, Together with an Edition of his English Lyrics* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1928); and Geraldine Hodgson, *The Sanity of Mysticism: A Study of Richard Rolle* (London: The Faith Press, 1926).

The two works selected for comparison with *The Showings* were composed by Rolle in Middle English, although he was competent in Latin and some of his other writings were penned in that language. The first, his *Meditations on the Passion*, is most apt because of its subject matter.¹⁴ It is a devotional text intended to guide the reader into an emotional experience of compassion for the suffering Christ. Like Julian's work, it uses a series of highly visual evocations of the Passion in order to involve the reader in the text. It was popular and was widely used in personal devotions quite quickly after Rolle's death, thus within Julian's lifetime. Colledge and Walsh find two possible points of similarity with it in *The Showings*, although they and others firmly suggest that Julian's style and approach are so significantly different from Rolle's that she may even have found his emotionalism distasteful, had she had access to his work.¹⁵ It is selected for comparison because of its popularity and because it also uses the Passion as its guiding image.

The second text selected is Rolle's *The Form of Living*, composed as a sort of rule for the anchoress Margaret Kirkby, who was under Richard's guidance. It is not long and was written in the form of a letter of instruction rather than in the more traditional form of a rule. It offers advice on comportment, temptations, attitude and prayer rather than concrete suggestions concerning devotions, hours and work. Since

¹⁴ Middle English citations to this source come from one of two editions. The first is Hope Emily Allen, ed., *English Writings of Richard Rolle: Hermit of Hampole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). For the passages which she omitted I have used C. Horstman, ed., *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole. An English Father of the Church and His Followers*, vol. 1 (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1895). Citations from this second source will be marked with an 'H' following the page number (i.e. 2 H).

¹⁵ Others who feel that Julian was not influenced by Rolle include Warrack, *Revelations of Divine Love*, xliii; Baker, "Julian of Norwich and Anchoritic Literature" *Mystics Quarterly* 19 [1993], 156; Mary Arthur Knowlton, *The Influence of Richard Rolle and of Julian of Norwich on the Middle English Lyrics*, *De proprietatibus litterarum* [Series Practica 51] [The Hague: Mouton, 1973], 84; Reynolds, *Some Literary Influences*, 25; and R. M. Wilson "Three Middle English Mystics" *Essays and Studies*, 9 [1956], 87.

Margaret was enclosed as an anchoress during the year prior to Richard's death, this text could not have been written much before 1348. It circulated widely, however, as the thirty-eight extant manuscripts give evidence. Colledge and Walsh draw no comparisons with it, and to my knowledge no other scholar has suggested that Julian had access to this work.

The Form of Living is chosen for comparison with *The Showings* because, like Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion*, it was quickly popular, had a lasting impact on the development of Middle English devotional writing and is an important example of the kind of thought popular in Julian's day. Like the *Meditations*, it also springs from circumstances very similar to Julian's, in that Rolle was also a lay, enclosed mystic writing from his experience of God with the intention of drawing others into a deeper relationship with the divine.

The Book of Margery Kempe. Margery Kempe was an exact contemporary and near neighbour of Julian of Norwich's and records in her spiritual autobiography the fact of her visit to consult with the anchoress.¹⁶ She was born c. 1373, the year of Julian's illness and showings, in Bishop's Lynn (now King's Lynn) about 30 miles distant from Norwich near the Norfolk coast. Her book is the dictated recollection of her spiritual growth and blessings following her conversion from a frivolous life brought on by a serious pre- and post-partum illness. The work records her spiritual conversations with Jesus, Mary and various saints; her spiritual gifts of tears and of

¹⁶ Citations from this source are from Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, eds, *The Book of Margery Kempe: The Text from the Unique MS. Owned by Colonel W. Butler-Bowden* (Early English Text Society, Original Series, No. 212) (Oxford: Humphrey Milford, 1940).

wailing; her many pilgrimages; and some of the trials she endured in trying to live an exemplary life.

Kempe had some difficulty in recording her life, as she believed Jesus had commanded her to do. Being illiterate she was forced to depend on the willingness and abilities of others. The first priest to record her words was a German speaker who so corrupted both his letters and the language that a subsequent priest was unable to make sense of it.¹⁷ Through divine intervention, as Kempe tells us, this second cleric was able to overcome these hurdles as well as his own reticence to become an able amanuensis and enthusiastic supporter of the sometimes off-putting Kempe. The book was completed c.1448 and Kempe must have died within a decade of that date. The last independent attestation of her life is a record in the books of the Guild of the Trinity in Bishop's Lynn in 1449.¹⁸

Kempe's work is chosen for comparison with *The Showings* for a number of reasons, the most significant of which is the fact that she actually met and spoke with Julian of Norwich. Colledge and Walsh examine the language of Kempe's recollection of the advice given her by the anchoress and find it to be consistent with that found in *The Showings*. They conclude that "only a perversely captious critic would deny authenticity to this account."¹⁹ To my knowledge no scholar has questioned Kempe's veracity in this or any regard. Other reasons for this selection include the fact that Kempe is the second woman mystic to have left a record in

¹⁷ Margery, Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. B. A. Windeatt (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 3.

¹⁸ Details of her life are taken from the Introduction and Suggested Chronology in Windeatt, *Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 9-30.

¹⁹ Colledge and Walsh, *A Book of Showings*, 38.

Middle English of her spiritual experiences, Julian of Norwich being the first. The work, like Julian's, is strongly christocentric, records the role of a significant illness and was written for the edification of others. Like *The Showings* it seems to have had limited circulation in its own day and it is only in this century that its rediscovery has led to focussed attention.

There are obvious dissimilarities between the three works chosen for comparison and *The Showings*. *The Ancrene Wisse* is a text-book of holy living; *The Showings* is not in the least didactic or directive. The works of Richard Rolle are deeply rooted in the tradition of affective piety and seek to evoke an emotional response in the reader; Julian avoids the intense emotionalism of this movement and pushes beyond it to pure theology. Margery Kempe has written an autobiography of fascinating detail which shows how the spiritual life was lived by the common people; Julian of Norwich has pared her text of almost all personal detail, leaving her readers with many questions about herself and her life. These differences being acknowledged, however, the reasons given above for selecting these texts for comparison with *The Showings* are still valid. Julian of Norwich wrote her book in a time of spiritual flourishing in England and it is felicitous to have similar contemporary documents with which to compare her work.

The Personal Experience of Pain

Chapter One of this dissertation examines Julian of Norwich's own experience of pain as recounted in or deduced from her text. Because neither *The Ancrene Wisse* nor the two selected works of Richard Rolle are based on personal experience it is not

possible to use them in comparison for this category. Margery Kempe, on the other hand, has filled her book with the details of her personal pain and suffering, so much so that these details sometimes threaten to overwhelm other aspects of her text. The autobiographical nature of Kempe's work and the obvious significance of her own suffering to her spiritual life make this a rich text for comparison with *The Showings*.

The Pains in her Life. Kempe's spiritual gifts, weeping, wailing, and conversing with Jesus and the saints, were a two-edged sword for the pious lay woman. While they immeasurably enriched her life and provided the foundational motivation for her actions, they also drew unpleasant and often critical attention to her and opened her to charges of hypocrisy or posturing. Many of the details Kempe provides about her pains indicate that her suffering was rooted in the disjunction others felt between her piety and their own. She speaks frequently of being slandered (2, 29, 74, 105, 156) or shamed and humiliated by others (17, 28, 129-30, 131, 185) on account of the oddness of her dress or behaviour.²⁰ She also suffers greatly because of her heightened sensitivity to Jesus' purity, feeling pain during intercourse with her husband until he grants her conjugal chastity (14, 48), finding it painful to look upon handsome men or baby boys because they remind her of Jesus and his Passion (86), suffering when she hears the Lord's name taken in vain or when she sees a commandment broken (160). These pains are added to the ever present anguish which constant compassionate recollection of the Passion brings to her, this

²⁰ Page numbers will be included in the body of the dissertation in parentheses when it is clear which text for comparison is being used. When multiple references are offered they are not meant to be exhaustive. They are intended to offer numerous corroborations of the point being illustrated.

being the source of the weeping and wailing themselves (passim).²¹

Pain as Punishment. On a number of occasions Kempe makes the classic connection between her suffering and God's will: "Þis creatur, seyng alle Þis aduersytes comyng on euery syde, thowt it weryn þe skowrges of owyr Lord Þat wold chastyse hir for hir synne" (11; see also 12-13, 154). A striking interlude in her spiritual companionship with Jesus occurs when Kempe is shown the souls of the damned and refuses to believe that God would show her such things. Jesus insists that she "must as wel heryn of þe dampnyd as of þe sauyd" (144) but she is convinced that some evil spirit must be at work. In punishment for her disbelief Jesus withdraws his presence from her for twelve days so that she is subject to lecherous thoughts and no longer has the comfort of her accustomed conversations with her Lord. Fearing that she has been abandoned she reminds Jesus that he promised never to forsake her and through an angelic intermediary she is assured that this promise is still true:

God hath not forsakyn þe ne neuyr schal forsake þe, as he hath behyte þe, but, for þu beleuyst not þat it is þe spiryt of God þat spekyth in þi sowle & schewyth þe hys preuy counselys of summe þat xul ben sauyd & summe þat xal ben dampnyd, þerfor God chastisyd þe on þis wise & maner, & þis chastisyng schal endurn xij days tyl þu wyl beleuyn þat it is God wech spekyth to þe & no deuyl (145-46).

²¹ Teresa of Avila warns her nuns against putting too much emphasis on tears because they have heard that tears are to be desired:

Let's not think that everything is accomplished through much weeping but set our hands to the task of hard work and virtue. These are what we must pay attention to; let the tears come when God sends them and without any effort on our part to induce them. . . . Let Him give us what He wants, whether water or dryness. With such an attitude we shall go about refreshed, and the devil will not have so much chance to play tricks on us" (*The Interior Castle*, Sixth Dwelling Place, 6.9.141).

(God has not forsaken you nor never shall forsake you, as he has promised, but, since you do not believe that it is the Spirit of God that speaks in your soul and shows you his privy counsel concerning those who shall be saved and those who shall be damned; therefore, God chastised you in this way and manner, and this chastising shall endure twelve days until you will believe that it is God who speaks to you and no devil.)²²

Although she begs for the consolations to return she is told that she must endure the pain for the allotted time in order to learn her lesson, even though Jesus is not angry with her (145).

This episode merits particular comparison with Julian's experience because of its obvious similarity to it on several levels. Like Kempe, Julian endured great pains that she felt she could not endure, recorded in her Seventh and Eighth Showings.²³ Like Kempe also, Julian denies her God and fears she is being tempted by evil spirits in the succession of showings, telling the visiting religious that she had passed the day raving. However, as we have seen, Julian does not allow that pain is a form of punishment meted out by God, whereas Kempe interprets her experience as well-merited chastisement for disbelief. Also, Julian is refused a sight of purgatory (33:427) and is not given any information at all concerning the damned. Kempe's sight of hell which sparks her unbelief is not the only one given to her, and on other occasions she is shown the state of the souls of people who have died, some of whom are indeed damned (46, 52, 53, 144, 257). Although the events in the two mystics' lives are very similar, their interpretation of them is quite different. Where Kempe's

²² Modern English translations of Kempe and Rolle are my own.

²³ See above, p. 54 and p. 60. Because so many cross-references are made in this chapter they will be included in the body of the text in brackets, {}, in order to avoid an undue proliferation of footnotes.

God chastises sin and exhibits the damned, Julian's God bears no malice and gives no sight of the damned at all.

Interpreting her Pain. In her text Kempe provides a number of interesting interpretations of her pain, showing that she experienced her suffering not as gratuitous but as teleological to a significant degree. At the first and simplest level, Margery experiences her pain as a way to prove her love for Christ. She says,

it was to her in a maner of solas & comfort whan sche sufferyd any dysese *for þe lofe of God* & for þe grace þat God wrowht in hyr. For euyr þe mor slawnder & repref þat sche sufferyd, þe mor sche incresyd in grace . . . & of wonderful spechys & dalyawns [conversations] whеч owr Lord spak and dalyid to hyr sowle, techyng hyr how sche schuld be despysed *for hys lofe* (2, emphasis mine; see also 29, 51, 74, 123, 137).

