

**Behold How I Love You**

**The Theology and Mystagogy of Julian of Norwich's *Showing of Love***

**By**

**Petronella Hedwig Herman Maria Galama**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines Julian of Norwich's *Showing of Love* with an emphasis on the mystagogical implications of her theology. My thesis contextualises Julian's spiritual development within the monastic climate of the Middle Ages that favoured anchoritic life as a form of solitary devotion to God. For this purpose, it describes the English medieval rules for anchoresses to gain an understanding of divine inspiration that shaped its spirituality. Furthermore, it draws out how Julian's spiritual autobiography expresses a devotion that relies on God's initiative for her inspired theology. My thesis contextualises Julian's theology by comparing her thoughts with the church fathers', who were influential in formulating the Christian doctrines of Creation and Trinity, and its implications for Christian lived spirituality. It argues that Julian's theology formulates humanity's creation with the potential for deification, which is hindered by a loss in the beholding of God's love because of its created nature. Furthermore, it sets out how Julian elucidates the Christian mysteries of faith by an attentiveness to human suffering in the light of God's compassion and love for humanity as revealed in Christ. Her theology of compassion by implication criticizes some aspects of the church fathers' thoughts. My thesis emphasises the relevance of Julian's theology of God's compassionate love for the art of spiritual direction (mystagogy). It shows Julian's compatibility with contemporary study of spirituality that connects doctrine with a deepening of the lived experience of God. Thus, my thesis embraces the *Showing of Love* as the expression of a woman's theology that bears continuity with the early church and presents a development of thought regarding God's compassion that has the potential to initiate a deepening of spirituality in the contemporary practice of *lectio divina* and spiritual guidance.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis started when Julian came alongside me as a spiritual guide in my search for the love of God. Whereas I started as a young mystic, drawn by an experience of joy that is beyond my own and trying to understand God's guidance within my life, gradually Julian's writing is also guiding me into an understanding of the Christian mysteries of faith. As I am trained in the tradition of *lectio divina*, the thesis is the fruit of my personal engagement with the *Showing of Love*. My experiences of pain and love are outspoken before God's countenance in which I encounter silence, my not knowing and a beholding in love. My meditation on the *Showing of Love* is gradually deepening the meaning of a personal relationship that is embedded within compassion and a loving beholding. In the process of *lectio divina*, God's compassion and lovingly beholding have guided me into a deeper understanding of the mysteries of the Christian faith. The descriptiveness of the thesis exposes that searching for an understanding, as it reflects the process of *lectio divina*.

Special thanks are owed to my supervisor Dr. Carolyn Muessig, for her enduring confidence, challenging encouragement and in-depth understanding. I want to acknowledge gratefully all persons who encouraged me, in particular Prof. Dr. Knut Walf, Bep Meereboer O'Carroll, Mieke Peters OSB, frater Jan Smiths CMM, Lucy Tromp and Eugène van Vught MSC who have played a major role in enabling the writing of my thesis in Great-Britain. My kind acknowledgement goes out to Martin and Irene Allott, who helped me in polishing my thesis by requesting clarification and pointing out the grammatical mistakes in the formulation of my thoughts in English. I would also like to thank the Society of the Sacred Cross for the hospitality and silence they have provided at those times that were set aside for the writing of my thesis. My participation in the Christian Pastoral Counselling course at Network Counselling and Training has sustained my quest for compassion and nourished me with an environment in which to explore the pastoral implications of faith.

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## Introduction

### 1 Objective and definitions

Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416) inaugurates her *Showing of Love* with an autobiographical account that describes the moulding of her spirituality in the tradition of *imitatio Christi*. Caroline Walker Bynum has made a significant contribution in understanding the importance of physicality for female spirituality, ascetic practice and theologising in the late Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> However, her emphasis on the central role of suffering itself as an *imitatio Christi* does not resonate with Julian's theology of the transcendence of human suffering that she beholds in the blessed face of Christ nor with her understanding of compassion as the essence of *imitatio Christi*. Julian does ask for a nearly fatal illness, not for the sake of suffering, but for her wish to receive deeper surrender to God's will. Julian requests to suffer with Christ's suffering, but her pain is transfigured into knowledge of God's love. In Julian we encounter a theologian who moves out of certain aspects of traditional devotion and provides alternative routes to spiritual experience.

My thesis on Julian of Norwich's *Showing of Love* contributes to the recognition of the theological and the spiritual strength of women who speak and write about God. Thomas Merton regards Julian as a great theologian and recognises in her *Showing of Love* great strength in pursuit of the mystery of God. He acknowledges the centrality of the eschatological awareness of God's love: "One of her most telling and central convictions is her orientation to what one might call *an eschatological secret*."<sup>2</sup> My thesis emphasises the mystagogical implication of the *Showing of Love*, because my argument is that Julian speaks about God with the intention to make her fellow Christians attentive to God's mystery within human life. My thesis demonstrates Julian's capacity to deploy her visionary experience of God's love and compassion in great depth as a renewing source for theology. In addition it considers the implications of her theology for a contemporary practice of spiritual direction.

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (London: Burns and Oates, 1968), 191.

Mystagogy is spiritual direction with an emphasis on the autobiographical narrative of the Christian who experiences life with awareness of the mystery of God. Mystagogy is the composite of *mysterion* (mystery) and *agein* (guiding).

In the context of their biographical experiences, mystagogy makes people attentive to the hidden presence of the incomprehensible God and the working of his Spirit: as transcendent origin and ground, as the horizon and goal of the life history of the individual and the history of humankind. It sets in motion a faith process of learning through discovery in which God can let himself become experience as the salvation of human beings.<sup>3</sup>

A mystagogic form of spiritual direction takes shape in the liturgy, in the reading of the Bible and spiritual treatises, or in the meeting between a spiritual director and directee. In the early church mystagogy is developed within the liturgical context as a catechetical preaching on the spiritual meaning of the sacraments.<sup>4</sup> In the reading of spiritual texts, or *lectio divina*, mystagogy means an intensification of the awareness of God's love and the deepening of personal response.<sup>5</sup> Mystagogy as the art of spiritual direction is intended to clarify autobiographical experience in the light of God's guidance in human life.<sup>6</sup> The focus of this thesis is spiritual direction appropriated through *lectio divina*.

Kees Waaijman formulates the definition of the study of spirituality that

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<sup>3</sup> Werner Simon, "Mystagogie. II. Religionspädagogisch und praktisch-theologisch," in Andreas Wollbold and Werner Simon, "Mystagogie," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 7 (1998), 571. Quoted in Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations and Methods*, Studies in Spirituality, suppl. 8 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 870.

<sup>4</sup> Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy: A Theology of Liturgy in the Patristic Age*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989); Craig Allen Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Scholtissek, "Mystagogische Christologie im Johannes-Evangelium? Eine Spurensuche," *Geist und Leben* (1995): 412-26; Werner Löser, "Vom Geist bewegt- lebendige Schriftauslegung heute?" *Geist und Leben* (1995): 427-41; Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 690-771 and 871-2; Kees Waaijman, "Mystieke ervaring en mystieke weg," in *Encyclopedie van de mystiek: fundamentele tradities en perspectieven*, ed. Joris Baers, Gerrit Brinkman, Auke Jelsma and Otger Steggink (Kampen: Kok and Tiel: Lannoo, 2003), 68-70; Hein Blommesteijn and Frans Maas, *Kruispunten in de mystieke traditie: tekst en context van Meester Eckhart, Jan van Ruusbroec, Teresa van Avila en Johannes van het Kruis* (s-Gravenhage: Meinema, 1990); Hein Blommesteijn and Frans Maas, "Mystiek en taal," in *Encyclopedie van de mystiek*, 290-301.

<sup>6</sup> Arno Schilson, ed., *Gottes Weisheit im Mysterium: Vergessene Wege christlicher Spiritualität* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1989); Stefan Knobloch and Herbert Haslinger, ed., *Mystagogische Seelsorge: Eine lebensgeschichtlich orientierte Pastoral* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1991); Michael Plattig, "Mystik, mystisch- Ein Modewort oder die Charakterisierung des 'Frommen von Morgen' (Karl Rahner)?" *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 60 (1997); Michael Plattig, "Der Glaube an das Wirken des Geistes. Aspekte geistlicher Begleitung nach Johannes vom Kreuz," *Studies in Spirituality* 8 (1998): 249-61. 105-16; Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 874-942.

focuses my mystagogical and theological methodology in the study of Julian's visions. Waaijman's dialogical-phenomenological approach to spirituality regards the transformational effect occurring within the relationship between God and the human person as essential. "Spirituality is the ongoing transformation which occurs in involved relationality with the Unconditional."<sup>7</sup> The object of the study of spirituality is the "divine-human relational process which is viewed as a layered process of transformation."<sup>8</sup>

Because mystagogy is concerned with the working of God in human life, it is related to mystical inspiration. Waaijman's definition of spirituality distinguishes a divine and a human side of a relationship that interact dialogically with each other. The dialogical interaction between God and the human instigates the intimacy of a loving relationship.

The inner horizon of mysticism is formed by the reciprocal love-impact of *I* upon *Thou* and *Thou* upon *I*, a counter-interior event that creates its own intimacy – 'countering intimacy'- and in a love-filled vis-à-vis brings the beloveds into being.<sup>9</sup>

Mysticism delineates a specific viewpoint in the study of spiritual transformational processes, as it emphasises the influence of God's working in all aspects of human life. Human consciousness is profoundly transformed through an internalization of the divine attributes, by virtue of a transition in which the human personality is overformed by God's love.<sup>10</sup>

My theological approach is informed by an interest in the relationship between doctrine and the experience of God's self-disclosure.<sup>11</sup> In the formulation

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<sup>7</sup> Kees Waaijman, "Toward a Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality," *Studies in Spirituality* 3 (1993): 45. See Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 425-82 and Waaijman, "Spirituality as Transformation demands a Structural Dynamic Approach," *Studies in Spirituality* 1 (1991): 25-35.

<sup>8</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 425.

<sup>9</sup> Kees Waaijman, "Mysticism from the Perspective of the Jewish-Christian Tradition," *Studies in Spirituality* 2 (1992): 30.

<sup>10</sup> See Hein Blommestijn, "Progrès-progressants," *DSp* 12 (1986), 2383-2405. For a description of the importance of transformational process in understanding Julian's theology and spirituality, see Oliver Davies, "Transformational Processes in the Work of Julian of Norwich and Mechtilde of Magdeburg," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), 39-52.

<sup>11</sup> See William M. Thompson, *Fire and Light: The Saints and Theology, On Consulting the Saints, Mystics and Martyrs in Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987); Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998); Dermot A. Lane, *The Experience of God: An Invitation to do Theology*, rev. ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2003).

of the Christian creed, the early church theologians express their experience of God's self-revelation in Christ and in the relationship with the Holy Spirit. In the continuing Christian tradition, the creed gives access to the experience of God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit as the foundation upon which successive theology is formulated.<sup>12</sup> Karl Rahner stresses the importance of theology being understood as engagement with the mystery of God.

It is therefore a very existential problem, when we ask how *the* mystery stands to the many mysteries of Catholic faith and doctrine and whether the whole field of mysteries can be understood as a real unity (...) Is Christian doctrine, where it covers real mysteries, really a highly complicated system of orderly statements? Or is it rather a mysterious simple thing of infinite fullness, which can be propounded in an immense variety of statements while its mysterious and simple unity remains unchanged?<sup>13</sup>

The title of my thesis, *Behold How I Love You*, echoes the words spoken by Christ to Julian and thus stresses that humanity is seen with the eyes of God's love. The title underlines my argument that Julian's interpretations of Christian doctrine and the mysteries of faith are centred in her encounter with the compassionate and loving gaze of Christ. It emphasises that her theology is an expression of the divine-human relationship and gives guidance into the mystery of God that resonates with the mystery of being human. My guideline for the process of formulating a theological treatise in terms of human experience is informed by the definition of spirituality as the divine-human relationship, which emphasises the transformation of the human into God when the totality of human life is brought into an encounter with God's love.

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<sup>12</sup> See Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000; reprint, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 37. See Karl Rahner, "Faith Between Rationality and Emotion," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 12 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974); James J. Bacik, *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery. Mystagogy according to Karl Rahner* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980).

## 2 Methodology

My research uses the methodology of Waaijman, whose work on spirituality explicates the dialogical transformation of the divine-human relational process. Waaijman has developed four methodologies for the study of spirituality: form-descriptive; systematic; hermeneutic, and mystagogic. Form-descriptive research studies a form of lived spirituality in its historical context, and examines its driving inspiration that is given with its perception of the divine-human relationship.<sup>14</sup> Systematic research studies themes in Christian faith and spirituality that are formulated with the intention to gain insight into a doctrine and disclose its truth from the perspective of lived experience.<sup>15</sup> Spiritual hermeneutics is founded upon the tradition of *lectio divina* and explores how an expression of the divine-human relationship unfolds a revelation of God's mystery to which Christians entrust themselves.<sup>16</sup> Mystagogic research seeks to clarify how a Christian relates personally to the mystery of God and how this relationship initiates an ongoing elucidation of life experience in the light of that mystery.<sup>17</sup> Hence, my thesis will first delineate the form of anchoritic spirituality and study Julian's autobiographic expression of her devotion; then it will systematically research Julian's theological interpretation of Christian doctrine and its implications for understanding the divine-human relationship, and finally it will examine the significance of Julian's work as a manual for spiritual direction in the twenty-first century.

The methodology of the thesis uses a hermeneutic in which theology is savoured by human experience. Its emphasis to relate theology to experience is informed by the contemporary study of mysticism, in which mysticism is interpreted as the experiential aspect of the awareness of God. The concern can be raised that modern lenses are applied in the interpretation of medieval theology. Modern authors use the term mysticism to refer to non-scholastic expressions of theology, in which personal experience of God is influential. The idea of mysticism is thus a modern construct that provides a hermeneutic in which medieval theology is read in the light of the immediate experience of God that underlies it. The thesis does not engage with the critique that is raised against a concept of mysticism that argues in favour of the existence of an essence of

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<sup>14</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 595-688.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 774-868.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 689-773

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 869-945.

mystical experience or the critique against the use of the concept of experience itself.<sup>18</sup>

In the thesis, the terms mystagogy and mysticism are used to describe guidance into awareness and experience of union with God's love that is initiated by God. Although both terms are firmly rooted in the Christian tradition, their contemporary definitions are anachronistic in interpreting a medieval text where there are no exact medieval equivalents. Julian does not use the terms mystagogy or mysticism: she uses the Middle English *ghostly* to express her experience of God's love that is beyond language and speaks about God's activity to *gyde vs.*

For the reason of situating Julian's theology within a longstanding tradition of reflection on Christian doctrine, the thesis includes thoughts from Greek patristic sources that have shaped its understanding of the Trinity and Christ's nature, whilst expounding the nature of human creation and its potential for deification. The aim is to recapture an interpretation of the human relationship with God based upon experience of union with God that is present in the early church and has become lost in the contemporary time through the influence of a rational scholastic approach to theology.

Although there is no certainty about theological sources that contribute to Julian's theology, for an in-depth understanding of her theological formulations it is necessary to compare her thoughts with those expressed in the church. This approach ensures that her theology and its mystagogical implications are understood as the continuation of a Christian tradition, whilst it also underlines the specific emphasis unique to her theology. Therefore, my research will refer extensively to the theology formulated within the early church. The decision to concentrate on the early church, rather than on the medieval mystical and scholastic tradition, is motivated by the importance of the early church in formulating orthodox Christian doctrine, whilst the early church simultaneously sustains a flexibility in theological reflection in their search for an in-depth understanding of the divine-human relationship. Prominent theologians in the

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<sup>18</sup> An insight in the debate around the modern concept of mysticism can be gained from Grace Jantzen, "Mysticism and Experience," *Religious Studies* 25 (1989): 295-315, "Could there be a Mystical Core of Religion?" *Religious Studies* 26 (1990): 59-69 and Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 322-53; Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: SCM Press, 1991; reprint, London: SCM Press, 1992), xiii-xx; Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 252-73.

early church later became marginalized in the Christian tradition. My approach attempts to discover if Julian's theology shows affinity with different trends of theologising present within the early church.

Contemporary access to and translation of patristic sources provides a critical relation to the Christian tradition that differs from Julian's actual circumstances. Therefore, the thesis's reference to patristic theology has no claim of showing Julian's personal acquaintance with Greek patristic sources. As Greek patristic texts were not available in Medieval England, Julian could not have been influenced directly by the sophistication of theological argument present in the early church. In the Middle Ages, the legacy of the Greek fathers was transmitted by sermons and biblical commentaries, which sometimes included their thoughts. In the thesis, the inclusion of Greek patristic theology is used as a heuristic device to sustain an interpretation of Julian's theological position that is in continuity with Christian doctrine. Thus, the argumentation is similar to the methodology used by Peter Dronke in his study of correspondences regarding the doctrine of apocatastasis amongst a diverse range of patristic and medieval theologians, without making reference to the authors' actual reading of the patristic sources and without trying to establish how the notion was passed on in the Christian tradition.<sup>19</sup>

This thesis is concerned to establish an exegetically accurate reading of Julian's *Showing of Love*, in which both its continuity with the Christian tradition and its originality create the text's availability as a contemporary source for spiritual guidance. The thesis does not claim to establish exegetically correct readings of the used patristic source texts, but relies on modern translations as well as secondary literature that critically engage with patristic sources in the light of the development of doctrinal orthodoxy and its influence on Christian mysticism. In particular, the engagement with Augustine and Anselm is not free from a certain reductionism by focussing exclusively on specific aspects of their theology. Sometimes the thesis deals with a form of Augustinianism; a reception and use of Augustine that is weighted in its focus on the doctrine of original sin.<sup>20</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Dronke, "The Completeness of Heaven," in *Envisaging Heaven*, ed. Carolyn Muessig and Ad Putter (London: Routledge, forthcoming, 2006). A form of this article was presented by Peter Dronke at the Conference "Envisaging Heaven" Centre of Medieval Studies, University of Bristol, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of Augustinianism, see R.P. Russell, "Augustinianism," and "Augustinianism, Theological School of," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Washington, The Catholic University of America, 1967), 1063-9 and 1069-71.

engagement with reductionism of the Augustinian anthropology is important for the reason that the emphasis on sinfulness has informed the contemporary experience of the human relationship with God. Comparison with reductionist representations of Augustine and Anselm's doctrines regarding human nature and salvation is used to establish Julian's theological originality by way of contrasting theological positions.

The thesis sets out to give an exegesis of the *Showing of Love* that is relevant for the contemporary practice of spiritual guidance and therefore addresses pastoral questions relevant for a modern audience. One of the important theological themes that have a bearing on pastoral theology is the extent of God's love in working out the salvation of humanity. The concern of the thesis is to give an interpretation of Julian's theological position regarding suffering, free will and the influence of God's love, whilst showing that her position is validated by the Christian tradition. The thesis is not concerned to determine the theological sophistication that is present in the defence of such positions regarding the influence of free will and justice that argue against universalism.

### **3 Structure of the chapters**

Three distinct organising principles are at work in the *Showing of Love*: autobiographical, theological and mystagogical. They are interconnected within the treatise and give it a quality of an exploration of Julian's personal experience as transforming awareness of God that is made relevant for Christian faith and its implications for spiritual direction. The three organising principles of the *Showing of Love* are reflected in the structure of my dissertation. Chapters 1 and 2 concentrate on the autobiographical thread; chapters 3, 4 and 5 focus on the theological thread, and chapter 6 on the mystagogical thread.

The first chapter gives a context for understanding Julian's anchoritic vocation and in particular its contemplative and pastoral aspects. The medieval English rules for anchoresses is the material used for this purpose, because they describe the form and inspiration of anchoritic spirituality. My description of the spiritual architecture of anchoritic life demonstrates its aptness to visionary insight and responsibility in spiritual direction. Thus, the chapter gives a demarcation of the

form of anchoritic spirituality and the divine inspiration that shaped its interiority.

The second chapter explores the *Showing of Love* as a spiritual autobiography describing the divine inspiration in shaping her life, vision and theology. It focuses particularly on two chapters that form a preface to her showing and wherein she relays devotional memories from her early youth. It includes further a discussion of Julian's visionary experience and its impetus for her theological reflection. My aim is to put down the foundation upon which to built the following chapters, which study the profoundly transformative impact of Julian's visionary inspiration upon her theological interpretation.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 describe the theology of the *Showing of Love*. The third chapter studies Julian's theology of God's creatorship and the creation of human nature out of nothing. To grasp the strength of her theology, my discussion is set purposefully within the church fathers' formulation of the Christian creed and its further implications for understanding the divine-human relationship, whilst drawing out resemblances with Julian's interpretation of the human potential for deification. The fourth chapter examines Julian's theology of God's compassion in the response to human suffering. To draw out the potential of her answer to theodicy, it focuses on differences and similarities with some church fathers' exegesis of Adam's fall and God's response to sin. In addition, it explores how her answer to theodicy informs her theology of atonement in the reconciliation between human weakness and deification. The fifth chapter looks at Julian's theology of God's enduring love as the foundation for her argument in favour of the universal salvation of humanity. To emphasise the uniqueness of her theology, it shows the differences and similarities with the theology of some church fathers regarding the human will, God's impassibility and God's foreseeing wisdom. The aim of examining Julian's theology is to build a foundation for understanding the mystagogical aspects that are implied within it.

The sixth chapter considers the relevance of Julian's *Showing of Love* for a contemporary understanding of mystagogy that reaches beyond Julian's historical significance as a woman writing theology. My argument relies on modern trends in the art of spiritual direction in order to show that Julian exercises a systematic theological reflection upon her vision that leads her to integrate theology with lived spirituality. The focus is on an approach to God through a knowing in love, the experience of God's love in the creation, faith in Christ's compassion reflected

in contrition, compassion and longing, and attentiveness to God as emphasised within the personal relationship of spiritual accompaniment. The aim is to demonstrate the historical and practical contributions of Julian's theological agenda.

#### 4 Bibliographical essay

Interest in Julian's theology has been increasing considerably since the nineteenth-eighties. A number of books presenting a theological interpretation of the *Showing of Love* have been published and there have been numerous articles and modern translations. The increased interest indicates the significance of Julian's theology and spirituality for contemporary times. The following bibliographical presentation gives a sample of the development and trends in the research on Julian's theology.

The earliest research on Julian's *Showing of Love* was published in 1924 and conducted in the discipline of psychology of religion.<sup>21</sup> The first publication of an in-depth theological study follows thirty-four years later, in 1958. Paul Molinari concentrates on Julian's contemplative theology of unitive prayer.<sup>22</sup> He describes and interprets the different aspects of her visionary beholding and finds it important to demonstrate that her visions are not the result of some psychological disturbance. He interprets her vision as the elucidation of God's love for humanity and demonstrates that the beholding of God's love as object of contemplation underlies Julian's teaching on prayer. After Molinari's publication, there is again no major publication in Julian studies for twenty-four years. The interest of researchers is again raised after the publication of two critical editions of the *Showings*.<sup>23</sup> The edition of Edmund Colledge and James Walsh is introduced by a research of possible sources of Julian's theology. The following publications demonstrate that Julian's mystical theology has a strong foundation in her systematic theology. Thus, the focus shifts from psychology to contemplative

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Henry Thouless, *Lady Julian: A Psychological Study* (London: SPCK, 1924).

<sup>22</sup> Paul Molinari, *Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of A Fourteenth Century English Mystic* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1958).

<sup>23</sup> Marion Glasscoe, ed., *A Revelation of Love* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993, reprint, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996); Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, ed., *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978).

prayer and then to systematic theology.

The initial approach of systematic research is concerned with demonstrating both Julian's orthodoxy and authenticity by evaluating her theology along with the theologies of the early church and the Western mystical tradition. Brant Pelphrey, Jennifer Heimmel and Denise Nowakowski Baker use this contextualising methodology. Pelphrey focuses on salvation in Christ as Julian's main theological theme.<sup>24</sup> His research is the first to underline her theology of unification with God in terms of wholeness (*salve*) and at-one-ment and show its resemblance to the church fathers' idea of divinisation (*theosis*). His research is structured around the threefold nature of love: uncreated, created and gift. Heimmel's research concentrates on an interpretation of Julian's image of God as Mother.<sup>25</sup> She explores biblical, patristic and mystical sources as well as images in fourteenth-century literature that speak in feminine and maternal terms of God, before she gives an in-depth study of the richer development and innovation of God's motherhood in Julian's theology. Her analysis of the image of motherhood describes God's intimate care in the growth of humanity towards unity. Nowakowski is concerned with showing Julian's intellectual development from devout young woman into a mature theological thinker.<sup>26</sup> Her theological research focuses on Julian's theodicy and refers to analogues with patristic and medieval thinkers, whilst showing how she develops a unique and sophisticated moral and mystical interpretation.

The further development in the systematic theological study of Julian is based on a hermeneutical approach to her articulation of God's unifying love and compassion.<sup>27</sup> Patricia Mary Vinje, Margaret Ann Palliser and Kerry Hide employ this method. Vinje sets the scene for the use of a methodology of *lectio divina* with an explanation of Julian's own approach to knowledge of God that is based in the patristic and medieval exegesis of the four senses of Scripture.<sup>28</sup> She researches

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<sup>24</sup> Brant Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1982).

<sup>25</sup> Jennifer Perone Heimmel, "*God is Our Mother?*" *Julian of Norwich and the Medieval Image of Christian Feminine Divinity* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1982; reprint, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's 'Showings': From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>27</sup> In addition to underlining Julian's importance for systematic reflection on lived experience, Domenico Pezzini's article elucidates his argument of affective theology with a hermeneutics of Julian's many faceted formulation of *bliss*. Domenico Pezzini, "The Vocabulary of Joy in Julian of Norwich," *Studies in Spirituality* 4 (1994): 94-115.

<sup>28</sup> Patricia Mary Vinje, *An Understanding of Love according to the anchoress Julian of Norwich* (Salzburg:

Julian's theology of love by extracting and interpreting words and images that portray the loving relationship between God and human. Palliser researches Julian's theology of compassion with some attention to the implications for Christian spirituality.<sup>29</sup> She substantiates her claim of the christocentric nature of Julian's doctrine of compassion with a hermeneutic of the semantic field of *mercy, save, keep, ruth, pity* and *compassion*. However, her theological conclusions are restricted in so far as she limits the compassion that exists within God to Christ, through whom it is extended to humanity. She thus weakens the understanding of God's unmediated relationship with humanity. Hide explicates Julian's soteriology, in terms of increasing union of the human with Christ, by examining the semantics of *oneing*.<sup>30</sup> She evaluates Julian's right to be heard in the contemporary study of christology and pneumatology in the continuing reflection on salvation history, as her theology provides ways of overcoming an important missing link between theology and spirituality.

Another strand in theological research emphasises the importance of the integration between Julian's mysticism and her theology. The intention is to show continuity between past and contemporary women theologians by taking seriously the contribution that female writers have made to various areas of Christian doctrine. Grace Jantzen and Joan Nuth promote this approach. Jantzen emphasises Julian's theology of integration: doctrine is integrated with experience and its practical consequences.<sup>31</sup> Jantzen outlines that Julian's theology reaches beyond its doctrinal teaching towards the healing of the fragmented human person into an integrated personality with a deepened moral and spiritual integrity in response to God. Nuth sets out to examine Julian as a doctrinal theologian and a paradigm from whom contemporary women theologians can draw inspiration. Her research concentrates on Julian's teaching of God as love that is expressed in Christ's incarnation and the Trinity, and, furthermore, in the works of nature, mercy and grace that bring about the reformation and salvation of the human.<sup>32</sup> Whilst acknowledging that Julian's theology exhibits the influence of traditional

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Institut Für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Ann Palliser, *Christ, Our Mother of Mercy: Divine Mercy and Compassion in the Theology of the "Shewings" of Julian of Norwich* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Kerrie Hide, *Gifted Origins to Graced Fulfillment: The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2000). Her research was first published in 1987.

<sup>32</sup> Joan Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

theology from patristic and scholastic sources, she sees the liberating and feminine aspects of her portrayal of God in terms of the integration of omnipotence and motherly intimacy. Unfortunately, she provides no conclusions about the implications of her research for Christian theology in general and feminist theology in particular.

In the research so far, the question of the implications of Julian's theology for spiritual direction has received little attention. Julia Gatta and Kevin Magill advocate this interest. In her study of spiritual direction in the English mystical tradition, Gatta devotes a chapter to Julian.<sup>33</sup> Gatta argues that Julian's vision only pertain to those who will be saved and her spiritual guidance is intended for the proficient, who have earnestly lived the faith for several years. She describes her theodicy as a form of pastoral guidance, because suffering can cause impatience, despair and spiritual desolation that become a means of finding consolation in God. Magill examines Julian's vision as a didactic tool to fit a variety of pedagogic and pastoral needs amongst an illiterate audience in a visual culture.<sup>34</sup> He challenges scholarly identification of Julian as a mystic by demonstrating that her visions constitute a concrete visual approach to the teaching of theology rather than pointing to the ineffable mystery of God. His study is relevant in outlining the kataphatic element in spiritual guidance; using images as a means of teaching God's love. However, by detaching theology from mysticism there is no analysis of the ineffable aspect of the divine initiative in spiritual guidance.

With different methodological approaches, the research addresses analogous themes of Julian's theology and focus on God's love in her theology of salvation. Each author has a different emphasis in interpretation, which often depends on the author's view of theological influences and the extent to which Julian pushes the boundaries of certain theological views. The authors' interpretations depend largely on their perspective whether or not Julian adheres to the idea of culpability expressed in the church teaching, and in particular in the theologies of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). For example, Ritamary Bradley studies various researchers' interpretations of Julian's theology of atonement and the extent to which their interpretation associates with Anselm

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<sup>33</sup> Julia Gatta, *Three Spiritual Directors* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1986), 50-90; Julia Gatta, "Julian of Norwich: Theodicy as Pastoral Art," *Anglican Theological Review* 63 (1981): 173-81.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin James Magill, *Julian of Norwich: Visionary or Mystic?* (London: Routledge, 2005).

of Canterbury's.<sup>35</sup> My thesis takes the issue of Julian's theological position further in order to show that she is an independent thinker, who writes outside certain boundaries of the church's teaching without losing her orthodox stance. I examine dissimilarities with Augustine and Anselm, and similarities with those theologies that have become marginalized in the Christian tradition, and in particular the theologies of Irenaeus of Lyon (c.130-c.200) and Origen (185-254). My thesis examines an anthropological view in Julian's theology that has received little attention in scholarly research and explicitly connects the ineffability of God's love with the lived mystery of being human.

## 5 Extant manuscripts

Before moving onto the thesis proper, a word needs to be given to the use and choice of sources. The citations of the *Showing of Love* are taken from the critical edition of Anna Maria Reynolds and Julia Bolton Holloway: *Julian of Norwich, Showing of Love: Extant Texts and Translation*.<sup>36</sup> Its editorial work of four main manuscripts is most recent and done with great accuracy in order to replicate as closely as possible the features of the surviving manuscripts. Titles of modern editions and translations given to Julian's treatise all refer to its visionary nature: *Revelations of Divine Love*; *A Revelation of Love*; *A Book of Showings*; and *Showing of Love*. The title *Showing of Love* resonates Julian's words: "Thus I vnderſtonde in this Jhewyng of loue."<sup>37</sup> It shows the divine inspiration of her vision: "Aviſioun · Schewed Be the goodenes of god."<sup>38</sup> Julian experienced her sixteen visions as one integrated divine revelation: "This is a reuelacion of loue that Jhesu Chriſt our endles bliſſe made in ·xvi· Jhewynges."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, my thesis will refer to Julian's vision in the singular to avoid the impression that her sixteen visions are separate.

The original manuscript of Julian of Norwich's *Showing of Love* is lost. The

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<sup>35</sup> Ritamary Bradley, "Julian and the Mystery of Redemption," *Studies in Spirituality* 10 (2000), 205-27.

<sup>36</sup> *Julian of Norwich, Showing of Love: Extant Texts and Translation*, ed. Anna Maria Reynolds and Julia Bolton Holloway, *Biblioteche e Archivi* 8 (Florence: Sismel, 2001). The references in the footnotes includes manuscript, number of vision (if applicable), chapter and folio number of the manuscript, with a page number in brackets referring to the page in Reynolds and Bolton Holloway, *Showing of Love*.

<sup>37</sup> Paris MS, 3.10: f.23r *bis* (189). Absent in Amherst and Sloane MSS.

<sup>38</sup> Amherst MS, 1: f.97r (710). Absent in Paris and Sloane MSS.

<sup>39</sup> Paris MS, 1: f.1r (143); See Sloane MS, 1: f.1r (513).

extant manuscripts comprise one abridged and four elaborate accounts of the *Showing of Love*, and two florilegia.<sup>40</sup> The Amherst manuscript is the oldest extant manuscript, written in a hand from the fifteenth century. It is an abridged account of the *Showing of Love* and is also called the short text.<sup>41</sup> This unique manuscript belongs to a collection of spiritual treatises.<sup>42</sup> It was copied presumably in a Carthusian monastery, as the Carthusian order in the fifteenth century encouraged the dissemination of contemplative teaching.<sup>43</sup> Two manuscripts are a choice collection of texts from the *Showing of Love*. The Westminster manuscript is an anthology written in the fifteenth century and annotated in the seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup> The Upholland manuscript was compiled between 1640 and 1684 at the Benedictine convent in Cambrai.<sup>45</sup> The handwriting of most of this manuscript is recognised as Barbara Constable's, who professed at Cambrai in 1640 and died there in 1684.

The four elaborate accounts are also called the long text. The Paris manuscript is an early seventeenth century manuscript and belonged to the library of the Benedictine convent at Cambrai.<sup>46</sup> In 1651 the convent established a daughter-house in Paris. The Sloane manuscript is written in a hand from the middle of the seventeenth century, with added correction in different handwriting.<sup>47</sup> The care taken to clarify the Middle English language and to relate it to Dutch, suggests that it was written in the Benedictine convent of which Augustine Baker was the spiritual director. The Sloane 2 manuscript is written in a hand from the eighteenth century. It is likely a modernised copy from the earlier Sloane

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<sup>40</sup> For the information about the manuscripts I am indebted to: Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 1-18; Marion Glasscoe, "Visions and Revisions: A Further Look at the Manuscripts of Julian of Norwich," *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 103-20; Reynolds and Bolton Holloway, *Showing of Love*.

<sup>41</sup> London, British Library, Additional 37.790.

<sup>42</sup> Bolton Holloway is convinced that this collection concerns a "florilegium of similar text of spiritual direction for use by a woman contemplative." Reynolds and Bolton, *Showing of Love*, 685. This collection contains Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*; Jan van Ruusbroec's *Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, a fifteenth-century Middle English translation of *Van den Blinkenden Steen* (*Sparkling Stone*); abstracts from Richard Rolle's *Ego Dormio* and *The Form of Living* and translations of his *De Emendatione Vitae* and *Incendium Amoris*, made by Richard Misyn for Margaret Heslyngton in 1434; abstracts from Heinrich Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*; a portion of *De Modo Bene Vivendi ad Sororem*, a treatise written by Thomas of Froidmont to his sister Margaret of Jerusalem.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries: Religion and Secular Life in Late medieval Yorkshire* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988), 104-9.

<sup>44</sup> London, Westminster Archdiocesan Archives, Westminster Treasury 4.

<sup>45</sup> St. Joseph's Colledge, Upholland Northern Institute.

<sup>46</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fond Anglais 40.

<sup>47</sup> London, British Library, Sloane 2499.

manuscript.<sup>48</sup> The Cressy manuscript is the only printed text and dates from 1670. The Benedictine Serenus Cressy presumably used both the Paris and Sloane manuscripts as source-texts for the printed edition.<sup>49</sup>

A comparison between Amherst and Paris (or Sloane) gives the impression that Julian wrote her visions down in an abridged form shortly after receiving them and further elaborated upon its theology during a period of twenty years. The Amherst manuscript is known as the short text, for it contains an abridged form of the Paris and Sloane manuscripts. Amherst is divided into twenty-five chapters and does not distinguish a number of sixteen visions. The first three chapters give an autobiographical account of Julian's desire for three gifts from God, while the subsequent chapters describe her vision. The Paris and Sloane manuscripts are known as the long text. Different from the Amherst manuscript is the division of the *Showing of Love* into sixteen visions and eighty-six chapters. The first chapter provides indices to the content of each vision. The second and third chapters give an autobiographical account that contains minor alterations to Amherst. The content of the vision is elaborated more fully than the description in Amherst. The striking feature of these manuscripts is the presence of visionary parable with a theological interpretation in the fourteenth vision, which is absent from the Amherst manuscript.<sup>50</sup>

The Paris manuscript will be the source-text for my research, because of its suitability for a spiritual hermeneutics of the *Showing of Love*. Editors of the manuscripts are not in agreement whether Paris or Sloane is closest in language to Julian's original writing.<sup>51</sup> For my research it is important that the Paris manuscript is slightly more detailed, as it includes several important theological insights that are absent in the Sloane manuscript. Those insights are in accordance with Julian's spirituality and integral for an understanding of Julian's mystagogy. John Skinner includes a passage of the first vision from Paris into his translation of Sloane for reasons of its authenticity.

This remarkable passage, earthly and yet discreet, does not appear in Sloane 2499 but only in the Paris MS. It is included, accepting that Julian herself

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<sup>48</sup> London, British Library, Sloane 3705.

<sup>49</sup> London, British Library, Stowe 42.

<sup>50</sup> For an elaborate description of the differences between the Amherst and Paris MSS see, Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 18-25.

<sup>51</sup> See Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 25-28; Glasscoe, *Revelation of Love*, vii-xi.

wrote it, rather than it being some later addition. Its very boldness seems to indicate this conclusion. Moreover, it bridges the sense from the previous paragraph in typical manner with authentic voice.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, the Sloane manuscript contains editorial introductory summaries to each chapter that mediate an interpretation and might inhibit a direct sense of Julian's mystagogy. No editorial interpretation is present in the Paris manuscript.

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<sup>52</sup> John Skinner, trans., *Revelation of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 13.

## Chapter 1: Anchoritic spirituality

Anchoritic rules form a genre within the monastic tradition of spiritual direction and are devoted to the spiritual formation of solitarily enclosed women. Anchoritic rules are intended to design the exterior and interior lifestyle of enclosure in order to create a holy space where the presence of God has a formative impact on the spirituality of the anchoress. The rules provide us with a paradigm that describes the lived spirituality of anchoresses and thus gives us an impression of the religious atmosphere in which Julian contemplates the secrets revealed in her vision and writes the *Showing of Love*. Firstly, the chapter describes the genre of anchoritic rules and the pastoral context in which they were written. Secondly, it examines significant concepts that organize the contemplative orientation of anchoritic spirituality around the relationship with God. Thirdly, it examines how a contemplative attitude nourishes a pastoral commitment to the world in which the anchoress lives.

### 1 Anchoritic rules

In the earliest surviving manuscript of a *Showing of Love*, the author's name 'Julian of Norwich' is mentioned with the express intention of identifying her as an anchoress. In the final sentence of the Amherst manuscript she is referred to as "Juliane de Norwyche" while in the preamble it is mentioned that Julian is still alive in 1413 and is an anchoress in Norwich.<sup>53</sup> This identification of Julian as an anchoress is maintained in the Paris manuscript, which concludes with the Latin phrase: "Deo gracias · Explicit liber revelacionum Julyane · anatorite norwyche cuius anime propicietur deus."<sup>54</sup> None of the manuscripts refer to her baptismal name. This fact accentuates that, when she was established in her cell, 'Julian' adopted the name of the patron saint of that church, Saint Julian, signifying that she had left her familiar identity behind and taken upon herself an identity in dedication to God.

Julian of Norwich's *Showing of Love* reveals an anchoress's spirituality, that is, an understanding of God's mystery in human life as perceived by a woman who

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<sup>53</sup> Amherst MS, 1: f.97r (710) and 25: f.115r (782).

<sup>54</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: f.174r (491).

was spiritually formed by the anchoritic tradition. It gives an account of a vision that is granted to an anchoress by the goodness of God. There is significance to the statement in the Amherst manuscript that the *Showing of Love* is written by a devout anchoress. There is a further significance conveyed by the fact that the visions are given to Julian by the goodness of God. This implies that receiving a revelation belongs to Julian's authentic vocation and is initiated by the will of God.

There es a visionn schewed be the goodenes of god to a deuoute womann, and hir name es Julyan, that is recluse atte Norwyche and 3itt ys onn lyfe, anno domini millesimo CCCC xiiij<sup>o</sup>; in the whilke visyonn er fulle many comfortabyll wordes and gretly styrrande to alle thaye that desires to be Crystes looverse.<sup>55</sup>

The significance of Julian's anchoritic enclosure is also emphasised in the Paris manuscript with a Latin eulogy: "Deo gracias · Explicit liber revelacionum Julyane · anatorite norwyche cuius anime propicietur deus."<sup>56</sup> These words are like insignia that honourably mark Julian as an anchoress, who by revelatory inspiration wrote a spiritual treatise on the love of God.

To understand the *Showing of Love* as the religious expression of an anchoress at the end of the fourteenth century, it is necessary to gain acquaintance with the spiritual literature that influenced anchoritic spirituality at that time. Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, anchoritic spirituality finds expression and guidance through pastoral writings that are specifically addressed to women.<sup>57</sup> An anchoress finds vocational inspiration in these pastoral writings, which encompass several spiritual genres: rules, saints lives, contemplative treatises and meditations on Christ's passion.<sup>58</sup> My analysis of contemplative and pastoral aspects of

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<sup>55</sup> Amherst MS, 1: f.97r (710).

<sup>56</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: f.174r (491).

<sup>57</sup> Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 103; Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 8-9; Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, 83.

<sup>58</sup> Aelred of Rievaulx, "A Rule of Life for a Recluse," in *Aelred of Rievaulx: Treatises and the Pastoral Prayer*, ed. M. Basil Pennington (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1971; reprint, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995); Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, trans. *Anchoritic Spirituality: 'Ancrone Wisse' and Associated Works*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1991); Richard Rolle: *The English Writings*, trans. Rosamund S. Allen (London: SPCK, 1989); *The Myroure of Recluses: A Middle English Translation of "Speculum Inclusorum"*, ed. Marta Powell Harley (London: Associated University Press, 1995); Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957, reissued with an introduction, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988). Not

anchoritic spirituality is based on late medieval English anchoritic rules written specifically for women.<sup>59</sup> This corpus includes Aelred of Rievaulx's (1110-67) *De Institutione Inclusarum* (*Rule of Life for a Recluse*); *Ancrene Wisse* (*Guide for Anchoresses*) written by an anonymous author in the early thirteenth century; Richard Rolle's (c.1300-49) *Form of Living*; and the *Myrour of Recluses*, which is a Middle English translation of *Speculum Inclusorum* written by an anonymous author at the beginning of the second half of the fourteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Increasing interest for the enclosed life influences the composition of anchoritic rules. Anchoritic rules are influenced by the spirituality of the desert fathers and mothers, and shaped by the devotional climate of the time.<sup>61</sup> The authority of the rules is based on maintaining a similarity between anchoritic life and the coenobitic monastic tradition.

The request of women to their spiritual advisers to compose religious treatises and rules for purposes of pastoral guidance stands in a long history of the Christian tradition.<sup>62</sup> The rules are usually pastoral letters written by male monastic

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specifically written for anchoritic life; *The Monk of Farne: The Meditations of a Fourteenth Century Monk, translated, from a Manuscript at Durham, by a Benedictine Nun at Stanbrook*, ed. Hugh Farmer (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961). *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978).

<sup>59</sup> Mary Rotha Clay makes a distinction between extant rules for anchoresses and extant rules for male solitaries. Mary Rotha Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914), 96-100. Warren remarks that the extant anchoritic rules indicate "the different face of English anchoritism," because on the continent recluses often followed a monastic rule, while anchoritic rules were generally absent. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, 102, n.24. Both Clay and Warren include Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* amongst anchoritic rules. In our thesis, however, we consider the *Scale of Perfection* not as a rule, but as a contemplative writing, for the reason that Hilton does not call this treatise a rule; it is not concerned with the organisation of anchoritic life, but only with its spirituality.

<sup>60</sup> For citation, I will use modern English translations of the Latin and Middle English manuscripts, except for the *Myrroure of Recluses* which is not extant in translation.

<sup>61</sup> Athanasius, *The Life of St. Anthony*, trans. Robert T. Meyer (Westminster: Newman Press; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950); Derwas J Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966); Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000-1150* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984); Thomas Spidlik, "Réclus. I. Orient et Russie," in Thomas Spidlik and Marie-Christine Chartier, "Réclus," *DSp.* 13 (1988), 217-22; Margot King, "Saint Macrina: The Hidden Face Behind the Tradition" and "The Desert Mothers," in *On Pilgrimage: The Best of Ten Years of Vox Benedictina (1984-93)*, ed. Margot King (Toronto: Peregrina, 1994), 99-110 and 125-48; Clifford Hugh Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 1-17.

<sup>62</sup> Joan M. Ferrante, *To the Glory of her Sex: Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 39-67. Between 1200 and 1230 a number of English anchoritic manuscripts were written to provide spiritual reading and guidance for female anchoresses. Their anonymous monastic authors were acquainted with each other and addressed their treatises to a small community of women who lived together as anchoresses. This group of anchoritic treatises include contemplative treatises: *Savles Wardre, Holy Maidenhood*; saints lives: *St. Katherine, St. Margaret and St. Juliana*; and a collection of short prayers and meditations: *The Wooing of Our Lord, An Orison to God Almighty, A song of Praise to our Lord, An Orison to St. Mary*. In the fourteenth century, Walter Hilton writes the *Scale of Perfection* for an anchoress, who he addresses as

authors on the request of anchoresses who feel in need of guidelines for religious practices and directives in the spirituality of enclosed life. The genesis of anchoritic rules show that they are the expression of lived religious practice. In their role as spiritual counsellor of anchorites, the authors are familiar with the anchoresses for whom they write and have gained an understanding of the exterior and interior demands of anchoritic life.

Aelred of Rievaulx, a Cistercian monk, writes *Rule of Life for a Recluse* at the insistent request of his sister:

For many years now, my sister, you have been asking me for a rule in the life you have embraced for the sake of Christ, to provide spiritual directives and formulate the basic practices of religious life... It was not for yourself alone that you wished me to write this rule, but also for the young girls who, on your advice, are eager to embrace a life like yours.<sup>63</sup>

Aelred apologises for his inexperience of the anchoritic life and therefore draws on the institutions of the fathers to present his sister with a reliable rule.<sup>64</sup> The spiritual director of three anchorites who live in a form of community and ask to be accommodated with a rule wrote *Ancrene Wisse*.<sup>65</sup> The hermit Richard Rolle writes the *Form of Living* for a befriended anchoress.<sup>66</sup> Because anchoritic rules originate in an environment of pastoral care, they provide insight into the spirituality of this form of complete enclosure. The *Mirror of Recluses* is not written originally for a female audience, but the changes and omissions that are apparent in the Middle English indicate that the translation is made in the context of pastoral care for female anchoresses.<sup>67</sup>

Anchoritic rules are formative of a spirituality of enclosure and provide

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his sister in Jesus Christ. The treatises of an anonymous fourteenth-century author might have been written for an anchoress; *Cloud of Unknowing* and *Epistle of Privy Counsel*. The same author's Middle English translation and interpretation of Dionysius's *Mystical Theology*, as *Denis Hid Divinity*, might well have been made for an anchoress. This anonymous author wrote his treatises for an anonymous person who is eager to make progress on the contemplative path. Scholars often interpret this person as a Carthusian novice. Since both treatises were written in Middle English, which was in the fourteenth century accessible for some women, while Latin was still the official religious language used between male monastics, they were possibly written for a woman pursuing a solitary vocation.

<sup>63</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 43-4.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 43 and 52.

<sup>65</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> Allen, *Richard Rolle*, 152-3.

<sup>67</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, xi-xxvi.

spiritual direction for anchoresses. In the opening paragraphs of *Ancrene Wisse* (or *Ancrene Rimle*), the author plays with words of similar meaning to render the intentionality of a rule: *rectus, regula, directio, rectificatio, richte and rimle*.<sup>68</sup> With that word play, he indicates that a rule gives direction and straightens the path to God. Like a compass needle is sensitive to magnetism, the rule makes the anchoress inwardly sensitive to the love of God as guidance to eternal life. Rules have the intention of designing a way of life for the anchoress by determining with a certain precision the daily hours for manual work, prayer, meditation and silence. That devotional rhythm constitutes a spiritual architecture. Similar to a cathedral dome constructed around the emptiness of inner space, the spiritual architecture of the anchoritic vocation is solidly constructed by the rhythm of reading the sacred word and meditating on its inner meaning in silence. The intention of a spiritual architecture is to create a mystical interior space; that is, meditation, prayer and silence create an inner attitude of receptivity for God.<sup>69</sup> The regulation of daily life through ascetic and spiritual exercises is viewed as the 'outward rule' that is visible in outward behaviour. The 'inner rule' governs the inner life towards the love for God and neighbour.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the coherence of ascetic and spiritual exercises is attuned to the inner rule of deepening love.

The architectural construction of the anchorhold is designed to enable the practice of love for God and one's neighbour. The anchorhold is a small cell attached to a church.<sup>71</sup> After the anchoress first enters the cell, the entrance is blocked in order to secure enclosure for life. In the cell stands an altar for devotions to Christ and Mary. Three windows are built into the cell to enable spiritual and social contact with the outside world. Through the church window the anchoresses can see the holy sacrament and participate in the Eucharist. The house window functions for the conversations between the anchoress and her servants. A small parlour window, covered with a black cloth, facilitates conversations with parishioners and clergy.<sup>72</sup> The architecture of the anchorhold reflects the twofold vocation that establishes the spiritual architecture of

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<sup>68</sup> Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 339-40 n.2.

<sup>69</sup> For an interpretation of the Carmelite rule in terms of 'spiritual architecture' and 'mystical space,' see Kees Waaijman, *De mystieke ruimte van de Karmel: Een uitleg van de karmelregel* (Kampen: Kok; Gent: Carmelitana, 1995).

<sup>70</sup> Rievaulx's *Rule of Life for a Recluse* is divided in two parts, which are devoted to outer and inner spiritual formation. *Ancrene Wisse* adopts this distinction between outer and inner rule.

<sup>71</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 101

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-4.

anchoritic life: a contemplative and a pastoral vocation. Attention is due to the interpretation of spiritual concepts applied in the rules to delineate the contemplative and pastoral aspects of anchoritic vocation.

## 2 Contemplative life

Gerard Sitwell argues that the *Ancrene Wisse* has an ascetic emphasis with little interest in contemplative prayer.<sup>73</sup> In my view, it is important to consider how in the *Ancrene Wisse* the interior rule of contemplative attentiveness to God's love sustains the ascetic practice of the exterior rule.<sup>74</sup> It is my contention that the rules portray a coherent lifestyle centred on silence and prayer that is intended to engender attentiveness to the mystery of God. They emphasise the coherence between ascetic practice and contemplation to draw out the inherent meaning of anchoritic spirituality. Waaijman defines contemplation as a designation of the spiritual life in which space and time are structured around an attentive God-seeking endeavour: "In the word 'contemplation' spirituality comes to the fore as a carefully reserved space and time in which a person, with unremitting attention, focuses on the divine."<sup>75</sup> The anchoritic rules give a spiritual interpretation of concepts to draw out how space and time are structured around contemplation. These concepts consist of vocation, withdrawal, silence and bridal love for Christ.

The spiritual architecture of complete enclosure is constructed around a personal vocation as gift from God. Aelred, in his description of meditations for anchoresses, encourages his sister to contemplate with gratitude the God given gift that has brought her to a chaste life in anchoritic enclosure.<sup>76</sup> The *Mirror of Recluses* stresses the importance that the prospective anchoress discerns whether or not she is in fact called by the love of God before taking the eternal vow. The decision to become enclosed for life should not be made according to one's own judgement and will. The counsel of spiritual mentors must approve the prospective anchoress's suitability for enclosed life and the truthfulness of her vocation. In obedience to the guidance and counsel of two or three sincere

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<sup>73</sup> Gerard Sitwell in the introduction to *Ancrene Riwle*, translated by M.B. Salu (London: Burns & Oats, 1955; reprint, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990).

<sup>74</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 47-52.

<sup>75</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 342.

<sup>76</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 92-7.

persons, the prospective anchoress will be tested for the solitary life during a probationary period of at least one year.<sup>77</sup> God's call is experienced by the anchoress as a cause, a motif, a stirring or a principal intention to enter into the sweetness of God.<sup>78</sup> The authenticity of the vocation to anchoritic life is assured by a continuous desire for the solitary life and the perseverance in charity. With the light of truth and knowledge given by the Holy Spirit, the anchoress will discern how and by whom she is called to embrace the anchoritic life.<sup>79</sup>

The *Mirror of Recluses* is written within the tradition of discernment of spirits. The metaphor of the mirror indicates the necessity of self-awareness regarding the motivation for a solitary vocation: "Seeth and beholdip your owen self" and "Seeth now xoure callynge and clepyng."<sup>80</sup> A solitary vocation is distinguished from a conversion to Christian life by exterior means, such as the example of a holy person, reading Scripture or listening to a sermon.<sup>81</sup> It demands an emptying of the self-centred will and loosening resistance to God's call. To follow the call of one's vocation involves a profound belief in the wisdom of God; a trust that both the strengths and defects of one's physical and spiritual condition will be used profitably by God who ordains gifts according to the strengths and weaknesses of the anchoress.<sup>82</sup> With the will held in susceptible obedience to God, the anchoress is moulded through God's hands.<sup>83</sup>

Withdrawal into solitude is the foundation of the anchoritic vocation, as is indicated by the Greek *anachoretēs* which means withdrawn from the world.<sup>84</sup> *Ancer* is the Old English word for a hermit and means one who lives in solitude.<sup>85</sup> Aelred of Rievaulx judges the enclosure into "a cell with the entrance walled up" to be suitable for the spiritual life of his sister.<sup>86</sup> He writes to his sister: "You have withdrawn from the world to the fullest extent and are forbidden not only to possess but even to see and to hear what belongs to the world."<sup>87</sup> His rule sets out

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<sup>77</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 8-10. On the Episcopal responsibility for enclosure, see Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, 90-3; Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons*, 40-9.

<sup>78</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 11.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7. See 2 John 1.8 and 1 Corinthians. 1.26.

<sup>81</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 10.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, 73; Louis Gougaud, *Ermîtes et Reclus: Etudes sur d'Anciennes Formes de Vie Religieuse* (Vienne: Abbaye Saint-Martin de Liguge, 1928), 3; Marie-Christine Chartier. "Réclus. II. Occident." *DSp* 13 (1988), 221-8.

<sup>85</sup> Salu, *Ancrene Rinle*, 63 n. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 45.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

the institutionalisation of complete enclosure whilst providing religious significance to the reality of being immured. That religious significance is “to enjoy greater freedom in expressing their ardent longing for Christ’s embrace.”<sup>88</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, influenced by *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, elaborates upon the relationship between enclosure and inner devotion: “My dear sisters, just as you guard well your senses outwardly, so, above all else, see to it that you are gentle and mild and humble within.”<sup>89</sup>

Withdrawal demands ascetic practices that encourage the leaving behind of worldly desires. Yet, asceticism is not the goal of anchoritic life, but is intended to direct the anchoress to receive God in the purity of heart. Richard Rolle emphasises that anchoritic life cannot be understood by someone who does not live this form of life and who only perceives the harshness of its ascetic practices without being aware of the sweetness of inner communication with God that it facilitates.<sup>90</sup> Anchoritic rules affirm that the aim of physical enclosure is the enhancement of the ‘enclosure of the mind’ in complete concentration on God: “Direct your thoughts utterly to God, as you have by your outward appearance directed your body.”<sup>91</sup> Withdrawal from the world and its accompanying ascetic practices are aimed at the quietness of mind: a mind withdrawn from the world and in union with God.

Withdrawal from the world means entering into a ‘secret place.’<sup>92</sup> In the secret chamber an anchoress is alone, in silence and has her inner senses attuned to God. “Anchoresses who do not care about outward things with ear or eye now, will see and understand God’s hidden secrets and his secret judgements the more clearly there.”<sup>93</sup> The anchoritic cell is intended to be a contemplative environment, where, in solitude, the anchoress becomes receptive to divine presence. *Rule of Life for a Recluse* and *Ancrene Wisse* include an exhortation on silence and solitude. The silence that comes with solitude forms the core of anchoritic life, because silence is a prayerful attentiveness to God. The Holy Spirit speaks when the mind is silent. In silence the Holy Spirit infuses the anchoress with a longing for God and lifts her mind towards heavenly delights.<sup>94</sup> The anchoritic cell provides a spiritual

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>89</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 93.

<sup>90</sup> Rolle, *Form of Living*, 157-8.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>92</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 82.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>94</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 96. See *Ancrene Wisse*, 105-6.

environment that is suitable for divine inspiration that leads to a deeper knowledge of God.

The rules use bridal imagery drawn from a spiritual exegesis of the Song of Songs in order to clarify the affective relationship between the anchoress and Christ. Bridal imagery is also used to illustrate the spiritual interiority of the anchoritic cell. Aelred introduces the image of the anchoritic cell as a 'bridal chamber.' He interprets the spiritual interior of the anchorhold as a contemplative solitude wherein the anchoress receives the marital enjoyment of being loved by Christ. The desire for God is expressed in terms of bridal mysticism as a longing for Christ's embrace. The desire is engendered by Christ's desire to beautify his bride with all the virtues that flow from love.<sup>95</sup> *Ancrene Wisse* conveys a profound sense of the mystical dimension of anchoritic life in imagining the anchoress as 'God's chamber' and the anchorhold as 'prison of God.'<sup>96</sup> The images convey that both anchoress and anchorhold are the embodiment of God's indwelling.<sup>97</sup> The anchorhold understood as 'prison of God' describes the anchoritic form of life in terms of its physical and spiritual enclosure. God imprisons the anchoress through her own calling to love God. She is called into physical enclosure in order to belong completely to God.

The spiritual direction given by anchoritic rules directs the anchoress in the art of entrusting her life to God. *Ancrene Wisse* composes a daily prayer that expresses how the interior space of the anchorhold is structured by the anchoress's contemplative awareness of God's indwelling.

But what place is there in me where my God may come, where God may come and dwell in me, God who made heaven and earth? Is it so, Lord my God; is there anything in me which can contain You? Who will grant that You may come into my heart and make it drunk, that I may embrace You, O my one good? What are You to me? Have mercy, that I may speak. The house of my soul is too narrow for You- so that You may enter it, let it be made large by You.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 62-3.

