Introduction

How does Julian’s text *Revelations of Divine Love (Showings)* contribute to our own Christian living and our spiritual growth? Julian’s text offers religious educators, people working in parish ministry as well as any other like minded Christians an opportunity to explore the meaning of their faith through Julian’s revelations. Julian’s text opens our eyes today to the second person of the Trinity in her perceptive insights and powerful use of metaphorical language and her descriptive images.

The suffering Christ as shown in Julian’s revelations relates strongly to our own human suffering and our own humanity today. As Christians, we are able to become more fully human and Christ like in our humanity through understanding Christ as displayed in Julian’s text. In understanding our own humanity through the suffering Christ, we are able to offer the same love for humanity that Christ offers us from the cross.

Julian draws us into the presence of Christ in our lives today. The movement into Christ for Julian becomes a movement into the pierced wound of Christ’s body and thus Christ the Holy Mother Church with the water and blood representing for us the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Julian directs us to searching our souls for our own divine goodness. Our own spiritual journey is sometimes blinded and obscured because we fail to see the image of God in Christ within the Holy Trinity as Julian reveals to us.

Julian’s depiction of the suffering Christ upon the crucifix contributes to a deeper and more spiritual meaning in terms of the symbolism of the crucifix. In our prayers and in our own physical wearing of the crucifix, we are able to identify with the purpose of our own human suffering today and our own human nature in the way that Julian indicates to us. It is on the cross that Julian reveals the crucified love of Christ for all humanity. Julian portrays the living presence of Christ working in our lives today through the Eucharist. Christ not only becomes the living presence within our being but the eternal presence that dwells within our soul.

Julian’s text teaches us to experience the real presence of God in Christ within the Holy Trinity and how to live out such an experience in our own spiritual journey today. Julian’s text was one of the great Christian mystical classics of the medieval period and today her text still has worldwide popularity. The network of Julian
meetings, the pilgrimages to Norwich, the annual festival and lectures, all serve to highlight the importance to modern and contemporary Christian spirituality. Julian’s text plays an equally important role in parish ministry groups, retreats, schools and spiritual centres.

Section One – Background and Major Influences on Julian’s Text

Where does Julian’s text place itself in the Christian Spiritual Tradition? Where does Julian fit into the mystic al tradition within Christian spirituality?

Julian’s spirituality has strong similarities with affective piety and devotion. An emotional and close bond with the humanity of Christ comes through Julian’s text similar to well known writers from earlier periods such as Saint Anselm of Canterbury 1033-1109 AD and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux 1090-1153 AD. In both of these earlier writers, the humanity of Christ had a central focus. In Saint Anselm’s Prayers and Meditations especially the “Prayer to Christ”, there exists a strong emotional response to the human suffering of Christ: “I am mindful of your passion, your buffeting, your scourging, your cross, your wounds...” 1 Another key text by Saint Anselm that would have influenced Julian was Cur Deus Homo (Why God became Man) There appears in Julian’s text a common theme that appears in Anselm’s Cur Deus Homo relating to both the divinity and humanity of Christ. Julian writes in her first revelation where she sees the red blood running down from the crown of thorns: “I perceived, truly and powerfully, that it was he who just so, both God and man...”2

Anselm portrays both the divine and human nature in his depiction of Christ contained in his fine work Cur Deus Homo: “Indeed he is both God and Man, so consequently, where his human nature was concerned, from the time he became human, he received from his divine nature.”3 Saint Bernard of Clairvaux’s Sermon to the Song of Songs also has a very familiar theme and an emotional bond to the human suffering of Christ


2 Unless otherwise noted all direct quotations from Julian of Norwich will be taken from Julian of Norwich, Showings, The Classics of Western Spirituality, Translation and Introduction by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A and James Walsh, S.J (Mahwah: Paulist Press1978), 181. * All quotations from this text will appear in brackets with the chapter number then a colon and page number and unless indicated otherwise all quotations will also come from the Long Text.

that takes place in Julian’s text. Bernard repeats the similar theme of identifying with the humanity of Christ as an emotional bond: “The mouth which kisses the Word who assumes human nature; which is assumed the recipient of the kiss; the kiss, which is both giver and receiver, is the Person which is both, the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.”

During the fourteenth century, Julian lived in a time of great writings by other English writers namely Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, the Unknown author to *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Margery Kempe. It is not possible to discover what influences these writers and their texts would have impacted on Julian’s text. The growth of the Christian spiritual and mystical writers was very significant in England as well as continental Europe with Meister Eckhart and Saint Catherine of Siena. Great events occur during Julian’s period 1343-1423 including the Black Plague, the Peasants Revolt 1381, suppression of the Lollards and the Great Schism in the Roman Catholic Church 1381-1417, all taking place before during and after her lifetime. Another major influence would have been the *Ancrene Wisse* (*also known as Riwle*) setting out the life of an anchoress within the anchor hold which Julian enters during the end of the fourteenth century possibly about 1491.

Julian’s text has familiar themes within the Pauline letters in terms of the risen Christ and our own shared suffering with Christ as found in Colossians 1:24: “I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake.” In addition, the suffering servant as depicted in the Prophet Isaiah chapter fifty three would have served as a useful source for Julian’s depiction of the suffering Christ. The most noted passage in the Prophet Isaiah that has the closest connection to the suffering Christ appears in Chapter Fifty Three verse five: “but he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole and by his bruises we are healed.”

In what ways could Julian and her text sit comfortably within the area of Christian mysticism? Are there stages that Julian takes similar to other mystical traditions such as conversion? One must be careful not to merely slip Julian neatly into a strict definition of a Christian mystic. Julian does experience at a deeper and more devoutly

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spiritual level, revelations of the crucified Jesus from the cross. The well respected English writer David Knowles in his text *The English Mystical Tradition* offers an insightful picture for us concerning the definition of a mystical life. As Knowles writes: “...the mystical life is usually distinguished by an awareness, on the part of the individual, of the existence of the soul at a deeper level than that of ordinary mental consciousness, and often the indwelling of God, the Three Divine Persons, within it.”

Knowles has in fact in his precise and succinct style described the nature of Julian of Norwich and her revelations. The soul and presence of both God and Christ form essential foundations as well as Trinity from the beginning of her first revelation to her sixteenth revelation.

Evelyn Underhill sheds light on the phases involved within a spiritual journey in her text *Mysticism A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness*, but not in the same style and preciseness that Knowles arrives at with his description of the mystical life. It is not necessary to place Julian into the phases as Underhill clearly shows in her own text namely the awakening of the self, purgation, Illumination, purification and union. Two distinct types stand out in the Christian Mystical tradition namely the apophatic and kataphatic strands that would have influenced Julian’s text. The first form within the tradition the *apophatic* deals more individuals who experience the divine through negation and a state of nothingness and a state of unknowing. Pseudo- Dionysius, Meister Eckhart and *The Cloud of Unknowing* characterise this form of knowing God.

Julian would fit neatly into the second type or form of mysticism that being *Kataphatic* involving visual images and voices and a personal relationship or bonding with the divine. The fine use by Julian of figurative language has great breadth in meaning and her powerful and vivid images create a further depth of understanding. Julian’s revelations have a beauty and richness of language that have been warmly valued as a spiritual text and great literary work. Julian sees and hears God in Christ which takes us all into her unique spiritual journey and then our own spiritual journey.

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SECTION TWO- THE SUFFERING CHRIST

2.1 Julian’s wounds become our spiritual pathway

Julian seeks three graces as a gift from God, the recollection of Christ’s passion, a bodily sickness and three wounds. Julian experiences the bodily sickness leaving her stricken to her bed for three days and nights. It was on the third night near death that Julian changed her desire to live and seek the mercy of God: “to live and love God better and longer, so that I might through the grace of that living have more knowledge and love of God in the bliss of heaven” (3:179).

Julian seeks the wounds of contrition, compassion and a longing for God. These wounds become Julian’s personal spiritual pathway towards loving God and her fellow Christians. The pathway for Julian begins with her own bodily sickness that becomes almost fatal until her local priest places the crucifix before her and a sudden change and removal of her pain occurs. At this point, the first of Julian’s sixteen revelations begins with the bodily vision of a bleeding Christ on the cross.

Brant Pelphrey refers to a similar progression in terms of a spiritual life relating to Julian’s three wounds which would be an appropriate model for serious minded Christians seeking their own spiritual journey. Pelphrey highlights in very clear language the essence of Julian’s first wound namely the wound of contrition. The key and essential emphasis on Julian’s first wound of contrition according to Pelphrey would require the act of true contrition which in Pelphrey’s own words mean: “to repent on behalf of others.”

Canon Michael McLean differs from Pelphrey on Julian’s first wound by presenting in his 2005 Annual Julian Lecture, a fuller meaning to what true contrition means for our own human nature. His emphasis deals more with the individual as he states: “turning from the self to God, centring upon him. This will involve the pain (wound) of abandoning self gratification.”

This explanation by McLean fits in more with Grace Jantzen’s interpretation of Julian’s three wounds.

Grace Jantzen in her text *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* claims that for Julian her three wounds also become the pathway for: “a transformation of the self in

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10 Brant Pelphrey, *Christ Our Mother Julian of Norwich,* (Wilmington, Michael Glazier, 1989), 180.
11 Ibid. 182
12 Canon Michael McLean “Jesus of the Scars” 2005 Annual Julian Lecture  St Julian’s Church, Norwich on 14th May 2005, 12.
total conversion towards God.”

Jantzen and McLean both make significant contributions concerning the crucial importance of the first wound of contrition. It would be appropriate however to state that both Jantzen and McLean make assumptions that people require a total make over in the way they live in the world rather than making a gradual turning towards God. Human nature has a degree of self preservation and Julian’s first wound would be better served in directing ourselves towards God when we become less concerned with loving God and others. It is more a matter of not allowing oneself to be obsessed with self gratification to the point where one forgets basic human dignity and respect. It is not necessary to cut oneself from the world, but to live in the world. One does not need to abandon everything to serve God; there is no requirement to live as a recluse. Julian’s message in the wound of contrition is to never abandon God and be consumed by the pleasures of the world at the expense and suffering of others. Christian growth within the context of Julian’s wound of contrition would point faithful Christians towards their own acts of contrition for the wounds of humanity. There have been great acts of contrition and healing wounds of love and compassion as demonstrated by Saint Maria Goretti. Her forgiveness of her killer Alessandro Serenelli before she died of her fatal stab wounds demonstrate on one level the merciful love of God working through Maria Goretti. The act of contrition by Alessandro and his own transformation after serving out his thirty year sentence and taking up his new life as a Capuchin tertiary, serves a beautiful reminder of our merciful Creator who forgives the transgressor when the wound of contrition works through individuals like Alessandro.

In the act of being contrite and a desire to be forgiven as well as the act of forgiveness of the sinner must also be a healing wound. Failure to forgive also means a failure to love and a failure to love others with compassion. Christ forgives from the cross, a compassionate act of love, in life we should be encouraged to carry out the wound of forgiveness as part of Julian’s three wounds.

The second and third wounds namely the wound of compassion and longing for God have further dimensions for our Christian spiritual journey. Canon Michael McLean

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13 Jantzen, Julian of Norwich, 67.
14 Maria Goretti was born in Corinaldo Italy on October 16th 1890. On July 5th 1902, Maria was mortally wounded by Alessandro Serenelli after an attempted sexual assault. Maria died later of her wounds at the age of 11 years, however she had forgiven Alessandro before her death. Maria was beatified on April 27th 1947 and then her canonisation took place on June 24th 1950.
describes this second wound as: “As far as compassion goes we need to remember that Christ on the cross was undergoing not simply passion but com-passion.”

Pelphrey goes further to describe Julian’s entire theology as a: “theology of compassion”. On this point, Pelphrey has drawn on one of Julian’s most powerful and beautiful images of Christ for all believing Christians. We share this compassionate suffering with Christ and most importantly with others when they suffer greatly in this world. Both Pelphrey and McLean have highlighted correctly the most fundamental Christian virtue that all faithful Christians should believe in, that is the compassionate love of Christ from the cross.

In Julian’s own words in her thirteenth revelation in chapter twenty eight: “So I saw how Christ has compassion on us because of sin; and just as I was filled full of pain and compassion on account of Christ’s Passion, so I was now in part filled with compassion for all my fellow Christians…” (Chapter 28, p 226)

The third wound, the longing for God has significant meaning for Julian and for all Christians. Michael McLean states the meaning of this third wound in very beautiful terms that makes sense for us all: “The third wound is the ever deepening longing for God. It is not just a longing for God in the bliss of heaven at the end of our days; it is the ever-present reality or possibility here and now”

This makes perfect sense for modern readers of Julian’s text to find and search for a fuller meaning to their spiritual growth in their faiths. McLean has highlighted one area that is sometimes missed even today relating to Julian’s text.

We must all long for God continually in our Christian living. God must be our centre in our thinking and acting towards others, to see the image of God in our fellow human beings must be our central thought. Julian shows us all an enlightening description of the compassionate and merciful face of God in her Parable of the Lord and the Servant. This image of God will be dealt with later in the major section on Christ in the Trinity and the Image of God.

Our own sense of despair and hopelessness must not overcome us; we must seek to be healed by these wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God. God will love us regardless of the times when we sin. There is no blame by God only pity and compassion for us. Julian herself states that these three wounds do in fact heal us in

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15 McLean “Jesus of the Scars” 2005, 12.
life: “By contrition we are made clean, by compassion we are made ready, and by true longing for God we are made worthy” (39:244).

In finding the meaning of the previous quotation from Julian, one must look according to the words of Julian at how we live in this world today. To be contrite and reflect on our lives and where we have allowed ourselves to forget the needs of those that have less chances in life. To be reflective of our possessions and not wanting more, to be contrite during the times we fail to see Christ in our neighbour. Christ’s displays compassion from the cross, our lives and our spiritual journey need to demonstrate a compassion for the suffering humanity.

As the Prophet Isaiah describes the suffering servant with the well known passage as stated earlier in chapter 53 verse 5: “...and by his bruises we are healed”, Julian builds upon this famous verse from Isaiah by referring in her own way to the healing wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God: “Though he be healed, his wounds are not seen by God as wounds but as honours” (39:244). These wounds serve us all today in our Christian faith; we live by these wounds to enrich us spiritually and to grow in the love of others and the love of God in others.

Julian does in fact stress: “”...we shall be rewarded in heaven by the courteous love of almighty God...” (39:245), this then does not prevent us from living our life here and now in this world and thus allowing Julian’s three wounds to guide us upon our journey. These wounds become more meaningful and purposeful for our own Christian living if we see these wounds as healing wounds. These wounds draw us closer to our Creator in the here and now.

Julian’s spiritual pathway is a strong indicator for our own Christian living today. It is very insightful of her to understand how much we do despair at every point in our life experiences in this world. Julian’s wounds are for us today “Wounds of Life” that spiritually enrich us when we seek a fuller and more meaningful personal growth in our spiritual faith. When we delve into self gratification and allow personal gain and our own selfish desires to take hold of our thoughts, Julian’s “Wounds of Life” direct us back to how we should be living and upholding our Christian beliefs.

Depression is a major mental disease and reason for suicide due to our own sense of hopelessness over our lives. If we could see Christ the way that Julian sees Christ where he sorrows for our pain and desires us to know that he loves us always, and then hopefully we would never feel alone or abandoned. Julian explains this love that
our Lord God displays for us: “For our courteous Lord does not want his servants to despair because they fall often and grievously; for our falling does not hinder him loving us” (39:245). Faith filled Christians must display this divine love into their own living towards those who live in continual misery and despair. It is the wound of compassion that must be poured out from our own cross to the sick and to those who have been abandoned in our society.

The journey of healing begins with these wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God. Our journey in life includes many forms of healing when we are broken by sin and guilt. As Julian expresses so beautifully that we are cleansed by our contrition which for all of us today should involve our continual willingness to accept our faults and be sorrowful and contrite before God. The healing as part of this spiritual pathway includes our own commitment to Christ as Julian indicates: “The blessed wounds of our saviour are open and rejoice to heal us” (61:302). Jesus’ wounds heal us in the same manner as portrayed in the Prophet Isaiah and depiction of the suffering servant. The wounds of Christ heal us through our participation and celebration of the Eucharist and our own personal commitment to living out the meaning of the Eucharist in our own spiritual journey. Julian indicates further the role of Christ the Holy Mother Church in chapter sixty of her fourteenth revelation as the mother who becomes our “precious food of true life” (60:298). Do we engage fully in the meaning of receiving the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist? The “precious food” should become the rich source and sustenance of our spiritual growth, the sustaining and life giving strength to our faith.

These wounds should also become “wounds of love” as well as earlier stated “wounds of life.” Christ’s wounds heal us and equally our empathy and affinity with these wounds should resemble healing “wounds of love” that we seek always to bring forth in our actions to others.

Society is in need of healing, people require the feeling of being cleansed and healed with love. Christian love deals with the most basic human action of all, that is to forgive and Julian highlights this so well in her Parable of the Lord and the Servant. Healing wounds of love bring us closer to the compassion of the cross.

Our spiritual movement towards God in our lives today could be guided by the same three wounds of Julian. Living out the wounds of contrition, compassion and a longing for God becomes a personal journey through life itself. Julian’s text serves as
model, as a beacon of light, a rich source of spiritual enlightenment to live by in our world. Julian’s wounds become for us our entry point into the world to intercede through our deeds and actions towards the under privileged and the poor and outcast. By incorporating Christ’s wounds as Julian desires three wounds, we become more Christ like in our own humanity.

The wounds become a spiritual guide as well as pathway to live in the world but to live and discover our true Christian humanity. Our world takes us away from becoming more Christ like in our humanity, the wounds as Julian describes for us, bring us back. It is for our own Christian faiths to face the challenges within this world and not be consumed by impulses that distort our way of understanding what it means to be fully human and fully Christian.

Gillian Ahlgren takes up a similar theme in her well researched article entitled: “Julian of Norwich’s Theology of Eros.” This desire does not become sexual rather it is a desire for love in Ahlgren’s own understanding of Julian’s three wounds. In essence this eros makes us become more human through our imitation of Christ. This imitation in Ahlgren’s own words means: “...to pour out, in love –towards others, we make more manifest the body of Christ in our own time and space.”

In essence this key point by Ahlgren reinforces the need to incorporate Julian’s three wounds in our own actions of love towards the people in our world here and now. We live for today with the wounds of contrition, compassion and longing for God.

The wounds of love and healing stem from Christ’s wounds that pour out the blood and water from the body of the crucified Christ on the cross as will be discussed fully in the next sections. It is through Julian’s first revelation that we begin to understand how she draws herself and her fellow Christians into the Body of Christ on the crucifix. The vision of the suffering and crucified body of Christ becomes a sacramental link to the Church as the Body of Christ. The most powerful image for Julian is the crucifix and the precious blood of Christ that pours out from the body for the redemption and salvation of humanity.

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2.2 Precious Blood of Christ

The crucifix represents the most important symbol in Christianity. It is the essence of our faith it forms the visual symbol for all our prayers and worship. As for Julian it also becomes the key and crucial focus for her as stated earlier at the point of her death. In the same way, her first revelation arises out of her deep desire on seeing the crucifix as her own words state: “I desired to suffer with him, living in my mortal body, as God would give me grace” (4:181).

Julian experiences even in her first revelation, the sight of a great loss of blood from the head of Christ. The blood flows like a “living stream” and Julian still sees beyond the physical loss of blood to understand a deeper meaning: “I perceived, truly and powerfully, that it was he who just so, both God and man...” (4:181). Julian experiences her threefold dimensions of her revelations namely her bodily visions, the words and her spiritual visions. The Trinity is incorporated within the first revelation as she tells us: “And in the same revelation, suddenly the Trinity filled my heart full of the greatest joy....And this was revealed in the first vision and in them all, for where Jesus appears the blessed Trinity is understood, as I see it” (4:181). The suffering Christ for Julian is the key for her and our own understanding of the Trinity as she also indicates later in her eighth and ninth revelations. Julian indicates her fuller meaning concerning the Holy Trinity and the passion of Christ in her ninth revelation by stating: “All the Trinity worked in Christ’s Passion, administering abundant virtues and plentiful grace to him; but only the Virgin’s son suffered, in which all the blessed Trinity rejoice” (23:219).

In this way, the suffering of Christ on the cross must be understood in terms of our Trinitarian God. When we pray and meditate either during the liturgical events within the Holy Church including the days of the passion before the crucifixion of Christ, we must be fully mindful as Julian has so carefully explained to us that the Blessed Trinity, the risen Christ is with us in this life and the next. This theme will be explained further in the section on the Crucifix a journey through the Cross of Love and Salvation.

Julian extends her bodily vision of Christ’s blood loss to include a deeper spiritual meaning. Beauty and purpose form the essence of what Julian understands to be her vision of the continuous bleeding taking place. Julian’s offers a very descriptive account of the bleeding from Christ’s head as: “The copiousness resembles the drops
of water which fall from the eaves of a house after a great shower of rain, falling so thick that no human ingenuity can count them” (7:188). The amount of blood becomes too numerous for even Julian as she describes: “...they were like raindrops off house’s eaves; so many that they could not be counted” (7:188).

The amount of detail in the blood loss as Julian describes for us could be understood in a number of ways. The loss of Christ’s blood that appears so great becomes a symbolic representation of the redemptive love that Christ willing pours out for the sinfulness of human kind. Humanity must be redeemed through Christ’s suffering and thus for Julian, her emphasis becomes rich in theological meanings rather than a literal interpretation.