(it was to her in the manner of a solace and comfort when she suffered any disease *for the love of God* and for the grace that God wrought in her. For the more slander and reproof that she suffered, the more she increased in grace . . . and of wonderful speeches and conversations which our Lord spoke and said to her soul, teaching her how she should be despised *for his love* [emphasis mine].)

The fact of her cheerful endurance is confirmed by Jesus as pleasing and meritorious. When he warns her that more tribulation is coming to her she remains silent, dismayed by the news. He responds, "What, dowtyr, art þu euyr payd for to suffyr mor tribulacyon for my lofe (119)?" Her answer, of course, is no and she confirms that "fro þat tyme forwarde þat sche knew it was owr Lordys wille þat sche xulde suffyr mor tribulacyon, sche receyued it goodly whan owr Lorde wolde send it & thankyd hym hily þerof, beyng ryth [right] glad & mery þat day þat sche suffryd any disese" (120).

Kempe suffers gladly not only because it is her Lord's will that she do so, but

also because she is assured that her sufferings have not only purified her of sin (30, 51, 72), thus releasing her from the sentence of purgatory (196), but they are also a sort of living martyrdom. Jesus tells her,

it is mor plesyng vnto me Pat þu suffyr despitys & scornys, schamys & repreuys, wrongys and disesyð þan 3if þin hed wer smet of thre tymes on þe day euery day in sevyn 3er. . . . In myn goodnes & in thy sorwys Pat þu hast suffryd þerin hast þu gret cawse to joyn, for, whan þu comyst hom in-to Heuyn, þan xal euery sowle turnyn þe to joye (131).

(it is more pleasing to me that you suffer despite and scorn, shame and reproof, wrongs and diseases than if your head were smote off three times in the day every day for seven years. . . . In my goodness and in your sorrow that you have suffered, therein you have great cause to rejoice, for when you come home into heaven, then shall every soul turn you to joy.)

With this promise colouring her interpretation of her pain, it is not surprising to find Kempe making links between herself and Jesus, between her suffering and his. She clearly sees herself as following his example in enduring pains, shame and slander (12, 105, 107, 130, 137). But even beyond this, she is told that, like Jesus, she is to be an example of patient suffering to others:

I haue ordeynd þe to be a merowr amongys hem for to han gret sorwe Pat þei xulde takyn exampil by þe for to haue sum litil sorwe in her hertys for her synnys Pat þei myth þerthorw be sauyd. . . . Do þu þi deuer & prey for hem whil þu art in þis world, & þu xalt haue þe same med & reward in Heuyn as 3yf al þe werlde wer sauyd be þi good wil & þi preyer (186).

(I have ordained you to be a mirror among them, to have great sorrow, so that they should take you as their example, and learn to have some little sorrow in their hearts for their sins so that they might thereby be saved. . . . Do your part and pray for them while you are in this world, and you shall have the same reward in heaven as if all the world were saved by your good will and your prayer.)

Margery understands that her pains have qualified her for great spiritual rewards,

which, like those granted to Jesus under similar circumstances, she may share with others through intercession.

Comparison with Julian of Norwich. Kempe's personal pain plays a significant part in the substance of her text. Hers is a tale of very public suffering which was obviously disturbing to others. Through the divine gift of compassion Kempe was able to relive the moments of the Passion of Jesus Christ, providing herself with a seemingly inexhaustible well of vicarious pain. Apart from enduring this constant sympathetic suffering, Kempe understood it to play an important part in her spiritual development. Her endurance of pain proved her love for Jesus, purified her of sinfulness like a martyrdom, and allowed her to serve as a divinely ordained example of patient suffering to others. This pain and its outward manifestations, weeping and wailing, obviously distinguished Kempe from other pious lay people of her day, sometimes serving as a barrier between herself and others, sometimes enabling her to assume the role of exemplar.

Although some of the external circumstances of Julian's pain seem superficially like that of Margery Kempe (i.e. the role of sickness), there are differences between the role pain plays in the texts of the two women. Julian's pain is not the point or substance of her text, while it seems to be so with Kempe. In *The Showings*, pain serves simply as the framework on which she drapes both her mystical experiences and the lessons she has gleaned from them.

On the personal level Julian's pain purges her and prepares her to receive her showings {30}. It also heightens her compassion not just for Jesus, as in the case of

Kempe, but for her fellow Christians in their worldly suffering. On the authorial level the few discreet details Julian includes in her text of her personal pain serve to valorize her experience and to qualify her as a teacher {39}. Through her suffering she connects concretely with her readers. Her pain also narrows her narrative horizon and focusses her reader's attention imaginatively on the crucifix so that it may teach the reader as it has taught her {41}. On the theological level Julian's pains have taught her that suffering is a part of life and that her thought must take this into account. Although focussed on her conviction that God's will for us is benign and that all God's purposes are love, Julian does not overlook the difficulty of pain in life. Rather she addresses it, and reminds both herself and her readers that even in pain and suffering one can and must choose Jesus, choose the good {69}. God is present even in and through the pain, although God is not the cause of human suffering.

The Pain of Humanity

This second section will explore any of those themes raised in this dissertation in Chapter Two which are common between Julian of Norwich and the authors being studied for comparison. These are sickness, the body, temptation, the world, the world to come and sin.

Sickness. The author of *The Ancrene Wisse* had a complex and interesting understanding of the role of illness in the spiritual life. In a summary passage which merits full citation some of the author's interpretations of sickness are outlined:

secnesse þat godd send nawt þat sum lecheð þurh hire ahne dusischipe.
deð þeose six þinges. wescheð þe sunnon þe beoð ear iwrahte. wardeð

to 3ein þeo þe weren towardses. Pruueð pacience. Halt in ead
modnesse. Mucheð þe mede. Eueneð to martir þene þole mode. þus
is secnesse sawlene heale. salve of hire wundend. Scheld þat ha ne
kecche ma (94-95).

[Sickness that God sends (not that some catch through their own
foolishness) does these six things: 1) washes the sins that have already
been committed, 2) protects one against those that were threatening, 3)
tries patience, 4) keeps one humble, 5) increases one's reward, 6)
makes the patient person equal to a martyr. In this way sickness is the
soul's health, a salve for her wounds and a shield against receiving
more (115)].

The six functions of illness listed here can be found reiterated and thus reinforced in
the text: purification (95), protection (91), patience (28-29), humility (91), reward
(99), and martyrdom (95).

Beyond the obvious six functions to which the author draws our attention, this
passage includes two other related ideas. First, that sickness can be a gift from God.
Elsewhere the author says, "Ne beat he [God] nan bute hwam se he luueð" (96)
["{God} beats no one except the one he loves" (116)], and "Euch worldlich wa hit is
godes sonde" (98) ["every worldly ill is God's messenger" (118)]. Second, the
concluding statement summarizes the benefits of pain-as-suffering by stating that "þus
is secnesse sawlene heale" (95) ["sickness is the soul's health" (115)]. The author also
implies that passing through a period of severe sickness renders one more healthy
spiritually than before because one has triumphed over the pains of hell which the
pains of the earth foreshadow: "þe mei þenne edstearten þat ilke grisliche wa. þe
eateliche pinen þurh secnesse þat agead þurh ei uuel þat her is seliliche mei ha
seggen" (95) ["Whoever then may escape those same horrible woes, those hideous
pains, through a sickness that passes, through any evil that we find here, can be

called fortunate". (116)].²⁴ Certainly illness is a very much expected and perhaps an anticipated part of the anchoritic life which in this text is interpreted as pain-as-suffering which prepares one for heaven.

Richard Rolle's *Meditations on the Passion* do not allude to personal sickness; the genre and subject matter make it irrelevant. His *Form of Living*, comparable to *The Ancrene Wisse*, is also silent on this subject. The omission in this text is less easy to justify, for as we have seen, illness is certainly understood to be a part of life in the anchorhold, as much a result of strict ascetical practices as of medieval sanitation and cleanliness. The closest Rolle comes to mentioning sickness is in his admonitions against disciplines which are too stringent: "Than if we make vs so woke and so feble þat we may noþer worch ne pray as we sholden do, ne Pynke, be we nat gretly to blame, þat faillen whan we had moost need for the be stalworth? (4)" Like so many spiritual advisors of the British Isles, Rolle is concerned about moderating asceticism, and warns against bringing on weakness or illness oneself, for this damages the temple of the body and sullies the anchoress's pure offering of herself to God.²⁵

Margery Kempe includes ample references to personal sickness in her text, which can be divided into two groups with two separate functions. Like Julian of

²⁴ If Julian did have a copy of *The Ancrene Wisse* for her use in the anchorhold, this passage must surely have had special significance for her, given her close brush with death and the benefits she received after her illness.

²⁵ Note the same concern expressed by the author of *The Ancrene Wisse* in the passage cited above: "secnesse þat godd send nawi þat sum lecheð þurh hire ahne dusischipe. deð þeose six þinges. . . ." (94, emphasis mine) ["Sickness that God sends (*not that some catch through their own foolishness*) does these six things" (115, emphasis mine)]. Hilton also admonishes against a too vigorous mortification of the body. He concludes the section in which he deals with this subject by saying: "therefore do fairly what concerns you, look after your bodily nature according to reason, and then suffer God to send what he will, whether it be health or sickness; take it gladly, and do not wilfully complain before him" (*Scale* 1.75.148).

Norwich, she opens her spiritual account with an illness:

Whan þis creatur was xx 3er of age or sumdele mor, sche was maryed to a worschepful burgyes of Lyn and was wyth chylde wyth-in schort tyme, as kynde wolde. And, aftyr þat sche had conceyued, sche was labowrd wyth grett accessys tyl þe chylde was born, & þan, what for labowr sche had in chyldyng & for sekenesse goyng befor, sche dyspered of hyr lyfe, wenyng sche mygth not leuyn (6).²⁶

(When this creature was twenty years of age or somewhat more, she was married to an honourable burgess of Lynn and was with child within a short time, as nature would have it. And after she had conceived, she was laboured with great attacks until the child was born, and then, what with the labour she had in giving birth and with the sickness going before, she despaired of her life, believing that she might not live.)

Fearing for her life, Kempe makes as full a confession as she is able, but her own reluctance and the disinterested manner of her priest keep her from confessing one secret sin.²⁷ The distraught woman attempts to do penance on her own, but without ecclesiastical absolution she fears that she will be damned. "And a-noon, for dreed sche had of dampnacyon . . . þis creatur went owt of hir mende" (7).

Kempe spends over a year in this state of mental illness, tormented in her mind by devils, uttering slander, and doing herself some bodily harm (7, 8). Then one day, when she is alone she has a vision of Jesus who asks, "Dowtyr, why has þow forsakyn me, and I forsoke neuyr þe" (8)? This is the sudden turning point in her illness and when her husband and servants return to her she demands and is given control of the household, so far as we know never to relinquish it again (8).

²⁶ Compare the opening of Kempe's First Chapter to the opening of Julian's Third Chapter: "And when I was xxxth yere old and a halfe, god sent me a bodily sicknes in the which I ley iij daies and iij nyghtes . . ." (3:289).

²⁷ Note that Julian also had a problem with the idea of confessing to a priest after her conversation with the religious: "I was sore ashamyd and astonyd for my rechelesnesse . . . and wolde a bene shryvyn. But I cowlde telle it to no prest, for I thought, hoe shulde a preste belieue me when I by seaying I ravid, I shewed my selfe nott to belyue oure lorde god" (66:633-4)?

Kempe's own interpretation of both her mental illness and its miraculous cure is that she has been called to a different life. It takes her a while to find this new path, first trying her hand at several cottage industries and temporarily resuming her self-confessedly materialistic existence (9-11). But before long she realizes that her business failures are signs that God wants something else from her. "Pan sche askynd God mercy & forsoke hir pride, hir coueytyse [covetousness], & desyr Pat sche had of Pe worshepys of Pe world, & dede grett bodyly penawnce, & gan to entyr Pe wey of euyr-lestyng lyfe, as schal be seyde aftyr" (11).²⁸ This foundational illness and the promise of Jesus' presence which concluded it demonstrate one dramatic role for sickness in Kempe's thought, it called her to a new, Christ-filled life.