<sup>96</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 82, 88 and 101.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem.*

Prayer is an abandonment of a self-centred will and reaches out towards a purity of heart in which God can dwell. Prayer expresses the desire of abandoning oneself in surrender to God's overpowering love and thus to become anchored in a wilful longing for God.

Anchoritic rules further make clear an eschatological feature of spirituality by cultivating awareness of death and salvation. *Ancrene Wisse* accentuates the anchoress's enclosure for life with the metaphorical image of the anchorhold as Christ's tomb: an anchoress is dead to the world and her anchorhold is a sepulchre where she is buried with Christ.<sup>99</sup> The image of Christ's tomb centres the anchoritic vocation within the Paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. The understanding of anchoritic life as the enactment of Christ's passion finds its deepest roots in the Pauline theology of mystical participation in Christ: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ lives in me."<sup>100</sup> Anne Savage perceives that the anchorhold is transformed "into a cross" and confers upon anchoresses "their high spiritual status as Christ-like women."<sup>101</sup> To view anchoritic life as *imitatio Christi*, emphasises awareness of suffering in the light of Christ's death and resurrection: "In the thoughts of the heart and in the bitterness of the flesh, they carry God's cross."<sup>102</sup> Attentiveness to human suffering in the light of the resurrection of Christ constitutes the transformative dynamic that interests the anchoress.

In the spiritual environment of the anchoress, the resurrection is anticipated and emphasis is made on the eschatological perspective of human life. Contemplation gives the anchoress an insight into the secrets of God and a taste of the beatific vision. The anchoress's perception of eschatological time is grounded in her awareness of the beatitude to come. The *Rule of Life for a Recluse* develops the image of the longing for Christ's embrace with another image from the Song of Songs: "My beloved is mine and I am his."<sup>103</sup> The fulfilment of the contemplative vocation exists in union with Christ. The anchoritic vocation is characterised by a seeking for Christ that will be fulfilled in the encounter with God face to face. He encourages the anchoress to envisage that she stands before

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 111. Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 62.

<sup>100</sup> Galatians, 2.20.

<sup>101</sup> Anne Savage, "The Solitary Heroine," in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge, Rochester and New York: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 70.

<sup>102</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 97.

<sup>103</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 102.

God's judgement-seat and to see how her love predestines her to see the face of Christ.<sup>104</sup> The beatific vision increases the anchoress's desire for the love of Christ.<sup>105</sup> The meditation on the beatitude gives knowledge of God's self-revelation within creation.

To be sure, what surpasses all these things, that is the sight, the knowledge and the love of the Creator. He will be seen in himself, he will be seen in all his creatures, ruling everything without anxiety, upholding everything without toil, giving himself and, so to speak, distributing himself to one and all according to their capacity without any lessening or division of himself.<sup>106</sup>

The anchoress is given a spiritual sight of the Trinity: "The Father will be seen in the Son, the Son in the Father, the holy Spirit in both. He will be seen not as a confused reflection in a mirror, but face to face."<sup>107</sup>

The *Mirror of Recluses* interprets the anchoritic vocation as a gift of God's saving love.<sup>108</sup> The rule elaborates upon Romans 8.28 to authorise the idea that God elects the anchoress amongst the few. Her predestination to possess eternal life is grounded in the grace of her love for God.<sup>109</sup> The *Mirror of Recluses* admonishes the anchoress to contemplate the saving work of God: "Seeth the werkes of God."<sup>110</sup> Her contemplation strengthens awareness of God's steadfast and almighty will in the government of the creation. She also meditates on the nobility of the soul as it is created in the image of the Trinity. Meditation nurtures the contemplative awareness of God's might in creating out of nothing; of God's wisdom governing creation; of God's goodness bringing salvation through the passion of Christ; and of the perfect righteousness of the last judgement.<sup>111</sup> The anchoress withdraws from worldly thoughts and the activity of her mind is suspended to become attentive to God.<sup>112</sup> She receives insight into the hidden mysteries of God that surpass human intelligence and reason. She receives insight

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 102: "Hence there is born such love, such ardent affection, such sweetness of charity, such abundance of enjoyment, such vehement desire, that neither does satiety lessen desire nor desire hinder satiety."

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>107</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem; Rolle, *Form of Living*, 69.

<sup>110</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 26. See Psalm 65.5.

<sup>111</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 24.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 16-7.

into the articles of faith, such as the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ.<sup>113</sup> As in a mirror and in darkness, the anchoress beholds the beatitude to come and has “some foretaste of the sweetness of the future blessedness in the delectation of the divine goodness (...) in some sort of vision and ineffable consolation of the Almighty.”<sup>114</sup> The integrity of her faith makes the anchoress receptive to the secrets of God and to an eschatological perspective on human life.

### 3 Pastoral care

Jonathan Hughes describes anchorites and anchoresses as “solitaries: men and women who, in an attempt to get closer to God, strove to achieve a physical and emotional detachment from human society.”<sup>115</sup> It is a misunderstanding to view the enclosed life as a way to emotional detachment from human society in order to concentrate solely on God. Anne Savage correctly perceives that “the heroic affirmation of faith will be for the anchoress always in the context of her commitment to suffering by her chosen way of life, enclosed in the anchorage.”<sup>116</sup> Recent papers on the communal aspect of solitary life acknowledge that the solitary life as separation from society is not rightly perceived without regard for the complementing union of the solitary with all humanity.

The solitary, though he may spend much time alone is *never* alone in the sense of being alienated from humanity, unaware of its sorrows and agonies and unmindful of his responsibility to bring persons, known and unknown, to the mercy of God through prayer.<sup>117</sup>

A committed consciousness of the suffering that is present amongst all humanity shapes the intention with which the anchoress prays. The spirituality of enclosure inspires an anchoress to perfection of charity towards one’s neighbour that finds

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 37-40.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>115</sup> Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, 64.

<sup>116</sup> Savage, “Solitary Heroine,” 70.

<sup>117</sup> Mary Clare, “Eremitical Revival in the Anglican Church in the Twentieth Century,” in *Solitude and Communion, Papers on the Hermit Life given at St. David’s, Wales in the Autumn of 1975*, ed. Arthur M. Allchin, (Fairacres: Sisters of the Love of God Press, 1977; reprint, Fairacres: Sisters of the Love of God Press, 1983), 67.

its source in the boundless charity of God.<sup>118</sup>

Research concerning the pastoral function of solitaries emphasise the holiness gained through that particular life of prayer.<sup>119</sup> In his study of the sources of pastoral care in the patristic and medieval Christian tradition, Thomas Oden describes pastoral care as a therapeutic human relationship that cannot be detached from God's eternal care for humanity.

The pastoral tradition has not viewed human care autonomously, as if everything were dependent upon fleeting, changing human initiative. Rather human caring is energised and embraced by God's own steady caring for the world.<sup>120</sup>

Anchoritic rules reason that the pastoral profession is an intrinsic aspect of the anchoress's vocation, because the holiness of the contemplative life informs the strength of presence, prayer and counsel. Pastoral care is not performed through almsgiving, because the possession of money jeopardises the vow of poverty. Rather, the anchoress cultivates good will for humanity through her contemplative lifestyle. Contemplative prayer underlies the profession of pastoral care for the reason that the attentiveness to God cultivates the love for neighbour.<sup>121</sup> Anchoritic rules guide the anchoress into a spirituality that is characterised by a deepening love for Christ that becomes reflected in a deepened compassion with human life.

The architecture of the anchorhold reflects the anchoress's spiritual commitment to her fellow Christians. *Ancrene Wisse* makes a comparison between the architecture of the anchorhold and the importance of the anchoress's holiness for the spiritual integrity of the church community. The rule interprets the Middle English word for solitude *ancer* in terms of an anchor. The anchorhold is anchored to the church and forms a buttress for it. In the same way, the anchoress is an anchor that sustains the church community in the steadfastness of faith. An

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<sup>118</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 77-8.

<sup>119</sup> Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*; 146-166; Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 103-52; Henry Mayr-Harting, "Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse," *History* 60 (1975): 337-52.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Counsel* (New York: Crossroad, 1987: reprint with a new preface, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 89.

<sup>121</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 74-8.

anchoress's holiness is a safeguard against temptations for the community.<sup>122</sup> The spiritual interior of enclosed life is designed to make the anchoress attentive to both God and society, or in religious terms: to one's neighbour. The inward devotion of the anchoress is never separated from a pastoral engagement with the vicissitudes of life in the world.

An anchoress's election to receive the beatific life, through the grace of God, involves a commitment to a pastoral attitude that is grounded in the holiness of her life. Her withdrawal from the world enhances her compassion with human life. Her withdrawal from the world enhances her compassion with human life. Anchoritic rules feature a deep concern for pastoral prayer.<sup>123</sup> In the solitude of her cell, the anchoress establishes a firm faith in God's goodness. Her faith reassures her to ask comfort for those in difficulties and tribulations and to pray for the salvation of humankind. She prays with continual remembrance of both the goodness and the suffering in the world.<sup>124</sup> The *Ancrene Wisse* admonishes the anchoress to take to heart human suffering and distress.

At some time in the day or night have in your heart all the sick and sorrowful who are suffering pain and poverty, and think of the torments which people are undergoing in prison, where they lie in heavy iron fetters, and especially of those Christians who are among the heathen, some in prisons, some in as great servitude as are oxen and asses. Think with compassion of those who are under great temptations. Keep the griefs of all these in your heart and sigh to Our Lord that He may take pity on them and look on them with the eyes of His mercy, and if you have time say the psalm *I have lifted up mine eyes*, etc.<sup>125</sup>

Trust in God stands at the centre of an anchoress's pastoral prayer. Her prayer will be in accordance with the meaning of the words in the *Our Father*, a prayer given by Christ which expresses trust that God will provide for physical and spiritual needs.<sup>126</sup> The foundation of prayer is faith in God's goodness, because the will to pray for the relief of suffering and to ask for the fulfilment of human need is grounded in a trust in God's compassionate love. It is the vocation of the anchoress to conform her will to the will of God; which means, to pray with

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<sup>122</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 101.

<sup>123</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 19-23.

<sup>124</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 77-8.

<sup>125</sup> Translation taken from Salu, *Ancrene Riwle*, 12-3.

<sup>126</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 21.

compassion for the hurts, wounds and anguish in human life. The anchoress bears in mind that the source of relief and fulfilment is found in the grace and mercy of God, who provides what is necessary for human life out of boundless compassion.<sup>127</sup> Her devotion is a deep trust in God, together with the awareness that God's will is above human understanding. She prays for the fulfilment of God's will with the understanding that God's knowledge of human needs is sublime.

The anchoress's pastoral profession is not only ministered by a contemplative vocation of pastoral prayer, but also by an active ministry of spiritual direction. She is encouraged to give spiritual direction to those women who are pursuing a religious vocation. Significant is the request of Aelred's sister for an anchoritic rule to aid her with the spiritual instruction of young women. Those women converse with the anchoress about their wish to enter into enclosure.<sup>128</sup> Unfortunately, the rules do not elaborate upon the anchoress's pastoral conversations, but several significant details confirm the anchoress's profession as spiritual director. From the *Rule of Life for a Recluse* we might conclude that an anchoress was expected to give spiritual direction to religious and lay people who came to converse with her.<sup>129</sup> The anchoress is only allowed to speak with a young man or with a person of doubtful character when they are in real need. In the presence of her confessor the anchoress is allowed to converse with bishops, abbots and well-known priors who have a wish to speak with her. The anchoress converses with them only incidentally and in confidentiality, making them the recipient of her confidences (*secretum*). The nature of her confidences might exist in the anchoress's confession heard by the cleric. But it might also be interpreted as spiritual direction provided by the anchoress, for the Latin *secretum* denotes knowledge of God's secrets.<sup>130</sup>

*Ancrene Wisse* confirms that an anchoress is allowed to give spiritual direction to women. However, the *Ancrene Wisse* sets boundaries to the pastoral profession of the anchoress regarding men. It prohibits the anchoress to preach and teach. Neither is she allowed to counsel men or to criticise and blame them for their

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>128</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 52.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 51-2.

<sup>130</sup> See William of Saint Thierry, *The Golden Epistle: A Letter to the Brethren at Mont Dieu*, trans. Theodore Berkeley (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 25.299-300.

vices.<sup>131</sup> Rolle's *Form of Living* does not set these boundaries and gives greater responsibility to the pastoral role of the anchoress. Amongst sins that can be conducted by an anchoress is a lack in pastoral care.

Not correcting those who sin in one's presence, not reconciling disputes, not instructing those who are ignorant, nor supporting those who are in sadness, or sickness, or poverty, or undergoing penance, or in prison.<sup>132</sup>

An anchoress is obliged to give instruction in the craft of dying as she specialises in the remembrance of death and meditates on the destinations of hell, purgatory and heaven:

We should reflect on how great is the joy of those who persevere in God' love to their death... And besides, consider what agony and what grief and torment those are destined to have who do not love God.<sup>133</sup>

To give appropriate counsel about life after death is essential to the spiritual direction given by the anchoress. It is considered an act of charity that she will be "instructing those who are about to pass away as to how they should act."<sup>134</sup>

Dennis Martin observes "the quest for assurance of salvation constituted a major pastoral problem in the Middle Ages."<sup>135</sup> A reading of the anchoritic rules provides insight into the spiritual architecture of complete enclosure constructed around a contemplative and pastoral interiority of anchoritic life that is sustained by an eschatological awareness of the anchoress. In the enclosed space of the anchorhold, perceived both as bridal chamber and Christ's tomb, the anchoress is spiritually positioned between heaven and hell. The anchoress's meditation on God's judgement and the beatitude to come influences her pastoral approach to the concerns of her parishioners. She prays for the humans in purgatory. "Many would have been lost who are saved through the anchoress's prayers."<sup>136</sup> Her intercessory role for salvation is accentuated, because of her understanding of the

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<sup>131</sup> *Ancrone Wisse*, 72 and 75.

<sup>132</sup> Rolle, *Form of Living*, 166.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-3.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>135</sup> Dennis Martin, "Popular and Monastic Pastoral Issues in the Later Middle Ages," *Church History* 56 (1987): 320.

<sup>136</sup> *Ancrone Wisse*, 111.

destinations in life after death. The eschatological directive of the anchoritic vocation is made manifest in her meditations on the last judgement. She meditates on the departing of her soul from the body at the moment of death, at which time sins will be openly shown and God pronounces judgement. She meditates on the great sadness of the heart; for hell is the absence of the vision of God and thus there is neither comfort for pain nor any consolation for despair.<sup>137</sup>

## **Conclusion**

An exploration of the anchoritic rules brings to the fore how the contemplative intentionality of anchoritic life establishes a spirituality that is grounded in the loving relationship with Christ, in whom the anchoress loses her self-centredness as Christ comes to live within her. The rhythm of prayer and silence is conducive to an in-depth understanding of the articles of faith and her contemplation reaches out to the eschatological mystery of seeing God face to face. Anchoritic enclosure provides a spiritual lifestyle in which mystagogy can flourish, as the anchoress becomes attentive to the inner guidance of God and her will is oriented to an assimilation with the will of God. She comes to experience the will of God as a love for neighbour that is compassionate with human suffering and needs. Compassionate love anchors her pastoral profession in an availability to listen to the concerns that arise within the world around her and makes her attentive to all forms of suffering. Her awareness of God's saving presence grounds her vocation as a spiritual director. The examination of contemplative and pastoral aspects of anchoritic spirituality lays the foundation for an understanding of Julian's autobiography and spiritual development, as will be explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>137</sup> *Myroure of Recluses*, 30-1.

## Chapter 2: A Gift of God

With Julian's *Showing of Love*, we possess a theological treatise written by an anchoress with the express intention of giving comfort to her fellow Christians and guiding them into a personal relationship with God. The outstanding feature of this treatise is that the profoundness of her theology is rooted in her vision of God's love. This chapter explores how Julian's vocation as an anchoress, visionary and theologian receives coherence through her attentiveness to God's will. The analysis is drawn from Julian's short autobiography and the autobiographical references within the *Showing of Love* that disclose her spiritual search. Firstly, the chapter provides a brief description of her life and the queries around her intellectual formation. Secondly, it underlines that Julian's spiritual formation is stimulated by a calling from God and is sustained by the anchoritic tradition. Thirdly, it addresses her divine inspiration as the foundation of her understanding of the mysteries of faith and her intention for writing the *Showing of Love*. Fourthly, it examines how a mystagogical process, in which her faith is guided by God's self-communication, influences the development of Julian's theology.

### 1 A devout woman

In addition to the knowledge that Julian was an anchoress in the cell attached to St. Julian's church in Norwich and her autobiographical description in the *Showing of Love*, there is the account of her pastoral counsel with Margery Kempe (c.1373-c.1440) that gives information about her personality and religious profession.<sup>138</sup>

The introductory chapters to the *Showing of Love* form a spiritual autobiography in the sense that Julian gives an insight into her Christian identity: the yearning that shaped her spirituality during her youth, until, at the age of thirty, she receives a visionary experience that becomes an inspirational gift that she develops during the rest of her life. She gives a detailed account of her longing for three gifts of God: which include a deeper feeling of the passion and a near-fatal illness.<sup>139</sup> In hindsight, the longings support her susceptibility to the revelation. She explains

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<sup>138</sup> Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. Barry A. Windeatt (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985; reprint with a revised bibliography, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994), 35-7.

<sup>139</sup> Paris MS, 2-3: ff.3r-7r (147-55).

how the progression of a paralysing illness, at the age of thirty and a half, caused a state of mind that made her attentive to a sequence of visions on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1373.<sup>140</sup> We can thus deduce that Julian was born in November 1342. There is no further information about the continuation of Julian's life from the age of thirty, except for the mention of two dates in the *Showing of Love* that are relevant for her growing insight into the meaning of the visions. Fifteen years after the day of the visions she received by revelation insight into the divine appeal to love.<sup>141</sup> Five years later a deeper grasp of the divine judgement was given her.<sup>142</sup> Both dates are mentioned in the long text only and support the opinion amongst scholars that the short text is an early record, while the long text is written over a period of at least twenty years contemplation.<sup>143</sup>

At an early age, or at some point during those years of contemplation, Julian followed her vocation of solitary enclosure and became an anchoress in St. Julian's cell. We cannot exclude any reasonable possibilities about her life before she became an anchoress. In the Middle Ages the life of an anchoress could be preceded by either monastic or family life.<sup>144</sup> It is possible that she had been married and widowed or a beguine, dedicated to a life in accordance with vows and in the evangelical care of her neighbours.<sup>145</sup> Possibly she could have belonged to a monastic order, such as the Benedictines, for the Benedictine convent Carrow Abbey held the advowson over St. Julian's cell.<sup>146</sup> Although there is no evidence that Julian took vows in a monastic order, the assumption that she had an affiliation with a contemplative tradition is likely, because it gives a good preparation for the solitary life.

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<sup>140</sup> Paris MS, 3: ff.5r-7r (151-55) and 16.65: f.141r (425). For a comparison between the time of the visions and the liturgical time, see Marion Glasscoe, "Time of Passion: Latent Relationships between Liturgy and Meditation in Two Middle English Mystics," in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in Honour of S. S.*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 141-60.

<sup>141</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: ff.173r-v (489-90).

<sup>142</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.96v (336).

<sup>143</sup> See P. Franklin Chambers in the note to the thirteenth edition of *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. Grace Warrack, 13th ed. (1901; reprint, London: Methuen, 1952), vii-viii; John Lawlor, "A Note on the Revelations of Julian of Norwich," *Review of English Studies* 2 (1951): 255-8. Nicholas Watson proposes that the completion of the Amherst manuscript was at the earliest in 1382, while the long texts was written much later than 1393 and is therefore an early fifteenth-century manuscript. Nicholas Watson, "The Composition of Julian of Norwich's Revelation of Love," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 637-83.

<sup>144</sup> Clay, *Hermits and Anchorites*, 92; Benedicta Ward in the preface to *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 4.

<sup>145</sup> For the existence of groups of beguines in Norwich, see Norman Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 64-5.

<sup>146</sup> Colledge and Walsh support the view that Julian belonged to a religious house and entered the anchorhold in 1393 or 1394, which, according to their view, is after the completion of the long text. Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 43-4.

The life is one which demands considerable maturity, human and psychological, as well as ascetic and spiritual. It is not a way to be taken unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, and it will not ordinarily be undertaken without some considerable experience of a regular life of prayer and obedience lived in community.<sup>147</sup>

The pastoral procedure under auspices of the bishop, to which an anchoress is subjected before her final confinement, is instituted to ensure that solitary enclosure is not taken on without mature experience of religious life.

Julian refers to herself as “a Symple creature vnlettyrde.”<sup>148</sup> It is neither certain what her self-expression indicates about her education nor what the intention is behind her words. Marion Glasscoe argues that Julian was illiterate and thus an amanuensis wrote the *Showing of Love*.<sup>149</sup> Margery Kempe, whose autobiography explicitly relates how two scribes supported her, followed this procedure.<sup>150</sup> Rosalyn Voaden argues that the importance of the scribe is accentuated by the fact that their appointment was often attributed to divine intervention.<sup>151</sup> Since a scribe can interfere with the authenticity of the narrative, it is important to find someone who is able to understand and accurately describe the religious experience. Julian mentions a priest who installs the cross on her deathbed and a monk who reassures her of her divine inspiration, but nowhere refers to an amanuensis.<sup>152</sup>

Lynn Staley Johnson develops the idea of Julian as a highly skilled author.<sup>153</sup> The emergence of vernacular religious writings gave women the opportunity to write and read theological and spiritual treatises.<sup>154</sup> Julian most likely wrote her revelations with her own hand, while elaborating upon her writing at least fifteen to twenty years during which she received further enlightenment into the

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<sup>147</sup> Arthur M. Allchin, “The Solitary Vocation: Some Theological Considerations,” in *Solitude and Communion*, 3.

<sup>148</sup> Paris MS, 2: f.3r (147).

<sup>149</sup> Glasscoe, *Revelation of Love*, xviii-xix.

<sup>150</sup> Kempe, *Margery Kempe*, 35-7.

<sup>151</sup> Rosalyn Voaden, “God’s Almighty Hand: Women Co-Writing the Book,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, vol. 1, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 62-3.

<sup>152</sup> Paris MS, 3: 6v (153) and 16.66: ff.141v-142r (426-7).

<sup>153</sup> Lynn Staley Johnson, “The Trope of the Scribe and the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe,” *Speculum* 66 (1991): 820-38.

<sup>154</sup> Herbert Grundmann, “Die Frauen und die Literatur im Mittelalter: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Schrifttums in der Volkssprache,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 26 (1936): 129-61.

theological meaning of the visions. Thus, the *Showing of Love* gives an impression of the literacy of an unlettered woman. Julian's statement of being an unlettered woman does not exclude her authorship of the *Showing of Love*. It seems to suggest that her knowledge is derived from visionary inspiration, rather than based upon academic education. Writing theology was an exceptional undertaking for a woman in the Middle Ages. The fact that female theological writers made use of the visionary genre to convey their wisdom, clarifies that divine inspiration was the accepted access to the knowledge of God. Theological authorship for women was only acceptable if sustained by visionary inspiration.<sup>155</sup> Julian might have been conscious of visionary books written by Elizabeth of Schönau (1129-64), Mechtild of Hackeborn (1241-99), Bridget of Sweden (1303-73) and Catherine of Siena (1347-80). Their visionary books were available in Middle English.<sup>156</sup> She followed the example of women in accepting that writing theology belonged to her vocation.

The importance of Julian's literacy, especially Latin, lies in the use of theological sources, that is, whether or not she was acquainted with mystical and theological treatises that would have influenced and deepened her understanding of the revelations. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh make a case in favour of Julian's thorough acquaintance with monastic theological and devotional treatises and her highly skilled abilities as a writer. They support their conclusion with external evidence, that is, the possibility of Julian's education at the Benedictine convent Carrow Abbey and the availability of theological manuscripts in Norwich. Colledge and Walsh argue that Julian's statement of being unlettered is dictated by humility and a theology of grace, as well as a wish to hide her erudition. They conclude that Julian was an heiress of the monastic traditions of *lectio divina*.<sup>157</sup>

Anna Maria Reynolds studied some literary influences in Julian's *Showing of*

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<sup>155</sup> See Elizabeth Avilda Petroff, ed., *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Voaden, "God's Almighty Hand," 55-65; Sabine Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Visionary Life*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998; reprint, London: Routledge, 2001), 40-54.

<sup>156</sup> Ruth J. Dean, "Manuscripts of St. Elizabeth of Schönau in England," *The Modern Language Review* 32 (1937): 62-71; Roger Ellis, "Flores ad Fabricandum... Coronam: An Investigation into the Uses of the Revelations of St. Bridget in Fifteenth Century England," *Medium Aevum* 51 (1982); *The Booke of Gostley Grace of Mechtild of Hackeborn*, ed. Theresa A. Halligan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979); Bridget of Sweden, *The Liber Celestis of St. Bridget of Sweden: The Middle English Version in British Library Ms Claudius B, Together with a Life of the Saint from the same Manuscript*, vol. 1., ed. Roger Ellis (London: Oxford University Press, 1988); 163-86; Catherine of Siena, *The Orchard of Syon*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

<sup>157</sup> Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 39-59.

*Love*, ranging from the Scriptures, the patristic tradition to near contemporary female and male writers. She acknowledges that Julian's work is "full of scriptural allusions and imagery" and contains throughout "echoes of other spiritual writings." She concludes that Julian is "securely entrenched in the religious traditions of her age" and that she appropriates theological insights contained in both Scripture and in the monastic writing with which she was familiar.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, as much as Julian might have been knowledgeable of other spiritual writings, nowhere are direct sources traceable with the exception of a citation from Gregory the Great's (540-604) *Life of Saint Benedict*.<sup>159</sup> Reynolds also confirms the uniqueness of Julian's writing and affirms David Knowles's observation that "Julian is as original as a Christian writer can well be."<sup>160</sup>

Whether Julian had actually read the patristic and monastic works or whether they were read to her is of little importance considering the uniqueness with which she integrates her sources into the revealed theology of her visions. Oral delivery was a common means to get acquainted with written literature.<sup>161</sup> Nonetheless, it can be expected that Julian had the ability to read if one takes into consideration that anchoritic rules were written specifically for female anchoresses and they encouraged the anchoress to take a book and read.<sup>162</sup> She likely took advantage of the hours in the rhythm of anchoritic life that were set apart for reading. Her visionary revelation and the silence of her anchoritic life might have stimulated her original and authentic insight into fundamental theological doctrines, while her appropriation of monastic writings gave her originality a strong foundation within the Christian tradition.

Julian's treatise was not widely disseminated amongst her contemporaries,

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<sup>158</sup> Anna Maria Reynolds, "Some Literary Influences in the Revelations of Julian of Norwich (c 1342-post-1416)," *Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages* 7-8 (1952): 18-28. Some scholars approach the question of literary influences in Julian from the perspective of the availability of manuscripts in England at the end of the fourteenth century. See Oliver Davies, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988), 158-61; Roger Lovatt, "Henry Suso and the Medieval Mystical Tradition in England," in *Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1982), 47-62.

<sup>159</sup> Reynolds, *Literary Influences*, 23.

<sup>160</sup> David Knowles, *The English Mystics* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourn, 1927), 131.

<sup>161</sup> Ruth Crosby, "Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 11 (1936): 88-110.

<sup>162</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 56; *Ancrene Wisse*, 64 and 138; Hilton, *Ladder of Perfection*, 15. This argument for readership amongst English anchoresses is fully developed by Bella Millett, "Women in No Man's Land: English Recluses and the Development of Vernacular Literature," in *Women and Literature in Britain, c.1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 86-103. For a study of female literacy and religious readership in the late Middle Ages in England and Julian of Norwich in particular, see Felicity Riddy, "Women Talking about the Things of God: A Late medieval Subculture," in *Women and Literature*, ed. Meale, 104-27.

which is demonstrated by the fact that the Amherst is the only surviving manuscript from the fifteenth century. Joan Nuth attributes her moderateness to a cautious attitude in spreading her theology, as it raises questions about the church's teaching in a climate that was suspicious of unorthodox teaching in the vernacular.<sup>163</sup> As her theology challenges official doctrinal position, the question of audience becomes even more significant. Both Barry Windeatt and Mark Burrows argue that Julian's theology is developed in such a way that it escapes the narrow boundaries of a monastic readership and is inclusive of a lay audience.<sup>164</sup> Windeatt suggests that the Amherst manuscript is addressed to those who are pursuing the contemplative life, whereas the expanded manuscripts adopt an inclusive attitude as Julian develops the universalism of her theology.<sup>165</sup> "That universalism which upon meditation Julian perceives as one of the great themes of her shewings could not be fully expressed if the text continued to be so narrowly defined."<sup>166</sup>

In contrast, Nowakowski suggests that Julian propounds an exclusive theology that is addressed to the Christian elect as her audience.

She expresses neither anxiety nor arrogance about herself or her readers as she presents the theodicy of the predestined. Rather, she writes with humble confidence about those who will be saved to an audience whom she addresses as "myn evyn cristen." These two groups often appear to be one and the same.<sup>167</sup>

Judith Lang favours the same view of Julian's exclusivist position: "Julian repeatedly makes it plain when she is writing only about souls predestined for salvation."<sup>168</sup>

It is my contention that Julian's theology addresses different questions with a spiralling sense of inclusiveness, like a stone thrown in the water creates ever-widening circles. Julian addresses her work explicitly to the lovers of Christ;

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<sup>163</sup> Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 19-21.

<sup>164</sup> Barry Windeatt, "Julian of Norwich and Her Audience," *Review of English Studies* 28 (1977): 1-17. See Mark S. Burrows, "'Yett He sufferyth with Us:' Divine Asceticism in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," *Studies in Spirituality* 7 (1997): 99-112.

<sup>165</sup> Amherst MS, 4: f.99r (720) and 13: f.106r (746).

<sup>166</sup> Windeatt, "Her Audience," 5.

<sup>167</sup> Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 78.

<sup>168</sup> Judith Lang, "'The Godly Wylle' in Julian of Norwich," *Downside Review* 104 (1984): 164.

expands her attention to her fellow Christians; and secures a universalising theology of all who shall be saved. On an exclusive level, she teaches contemplative prayer to those who are intended to deepen their love for Christ. Her exclusiveness is not determined by the Christian faith as such, but by a vocational response to the love of Christ. “I ſpeke of ſuch men and women þ<sup>t</sup> for goddes loue · hate ſynne and dyſpoſe them to do goddes wyllē.”<sup>169</sup> On an inclusive level, she writes for her fellow Christians, who she comforts with a theology of hope and compassion amidst suffering. Elizabeth Dreyer bears in mind that Julian speaks prophetically in a historical situation of suffering.

Her text addresses an audience that was experiencing the extreme suffering associated with economic, political, demographic and ecclesial upheaval. (...) Added to this suffering was the belief that their sinfulness was the cause of these expressions of God’s wrath.<sup>170</sup>

Her fellow Christians are “a suffering community whom she had to convince of hope against waves of depression and despair.”<sup>171</sup> Julian’s message to her fellow Christians reassures of God’s compassion with suffering and that all suffering shall come to end.<sup>172</sup> On a universal level, her theology of God’s love secures the salvation of all humanity. It is inclusive of God’s acting out the salvation of those who, according to the common teaching of the church, are reprobates. Salvation is not restricted to the elect Christians but also encompasses those who live without Christian faith. In addition it includes those who persist in disobedience to love and cause the suffering of others.<sup>173</sup> The problem of suffering in all human life will become transformed into knowledge of the deep quality of compassionate love in God on earth and finally in the beatific sight.<sup>174</sup>

## 2 Spiritual formation

A reading of the three chapters of her autobiographical narrative that introduces

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<sup>169</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: f.153v (450).

<sup>170</sup> Elizabeth A. Dreyer, “Narratives of the Spirit: A Medieval Resource,” *Studies in Spirituality* 8 (1998): 112. See Joan Nuth, *God’s Lovers in an Age of Anxiety: The Medieval English Mystics* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001).

<sup>171</sup> Dreyer, “Narratives of the Spirit,” 126.

<sup>172</sup> Paris MS, 13.32: f.57v (258).

<sup>173</sup> Paris MS, 13.32: f.58v (260) and 13.36: f.65v (274).

<sup>174</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: f.51r (245).

the *Showing of Love* suggests that Julian experiences a vocational longing for the anchoritic life. Julian's autobiographical account reveals three motifs which form the foundation of her theological and mystagogical competence; attentiveness to God's will, participation in Christ's passion, and a vision of God's love. A profound awareness of grace lies beneath the few words that she dedicates to herself. Her words emphasise that the gift of God's love in her life is constitutive of her vocation and divine inspiration.

This reuelation was made to a Symple creature vnlettyrde leving in deadly flejh the yer of our lord a thouſaunde and three hundered and ·lxxiiij· 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.<sup>175</sup>

Julian's depth of understanding her desire for three gifts justifies the opinion that she was well informed about essential aspects of spiritual formation within the anchoritic tradition. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh are convinced that Julian "read with perception such treatises as the *Ancrene Riwle*."<sup>176</sup> Hughes attributes to Rolle's teachings the honour of inspiring Julian to an anchoritic vocation, while suggesting that Walter Hilton (c.1343-96) might have personally spoken to her in order to modify the influence of Rolle's teaching regarding spiritual sweetness.<sup>177</sup> However, Hughes considers neither her influence as anchoress, theologian and pastor nor her independent spirituality of devotion to Christ. It is my contention that a contemplative and a pastoral attitude sustain her prayers, as they are characteristic for an anchoritic vocation and inform the development of her theology.

The contemplative facet of Julian's prayer is characterised by her ability to surrender her desire to the will of God. Her discernment between unconditional and conditional longings that arise in her prayer emphasise her attentiveness to the divine initiative of her longings as well as dependence on God's will as the agent to their fulfilment.

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<sup>175</sup> Paris MS, 2: f.3r (147).

<sup>176</sup> Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 48. See Reynolds, *Literary Influences*, 24.

<sup>177</sup> Hughes, *Pastors and Visionaries*, 88-9, 213, 225.

These twey Deſyers of the paſſion, and of the ſicknes that I Deſyred of him was w<sup>t</sup> a condicion · for me thought this was not the commune vſe of prayer · therfor I ſayd lord thou knoweſt what I would if that it be thy wille that I might haue it · and if it be not thy will good lord be not Diſpleſed for I will not but as thou wilt. (...) Right as I aſked the other twayne w<sup>t</sup> a condicion ſo aſked I this third mightly w<sup>t</sup> out anie condicion.<sup>178</sup>

Early in her youth, Julian discerns God's attentiveness within her prayer, as God inspires her deepest aspirations for the religious life with a longing for a vision of the passion and even for a near-fatal illness. Although she was initially uncertain of the authenticity of her longings as willed by God, she articulates how she perceives that a vision of the passion and a severe illness will direct her devotion toward the deepening of contrition, compassion and longing for God. The passion evokes compassion, whereas she longs with contrition for an illness.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, her awareness of the longing for an illness is so genuine that she dares to specify a date for its fulfilment. Under the prerequisite of God's assent, she requests a near-death illness at the age of thirty.<sup>180</sup> Because she is unsure whether her uncommon prayer for a vision of Christ's passion and a grave illness are in conformity with God's will, she asks them conditionally, that is, only if it is God's will to grant them to her. Because she is certain that her longing for the three wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God belong to a common form of prayer, she longs for them unconditionally.

My interpretation of Julian's longings differs from with Christopher Abbot's perception of Julian's youthful prayer as egocentric devotion.

Notwithstanding the ostensible genuineness of her conscious pious intentions, or her formal and explicit submission to God's will, and perhaps above all, the fact, that she ingeniously seeks to number herself among 'Christ's lovers,' the picture that emerges in Chapters 2 and 3 has Julian, not Christ, at the centre. The vehemence and extraordinariness of her desires suggests an energetic emotional drama in which Julian is the main actor. Chapter 2 especially can seem an exhausting litany of desire, almost every line containing some

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<sup>178</sup> Paris MS, 2: ff.4v-5r (150-1).

<sup>179</sup> Paris MS, 2: ff.3r-4v (147-50).

<sup>180</sup> Paris MS, 2: f.4v (150).

expression of Julian's needs, wants and hopes.<sup>181</sup>

It is my view that the autobiography is written with the argument that her longings, both unconditional and conditional, are inspired by God in order to allow recognition that Julian's vocation as an anchoress, visionary and theologian is established by God's grace. The divine will initiates a vocational longing and moves and orients this deepest longing to its ultimate fulfilment.

Julian's request for three gifts makes clear an important theme of her mystagogy, in which prayer is a longing for God together with a trusting in God's initiative. Julian's theology of prayer affirms that God's initiative creates longing and fulfils it.<sup>182</sup> To consider Julian's prayer as the self-assertion of a strong personality, which prompts Abbot's impression of her religious egoism, is to fail to appreciate that spiritual direction demands an attentiveness to human desires. Janet Ruffing recognises the importance of valuing desires as a prayerful attentiveness to God. "Human and divine desiring is a core feature of the spiritual life. Our desires energize the spiritual quest and lead us to God."<sup>183</sup>

Ruffing explains that the task of a spiritual director is to support the directee in elucidating and focussing desire. The director needs to respond to the directee in recognising God-centred desires and in uncovering illusory desires.<sup>184</sup> Whereas there is no information about Julian's relationship with a spiritual director, the anecdote about a monk visiting her during her illness and the reassurance she receives from him gives an indication about his willingness to listen carefully to her experience. His refusal to collude with Julian's doubt concerning the authenticity of her visions is indicative of his belief in Julian's integrity, which might have been established through his previous discernment of and response to her genuine desire for God. Her anxiety to disclose her feelings in confession to a priest, out of fear of disbelief, shows clearly that her relationship with the monk is built upon mutual trust.<sup>185</sup>

Ann and Barry Ulanov share the emphasis on human desiring as part of

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<sup>181</sup> Christopher Abbot, "Piety and Egoism in Julian of Norwich: A Reading of Long Text Chapters 2 and 3," *Downside Review* 114 (1996): 277.

<sup>182</sup> Paris MS, 14.41-3: ff.73r-80v (289-304).

<sup>183</sup> Janet K. Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>185</sup> Paris MS, 16.66: ff.141v-142r (426-7). Bolton conjectures that the monk "could be Adam Easton, O.S.B., of Norwich Benedictine Priory, who was in Norwich at this date, who already would have known Birgitta of Sweden." Reynolds and Bolton, *Showing of Love*, 426, n.1.

prayer. “Our admission of desires into conscience becomes an admission of divine presence (...) Prayer begins with a desire which we experience as our own and develops when we perceive even the desire itself as God’s action in us.”<sup>186</sup> During the time before the fulfilment of her longings, when Julian is still doubting whether her longing is her own or rather God’s inspiration, she lives in patient abandonment of her longing for a vision and an illness: “theſe twayne Deſyres before I ayd paſſid from my mynd.”<sup>187</sup> Abandonment of one’s own will with the intent to favour the will of God implies an abnegation of one’s own judgement, because the intention is to become available for God without knowing explicitly the motivation and intention that is in God’s mind.<sup>188</sup> Complete trust in God implies the discernment between God’s will and self-will, patiently knowing that God’s intention reveals itself with time.

The unconditional prayer to receive three wounds is grounded in Julian’s discernment that a religious vocation is an unconditional and persistent inner attitude of dedication to Christ. Originally the three wounds are inspired by the example of Saint Cecilia, who was martyred for her unconditional belief in Christ by three deadly wounds in her neck.<sup>189</sup> The story of Cecilia played an influential role in fourteenth-century literature for female devotion.<sup>190</sup> Julian internalises Cecilia’s three deadly wounds as three spiritual attitudes: contrition, compassion and longing for God. With the certainty that these attitudes constitute an inner religious devotion in accordance with God’s will, she asks unconditionally that her life might be directed in conformity with them. She exhibits unconditional spiritual determination.

Julian’s unconditional and conditional prayers are sustaining a religious vocation of deepening relationship with Christ. Her unconditional prayer reflects how a general vocational aspiration, already present in her early youth, is later consummated in her vocation as an anchoress. She understands dedication to Christ as an inner life of spiritual woundedness by contrition, compassion and longing for God. A wounded mind is sustained by God to dwell continually in the mystery of Christ’s passion. Her desires to participate in Christ’s passion and for a

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<sup>186</sup> Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 20-1.

<sup>187</sup> Paris MS, 2: ff.5r (151).

<sup>188</sup> F.M. Catherinet, “Conformité à la Volonté de Dieu,” *DSp* 2 (1953), 1442.

<sup>189</sup> Amherst MS, 1: f.97v (712).

<sup>190</sup> For overview of St. Cecilia’s influence as an example for the spiritual life, see Riddy, “Women Talking about the Things of God,” 105; Reynolds and Bolton Holloway, *Showing of Love*, 713, n.2.

near-death illness are particularly inspiring to an anchoritic vocation, in which the solitary is regarded as dead to the world with the intention to become alive in Christ. Her worldly death enables participation in the compassionate spirit of Christ.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the call to an anchoritic vocation is experienced in the desire to love God and neighbour. The wound of a wilful longing for God forms the core of Julian's anchoritic vocation. Julian is wounded by God's love and responds with a longing that reaches out to the vision of God.<sup>191</sup> Julian's longing for God reflects a contemplative aspiration, while her longing for the wounds of contrition and compassion are associated with the pastoral profession of the anchoress. Contrition is an inner sorrow for sin. "Think, anchoress what you looked for when you forsook the world in your enclosure: to weep for your own and other's sins."<sup>192</sup> Compassion is an affection of love with an awareness of suffering. "So embrace the whole world with the arms of your love (...) and feel compassion."<sup>193</sup> The three wounds inspire a spiritual attitude according to the divine appeal to love that is experienced in Christ's passion. The passion encompasses all three spiritual wounds: contrition, compassion and longing permeate the mystery of love revealed by the passion. Christ suffered pain out of love for humanity, suffers with humanity and longs for the salvation of humanity.<sup>194</sup> "Your compassion for me makes you show yourself human to the extent that you seem almost to be no longer aware that you are human."<sup>195</sup>

The redeeming act of Christ's passion involves so many mysteries beyond human understanding that it can be lived only through the grace of God. Julian acknowledges that her meditation is still unable to grasp the meaning of Christ's pain and she hopes for a more developed feeling of Christ's passion through a "bodily vision," that is, both a visual and an emotional participation in the crucifixion:

for the firſt me thought I had ſum deele feelyng in the paſſion of Chriſt · but  
yet I deſyred to haue more by þ<sup>e</sup> grace of god · Me thought I woulde haue ben

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<sup>191</sup> See Albert Dauchy, "Désir de la Perfection," *DSp* 3 (1954), 592-604.

<sup>192</sup> *Ancrene Wiſſe*, 88.

<sup>193</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 77.

<sup>194</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r-57r (253-7) and 16.71: ff.149v-150v (442-4).

<sup>195</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 88.

that tyme w<sup>t</sup> magdaleyne and w<sup>t</sup> 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.<sup>196</sup>

To further a deepened feeling of compassion with Christ's suffering, she desires "a bodely sight" of his crucifixion as if she was one of the women who stood at the foot of the cross together with Christ's most precious lovers, his mother and Mary Magdalene. She articulates the movement from passion to compassion: Christ's lovers respond with compassion to Christ's pain.

Her longing for "a bodely sight" of Christ's passion suggest acquaintance with visionary devotion, whereas "mynd of the passion" reveals her knowledge of a tradition of meditation.<sup>197</sup> The meditation on the life Christ, and specifically on the passion, represents an aspect of devotional piety developed in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries and forms an important aspect of anchoritic spirituality.<sup>198</sup> Aelred elaborates upon the meditation in the *Rule of Life for a Recluse*.<sup>199</sup> He explains its purpose as the nourishment of the affections with love for Christ, through contemplation on the unity between Christ's humanity and divinity.<sup>200</sup> It belongs to the daily practice of the anchoress's *lectio divina*, the spiritual reading of the Scriptures, to bring Christ's life before the imagination. Meditation on the passion of Christ moulds the inner devotion of the anchoress. *Ancrene Wisse* presents the meditation as a significant exercise for identifying one's own suffering with that of Christ.<sup>201</sup> The meditation on Christ, especially on his suffering leading to death in prospect of resurrection, was highly valued as a focus of the anchoritic vocation. For an anchoress, Christ's life, and in particular his passion, exemplified a form of living. Christ teaches compassion that originates in complete obedience to God,

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<sup>196</sup> Paris MS, 2: ff.3r-v (147-8).

<sup>197</sup> Paris MS, 2: f.3r (147).

<sup>198</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 89-121; Vincent Gillespie, "Strange Images of Death: The Passion in Later Medieval English Devotional and Mystical Writing," *Analecta Cartusiana* 117 (1984), 11-59; Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late medieval Literature* (Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1989); David Aers, "The Humanity of Christ: Reflections on Orthodox Late Medieval Representations," in *The Powers of the Holy, Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late medieval English Culture*, David Aers and Lynn Staley (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 15-42; Ellen M. Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>199</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 80-92.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-92.

<sup>201</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 97 and 99.

that is, union with God's will.<sup>202</sup> Anchoritic solitude is a God-oriented life through Christ-likeness.

Julian's unconditional and absolute orientation on God manifests itself as a desire for a near-fatal illness, which will purify her from worldly attachment and direct her life in the worship of God. She emphasises that it is not her own will that aspires to the illness, but rather it is freely given to her along with contrition:

ffor the ꝑecunde came to my mind w<sup>t</sup> contricion frely w<sup>t</sup>out anie ꝑekyng, a wilfull deꝑyre to haue of gods gyfte a bodily ꝑicknes · I would · that that ꝑicknes were ꝑo hard as to the death · (...) ꝑaue the outꝑassing of the ꝑowle · And this ment I · ffor I would be purgied by the mercie of god · And after liue more to the worꝑhippe of god · by cauꝑe of that ꝑicknes · for I hoped that it might haue ben to my a reward when I ꝑhuld haue died · for I Deꝑyred to haue ben ꝑoone w<sup>t</sup> my god and maker.<sup>203</sup>

Although she realises that her aspiration does not belong to the common way of prayer, she is able to give a thorough motivation of her longing. She desires to be purified from all manner of earthly comfort and hopes that after her healing her longing for God will be strengthened. She wants to experience the physical and spiritual pains that accompany the process of death.<sup>204</sup> She thus hopes to be taken to the uttermost depth of loosing her self-will in order to re-orient on God alone in whose mercy she will find salvation. Her longing for a near-fatal illness revolves around the hope of union with God when the soul passes out of the body. It is likely that Julian saw people in their last struggle before their death, since the plague struck Norwich heavily during her life. This could have made her aware of the intensity of the moment of dying and the necessity to prepare oneself spiritually.

The fact that Julian is able to understand both illness and dying as a gift of God shows awareness of the spiritual writings of her time. The *Ancrene Riwle* demonstrates that an illness can be a divine gift intended for purification: "Sickness that God sends (not that some catch through their own foolishness)."

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<sup>202</sup> Rolle, *Form of Living*, 168-9.

<sup>203</sup> Paris MS, 2: ff.4r-v (149-50).

<sup>204</sup> Ibidem.

God proves his beloved chosen ones, just as the goldsmith tests gold in the fire and destroys the false gold in it, so that the good comes out brighter. Sickness is a hot flame to suffer, but nothing cleanses gold so well as it cleanses the soul.<sup>205</sup>

The *Rule of Life for A Recluse* encourages the anchoress to meditate on death in order “to have such serenity of conscience, such firm faith and such certain hope that you do not fear death.”<sup>206</sup> During the Middle Ages treatises were written on the craft of dying, emphasising the importance to meditate on one’s inescapable death and to carry out penance and achieve virtue in preparation for this moment. Several of these treatises were translated into the vernacular, like the fifth chapter of the *Horologium Sapientiae* written by Heinrich Suso (1300-66), that teaches how “to be able to die for the love of Jesu.” A good preparation for death is a gift from God.

For that is a sovereign gift of God; sothly for a man to learn to die is for to have his heart and his soul at all times upward to those things that be above; that is to say that what time death cometh it find him ready, so that he receive it gladly, without any withdrawing; right as he that bideth the desired coming of his beloved friend.<sup>207</sup>

Julian fully understands how the craft of dying enhances the craft of living. Eternal life becomes formed within the human nature during earthly life, for the capacity to see God is formed into the human nature through purification, as the blindness of the mind is taken away and the person comes to self-understanding

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<sup>205</sup> *Ancrene Wisse*, 115-6: “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 -when God sees that she would if sickness did not intervene. Sickness makes a person to understand what they are, to know themselves; like a good teacher it beats us, the better to teach us how mighty God is, how frail is the world’s joy. Sickness is your goldsmith who, in the joy of heaven, gilds your crown. The greater the sickness is the busier is the goldsmith, and the longer it lasts the more he burnishes it, to be equal to a martyr’s through a short-lived pain.”

<sup>206</sup> Rievaulx, *Rule of Life for a Recluse*, 97.

<sup>207</sup> Frances Margaret Mary Comper, ed., *The Book of the Craft of Dying and Other Early English Tracts Concerning Death* (1917; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977), 105-6. See Comper, *Craft of Dying*, 117: “For by what manner of death he be overlaid, he shall be purged and brought to the sight of Almighty God; and, in the passing of his spirit, it shall be received into the blessed palace of everlasting bliss.”

in the light of God's eternal love.

The culmination of Julian's autobiographical narrative lies in her story of an illness sent by God that forms the onset of her visionary experience.<sup>208</sup> The development of her illness suggests that its meaning can be interpreted as an *imitatio Christi*.

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; and on the iiij nyght I toke all my rightes of holie church, and went not to haue leuen tyll day.<sup>209</sup>

Julian discloses how her own will is in conformity with the divine will: "And I vnder]tode in my rea]on and by the feelyng of my paynes that I ]hould die · and I a]scentyd fully w<sup>t</sup> all the will of myn hart to be at gods will."<sup>210</sup> She describes how her body becomes gradually paralysed from the feet upward until her breath faltered and her eyesight was fixed in a paralysed gaze on the cross. The paralysing illness evolves slowly during three days and is accompanied with an intense feeling of pain, as her body gradually becomes lifeless and she approaches death. The detail suggests how her illness and subsequent healing coincides with the three days of Christ's crucifixion, death and resurrection. Her illness and approaching death are an imitation of Christ in his last agony. The painful process of Julian's paralysis resembles her vision of the dying of Christ's body on the cross, which is similarly experienced with great suffering.<sup>211</sup> During the progression from physical pain and paralysis towards the anticipated moment of dying, she suddenly experiences physical and spiritual wholeness and elimination of all pain.<sup>212</sup> Again, the experience is similar to her vision of the passion, as it mirrors the sudden transformation from suffering to joy that she beholds in Christ's passion.<sup>213</sup>

Julian's spiritual autobiography accentuates a theology of grace. Looking back towards her youth many years after her visionary experience, years during which she comes to understand the theological significance and mystagogical implications of her vision, Julian is able to value each of her three longings as a

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<sup>208</sup> Paris MS, 3: f.5r (151).

<sup>209</sup> Paris MS, 3: ff.5r-7r (151-55)

<sup>210</sup> Paris MS, 3: f.5v (152).

<sup>211</sup> Paris MS, 8.16: ff.32r-33r (207-9).

<sup>212</sup> Paris MS, 3: f.6v (154).

<sup>213</sup> Paris MS, 9.21: f.41r (225).

gift of God. A gift that made her receptive to visionary inspiration, because her prayer for a vision of Christ's passion and a near-dead illness reaches out to a transcendent destination; a vision of God. Her prayer is answered by a profound revelatory inspiration of God, when her enactment of Christ's passion and compassion become one dynamic orientation towards the divine love and gives her an understanding, although necessarily partial, of the mysteries of the redemptive act of Christ's passion.

In elaborating upon the three gifts she receives from God, Julian's autobiographical account communicates to her fellow Christians that God is the originator of her vision, and therefore, God is the source of her theological knowledge. The *Showing of Love* is revealed to her with the gratuity of God's will. Julian's narrative of her near-death illness as the onset of her vision sets out to convey an *imitatio Christi* and alludes to the eschatological dimension of her vision. Not only does her experience convey a deep sense of the *imitatio Christi*, but also a taste of the *visio Dei*. She becomes susceptible to a revelation of divine love at the moment when she is near death and reaches forth toward the eternal beatific vision. The *imitatio Christi* increases her receptivity to a divine revelation that illuminates her with an awareness of resurrection and eternal life. Whereas before death God is seen in darkness and through a mirror, the transformative dynamic that takes place within death is the realisation of beholding God face to face.

The underlying intention of Julian's autobiography is to express the *imitatio Christi* and specifically her identification with the passion. An understanding of the *imitatio Christi* as the ultimate authoritarian basis for theological teaching is in conformity with a spiritual theology that holds that God can be approached only through Christ.<sup>214</sup> Bynum demonstrates that the *imitatio Christi* is an important element in the female religious experiences described in hagiographic and autobiographical literature. "To women, the notion of the female as flesh became an argument for women's *imitatio Christi* through physicality"<sup>215</sup> Accounts of female spiritual experiences, whose authority is derived from mystical union with Christ and accompanying visions, arise for the first time in the thirteenth century.<sup>216</sup> These spiritual experiences are prominent for a reorientation in

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<sup>214</sup> See Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 87-8

<sup>215</sup> Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 263.

<sup>216</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 172. For an analyses how Julian develops the *imitatio Christi*

theology and spirituality. “Major devotional and theological emphases emanate from women and influence the basic development of spirituality.”<sup>217</sup> Divine inspiration is a theological validation of female authorship during the Middle Ages, when women had limited access to theological education as a source for religious authority.<sup>218</sup>

### 3 Divine inspiration

In fourteenth-century England, it was vital to the acceptance of Julian’s divinely inspired authorship of a theological treatise that she was perceived as chosen by God for an anchoritic vocation, as solitude was regarded as a form of living that was receptive to knowing the secrets of God. It is God’s design to direct Julian’s life towards a visionary inspiration. Although it is uncertain whether Julian’s visionary experience occurred during her anchoritic enclosure, it can be expected that her reflective writing on her vision occupied her during the time when she became established as an anchoress in the cell attached to St. Julian’s church. The solitude and silence of her enclosure draw her into a profound meditation on the images, the words formed in her understanding and her spiritual sight.<sup>219</sup> During twenty years of contemplation on her vision, she received further illuminations that deepened her understanding of the original vision: “renewde by lyghtenynges and touchynges I hope of the same spiryte that shewyth them alle.”<sup>220</sup>

Julian explicitly expresses that Christ is the source of love that informed the vision. “This is a reuelacion of loue that Jhesu Chriſt our endles bliſſe made in ·xvi· shewynges.”<sup>221</sup> Having articulated that her treatise originates in the inspired words of Christ, she gives an index to her sixteen visions to specify the theological substance. The entire vision illuminates a theological understanding of the Holy Trinity, together with the incarnation of Christ and the union between God and humanity.

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as the authorisation for her teaching and spiritual direction, see Christopher Abbot, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999).

<sup>217</sup> Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 249.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>219</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.19r (179).

<sup>220</sup> Paris MS, 15.65: f.140v (424).

<sup>221</sup> Paris MS, 1: f.1r (143).

The first is of his Precious crownyng of thornes. And ther in was contened & specified the blessed trinitie w<sup>t</sup> the incarnation· and the vnithing betweene god and mans soule w<sup>t</sup> manie fayer schewynges and techynges of endeleſſe wiſdom and loue, in which all the shewynges that foloweth be grovndide and ioyned.<sup>222</sup>

What Julian describes as sixteen visions is one integrated vision grounded in a divinely received knowledge: “techynges of endeleſſe wiſdom and loue.”<sup>223</sup> Julian’s vision of Christ’s passion forms the core of her theological and spiritual reflection on Christ’s divinity and humanity, which becomes foundational for her theology of sanctification through a trinitarian love and the unity between God and human nature. Christ’s incarnation and passion is a reflection of the love within the Trinity: “the trinitie is our endleſſe ioy· and our bleiſſe by our lord Jeſu Chriſt and in our lord Jeſu Chriſt.”<sup>224</sup> Her mysticism of the passion thus furthers the understanding of the trinitarian foundation of her theology of compassionate love.

Mysticism of the passion is a form of Christian spirituality (a fruit of a multiform grace) that is characterised by an ardent contemplation of the crucified and a loving participation in his suffering reaching out to a mystical communion with the passion. This communion becomes very intense since it is the unfathomable mystery of the divine love that is revealed through the cross.<sup>225</sup>

A vision is an awareness of the divine mysteries that does not originate in the human but is initiated by God.<sup>226</sup> The understanding of a vision is developed in the Christian mystical tradition. Augustine and Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173) interpret a vision as knowledge of God given by divine inspiration. The

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<sup>222</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>223</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>224</sup> Paris MS, 1.4: f.7v (156).

<sup>225</sup> Flavio Di Bernardo, “Passion (Mystique de la),” *DSp* 12 (1984), 312. Translation mine.

<sup>226</sup> See Léopold Malevez, “Essence de Dieu (Vision de l),” *DSp* 3 (1957), 1333-45. Pierre Adnès emphasises that a vision is a gratuite gift: “En fait, le terme de visions embrasse un ensemble de phénomènes de connaissance très variés, qu’on ne peut facilement ramener à un commun dénominateur si ce n’est par l’impression qu’ils donnent de venir d’ailleurs, d’un au-delà du sujet, lequel n’a pas le sentiment de les produire et d’y coopérer activement, mais de les recevoir gratuitement, comme un don, une faveur inattendue.” Pierre Adnès, “Visions,” *DSp* 16 (1994), 949.

theologians' different opinions regarding the forms in which its perception can be understood illuminates the complexity of visionary inspiration. In *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine expounds a theory of visions based on Paul's testimony of his enrapture into the third heaven.<sup>227</sup> Augustine distinguishes three forms of visionary perception, which he values in a hierarchical order: bodily, spiritual and intellectual. The bodily vision is a perception with the bodily senses. The spiritual vision is perceived with the part of the soul that possesses an imaginative ability: when this part is assimilated with the divine, many things are revealed, but not with the eyes of the flesh or the ears or another bodily sense. The intellectual vision is seen with the eyes of the spirit, whereby truth and wisdom are perceived with the intellect. Without the intellectual vision the other two are fruitless or even guide into error.<sup>228</sup> Richard distinguishes four kinds of vision.<sup>229</sup> He emphasises that images possess a mystagogical function in leading the mind toward the invisible knowledge of God. Enlightenment of the human mind by the Holy Spirit forms the essence of knowledge that is conveyed within a vision.<sup>230</sup>

Julian's discernment of three forms of visionary perception emphasises the complexity of the visionary structure: visual perception, words formed in her understanding and spiritual insight. In addition to this general mode of her visionary perception, she adds several more specific terminologies to indicate a particular type of visionary sight.<sup>231</sup> Generally, her visionary sight is a mystical experience of God's love, which draws her senses, her understanding and her feeling into God.