Julian herself contemplates her first revelation of the bleeding from Christ’s head not as grotesque and horrible sight but as great joy and delight. The spiritual meaning of this bodily vision cannot be fully revealed by Julian but even today such a meaning can be understood in our own terms. The outpouring of blood from the head of Christ becomes a willingness of Christ to suffer greatly for humanity, a suffering that Julian writes about in chapter twenty two of her ninth revelation.

In Julian’s fourth revelation, the bleeding of Christ covers the entire body, again plentiful but related more to the scourging and not to the crown of thorns. Julian associates the blessed blood of Christ as a redemptive act that cleanses the sins of humanity. The bleeding becomes for Julian so intense that it covers everything including her own bed. The blood takes on a divine nature as Julian explains for us: “But it is more pleasing to him that we accept for our total cure his blessed blood to wash us of our sins” (12:200). The blood that Julian describes as both blessed and precious also is human blood; it is our human nature as Julian states: “And it is of our own nature, and blessedly flows over us by the power of his precious blood” (12:200). Julian uses the term “precious blood” as do other medieval writers such as Catherine of Siena who also refers often in her letters to the shedding of Christ’s blood as precious: “I Caterina, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, am writing to you in his precious blood.”

This precious blood takes on even more divine qualities according to Julian: “Behold and see the power of this precious plenty of his precious blood...The precious plenty

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of his precious blood overflows all the earth, and is ready to wash from their sins all creatures who are, have been and will be of good will” (12:200). Julian’s account here offers us a fuller and more meaningful description of Christ’s shedding of his blood for our redemption and salvation. The beauty in her words “the precious plenty of his precious blood” evoke within us a more mystical sense of how we may contemplate receiving Christ’s blood in the celebration of the Eucharist. Even more the poetic style and techniques of alliteration and vivid imagery create a more sensual feeling for readers of Julian today to fully appreciate and enjoy.

The plentiful loss of blood could also be understood as the plentiful flowing of Christ’s mystical blood for all Christians as celebrated in the Eucharist. We experience for ourselves the mystical body and blood of Christ and how we live out this mystical presence becomes part of our own spiritual and faith journey.

Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt in his text *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* places a further emphasis on Julian’s description of Christ’s precious blood. He argues that this blood has even more divine powers than cleansing and healing, it has regenerative power for humanity. This may be a rather interesting interpretation of Julian’s description of Christ’s precious blood but the restoration of humanity occurs with the resurrection of Christ as Julian indicates later in her fourteenth revelation.

Even more the connection to the sacrament of baptism and the ritual act of water washing away our original sin is very evident. The blood and water have Biblical references firstly in John 19: 34: “Instead, one of the soldiers came pierced his side with a spear and at once blood and water came out” In John’s first letter 5:6, the purpose of the blood and water from Christ’s body takes on a more symbolic meaning: “This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with water only but with the water and blood.” The shedding of blood and water from the pierced side of Christ prepares us for our own baptism into Christ’s body the Holy Mother Church and then to later receive Christ through the Eucharist. Julian develops these links to the body of Christ as the Holy Mother Church in her tenth revelation and her fourteenth revelation. In Julian’s tenth revelation, she draws us into the pierced side of Christ more in reference to the Holy Mother Church.

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One earlier source relating to blood loss that could have been available to Julian lies within the *Ancrene Riwle*. As an anchoress, Julian may have been required to at some stage to acquaint herself with the example of the pelican. It was in fact a guide text for an anchoress to keep the Holy Church on the correct course as an anchor for a large ship. The pelican strikes and kills with her bill her young. In the same instance, the pelican will strike her breast with her bill so that: “let her draw the blood of sin out of her breast, that is out of her heart, in which is the life of the soul, and thus her slain young will come alive again, that is, her good works.”

Whether Julian was drawing directly from the example of the pelican in her descriptions of the plentiful blood cannot be known. It is relevant to note how the blood from the pelican becomes life giving and the intention of the pelican strongly resembles how Christ’s blood becomes an act of salvation. In Julian’s own words: “And furthermore, it (precious blood) flows in all heaven, rejoicing in salvation of all mankind…” (61:300)

Julian experiences these visions of the bleeding head and body of Christ as her own female manner of portraying her devotion to Christ. Medieval women identified far more with the physicality of Christ’s flesh in an affective form of piety. Julian may also have observed artistic depictions of the crucified body of Christ to stimulate her writing. The visual images of the suffering Christ were in fact very common in late medieval themes that Julian has obviously drawn upon in her first and fourth revelations. Gordon Mursell has contributed a valued comment on this form of devotion to the suffering Christ by claiming that: “This theme became the source of a veritable torrent of devotion in the late Middle Ages- innumerable meditations on the life of Christ, sermons, plays, poems, images, book of hours, altarpieces and wall paintings…”

Caroline Walker Bynum reinforces this popular form of female piety and devotion with respect to how medieval women incorporated Christ’s flesh as part of their own female flesh. She argues that: “Not only was Christ enfleshed with flesh from a woman; his own flesh did womanly things: it bled, it bled food and it gave birth.”

This view by Bynum does in fact fit neatly into Julian’s maternal themes of the Mother Christ.

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This maternal nature of the Mother Christ does in fact occur in Julian’s fourteenth revelation as her portrayal as Christ as our Mother feeding us through his body as well the physical pain of giving birth to us as our eternal mother. On the other hand, Julian’s portrayal of the bleeding Christ in her first and fourth revelations represents more the cleansing and purifying the sins of humankind.

Our own link to the sacrament of the Eucharist would emerge from such an understanding of the mystical blood of Christ as portrayed in Julian’s spiritual vision. The beauty in receiving the mystical blood of Christ in The Eucharist today should be with a similar strength and delight in the manner that Julian reveals to us.

One very crucial factor for Julian in her bodily visions of the bleeding Christ comes from her own realisation of what takes place after the bodily visions cease. In essence this realisation by Julian becomes a realisation for our own understanding today. We cannot expect to experience Julian’s visions but we can contemplate spiritually on a deeper level. Julian in fact strongly points us in that direction in her own words: “But I may not and cannot show the spiritual vision as plainly and fully as I should wish” (9:192). Thus Julian believes that for like minded and faithful Christians the Lord God will reveal these spiritual visions: “But I trust in our Lord God almighty that he will out of his goodness and for love of you, make you accept it more spiritually and more sweetly than I can or may tell it” (9:192).

It is for our own understanding and individual abilities to contemplate God and the crucifix for our own spiritual growth. Julian acts as our guide to stimulate our abilities to seek a deeper and even more mystical meaning of the crucifix. Julian’s revelations become more like a spiritual light to direct us on our own personal life journey in order to discover the fuller meaning of where Christ resides in our own being: “... and I counsel you for your own profit, that you disregard the wretch to whom it was shown, and that mightily, wisely and meekly you contemplate upon God” (8:191).

Our Christian faith is enhanced by a greater understanding of Julian’s portrayal of the mystical presence of Christ’s body and blood. Julian offers us today a renewed and enlightened entry into this presence of Christ’s body and blood through her first and fourth revelations. It is through the crucifix that Julian portrays our shared suffering with Christ, our own shared pain within our own contemporary world today.
2.3 Crucifix - the Journey through the Cross of Love and Salvation

The crucifix becomes a journey through the cross of love and salvation. As Julian portrays in her eighth and ninth revelations, humanity has a shared suffering with the crucified Christ. It is a journey that Christ willing takes with us today and every day when we endure our pains and perils. This shared suffering comes out of Christ’s love for humanity, a shared love that we as faithful Christians also share with those who suffer the most in this world. The crucifix becomes as Julian informs us when we pray that: “... for his holy Cross on which he died, and all the help and the strength that we have of that Cross, it is of his goodness” (6:185). The cross is our strength, it is our goodness, and our prayers become prayers to the Holy Cross. Julian makes the crucifix become a living and working reality for our faith today. The cross of Christ comes alive for Julian as it does for our understanding for our own spiritual journey.

The eighth and ninth revelations form the essence in Julian’s key message concerning the suffering Christ. The key theological emphasis by Julian relates primarily to soteriology which is derived from the Greek words *soteria* (deliverance, salvation) and logos (word or thought)\(^{24}\) Kerrie Hide makes a very important point concerning the fact that not enough examination of Julian’s work relating to salvation has been attempted by critical scholars. It is in fact an aspect of Julian’s text that does not rate in importance as much as it really should and Hide has made a very valued point. The human experience of suffering requires that we further understand the saving actions of our God. Kerrie Hide offers a very succinct definition concerning how this definition then relates to Christ: “God’s actions in Christ for our salvation.”\(^{25}\) Hide then connects her definition of soteriology to Julian by stating: “For Julian it is our gifted origins, who we are- created in the love of the Trinity with our being with God- that make salvation a reality”\(^{26}\) It is in fact a very sound point argued by Hide that our human origins lay within the Trinity that in time leads onto the salvation of humanity. American writer Joan Nuth argues a similar intention of God working through Christ: “...she (Julian) takes great care to emphasize that Christ was no unwilling, purely

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passive sacrificial victim to God’s plan for salvation. Rather Christ underwent his passion because of his own great desire for union in love with all human beings.”

Both writers have highlighted the essence of Julian’s theology of our creator God working through his son to redeem and save us. For our own meaning today, we see the suffering Christ on the cross working in our world being active in our living. Our humanity is linked in the form of a shared bond with Christ. The human suffering of Christ becomes for Julian and for us a window for seeing our own true humanity in Christ.

In the eighth revelation, the body of the suffering Christ for Julian becomes a shared suffering, a union with Christ’s pain in the shared pain of a suffering humanity. In Julian’s words she tells us this shared pain with Christ: “Here I saw a great unity between Christ and us, as I understand it; for when he was in pain we were in pain, and all creatures able to suffer pain suffered with him” (18:210). The close Biblical references to the Pauline Christ are very clear as in Galatians 2:19-20: “...I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live in Christ, but it is Christ who lives in me.”

There exists for Julian a close and personal affinity with Christ on the cross. Christ on the cross is with the persecuted, the lonely, the poor and the disadvantaged. As Julian expresses this in her text in her eighth revelation: “...and he saw and he sorrowed for every man’s sorrow, desolation and anguish, in his compassion and love...” (20:213). For Julian, one must closely associate a solidarity and journey with the poor and the persecuted as though we are together suffering alongside the poor, experiencing their pains and sorrows with them in life. We are in union with Christ on the cross when we sorrow and anguish for the powerless and the poor as Christ sorrows.

At the same time within this revelation, Julian explains a deeper form of contemplation of the cross which she draws out further in chapter fifty one of her fourteenth revelation that being the well known Parable of the Lord and the Servant. As Julian contemplates upon the cross, she feels at ease: “I was secure and safe” (19:211). It is the heavenly Jesus that comforts Julian, a comfort that she brings out from the depths of her own soul. One further dimension that Julian contemplates upon the vision of the cross lies with her experience of the two parts of herself. Julian

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explains her meaning as she does in chapter fifty one concerning the inward revelations to her soul as opposed to the outward more visible revelations:

“The exterior part is our mortal flesh, which is sometimes in pain, sometimes in sorrow, and it was in that part of me that I felt regret. The interior part is an exalted part and blessed life which is all peace and love; and this is more secretly experienced.; and it was in this part of me that I powerfully, wisely and deliberately chose Jesus for my heaven. And in this I truly saw that the interior part is master and ruler of the exterior…” (19:212).

In the ninth revelation, Julian presents a Christ of hope, a light from the darkness and a belief to endure through our own suffering. As Christ changes appearance on the Cross for Julian, our own transformation should take place when we contemplate a deeper and more spiritual meaning of Julian’s ninth revelation. As this ninth revelation shows us: “…suddenly, as I looked at the same cross, he changed to an appearance of joy. The change in his blessed appearance changed mine, and I was glad and joyful as I could possibly be” (21:214-5).

Christ on the cross symbolises a crucified love for humanity. As Saint Paul states in Colossians 1:24 “I am rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake…” Julian shows how we share Christ’s pain with him on the cross for the joy that is to come in his kingdom: “…and in our sufferings we are dying, and with his help and his grace we willing endure on the same cross until the last moment of life. Suddenly he will change his appearance for us, and we shall be with him in heaven” (21:215). In 1 Peter 4: 13, the same theme to Julian’s has been expressed: “But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s suffering, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed.”

Christ is prepared to suffer every day for us as Julian clearly shows: “For although the sweet humanity of Christ could suffer only once, his goodness can never cease offering it. Every day he is ready to do the same, if that might be.” (22:217). Christ’s love for us is abundant, it is endless and in Julian’s vision Christ is prepared to suffer more and more for our salvation. More importantly the cross as Julian describes becomes the cross of goodness and for our own understanding today, the crucifix becomes this symbol of goodness and love. Kerrie Hide regards Julian’s central focus of Christ on the cross as: “…a story of love” that therefore would for contemporary society: “…benefit from a poignant reminder of the unconditional love expressed by the crucified.” 28 This analysis by Hide is absolutely correct because Julian again and

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28 Hide, Gifted Origins, 206.
again stresses Christ’s willingness to suffer for the love of humanity as the quotation from her text at the beginning of this paragraph clearly indicates for our understanding.

Do we have the same faith in our ability to suffer with or display the same endless love, day in and day out for the poor and outcast? Does this love only become convenient when it is attractive? One example from the last century comes to mind in the person of a Dominican by the name of the Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925). He believed in true solidarity with the poor to suffer with them and this was indicated in his own direct action towards the poor which would lead eventually to his own death due his contracting an infectious disease. Pier in fact was a deeply spiritual person who lived out his faith by: “seeing in each person the face of Christ”29 The actions of Pier became his own way of expressing his devotions by directly serving the poor as he states in his own words: “Jesus comes to me every way in Communion, and I return the visit by serving the poor.”30

Julian is indicating to us how we could live in the world and display the same deep abundant commitment of love that Christ offers from the cross especially to those who suffer so much in this world. Our Christian faith requires solidarity for the poor in direct action.

One excellent comparison relating to the human suffering and Julian’s suffering concerns a presentation by Canon Melvyn Matthews Chancellor Emeritus of Wells Cathedral on the topic: “Two Women Facing Death” Julian of Norwich and Etty Hillesum. As a Dutch Jew living in the time of the Nazi persecution, Etty experienced the brutality of human beings at the most despicable level. What then was her connection in her letters and diaries to Julian’s text? Canon Matthews does offer a comparison between Etty Hillesum and Julian at the level of the physical body and the whole of society. The comparison has more importance not on the physical level but rather as Matthews states: “They embrace the phenomenon, the theological reality, of death. Moreover both women identify entirely with the suffering of their people.”31

Julian indicates that in all our pains and afflictions, we must not despair and give up all hope in this life. How horrible our pains may be, our loving creator God will

30 Luciana Frassati, Mio fratello Pier Giorgio: La carità (Rome: Edizione Paoline, 1951), 5 in Maria Di Lorenzo, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, 73.
always love us: “For our courteous Lord does not want us his servants to despair because they fall often and grievously; for our falling does not hinder him loving us” (39:245). As Julian indicates in her ninth revelation that our suffering here in this world must be looked at in the greater view of what will follow for us all with Christ in heaven: “And here I saw truly that if he revealed to us now his countenance of joy, there is no pain on earth or anywhere else that would trouble us, but everything would be joy and bliss for us” (21:215).

Etty Hillesum in her writings approaches human suffering in a similar dimension to Julian. In fact, human suffering in her eyes could be seen as greater aspect of the human journey. As Etty writes in her diaries: “You are sure enough to go through lean times with me now and then, when my faith weakens a little, but believe me, I shall always labour for You and remain faithful to You and I shall never drive you from my presence. I have the strength enough, God for suffering on a grand scale…”

Etty similar to Julian understands that human suffering and pain form part of our mortal life on earth but it does not prevent the eternal love of creator God.

In the same revelation, Julian places our delight and joy in Christ’s salvation for us firmly within the Trinity. It is all the Trinity that rejoices in Christ’s sufferings and it is Christ’s joy and delight that he kindly offers for our salvation: “…for although it might not have been necessary, if he could suffer more he would. This deed and this work for our salvation were all devised as God devise it…” (23:218-19). Again for Julian the strong emphasis on the role of the Trinity becomes her focus: “All the Trinity worked in Christ’s Passion, administering abundant virtues and plentiful grace to us by him; but only the virgin’s son suffered in which all the blessed Trinity rejoice” (23:218-19). For Julian the key soteriological themes of our Trinitarian God working through his son for the salvation of humanity become her main focus.

Julian draws us to a perfect example to live in Christ through her example of the cheerful giver. In this way we can imitate Christ in our own humanity as a generous and courteous giver: “Always a cheerful giver pays little attention to the thing which he is giving, but all his desire and all his intention is to please and comfort the one to whom he is giving it” (23:219). As Christ shows us from the cross Julian continues with her description: “And if the receiver accept the gift gladly and gratefully, then the courteous giver counts as nothing all his expense and his labour, because of the

joy and delight that he has because he has pleased and comforted the one whom he loves” (23:219-20). The cheerful giver for Christians today involves a similar willingness and desire to be Christ like in our humanity and our own efforts to become fully human in our display of true Christian love for our neighbour as part of our true Christian identity.

In many ways the cheerful giver quotation from Julian’s text highlights the most desirable virtues within Christianity including charity, compassion, unconditional and unselfish love. Christ totally offers himself and his own life as atonement for our sins; he willing suffers death and would suffer more as Julian’s example above has indicated to us. Our total surrender of ourselves for the needs of the poor and persecuted as the Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati willing devoted himself totally to the poor and his living becomes a perfect model for Christians to follow today. It is not that difficult to live as the cheerful giver, it does not have to be a total surrender but a visit to a lonely sick friend on a regular basis, a visit to the gravesites of our beloved ancestors, are all small ways of moving closer to this cheerful giver. Julian has shown to us all a very direct way to journey through the cross of love, the outpouring of love from the cross symbolises for us all today our own abilities to journey with those who need our help, support and love the most.

In this way, Julian moves into the body of Christ’s side more importantly as Christ the Holy Mother Church. Our journey within our own Christian living incorporates living within the sacraments and living out the meaning of the sacraments in our own love towards our neighbour. Julian shows us the true Christian identity and the true humanity of Christ. As we live in the world, we receive Christ’s body and blood and then we become more fully Christian and more fully human. The true humanity of a faithful Christian life emerges from Julian’s revelation. We are on the cross, nailed with Christ when we travel alongside and suffer with the very poor, underprivileged, the refugees, the lonely and depressed. Our distinct human nature in Christ is revealed through Julian’s ninth revelation. The crucifix takes on a further dimension for Julian and for our deeper spiritual understanding of how the cross comes alive for our contemporary Christian spirituality. The blessed wounds of Christ become an entry point into the body of Christ. Christ lives within us through his body the Church. Julian moves us into this Body of Christ in her tenth revelation and later in her fourteenth revelation into her more developed maternal role of Christ as the Holy Mother Church.
2.4 Movement into the Body of Christ the Church

The pierced side of Christ’s body becomes the entry point for not only Julian but for all Christians in her tenth revelation. The symbolic representation of the pierced side of Christ’s body clearly shows a movement into the Christ as the Church. Julian develops this theme further in chapter sixty of her fourteenth revelation as part of her reference to Christ as the Mother Church that through the blessed sacrament of the Eucharist feeds our spiritual lives and encloses us all within the Mother Church through our baptism. It is here that Julian again refers to the open side of Christ as the entry point into his blessed breast. The Pauline theme in 1 Corinthians 12:12: “...are one body, so it is with Christ” is clearly visible at this point in Julian’s revelation. As members of the Holy Church, we become linked to the body of Christ through our own Baptism and participation in the Eucharist.

Equally important is the sacrifice of Christ’s life for us. Christ gives himself to humanity and thus draws us all into his body the Church. The sacrificial offering by Christ for all of humanity on the cross becomes the key focal point for all faithful Christians to be part of the faithful community the Church. The pierced side of Christ with the great loss of blood and water represents the unconditional act by Christ in sacrificing his own life. Christ is offering himself as the sacrificial lamb for our salvation and redemption. What Christ gives to us through the cross becomes the focal point for us today to continue through the Holy Church and the sacraments.

The words contained within this revelation have significant meaning for Julian and our own understanding: “...and with sweet regard he drew his creature’s understanding into his side by the same wound: and there he revealed a fair and delectable place, large enough for all mankind that will be saved and will rest in peace and love” (24:220). The key importance here rests heavily with Julian’s strong emphasis on the body of Christ as our Church. The emphasis becomes ecclesiological because the Holy Church is the main thrust at this point in Julian’s revelation. It is also important to note that this ecclesiological emphasis by Julian follows earlier Christian traditions. Richard Gaillardetz clearly points out to us on the early Christian
tradition: “Early Christian understandings of the Eucharist reinforced the relationship between baptism, Church and spirituality.”33 Saint Paul clearly shows this shared meaning of the Eucharist with the body of Christ the Church in 1 Corinthians 10: 16-18: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”

Even more interesting, in Julian’s tenth revelation, it is not inclusive but more universal for all Christians to come to the body of Christ as the Church. Christopher Abbott in his text Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology agrees with this crucial point; however he stresses that this movement forms: “...a movement into the heart of the Church and the discovery of a union with her fellow Christians effected through the mystical Christ in whom we are all enclosed”34

The Holy Church emerges from the blood and water that flows from the side of Christ. As indicated earlier in John 19:34, Julian also indicates in her tenth revelation the importance of Christ’s blood and water: “And with that he brought to mind clear and precious blood and water which he suffered to be shed for love” (24:220). The blood and water become for us today the key sacraments of initiation Baptism and the Eucharist for faithful members of the Holy Church as stated earlier in Julian’s fourth revelation relating to the bleeding from the head and body of Christ in the previous section on the “Precious Blood of Christ.”