The second function she attributes to sickness can be determined from the other references she makes to the presence and working of illness in her post-conversion life. While on her pilgrimage to the Holy Land Kempe becomes very ill in Venice: "Pon sche toke hir chawmbre & ete a-lone vj wokys vn-to Pe tyme Pat owyr *Lord mak hir so seke* Pat sche wend [believed] to a be ded, & sythyn [then] sodeynly he mad hir hool a-ȝen" (66, emphasis mine). Later, after returning from a pilgrimage with her husband to Ely, Kempe becomes ill again: "Afftyrward God *ponyschyde hir wyth many gret & diuers sekenes*. . . . Whan sche was recuryd of alle Pes sekenessys, in schort tyme folwyd an-oþer sekenes which was sett in hir ryth [right] syde, duryng Pe terme of viij ȝer" (137, emphasis mine).

As the passages which I have emphasized show, Kempe interprets these later

²⁸ In her discussion of the various functions of illness for medieval visionary women Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff uses Kempe's experience as the example for her category, "Illness as a Call to a Different Life" (*Visionary Literature*, 37).

illnesses, the ones which come to her while she is trying to live up to her calling, as God's will for her. At one point in the text Jesus himself provides Kempe with a spiritual interpretation for her bouts of ill health: "I haue preuyd [tested] þe be many gret heuynes [heavinesses], & many grevows sekenes in so mech þat þu hast ben annoynted for deed, & al thorw my grace hast þu skapyd" (51). Her sickness is a test, which she passes by accepting God's will and by enduring it patiently.²⁹

Comparison with Julian of Norwich. In comparing these texts to *The Showings* on the subject of illness we find that Julian was obviously familiar with the spiritual interpretations attached to sickness by her peers, but that she probably moved beyond them after her visionary experience {28}. In her youth Julian had asked for a bodily illness as one of three gifts from God. She had wanted an illness which would take her painfully to death's door, thrusting her upon God alone and thus building up and perhaps testing her faith. She tells us that her intention was to "be purgied by the mercie of god, and after liue more to the worshippe of god by cause of that sicknes. For I hoped that it might haue ben to my reward when I shuld haue died" (2:287).³⁰ This is the same understanding of illness that we see both in *The Ancrene Wisse* and in *The Book of Margery Kempe*: illness as purification of the self for the worship of

²⁹ Petroff includes "Illness as a Test" as one of her categories. Although she does not mention Kempe specifically in regard to it, it clearly applies in this second grouping of illnesses in Kempe's text. Petroff's other categories are "Illness as Abnormal or Uncontrollable Behavior," "Illness and Mystical Death," "Ecstasy as a Type of Illness, or Illness as the Visible Sign of Ecstasy," and "Illness as the Manifestation of a Conflict Related to Writing" (*Visionary Literature*, 37).

³⁰ Compare this with Paul's admonition to the Romans, "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — which is your spiritual worship. . . . Be transformed in your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:1, 2, NRSV).

God, as source of humility, as gift of God, and as test.

What makes one suspect that Julian moved to a different interpretation following her visionary experience is the disjunction between what she had expected and what she experienced. Following the spirituality of her day, young Julian thought a deathly illness would drive her to God. It is not the illness at all which drives her to God, purifies her or tests her through pain. These things are accomplished during the showings themselves, which are entirely free from illness. Julian has included her original interpretations of illness, which she admittedly forgot, but has showed her readers how these interpretations were not valid, since they were not fulfilled. Something else, the showings themselves, filled those functions, thus casting doubt on the original interpretations.

The other significant role which illness plays for Julian is that of both creating and then authenticating her as an author, one who has confronted death, and received the last rites {27, 43}. Kempe comes closest to this in her foundational illness following childbirth, although she admits that it took her a considerable while to heed her calling to a new life. Her illness eventually creates her as a new spiritual creature, but not necessarily as an author. That second creation comes later, when Jesus commands her to record her life (3). We don't know how long Julian waited before she recorded her visionary experiences, but the temporal gap in Julian's case is significant. As she clearly shows in her text by leaving clues about her illness, Julian draws her authority to write as much from that transformative experience as from the visions themselves.

The Body. The connection between human suffering and the body is obvious because the body is the locus of physical pain. *The Ancrene Wisse* presents a consistent and fairly standard view of the body as the most fit vehicle for human purification because of its degenerate nature. In a series of evocative similes the author of *The Ancrene Wisse* compares the flesh to a fat, wild calf, "þe awildgeð sone hit eauer featteð" (72) ["which runs wild as soon as ever it gets fat" (99)]; to an idle horse and to "wurm forfret hire & wasteð hire seoluen" (72) [{"a worm which} wastes itself and kills itself" (100)]. Because of this tendency to evil and because of the extremely low state of the flesh (73, 143) it is most fitting that the flesh be the location of our humiliation: "swa schal ancre utewið þolien heard on hire flesch & prikiende pínen" (71) ["so should an anchoress suffer harshness and prickling pains on her flesh without" (98)]. "þe flesch walke awilgín & bicu men to fulitohen toward hire leafdi 3ef git nere ibeaten. & mak ic sec þe sawle 3ef secnesse hit ne temede wið uuel ðer siðsunne" (91) ["The flesh would grow wild and become too badly disciplined toward her lady if it were never beaten, and make the soul sick if sickness did not tame it with illness or sin" (113)].³¹ The word of hope regarding the flesh is that it is redeemable. "Þurh þe hehschipe of hire hit schal wurðeful liht. lihtre ðen ðe wind is & brihtte ðen ðe sunne" (74) ["Through the soul's sublimity, the flesh shall become very light, lighter than the wind is and brighter than the sun" (100)]. This is so because Jesus took on human flesh and showed that it could be purified (23).

³¹ According to *The Ancrene Wisse*, women's flesh is a "bruchele uetles . . . burchel as is cani gles" (86) ["brittle vessel . . . as brittle as any glass" (109)] because of the purity of chastity which, once broken, can never be restored. It does not seem to have occurred to the author that this is true of any chaste individual regardless of gender and is more a quality of chastity than of femininity.

Neither Rolle nor Kempe has anything specific to say concerning the flesh, but they do address it obliquely in their discussions of the temptations of this world, which are naturally visited upon the flesh in many instances. Before we attempt a comparison with Julian's thought we should look at our authors' theories on temptation, the world, and the world to come since each is connected to the body theologically.

Temptation. Returning for a moment to *The Ancrene Wisse*, we find in it three specific functions for bodily and spiritual temptations. First, like sickness, temptations beat the flesh and make the soul sick to tame it (91). The author likens the suffering of temptation to a sickness (91) and to being wounded (99), both of which conditions require that the afflicted person turn their attention to their own healing. Even beyond healing, suffering temptation and triumphing over it "is ure purgatoire. ure cleansing fur" (117) ["is our purgatory, our cleansing fire" (132)]. It releases one from the need for further purification after death.

Second, temptations serve as painful warnings of what awaits in hell and purgatory. In the discussions on temptations the author of *The Ancrene Wisse* conflates them with pain and says, "understondeð þat godd walke o sum wise scha wín ham (hell and woe) to men i þis world bi wortliche pinen & wortliche wunnen. & schaweð ham forð as schadewe" (124) ["understand that God wants to show them {the woe of hell and the joys of heaven} to people in this world in some way, through worldly pains and worldly joys. And he shows them as shadows" (136)].

Third, beyond warning of what is to come, triumph over temptation is actually

rewarded in the life to come. "Alle þe ilke fondunges þe webeoð nu ibeaten wið. puncheð wop. nawt wunne. ah ha wendeð efterward to weole & to eche blisse" (99; see 121, 122) ["All the temptations we are beaten with now we think grief not happiness; but they turn afterwards to good, and to eternal joy" (118; see 134, 135)].³² It is this ultimately beneficial understanding of temptation that leads the author to make a proposal about God's relationship with humanity:

ure lauereð hwen he þoleð þat we beon itemptet. he pleieð wið us as þe muder wið hire 3unge deorling. flið from him & gut hire. & let him sitten ane. & lokin 3eorne abuten cleopien dame dame. & wepen ane hwile. & þeme wið spred de earmes leapeð lahhinde forð. cluppeð & cusseð & wipeð his ehene. Swa ure lauereð let us ane iwurðen oðer hwile. . . . & þah i þat ilke point ne luueð us ure lauereð neauer ðe leasse" (118-19).

[Our Lord, when he allows us to be tempted, is playing with us as the mother with her young darling. She runs away from him and hides herself, and lets him sit alone and look eagerly about crying "Mother! Mother!" and crying for a while; and then with open arms she jumps out laughing, and hugs and kisses him and wipes his eyes. So our Lord sometimes lets us be alone. . . . And yet at the same moment our Lord loves us none the less, for he does it out of his great love (132)].³³

The reason God not only allows but perhaps even engineers our temptation is that we learn from it to depend on God and to love God the more.

Richard Rolle repeats this same idea in "The Form of Living." He explains that God allows the devil to tempt people "for har profite, that þei may be þe hegher coroned whan þei haue Progh his helpe ouercome so cruel an enmy, that ofte syth

³² Hilton includes this idea in his work. After allowing souls to be tempted by the Devil, God gives them "a new power . . . [and] leads them into the constancy of good virtuous living, in which he keeps them (if they are humble) until their last end, and then he takes them completely to himself" (*Scale* 1.39.110).

³³ .Baker includes this passage from *The Ancrene Wisse* in her study of possible influences on Julian of Norwich. She finds similarities but significant differences and concludes that dependence on *The Ancrene Wisse* cannot be proven ("Anchoritic Literature," 152-53).

[such] hath in body and soul confounden many mèn" (FL 5-6). Here clearly it is the devil who is doing the tempting, but God allows this interaction because of the benefit that can, but does not necessarily always, come from it.³⁴

Margery Kempe has also been influenced by the idea of temptations being gifts of God. At the beginning of her renewed life she suffered three years of temptations which "sche bar as mekely as sche cowde, thankyng ower Lord of alle hys 3eftys [gifts]" (13). In Kempe's case, however, the idea of temptations as gifts is joined with the idea of our pains being punishment for our sins. The passage cited above is followed by this justification: "For sche wyst [knew] rygth wel sche had synned gretly a-3ens God & was worthy mor schame & sorwe Pan any man coud don to hyr" (13; see also 14, 39). Margery is pleased enough to receive temptations, not because she understands that they will force her to depend on God, but because she perceives that she deserves them as punishment for her sins, and interprets them as the direct result of God's intervention in her life. Although she is not explicit on this point, we may assume that she also believes that successful endurance of these merited temptations will purge her of the originating sins.

The World. Just as we might suspect, based on what they have to say about the body and its temptations, our three texts portray the world as a miserable place to be suffered in order to prove endurance. *The Ancrene Wisse* generally presents the world as the primary source of temptation, thus a potential impediment to spiritual

³⁴ The Biblical foundation for this idea is found in the book of Job, where God agrees to allow Job to be tempted. In Job's case, the temptation is not allowed to strengthen him, but so that God can prove to the devil that at least one good man loves God unconditionally, despite physical circumstances.

living (54, 46, 99). The world is best thrust aside: "þe heouene is swiðe heh. hwa se uule biȝeoten hit & arechen þer to. hire is lutel inoh forte warpen al þe world as a scheomel to hare uet to areache þe heouene" (86; see 23) ["Heaven is very high; whoever wishes to gain it, and to reach up there, is not doing much if she throws the whole world under her feet" (110; see 61)]. Bad as the world may be, however, its one purpose is to foreshadow through its own pains the pains of hell, and thus to serve as a warning of what awaits any who may be living so as to be damned. "Al þe wa of þis world nis bute schadewe of þe wa of helle . . . nedlunge ȝe mote oðer underuo me. oðer þat grisli che wa þat ich am of schadewe (99; see 95) ["All the pain of this world is merely a shadow of the pain of hell. . . . You must inevitably receive either me or that terrible pain of which I am the shadow" (118; see 116)].³⁵ The doom of humanity is "to lib ben i swinc. & isar on earðe" (157) ["to live in toil and in grief on earth" (161)], and only through endurance of this do we attain the spiritual joys of heaven.

Richard Rolle makes three points concerning the world, here summarized in a passage from *The Form of Living* in which he advises Margaret Kirkby to consider different aspects of life:

On is þe mesure of þi life here, þat so short is þat vnnethe is oght; for we lyve bot in a poynt, þat is þe lest þynge þat may be. . . . Anoþer is vncerteýntee of oure endynge; for we wot neuer whan we shal dey. . . . The þrid is þat we shal answare before þe rightuous iuge of al þe tyme þat we han had here (FL 10).