All this was shewde · by thre partes · that is to sey · by bodyly syght and by worde formyde in my vnderstondyng · And by goostely syght · But the goostely syght I can nott · ne may shew it as openly ne as fully as I would · But I truſt in our lord god almightie that he shall of his godnes · and for iour loue make yow

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<sup>227</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vol. 2 (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 12. See 2 Corinthians, 12.2-4.

<sup>228</sup> See Adnès, "Visions," 965-67; Charles André Bernard, "La Perception Mystique Visionnaire," *Studies in Spirituality* 6 (1996), 169-70.

<sup>229</sup> See Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages, A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (+203) to Marguerite Porete (+1310)* (Cambridge: University Press, 1984; reprint, Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 146.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>231</sup> For a detailed overview and interpretation of Julian's discernment of her visionary sight, see Molinari, *Julian of Norwich*, 32-48.

to take it more ghōstely and more ſweetly then I can or may tell it.<sup>232</sup>

The “bodyly ſyght” classifies her vision of Christ passion, as it reveals a historical event in which she participates through her vision and which she describes in a detailed and realistic way as if she sees it with the eyes of her body. The “worde formyde in my vnderſtondyng” classifies a specific form of vision in which Christ speaks to her with the intention to enhance her insight into God’s revealed and concealed mysteries: “then ſhewed oure good lordes wordes fulle mekely w<sup>t</sup>out voyce and w<sup>t</sup>out openyng of lypes.”<sup>233</sup> Christ’s words inspire divine wisdom. The “gōōstely ſyght” is the influence of the Holy Sprit – love- through which her understanding is transformed into a higher loving and knowing. “And to this vnderſtondyng was þ<sup>e</sup> ſoule led by loue and drawing by myght in every ſhewyng.”<sup>234</sup> Julian’s description of threefold mode of visionary perception outlines her pattern of beholding almost as a spiral progression in which seeing enhances her understanding, whilst understanding deepens her seeing of God.

Julian’s discernment of the forms of visionary beholding is grounded within the Christian tradition, but as Nicholas Watson points out, simultaneously creates a flexibility with which she interprets forms of beholding as to widen the reach of her understanding.<sup>235</sup> Watson suggests that Julian deliberately creates continuity between her revelation and visionary tradition. “The ‘Augustinian’ hermeneutic thus creates some basic categories which have the added benefit of being sanctioned by tradition.”<sup>236</sup> Augustine’s approval of knowledge mediated through visions enabled women to teach with authoritative theological reflection. Julian applies criteria of discernment to ascertain the orthodoxy of her visionary experience. First, she acknowledges that her vision is in accordance with the teaching of the church.<sup>237</sup> Second, the third mode of her visionary beholding, “gōōstely ſyght,” is similar to Augustine’s understanding of the intellectual vision. Her spiritual vision occurs under the influence of God’s love within the human

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<sup>232</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: ff.19r -v (179-80). See Paris MS, 16.73: ff.152v-153r (448-9).

<sup>233</sup> Paris MS, 16.68: f.145v (434).

<sup>234</sup> Paris MS, 14.46: f.84v (312).

<sup>235</sup> Nicholas Watson, “The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich’s Revelation of Love,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), 79-100.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>237</sup> For a study of Julian’s practice of discernment and her concept of the church, see John D Green, *‘A Strange Tongue’: Tradition, Language and the Approbation of Mystical Experience in Late Fourteenth-Century England and Sixteenth-Century Spain*, Studies in Spirituality, suppl. 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 61-83.

psyche and makes it attentive to an affective experience of being loved by God. According to Augustine, the intellectual vision cannot guide the visionary into deception.

Theologians developed categories of discernment to distinguish whether the source of a vision to ascertain whether a vision comes from God.<sup>238</sup> Grace Jantzen argues that the application of discernment of spirits can function as an authority to exclude women from theologising.

Although there were considerable variations in women's experiences, when a woman wrote a book she based it squarely on her own experience, often of a visionary nature. Her male contemporary, however, was much more sceptical on intense experience and relied on it much less in writing. Furthermore, as men became increasingly threatened by the writings of female visionaries, they tried to disqualify visionary experiences as a possible source of religious authority. But for the women, what else than their own experience was available? The usual routes of education and ecclesiastical preferment were not open to them.<sup>239</sup>

Carolyn Muessig demonstrates that women were able to explore different attitudes to learning: one type is centred on the compilation of textual knowledge and encourages self-development through education, whilst the other emphasises sacred learning with Christ as teacher.<sup>240</sup> Sacred learning is not dependent on the use of textual authorities, but is grounded in divine revelation. As anchoress, Julian stayed close to the monastic tradition of sacred learning. The controversy between monastic and scholastic learning occurs in the twelfth century, when William of St. Thierry (c.1085-1148) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) favoured monastic learning in the "school of love" above the intellectual

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<sup>238</sup> See Rosalyn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (York: York Medieval Press and Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999). Voaden demonstrates that John Gerson's doctrine of discernment influenced Bridget of Sweden and Margery Kempe.

<sup>239</sup> Jantzen, *Christian Mysticism*, 159.

<sup>240</sup> See Carolyn Muessig, "Learning and Mentoring in the Twelfth Century: Hildegard of Bingen and Herrad of Landsberg," in *Medieval Monastic Education*, ed. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 87-104; Carolyn Muessig, "Prophecy and Song: Teaching and Preaching by Medieval Women," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, edited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 146-58. See Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, 208 n.3.

approach that prevailed at the universities.<sup>241</sup> Julian lived in a spiritual climate that is distanced from the university and the doctors of divinity who receive intellectual formation from textual studies. Julian shares this emphasis on revealed knowledge through love with her contemporary mystical authors. Rolle and Hilton both left university after several years of study and express their reluctance to be involved in its intellectual climate. Rolle's spirituality values the human who is in love with God more highly than knowledge of God.<sup>242</sup> The approach to God through love finds a sublime expression in the *Showing of Love*.

Julian is close to the monastic tradition of sacred learning that values knowledge received through love. The main characteristic of visionary theological literature is its claim of divine inspiration. Julian describes herself as a "simple creature that cowde no letter" as an acknowledgement that her theological teaching originates in a gift of divine illumination rather than in acquired scholarly knowledge.<sup>243</sup> Statements of illiteracy are generally present in visionary literature. It articulates an authoritative focus that lies in Christ rather than in personal study.<sup>244</sup> This change in an authoritative focus is necessary for theology, because human intelligence and erudition are not sufficient to reach knowledge of God. Julian clarifies that she is not writing to become a teacher of divinity in her own right, but argues that through her writing Christ guides her fellow Christians into awareness of God. Christ is the sovereign teacher.<sup>245</sup> Her humility, expressed as being "unlettered," reaches the height of its meaning, for it is not her knowledge that forms the core of her teaching, but Christ teaches. In introducing the concept of Christ as a teacher, she affiliates with an old tradition.<sup>246</sup>

The expression of being unlettered is an important topic in mystical literature, because of the tension involved in speaking about God. Julian is aware that

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<sup>241</sup> See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University press, 1974; reprint, London: SPCK, 1978), 251-8; Hein Blommestijn, "Waar begon het conflict tussen rede en ervaring? Willem van Saint Thierry," *Speling* 37 (1985): 56-64.

<sup>242</sup> See Frances Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992; reprint, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 112.

<sup>243</sup> Sloane MS, 2: f.1v (514).

<sup>244</sup> See Voaden, "God's Almighty Hand," 58-61; Anneke Mulder-Bakker, "The Recluserium as a Centre of Learning" in *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East*, ed. J.W. Drijvers and A.A. McDonald (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 245-54; Anneke Mulder-Bakker, *Lives of the Anchoresses: The Rise of the Urban Recluse in Medieval Europe*, trans. Myra Heerspink Scholz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

<sup>245</sup> Amherst MS, 6: f.101r (726).

<sup>246</sup> Ritamary Bradley, "Christ, the Teacher, in Julian's *Showings*: the Biblical and Patristic Traditions," in *Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. M.Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1982), 127-42.

language falls short of the divine reality and acknowledges that God's love can only be known through divine inspiration. She describes the visual images and the spiritual insight derived from them, but she also teaches that spiritual insight cannot be separated from God's self-revelation. Because she is unable to express her insight fully, her spiritual treatise is a guide to the knowledge of God that becomes revealed through attentiveness to one's personal experience. "But I trust in our lord god almightie that he shall of his godnes · and for iour loue make yow to take it more ghoſtely and more ſweetly then I can or may tell it."<sup>247</sup>

Knowledge and love are intertwined: the spiritual insight is inexpressive exactly because it cannot be reached by human intellect, but only through the illumination of the intellect with love. Knowledge of God is inspired through God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Julian develops a theology that faith necessarily forms the core of every visionary experience. She emphasises the reciprocal relationship between the revelation of God and human receptivity in faith. The visionary insight bears the character of faith, because it is a gift that can never be reached through the effort of the human intellect. The vision is an immediate form of spiritual teaching through divine revelation, enlightening the spiritual faculties with faith.<sup>248</sup>

Julian's writing is stimulated by the divine imperative that God wants God's love to be known. The divine imperative to put into writing the insights received through visionary inspiration is a regular theme in visionary literature. Peter Dronke emphasises that women are motivated by an inner need to write.

The women's motivation for writing at all, for instance, seems rarely to be predominantly literary: it is often more urgently serious than is common among men writers; it is a response springing from inner needs, more often than from an artistic, or didactic inclination.<sup>249</sup>

Julian's need to write her *Showings* stems from her obedience to the will of God. Her theological confidence and motivation for writing a treatise on spiritual direction is based on the Scriptures. The oneness of charity in all humankind shines throughout her rationale as she explains that a Christian is called to

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<sup>247</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.19v (180).

<sup>248</sup> Paris MS, 16.70: ff.147v-148r (438-9).

<sup>249</sup> Dronke, *Women Writers*, x.

resemble God's love for all humanity. The likeness with God requires that the motivation to teach, as well as the profit of being taught, is dependent on the proper attitude of Christian love.<sup>250</sup> Julian's writing is motivated by the awareness that an altruistic attitude gradually influences every aspect of human life, including the gift of knowledge.

In alle this I was much I teryde in cheryte to myne evyn chriſten that they myght alle ſee and know the ſame that I ſawe · ffor I wolde that It were comfort to them.<sup>251</sup>

The importance of encompassing love bears a strong reference to Paul, who preaches that charity seeks not its own: knowledge is empty and the gift of prophecy is worthless when it is not sustained by charity.<sup>252</sup> Strengthened by the commandment to love, she is assured of the genuineness of her motivation to make known the goodness of God. According to the scriptural dictum that God reveals divine knowledge to whom God wills and whenever God wills, the vocation of a spiritual guide is not anchored in the human intellect but in the will of God. Julian receives the gift to talk about God's goodness to her fellow Christians.

#### 4 Pastoral theologian

An important encouragement that motivated Julian to write the *Showing of Love* lies in the anchoritic profession as a spiritual director. Her understanding that "God will be known" gives her an obligation to guide her fellow Christians into an exploration of God's love and its meaning for their life-experiences.<sup>253</sup> By profession, she was expected to give spiritual direction to those who sought her counsel. Margery Kempe testifies that Julian was known by her contemporaries and held in high regard for her expertise in visions. Margery felt admonished by

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<sup>250</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: ff.18r-19r (177-9); Amherst MS, 6: ff.100v-101r (724-6).

<sup>251</sup> Paris MS, 1.8: 17r (175).

<sup>252</sup> 1 Corinthians, 13.1-13.

<sup>253</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: f.10r (161).

God to ask counsel from Julian. Margery's autobiography records her impression of their conversations, which forms an outstanding example of the spiritual discernment that Julian applies to religious experience.<sup>254</sup> She presents an example of how the anchoritic vocation reconciles contemplative life with pastoral care. She is inspired by a theology of God's love and her spiritual counsel to her fellow Christians is rooted in her theology.<sup>255</sup>

Julian's visionary experience of God's love is not a private experience of love, but is intended as a pastoral teaching to guide her fellow Christians into the awareness that God beholds them with compassionate love. The theology developed from her insight into God's love comforts Christians with a hopeful optimism regarding the transfiguration of sin into blessedness and the salvation of all humanity. Her theology of hope is grounded in her vision of the transfiguration of Christ's countenance, his words that "all þhalle be wele" and her understanding that "in mankynd that þhall be þavyd is comprehendyd alle · that is to þey · alle that is made · and the maker of alle · ffor in man is god · And in god is alle."<sup>256</sup>

Before describing Julian's theology and spiritual direction in the next chapters, it is important to pay attention to the spiritual growth that informs her writing and becomes apparent during the years of contemplation on her vision. The Christian doctrines that shape Julian's initial understanding of God and human life are portrayed by her creed and by her theological questions that are evoked by the spiritual insight she receives into the love of God. Over a period of at least twenty years, she struggles with her gradual estrangement from certain aspects of the church's teaching and takes courage to develop the theology that is explicit in her encounter with God's love.

For an understanding of Julian's spiritual and theological development it is relevant to look at those Christian teachings mentioned explicitly by Julian and which informs her creed.<sup>257</sup> Julian's faith is based on the biblical belief that humanity is made in the image of God, which in the Christian tradition is the image of the Trinity.<sup>258</sup> The church teaches that humanity has fallen into sin and

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<sup>254</sup> Kempe, *Book of Margery Kempe*, 77-9.

<sup>255</sup> Reynolds as well as Colledge and Walsh studied the parallels between Julian's *Showing of Love* and her advice to Margery Kempe. Reynolds, *Literary Influences*, 20 n.13; Colledge and Walsh, *Book of Showings*, 35-8.

<sup>256</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: ff.49v-50r (242-3) and 1.9: f.18v (178).

<sup>257</sup> Paris MS, 2.10: f.21v (184).

<sup>258</sup> Augustine has influenced Christian anthropology and mysticism in developing the doctrine of

therefore is in need of the restoration of the image of God.<sup>259</sup> With a deeply affectionate tone, her creed articulates the eschatology of God's love and the bliss of the heavenly life that is mediated through the resurrection of Christ. The affectionate articulation of Julian's faith in God's love and Christ's incarnation contrasts with the harshness with which she expresses her resentment with human life. In Julian's creed, human nature is considered to be defiled and lamentable: "this Deadly lyfe in our fowlhede · and in our wretchednes."<sup>260</sup> The human flesh is synonymous with death: "our fowle blacke dede."<sup>261</sup>

Julian was theologically and spiritually influenced by the church's doctrine on the sinfulness of humanity. The church's teaching regarding sin evokes in her a deep-seated guilt: "for I knew be the comyn techyng of holy church and by my owne felyng · that the blame of oure Jynnes contynually hangyth vppon vs."<sup>262</sup> She discloses how her initial understanding of God's impassibility concerning human suffering contributes to her depression. Before she received her vision, her spirituality was overshadowed by weariness with life and she longed for the gift that God might deliver her of this world.<sup>263</sup> Her depression was caused by her deep grief concerning human suffering and strengthened by her apprehension of God's absence from human life: "and yf there had no payne ben in this lyfe · but the abJens of oure lorde me thought Jome tyme þ<sup>t</sup> it was more than I myght bere."<sup>264</sup> Her depression precludes a faith in God's compassionate love and suffering with humanity. She experiences no consolation, which constitutes a severe obstacle to a spirituality of trusting in God.<sup>265</sup>

The spiritual dilemma that forms the heart of Julian's vision is the chasm between the church's teaching on God's wrath and her vision of God's compassionate love that promises salvation for all.<sup>266</sup> The chasm between her vision of God's love and the church's teaching that sin evokes God's wrath becomes the source of Julian's spiritual growth. In Avilda Petroff's classification

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the soul's creation in the image of the Trinity. See McGinn, *Foundations of Mysticism*, 243-8; Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church: The Story of Emergent Christianity from the Apostolic Age to the Dividing of the Ways between the Greek East and the Latin West* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993), 235-6.

<sup>259</sup> See Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANF 1, 5.16.2: "Christ was incarnate that, what we had lost in Adam, that is, being after the image and likeness of God, we might recover in Christ Jesus."

<sup>260</sup> Paris MS, 2.10: f.21v (184).

<sup>261</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>262</sup> Paris MS, 14.50: f.92r (327).

<sup>263</sup> Paris MS, 15.64: f.137r (417).

<sup>264</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>265</sup> Paris MS, 7.15: ff.30v-31r (204-5).

<sup>266</sup> Paris MS, 14.45: ff.82r-v (307-8).

of visionary genres, a doctrinal vision is characterised by a resolution to a specific spiritual dilemma and is used as a teaching device in the guidance of others.<sup>267</sup> In her vision, she desires to see in God the truth concerning sin and blame.

ffor eyther me behovyd to ſee in god that ſynne were alle done away or els me behovyd to ſee in god · how he ſeeth it · wher by I myght truly know how it longyth to me to ſee ſynne and the manner of oure. Blame.<sup>268</sup>

Julian's acknowledgement of the discrepancy between the church's eschatology and the revelation of God's love encapsulates her spiritual quest towards a deeper understanding of how God beholds humanity. Her frequent requests to Christ that she might receive a deeper understanding of the meaning of God's love indicate that her uncertainty regarding the church's teaching on sin and God's punishing wrath becomes the impetus for attentiveness to God's guidance into the mystery of God's compassionate love.

Another area for Julian's inquisitiveness regarding God's love is the problem of human suffering. Julian's conscience of the severity of human suffering contrasts with the revealed truth in her vision that God's love shall make all things well. From her experience that she must affirm the reality of human suffering, she reaches out to an understanding of God's foreseeing wisdom.

And me thought yf ſynne had nott be · we ſhulde alle haue be clene and lyke to oure lorde as he made vs · And thus in my foly before thys tyme often I wondryd why by the grete forſeyde wyſdom of god the begynnyng of ſynne was nott lettyd · ffor then thought me that alle ſhulde haue be wele · ¶ Thys ſteryng was moch to be forsaken · And nevytheleſſe mornyg and ſorow I made therfore w<sup>t</sup>ou<sup>t</sup> te reſon and dyſcrecion · (...) But in this I ſtode beholdyng generally ſwemly and mornyngly ſeyyng thus to oure lorde in my menyng w<sup>t</sup> fulle gret drede · A good lorde how myght alle be wele · for the gret harme that is come by ſynne to thy creatures · ¶ And here I deſyeryd as I druſte to haue ſome more opyn declaryng · wher w<sup>t</sup> that I myght be eſyd in thys.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Petroff, *Visionary Literature*, 9.

<sup>268</sup> Paris MS, 14.50: ff.92r-v (327-8).

<sup>269</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: ff.49v-50r (242-3) and 13.29: f.53r (249).

Julian makes an important discernment in that her theological inquiry is motivated by sorrow. From an understanding of the perspective of lived spirituality, she is searching for a reconciliation of her faith in God's goodness and foreseeing wisdom with the suffering of human kind and, furthermore, for the reconciliation of the creation of humanity in the image of God with the disconcerting impact of sin. The theodicy forms a serious problematic area within the church's teaching and provides the impetus for her spiritual growth through understanding how the creation and the human are beheld in the sight of God. The tension between the experience of sinfulness and the biblical teaching that the human is created in the image of God introduces into the *Showing of Love* one of the main themes of spiritual direction.

Her spiritual growth can be characterised as a mystagogical process that is initiated by God and extends over a period of more than twenty years, during which her fear of questioning authoritative truth becomes integrated with a longing to see life as God sees it. Her centre of gravity in faith shifts from the church's authority to her experience of God's love. Julian's theology is an example of persevering with the question of theodicy together with a courageous searching for an answer in God. Her theological methodology is rooted in lived experience: a trustful holding of the truth of God's might, wisdom and love through whom all shall be made well together with a desperate and depressing awareness of human suffering. That methodology is mystagogical in that her attentiveness to human experience bears within it openness to the mystery of God, while reciprocally the truth of the nature of God's love informs the depth of understanding human experience. The search for a deeper understanding of God's love motivates her contemplative life. Her mystagogical spiritual direction reaches a level of experiencing which is difficult or even impossible to express in words. Openness towards integration of God's love in the experience of suffering informs the strength of her pastoral theology. It directs an experience in which human life becomes transparent for God's mystery.

An important question is how in theology the lived experience of God and the doctrinal teaching of the church are held together in a synthetic equilibrium that enables the elucidation of the Christian mysteries of faith. Dermot Lane answers the questions in terms of faithfulness. "Good theology (...) is informed by a searching fidelity to God's revelation in Jesus Christ expressed in the Bible and

the living tradition of the Church.”<sup>270</sup> Lane’s criteria for the discernment of authentic religious experience include the idea of appropriation.

Does the encounter with the religious dimension of experience relate the individual to the power and presence of a Transcendent Reality worthy of total surrender in faith, absolute interest in hope and personal involvement in love?<sup>271</sup>

For Julian, the equilibrium in her search for truth demands a fidelity to the church’s teaching as well as attentiveness to God’s meaning that increases her devotion in faith, hope and love.<sup>272</sup> Julian accepts the doctrine of the church and from that solid ground stretches out to deepen her faith with a growing awareness of God’s love. The love that is revealed in her vision urges her to reach beyond an intellectual comprehension of the mysteries of faith. Her methodology for discerning the meaning of God’s love for humanity consists of an outward instruction by the church’s teaching on Christ and an inner enlightenment through the Holy Spirit: “Here to we be bounder of god and drawn and counselled and lend inwardly by the holy go[st] · And outward by holy church · in the [amen] grace.”<sup>273</sup> The church’s teaching assists her search with a discretion of truth regarding the salvation given in Christ: “ffor we know in oure feyth · And al[so] it was [hew]de in alle · that crist Jhesu is both god and man.”<sup>274</sup> God inspires the Christian with the grace to participate in the mystery of the Trinity and initiates the seeking for its truth.<sup>275</sup>

Julian’s spiritual development is sustained by two salvific revelations, of which the first is open and revealed in Christ and the second is concealed in the mystery of God and shall be made known in the beatific vision.<sup>276</sup> Julian is faithful to the salvific mystery of Christ as expressed in the creed of the church. Her theology of Christ’s incarnation and passion articulates the impression of the quality of God’s love that will be made fully known in the beatific vision. Her commitment to the experience of the unfathomable depth of God’s love and compassion inspires her

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<sup>270</sup> Lane, *Experience of God*, 46.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>272</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.19r (179); 7.15: ff.30v-31r (204-5) and 16.86: f.173v (490).

<sup>273</sup> Paris MS, 13.30: ff.53v-54r (250-1).

<sup>274</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: f.55v (254).

<sup>275</sup> Paris MS, 2.10: f.20r (181) and f.22v (186).

<sup>276</sup> Paris MS, 13.30: ff.53-54r (250-1).

to formulate a theology of hope and the healing of suffering.

The pastoral feature of anchoritic spirituality accentuates that Julian's *Showing of Love* belongs to the genre of spiritual direction. It is a mystagogical treatise that guides her fellow Christians into an awareness of God's unconditional love and encourages love for Christ. As an anchoress, she writes for all those who desire to be lovers of Christ and who might receive comfort and encouragement from her words. Her serious effort to understand the Christian teachings is motivated by a willingness to reconcile her experiences of a suffering humanity with God's love. She is a theologian whose reflections on and questions towards the church's doctrine of sin and blame have profound consequences for her developing understanding of God, the nature of the creation and humanity's salvation. Aided by her vision, she reflects on the most profound secrets of God: creation out of nothing; the trinity as might, wisdom and love; Christ's incarnation; the nature of sin and salvation, and develops her theology and spirituality within that revealed eschatological perspective which affirms amidst human suffering that "all þhalle be wele."<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Paris MS, 13.28: f.50r (243).

## Conclusion

Julian's autobiography and the autobiographical references within the *Showing of Love* disclose that her spiritual and theological formation is grounded in a longing for God. Her autobiographical account is an appropriate reflection of her life experience that has brought to a level of understanding its meaning as a gift of God and thus forms an elucidation of her vocation as an anchoress, theologian and spiritual director. Her theology develops as the result of God's self-communication that engenders a tension with certain aspects of the church's teaching and encourages Julian to reach a deeper understanding of the mysteries of faith. The church's teachings on Christ's divine and human nature and the creation of humanity in the image of God form the solid ground from which she tentatively explores a theology of hope and compassionate love. Guided by God's self-disclosure, she comes to an interpretation of the Christian faith as an elucidation of God's compassionate love for the salvation of all humanity. Her spiritual and theological development are properly called a mystagogy in which her life, her apprehension of human suffering and her contemplation on the mysteries of faith become transparent to the mystery of God's saving love. The following three chapters explore Julian's theology of creation, sin and salvation, while the last chapter will explore its implications for spiritual direction.

### Chapter 3: God's Creatorship

The Christian creed opens with an affirmation of faith in God the almighty creator and continues with an affirmation of faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit: the Trinity. Julian's vision begins with the affirmation that in Christ is seen the Trinity and proceeds to a theology of God's creatorship. She elaborates upon the creed's profession that all things are made through Christ and that Christ is incarnate for the salvation of humanity. This chapter researches Julian's theology of God's creatorship and humanity as God's creation. It is important to study her doctrine of creation as it lays the foundation for an understanding of the divine-human relationship in terms of a mutual beholding and responding in love. In addition, it relates her theology of creation to the doctrines of creatorship and the Trinity as it is formulated in the early church. Firstly, the chapter explores her theology of creation 'out of nothing' through the love of the triune God and its implications for the destiny of the creation. Secondly, it examines her theology of the creation of humanity in God's image and its implications for deification. Thirdly, it examines how the human potential for deification is further developed in her theology of the christocentric nature of humanity. Fourthly, it describes her theology of the human spiritual faculties as created in the image of the Trinity.

#### 1 Creation out of nothing

"The classical creeds of Christendom opened with a declaration of belief in one God, maker of heaven and earth."<sup>278</sup> God the Creator has the almighty power to govern the universe with sovereignty.<sup>279</sup> "Almighty' (Greek *pantocrator*= 'ruler of all'), Latin *omnipotens*= 'capable of doing everything'): this attitude does not primarily express God's creative power but his superiority and effectiveness."<sup>280</sup> The Christian doctrine on the creation is derived from the narrative of Genesis in which God creates the universe, the earth and humankind, and sees that it is good.<sup>281</sup> The church fathers formulated the doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* that is

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<sup>278</sup> John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th rev. ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1977, reprint London: Adam and Charles Black, 1980), 83.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>280</sup> Hans Küng, *Credo: The Apostles' Creed Explained for Today* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 27.

<sup>281</sup> Genesis, 1-2.2.

accepted into the Nicene Creed (325). God creates ‘out of nothing.’ The theology of *creatio ex nihilo* is first developed by Athanasius (c.296-373) “Out of nothing, and without its having previous existence, God made the universe to exist through his word.”<sup>282</sup> Athanasius expresses the continuous involvement of God within the creation.<sup>283</sup>

The orthodox Christian understanding of the creation *ex nihilo* is developed in the debate on the nature of the creation with Greek philosophy and a Gnostic influence in Christian thinking. It opposes the Platonic belief in God as architect of the creation, which assumes that God makes use of pre-existent matter for the creation. The Platonic view supposes that matter exists independently from God. It also is formulated against a Gnostic interpretation of creatorship and creation, which proposes that the materiality of the creation is inherently evil, because it is created by a lesser and evil god. The orthodox Christian theology postulates that God creates the whole of creation including matter itself. Therefore, God did not use any pre-existent matter in the creative act. God is not merely the architect of the creation, who ordered pre-existent matter according to divine law and government. The theologians of the early church valued the inherent goodness of the creation as expressed in Genesis. The doctrine of the creation *ex nihilo* ascertains that the will of God is the cause of the creation. God created the materiality of the creation out of nothing and thus the physical matter of the creation is inherently good as part of God’s creation.<sup>284</sup>

The church fathers’ doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* incorporates the notion that God the creator is different from the creation. God is uncreated. The creation is created.

Creation *ex Nihilo* means for them that there is a complete contrast between God and the created order, between the uncreated and self-subsistent, and that which is created out of nothing by the will of God.<sup>285</sup>

It is important not to misunderstand the complete contrast between God and

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<sup>282</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, trans. Archibald Robertson, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 3.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>285</sup> Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 75-6.

creation, because it neither implies the idea that God is separate from the creation nor that God abandons the creation. Christian theology does not accept a separation between God and creation in terms of a distancing from the creation after the initial creative act, because it suggests mistakenly that the creation exists and functions independently according to its architectural laws. The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* postulates the idea of a difference in terms of uncreated and created. The uncreated nature of God exists independently from any other source of life. God is life. The creation is not self-subsistent, but receives its existence from the will of God in a continuous creative act. The mystagogical awareness inherent in the theology of the creation *ex nihilo* is the recognition of complete dependence of the creation on God.

God is simultaneously immanent and transcendent in the creation. Hilary of Poitiers (315-67) describes his search for the meaning of life and how it is related to knowledge of God. His developing understanding of God's creatorship is so significant that it motivates his conversion to Christianity.

I began to search for the meaning of life. (...) Then I sought to know God better. (...) The whole heavens are held in God's hand, the whole earth in the hollow of his hand. (...) The heavens is also his throne and the earth his footstool. We should certainly avoid too human an image of God, as someone sitting on a throne with his feet on a footstool. His throne and his footstool are his infinite omnipotence, which embraces everything in the hollow of his hand. The imagery borrowed from created things signifies that God exists in them and outside them, that he both transcends and pervades them, that he surpasses all creatures and yet dwells in them. The hollow of his hands symbolizes the power of his divinity revealing itself.<sup>286</sup>

The biblical images of God should not be viewed anthropomorphically but need to be interpreted with a proper understanding of God's uncreated nature. Hilary's reading of a biblical image of God's creatorship bears similarity with Julian's interpretation of her vision in which she sees that the creation is held in the hollow of God's hand.<sup>287</sup> Hilary and Julian contemplate imagery of creation in

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<sup>286</sup> Quoted in Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and Commentary* (London: New City, 1993), 18-9. See Hilary of Poitiers, *On The Trinity*, 1.1-6.

<sup>287</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9r-v (159-60).

order to become increasingly aware how the creation exists through the omnipotence of God.

Julian's understanding that the nature of the creation is engendered 'out of nothing' is mediated through her visionary image in which she sees the creation lying in the hollow of her hand. The vision encompasses all three ways of her visionary knowing: an image, words formed in her understanding and spiritual insight.<sup>288</sup>

And in this he shewed a little thing the quantite of an hafe[n]nott lying in þe palme of my hand as me semide and it was as rounde as a balle · I looked theran w<sup>t</sup> the eye of my vnderstanding and thought, what may this be · And it was answered generaely thus · ¶ It is all that is made · I marvayled how it might la[st]e, for me thought it might haue sodenly falle[n] to nawght for littlenes ¶ And I was answered in my vnderstanding it la[st]eth and ever shall · for god loueth it · and so hath all thing being by the loue of god, ¶ In this little thing I saw iij · properties, ¶ the first is þ<sup>t</sup> god made it, ¶ the secund that God loueth it, ¶ the thirde that god keyth it, ¶ But what behyld I ther in verely the maker · the keper · the louer.<sup>289</sup>

Julian communicates that the whole creation receives existence out of God's love. Her insight into the nothingness of the creation is intended to guide her fellow Christians to the contemplation of God's indwelling love and an awareness of absolute dependence on God's creative activity. Her initial impression that the creation is so small and might fall into nothingness evokes the awareness that it is impossible for the creation to exist apart from the creative working of God. Hence the creation is so dependent on the creator that it will cease to exist if God withdraws the love of the creative act.

Her interpretation of creation *ex nihilo* deepens the meaning of nothingness towards the love of God. God creates with the nature of uncreated love. Being created out of nothing means being created out of the uncreated nature of God. The creation is a mirror image of God's uncreated nature, because the ground of its existence is derived from God. Julian's understanding of the nature of creation mediates her spiritual insight into the mystery of God's indwelling in the creation.

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<sup>288</sup> See Paris MS, 1.9: f.19r (179).

<sup>289</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9r-v (159-60).

Her awareness deepens into the beholding of God's personal relationship with the creation. In contemplating the meaning of God's creatorship she comes to the awareness of God's guardianship over and lovemaking with the creation: "But what behyld I ther in verely the maker · the keper · the louer."<sup>290</sup> The Trinity indwells in the creation. God is one in love. From God emanates the creation of which God is creator, sustainer and lover.

God is love and the creative activity is performed with enduring love. The theology of the creation out of nothing expresses the ultimate and mysterious otherness of God who is creatively working within the creation to guide it to its ultimate fulfilment. God creates out of nothing and guides the creation in an ongoing movement of love towards its eternal destiny.<sup>291</sup> God knows the creation in its origin and fulfilment simultaneously. The creative act of God is not merely an act of origination at the beginning of time, but includes the destiny of creation within the love of God. The creation exists within the eternal eschaton of God.

A fundamental facet of Julian's theology of creation *ex nihilo* is the inseparability between creation and eschatology. God is the one God of creation and salvation. Her eschatology is rooted in her understanding of God's eternal love that can neither be diminished nor lost within the creation. The eschatology of God's love is grounded in the might, wisdom and love of the triune God, which guides the creation towards its destination in God.

And therefore the blessed trynte is evyr fulle plejyd in alle his workes · And all this shewyd he full blessedly · meanyng thus · ¶ See I am god. See I am in all thyngs · See I do all thyng · See I nevyr lefte my handes of my workes · ne nevyr shalle w<sup>t</sup>out ende See I lede all thyng to the end · þ<sup>t</sup> I ordeyne it to · fro w<sup>t</sup>out ~~end~~ begynnyng by the same myght wisdom and loue that I made it with · how shoulde any thyng be a mysse.<sup>292</sup>

Julian experiences the divine eschaton within the creation, as her vision gives her the spiritual awareness that God indwells the creation with might, wisdom and love. She becomes aware of the nothingness of the creation in the light of God's eternity, which means that the creation is whole and good because of the divine

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<sup>290</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: f.9v (160).

<sup>291</sup> See Paris MS, 13.32: f.58v (260).

<sup>292</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: ff.24v-25r (192-3).

indwelling. Her eschatology is deeply influenced by the monastic sense of time: as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be forever. Continuously her insight breaks through the human sense of time and establishes the divine eschatology of God's love within the 'eternal now' of human life. She possesses not only the boldness to proclaim that all *shall* be well, but even here and now in the creation all *is* well: "how ſhoulde any thyng be a myſſe."<sup>293</sup>

Julian's theology of the Trinity resembles that of the Eastern church fathers. The Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky argues that the Eastern church values the central place of the Trinity for the Christian spiritual life, the experience of God and eschatology.

The Trinity is, for the Orthodox Church, the unshakeable foundation of all religious thought, of all piety, of all spiritual life, of all experience. It is the Trinity that we seek in seeking after God, when we search for the fullness of being, for the end and meaning of existence.<sup>294</sup>

The Trinity encompasses the origin, the access to spiritual experience during life and the destination of human life through the deification of human nature. The church fathers acknowledge that the substantial and uncreated oneness of the Trinity is incomprehensible to the human mind. They assert that the triune God is known through the outflowing creative and sanctifying love in human nature.<sup>295</sup> The Trinity is the foundation of the deification of human nature. This mystical-eschatological understanding of human nature emphasises its createdness in the image of God and its receptivity to the glorifying indwelling of the Trinity.

Julian's understanding of the Trinity as might, wisdom and love is ultimately concerned with the effect of God's indwelling in the human nature and is embedded in a soteriological approach of the sanctification of humanity. She emphasises the economic Trinity rather than the immanent Trinity; that is, how the Trinity is experienced in its outflowing love in human nature rather than in the mutual love that exists in God's essence. The pivotal importance of the Trinity for

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<sup>293</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: ff.24v-25r (192-3). See Paris MS, 13.34 f.62r (267).

<sup>294</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1957; reprint New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 65-6.

<sup>295</sup> See Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God*, trans. Asheleigh Moorhouse (London: The Faith Press, 1963).

the creation of human nature and the accomplishment of salvation through deification abounds. In Christ is seen the Trinity; in the creation is beheld the Trinity; human nature is created in the image of the Trinity; in the eschatology of God's love is seen how all shall be well through the might, wisdom and love of the Trinity.

## 2 Created in the image of God

The church fathers' theology of creation *ex nihilo* is further elaborated into an understanding of God's creation of humanity in the image of God. The main premise of the orthodox Christian teaching concerning human nature is derived from Genesis 1.26-7 on the creation of humankind. Genesis 2.7 describes how God creates Adam: "And God formed man of dust from the earth and breathed into his face the breath of life; and man was made a living being."<sup>296</sup> Gregory Nazianzen (c.323-89) comments that the breath of God signifies the imprint of God's image: "for the spirit that he breathed into it is a flash of the invisible godhead."<sup>297</sup> The creation of humanity in the image and likeness of God is interpreted by the church fathers within the perspective of its deification. The image of God gives human nature the outlook of being perfected in God's likeness. Origen comments that likeness with God is the deification of humanity in the beatific vision of eternal life.<sup>298</sup> "Human nature received the dignity of the image right from the beginning; but the likeness is reserved for the fulfilment."<sup>299</sup>

Andrew Louth argues that the doctrine of the creation *ex nihilo* denies the kinship between God and humanity, because it is a rejection of the Platonist anthropology that humanity is created with an inherent divine quality.<sup>300</sup> Louth argues that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* poses a difficulty to the mystical

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<sup>296</sup> Genesis, 2.7.

<sup>297</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 79. See Gregory Nazianzen, *Dogmatic Poems*, 8. See Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Ian and Ihita Kesarcodi-Watson (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978; reprint, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 69: "St. Gregory of Nazianzus can speak, and rightly so, of the presence in man of a "particle of divinity." *This means that uncreated grace is implicated in the creative act itself, and that the soul receives at once life and grace: for grace is the breath of God, the "current of divinity," the vivifying presence of the Holy Spirit.*"

<sup>298</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (London: SPCK, 1936; reprint with an introduction by Henri de Lubac, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973), 3.4.1.

<sup>299</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 91. See Origen, *First Principles*, 3.6.1.

<sup>300</sup> Louth, *Christian Mystical Tradition*, 75-7.

understanding of union with God, since it implies a difference in nature between humanity and God.<sup>301</sup> Athanasius holds the idea that creation is infinitely different from God, but that the divine image in humanity makes contemplation of God possible. According to Louth, Athanasius did not develop the implications of deification in terms of divinising contemplation, although he speaks of the soul as mirroring Christ, the image of God. Louth explores how Athanasius restores the mystical aspect of the Christian tradition by elaborating upon the image of the soul as a mirror: the created soul reflects the uncreated nature of God. Athanasius left further exploration of mystical theology to his successors. Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-95) integrates the Athanasian heritage of *creatio ex nihilo* with a mystical theology of an intimate knowing of God through love.

His understanding of the creation out of nothing means that there is no point of contact between the soul and God, and so God is totally unknowable to the soul, and the soul can have no experience of God except in so far as God makes such experience possible. It is the unknowability of God that leads to Gregory's insistence that it is only in virtue of the incarnation, only because God has manifested Himself- and his love- among us, that we can know him at all. As the soul responds to God's love, as it comes closer to the unknowable God, it enters into deeper and deeper darkness, and knows him in a way that surpasses knowledge.<sup>302</sup>

According to Louth, mysticism can no longer be interpreted in Platonic terms as a union between God and the soul: "There is no ecstasy, in which the soul leaves its nature as created and passes into the uncreated."<sup>303</sup>

In contrast with Louth's argument, Olivier Clément gives evidence that the theme of kinship pervades the writing of the church fathers and was constitutive for their mystical theology. He argues that the difference with the Platonic anthropology lies in the church fathers' view that both body and soul are created in the image of God.

It is the whole human being, soul and body, that is in the image of God. The

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 77-80.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>303</sup> Ibidem.

body, by receiving the life giving breath of the Spirit, is enabled to be the visible expression of the person: to be not a mask but a face. Like the Bible, the Fathers assert that only the unity of soul and body constitutes the human being. The visible aspect of humanity would not exist, if it were not *the invisible made visible*. Soul and body must mutually symbolise each other. (...) In the second century the Apostolic Fathers laid great emphasis on this dignity of the body. For them, Christianity proclaims, prepares and anticipates the resurrection of the flesh, as is proved both by Christ's bodily resurrection and by his 'ascension,' which enabled earthly flesh to penetrate into God himself.<sup>304</sup>

The theology that human nature exists with an insurmountable difference to the uncreated nature of God is still inclusive of the exaltation of human nature in both body and soul.

The biblical image of the formation of Adam expresses an appreciation of the created nature of humanity: created from dust and inbreathed with God's life. Gregory Nazianzen is sensitive in explaining the twofold nature of humanity without creating a dualism between body and soul.

The great Architect of the universe conceived and produced a being endowed with both natures, the visible and the invisible: God created the human being, bringing its body forth from pre-existing matter which God animated with God's own spirit. (...) He created a being at once earthly and heavenly, insecure and immortal, visible and invisible, halfway between greatness and nothingness, flesh and spirit at the same time. (...) And most mysterious of all, made to resemble God by simple submission to the divine will.<sup>305</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa further developed the idea of being created in the image of God as an inherent and natural kinship with God, which draws humanity to likeness with God. That likeness is the destiny of humanity and towards this purpose it is created with the fullness of a longed for prospect in all its abilities.

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<sup>304</sup> Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 82.

<sup>305</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 77. See Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 45: The Second Oration on Easter*, 7.

If humanity is called to life in order to share in the divine nature, it must have been suitably constituted for the purpose. (...) It was essential that a certain kinship with the divine should have been mixed in human nature, so that this affinity should predispose it to seek what is related to it. (...) That is why humanity was given life, intelligence, wisdom, and all the qualities worthy of the godhead, so that each one of them should cause it to desire what is akin to it. And since eternity is inherent in the godhead, it was absolutely imperative that our nature should not lack it but should have in itself the principle of immortality. By virtue of this inborn faculty it could always be drawn towards what is superior to it and retain the desire for eternity. That is summed up in a single phrase in the account of the creation of the world: ‘God created humanity in God’s own image.’<sup>306</sup>

The human is endowed with an inborn faculty that draws it to the uncreated source of its life. It is felt as a desire that is grounded in the immortal, eternal and divine quality that is mixed into the created nature.

According to Irenaeus, the createdness of human nature means that it is imprinted with a desire to receive an increasing likeness with God. “Man receives advancement and increase towards God. (...) For the receptacle of his goodness, and the instrument of his glorification, is the man who is grateful to him who made him.”<sup>307</sup> Irenaeus presents a mystagogy that guides the Christian into a living experience of what it means to be created by God and admonishes the Christian to be attentive to the creative craft of God.

For you do not make God, but God you. If, then, you are God’s workmanship, await the hand of your Maker which creates everything in due time; in due time as far as you are concerned, whose creation is being carried out. Offer to him your heart in a soft and tractable state, and preserve the form in which the Creator has fashioned you, having moisture in thyself, lest, by becoming hardened, you lose the impressions of his fingers. But by preserving the framework you shall assent to that which is perfect, for the moist clay which is in you is hidden by the workmanship of God. His hand has fashioned your substance (...) For creation is an attribute of the goodness

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<sup>306</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 80. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations*, 5.

<sup>307</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.11.2.

of God; but to be created is that of human nature. If, then, you shall deliver up to him what is yours, that is, faith towards him and subjection, you shall receive his handiwork, and shall be perfect work of God.<sup>308</sup>

The theology of God's creatorship is not merely a doctrine accepted in faith, but becomes integrated into the lived experience of Christians who are taught that God is perfecting their created nature.

It is my opinion that Julian's anthropology is embedded within the theology of the early church, which developed a mystical understanding of the deification of human nature. She maintains the early church theology of humanity's creation in the image of God. She grounds her understanding of the Christian anthropology in several visionary sights, which guide her into the mystery of the human creation *ex nihilo*. Her spiritual insight resonates with the biblical story of the creation of Adam, whose body was formed of earth and whose soul was breathed into him with the breath of God. Her theology accords with the fundamental dogma of the Christian tradition that the creation is inherently good. It is created out of God's love:

ffor or that he made vs · he louyd vs · And whe~~n~~ we were made we louyd hym ·  
And this is aloue made of the kyndly sub~~st~~tauncyall goodne~~s~~se of the holy go~~st~~ ·  
myghtly in re~~s~~on of the myghte of the fader · and wy~~s~~e in mynde of the  
wy~~s~~dom of the ~~son~~ · And thus is man~~n~~ys soule made of god. and in the same  
poynte knyte to god ¶ And thus I vnder~~st~~ode that man~~n~~es soule is made of  
nought, that is to se~~y~~ it is made but of nought · that is made as thus · whan god  
shulde make man~~n~~es body he toke the slyme of the erth. whych is a mater  
medelyd and gaderyd of alle bodely thynges · and therof he made man~~n~~es  
body, ¶ But to the makyng of man~~n~~ys soule he wolde take ryght nought · but  
made it.<sup>309</sup>

Human nature is rooted in God's love in which there is neither beginning nor end; God's eternity is the ground of love from which humanity receives being. Humanity is created in a blend of two natures; a nature created from that which is created and a nature created from that which is not created. The human body is

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 4.39.2.

<sup>309</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: ff.112r-v (367-8).

created with earth and the substance of the soul is created with the uncreated might, wisdom and love of God. Julian anthropology distinguishes between substance and sensuality, but maintains that both are created by God and thus adheres to the Christian dogma that the uncreated nature of God is distinct in nature from the created nature of humanity. Sensuality is created from physical matter and can be called the ‘created createdness’ of human nature. The substance is created out of nothing and can be called the ‘uncreated createdness.’ The substance of human nature is always oriented towards the love of God. The substance informs in humanity a kinship or likeness with God and enables the sensuality to become receptive to God’s working. The ‘created uncreatedness’ - the soul- is an innate response to the love of God.

Julian’s distinction between sensuality and substance adheres to the theology of the church fathers regarding image and likeness. The capacity for divination here on earth is created into human nature through the image of God and finds fulfilment in likeness with God in the divine eschaton. The human longs for growth and fulfilment in love, because the sensuality is created with a weakness, whereas the substance is created in the fullness of seeing and loving God. The tension between lack and perfection creates an endless progression of coming to fulfilment in God’s love.

And anemptys oure ſubſtaunce he made vs ſo nobyll and ſo rych þt evyr more we werke his wylle (...) ¶ And thus in oure ſubſtaunce we be full · And in oure ſenſualyte we feyle · Whych feylyng god wylle reſtore and fulfyll.<sup>310</sup>

The substance of human nature reflects likeness with God and is always fulfilling the will of God: it sees God and beholds God and the seeing and beholding engenders the love for God.<sup>311</sup> She emphasises the idea present in the church fathers that human nature is mingled with the nature of eternity.

The sensuality is orientated towards the creation and informed by the creation in its way of understanding, remembering and loving. Because the sensuality is created from the createdness and oriented towards the creation, it constitutes the uniqueness of each person as an individual with its own life-story and inner life. ‘I ſaw that oure kynde is in god hoole in whych he makyth dyverſytes flowyng oute

<sup>310</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: ff.120r-v (383-4).

<sup>311</sup> Paris MS, 14.44: ff.80v-81v (304-6).

of hym · to werke his wylle.”<sup>312</sup> The sensuality is created with vulnerability through experiences of loneliness, ignorance, forgetfulness and pain.<sup>313</sup> Within those experiences the human person searches for the meaning of God’s will. Within this searching the love of God is the compass needle.

Sensuality is the changeability that naturally belongs to the created human nature. A person experiences a changeable relationship with oneself, with others and with God. The physical nature undergoes continuous change until the body decays and fades away.<sup>314</sup> Sensuality also comprises affectivity and judgements, which are changeable and continually influenced by life-experiences.<sup>315</sup> The changeability of the human sensual nature exists because God cannot be seen continually.<sup>316</sup> Sensuality and substance are related to a difference in human experience and knowledge: that of recognising the nature of suffering and the nature of joy. Suffering is rooted in the changeable sensual nature, while joy is rooted in the substance that is created out of God’s love. Because of the indivisible bond that is created between substance and sensuality, the sensuality shares in the love of God and responds with a longing for love.<sup>317</sup> The receptivity of the sensuality to the experience of being loved by God is the reason that suffering and longing for God are intertwined within the human experience. Experiences of suffering and happiness shape the path towards a trusting relationship with God. An experience of pain can thus cause the search for God, as it awakens a longing to be loved and to know God.<sup>318</sup>

Grace Jantzen’s persistence in regarding Julian as an integrative theologian also pertains to the integrity between substance and sensuality.<sup>319</sup> The relevant point is that Julian’s theology holds that neither substance nor sensuality are

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<sup>312</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: f.121r (385).

<sup>313</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.93v-94r (330-1).

<sup>314</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: f.12v (166).

<sup>315</sup> See Paris MS, 14.45: ff.81v-82r (306-7); 14.47: ff.85v-86r (314-5).

<sup>316</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: f.86v (316).

<sup>317</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9r-10v (159-62); 1.6: ff.12r-13v (165-68).

<sup>318</sup> Paris MS, 2.10: ff.22v-23v (186-8).

<sup>319</sup> Jantzen, *Christian Mysticism*, 146-56. Prudence Allen holds the view that Julian’s view is based upon the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas (1224-74). “Julian introduces a theory of the relation of soul and body that draws upon a Thomist understanding of the human person as an integral unity. (...) Julian’s use of the traditional philosophical terms ‘substance’ and ‘sensuality’ both borrows from and adds to common scholastic understanding of the terms.” Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation 1250-1500*, vol. 2 of *The Concept of Woman* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 407. Within this argument, Allen contends that Julian does not develop a mystical theology of the annihilation of the self. Wolfgang Riehle, who denounces the influence of Eckhart’s ground of the soul, puts a similar view forward regarding a scholastic influence on her articulation of substance and sensuality. Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 156-7.

separated from God, as both sensuality and substance are created in the image of God and dependent upon God's creative act: "ffor I ſaw full ſuerly that oure ſubſtaunce is in god ¶ And alſo I ſaw that in oure ſensualyte god is."<sup>320</sup> Julian does not exclude the sensuality from her understanding of the soul. The 'soul' can best be interpreted as the human person, who is created in an integrative wholeness between substance and sensuality.

It is my contention that Julian reaches back to the early church's theology, which says explicitly that the whole of the human person, body and soul, is created in the image of God. A deep respect for the human body is a unique feature of her understanding of God's relationship with humanity. Her theology of the human body expresses that God does not despise the human body, but sustains its natural functioning.<sup>321</sup> Her vision gives an insight into the creation of the human body. This vision of the human body is reminiscent of Psalm 138. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." God's continuous act of creation sustains the body's formation and functioning: "for loue of the ſoule that he made to his awne lykneſſe (...) ſoule and body cladde and encloſydde in the goodnes of god."<sup>322</sup> God loves the human person in body and soul. The human body is responsive to the love of God, because it is created, formed and sustained in its functioning by the indwelling love of God.

### 3 Created in the image of Christ

The doctrine of the Trinity formulates the substantial oneness of the uncreated nature of Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit. God the creator, Christ and the Holy Spirit are of one substance (*ousia*) and share the same nature. The council of Nicaea ascertains that the divinity of Christ exists in one substance with the creator God. The council of Constantinople (381) acknowledges the divinity of

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<sup>320</sup> Paris MS. 14.55: f.116r (375).

<sup>321</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: ff.12r-v (165-6).

<sup>322</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: f.12v (166).

the Holy Spirit as orthodox Christian teaching. The motivation of the church fathers in formulating the one substance of Creator, Son and Holy Spirit is characterised by a soteriological awareness of the deification of human nature. The argument in favour of the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit is that, because they divinise human nature, their nature must be that of God.<sup>323</sup> The Son is the image of God who is incarnate in the flesh and bestows divinity on humanity. The Holy Spirit is one substance with God and through the gift of love the Holy Spirit bestows sanctification on human nature so that it is made to participate in God.

The Eastern church fathers argue the orthodox position of one substance and three persons in terms of the differentiation in the origins of Creator, Son and Holy Spirit, while maintaining the eternity of the one God.<sup>324</sup> “The Father by his character of unoriginated origin; the Son by generation; the Spirit by procession.”<sup>325</sup> God the creator is uncreated; Christ, the Son and Word of God, is begotten from the Father; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and, or through, the Son. The generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit are not interpreted in terms of a temporal coming into existence, but signify the uncreated nature of the one God as an eternal self-giving: “just as the Father is always good by nature, so He is by nature always generative.”<sup>326</sup> The Fathers understood the relationship between the Creator, Christ and Spirit as the personal expression of mutual love.

The divine Persons are not added to one another: the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, the Spirit is united to the Father together with the Son and ‘completes the blessed Trinity’ as if he were ensuring the circulation of love within it.<sup>327</sup>

The divine persons form a substantial bond of love in the Godhead that is without beginning and without end; the primal ground and ultimate goal; the alpha and the omega of life. The three persons are not a fragment of the whole,

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<sup>323</sup> Kelly, *Doctrines*, 233, 243 and 257-8.

<sup>324</sup> See Gregory Nazianzen, *The Third Theological Oration- On the Son*, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 160-76.

<sup>325</sup> Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 336.

<sup>326</sup> Quoted in Kelly, *Doctrines*, 243. See Athanasius, *Contra Arius*, 3.66.

<sup>327</sup> Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 67.

but contain each other in communion and permeate each other with an eternal and infinite personal love.<sup>328</sup>

The doctrine of Christ's incarnation is developed with the explicit intention to centralise Christ's involvement in the salvation and sanctification of humanity. The church fathers developed the theology of the two natures of Christ.<sup>329</sup> The Council of Chalcedon (451) articulates the kerygma that Christ is

the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly human (...) consubstantial to the Father in regards his divinity and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity.<sup>330</sup>

Christ is one person with two natures: perfectly God by nature and perfectly human by nature. Christ is the divine self-expression and self-giving in salvation history: the incarnation of God in human nature.

Athanasius is the originator of the theology that Christ bestows divine life to humanity by virtue of the consubstantial unity between the divine and human natures in Christ. He lays the foundation of the Eastern tradition of *theosis*, that is, the divinisation of human nature through participation in God. This theology emphasises that the deification of human nature is the result of the incarnation.

The Word could never have divinized us if he were merely divine by participation and were not Himself the essential Godhead, the Father's veritable image.<sup>331</sup>

By the Word becoming man, the universal providence has been known, and its giver and artificer the very Word of God. For he was made man that we be made God.<sup>332</sup>

Gregory Nazianzen follows the idea that Christ's incarnation allows the divinisation of humanity. "By becoming exactly what we are, He united the

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>329</sup> John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), 215-6.

<sup>330</sup> Norman T. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 86.

<sup>331</sup> Quoted in Kelly, *Doctrines*, 243. See Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*, 3.51.

<sup>332</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 54.

human race through Himself to God.”<sup>333</sup> He uses the image of knitting to express that in Christ the divine and human natures are perfectly conjoined. The two natures of Christ “have been substantially conjoined and knit together.”<sup>334</sup> With the image of mingling, he expresses that in Christ the nature of all humanity is united with God and sanctified.

The Word, in taking flesh, was mingled with humanity, and took our nature within himself, so that the human should be deified by this mingling with God; the stuff of our nature was entirely sanctified by Christ.<sup>335</sup>

Julian adheres to the doctrine that Christ is fully divine and fully human in nature and follows the Eastern church fathers’ understanding of humanity’s growth in likeness with God through its creation in the image of Christ. Her theology of humanity’s christocentric nature is developed from her adherence to the kerygma of Christ’s participation in the Trinity and the consubstantial unity of the divine and human natures in Christ. Christ is the second person of the Trinity and fully divine: “the dwelling of the blessed soule of crist is full & hygh in þe glorious godhede.”<sup>336</sup> Christ is destined to assume human nature and create an indivisible union between sensuality and substance.

And thus in crist oure two kyndys be onyd for the trynity 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.<sup>337</sup>

Julian’s theology of the human creation *ex nihilo* is further developed in her teaching that Christ is the firstborn of all creation and wills to be the ground of human nature.<sup>338</sup> She adheres to the theology of Athanasius, which affirms that Christ is the creative word of God and incarnates by virtue of God’s goodness and loving-kindness.<sup>339</sup> Christ incarnates out of love for humanity:

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<sup>333</sup> Quoted in Kelly, *Doctrines*, 297. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.10.

<sup>334</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Letters on the Apollinarian Controversy: Epistle 101*, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 5.

<sup>335</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 47. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*, 2.

<sup>336</sup> Paris MS, 14.54: f.113v (170).

<sup>337</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: f.121r (385).

<sup>338</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: f.112r (367).

<sup>339</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 1, 4 and 11.

ffor I ſaw full trewly that alle the werkys that god hath done · or evyr ſhall were full knowen to hym and before ſeen fro w<sup>t</sup>ou<sup>t</sup> t begynnyng. And for loue he made mankynd · and for the ſame loue · hym ſelfe wolde become man.<sup>340</sup>

She sees the incarnation of Christ in the perspective of the creation out of God's love.

God the blyſſydfull trynyte whych is evyr laſtyng beyng ryght as he is endleſſe fro w<sup>t</sup>out begynnyng · ryghte ſo it was in his purpoſe endleſſe to make mankynde · whych feyer kynd furſt was dyght to his owne ſon: the ſecond perſon · and when he woulde by full accorde of alle the trynyte · he made vs alle at onys, ¶ And in oure making he knytt vs and onyd vs to hym ſelfe · by whych oonyng we be kept as clene and as noble as we were made.<sup>341</sup>

In a similar fashion as Gregory Nazianzen, Julian uses the image of knitting to describe the union between Christ's divinity and humanity, while she argues that through Christ's knitting all humanity is conjoined to God. Christ's incarnation endows humanity with a christocentric nature. The church fathers put forward this understanding of human nature in terms of the endowment with the image of Christ, who is the perfect image of God.

Wherfore he wyll we wytt þ<sup>t</sup> þ<sup>e</sup> nobeleſt thyng that evyr he made is mankynde · and the fulleſte ſubſtaunce and the hyeſt vertu is þ<sup>e</sup> bleſſyd ſoule of criſt · And ferthermore he wyll we wytt that this deerworthy ſoule was preciouſly knytt to hym in the making · whych knott is ſo ſuttell and ſo myghty that it is onyd in to god · In whych onyng it is made endleſly holy, ¶ ffarthermore he wyll we wytt that all the ſoulys þ<sup>t</sup> ſhalle be ſavyd in hevyn w<sup>t</sup> out ende be knytt in this knott and onyd in this oonyng and made holy in this holyneſſe.<sup>342</sup>

The human nature is christocentric as the indwelling of Christ engenders the nobility of the human nature. She maintains the difference between the created

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<sup>340</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: ff.121r-v (385-6).