Abbott does not place the emphasis on the maternal aspects of the pierced side of Christ due to his stronger slant on Christ’s body as the Church. Caroline Walker Bynum does in fact argue that there was a clear maternal identification of the Holy Church within medieval art and texts: “Medieval texts and medieval art saw the Church as the body of Christ...Thus the Church was depicted in medieval art as a woman sometimes as Christ bride, sometimes as a nursing mother.”35 Julian clearly demonstrates this identification in her fourteenth revelation more as maternal aspects rather than feminine aspects and this will be discussed later in the section on “Christ our Holy Mother Church in the Holy Trinity.” This belief of the Church as a nursing

mother caring for the faithful closely fits into Julian’s depiction of Christ as our working mother or Mother of Grace.

Artistic medieval images that displayed Christ on the cross giving birth to the Holy Church as mother giving birth to a newborn were evident during the medieval period. Early thirteenth and fourteenth century artistic depictions could have easily been available for Julian to inspire and influence her descriptions of Christ giving birth to the infant Church. French Moralized Bibles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries displayed according to Bynum frequent references as she states to: “parallels between the birth of Eve from Adam’s side and the birth of the Church from Christ’s body.”

One such artistic image existed in a French Moralized Bible created in 1240 and held at the Bodleian Library Oxford. (See Illustration One)

The sight of the blessed heart of Christ split in two for Julian becomes a full realisation of the boundless and endless love that Christ pours out for all of humankind: “And in this sweet sight he showed his blessed heart split in two, and he rejoiced he showed to my understanding a part of his blessed divinity, as much as was his will at that time, strengthening my poor soul to understand what can be said that is the endless love...” (24: 220).

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ was a popular form of devotion within the Church and Julian’s reference at this point serves as a rich and valuable source. The symbolism of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for Julian and it was for the early Church before Julian’s century was depicted as an emblem of love. The splitting of the heart of Christ in two as Julian reminds has the key focus on “endless love”. Christ pours out his own blood for the redemption and salvation of humanity and for the love of humanity. Popular devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus before the time of Julian and during her time were very evident. Earlier devotions emerged from the religious orders including the Dominicans, Benedictines, Carthusians, Cistercians and Franciscans. Well known mystical writers from the earlier period included Mechtild of Hackeborn (d 1299) and Gertrude the Great (1256-1302) experience visions of the heart of Christ similar to Julian.

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37 Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption, 99.
Figure 3.6. Detail from a French Moralized Bible, MS 270b, fol. 6r, Bodleian Library, Oxford (ca. 1240). Using the inversion so common in medieval religious imagery, artists depicted Christ as a mother giving birth to Church on the cross, and drew a parallel to the birth of Eve from Adam’s side.
Another European contemporary writer during Julian’s time Catherine of Siena in her \textit{Dialogue} makes similar references to the heart of Christ and the body of Christ as the mystic body of the Holy Church. In Catherine of Siena’s major work \textit{The Dialogue} where the Lord God speaks to her: “My Son’s nailed feet are a stair by which you climb to his side, where you will reveal his inmost heart.” \footnote{Catherine of Siena, \textit{The Dialogue}, 64.} In the same text, Catherine follows the similar pathway with the body of Christ as the Holy Church that sustains us spiritually through the sacrament of the Eucharist: “To my ministers in the mystic body of the Holy Church, so that you might have life when they give his body as food and his blood as drink”\footnote{Catherine of Siena, \textit{The Dialogue}, 206.} We need to understand for our own Christian faiths that the mystical presence of Christ’s body and blood must transform the manner in which we Christ lives in us.

Endless love of Christ for humanity has become Julian’s key message within this tenth revelation. Christ does not hesitate to die for us and suffer great pain for us. Our salvation and the endless joy and bliss that await us become our hope in our living out the Christian journey. Christ prepares our own salvation through his own suffering.

The suffering Christ on the cross has a further dimension for Julian. The image of the drying body and the physical thirst form the further dimension of spiritual thirst. The desire for Christ to thirst for humanity is also a desire for humanity to spiritually thirst for Christ.

### 2.5 Spiritual Thirst

At the beginning of Julian’s eighth revelation, a very revealing image of Christ’s drying body on the cross appears before her eyes. The intensity of this description by Julian of the “shrivelled and dried up body” maintains a focus on the great loss of blood and moisture from Christ’s body. The physical drying of the body as revealed to Julian has more symbolic meanings: “And in this drying, what Christ had said came to my mind: I thirst. For I saw in Christ a double thirst, one physical, the other spiritual” (9:207). Julian firstly wishes to deal with the physical dimensions of the drying body of Christ for her own portrayal of the Holy Church: “This saying was shown for the physical thirst, and what was revealed of the spiritual thirst I shall say afterwards; and
concerning the physical thirst, I understood that the body was wholly dried up, for his blessed flesh and bones were left without blood and moisture” (17:207).

Julian does not wish to paint the Church in a negative light, she constantly draws us back to obedience to the Holy Church as she states in her first revelation: “But in everything I believe as Holy Church preaches and teaches” (9:192). It does not prevent Julian from creating an image of the Holy Church more in line with the early Church in the period of Saint Paul the Apostle. It is the body of Christ that is the Holy Church as in 1 Corinthians : 12 : 12 states: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” The Church for Julian the anchoress remains the body of Christ with no disrespect to the Church of Rome.

The dryness and loss of moisture in the body of Christ becomes a representation of the suffering Church during Julian’s time. The Great Schism within the Catholic Church and the crusade of the Bishop of Norwich Henry Despenser against the French Papacy in Avignon point directly to a Church that was deeply fractured. Julian’s subtle criticism if it may be termed even as that, does not sit well with modern scholars of Julian’s text. Grace Jantzen argues that Julian does not take issue in any direct manner to the Church of Rome. In fact as Jantzen argues her case concerning the intentions of Julian: “... Julian liberated herself from self-contempt based on gender; she was not able to liberate herself from strict subservience to male defined ecclesiastical dogma.”

It may be simple to agree with such an observation by Jantzen but Frederick Bauerschmidt offers a more plausible explanation for Julian: “Her constant affirmations of loyalty to the Church would seem to indicate that she is quiet aware occasioned by a lapse of orthodoxy” This analysis fits more easily with Julian’s statements of loyalty to the Church in Rome alongside her desire to open our eyes in her time and our time to the original nature of the Church. On this point Bauerschmidt makes a similar statement: “But as Julian stubbornly refused to lift her eyes from the suffering body of Jesus, so too she will not let go of the church as a visible entity in which she can dwell in unity with her fellow Christians.”

It is this context that Julian sets the scene for her description of the dried body of Christ. The Church was suffering from a very painful Schism and so Julian describes

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Christ as the Church in the same manner. The body of Christ becomes “torn in pieces like a cloth and sagged down, seeming that it would have fallen because it was so heavy and so loose” (17:208). Julian one and only dire warning to the Church takes on a similar description: “Holy Church will be shaken in sorrow and anguish and tribulation in this world as men shake a cloth in the wind...” (28:226). It could be argued that such a warning by Julian applies today as it did in her time. When the faith of the Holy Roman Church is challenged from many angles whether it concerns child abuse cases against the clergy and further challenges from other faiths, it remains for our own inner spiritual strength to bring us selves back to the real identity of the Church as Christ’s body.

The crown of thorns upon Christ’s head takes on a fuller and richer dimension that again relates back to the Body of Christ as the Church. There appears a double layered meaning for Julian and even today for our own understanding of the passion and crucifixion of Christ: “And then I saw that it was so; what adhered to the crown began to dry and lose weight, and so it was crown upon crown. The crown of thorns was dyed with the blood, and the other crown and head were all one colour, like congealed dried blood” (17:208). Julian returns to the crown in a very different mode in the final part of her Parable of the Lord and the Servant in Chapter Fifty One of her fourteenth revelation. The crown takes on a different property upon the ascension of Christ to the right hand side of his Father: “Now the Son does not stand before the father as a servant... but he stands immediately before the father, richly clothed in joyful amplitude, with a rich and precious crown upon his head” (51: 278). It is in an earlier reference that Julian then states: “For it was revealed that we are his crown...” (51:278).

Today we should not overlook the deeper spiritual dimension of these words by Julian for our own personal faith journey into the Church that we should know as the Body of Christ. Julian herself understands this to be a vital belief: “And this was a singular wonder and a most delectable contemplation, that we are his crown” (22:216). We as members of the Holy Church become the precious crown upon Christ’s body. This description serves as a delightful image of our own sense of belonging to the body of Christ.

Julian takes this bodily vision to a more spiritual meaning for both her and us. The thirst for Christ on the cross is physical and yet Julian can experience a further dimension of this physical thirst to be one of a deeper spiritual thirst. The key for
Julian is Christ’s spiritual thirst for humanity. This spiritual thirst is never ending and eternal for us: “For this is Christ’s spiritual thirst his longing in love, which persists and always will until we see him on the day of judgement” (31:230). Christ desires us, longs for us to come to him. It becomes Christ’s joy and bliss that his humanity suffered for us. As Julian expresses more forcefully in her ninth revelation that Christ was willing to suffer continually for his unconditional love for us: “It is a joy, a bliss, an endless delight to me that ever I suffered my Passion for you” (31:230).

Our spiritual thirst for Christ becomes a thirst for the body of Christ the Church. Through our own baptism and the continual celebration of the Eucharist, we receive the mystical body and blood of Christ. We are all members of this body of the Christ the Church as Julian informs us: “For insofar as Christ is our head, he is glorious and impassable; but with respect to his body, to which all his members are joined, he is not yet fully glorified or wholly and impassable” (32:230).

The thirst for Christ for us continues even today for all members of his body. Julian’s ninth revelation seeks to enlighten our faith in the Church as the body of Christ in this life and the next: “...which desire, longing and thirst, as I see it, were in him from without beginning; and he will have this until the time that the last soul which will be saved has come up into his bliss” (32:231). Joan Nuth makes a very sound point on the continuing thirst for Christ in this world: “The work of salvation, won through Christ’s sufferings and death, is not complete and thus Christ’s spiritual thirst will not be satisfied until the end of time.”

We must continue this work for our salvation and spiritual thirst for Christ through his Church and seek to take this message to others through prayer, meditation and our contemplation of Christ’s mystical presence through the sacraments. This is even more essential for our spiritual enrichment today. When we receive the mystical body and blood of Christ through the Eucharist, it is equally important to understand and live more and more through the spiritual presence of Christ in our lives. God in Christ is present within us and Julian has portrayed an even more spiritually enriching way of seeking and thirsting for Christ.

The emotional intensity of Christ’s longing for us equally means that we must respond in kind to Christ’s longing: “...so truly is there in God a quality of thirst and longing; and the power of this longing in Christ enables us to respond to his longing...” (32:231.) Responding and longing for Christ should be our daily need in our lives.

44 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 49.
through our responses to the people in our encounters in life. If we fail to respond to others the way Christ thirsts for us, we in fact are not responding to Christ.

We must desire and long for Christ through the compassion and love for our fellow Christians. Christ has as Julian states: “... pity and compassion for us...” (32:231). For Julian the sight of Christ’s compassion from the cross fills her with compassion for her fellow Christians. In Julian’s own terms the compassion that Christ displays from the cross because of our sin, must then be followed for our own love for fellow Christians. Julian has drawn upon Biblical references firstly from the Gospel of John where the theme of thirst appears in the account of Jesus and the Woman of Samaria in chapter four verses 14-15: “Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give them will become a spring of water gushing up to eternal life”. This particular passage clearly identifies the theme of spiritual thirst that Julian has shown within her eighth and then thirteenth revelations. All of us who richly desire and importantly thirst for Christ will be sustained in a spiritual replenishing of our lives. Christ will refresh our spiritual thirst in him as he feeds us spiritually through the sacrament of the Eucharist. The spiritual thirst opens the way for Christ to be in our person and from that our compassion for others flows as a compassionate act of God.

In the Prophet Isaiah 54: 7-8, the compassionate nature of God towards the people of Israel would have been a valuable reference point for Julian in her own understanding and presentation of her revelation: “For a brief moment I abandoned you but with great compassion I will gather you”. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians 2: 20, he presents Christ as: “and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me”. Julian extends our own compassionate nature as Christians by stating: “one has for fellow Christians in love is Christ in us...” (29: 227). We display compassion and love for all other fellow Christians because Christ is in us. In addition, we learn to suffer alongside those who suffer greatly at the hands of persecutors even if these people do not belong to our own Christian faith. In the words of Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:26 where he states: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it...”

The sacramental importance of the Eucharist and the body of Christ in us, gives further meaning to how we then live out with love and compassion towards our neighbours. The Eucharist becomes Christ living inside us and the more we display
the same love and compassion that Christ displayed from the cross, the more we live in Christ.

Saint Anselm of Canterbury in his *Prayer to Christ* could have provided an earlier reference for Julian in terms of a spiritual thirst and longing for the divine: “My soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs after you, my soul thirsts for God, the fountain of life...” 45 Anselm unlike Julian seeks a union with the divine based more on the soul as the bride and Christ as the bridegroom: “Lord, meanwhile, let my tears be my meat day and night, until they say to me, ‘Behold your God’, until I hear, ‘soul, behold your bridegroom’.” 46 Julian’s emphasis as has been shown does not deal with this type of union but more with a union and thirst for the suffering Christ here and now. This desire and spiritual thirst for Christ has a later reference in her sixteenth revelation relating to God’s longing and thirst for man. Julian writes about God’s longing drawing of us all into him: “...and the longing in the same love draws us into heaven, for God’s thirst is to have man, generally, drawn into him, and in that thirst he has drawn his holy souls who are now in bliss” (75:326). The key here for Julian becomes as will be shown later in the section on “Seeing our Light and Faith through Jesus”, the salvation of our souls as a form of longing and thirst for our creator God. Our thirst comes deep within our personal understanding of how Christ lives in us. When we believe the real presence of Christ is in us at the Eucharist, it would then be that we have fully appreciated what Julian really means. We live our Christian journey through and with Christ living within us. We share the compassion and pity for the suffering in our world and more importantly to those close to us who are suffering. One should not be blind to the suffering of a friend or family member if one receives Christ in the Eucharist then one must be prepared to love and suffer with them through their own journey. In fact the Sermon on the Mount summarises the key to Julian’s theme of spiritual thirst in the Gospel of Matthew chapter five verse six: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” Julian wants us to contemplate and understand God more. Her spiritual thirst for the divine presence leads into a need to know God more and understand the judgement and image of God. As in her earlier reference in the Third chapter of her Long Text: “I wanted to live and to love God better and longer, so that I might through grace of that living have more knowledge of God in the bliss of heaven” (3:179). Does God

attribute blame and guilt to us when we sin and turn away from God with our actions? Julian seeks to understand the judgement of God knowing fully the judgement of the Holy Church which she accepts. Julian searches for answers as to the nature of God and the nature of the second person of the Trinity. In Julian’s own eyes the answer lies in the Parable of the Lord and the Servant (fourteenth revelation) which Julian refers to in the earlier part of her Long Text in chapter seven: “And so that I might understand this, he showed me this plain example. It is the greatest honour which a majestic king or a great lord can do for a poor servant, to be familiar with him...” (7: 188).

Section Three- Christ in the Trinity and the Image of God

3.1- How God looks upon us?

Julian desires to grow in her understanding of the Holy Trinity and the attributes that applies to each distinct entity. As Joan Nuth asserts that the image of God and the relationship of God to his son and to all of humanity as presented in Julian’s text deals with a God that shows a non-judgemental image rather than a patriarchal or hierarchical image. It is an image as Nuth claims that Julian presents which flows against the current tide of thinking about God during the fourteenth century.47 This image of God resembles an image closer to the Old Testament as shown in Psalm 103: 8-10: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities.” It is also a God that is active in the world with us through the Son and Holy Spirit. Joan Nuth is making a crucial and fundamental argument concerning the relationship between humanity and God. It is a God that Julian offers to us that is active in her world and our world today. It is in the Parable of the Lord and Servant in chapter fifty one and the preceding chapters that Julian begins to uncover her understanding of God’s nature for us especially in terms of our sinfulness.

In Julian’s time period, the prevailing preoccupation to sin by the Church would have been very important in the writing of her text. In the same way, Julian was attempting in every way possible to refocus the Church back to a more human meaning of sin. The Fourth Lateran Council stipulated the following requirement in 1215 that

47 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 73.
according to Canon 21: “Omnis utruisque sexus which commands every Christian who has reached the years of discretion to confess all his or her sins at least once a year to his or her parish priest.” In Julian’s time, it was enforced by English bishops, like Henry Despenser Bishop of Norwich that the laity repents for their sins.

Joan Nuth offers a very convincing argument on the image of God that Julian desires for all of us to know. As far as Nuth believes Julian’s revelations were: “given as a remedy for the excessive preoccupation with the sin characteristic of her age” It is debatable that Julian’s revelations were in fact some form of a quick fix for the over obsession with sin, it would be more appropriate to accept that Julian’s image of God was drawing the clergy and laity back to an image that was rather closer to scripture.

Nuth does in fact correctly state that Julian’s God is “...a God in love with the human race...” Kerrie Hide differs in more subtle language from Joan Nuth where she believes that the image of God as presented by Julian demonstrates a “theology of presence.” An image of God that is active in the world, living and being with us not just in Julian’s time but here and now in our presence and thus a more appealing image for our understanding today. In Julian’s own words concerning the image of God that was portrayed Psalm 103, she states: “I saw truly that our Lord was never angry, and never will be. Because he is God, he is good, he is truth, he is love, he is peace; and his power, his wisdom, his charity and his unity do not allow him to be angry” (46:259).

We are part of God’s creation, yet how does God judge us when we fail and sin in the eyes of God. For Julian, there are two judgements, one from God as the first judgement and the other from the Holy Church: “... because of the higher judgement which God himself revealed at the same time, and therefore I had of necessary to accept it. And the lower judgement had previously been taught me in the Holy Church...” (45:257). Julian requires an answer as to whether the judgement of the Holy Church is correct in God’s eyes. Julian continually insists that in God’s eyes there is no anger, no wrath as she states: “For our soul is so wholly united to God, through his own goodness...” (46:259).

49 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 119.
50 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 119.
51 Hide, Gifted Origins, 67.
The judgement of God on mankind was continually thrust downwards on the laity by the Church as the reasons for the Black Death. People in Julian’s time lived in fear of the God’s wrath and judgment and yet she was able to present a very different image. Denise Baker argues correctly that the image of God presented by Julian contrasts strongly with the retributive nature and image of God. The nature of God’s response to our sinfulness is presented in a very different light in Julian’s text in contrast to the Augustinian notion and Church teaching on a God that punishes Adam and Eve for their deliberate transgressions alongside their descendants. This critical point by Baker is a correct assessment of Julian’s image of the merciful God that agrees with Joan Nuth and Kerrie Hide although who both as stated earlier associate a loving presence of our God with humanity.

Julian believes that our sins occur through our blindness, ignorance and weakness to God: “Man is changeable in this life, and falls into sin through naivete and ignorance. He is weak and foolish in himself...” (47: 260). God in Julian’s understanding has pity, compassion and the operation of merciful love. The God that Julian presents to us includes both the property of mercy and grace that operate within the love of God. Julian links these properties to motherhood which she explores further with Christ as the second person of the Holy Trinity. This will be pointed in the next section on how God looks upon us even when we sin.

Julian requests to know the answer to her question concerning the judgement of the Holy Church for our sins as opposed to the judgement of God. As stated before God lays no blame or guilt and she presents her question as such: “And if it be true that we are sinners and not blameworthy, good lord, how can it then be that I cannot see this truth in you who are my God, my maker in whom I desire to see truth ?”(50:266). Julian seeks to rediscover the body of Christ as the Holy Mother Church and to ease the judgements of a Church that in her time was under severe strain and schism. For Julian the answer becomes a cry and plea to understand God: “... so as to tell good from evil, whereby I may through reason and grace separate them more distinctly, and love goodness and hate evil as Holy Church teaches” (50:266). The answer for Julian comes from her creator Father and Lord as revealed through the Parable of the Lord and Servant.

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3.2 Parable of the Lord and the Servant – our understanding in the way we see God today

Julian’s wonderful Parable of the Lord and servant clarifies a great answer for her. Even for Christians today, this parable serves as a remarkable tale of a steadfast God as portrayed in the Old Testament notably Psalm 103. A God that remains faithful to the people of Israel remains faithful and steadfast for us today in our own Christian living. This image of steadfast God must be a core understanding especially with the distorted images of God that confront us in radical Christian and Islamic fundamentalist faiths.

Julian reminds us that for her the meaning of this parable comes in two dimensions. In this fourteenth revelation for Julian her vision has a double meaning, the first as a bodily vision and then an inward spiritual revelation. At this point, it is not necessary or even prudent to retell the entire course of the parable by Julian. It is more beneficial to indicate the key theological themes that assist us in understanding where Christ comes within the Trinity and the image of God.