(One is the measure of your life here, that is so short that it is scarcely anything; for we live only in a point, which is the least thing that may be. . . . Another is uncertainty of our ending; for we never know

³⁵ Note that we have already encountered in *The Ancrene Wisse* the idea of the foreshadowing of the pains of hell through painful temptations. The connection with the world is obvious.

when we shall die. . . . The third is that we shall answer before the righteous judge for all the time that we have had here.)

Life is both short and precarious, yet we are held responsible for it. If we happily endure "scharpe lyuyng" ["harsh living"] for the love of Jesus, accompanying him in his pain with our own worldly suffering, then we will be rewarded (SM 89 H).

However, if people do not put God above all other worldly things, "bot fileth har body and har soul in luste and lechurie of þis life . . . Þei shal brand ther in þe fire of helle" (FL 10).

Margery Kempe shares with the author of *The Ancrene Wisse* and Richard Rolle the conviction that we have been put in this world to transcend pain and suffering through endurance. The form of endurance she seems most to have experienced is that of shame, which is a recurring theme in her text.³⁶

Sche wyst rygth wel . . . dyspite of þe world was þe rygth way to-Heuyn-ward sythen Cryst hym-self ches þat way. Alle hys apostlys, martyres, confessorys, & virgines and alle þat euyr comyn to Heuyn passed be þe way of tribulacyon, and sche desyred no-thing so mech as Heuyn (13; see also 17, 28, 43, 99, 104, 107, 185).³⁷

(She knew right well . . . scorn of the world was the right way to heaven since Christ himself chose that way. All his apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins and all that ever come to heaven passed by the way of tribulation, and she desired nothing so much as heaven.)

Kempe has inflated her endurance so that shameful words function for her in the same way as missionary zeal did for the apostles; torture and death did for the martyrs; and

³⁶ Teresa of Avila specifically mentions scorn and shame as among the trials frequently experienced as part of the spiritual journey (*The Interior Castle*, Sixth Dwelling Place 1.3-4.109-110).

³⁷ The theme of shame as a special form of worldly endurance is also found both in *The Ancrene Wisse* ("þeos twa. scheome & pine . . . beoð þe twa leaddre steden þe beoð up inht to heouene" (181; see 182, 183) ["these two, shame and pain . . . are the two sides of the ladder which goes straight up to heaven" (178; see also 179, 180)]; and in Rolle ("if þou be wroth for any angys of þis world, or for any ward þat men seith of þe, or for oght þat men saith to þe, þou art nat meke, ne þou may so loue God stalwarthly" (FL 20-21)).

self-denial does for virgins. Since she is unable to be an apostle, is afraid of martyrdom (30) and is no longer a virgin (48) this is most convenient.

At one point Kempe wishes "to be delyueryd owt of Pis wretchyd world" (20), but she is told that she must "abyden & languren in lofe," because Jesus has ordained her to pray for others and her work is not yet complete. Her time in the world is obviously painful to her, but she understands it to be redemptive for both herself and others.

The World to Come. The world to come is just as much theologically operative for our three authors as is the world around us. For the author of *The Ancrene Wisse* hell is a place of torment (50, 108), pain (63, 95, 98), stench (56), and misery (110). By its own sinfulness humanity has "ofearnat þe pinen of helle world abuten ende" (95) ["earned the pains of hell world without end" (116)], and deserves nothing more than these. The primary role of hell in *The Ancrene Wisse* is to inspire fear in its readers, so that fear of hell promotes good behaviour. The author instructs the anchoresses to include consideration of hell in their routine devotions: "ʒe schulen bihalde sum cheare toward te pine of helle. þat ow uggi wið ham. & fleo þe swiðere ham from mard" (50; see 63, 72, 76, 98) ["You will look sometimes toward the torments of hell, so as to be frightened by them, and so as to flee them the more strongly" (83; see also 92, 99, 102, 118)].

Heaven is also a powerful motivator in *The Ancrene Wisse*. The passage just cited concerning the devotional use of the fear of hell is followed immediately by one concerning the longing for heaven: "ʒe schulen gasteliche iseon þe blissen of

heouene, þe ontendden ower heorte to hihín ham toward" (50) ["You will see spiritually the joys of heaven, which kindle your heart to hasten toward them" (83)]. Heaven is the place of reward (23, 94, 99, 121, 22), where crowns are given for shame or pain suffered on earth:³⁸

He [the devil] unþonc hise téð i þe temptatiun þat tu stondeſt aʒeín. mucheð þe mede. out for þíne þat he wende forte drahe þe toward. dreideð þe crune of bliſſe. & nawt ane an ne twa. ah aſe feole ſiðen aſ þe ouerkimeſt him" (121; see 84, 95).

[In any temptation that you stand against he [the devil] increases your reward, and instead of the torment that he hoped to draw you into, braids you a crown of joy — and not merely one or two, but as many crowns as the number of times you overcome him (134; see 108, 116).]³⁹

In heaven the pains, shames and torments of this life are turned into joy: "twafald bliſſen iʒarket. aʒeín ſcheome. menſke. aʒein þíne. delit & reſk buten ende" (182) ["a double joy is prepared: in return for shame, honor; in return for pain, delight and peace without end" (179)]. The anchoresses are taught that, like Jesus, they must suffer on earth in order to have joy in heaven (23).⁴⁰

The ideas of *The Ancrene Wiſſe* are also familiar to Richard Rolle. Hell is a place of agony, grief and torment (FL 10) where suffering is administered through fire (FL 15). As in *The Ancrene Wiſſe*, Rolle uses the idea of hell as a threat:

[Jesus'] rightwiſneſſe wil þat al þat louet hym nat be euer lyvyng in

³⁸ The Cloud author includes the idea of crowns being awarded in heaven for any who suffer persecution for the love of God: "Stand then bravely in faith and endure steadfastly the severe buffetings of these hard stones. For your reward I shall crown you in bliss" (*Cloud* LVIII, 235-36).

³⁹ Note that we have already encountered an idea similar to this in Richard Rolle, where the devil is allowed by God to tempt humanity because of the great good that can come from it if the temptation is properly overcome.

⁴⁰ Timothy 2:12a, "if we endure, we will also reign with him" (NRSV).

fyre, Pat is horrible to any man to Pynke. Look Pan what hit is to fele; bot Pai Pat wil nat dred hit ne thynke hyt now, Pei shal suffre hit euermoore (FL 15).

([Jesus'] righteousness wills that all that did not love him live for ever in fire. That is horrible for any man to think about; consider what it is to feel it. But they that will not dread it nor think of it now, they shall suffer it evermore.)

Rolle adds this nuance to his picture of hell: "in helle myght no thyng lyve for mych payne bot Pat þe myght of God suffreth ham nat to dey" (FL 15).

Heaven is the place of joy (FL 5) where earthly endurance of temptation and suffering is rewarded with crowns. God permits people to be tempted "that Pei may be higher coroned" when they come to their final reward (FL 5). The anchoress has chosen her hard way of life "to suffre tribulaciouns and anguysshes here, and afre to cum to reste and ioye in heuyn" (FL 6).

In *The Book of Margery Kempe* we learn how the ecclesiastical use of the threat of hell was actually interpreted by one imaginative and pious soul. Kempe tells us early in her narrative that during her formative illness she was unable to confess and therefore to be shriven of a particular sin. Since she feared that she was close to death, the fact of an unshriven sin was of immense concern to her: "And whan sche was any tym seke or dysesyde, þe Deuyl seyde in her mende Pat sche schuld be dampnyd, for sche was not schreuyng of Pat default" (7). The effect of this on Kempe is devastating:

For dreded sche had of dampnacyon on þe to syde & hys scharp repreuyng on þe oþer syde, þis creatur went owte of hir mende & was sondyrlye vexid & labowryd wyth spiritys half 3er viij wekys & odde days (7).

(What with the dread she had of damnation on the one hand, and his [her confessor's] sharp reproof on the other hand, this creature went

out of her mind and was sorely vexed and laboured with spirits half a year, eight weeks and odd days.)

During this time of torment she thinks she sees devils with their mouths aflame pawing at her, threatening her, and even dragging her about (7-8).

These images, which we have already encountered in a literary sense in *The Ancrene Wisse* and Richard Rolle, are more concrete in Kempe's experience. Despite the obviously evocative power of the images of hell in Kempe's thought they do not play a significant role in the rest of her book. This is probably because of the genre of her text, which is autobiographical rather than purely didactic. Unlike the author of *The Ancrene Wisse* or Richard Rolle who wrote as mentors, Kempe has no need to warn others or to keep them on the narrow path. The other factor mitigating Kempe's potential need for images of hell in her text is the interpretation she reached for the meaning of her own suffering, already noted {195}. Kempe understands her life to be her torment, every harsh word or painful illness to be her purgation (20). There is no further need to evoke any torments other than those which she has already endured.

The dominant role which heaven plays in Kempe's text is similar to that mentioned both in *The Ancrene Wisse* and Richard Rolle. It is the place where earthly pain and suffering are rewarded with joy. This idea runs throughout Kempe's narrative and was clearly an important support for her in the suffering which she endured. It is most succinctly stated in a conversation she has with Jesus' mother Mary, who says to her "dowtyr, 3yf Pu wylt be partaby! [share] in owyr joye, Pu must be partabil in owyr sorwe" (73; see also 82, 189, 196). Here Mary is referring

specifically to Kempe's wailing and crying and she is explaining that they will be rewarded in heaven. But in other places Kempe herself makes the other claim, that it is her personal suffering which will be rewarded (13, 43, 131, 135, 160, 185, 196).

Comparison with Julian of Norwich. The four themes just explored, the body, temptation, the world and the world to come, are united by their common relevance to lived human experience. It has seemed simplest to compare them as a group to Julian's thought, as it has been described in Chapter Two.

Like Richard Rolle and Margery Kempe, Julian had little to say about the body *per se*. In her discussions of the lower self and of the sensual self, both of which are parts of the soul, she implies that these more fallible parts of ourselves are the appropriate location for us to work out our perfection through suffering {102}. This is similar to the idea found in *The Ancrene Wisse* concerning the body, that because it is weak and degenerate it is the fit vehicle for our purification through suffering. However, note that *The Ancrene Wisse* considers the body fit for suffering because of its degenerate nature. Julian does not offer the lower or sensual selves as appropriate because of their degeneracy. In her thinking there is no part of us which is inherently degenerate, and in fact the lower and sensual self are the dwelling place of Jesus in the soul. These parts are simply more prone to failure and so more open to being perfected. What Julian does say about the body is that it and the soul work together to restore the complete person ultimately to perfection, through the grace of God {110}.

Each of the works selected for this contextualization conveys a strong sense of

the usefulness of worldly temptations to the spiritual life. In rising above these, some of which are sent by God to test the questing soul, humanity demonstrates endurance and learns to depend on God alone. Kempe particularly emphasized the connection between her experience of fleshly temptations and divine chastisement.

We have not yet specifically studied the idea of temptation in *The Showings* because it does not play a significant part in Julian's thought. She does refer to temptations nine times, five of which refer to the temptations of fiends, particularly, but not exclusively, at the moment of death: "I desyred to haue all maner of paynes, bodily and ghostly, that I should haue if I should haue died, all the dredys *and temptations of fiendes*, and all maner of other paynes, saue the out passing of the sowle" (2:287, emphasis mine. See also 4:296, 297; 41:467; 67:638). Three times Julian refers to the temptations we feel when we turn our gaze from God and consider only ourself: "whan a soule is temptyd, troblyde and le(f)te to her selfe by her vnrest, then is it tyme to praye" (43:479; see also 1:282; 47:498). The last instance instructs that our meekness in accepting penance and worldly woes pleases God: "also meekely takyth bodely sycknesse of goddes sendyng, also sorow and shame outwardly with reprefe [reproof] and despyte of the worlde with alle maner of grevance and temptations that we be cast in, gostly and bodely" (39:451). Julian thus presents temptations in three guises: the work of fiends, which we need not fear because of God's protection; our own fault, which we can remedy by keeping our mind focussed on God; and a part of life which should be humbly accepted and endured in order to please God.

We do not encounter in Julian's thought the ideas found in *The Ancrene Wisse*

that temptations purify the flesh or serve as warning of what awaits in hell. Julian makes the closest statements to this in her reflections on pain in general: it is the consequence of our sinful nature {92}; it comes from our blindness to God's goodness {90}; it teaches us humility and forces us to focus on God alone {96}; it perfects endurance {96}; it is not a punishment but a penance to make us well {16}.