<sup>341</sup> Paris MS, 14.58: f.123r (389).

<sup>342</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: ff.113r-v (369-70). See Paris MS, 14.54: f.113v (370): where the bleſſed ſoule of criſt is, there is the ſubſtance of alle the ſoules that ſhall be ſavyd by criſt.

human nature and the uncreated nature of God, whilst developing the idea that an indivisible bond is created with the incarnation of Christ. An intimate and holy bond is established between the uncreated nature of God and the created human and the holy bond means that God loves humanity in an equal way as God loves Christ.<sup>343</sup>

Julian's understanding of the christocentric nature of humanity is reminiscent of the reciprocal self-giving relationship that exists between Creator, Son and Holy Spirit. The church fathers' see the immanent relationship within the Trinity as a coming from and returning to God. "The single nature of the Three is God. In regard to his oneness he is the Father. The others come from him and return to him without being confused with one another."<sup>344</sup> Julian acknowledges that the outflowing and indwelling love that exists between Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit is bestowed upon humanity through Christ.

And by the endleſſe entent and affent · And the full acorde of all the trynyte · þ<sup>e</sup> myd perſon wolde be grounde and hed of this feyer kynde out of whom we be all come · in whom we be alle encloſyd · in to whom we ſhall all goo.<sup>345</sup>

The divine nature of Christ forms the ground of the created nature of humanity: the ground out of whom human nature is engendered, through whom it is given life and to whom it shall return. Being created through God also means *in* God and *towards* God. God loves humanity as God loves Christ. Christ keeps safe the human will to love God. "And namly and truly that we haue all this bleſſyd wyll hoole and ſafe in oure lorde Jheſu criſt."<sup>346</sup>

God's kingdom is Christ's city and dwelling place in human nature. Human sensuality is sanctified by the incarnation and partakes in the mystical body of Christ.<sup>347</sup> The intimacy in which the human sensuality partakes in the divinity is sublimated in Christ's incarnation and is mirrored in the will of Mary who is the God-bearer and the highest expression of God's love for human nature.<sup>348</sup> Christ makes a dwelling place where the human nature is made sensual:

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<sup>343</sup> Paris MS, 14.54: f.113v (370).

<sup>344</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 69. See Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration*, 42.

<sup>345</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: f.112r (367).

<sup>346</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: ff.111r-v (365-6).

<sup>347</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.103r-v (349-50).

<sup>348</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: f.113r (369); 14.44: ff.80v-81r (304-5) and 11.25: f.48v (240).

ffor in the same poynt that oure soule is made sensuall · in the same poynt is the cytte of god ordeyned to hym fro w<sup>t</sup>out begynnyng ¶ In which cytte he comyth and nevyr shall remeve it · for god is nevyr out of the soule in which he shall dwell blessedly w<sup>t</sup>out end.<sup>349</sup>

I saw þ<sup>e</sup> soule · so large as it were an endlesse warde · and also as it were a blessed kyngdom · and by the condicions þ<sup>t</sup> I saw there in I vnderstode þ<sup>t</sup> it is a wurshypfulle cytte ¶ In myddes of that cytte oure lorde Jhesu · very god · and very man · (...) he littyth in þ<sup>e</sup> soule evyn ryghte in peas and rest and he rulyth and □ evyth hevyn and erth and all that is.<sup>350</sup>

Julian's theology emphasises humanity's deification through the incarnation of the divine nature of Christ into the created human nature. Christ gives the gift of human likeness with God by way of the sanctification of human nature.

And all the gyftes that god may geue to the creature he hath gevin to his son Jhesu · for vs · which gyftes he wonnyng in vs hath beclofd in hym in to the tyme that we be waxyn and growyn · oure soule w<sup>t</sup> oure body · And oure body w<sup>t</sup> oure soule.<sup>351</sup>

Christ's incarnation sanctifies the human body and spiritual faculties: "for it is his lyknyng to reigne in oure vnderstandyng blessedly and littyth in oure soule restfully · and to dwell in oure soule endlessly · vs all werkyng in to hym."<sup>352</sup> Julian's theology of sanctification is characterised by a trust in the transformative love of Christ: "depyeryng that alle be done that he doth truly trustyng in hym."<sup>353</sup> The significance of the incarnation is extended to the salvation of all humanity, because the indwelling love of Christ encompasses all humanity. "And god hath made alle that is made · and god loveth alle þ<sup>t</sup> he hath made."<sup>354</sup> Julian develops a mystagogic strength in her approach to a christocentric anthropology and initiates

<sup>349</sup> Paris MS, 14.55: f.116r (375). See Paris MS, 14.51: f.98v (340); 14.54: f.113v (370).

<sup>350</sup> Paris MS, 16.68: f.143v (430).

<sup>351</sup> Paris MS, 14.55: ff.116r-v (375-6).

<sup>352</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: f.122v (388).

<sup>353</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: f.123r (389).

<sup>354</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.18v (178).

her fellow Christians into the experience of deification through Christ.

#### 4 Created in the image of the Trinity

Augustine expresses the immanent relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit in terms of mutual indwelling love. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father; the Holy Spirit is the gift of love between the Father and the Son and the consubstantial bond that unites the Trinity.<sup>355</sup> His idea of mutual love in the Trinity builds upon the Johannine dictum that God is love.<sup>356</sup> Augustine traces in the human mind the vestige of the loving relationship within the Trinity. He identified the trinitarian image with the contemplative intellect that is formed by memory, intellect and will and through which the human knows the love of God.<sup>357</sup>

This trinity of the mind is not really the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made. And when it does this it becomes wise. (...) Let it worship the uncreated God by whom it was created with a capacity for him and able to share in him. In this way it will be wise not with its own light but by sharing in that supreme light.<sup>358</sup>

The human intellect is created in the image of God and “its creation is identified with its knowing the Divine Word through whom it was made.”<sup>359</sup>

Augustine’s teaching on the reciprocal loving indwelling in the Trinity and the human mind in the image of the Trinity became widely adopted in the Western theological and mystical tradition. Catherine LaCugna criticises Augustine for developing a trinitarian theology that no longer emphasises the distinctions of the three persons in the economy of salvation, as he locates the Trinity in each

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<sup>355</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press, 1991), 5.3.12 and 15.5.27.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.5.27. See 1 John, 4.8 and 16.

<sup>357</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, 9-10 and 14-15.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.4.15.

<sup>359</sup> Augustine, Genesis, 3.20.31.

individual human being.<sup>360</sup> Despite her criticism, she appreciates Augustine's safeguarding a correspondence between theology and anthropology. "Even if this is not the link of the economy of grace, of the sending of Son and Spirit, Augustine nonetheless did not altogether abandon a point of intersection between God and creature."<sup>361</sup> She acknowledges that he proposes a valid point into salvation history by his acknowledgement that the human bears in itself the image of God and exists in a longing to be united by God.<sup>362</sup>

Augustine's teaching on the Trinity integrates theology with humanity's search for God. Denys Turner explores Augustine's autobiographical *Confessions* and his theological teaching *The Trinity* as expressions of a search for self-understanding.<sup>363</sup>

Augustine came to see that these two pursuits, the search for God and the search for himself were in fact the same search; that to find God was possible only in and through the discovery of the self and that the self, his self, was discoverable only there where God was to be found. And that place, where both he, Augustine, and God were to be found was in the depths of his own interiority: *tu autem eras interior intim meo*, 'But you were more inward than my own inwardness.'<sup>364</sup>

Waaajman uses the *Confessions* as an example of an autobiographical narrative that elucidates mystagogy as God's guidance that introduces the awareness of humanity's dependence on God's creatorship.<sup>365</sup> "Accordingly I would have no being, I would have no existence at all, unless you were in me."<sup>366</sup> Augustine's *Confessions* articulate that the coming to awareness of the true nature of God is deeply related to an inner search for truth. "Because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you."<sup>367</sup> Augustine discovers God in his searching and expresses that too late he came to love God. He searches for God outside, only to find God deeply within himself. "You are more inward than my

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<sup>360</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 44 and 81-104.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>363</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 50-101.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>365</sup> Waaajman, *Spirituality*, 895-8.

<sup>366</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991; reprint, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998), 1.1.1.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.2.2.

most inward part.”<sup>368</sup> In *The Trinity* he explores how self-knowledge derives from recognition of God’s image in the human mind and its potential to cleave to God. “And it could not love itself if it did not know itself at all, that is if it did not remember and understand itself. There is such potency in this image of God in that it is capable of cleaving to him whose image it is.”<sup>369</sup>

Julian’s understanding bears affinity with Augustine’s spiritual experience as he describes it in the *Confessions* and *The Trinity*. She adheres to Augustine’s theology that humanity is created in the image and likeness with the holy Trinity: “the bleſſyd fulle trinitie made mankynd to his ymage and to his lykenes.”<sup>370</sup> Like Augustine, Julian discovers the image of the Trinity within the human nature. Human nature is the created image of the one loving nature that exists between the persons within the uncreated Trinity.

And thus was my vnderſtandyng led of god to Je in hym and to wytt to vnderſtonde and to know that oure ſoule is a made trynyte lyke to the vnmade bleſſyd trynyte knowyn and lovyd fro w<sup>t</sup> out begynnyng · And in þe making onyd to the maker · (...) God is more nerer to vs than oure owne ſoule · for he is grounde in whome oure ſoule ſtandyth and he is mene that kepyth þ<sup>e</sup> ſubſtaunce and the ſenſualyte to geder · ſo that it ſhall nevyr departe · ffor oure ſoule ſyttyth in god in very reſt · and oure ſoule ſtondyth in god in ſuer ſtrenght ¶ And oure ſoule is kyndely rotyd in god in endleſſe loue · And therfore if we wylle haue knowyng of oure ſoule and comenyng and dalyance ther w<sup>t</sup> it behovyth to Jeke in to oure lord god in whom it is encloſyd.<sup>371</sup>

Julian explores the mutual indwelling and enclosing between the love that exist in the immanent Trinity and the outflowing love of the Trinity within the human nature. God dwells in humanity and humanity dwells in God. Her idea of mutual indwelling is deeply reminiscent of the Johannine dictum: “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.”<sup>372</sup>

We be cloſyd in the fader, and we be cloſyd in the Son, and we are cloſyd in

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 3.6.11; see also 10.27.38.

<sup>369</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 15.4.20.

<sup>370</sup> Paris MS, 2.10: f.21v (184).

<sup>371</sup> Paris MS, 14.55: f.116v (376) and 14.56: f.118r (379).

<sup>372</sup> 1 John, 4.16.

the holy goſt. And the fader is becloſyd in vs, the Son is becloſyd in vs, and the holy goſt is becloſyd in vs, all myght, alle wyſdom and alle goodneſſe, one god.<sup>373</sup>

Notwithstanding the infinite participation of the created human nature in the intratrinitarian love, Julian acknowledges the difference between the createdness of human nature and the uncreated nature of the Trinity. However, in the mutual indwelling and enclosing of the divine and human natures, Julian cannot perceive a distinction between God and human substance. The distinction between God and human nature seems to fall away within the awareness of the reciprocal love between God and the human.<sup>374</sup> Human nature is intimately adopted into the mutual love within the Trinity.

And I ſawe no dyfference betwen 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.<sup>375</sup>

Julian's understanding resembles the mystical theology of Eckhart and John Ruusbroec (1293-1381).

Yet all loving spirits are one fruition and one blessedness with God without distinction; for that beatific state, which is the fruition of God and of all his beloved, is so simple and onefold that therein neither the Father nor Son, nor Holy Ghost, is distinct according to the Persons, neither is any creature.<sup>376</sup>

According to James Mackey, these mystical theologies are developed from the understanding of the church fathers that the divine essence is simple and one. All distinction is nullified in God's oneness, including the distinction between created and uncreated. The movement of outflowing from God and returning into God is mediated through Christ: "So all that comes from the One, Word, and in that

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<sup>373</sup> Paris MS, 14.54: f.114v (372).

<sup>374</sup> See Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 44.

<sup>375</sup> Paris MS, 14.54: f.114r (371).

<sup>376</sup> John of Ruysbroek, *The Book of Supreme Truth*, in *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, The Sparkling Stone, The Book of Supreme Truth*, trans. C.A. Wynschenk (Maryland: Westminster, 1974), 240.

Word all ensouled creatures, must be drawn back again into utter simplicity.”<sup>377</sup>

In her anthropology, Julian describes the image of the Trinity within the human nature as a mirror of the uncreated nature of the Trinity. The trinitarian image in human nature is its possession of truth, wisdom and love in created form. Julian’s theology of the creation *ex nihilo* communicates that humanity is created with a natural love for God, because it possesses God’s uncreated love in created form. Her argument for the identification of human nature with the image of the Trinity is based on her interpretation of the creation *ex nihilo*. The goodness, might and wisdom in the Trinity sustain a bond of love that is found in the human ability to reciprocate God’s love.

ffor or that he made vs · he louyd vs · And when we were made we louyd hym ·  
And this is aloue made of the kyndly substauncyall goodnesse of the holy goft ·  
myghtly in reison of the myghte of the fader · and wyse in mynde of the  
wyfdom of the Jon · And thus is mannys soule made of god.<sup>378</sup>

Again, Julian alludes to the profoundly mystical awareness professed in the epistle of John; “We love God, because God loves us first.”<sup>379</sup> The human nature is created with an innate responsiveness to God’s love. The image of the Trinity comprises the fullness of the divine indwelling in human nature and evokes the response to love God in likeness with God’s love that is given to humanity.

Julian further explores how the outflowing love of God in the human nature engenders a transparency for the uncreated might, wisdom and love within the created human faculties of reason, memory and will. Human will is created in likeness with the uncreated will of God and is always fulfilling the will of God:

man werkyth evyr more his wylle and his wurfchyppe duryngly w<sup>t</sup>out styntyng ·  
(...) And evyr more it doyth that it was made for · it seeth god and it beholdyth  
god · And it louyth god · (...) Truth seeth god · and wisdom beholdyth god · and  
of theyse two comyth the thurde · And that is a meruelous delyght in god  
whych is loue · Where truth and wyfedom is verely · there is loue verely

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<sup>377</sup> James P. Mackey, *The Christian Experience of God as Trinity* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 175.

<sup>378</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: ff.112r-v (367-8).

<sup>379</sup> 1 John 4.10.

comyng of them both· and alle of goddes makyng· ¶ ffor god is endleſſe  
ſouereyne truth· endeleſſe ſouereyne wyſdom· endeleſſe ſouereyne loue  
vnmade· And a mans ſoule is a creature in god· Whych hath the ſame  
propertes made.<sup>380</sup>

Humanity participates in God's beholding of the truth, wisdom and love in the Trinity. The human nature is created with receptivity to the might, wisdom and love of the Trinity and the ability to love with the love of God.<sup>381</sup> Although the human will is shaped within the form of the divine will, it has lost the accordance with the form of God's love, since the human sensuality makes the will changeable in its attentiveness to God's love.<sup>382</sup>

Human reason is a gift that is anchored in the human nature and constitutes the uniqueness of each human life in the way that it informs and transforms self-awareness. Because reason is also grounded in the nature of God it is receptive to the wisdom of God who guides humanity towards eternal life. The awareness of the creation and humanity's origin in the love of God is represented by the capacity of the memory. The memory is the steadfast mind that beholds God as the creator of all that exists and discovers truthful self-awareness in the awareness of God. "Oure feyth comyth of the kynde loue of oure ſoule· and of the clere lyghte of oure reſon and of the ſtedfaſte mynde whych we haue of god in oure furſt makyng."<sup>383</sup>

Self-awareness that is mediated through the sensual capacities of reason, memory and will and that constitutes the uniqueness of personhood becomes a spiritual awareness that is more deeply rooted in the love of God. The onset of that self-awareness is an aspect of spiritual direction into a life of faith. Faith is engendered by the awareness that God creates the creation and that human nature is created with a complete dependence on the outflowing love of God. Faith is the trusting in God that continually unlocks deeper aspects of self-awareness as memory, understanding and will are drawn more profoundly into God's love as the Christian comes to understand oneself in likeness with God's love. Faith is the trust that humanity is deeply loved by God.

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<sup>380</sup> Paris MS, 14.44: ff.80v-81r (304-5).

<sup>381</sup> Paris MS, 14.44: f.81r (305).

<sup>382</sup> Paris MS, 14.47: ff.85v-86r (314-5).

<sup>383</sup> Paris MS, 14.55: f.115v (374).

Oure feyth is a lyght kyndly comyng of oure endleſſe day · that is oure fader god · in whych lyght oure moder cryſt and oure good lorde the holy goſt · ledyth vs in this paſſyng lyfe · ¶ This lyght is meſuryd dyſcretly nedfully ſtondyth to vs in the nyght · the lyghte is cauſe of oure lyfe · the nyght is cauſe of oure payne and alle oure woo · (...) Thus I ſawe and vnderſtode that oure feyth is oure lyght in oure nyght · Whych lyght is god oure endleſſe day.<sup>384</sup>

The sensual faculties become spiritual as the human person comes to a self-awareness that is reoriented towards God’s love and finds orientation within the world through a trusting in God. Julian’s spirituality demonstrates a searching to see human life with the eyes of God:

the bryghtnes and clerneſſe of truth and wyſedome makyth hym to ſee · and to know that he is made for loue · in whych loue god endleſſly kepyth hym.<sup>385</sup>

Julian uses various metaphors to guide her fellow Christians into the discovery of the intimate closeness between God and humanity: God dwells in the soul; God enfolds the soul; the soul is rooted in God; the soul is God’s abode. The images function as metaphors of self-discovery as they affirm that Christians cannot come to the full knowing of themselves, unless they come to know God.<sup>386</sup> The metaphors of God’s indwelling in the human nature explore the intimate loving relationship with God. The intimacy with God is similarly expressed with the more philosophical indications of substance, kind and point. The substance is the nature (*kind*) of humanity that responds to the love God. The nature of human love is intimately bound to (*knyte to*) God’s love: it is created out of the uncreated Trinity, whose love initiates the reciprocal movement of love between God and human. The human nature is created to be the beloved of God: “ffor he is the endleſſhead and he made vs only to him ſelfe.”<sup>387</sup>

The ground of love in human nature can never be lost and engenders the longing for God that is fulfilled in eternal life in all humanity. The substance of

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<sup>384</sup> Paris MS, 16.83: ff.171r-v (485-6).

<sup>385</sup> Paris MS, 14.44: f.81v (306).

<sup>386</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 175.

<sup>387</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: f.10v (162).

human nature is grounded in God's love and this love sustains the life of humanity, drawing it into participation with God through the Holy Spirit.<sup>388</sup> Human nature is created in such a way that it is drawn towards union with the divine truth, wisdom and love, desiring to cleave to the image of God and come into a unifying accord with God's life, love and light.

I had in perty touchyng· Jyght· and feelyng in thre propertees of god· (...) the propertees are theyſe: lyfe· loue· and lyght (...) Theyſe iij lichte propertees were ſeen· in oone goodneſſe in to whych goodneſſe my reſon wolde be oonyd and cleuyng to w<sup>t</sup> alle þ<sup>e</sup> myghtes ¶ I behelde w<sup>t</sup> reuerent drede and hyghly mervelyng in the Jyght and in feelyng of the ſwete accorde that oure reſon is in god· vnderſtandyng that it is þ<sup>e</sup> hygheſt gyfte that we haue receyvyd And it is growndyd in kynd.<sup>389</sup>

Human nature is permeated with God's love, wisdom and tenderness that will never leave human nature and which arouses and draws human nature into a deeper mutuality of love with God.

Julian's trinitarian theology is not only similar to Augustine's discovery of God as an image within human nature which gives strength to adhere to God, but also expresses a similar wisdom to that of Gregory of Nyssa; that the marvellous fascination of seeing and loving God will not come to an end. Gregory emphasises that the continuous growth towards likeness with God is engendered through knowing God and experienced in a deepening desire for God. He describes the vision of God as an insatiable desire for God, exactly because God's uncreated nature is endlessly evoking the human desire to see God face to face. The insurmountable difference between God's uncreatedness and human createdness provides a perspective of endless transformation into love.

This truly is the vision of God: never to be satisfied in the desire to see him. But one must always, by looking at what he can see, rekindle his desire to see more. Thus, no limit would interrupt growth in the ascent to God, since no limit to the Good can be found nor is the increasing of desire for the Good

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<sup>388</sup> Paris MS, 14.44: f.81r (305); 14.48: f.87v (318); 14.51: f.99v (342).

<sup>389</sup> Paris MS, 16.83: ff.170v-171r (484-5).

brought to an end because it is satisfied.<sup>390</sup>

In the late Middle Ages, the enkindling of desire is described by Guigo the Carthusian (d.1188/93) as the prayer that blossoms forth from the *lectio divina*: “In my meditation the fire of longing, the desire to know you more fully, has increased. The more I see you, the more I long to see you.”<sup>391</sup> The vision of God is like the beatific vision and incites a deeper longing to be more fully loved and known in God.

## Conclusion

Julian’s theology of God’s creatorship systematically integrates the main traditions within the early church that speak about God as creator and humanity as created: out of nothing; in God’s image; endowed with the nature of Christ; in the image of the Trinity. Although her theology owes much to Augustine in the understanding of the spiritual faculties as created in the image of the Trinity, for a true appreciation of the mystagogic implications of her theology it is necessary to go beyond Augustine to the earlier Eastern church fathers’ spiritual theology that the whole human nature is created with the potential for deification through the incarnation of Christ. Hence, Julian offers an orthodox view of Christian theology and mystagogy by explicating God’s continual creatorship in human life for the purpose of its sanctification. The human nature is created with the nature of God’s love and endowed with the will of Christ, which makes it naturally responsive to a longing for God’s love and conformity to God’s will. Her theology of God’s creatorship forms the firm foundation of a creational and trinitarian mystagogy of love, as it establishes human life in a mutually loving relationship with God that draws the human into the eschatological prospect of illumination of the spiritual senses in the beatific vision. Whereas this chapter emphasises the trinitarian love as the source-experience that becomes transparent in God’s creatorship and the deifying potential of the human, the following

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<sup>390</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 2.239.

<sup>391</sup> Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks: A Letter on the Contemplative Life and Twelve Meditations*, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York: Doubleday 1978; reprint, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 6.

chapter concentrates on the experience of human suffering and its implications for the further development of a theology of God's creatorship and trinitarian love.

## Chapter 4: God's Compassion

The question of theodicy poses a profound difficulty to Christian theology. How are God's creatorship and the goodness of creation reconcilable with the existence of human sin and suffering?<sup>392</sup> Julian holds the Christian doctrine of the goodness of God and creation, and, therefore, is concerned with the problem of theodicy. The research of her doctrine of God's creatorship in view of sin and suffering is important to appreciate her theology of God's compassion and suffering with humanity. This chapter provides a background of some theological aspects in the church fathers' understanding of sin and suffering, against which it studies how Julian redresses this interpretation. In addition, it demonstrates that she adheres to strands in some church fathers' reflection on human weakness and loss, which have been marginalized in the Christian tradition. Firstly, the chapter explores Julian's theology of Adam's fall and underlines that she differs from Augustine's thought about the implications of the fall for original sin and free will. Secondly, it compares her theology with the church fathers' interpretation of the fall as a loss in the beholding of God and draws out similarities with Irenaeus's understanding of Adam's creation in vulnerability. Thirdly, it describes aspects of some church fathers' explanation of suffering as the consequence of God's wrath in the punishment of sin, and demonstrates that Julian's theology introduces the idea of God's compassion with suffering. Fourthly, it argues that Julian formulates a theology of atonement that differs from Anselm's, as she devises a theology of Christ's passion in terms of God's suffering out of love with humanity.

### 1 The fall of Adam

The Christian tradition formulates the goodness of God's creation, which includes humanity being created in the image of God. The belief in the creation of humanity in the image of God is derived from the Old Testament: "And God said, "Let us make humankind to our image and likeness" (...) And God made

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<sup>392</sup> Similarly, the Jewish tradition faces the difficult task of reconciling sin and suffering with the goodness of God. See Irving J. Rosenbaum, *The Holocaust and Halakbah* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1976); David Birnbaum, *God and Evil: A Jewish Perspective, A Unified Theodicy/Theology/ Philosophy* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1989).

man, to the image of God he made him: male and female he made them.”<sup>393</sup> Together with the story of the creation of humanity in Adam, the Old Testament story of the fall of Adam has taken a central place in Christian reflection on the nature of sin.<sup>394</sup> From the early church to the theological discussions in the late Middle Ages, exegeses of the story of Adam formed the corner stone for contemplation on the nature of sin and suffering.<sup>395</sup> Augustine’s thoughts about original sin came to exercise a decisive influence in the late medieval Western theological tradition, against the more moderate thinking of Irenaeus who left his traces within the Eastern church. Julian’s interpretation of the fall and her theology of sin and God’s judgement is in some respects significantly different from Augustine’s theology of original sin and God’s punishment. It is remarkably close to Irenaeus’s theology of humanity’s creation in weakness.

Augustine follows the traditional Christian view that Adam is created in perfection. The belief in Adam’s perfection follows from the perfect creation of God and equates the goodness of creation with humanity’s original righteousness. Augustine searches for the cause of sin and suffering at the beginning of the creation and, in accordance with a Christian literal interpretation of Genesis, he finds the root of all suffering in Adam’s trespassing of God’s commandment.<sup>396</sup>

Human nature was certainly originally created blameless and without any fault (*vitium*); but human nature by which each one of us is now born of Adam requires a physician, because it is not healthy. All the good things, which it has by its conception, life, senses and mind, it has from God, its creator and maker. But the weaknesses which darkens and disables these good natural qualities, as a result of which that nature needs enlightenment and healing, did not come from the blameless maker but from the original sin, which was committed by free will. For this reason our guilty nature is liable to a just penalty. For if we are now a new creature in Christ, we were still children of wrath by nature, like everyone else.<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Genesis, 1.26-7.

<sup>394</sup> Genesis, 2.25-3.24.

<sup>395</sup> See Frederick Robert Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin* (1903; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1968); Norman Powell Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929).

<sup>396</sup> Augustine, *Genesis*, 11.32.42.

<sup>397</sup> Quoted in Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 447. See Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*, 3.3.

The interpretation of the fall as the transgression of God's commandment by Adam lies at the root of the doctrine of original sin and original guilt.<sup>398</sup> Norman Williams distinguishes in Augustine two independent propositions regarding the fall: described in medical terms as woundedness (*vitium*) and in judicial terms as guilt (*reatus*).<sup>399</sup> The guilt that Adam contracted because of original sin, his disobedience to the commandment of God, leaves a stain on human nature that is inherited by the subsequent generations.<sup>400</sup> Augustine's literal interpretation of Genesis defends the Christian position that sin has not entered into the creation through God. God is goodness and created the world in goodness. Therefore, the blame of sin is carefully located within Adam's disobedience and humanity's inheritance of the guilt of sin from Adam. Augustine's theology of the inheritance of original sin and guilt is defended by his beliefs about the conception of a child, which hold that a child receives both body and soul from the parents.<sup>401</sup> The taint of original sin and guilt of Adam descends through the generations since all humanity is generated from the body and soul of Adam: "Each child is Adam in body and soul, and therefore the grace of Christ is necessary for him."<sup>402</sup>

Augustine's theology develops an understanding of original sin as the perversion of the will, which, as its consequence, lost the interior orientation towards God and is inclined towards sinful behaviour. Augustine, too, reconciles the goodness of God with the possibility of sin, by asserting that the created human nature is different from God's nature and therefore imperfect: "This I do know; that the nature of God cannot be deficient, at any time, anywhere, in any respect, while things which were made from nothing are capable of deficiency."<sup>403</sup> He maintains that evil has no substance of itself and explains sin in terms of an incapacitation and corruption of the will. The corruption of the will causes humanity to turn away from God and seek pleasure in the materiality of the creation. Sinful behaviour is motivated by a certain pleasure which it provides and

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<sup>398</sup> See Tennant, *Doctrines of Fall and Original Sin*; Williams, *Fall and Original Sin*; Leo Scheffczyk, "Ersünde," *LM* 3 (1986), 2117-20; Leo Scheffczyk, "Sünde, »Sündenfall«," *LM* 8 (1997), 315-9.

<sup>399</sup> Williams, *The Fall and Original Sin*, 365.

<sup>400</sup> Augustine, *Genesis*, 10.11.19.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.10.17.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.11.19.

<sup>403</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Pelican Books, 1972; reprint with a new introduction, Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1984), 12.8.

therefore humanity is inclined to stray away from God.<sup>404</sup>

I inquired what wickedness is; and I did not find a substance but a perversity of will twisted away from the highest substance, you O God, towards inferior things, rejecting its own inner life and swelling with external matter.<sup>405</sup>

Augustine explains evil as a defective choice, which is therefore punishable by God. The defection itself is evil: “a defection from him who supremely exists to something of a lower degree of reality; and this is contrary to the order of nature.”<sup>406</sup> He gradually hardened his thinking regarding the corrupting influence of original sin on the free choice of the human will. The human is free only to choose evil, while God’s grace is necessary to liberate the will in choosing the good. “But this will, which is free in evil things because it takes pleasure in evil, is not free in good things, for the reason that it has not been made free.”<sup>407</sup> Through the grace of God, the human will becomes liberated from the domination of its perversion that inclines it towards sin.

Julian continues the tradition of exegesis of the story of Adam and the fall, but draws different conclusions than Augustine about the original righteousness of Adam and the consequences of his fall. She derives her theology on the nature of sin from her vision of the lord and the servant; the vision, a parable, discusses the story of Adam’s fall and is given in answer to her request for understanding the mystery of God’s beholding of sin.<sup>408</sup> She contemplates the parable during at least twenty years, because it contains several mysteries that need unravelling in order to grasp its theological significance.<sup>409</sup> Her sustained contemplation proves to be insightful regarding three unfathomable mysteries: God assigns no blame to humanity, God’s compassion for human suffering, and the intimacy between God and humanity through the incarnation of Christ.<sup>410</sup>

The parable combines two themes from the biblical narrative of Adam into one: the creation of Adam and the fall of Adam. Her exegesis of the creation and

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<sup>404</sup> Augustine, *Genesis*, 11.35.47-8.

<sup>405</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.16.22.

<sup>406</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 12.8.

<sup>407</sup> Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, trans. P. Holmes and R.E. Wallis, NPNF 1<sup>st</sup> ser. 5, 1.3.7.

<sup>408</sup> Paris MS, 14.50: f.92r-14.53 and 14.51: f.111r (329-65).

<sup>409</sup> For a detailed analysis of Julian’s exegetical methodology as applied to the parable of the lord and the servant, see Vinje, *Understanding of Love*, 72-84.

<sup>410</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.98r (339) and f.101v (346).

fall is concerned with a theology in which the otherness of the uncreated nature of God from the created nature of humanity is to account for Adam's loss in beholding God. She sees that the servant does not merely represent Adam and all humanity, but also represents the humanity of Christ.<sup>411</sup> The mystery that God assigns no blame to humanity finds an answer in the identity of Adam and Christ: the fullness of the image of God is given to Adam through Christ. Ritamary Bradley and John Clark relate Julian's theology to Paul's understanding of Adam as the figure of Christ and salvation in Christ as the recapitulation of Adam.<sup>412</sup> This theology is further developed by Irenaeus.<sup>413</sup> Apart from this connection, Julian's exegesis also refers to the early Christian kerygma expressed in Ephesians: "just as God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before God in love."<sup>414</sup>

A mystery contained in the parable is God's loving gaze towards Adam in his fall. God's loving gaze is borne from God's loving initiative: God sends Adam to a certain place to fulfil God's will and thereby causes the fall of Adam.

The lorde lokyth vppon his Jervauant full louely and Jwetly and mekely · he Jendyth hym in to a certeyne place to do his wyll · The Jervauant nott onely he goyth · but Jodenly he Jtertyth and rynnyth in grett haJt, for loue to do his lordes wyll. And anon he fallyth in a Jlade · And takyth ful grett Jorow · and than he greuyth and monyth and wallow<sup>t</sup> and wryeth · but he may nott ryJe nor helpe hym Jelfe by no manner of weye.<sup>415</sup>

Julian's interpretation that the creation of Adam is willed by God is rooted in the biblical narrative that God creates Adam in God's image; her emphasis on God's loving initiative to send Adam resonates with an image of God who wants to create. The fall of Adam is God's initiative in the creation of humanity with an earthly and feeble nature. The vision emphasises the earthly nature of Adam and situates Adam on the barren earth rather than in paradise: "man kynde · whych is

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<sup>411</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.93r-97v (329-38) and ff.101r -106v (345-56)

<sup>412</sup> Ritamary Bradley, "Metaphors of Cloth and Clothing in the Showings of Julian of Norwich," *Mediaevalia* 9 (1983): 273; John Clark, "Predestination in Christ according to Julian of Norwich," *Downside Review* 100 (1982): 82-3.

<sup>413</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.22.3.

<sup>414</sup> Ephesians, 1.4.

<sup>415</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.93v (330).

medlyd w<sup>t</sup> erth.”<sup>416</sup> Adam represents all humanity and the “certeyne place” to which God sends Adam is the earth.<sup>417</sup>

Julian’s theology develops two unique interpretations of the fall: Adam’s obedience to God and Adam’s lack of blame. Her theology articulates that neither the fall nor his suffering are caused by a transgression of God’s commandment. Adam is obedient to God and commits no fault for which blame can be assigned.

I merveyled how this ſeruaunt myght thus mekely ſuffer all this woo · and I behelde w<sup>t</sup> avyſement to wytt yf I culde p̄ceyve in hym ony defau□te · or yf the lorde ſhuld aſſigne in hym ony maner of blame · And verely there was none ſeen · ffor oonly hys good wyll and his grett deſyer was cauſe of his falling.<sup>418</sup>

Adam is motivated by a self-emptying love in great desire to fulfil God’s will.<sup>419</sup> That will is the love for God, which remains undamaged after the fall: “And inward in hym was ſhewed a ground of loue whych loue he had to the lorde · that was evyn lyke to þe loue · that þe lord had to hym.”<sup>420</sup>

Julian’s interpretation of the creation of humanity breaks with a Gnostic tradition that sees creation as the result of the work of a lesser god with an evil intention. She does not adhere to a Christian interpretation that human embodiment is caused by the fall of an angel because of an attitude of pride and is therefore separated from the beholding of God. Most importantly, she challenges a Christian exegesis that Adam’s disobedience caused a separation from God, as God rejects Adam because of his guilt and as subsequent punishment expels him from God’s sight. Conversely, Julian sees that Adam is obedient in his love for God and in God’s sight Adam is “full louely and ſwetly and mekely.”<sup>421</sup>

Julian’s theology does not hold the view that Adam is created in perfection and loses his original righteousness through disobedience. She understands the fall in terms of the difference between God’s uncreated nature and human created nature. Adam’s creation is imperfect as the created nature is different from God, which accounts for the experience of pain: “man was fallyn in to ſorow and

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<sup>416</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.99r (341). See Paris MS, 14.51: f.97v (338) and ff. 98v-99r (340-1).

<sup>417</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.97r (337) and f.101v (346).

<sup>418</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.94r-v (331-2).

<sup>419</sup> See Paris MS, 14.51: f.100r (343).

<sup>420</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.99v-100r (342-3).

<sup>421</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.93v (330).

payne.”<sup>422</sup> The fall is interpreted as the woundedness of human nature: human nature is created in feebleness, loneliness and disablement. The vision vividly portrays the painful bruising that befalls Adam because of his earthly nature:

in which woo he ſufferyd ·vij· grett paynes ·¶ The furſt was the ſoore broſyng that he toke in his fallyng which was to hym moch payne ·¶ The ſeconde was þ<sup>e</sup> hevynelſſe 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 almoſt he had forgotten his owne loue ·¶ The ·v· was þ<sup>t</sup> he myght nott ryſe ·¶ The ·vi· 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 ·vij<sup>th</sup>· was that the place which he ley in · was along harde and grevous.<sup>423</sup>

Julian describes the fall of Adam in terms of the woundedness of human nature: the susceptibility to pain, heaviness and feebleness as well as the incapacity of reason, a failure to stand up independently and experiencing the loneliness and the harshness of life. Humanity is portrayed in a state of grief and loss. Adam is hindered in his love for God, because he attends fully to his own pain and is unable to find comfort in God’s nearness. The difference between the created human nature and the uncreated nature of God causes in Adam a disconcerting feeling of loneliness. “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.”<sup>424</sup> The sight of Adam is turned towards the pain of human life and lost experience of the comforting nearness of God.

And of all this · the moſt myſchefe that I ſaw hym in was feylyng of comfort · for he culde nott turne his face to loke vppe on his lovyng lorde · which was to hym full nere · in Whom is full comfort · but as a man that was full febyll and vnwyſe for the tyme · he entenyd to his felyng and enduryng in woo.<sup>425</sup>

Julian’s view of Adam’s loss is close to Augustine’s interpretation of sin as

<sup>422</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.98v (340).

<sup>423</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.94r (331).

<sup>424</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.99r (341).

<sup>425</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.93v-94r (330-1).

woundedness, and yet significantly different in her understanding of the integrity of the human will in its orientation to God.

This man was hurte in his myghte · and made fulle febyll · And he was ſtonyd in his vnderſtandyng for he was turnyd fro the beholdyng of his lorde, but his wylle was kepte in gods ſyght · ffor his wylle I ſaw oure lorde commende and aproue · but hym ſelfe was lettyd and blyndyd of the knowyng of this wyll.<sup>426</sup>

Julian's theology is not disparaging, as she maintains that humanity's incapacity in loving God is caused by ignorance and lack in self-awareness, although the loving capacity of the will itself is undamaged. Human nature is vulnerable because it is created and "medlyd w<sup>t</sup> erth" and in loss of the awareness of God's nearness.<sup>427</sup>

Julian is mystified by her vision of Adam's nobility in the fulfilment of the will of God, for it seems that Adam's integrity of the will is not attributable solely to the humanity of Adam.<sup>428</sup> The parable of the lord and the servant is an allegory of the fall of Adam, which is developed further by a theology of the incarnation of Christ.

In the ſervant is comprehendyd the ſeconde perſon of þe trynyte And in the ſervau<sup>nt</sup> is comprehendyd Adam that is to ſey all men ¶ And therefore whan I ſey the ſonne · it ſe menyth the godhed · whych is evyn w<sup>t</sup> the fader · And whan I ſey the ſervau<sup>nt</sup> it menyth cryſtes manhode whych is ryghtfull Adam.<sup>429</sup>

In equivalence with Adam's fall into the "the ſlade of this wrechyd worlde," which metaphorically stands for the creation of humanity, Christ falls into the "the ſlade of the meydens wombe."<sup>430</sup> The creation of Adam is simultaneous with the incarnation of Christ. The parable shows no temporal sequence between the fall of Adam and the incarnation of Christ. Both are seen at the same time – at the moment of creation.

Paul, who sees Christ as the second Adam, first formulates the idea of correspondence between Adam and Christ that is developed by Irenaeus in his

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<sup>426</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.97r (337).

<sup>427</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.99r (341).

<sup>428</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.95v (334).

<sup>429</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.101r-v (345-6).

<sup>430</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.101v (346).

doctrine of recapitulation.<sup>431</sup> Julian similarly develops a Christian theology of Adam as the figure of Christ. The correspondence between Adam and Christ implies the sanctification and perfection of humanity through the incarnation of Christ:

ffor in that Jame tyme that god knytt hym to oure body in the meydens wombe he toke oure ſenſuall ſoule in whych takyng he vs all havyng becloſyd in hym · he onyd it to oure ſubſtance · In whych oonyng he was perfit man · for criſt havyng knytt in hym all man that ſhall be ſavyd is perfete man.<sup>432</sup>

The incarnation of Christ brings a salvific influence to humanity, because of the unity that exists between the uncreated and the created nature in Christ. Unlike Adam, Christ never loses sight of God’s compassionate love.<sup>433</sup> Christ is therefore the divine exemplar of contemplation and restores the image and likeness of God within humanity; Christ restores the ability to turn to the beholding of God and respond to the love of God.

Adam represents the weakness of human nature.<sup>434</sup> Christ’s incarnation unites the strength of the uncreated divine nature with the weakness of the created human nature, and thereby is Adam made righteous. Christ’s humanity is identical with the righteousness of Adam and the cause of Adam’s nobility. Julian acknowledges that Christ has taken upon him the blame of Adam: “And thus hath oure good lorde Jheſu taken vppon hym all oure blame.”<sup>435</sup> Julian does not formulate a theology that comprehends blame as the consequence of the guilt for the transgression of God’s commandment. Blame is inherent in humanity’s suffering: “I ſaw that oonly payne blamyth and ponyſchyth.”<sup>436</sup> Through Christ, Adam’s loving capacity of the will is kept whole and safe in its orientation towards the fulfilment of God’s will, that is, to love God in a union of wills. Christ sanctifies all humanity with the wholeness of a loving will for God. Humanity is engaged continuously in a mutual love with God through the strength received

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<sup>431</sup> See 1 Corinthians, 15.45-6: “The first man, Adam, as scripture says, became a living soul; but the last Adam has become a life-giving Spirit.” Romans, 5.14: “Adam is the figure of Him that was to come.” Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.22.3. See Tennant, *Doctrines of Fall and Original Sin*, 282-91; Williams, *Fall and Original Sin*, 189-90.

<sup>432</sup> Paris MS, 14.47: ff.122r-v (387-8).

<sup>433</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.102v (348).

<sup>434</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.102r (347).

<sup>435</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.101v (346).

<sup>436</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.97v (338).

from Christ.

Julian formulates a doctrine of original righteousness that reassesses Augustine's doctrine of original sin. Adam is righteous, because he possesses the wholeness of a loving will for God. Her emphasis on the inherent goodness of the creation leads her to a different anthropology from that offered by Augustine. Although Julian's anthropology can be interpreted as unorthodox in view of the Augustinian teaching that humanity has a predisposition to sin, it is fully orthodox in the light of the Christian dogmas that God is the creator and that creation is inherently good. Her theology of original righteousness is in agreement with the doctrine that God creates humanity in God's image.

Although scholars propound an Augustinian influence in Julian's writings, they have rarely elaborated upon the difference between Augustine and Julian's theology of sin, punishment and predestination or researched how the difference accounts for a disparity in their theology regarding God's involvement with humanity.<sup>437</sup> An exception is formed by Nowakowski's study, which argues that Julian follows the Augustinian teaching on the culpability of humanity and predestination, but, nevertheless, is attentive to fundamental differences in the implications of the two theologies.

She subscribes to a thoroughly Augustinian understanding of human peccability and predestination. (...) Julian, however, articulates the usually dismaying tenets of human culpability and gratuitous election in a theodicy designed to console rather than condemn her "evyn cristen." She transforms the typical tenor of these doctrines by integrating the conviction of human sinfulness fundamental for theories of predestination into an optimistic anthropology derived from mystical theology.<sup>438</sup>

Although my thesis agrees with Nowakowski's conclusion, I do not corroborate her assertion that Julian's theology supports the peccability of humanity nor her interpretation that only Christians are elected and predestined for salvation.<sup>439</sup>

There are similarities between Julian and the influential teaching of Augustine on God's grace as well as his understanding of sin in terms of the woundedness of

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<sup>437</sup> See Pelphrey, *Love was His Meaning*, 294; Jantzen, *Mystic and Theologian*, 179 and 182; Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 134-5; Palliser, *Christ, Our Mother*, 38, n.84; Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 74-5.

<sup>438</sup> Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 74-5.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

human nature. However, recognition of the uniqueness of Julian's theology can only be accomplished through considering how her understanding of God's love differs considerably from Augustine's theology of human culpability and God's punishment. Furthermore, her understanding of the human will in its longing for God differs completely from Augustine's conviction that the human will is untrustworthy because of the taint of sin. Augustine's teaching holds that the goodness of the will is damaged through the fall and goodness can only be chosen through the influence of God's grace. In distinction from the Augustinian thought on free will as corrupt, Julian states the wholeness of the will. She is similar to Augustine in articulating the necessity of God's grace for perfecting the will in the love of God.<sup>440</sup>

A profound difference in Augustine and Julian's understanding of sin accounts for their contrasting perception of the trustworthiness of human nature and will. Clément criticises Augustine, because he loses touch with the theology of the church fathers on human freedom as he hardens his position regarding the distorting influence of original sin in the debate with the Pelagians.<sup>441</sup> Brian Thorne argues that Augustine's theology has influenced Christian self-awareness in such a way that Christians have come to see themselves as unacceptable to God. Thorne criticises the demeaning influence exercised through Augustine's belief that human nature is inherently sinful. "His legacy, it seems, is to have lodged in the collective unconscious of Western men and women the terrifying possibility that they are totally corrupt and altogether unacceptable in the eyes of the creator."<sup>442</sup> His theology of original sin evokes distrust of the human potential and desires, because human nature is utterly unreliable in the will to choose well and thus the ability to overcome suffering is doubtful.

Julian does not resist all aspects of the Augustinian understanding of sin. She integrates the image of woundedness and the dependence on the grace of God into her theology. She shares the Augustinian understanding of sin that human nature is wounded and therefore blind to the love of God. Julian sees human pain, aloneness and the inability to rise as the far-reaching consequences of the fall, that is, of being created in a vulnerable and feeble human existence. The sore bruising strips Adam of his ability to raise himself independently from his fall. The theme

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<sup>440</sup> Paris MS, 14.46: ff.83r-v (309-10) and 14.56: f.118r (379).

<sup>441</sup> Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 81.

<sup>442</sup> Brian Thorne, *Person-Centred Counselling: Therapeutic and Spiritual Dimensions* (London: Whurr, 1991), 107.

of inability reveals Julian's familiarity with and interest in the Augustinian doctrine that humankind is in need of divine grace. Still, Julian's interpretation of the parable discredits the idea that Adam's fall has caused a flaw in human nature. Julian's understanding of the fall proposes a radically different doctrine on the human will than Augustine's doctrine, which holds that the will of Adam is distorted through disobedience and its deformation is inherited by humanity. In Julian's theology, suffering is inherent in the human experience of woundedness. Human nature and will are reliable in the search for God, but whether one pursues the searching towards its ultimate fulfilment in God is dependent on faith understood as a trusting in God's love.

Augustine and Julian's theology are in close encounter in so far that both realise that the human will needs to be liberated through the grace of God, who guides a Christian into awareness of being loved by God. Augustine emphasises the necessity of grace for the liberation of the will in its orientation to God. Julian, too, sees how the human will is drawn to desire for God by the love of God:

ffor we be now ſo blynde and ſo vnwyſe that we can never ſeke god · till what tyme þ<sup>t</sup> he of his goodnes ſhewyth hym to vs · And whan we ſee owght of hym graciouſly · then are we ſteryd by the ſame grace · to ſeke w<sup>t</sup> great deſyer to ſee hym more bleſſedly.<sup>443</sup>

Her theology of grace makes mysticism available to an understanding of the fall and of sin: blindness, woundedness and pain are set in a reciprocal relationship with the desire to see God. Sin has a mystagogical implication as it incorporates awareness of complete dependency on God to awaken and perfect the longing for God.

## 2 Created in imperfection

Julian's theology is concerned with the cause of human suffering and she searches for a meaningful answer which can reconcile the belief in a God of love who created human nature and allows the coming into being of the reality of sin.

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<sup>443</sup> Paris MS, 2.10: f.20r (181).

And me thought yf Jynne had nott be · we Jhulde alle haue be clene and lyke to oure lorde as he made vs · And thus in my foly before thys tyme often I wondryd why by the grete forJeyde wyJdom of god the begynnyng of Jynne was nott lettyd · ffor then thought me that alle Jhulde haue be wele · ¶ Thys Jteryng was moch to be forsaken · And nevytheleJJe mornyng and Jorow I made therefore w'ou□ te reJon and dyJcrecion.<sup>444</sup>

Julian acknowledges that her questioning is a form of spiritual pride, whereby her reason is prying into the secrets of God, while the answer to the existence of sin and suffering is beyond the insights of human discernment and belongs to God's mystery.<sup>445</sup> Her quest for understanding and meaning is persistent and becomes a major force in her theological development. Her concern gives her spirituality a similar impetus as that received by Augustine, who is searching for divine love, and whose mind is inclined to unravel the origin of evil and suffering in human life.<sup>446</sup> Although Augustine is fluent in developing the idea of original sin and not silenced by not-knowing, he still acknowledges the depth of the mystery: "No one therefore must try to get to know from me what I know that I do not know."<sup>447</sup>

Julian's understanding of the nature of suffering is reminiscent of Irenaeus and Gregory the Great. Julian uniquely reconciles the Irenaean theology of an imperfect creation with the common church fathers' theology of an original perfect creation, which attributes to the fall a loss of beholding God. She follows Irenaeus, as her theology formulates the will of God to create humanity with a sensual nature, which is imperfect in the beholding of God. Imperfection of the created nature is inherited by humanity from Adam.<sup>448</sup> Adam is created in weakness. She follows Gregory in his understanding that the fall causes the loss of the beholding of God, as she acknowledges that Adam is unable to look up to see the tender love of God who is always close and near. Adam is in loss of the beholding of God.

Gregory the Great explored the nature of human creation before and after the

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<sup>444</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: ff.49v-50r (242-3).

<sup>445</sup> Amherst manuscript adds "of fulle grete pryde." Amherst MS, 13: f.106r (746). See Paris MS, 13.27: f.51r (245).

<sup>446</sup> See Gillian Rosemary Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>447</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 12.7.

<sup>448</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.102r (347).

fall. According to Gregory, Adam is in full possession of the loving sight of God before he turns towards the exteriority of sin and loses the ability to contemplate God. The loss of the beholding of God, through the fall of Adam, is a concern that is embedded within the Christian tradition. For Gregory, contemplation is formative for the Christian faith. In Christ, the ability to love and contemplate God is restored.<sup>449</sup> Julian's theology is consistent with Gregory's interpretation of the fall: Adam turns from the interiority of loving God towards the exteriority of sin –the experiencing of pain- and as a result loses the contemplation of God's love. The loss of seeing God suffered by Adam is restored through Christ, in whom God and humanity are joined.

Julian's teaching is reminiscent of Gregory's, as she understands the fall as a loss in the beholding of God and the subsequent ignorance about the human love for God and a lack in trusting God's love.<sup>450</sup> Julian elaborates the understanding of sin into the understanding of a woundedness of the spiritual capacities, which carries profound consequences for the damage to God's image in human nature. Adam is "[t]onyd in his vnder[st]andyng for he was turnyd fro the beholdyng of his lorde" and "blyndyd of the knowyng of this wylle."<sup>451</sup> Sin is an impairment that exists in a physical vulnerability and a spiritual feebleness that causes forgetfulness concerning God's love for humanity as well as the love of humanity for God. Human reason is blinded in seeing the closeness of God, the memory is forgetful of the love for God; and the will is obstructed in longing for God: "he was blyndyd in his re[ason] · and [t]onyd in his mynde [o] ferforth that allmo[st] he had forgotten his owne loue."<sup>452</sup>

Irenaeus's theology of the imperfect creation of humanity is significantly different from the common view in the early church that Adam is created with the perfection of beholding God. Irenaeus holds the view that Adam is not created perfect.<sup>453</sup> He considers the creation of human nature within the *creatio ex nihilo*. For Irenaeus the difference between the uncreated God and the created humanity results in an imperfect creation. "But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect."<sup>454</sup> The difference between the

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<sup>449</sup> See Bernard McGinn and Patricia Ferris McGinn, *Early Christian Mystics: The Divine Vision of the Spiritual Masters* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 84-5.

<sup>450</sup> Paris MS, 16.62: ff.133v-134r (410-11).

<sup>451</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.97r (337).

<sup>452</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.93v-94r (330-1).

<sup>453</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.38.1-4.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.38.2.

uncreated nature of God and the created nature of humanity amounts necessarily to a natural incompleteness and imperfection within human nature.

Irenaeus sees in the imperfect condition of human nature the possibility of a growth in the image of God. Human nature is created with the tendency towards maturity and growth.

It is precisely in this that God differs from humanity: God creates; humanity is created. He who creates is always the same, while they who are created must acknowledge a beginning, an intermediary state and a maturity. (...) They receive knowledge and progress towards God. For in so far as God is always the same, to that extent human beings found in God will always be making progress towards God.<sup>455</sup>

His view on the original creation of humanity is an affirmation of the human potential for growth and demonstrates an understanding of the mystical tradition that regards the existence of the created nature of humanity in view of the beckoning prospect of a progress towards God.

Irenaeus discovers that the progress towards God is guided by the human ability to distinguish what is good, not merely through an intellectual notion of the good but through the experience of both good and evil. Human nature is created with freedom. "Humanity was free from the beginning. For God is freedom and humanity was made in the image of God."<sup>456</sup> The will to choose the good becomes liberated through experiencing both obedience and disobedience to God.<sup>457</sup> Discernment that is guided and tested by experience is more reliable than rational notions that are formed without the actual experiencing of opposites. Discernment is a valuing process that is a constituent of human nature and instigates a learning process regarding the recognition of good and its contrary, in a similar way as it is necessary for the discrimination of sense perception.

Man has received the knowledge of good and evil. (...) Wherefore he has also had a twofold experience, possessing knowledge of both kinds, that with discipline he may make choice of the better things. But how, if he had no

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<sup>455</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 87. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.11.2.

<sup>456</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 81. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.37.4

<sup>457</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.39.

knowledge of the contrary, could he have instruction in that which is good? For there is thus a surer and an undoubted comprehension of matters submitted to us than the mere surmise arising from an opinion regarding them. For just as the tongue receives experience of sweet and bitter by means of tasting, and the eye discriminates between black and white by means of vision, and the ear recognises the distinction of sounds by hearing; so also does the mind, receiving through the experience of both the knowledge of what is good, become more tenacious of its preservation, by acting in obedience to God. (...) But if any one does shun the knowledge of both these kinds of things, and the twofold perception of knowledge, he unawares divests himself of the character of a human being.<sup>458</sup>

Irenaeus expounds the doctrine of original righteousness as he asserts that human nature is created with the right constitution to progress towards God. Human nature needs to preserve the form in which it is created, because it is created in receptivity to the creative working of God, which will fashion humanity towards the perfection of likeness with God. The discernment between good and evil, that is, obedience and disobedience to God, opens the perspective of living in accordance with the will of God. Irenaeus is aware of the complexity involved in living according to the will of God. He does not articulate the will of God in terms of moral extremes, but rather views it as a becoming aware of what it means to entrust oneself to the creative influence of God's creatorship.

Julian's interpretation of the fall as the creation of Adam in vulnerability bears a profound similarity to Irenaeus's theology that "man was not made perfect from the beginning."<sup>459</sup> It is God's design to have created the world with the existence of suffering, but within and beyond suffering there is the opportunity of deification. A human being is limited and vulnerable. Julian, like Irenaeus, is respectful of the imperfection of human nature. She considers imperfection as the natural outcome of an ultimate difference with the uncreated nature of God who is perfection. The created nature of humanity is imperfect, because it is lacking in love, wisdom and might.<sup>460</sup> No denigratory meaning of sinfulness is attributed to the human sensuality, because imperfection is a natural condition of createdness.

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 4.39.1.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 4.38.

<sup>460</sup> Paris MS, 13.32: f.57v (258) and 14.48: f.87v (318).

Julian's theology of the creation of Adam is close to the Irenaeian view of the imperfect creation of humanity and its implications for a meaningful understanding of human suffering, without removing the profound mystery nor the depth of pain surrounding the whole diversity of human suffering. She interprets the fall as God's initiative to create humanity with a vulnerable nature: God purposefully sends Adam to a certain place to do God's will.<sup>461</sup> God sends Adam to till the earth and cultivate rich fruits as a treasure for the lord.<sup>462</sup> Adam has to find the treasure of the earth, that is, humanity has to grow in the awareness that it is deeply loved by God who has made a dwelling-place in humanity. Humanity has to bear with suffering in order to cultivate the fruit of a deep human compassion on the soil of self-awareness as well as a growing awareness of God.<sup>463</sup> This view implies that the fall of Adam is not properly understood as the deformation of the human nature by original sin, but more correctly as the creation of humanity for whom experiences of vulnerability and pain possess a teleological significance. The train of this thought carries the implication that the suffering of humankind is foreordained.

Julian is tolerant as she says that sin is caused through ignorance, because humanity is created with a lack of knowing and loving.<sup>464</sup> Sinning is understood as coming forth from imperfection and thus encourages a respectful humility, that is, an awareness of the fallible nature of understanding, loving and judging. Julian's interpretation of sin is not directed by moral extremes, but by a lack of experiencing the closeness of God's love and foreseeing wisdom. The implication is that Julian does not equate sin with evil, but with imperfection and the subsequent experience of pain. There is no sense of judgement within Julian's theology, but rather a profound understanding and acceptance of the vulnerability of being created within a sensual and thus limited human body. God wills the creation of humanity. Its imperfect condition is a constituent of the human vocation to come to trust God's love. Outstanding are Julian's thoughts about the maturation of faith, which comes forth from trusting the deep-seated awareness of being loved by God: "ffor god will be knowen · ffor if we know him and loue him · and reverently drede him we ſhall haue patience and be in great reſt."<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Paris MS, 15.51: f.93v (330).

<sup>462</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.100r-101r (343-5).

<sup>463</sup> See Paris MS, 14.54: ff.114v-115r (372-3); 14.57: ff.121v-r (386-7) and ff.122v-123r (388-9).

<sup>464</sup> Paris MS, 14.47: ff.85v-86r (314-5).

<sup>465</sup> Paris MS, 15.65: f.140v (424). See Paris MS, 2.10: f.23r (187); 15.65: ff.140r-v (423-4) and 16.73:

### 3 Compassionate gaze

Augustine explores human suffering within the understanding of the fall of Adam causing the stain of original sin as well as the punishing judgement of God. In scholarly research of Christian spirituality there is a significant absence of discussion on how God's judgement is presented as the cause of suffering. I suspect that the reasons for this absence are twofold. Firstly, there is an inconsistency between the idea of a wrathful God and the goodness of the creator who is a God of love. Secondly, it appears that the Christian tradition has contributed remarkably little to a God-centred understanding of suffering. The Christian tradition needs to reflect on what kind of understanding of judgement can be meaningfully reconciled with the belief in a God of love, and how the reality of sin can be approached with an eschatological awareness which is truthful to God's love. Similarly as the goodness of the creator God raises the question of the causes of suffering, Christian theology cannot be exempt from questioning how the love of God can be reconciled with God's vengeance. Julian offers guidance in the search to find answers to some fundamental Christian concerns in regard to sin, judgement and the love of God.