The double meaning of the parable for Julian has outward and inward understandings for her and even for our own spiritual growth today. Inwardly a deeper meaning would be within the depths of our soul while outwardly we see the world as it exists. The inward meaning different to the outward meaning presents more difficulties for Julian to fully comprehend. In Julian’s own words the meaning of this revelation comes to her within the parable: “And in this inward spiritual revelation of the Lord’s meaning descended into my soul” (51:269). Julian seeks further meaning but encounters a problem: “And at this point the example vanished and our good Lord led my understanding on to the end of what was to be seen and shown in the revelation” (51:269).

Julian becomes perplexed as to the real identity of the servant who was also shown to her as Adam: “For in the servant, who was shown for Adam, as I shall say, I saw many different characteristics which could in no way be attributed to Adam...” (51:269). Even further to this point by Julian, she required three further insights to properly comprehend the meaning of the parable and she understands how one must unlock the meanings through her own insights “...and so at that time I relied greatly on three insights, for complete understanding...The secrets of the revelation were deeply hidden in this mysterious example; and despite this I saw and understood that
every showing is full of secrets” (51:269). The three insights for Julian mean firstly that she understood the teaching of the parable at the beginning. Secondly, she understood the inward instruction to the parable and thirdly there was the full meaning of the parable from beginning to end and as Julian states: “...which our Lord God of his goodness freely and often brings before my eyes” (51:269).

Even for faithful Christians today there are mysteries of our faith that make us find and discover the truthful meanings. It is through prayer and deeper contemplation of God that we come to a better and fuller understanding of where God in Christ exists for us in this world. At times we must seek to find deeper more spiritual meanings to events that confront us in our living. Christian mystics search for a more spiritual meaning in understanding the mysteries of our faith and for us all a similar pathway may be necessary. Julian’s revelations gave her a very insightful and even more intimate relationship with God. In the same way, even though we may not experience divine revelations, this would not prevent us from seeking the sacred mysteries of our Christian faiths as Julian seeks the inward spiritual meanings within the Parable of the Lord and the Servant.

The essential meaning within the parable lies in her twenty years that Julian takes to fully understand the inward instruction. As Julian expresses this: “You ought to take heed to all attributes, divine and human, which were revealed in the example...” (51:270). In very clear terms and language, Julian has indicated the deeper mystical and inwardly spiritual dimension for herself and even for our understanding today. We must explore the divine depths of our own souls for meanings and answers and seek that divine presence of God in Christ to guide us through the perilous times in life.

One writer on Julian’s text has offered an interpretation of what Julian means by her inward and outward instructions that she receives from the Lord. Christopher Abbott argues that Julian’s revelation within the parable of how the Lord looks upon his servant falls into two parts for an essential reason. As Julian expresses this sentiment in her own words: “And all this time his loving lord looks on him (servant) most tenderly, and now with a double aspect, one outward, very meekly and mildly, with great compassion and pity, and this belonged to the first part; the other was inward, more spiritual... And this belonged to the second vision (part)” (51:268). The essential reason as Abbott explains in his own words is: “The Lord’s compassion is aroused by
the outward reality, which is the fallen humanity; but his joy is on account of the inward reality, which is the broken love of Christ expressed through his obedience.”53 This argument by Abbott refers to the description Julian offers for the servant standing before his Lord: “...and the colour of his clothing and how it was made, and his outward appearance and his inward nobility and goodness...his outward behaviour and his inward goodness and willingness” (51:270). In this way the inward meaning of the Lord as Abbott informs us does in fact assist our understanding. It offers us a deeper and more powerful image of our merciful and forgiving God, one that understands the obedience of the servant or even for any individual today who desires to discover an inward truth for his or her own spiritual quest.

As Julian stated earlier in her Long Text, we must spiritually contemplate in our own way what God will reveal to our own souls. It is in the human soul where both God and Christ dwell that we seek deeper meanings within our prayers, meditations and contemplations. Julian expands further in her fourteenth revelation including within this parable the divine presence within the human soul and again later in her sixteenth revelation. The mystery of the divine presence remains for each faithful Christian to actively seek in his or her living.

The duties of the servant to go forth and complete the works of the Lord describe also the qualities and the emotional state of both the Lord and servant. The Lord remains restful and peaceful in the presence of the servant and importantly according to Julian the facial appearance of the Lord that looks “very lovingly and sweetly and mildly” (51:267) upon the servant becomes a powerful image of God even today. The servant falls like all of humanity according to Julian simply because: “And in all of this, the greatest hurt which I saw him in was a lack of consolation, for he could not look on his loving lord, who was very close to him” (51:267). Julian concerns herself with simple reasons to explain the state of the servant after this fall which she also refers to as “man” a later reference she makes in chapter fifty one: “...but like a man who was feeble and foolish” (51:267). The nature of this servant (man) resembles our own very human characteristic and human frailty that we all easily fall into today. These characteristics show our own inabilities to see the face of the Lord.

In the same way, Julian believes that the distress displayed by the servant after the fall is further represented by seven great pains probably presented by Julian as an opposite

53 Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 95.
of the seven deadly sins but in a language and style that fits into our own sensibilities. These seven pains include after the fall:

“...severe bruising causing great pain... clumsiness of his body...weakness, blindness in his reason and perplexed in his mind so that he has almost forgotten his own love, inability to raise oneself, isolation within a desolate place...the seventh was that the place in which he lay was narrow and distressful” (51:267-68).

All of these great pains shown by the servant display a general human condition that humans experience today. It becomes interesting to note whether this human condition of blindness and weakness occurs after our sinfulness or whether we intentionally sin and transgress or refuse to see the image of God in other people.

It takes Julian twenty years as stated before to comprehend who the servant represents in the inner instruction that she receives from the Lord. As she states:

“I understood that the servant who stood before him was shown for Adam, that is to say, one man was shown at that time and his fall, so as to make it understood how God regards all men and their falling. For the sight of God all men are one man and one man is all men” (51:270).

Human frailty in the time of Julian and in our time causes an inability to see the face of God due to our weaknesses: “This man was injured in his powers and made most feeble, and his understanding he was amazed, because he was diverted from looking on his lord...” (51:270).

The blindness which the servant and Adam experience for Julian also represents the blindness of every human even today. Julian describes how the man as representing all men was still blind in knowing the will of God: “I saw the lord commend and approve him for his will, but he himself was blinded and hindered from knowing his will” (51:270). Julian understands more about how God looks upon us for our sinfulness. This image of God is one of the most beautiful descriptions by Julian of a merciful, forgiving and loving God that all of us would cherish: “And then I saw that only pain blames and punishes, and our courteous Lord comforts and succours and always he is kindly disposed to the soul, loving and longing to bring us to his bliss” (51:271). The language that Julian has given in her description is comforting and even reassuring for our image of a forgiving, merciful and compassionate heavenly Father.

Grace Jantzen offers a very solid case for the blindness of the servant that comes from within the servant’s own self-image: “The second form of blindness from which the servant suffered, namely blindness to his own selfhood and worth in the sight of
In drawing this point out by Jantzen further, she argues a very valid point that Julian in fact does not deny our own feelings of guilt, rather Julian wants us to turn back to God. As Julian herself expresses later in chapter 52 concerning our recognition of our own weaknesses as she describes: “So does the good Lord wants us willingly to accuse ourselves, and to see truly and know our failing and all the harms which come from it, seeing and knowing that we can never repair it” (52: 281). For Julian it does not stop with our own continued feelings of failure but to turn back to our good Lord: “...and also we willing and truly see and know the everlasting love which he has for us, and his plentiful mercy”(52: 281). In Julian’s final revelation, she takes the blindness of the servant and failure to see the face of God as a further step in our own general spiritual blindness as will be shown in the last section on “Seeing our Faith and Light through Jesus”.

In strong contrast to Grace Jantzen, Denise Baker argues that Julian’s account of the servant’s fall challenges earlier doctrines on the fall as offered firstly by Saint Anselm and then earlier by Saint Augustine. Julian’s God shows no wrath or anger: “For I saw most truly that where our Lord appears, peace is received and wrath has no place; for I saw no kind of wrath in God, neither briefly nor for long. For truly, as I see it, if God could be angry for any time, we should neither have life nor place nor being...” (49:264). Saint Anselm of Canterbury takes a different stance on the nature of the sinner in Cur Deus Homo (Why God became Man):

“For suppose someone assigns his bondslave a task, and tells him not to leap into the pit from which he cannot by any means climb out, and that bondslave, despising the command and advice of his master, leaps into the pit which has been pointed out to him, so that he is completely unable to carry out his task assigned to him. Do you think that his incapacity serves in the slightest as a valid excuse for him not to perform the task assigned to him?”

It is obvious from Anselm’s account that deliberate transgression takes place but it would be unwise to believe that Julian was attempting to revise Church doctrine. It is difficult to argue as Denise Baker claims that Julian was showing: “The differences between Anselm’s example and Julian’s strikingly demonstrate her disagreement with the conventional interpretation of Genesis 3.” This assertion by Baker may be reading too much into Julian’s own description concerning the manner of the servant.

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54 Jantzen, Julian of Norwich, 208.
55 Jantzen, Julian of Norwich, 208.
56 Baker, Julian of Norwich’s Showings, 92
58 Baker, Julian of Norwich’s Showings, 92.
There is no direct reference to deliberate acts but as Julian states herself: “Not only does the servant go, but he dashes off and runs at great speed, loving to do his lord’s will” (51:267).

Baker also contends that through Julian’s parable in chapter fifty one of her Long Text that: “this parable she offers an alternative to the doctrine of original sin crucial to Augustine’s juridical theodicy.”\(^59\) Augustine proposed as many did after his time that Adam and Eve transgressed deliberately and thus their descendants would then suffer from both the guilt and the weakness to sin.\(^60\) This argument is somewhat difficult to follow from Baker because Julian does not deal at any point in attempting to subvert previous Church doctrine. As earlier noted Julian accepts the teachings of the Holy Church. In the same way the interpretation of Romans 5: 18: “Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one’s act of righteousness leads to justification for all”, could be understood as Augustine did as the indication of our inherited weakness to sin. Julian does describe in her seven great pains, the third pain of weakness; yet she does not dwell at any point on the causes of these great pains. The doctrine of original sin does not in fact become a focus for Julian. She has very little interest in attempting to explain the causes of the fall of the servant. This is not to argue that Julian dismisses sin as unimportant and not worthy of mention.

The cause of the servant’s fall may be more to the great speed as stated by Julian and the lack of due care in completing the will of his loving Lord: “Not only does the servant go, but he dashes off and runs a great speed, loving to do his lord’s will” (51:267). Deliberate transgression as described in Genesis 3 was not the purpose of Julian’s meaning. In this way, Denise Baker has misunderstood Julian’s intention and her claim that Julian was in some manner taking a different standpoint on the Augustinian view of original sin would again be misrepresenting Julian’s portrayal of the servant. Sin takes place as Julian indicates before her parable due to the fact that: “Man is changeable in this life, and falls into sin through naivété and ignorance. He is weak and foolish in himself...” (47:260). The cause for this weakness and foolishness in man, is the same as Julian describes for the servant who fails to see the loving face of the Lord that being: “…blindness, because he (man) does not see God” (47:260.) Failure to see the loving face of the Lord is a very powerful expression of our own failings in this life. Our human errors and our selfish urges for betterment and

\(^59\) Baker, Julian of Norwich’s Showings, 86.

\(^60\) Baker, Julian of Norwich’s Showings, 86.
continual improvement overpower our true feelings. We fail to see our loving God and as stated earlier the image of God in our neighbour. Our sins become as Julian shows us with the servant, a result of our own inabilities to see the active presence of God in our world today. A loving God that is ever present in all things, the goodness of our loving creator Father in the face of the stranger, the refugee, the asylum seeker and the persecuted. Our weakness and our blindness become habitual if we do not seek through our prayers and participation within the sacraments of the Holy Church, the body of Christ. We receive the mystical body and blood of Christ; we must spiritually thirst for Christ in the face of others that we may sometimes ignore.

As Julian has just stated for us all to hear and act upon, we fail through our naivete and ignorance. Our ignorance can defeat limit us, unless as Philip Sheldrake points out we are: “united with God in Christ through a Spirit led communion with one another. God’s own relational nature is fundamental to this life. God is persons-in-communication, a mutuality of self-giving love.”61 The essence of Julian’s message is tied so beautifully in what Sheldrake has just stated to us, God is in other persons and so the image of the loving God is in each of us and our ignorance in failing to see that loving face of God becomes our downfall and our own lack in living fulfilling lives. An obsession with sinning does not become a focus for Julian as stated before; sin occurs due to weakness and ignorance and as Julian shows later in her sixteenth revelation sin does blind us from seeing God but it should never hold us back in loving our creator God.

For Julian the servant does not deliberately disobey the Lord, the careless nature of the servant due to blindness and weakness of character forms the reasons for sinfulness after the fall. It is through Christ who takes upon himself: “all our blame; and therefore our Father may not does not wish to assign more blame to us than to his own beloved Son Jesus Christ” (51: 275). Julian’s image of a merciful God that does not seek retribution is very appealing for us today. Our sinfulness is understandable and always there exists our ability to redeem our sins, seek forgiveness and see the face of God in Christ.

Bernard of Clairvaux in his Sermons on the Song of Songs and his depiction of both Adam and Eve probably comes closer to Julian’s version of the servant and the fall. The fall becomes a result of separation from the image of God in which humankind

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was created. In Sermon 36, Bernard expresses a more direct separation from God after the fall: “When a man thus takes stock of himself in the clear light of truth, he will discover that he lives in a region where likeness to God has been forfeited...”

It is in the Sermon 36 that Bernard’s description of the blindness of Adam has closer connection to Julian’s description in her parable of the seven pains according to Denise Baker. As Bernard states: “As for me as I look at myself, my eye is filled with bitterness. But if I look up and fix my eyes on the aid of the divine mercy, this happy vision of God soon tempers the bitter vision of myself...” Julian describes the fourth pain of the Servant as: “the fourth was that he was blinded in his reason and perplexed in his mind, so much that he almost forgotten in his own love” (51: 268).

As far as Denise Baker is concerned there are more subtle differences between Bernard and Julian in terms of Bernard’s stronger emphasis on the bodily senses as opposed to Julian’s description of servant’s emotional state of loneliness. In fact this distinction by Baker is very true of the manner in which Julian does wish to present the feelings of the servant in the terms of an emotional separation for his Lord.

Julian draws us towards the divine presence of the Lord within our own souls. Her powerful use of imagery and very detailed descriptions offer a very visual and emotive feeling for the reader. As Julian informs us in her description of where the Lord God resides: “The place where the Lord sat on was unadorned, on the round, barren and waste, alone in the wilderness” (51:271). The wilderness or sometimes known as the desert immediately conjures up Biblical images of the Israelites wandering in the desert and the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. Our souls could easily be described as places that are barren and wasteful due to our failings to seek our loving God. It is a place to discover the divine within us and to see our active God in our world. Julian takes us further in her sixteenth revelation with the second person of the Trinity dwelling within our soul in a similar form to our creator God, the wilderness becomes a vast citadel in which Christ dwells.

The image of our loving and merciful, all forgiving Creator Lord becomes Julian’s next beautiful description. Even today Julian’s images have great benefit to a

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63 Baker, *Julian of Norwich’s Showings*, 97.
64 Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon 36 from *Sermon to the Song of Songs*.
65 Baker, *Julian of Norwich’s Showings*, 98.
sometimes distant secular world that has forgotten the image of the Creator. The beauty and style of the following description by Julian serves to enrich our Christian faiths today:

“His clothing was wide and ample and very handsome, as befits the Lord. The colour of the clothing was azure blue, most dignified and beautiful. His demeanour was merciful, his face was a lovely pale brown with a very seemly countenance, his eyes were black and seemly, revealing all his loving pity, and within him there was a secure place of refuge long and broad, all full of endless heavenliness” (51:271).

The imagery of the Old Testament Psalms immediately comes to mind in Julian’s description especially Psalm 51:1-2: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions, Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” The themes relating to mercy, forgiveness, security, protection, pity and refuge, all remind the reader of the strong and divine image of the Lord God. The language has significant purpose for Julian in describing the vastness and immensity of God’s existence in our world and in our individual lives.

Julian continues her image of the Lord God by expressing in her own words: “This lovely regard had in it a beautiful mingling which was wonderful to see. Part was compassion and pity, part was joy and bliss...the pity was earthly and the bliss was heavenly” (51:271). In our own terms, the pity and compassion manifest as the outward meaning while the joy and bliss become a more spiritual dimension of our faith for this life and unto the next life.

Julian refers again to the blindness not this time of the servant but in general terms as “man”, an obvious reference to humanity. Her emphasis here relates to as she states: “But man is blinded in this life, and therefore we cannot see God, as he is” (51:272).

The purpose for Julian and for our own understanding is to see the place where God exists for us all within our own souls.

The Lord is a constant and stable presence dwelling within our souls and we all await the work of the Lord’s beloved Son who will redeem us: “He has made man’s soul to be his dwelling place which is the most pleasing to him of all his works” (51:272).

The active indwelling presence of God in our world today becomes the fuller meaning for Christians living the meaning of their faiths to the fullest.

The fall of man does not disrupt the position or disfavour of the Lord but he awaits the coming of his son, our redeemer and saviour: “...and therefore our kind Father did not
wish to prepare any other place, but sat upon the ground, awaiting human nature... by his grace his beloved Son has brought back his city its noble place of beauty by his hard labour” (51:272). Christ restores humanity and restores our human soul. Julian expands this notion far more in chapters fifty five to sixty where she fully develops her Trinitarian theology with Christ as the second person of the Trinity along with her maternal themes of the Mother Christ.

The beauty of Julian’s language within her parable lies with her very intense descriptions of the clothing and demeanour of both the Lord and the Servant. Again the themes of steadfastness and salvation form part of Julian’s words: “The blueness of the clothing signifies his steadfastness...” (51:272). Psalm 103 also proclaims the steadfastness of the Lord God in verse four: “...who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy...” Julian refers to this redemption from the pit not within her parable but later in her fifteenth revelation in the section on “Seeing our Light and Faith in Jesus”. The Lord God dwells within us and our salvation takes place through the sending of his son. The meaning here shows clearly a God of salvation that is active in human history.

The love between the Lord God and the servant has both an inward and outward meaning: “I saw the lord sitting in state, and the servant standing respectfully before his Lord and in this servant there is a double significance, one outward, and the other inward” (51:272). The appearance of the servant outwardly signifies our broken humanity through our own sinfulness: “...his clothing was a white tunic, scanty, old and all worn, dyed with the sweat of his body, tight fitting and short...” (51:273) Christopher Abbott adds further to this description of the outward appearance of the servant’s clothing as: “human flesh which has laboured throughout history under the constraints of fallenness...”66 Abbott has made a very significant point concerning the weakness that exists within humanity, a weakness that Julian has associated with the words “scanty, old and worn”.

The inward appearance of the servant becomes even more significant due to the words used by Julian: “And inwardly, there was shown in him a foundation of love, the love which he had for the lord, which was equal to the love which the lord had for him.” (p273) In Julian’s own words this love represents a divine wisdom that we must always feel for our creator God, the wisdom of the divine love that dwells within us:

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66 Abbott, Julian of Norwich, p96.
In the story of Genesis after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Adam must eat from the cursed ground because of the sin of disobedience. Julian does change the emphasis to recast the servant as the gardener that then sets forth to restore the broken soil, our broken humanity to bring forth new growth: “And he was to persevere in his
work, and make sweet streams to run, and fine and plenteous fruit to grow, which he was to bring before the Lord and serve him with his liking” (51:273-4).

Once this work was complete, the servant could then present this food, our restored souls or even our restored humanity to the Lord. The rich treasure to be reproduced as a new and fruitful crop represents how our human souls our sensual nature would require a form of reproducing and restoring. Jesus restores this broken soil with his own glorification after his resurrection. This restoration occurs later with Julian’s further portrayal of Christ as our loving Mother of Mercy in chapters 58 to 60.

In Julian’s terms, the servant is comprehended as Christ the second person of the Trinity: “In the servant is comprehended the second person of the Trinity and in the servant is comprehended Adam that is to say all men” (p274). In Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians chapter fifteen verses 45-46, a valuable source of scriptural reference for Julian outlines the difference between Adam and Christ: “Thus it is written, The first man, Adam became a life being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual.” The key point here in this reference for Julian remains that as she comprehends both Adam and Christ as the same with Adam as all men, the intention appears to have relied on the Pauline example between humanity of Adam and the divinity of Christ. All humanity must be restored or recreated by the gardener meaning the second person of the Holy Trinity. The full explanation of the restoration of humanity by the second person of the Trinity comes out in chapter fifty eight within the fourteenth revelation.

The fall of Adam is then related to the fall of Christ: “Adam fell from life to death, into the valley of this wretched world, and after that into hell. God’s son fell with Adam, into the valley of the womb of the maiden who was the fairest daughter of Adam...” (51: 274-5). The interpretation of the meaning here by Julian has come with some debate amongst Julian scholars of today. On one level a proper understanding of the fall both of Adam and Christ together would signify how Christ shares in the human weakness of sin on becoming human. The incarnation of the word becoming flesh through the womb of the maiden thus begins the identification of God with our broken wounded humanity.