In the texts selected for comparison with Julian, the world around us is primarily a burden to be endured or a necessary evil to be transcended. *The Ancrene Wisse* sees the world as the primary source of temptations, a place which foreshadows both the pains and the joys of the world to come. It is our doom to live in the world, and it is best thrust down beneath us as we attempt to climb to heaven. Richard Rolle's selections emphasize the precarious nature of our life in the world, but he reminds his reader that we are still responsible for what we do here, so that the world may lead us either to heaven or to hell. Kempe's experience of the world is that it must be suffered, since it is the primary source of the shame and pains which she had to endure.

Julian presents a different picture of the world and its role in our spiritual growth, although she does not disagree with any of these authors in seeing the world as a place of woe and pain. For the anchoress, even though the world may bring suffering we can still please God in our living, especially by enduring pain cheerfully, which is an act of compassion with Christ and the world {87}. The pain of this world is temporary {97}, and serves an important part in our perfection, making us fit for heaven by purifying us {17}. Nothing can separate us from God {91}, in whom we dwell and who dwells in us. Because we are not blamed by God for sin {113}, we

cannot lose the promise of bliss vouchsafed to us by Jesus' death and resurrection {93}. For Julian, the world is the place of our cure {17}.

The power of the image of hell is common in Julian's three contemporaries. A place of fire and suffering it functions in the texts as a most effective source of fear and thus a motivator for ethical living. Richard Rolle's two selections emphasize the usefulness of hell in God's plan by noting that nothing could survive the agony of that place unless God were sustaining it. The pains of hell are what we earn based on our own lack of merit. Conversely, heaven is the place of joy and reward, to which we are brought through the merits of Jesus alone, but which we also earn by meritorious living on earth. Our pains here will be translated into joys in heaven, a thought which obviously offered much comfort to Kempe in her constant temporal sufferings.

We have already noted in Chapter Two how in Julian's theology hell has a strangely ineffectual presence {131}. She was denied a vision of it and she follows the implicit instruction in Jesus' admonishment of that request in leaving well enough alone {133}. However, through piecing together the few comments that she does make it can be seen that Julian is quite traditional in her understanding of hell as a place of pain and sorrow. However, she also sees in the Fifth Showing that the power of hell is completely and eternally broken by the power of Christ (13:346-350).

Julian teaches that our pain and suffering on earth will be rewarded with joy in heaven {121}. This is common with the authors we are studying here. For Julian's peers, the pains of this world are our desert; the joys of the next are our reward. For Julian, the pain of this world is our penance, sent to heal us {122}.

Both *The Ancrene Wisse* and Richard Rolle use the metaphor of a golden

crown for reward in heaven.⁴¹ Julian uses the image of a heavenly crown four times in *The Showings*, but each time it is Jesus who is rewarded with a crown, and humanity is the crown:

[God the Father] is wele plesyde with alle the dedes that Jhesu hath done about our saluacion; where for we be nott only hys by his byeng, but also by the curteyse gyfte of hys father. We be his blysse, we be his mede, we be hys wurshype, we be his crowne. And this was a syngular marveyle and a full delectable beholdyng, that we be hys crowne (22:384; see also 23:393; 31:419; 51:544).

([God the Father] is well pleased with all the deeds that Jesus has done for our salvation; and therefore we are his, not only through our redemption but also by his Father's courteous gift. We are his bliss, we are his reward, we are his honour, we are his crown. And this was a singular wonder and a most delectable contemplation, that we are his crown [216].)

Julian indicates that this idea is an astonishment to her, and one can certainly understand why this is so. Not only has the crowning been transferred to Christ, which in itself is not difficult to accept, but redeemed humanity is considered precious enough to make up the matter of the crown.

Sin. The last theme we should consider in this section on the pain of humanity is that of sin. *The Ancrene Wisse* makes a number of fairly traditional points concerning sin and pain. The sin of humanity, "þat stinkeð nabyng fulre" (45) ["which stinks more foully than anything" (80)], is a sickness in our soul (17, 169, 185). This sickness is the debt we owe God for our own hopeless nature: "we beoð alle i prisun her. & ahen godd greate deattes of sunne" (66-67) ["we are all in prison here, and owe God great debts of sin" (95)]. We cannot pay this debt ourselves, being unworthy, and so for this purpose Jesus was born (23) and died (17, 185).

⁴¹ This is undoubtedly based on the New Testament image of crowning the elect: 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10; 6:2.

Richard Rolle's two works also portray sin as a sickness (SM 94H) or a stain from which only Jesus' blood and water can cleanse us (LM 99H). Margery Kempe repeats the image of sin as a stain on the soul (MK 30), and adds the idea of God administering chastisement for sin. Recognizing adversities in her life she concludes that they "weryn þe skowrges of owyr Lord þat wold chastyse hir for hir synne" (11).

Julian shares with her contemporaries the idea of sickness as a metaphor of sin. In both *The Ancrene Wisse* and Richard Rolle, the sickness which is sin disables the soul. The author of *The Ancrene Wisse* advises the anchoresses to use the same trick "coínte hearloz" ["clever beggars"] do, "hare flowinde cweise þat ha putteð eauer forð" (168) ["who always display their festering wounds and their running sores"] in order to provoke good people to attend to their needs. Coming to God in confession, with our sins on display, will invoke the same response in God, who "ihalset swa. ne mei for reowðe wearnen hire ne sweamen hire wið warne" (169) ["so asked cannot for pity deny or grieve her with refusal" (169)]. In the shorter meditation on the Passion (SM) Rolle prays for "a drope of þi blood to droppe on my soule in mynde of þi passyoun may hele al my sore, souple and softe in þi grace þat is so harde" (SM 26).

In Julian we find her emphasizing the transitory nature of the sickness which is sin. Sin is neither shameful nor blameworthy once it is forgiven. It is the result of our failings to be sure, but it is not a permanent separation from God. As such, God does not seek to punish us for sin {113}, but uses the pains which follow on sin to cleanse and purify humanity, perfecting it for heaven {17}. In Julian's thought, sin is

useful to God in preparing us for bliss. This is a different focus than that of *The Ancrene Wisse*, *for whom sin is a debt which must be paid but cannot be paid by us*, or of Kempe's clear association of sin with chastisement and the pains in her life. In Julian's thought there is a part of us which never consents to sin, the godly will {117}. This part of us is thus untouched by sin, and it redeems the whole, through the presence and work of Jesus Christ.

The Pain of Jesus Christ

The third chapter of this dissertation examined Julian's presentation and theological use of Jesus' suffering. The last section of this chapter will draw on that material in order to make the necessary comparison with Julian's peers. After looking at Jesus' suffering in his humanity we will examine the specific forms of suffering which the three authors chosen for contextualization share with The Showings: his wounds, bleeding, and thirst. Lastly, we will explore how Jesus' suffering expands beyond its salvific function for these authors to provide a model of patient endurance.

Jesus' Suffering. In *The Ancrene Wisse*, the anchoresses lives are to be steeped in the suffering of Christ: their prayers are to focus on it whenever possible (22), they are to model themselves after him (186), his pain is to be their motivation (56). One particular theme in *The Ancrene Wisse* is Jesus' suffering in each of his five senses.⁴² The first part of the book is divided into meditations on the vices that

⁴² This theme can also be found in Peter Damian (*De Laude Flagellum*) and Thomas Aquinas (*Summa* (continued...))

come to the idle through their various senses, so it is quite natural to find elsewhere an elaboration of Jesus' suffering in each of his senses.⁴³ "Hwa se pohte hu godd seolf was i þis wit ideruet. ha walde þe derf þrof þuldeliche polien" (56) ["If anyone thought of how God himself was tormented in this sense [smell], she would suffer its pain with patience" (87)]. The author elaborates graphically on what Jesus suffered by smelling (56), seeing (56), being beaten on the mouth and tasting the gall (56), hearing scornful reproaches (57), and lastly, and most importantly, through his feelings.⁴⁴ This last is singled out for special attention because "þis ilke an wit is an alle þe opre. & 3ont al þe licome. & for þi hit is need to habben best warde. Vre lauerd wiste hit wel. & for þi he walde meast i þat wit polien" (60 ["this same one sense is in all the others, and throughout the body; and therefore it needs to be guarded best. Our Lord knew this well, and therefore he wanted to suffer most in this sense" (89)]. Each sense suffered according to its abilities, and the whole suffered as well: "Vre lauerd i þis wit nefde nawt in a stude. ah hefde ouer al þíne. nawt ane 3ond al his bodi. ah herde 3et inwið his seli sawle" (60) ["Our Lord did not suffer pain in a single place but had pain all over, not only throughout his body, but also in his innocent soul" (90)].

The quality of Jesus' pain was unlike that of any other person, because,

⁴²(...continued)

Theologica 3, q.46, a.5).

⁴³ Hilton speaks of the five senses as windows "by which your soul goes out from itself to seek its delight and its nourishment in earthly things, against its own nature" (*Scale* 1.78.149).

⁴⁴ Savage and Watson explain the choice of this unusual term for the fifth sense: 'Feeling' translates Middle English 'felunge,' which could also be rendered 'touch,' our usual term for this sense. However, for us the sense of touch is confined to the surface of our bodies, whereas for the author of *The Ancrene Wisse* all sensations of pleasure and pain, whichever sense they originate from, are evidently regarded as 'feelings' (Savage and Watson, *Ancrene Wisse*, 358, note 84).

through the conjoining of humanity and divinity, his flesh was infinitely more tender:

Pat nes na feorlich wunder. for eauer se flesch is cwickre. se þe reopunge þrof & te hurt is sarre. . . . Euch monnes flesch is dead flesch aȝein þat wes godes flesch. as þat te wes inumen of þe tendre meiden. & nþing neauer nes þrīn. þat hit adeadede. ah eauer wes iliche cwic of þat cwiķe godd head þe wunede þrīnne" (61).

[And this is not at all strange. For the more alive the flesh, the stronger are its sensations and its pains. . . . Everyone's flesh is dead flesh compared with God's flesh, for it was taken from the tender maiden, and there was never anything in it that could deaden it; but it was kept continually alive by the living Godhead that dwelt in it (90)].⁴⁵

The Ancrene Wisse offers several reasons why Jesus had to suffer so much.

The first is that he suffered in his body, the way humanity suffers, which validates his effectiveness as a comforter. *The Ancrene Wisse* says that Jesus wanted to suffer most in the sense of touch or feeling "al forte frourin us ȝef wa þrin" (60) ["all so as to comfort us if we suffer pain through it" (89-90)]. The fact of his having shared this experience means that he can effectively minister to us as we also endure pain. Second, the great extent of Jesus' suffering proves the great extent of his love for humanity. In a passage in which Jesus is compared to a knight contesting in the lists, *The Ancrene Wisse* says he "com to pruuien his luue. & schawde þurh cnihtschipe þat he was luue wurðe. as weren sumhwile cnihtes iwunet to donne" (199) ["came to prove his love, and showed through chivalry that he was worthy of love, as knights were at one time accustomed to do" (191)]. Third, his great suffering attracts or earns our love, for we are moved by pity for him to love him the more:

ne mahte he wið leasse gref habben arud us? ȝeoi iwiss ful lihtliche. ah he nalde. for hwi? Forte bineomen us euch bi tellunge aȝein hīm of

⁴⁵ The idea that Jesus' flesh was more tender than any other human flesh can be found in Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* 3, q. 46, a. 6).

ure luue þat he se deore bohht. me buð lihtliche þing þat me luueð
lutel. He bohte us wið his heorte blod. deorre pris nes neauer. forte
ofdrahen of us ure luue to ward him. Þe costnede him se sare" (200).

['Could he not have delivered us with less pain?' Yes indeed, very easily, but he would not. Why not? To deprive us of every excuse for not giving him our love, which he so dearly bought. A thing little loved is easily bought. He bought us with his heart's blood – never was a price dearer – to draw out our love toward him, that cost him so bitterly" (192)].⁴⁶

Here, Jesus' pain is portrayed as a currency, a thing with inherent, transferrable value. This monetary image also underlies the idea that Jesus has settled our debt [of sin] (66), bought our souls (149), and laboured to bring us to freedom (132).⁴⁷

Richard Rolle's selections include all of these ideas about Jesus' suffering. Meditating on the Passion, Rolle acknowledges to Jesus that "so was þou pyned [pained] in þi fyue wyttes, to hele with oure trespas þat we þere-with han wrouȝt" (SM 87H). He then goes on to list both the tortures and the transgressions associated with each sense. Like *The Ancrene Wisse*, Rolle understands that Jesus' mortal suffering was infinitely more than anything else that has been suffered by human flesh: "þere was neuere non so hard [grief or sorrow], for it was makeles [matchless]; of alle peynys þat euere were, so hard was neuur fowndyn" (SM 88H; see 22, 89H, 90H). This exquisite suffering reveals Jesus' great "love and þe charyte" (SM 20) for us; and purchases our souls from damnation (76).