The doctrines of God's judgement and wrath have a biblical foundation and are further developed in the commentaries and exegeses of the church fathers. In the Western church, the understanding of the corruptive influence of sin is hardened through the influence of Augustine. Augustine's interpretation of the fall is not devoted to the proclamation of a loving God and rather narrows the image of God to a judge who holds an autonomous judgement of the inherent sin and guilt of humanity. Augustine's theology of original sin weighs heavily on the origin, the worthiness and the eschaton of humanity: "All men are by nature *children of wrath*, a condition which is a punishment for sin."<sup>466</sup>

For Augustine, the mystery of God implies that no human mind can have insight into the wisdom of God's judgements regarding the destination of humanity.<sup>467</sup> The wisdom of God bruises human reason.<sup>468</sup> That proposition

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f.154r (451).

<sup>466</sup> Augustine, *Genesis*, 9.10.17. See Ephesians, 2.3.

<sup>467</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 2nd ed. with an epilogue (London: Faber and

regarding the divine mystery leads him to proclaim the answer to theodicy: human suffering is a sign of God's wrath, the result of a punishment inflicted by God's judgement and a reminder of eternal damnation in hell.<sup>469</sup> Augustine experiences the unimaginable wisdom of God in human suffering and in the punishment for sin. He explains God's wisdom in such a way that the human is designated as being ignorant of the reasons and severity of God's punishments, and also as having the predestination to eternal damnation or glorification. Such a God, who either saves or rejects, confronts the Christian with an unpredictable and threatening autonomous judge. The idea of predestination introduces a desperate vision of God, as there is no motivation behind God's choice to elect some for salvation. His teaching on predestination was criticised by monastic communities, because of the uncertainty it provides to approach God at the last judgement even with a right conscience.<sup>470</sup>

John Burnaby, in his study of Augustine's teaching on *Amor Dei* as motive for the Christian life, points out the inconsistency between Augustine's teaching on God's love and an eschatological teaching which is governed by God's punishment. It is interesting that Burnaby criticises Augustine's eschatological teaching rather than Augustine's searching for the origin of sin. Although, he criticises Augustine for interpreting the narrative of Genesis and the fall of humanity as a historical fact, he accepts as a reality the evil of sin in human nature.<sup>471</sup> Burnaby criticises the eschatological consequence of Augustine's understanding of sin, because it communicates an awareness of a God that is incompatible with a loveable God.

It is Augustine's account, not of the origin of moral evil, but of its consequences, not his mistaking of a myth of the *Uhrzeit* for history, but the

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Faber, 2000), 400-10.

<sup>468</sup> See Williams, *Fall and Original Sin*, 329; Brown, *Augustine*, 401-2.

<sup>469</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 20.1: "And it is by God's deep and just judgement that (...) the life of men on this earth is most miserable, being full of errors and anxieties. (...) Condemning them to misery as the deserved retribution for the first sins of the race; he also judges the particular actions of individuals performed by the decision of their will."

<sup>470</sup> See Brown, *Augustine*, 400-410.

<sup>471</sup> John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of St. Augustine's Teaching on the Love of God as the Motive of Christian Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938; reprint, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 183: "The present state of mankind is what it is, however it has been reached: and Christian faith in God can be combined at least as easily with belief as with disbelief in the fall of man. (...) What we are now to consider is the relation of Augustine's doctrine of sin to his doctrine of the *Summum Bonum*, and its connection or lack of connection with his theories of punishment. We may reject his teaching on Judgement, without thereby passing a verdict upon his teaching on Sin."

eschatology which he professes to deduce from it, his dogmas of the *Endzeit* that have alienated men from the Catholic faith. Because it is impossible for us to love a God who condemns to eternal fire all those of His children who have never heard the gospel message, it is impossible for us to believe that such a God exists.<sup>472</sup>

Burnaby realised the negative influence that the image of a condemning God exercises on the spiritual life of a Christian, because God's condemnation creates insurmountable obstacles to belief in a God of love. His criticism is important from the viewpoint of mystagogy, as it emphasises that a punishing and condemning God neither awakens the experience of being loved by God nor encourages the longing to love God.

Peter Brown mentions that Augustine originally explored suffering as a means of reaching self-knowledge and humility, while he later distances himself from this view and regards suffering solely as the consequence of guilt.<sup>473</sup> Brown's reference to Augustine's valuing of suffering as a therapeutic tool overestimates its positive meaning, because Augustine states how suffering teaches a Christian the humbling self-knowledge of distrust in oneself.

There would be labors, sorrows, death, and all the afflictions of this world, and divine grace by which God at the opportune time come to the aid of those whom He has taught in their affliction that they must not trust in themselves.<sup>474</sup>

Suffering comes from the natural inclination of choosing sin rather than good and prompts awareness of how strongly the penchant to sin is engraved in human nature. Suffering results from the deformity of the will.

Augustine's theology of God's punishing judgement was previously developed within the Christian tradition. Irenaeus and Tertullian (160-220) wrote their thoughts about the divine anger in the defence of the apostolic faith against Marcion (c.140-80). Marcion argued that the creator God of the Old Testament is a different and lesser god than the saviour God of Christ. He adhered to a

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<sup>472</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>473</sup> Brown, *Augustine*, 399.

<sup>474</sup> Augustine, *Genesis*, 11.35.48.

Gnostic dualism, which separates creation from the goodness of God and from salvation. His argument postulates that the jealous and wrathful bearing of the creator God is unlike the merciful and compassionate God of salvation.<sup>475</sup> In defence of the unity of the Old and New Testament, Irenaeus and Tertullian considered the truth of a jealous, wrathful and avenging God in proclaiming the one God of Christ, who is both creator and saviour.

Irenaeus is not so much concerned with the quality of God's anger as with defending the unity of God as creator and saviour, with an intimate care for salvation. He merely refers to the anger of God in order to interpret it in terms of a rebuking and judicial power that is exercised together with God's goodness. Anger and goodness are never separate in God, because God is not God if goodness is absent. God's justice calls forth a judgement with wisdom and is preceded by goodness. In God's goodness there is no imperfection, for God intends the salvation of all.<sup>476</sup>

Tertullian is more devoted than Irenaeus to the specification of God's anger as a judicial power with a healing effect. Tertullian saw God's punishment as an infliction of suffering for the good of humanity. God is the author of "penal evil" as God "creates evil" in order to restore peace: the creation of evil belongs to the divine providence as part of the justice that inflicts suffering in order to sustain the goodness of the creation.<sup>477</sup> Tertullian's understanding of the divine justice makes him adhere to the insight of God's ultimate goodness and omnipotence. "Thus God is wholly good, because in all things he is on the side of the good. In fact, he is omnipotent, because able both to help and to hurt."<sup>478</sup> Therefore, God needs to be feared, but ultimately to be loved.<sup>479</sup> Tertullian gives priority to an interpretation of the divine emotions in terms of God's punishment rather than understanding it as God's discernment of the motivations in the human heart.

The discussions of Irenaeus and Tertullian about God's wrath are moderated by the belief that God is impassible and can suffer no human emotions. Tertullian interpreted the impassibility of God in such a way that it provides certain qualifications to experiencing emotions as befitting God. His argument in favour

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<sup>475</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.27.2; Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, trans. Dr. Holmes, ANF 3, 2.11-6.

<sup>476</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.25.1-4.

<sup>477</sup> Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 2.13-4.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.13.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibidem*.

of the divine wrath is rooted in the ultimate difference between the uncreated nature of God and the created nature of humanity. According to Tertullian, the whole breath and depth of human emotions are created in the image of God and are an adumbration of the divine emotions.

Furthermore, although you allow, with others, that man was inbreathed by God into a living soul, not God by man, it is yet palpably absurd of you to be placing human characteristics in God rather than divine ones in man, and clothing God in the likeness of man, instead of man in the image of God. And this, therefore, is to be deemed the likeness of God in man, that the human soul has the same emotions and sensations of God, although they are not of the same kind; differing as they do both in their conditions and their issues according to their nature. (...) For indeed we do not possess them in perfection, because it is God alone who is perfect. (...) All these affections He is moved by in that peculiar manner of His own, in which it is profoundly fit that He should be affected; and it is owing to Him that man is also similarly affected in a way which is equally his own.<sup>480</sup>

Tertullian finds it inappropriate to attribute the experience of human emotions to God, as this would create an anthropomorphic image. He compares the naming of the divine affections with a speaking of the hand and eyes and feet of God: “which should not be compared with those of human beings, because they are associated in one and the same name.”<sup>481</sup>

John Chrysostom (347-407) reflects on the words of Paul about the wrath of God. His commentary defends God’s punishment, although he is obviously challenged by his understanding of God’s love. Chrysostom argues that suffering is a punishment from God and includes famines, diseases and wars amongst the sufferings on earth which results from God’s intention for the correction of human behaviour. He contrasts God’s corrective purpose of suffering on earth with God’s purpose of vengeance in hell.<sup>482</sup> Chrysostom attempts to give meaning to the idea that corrective suffering is instigated by God’s love. He touches on the mystery that suffering will be turned into good if it is accepted with a genuine love

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 2.16.

<sup>481</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>482</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. J.B. Morris and W.H. Simcox, NPNF 1<sup>st</sup> ser. 11, homily 3 (*Rom* 1.18).

for God.

For this is quite an instance of His unspeakable power, His makings things seemingly painful to be lightsome to us, and turning them into that which is helpful to us.<sup>483</sup>

Chrysostom is in difficulty trying to reconcile God's unconditional love with love for sinners and warns against the mistaken idea that the love of God rewards instead of punishes sin.<sup>484</sup> The trust that God works all things to the good is engendered in those Christians who possess a genuine love for God.<sup>485</sup>

Chrysostom is inconsistent in relating God's judgement to love. He touches on the mystery of God's loving presence within human life, including the suffering that is encountered. Yet, he is unable to leave the mystery of the whole of human life to the discernment of God. He holds the opinion that not all humanity is worthy of enjoying eternal life. "For if there be no hell and yet there will be a Resurrection of all, than the wicked will attain to the same good things!"<sup>486</sup> Although Chrysostom's concern is understandable, it holds no ground within the light of God's love and loses conviction against the compassionate words in the epistle of John: "He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still."<sup>487</sup> Words of condemnation do not touch the compassionate heart of a God who is unimaginably different in judgement from the way a human judges.

The interpretation of the church fathers that God's love is manifested as wrath might be related to the hope within the early church that the conversion of all humanity to the true Christian God is imminent. In the writing of Athanasius, the expectation of the immediate Christianisation of humanity flows from Christ's resurrection: the spirit of Christ is alive and actualises the approaching conversion of all humanity to the true God.<sup>488</sup> Paul situates the last judgement and the end of the world in the near future.<sup>489</sup> He asserts that the human idea of vengeance should not replace God's love, as judgement and wrath are properly understood

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid., homily 15 (Rom. 8.28).

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., homily 6 (Rom. 3.7).

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., homily 15 (Rom. 8.28).

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., homily 25 (Rom. 14.13).

<sup>487</sup> 1 John, 2.9.

<sup>488</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 30.

<sup>489</sup> Romans, 13.11-4.

within the unsearchable wisdom of God.<sup>490</sup>

Julian follows a different course in understanding the influence of God's love for the atonement of humanity. The parable of the lord and the servant guides her into an awareness of God's compassionate response to human suffering. God beholds the feebleness of humanity with tenderness, kind-heartedness and mildness as well as with deep compassion and sympathy. "And ryght thus contynuantly his loueyng lorde full tenderly beholdyth hym · (...) full mekly and myldely w<sup>t</sup> grett rewth and pytte."<sup>491</sup> Taking into consideration that the Augustinian teaching on original sin and guilt influenced the Christian tradition in the fourteenth century, it is the more remarkable that Julian guides her fellow Christians into the mystery of God who is love.

Julian places compassion and pity at the heart of God. In this regard she is a reforming theologian, as theologians took great pains to exclude emotions of compassion from God, although they did not deny the transformative influence of God in human life. For example, Augustine writes: "His pity is not the wretched heart of a fellow sufferer... the pity of God is the goodness of his help... when God pities, he does not grieve and he liberates."<sup>492</sup> The idea of the impassibility of God does not allow for God's suffering with humanity, although the human experience might be that of receiving compassion from God. "Anselm suggests that while God's mercy is not actually compassionate (in the sense of suffering sorrow with us), it seems to us *as if* God were compassionate when we receive the effects of his mercy in our experience; in fact, confesses Anselm, 'if You are impassible, you do not have any compassion.'<sup>493</sup>

Julian, however, has no reluctance to write that in God she sees a deep pity and compassion towards humanity.

And the louely loking that he loked on his Jervaunt contynually · And namely in his fallyng me thought it myght meltoure hartys for loue · and breft them on twoo for Joy · this feyer loking Jhewed of a Jemely medelur · whych was marvelous to beholde ¶ That one was rewth and pytte ¶ That other Joy and

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<sup>490</sup> Romans, 11.33-36 and 12.19.

<sup>491</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.94v (332).

<sup>492</sup> Quoted in Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 17. See Augustine, *Contra Adversarium Legis et Prophetarum*, 1.40.

<sup>493</sup> Fiddes, *Suffering of God*, 17. See Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, 8.

blyſſe The joy and blyſſe paſſyſth as ferre þe rewth and the pytte · as hevyn is aboute erth, the pytty was erthly · & the blyſſe hevynly ¶ The rewth and the pytty of the ffader was of the fallyng of Adam whych is his moſt lovvd creature · the Joy and the blyſſe was of the fallyng of his deerwurthy ſon · whych is evyn w<sup>t</sup> the fader.<sup>494</sup>

Julian's theology creatively integrates the different thoughts of the church fathers in regards to the creation of humanity and the effect of the fall. Human nature is created in weakness and in loss of the beholding of God. With her emphasis on the feebleness of human nature, she also overcomes certain inconsistencies in the church fathers' interpretation of the punishing judgement of God and remains firm in her belief that God's judgement is loving. Julian profoundly challenges the punitive content of the church fathers' theology, through expounding that God's love for the creation indemnifies punishment and blame. She reassesses a theology of blame in order to elaborate upon God's compassion with human suffering. Blame is replaced by experiencing suffering with awareness of God's compassion. She guides her fellow Christians into an awareness of God's love, by drawing out the implications for an image of God that completely transcends the church's teaching on sin as blameworthy and evoking divine wrath and punishment.

As Julian breaks away from the church's discourse of blame and punishment, she ventures to be in touch with God's compassion with human suffering. A close reading of her theology suggests that theodicy finds its deepest answer in Christ who reveals the nature of God. God's answer to human suffering is ultimately revealed in Christ. Christ wants to become human and incarnate out of love; Christ suffers out of love; and Christ's resurrection reveals the loving gaze of God that will be experienced by all humanity in the eternal eschaton of God's love. From a perspective of Christian faith, the theodicy finds an answer in the incarnation of Christ together with the passion and resurrection. Julian develops a theology of salvation that is rooted in the love of God and that is characterised by God's loving beholding of humanity. God beholds humanity in a compassion, which empathises with suffering and pain. God beholds the incarnation of Christ with a love that sees how all humanity is brought to eternal bliss.

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<sup>494</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.98r (339).

#### 4 Passion and compassion

The doctrine of the fall and human sin prompts Christian theologians to reflect on God's care in the reconciliation of humanity to God, as humanity's sight for God's love is weakened. Paul Fiddes demonstrates that the Christian tradition proposes different models for understanding the mystery of atonement.<sup>495</sup> The theology of atonement "insists that salvation depends upon the restoring of a relationship between human beings and God, who are estranged from each other. The English word 'at-one-ment' spells out this 'making at one.'"<sup>496</sup> Julian's theology of atonement is best characterised as an act of love intended for the healing of human suffering. Julian portrays how the fall and the suffering of humanity are beheld with God's compassionate and loving gaze. God's gaze in beholding humanity comprises the mysteries of faith in Christ and expresses the influence of Christ's incarnation, passion and resurrection in human life as equally coming to see God face to face. The same qualities of God's beholding are seen in Christ's countenance during his suffering on the cross.<sup>497</sup> She sees loving compassion as the sole motivation of Christ's passion. By undergoing suffering, Christ shares in the experience of suffering and vulnerability that is intrinsic in human life. The essence of Christ's suffering for humanity is formed by his words: "Lo how I loue thee."<sup>498</sup> Christ's countenance is a "[h]ewyng of compaffion."<sup>499</sup> The passion and resurrection reveal that God's loving cheer transforms human suffering into joy as his compassionate love is the salvific influence that turns human suffering into eternal bliss.

Julian's emphasis on the revelation of God's love within the incarnation and passion of Christ is very different from Anselm's reasoning as to why God became human.<sup>500</sup> Bradley outlines how several commentators have taken up the

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<sup>495</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989; reprint, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004).

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>497</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r-57r (253-7) and 16.71: ff.149v-152v (442-8).

<sup>498</sup> Paris MS, 10.24: ff.46v-47r (236-7).

<sup>499</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.56v-57r (256-7).

<sup>500</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, in *Saint Anselm: Proslogion, Monologium, Gaunilo's: On Behalf of the Fool, Cur Deus Homo*, trans. S.N. Deane, 2nd ed. (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1962).

question of the relation of Julian's texts to those of Anselm.<sup>501</sup> Anselm was a major force in stimulating the devotion to the passion. He writes as a spiritual guide in composing his *Prayers* and *Meditations*.<sup>502</sup> His prayers show how he was steeped in the awareness of his own sinfulness and open to receive God's compassion. A change in attitude occurs during the twenty years after he wrote his *Prayers*. In *Cur Deus Homo*, his personal devotion becomes separated from theological reflection and his argumentation for the theology of satisfaction is based on rational grounds. He is unable to accept the idea of God's unconditional compassion, which leads him to develop the theology of Christ's satisfaction for sin and to narrow the meaning of Christ's incarnation and passion to a repayment of the human debt owed to God.<sup>503</sup> The emphasis on human culpability results in the interpretation that Christ pays the debt caused by sin because he is free from guilt. As salvation results from faith in the redemption of sin through Christ's death, Christian devotion loses touch with the mystery of the sanctification of humanity.

Julian's spiritual development moves opposite to Anselm, as she breaks free from the idea of culpability to discover a freely given compassion in God. Through the guidance of God's love, Julian moves away from the theology that Christ's incarnation and passion are necessary for the amendment of God's wrath.<sup>504</sup> Occasionally Julian's language resembles the teaching on satisfaction. "And thus we haue mater of mornynge · ffor oure Jynne is cauſe of criſtes paynes · and we haue laſtyngly mater of Joy · ffor endleſſe loue made hym to Juffer."<sup>505</sup> She reconstructs the language of the church and reconciles its theology with her own growing awareness of God's love. Her emphasis is not on guilt, but rather on discernment and a trust in love: "and go forth w<sup>t</sup> god in loue."<sup>506</sup> The awareness

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<sup>501</sup> Bradley, "Julian and the Mystery of Redemption," 205-27. See Joan Nuth, "Two Medieval Soteriologies: Anselm of Canterbury and Julian of Norwich," *Theological Studies* 53 (1992): 613-45; Jane McAvoy, "To be Satisfied: Julian of Norwich and the Meaning of Atonement," *Studies in Spirituality* 13 (2003): 141-53.

<sup>502</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm, with the 'Proslogion'*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973).

<sup>503</sup> A comparison between Anselm and the Eastern church fathers' theology of atonement is given in, Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, trans. A.M. Alchin et al. (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 99-103.

<sup>504</sup> John Clark compares Julian's theology to John Scotus Eriugena (c.810-877): "This leads to the question, how far Julian's outlook approaches the view of Duns Scotus, that the Incarnation cannot be considered as merely 'occasioned' by the Fall, but was for its own sake part of God's purpose from all eternity." Clark, "Predestination in Christ," 88-9.

<sup>505</sup> Paris MS, 14.52: f.108v (360).

<sup>506</sup> See Paris MS, 13.39: ff.69r-v (281-3).

of Christ's compassion as 'suffering with' gives an impetus to spirituality that is different from that religiosity which is rooted in an understanding of Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins. The emphasis in Julian's soteriology is not on Christ's humanity as free from guilt, but on Christ's strength to suffer because of his divine nature: "ffor as moch as he was moſt tendyr and clene · ryght ſo he was moſt ſtrong and myghty to ſuffer."<sup>507</sup> Julian's reappraisal of the theology of atonement is, furthermore, testified by her assertion that God cannot forgive, because God cannot be offended by sin.<sup>508</sup>

Paul Fiddes argues that Anselm's theology of atonement is problematic in so far as it suggest that the debt to God's justice is paid on the cross once and for all and does not account for the subjective relationship of the human with God's salvific act. "It does not integrate the human response to God, and the healing of human personality here and now, into the act of atonement."<sup>509</sup> Whereas Anselm's faithful search for understanding lends itself to a separation between theology and spirituality, Julian is groundbreaking in her effort to reintegrate Christian faith with the lived experience of God's compassion. Christ's passion is a suffering out of love for humanity and reveals the nature of God's suffering with humanity. This love evokes within the human a deep compassion for suffering.

Julian's theological interpretation of the passion focuses on the love of Christ and his suffering out of love. My contention that her understanding of salvation is distant from the prevailing scholastic theology indicates the availability of other sources, either in preaching or in manuscripts, which enable her to be inspired by the sensitivity to the Paschal mystery that is characteristic of the early church. Julian's belief in the incarnation and the passion of Christ for the salvation of humanity resembles the theology of sanctification formulated by the early church. The Christian tradition as articulated by the Eastern church fathers is devoted to the Paschal mystery of Christ as an awareness of the salvation of human life through the restoration of the image of God and the resurrection from death.

The reflection on the Paschal mystery gradually shifted during the Middle Ages towards the single-minded meditation on the passion. Ewert Cousins argues that the emphasis on the suffering of Christ lost touch with the deeper mysteries of the Christian faith such as the resurrection.

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<sup>507</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40r (223).

<sup>508</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: f.89r-v (321-2).

<sup>509</sup> Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 99.

As the Middle Ages progressed, the passion of Christ permeated more deeply the religious psyche of Western Christendom. In the lives of the saints there are many accounts of the intensity of this devotion, even of a morbid fascination with pain and humiliation. From a psychological point of view, this late medieval devotion to the passion of Christ is one of the most problematic phenomena in the history of Christian spirituality. It is also problematic from a doctrinal and spiritual point of view, for attraction to the suffering and death of Christ became so intense in some cases that Christians lost sight of the other aspects of the Christian mysteries and their organic interrelatedness.<sup>510</sup>

Meditation on the passion of Christ is originally intended to invoke humility, contrition and compassion. Bernard of Clairvaux proposes meditation on the humanity of Christ in order to transform carnal love into a spiritual loving of God. The redirection of the human affections was the primary reason for Christ's incarnation. "He wanted to recapture the affection of carnal man who was unable to love in any other way, by first drawing them to the salutary love of his own humanity, and then gradually drawing to raise them to a spiritual love."<sup>511</sup> Meditation on Christ's passion evokes a spiritual attentiveness to the love of God.

Cousins argues that the discipline of spirituality needs to evaluate the practice of meditation on the passion as a progression through the stages of contemplative prayer. His appraisal makes use of a medieval method of scriptural interpretation. He concludes that Julian gives an outstanding example of meditation on the passion amongst late medieval devotion as her vision accesses mystical meaning.

The fourth sense is the anagogic, which reveals the ultimate mystical meaning: the union of the soul with God after death or the foretaste of that union in this life through mystical experience. Through her vision of Christ's passion, Julian penetrates this level, experiencing the joy of the Trinity.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Ewert Cousins, "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt, Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988; reprint, London: SCM Press, 1989), 377.

<sup>511</sup> Quoted in Cousins, "Humanity and Passion," 378-9. See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Song of Songs*, 20.6.

<sup>512</sup> Cousins, "Humanity and Passion," 388-9.

Cousins's argument supports my thesis that Julian's writing is not merely theological, but intended as a form of meditation that is rooted in the tradition of *lectio divina* and sustains her mystagogical guidance into the mystery of the Trinity. Julian promotes a meditation on the passion that enfolds the mystery of love in the Trinity and visualises the resurrection as the transfiguration of suffering into seeing God face to face.

Bernard McGinn proposes that Christian mysticism became developed through the effort of early Christian thinkers to reflect on the meaning of life in the resurrection of Christ. Those Christian thinkers felt the "biblical obligation" for "all believers to strive for a deeper consciousness of the presence of the Redeemer."<sup>513</sup> His observation on the foundations of Christian mysticism is significant for understanding the relationship between the christological and soteriological awareness that is expressed by Julian. She gives spiritual direction in an awareness of the infinite capacity of Christ's compassionate love for humanity. Human suffering becomes transparent to Christ's words spoken on the moment of transfiguration: "Lo how I loue thee."<sup>514</sup>

Although Julian gives a significant refinement of some established teachings of the church regarding the fall and God's judgement, it is important to emphasise that the christological creed forms the core of Julian's theology and mystagogy of the Paschal mystery. At the final point of the exaltation of Christ, Julian hears Christ's words as a divine sanctification of the creed: "I it am, that holy church prechyth the and techyth thee."<sup>515</sup> Julian's perception of the redemptive influence of Christ's suffering is in accordance with the creed and the hymns that influenced the formulation of the creed. The christological hymn in Philippians proclaims the suffering of Christ in his humanity and the glorification of Christ in his divinity. Christ is God; empties himself to become human; is born from a woman; willingly suffers in human vulnerability and is glorified.<sup>516</sup> Human nature is glorified with Christ.<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> McGinn, *Foundations of Mysticism*, 83.

<sup>514</sup> Paris MS, 10.24: ff.46v-47r (236-7).

<sup>515</sup> Paris MS, 12.26: f.49r. (241).

<sup>516</sup> Philippians, 2.6-11. Paul Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 65-9.

<sup>517</sup> See Galot, "Eschatologie," *DSp* 4 (1960), 1020-59; Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 82-91. Saint Paul developed the idea of the resurrection from death in Christ; e.g. 1 Corinthians 15; also Ephesians 2.4-6: "But God is rich in mercy, and because of his great love for us, he brought us to life with Christ when we were death because of our sins; it is by grace you are saved. And he raised us up in union with Christ Jesus and enthroned us with him in the heavenly realms."

Julian's meditates on three aspects of the passion. It is God who suffers, what pain Christ's suffers and for whom Christ's suffers:

it is gods wylle as to my vnderſtandyng that we haue iij · maner of beholdyng of his bleſſyd paſſion · (...) ffor the hieſt poynt that may be ſeen in his Paſſion is to thynke and to know that he is god that ſufferyd · ſeeyng after theſe · other two poyntes whych be lower ¶ That one is what he ſufferyd, ¶ And that other · for whom that he ſufferyd.<sup>518</sup>

Julian holds that it is God who suffers. She associates the life giving and salvific influence of the passion and resurrection with the Word becoming flesh: Christ's incarnation into human nature. Contemplation on the unity between the divine and humane natures in Christ forms the mystagogic initiation into the experience of the passion: "both god and man the ſame that ſufferd for me."<sup>519</sup> Christ's incarnation enables God to suffer:

ffor the hieſt poynt that may be ſeen in his Paſſion is to thynke and to know that he is god that ſufferyd · (...) And in thys he brought to mynd in parte the hygh and the nobylte of the glorious godhede and ther w<sup>t</sup> the preciouſ hede and the tendyrneſſe of the bleſſydfulle body · whych be to gether onyd.<sup>520</sup>

In Christ the blessed noble nature of God is united with the vulnerable tenderness of human nature. Christ's passion is God's self expressive love of suffering with humanity, for "suffering for and with another is a language which penetrates more deeply than words."<sup>521</sup> In Christ, God suffers on the cross.

Julian's *Showing of Love* contributes to the tradition of meditation on the passion of Christ that intends to evoke a response of contrition and compassion:

it is gods wylle as to my vnderſtandyng that we haue iij · maner of beholdyng of his bleſſyd paſſion · the harde payne that he ſufferyd w<sup>t</sup> a contricion and compaſſion · And that ſhewde oure lorde in this tyme · And gaue me myght

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<sup>518</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: ff.39v-40v (222-4).

<sup>519</sup> Paris MS, 1.4: f.7v (156).

<sup>520</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40r (223).

<sup>521</sup> Fiddes, *Suffering of God*, 16-7.

and grace to see it.<sup>522</sup>

She portrays Christ's suffering in such a realistic and lively manner that the vision easily draws her fellow Christians into meditating the humanity and vulnerability of Christ.<sup>523</sup> Her meditation is solidly grounded in her own experience, as her youthful prayer for compassion arises from her desire to suffer with Christ in the vulnerability of his humanity.<sup>524</sup> Her vision shows Christ's face stained with blood that runs from the wounds inflicted by the crown of thorns pressed on his head. She sees Christ suffering on the cross, as he is close to death through exposure to the blowing wind that dries the moisture in his body. Her prayer for awareness of Christ's pain is fulfilled when her sight of Christ's painful dying evokes in her an excruciating painful empathy; Christ's pain is her pain. By narrating her experience of seeing the one she deeply loves in immense pain, she moves the inner response of her fellow-Christian and evokes a meditation of seeing the passion of Christ with the eyes of love. Christ's intense vulnerability is meditated with such compassion as to open one's heart to the depth of Christ's pain.

Julian's mystagogy engages her fellow Christians with the existential experience of human suffering and focuses attention on Christ's suffering out of love for humanity. Julian's vision shows the depth of human pain in the light of Christ's passion. "And the beholding of this w<sup>t</sup> alle the paynes that evyr were or evyr shalle be."<sup>525</sup> The experience of all pain is quickly shown in a moment, for it is more dreadful and painful than a human can endure. The intensity of human suffering is experienced to make Julian aware that it constitutes the reality of the pain that is consummated by Christ. Her visionary glance of human suffering is suddenly transformed into an understanding of Christ's passion. In the crucifixion of his humanity, Christ experiences the accumulation of all human pain: "And w<sup>t</sup> alle this I vnderstode the passion of cristen for the most Payne. And ovyr passyng."<sup>526</sup> Christ suffers so deeply because the love of the Trinity gives strength to his humanity: "for the vnyng of the godhed gaue strength to the manhed for loue to suffer more than alle man might."<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40v (224).

<sup>523</sup> Paris MS, 8.16-17: ff.32r-36r (207-15).

<sup>524</sup> Paris MS, 2-3: ff.3r-7r (147-55).

<sup>525</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: f.50v (244).

<sup>526</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>527</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.39v (222).

Julian understands atonement in terms of Christ's wilful motivation to suffer with humanity, thereby taking upon himself the accumulation of all human pain with strength given by divine love and with the intention of its transfiguration. "And ffor every mannys lynne that shalbe sayyd he sufferyd · And every mannes sorow Deolacion and angwyllhe he sawe and sorowd · for kyndnes and loue."<sup>528</sup> She meditates that Christ's suffering for humanity is intended for the atonement and transfiguration of human pain:

p<sup>e</sup> loue in hym was so strong whych he hath to oure soule · that wyllyngfully he chose it w<sup>t</sup> grett Desyer · And myldely he sufferyd it w<sup>t</sup> grett Joy · for the soule · that beholdyth thus · whan it is touchyd by grace he shalle verely see that tho paynes of cristes passion passe all paynes · that is to sey · whych paynes shal be turned in to everlastyng Joy · by the vertu of cristes passion.<sup>529</sup>

Julian's revelation that enduring love is the ground of Christ's suffering reveals the redemptive meaning of his suffering. God suffers with love. Because the love of Christ is divine in nature, it means that his capacity to suffer is the strongest of all humankind. The love which is divine gives Christ strength to bear the suffering of all humanity; and the love which is eternal makes Christ long for and suffer with humanity from the beginning of the creation to the last day of salvation.

I me<sup>e</sup>ne 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.<sup>530</sup>

Christ's passion is salvific because his capacity to suffer for humanity equals his strength to love all humanity in all eternity. All humanity is enclosed in Christ's divine nature.<sup>531</sup>

Oliver Davies's study on the theology of compassion sees the compatibility between human and divine compassion in a self-giving attitude (*kenosis*), in which the other is the heart of one's perception.

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<sup>528</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40r (223).

<sup>529</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40v (224).

<sup>530</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.39v (222).

<sup>531</sup> Paris MS, 10.24: f.46r (235).

Compassion is a human condition which is constituted by the simultaneous interplay of cognitive, affective and volitional dimensions. Cognition is involved to the extent that we reconstruct, or recognize, the other in their need; it is volitional to the extent that our recognition and our feeling prompt us to act in a way that will be in the other's best interests.<sup>532</sup>

As Julian's meditation of the passion is centred on Christ's wilful suffering out of love for humanity, by implication her mystagogy guides the Christian into the mystery of the bond between pain and compassion. Christ suffers with humanity and for all humanity; Christ's suffering is chosen willingly out of deep love for humanity; the strength of God's love transfigures suffering into compassion.<sup>533</sup> In her mystagogic approach to Christ's suffering, the movement from passion to compassion influences awareness of God. Christ's suffering is revelatory of a deep compassion that exists within God. Human pain and God's compassion are inseparable.

Julian's meditation explores the response to Christ's suffering as a compassion born from suffering out of the profoundness of the union in love. The pain of Christ encompasses the suffering of all of creation out of love for Christ.<sup>534</sup> The bond between God and creation is encapsulated in a movement between pain and compassion. Mary, the mother of Christ, experiences the deepest suffering that is born from her love for her Son. Compassion is a bond of love wounded by the experience of pain.

Here I ſaw in parte the compaſſion of our bleſſed lady ſain<sup>t</sup> Mary for criſt and ſhe was ſo onyd in loue · that the grettnes of her loue · was cauſe of the grettnes of her peyne · ffor in this I ſaw a ſubſtance of kynde loue contynued by grace · that his creatures haue to hym · which kynde loue was moſt fulſomly ſhewde in his ſwete mother and ovyrpaſſyng for ſo much as ſhe louyd hym more then alle other · her peyne paſſyd alle other ffor ever the hygher the myghtyer · the ſwetter that the loue is · the more ſorow it is to the lover to ſe that body in payne that he lovyd.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 232.

<sup>533</sup> Paris MS, 9.22: ff.43v-44r (230-1).

<sup>534</sup> Paris MS, 8.18: ff.36r-37v (215-8).

<sup>535</sup> Paris MS, 8.18: ff.36r-v (215-6).

Mark Burrows's exploration of the divine and human meaning of suffering in Julian's meditation on the passion reaches the conclusion that human suffering is an ascetic participation of the Christian in the divine life.<sup>536</sup>

In the divine desire for our return, God continues to suffer on behalf of humanity, and it is this divine suffering that paints the landscape upon which Julian calls others to accept their own affliction and 'woe' as the means by which they themselves might participate in God.<sup>537</sup>

Burrows is astute in his reflection on human suffering as a means of participation in God. His conclusion is problematic only in so far as it ponders on suffering as an essential quality of Christ's passion and leaves aside the transfiguration of Christ's countenance from suffering to blessed cheer. Roberto Fusco studies this aspect of Julian's contemplation on Christ crucified, although he does not elaborate upon Christ's divine suffering.<sup>538</sup> According to Julian, the alteration of Christ's aspect towards humanity signifies a complete transfiguration of human suffering.<sup>539</sup> The landscape is therefore not suffering itself, but the divine love that radiates in the passion and through which Christ receives the strength to suffer with humanity.

The transfiguration of suffering in the encounter with the compassionate loving gaze of God leads Julian to conclude that human suffering will result in a high knowledge of God and make humanity heir of Christ's bliss.<sup>540</sup> The two qualities of Christ's pain, human and divine, are shown in his physical and spiritual thirst.<sup>541</sup> Humanity suffers with Christ as his suffering reflects human nature and Christ is not completely glorified and impassible for as long as he continues to suffer with humanity.<sup>542</sup> Christ's resurrection is a compassionate response of suffering with humanity: "for as long as he was passyble he sufferde for vs · and forowde for vs · And now he is vppe relyn and no more passybylle yett he sufferyth

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<sup>536</sup> Burrows, "Yett He sufferyth with Us," 112.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>538</sup> Roberto Fusco, "The Contemplation of Christ Crucified in Julian of Norwich," *Studies in Spirituality* 13 (2003), 119-39.

<sup>539</sup> Paris MS, 8.21: ff.41r-v (225-6).

<sup>540</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>541</sup> Paris MS, 8.17: f.33v (210). See Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r-57r (253-7).

<sup>542</sup> Paris MS, 8.21: f.41v (226).

w<sup>t</sup> vs.”<sup>543</sup> Christ’s suffering on the cross in his passible human nature continues within his impassible divine nature. God’s passibility in Christ allows for the suffering with humanity.

In Christ’s human nature, compassionate love is revealed as a suffering out of love and its dramatic consequence of a painful death; in his divine nature, compassionate love is revealed as eternal bliss of the bond of love in God. Christ is incarnate in human nature to become one with human suffering and transform suffering through the power of resurrection. At the consummation of Christ’s death, Julian beholds a sudden and immediate transformation in the countenance of Christ from pain into blessed cheer.

¶odenly I beholdyng in the [ame cro]sse · he chaungyd in ble[ss]ydfulle chere · the chaungyng of hys ble[ss]yd chere · chaungyd myne · And I was as glad and mery as it was poss[ib]le · then brought oure lorde meryly to my mynd · wher is now any poynt of thy payne or of thy a<sup>n</sup>guy[ss]e.<sup>544</sup>

The transfiguration of Christ’s countenance reflects God’s beholding of humanity in view of Adam’s fall together with the resurrection of Christ and thus God’s loving beholding transfigures all human suffering in the resurrection of Christ: “the mercyfull beholdyng of his louely chere fulfilled all erth.”<sup>545</sup> The awareness of Christ’s resurrection has a mystical connotation that emphasises the transformation of human nature into the eternal glory of seeing God face to face (*visio beatifica*).<sup>546</sup> The transfiguring influence of love is a mystery hidden in God.<sup>547</sup> Humanity is blind to the transfiguring effect of God’s love within suffering, but contemplation on the passion lifts the darkness and gives a glimpse of insight into the profound mystery of a God who suffers with humanity out of love.<sup>548</sup> In this

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<sup>543</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40r (223). See Paris MS, 13.31: f.56r (255).

<sup>544</sup> Paris MS, 9.21: f.41r (225).

<sup>545</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.98r-v (339-40).

<sup>546</sup> A mystical understanding of the *visio beatifica* is influenced by Saint Paul; e.g. 1 Corinthians 13.12 “Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known;” and 2 Corinthians 3.18: “We all see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and we are transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, through the power of the Lord who is the Spirit.” Also, Ephesians 2.8-9: “For it is by grace you are saved through faith; it is not your own doing. It is God’s gift, not a reward for work done.”

<sup>547</sup> Paris MS, 13.34: f.61r (265).

<sup>548</sup> Paris MS, 13.32: f.59 (262).

mystery is contained the communication of Christ words: “Lo how I loue thee.”<sup>549</sup>

Her theology regarding God’s passibility has far reaching consequences for her understanding of salvation and atonement. The Greek word *salve* means healing, whilst the English word at-one-ment refers to the unification between human and God. The healing of humanity is curative for God’s suffering with humanity. When humanity becomes impassible, without suffering, then God’s compassion with humanity comes to an end and will be sublimated into eternal love. Julian’s theology of atonement holds that the sanctification of humanity becomes the crown of Christ and contributes to his glorification.

## Conclusion

Julian’s theology reaches beyond Augustine’s understanding of suffering as the result of Adam’s disobedience and the subsequent perversion of the human will to the Irenaeian theology that humanity is created in vulnerability and with the prospect of growth into likeness with God. She thus presents an orthodox, albeit marginalized view, on God’s creatorship and the potential of human nature for deification despite its susceptibility to suffering. Julian’s theology also reaches beyond the church fathers’ understanding of suffering as the result of God’s punishment for sin to a theology of God’s compassion with human suffering. Her theology of compassion surpasses the doctrine of God’s impassibility and influences her theology of Christ’s passion. Her understanding of Christ’s passion breaks away from the Anselmian theology of the amendment of sin. Julian’s theology has mystagogical implications as it guides her fellow Christians into a changing understanding of suffering. Suffering is an inseparable part of human experience and can become transparent to a purposeful direction of increasing compassion. Her theology guides her fellow Christians into a changing awareness of God and the trinitarian love. Christ’s passion reveals that compassion with suffering is an inalienable part of the trinitarian communion and excludes wrath and punishment. Whereas this chapter emphasises the implications of suffering for an understanding of God’s creatorship and compassion, the following chapter concentrates on Julian’s theology of God’s loving judgement as it derives from

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<sup>549</sup> Paris MS, 10.24: ff.46v-47r (236-7).

her teleological understanding of sin and influences her eschatological theology.

## Chapter 5: God's Enduring Love

St. Paul formulates a Christian understanding of eschatology in terms of the beatific vision. “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to Face. Now I know only in part but then I will know as I am known.”<sup>550</sup> It expresses a transformation of ignorance into the fullness of knowing that is to come with eternal life. The Pauline dictum reflects Julian’s theology that humanity is created in weakness as well as with the potential to know God. For an appreciation of Julian’s theology of the beatific vision, it is necessary to examine the implications of her doctrine of God’s creatorship for her view on eschatology. This chapter explains different strands in the church fathers’ theology that are relevant for an interpretation of Julian’s contribution to a theology of the human will, sin, God’s wise judgement and salvation. Firstly, the chapter describes the church father’s theology of free will and demonstrates that Julian’s theology expands the idea of human free will with her understanding of sin as nothing outside loss and pain. Secondly, it explains that Julian’s experience of God’s enduring love develops further the church fathers’ theology of God’s impassibility, and argues that her theology is rooted in apophatic knowing. Thirdly, it discusses her theology of salvation and argues for its connection with a marginalized theology of universal salvation that is expressed by Origen. Fourthly, it examines how her theology of God’s foreseeing wisdom is the foundation of her mystagogy, which elucidates the experience of God’s guidance in humanity towards a seeing God face to face.

### 1 Sin is nothing

Julian stands in a long Christian tradition of contemplation on the relationship between God’s creatorship, human freedom and sin. She develops the doctrine of original righteousness in terms of the integrity of the human will: humanity always dwells in the will of God, beholds God and loves God. Her understanding of the integrity of the will reflects the theology of the Eastern church fathers that the will is created in the image of God. Christian theology holds that humanity is created

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<sup>550</sup> 1 Corinthians, 13.12.

with a free will.<sup>551</sup> “Humanity was free from the beginning. For God is freedom and humanity was made in the image of God.”<sup>552</sup> Clément emphasises that the Eastern church fathers see free will as a gift from God that forms a kinship between human nature and God.<sup>553</sup> For example, Gregory of Nyssa views human nature as kindred to God’s nature, including the desire in freedom of will to become godlike.

He who created human beings in order to make them share in his own fullness so disposed their nature that it contains the principle of all that is good, and each of these dispositions draws them to desire the corresponding divine attribute. So God could not have deprived them of the best and most precious of his attributes, self-determination, freedom.<sup>554</sup>

The views of Hilary of Poitiers, according to Clément, form a bridge between the Eastern and the Western Christian tradition. He introduces into the Western tradition, which is more accustomed to a moral approach of Christian spirituality, the principal themes of faith in the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ as the foundation of the free will.<sup>555</sup> Hilary believes free will is given for the purpose of receiving the gift of God’s love through faith in Christ, but this freedom is inhibited by human weakness and vulnerability. “Our own difficulties make hope painful, our desires become infuriating and our faith grows weak.”<sup>556</sup> In his search for the meaning of life, his awareness that God is not indifferent to the feelings of humanity becomes an incentive to know the true nature of God: “in whose loving kindness my soul could rest amid all the troubles of this anxious life.”<sup>557</sup> God thus enables the will to become free in its orientation to love God amidst feebleness and suffering.

Although free will is created in the image of God and in nature drawn towards the love of God, the Christian tradition also emphasises that disobedience inclines human choice to deviate from the will of God. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine’s anthropology introduced the idea that the human

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<sup>551</sup> See Nyssa, *Moses*, 1.12.

<sup>552</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 81. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.37.4.

<sup>553</sup> Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 81.

<sup>554</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 81. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations*, 5.

<sup>555</sup> Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 340-1.

<sup>556</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 21. See Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, 1.13.

<sup>557</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, trans. E.W. Watson, L. Pullan and others, NPNF 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 9, 1.3.

free will is drawn to evil because of original sin. His thoughts on humanity's defective exercise of free will are derogatory of the excellence of human nature as created in the image of God. According to Clément, Augustine's thoughts on the defective use of free will are a distortion of the Christian mystery of freedom. Despite Augustine's thoughts on the will being tainted by original sin, he also developed the idea of the human spiritual faculties as created in the image of the Trinity: memory, reason and will are receptive to the love of God.<sup>558</sup> To do full justice to Augustine, one must bear in mind that his theology of the love of God, formulated in *The Trinity* and the *Confessions*, eases his harshness on human nature and sheds on it the light of personal experience. The *Confessions* is "essentially a book of devout reflection by the saint on the wonder of God's goodness to him, and is primarily a *confessio laudi* (a confession of praise) rather than a mere *confessio peccati* (a confession of sins)."<sup>559</sup> The *Confessions* does not proclaim a spirituality of God's judgement and punishment. On the contrary, it emphasises a spirituality that originates from the awareness of God's goodness and develops into a way of living in complete dependence on God.

The *Confessions* contrasts Augustine's thoughts about the implications of original sin for the defective use of the will with his experience of the will as a compass needle that orients human life towards God when it becomes receptive to love. Augustine sees love as the gravity that pulls the human towards God. "Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position they are at rest. My weight is my love."<sup>560</sup> The weight of love draws the human to find rest in God. He expresses the influence of love in the liberty of the will.

Augustine's theology of the love of God influenced the Western mystical tradition and might have had a bearing in Julian's writing. The Christian theology of the love of God expounds that love is God's nature and that the encounter with God's love inspires a human response. "For Augustine, *caritas* is God's nature, not just an attribute."<sup>561</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) preaches that the love of God purifies the human will.<sup>562</sup> Medieval mystical authors developed

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<sup>558</sup> Augustine, *Trinity*, 9.1-3.

<sup>559</sup> John Hammond Taylor in the introduction to Augustine, *Genesis*, 5.

<sup>560</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 13.9.10.

<sup>561</sup> George M. Newlands, *Theology of the Love of God* (London: Collins, 1980), 37. See Augustine, *The Trinity*, 15.5.27.

<sup>562</sup> Newlands, *Love of God*, 37.

the Augustinian theology of the trinitarian image in human nature and elaborated upon an understanding of the human will as the capacity to love which reaches full potential through unification with God. The will is *capax Dei*: it possesses the ability to receive God's love and to become one with the will of God. Thus the concept of the defective use of free will is transposed by the will as *capax Dei*.

Augustine and Julian are similar in their understanding that love gravitates the will towards God. They both express that spiritual rest is found in God, in whom the human experience is to be infinitely loved, because God as the creator is most intimate with humanity.<sup>563</sup> Julian, however, differs significantly from Augustine with her theology of the godly will in which there is no gravitation towards evil. Lying at the root of Julian's theology of salvation is her recognition that humanity possesses a godly will that never assents to evil as it is directed towards God. In her anthropology, the godly will - or good will- is the innate orientation within the human nature, which tends towards God and is experienced as the desire to know and love God.

In whych Jhewyng I Jaw and vnderJtode full Juerly that in ech a Joule that Jhall be Jafe is a godly wyllle that nevyr affJentyd to Jynne ne nevyr Jhall · whych wyll is Jo good that it may nevyr wyllle evyll · but evyr more contynuly it wylllyth good and werkyth good in the Jyght of god.<sup>564</sup>

Julian's theology of the human will stands within the contemplative tradition, which argues that the will is created *capax Dei*, that is, with the capacity to receive the love of God. The human will is created with an innate orientation to love God and becomes truly free when it becomes united with God's love. The receptivity of the will to God's love is mystical, as the union of the will is initiated by God and enfolds the goodness of human nature under the influence of grace.

Scholars differ in opinion about the interpretation of *godly wyllle*. Nowakowski and Lang identify the godly will with the will of the elect.<sup>565</sup> The significance of the debate around the godly will lies in the exploration of Julian's teaching regarding difference and similarities between the uncreated nature of God and created human nature and its implications for the possibility of salvation. Knowles and

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<sup>563</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1. Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9v-10r (160-1) and 3.11: f.24r (191).

<sup>564</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: f.111r (365). See also, Paris MS, 13.37: ff. 67r-v (277-8).

<sup>565</sup> Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 77; Lang, "Godly Wyllle," 164.

Reynolds argue that the godly will is similar to Eckhart's 'spark of the soul' that is eternally in God and "cannot be extinguished either in hell or in heaven."<sup>566</sup> Reynolds holds the opinion that Julian's idea of the godly will comes close to unorthodoxy as it suggests that the will in humanity is essentially uncreated.<sup>567</sup> Riehle attempts to preserve the orthodoxy of Julian by arguing that she follows Augustine in his definition of the will as the love towards God. He interprets the godly will as the human loving will which remains good after the fall: "choosing good in an act of the free will."<sup>568</sup> Riehle's argument not only ignores the contradiction in Augustine's understanding of the will, but also understates Julian's theological position, which articulates the substantial oneness of the human will with the will of God.

Julian's understanding of the freedom to love God is based in a christocentric understanding of human nature, proposing a soteriology in which the wholeness of the human will is kept safe in Christ.

There fore oure lorde wyllle we know it in the feyth and the beleue · And namly and truly that we haue all this bleſſyd wyll hoole and ſafe in oure lorde Jheſu criſt · for that ech kynde that hevyn ſhall be fulfyllyd w<sup>t</sup>. behovyd nedys of goddys ryghfulnes ſo to be knytt and onyd in hym that there in were kepte a ſubſtaunce whych myght nevyr nor ſhulde be partyd from hym.<sup>569</sup>

Julian's soteriology formulates that salvation is inherent in the inseparable bond between Christ and humanity, as she sees the godly will within the eschatological viewpoint of "the lyfe of alle mankynd that ſhalle be ſavyd."<sup>570</sup> Her soteriology is similarly expressed by William of Saint Thierry and Eckhart and is grounded in the belief that the bond of love between God and human nature cannot be lost.<sup>571</sup>

The fulfilment of the divine eschaton is secured in the human will, as it is oriented to God. The bond between the human and the divine nature is created out of nothing less than God's love for humanity, which cannot be broken by

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<sup>566</sup> Eckhart, *The Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. C. de B. Evans, vol. 2 (London: J.M. Watkins, 1931), 1.427. Knowles, *English Mystics*, 144; Reynolds, "Literary Influences," 27.

<sup>567</sup> Reynolds, "Literary Influences," 27.

<sup>568</sup> Riehle, *English Mystics*, 159.

<sup>569</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: ff.111r-v (365-6).

<sup>570</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.18v (178).

<sup>571</sup> William of St. Thierry, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, trans. Thomas X. Davis (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 3.14. See David N. Bell in the introduction to St. Thierry, *Nature and Dignity of Love*, 15-6.

sin.<sup>572</sup> From this foundation of the unbreakable bond between God and human nature, Julian develops an understanding of sin as nothing. Sin is nothing from the perspective of the wholeness of God's creation; sin has neither substance nor is it part of the ground of being:

but I ſaw nott Synne · ffor I beleue it had no maner of Subſtaunce ne no part of beyng · ne it myght not be knowen · but by the payne that is cauſed therof · And thys payne is Somthyng as to my ſyñ te for a tyme · ffor it purgyth and makyth vs to know oure ſelfe and aſke mercy.<sup>573</sup>

Julian's understanding that sin has no substance is in accordance with the Christian orthodoxy, which acknowledges the goodness of the creation as created by God and views sin as an absence of goodness.<sup>574</sup> Her interest in sin follows Augustine who said that the discernment of the origin of sin is as much a mystery as seeing the darkness and listening to the silence.<sup>575</sup> The origin of sin in human nature is unknowable to the human reason and cannot be discerned through cognitive reasoning. However, she holds that the knowledge of sin is purifying; sin comes to awareness and is known through pain.

Julian's theology of sin as nothing has its foundation in the creatorship of God, the human experience of pain as well as the deifying relationship between God and humanity. Her understanding of the nothingness of sin is shaped by her belief in the incarnation of Christ, who unites the human will to God, and the trinitarian indwelling in the creation, through which humanity will become eternally blessed in the eschatological beholding of God face to face. Sin is nothing in view of the wholeness of human nature as it is rooted in the nature of God: "ffor he ſeyeth · I loue the · and thou louyſt me · and oure loue ſhall nevyr parte in two."<sup>576</sup> God uses nothing less than the divine nature to create and thus love forms the core of human nature. The human nature is wonderfully created in the image of God and is imprinted with a natural receptivity to be loved by God. The creative act of God gives goodness to the human nature in a likeness to

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<sup>572</sup> Paris MS, 13.36: f.64r (271).

<sup>573</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: f.50v (244).

<sup>574</sup> See Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.7.12: "evil has no existence except as a privation of good, down to that level which is altogether without being."

<sup>575</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 12.7.

<sup>576</sup> Paris MS, 14.58: f.123v (390).

God's goodness. Because sin has no substance of eternity, it bears no consequences for God's eschatological design for human life.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Julian's teaching on sin integrates human vulnerability with the loss of sight of God's love. Her view that humanity is created in God's image and in vulnerability resonates with the theology of Irenaeus, whilst her awareness of sin as the loss of contemplation and awareness of God's closeness to human life is compatible with Gregory the Great's teaching. Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of sin as not knowing the true God resonates within Julian's understanding of sin as woundedness and a loss in the beholding of God. He considers that the highest virtue is the possession of "the proper notions about the divine nature."<sup>577</sup> Julian's theology expresses that the pain of sin is caused by the experience of an absence; it exists because of the loss in the beholding of God's love. Sin is painful, for its pain is evoked by the absence of the experience of being loved.

Brant Pelphrey misunderstands Julian's theology of sin when he finds it necessary to correct her view that neither sin nor evil exist.<sup>578</sup> Julian acknowledges the reality of human suffering, without diminishing the pain caused through human behaviour. Julian's interpretation of sin as nothing, outside humanity's inability to be aware of God's love, provides a different explanation of the cause of humanity's hurtful behaviour than Augustine. Her assertion that sin is nothing and can only be known through pain introduces an understanding of evil as the outcome of pain, rather than the outcome of the defection of the will. Human responsibility for sin is caused by a loss of sight on God's love, which therefore causes a loss of love for humanity. Pain can be God's gift, but can also be misused when it causes a hardening of the heart towards love. Her theology that sin can only be known through pain expresses that human woundedness influences human motivations and deeds. Sin understood as pain, rather than evil, accepts the nuances within feelings and relationships that are given with human vulnerability. Ultimately, pain enables the divine love to become transparent to the will and manifest the freedom to choose love over and above hurtful behaviour.

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<sup>577</sup> Nyssa, *Moses*, 1.47: "(...) inasmuch as it transcends all cognitive thought and representation and cannot be likened to anything which is known. He [Moses] was commanded to heed none of those things comprehended by the notions with regard to the divine nor to like the transcendent nature to any of the things known by comprehension. Rather, he should believe that the divine exists, and he should not examine it with respect to quality, quantity, origin, and mode of being, since it is unattainable."

<sup>578</sup> Pelphrey, *Love was His Meaning*, 153 n.10.

Julian is accepting of the vulnerability of human nature. She grounds her theology of sin in the vulnerable condition of human life, which awakens the experience of pain: “Synne is behouely.”<sup>579</sup> Sin is part of the vulnerability of human nature, because it is not yet attached to the goodness of God and the experience of pain makes human nature receptive to God’s mercy and grace.<sup>580</sup> A human is vulnerable, ignorant about the nobility of human nature and unaware of God’s love.<sup>581</sup> She distinguishes four forms of ignorance: concerning the love of God, concerning humanity’s identity in God, concerning the continuous loving will of human nature in desiring God, and concerning the indwelling of God in creation.<sup>582</sup> Sin is the lack in experience of God’s love that causes pain.

Julian’s acceptance of human vulnerability and understanding of sin as pain influences the mystagogy of the *Showing of Love*, as it guides the Christian towards awareness of the depth of God’s love. God’s love is characterised by attentiveness to the teleological mystery of human pain and a consideration of sin within an eschatological perspective of sanctifying knowledge:

he comforyth redely and ſwetly menyng thus · It is tru that Synne is cauſe of alle thys payne · But alle ſhalle be wele · and alle maner of thyng Shalle be wele · (...) And in theyſe ſame wrdes I ſaw an hygh mervelous prevyte hyd in god · whych pryuyte he ſhalle opynly make and ſhalle be knowen to vs in hevyn · ¶ In whych knowyng we ſhalle verely ſe the cauſe why he ſufferde Synne to come · In whych ſyght we ſhalle endleſſely haue Joye.<sup>583</sup>

The pain of sin possesses a teleological significance as it impels the transformation of spiritual ignorance towards an awareness of God’s love. The eschatological event of the transfiguration of human knowledge underlies her remarkable statement that suffering will give awareness of the profound quality of love in God:

we ſhall thanke and blyſſe oure lorde endleſſly enjoyeng that evyr we ſufferyd woo · and that ſhalle be for a properte of bleſſyd loue · that we ſhalle know in

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<sup>579</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: f.50r (243).

<sup>580</sup> Paris MS, 14.47-9: ff.85v-89r (314-21).

<sup>581</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.97r (337).

<sup>582</sup> See Palliser, *Christ Our Mother of Mercy*, 146.

<sup>583</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: f.51 (245).

god which we myght nevyr haue knowen w<sup>t</sup>ou<sup>t</sup> t wo goyng before.<sup>584</sup>

The tension between the two truths of humanity, created in the image of God as well as with vulnerability and ignorance, is held together within the eternal perspective of God's love. Humanity lacks the understanding of God's reason – love- that motivates God to create human life within the nature of suffering. To the extent that humanity is open to the reality of suffering, they might also gain an awareness of the closeness of God to human life.<sup>585</sup> Her teaching about the will of God in human suffering constitutes a Christian attitude towards suffering: suffering is an unavoidable life-experience that evokes compassion.