Christopher Abbott presents a more thoughtful and theological understanding of the above passage from Julian’s description of the fall of both Adam and Christ. He states
that the first level Christ takes on the “ravages of time in a fallen world” \textsuperscript{67} It is more the next level of understanding that Abbott argues concerning the fall into the maiden’s womb that creates a more powerful theological meaning for even our understanding. He claims that the Virgin’s womb is: “fertile field in the wilderness of space-time, is furrowed and seeded by the Holy Spirit to be the womb of the new creation through which all might be reborn”\textsuperscript{68} This analysis by Abbott makes perfect sense and it follows that Julian would use such maternal imagery as she does so well in chapters fifty eight to sixty of her fourteenth revelation. The rebirth in Christ forms her strong metaphor with Christ as the Mother of Grace as she states in chapter sixty: “…made the foundation of his work most humbly and most mildly in the maiden’s womb” (60:297). The next section on Christ our Holy Mother Church within the Trinity explores this theme in depth.

Abbott adds one further key and crucial theological dimension to fall into the maiden’s womb. He comments on what he understands to be: “three crucial aspects of redemption: the human experience of sin; the love of God expressed and made operative through the incarnation and passion of Christ; and the possibility of humanity’s rebirth.”\textsuperscript{69} This analysis shows a fine depth of understanding in Julian’s crucial themes of redemption and salvation in that even though humanity falls, Christ will redeem us in this life and the next. Kerrie Hide also agrees that the fall into the maiden’s womb focuses on “the story of salvation”, the salvation of humanity through Christ.\textsuperscript{70}

Kerrie Hide does in fact find strong disagreement with Denise Baker on Adam’s fall. It is not as Baker argues that: “the predestination of humanity in the second person of the Trinity from all eternity necessitates the incarnation of Christ when Adam falls from union with God into the region of unlikeness.”\textsuperscript{71} Hide argues that Julian was not interested in the consequences of the fall and that the incarnation was not associated with a predetermined plan for the causes of the first sin.\textsuperscript{72} As stated earlier, Julian was not attempting to subvert any doctrines on sin including original sin.

The focus on both the divinity and humanity of Christ both God and man as Julian saw in her first revelation again becomes her crucial emphasis. More importantly

\textsuperscript{67} Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 101.
\textsuperscript{68} Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 101.
\textsuperscript{69} Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 101.
\textsuperscript{70} Hide, Gifted Origins, 126.
\textsuperscript{71} Baker, Julian of Norwich’s Showings, 97.
\textsuperscript{72} Hide, Gifted Origins, 128.
within this part of the parable, Julian makes the key connection between Christ and all of human kind. For Julian and for faithful Christians today, such a crucial relationship as Julian describes next, must be valued deep within our fundamental beliefs today.

Julian describes the equality of Christ to the Father in terms of Christ’s divinity: “...even though he is God, equal with the Father as regards his divinity, but with his prescient purpose that he would become man to save mankind in fulfilment of the will of his father...” (51:275). Christ becomes incarnate for our salvation at the behest of the will of the Father. Julian again places emphasis on the maiden’s womb as the fall that Christ undertakes even though it cause such pain and suffering: “…and soon he fell very low into the maiden’s womb, having no regard for himself or his cruel pains” (51:275). Julian makes a crucial point here concerning the soteriological emphasis on the salvation of humanity within her maternal theme of the womb which she will so skilfully highlight in the next section.

The description of the white tunic of Christ has a significant importance in making the reader understand how a simple piece of cloth could create such a powerful image: “The white tunic is his flesh; the scantiness signifies that there was nothing at all separating the divinity from the humanity” (51:275). Julian’s style of figurative and descriptive imagery becomes her great tool in directing us today to her spiritual meanings. Even though the descriptions are simple, they are so important in the context of understanding the second person of the Blessed Trinity. The white tunic plays such an key role in creating the picture of Christ as both divine and human within our minds as Julian further indicates: “The tight fit is poverty, the age is Adam’s wearing, the wormness is the sweat of Adam’s labour, the shortness shows the servant-labourer” (51:275). The metaphorical language has such a rich and deeply spiritual meaning and for readers of Julian today whether it be in Julian network meetings or prayer groups, the description here of the white tunic should be so beneficial. The suffering Christ must endure the pains of a sinful and wounded human world.

Julian presents to us in her parable a beautiful image of Christ for our understanding and appreciation today as the Son who knows the will of the Father and how he represents: “the wisdom of the Father” (51:276). The reference here for Julian comes from 1 Corinthians verse 30: “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus who became for us the wisdom from God...” Julian stresses the closeness of all of
humanity with the second person of the Trinity and again she draws on the Pauline themes of Christ’s body as the Church with humanity as members of that body:

“Very truly the Son knew when was the Father’s will, and how long he would desire it, that is to say as regards his divinity, for he is the wisdom of the Father. Therefore this meaning was shown for understanding of Christ’s humanity. For all mankind which will be saved by the sweet Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, all is Christ’s humanity, for he is the head, and we are his members...” (51:276)

Our union is with Christ, our humanity is with Christ and we imitate Christ as members of his Holy Church. Kerrie Hide argues the reference by Julian to the wisdom motif signifies as she claims: “…no separation between creation and redemption. Christ, the Incarnation of the wisdom of God, manifests how creation and Incarnation are intrinsically connected in the one divine plan.” 73 This explanation by Hide has merit in that Julian has connected the Pauline image of Christ to the wisdom of the Father. 74 As 1 Corinthians 1: 30 shows: “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” Abbott only relates the meaning of Julian’s passage in chapter 51 as an obvious Pauline reference to 1 Corinthians 12: 12: “…and all members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ.” The key for Abbott as he points out: “Julian adduces the concept of the Church’s spiritual reality as the mystical body of Christ.”75 Both Hide and Abbott correctly understand the meaning that Julian has given us; however Abbott only stresses the importance of Christ as the Church without placing any importance on the wisdom motif as Julian indicated in the passage and Kerrie Hide had commented upon in her own understanding of Julian’s words. Hide herself further elaborates on Julian’s maternal themes and offers particular comments on the Mother Christ within the Mother Church. These comments will be expanded upon in the next section on “Christ our Holy Mother Church within the Holy Trinity”.

Julian describes the longing and desire that appears in both servant and the Son as:

“And all who are under heaven and will come there, their way is by longing and desiring, which desiring and longing was shown in the servant standing before the Lord, or otherwise, in the Son standing before the Father in Adam’s tunic...”(51: 276). Equally for all mankind the desire and longing in our spiritual living to carry out the

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73 Hide, Gifted Origins, 129.
74 Hide, Gifted Origins, 129.
75 Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 103.
Father’s will becomes the centre point for our Christian faith. As Christ the Son carried out the Father’s will, we today must seek a similar pathway even when we remain blinded by our worldly obstacles.

Julian portrays a further symbolic understanding for us all to visualise a powerful image of the Father and Son: “The sitting of the Father symbolizes the divinity that is to say to reveal rest and peace...” (51:276) our heavenly Father resides for us all as a place for rest and peace. When we seek our Father we find this rest and peace. The next image of the servant or Christ rushing away by Julian further stresses the divinity and humanity of the second person of the Trinity: “The standing of the servant symbolizes labour, and that he stands to the left symbolizes that he was not fully worthy to stand immediately in front of the Lord” (51: 276-7). The obvious reference here by Julian and a benefit for our faiths today, is the image of God’s son willing to become human and experience the scourge of a sinful world. The position of the servant to the Lord means that he will not be equal to the Father the resurrection and glorification of Christ.

The servant rushes away which for Julian represents the obedience to do the Father’s will and as Julian states: “His rushing away was divinity, and his running was the humanity...” (51:277). A willingness to suffer the pains of death in accordance with the will of the Father: “...and that he stood to the left symbolizes that the Father by his will permitted his own Son in human nature to suffer all man’s pain without sparing him” (51:277). In this way, the servant comprehended as Christ willing sacrifices his life. The torn tunic becomes Julian strong emphasis of the sinful humanity: “By his tunic being ready to go to rags...” (51:277)

Christ carries out the Father’s will by accepting our human nature and experiencing the fall. Julian describes this as: “falling to accept our nature, and in this falling he took great hurt. The hurt that he took was our flesh, in which at once he experienced mortal pains” (51:277). The pain and hurt of our sinful humanity was experienced by Christ in his undertaking of the Father’s will. Julian has offered us a pathway to follow if we believe the circumstances are present to follow the Father’s will and to imitate Christ.

In recent history there have been individuals who have sincerely believed that following the Father’s will included the ultimate sacrifice of one’s life and thus following in the same way the cross of Christ as a member of the Holy Church, the body of Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood that the Father’s will required that he
followed the true beliefs of his own Christian faith as Christ abided by his Father’s will. He did not retreat as he could have easily done so but he confronted a great evil. He was not prepared to accept meekly the depravities of the Nazi regime. In becoming a member of the resistance against the Nazi regime, Bonhoeffer could see that the pure Church was the mystical body of Christ and that to be a member of that body meant living out in his life a dangerous journey that was closest to that meaning. In confronting evil rather than turning away was not a possibility that Bonhoeffer could envisage for his life.

Bonhoeffer understood that he had to co-suffer with his fellow Christians and like the servant or rather like Christ; he takes on the mortal pains and great hurt of the decent Christian Germans. In Bonhoeffer’s own words: “if we want to be Christians, we must have a portion in the broadness of Christ’s own heart through responsible deeds...we should do so in genuine sympathy flowing forth not from fear, but from the liberating and redeeming love of Christ toward all who suffer.”

Archbishop Oscar Romero was also set upon following the pathway of the peacemaker by opposing the violence within El Salvador. He knew very well that the path he followed would possibly lead to his own death in 1979 but he was prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. In acting in the way he did, Romero opposed the military regime of El Salvador as an agent of God’s will because he followed the teachings of the gospel in terms of love and justice. God’s divinity was shining through Oscar Romero and his was also willing to take on the pains of the people of El Salvador as though he was wearing the same white tunic of the servant. The difference became that Romero’s death became a rebirth and restoration as a Christ act for the people of El Salvador. The dead body of Romero does in fact become the white tunic torn into rags but he rose again in the people of El Salvador.

Both Bonhoeffer and Romero displayed their own humanity by showing the depth of God’s presence within their own souls. It would have been human to falter and retreat back into comfort as many people prefer to do rather than risk their own lives. A Divine hero as shown in both Bonhoeffer and Romero displayed in their own time, is prepared to take on the face of the suffering Christ and the pains of death. These divine acts of sacrifice have been repeated in other people who have taken on the face

of the suffering Christ and followed the will of God as they believed it to be at that moment in history.

In the final presentation of the servant and Christ by Julian within her parable, we see the glorification of God’s son and a changed appearance in the clothing and the wearing by Christ of a precious crown which is different to the crown of thorns: “For the clothing was blue, and Christ’s clothing is now of a fair and seemly mixture, which is so marvellous that I cannot describe it, for it is all of true glory” (51:278).

The full glorification of the resurrected Christ takes place in Julian’s description and the once crown of thorns and the position of the servant to the Lord has changed: “Now the Son does not stand before the Father as a servant, pitifully clothed, partly naked but he stands immediately before the father richly clothed in joyful amplitude, with a rich precious crown upon his head” (51:278). It is a crown to signify our redemption and salvation and Julian completes this parable to describe the spiritual marriage between the spouse Christ in glory with the Father and the beloved wife our human souls. Julian does not overly stress the theme of mystical marriage as do other earlier medieval writers like Bernard of Clairvaux in his *Sermon to the Song of Songs* Julian takes this union further with the description of Christ as our Mother within the Trinity. The wisdom of Christ as our Mother becomes Julian’s key focus after her parable on how we see our true salvation with Christ our Holy Mother Church within the Holy Trinity. The Holy Mother Church Christ becomes an important representation within the Holy Trinity. Ours human souls become unified through Christ as Julian will indicate in the next section. The maternal themes create a very wonderful image of the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

### 3.3 Christ our Holy Mother Church within the Holy Trinity

The maternal theme of Christ as the Holy Mother Church becomes the key emphasis within chapters fifty eight to sixty two as part of Julian’s fourteenth revelation. Julian has already indicated in her parable how Christ fell into the womb of the maiden. Julian continues with her maternal themes to demonstrate a similar theme of enclosure by incorporating the indwelling of God then Christ into our human soul. It is Christ as our Mother who restores us through his resurrection and unites the two natures of our soul as Julian clearly shows. Christ our working mother that nourishes and nurtures us
in Julian’s time and today through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. This maternal role of Christ guides us into his body the Holy Mother Church. The emphasis by Julian becomes then more ecclesiological as well as soteriological because it becomes concerned with how the Church through the sacraments works for us today in this life and prepares us for eternal life. The Holy Spirit completes the union as the next section will indicate for us.

The image of the Holy Mother Church as will be shown in this section becomes the most pure representation of the Holy Church. It is an image for all Christians to deeply regard as their spiritual model that may have been misunderstood or may have remained hidden. It is a pure and perfect image to be ever present in our current understanding of the Church.

Julian has the intention to show us how the Trinity works in our lives through enclosing us within this triune God. In reference to the first revelation of Julian’s Long Text and in the Short Text, the Trinity is revealed as a spiritual sight where the Lord is described as: “He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for his love, embraces us and shelters us and never deserts us.” (5:183) In the same manner our Lord loves us as Julian demonstrated in her image of the hazelnut as distinct properties within the Trinity namely: “The first is that God made it, the second is that God loves it, the third is that God preserves it.” (5:183)

In the fifty fourth chapter, Julian portrays the God that dwells within our soul: “God dwells in our soul; and more greatly ought to rejoice that our soul dwells in God. Our soul is created to be God’s dwelling place, and the dwelling of our soul is God...” (54:285). The presence of our heavenly creator God enclosed within our being makes these words by Julian very powerful. Our being as humans means more than just our physical body but a more important spiritual being within us all. In more ways, it could be termed that we are all enclosed within the womb of God.

The Trinity as our Father the creator of our substance is enclosed in us: “…Trinity is our Father, for he made us and keeps us in him. And the deep wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother, in whom we are enclosed” (54:285). Psalm 139 verse thirteen offers similar sentiments on both the indwelling and immanence of God alongside the maternal womb motif: “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” The whole Trinity as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are equally enclosed within us through the wisdom and goodness of our one God: “We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are
enclosed in the Holy Spirit” (54:285). Our triune God dwells within our being and as Julian indicates next Christ’s dwelling within our souls becomes for all Christians an eternal presence.

God dwells eternally within our souls taking on our sensuality. Our soul or city as Julian describes is a place that God will never depart which she repeats again in her sixteenth revelation with a stronger emphasis: “For I saw very surely that our substance is in God, and I also saw that God is in our sensuality...He comes into this city and will never depart...And this was said in the sixteenth revelation, where it says: The place that Jesus takes in our soul he will never depart” (55:287). Julian repeats the same message in the next chapter but with the emphasis again on Christ and again later within her sixteenth revelation and in the section on “Seeing Our Light and Faith in Jesus”. The important emphasis on our human sensuality in which Christ has been enclosed along with our natural substance has special importance on the sacred and divine within our human souls: “That honourable city in which our Lord sits is our sensuality, in which he is enclosed; and our natural substance is enclosed in Jesus, with the blessed soul of Christ sitting in rest in the divinity” (56:289). Christ is alive and present within our human nature. The womb imagery again has purpose at this point, to be enclosed within our own soul within the womb of Jesus.

This soul has been grounded in God and we only understand our soul by as Julian states: “... until we first have knowledge of God, who is the Creator to whom it is united” (56:288). Julian wants us to understand the close affinity that our heavenly Father has within us all. It is not to be taken lightly; we must all fully appreciate this knowledge of God and never lose sight of his presence within our souls. Today people do not fully comprehend the importance of the immanence of God within their own being. As Julian further stresses: “For our soul sits in God in true rest, and our soul stands in God in true strength, and our soul is naturally rooted in God in endless love” (56:289).

Even for our own understanding today and our Christian faiths, Julian presents a very clear way of knowing the indwelling of God’s presence. Julian brings out the two parts of our soul as mentioned on page 294 namely our substance and our sensuality. These parts of the soul have been referred to as the higher and lower parts but what do they represent.

One observation would be that our substance is the deepest part of our soul which is pure where God resides as our creator. We cannot separate from this substance;
however we can easily be fragmented from this substance by our sensuality. Julian does not offer further meanings to these two parts but as she has indicated our failure to know God would be similar in fact to the earlier failure of the servant to see and know the merciful face of God.

Our substantial nature is grounded in God and in Julian’s words: “spring mercy and grace and penetrate us, accomplishing everything for the fulfilment of our joy” (57:290). As Julian indicates our two natures of our soul do become fragmented: “And so in our substance we are full and in our sensuality we are lacking and this lack God will restore and fill by the operation of mercy and grace” (57:291). One question is why should our sensuality be lacking, is it sin or is it our human weaknesses as Julian indicated with the seven great pains of the servant in the parable. Julian has opened our eyes and our awareness of our self and how to avoid in this life the mistakes in not knowing the immanence of God and the Holy Trinity. This question will be further explored in the section on “Seeing our Light and Faith in Christ” in terms of contemplating Christ within our human souls.

It is through Christ within the Trinity that will unite our two natures: “And so in Christ our two natures are united, for the Trinity is comprehended in Christ, in whom our higher part is founded and rooted; and our lower part the second person has taken, which nature was first prepared for him” (57:291). Julian implores us to profit from our faith and God’s commandments. It is through our faith and the seven sacraments of the Holy Mother Church that we then receive the virtues through the grace of the Holy Spirit: “Also in our faith come the seven sacraments, one following another in the order God has ordained them in us, and every kind of virtue” (p292).

It is through the incarnation that Christ takes on our sensual nature and we become joined with Christ through our own baptism within the Holy Mother Church. : “For in the same time that God joined himself to our body in the maiden’s womb, he took our soul, which is sensual, and in taking it, having enclosed us all in himself, he united it to our substance” (57:292). Our sensual nature is lacking as Julian states and thus in need of salvation due to our fall through Adam.

At this point, Julian clarifies for us the salvation of Christ for all of humanity within the Trinity. The properties of the blessed Trinity that Julian presents to us focus on fatherhood, motherhood and lordship. The Holy Trinity that shows a God active in our world today through The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The three key
As the aspects of the Blessed Trinity become Julian’s focus in our own understanding of how this triune God works within our world. As Julian explains for us to appreciate fully:

“In our almighty Father we have our protection and our creation from the beginning; and in the second person, in knowledge and wisdom we have perfection, as regards our sensuality, our restoration and our salvation, for he is our Mother, brother and saviour...” (58:293).

The language in itself portrays a close affinity with our creator God and Julian completes this work by adding: “...and in our good Lord the Holy Spirit we have reward and our gift for our living and our labour...” (58: 293-4). The full purpose of the third person of the Holy Spirit will be explained as indicated before in the next section.

The purpose of Julian’s strong emphasis on the Trinitarian themes comes down to her desire to make us understand the three key aspects within the Holy Trinity namely: “For all our life consists of three: In the first we have our being, and in the second we have our increasing, and in the third we have our fulfilment. The first is nature, the second is mercy, and the third is grace.”(58:294) Julian expands on her explanation of these three key aspects of the Trinity for our full comprehension. As Julian further elaborates: “Thus in our Father, God almighty, we have our being, and in our Mother of mercy we have our reforming and our restoring, in whom our parts are united and all made perfect and through the rewards and gifts of grace of the Holy Spirit we are fulfilled.”(58: 294-5) Julian does stress that the restoring and reforming of us comes from our Mother of mercy through as she states: “...and in mercy he reforms and restores us, and by the power of his Passion, his death and his Resurrection he unites us to our substance” (58: 294).

This portrayal of the Holy Trinity by Julian as our being, our restoring and our fulfilling, offers a very spiritual dimension for Christians today to feel the presence of God in their lives. It is a picture or rather an image of God with the emphasis on Christ that would greatly assist us with a fuller understanding of the place of this triune God. In reality, we see who we are as humans, our failings and our chance for redemption and salvation through Christ. In this image of the Trinity, we see our divine nature as human beings and the divine goodness that dwells within our spiritual being. In addition, the second person of the Holy Trinity is active in this world to restore our souls and the full dimension of this blessed Trinity comes to us in the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit to complete our full union with the divine in this world.
Julian draws out further her maternal theme by showing Jesus in three ways as our Mother of nature, mercy and grace: “And so Jesus is our true Mother in nature by our first creation, and he is our true Mother in grace by his taking our created nature” (59: 296). Julian clarifies this meaning more by expressing motherhood as: “I understand three ways of contemplating motherhood in God. The first is the foundation of our nature’s creation; the second is his taking of our nature, where the motherhood of grace begins; the third is the motherhood of work” (60: 297). For Julian the three Trinitarian aspects of the motherhood become clearer for us as she continually stresses this threefold dimension in all her examples.

Jesus as the second person of the Trinity exists as Saint Paul states in Colossians 1:3: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...” Christ is thus the true mother of our creation of human kind just as he is our mother of our own created nature by becoming human. It is the motherhood of grace, the motherhood of work where the body of Christ becomes the Holy Mother Church.

The motherhood of work becomes for Julian an essential way of showing to us today how God works through Christ. This mother of working is active through the sacraments of the Mother Church. As Julian highlights this nature of motherhood of work: “The mother can give her child to suck of her milk but our precious Mother Jesus can feed us with himself and does, most courteously and most tenderly, with the Blessed Sacrament, which is the precious food of true life...” (60:298). The maternal themes that Julian has offered here become a fine example for living out through the Church and through our own spiritual lives the meaning of receiving the mystical body and blood of Christ. Christ lives within us through his body the Holy Mother Church: “…and with all the sweet sacraments he sustains us most mercifully and graciously... I am he whom Holy Church preaches and teaches to you...” (60: 298).