⁴⁶ The reverse of this question would be 'Could he suffer any *more* pain?' We find this question implicit both in MK ("& it wer possybyl me to suffyr peyn a-geyn as I haue do be-form, me wer leuar to suffyr as mech payn as euyr I dede for þi sowle alon raþar þan þow schulyst partyn fro me wuth-owtyn ende [30]) and in Julian of Norwich ("Arte thou well apayd that I sufferyd for thee? . . . Yf I myght suffer more, I wolde suffer more" [22:382]).

⁴⁷ The scriptural roots of this can be found in Paul's thought: "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (I Cor.6:19b-20a, NRSV).

The outstanding quality of Rolle's treatment of Jesus' suffering is its deeply affective nature.⁴⁸ One example will serve to reveal the emotional quality of his meditations:

I se in my soule how reufully Pou gost: Pi body is so bloody, so rowed and so bledderyd; Pi crowne is so kene, Pat sytteth on Pi hed; Pi heere mevyth with Pe wynde, clemyd with Pe blood; Pi lovely face to wan and so bolnyd with bofetynge and with betyng, with spyttynge, with spowtyng; Pe blood ran Perewith (21).

(I see in my soul how pitiful you are: your body is so bloody, so scourged and so beaten; your crown is so keen, that sits on your head; your hair moves with the wind, clotted with your blood; your lovely face so wan and so bruised with buffeting and with biting, with spitting and with spouting; the blood ran therewith.)

The purpose of this emotional intensity is to evoke in the reader/meditator compassion, pity, and identification. It is intended to involve the reader's feelings as well as, perhaps even more than, her or his thoughts.

The Book of Margery Kempe does not include overt references to Jesus suffering in all his senses nor to the extreme delicacy of his feeling. It does focus on the third theme mentioned above, that of the inherent value in his suffering. His pains purchase our devotion (191), redeem us from the world (246), and prove his great love (137). "Dowtyr, Pes sorwys & many mo suffyrd I for Pi lofe, & diuers peynys, mo Pan any man can tellyn in erth. Perefors, dowtyr, Pu hast gret cause to louyn me ryght wel, for I haue bowt Pi lofe ful der" (191). Kempe is told repeatedly, and reiterates the fact herself, that Jesus' suffering was undertaken on behalf of humanity (17, 137, 207). She is also told that his suffering is now complete.

⁴⁸ Allen, *Richard Rolle*, 57

Comparison with *Julian of Norwich*. Julian writes most evocatively of the sensitivity of Jesus' flesh to human suffering:

And thus saw I oure lorde Jhesu languryng long tyme, for the vnyng of the godhed gaue strenght to the manhed for loue to suffer more than alle man myght. I meene nott oonly more payne than alle man myght suffer, but also that he sufferd more payne than all man of saluacion that evyr was from the furst begynnyng in to the last day myght telle or fully thynke (20:374; see also 20:376).

(And so I saw our Lord Jesus languishing for long, because the union in him of the divinity gave strength to his humanity to suffer more than all men could. I mean not only more pain than any other one man could suffer, but also that he suffered more pain than all men who are to be saved, from the first beginning to the last day, may tell or fully think [213].)

In *The Ancrene Wisse* Jesus' suffering functions to motivate the anchoresses. In Rolle's two works the focus on Jesus' suffering serves primarily to engage the reader's affective response. In *The Book of Margery Kempe* Jesus' suffering is the vindication and model of Kempe's own. For Julian of Norwich none of these functions plays a significant part, although none is entirely foreign to her thought either. The fact of his suffering does bear her up (3:291), does draw the reader in emotionally in one of the showings (Eighth Showing, chapters 16-20), and does serve as a model of earthly endurance (73:667).

As we have seen, however, Julian uses deliberate strategies to mitigate the impact of the showings of the Passion {142}. Where blood and pain are unavoidable, she deftly substitutes homely images like rain drops or fish scales to soften their emotional impact. The images of Jesus' suffering which formed the bulk of the original showings are woven into her text like a warp, providing support without

being the focal point. Her strategy is almost always to push the reader through the visual to the intelligible truth behind it. This truth is that Jesus' suffering has guaranteed for humanity the unfailing love of God and an eternity of joy {i.e. 143}.

Wounds. The most overt references to the physical suffering of Jesus are to be found in meditations or reflections on his five wounds. *The Ancrene Wisse* does not dwell on the specific wounds of Jesus at all. The first references to his wounds are in the form of devotional devices: use the memory of Jesus' five wounds to pattern your prayers ("falleð o cneion to ower crucifix urð þeose fif gretunges ine munegunge of godes fif wunden" (13) ["fall to your knees before the crucifix with these five salutations in memory of God's five wounds" (54)]) or to give shape to particular meditations ("for þe ilke fif wunden þe þu on hire bledest heal mi blodi sawle of alle þe sunnen þat ha is wið iwundet. þurh mine fif wittes" (17) ["for those same five wounds from which you bled on [the cross], heal by bloody soul from the all the sins by which she is wounded through my five senses" (57)]).

The other outstanding reference to Jesus' wounds comes much later in the text. The author advises the anchoresses on strategies to protect themselves from the temptations of the devil and says,

nempne ofte iesu, cleope his passiunes help. halse bi his pine. bi his deorwurðe blod. bi his deað o rode. flih to his wunden. Muchel he luuede us þe lette makien swucche þurles in him forte huden us in. Creop in ham wið þi þoht. ne beoð ha al opene? & wið his deorewurðe blod biblod de þin heorte" (151).

[Name Jesus often, call for the help of his passion. Plead by his pain, by his precious blood, by his death on the cross. Flee into his wounds. He loved us much who allowed such holes to be made in him for us to

hide in. Creep into them with your thought – are they not entirely open? – and bloody your heart with his precious blood (155)].

Here no one wound is specified. All of Jesus' wounds are refuges which he himself invites us to enter. Note that the author interprets Jesus' woundedness as proof of his love, a more specific example of what we have already noted, that his suffering proves his love.

Richard Rolle offers a beautiful and poetic meditation on Christ's wounds in his longer meditation on the Passion (LM). While thanking Jesus for the "sore and longe and egre payne þat þou suffreddest for us" (LM 34) Rolle digresses in order to rhapsodize Jesus' wounds:

þan was þy body lyk to hevyn. For as hevyn is ful of sterris [stars], so was þy body ful of woundes. . . . þy body is lyk to a nette; for as a nette is ful of holys, so is þy body ful of woundes. . . . þy body is like to a dufhouse. For a dufhouse is ful of holys, so is þy body ful of woundes (LM 34-35).

(Then your body was like heaven. For as heaven is full of stars, so was your body full of wounds. . . . Your body is like a net; for as a net is full of holes, so is your body full of wounds. . . . Your body is like a dovehouse. For as a dovehouse is full of holes, so is your body full of wounds.)

In the same way, Jesus' body is like a honeycomb, a book inscribed in red ink, a meadow full of scented flowers and health-giving herbs (LM 35, 36). Each of these similitudes includes a prayer or petition to Jesus based on the imagery in question. From these prayers we learn that for Rolle, Jesus' wounds are proof of his love (LM 34, 36), a refuge in temptation (LM 35) and a healthful medicine to the sin-sick soul (LM 36).

Margery Kempe is spurred to copious tears and wailing by considering Jesus' woundedness (69), but other than as a stimulus to her own devotions the wounds play

no significant part in her thought.⁴⁹

Comparison with Julian of Norwich. Julian includes specific descriptions of Jesus' bleeding head and of his wounded side, both of which lead her to particular theological truths. She tells us in her own summary that the showing of the crown of thorns "contened and specified the blessed trinitie with the incarnation and the vnithing betweene god and mans sowle, with manie fayer schewynges and techynges of endelese wisdom and loue" (1:281).

The wounded side leads Julian to a consideration of Jesus' broken heart within, the Sacred Heart, which also reveals an variety of truths. She learns that Jesus' woundedness is a joyful thing in which he rejoices and we should find delight, for it is our salvation {168}. She is shown that the love from that broken heart is expressed in a variety of intimate ways {170}, and that it did not stop with Jesus' death but continues to pour out toward us even now {170}. Julian also discerns something of the mystery of the godhead while looking into Christ's wounded side, for there she sees love and knows that God is pure love {171}. As with so much else that concerns Jesus' suffering, Julian uses the wounds of Christ to draw the

⁴⁹ It may be interesting to note an almost certain reference in her own text to the selection from Rolle outlined above:

& whan . . . it was grawntyd þis creatur to beholdyn so verily hys precyous tendyr body, al-
rent & toryn wyth scorgys, more ful of woundys þan euyr was duffehows of holys . . . þan
sche fel down & cryed wyth lowde voys (70).

(And when . . . it was granted to this creature to behold so truly his precious tender body, all
rent and torn with scourges, more full of wounds than ever was a dovehouse full of holes . . .
then she fell down and cried with a loud voice.)

hearer/reader through them towards what she has learned from them of the love of God for humanity.

Blood. Our three authors make two points about Jesus' blood and because their thought is so similar I will treat them point by point rather than author by author, as I have been doing up to here. The first point is that Jesus bled copiously, both under torture and on the cross. *The Ancrene Wisse* speaks of this abundant blood while teaching about Jesus being tormented in his five senses: "swa siðe fleaw þat ilke blodi swat. of his blisfule bodi. þat te streames urned dun to þer eorðe" (60) ["so fully and so freely flowed that bloody sweat from his blessed body on all sides that the streams ran down to the earth" (90)].⁵⁰ Richard Rolle imaginatively looks upon the cross and enumerates the visible forms of the suffering of Jesus, one of which is his bleeding: "Þe stremys of Þi reede blood rennyn as Þe flood; Þi woundys are for-bled [bleeding profusely] and grysly on to se" (SM 24). Kempe also speaks of "the rivers of blood flowing out plenteously from every limb" (106). The purpose of this emphasis on the quantity of Jesus' blood appears to be to underline the immensity of his pain and his suffering, thus increasing the affective appeal of the works being examined.

Julian of Norwich also mentions the copiousness of Jesus' blood, particularly when she fears that it will overwhelm her bed and flood onto the floor (12:343), but for her the copiousness points to a different theological truth. His plenteous blood is a joy and a comfort to the anchoress, who extrapolates from its quantity the

⁵⁰ This cites and translates Luke 22:44

magnanimity of a God who would offer so much redemption to the people {143}. It also serves as the vehicle whereby the power of hell is overcome. Julian sees Jesus' blood break the bonds of hell, releasing its occupants, flooding the earth and then ascending into heaven to intercede for humanity with God the Father {144}.

The second point shared by the three authors is that the blood of Jesus is a medicine or cure for us, which brings health and peace when we invite it into our experience. *The Ancrene Wisse* continues its discussion of the wounding of Christ in his senses by drawing an analogy between medicinal blood-letting and Jesus' bloody form of death: "in al þe world þe wes o þe feure. nes bimong al moncun on hal dale ifunden þe mahte beon ilete blod. bute godes bodi ane" (61; see 153) ["in the whole world, which was in a fever, there was not among all humanity a single healthy part found where blood might be let, except God's body alone" (90)]. Just as the blood from an incision in one part of the body heals the whole, so blood from this one man heals the whole race of humanity. Richard Rolle prays for "a drope of þi blood to droppe on my soule in mynde of þi passyoun hele al my sore [sores] souple and softe in þi grace þat is so harde, and so dyen whan þi wylle is" (SM 26; see also 20). Margery Kempe is told by Jesus, "ryght as þow seyst þe prest [priest] take þe chylid at þe font-ston & dyppe it in þe watyr & wasch it from oryiginal synne, rygth so. xal I wasch þe in my precyows blod fro alle þi synne" (MK 30). His blood accomplishes for her what a sacrament accomplishes for others.