The understanding that suffering will give a deeper knowledge of love calls to mind one of the most problematic passages in the *Showing of Love*, where the words are spoken that suffering is God's will: "what ſhulde it than agrevyn thee to ſuffer a whyle Sythen it is my wylle and my wurſchyppe."<sup>586</sup> An interpretation of God's will in suffering cannot be isolated from the meaning that is embedded in the whole vision, which reveals that God wants to be known and that God's will is to love.<sup>587</sup> For a right understanding of suffering as willed by God it is important to distinguish between human responsibility for suffering and that pain which is brought about by God's working within human nature: "for in thys tyme the workyng of creatures was nott ſhewde but of our lord god in the creatures."<sup>588</sup> God's working in human nature transforms human weakness that is resistant to God's love and is a purifying process that reorients a person towards God. The outflowing love of God in human nature causes pain if that love is resisted. Pain is not engendered through God's punishment, but through the overflow of God's love as mercy and grace. "And in a other tyme he ſhewde for beholdyng of ſynne · Nakedly as I ſhall ſay · ¶ After when he vſyth workyng of mercy and of grace."<sup>589</sup> The pain engendered by love is a mystagogical tool that works the purification of human nature. The human will realise a quality of love that cannot be known without undergoing pain.

The question of God's will in suffering cannot be generalised towards all

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<sup>584</sup> Paris MS, 14.48: f.89r (321). See Paris MS, 14.61: f.131v (406).

<sup>585</sup> See Paris MS, 15.64: f.137v (418) and 15.65: f.140v (424).

<sup>586</sup> Paris MS, 15.64: f.137v (418) and 15.65: f.140v (424).

<sup>587</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: f.173v (490).

<sup>588</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23v *bis* (190).

<sup>589</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.24r (191).

suffering. Julian distinguishes between God's working in the creation and human responsibility for evil. The pain that is caused through God is caused with love. Julian compares it with the image of God as Mother. A mother can chastise her child for wrong so that it comes to accept the good.<sup>590</sup> Although, chastising might give the impression of punishment, it is my contention that Julian here refers to the influence of God's transformative love that appeals to the human conscience. Suffering that is caused through evil does not have this same effect, although it might cooperate with the process of discernment between right and wrong.

Julian makes no attempt to explain the origin of sin or the purpose of evil within God's plan, but searches for a meaningful answer with a fundamental trust in God's love. She tries to understand the dichotomy between suffering and God's goodness and, like Augustine, Julian discovers that it is impossible to discern the cause of sin.<sup>591</sup> Augustine persists in explaining the cause of sin in the beginning of the creation of humankind and with his interpretation of Adam's fall develops the idea of original sin. In contrast with Augustine, Julian comes to an acceptance of the experience of suffering as inherent in human vulnerability and looks towards the eschaton of God in which God will reveal the reason for sin being allowed within creation. I agree with Nowakowski's conclusion, that Julian completely changes the theological perspective from an etiological explanation towards a teleological orientation.<sup>592</sup>

Theodicy is neither in demand of a dogmatic nor a definitive answer, but forms the markings on a spiritual path which gives guidance into God's depth of love and compassion with suffering. Julian's theology explores a quality of loving knowing that emerges from suffering under the influence of God's will. Not only does Julian's theology aspire to the eschaton of God, but also her orientation is informed by an epistemology of love. She follows the monastic dictum that love itself is understanding: *amor ipse intellectus est*. An understanding of the meaning of sin and suffering can only come with love. Because God is the ultimate and eternal love, it is only at the end of time, in the divine eschaton, that the reason for sin and suffering will be fully known.<sup>593</sup>

## 2 God's loving judgement

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<sup>590</sup> Paris MS, 14.60: ff.130r-v (403-4).

<sup>591</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 12.7.

<sup>592</sup> See Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 69.

<sup>593</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: f.51r (245).

The idea of the creation *ex nihilo* as an understanding of being created out of God's love carries far-reaching implications for Julian's understanding of the divine judgement regarding sin. She develops continuity between the love of the creator God and the love of God's judgement. Her theology of God's judgement is in some respects similar to the church fathers, while, as has been explained in the previous chapter, very different in regards to God's punishing wrath. The church fathers attempt to reconcile God's wrath with God's goodness by emphasising that wrath is beneficent for the conversion of the human from sin to the love of God. Julian acknowledges that sin can only be known through a purging pain, but remains opposed to any suggestion of wrath and punishing judgement in God. In God's love there is no place for wrath, as love and anger are two irreconcilable opposites.<sup>594</sup> She thus opposes the idea that God is the actor of penal evil and deliberately inflicts suffering in order to evoke contrition. Her theology holds that punishment does not pertain to the mystagogical contrivance of God, as suffering is not attributed to the effectiveness of God's wrath. Wrath can have no function within the foreseeing purpose of God with the creation.

The similarity of views between the church fathers and Julian's lies in the exploration of the relationship between God's judgement, pain and love. Chrysostom is open to the idea that pain can be a creative force when it is accompanied by a search for genuine love. Although God works within all creation, the receptivity for a deeper knowing and trusting is only found if one desires to love genuinely. Chrysostom acknowledges that God's love changes the meaning of divine wrath in such a profound manner that it encompasses God's impassibility in a way that is incomprehensible to the human mind.

For if the wrath of God were a passion, one might well despair as being unable to quench the flame which he had kindled by so many evil doings; but since the divine nature is passionless, even if He punishes, even if He takes vengeance, He does this not with wrath, but with tender care, and much loving kindness; wherefore it behooves us to be of much good courage, and to trust in the power of repentance.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: f.89v (322).

<sup>595</sup> Quoted in Gavrilyuk, *Suffering of the Impassible God*, 62. See John Chrysostom, *Two Letters to Theodore after His Fall*, 1.4.

Julian makes the quality of God's unconditional love more explicit than Chrysostom dared to express in his understanding of God's impassibility. Her theology draws the consequences of a loving God to its full meaning in that the judgement of God is nothing outside of love.

Her critique of the theology of God's wrath runs in a similar vein as the church fathers' argument for God's impassibility, which is based on the ultimate difference between God and humanity. God's judgement must be understood in such a way that it surpasses any attribution of the human affections of wrath and blame to God. The emotion of wrath is found in human nature but not in God.<sup>596</sup> God's love encompasses a higher judgement than can humanly be understood and can only be received through God's self-revelation and guidance: "ffor the hygher dome · god shewed hym selfe."<sup>597</sup> God's love, as it is revealed, evokes a marvel and a wonder which leads Julian to a persistent questioning into the mystery of God: "I wondryde and merveyld w<sup>t</sup> alle þ<sup>e</sup> dylygence of my soule."<sup>598</sup> The beholding of God's love evokes an intense longing for the divine sight: "My longyng endured · hym contynuantly beholdyng."<sup>599</sup> The divine love guides and draws Julian through a transformation of reasoning into a longing to see as God sees.

The mystagogical guidance into a higher knowing of God's love is a sudden awareness through her vision together with a gradual process through her contemplation upon the vision over a period of twenty years. The chasm between the theological doctrine of God's judgement and her revelation of love constitutes a mystagogy wherein knowledge (*scientia*) is transformed into a higher knowing and loving (*sapientia*) of God. Her mystagogical progression creates a tension between an intellectual understanding of God and an understanding that is engendered through love. She experiences great difficulty in trying to secure the church's teaching on God's wrath, for her vision is revelatory of the endless quality of God's love for creation. Julian experiences an intense pressure on her intellectual ability, which culminates in a darkening of reason. Human reasoning is blinded in the light of God's self-disclosure. "And betwene theyſe two contraryes my reſon was grettly traveyled by my blyndnes · and culde haue no reſt for drede that his bleſſed preſens ſhulde paſſe fro my ſyght."<sup>600</sup> Her deepening awareness of

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<sup>596</sup> Paris MS, 14.48: ff.87r-v (317-8).

<sup>597</sup> Paris MS, 14.45: f.82v (308). See Paris MS, 14.45: f.83r (309) and 14.46: f.84v (312).

<sup>598</sup> Paris MS, 14.50: f.91v (326).

<sup>599</sup> Paris MS 14.50: ff.92r-v (327-8).

<sup>600</sup> Paris MS, 14.50: f.92r (327).

how God beholds humanity inevitably compromises the church's teaching on blame and judgement, as it comes under pressure of her intense revelation of divine love in which exists no wrath.

Julian's knowledge of God's loving judgement is rooted in an apophatic theology, which is developed from the doctrine that God's nature is infinitely different from creation. Gregory of Nyssa was the first Christian author to explore a loving knowing of God as a knowing in darkness. The more intimate a person knows God implies that knowing becomes unknowing.

The one who is going to associate intimately with God must go beyond all that is visible and (lifting his own mind, as to a mountaintop, to the invisible and incomprehensible) believe that the divine is there where the understanding does not reach.<sup>601</sup>

Augustine acknowledges the apophatic character of knowing sin.

To try to discover the causes of such defection -deficient, not efficient causes- is like trying to see darkness and to hear silence. Yet we are familiar with darkness and silence, and we can only be aware of them by means of eyes and ears, but this is not by perception but by absence of perception. No one therefore must try to get to know from me what I know that I do not know, unless, it may be, in order to learn not to know what must be known to be incapable of being known! (...) The mind acquires knowledge by not-knowing.<sup>602</sup>

The words of Gregory and Augustine touch the heart of Julian's spiritual dilemma. She approaches God's beholding of sin according to an understanding derived from the teaching of the church, while she becomes aware that her understanding of God's judgement is insufficient and inconsistent with the profundity of God's loving gaze beholding her. To engage intimately with the incomprehensible height of love in God's judgement, she needs to encounter God with an unknowing of God. To receive guidance by the Holy Spirit into the

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<sup>601</sup> Nyssa, *Moses*, 1.46.

<sup>602</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 12.7.

incomprehensible mystery of God requires an unknowing of what she understands to be God's judgement according to how the human mind judges.

Her theology of God's loving judgement owes its origin to kataphatic and apophatic ways of knowing God. The kataphatic aspect of her vision is mediated through images, words formed in her understanding and spiritual insight as they guide her into a knowing of God's love for the creation. The apophatic aspect is mediated through spiritual insight into what she cannot see regarding God's judgement. Nicholas Watson argues that Julian "finds revelatory material from what she *does not* see."<sup>603</sup> It is my contention that the apophatic character of Julian's vision forms the foundation of her eschatological theology. Apophatic knowing gives Julian an awareness of God who is incomprehensibly different in loving and discerning than a conventional Christian way of understanding God's righteous judgement. Her apophaticism occurs as a necessary unknowing of the Christian teachings of sin, wrath and punishment. Neither seeing sin nor wrath in God originates an apophatic quality of spiritual understanding within the encounter with God's love. It means that the way of seeing and knowing are transformed into God. Unknowing becomes a knowing of God, as to know God is to know in love.<sup>604</sup>

A significant aspect of Julian's vision exists in an apophatic cognition of sin. In the "Jhewyng of loue" she is drawn into an attentiveness to the will of God that guides her into an unknowing of sin.<sup>605</sup> She acknowledges the profoundness of her vision in awakening an awareness of God's creatorship in which the absence of sin is complete: "whan I J̄aw that god doyth all that is done. I J̄aw nott J̄ynn."<sup>606</sup> She encounters an omnipotent God, in whose nature exists no sin. "And I was J̄ewer that he doth no J̄ynne. And here I J̄aw verely that J̄ynne is no dede ffor in alle thys J̄ynne was nott J̄hewde."<sup>607</sup> The spiritual vision instils her with a marvellous wonder that in love she sees no sin: "I merveyled in that J̄yght w<sup>t</sup> a J̄ofte Drede and thought what is J̄ynne."<sup>608</sup> A further significant aspect of her apophatic vision is that the unknowing of sin evokes the unknowing of human judgement and allows the encounter with the mystery of God, who is uncreated,

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<sup>603</sup> Watson, "Trinitarian Hermeneutic," 90.

<sup>604</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: ff.173r-v (489-90).

<sup>605</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23r *bis* (189).

<sup>606</sup> Paris MS, 13.34: f.62r (267).

<sup>607</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23v *bis* (190).

<sup>608</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23r *bis* (189).

and whose ability to love is perfect and ultimately different from the human understanding and discernment between good and evil: “ffor man beholdyth ſome dedys wele Done · and ſome dedys evylle · and our lorde beholdyth them not ſo.”<sup>609</sup> The human is known and loved by God in a way that is very different from judging good and evil. The cognition of sin and human judgement form a hindrance to a true knowing of God, because the nature of God’s love transcends the human way of understanding and judging. She necessarily releases those cognitions in order to be drawn into a glimpse of understanding the depth of God’s love.

A further aspect of apophatic knowing exists in neither seeing blame nor wrath in God:

ffor I ſaw no manner of wrath in god · neyther for ſhorte tyme nor for long · ffor truly as to my ſyght · yf god myght be wroth a whyle · we ſhuld neyther haue lyfe ne ſtede ne beyng · ffor as verely as we haue oure beyng of the endleſſe myght of god · and of the endleſſe wyſdom · and of the endleſſe goodneſſe · alſo verely we haue oure keyng in the endles myght of god · in the endleſſe wyſdom and in the endleſſe goodneſſe. (...) And yf it be tru that we be ſynners and blame wurthy good lorde how maye it than be that I can nott ſee this truth in the · whych arte my god · my maker · in Whom I deſyer to ſe alle truth.<sup>610</sup>

Julian’s apophatic knowing complements and is consistent with her kataphatic knowing of God’s creatorship and humanity as God’s creation. In view of God’s creatorship and humanity as God’s creation out of love, it is impossible to sustain life if God’s love is withdrawn through wrath even for the shortest instant. The experience of blame and guilt belongs to the human conscience that is changeable and vulnerable.<sup>611</sup> The apophatic knowing that guides her into the depth of God’s judgement is accentuated by an absence of forgiveness: “oure lorde god as a neynſt hym ſelfe may not forgeue · for he may not be wroth.”<sup>612</sup>

The unknowing regarding God’s blame underlies her interpretation of Adam’s fall. Julian’s hermeneutics of the fall is based on attentiveness to God’s

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<sup>609</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.24r (191).

<sup>610</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: ff.89v-90r (322-3) and 14.50: f.92v (328).

<sup>611</sup> See Paris MS, 14.45: f.81v (306).

<sup>612</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: ff.89r-v (321-2).

withholding of blame: “I culde perceyve in hym ony defau□te · or yf the lorde  
shuld affigne in hym ony maner of blame · And verely there was none seen.”<sup>613</sup>  
Pelphrey’s statement that Julian considers Adam guilty misses out on the  
apophatic tenor of her epistemology. “Julian has raised the questions of Adam’s  
responsibility for sin and has answered it by saying that Adam *is guilty*, and that he  
is worthy of blame from our point of view.”<sup>614</sup> The human point of view becomes  
transcended in the apophatic quality of the vision. By evoking a transformation  
within the understanding of sin as the creation of human life in vulnerability and  
in loss seeing God’s love, Julian guides her fellow Christians into an awareness of  
God’s love for humanity, whose love is unconditional, without blame and without  
judgement.

God’s loving beholding of humanity sustains an additional aspect of Julian’s  
apophatic knowing. The unfathomable quality of God’s beholding is accompanied  
by a non-seeing of the difference between God’s nature and human nature.

And I sawe no dyfference between god and oure substance but as it were all  
god · And yett my vnderstandyng toke that oure substance is in god · that is to  
say · that god is god and oure substance is a creature in god.<sup>615</sup>

No created human knowing can penetrate the depth of relationship between the  
divine and human natures. In referring to Julian’s distinction between the  
uncreated nature of God and the created nature of humanity, Turner explicates  
the argument that since for Julian the distinction between God and human is  
indiscernible, she rather strengthens the experience of identity.

Julian’s language of the oneness of the soul’s substance with God’s substance  
is rather reinforced than thereby undermined. For Julian, we remind ourselves,  
the soul’s substance differs from the divine substance *only* as created from  
uncreated. In our ‘substance’ we are in a created way all that God is in an  
uncreated way. There is therefore *no* way that we can utter the distinction  
between God’s substance and ours.<sup>616</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> Paris MS, 14.50: f.94v (332).

<sup>614</sup> Pelphrey, *Love was His Meaning*, 99.

<sup>615</sup> Paris MS, 14.54: f.114r (371).

<sup>616</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 161.

Julian is guided by love and drawn by might to a higher knowing of the sweet judgement of God.<sup>617</sup> Her reasoning is drawn into union with love and thus is transformed into a loving knowing of God.<sup>618</sup> In that loving knowing she receives an apophatic self-awareness in which the distinction between the human and God's natures are not seen, and she receives an apophatic awareness of God in which blame and wrath do not exist. God judges humanity according to the substance, that is, the ground of love between God and the human nature, which reflects the love between God and the Trinity.<sup>619</sup> God knows the eschatological wholeness of human nature and sees both its vulnerability and its secure potential for deification.

Julian's apophatic knowing germinates the awareness of God as the actor of salvation.<sup>620</sup> The awareness that God does not sin, implies that in God's judgement there is no resistance to love and gives assurance that God's creative and saving love will never be withdrawn from the creation. Julian's understanding is drawn gradually into the profundity of God's love for humanity, which marks a turning point in her great fear concerning sin. Her great fear concerns the damage done to the human creation in the image of God, as well as God's punishing judgement and the possibility of eternal separation from God.<sup>621</sup> Her great fear becomes a soft dread when her understanding is touched by God's love and she sees the divine-human relationship with the eyes of God's love. Soft dread is a loving awe for God that engenders trust.<sup>622</sup> The intertwined kataphatic and apophatic tenor of her vision makes Julian attentive to the eschatology of God's love, as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be forever.

### 3 Universal salvation

The unknowing of sin has far reaching consequences for Julian's theology of God's judgement and the universal salvation of humanity. Her theology is built on the strong and sole footing of universal salvation: "ffor in mankynd that fhall be

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<sup>617</sup> Paris MS, 14.46: f.84v (312).

<sup>618</sup> Paris MS, 16.83: ff.170v-171r (484-5).

<sup>619</sup> Paris MS, 14.45: ff.81v-82r (306-7).

<sup>620</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23v *bis* (190).

<sup>621</sup> Paris MS, 13.29: f.53r (249) and 14.50: f.92r (327).

<sup>622</sup> Paris MS, 16.74: ff.155v-156r (454-5).

Jauyd is comprehendyd alle · that is to Jey · alle that is made · and the maker of alle ·  
 ffor in man is god · And in god is alle.”<sup>623</sup> A unique feature of Julian’s theology of  
 salvation is borne from her conclusion that God is not wrathful. This forms the  
 foundation of the eschatology of God’s love that is characterised by the two  
 truths that “all is well” and “all humanity shall be saved.” Julian’s theology  
 preserves the belief in the one God of creation and salvation. The vision reveals a  
 divine eschatology of unconditional love in which the salvation of humanity is  
 enacted with the same love of God from whom humanity receives its existence:  
 “ffor ryght as the bleſſyd trinite made alle thyng of nought ryght so the Jame  
 bleſſyd trynnye Jhalle make wele alle · that is nott welle.”<sup>624</sup>

The love that motivates God to create humanity remains unchangingly  
 involved in its salvation. Salvation is the act of God’s loving of humanity. God is  
 trustworthy in designing the fulfilment of human likeness with God.

And thus oure good lorde anſweryd to alle the queſtyons and dow□tys that I  
 myght make · Jayeng full comfortabely; I may make alle thyng wele · And I can  
 make alle thyng welle · And I Jhalle make alle thyng wele · And I wyll make  
 alle thyng welle · And thou Jhalt Je thy Jelfe þt alle maner of thyng Jhall be  
 welle · (...) And there he Jeyth: Thou Jhalt Je thy ſelfe · I vnderſtond the  
 comyng of alle man kynde that Jhalle be Jauyd in to the blyſſedfulle trynnye.<sup>625</sup>

Edward Yarnold expresses clearly what lies at the heart of the trustworthiness  
 of God and human nature: “It seems incompatible with God’s goodness to make  
 us capable of receiving God’s transforming love and to deprive that receptivity of  
 its fulfilment.”<sup>626</sup> He explicates his argument, that God designed humanity to  
 receive his transforming love, with a quote from Augustine’s *Confessions*. “You  
 have made us for yourself, and our hearts know no rest until it finds rest in  
 you.”<sup>627</sup> The example clarifies that the trustworthiness of human nature is  
 experienced in a longing for God. Augustine is well aware of the human being  
 created with the nature of desire to belong to God. However, it is my contention

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<sup>623</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.18v (178).

<sup>624</sup> Paris MS, 13.32: f.58v (260).

<sup>625</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.54v-55r (252-3).

<sup>626</sup> Edward Yarnold, “The Theology of Christian Spirituality,” in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, 2nd ed. with corrections (London: SPCK, 1992; reprint, London: SPCK, 2000), 12.

<sup>627</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1.

that Augustine never reaches the total perspective of his insight into the mutuality between God's loving nature and the human nature of longing. His theology of original sin and God's wrath, together with his teaching on predestination, states the belief that not all humanity, even those baptised and virtuous, will attain salvation in God. Humanity is predestined to eternal torment because of the inherent wickedness of human nature and salvation depends solely on God's grace.<sup>628</sup> Augustine's teaching does not offer a coherent answer to the question why a God of love elects only a part of humanity for salvation.

Julian's theology is consistent with the orthodox Christian belief in God's love and humanity's creation in God's image and holds that this theology is incompatible with the preaching of theologians who proclaim God's wrath and eternal damnation. God's unconditional love and higher judgement implies that wrath and punishment have no part in God's plan for the salvation of humanity. Julian's theology envisions the day of the last judgement dissimilarly to that proposed by the church.<sup>629</sup> The last judgement and its decisive division between heaven and hell are superseded in Julian's theology by a teaching on the indwelling love of the Trinity in human nature. The *Showing of Love* reveals the trinitarian interiority of heaven in three degrees of blessedness that humanity shall receive and which shall last without end. The degrees of bliss are rooted in the beholding of God who knows the depth of pain and love in all human life most intimately and who loves with unwavering eternal love.<sup>630</sup>

And all this was ~~hew~~ seen in shewyng of compaſſion for that shalle ceacyn at  
 domyes day · thus he hath ruthe and compaſſion on vs · And he hath longyng  
 to haue vs · but hys wyſdom and hys loue ſuffer nott the ende to come tyll

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<sup>628</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 14.26: "God almighty, the supreme and supremely good creator of all beings, who assists and rewards good wills, while he abandons and condemns the bad (and yet he controls both good and bad) surely did not fail to have a plan whereby he might complete the fixed number of citizens predestined in his wisdom, even out of the condemned human race. He does not now choose them for their merits, seeing that the whole mass of humankind has been condemned as it were in its infected root: he selects them by grace and shows the extent of his generosity to those who have been set free not only in his dealings with them but also in his treatment of those who have not been freed."

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., 20.1: "Now it is a belief held by the whole Church of the true God (...) that Christ is to come from heaven to judge both the living and the dead, and this is what we call the Last Day, the day of divine judgement- that is, the last period of time. (...) Now when talking of the day of God's judgement, we add the word 'last' or 'final,' the reason is that God is even now judging from the beginning of the human race, when he expelled the first human beings from paradise and barred them from the tree of life as perpetrators of great sin."

<sup>630</sup> Paris MS, 6.14: ff.29v-30v (202-4).

the best tyme.<sup>631</sup>

The last judgement is the transfiguration of all pain of humanity into the glory of God, when Christ's compassion is transfigured into the bliss of God.

Julian's theology of salvation rests on an apophatic cognition of God's design with the destination of human life. Her persistent request to see and understand the retributive and redemptive suffering in hell and purgatory is not granted. Hell and purgatory are not seen, and therefore cannot be accepted in her theology of compassion.

And ¶ itt in this I deſyeryd as I durſte that I myght haue had ſom ſy¶ t of hel and of purgatory · (...) And for ought þ<sup>t</sup> I culde deſyer I ne culde ſe of thys ryght nou¶ t.<sup>632</sup>

God's loving judgement is opposed to final damnation: "ffor oure lorde god is ſo good ſo gentyll and ſo curteſſe · that he may never aſſigne defau¶ te finall in whome he ſhall be evyr bleſſyd and praysſyd."<sup>633</sup> In God's nature there exists no condemnation, because it has no affinity with the nature of love.<sup>634</sup> Furthermore, according to God's judgement evil has no eternal quality. "In which ſy¶ t I vnderſtond þ<sup>t</sup> alle the creatures þ<sup>t</sup> be of the devylles condiccion in thys lyfe · and ther in endyng ther is no more mencyon made of them before god and alle his holyn."<sup>635</sup> Julian speaks the language of the church fathers that the incarnation, passion and resurrection of Christ defeat the power of evil and death. She

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<sup>631</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.56v-57r (256-7).

<sup>632</sup> Paris MS, 13.33: ff.59v-60r (262-3).

<sup>633</sup> Paris MS, 14.53: f.111r (365).

<sup>634</sup> Clive Staples Lewis wrote in a letter to his former pupil Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine mystic: "I have been reading Lady Julian of Norwich. A dangerous book, clearly. I'm glad I didn't read it much earlier." The letter is written on 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1940, when Lewis was writing the *Problem of Pain*. In his letter to Owen Barfield (2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1940), he cites Julian's all shall be well and says that she seems "in the fifteenth century, to have rivalled Thomas Aquinas's reconciliation of Aristotle and Christianity by nearly reconciling Christianity with Kant." Warren Hamilton Lewis, ed., *The Letters of C.S. Lewis* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 183 and 186. Melvyn Matthews, the Chancellor of Wells Cathedral, gives an explanation why the *Showing of Love* seems so dangerous to a Christian. He ponders how people see God: "From the outside it seems as if he [God] will judge, but it is not so, for the closer we come and the more we cast off our preoccupation with our painful condition, the more we will see that in God there is no wrath. For as Julian says, 'For I saw no wrath except on man's side ....' Or, as the prophet Zephania said some many hundred years earlier, 'The Lord has taken away the judgement against you.' And that is a terrifying thought." Melvyn Matthews, *Nearer than Breathing: Biblical Reflections on God's Involvement in Us* (London: SPCK, 2002), 75-6.

<sup>635</sup> Paris MS, 13.33: f.60r (263).

acknowledges that through Christ evil is overcome and the final eschatological consequence of evil is made impotent. Christ is victorious over evil.<sup>636</sup> Her theology does not allude to the separation of sinners from God in the last judgement, but proposes the transformation of sin –understood as resistance to love- and suffering into the love of God already during this life and continuously throughout eternity, while in a final deed all shall be made well.<sup>637</sup>

Julian discerns two meanings of the inheritance that pertains to God’s plan for human salvation. The first meaning is revealed in Christ, whereas the second remains concealed in God as a secret that will be revealed in the beatific vision.<sup>638</sup> According to Nowakowski, the revealed meaning in Christ secures that the elect Christians are saved by the mysteries of faith, whereas the concealed meaning hopefully alludes to the promise of salvation for all humanity.<sup>639</sup> Her argument does justice to the Christian theology that informs Julian’s understanding of salvation through Christ. However, it obscures the fact that Julian’s theology of salvation derives its foundation from humanity’s creation in the image of God and the incarnation of Christ, which creates a substantial unity between God and human nature. Julian’s theology makes no distinction between the elect and the non-elect of humanity, but emphasises the unity of all humanity in Christ and as God’s creation.

And he that generally lovyth all his evyn cri]ten for god · he lovyth alle that is ¶  
ffor in mankynd that ]hall be ]avyd is comprehendyd alle · that is to ]ey · alle  
that is made · and the maker of alle · ffor in man is god · And in god is alle ·  
And he that lovyth thus · he lovyth alle.<sup>640</sup>

According to Julian’s theology, the meaning of the revealed salvific mystery in Christ is his enduring compassion with human suffering and his longing to glorify humanity. Christ’s compassion and longing lasts as long as humanity is in need of sanctification and Christ awaits the inheritance of humanity.<sup>641</sup> The meaning of the concealed mystery of salvation is the promise of transfiguration of all

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<sup>636</sup> Paris MS, 5.13: f.27r (197).

<sup>637</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.54v-55r (252-3) and 13.32: ff.57r-58v (257-60).

<sup>638</sup> Paris MS, 13.30: ff.53-54r (250-1).

<sup>639</sup> Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 69, 74 and 79.

<sup>640</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.18v (178). See Paris MS, 13.30: f.54v (252).

<sup>641</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r-57r (253-7).

suffering and an understanding of the depth of God's love in the beatific vision.<sup>642</sup>

Another vnderſtandyng is this · that ther be many dedys evyll done in oure ſyght and ſo gret harmes take that it ſemyth to vs that it were vnpoſſible that evyr it ſhuld com<sup>e</sup> to a good end And vp on thys we loke ſorow and morne therefore · ſo that we can nott reſt vs in the blyſſedfulle beholding of god as we ſhuld do · ¶ And the cauſe is this · that the vſe of oure reſon is now ſo blynde ſo lowe and ſo ſymple that we can nott know the hygh marvelous wysdom · the myght and the goodnes of the blyſſedfull trynity.<sup>643</sup>

Both revealed and concealed meaning of the salvific inheritance secure the deliverance of all humanity, including those who have committed evil deeds.<sup>644</sup>

God's judgement regarding human salvation is christocentric: the incarnation of Christ communicates that the love of God for humanity equals God's love for the Son.<sup>645</sup> God's creatorship designs universal salvation into the trinitarian nature of humanity and secures it through the incarnation of Christ. God's design of the creation secures that none of God's creation will perish.

I ſaw that oure kynde is in god hoole in which he makyth dyverſytes flowyng oute of hym · to werke his wylle whoſe kynde kepyth and mercy and grace reſtoryth and fulfyllyth. ¶ And of theysſe none ſhalle be peryſſchyd · for oure kynde which is the hyer party is knytte to god in þ<sup>e</sup> makyng · and god is knytt to oure kynde which is the lower party in oure fleſſch takyng.<sup>646</sup>

Julian is faithful to a christocentric soteriology that sustains the sanctification of humanity, as it will be accomplished in and through Christ. Julian theologises within the Christian belief, but her theology has implications for the salvation of all humanity, because of the universal implication of Christ's incarnation in binding human nature to God. The passion of Christ reveals a spiritual thirst and longing that exists in God from eternity and contributes to the glorification of

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<sup>642</sup> Paris MS, 13.32: ff.57v-59r (258-61).

<sup>643</sup> Paris MS, 13.32: f.57v (258).

<sup>644</sup> Paris MS, 13.36: f.65v (274).

<sup>645</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: ff.99v-100r (342-3) and ff.102r-v (347-8).

<sup>646</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: f.121r (385).

Christ when all humanity is fully glorified.<sup>647</sup> Christ wants to make humanity heir of his bliss: “And the cause why · that he suffereth · is for the wille of his goodnes make vs the eyes w<sup>t</sup> hym in his blyffe.”<sup>648</sup> Christ is perfectly joined with human nature and so human nature will perfectly share in the resurrection of Christ.

Julian’s eschatology is coloured by the optimism that all humanity shall be saved. She argues for the reconstitution of the wholeness and goodness of creation through Christ and a final deed performed by God. Her impressions that “all shall be well” and “all souls shall be saved” resemble the theology of universal salvation.

Gregory of Nyssa also speaks of the restoration of all things; the doctrine of *apocatastasis* to employ the Greek term. And here we have to face the fact that Julian’s way of contrasting the reality of judgement as taught in the Gospels and the Church’s tradition, with the more hidden promise that in the end all shall be well, is much more typical of eastern Christianity than it is of western. Both sides of the Christian world reject any kind of teaching which implies an automatic universalism. That kind of view takes seriously neither the fact of evil, nor the nature of human freedom. But the hope and prayer that all should be saved is more firmly anchored in the eastern tradition than in the west.<sup>649</sup>

Origen is the founder of the idea of universal salvation. He is strikingly original amidst the Christian theologians with his doctrine of the final restoration or return of all things to their original blessed state. His doctrine of *apocatastasis* advocates Christ’s restoration of the creation into its original state of blessedness in the final stages of its evolution. The restoration involves a prolonged period of purification that will extinguish all evil.<sup>650</sup> The Council of Constantinople (543) condemned the doctrine, because of resistance against Origen’s repudiation of the eternity of hell and a strong attack against the idea that the devil will be saved. However, it is put forward that the orthodoxy of the doctrine of *apocatastasis*

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<sup>647</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r-56v (253-6).

<sup>648</sup> Paris MS, 8.21: f.41v (226).

<sup>649</sup> Arthur M. Allchin, “Julian of Norwich and the Continuity of Tradition,” in *Julian, Woman of Our Day*, ed. Robert Llewelyn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 31-2.

<sup>650</sup> Gerhard Podskalsky, “Eschatologie. B. Ostkirche/ byzantinischer Bereich,” in Nikolaus Wichi, Bernard McGinn and Gerhard Podskalsky, “Eschatologie.” *LM* 4 (1989), 9.

consists of the doctrines of Christ's victory over evil and the definitive salvation of creation through Christ who establishes that God will be all in all.<sup>651</sup> Furthermore, the belief of salvation for all humankind informs the prayer of compassion in the Eastern Church.

The Church has condemned the Origenist belief in the certainty of universal salvation, since that would make salvation automatic, indeed compulsory. But it has absorbed the hope which the teaching contains and expressed it in a highly spiritual form as a prayer of universal compassion that all might be saved.<sup>652</sup>

Joseph Wilson Trigg proposes that Origen's doctrine forms a coherent answer to theodicy.<sup>653</sup> According to his study, the principles underlying Origen's doctrine of *apocatastasis* are God's providence and the human free will. Origen understands the goodness of the created world, while accepting that its imperfections are a part of God's providence.<sup>654</sup>

God leaves souls free but in the creation of the material world sets conditions for them which will ultimately lead them to return to God willingly. (...) All the seeming imperfections of the world (...) are the means whereby God, as a loving Father, coaxes children home.<sup>655</sup>

Origen's doctrine of *apocatastasis* places great trust in the divine providence. Trigg concludes that providence is inclusive of corrective punishment.

It is a fundamental principle of his thought that all punishments, in this world and succeeding ones, are remedial; they belong to God's providential plan for bringing all erring rational creatures back to God.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> Gallot, "Eschatologie," *DSp* 4 (1960), 1046.

<sup>652</sup> Olivier Clément, *On Human Being: A Spiritual Anthropology* (London: New City, 2000), 19.

<sup>653</sup> Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983; reprint, London: SCM Press, 1985), 111. According to Wilson Trigg, Origen proposes a most satisfactory solution to the theodicy that has ever been suggested. He evaluates Origen's solution as a far better exemplification of the "Irenaean" theodicy as presented by John Hick than that expounded by Irenaeus himself.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-20.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-1.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

He interprets Origen's theology on the providence of God as God's perspective in which human judgement falls short. "If we can see no correlation between the character of given individuals and their earthly happiness, that is because we cannot view the world and human existence in it from God's perspective."<sup>657</sup> Suffering is a punishment from God in order to effect contrition, which God performs according to God's own timing.

Origen contemplates on the universal salvation of humankind, while considering how people with a hardened heart against the will of God can come in touch with contrition and receive the eternal vision of God. He theologises that God works mercifully in those who have turned to wickedness by allowing them to draw the final consequences of their evil behaviour before they come to contrition. God thus allows the wicked persons to pursue evil until they see the ultimate consequences of their behaviour. The final contrition in the human heart for evil deeds may not be evoked during life on earth and therefore remains invisible to human eyes and judgement. God, however, is not limited to work the conversion of the heart within the span of human life on earth. God works eternally in human nature: "for God deals with souls not in view of the fifty years, so to speak, of our lives here, but in view of the endless world."<sup>658</sup> Similar thoughts about providence are also found with Origen's contemporary, the Jewish philosopher Plotinus (204-70), who argues that evil behaviour inflicts pain on one's own soul.<sup>659</sup>

Origen's doctrine of final salvation gives a reflection on the meaning of suffering from the viewpoint of faith. Redemptive suffering instigates an evolutionary progression which continues after death and allows a human to eventually repent for sins and return to the will of God. "The soul steadily improves after death and, no matter how sinful it may have been at the outset, eventually makes sufficient progress to be allowed to return to the eternal contemplation of God."<sup>660</sup> Jacques Le Goff remarks that Origen's insight into the redemptive value of suffering is not encountered until the fifteenth century, but

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>658</sup> Origen, *First Principles*, 3.1.13.

<sup>659</sup> Plotinus, "Providence: First and Second Treatise," in *Ennead*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), 3.2-3.3.

<sup>660</sup> Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, 55.

gives no reference to fifteenth century theological writings to support his claim.<sup>661</sup> Although his observation is interesting, it can be argued that it is influenced by a one-sided focus on scholastic writings and the exclusion of female interpretations of redemptive suffering.<sup>662</sup> Julian's theology values the redemptive suffering of Christ as the ultimate cornerstone for understanding the compassion of God with all human suffering. She values the meaning of human suffering in so far as it accompanies the discovery of a quality of compassionate love in God.

Despite Julian's acceptance of universal salvation, her theologising has different connotations in understanding eternity and the effectiveness of God's foreseeing wisdom in engendering contrition. As I have argued before, her theology offers an eschatological perspective on sin that is characterised by God's compassionate love in the transformation of suffering; the pain of sin is evoked through the encounter with unconditional love. The meaning of God's omnipotence in doing all that is done is asserted in the whole vision, namely, that the nature of God is love.<sup>663</sup> The deeds of God are rooted in the nature of God who is might, wisdom and love. Furthermore, the salvation of all humanity remains a mystery hidden in God that is not accessible for human understanding and will not be revealed until the 'end' of time.<sup>664</sup> The final perspective of the transformation of human affectivity is the transfiguration of pain into a profound knowledge of God's compassion with human suffering. In God's sight all wounds of suffering will become a mark of honour, because human nature will share in the compassionate love of God through former experiences of pain. With that knowledge, human nature will become impassible, that is, incapable of suffering: "and make vs vnchangeable as he is."<sup>665</sup> All suffering will have reached an end. God will be all in all.

#### **4 God's foreseeing wisdom**

Julian's emphasis on the unconditional love of God is groundbreaking within Christian theology and builds a strong foundation for the Christian mystical tradition, which has always expressed a fascination for the unfathomable depth of

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<sup>661</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>662</sup> See Jane F. Maynard, "Purgatory: Place or Process?: Women's Views on Purgatory in 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Century (Britain)," *Studies in Spirituality* 12 (2002): 105-25.

<sup>663</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: f.173v (490).

<sup>664</sup> Paris MS, 13.36: f.64 (271). See Paris MS, 13.31: ff.54v-55r (252-3) and 13.32: ff.57r-58v (257-60).

<sup>665</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: f.91v (326).

God's love. Her theology of God's foreseeing wisdom elaborates upon God's loving knowledge of the human nature and draws out the dynamic that humanity knows God in darkness, but in the beatific vision will come to know as it is known by God. Julian's theology of God's love is rooted in a vision that draws her beyond the limits of human understanding into the eternity of God in whom life is without beginning and without end. The *Showing of Love* can be properly called a prophetic awareness of the influence of the eternity of God's love in human life. Such prophetic awareness is not foreknowledge about specific details of future events, but the prospect of God's will with humanity.

John McKenzie regards prophecy as a mature awareness of the moral will of God.<sup>666</sup> He, furthermore, compares prophetic inspiration with mysticism and defines the nature of prophecy as a transforming and ineffable mystical experience of God.

It grants them a profound insight not only into divine reality but into the human scene. Thus the prophetic experience is such a mystical immediate experience of the reality and presence of God. The prophets disclose the nature and the character of the God so experienced, and they state the implications of the divine nature and character for human thought and action. But the conception and formulation of their utterance is their own.<sup>667</sup>

In prophetic or mystical inspiration, there is a clear awareness of an insight that cannot be accredited to the knowledge of a human person. A prophetic or mystical experience is communicated with a mystical language that effects a transformation in order to guide Christians into that mystery of God.

Julian expresses as precisely as possible through language and imagery the nature of God and at the same time she knows that God guides humanity to knowledge through an interiorisation of love.<sup>668</sup> Her theology is rooted in a spiritual insight into God's omnipotence, foreseeing wisdom and love, which are without beginning and without end. "I beheld w<sup>t</sup> avy]ement · ]eeyng and knowyng in that ]yght · that he doth alle that is done."<sup>669</sup> Her third vision -a "[hewyng of loue"- is a spiritual vision of God's foreseeing wisdom that shows God's loving

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<sup>666</sup> John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 697.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>668</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: ff.19r-v (179-80).

<sup>669</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: ff.22v-23r *bis* (188-9).

knowing as the mystagogical tool with which God acts as the spiritual guide of each human.<sup>670</sup> The influence and manifestation of God's foreseeing wisdom is beyond human comprehension and thus informs the apophatic aspect of spiritual guidance:

ffor tho thynges that be in the forſayd wyſdom of god · bene fro w<sup>o</sup>u<sup>t</sup> t  
begynnyng · which ryghtfully and worſhipfully · contynually he ledyth to the  
beſt ende as it comyth abouthte fallyng to vs · ſodeynly · our vnwetyng · and  
thus by our blyndnes and our vnforſy<sup>n</sup>te we ſay theſe thynges be by happes  
and aventure.<sup>671</sup>

God's foreseeing wisdom is an expression of God's governing of the creation in general as well as God's care for humanity in particular. Julian sees the general providence in the ordering of the creation and human nature towards its destiny in God.<sup>672</sup> Her understanding of particular providence, as it is available for each individual creature, is understood in terms of God's leading or guidance within the changeability of human life. God is thus the principle spiritual guide within human life, whilst the human attitude is characterized by an unknowing of the direction of the guidance. In general terms the direction is known as the union with the will of God, but within particular life-experiences the human person remains in ignorance and thus human unknowing becomes accompanied by a trusting in God's will.

Thomas Oden defines providence in terms of God's care that orders events within human life towards the good.

The Christian teaching of providence holds up before us the caring of God for all creatures and the ordering of the whole course of things for good beyond our knowing. The principal actor in the drama of providence is the triune God who, in wisdom, orders events towards those ends most appropriate to the gifts and competencies of each discrete creature.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23r *bis* (189).

<sup>671</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>672</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: ff.24r-v (191-2).

<sup>673</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God: Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins, 1987; reprint, New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 271.

Oden emphasises the importance of a right understanding of providence regarding questions that arise in pastoral care.

Many practical questions of care of souls amid sickness, personal crisis, poverty, and death hinge on how well one understands this pivotal issue of providence. From a right understanding of providence follows a more realistic assessment of human existence, sin and the meaning of suffering in relation to the goodness of God.<sup>674</sup>

Oden's definition is applicable to Julian's understanding that God leads everything that happens towards its best end, although in the human perspective it might not appear as such. Nevertheless, the interpretation of God's foreseeing wisdom needs careful attention as a superficial reading might conclude that God orders evil towards a good purpose. This interpretation is proposed by the church fathers, but it needs examination as to whether Julian favoured this specific view or adapted the view to her different understanding of the meaning of suffering and God's enduring love.

The existence of evil and the experience of suffering are fundamentally problematic for a Christian theology of God's creatorship, foreseeing wisdom and human salvation. Julian enquires God about this poignant issue that theologians never truly resolved.<sup>675</sup> She provides a theologically sound foundation towards an answer by acknowledging that God's foreseeing wisdom is grounded in enduring love. Her vision of foreseeing wisdom includes a revelation on the difference between human and God's judgement that is hermeneutically one of Julian's most difficult statements concerning evil:

and to grett ees bryngyng the ſowle that is turned fro the beholdyng of the blynd demyng of man · In to the feyer ſwette demyng of our lorde god, ¶ ffor man beholdyth ſome dedys wele Done · and ſome dedys evylle · and our lorde beholdyth them not ſo.<sup>676</sup>

Because the passage is written within the context of God's foreseeing wisdom

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<sup>674</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>675</sup> Paris MS, 13.27: ff.49v-50r (242-3) and 13.29: f.53r (249).

<sup>676</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.24r (191).

and omnipotence -the insight that God does all that is done- it seems to suggest that God is either indifferent to or responsible for evil, as God can see the good in evil. Nowakowski misunderstands God's foreseeing wisdom, as she suggests that Julian's theodicy proclaims that the reality of human evil becomes part of God's design for human life. "In the third showing she focuses on the divine foresight that renders evil part of a plan for good."<sup>677</sup> Clark similarly misinterprets her vision: "our human blindness prevents us from seeing the whole pattern of God's providence, so that some deeds seems to us so very evil that no good outcome is possible, whereas in God's purpose this is not so."<sup>678</sup> Both scholars view Julian's theology on foreseeing wisdom within a particular type of theodicy. Hugh Rice argues that this model appeals to the fallibility of human reason. Suffering, also that caused by evil, is part of God's purpose.

One sort of response to the problem of evil is to plead ignorance; or at least the fallibility of human reason. (...) One might point to our possible ignorance of what is good and what is evil. (...) Another form of the response might emphasize our ignorance of God's purposes.<sup>679</sup>

It is my contention that the interpretation of God seeing good in evil fails to appreciate the value of God's suffering of evil: "ffor alle that is good oure lord doyth · And þ<sup>t</sup> is evylle oure lord Jufferyth."<sup>680</sup> Nor does it take into consideration that Julian distinguishes between the deeds of God and the deeds of humankind: "for in thys tyme the working of creatures was nott Jhewde but of our lord god in the creatures · for he is in the myd poynt of all thynges · and all he doth."<sup>681</sup> It also fails to understand the profoundly apophatic character of the vision, as sin is not seen, which leads Julian to the conclusion that God is not responsible for sin. "And I was Jfewer that he doth no Jynne."<sup>682</sup> The apophatic quality of the vision, I have argued before, signifies that the distinction between God's and human judgement draws out the difference in the quality of love within God, which is beyond the natural human conditional love that is rooted in the love for the good

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<sup>677</sup> Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 72.

<sup>678</sup> John Clark, "Fiducia in Julian of Norwich, II," *Downside Review* 99 (1981): 215-6.

<sup>679</sup> Hugh Rice, *God and Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 91.

<sup>680</sup> Paris MS, 13.35: ff.62v-63r (268-9).

<sup>681</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23v *bis* (190).

<sup>682</sup> *Ibidem*.

and anger towards evil. The significance of her argument is not that God sees the good in evil, but rather that God beholds humanity with an unconditional love that evokes a change in the human response to God.

Julian warns against a misunderstanding of her optimistic theology that all shall be well and God governs all. The misunderstanding is that her theology excuses persisting attitudes of hurtful or evil conduct.<sup>683</sup> For this reason, she is cautious in theologising upon the salvation of all humanity and rather states it in terms of an apophatic knowing that accompanies a trusting in God as well as it being the consequence of a Christian love. When she asks God about reprobates, she is told not to be anxious and leave their salvation into God's hands.<sup>684</sup> Her caution is appropriate, exactly because she does not theologise that good comes out of evil. Although her theology of God's foreseeing wisdom demonstrates generally God's working within all creatures, she does not have a particular answer to the question of God's providence for those who persist in sinful behaviour. Rather, her theology holds that the human is created with responsiveness to God's love that will be guided towards its destination through the encounter with love. Julian does not receive an insight into how the human responsiveness to God becomes manifest in each individual. The answer needs to be generally interpreted within the light of God's enduring love.

Another understanding of theodicy argues that personal suffering increases compassion.<sup>685</sup> This understanding is more appropriate for understanding Julian's theology, but also cannot be generalised as the essence of her vision of divine providence. Julian's hope that all shall be well and all humanity shall be saved is profoundly optimistic, but does not exclude awareness of the reality of human suffering. In her profession as a spiritual guide, she will have been aware that the experience of evil or suffering is neither necessarily nor easily distilled into a learning process that evokes a change of heart towards the good or matures the ability of compassion. An example that shows the importance of being humble in judgement regarding the divine providence is given by Julian's pastoral concern about someone who she loves. She asks God whether this person will continue in good living. No answer is given to her that satisfies her concern for this person, although she is encouraged to be trustful of God's working and to live with

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<sup>683</sup> Paris MS, 13.40: f.72r (287).

<sup>684</sup> Paris MS, 13.36: f.65v (274).

<sup>685</sup> Rice, *God and Goodness*, 107-9. See John Hick, "Soul-Making Theodicy," in *God and the Problem of Evil*, ed. William L. Rowe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 265-81.

equanimity.<sup>686</sup> It reveals a further aspect of apophatic knowing that occurs within the vision, as the working of God's foreseeing wisdom in each individual life remains a mystery hidden in God that will only be revealed at the end of time. The meaning of the anecdote lies in the acceptance of life as it is and the trust that God shall make all things well hinges on an act of deep faith. She integrates the paradoxical relationship between the experience of human pain and her vision of God's unconditional love into a mystagogical theology that guides her fellow Christians into a trusting in God. Julian's writing on God's foreseeing wisdom cannot be understood otherwise than through the transparency of the personal life-story for the working of God.

It is my opinion that Julian's theology of God's foreseeing wisdom is properly understood within her theology of the responsiveness of human nature to the unconditional love of God. Clark's accurate interpretation of Julian's theology acknowledges that she does not discuss how (or that) suffering and evil are part of the pattern of God's providence, and thus confutes his previous statement that is quoted above.

She does not set out to discuss *how* God's timeless foreknowledge and predestination are to be reconciled with the contingency of the world and the liberty of human choices made in time, but she shares the common assumption that God's purpose is to elicit in us a freely given response to love.<sup>687</sup>

Julian's theology of God's foreseeing wisdom bears a universal character as it is grounded in God's indwelling in the human nature with a trinitarian love. The triune God forms the foundation of a mystagogy in which the steadfastness of God's love opens the perspective of growth into God's endless love. The foreseeing wisdom of God guides humanity to its predestined destination in God and accompanies the human into the depth of loving and knowing God.

And therefore the bleſſed trynyte is evyr fulle plejyd in alle his workes · And all this ſhewyd he full bleſſedly · meanyng thus · ¶ See I am god. See I am in all thyngs · See I do all thyng · See I nevyr lefte my handes of my workes · ne

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<sup>686</sup> Paris MS, 13.35: ff.62r-v (267-8).

<sup>687</sup> Clark, "Predestination in Christ," 80.

nevyr þhalles w'out ende See I lede all thyng to the end · þ<sup>t</sup> I ordeyne it to · fro  
w'out ~~end~~ begynnyng by the þame myght wiſdom and loue that I made it with ·  
how þhoulde any thyng be a myſſe · Thus myghtly wyſely and louyngly was the  
þowle examynyd in this viſion · ¶ Than þaw I verely that my behovyth nedys to  
aſſent w<sup>t</sup> great reverence and Joy in god.<sup>688</sup>

Julian's theology of God's foreseeing wisdom derives its foundation from the awareness of the indwelling of the Trinity in the creation. The outflowing love of the Trinity as might, wisdom and love inspires in the human a mystical transformation that leads to salvation. Her understanding of the creation of human nature implies the certainty of its divination by participating in the inter-trinitarian movement of love. The might of God creates the soul; the wisdom of Christ draws human suffering into the compassionate love of God; the love of the Holy Spirit transforms human nature into eternal bliss. In the act of creating, God cannot do otherwise than know wisely and deeply love humanity. The profundity of the might, love and wisdom of God, which is discerning the human nature in a loving, guiding and transforming way, is unfathomable. God examines the human in a loving manner and guides the human through life. God's wise discernment of the human nature is accompanied with love and gives a profound sense of joy. The examination of the human nature evokes certainty about the intimacy of God's love and the human vocation to share in God's love. God knows that the human desire is designed towards its fulfilment.

It is my contention that Julian's theology of God's foreseeing wisdom accords with the church fathers' understanding of providence in terms of responsiveness to God's loving beholding of humanity. Her teaching resembles the distinction made by the church fathers between the immanent and the economic Trinity, that is, the mutually loving beholding within the Trinity and the lived experience of that incomprehensible love in human life. The Eastern fathers agreed that the uncreated nature of the Trinity is incomprehensible, but that the divine deeds of creation and divine providence can be known.<sup>689</sup> The human can come to know the activity of God in the creation. "While we affirm that we know our God in his energies, we scarcely promise that he may be approached in his very essence. For

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<sup>688</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: ff.24v-25r (192-3).

<sup>689</sup> See Lossky, *Vision of God*, 9-20.

although his energies descend to us, his essence remains inaccessible.”<sup>690</sup> Their theology expresses that God’s love descends to human nature in its weakness and that the human mind and affectivity are drawn into the love of the Holy Spirit. Basil of Caesarea (c.330-79) ascertains that the Holy Spirit guides humanity to a loving knowledge and intimacy with God, which is experienced as a purification and deification of the human nature. “Through the Holy Spirit, the ascent of the emotions, the deification of the weak, the fulfilment of that which is in progress is accomplished.”<sup>691</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa includes providence in the deeds of the triune God for the fulfilment of human life. “But whatever occurs, whether in reference to God’s providence for us or to the government and constitution of the universe, occurs through the three Persons.”<sup>692</sup> He expresses that the *hypostasis* of the Trinity is grounded in the nature of God’s beholding and is extended to a loving knowing of humanity.

His nature cannot be named and is ineffable. (...) We perceive, then, the varied operations of the transcendent power, and fit our way of speaking of him to each of the operations known to us. Now one of these is the power of viewing and seeing, or, one might say, of beholding. By it God surveys all things and oversees them all. He discerns our thoughts, and by his power of beholding penetrates even what is invisible. From this we suppose that “Godhead” (*theotes*) is derived from “beholding” (*thea*), and that by general custom and the teaching of the Scriptures, he who is our beholder (*theates*) is called God (*theos*). (...) For Scripture attributes sight equally to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>693</sup>

Chrysostom hears God’s providence as a voice that is audible to all people in the creation as it proclaims evidence of God’s care.

It reveals not only his providence but also his abundant love for us; for he

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<sup>690</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Letter to Amphilocheus, Bishop of Iconium*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, NPNF 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 8, 23.1.

<sup>691</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *On the Spirit*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, NPNF 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 8, 9.23.

<sup>692</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *An Answer to Ablavius: That We Should Not Think of Saying There Are Three Gods*, trans. Cyril C. Richardson, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 262.

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*, 259-60.

does not merely take thought for us, but is also our lover, and he loves us boundlessly with an inconceivable love. It is a love that knows no emotion, but is most warm and intense, noble, insoluble, unquenchable.<sup>694</sup>

Chrysostom teaches that the divine providence orders the creation in such a way that it not only nurtures and sustains the body, but also promotes the love of wisdom and a journey towards knowledge of God.<sup>695</sup>

Gregory and Chrysostom's understanding of God's loving beholding touch the core of Julian's theology regarding God's foreseeing wisdom in the salvation of humanity. The nature of God is love, and thus God's beholding and discerning of humanity is embedded in love. "Lo how I loue thee."<sup>696</sup> The vision of God's lovingly beholding consists of a "[h]ewyng of loue" together with a "[h]ewyng of compaffion."<sup>697</sup> Both aspects of love and compassion enlighten her understanding of the revealed mystery of Christ for the salvation of humanity. The countenance of Christ and his spiritual thirst are a "[h]ewyng of compaffion" and express that Christ beholds both the pain and the longing in each human.<sup>698</sup> The theology of God's lovingly beholding of humanity expresses an understanding of foreseeing wisdom in terms of healing the wounds of suffering.

Not without reason does her theology of God's foreseeing wisdom begin after an exploration of the human seeking for the beholding of God and her assertion that both seeking and beholding are initiated by God's loving touch.<sup>699</sup> Julian's mystagogical practice focuses on the responsiveness to God's love and thus her writing is specifically addressed to those people who want to deepen their love for God. God's closeness to human emotions is the ground of beseeching, that is, the searching and longing for God. The Christian explores the desire for a reciprocal relationship with God, through the seeking and beseeching to have God as well as the finding and trusting in God. The lived experience of God's foreseeing wisdom resonates uniquely in each person through the fundamental awareness of being guided by God. That guidance can manifest itself in experiences of deep darkness or in bliss. Julian describes both experiences of utter despair and ultimate

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<sup>694</sup> Quoted in James Walsh and Patrick Gerard Walsh, *Divine Providence and Human Suffering* (Wilmington and Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1985), 49. See Chrysostom, *On Providence*, 5.2.

<sup>695</sup> Walsh and Walsh, *Divine Providence*, 51.

<sup>696</sup> Paris MS, 10.24: ff.46v-47r (236-7).

<sup>697</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: f.23r *bis* (189) and 13.31: ff.56v-57r (256-7).

<sup>698</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r-56v (253-6) and 16.71: ff.149v-152v (442-8).

<sup>699</sup> Paris MS, 2.10: ff.23r-v (187-8).

blessedness.<sup>700</sup> Despair is an experience of abandonment by God in losing sight of God's love, while blessedness is a profound experience of being touched by God's love. God is present in both experiences. God knows both pain and happiness. In prayer it is possible to experience dryness and a waiting for God with a sure trust that God will give and fulfil the deepest longings that are expressed in prayer: God inspires those deepest longings.<sup>701</sup> Within all human life-experiences it is God who guides human self-awareness into a transparency for the working of God. God guides the human self-awareness into a knowing of God and into an awareness of the incomprehensible love for the creation that is without beginning and without end.

God's foreseeing wisdom is a very intimate knowing of the human, which secures God's guidance of humanity toward the destination in God's love.<sup>702</sup> God knows the human most intimately, because it is God's creation. The belief in the unsearchable wisdom of God, expressed by Paul, forms the foundation of trusting in God's loving care and compassion.<sup>703</sup> God beholds in love. God's judgement is neither blaming nor punishing, but a discernment of humanity's deepest longings. God's judgement is a discernment of the interior life of human emotions and motivations. It is like an examining of the foundations upon which human life is built in order that life can be grounded in a knowing of God. God considers and discerns the whole and complex inner life of humanity with the view to transforming the inner life into love. God's judgement is an essential part of grace, as it gives a trusting in the love of God with a knowing that one is most deeply known by God.

The implication of God's loving beholding of humanity for Julian's theology means that sin is seen as the resistance in longing for God, whereas God's loving judgement discerns and releases humanity's longing.<sup>704</sup> Like Augustine, Julian touches on the mystery of God's discerning judgement within the human conscience. Augustine expresses his discovery that God is not a judge outside him, but the creator God and the loving Trinity within him.

But where in my conscience, Lord, do you dwell? Where in it do you make

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<sup>700</sup> Paris MS, 7.15: ff.30v-32r (204-7).

<sup>701</sup> Paris MS, 14.41: f.73v (290).

<sup>702</sup> Paris MS, 3.11: ff.23v-25r (188-93).

<sup>703</sup> Romans, 11.33-5.

<sup>704</sup> See Paris MS, 13.27: f.49v (242).

your home? What resting-place have you made for yourself? (...) Just as you are not a bodily image nor the feeling of a living person such as we experience when glad or sad, or when we desire, fear, remember, forget and anything of that kind, so also you are not the mind itself. For you are the Lord God of the mind.<sup>705</sup>

God is distinct from the psychology and emotions of human judgement, but the human mind itself is anchored in God who is the foundation upon which human affectivity rests. God's guiding discernment lies within the conscience.