The maternal nature of Christ as the blessed sacrament of the Eucharist feeding and sustaining our spiritual lives through the Holy Mother Church must be an enriching and fulfilling aspect to our Christian faith. Christ as our mother was not new to the Church; there were earlier writers who wrote more in terms of the simile of Jesus as mother. For Julian refers to Jesus in metaphorical language that Jesus is our mother not as our mother. The subtle difference may seem less important to the casual observer, but it is a very key difference and a stronger comparison with motherhood. Julian may have been influenced by the Prayer to Saint Paul by Saint Anselm to draw out her maternal themes in which Saint Anselm writes: “And you, Jesus, are you not also
a mother? Are you not the mother who, like a hen gathers her chickens under her wings? Truly Lord, you are mother for both they who are in labour and they are brought forth are accepted by you.”

Later medieval artists did in fact depict in their artistic works a very similar theme to Julian’s description of Christ as our Mother feeding his Church through the Eucharist. The feeding and sustaining of our spiritual lives as stated above was depicted by one medieval artist Jacob Cornelisz in his *Man of Sorrows (ca 1510)* (see Illustration 2). The spurting of Christ’s blood into a chalice to spiritually feed and sustain the living presence of Christ within the lives of the faithful becomes a very compelling visual image for people during this period and even more today.

In chapter twenty four in the tenth revelation, Christ draws all the faithful through his open side as a movement into the body of Christ the Church as indicated in the earlier section. Julian places emphasis on the open side of Christ in maternal terms that even today would offer a beautiful image of a tender and nurturing Church: “The mother can lay her child tenderly to her breast, but our tender Mother Jesus can lead us easily into his blessed breast through his sweet open side, and show us there a part of the godhead and of the joys of heaven, with inner certainty of endless bliss” (60:298).

The nurturing nature of the Mother Christ serves to display a Mother Church that should also care tenderly for the faithful children of the Church. The maternal theme allows for Julian to extend how our Mother Christ suffers and dies for us in order to bring us to endless life. In the same manner that a mother suffers through childbirth, Christ as Julian points out to us: “So he carries us within him in love and travail, until the full time when he wanted to suffer the sharpest thorns and cruel pains that ever were or will be, and at the last he died. And when he had finished, and had borne us to bliss...” (60:298). Julian continues this same theme towards the end of her fourteenth revelation by again stating: “And in accepting our nature he gave us life, and his blessed dying on the Cross he bore us to endless life” (63:304). The key theme that stands out here is that we begin our human life journey with Christ and return to Christ for our final journey into eternal life. This journey for our own Christian faith becomes one where we are created with Christ in Baptism and then re-created in Christ into eternal life.

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Illustration Two
The cross of Christ represents in Julian’s eyes as well as for all Christians today, a suffering Christ that is in union with a suffering humanity. A Christ on the cross that brings us comfort and joy as Julian indicated in her ninth revelation in chapter twenty one. This suffering Christ will brings us to heavenly bliss and we will be reborn to Christ our eternal mother.

Two commentators add a great deal to Julian’s concept of the Motherhood of Grace or Mother of Working. Christopher Abbott and Kerrie Hide both stress the importance within the Motherhood of working grace that we as faithful Christians are born to Christ in baptism and return to Christ upon our mortal death. Abbott states this understanding as: “The creation (according to kind) and re-creation (according to grace) of humanity are presented as a movement emanation from God and return to God.” Working grace is the key for our lives as Kerrie Hide asserts: “Grace is always present and active within us.” Hide does repeat the same theme as Abbott in terms of creation and re-creation but more in terms of returning to Christ: “We are brought to birth so that we may return to our home in Christ both physically and spiritually.”

Both commentators have clearly understood the crucial importance of both our mortal and eternal life with Christ. Hide does express very well our spiritual return to Christ and in fact her explanation fits more comfortably with how Julian expresses this return at the beginning of chapter sixty one. Our spiritual soul becomes the further dimension of the motherhood of working grace as Julian states: “And in our spiritual bringing to birth he uses more tenderness, without any comparison, in protecting us. By so much as our soul is more precious in his sight, he kindles, our understanding, he prepares our ways, he eases our conscience, he comforts our soul…” The language that Julian has adopted here displays great sensitivity and warmth for all Christians. Impending death need not be a horrid experience when one reads these words as expressed by Julian. Even with our departure from this world in whatever state of sinfulness, Julian still finds great benefit and joyous comfort for us all by stating: “For we shall truly see in heaven without end that we have sinned grievously in this life; and notwithstanding this, we shall truly see that we were never hurt in his love, nor were we ever of less value in his sight” (61:300). Our heavenly Father does

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78 Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 133.
79 Hide, Gifted Origins, 145.
80 Hide, Gifted Origins, 144.
not seek retribution which in Julian’s century would have been strongly promoted by
the Church. Even today, we seek such comfort from these words regardless of the life
that existed on earth.

Christ the Holy Mother Church is the great model that Julian has placed before us as
a most pure and perfect image of the Church which serves us very well today as a
model: “... All the health and the life of the sacraments, all the power and the grace of
my word, all the goodness which is ordained in Holy Church for you, I am he” (60: 298). Today our participation within the sacraments of the Holy Mother Church
should be viewed in the light of Julian’s words. We participate within the body of
Christ as we are born into the womb of the Holy Mother Church, the womb of God in
Christ and return to this womb upon death.

These maternal images as presented by Julian have also sparked debate amongst other
commentators who have regarded these maternal images with a more modern
understanding. Two commentators offer very debatable and at times controversial re-
definitions of Julian’s maternal images. Recent contemporary journals have provided
avenues for some debate on Julian’s image of Christ as our Mother. Although other
key writers such as Joan Nuth, Grace Jantzen, Kerrie Hide and Christopher Abbott
have not expressed the maternal image of Julian’s Christ in terms of a feminized ideal
of God that has not prevented such ideals from being advocated.

Catherine Innes-Parker in her article entitled Subversion and Conformity in Julian’s
Revelation: Authority, Vision and the Motherhood of God, argues that the imagery of
motherhood that Julian’s has applied to the incarnate Christ does in fact redefine
God.81 Parker argues further to her claim by stating in her own words: “By
fundamentally redefining in feminine terms, who God is, Julian thus also redefines
what it means to be created in the image of God. The human ideal therefore becomes
feminine.” 82 It is highly debatable as to whether Julian’s intention in using maternal
metaphors to describe Christ could be described as feminine redefinitions. Julian was
cerned to portray God and the Holy Trinity in language that made sense to her and
those in her own century. It would be unwise to over exaggerate her intentions by
imposing modern terms such as feminism.

81 Catherine-Innes Parker, “Subversion and Conformity in Julian’s Revelation: Authority, Vision and
the Motherhood of God”, Mystic Quarterly, Volume 23 Number 2, March 1997, 22.
Another contemporary writer does in fact agree with Parker’s assertion on the term “feminine”. Liz Herbert McAvoy in her article entitled *The Moders Service: Motherhood as Matrix in Julian of Norwich* expresses the same sentiment as Parker by advocating the feminization of Christ’s body within Julian’s image of Christ giving birth to new life from the cross. In addition, McAvoy makes a further interesting claim in terms of the bleeding Christ on the cross as: “Again we see the feminized body of the bleeding Christ merge with that of the biological female in a mystical moment of union.”

It is important to point out that maternal and feminine have different contextual meanings when referred to in modern language. Maternal means having qualities of a mother involving obviously childbirth whereas feminine means qualities that applies to being female. Julian wants to focus on a maternal and loving Christ without making any other inferences. The maternal images of Christ should not be taken out of context and thereby allowing a disservice to the greatness of Julian’s text for all to enjoy today.

Julian offers us maternal images of a mother Christ with the qualities of a mother. In that Julian presents to us the wonderful image of the Mother Christ that works for us like a caring and protective mother to her children: “So he wants us to act as a meek child, saying: My kind Mother, my gracious Mother, my beloved Mother, have mercy on me” (61: 301). The Holy Mother Church should be seen in these maternal images that Julian has provided for us to view as a most divine image that is not hierarchical or ecclesiastical or even as an out of touch institution. We should view this pure image of the Church in the maternal sense and feeling that Julian has given to us today.

As Julian desires that we find Christ our Mother through a form commitment in faith to the Holy Church: “And he wants us to commit ourselves fervently to the faith of Holy Church, and find there our beloved Mother in consolation and true understanding, with all the company of the blessed” (61: 301). The key message from Julian remains with the pure image of the Church as the body of Christ our Mother.

Kerrie Hide expresses a valued comment at this point on the previous passage that adds greatly to Julian’s image of the Mother Church. Hide explains the communion

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we have with the Church as: “Julian’s image of the Church as all the blessed common translated as “company of the blessed” is an inclusive term with the Trinity and in a shared relationship with each other.”

This comment by Hide has considerable value because we all share as one with Christ in this shared community the Holy Mother Church and we all share as one with the body of Christ.

Julian’s image of the Church cannot be broken even though the Church was torn asunder in Julian’s time with the great Schism and in the same way that the Church of today experiences threats from outside. This Church for Julian remains on a firm hold like an anchor holding a ship to a correct position: “…but the entire body of Holy Church was never broken, nor ever will be without end” (61: 301). The firm commitment to the true Church becomes the greatness of Julian’s ecclesiological emphasis, it is not to subvert but to renew the faith of all Christians in her time and in our time to the Holy Mother Church: “And therefore it is a certain thing, good and gracious to will and fervently, to be fastened and united to our mother Holy Church, who is Jesus Christ” (61:301-2).

Julian takes us all further into a closer bond with Christ the Mother Church. It becomes as Kerrie Hide states correctly that the “Church is Christ. There is a fundamental ontological between Christ and the Church.”

The sole nature of the Church for us all today as Hide has indicated so well comes down to the fact that it is Christ and will always be Christ.

Julian shows this essential nature of God within the context of our own being as humans: “He is the ground, he is the substance, he is very essence or nature, and he is the true Father and the true Mother of natures” (62: 302). Julian’s language and use of the word “bound” creates a further union between God and humanity. It is a union that reaches into the Mother Church: “Here we can see that we are all bound to God by nature, and we are bound to God by grace... but to go to Holy Church, into our Mother’s breast, that is to say into our own soul, where the Lord dwells”(62:303). Our human soul thus becomes the divine home for God in Christ and the Mother Christ in the Holy Mother Church. In clearer terms, all Christians discover their true faith as Julian expresses; “And there we should find everything, now in faith and understanding, and afterwards truly, in himself, clearly, in bliss” (62:303).

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85 Hide, Gifted Origins, 148.
86 Hide, Gifted Origins, 149
Kerrie Hide makes a fundamental point here concerning Julian’s words as stated in the previous paragraph, “bound to God by nature... bound to God by grace.” Hide clearly points out that: “Within the Church there is no sense of the priority of nature over grace or grace over nature. Nature and grace both play significant roles in salvation.” Our very being as humans remains with God our creator and his grace forms our being in the same way. Julian makes this very simple relationship herself: “So our nature and grace of one accord; for grace is God, as uncreated nature is God. He is two in his manner of operation...” (63:303)

The word “bound” by Julian does stress a more definitive relationship. Kerrie Hide advocates even more than this by stating that the use of the word “bound” by Julian infers union in marriage or a stronger binding form of covenant or contract. The impact of the word does imply the meaning that Hide has offered but one must be mindful that Julian wants us to desire this close affinity with God in Christ as a mother has with a child. As Julian simply reminds of us all of this relationship: “And since that time, now and ever until the day of judgement, he feeds us and fosters us, just as the great supreme lovingness of motherhood wishes, and as a natural childhood asks” (63:304). The maternal images offered by Julian assist us today to renew our own faith and commitment to Christ as the Holy Mother Church. The natural love that a mother has for her child becomes the simple image that Julian requires us all to understand. Christ is our mother and we are his children.

Julian makes simple comparisons between a natural mother and our mother Christ. Julian describes for our understanding the qualities of a natural mother: “The mother may sometimes suffer the child to fall and to be distressed in various ways, for its own benefit, but she can never suffer any kind of peril to come to her child, because of her love” (61:300-301). In this same context, Julian indicates a crucial difference between a natural mother and our Mother Jesus: “And though our earthly mother may suffer her child to perish, our heavenly Mother Jesus may never suffer us who are his children to perish, for he is almighty, all wisdom and all love, and so is none but he, blessed may he be” (61:301).

The essential qualities of a maternal and loving mother that embraces a child in loving and tender care become the focus for Julian. It is not a feminist perspective at this point at all by Julian and it would be incorrect to assume this as part of her writing.

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87 Hide, Gifted Origins, 150.
88 Hide, Gifted Origins, 149.
The best and most appealing aspects of Julian’s text are the beautiful images whereby she conveys her meanings such as her maternal images of Christ.

The breast of our Mother Christ as with the open wound in Christ’s body display a perfect communion that all baptised Christians experience through the Mother Church. This perfect image portrays a living and breathing Church within our own physical being. In receiving the sacraments of the Church, baptised Christians form a union with Christ’s body.

As the motherhood of our first creation, Christ is the mother of wisdom. Julian must have fully aware of the Pauline identification of Christ as wisdom and this as Joan Nuth indicates would have inspired her in placing this key Biblical reference in her text. As Saint Paul clearly shows in 1 Corinthians verses 22-24: “For the Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Julian according to Denise Baker followed earlier traditions within Christian writers such as Hildegard of Bingen, Albert the Great and Bonaventure in depicting the Old Testament personification of wisdom as female. Baker is in fact correct with her judgement on the historical sources that may have preceded Julian’s text. As a devout religious woman within an anchor hold, she would have known the book of Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon as available resources to find her appropriate material.

As stated in the Wisdom of Solomon 7: 27-29: “Although she is but one, she can do all things...for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom. She is more beautiful than the sun...”

Julian makes the same connection within her text in chapter sixty three as she refers to Mother Jesus: “So in our true Mother Jesus our life is founded in his own prescient wisdom from without beginning...” (63:304). The link for Julian to the wisdom at the beginning of the Book of Proverbs stands out since Julian is connecting the wisdom of Christ who is the Mother of our first creation to Proverbs 3: 13-19: “Happy are those who find wisdom and those that get understanding for her income is better that silver and her revenue better than gold...The Lord by wisdom founded earth...” Christ exists before time as wisdom exited for our creator.

89 Nuth, Wisdom’s Daughter, 65.
90 Baker, Julian of Norwich’s Showings, 123.
Christopher Abbott considers a different slant to other commentators on the role of Christ as Mother other than just the maternal themes. He believes that on one level that the image of Christ as Mother serves an additional purpose: “...but the nature of the image itself also serves Julian’s purpose in special sense. It is employed to indicate all diverse modes and moods of a relationship that is actualised in the form of nurturing growth.”  

This examination of Julian’s meaning by Abbott needs closer scrutiny so that for the reader of Julian to understand a fuller meaning of Christ as the Mother Church. If as Abbott implies himself our relationship with Christ as our mother would enhance our own interactions with each other in a deeper more spiritual sense, so that the Church becomes an integral part of our being, then such an analysis by Abbott has considerable merit. We grow spiritually with Christ as our Mother Church, yet we still see the dogma and doctrine of the Church leaders. Julian’s model of Christ is pure and inspiring to our faith when it fails us or when temptations and doubts about the institutionalised Church confront us through the modern media. The beauty of Julian’s portrayal of Christ as the Holy Mother Church clearly displays a nurturing, caring, tender and loving image of a Church that must be more appealing for us to live by today.

Julian’s theology in her motherhood of Christ is both ecclesiological and soteriological. Christ as our Holy Mother Church caring for the children of the Church and feeding the children spiritually in this life. The soteriology comes out of our recreation in Christ as our eternal birth mother and our saviour. The motherhood imagery should not be regarded as Sister Margaret Palliser, O.P. advocates as: “The image of Christ as mother is not simply an interesting curiosity within her theology; rather, the motherhood imagery represents the very heart of Julian’s mature theology.”

Julian herself wants us to fully appreciate the motherhood in Christ; yet it forms only one of key and essential themes within her theology. She completes her final chapter in her fourteenth revelation by stating: “And there it will truly be made known to us what he means in sweet words when he says: All will be well, and you will see it yourself, that every kind of thing will be well” (63:305). It remains for our Mother Christ to renew our being in this life and the next as Julian ends chapter sixty three by

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91 Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 139.
stating: “And then will the bliss of our motherhood in Christ be to begin anew in the joys of our Father, God, which new beginning will last, newly beginning without end” (63:305).

As Julian gives us a beautiful portrayal of the Mother Christ working within our lives, in the same manner the Holy Spirit completes the work of the Blessed Trinity. The third person of the Holy Trinity fulfils us with the graces and gifts. The triune God is not complete for Julian without this fulfilment by the Holy Spirit. Our being, increasing and fulfilment as Julian stated in chapter fifty eight and as she further described as: “The first is nature, the second is mercy, the third is grace.”(58:294)

3.4 Holy Spirit completes our union within the Holy Trinity

For Julian, the Holy Spirit completes the full work of her triune God in our world. We see God’s work complete within the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Holy Trinity forms the perfect union and Julian continually reminds us all of the crucial importance of this role within our Christian faith. Even as early as her Short Text, she places importance on the Holy Spirit within the Holy Trinity: “This Father is pleased, the Son is honoured, and the Holy Spirit takes delight.”(Short Text Chapter 5 page 146)

The Holy Spirit forms the properties within the Blessed Trinity which would be a very useful and practical guide within our times of prayer, worship and meditation. As Julian indicates for our understanding: “The Trinity is our maker, the Trinity is our protector, the Trinity is our everlasting lover...” (4:181). The most well known example for people today and the best example that Julian offers concerning the Trinity would be the hazelnut. The most practical examples serve as the most appealing to our nature. The properties are simple for us all to understand: “…God made it, the second is that God loves it, the third is that God preserves it” (5:183).

Julian closely associates the operation of Christ as our Mother with the workings of the Holy Spirit. As Julian has shown in her description of the Mother of Working Grace, Christ works for his beloved children, nurturing, caring and sustaining us all. Kerrie Hide asserts that therefore a stronger connection exists between the motherhood of grace and the grace of the Holy Spirit. Julian does in fact directly state this and therefore Hide’s assessment has some merit: “…for Christ is mercifully

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working in us, and we are by grace according to him, through the gift and the power of the Holy Spirit. This working makes it so that we are Christ’s children and live Christian lives” (54:286).

One important aspect of our Christian living that Julian assists us with in terms of the third person of the Blessed Trinity relates to sin and prayer. Our contrition and willingness for healing come out of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “...until contrition seizure him by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and turns bitterness into hope of God’s mercy... The Holy Spirit leads him to confession...” (39:244). In this way, the active triune God works within our world to make us look inwardly at our sinfulness and seek forgiveness: “Then we are moved by the Holy Spirit through contrition to prayer, and desire with all our might an amendment of ourselves to appease God’s anger, until the time that we find rest of soul and ease of conscience.” (40:246)

As stated at the end of the previous section, Julian makes us fully aware of the role and function of the Holy Spirit within our own being and nature as humans. Our being, increasing and fulfillment fit neatly into our spiritual growth within our fundamental faith and devotion to the Blessed Trinity. Our fulfilling occurs through the operation of the Holy Spirit as Julian informs us: “...which working belongs to the third person, the Holy Spirit. He works, rewarding and giving...increased in riches and nobility by all the power of Christ and by the grace and operation of the Holy Spirit.” (58:294-5)

The Holy Spirit works within our faithful Christian living through our prayers and devotions. The power of our prayers guide us all as Julian states: “And so we shall by his sweet grace in our meek continual prayer come into him now in this life by many secret touching of sweet spiritual sights and feelings...”(43:255). The workings of the Holy Spirit operate at this point according to Julian: “And this is done by the grace of the Holy Spirit, until the day that we die, still longing for love” (43:255).

Prayer today becomes a vital part of our faith devotion and a significant contribution to developing a renewal in the Holy Trinity. Julian expresses this devotion to prayer as: “Prayer unites the soul to God, for though the soul may be always like God in nature and in substance restored by grace...” (43:253). Our prayers search continually for our triune God and most importantly the graces of the Holy Spirit to guide us along our spiritual journey. Julian’s text and her sayings could easily act as our daily
prayer book. Selected readings from her text could be a guide to meditation before our working day or at the conclusion.

Julian encompasses the Holy Spirit within her enclosure motif. As Julian has clearly shown us in the section on Christ our Holy Mother Church within the Holy Trinity on page forty eight, the importance of where each of us exists within this Trinitarian God: “We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son and we are enclosed in the Holy Spirit” (54:285). The third person of the Trinity has been formed within our being. In this way, the Holy Spirit becomes another womb of the Holy Trinity in which all faithful Christians dwell.