Julian of Norwich does not disagree with the idea of Jesus' blood being health-giving for humanity (39:449; 61:608; 63:616). As has been pointed out, Julian dexterously downplays the gruesome aspects of her showings, in the case of the blood

by presenting it almost as a static aspect of Jesus' face {142}. For her, Jesus' blood is confirmation of his humanity, of his common bond with us, and the sign of his intimate proximity.⁵¹

Thirst. Because Jesus' statement from the cross that he is thirsty is one of the few direct indications of his suffering, it is singled out by each of our authors for special mention.⁵² Once again, because the two points being made are common I will present them separately, summarizing the three authors' comments for each one. For both *The Ancrene Wisse* and for Richard Rolle, Jesus' thirst stands for a great longing which he has. *The Ancrene Wisse* says, "His þurst nis bute ȝirnunge of ure sawle heale" (62) ["his thirst is nothing but yearning for our soul's health" (91)]. Rolle makes a similar point, but distinguishes between Jesus' physical and spiritual thirsts, giving more emphasis to the latter. "Þat thurst was twofold: in body and in soule; þou thurst with a gret ȝernynge aftur þeire amendement þat dyden [did] þe to þe deth, and also for þe soulȝ þat þanne were in helle" (SM 89H). *The Ancrene Wisse* interprets Jesus as thirsting for all of humanity while Rolle narrows that longing to those in danger of damnation.

Julian also interprets the thirst of Jesus as his longing, and like Rolle divides that thirst into a physical and a spiritual aspect. We have seen that in the Eighth

⁵¹ For an intriguing discussion of the function of blood in the thinking of our four authors see generally Robertson, "Medieval Medical Views." Robertson is arguing that women authors employed the images of blood and of bleeding differently from men, purging themselves of what contemporary medical knowledge called the excess moisture in women: "such images are of course present in male texts as well, but in female writing, blood and tears and the like are central to the contemplative experience because of their reflection of the perceived nature of women" (149).

⁵² "Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty'" (John 19:28 NRSV).

Showing Julian draws particular attention to Jesus' physical drying {154}. This focus on his desiccation allows Julian to explore the two sides of that particular torment, his physical pain and his thirst. Julian's meditations on Jesus' physical pain serve her purpose of emphasizing his humanity. Only his human side could suffer, so reflections on his suffering reveal aspects of his human nature {158}.

The spiritual thirst represents his longing, but not for those in fear of damnation. It is Jesus' "loue longyng . . . for we that shalle be safe, and shalle be Crystes joy and hys blesse" (31:418). This is similar to an idea in *The Ancrene Wisse*, where Jesus longs "of ure sawle heale" (62) ["for our soul's health" (91)], perhaps a longing for all to be saved. Jesus' thirst is a symbol of his compassion for suffering humanity. But Julian adds more to this simple idea. In her exposition, Jesus' longing will come to an end at the end of time: "For the same thurst and longyng that he had vppe on the rode tre, whych desyre, longyng and thyrste, as to my syght, was in hym from withouȝt begynnyng, the same hath he ȝett and shalle in to the tyme that the last soule that shalle be savyd id come vppe to hys blysse" (31:420).

There is another interesting nuance in Julian's discussion of Jesus' thirst, namely, that humanity should respond to his longing with its own longing for him {158}. "And of the vertu of this longyng in Crist we haue to long aȝene to hym, without whych no soule comyth to heveyn" (31:420). God uses our longing for Jesus to draw us up to heaven (31:421). Thus Jesus' thirst, which provokes our thirst in response, is part of God's plan for human salvation.

Another idea which we find emphasized in Julian but not brought out in the

texts chosen for comparison is that Jesus' thirst is also God's thirst {?}. Late in her book Julian says, "Pe thurst of god is to haue the generalle man in to hym" (75:678). This is a simple transference to the whole godhead of what we have just explored above concerning Jesus. Julian then goes on to amplify the nature of this longing in God, explaining its three parts, longing that we know and love God; longing to have us in heaven and longing to reward us completely (75:679-80). Julian's sense of God longing for us is an important part of her theology, and one which is not so consciously emphasized in the texts selected for contextualization.

Christ as Exemplar of Patience. In his book on fourteenth-century saints, Richard Kieckhefer discusses the role of Christ as an exemplar of patient suffering.⁵³ In that era, so steeped in the suffering which attends wars, plagues and famines, the fact of Jesus' patient acceptance of pain in his life became a great source of strength to people. "Once Christians had been sufficiently reminded that endurance of suffering can be meritorious, just as Christ's own suffering was salvific, this theme would naturally be repeated in the widest variety of circumstances."⁵⁴ Kieckhefer points out that this could not have been the case unless patience was already understood to be a virtue, with inherent value, so that its application to a painful situation was understood to bring merit to the one who practiced it.

This theme of Christ as exemplar of patient suffering does appear in each of our texts. Quick examples will suffice to illustrate what really is a pervading idea in

⁵³ Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 78-88.

⁵⁴ Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls*, 88.

each of the three texts. Even though *The Ancrene Wisse* was probably written at the turn of the thirteenth century, thus predating the period of Kieckheffer's study, it depends heavily on Jesus as a model for the often uncomfortable life of the anchoresses who are receiving instruction. While discussing the perils associated with the sense of smell, the author makes a direct link between Jesus' suffering and patience in the anchoress: "Hwa se þoht hu godd seolf wes i þis wit ideruet. ha walde þe derf þrof þuldelich þolien" (56; see 28) ["If anyone thought of how God himself was tormented in this sense, she would suffer its pain with patience" (87)]. There are also many examples of the author instructing the anchoress to think about Jesus' pain in a certain situation and thus to bear her own infinitely smaller pain in devotion to him (62, 63, 72, 97, 184, etc.).

Richard Rolle, writing in the middle of the fourteenth century, has structured his meditations on the Passion around this very theme, detailing Jesus' suffering and then drawing some link to his reader's life in order to teach forbearance. One example will show his pattern:

Swet Jhesu, I yeld þe þankyng as I can of al þe evil wordes, sclaudres, scornynge, blasphemys, mowes, and schamys þat þe Jewes seid to þe in al tyme of þy precious passioun. . . . I beseche þe graunt me suffraunce and streynthe to stond stidfastly and patiently to suffre wordes of despite and rebukynge for þy love (LM 33)).

(Sweet Jesus, I thank you as much as I can for all the evil words, slanders, scorn, blasphemies, and shames that the Jews said to you in all the time of your precious passion. . . . I beseech you to grant me endurance and strength to stand steadfastly and patiently to suffer words of scorn and rebuking for your love.)

His message is that if Jesus could suffer these particular pains, then we certainly can bear up under these infinitely smaller pains for his sake.

Margery Kempe also gives clear indications of having been influenced by this thinking, which by her day would have become a norm. In the Proem to her book, she gives her summary justification for her life: "Þis creatur . . . was parfythly drawen & steryd to entren Þe wey of hy perfeccyon, whech parfyth wey Cryst ower Savyowr in hys propyr persooone examplyd. Sadly he trad it & dewly he went it be-form" (1-2). He is her model in the many unpleasant situations which she details in her text, so that by thinking on his great suffering she is able to steel herself to her own trials and tribulations (106, 107, 120, etc).

As we have seen, Kempe is told by Jesus that she is to become an exemplar to others: "dowtyr, I have ordeynd Þe to be a merowr a-monys hem for to han gret sorwe, Þat Þei xulde [should] takyn exampil by Þe for to haue sum litil sorwe in her hertys for her synnys" (186). This promise rests on the tradition that the saints and martyrs are also models of patience, although lesser ones than Jesus himself.⁵⁵ The distinctive aspect to this idea as presented in *The Book of Margery Kempe* is that Kempe herself is being given the promise of this role and is quite aware of it.

Comparison with Julian of Norwich. Not surprisingly, Julian of Norwich also

⁵⁵ We find reference to the saints as exemplars in *The Ancrene Wisse*:

Seint Andrew mahte polien þat te hearde rode heue him toward heouene. & luueliche bi clupte hire. Sein lorenz alswa poledede þat te gridil heue him uppards wið bear nin de gleden. Seinte stefne þat te stames þat me sende him & underueng ham gleadliche . . . & we ne mahe nawt polien þat te wind of a word beore us towart heouene (65).

[St. Andrew could endure that the hard cross should hoist him up toward heaven, and lovingly embraced it; St. Lawrence also endured that the griddle would hoist him upward with the burning coals; St. Stephen endured the stones they threw at him, . . . and we cannot endure that the wind of a word [an insult] may bear us toward heaven (94)].

Richard Rolle offers the example of "holy men and women" (FL 168) who are living each day in the love of God.

includes the theme of Christ as the exemplar of patient suffering in her text. In its clearest iteration it is found in the Sixteenth Showing: "full mekely oure lorde shewd the pacyens that he had in his harde passion, and also the joy and þe lykyng that he haþ of þat passion for loue. And this he shewde in example þat we shulde gladly and esely bere oure paynes" (73:667). We have already noted how in the texts chosen for comparison, the world, pain, sickness, and temptation are primarily negative forces which must be overcome, pushed aside or withstood in order for the spiritual seeker to prove love for God and to gain heaven. In Julian, the focus of patience is not sheer endurance, but active participation through which the seeker is purified and made whole. This makes Jesus an example of *redemptive* suffering, an active form of suffering which the seeker is invited to imitate. Through imitation the seeker participates in the redemption effected. In Julian's peers, the focus is more on the *patient* and submissive quality of Jesus' suffering ("na mare þen a schep as þe hali writ seið. cwich ne cweð he neauer" (65) ["'no more than a sheep,' as the Holy Writ says, 'did he struggle or speak,' (94)]). Through imitation of this passivity the seeker endures in order to prevail.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discover something of the historical context for Julian's use of the theme of pain in *The Showings* by contextualizing it with roughly contemporary works. In the first section, where the personal experience of pain was examined, we noted the multivalent nature of Julian's own pain as compared to the personal pains narrated by Margery Kempe. Where Kempe's book is

essentially a catalogue of her pains, proving her great love for God and effecting her purification from sin, Julian uses the fact of her own pain much more subtly. It works on her personally to purge her of sin and to heighten her compassion for both Jesus and for suffering humanity. It works on her vocationally, creating her as an author, narrowing the focus of her text and connecting her to her readers through identification. Lastly, it works on her theologically, impressing upon her the importance of pain and suffering to the human condition so that these are not overlooked in her optimistic and joyful thought.

In the second section the authors' presentations of the fact of human suffering was explored. Here it was shown that Julian interprets the pains attendant on human life very positively. She has a strong sense of us participating in our own redemption by joyfully accepting the world, temptation, physical suffering and sickness. Julian's world is a place where we are a source of delight to God, and where we cure our souls. The rewards of heaven are freely given us by a God eager to compensate humanity for the burdens of sin and pain.

In the third section the focus was on how the authors in question incorporated the suffering of Jesus into their theologies. The texts chosen for comparison were quite consistent in this regard. For them, the extreme nature of Jesus' pain is a significant motivator in personal piety and so it was emphasized whenever possible. The copious quantity of his blood, the deep tearing of his wounds, the parching nature of his thirst and the shameful tormenting by his persecutors each received minute attention. He suffered quietly, patiently and generously, forgiving his tormentors, and so should we all.

Julian turned Jesus' suffering to quite a different purpose, although she might easily have simply described what she saw in her showings, using her considerable authorial gifts to evoke empathy in her readers.⁵⁶ However, she chose another tactic, and minimalized the impact of what she was shown visually in order to heighten the effect of what she was shown intellectually or intuitively. Her main 'use' for Jesus' suffering was to draw attention to his humanity, the part of him which was capable of feeling pain, and thus to emphasize his proximity to us. Other than this, Julian consistently pushed her readers beyond the merely descriptive to the theological truths which were revealed to her in the showings. As a result, her text introduces complex ideas concerning the humanity and divinity of Christ; the quality of God's love for humanity; the Trinity; and what it means to be human.

Very much a child of her times, Julian used the thought categories of her day, and of her subject matter, to present her ideas. The traditional emphases of popular piety and of ecclesiastical writing found their place in her thought, indeed in some cases they form the foundation for it.⁵⁷ But much of what she was attempting to convey in her text did not slavishly follow the traditional patterns.

It would be wrong to characterize her as a conscious innovator, boldly forging

⁵⁶ One wonders whether her book would not have received more contemporary attention had it been more traditional in this regard.