Julian's mystagogy is formulated from the awareness that the affectivity of human nature is held safe within the unconditional love of God, which engenders an awareness of God's protection:

ffor thowe we fele in vs wrath · debate · and Jtryfe · yett we be all mercyfully beclofyd in the myldehed of god · and in his mekehed in his benyngnite · and in his bux[omne]ffe.<sup>706</sup>

This passage on humanity's resistance to love makes it clear that suffering is deeply embedded in the weakness of human nature and is allowed by God to be woven into the texture of human life. The innate orientation of human nature towards the love of God can be discovered in the release of resistant feelings like blame and anger. The experience of pain, unrest, anger, blame and not being in peace will arise in one's conscience and become transformed through discernment with love that is rooted in God's love: "for he that waJtyth and dyJtroyeth oure wrath and makyth vs meke and mylde · (...) ffor I Jaw full truly that where oure lorde aperyth pees is takyn and wrath hath no Jtede."<sup>707</sup> God's compassion works with human suffering in order to guide humanity into a deepened awareness of God's love for humanity. The transformation of human affectivity is part of God's foreseeing wisdom, whereby the Holy Spirit is the spiritual director of the human.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.24.35.

<sup>706</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: f.90r (323). See Paris MS, 2.10: ff.20r-v (181-2) and 13.37: f.67r (277).

<sup>707</sup> Paris MS, 14.49: f.89v (322).

<sup>708</sup> See Paris MS, 14.61: ff.130v-131r (404-5).

But oure good lorde the holy goſt which is endleſſe lyfe. Dwellyng in oure ſoule full truly kepyth vs. and werketh ther in a pees. and bryngyth it to ees by grace. and makyth it buxom. and accordyth it to god. and this is the mercy and the wey. that oure good lord continually ledyth vs in. as long as we be in this lyfe. which is chaungeable. (...) ffor the ground of mercy is in loue. And the werkyng of mercy is oure kepyng in loue. And this was ſhewed in ſuch a manner that I culde not perceyve of the p~~ro~~perte of mercy other wyſe. but as it were all loue in loue.<sup>709</sup>

God's mystagogical guidance is performed with love for the weakness and changeability of human nature. That love is mixed with compassion for human vulnerability and with grace that transforms the pain of resisting love and brings it in conformity with the will of God. Spiritual direction might make the experience of pain transparent to a longing for mutuality in love. The love of God is itself dynamic as it awakens in the human a longing to be loved by God and to become like in love with God.

William Johnston considers affective transformation as a fundamental aspect of the resurrection of human life through which God will be all in all. "Let us remember that it is not just the spirit that is divinized through the grace of Christ but also the body and the senses. And all this is a preparation for that resurrection of which the Risen Christ is the model and exemplar."<sup>710</sup> Julian's mystagogy touches on the deep paradox of suffering in the light of its healing. The paradox is revealed in Christ, whose wounds are wounds of love. Christ's incarnation sanctifies the human body together with mind, will and emotions; Christ's passion and resurrection are the transfiguration of suffering into the eternal bliss of God. Julian's theology formulates God's passibility as a suffering with and a longing for humanity's impassibility, as the glorification of God relies on the sanctification of humanity's vulnerability:

for as long as he was paſſyble he ſufferde for vs. and ſorowde for vs. And now he is vppe reſyn and no more paſſybylle yett he ſufferyth w<sup>t</sup> vs. (...) Thus

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<sup>709</sup> Paris MS, 14.48: f.87v (318).

<sup>710</sup> William Johnston, *The Mirror Mind: Spirituality and Transformation* (London: Collins, 1981), 119.

is god oure stedfast ground and shall be oure full blyffe and make vs vnchangeable as he is when we be ther.<sup>711</sup>

The wound of suffering becomes a wound of knowledge if it is accompanied by the mystical dictum that love itself is knowledge. Knowing is a trusting in the compassionate love of God, who lovingly guides humanity into a seeing of the mysteries of faith in the beatific vision. In the beatific vision the whole of human emotions, senses and faculties are transfigured into a spiritual feeling, seeing and knowing of God.<sup>712</sup>

And thus shall we w<sup>t</sup> his swete grace in oure owne meke continuall prayer come in to hym now in this lyfe by many prevy touchynges of swete gostly syghtes and felynges mesuryd to vs as oure sympylhed may bere it. ¶ And this is wrought and shall be by the grace of the holy gost. So long tyll we shall dye in longyng for loue. And than shall we alle come in to oure lorde oure selfe clerely knowyng. And god fulsomly hauyng. ¶ And we endlesly be alle hyd in god verely seyeng and fulsomly felyng and hym gostely heryng. And hym delectably smellyng And hym shall swetly swelwyng. And ther shall we se god face to face homely and fulsomly. The creature that is made shall see and endlesly beholde god which is the maker.<sup>713</sup>

The beatific vision is the possession of God in an endless knowing, longing and beholding. Self-knowledge is reciprocated with knowledge of God.

## Conclusion

Julian's theology of salvation emphasises the human potential for deification. Her understanding of the human will differs from Augustine and reflects the Eastern tradition, which regards human freedom as the innate image of God in men and women. Her theology of the incarnation of Christ supports her understanding of

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<sup>711</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40r (223) and 14.49: f.91v (326).

<sup>712</sup> See Karl Rahner, "The 'Spiritual Senses' according to Origen" and "The Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses in the Middle Ages," in vol. 12 of *Theological Investigations*, 81-103 and 104-34.

<sup>713</sup> Paris MS, 14.43: ff.80r-v (303-4).

the human will as *capax dei* and oriented towards the love of God. She develops an interpretation of sin as nothing that is in accordance with the orthodox theology of God as the creator and sin as an absence of the good, but which she further develops within the viewpoint that sin can only be known through pain. The significance of her theology of sin lies in its appreciation of suffering as a directive force in the search for God. She distinguishes between pain caused through human action and that caused by the purifying effect of God's love. Her emphasis on God's love as the cause of purification surpasses the understanding of the church fathers' view on God's punishment as the cause of suffering. Julian's theology of God's compassionate love is assisted by an apophatic knowledge in which the wrath of God is not seen. This leads her to formulate a theology of God's enduring love that secures the salvation of all humanity. Her theology surpasses the idea of election and predestination that is dominant in the church's tradition through the influence of Augustine, and accepts an understanding of universal salvation that is also proposed by Origen and is marginalized within the Christian tradition. Julian continues a tradition within Christian theology that regards divine providence as a creative force that guides human life towards its destiny in God. Her understanding of God's foreseeing wisdom draws its strength from her interpretation that sin can only be known through pain. God continuously works within the human nature to transform its weakness and resistance to the love of God and brings it into accordance with God's love. The uniqueness of Julian's theology lies in her understanding of salvation as a reciprocal relationship with God, because the human sanctification also increases the glorification of Christ. So far, my thesis has examined Julian's theology regarding God's creatorship of the human potential for sanctification; God's compassion with human suffering; and God's enduring love as the destiny of human salvation. The next chapter will concentrate on the implications of her theology for the art of spiritual guidance and emphasise God's guidance in human life.

## Chapter 6: God's Guidance

A study of the mystagogical implications of Julian's theology contributes to an appreciation of the pastoral aspect of the *Showing of Love* that is relevant for the study of spiritual direction in the twenty-first century. Mystagogy is the guidance into the mystery of God that makes Christians, in the context of their biographical experiences, attentive to the deifying indwelling of God and creates an openness to participate in the mysteries of faith, with the expectation to be changed by them. This chapter explores trends in the contemporary practice of spiritual direction with the intention of placing Julian's mystagogy within a theological discourse that seeks to elucidate Christian doctrine with personal experience. Firstly, the chapter studies Julian's spiritual direction into a loving knowing of God as a relevant paradigm for the modern revaluation of theology in terms of accessing spiritual experience. Secondly, it explores the personal aspect of relationship in Julian's spiritual accompaniment, demonstrating her counsel to fellow Christians as guidance into an attitude of self-acceptance. Thirdly, it explores how her theology of the mysteries of faith, as revealed in Christ, is appropriated in a Christian attitude regarding suffering. Fourthly, it examines the significance of Julian's understanding of God's creatorship and human nature for a positive reception of kataphatic spiritual experiences.

### 1 Knowing in love

Christianity has a long tradition of engaging with the Old and New Testament; not only in the establishment of orthodox Christian truth, but also as a way of deepening the Christian spiritual life. A classic example is the marvellous tradition of exegetical and spiritual interpretations of the Song of Songs, exploring the loving relationship between God and human.<sup>714</sup> Apart from doctrinal and exegetical texts, the Christian tradition contains a wealth of spiritual and pastoral treatises wherein an author expounds his or her personal experiences of God's

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<sup>714</sup> See Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); Bernard McGinn, "The Language of Love in Christian and Jewish Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 202-35; Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995).

love in order to offer guidance to fellow monks and nuns for the exploration and deepening of their own relationship with God. For example, the *Golden Letter* of William of Saint-Thierry (c.1085-1148) is a classic work for the spiritual direction of the Cistercian monks.<sup>715</sup> Similarly, the *Seven Manners of Love*, written by Beatrice of Nazareth (1200-68), is intended to initiate her fellow nuns into the transforming dynamics of divine love.<sup>716</sup>

The relationship between theology and spirituality is focussed on that of the Christian to the reality of God in Christ. George Every argues that theology was understood originally as guidance towards the contemplative vision (*theoria*) by sensitivity to the spiritual and mystical aspects of the biblical teaching, through which a Christian becomes receptive to the mystery of God revealed in Christ. The monastic view on the relationship between theology and spirituality is described by Every as a training in theology which leads to an engagement with the mystery of God.

The training of monks and nuns both in the East and in the West, was primarily intended to prepare them for progress through *theologia* to *theoria*, to grow in the knowledge of God and of understanding the meaning of life in Christ (...) This discipline is conceived to be a way to vision, to what the Greeks called *theoria*. (...) Theology in this sense is more than spiritual or mystical insight, although it is impossible without it. It implies a capacity to lead others along the way to it.<sup>717</sup>

The relationship between knowledge and love formed a fundamental part of the spiritual writings in the Christian tradition, but became increasingly problematic in the twelfth century through the emergence of theology as a scholastic and university based study.<sup>718</sup> The development of cathedral schools in Western Christianity during the late Middle Ages involved a loss of the mystical

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<sup>715</sup> Saint Thierry, *Golden Epistle*. See Hein Blommestijn, "Liberating Virtue: Willem of St. Thierry," *Studies in Spirituality* 7 (1997): 67-78.

<sup>716</sup> Jos Huls, "Seuen Maniren van Minnen" van Beatrijs van Nazareth: *Het mystieke proces en mystagogische implicaties* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

<sup>717</sup> George Every, "The Decay of Monastic Vision," *Theoria to Theory* vol.1. no. 1 (1966), 20 and 24.

<sup>718</sup> See Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 233-86; Hein Blommestijn, "Rede en ervaring," 56-64; Waaijman, "Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality," 5-57; Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 33-64; Elizabeth Liebert, "The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 1 (2002): 30-49.

sense in Scripture reading, because of a shift to clerical authority and academic interpretation of the spiritual heritage of Christianity. Every demonstrates how the scholastic approach to theology overruled the contemplative tradition of loving knowledge.

It is my contention that concern for this kind of theology has been displaced in Western Christianity by an unbalanced preoccupation with the study of authorities, whether these are original sources or solemn pronouncements by the *magisterium* of the Church on the interpretation of the Christian revelation, and that this has been disastrous.<sup>719</sup>

The contemporary church is faced with a crisis in explaining the experiential meaning of the Christian doctrines, because of an emphasis on the rational content of those doctrines without reference to a knowing which a progressive union with the love of God engenders. Growth in knowledge of God is inseparable from discovering the meaning of living in Christ. It cannot be accessed through an academic interpretation of doctrines, but needs to be lived through in order for the Christian faith to be made transparent within human experience. The emphasis on human experience as the focus of spiritual direction and the deepening of the Christian faith resurfaced during the twentieth century.<sup>720</sup> It has led Karl Rahner to instigate the necessity of religious experience: “the devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic,’ one who has ‘experienced’ something, or he will cease to be anything at all.”<sup>721</sup>

Spiritual direction sustains the relationship between theology and spirituality; between knowledge and love. Not only because the Christian is invited to relate one’s understanding of the Christian tradition with an inner motivation to grow in love for God and neighbour, but also because love itself constitutes a form of knowing God. Spiritual direction is concerned with the lived experience of God and interest in the interpretative dimension of theology for the human experience. Philip Sheldrake interprets spirituality as the expression of “the conscious human

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<sup>719</sup> Every, *Decay of Monastic Vision*, 20.

<sup>720</sup> See Waaijman, “Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality,” 37-9; Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 3-32; Lane, *Experience of God*, 7-11.

<sup>721</sup> Karl Rahner, “Christian Living Formerly and Today,” *Theological Investigations*, vol. 7 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971), 15.

response to God that is both personal and ecclesiastical.”<sup>722</sup> Spirituality is the experiential side of theology or the living out of theology. Sheldrake insists on the importance of Christian spirituality being rooted in a firm theological foundation.

The key doctrines formulated by the early Christian Church were those of God as Trinity and Jesus Christ as truly God and truly human. All human statements about God have practical implications; we live what we affirm. Ineffective or even destructive spiritualities inevitably reflect inadequate theologies of God. In that sense, the quality of spirituality is one test of the adequacy of the theology of God that lies behind it.<sup>723</sup>

Sheldrake counts Julian’s *Showing of Love* as “amongst the most theological of medieval mystical texts” and studies her trinitarian theology to underpin his thesis that theology and spirituality should be held together in a strong cohesion. He does not intend to provide a unifying theological mould for the development of spiritual practice, but acknowledges that spirituality introduces a way of knowing engendered by participation in love rather than rational enquiry.<sup>724</sup>

Oliver Davies acknowledges that the discovery of new ways of speaking about God and the reflection upon old ones are pivotal to the theological discipline.<sup>725</sup> As has been shown in the previous chapters, Julian’s theology reevaluates old images of God’s wrath and punishment in the light of God’s compassionate love. Her mystagogy finds its foundation in her communication of a doctrine of God, marginalized within the Christian tradition, but still rooted within God’s self-revelation. Davies demonstrates that the compassion of God is not merely a subjective experience of God but intimately bound in with God’s self-naming; “I am that I am, who sees you in your affliction” and in God’s Immanuel in the person of Christ as ‘God with us.’<sup>726</sup> Julian’s theology of God’s compassion and love enables her fellow Christians to understand a religious experience that might previously have gone unrecognized, due to unavailability of an appropriate theological framework. She formulates an anthropology that explains the innate

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<sup>722</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*, rev. ed. (London: SPCK, 1995; reprint, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 45.

<sup>723</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology*, 15.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-128.

<sup>725</sup> Davies, *Theology of Compassion*, 249.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

capacity of responding to God's loving compassion, which enfolds awareness that the totality of human life is integrated with spiritual experience. Following Davies's conclusion for a theology of compassion, it is unfeasible to deny the significance of communicating a doctrine capable of unlocking a profound self-understanding. Julian's emphasis that God's image in humanity longs to be perfected in likeness communicates to her fellow Christians "the further possibility of an embrace of the other, and the fulfilment of realization of the dialectical structure of consciousness through the kenotic dispossession of self for the sake of other."<sup>727</sup>

The profoundly theological character of Julian's mystagogy devalues Waaijman's assertion that mystagogy is not concerned with the transmission of any doctrinal content. "Mystagogy differs from doctrinal transmission of any kind whatever. In mystagogy no cognitive content is communicated; rather an experience that is already there is interpreted."<sup>728</sup> However, Waaijman's understanding of mystagogy in terms of the elucidation of human experience with the mystery of God is significant for its emphasis that ultimately God conducts spiritual direction. "It is the art of spiritual accompaniment to help a person to become free for the Unconditional, for the divine Reality as this Reality gradually reveals itself to the traveller."<sup>729</sup> The definition of mystagogy underlines the bearing of Julian's spiritual direction; which is, to disclose the innate awareness of being held safe in God's loving compassion together with attentiveness to God's guidance. Julian's mystagogy embraces the deepening of lived faith through the experience of God's love, as love itself reaches far deeper into the conscience than theological instruction. Language itself is insufficient to convey the depth of God's grace and needs accompaniment from God's ineffable self-revelation inscribing the depth of love within human life. "But I truſt in our lord god almightie that he ſhall of his godnes · and for iour loue make yow to take it more ghoſtely and more ſweetly then I can or may tell it."<sup>730</sup>

Julian's mystagogy into God's unconditional love is characterised by two fields of tension: doctrinal and descriptive. Her vision introduces a tension between the theology of God's judgement and a mystical experience of God's enduring love,

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<sup>727</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>728</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 870.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid., 887. See Philip Sheldrake, "St. Ignatius of Loyola and Spiritual Direction," in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavinia Byrne (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 111.

<sup>730</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.19v (180).

which causes such profound insight that language fails to convey the full impact of the experience of being loved by God.<sup>731</sup> As discussed in the previous chapters, the doctrinal tension becomes the foundation for developing a theological understanding regarding the creation of human nature in the image of God, God's compassion with human suffering, and God's enduring love in the sanctification of human nature. The tension regarding the ineffability of God's love initiates a process of *lectio divina*, which encourages the Christian to become engaged in a dialogue between the mysteries of faith as expressed in the treatise and lived spirituality. The dialogue includes the experience of human vulnerability and the awareness of being created in the image of God; the fear of God's wrath for sin and the experience of God's love for humanity; the reality of suffering and Christ's words that all shall be well.

The strength of Julian's mystagogy is her theological emphasis on God's foreseeing wisdom and love in the practice of spiritual direction. Roberta Bondi's exemplifies Julian's relevance for personal spiritual guidance with the capturing title: "A Conversation with Julian of Norwich on Religious Experience."<sup>732</sup> John Swanson's article, called "Guide for an Inexpert Mystic," describes how the *Showing of Love* instigates a process of interiorisation of God's love.<sup>733</sup> In Swanson's words, Julian writes with "space around it" and thus provides a place "for one's own thoughts and meditations."

It is presented, and one reads it, and then it begins its work; so that by the time one has finished, one realizes that *Revelations* has served only as a hint, an insight, and that most of the cognition and expansion comes from one's own building upon the basics.<sup>734</sup>

Swanson gives an experiential description of the process of *lectio divina* and the initial hint (*remex*) that is provided by a reading of the *Showing of Love*. And although the reading of the treatise will end, the inner process of tasting and digesting the meaning of the words is ongoing. Julian's mystagogy becomes apparent in the few answers she gives to the mystery of human life and the

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<sup>731</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: ff.19r -v (179-80) and 16.73: ff.152v-153r (448-9).

<sup>732</sup> Roberta Bondi, "A Conversation with Julian of Norwich on Spiritual Experience," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 1 (2002): 83-98.

<sup>733</sup> John Swanson, "Guide for the Inexpert Mystic," in *Julian, Woman of Our Day*, 75-88.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

mystery of pain, as it is understood in God's wisdom. Her silence is just as eloquent as her speaking, as it creates an emptiness that is necessary for a unique resonance in each human person and gives the opportunity for an examination of conscience and emotions in each person, making them more transparent to the mystery of God's transforming love. Because of the space that Julian creates, God takes over as spiritual director.

The study of the *Showing of Love* as a mystagogical treatise recommends the exploration of the practice of *lectio divina* as a guidance for the spiritual life of the Christian. The practice of *lectio divina* invites the Christian to enter into a prayerful rumination on the meaning of God's love. Bearing in mind the threefold form of Julian's visionary perception, the way in which her spiritual treatise functions as a mystagogical influence in the lives of her fellow Christians is determined by rumination on the images, words spoken by Christ, and spiritual insights. Julian narrates as effectively as possible what she perceives and does not perceive within her vision, thus encouraging her fellow Christians to ruminate on and engage with its insight in a prayerful turning to God. The spiritual reading of the treatise is a gradual appropriation of meditation on God's compassionate love, which, with continuous contemplation, evokes a change of heart towards conformity with God's love.

Julian's visionary beholding encapsulates her senses, spiritual understanding and affective knowing. She relates how her beholding encompasses a form of knowing, which transcends common experience of human life. Though the vision gives a heightened awareness of God, it still cannot satisfy her longing for the beatific vision. Her vision is in darkness and as in a mirror, while in the divine eschaton it will come to full fruition.

And me thought that the Jyght and the felyng was hye and plentyvous and gracious in regarde that oure comun felyng is in this lyfe · But ¶ett me thought it was but lowe and Jmalle in regard of the grett deJyer that the Joule hath to Je god.<sup>735</sup>

The visionary insight that pertains to a loving knowing is ineffable and can only be taught by God. Yet, Julian encourages her fellow Christians to seek for an

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<sup>735</sup> Paris MS, 14.47: f.86r (315).

eschatological insight into the Christian mysteries of faith that can begin on earth through a knowing in love.

God wylle we vnderſtande · Deſyeryng w<sup>t</sup> all oure hart and alle oure ſtrength to haue knowyng of them · evyr more and more · in to the tyme that we be fullyllyd · for fully to know them and clerely to ſe them · is not ells but endles Joy and blyſſe that we ſhall haue in hevyn · whych god wyll we begynne here In knowyng of his loue · ffor only by oure reſon we may nott profyte · but yf we haue evynly therw<sup>t</sup> mynde and loue.<sup>736</sup>

Julian teaches that God’s guidance occurs in the attentiveness to the human longing to see God. Her guidance is apophatic in so far that the human longing for God cannot reach its fulfilment until in the beatific vision. Her theology is therefore by necessity a mystagogy: God ultimately conducts guidance into the mystery of God. God guides the human into knowledge that transcends ordinary perception of human life and gives an affective understanding of God’s love. The knowledge of God is found within the human desire to see God face to face. Her mystagogy thus directs the Christian into awareness that God’s beholding of humanity in love initiates the human longing for God. God knows and loves the human most intimately.

Julian’s understanding of the church’s teaching depends on the mystagogical guidance by Christ and the Holy Spirit, together with God’s intention in what is shown to her about the beatific vision. “But in all thing I beleue as holy chyrch prechyth · and techyth · (...) And w<sup>t</sup> this intent and w<sup>t</sup> this meanyng I beheld the ſhewyng w<sup>t</sup> all my dyligence · ffor in all thys bleſſed ſhewyng I behelde it as in gods menyng.”<sup>737</sup> Her adherence to the church’s teaching is not unequivocal, as her vision has a critical bearing on the teaching of God’s wrath and eternal damnation that are not seen in God. She adheres to the doctrine of Christ’s two natures: fully divine and fully human; and Christ’s suffering of the passion for the salvation of humanity. Upon that doctrinal foundation she develops a soteriology and a theology of God’s high judgement regarding the substantial and unbreakable bond of love between God and humanity: “I loue the · and thou louyſt me · and oure

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<sup>736</sup> Paris MS, 14.56: ff.119v-120r (382-3).

<sup>737</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.19r (179). See Paris MS, 13.33: f.60r-v (263-4).

loue ſhall nevyr parte in two.”<sup>738</sup>

Julian builds her theology on a Christian foundation, whilst her mystagogy gives access to the Christian mysteries of faith through the experience of God’s self-communication. The compassionate love of God, as revealed in Christ, becomes the leading principle in the interpretation of Christian faith and the experience of salvation. Her mystagogy invites Christians to acknowledge Christ as the teacher and Christ as the church:

God ſhewde fulle grett pleſaunce that he hath in alle men and women that myghtly and wyſely take the prechyng and the techyng of holy chyrch · for he it is holy chyrche · ¶ he is the grounde · ¶ he is the ſubſtaunce · ¶ he is the techyng ¶ he is the ~~th~~ techer ¶ he is the ende · and he is the mede wherfore every kynde ſoule travelyth and thys is knowen and ſhall be knowen to ech ſoule to whych the holy goſt declaryth it. ¶ And I hope truly alle tho that ſeke thus they ſhalle ſpede for they ſeke god.<sup>739</sup>

Julian is a mystic who turns inward to discover that Christ and the Holy Spirit ultimately perform spiritual direction into the mystery of God’s love and the Christian faith.<sup>740</sup> Julian speaks of the intimate engagement of Christ in the guidance of the human person towards spiritual growth and an understanding of the Christian mysteries of faith. Christ tenderly guides the human into a peaceful conscience and enkindles understanding of the sanctifying mystery that is enclosed in the substantial unity between Christ’s divine and human natures.

Ande in oure goſtly forth bryngyng he vſyth more tenderneſſe in kepyng · w<sup>t</sup>out ony *compariſon* · (...) he kyndelyth oure vnderſtondyng · he prepareth oure weyes he eſyth oure conſciens · he confortyth oure ſoule · he lyghteth oure harte · and gevyth vs in party knowyng and louyng in his blesſydfull godhede w<sup>t</sup> gracyous mynde in his ſwete manhode and his bleſſed paſſyon, w<sup>t</sup> curteſſe mervelyng in his hye ovyr paſſyng goodneſſe · And makyth us to loue all that he louyth for his loue.<sup>741</sup>

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<sup>738</sup> Paris MS, 14.58: f.123v (390).

<sup>739</sup> Paris MS, 13.34: ff.61v-62r (266-7).

<sup>740</sup> Paris MS, 13.30: ff.53v-54r (250-1).

<sup>741</sup> Paris MS, 14.61: ff.130v-131r (404-5).

Julian's awareness of the substantial unity between the two natures of Christ and its sanctifying influence upon the two natures of humanity is further developed in the awareness that self-knowledge is found only in God. She formulates the guiding role of the Holy Spirit in the awakening of self-awareness.

And thus I saw full suerly that it is redyer to vs and more eþy to come to þ<sup>e</sup> knowyng of god then to know oure owne soule · ¶ ffor oure soule is so depe growndyd in god · and so endleþly tresoryd that we may nott come to the knowyng ther of tyll we haue furþt knowyng of god whych is the maker to whome it is onyd · ¶ But not w<sup>t</sup>tondyng I saw that we haue kyndly of fulhed to deþyer wyþely and truly to know oure owne soule, wherby we be lernyd to þeke it ther it is and that is into god · ¶ And thus by the gracious ledyng of the holy goþt we þhall know hym both in oone whether we be þteryd to know god or oure soule · it is both good and trew.<sup>742</sup>

God's judgement is a magnificent truth, whereby she comes to some kind of understanding under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the implication of awareness of God's loving judgement for human affective life is profound.

And the more knowyng and vnderþtondyng by the gracious ledyng of the holy goþt · that we haue of theþe · ij · domes the more we þhalle þee and know oure felynges · And evyr the more that we þee them the more kyndly by grace we þhall long to be fulþlyd of endleþþe Joy and blyþþe · ffor we be made ther to.<sup>743</sup>

Mystagogical guidance through God's foreseeing wisdom is found in attentiveness of the human free will to the indwelling love of the Holy Spirit. That guidance is both a kataphatic and an apophatic experience, because the orientation to love is revealed in the mysteries of faith, but the pain accompanying the ongoing union is a mystery that belongs fully to God as a secret of God's mystagogy, giving a high beatific vision of the unfathomable depth of God's compassionate love.<sup>744</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> Paris MS, 14.56: ff.118v-r (378-9)

<sup>743</sup> Paris MS, 14.45: f.83r (309).

<sup>744</sup> Paris MS, 14.33: ff.60v-61r (264-5).

## 2 The wound of sin will be a mark of honour

Julian engages in a relationship of spiritual guidance with her fellow Christians, which encourages them to become attentive to the guidance of God in their lives. Kees Waaijman centralises the personal relationship between director and directee in his study of mystagogy. The mystagogical implication of spiritual direction in a personal relationship is the elucidation of the working of God in the directee's life and watchfulness of obstacles that inhibit a conformation to the will of God. The conversations require a trustful discernment of God's personal influence in the life of the directee. The accompaniment of a spiritual guide is intended to explore personal experience and awareness of God, to become alert to resistance and to intensify attentiveness to God. Attentiveness is enhanced by the director's empathic understanding and the directee's willingness to keep a spiritual diary, in which life experiences are thought through with the intention of elucidating God's transforming presence in life.<sup>745</sup> Thomas Oden describes the classical pastoral tradition and its therapeutic understanding in terms of an empathic listening that reveals God's caring.<sup>746</sup>

The relationship of personal accompaniment forms part of Julian's anchoritic profession. During her life, she is sought for her spiritual advice and is a spiritual director for women and men who search for meaning within daily life and clarification of experiences that are initiated by God. As pastoral counsellor, Julian listens and responds to those who seek her guidance and emotional support. She is a woman with mature spiritual depth, who contemplates the mysteries of God and discerns spiritual truth with attentiveness to enlightenment by the Holy Spirit.

Margery Kempe's account of her meeting with Julian presents a unique historical document of Julian's approach to spiritual direction. The conversations between Margery and Julian are a token of the personal relationship of spiritual accompaniment and are significant for understanding Julian's approach to matters of discernment. Margery's autobiography exemplifies an interpretation of life in which God is seen as the main director. In her search for sound spiritual advice, God admonishes her to visit the anchoress Julian in Norwich, who is highly respected for her insights and able to give good counsel regarding the authenticity of visions. Margery speaks openly to Julian about her contemplation and the "ful

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<sup>745</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 870-942.

<sup>746</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Counsel*.

many holy spechys and dalyawns that owyr Lord spak to hir sowle,” hoping to discover whether or not there is deception in her visions.<sup>747</sup>

In the conversations between Margery and Julian, which continue for several days, Julian gives the advice that steadfastness in love is the main criterion for spiritual discernment. Julian encourages Margery to discern whether or not her contemplation and visions are rooted in God’s will and whether the influence of her visions motivates her to a deepening love. “The Holy Gost mevyth nevyr a thing ageyn charité, and, yf he dede, he wer contraryows to hys owyn self, for he is al charité.”<sup>748</sup> Julian’s counsel is built upon her theology that God’s nature is love and never goes against love. She proposes a form of discernment that is a knowing in love. The only trustworthy and certain token of God’s presence is the experience of a greater stability in the capacity to love: “and the Holy Gost makyth a sowle stabyl and stedfast in the right feyth and the right beleve.”<sup>749</sup> Furthermore, she asserts that Margery’s contrition, compassion and devotion are sure signs of God’s indwelling: “whan God visyteth a creatur wyth terys of contrisyon, devosyon, er compassyon, he may and owyth to levyn that the Holy Gost is in hys sowle.”<sup>750</sup> Julian’s pastoral theology guides Margery into the discernment of God’s indwelling, imposing no authoritative judgement on her experiences, but allowing her to become attentive to the guidance of God.

Julian’s pastoral approach to spiritual direction can be compared with the Irish tradition of soul-friendship (*anamchara*). Soul-friendship is a form of spiritual direction, which is intended to gain an understanding of the inner motives of the heart with the guidance of a wise and discerning monk or anchoress.<sup>751</sup> As it was Columbanus who crafted the rules for penitential practice, in his monastic rule he acknowledges the importance of the spiritual direction relationship.<sup>752</sup> The desert fathers also acknowledge the healing and transforming influence through the disclosure of the inner life.<sup>753</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 53.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>751</sup> Diarmuid O’Loaghair, “Soul-Friendship,” in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, 30-42.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-2. See, Diarmud O’Loaghair, “Celtic Spirituality,” in *Study of Spirituality*, 216-25; Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003) 241-7.

<sup>753</sup> See Michael Plattig and Regina Bäumer, “The Desert Fathers and Spiritual Direction,” *Studies in Spirituality* 7 (1997): 42-54.

The soul can only become addressable by God when it opens itself up. For that reason the desert monks placed so much emphasis on the expression of the motions of the soul (*logismoi*). This is not a simple matter in as much as the deepest stirrings of the soul are hidden from us. That which goes on in our heart -our fantasy and affectivity, our motives and thoughts- keeps us in its grip.<sup>754</sup>

Self-disclosure is appropriate only in the encounter with a trustworthy and wise person. “Do not lay open your conscience to anyone whom you do not trust in your heart.”<sup>755</sup> This pastoral tradition acknowledges the importance of sharing the depths of emotions with an *Abba* or *Amma*, a soul-friend or spiritual guide and ultimately to God. Spiritual direction is thus a continuation of prayer before God. “By prayer I mean not that which is only in the mouth, but that which springs up from the bottom of the heart.”<sup>756</sup>

Augustine is another example of someone who discloses his memories before God in order to discover God’s searching for him.<sup>757</sup> Augustine’s *Confessions* is a spiritual autobiography in which he narrates his life and search for God from the perspective of God’s indwelling. “See, You were within and I was without and sought you there.”<sup>758</sup> Augustine explores his memories and through them discovers that God’s attentiveness to him initiates his searching for God and articulates the awareness that God is the ultimate spiritual guide. Louth draws attention to Augustine’s awareness that no person can entirely know the complexity of the inner life of themselves and others.

Augustine, who has revealed so much of himself, was one whose deepest conviction regarding man was that ‘the human heart is an abyss,’ that ‘man is a vast deep (...) the hairs on his head are easier by far to number than are his feelings, and the movements of his heart.’ Man is unknown to himself, and still more unknown to anyone else: ‘in the sojourning of his carnal life each

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<sup>754</sup> Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 890.

<sup>755</sup> Abba Poemen, quoted in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans., Benedicta Ward, (Oxford: Mowbray, 1981), 194.

<sup>756</sup> Quoted in Clément, *Christian Mysticism*, 182. See John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensibility of God*, sermon 5.

<sup>757</sup> Waaijman uses Augustine’s *Confessions* as a paradigm for the study of mystagogy in autobiographical writings. Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 895-8. For an analysis of Augustine’s searching for God, see Turner, *Darkness of God*, 50-101.

<sup>758</sup> See Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.27.38.

one carries his own heart, and every heart is closed to every other heart.<sup>759</sup>

It is important that the human heart is open in order to be pliable to an inner guidance by God. Augustine's searching and finding of God touches deeply the core of Julian's mystagogy that intends to awaken the human longing for God. Julian introduces a gradual transformation of the human will into the love of God and her teaching comes close to Augustine's insight that God has drawn him into a searching for God.<sup>760</sup>

In writing her *Showing of Love*, Julian engages in a relationship of spiritual accompaniment with her fellow Christians. The *Showing of Love* is a spiritual treatise that provides spiritual direction to her fellow Christians, who desire to grow in love for Christ. Julian's theology relates the Christian faith to the lived experience of pain and suffering, joy and trust in order to discover the fullness of God's working within human life. Her spiritual direction aims to foster the encounter with God's unconditional love within a religious climate permeated by a theology of human nature as sinful. This climate inhibited for Christians the inner experience of being loved by God. Christians internalised the idea that they were not worthy to stand before God because they were blemished by sin. In our contemporary time, Christian authors explore the negative impact on spiritual growth when the unconditional love of God remains subjected to the human experience of being judged and rejected.<sup>761</sup>

We have heard so much about justice and judgement and the wrath of God that it is hard to believe anything else in our nerves and cells. (...) It is so easy to find anger and retribution among people, to learn about criticism and lack of acceptance even amongst our closest friends and family, that we keep on projecting upon God what we have known from people. There seems to be little reason to expect something else.<sup>762</sup>

Julian's spiritual direction into a deepened experience of God's love gains

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<sup>759</sup> Andrew Louth, "Augustine," in *Study of Spirituality*, 135. Quotations respectively taken from Augustine, *Psalms*, 41.13; *Confessions*, 4.14.22 and *Psalms*, 55.9.

<sup>760</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*; and Augustine, *The Trinity*, 10.2.5.

<sup>761</sup> See Matthews, *Nearer Than Breathing*, 75-6.

<sup>762</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, *The Other Side of Silence: A Guide to Christian Meditation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976; reprint, London: SPCK, 1977), *Silence*, 17.

significance against the background of a religious culture that emphasised sinfulness. She proposes that God's love is not broken by sin. The core dynamic provoked by Julian's treatise is the inner transformation which occurs when the Christian moves away from a belief in the wrath of God and grows into a spirituality which is rooted in the encounter with the unconditional love of God. Julian challenges the theology of human sinfulness and God's rejecting judgement through expounding its inhibiting influence on the experience of being loved by God. She redresses the theology of God's punishing judgement with the higher judgement of God's unconditional love. Her writing promotes a spiritual awakening to see God in the creatures and to become aware of the guiding hand of God in the transformation into love. The inner dynamics of this transformative process is experienced in the encounter with the unconditional love of God through which God influences the awareness of self, others and the world, and which also opens an awareness of the Christian mysteries of faith. Her treatise inevitably creates a space for spiritual direction to initiate and deepen in Christians the experience of being loved by God, and to encourage a living out of a trust in unconditional love as the core of a Christian relationship with God.

Paul Tillich voices the understanding of sin as alienation from the love of God that is the ground of human being and uncovers estrangement as lying at the root of human pain. The experience of pain leads to despair if it is not accompanied by a deep acceptance and awareness that humanity is created in vulnerability and in imperfection.

Estrangement from others and ourselves, because we are estranged from the Ground of our being, because we are estranged from the origin and aim of our life. (...) We are separated from the mystery, the depth and the greatness of our existence.<sup>763</sup>

Tillich describes the experience of God's grace as that of acceptance.

There are no substitutes for words like 'sin' and 'grace.' But there *is* a way of rediscovering their meaning, the same way that leads us into the depth of our human existence. (...) Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and

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<sup>763</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (London: SCM Press, 1949; reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), 161.

restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of meaningless and empty life. It strikes us when we feel our separation is deeper than usual, because we have violated another life, a life which we loved, or from which we were estranged. It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction and composure have become intolerable for us. It strikes us when year after year the longed for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of life breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: "You are accepted. *You are accepted*, accepted by that which is greater than you and the name of which you do not know."<sup>764</sup>

The wisdom of turning to God and knowing God are pivotal in Julian's mystagogy. Turning to God involves a process of becoming aware of God's higher judgement of unconditional love regarding humanity. In the encounter with a God who beholds humanity with eyes of compassionate love, a Christian discovers self-acceptance. Julian's theology, which comprises the optimistic exclamation that all shall be well, influences the way prayer is conceived. It engenders a change of heart from doubtful dread to a soft dread. Soft dread is a loving fear for God and a trusting in God.<sup>765</sup> The spiritual growth of the human person is experienced as an entrusting of oneself to the love of God, with the acceptance of life as a profound secret. Growth in trust and love occurs through the working of God, who is equally a mystery and above human apprehension. According to Hein Blommestijn, the initial stages of the spiritual path are formed by a growing belief in the human acceptability before God and entrusting oneself to the movement of love.

Ascetic transformation is a preliminary form of mysticism. It is a condition for mysticism without being absolutely prerequisite. In this sense one can speak of asceticism as something like a school of mysticism: a climate in which certain attitudes which are of great importance in the mystical process are interiorized. Some of these attitudes are: daring to live without dread; ceasing

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<sup>764</sup> Ibid., 161-2.

<sup>765</sup> Paris MS, 16.74: f.156v (456).

to measure oneself by what one can do or achieve; learning to live from the deep conviction that I have ‘permission to be’; entrusting oneself to the movement of love which propels one’s life forward.<sup>766</sup>

The theology of God’s compassion with suffering becomes the foundation for Julian’s advice in spiritual direction. Julian’s transformative understanding of God’s attitude towards sin is intended to guide a Christian during the initial and progressive stages of the contemplative path, at which the conversion towards virtue and the willingness to follow the path of Christ is already manifest. The experience of unconditional acceptance by God might be disconcerting for Christians who adopt the idea of the fundamental sinfulness of human nature and for whom sin constitutes the human separation from God.<sup>767</sup> However, Julian warns against a misunderstanding of her teaching. Although sin can be an access to experience the quality of God’s love, she reminds her readers that the path to God is shaped by discernment in love as well as dislike of sin.<sup>768</sup> Her theology of acceptance before God is generally addressed to all humanity, but in particular to those who, although not deliberately persisting in hurtful behaviour, experience contrition. Because of the vulnerability of human nature, they are confronted with the unavoidable life-experience of hurt: “we bere oure traveyle and oure payne hevily.”<sup>769</sup>

In the progressive phase of the contemplative life, the ‘lover of Christ’ is certain of the love for Christ and promises to live in virtue. Nevertheless, each Christian who pursues a life of prayer still acknowledges an unconformity with the original purity of the human nature, experiences misery and is troubled by weariness with life.<sup>770</sup> The experience of suffering leads to impatience and despair.

I ſpeke of ſuch men and women þ<sup>t</sup> for goddes loue · hate ſynne and dyſpoſe  
them to do goddes wylle than by oure goſtly blyndhed and bodely hevynelſſe  
we are moſt enclynyng to theyſe, ¶ And therefore it is goddys wylle þ<sup>t</sup> they be

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<sup>766</sup> Quoted in Waaijman, “Mysticism,” 35. See Hein Blommestijn, “In de leerschool van de mystiek,” *Speling* 33 (1981): 96-100.

<sup>767</sup> See Joanna and Alistair McGrath, *The Dilemma of Self-Esteem: The Cross and Christian Confidence* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1992).

<sup>768</sup> Paris MS, 13.40: f.72r (287).

<sup>769</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: ff.153r-v (449-50).

<sup>770</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: ff.153r -154r (449-51).

known.<sup>771</sup>

Julian articulates her spiritual direction regarding sin very specifically in the final part of her revelation, that is, after she describes her theology of sin as pain and God's compassion with human suffering. She mentions explicitly two sins, which hinder Christians in their spiritual development.<sup>772</sup> The first is impatience when a Christian is confronted with pain. The second is despair when suffering is experienced without consolation.

God ſhewde ij · manner of ſyckneſſe þ<sup>t</sup> we haue. ¶ That one is vnpacyens or ſlouth · ffor we bere oure traveyle and oure payne hevyly, ¶ That other is diſpeyer or doughtfulle drede as I ſhalle ſey after. ¶ Generally he ſhewde ſynne wher in alle is comprehendyd · but in ſpecyall he ſhewde noone but theyſe ij · and theyſe two are it þ<sup>t</sup> moſte traveylyth and trobyllyth vs · as by that oure lorde ſhewde me.<sup>773</sup>

The sins of impatience and despair are severe obstacles to the religious life. Anchoritic rules warn against sloth as one of the main snares of sin for the enclosed life.<sup>774</sup> Both impatience and despair are caused by blindness in seeing the love of God: “and þ<sup>e</sup> cauſe why we are traveyled w<sup>t</sup> them is for vnknowyng of loue.”<sup>775</sup> The patience of Christ amidst his anguish is an example of a compassionate and self-emptying state of mind. Christ's patience encourages a transformation from an attitude that carries suffering heavily towards compassion with suffering. Likeness with Christ transforms impatience and despair into a patient attitude that sustains spiritual growth and invigorates the trust in God's compassion.<sup>776</sup>

Julian explores the feeling of despair in order to articulate the sense of self-rejection that can accompany the awareness of constant failure and falling into ‘sin.’ Despair is itself a sin, because it is opposed to a soft dread that accompanies

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<sup>771</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: ff.153v-154r (450-1).

<sup>772</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: f.153r (449).

<sup>773</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: ff.153r-v (449-50).

<sup>774</sup> Richard Rolle gives a long list of sins, amongst which sloth is “a lack of spiritual dedication (if you allow your heart at any time to be idle, without being occupied to God's praises).” Rolle, *Form of Living*, 164.

<sup>775</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: f.153v (450).

<sup>776</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: f.153r (449).

a trusting in God's loving acceptance.<sup>777</sup> She employs several distinctive images to convey humanity's acceptability before God. Most revealing is Julian's vision of the creation, which gives an acknowledgement of how God loves deeply human life and which awareness of lovability creates a deep inner peace and rest.<sup>778</sup> She uses some powerful images that to comfort fellow Christians, such as her portrayal of Christ as Mother or friend in whose loving arms a Christian finds consolation.<sup>779</sup> She encourages Christians to shelter in Christ's arms when remorse is aroused. The image of Christ as a friend resonates with feelings of acceptance and warmth, and thus Christians might begin to feel loved for who they are. Instead of inducing blame and shame by using the image of a judging God, the image of Christ as a friend gives rise to acceptance for failures and inabilities.

The pastoral theology regarding impatience and despair is important for understanding Julian's mystagogy as guidance given by God in the transformation of emotions and the healing of pain. She counsels on sin in terms of acceptance of the vulnerability of humanity and thus is able to see the healing quality of sinning. The lived spirituality of sin becomes a journey from faith to feeling: faith transforms the experience of God's absence from suffering into a deep inner feeling of God's presence within experiences of suffering.<sup>780</sup> An essential component of Julian's spirituality is formed by her awareness that dwelling in painful experiences causes an inability to be raised, that is; to see the closeness of God with human life:

and therefore though we ben in so much payne woo and dyseise that vs thynkith we can thinke ryght nought but that we are in · or that we feele · as soone as we may passe we lightly over · and lett we it at nought · And whi ffor god will be knowen · ffor if we know him and loue him · and reverently drede him we shall haue patience and be in great rest.<sup>781</sup>

Julian expresses that the greatest trust should be placed in the love of God, who transforms and defies human nature. Trust in God's love is more important than a faith in God's omnipotence and a hope in God's wisdom. Attentiveness to and

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<sup>777</sup> Paris MS, 16.79: f.165r (473).

<sup>778</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9r-10v (159-62) and 1.6: ff.12r-13r (165-7).

<sup>779</sup> Paris MS, 13.40: ff.71r-v (285-6); 16.61: ff.132r-133v (407-9) and 16.74: f.156r (455).

<sup>780</sup> Paris MS, 7.15: ff.30v-32r (204-7).

<sup>781</sup> Paris MS, 15.65: f.140v (424).

trust in the transformative love of God often fails and is lacking in human life.<sup>782</sup>

Julian's positive perception of the effect of sin is remarkable. God allows the human to fall into sin in order to receive a greater honour in heaven, because the wound of sin will become a mark of honour.<sup>783</sup> It is important to discern what Julian means by sinning causing a greater honour, as within that context she is talking about the sinning of the greatest saints. Falling into sin carries a great honour, because through failing the human person comes to discover dependence on God. Falling into sin is accompanied with the painful recognition of human failing and weakness, and thus the experience breaks the complacency of the human person.<sup>784</sup> Julian uses the example of St. Beverly who loves God, when God allows him to 'fall' with the intent to raise him to a higher grace. Through his 'fall' the man receives contrition and meekness in his way of living.<sup>785</sup> Julian holds the view that falling or failing is essential for the spiritual way.

ffor it nedyth vs to falle· and it nedyth vs to see it· ffor yf we ~~fe~~ felle nott we  
ſhulde nott knowe how febyll and how wrechyd we be of oure ſelfe· nor alſo  
we ſhulde not ſo fulſomly know þ<sup>e</sup> marvelous loue of oure maker.<sup>786</sup>

The 'fall' represents the critical transition from human effort in the devotion to God towards a meekness that allows the entrusting of oneself to God's love.

Julian's appreciation of sin as failure echoes contemporary understanding of spirituality and prayer in which acceptance of the dark side of human nature is a way to reach out to God. Anselm Grün and Meinrad Dufner emphasise that spiritual direction should not encourage the pursuit of high ideals, but rather allow the directee to get in touch with the reality of life as way to God.<sup>787</sup>

We can only find the pearl in us, when we become aware of our wounds. The wound is not only the place where we get in touch with our own self. There

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<sup>782</sup> Paris MS, 16.73: f.154v (452).

<sup>783</sup> Paris MS, 13.38: ff.67v-68r (278-9).

<sup>784</sup> Paris MS, 13.39: ff.69r-v (281-2): Synne is the ſharpeſt ſcorge þ<sup>t</sup> ony choſyn ſoule may be ſmytyn w<sup>t</sup>· whych ſcorge alle to betyth man or woman· And alle to brekyth hym and purgyth hym in hys owne ſyght· (...) becauſe of the meekenes that we gett here by· we be reſyſyd fulle hygh in goddes ſyght by his grace.

<sup>785</sup> Paris MS, 13.38: ff.68v-69r (280-1).

<sup>786</sup> Paris MS, 14.61: ff.131r-v (405-6).

<sup>787</sup> Anselm Grün and Meinrad Dufner, *Spiritualiteit van Beneden*, trans. Gerard Mathijssen (Kampen: Kok, 1996; reprint, Kampen: Kok, 2003), 27.

where we are at the end of our own possibilities, where there is nothing else then the surrender of ourselves, there can our relationship with Christ grow, and there we surmise how we are totally dependent on him.<sup>788</sup>

Ann and Barry Ulanov appreciate awareness of sin as the stripping of the self in resistance to God:

sometimes accepting that what might superficially look like a fault or limitation, even a sin, may turn out to be a major part of our identity, even an opening through which God reaches right into us. There, in our own special way, no matter how lowly, we can become part of the sodden earth in which Christ appears. Thus a deep wound to the formation of the ego, that centre of personal identity, that might leave us forever fragile, anxious, boarded up against others, may instead become the aperture, the very point of sure accessibility through which God touches the soul and moves it to give all its needs and hopes into God's care.<sup>789</sup>

Grace Jantzen argues that Julian is a theologian with openness to human experience, including its painful side.

Openness to experience is also, however, openness to its darker sides: depression, fear, self-rejection. From the way Julian writes about these, it is clear that she had to come to terms with them in her own life. She does not ignore them; instead, she offers insight about how these can be progressively transformed to become part of a creatively integrated person.<sup>790</sup>

Jantzen demonstrates that Julian is attentive to the whole spectrum of her experiencing and emotions including the dark side of her depression, fears and self-rejection. She comes closest to understanding how Julian integrates suffering into a loving knowing of God. "It is this steady will to live in response to the love of God which makes for the right use our natural reason and the teaching of the

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<sup>788</sup> Ibid., 19. Translation mine.

<sup>789</sup> Ann and Barry Ulanov, "Prayer and Personality: Prayer as Primary Speech," *Study of Spirituality*, 29.

<sup>790</sup> Jantzen, *Julian*, 105.

church.”<sup>791</sup> Julian integrates theological knowledge and spiritual practice, as knowing the love of God influences the discernment between pain and trust in God.

Julian acknowledges the difficulty of self-acceptance if the awareness of failure and vulnerability is not accompanied by a deep awareness of the love of God.<sup>792</sup> Her spiritual direction is intended to reveal the enduring love that exists in God for the whole spectrum of human emotions. She proposes that spiritual life is motivated by the awareness of God’s unconditional love, which the Christian internalises together with a gradual process of discernment of feelings that resist peace and love. To become wilfully emptied out of love means to be attentive to the gift of love without demands and with awareness that demands inhibit the reality of the other’s love to reveal itself. Her teaching to find rest in God through a wise attachment is complemented with the insight that attachment to God is ultimately God’s work in the human.<sup>793</sup>

Julian’s spirituality refrains from emphasising the high prestige of moral righteousness, but rather promotes an encounter with the love of God in the feebleness of human existence. She refrains from the pastoral practice of advising on moral and ascetic behaviour, because her revelation proposes a view on sin as the experience of pain that takes the understanding of sin beyond the discipline of morality. The discernment of virtues and vices does not belong solely to moral practice, because virtuous living springs naturally from the spiritual discipline of the loving encounter with God. “As the opposite of vices, virtues not only belong to ethics, but are also a core concept of spiritual growth and mystical transformation.”<sup>794</sup> Julian’s mystagogy, while aware of the realm of ethics, considers virtuous living as naturally evolving from the human receptivity to God’s love and acceptance of God’s goodness as an intrinsic part of human nature. Virtues become interiorised through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>795</sup>

Tillich recalls St. Paul’s hymn of love in his argument that love is the ultimate imperative of any moral commandment.

If love is the ultimate norm of all moral demands, its *agape* quality points to

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<sup>791</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>792</sup> Paris MS, 14.52: f.109v (362).

<sup>793</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: f.10v (162).

<sup>794</sup> Hein Blommestijn, “Liberating Virtue,” 78.

<sup>795</sup> Paris MS, 14.57: f.122r (387).

the transcendent source of the content of the moral imperative. For *agape* transcends the finite possibilities of man. Paul indicates this in his great hymn of love (1 Corinthians, 13) when he describes *agape* as the highest work of the divine Spirit, and as an element of the eternal life, even beyond faith and hope.<sup>796</sup>

Tillich's understanding of the primacy of love as given by the Holy Spirit for the consummation of eternal life resonates deeply with Julian's mystagogy into the meaning of love. "Thus was I lernyd þ<sup>t</sup> loue is oure lordes menyng."<sup>797</sup>

Discernment is an aspect of the spiritual life that poses the unique relationship between the human person and God at its centre and encourages the inner conscience to awaken and develop. Christians who have a feeling for the love of Christ are vulnerable to each stirring that goes against the movement of God's love. Through the examination of conscience, the motives of the inner life are brought into conformity with inner peace received from God. The conscience then becomes promoted by love as the orientating force in relationships and life-choices. Furthermore, discernment allows for the uniqueness of each individual person as it is seen in the eyes of God. Often it is within emotional pain that the intensity of God's love is experienced, for the compassion of God encompasses all human emotions and is close to the deepest pain. Discernment promotes the awareness that God knows the depths of each person and beholds each with eyes of love.

And god shewed that synne shalle be no shame· but wurshype to man· for ryght as to every synne is answeryng a payne by truth· Ryght so for every synne to the same soule is gevyn a blyffe by loue.<sup>798</sup>

### 3 Contrition, compassion and longing

Julian's mystagogy into an understanding of woundedness as an opening to the

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<sup>796</sup> Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964; reprint, London: Collins, 1969), 35.

<sup>797</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: f.173v (490).

<sup>798</sup> Paris MS, 13.38: f.67v (278).

reciprocal love longing between God and human elucidates her spiritual guidance into the mysteries of faith, which are revealed in Christ's passion as a sharing in human suffering. In modern spirituality and theology, the search for a meaning of suffering is directed to meditation on Christ's passion. Andrew Elphinstone counsels that pain needs to be taken serious in the pursuit of religious truth: "it continues through life and its owner may not be content until he or she has come to the encounter with larger matters like the suffering of man, the love of God and the suffering of Christ."<sup>799</sup> Karl Rahner argues that the mystery of Christ surpasses all human answers.

That descent which alone saves because its emptiness is filled with the unutterable inconceivability of God, which alone answers all the questions posed by our life in a thousand little ways. It answers them by surpassing them.<sup>800</sup>

Neither a theological nor an intellectual answer can satisfactorily encompass the answer to suffering. Theodicy demands a thoroughly human answer that is found through a sharing in suffering.<sup>801</sup>

Julia Gatta points out that Julian's persistent questioning of God forms a model of spiritual direction. Gatta's comment underlines the mystagogical quality in Julian's art of spiritual guidance, as she promotes a personal entrusting to Christ as spiritual director into the mysteries of faith. Christ receives the searching questions laid open to him as part of the longing to know God.<sup>802</sup>

From her personal and pastoral experience, Julian seemed to know that intellectual and speculative perplexities could pose a serious obstacle to spiritual growth. The individual "problem of sin" cannot be addressed so long as the larger, cosmic "problem of sin" is felt as a crushing incongruity. As Julian struggles with these issues in the course of the *Revelations*, she evolves a method of theological wrestling that has implications for pastoral guidance as well as prayer. (...) Her director, so to speak, is Christ. So Julian's intense exchanges with the Lord function not only as a model of dialectical prayer,

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<sup>799</sup> Andrew Elphinstone, *Freedom, Suffering and Love* (London: SCM Press, 1976), ix.

<sup>800</sup> Karl Rahner, *Meditations on Hope and Love* (London: Burns and Oates, 1976), 56.

<sup>801</sup> See Küng, *Credo*, 89-94.

<sup>802</sup> See Paris MS, 13.31: f.54v (252) and 14.41: f.74v (292).

but also as a model for direction itself: a relationship characterised by full and open expression of doubt and dilemma in which Julian feels free to ask searching questions to God.<sup>803</sup>

Julian's voice as a pastoral theologian and spiritual director is clearly audible in her persistent questioning of Christ to receive the truth regarding God's unconditional love. While Julian's voice narrates her personal journey in discerning the depth of God's love, her questions about sin function like landmarks for those who engage with her treatise in exploring the love of God. The anxiety of human life is experienced in deep emotions and unanswerable questions which well up in confrontation with suffering. Julian is interested in the affective side of human experience, and accepts that the difficulties of grasping the cause of suffering and living with grief are in itself severely painful. She writes and contemplates about emotions caused by the experienced loss of God's nearness; emotions of anger and wrath, depression and desolation, great fear. Her questions regarding sin and suffering will never be resolved, but the images, words and spiritual insights which she receives in contemplating those mysteries are inviting and guiding the Christian into a personal engagement with the mystery of God's compassionate love as it is expressed in the passion of Christ. Her questions touch so closely the profound mystery of the dialogical relationship between human life and God that the questions themselves unfold a path that directs the Christian into a lived spirituality and faith that seeks to be deepened by that mystery. Thus her questioning "sets into motion a faith process of learning in which God can let himself become experience as the salvation of human beings."<sup>804</sup>

Julian's spiritual direction teaches that the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith are illuminated with meaning when seen in the light of both human pain and love. Her search for the meaning of suffering finds an answer in her meditation on the passion of Christ, in whose countenance she experiences compassion with human suffering. Her youthful prayer to receive the three wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God underlies the formation of her relationship with God and is important for understanding her mystagogy. Julian makes no claim to describe the stages of the spiritual life in the ascent to God, although the wounds

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<sup>803</sup> Gatta, *Three Spiritual Directors*, 58.

<sup>804</sup> Simon, "Mystagogie," 571.

of contrition, compassion and longing echo the Christian understanding of the mystical path as progressive spiralling stages of purification, illumination and mystical union.<sup>805</sup>

And also whom oure lord wylle · he vylytyth of his sprecialle grace w<sup>t</sup> so grett contricion · And also w<sup>t</sup> compaſſion and tru longyng to god · that they be soodeynly delyverde of synne and of payne · and taken vp to blyſſe · and made evyn w<sup>t</sup> seyntes ¶ by contryſcion we be made clene · by compaſſion we be made redy · And by tru longyng to god we be made worthy.<sup>806</sup>

The uniqueness of Julian's understanding of woundedness is her encouragement of a form of living in which attentiveness to pain and suffering functions as a compass needle to mystical union with God.