Julian elaborates on the role of the Holy Spirit not just in this mortal life but in our eternal life: “... and then in the foundation of creative nature with the operation of mercy, the Holy Spirit by grace breathes into us gifts leading to endless life” (55:287). The Holy Spirit plays a key role within the Holy Trinity by preserving and reconciling our human soul with our creator God: “But our good Lord the Holy Spirit, who is endless life dwelling in our soul, protects us most faithfully and produces in the soul a peace, and brings it to ease through grace, and makes it obedient and reconciles it to God” (48:261-2). The divine virtues of God’s goodness contained within our substance are as Julian describes for us: “the same virtues by the operation of mercy are given to us in grace, renewed for us through the Holy Spirit...’ (57:292). Our lives become complete, fulfilled and perfect with the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Kerrie Hide outlines a very crucial aspect concerning Julian’s image of the Holy Spirit. In the Julian’s own words, she shows how this triune God operates on truth, wisdom and love: “Truth sees God, and wisdom contemplates God, and these two comes the third, and that is marvellous delight in God, which is love” (44:256). Even though Julian does directly imply the Holy Spirit, Kerrie Hide understands Julian’s meaning in the same way that the hazelnut is made, loved and protected. 94 This love of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity has a higher meaning according to Hide in Julian’s eighty-fourth chapter of her sixteenth revelation: “…given charity is virtue, and that is a gift of grace in deeds, in which we love God for himself, and ourselves in God, and that God loves for God.” (84: 341) Hide does express very well

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94 Hide, Gifted Origins, 156.
Julian’s meaning here: “Given charity is the free gift of the very self of God within human nature, drawing humanity into the life of Trinitarian love.”

The above statement by Hide has considerable merit on Julian’s meaning concerning “given charity”; however there is more to this meaning by Julian. The words “a gift of grace in deeds” indicate a desire to live by actions and deeds towards each other. Charity must be poured out from every Christian that loves God then they must love others in their deeds and actions. We respond through these gifts of the Holy Spirit by living as closely to our authentic Christian identity.

Julian has opened our eyes to the Christ within the Holy Trinity to reveal the deeper and spiritual meaning of the image of God that involves the third person of the Holy Trinity. We discover how this active presence of God working in our lives, working through the Holy Mother Church and gifts and virtues of the Holy Spirit. The grace is active within us and as we receive the Holy Spirit, we make every attempt to live in deeds and actions. Julian does not elaborate on how faithful Christians should carry out these deeds as does a contemporary of Julian’s in Margery Kempe who actively conducts her own personal crusade to visit the sick and poor in a similar way to Catherine of Siena.

Julian desires as we today desire to know how to endure times of hardship through this life. We must see our own soul to see Christ, to know the Christ dwelling within us. We must look for Christ within through our pains to see the light and our faith as Julian will show us next. The human soul is where God in Christ rests and dwells. Julian takes the indwelling of Christ within our soul into greater meaning within her sixteenth revelation as she indicated in chapter fifty six: “And of this enclosing I saw and understood more in the sixteenth revelation” (56:28).

In the next section, Julian describes charity as seeing the light and it is the light that Christ reveals to us due to our own blindness. This blindness as Julian highlights in her fifteenth revelation is overcome in the sixteenth revelation for all Christians to see the one true light of their faith.

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95 Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 156.
Section Four

4.1 Seeing our Light and Faith through Christ

Julian makes us all realise that there is hope in this life in the expectation of what will be awaiting us in the next. We must learn to endure the pains of this life to be prepared for the joy and bliss of eternal life. How then do we live in this world and experience the sufferings and pains that continually face us? Julian provides answers for us in her fifteenth revelation in her words and meanings that make sense for believing Christians today.

In the fifteenth revelation by Julian, she displays the pain and suffering in this life in contrast to the joyful and blissful life that awaits all of us with Christ: “For often I beheld the woe that there is here and the good and blessed being that is there; and if there had been no pain in this life except the absence of our Lord, it seemed to me sometimes that was more than I could bear...” (64:305). For Julian the courteous Lord gave her an answer to her major concern about the world she had experienced in Norwich: “And to all this our courteous Lord answered, to give me comfort and patience, and said these words: Suddenly you will be taken out of all your pain, all your sickness...And you will come above, and you will have me for your reward, and you will be filled full of joy and bliss” (64:306).

Life both in Julian’s time and our own time consists of many unbearable moments of sadness and great tragedy. People lose hope in this life but Julian’s words are inspiring for those living on the edge through terminal illness. Julian’s text would inspire those terminally ill that there is a great joy and bliss awaiting their passing from their mortal life into their eternal life.

Our souls become the central focus for the life of joy and bliss: “Then, too, it is God’s will that so long as the soul is in the body it should seem to a man that he is always on the point of being taken” (64:306). As indicated earlier in the section on the Parable of the Lord and servant and in Psalm 103, the Lord’s goodness will redeem our life from the pit; Julian describes a body lying in a pit of mud to signify our own wretched and sinful lives. In Julian’s words this body emerges from the pit into a new form:

“And this time I saw a body lying on the earth, which appeared oppressive and fearsome and without shape and form, as it were a devouring pit of stinking mud, and suddenly out of this body sprang a most beautiful creature, a little child, fully shaped and lively and whiter that the lily, which quickly glided up to heaven. The pit which was the body signifies the great
wretchedness of our mortal flesh; and the smallness of the child signifies the cleanness and the purity of our soul.” (64:306)

Our lives require constant focus on purifying our souls by contemplating as Julian explains: “It is God’s will that we focus our thoughts on this blissful contemplation, as often as we can and for as long as we can continue in it with his grace, for to the soul who is led by God...” (64:307). This contemplation could easily be achieved today through our own prayers and devotions or even through our own contemplation within a regular prayer group meeting like the Julian of Norwich network meetings. Twenty minute contemplation sessions are held at each of the Julian network meetings after a passage has been read.

How then does this contemplation work for us? Is it different to meditation? In meditating upon Julian’s words we discover the meanings, the symbolism and what the words mean to us. From this meditation, people should pray for further guidance. In contemplating on Julian’s text, one would be moved into a deeper spiritual level to then approach life with a renewed emphasis. This form of contemplation upon the words of Julian could be easily achieved at other parish prayer groups, day retreats and school retreats.

For Julian it is her intention for all Christians to contemplate this heavenly joy over our own sometimes morbid states of: “depression and spiritual blindness” (64:307). In our own Christian living again Julian’s words become more inspirational and deeply encouraging for us during our own times of deep depression and hopelessness. In our prayerful contemplation during the many trials and tribulations in life, we have this sense of hope in everlasting life as a comforting means to endure through such trials.

During our contemplation, it could be a time to seriously dwell on the separation of the two natures within our human soul. The essential nature or substance does remain fragmented as stated earlier in the section on “Christ our Holy Mother Church within the Holy Trinity”. Our sensual nature which as stated by Julian in chapter fifty seven is not perfect and therefore lacking. Our soul must be continually and spiritually refreshed by Christ within the Eucharist and within our own abilities to contemplate this divine goodness when our world consumes our thinking in the wrong direction and away from Christ.

In her final sixteenth revelation, Julian is tempted by the devil and her sickness returns. For Julian such an experience was also a test of her belief in her revelations and her faith in the Holy Church. Julian was able through her own strength to regain
herself and remove both her sickness and the appearance of the devil: “And as soon as I fell asleep, it seemed to me that the devil set himself at my throat...I knew well that it was the devil to come and tempt me” (67:311-12). Julian seeks her protection in her divine revelations and her faith in the Holy Church: “And at once I had recourse to what our Lord had revealed to me on the same day, and to all the faith of the Holy Church and I fled to them as to my source of strength. And immediately everything vanished...” (67:312).

For all of us, the temptations in this life could easily appear in a similar way as they appeared for Julian. We could easily fall into comfortable lifestyles and avoid the pain and suffering that would be required when we need to suffer with and alongside those who are poor, disadvantaged and persecuted. In many ways, temptations are all around us and an indication of in fact how we do not know God and even properly know ourselves. Our faith maybe weak when we fail to see the temptations within our world and we all require the strength that Julian displayed when confronted by the devil.

Spiritual blindness prevents us from seeing the loving face and image of God as the servant failed to see. The necessity to see spiritually with our spiritual eye becomes Julian’s emphasis early in her sixteenth revelation. Our inability to see with our spiritual eyes could be similar form of blindness that the Pharisees experienced in the Gospel of John chapter nine. As Jesus replies when challenged by the Pharisees after giving sight to the blind man from birth in John 9: 39: “I came into this world for judgment so that those who cannot see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”

Julian refers earlier to God opening our eyes: “And so we are afflicted in our feelings by Adam’s falling in various ways, by sin and by different pains, and in this we are made dark and so blind that we can scarcely accept any comfort” (52:279). Julian is making reference to the darkness and blindness of Adam and the darkness within our humanity, however there is solution according to Julian: “But in our intention we wait for God, and trust faithfully to have mercy and grace; and this is his working in us, and in his goodness he opens the eye of our understanding, by which we have sight...” (52:279). God opens our spiritual eyes to those in our world who are lonely, depressed, outcast from their own communities that others cannot see or refuse to see.
The opening of Julian’s spiritual eye becomes a very significant focus for her to see into her soul. This significance has even more importance today for our spiritual growth when our faith is weak. Julian sees into her own soul as we should equally see into our own souls. The spiritual eye of Julian opens for her to view the appearance of Christ: “And then our good Lord opened my spiritual eye, and showed me my soul in the midst of my heart. I saw the soul as wide as if it were an endless citadel, and a blessed kingdom...In the midst of that city sits our Lord Jesus, true God and true man...” (68:313-4). Inside of this citadel, there is for Julian a city as with her earlier reference to God dwelling within this city of God; “He comes into this city and will never depart” (55: 287). The emphasis for Julian at this point in her text has a stronger meaning to her earlier reference in chapters 55 and 56 where the emphasis focuses on the indwelling of God although Julian does in her usual style indicate that her emphasis will be on the indwelling of Jesus later in her sixteenth revelation.

The spiritual eye was also incorporated within other medieval writers and English contemporaries of Julian. Walter Hilton an Augustinian priest in his text Scale of Perfection refers to the spiritual sight and knowledge of Jesus: “In this way Love works in a soul, opening the spiritual eye to gaze upon Jesus by the inspiration of special grace, and making it pure, subtle and fit for the work of contemplation.”

Another contemporary in Julian’s time and a female writer who was claimed to have sought spiritual advice from Julian by the name of Margery Kempe makes a similar reference to the words spiritual eye: “And at once she saw, with her spiritual eye, our Lord’s body lying before her...”

These further medieval images of the spiritual eye have the same strong connection with Julian’s text. The soul with the divine presence enclosed within, allows us through our prayers, meditations and contemplations to savour the mystical vision of the Blessed Trinity. We see because our soul is turned to the divine presence and it is turned in love.

The enormity and size of the human soul in Julian’s description as an “endless citadel” portrays within itself the potential for all humans. Christopher Abbott stresses this point very well by stating: “...and Julian’s characterization of the individual as soul expresses this distinctive potential of human beings...The soul thereby becomes

more and more capacious (capable of holding much) for the indwelling Christ, an endless world of order and peace...”98 The key importance here for all Christians today is crucial for our understanding our potential to see within our souls and seek greater union with our creator.

In chapter 68, the emphasis has changed to the second person of the Holy Trinity: “He sits erects there in the soul, in peace and rest, and he rules and guards heaven and earth and everything that is. The humanity and divinity sit at rest…” (68:313). The image here for us as well as for Julian clearly highlights a Christ that is a peaceful and purposeful presence for us and a protective presence: “...the divinity rules and guards, without instrument or effort. And he the soul is wholly occupied by the blessed divinity, sovereign power, sovereign wisdom and sovereign goodness.” (68:313) A Christ that is always present in every sense of our mortal and eternal life. It is a Christ that knows our human side, knows our weaknesses within our sensual soul. It is a steadfast Christ, ever stable, always present for us in our souls. When we contemplate Christ within our prayers, we seek the steadfast, compassionate and merciful Christ. We seek the Mother Christ that is ever present when we fail to see his image in our own Christian living.

Our soul becomes more than a vast wilderness or desert to wander aimlessly but to find and discover the vastness of our own human potential. To be human as Christ was human and to discover our divine goodness within ourselves should be our spiritual journey in this life. As Christopher Abbott has mentioned above the endless possibilities of holding on to such divine presence should be the stimulus to a greater spiritual journey in this life. Our lives should always be a discovery and even more a journey in finding our true Christian identity. The modern media constantly perverts our true human and Christian image.

Some individuals may find it difficult to even fully discover that Christ dwells within their souls if they do not heed the message from Julian. Again Julian draws us back to our own abilities to contemplate God: “...but all its contemplation is blessedly set in God, who is Creator, dwelling there, for in man’s soul is his true dwelling place” (68: 314).

Julian further indicates the seriousness of her sixteenth revelation that gives us all hope and inspiration even today. To know with absolute truth the wisdom of Julian’s

98 Abbott, Julian of Norwich, 159.
final vision that makes us believe even more faithfully in the divine goodness within all our souls. The Lord revealed to Julian the importance of all the revelations: “Know it well; it was no hallucination which you saw today, but accept and believe and hold firmly to it, and comfort yourself with it and trust in it, and you will not be overcome” (68: 314). The importance of the final words by the Lord, “you will not be overcome” had strength and certainty so that as faithful Christians we would be able to as Julian writes: “God wants us to pay attention to these words, and always to be strong in faithful trust...” (68:315). Even when temptations confront us or in Julian’s case when the devil reappears in chapter 69, it requires the grace given by God to trust in his presence within our souls.

The greatest human potential that comes from the divine dwelling within our souls is to love. The human potential to love each other and see each other with our souls becomes the greatest challenge. Gillian Ahlgren offers a further concise statement on the divine dwelling within our souls as another example of our human potential: “Indeed, in recognizing that God dwells within us and makes us who most deeply are, we are empowered to work in and with the divine within us.”99 This statement does in fact greatly demonstrate one of the central thoughts of the immanence of the divine, the empowering that should follow within our own actions. This empowering becomes an incentive to become more Christ like in our faiths. If one claims that God in Christ dwells within one’s soul and further to this when one receives the mystical body and blood of Christ through the Eucharist, then one must act accordingly. Ahlgren has again expressed this sentiment beautifully by informing how Julian has shown us all: “through the knowledge of God’s loving, indwelling presence in humanity...”100

Our capacity for human goodness should be limitless in this world. The vast city and citadel where Christ dwells becomes our own pathway for discovering our capabilities for extraordinary acts of the human will for divine goodness. To be more fully Christian and human means to search our souls for answers and solutions to how we may carry out our abilities to give so much of ourselves to others in need.

As Julian has informed us in chapter sixty eight, we must all contemplate the divine presence in our souls. Our souls are nourished and enriched through the holy sacraments of the Church. Julian requires that we must contemplate this divine

99 Ahlgren, “Julian of Norwich’s Theology of Eros” 44.
100 Ahlgren, “Julian of Norwich’s Theology of Eros” 45.
presence as she has continually stated even within her Short Text: “...and you will contemplate Jesus, who is every man’s teacher” (Short Text, chapter six page 135). In our dwelling place the city, our own souls, there exists as Julian describes: “the greatest light and brightest shining...And in the city is the glorious love of our Lord God as I see it” (68: 314). The symbol of light for Julian and for us today becomes our own faith. For Julian as for us, this light depends on how clearly we walk in this light. The obvious link to John’s gospel 8:12 where Christ speaks as: “... I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

Light has many symbolic meanings within Christianity and within the Old Testament. Even in chapter one, verses two and three of the book of Genesis, darkness has sinister meanings, the place where the devil resides: “...the earth was formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters and then God said: “Let there be light...” Julian would have been fully aware of the theological and spiritual meanings within the imagery of light and dark. In the same way, spiritual blindness becomes a form of darkness to our own souls. Living in spiritual blindness and our inabilities to see the spiritual light of Christ dwelling within our souls, means that our eyes are closed to Christ’s presence. Earlier writers such as Saint Anselm also dealt with the theme of light and darkness as a source of divine inspiration in seeing the divine. In his Proslogin, chapter fourteen entitled How and why God is seen and not seen by those who seek him: “The truth is, I am darkened by my weakness, or dazzled by you...How great is the light from which shines out very truth that lightens the reasoning mind! How wide is that truth in which everything that is true...” As with Anselm, Julian seeks this true light.

This greatest light shining within our human souls provides us with strength through the times of temptation. Even for Julian, the devil returns but as she explains for us: “And the good Lord God gave me grace to trust greatly, and to comfort my soul...” (70:316). It was setting her eyes on the crucifix and through the strength of speaking Christ’s Passion and the faith of the Holy Church that she overcomes the devil: “I set my eyes on the same cross in which I had seen comfort before, my tongue to speaking of Christ’s Passion and repeating the faith of Holy Church, and my heart to clinging to God with my trust and strength...” (70:316). The Holy Mother Church is the body of

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101 Saint Anselm of Canterbury, The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm, 256
Christ that we cling to in this life. The Church is the citadel, the rock for our faith to place all trust. This trust and faith has further meaning in the most powerful symbol in our faith, the crucifix. Julian has shown to us in her revelations the meaning of the suffering Christ on the cross for our faith.

It is Julian’s faith that allows her to preserve her revelations: “...and it is faith which preserves the blessed revelation...” (70:316-7). In the same way, our Christian faith today is based on our ability to remain faithful to Christ. We must continue to hold fast to our faith and to hold onto as Julian puts it: “And therefore our precious lover helps us with spiritual light and true teaching in various ways from within and from without...” (71:318). We must be able to confront our pains and sorrows through the power of Christ’s passion and cross and thereby be comforted in the same way that Julian was comforted from her sickness. We fail to see the true face of Christ in our world as Julian has revealed to us in her text when the temptations of this world keep us from discovering the face of Christ, we have also equally failed to appreciate the messages from Julian’s text.

Our faith must be with us at all times as Julian indicates in her text. Even when we have trials during our lifetime, we must remain strong in faith: “But in faith is where our Lord wants us to keep ourselves, for we are obliged by his goodness and his action to keep ourselves in the faith, and he suffers us to have our faith tried by our spiritual enemies and to be made strong” (71:318).

In the same manner our spiritual blindness, our sinfulness blinds us and keeps us within the darkness. We fail to see as Julian explains for us: “...because of his great goodness he keeps us faithfully... because our spiritual eye is so blind, and we so burdened with the weight of our mortal flesh and the darkness of sin that we cannot see clearly the blessed face of our Lord God” (72:321). As with the servant who failed to see the face of the loving Lord, we experience this blindness as well because our lives lack the spiritual growth and energy to contemplate Christ more and more. Julian links this blindness to our own lack of knowledge, firstly of ourselves and then of God.

Our knowledge of God thus depends on as Julian states: “The first is that we know our Lord God. The second is that we know ourselves, what we are through him and in nature and in grace. The third is that we know humbly that ourself is opposed to our sin and to our weakness” (72:321). Julian indicated earlier in chapter fifty six that we must know God first before we fully know our souls. This makes sense for our own
spirituality today because when we fail to even see our own failings and short comings and fail to know that the divine presence of Christ is within us. It is knowledge of this divine presence that is equally lacking at many stages in our lives today.

It is not that we as humans will never sin or become completely perfect in every sense of the word. Even shut away in total isolation from the rest of the world or even like Julian as an anchoress, cannot prevent us from the possibility of sin. Julian understands this as she has stated previously in her seven great pains in the parable of the Lord and the Servant. We sin due to weaknesses in our own humanity. On the other hand, one does not become totally overcome by sin and thereby experience a sense that everything one does is sinful. Grace Jantzen expresses an important and key point on how we overcome our own sense of weakness to sin: “Because we are created in God’s image and restored by his grace, the sense of worthlessness and of being out of touch with ourselves can be removed, not by endless investigation of ourselves, but by contemplation of God in Christ.”

Julian has from the very beginning of her text both in her Short and Long Text stressed the importance of the three wounds and the healing that occurs: “The blessed wounds of our saviour are open and rejoice to heal us.” (61: 302) As it was explained in the section on “Julian’s wounds become our spiritual pathway”, the wounds of Christ heal our broken and wounded humanity in terms of cleansing us, preparing us and making us worthy. The wounds of healing maintain our faith in the one true Jesus, second person of the Holy Trinity. Our world is full of challenges, however if we contemplate the divine presence of Christ within our souls, cherish his presence when we fall to sin and believe in our abilities for renewal by the power of prayer and contemplation, our Christian lives become more meaningful. Even when we sin, Julian provides us with the answers.

Julian also understands our weaknesses in sin and especially our human emotion to fear. She does expect humans to remove their fears but to understand that there is a solution for fears. Julian describes the nature of fears as four kinds which includes a description similar to the Song of Songs chapter five verse two which states: “I slept, but my heart was awake Listen my beloved is knocking..” In the same way, Julian describes her second fear as : “The second fear of pain, through which a man is stirred

102 Jantzen, Julian of Norwich, 209.
and wakened from the sleep of sin; for anyone fast asleep in sin is not for that time able to receive the gentle strength of the Holy Spirit...” (74:324). On the other hand this fear does not defeat us according to Julian: “And this fear moves us to seek comfort and mercy of God; and so this fear helps us as an approach, and enables us to have contrition by the blessed touching of the Holy Spirit” (74:324).

The third fear that Julian mentions is doubtful fear and this fear becomes more responsible for causing our own fears about ourselves: “God wants us to have doubtful fear, inasmuch as it induces to despair, turned is us into love by true knowledge of love...” (74:324). Julian in fact is not suggesting that we must live in doubts all the time or live in despair but as she points out: “... that is to say that bitterness of doubt be turned into sweetness of gentle love by grace, for it never pleases our Lord that his servants doubt his goodness” (74:324). Our despair and severe doubts pull us all further away from the core love of our creator God for all of humanity. Our doubts can easily become all consuming and lead us away from believing in our loving God.