⁵⁷ Colledge and Walsh are at great pains to trace the possible sources of Julian's thought. The book-length introduction to their critical edition of *The Showings* proposes numerous precedents for just about every aspect of her theology. They conclude, "The editors . . . are convinced . . . that Julian was a great scholar. But about how she learned her Latin, with whom she studied Scripture and rhetoric, in which library she came upon William of St. Thierry, we can do no more than surmise" (*A Book of Showings*, 198). I am unconvinced by their arguments, precisely for the reasons they leave to speculation: how this could have come about? Colledge and Walsh are not able to prove verbal dependence for any of these so-called precursors, save scripture. I prefer to concur with Bernard McGinn who draws attention to the Pauline nature of Julian's thought ("The English Mystics," 203). It does not stretch the bounds of credibility to suggest that Julian was an extremely intelligent and perceptive person, with an excellent command of scripture, particularly the ideas of Paul, who thought deeply about the core problems of theology for her time.

new modes of thinking about an ancient subject. Rather, I think it is fairer to her whole experience to see her as an intelligent and thoughtful visionary who struggled to find valid ways to convey a confusing but illuminative series of insights. Julian used the categories of thought available to her, but pressed beyond them or manipulated them when necessary in order to remain true to her experience of God.

Conclusion

Loue Was His Menyng

One of the qualities of mystical encounters is ineffability.¹ It is impossible to convey to others what one has perceived through mystical union with the divine. Another quality of mystical encounters, however, is that they bring a new kind of knowledge of the divine to the individual who experiences God in this way.² The confidence and clarity of this mystical knowledge are what drive the mystic to attempt to breach the barrier of ineffability in order to communicate a part of what has been experienced. But something of the mystery of the original encounter always cloaks the language of the mystics, wrapping their speech in enigma. The challenge of reading mystical texts is almost the same as that of writing them: to lift the cloak of enigma in order to reveal the core of truth which lies within.

In my attempt to pierce the mystery of Julian of Norwich's experience through careful reading of *The Showings*, I have elected to focus on one image only. Through a thorough examination of both Julian's personal experience of pain and her use of it in her thought, I have tried to follow Caroline Walker Bynum in unlocking the secret of one medieval mystic's language. Bynum advocates exploring the "network of images" used by a given medieval mystic, selecting one in order to reveal and to

¹ Happold, *Mysticism*, 45.

² This is called the noetic quality (James, 293; Happold, *Mysticism*, 45).

understand its "emotional significance" for the author.³ In the case of Julian of Norwich this has most frequently been done with her now-famous image of Jesus as mother; and only slightly less frequently with her presentation of God as *homely* and *courteous*, and with her theology of sin. No other scholar has focussed on the role and function of pain in Julian's experience and text.

The scholarly oversight of the role of pain in Julian's thought might easily indicate that this is an image with little significance. This is not true. Once we are alerted to look for it, we find that Julian's text is actually laced with pain: her own pain, the pain of others, and the pain of Jesus as shown to her through her visions of the crucified Christ. Almost the only autobiographical moments in *The Showings* are coloured with the great pain of Julian's preliminary illness, the suffering she experiences in the Seventh and Eighth Showings, and the resumption of her painful sickness in the demon-filled interlude before the last showing. The little that Julian allows us to know about herself is that she suffered greatly in the process of being prepared for her mystical encounter and in following it. This fact alone means that we cannot ignore Julian's personal experience of pain.

Likewise, once we look for them, we find that her reflections on the pain of human living form a vital part of Julian's thought. Much of her effort is given over to resolving satisfactorily the problem of human suffering and its relation to original sin. Pain also proves to be a heuristic key in Julian's christology. Through her compassionate sensitivity to Jesus' suffering Julian learns important things about her saviour and about his loving, merciful relationship with his people.

³ The phrases are Bynum's. See above, p. 3, 17.

Summary of Findings

Chapter One: Pain as Gift. Julian deliberately tells us that in her youth she requested of God that she should suffer deathly pains in a sickness in order to learn compassion, contrition and longing for God. The gift of pain is given, but perhaps not as the young Julian had anticipated. In an illness in her thirtieth year which lasts almost a week, Julian is debilitated to the point of almost complete paralysis and then quite suddenly released from physical pain just before the showings of God begin. It is these showings, and not the near-fatal illness which will teach Julian what she had wanted to learn, and much more besides. The experience of illness functions to compress Julian, reducing her to her mind, will and soul so that it is with these faculties alone she faces and cooperates with what God has prepared for her.

In the Seventh and Eighth Showings Julian is visited by another kind of pain, given by God as an integral part of the showings themselves, thus itself a showing. Through the alternating of pain and bliss Julian learns that not all pain comes from sin, but all pain is passing. Then, in watching her lover suffer Julian experiences the devastating pain of true compassion, immediately regretting that she had requested just this gift in her optimistic youth. Nonetheless, through this agony of compassion Julian discovers that pain can lead to salvation, when it is suffered vicariously, as both she and Jesus are doing. In the midst of this great suffering Julian learns to choose Jesus for her heaven, demonstrating herself what she wishes to convey to all her hearer/readers.

Immediately following the Fifteenth Showing, Julian's illness comes crashing

down upon her again, this time coincidental with the apparent withdrawal of God's presence. The combination of sickness and the sense of the loss of God drive Julian truly to despair, where she repudiates God's work in her through the fifteen previous showings. Gently chastising her, Jesus invites her not to deny his gift, and Julian responds gratefully by successfully resisting two further demonic temptations.

By presenting her own personal pain as a sort of framework for *The Showings* Julian successfully accomplishes several things. As an author, she opens herself up to her readers, inviting them to identify with her vulnerability, her suffering, even her failings, thus making her text more accessible by making herself accessible. As a believer, Julian moves from a blithe belief that a life-threatening illness will draw her closer to God to an infinitely more mature appreciation of Jesus' suffering, which itself draws her closer to him through the workings of compassion. As a theologian, Julian learns from what she herself experiences, and then presents her book, *The Showings*, from the foundation of her own lived pain.

Chapter Two: The Didactic Nature of Pain. Having suffered deeply in her own person, Julian is moved to reflect on the meaning of human suffering. Holding the principal truth before her, that the purpose of human life is to delight God, Julian explores the puzzling blindness of humanity which cannot see God's gracious love and mercy, and thus causes its own pain, doubt and despair. Julian also learns that the pains of daily living, sickness, loneliness, and death, draw us closer to God by uniting us to our suffering saviour. Our pain is only temporary, but in passing through it we are participating in the working out of our redemption because in endurance we learn

to choose Jesus.

God willingly allows suffering by withholding sight of his joyful face, which sight alone would propel us into bliss. This is so because the suffering we experience is in the nature of a penance, which must be endured in order for purification to take place. Our painful living cleanses us and brings us to heaven's door unified, the disparate parts of our soul united and perfected through suffering.

Having been told that all shall be well, and knowing that God's goodness can be found in everything, Julian is forced to ask about sin. She learns that sin has existence because it is part of God's plan for humanity. Although we participate in sin, a part of us never consents to it. This godly will is never sundered from God, and allows God to turn the evil of sin, and the pains which follow upon it, to ultimate good for humanity. The pains we suffer are necessary, but they are also useful. They drive us to depend on God alone, and through this dependence we are brought to bliss. There we will find that the pains which we endured are turned to joys, so that truly everything works for good in those who love God.

Chapter Three: Pain Earns Redemption and Joy. Julian is shown her saviour suffering for her and for all of humanity on the cross. As she watches the gruesome moments pass, Julian discovers that her mind is illumined with radiant truths about the purpose of Jesus' suffering. In watching his pain she realizes with poignancy that his humanity was as fragile, as tender as her own. She discovers the joy which underlies the Passion: Christ's joy in performing his great work; the Father's joy in welcoming Christ's friends to heaven; and our joy in our redemption. She is also

shown the great love at work in the Crucifixion: the love within the trinity; and the love of God for us in Jesus. The Incarnation held the seeds of the great sacrifice to come, itself being a sacrifice of the perfection of the Trinity while the second person was united to the weakness of humanity. The Passion, the greatest of God's acts of love, unites us with God both through the shared experience of temporal suffering and through the uniquely redemptive nature of Jesus' suffering, which brings us ultimately to bliss.

Chapter Four: Comparison with Contemporaries. Julian of Norwich tells us that she is a faithful daughter of the Church, and it is clear that she is familiar with the general currents of thought of her day. In comparing aspects of her thought with that of three approximate contemporaries one is immediately struck with the similarities. The same themes are explored, the same problems are addressed, the same historical event, the Crucifixion, holds the key. This being said, meticulous comparison yields subtle points of difference, whereby Julian is separated from her contemporaries in her faithfulness to her principal conviction: that God does everything to show love for humanity. This commitment to a God of love lifts Julian above the general contempt of the world shown by her peers, including their disparagement of the body and of human life. Where her peers use fear and pity as spiritual motivators, Julian uses love. Where they focus on the magnitude of Jesus' suffering and the heroism of his endurance, she focuses on the magnitude of his love, and the place which *our* endurance of pain has in our redemption.

Conclusions

It is a testament to the holistic nature of Julian's thought and the integrity of her vision that a study of the sub-theme of pain should reveal the same themes and convictions about the love of God which are overtly expressed in her text. Within the complex "network of images" used by this author, one which she surely used almost unconsciously has proved the consistency of her thought.

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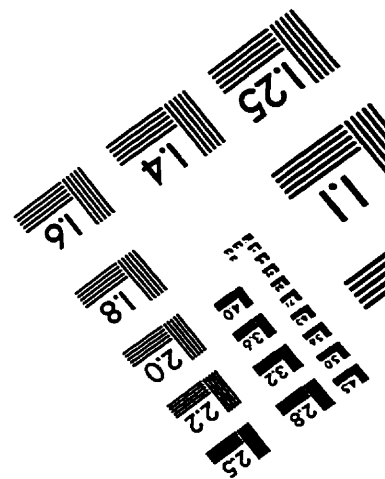
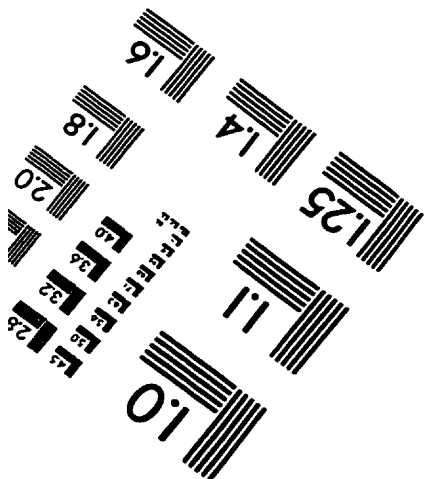
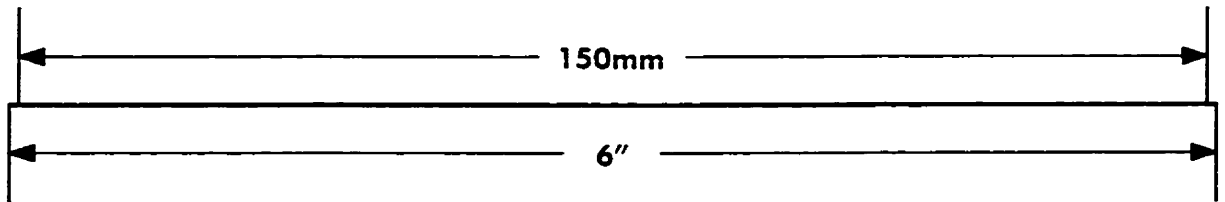
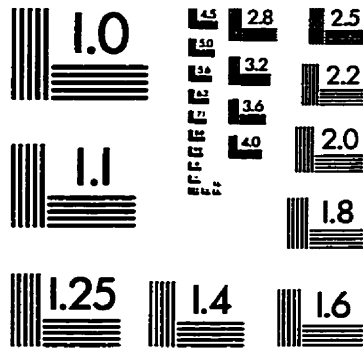
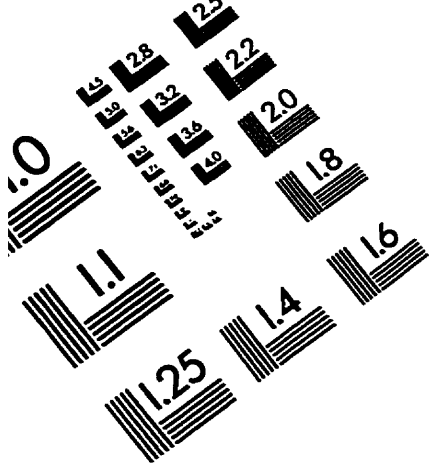
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