Julian develops a spirituality of contrition, compassion and longing as it is found with the church fathers. A prayer of Chrysostom expresses that contrition evokes the awareness of feebleness. "As a man have I sinned, have Thou mercy on me, as the God full of compassion, seeing the feebleness of my soul. O Lord, send down Thou grace to help me, that I may glorify Thy name."<sup>807</sup> Contrition is the awareness of frailty that blossoms forth in the longing for God's self-gift. In the thought of Gregory the Great compunction is a sorrow according to God, that encompasses all three stages of the spiritual life: in the beginner there is an awareness of sin, in the advanced there is the withdrawal from the world and in the perfect there is the hope for God.<sup>808</sup> In the spirituality of Gregory, compunction begins with the awareness of sinfulness and blossoms forth in the compunction of love.<sup>809</sup> The spirit of contrition facilitates a critical point in spiritual growth because self-righteousness and spiritual pride are relinquished in order to receive the loving grace of God. Contrition is not the end point of the Christian life, but rather the starting point of the relationship with God in which the awareness of being loved by God initiates a desire to be fully possessed by

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<sup>805</sup> The threefold path of purification, illumination and union was developed within the Christian tradition to describe the journey of the soul to God. See Pierre Pourrat, "Commencants," *DSp* 2 (1953), 1143-56.

<sup>806</sup> Paris MS, 13.39: f.70r (283). See Paris MS, 16.76: ff.159r-v (461-2).

<sup>807</sup> Quoted by Arvo Pärt, *Litany* (München: ECM Records, 1996).

<sup>808</sup> Joseph Pegon, "Componction," *DSp* 2 (1953), 1313-9.

<sup>809</sup> McGinn and Ferris McGinn, *Mystics*, 81-3.

God's love.<sup>810</sup>

The wound of longing is an image that is deeply embedded within the mystical-exegetical tradition of commentaries on the Song of Songs: "I am wounded with love."<sup>811</sup> Origen was the first author to elaborate upon the verse.

If there is anyone anywhere who has at some time burned with this faithful love of the Word of God; if there is anyone who at some time received the sweet wound of him who is the chosen dart, as the prophet says; if there is anyone who has been pierced with the lovable spear of his knowledge, so that he yearns and longs for him by day and night, can speak of naught but him, can think of nothing else, and is disposed to no desire nor longing nor yet hope, except for him alone- if such there be, that soul then says in truth: "I have been wounded by charity."<sup>812</sup>

Christ touches the human to wound its nature with a love that enkindles a deep longing for the beloved. The deeper the wound, the more intense becomes the longing.

Julian maintains a traditional form of spiritual direction within Christianity, which approaches contrition with the dictum that the pure of heart shall see God. Her approach to mystagogy is related to the teleology of the desert fathers, who considers purity of heart as the main goal of Christian spiritual life.<sup>813</sup> The spirituality of the desert fathers is in touch with the whole array of human affections and gives insight into the transformation of the affections to reach a purity of heart. The sayings of the desert fathers do not constitute moral rules, but are intended to soften the heart and give understanding of the reality of life in view of a compassionate attitude. Julian transforms the understanding of sin into attentiveness to the mystery of pain. Sin is no longer seen in terms of unmoral behaviour, but -through the pain that is felt- sin is understood as a loss and becomes a form of awareness, which initiates a searching for God whose love only can fulfil the deepest longing of human love. Pain becomes a form of prayer

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<sup>810</sup> See Irénée Hausherr, *Penthos: The Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East*, trans. Anselm Hufstader (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1982).

<sup>811</sup> Song of Songs, 2.5.

<sup>812</sup> Origen, *The Song of Songs; Commentary and Homilies*, trans. R.P. Lawson (Westminster: Newman, 1957), 198.

<sup>813</sup> See John Cassian, *Conferences*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); Philip Rousseau, "The Desert Fathers, Anthony and Pachomius," in *Study of Spirituality*, 119-30.

and spiritual direction in so far as it reveals the deepest need be loved and within that need the will of God becomes transparent.<sup>814</sup> The self-disclosure of God's compassionate love within the passion of Christ underlies Julian's spiritual direction towards contrition, compassion and longing for God as an appropriate response to suffering.

John Chryssavgis presents repentance and confession as a particular important aspect of spiritual direction that is formulated in patristic sources.<sup>815</sup> Repentance is the recognition of vulnerability that initiates a new way of loving oneself and others.<sup>816</sup> Chryssavgis evaluates its liberating influence within the context of Christ's passion and resurrection.

The chief initiative for reconciliation has been made by God in Christ, but the fulfilment of Christ's sacrifice in our lives depends upon our response. Openness to God is the precondition for God's dwelling within us. (...) The more one tastes of God, the more one wants of Him, and so repentance deepens.<sup>817</sup>

In Julian's pastoral theology, the pain of contrition is a form of mourning, evoked through a lack of sight of God, which makes the human receptive to self-knowledge. Contrition is natural as no human can have a continuous awareness of God.<sup>818</sup> It is accompanied by a longing to receive the grace of God. Contrition and longing are two spiritual attitudes that are experienced jointly within human life, as the human can neither have full sight of God nor understanding of its own self, whilst it longs for that sight and insight. The two spiritual attitudes are sure signs of God's guidance, who guides the human into awareness that the mystery of human life is hidden in the mystery of God:

we ſhulde be in longyng and in pen<sup>n</sup>ance into the tyme that we be led ſo depe  
in to god that we verely and trewly know oure owne ſoule. and ſuerly I ſaw  
that in to this hye depneſſe our good lorde hym ſelfe ledyth vs.<sup>819</sup>

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<sup>814</sup> Paris MS, 16.74: ff.154v-157r (452-7).

<sup>815</sup> John Chryssavgis, *Soul Mending: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000).

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>818</sup> See Paris MS, 14.47: ff.86r-v (315-6).

<sup>819</sup> Paris MS, 14.56: f.119r (381).

The discernment of true contrition is important in the practice of spiritual direction as it encourages Christians to discern the working of God within life and be aware of attitudes that resist the working of God. Contrition is a sign of guidance by the Holy Spirit and is accompanied by a prayerful longing:

than be we ſteryd of the holy goſt by contriſcion in to prayer and deſyer  
amendynge of oure ſelfe w<sup>t</sup> alle oure myght to ſlake the wrath of god vnto the  
tyme · we fynde a reſt in ſoule · And ſoftnes in conſciens.<sup>820</sup>

Julian describes feelings of self-blame and guilt that are in need of atonement.<sup>821</sup> The Holy Spirit guides the human into rest and softness of conscience and healing. “And than begynn his woundys to heele.”<sup>822</sup> The openness to God’s love transforms the human nature and brings it in accord with the natural desire to love.<sup>823</sup> The healing of pain comes through a trusting in God who heals memory, understanding and will through the enfolding of the ability to love: “And thus by this meke knowyng thorow contrycion and grace (...) ſhalle oure bleſſyd ſavyour perfetely cure vs.”<sup>824</sup>

Julian’s mystagogy touches closely on the experience of love that functions in inter-human relationships. Her form of guidance seeks to transform painful feelings into an acceptance of the fundamental limitations that each human person encounters in the process of loving oneself and others and the pain that accompanies this limitation.<sup>825</sup> She prefigures trends in contemporary thinking about the meaning that can be inherent in pain. Henri Nouwen gives a clear insight into the relationship between pain and love.

Do not hesitate to love and to love deeply. You might be afraid of the pain that deep love can cause. When those you love deeply reject you, leave you, or die, your heart will be broken. But that should not hold you back from loving deeply. The pain that comes from deep love makes your love ever more

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<sup>820</sup> Paris MS, 13.40: ff.71r-v (285-6).

<sup>821</sup> See Paris MS, 13.39: f.69v (282); 16.73: ff.154r-v (451-2) and 16.78: f.163r (469).

<sup>822</sup> Paris MS, 13.39: f.69v (282).

<sup>823</sup> Paris MS, 14.48: ff.87r- 89r (317-21).

<sup>824</sup> Paris MS, 16.78: ff.163r-v (469-70).

<sup>825</sup> Paris MS, 13.37: ff.66v-67r (276-7).

fruitful. It is like a plough that breaks the ground to allow the seed to take root and grow into a strong plant.<sup>826</sup>

This journal entry was written in a time of deep pain and despair after the break-up of an intimate relationship. From this experience Nouwen learned the intimate interweaving of pain and love, and he describes his discovery that being in touch with real pain opens the heart to compassion:

There is real pain in your heart, a pain that truly belongs to you. You know that you cannot avoid, ignore, or repress it. It is this pain that reveals to you how you are called to live in solidarity with the broken human race.<sup>827</sup>

According to Julian's pastoral theology, the painful influence of emotions is intrinsically valuable for the reason that the wounds elicit a search for the source of compassion and disclose awareness of God's compassion amidst the anxiety of human life. Woundedness, healed with compassion, become marks of honour:

they]e be thre meny as I vnder]tode wher by that alle ]oules com to hevyn · that is to ]ey that haue ben ]ynners in erth · and ]halle be ]avyd ¶ ffor by they]e medycins behovyth that every ]ynnfulle ]oule be helyd · though that he be helyd hys woundys be ]ene before god · nott as woundes but as wur]hyppes.<sup>828</sup>

The wound of contrition becomes an integral aspect of knowledge of God, as a reorientation of self-awareness and affectivity is engendered in the encounter with God's love that releases the human capacity to love. The wound of contrition then becomes a wound of knowledge.

Meditation on the passion of Christ forms a pivotal feature in Julian's acceptance of pain as an existential part of human life and gives her discernment of God's self-emptying response. Christ is the paradigm for a Christian attitude that is born from attentiveness to the mystery of God's suffering with humanity. Compassion is valued as the image of Christ in human nature.

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<sup>826</sup> Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997), 49.

<sup>827</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>828</sup> Paris MS, 13.39: ff.69v-70r (282-3).

Thus I saw how criſt hath compaſſyon on vs · ffor the cauſe of ſynne And ryght as I was before in the paſſion of criſt fullyllyd w<sup>t</sup> payne and compaſſion · lyke in thys I was in party fulfilled w<sup>t</sup> compaſſion of alle my evyn criſten · (...) And than ſaw I that ech kynde compaſſion that man hath on hys evyn criſten w<sup>t</sup> charyte it is Criſt in hym · that ych maner noughtyng that he ſhewde in hys paſſion, it was ſhewde a□ ene here in thys compaſſion.<sup>829</sup>

Julian provides direction into the spirituality of Christ-likeness. She attaches an atoning value to suffering, because pain contributes to the maturation of the human person in likeness with Christ. The consciousness of pain has the capacity to reorient the human person towards a deeper relationship with God, grounded in Christ's compassion with suffering. Through the acceptance of suffering and through the exploration of a purifying effect within it, a Christian comes to partake in the self-emptying quality which is expressed in Christ's compassion. The purifying effect of suffering is not a moral quality, but one of self-emptying or 'noughting' through which the power of Christ's love is released. Suffering is not in itself exalted as *imitatio Christi*, but the discovery of the quality of love within suffering allows a participation in the suffering of Christ out of love for humanity. Participation in Christ's compassion forms the core of the *imitatio Christi*, as Christians experience that Christ comes to live in them.

Julian's theology of woundedness articulates a love longing in human nature for union with God initiated by the longing of Christ. She sees the longing for human salvation in the woundedness of Christ on the cross. Christ suffers in body and in spirit. Christ's spiritual suffering is a longing for union of humanity with him.<sup>830</sup> Julian's mystagogy into the meaning of suffering is rooted in her theology of the indwelling of Christ in human nature. She guides her fellow Christians into the secret of the human nature hidden in God, in whom pain and love are inseparably bound together because of the depth of God's longing to love and be loved. Mystagogy is guidance into the contemplation of God's love that evokes awareness of the sustained longing in God to draw humanity into the eternal beholding face to face.

Her mystagogy into God's love comes alongside Christians' seeking for God through engagement with the depth of human pain, as the deepest needs of

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<sup>829</sup> Paris MS, 13.28: f.52r (247).

<sup>830</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r-57r (253-7).

human nature are designed to search for compassionate love. The *Showing of Love* provides the gift of comfortable words to the lovers of Christ and is intended to deepen the faith of each Christian who is confronted with the wounding impact of pain. Julian's mystagogy is inclusive of a searching for God that stems from God's coming to humanity. Her understanding of union is christocentric, as Christ unites the divine and human natures and thus sanctifies humanity. Experiencing Christ's passion deepens her understanding of contrition, compassion and longing as spiritual woundedness.<sup>831</sup> An atoning perspective on suffering underlies her interpretation of spiritual woundedness in terms of healing and reward. Human life is wounded with pain, but the wounds of contrition, compassion and longing inflicted by God's grace are healing wounds and will bring a greater knowledge of God. The nature of the wounds resembles Christ's wounds, whose wounds transfigure human suffering and sublimate the longing to see God face to face.<sup>832</sup>

Julian's mystagogy demonstrates that to become what humanity is destined to be is mirrored in the mysteries of Christ's incarnation, passion and resurrection. Christ incarnates so that human life can be sanctified and glorified. Julian's theology of atonement formulates that Christ cannot be glorified until all humanity is glorified.<sup>833</sup> Christ, and thus God, is in need of the reciprocal love of humanity. Glorification is a reciprocal longing in which Christ becomes glorified. Christ's suffering with humanity comes to an end when the suffering of all humanity is transfigured into the blessed beholding of God face to face. In that fulfilment, humanity becomes impassible in likeness with God, and God's compassion will become an eternal loving.<sup>834</sup>

My assertion regarding the relevance of Julian's christology for the art of spiritual direction is supportive of Ruffing's remark that God initiates an apophatic spirituality of self-emptying practice.<sup>835</sup> The image of Christ comes alive through engagement with Christ as spiritual director. Julian's theology holds together the apophatic path of self-emptying with a kataphatic path of meditation

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<sup>831</sup> See Domenico Pezzini, "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*, ed. P. Boitani and A. Torti (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 1990), 51.

<sup>832</sup> Paris MS, 16.71: ff.149v-152v (442-8).

<sup>833</sup> Paris MS, 8.20: f.40r (223) and 13.31: f.56r (255).

<sup>834</sup> Paris MS, 13.31: ff.55r and 56v-57r (256-7) and 14.49: f.91v (326).

<sup>835</sup> Janet K. Ruffing, "The World Transfigured: Kataphatic Religious Experience Explored through Quantitative Research Methodology," *Studies in Spirituality* 5 (1995): 233.

on the passion.

If individuals proceed along either path towards mature self-transcendence, their entire intersubjective reality is gradually oriented around the Divine presence as the centre of their lives. This reorientation leads to similar effects in their lives as a whole. Everything is increasingly experienced in a transfigured way. God is in everything. The mystic experiences self and others through God's compassion and love.<sup>836</sup>

Julian believes that the deepest human identity is found in growth into likeness with God and that the meaning of life is found in being loved by God.<sup>837</sup> Loving oneself and others is most fully engendered through the awareness of how deeply God loves humanity and how profoundly God knows the creation.<sup>838</sup> She acknowledges that growth into likeness with God cannot be accomplished without suffering, and thus integrates her mystagogy with an insight comparable with that expressed by modern theologians and psychotherapists. Psychotherapist Victor Frankl, survivor of Auschwitz, draws the conclusion that the deepest need in human nature is a search for meaning in life. His approach to suffering is that meaning can be found within it.<sup>839</sup> Sebastian Moore acknowledges that it is a human need to be loved and to trust that each individual human life is ultimately meaningful to God: "knowing that I am significant for the unknown reality that is my origin."<sup>840</sup> According to Carl Rogers, the deepest longing of human nature is to become "who I truly am."<sup>841</sup> Questions of love and suffering in perspective of becoming genuinely oneself are unavoidable in a relationship of spiritual direction.

#### 4 God's creatorship

A current debate amongst scholars in the study of mysticism and spiritual

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<sup>836</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>837</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: f.173v (490).

<sup>838</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: f.10v (162).

<sup>839</sup> Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: The Classical Tribute to Hope From the Holocaust*, trans. Ilse Lash, 5th ed. (London: Rider, 2004).

<sup>840</sup> Sebastian Moore, *The Fire and the Rose are One* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 13

<sup>841</sup> Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming A Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (London: Constable, 1961; reprint, London: Constable, 1993), 166. Rogers refers to Søren Kierkegaard's dictum; "to be that self which one truly is."

direction focuses on the extent to which the apophatic and kataphatic character of spiritual experience are equally accepted as formative of a deepening awareness of God. Janet Ruffing articulates a definition of kataphatic spiritual experience that appreciates it as the way through which a person becomes attentive to God.

Typically, kataphatic refers to experiences of God which are mediated through one of God's creatures, either something external to the person such as nature, art, language, sound, ritual, another person, etc. or through a content of the person's consciousness such as visions, prophetic words or locutions.<sup>842</sup>

Grace Jantzen argues that scholarly research of mysticism is one-sided in the understanding of mysticism as an apophatic experience. According to Jantzen, this one-sided understanding in the apophatic nature of spiritual experience is induced by a predominantly male approach to mystical experience, to the detriment of female experiences of God expressed in imaginative language.<sup>843</sup> Ruffing favours a similar argument as Jantzen for the lack of interest in kataphatic experience within spiritual direction.<sup>844</sup> The argumentation might account for the continuous defence of Julian's theological orthodoxy with emphases to her adherence to the church's teaching. Julian ascertains that her insights are accessible through faith and emphasises that she does not waver from the teaching of the church, as if to give assurance of the substance of visions as a source of theological insight.<sup>845</sup>

Ruffing broadens the argument with a critical interpretation of the theology of the Christian tradition, because it "emphasizes distance between the creator God and creatures."<sup>846</sup> The theology of the creation *ex nihilo* posed the absolute difference between creator and creature and engendered a mystical theology of the knowing of God that is rooted in not knowing.<sup>847</sup> In addition to Ruffing's insight, I want to add that the idea of God as a judge discourages kataphatic experience. Due to a one-side development of the image of God as judge, the awareness of the loving creatorship of God and the eminence of human nature created in the image of God became lost in the transmission of the Christian

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<sup>842</sup> Ruffing, "World Transfigured," 232.

<sup>843</sup> Jantzen, *Christian Mysticism*, 279.

<sup>844</sup> Ruffing, "World Transfigured," 232-3.

<sup>845</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.19v (180) and 13.33: f.60r-v (263-4).

<sup>846</sup> Ruffing, "World Transfigured," 233.

<sup>847</sup> Louth, *Christian Mystical Tradition*, 76-7.

tradition. The development of the image of God as a judge not only strengthens the idea of separation between God and creatures, but also alienates the Christian from the awareness of seeing God's love within the creation and to receive that love within the human nature. Seeing God as a judge overlooked the possibility of the deification of the human person through the working of God and the interiorisation of love and compassion. The creation and the human nature are discarded in the mediation of the love of God and thus the path of kataphatic religious experience is closed.

Julian's kataphatic mystagogy is rooted in the awareness that the human being is created in the image of God. Her use of an image of God's creation, seeing the creation lying in the palm of her hand, enables the progression to a deeper spiritual insight into reciprocity between transcendence and indwelling of God in the creation.<sup>848</sup> Julian continues a theology and form of spiritual direction in which the creation is seen as the vestige of God: the creation as God's craft bears the imprint of the hand of the creator. The church fathers held a deep respect for the creation and were sensitive to the beauty of nature. An example is Gregory Nazianzen, whose writing about creation sounds like a poetic homily on nature's magnificence and leads to the contemplation of God's creatorship.<sup>849</sup> Evagrius of Pontus (346-399) regards abandonment of physical needs into the hands of God as a way of spiritual prayer. "Entrust to God the needs of the body, and it will be clear that you entrust to Him the needs of your spirit also."<sup>850</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux expresses a deep respect for the human body and articulates that the physical needs are included in the spiritual path as they allow the recognition of God's love.<sup>851</sup> These strands in the Christian tradition are not suspicious of the beauty of creation and open to experience the human body as expression of God's love.

The idea of separation between God and the creation of humanity as well as a suspicion toward the human body and sexuality is strengthened by the influence

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<sup>848</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9r-10v (159-62).

<sup>849</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Second Theological Oration- on God*, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 21-7.

<sup>850</sup> Evagrius of Pontus, *On Prayer: 153 Texts*, in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth*, trans. G. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, 31, vol. 1 (London: Faber and Faber, 1979; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1983). 31.

<sup>851</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, in *The Twelve Steps of Humility and Pride, and On Loving God*, ed. Halcyon Backhouse (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1985), 2.2 and 8.23-5.

of Augustine's teaching of original sin.<sup>852</sup> In the context of his discussion of the transmission of sin through the parents, Augustine gives no definitive answer to the question whether God is present in the procreation and formation of a child and whether the child receives life from God.<sup>853</sup> His defence clears God from any responsibility for transmitting the taint of original sin in humanity. His problem is: if God has a hand in creating a newborn child, then God is responsible for the transmission of sin. In proposing the independence of the generation of new life, Augustine gives the impression that the creation is created with an independence from the life-giving creatorship of God. He assumes that humanity is endowed with the natural power of reproduction and that a foetus develops independently from God. His contentions contribute to an image of God who is outside physical experience and separate from the creation.

Interestingly, the tone of Augustine's understanding of the creatorship of God changes when he is not concentrated on a defence of the transmission of original sin. Augustine is aware of God's continuous creatorship, which idea finds its roots in the Scriptures and has always been an integral understanding in the tradition of the church fathers.

But in what state did God make man from the slime of the earth? Did He make him a fully developed man, that is, an adult in the vigour of young manhood, or an infant, as He makes human beings today in mothers' wombs? He who performs these deeds is none other than He who said: *Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.*<sup>854</sup>

His understanding of God results from a deeper level of *lectio divina* in which the mystical sense of scripture is revealed and images of God are interpreted metaphorically. He stands in the tradition of the church fathers in discussing that the hand of God, which moulds Adam from the dust, is a metaphor of the wisdom and omnipotence of God through whom humanity is created with the eminence of God's image.<sup>855</sup>

Julian's spiritual direction prompts a reorientation of self-awareness; it is appropriate to acknowledge God as the creator and the creation as transparent to

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<sup>852</sup> See Brown, *Augustine*, 390-3.

<sup>853</sup> Augustine, *Genesis*, 10.10.17 and 10.14.23.

<sup>854</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.13.23.

<sup>855</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.12.20-1.

the loving and creative working of God. Humanity exists in dependence on the creation as well as on God. The awareness of the smallness of the creation in the light of eternity guides the Christian to become aware of dependence on the creatorship of God. The meditative visionary image shows how the creation is lying safe and secure in the palm of God's hand, and thus brings to awareness that God's love holds the creation into being.<sup>856</sup> God's omnipotence includes homeliness. In her vision of the formation of the human body, Julian explores how religious experience is mediated through God's creation. God creates the human body and God sustains its natural functioning. Her vision of God's working in the lowest part of human needs envisages how deeply God loves the creation.<sup>857</sup> The creative working of God is experienced within the human body and thus the body becomes the locus for spiritual closeness with God. The physical functioning of the body reflects the intimate *homely* love of the divine.

The spiritual direction given by Julian can easily be misunderstood as she counsels to hold as nothing all that is created in order to love God. "Of this nedeth vs to haue knowledge· that vs lyketh nought all thing that is made· for to loue ~~god~~ and haue god that is vnmade."<sup>858</sup> It appears as if the recommendation refers to either an ascetic or an apophatic approach to God in the transcending of creation. Physical asceticism is never mentioned in the *Showing of Love* and, instead, she focuses on the mystical awareness that the human is physically dependent on God's creative work. Her awareness that God's love transcends human judgement does not lead her to emphasise an apophatic path in the pursuit of knowing God, but rather to an exaltation of the human longing for God.

Julian's advice to hold as nothing all created should be held together with her expression of God's deep respect and love for the creation and the needs of the human body. Her theology promotes awareness of God's creative favour in the functioning of the body. Her visionary sight of God's involvement in the physical development of the human body functions as a meditative image to contemplate the dependency of the createdness on God and thus provides spiritual direction to her fellow Christians into the awareness of God's closeness with human creation. God is intimately attending the formation of the body and the physical needs. God forms the flesh, the skin, the bones and the organs. The grace of God's

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<sup>856</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9r-10v (159-62).

<sup>857</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: ff.12r-13r (165-7).

<sup>858</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9v-10r (160-1).

goodness invigorates and sustains the most intimate life-processes of the human body and comes down to the lowest part of the human needs to open the body in answer to the call of nature.

A man goyth vppe ryght and the soule of his body is sparyde as a purse fulle feyer · And whan it is tyme of his necessity · it is openyde and sparyde ayen fulle honestly · ¶ And that it is he · that Doyth this it is schewed ther wher he leyth · he comyth downe to vs to the lowest parte of oure nede · ffor he hath no dispite of that he made Ne he hath no disdeyne to serue vs at the symplest office that to oure body longyth in kynde · for loue of the soule that he made to his awne lycknesse · ¶ ffor as p<sup>e</sup> body is cladd in the cloth · and the flessch in the kynne · and the bonys in p<sup>e</sup> flessch and the harte in the bowke so ar we soule and body cladde and enclosydde in the goodnes of god.<sup>859</sup>

The image of God's formation of the human body promotes awareness of God's intimate closeness to human life, as the creative work of God is experienced in the life-giving nature of the body. The emphasis on the lowliness to which God descends in embracing the human nature captures the intimacy and closeness of God to the createdness of human life. Julian's approach to the human body as a locus of religious experience stands in sharp contrast with the rejection of body and sexuality, which has become prevalent in the Christian tradition, as it favours celibacy and virginity over sexual relationship. For example, Augustine's self-disclosures reveal a struggle in refraining from sexual relationship and making a decision for celibacy. He wishes to live celibate after his conversion to Christianity.<sup>860</sup> Augustine asserts that experience of sexual lust is a punishment for original sin, as sexuality is not controlled by the will. Margery Kempe is an example of the denial of the worthiness of sexuality within marriage, as, after giving birth to fourteen children, she mourns her loss of virginity and demands a celibate relationship with her husband for the honour of being a virgin of Christ.<sup>861</sup>

Julian conveys a deep respect for the needs and desires of the human body. The body is experienced as a marvellous creation that is deeply loved by God and

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<sup>859</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: ff.12r-v (165-6).

<sup>860</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.7.16.

<sup>861</sup> Kempe, *Book of Margery Kempe*, 46-7, 56 and 58-60.

dependent on the life giving might of God the creator. When she writes about the opening of the body in the time of our necessity, she seems to refer not only to the catharsis of physical deposits; she will have had also in mind the desire for and enjoyment of sexual intercourse as well as the process of giving birth. Julian is intuitively female in her attention to the opening of the body and the intermingling of pain and wonder in giving birth. Julian talks about Christ as Mother to give expression to God's creative participation in both the physical and spiritual forth bringing of the human. Christ labours in mothers' painful physical contraction of the womb in giving birth.

To the properte of moderhede longyth kynd loue · wy]dom and knowyng · and it is god · ffor though it be fo þ<sup>t</sup> oure bodely forthbryngyng be but lytle · lowe · and ]ymple in regard of oure go]tely forth brynggyng yett it is he that doth it · in the creaturys by whom that it is done.<sup>862</sup>

Seeing Christ as Mother reveals a feminine understanding of the creatorship of God and communicates intuitively God's intimate involvement in the pain and joy of giving birth: both physically and spiritually. Christ forms the human body in the mother's womb and labours in its forth bringing, while throughout life Christ sustains the physical functioning and spiritual development in a continuous creative process.

Julian's vision portrays the human body and its needs as trustworthy in their experience of God's love. The trustworthiness is grounded in the physical desire for a union and relationship that is a reflection of the human longing for God: "for loue of the ]oule that he made to his awne lyckne]e."<sup>863</sup> The physical need of sexuality receives its orientation within God; God's creative might is suffused with love and creates a dynamic that directs physical desire to a loving relationship. Julian's understanding that the human desire finds fulfilment in the love of God is pivotal for the kataphatic character of her spiritual direction. Her spiritual direction into awareness of being loved by God provides a decisive moment of discernment in the realisation that human longings are reaching out to mutuality in love as its only fulfilment. The mutuality of love within human relationships can mediate and enhance the experience of being loved by God: "for oure kyndely

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<sup>862</sup> Paris MS, 14.60: f.130r (403).

<sup>863</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: f.12v (166).

wille is to haue god · and the good wylle of god is to haue vs.”<sup>864</sup> The experience of God’s love for the body and its needs reveals the lovability and thus the inherent worthiness of the human person. God’s love becomes the directive force within human needs and longings and enables the human to establish a genuine self-love as well as mutually loving relationships.

Ruffing emphasises that sexual desire is an expression of God’s love and its exploration should be a fundamental part of the spiritual direction relationship.<sup>865</sup>

Celibate mystics wrote most of the mystical literature and were taught to sublimate their sexuality into disinterested love, not the ardor of passion. This often left married or single people with the impression that their embodied loving did not lead to mystical love.<sup>866</sup>

She argues that spiritual directors need to have knowledge of the reciprocal loving relationship that is expressed in the tradition of love mysticism, in which women and men experience union with Christ within their sexual desire and describe it in erotic language. In addition, they cannot do without “an adequate phenomenology of desire, which relates forms of human love to their fundamental goal of union with God.”<sup>867</sup>

Ruffing evaluates a male and a female form of spiritual direction in focusing desires by comparing Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) and Gertrud the Great’s (1256-1302) *Spiritual Exercises*. Whereas Ignatius emphasises awareness of sin, Gertrud explores mystical union and “invites her retreatant to the *spiritual marriage*, with exercises awakening love in mutual cherishing.”<sup>868</sup> Similarly, Julian’s approach to spiritual guidance emphasises the reciprocal love longing between God and human, whereas the awareness of sin is embedded within that longing.

To become aware of the loving gaze of God is the most profound form of spiritual direction shining through in the *Showing of Love*. “Lo how I loue thee.”<sup>869</sup> Julian’s vision of the physical creation of the human body awakens the

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<sup>864</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: f.13r (167).

<sup>865</sup> Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction*, 95-123.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>867</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. See Gertrud the Great of Helfta, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Gertrud Jaron Lewis and Jack Lewis (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1989); Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. Louis J. Puhl (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951).

<sup>869</sup> Paris MS, 10.24: ff.46v-47r (236-7).

contemplative mystery of God's enduring love. The formation of the body and the human needs is experienced on a deeper mystical level as the formation of the human deepest desire for God:

ffor oure soule is so pre[sciu]ly louyd of hym that is hygh[est] that it ouer passeth the knowyng of alle creatures ¶ That is to say · ther is no creature that is made that may witt how much · and how swetely · and how tenderly that oure maker lovyth vs · And therefore we may w<sup>t</sup> hys grace and his helpe · stande in go[t]ly beholdyng w<sup>t</sup> euerlastyng marveylyng in this hygh ouerpassyng vnme[as]urable love that oure lorde hath to vs of his goodnes.<sup>870</sup>

Julian's theology of the creation out of nothing is of fundamental importance to her mystagogy, because it promotes awareness of the innate love in the human that is experienced as a deep desire to become satiated with the love of God.<sup>871</sup> In her vision of all creation out of the love of God, she sees the lovemaking of God in the creation that awakens the human desire to possess God. "God of thy goodnes geue me thy selfe for thou art Inough to me."<sup>872</sup> God's love desires to possess the totality of human nature and God's loving gaze is a continuous creative influence that brings human nature to its innate purpose of mystical union with God. The loving gaze of God is reflected within the human nature as a deep desire to see God. The spiritual life of transformation in God reaches so deeply into the human nature to the extent that there is nothing created between God and human nature.

But what behyld I ther in verely the maker · the keper · the louer · for till I am sub[st]antially vnited to him I may never haue full re[st]e · ne verie bli[ss]e · p<sup>t</sup> is to say · that I be so fastned to him that ther be right nought that is made betweene my god and me.<sup>873</sup>

Julian's mystagogy guides her fellow Christians into the awesome mystery of trusting the unconditional love of God that is experienced as an endless endeavour of sanctification. That beckoning mystery of God's love becomes the

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<sup>870</sup> Paris MS, 1.6: ff.12v-13r (166-7).

<sup>871</sup> Paris MS, 14.51: f.99v (342).

<sup>872</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: f.10v (162).

<sup>873</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: f.9v (160).

foundation of the spiritual life. God's infinite love is experienced in the courage to hold as nothing all that is created, because everything created dies and passes away, but the goodness of God is always whole and near.<sup>874</sup> The mystagogic initiation into the spiritual life demands "the awakening of the deeper self which is united to God."<sup>875</sup> In the *Showing of Love*, the spiritual process of awakening love and the focussing of desire is described as a noughting: the becoming empty of all that is made.<sup>876</sup>

Julian's mystagogy develops the awareness of beseeching as participation in the trinitarian love, as she regards God as lover and human desire for union with God as ground of prayer.<sup>877</sup> "Beseechyng is a trew and gracious leftyng wyllle of the soule onyd and fastenyd in to the wyllle of oure lorde · by the swet prevy werkyng of the holy goſt."<sup>878</sup> Prayer is not the words spoken to God, but rather the human longing itself expresses a beseeching. Prayer is part of the focusing of desire in God and consists of the awareness of human emotions of anger and resistance to love as well as the awareness of the ability to love.

Prayer onyth the soule to god for though the soule be evyr lyke to god in kynde and in ſuſtaunce reſtoryd by grace· it is ofte vnlike in condeſcion by ſynne of mannes perty· than is prayer a wytneſſe that the soule wyllle as god wyll· And comforyth the conſcience and ablyth man to grace.<sup>879</sup>

In the prayerful relationship with God the whole depth of human emotion needs to come to light in order to be transformed. The human longing is experienced in the body, emotions, desires and intellectual capacity, as they are receptive to the transformative influence of God's love. The human person feels emotions - like anger and wrath- that resist the love of God and hinder the knowing of God.

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<sup>874</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9v-10r (160-1) and 1.6: f.12v (166): for all they varyſſch and waſt away· the goodneſſe of god is ever hole and more nere to vs w<sup>o</sup>u<sup>o</sup>te any compariſon.

<sup>875</sup> Cousins, "Humanity and Passion of Christ," 389.

<sup>876</sup> Paris MS, 1.5: ff.9v-10r (160-1).

<sup>877</sup> Paris MS, 14.42: f.76r (295). Owre lorde wyllle that we haue tru vnderſtondyng and namely in thre thynges that longyth to oure prayer ¶ The furſt is · by whom and howe that oure prayer ſpryngyth · by whom he ſhewyth whan he ſeyth · I am grounde · And how by hys goodneſſe · ffor he ſeyth · furſt it is my wyllle · ffor p<sup>e</sup> ſeconde in what maner and how p<sup>t</sup> we ſhulde vſe oure prayers · And that is that oure wyllle be turned in to the wyllle of oure lorde enjoyeng · And ſo menyth he whan he ſeyeth I make the to wyllle it, ffor the thurde · p<sup>t</sup> we know the fruyt and the ende of oure prayer · that is to be onyd and lyke to oure lorde in althyng And to this menyng and for thys ende was alle thys louely leſſon ſhewed.

<sup>878</sup> Paris MS, 14.41: f.74v (292).

<sup>879</sup> Paris MS, 14.43: f.78v (300).

God's love makes contrary emotions amenable and reorients the human affectivity towards its innate loving capacity.<sup>880</sup> The human created faculties of reason, memory and will are grounded in the love of God and through the influence of desire are drawn into union with that love.<sup>881</sup>

Julian's awareness of God's guidance within the totality of human life follows the desert fathers' concern with prayer. The sayings of the desert fathers express a coming to rest of the heart and intellect through attentiveness to the passions with a discernment of the influence they exercise. Julian's insights are similar to Evagrius's understanding of prayer as the abandonment of the will to God.<sup>882</sup> He devotes some attention to feelings of anger in his treatise on prayer. For Evagrius, anger is a passion that inhibits the human judgement from functioning properly.<sup>883</sup> Prayer is directed towards apophatic wisdom, as the intellect rises above the contemplation of the created world and is not imprinted by any form of image of God.<sup>884</sup> Apophatic wisdom is not an idea of God who is 'above' the creation, but an awareness of God whose compassion cannot be grasped in human terms.<sup>885</sup>

The Holy Spirit, out of compassion for our weakness, comes to us even when we are impure. And if only he finds our intellect truly praying to Him, He enters it and puts to flight the whole array of thoughts and ideas circling within it, and He arouses it to a longing for spiritual prayer.<sup>886</sup>

In addition, Julian's concern that the totality of human life, body, emotions and spiritual faculties are brought into relationship with God prefigures an understanding of God and the spiritual life that is developed in a modern understanding of contemplative prayer, such as expressed by Kelsey.

For some inscrutable reason, something hidden deep in God's nature, God wants to meet the totality of us, in the greatest depth. And only then can God's love touch every part of us and transform or change the whole.<sup>887</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> Paris MS, 14.48: ff.87r-v (317-8).

<sup>881</sup> Paris MS, 14.55: f.115v (374).

<sup>882</sup> Evagrius, *On Prayer*: 153, 55-71.

<sup>883</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-4 and 65.

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid.*, 58 and 67.

<sup>885</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-4.

<sup>886</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>887</sup> Kelsey, *Silence*, 19.

Encounter with love becomes a painful and yet glorifying transformation of the human nature in God. Kelsey expresses the significance of the encounter in terms of a purifying process that conforms the person to likeness with God. “Really meeting the God who is love, means stepping willingly into the refining fire to be slowly remade and changed into the kind of love that one has confronted.”<sup>888</sup>

The *Showing of Love* is like a many faceted jewel reflecting different aspects of the divine-human relationship. From whichever perspective a Christian looks at the jewel, its radiance is permeated by the qualities of God’s profound love for the creation as it exists in God’s image, and God’s compassion with suffering. The core of the jewel is Christ saying: “Lo how I loue thee.”<sup>889</sup> The jewel is evolved around its core of God’s love, which is subsequently reflected in each aspect of human life: human body and deepest desires, pain and compassion, destiny and eternity. Contemplation on the facets of God’s love as it manifests in human life engenders in Christians a transformative guidance through the encounter between self-awareness and awareness of God.<sup>890</sup>

Julian understands that the beatific vision begins on earth as an experience of being loved by God, because God’s love is already incomparably near and close to the createdness of human life. Therefore, the beatific vision is not exterior to the creation, but is expressed within the creation, within the human body, within the interiority of longing and within emotions of joy and pain. The prayer of beseeching involves the discernment of desire to discover that the depth of human desire is a longing to be loved by God. Prayer arises from the awareness of God’s initiative and guidance in the longing of the human. God awakens a beseeching:

I am grounde of thy beſekyng ffurſt it is my wylle that thou haue it · And  
ſythen I make the to wylle it · And ſythen I make the to beſeke it · And thou  
ſekyſt it · how ſchoulde it than be · that thou ſhuldyſt nott haue thy ſekyng.<sup>891</sup>

The beauty of Julian’s spiritual direction lies in trust that God awakens the desire; since it is God’s will for the human to have the desire, God is trustworthy to

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<sup>888</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>889</sup> Paris MS, 10.24: ff.46v-47r (236-7).

<sup>890</sup> Paris MS, 14.56: ff.117v-118r (378-9).

<sup>891</sup> Paris MS, 14.41: f.73v (290).

guide it into the fulfilment of the possession of God.

## **Conclusion**

Julian's spiritual direction is mystagogical, as it counsels Christians to become attentive to the mystery of God in the context of their biographical life-experience through a knowing in love. The knowing of God is realized in the human longing to see God face to face. Her emphasis on knowing through longing integrates an apophatic with a kataphatic approach to spiritual direction. The lived experience of God is apophatic in so far as the height of God's judgement surpasses human knowledge and the meaning of God's will in experiences of pain cannot be fully known. Her spiritual guidance encourages self-acceptance in the light of her view that sin shall be a mark of honour. Julian provides spiritual direction by means of a kataphatic theology, which formulates God's indwelling in the creation and compassionate love for humanity. Her mystagogical guidance is strongly rooted in the reciprocal love and longing between God and humanity, together with the acknowledgement of the presence of emotional pain in human life. God's love is the mystagogical tool for the healing of emotions and their transformation into love. With her emphasis on the unconditional love of God, she develops the understanding of spiritual growth in such a way that it engages with the breath and depth of human longing and emotions. Spiritual growth is the growth in likeness with Christ through an understanding that woundedness pertains to the transfiguration of human life into the glorification of Christ.

## Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates that the strength of Julian's theology lies in the combination of divinely inspired knowledge of God's love together with a faithful searching for answers concerning the magnitude of human suffering and conflicting doctrinal teaching. Sacred learning gave her access to engage with theological thinking based on the Scriptures and formulated doctrine by theologians of the early church that constitutes the foundation of Christian theology. She develops an exegesis of the Scriptures by her attentiveness to visionary images, which resonate with the stories of the creation and the fall of Adam, whilst her reading is inspired by Christ's words and gives a sophisticated understanding of the theological doctrine of the Trinity.

Julian devoted her entire life to the pursuit of the knowledge of God and a deeper understanding of the Christian mysteries of faith. God initiates her devotion, as early in her youth she desires the wound of knowledge about the passionate compassion of God. Her vision of God guides her into the solitary confinement of anchoritic life, a favourable environment for contemplation and writing her mystagogical theology. Anchoritic solitude is a lifetime prison sentence to live with the promise of the beatific vision and the marriage bed of a loving relationship with Christ. The anchoritic cell is a place of sacred learning, where Christ is the teacher and Julian receives her lessons of love. Sacred learning gave access for women in an authoritative speaking about God, and Julian employs her visions engaging her fellow Christians in a conversation in which she unfolds God's love surpassing the image of God presented by the teaching of the church. Her teaching emphasises the unhampered love of God that draws the human into an everlasting longing to possess God.

Julian formulates a theology which connects her with the earliest theologians of the Christian tradition who are concerned with the formulation of doctrine and its implications for the divine-human relationship. Although there is no certainty whether Julian was familiar with the writings of the church fathers, Julian's vision and her theological interpretation influence a way of seeing God which bears the markings of an old tradition within Christianity which sees sinfulness as part of an ongoing growth towards likeness with God. These theologians are concerned with

the formulation of Christian doctrine and explore the implications of the Christian belief for the contemplative life and knowledge of God. They formulate the theology of creation out of nothing, which implies the difference between the uncreated nature of God and the created nature of humanity. Their formulation of the triune God is borne from the experience of God's creatorship, Christ's incarnation and the Holy Spirit for the deification of humanity, which has lost the beholding of God through sin.

The church fathers formulate what it means to be created in the image of God and how humanity is called to grow towards likeness. They describe the lived experience of a loving knowing of the mystery of God. In patristic spirituality the 'created-uncreated' polarity is foundational to the spiritual life as it designs the possibility for an endless progression of the human way of life into the divine- "to become what he will never be: his likeness."<sup>892</sup>

The whole of the spiritual life is extended between the fundamental fact that man is created in God's image, and the infinitely receding but beckoning prospect of this divine image demanding growth into complete likeness to him.<sup>893</sup>

Julian's understanding of God's loving beholding of humanity accentuates a Christian theology and spirituality that was formulated from the beginning of Christianity, and is rooted in the experience of God as the loving creator who cannot be approached otherwise than in loving knowing. The *Showing of Love* positions spiritual growth within the createdness of humanity and its desire to increase in likeness with the love of the uncreated creator. Julian's theology emphasises the creation as loved by God and promotes an awareness of the worthiness of humanity, distancing itself from the dominant spirituality in her time regarding sin and God's wrath. Julian's own spiritual growth spans over twenty years in which she re-examines the proclaimed truth of the church, whilst her spirituality becomes rooted increasingly in the goodness of the creation and the creation of humanity in God's image. Her vision sustains a spiritual growth that breaks out of the narrow confinement of the confession of sins as the focus of Christian spiritual life, as she comes to see it as linked unavoidably with the

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<sup>892</sup> Waaijman, "Definition of Spirituality," 7.

<sup>893</sup> Waaijman, "Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality," 7.

createdness of human nature. She reaches, knowingly or unknowingly, beyond her time to the patristic spirituality in which sin is not autonomous in the Christian lived experience, but part of the dynamic spiritual growth towards likeness with God.

Julian's theology consistently develops the meaning of humanity's creation in God's image within the light of its sanctification through the love of God. The idea of creation out of God's love has far reaching implications for understanding the created nature of humanity as well as the destiny to which humanity is called. The creation by God out of nothing means that creation is sustained by God's creative activity, which emanates a loving attitude and initiates a loving response in the human. Creation out of nothing also means that humanity is created in the image of God. Human nature is mingled with God's nature. Furthermore, the human being is envisaged as a whole identity in sensuality and substance. Through the incarnation of Christ, human sensuality is united with God's substance and participates in the intratrinitarian love that exists within God: seeing and loving God. The creation of the human in the image of the Trinity describes the potential of the spiritual faculties to become aware of God and cleave to God's love.

Julian develops the Christian doctrine of humanity's creation in God's image and the suffering of humanity into a coherent and systematic theology. She integrates two strands in theological thinking into her understanding of Adam's fall; Irenaeus's theology of humanity's creation with vulnerability and the common theology that interprets the fall as a loss of beholding God. Her understanding of God's initiative in creating humanity with a wounded nature has implications for overthrowing Augustine's teaching on human culpability and God's wrath. Julian develops a theology of God's compassion that distances itself from the church fathers' teaching on God's punishment as a mystagogical influence for the conversion of humanity. Her argument emphasises that the nature of God allows compassion but not wrath. God's impassibility is re-examined by her theology of God's loving gaze that is without blame and instead reveals God's suffering with humanity. The ultimate enactment of God's suffering is Christ's crucifixion as the atoning act out of love. The passion reveals the passibility of Christ that continues to exist within the resurrection until all humanity is glorified and the reciprocal bond of suffering is transfigured into a high understanding of the compassionate

love of God.

Christian theodicy regards human freedom and suffering as embedded together within human nature. The church fathers view freedom as the image of God, and in particular Irenaeus formulates how suffering teaches the art of discernment. Julian adheres to the view of the will as created in the image of God and *capax dei*. Her assertion that sin can be known only through pain equates it with a motivation to search for and turn to love God and neighbour. The nobility of God's love is crucial for her apophatic theology in which she sees neither sin nor blame, but instead the inseparable reciprocal bond of love between God and human. Her apophatic knowledge develops consistently the eschatological consequences of God's trustworthiness in loving humanity that precludes any loss in the creation. She sees no separation between the elect and the reprobate, but is told about the definitive prospect of universal salvation. God's foreseeing wisdom is rooted in the intimate knowing and loving of humanity, an influence so powerful that it transforms human resistance to love and transfigures emotions, spiritual senses and faculties into a mutual loving beholding of God in the beatific vision.

I propose that Julian's *Showing of Love* is a valuable source of spiritual direction not only in the fourteenth century, but also in the contemporary religious climate and people's search for the meaning of God's love in the lived experience of human life. She asks the same questions as we ask today regarding human suffering and offers a theology of hope for the healing of painful wounds through God's compassionate love. Julian's talking about God emphasises a knowing in love that intermingles kataphatic with apophatic knowledge. Julian talks about a divine quality of judgement that is beyond human understanding and is difficult to describe with human language. Yet, God's nature is love and this love is accessible to lived experience and has strong implications for a kataphatic form of spiritual guidance. God's creatorship is experienced in the functioning of the body, the formation of human longing and the healing of wounding emotions. Contrition, compassion and longing for God are the image of Christ's self-emptying attitude in response to human suffering and the transfiguration of woundedness into a high knowledge of God.

Hence, my thesis examines Julian's theology systematically and studies its relevance for lived experience. Views that have been formulated in the early

church and have become marginalized or dismissed in the later development of Christian doctrine still have relevance for Julian's theological thinking and have not lost their significance in the twenty first century. Although Julian's treatise was not widely disseminated in her time, its influence regarding the spirituality of Christians is felt especially since the twentieth century. The interest might be attributed to the fact that she binds the marginalized strands of Christian thought into a coherent and sophisticated view on human creation and universal salvation. Furthermore, she emphasises a theology of atonement as an act of love marginalized in the medieval Christian tradition that favoured Anselm's judicial interpretation of Christ's crucifixion.<sup>894</sup> The theology of Irenaeus has proved to be valuable in the current discussion on theodicy and Origen's view of universal salvation is brought to the forefront of Christian thought.<sup>895</sup>

The debate about Julian's faithfulness to the church has led several researchers to conclude that Julian merely alludes to universal salvation, to the passibility of God and God's need for humanity, and thus the research left undecided questions regarding her theological position. Regarding Julian's position on sin, researchers argue that she holds an Augustinian view on human culpability.<sup>896</sup> Regarding God's suffering and compassion, the church teaches that God is impassible and God's suffering is experienced only in the humanity of Christ. Palliser follows this argument by restricting Julian's theology of God's compassion to Christ, who mediates compassion to all humanity.<sup>897</sup> Other research pays no or little attention to the issue of God's passibility and thus disregards a profound strength in Julian's theology.<sup>898</sup> Regarding Julian's position on universal salvation, researchers might point to her words: "I ſpeke of them that ſhalle be ſavyd · for in this tyme god ſhewde me no nother."<sup>899</sup> They interpret Julian's teaching on salvation in the context of her adherence to the teaching of the church regarding a restricted election of humanity to salvation, or argue that she alludes merely to and gives

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<sup>894</sup> Fiddes, *Event and Salvation*, 140-68.

<sup>895</sup> John Hick, *Evil and the Love of God*, 2nd ed. (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1977; reprint with a new preface, Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1990); John A.T. Robinson, *In the End: God...: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things* (London: James Clarke, 1950); Karl Rahner, "The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions," in vol. 4 of *Theological Investigations*, 323-46, and "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," in vol. 12 of *Theological Investigations*, 199-224; Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God*, vol. 2 of *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957).

<sup>896</sup> See Pelphrey, *Love was His Meaning*, 294; Jantzen, *Mystic and Theologian*, 179 and 182; Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 134-5; Palliser, *Christ, Our Mother*, 38, n.84; Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 74-5.

<sup>897</sup> Palliser, *Christ, Our Mother*, 172-6.

<sup>898</sup> See Gatta, *Three Spiritual Directors*, 72-5; Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 87 and 94-5.

<sup>899</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.19r (179).

only hope regarding the salvation of all humanity.<sup>900</sup> The argumentation does not hold true in view of the very specific statements that Julian makes: Adam carries no blame; in Christ it is God who suffers; she sees no hell nor purgatory; the creatorship of God does not allow anything to perish; the loving bond between God and humanity is eternal, and God's love is all embracing.

My theological research demonstrates that Julian, albeit cautiously, formulates explicitly some outstanding aspects of her theology regarding humanity's lack of blame, God's passibility and universal salvation. My argument regarding Julian's theological position takes into account that Julian sees Christ as the church. Christ is the way through which God's love is experienced and forms the ultimate foundation of the truth for the Christian faith. Therefore, my research of her theologising brings to light a unique interpretation of faith in Christ and salvation. Julian overthrows the teaching of Augustine, whose answer to theodicy, in terms of humanity as a fallen and culpable race, offers little hope of the transfiguration of suffering through the human ability to love. Augustine holds that all humanity is by definition reprobate, but reprobates can be saved depending on God's arbitrary choice. Julian theologises that humanity is created in imperfection, because its created nature is designed with an inability to behold continuously God's love. Nevertheless, human free will is directed to growth in likeness with God and will be liberated by God's overwhelming initiative to love and long for humanity. Hence, Julian's theology formulates a doctrine of universal salvation, as all will be saved by God's unwavering graceful love that reaches out to all humanity. Her words are very explicit and also express God's fulfilment in saving all humanity, as God indwells humanity: "ffor in mankynd that þhall be þavyd is comprehendyd alle · that is to þey · alle that is made · and the maker of alle · ffor in man is god · And in god is alle."<sup>901</sup> Together with humanity, God is encompassed in salvation. Julian develops the idea of God's passibility. In Christ it is God who suffers and who gives Christ the strength to suffer human pain for the transfiguration of all humanity. Julian's theology expresses Christ's need of the reciprocal love of humanity to become glorified, as his suffering with humanity

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<sup>900</sup> Gatta, *Three Spiritual Directors*, 53 and 61; Jantzen, *Mystic and Theologian*, 178-9; Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 18-19 and 162-69; Vinje, *Understanding of Love*, 140, n.111; Nowakowski, *Vision to Book*, 79-80; Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 196. Kerrie Hide forms an exception; although she acknowledges that Julian does not oppose the teaching of the church regarding damnation, she still makes a definite statement in favour of Julian's theology of universal salvation. Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 184-96.

<sup>901</sup> Paris MS, 1.9: f.18v (178).

will end with the sanctification of all humanity. In the beatific vision all humanity will see that the glorification of Christ is intertwined with the sanctification of humanity as the crown of Christ's glory. In the beatific vision, humanity shall receive impassibility, together with a high understanding of human woundedness and a high knowledge of God's compassionate love.

My thesis provides a basis for evaluating Julian's relevance for contemporary theology, as mystical theology is increasingly appreciated as a source of systematic theological reflection. My thesis complements the test-case studies of Elizabeth Dreyer, in favouring Julian's importance for trinitarian and pneumatological theology.<sup>902</sup> Furthermore, it promotes her significance for a renewed thinking in christological, soteriological and eschatological theology. The thesis reflects on creation out of God's trinitarian love, theodicy, suffering, God's compassion and foreseeing wisdom, the beatific vision, and gives an onset to a dialogue with other religions in the light of the universal and inclusive nature of her teaching as well as her emphasis on compassion.<sup>903</sup> The contemporary interest in Julian's theology and spirituality shows that her theological endeavour is taken seriously. Thomas Merton has set the scene for an appraisal of her eschatology, and, increasingly, theologians are influenced by her theology and its implications for lived spirituality. Her relevance has not only a bearing on feminist theology in emphasising her image of God as Mother.<sup>904</sup> John Milbank exemplifies the significance of her theology for reflection on forgiveness.<sup>905</sup> Her view that God cannot forgive because God cannot be offended inspires his reflection on forgiveness as an ability given to humanity. According to Paul Fiddes, the development of Jürgen Moltmann's thought of reciprocal glorifying between God and humanity might well have been influenced by new acquaintance with Julian's ideas about the thirst and desire of Christ.<sup>906</sup>

Because my thesis emphasises Julian's interpretation of Christian doctrine in

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<sup>902</sup> Elizabeth A. Dreyer, "The Trinitarian Theology of Julian of Norwich: Mysticism and Theology -A Test Case," *Studies in Spirituality* 4 (1994): 79-93 and Dreyer, "Narratives of the Spirit," 97-140.

<sup>903</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R.A. Wilson and J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974); Marian F. Sia and Santiago Sia, *From suffering to God: Exploring Images of God in the Light of Suffering* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Elizabeth A. Dreyer, ed. *The Cross in Christian Tradition: From Paul to Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000). Davies, *Theology of Compassion*.

<sup>904</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

<sup>905</sup> John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003; reprint, London: Routledge, 2003), 60, 61-2.

<sup>906</sup> Fiddes, *Suffering of God*, 85 n.26.

view of lived experience and the personal entrusting to God, it contributes to reflection on the art of spiritual direction and mystagogy. The contemporary interest in the *Showing of Love* indicates that its articulation of creation in the image of God appeals to an intuitive knowing in Christians of the depth of mutual divine-human love. Her relevance includes reflection on God's foreseeing wisdom as an intimate loving and knowing of humanity that gives guidance through the Holy Spirit into the release of pain and an increasing ability to love. Furthermore, her emphasis on God's intratrinitarian love unlocks religious experience within the human longing for relationship with God. Julian's approach to spiritual direction prefigures trends that integrate psychological insights with contemplative prayer, as she emphasises the positive aspects of human nature, and views falling into sin as a possibility to deepen the relationship with God. Approaches to spirituality, which integrate the insights of depth psychology, hold the view that a relationship with God needs to include attention to the dark and unconscious side of human nature, and appreciate the human desire as a pathway to God, in which conditioned desires become liberated into the deepest desire to be loved.<sup>907</sup> Julian's influence extends to the discipline of psychotherapy. Brian Thorne describes Julian's relevance for understanding a person-centred approach to counselling and insights in healing.<sup>908</sup>

Julian's theology elucidates the paschal mystery in the historical person of Christ, but also reaches beyond the historical perspective towards an incarnational theology that sees Christ as the image of God in human nature and a soteriology that emphasises Christ's compassionate love for and suffering with all humanity. Although Julian's theology is formulated within the Christian tradition, her eschatological perspective is inclusive of all humanity, even those who do not adhere to the Christian belief or are unaware of its mysteries of faith. Julian wonderfully mixes theological audacity with true humility, not trying to fill in the blanks of what she is not shown: that mix of audacity and humility, with a deep apophatic awareness, is much needed in the church today, which is too often too

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<sup>907</sup> See Gerald G. May, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982); Ulanov, *Primary Speech*; Sebastian Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985); Elizabeth A. Dreyer, *Manifestations of Grace* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990); Anselm Grün and Gerhard Riedl, *Mystik und Eros*, 7th ed. (Münsterschwarzach, Vier-Türme Verlag, 2005).

<sup>908</sup> Brian Thorne, *Person-Centred Counselling and Christian Spirituality: The Secular and the Holy* (London: Whurr Publishers: 1998), 105-16 and Brian Thorne, *Infinitely Beloved: The Challenge of Divine Intimacy* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 7-21.

certain.<sup>909</sup> Julian gives a comforting message to a diverse audience. She writes for Christians who are terrified by the concept of a God who exercises a condemning judgement, in the way it is taught by the traditional teaching of the church. She addresses Christians who have a profound belief in the love of God, but are confused by the theology of original sin that dismisses their inherent worthiness. She approaches people who are searching for the love of God and have not found truth in the Christian teaching of exclusive election through belief in Christ. Julian acknowledges that her book is not ended as it directs to God's love.<sup>910</sup> Because her theology is written with openness to the personal appropriation of questions regarding sin, suffering and God's compassionate love, she invites the individuals' searching for their own answers in relation to their own life. It is not a definitive manual that needs to be followed by the letter, but allows individuals to relate their life to God's love in the diverse situations wherein they find themselves. Julian's theology of God's love stimulates an inner searching, but God guides the search into finding truth in God's compassionate love for humanity.

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<sup>909</sup> I thank Chris Jenkins for this insight.

<sup>910</sup> Paris MS, 16.86: ff.172v-173v (488-90).

## Abbreviations

- ANF      *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325.* Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, Allan Menzies, A. Cleveland Coxe. 10 vols, with 1 vol. Indices. Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885-97. Reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.
- DSp      *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique. Doctrine et Histoire.* Edited by Marcel Villiers, Ferdinand Cavallera, Joseph de Guibert; continued by André Derville, Paul Lamarche and Aimé Solignac. 17 vols. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932-95.
- EETS      *Early English Text Society.* London: Oxford University Press, 1866-.
- LM      *Lexikon des Mittelalters.* 9 vols. Edited by Robert Auty, Robert-Henri Bautier and Norbert Angermann. München: Artemis, 1977-89.
- NPNF      *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers: A Select Library of the Christian Church.* First and Second Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henri Wace. 28 vols. Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886-98 and Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900. Reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.

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