We must also possess the fourth fear as Julian indicates for our Lord that is reverent fear: “The fourth fear is reverent fear, for there is no fear in us which fully pleases God but reverent fear, and that is gentle. For the more it is obtained, the less is it felt, because of the sweetness of love” (74:324). This reverent fear must not be confused with a natural fear against our human person. Julian’s understanding of this fear comes from the Biblical references to the reverent fear of the Lord as stated in 2 Chronicles chapter 19 where in verses 6-7, Jehoshaphat, King of Judah appoints judges and explains to them on what basis that should judge: “...and said to the judges not on behalf of human beings but on the Lord’s behalf; he is with you in giving judgment. Now let the fear of the Lord be upon; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the Lord God, or partiality, taking bribes.”

As far as Julian is concerned, fear and love work together and both are part of our human nature. Julian understands therefore for this reverent fear to be proper and correct working relationship with our loving God: “It is proper to God’s lordship and his fatherhood to be feared, as it is proper to his goodness to be loved; and it is proper to us who are his servants and his children to fear him, for his lordship and fatherhood, as it is proper to us to love him for his goodness” (74:325). How then does this relate to our Christian faith today? Fear of the Lord God may come across as an unusual belief. On the other hand when viewed in the correct dimension both at a
spiritual and scriptural level, it becomes clear that this reverent fear has such long historic roots in the Old Testament as shown in Chronicles and in the New Testament as stated in 1 Peter chapter one verse 17: “If you invoke as father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during your time in exile.” Obedience to the Lord God and to reverently fear his words becomes the message for Julian then and for us today. To live by the words of God with the reverent fear does not mean that we fear horrible retribution and God’s wrath and anger because Julian has plainly dismissed that image of God in her Parable of the Lord and the Servant.

Julian believes that we combine reverent fear and love together and thus our trust will then grow in our Lord God: “So let us desire of our Lord God to fear him reverently and love him meekly, our trust is never in vain, For the more that we trust and the more strongly that we trust, the more we please and honour our Lord...” (74:325-6). Trust becomes our powerful human emotion that we must have in our own Christian faith. The theme of trust is a key Biblical message from the Old Testament Psalms, for all to understand and appreciate in times of prayerful mediation and contemplation. As in the words of Psalm 4:4-5 that evoke the Lord God as the place for safety and security: “When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord.”

Our blindness to our sin could also be viewed as our inability to see God. Julian makes this very point in chapter forty seven: “And the cause is blindness, because he does not see God; for if he saw God continually, he (man) would have no harmful feelings...” (47:260) Harmful feelings of despair, possible suicide are so much a part of living in this world, as it was in Julian’s time. Many individuals, who have experienced profound periods of loss within their lives, have found a new source of light through a renewal of their Christian faiths through prayer and devotion. When we return our souls to seeing God in Christ rather than falling into the sin of despair, we change our lives.

Our souls should be awake to our sins: “For the soul which contemplates the gentleness of Jesus does not hate any hell, but the sin of hell” (76:328). These sweet words of Julian would easily stimulate our senses today. When we all fall, we should not fall as well in total despair at our sinful nature. Instead as Julian shows us all: “And therefore it is God’s will that we recognize sin, and pray busily and labour
willingly and seek meekly for teaching, so that we do not fall blindly into it, and if we fall, so that we quickly rise” (76:328).

When we fall to sin as Julian has just shown, we must be prepared immediately to seek repentance: “And if we through our blindness and our wretchedness at any time fall, then let us quickly rise, knowing the sweet touching of grace, and willingly amend ourselves according to the teaching of the Holy Church” (52:281). Thus we must atone for our sinfulness and be prompt with our recognition of our sins. In addition, our sins must not cause our further downfall into despair: “...and go on our way with God in love, and neither on the side fall too low, inclining to despair, nor on the side be too reckless, as though we did not care...” (52:281). Our despair and harmful feelings will cause great hurt to God but again as Julian shows us God sees matters differently: “For God sees one way and man sees another way. For it is for man meekly to accuse himself, and it is for our Lord God’s own goodness courteously to excuse man” (52:281).

The pain that each would cause our creator God would in fact be similar to the servant’s inability to see the loving face of the Lord. According to Julian this pain is simply: “For the greatest pain that the soul can have is at any time to turn from God through sin” (76:328). Julian may have drawn on the famous words of Saint Augustine in his text Confessions for her reference to the human soul seeking and finding God: “The soul which to be in rest should, when other men’s sins come to mind, flee that as pain of hell seeking from God help against it” (76:328). Saint Augustine states a very familiar line to Julian concerning the soul in chapter five of Book One: “My soul is like a house, small for you to enter, but I pray you to enlarge it.”

Julian’s threefold Trinitarian themes come out when we further contemplate God. This contemplation makes even more relevance for today because it provides a greater understanding of how to see God in everyday living. The words from Julian here become very important because they draw on her original three wounds that she sought on her death bed: “...and during that time we cannot see the beauty of God, unless we can contemplate them with contrition with him, with compassion on him, and with holy desires to God for him” (76:328). God is the ground of our soul but as Julian states, we all need today to be deeply conscious of our sinfulness and be willing

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to be forgiven and as well as forgive others. We must all feel the same compassion from the cross that Jesus felt for humanity and then to continually long, thirst and desire God in our everyday living.

To Julian and to our understanding, we must remain faithful to Jesus: “This blessed friend is Jesus, and it is his will and counsel that we keep with him and fasten ourselves closely to him in whatever state we may be” (76:329). It does become at times easy to fall into sin, to even today lose faith because of the many trials and temptations in our modern secular world but Julian inspires us with her words of faith: “For whether we be foul or clean, we are always the same in his love; for well or for woe, he wants us never to flee from him. Because of our own inconstancy, we often fall into sin” (76:329).

If we lose faith and fall into despair, we fail to see the light of our faith in Jesus. The light that exists within the vastness of our souls is always present. The enemy becomes our own inability to see this light dwelling within our souls: “Thus it our enemy who wants to retard us with false suggestions of fear about our wretchedness because of the pain which he threatens us with” (76:329). Julian keeps our faith within perspective and on the true course by advising us as such: “For it is his (enemy) purpose to make us so depressed and so sad in his matter that we should forget the blessed contemplation of our everlasting friend” (76:329). Our own feelings of worthlessness about living and anxiety can be very destructive to our human nature.

We must view God in the ways that Julian directs us to view God and with her next example.

Julian’s three part imagery of our triune God is highlighted in how Christ works in our lives. Julian creates the same imagery in her reference to the three properties of the hazelnut: “…God made it…God loves it… and God preserves it” (5:183). In a similar manner Julian portrays the indwelling of Christ: “…he dwells here in us, and rules us, and cares for us in this life, and brings us to bliss” (80:335).

Julian reminds us to remain faithful because in her own words: “Our faith is light” (83:340). For our understanding today this light in reference to our faith extends to the light of the Holy Trinity. It is not only Jesus as our brightest light, but also as Julian states: “…coming in nature from our endless day, which is our Father, God in which light our Mother, Christ, and our good Lord the Holy Spirit lead us in this passing life” (83: 340).
The light is charity and how much we measure it on earth as Julian states: “....with labour deserving the honourable thanks of God” (84:340). This charity will as Julian states: “keep us in faith and in hope” (84:340). The light of charity presents itself in three ways for Julian:

“The first is uncreated charity, the second is created charity, third is given charity. Uncreated charity is God, created charity is our own soul in God, given charity as mentioned earlier in the section on the Holy Spirit, is virtue and that is a gift of grace in deeds in which we love for himself and ourselves in God, and all that God loves for God” (84:341).

The created charity comes from the second person of the Holy Trinity. The Christ that dwells within us requires that we must contemplate his divine goodness and cherish the fact that we have such charitable love within our being. Our soul is vast as the citadel and our human potential to seek that beauty within us remains our life journey. When we fail to see the created charity within our souls, the bright light that is Christ, we become spiritually blind.

Julian desires for us to contemplate the higher spiritual joy of God rather than the lower contemplation of our own weaknesses: “For higher contemplation keeps us in spiritual joy and true delight in God; the other, which is lower contemplation, keeps us in fear, and makes us ashamed of ourselves” (82:339). The higher contemplation enables us all to experience through our daily prayers, meditations, and an inner and deeper presence of where God in Christ exists in the world. It becomes different for each individual to contemplate on a level that becomes desirable. The depth of our contemplation would be a matter of personal choice. Julian indicates the means to a deeper and more spiritual level of consciousness but it all depends on where and what is taking place in each individual at that time. For people who cannot see the blindness of their sins, contemplation of God in Christ still remains a problem.

Julian’s final pronouncement is for us to love God through loving others especially through our deeds of charity. We must love others from the cross and love with compassion and pity as Christ did for us from the cross. That in the end was Julian’s message: “Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love” (86:342). In what ways then does Julian of Norwich’s text contribute to our spiritual journey in faith? The immense popularity of her text today has been very evident in all forms of Christian worship including educational institutions, various Christian denominations and even as a great literary study.
Section Five

5.1- What is Julian of Norwich’s contribution to contemporary Christian spirituality?

Many individuals have experienced firsthand the immensity of Julian’s work either from a detailed study or a pure enjoyment of selected readings. It may become more difficult task for individuals to engage in a full study and close examination of the entire text. It does take considerable time to read and then fully understand the totality of Julian’s work. Modern scholarship of Julian’s text has assisted greatly for like-minded individuals to find and discover further meanings within Julian’s text.

On the other hand, Julian’s text and her powerful messages concerning our Christian faith do have another audience. This audience includes the countless people who appreciate the richness of Julian’s simple messages and themes. People, who wish to just read from selected passages as though they are reading from selected passages from the Bible, these people also feel enriched by Julian’s words.

Passages within the eighth and ninth revelations describe for us the deeper spiritual meaning of Christ on the cross and what it means to suffer in this world today. Our faiths would understand with a more enlightened awareness the meaning of the crucifix through the eyes of Julian and this in turn opens our eyes. Julian becomes our wonderful spiritual teacher and guide today through various forums including selected readings, or a study of the entire text or through prayer meetings that focus on Julian’s text.

Our spiritual pathway could be guided along the right path with easy to read passages from Julian’s text. One such text entitled All Will Be Well provides passages from Julian’s text to guide people into prayer and meditation. As Caroline Myss who writes the foreword to this small text herself states: “A mystical renaissance is at work in our world today. Like a subtle field of grace that surrounds our world, individuals everywhere are exploring the seductive invitation to develop a joyful and intimate relationship with God.” 104 In fact the previous comment is a very valid point concerning the popularity of how other medieval mystical writers such as Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross could continue the same work of assisting us in experiencing a relationship with God. Each writer as with modern

writers like Thomas Merton offer a light that will shine for us all to encounter the divine within our world. As Caroline Myss summarises for all the mystical works and writers, the simple message as with Julian is: “We are born with a yearning for God that we can try to fill with material goods and worldly accomplishments...Life is an empty journey without the companionship of God.” 105 As Julian reminded us continually to contemplate on the divine goodness of God in the same way Caroline Myss believes we must all make the effort to do the same: “And developing a sense of Divine intimacy requires time set aside to be with God in prayer, reflection and contemplation.”106

The purpose of a text like All Will Be Well is to assist us all in prayerful meditation and contemplation. As the series editor John Kirvan points out concerning the purpose of the text: “The purpose of this book is to open the gate for you. It can give you access to the spiritual experience and wisdom of one of the world’s greatest spiritual teachers, Julian of Norwich.”107 A text such as All Will Be Well guides us through our daily living through the words of Julian of Norwich. Such a text as with selected readings could be easily used for spiritual retreats or for a daily spiritual journal. Schools and parishes would be served well through adopting such a wonderful text containing the words and spiritual messages of Julian.

Daily contemplation for fifteen minutes on the words of Julian would be a benefit for people taking their own spiritual journey. Julian’s text opens the awareness of the second person of the Trinity, the graceful image of our merciful God and where God in Christ exists for us within our own souls. Julian’s words speak to each of us differently and how we feel about her words becomes a personal act of contemplation. It is equally important to contemplate Julian’s words from her text within a prayer group. The powerful sense of the group presence adds to the silent contemplation of Julian’s words. From my own personal experiences of the Julian prayer meetings, it is comforting to experience Julian’s words in this setting. People do in fact savour the divine moment more while with others in a group and contemplation becomes more intense and deeper.

People do not need to be scholars of the Julian text. The messages from Julian’s text today reaches many scholars but more importantly any individual who desires to hear

105 Myss “Foreword,” in All Will Be Well, x.
106 Myss “Foreword,” in All Will Be Well, x.
107 John Kirvan, Series Editor in All Will Be Well, 6.
the words of Julian. The spiritual journey contained within Julian’s text has enormous benefit for individuals in need of personal healing. Their lives may be fractured through their own actions or from an outside experience. Julian’s words would help these people see where God in Christ dwells within their own souls. More importantly even when their sins are so great, Julian reminds us all that her image of the merciful father should be our image of a forgiving God.

In our daily living, Julian shows us how to see the blessed Trinity at work. It becomes an active presence of a working God and even more an active presence of Christ as our working Mother. The maternal themes strengthen our feelings of warmth and comfort in that Christ our Holy Mother Church is there for us, feeding and nourishing us through his mystical presence of his body and blood. Our sinfulness should not be viewed as our failures and when contemplating on Christ we should be drawn back into the body of Christ the Holy Mother Church.

The Julian network based at Norwich in England assists with the continual spread of her text. People are able to join the network in the same way that I did in 2009 and as recently as the same year, join an inner core of Julian companions. The constitution of this new core group does in fact indicate very well the means to further appreciate the beauty and spiritual messages from Julian’s text.

The five main aims of these companions consist of reflecting on the unconditional love of God towards others, compassionate empathy in their living, meditate and intercede in the world, seeking spiritual nourishment from the text and to visit the Julian shrine in Norwich at least once.108 (see also Appendix A) These aims are obviously not for all readers of Julian to be able to seek in their own lifetime. The importance of these aims comes down to the key message concerning unconditional love towards others, compassion towards others and an ability to see the face of the suffering Christ in the suffering of this world.

At the 2010 Julian festival on May 8th, I personally witnessed the original Companions that were chosen in 2009 renewing their pledges to be Companions. In addition on that same day there was a further induction of more Companions into the network making the total number of Julian Companions at eleven with one from Australia and one from the United States with the rest from the United Kingdom.

My own individual journey and pilgrimage to the Shrine of Julian on May 8th 2010 that celebrates the day of Julian’s revelations became a fulfilling experience. To sit in the place of Julian’s cell and shrine as well as participate equally in the festival allows one to see the powerful and still growing impact of Julian’s text today. (see List of Illustrations Number Three) In the same way, my continual participation in the Julian prayer meetings in Melbourne Australia further enhances my spiritual growth through the words of Julian’s text. In this way, I experience the continual growth and spread of Julian’s text and her words.

The Companions just like in any other Christian order believe in following the most basic core message from Christ that is to love others as stated in Matthew 22: 37-39: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. And a second is like it You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” The human potential for great acts of love and compassion towards others is there with the divine presence of Christ within our souls.

Julian speaks to us today about our own inabilities and failures to see the image of God in others. We fail because of our spiritual blindness and our desires to seek the comfortable over the uncomfortable. To see Christ as the brightest light within our soul means that we never forget this light when we see others in our world. Christ reminds us of this very fact in Matthew 25: 43: “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”

One key and vital contribution that Julian’s text makes for us all today as faithful Christians has to be Julian’s emphasis on the preparation for eternal life. As part of living in this world, we must equally be fully aware of departing from this world. Death brings fear of the unknown for many of us and with this fear there exists an absence of hope. Julian has provided an enlightening view into our eternal life with Christ in order to remove our fears. The joy and bliss that await us in heaven should be comforting words for us all.

People who find coping with death a horrid experience would be eased with the words of Julian. As a woman facing death, Julian placed her trust and hope in the crucifix. In that way when facing death, our hope and salvation should be with us while being comforted by the visible presence of the crucifix.
Illustration Three
Salvation comes to us all as Julian indicates for faithful Christians, death then becomes a gateway into the next life with our eternal mother Christ. Julian’s text contributes to our contemporary Christian spirituality by offering hope for salvation: “Dying, we are constantly protected by Christ, and by the touching of his grace we are raised to true trust in salvation” (52:279). We live in hope that one day our mortal life will end and a new life begins in the joy and bliss. The words of Julian offer people suffering terminal illnesses their own hope of the future beyond this life on earth. Julian gives us the big picture of life as part of our spiritual journey.

Julian’s text contributes further to our own knowledge of the Blessed Trinity and a further knowledge of our own self. The Blessed Trinity has been presented by Julian to make us understand the purpose of each separate but equal person. Our spiritual understanding of the triune God becomes very clear for how God is actively present in our world today. Our spiritual growth grows with a deeper spiritual understanding of where God exists for us.

In addition to making us understand ourselves more, Julian offers the most crucial aspect of where God is for us. Our soul is the dwelling place of Christ as the brightest light shining within. The spiritual quest we make in life should be a discovery of the rich divine goodness that dwells within our being. Julian’s text shows us this higher part of our soul, our essential being or substance but we are constantly held back by our sensual being or lower part of our soul. Christ restores these two parts for us, yet our sinfulness holds us back.

Julian’s text assists us all greatly in finding Jesus within our souls. Our spiritual blindness holds us back from seeing where Jesus is in our world today. Failure to contemplate this divine goodness in our prayers and or daily readings of passages from scripture or passages from Julian’s text, holds us back from seeing Jesus.

Our potential as truly spiritual people living an authentic Christian life rather than the false living is always there for us to live out in this world. Julian’s words inform us that God can be known here and now. Julian’s world has many similarities with our world today, the threat of the unknown and the constant insecurity. The words of Julian offer us today on our spiritual quest as Christians certain hope for this life and the next.

Our sinfulness in this life does impede our spiritual growth but as Julian has shown to us the image of a forgiving and merciful God, our sins should not be a fatal blow to our healing. Falling to sin in this life is not the end because our Holy Mother Church
in Christ will always be there to restore us back to our true self. God in Christ has been revealed to Julian and she has shared these revelations with us in her written work.

Our Christian faith must be stable and must never wander; our faith in the Holy Mother Church must be equally strong. It does become difficult when our faith is tested by false images from the media of the Church and sadly by authorities within the Church who have abused their offices. The pure image of the Church as the Holy Mother Church as the Body of Christ should be upper most in our Christian faiths. Today the message from Julian to us becomes very clear and yet it remains for our own Christian faiths to be truthful to Julian’s words. This world will always test and challenge our Christian faiths but in Julian’s own words she offers simple advice: “I pray almighty God that this book may not come except into the hands of those who wish to be his faithful lovers, and those who will submit themselves to the faith of the Holy Church and obey the wholesome understanding and teaching of men who are virtuous life...” (86:343). Faithful Christians should take this simple message as an indication not to separate themselves from the faith of the Holy Mother Church even when it appears as though their model of the Church has been threatened.

Julian’s revelations should clear our minds of doubt about our true faith in the Holy Mother Church. Even when teachings from the Church may not sit easily with us, we must anchor ourselves as Julian has anchored her faith to the pure image of the Church.

At Lent, Easter and Christmas, Julian’s words within her revelations prepare our greater awareness of the presence of Christ. The rebirth with the eternal Christ becomes important for our faith at Easter. Christ taking on our sensual nature and becoming human enhances our faith at Christmas. Our salvation in Christ also becomes part of the celebration of the birth of the Christ child and saviour. In preparation for the resurrection of Christ at Easter, we understand the passion of Christ through the words of Julian on the suffering Christ and what it means for us today.

Julian gives us a true view of our true humanity through her revelations. We see Christ’s humanity as revealed to Julian and the unconditional love for all of humanity. The cheerful giver as Julian describes in chapter twenty three of her ninth revelation symbolises the qualities of the suffering Christ from the cross and his willingness to suffer for the love of humanity. This key example portrays one of the highest qualities
for us today to be Christ like in our world. In giving totally to others without one selfish thought for the giver but only kind and generous thoughts for the receiver.

People seek personal spiritual enrichment in their lives. They feel empty without a guide or teacher to direct them on the right path. Life itself is full of many turns in this world. Julian’s text stands out as a beacon to redirect us back to the fundamental truths about our Christian faith. Julian’s text would serve greatly on spiritual retreats as a simple journey. The richness of Julian’s text can be enjoyed individually or in groups. Julian’s text and her revelations speak to all of us in different ways. Group retreats are very effective means to hear the voice of Julian through other voices.

The key Christian symbol that Julian’s text and revelations continually present to us is the crucifix. The suffering Christ on the cross becomes from the beginning of Julian’s text her principal theme as it remains throughout her text. The risen Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, Christ the Holy Mother Church, the light as Christ that dwells within our human soul, all come back to Julian setting her eyes upon the crucifix.

To live according to the major themes within Julian’s text is probably best displayed by the compassionate heart. The compassion and love from the cross as shown in Julian’s revelations should be lived towards others in this world. Devotion to prayer, meditation and worship prepare our souls for the most important task in being aware of the needs of all human people within our world. The compassion from the cross as Julian makes us fully aware closely resembles the words from the Prophet Isaiah chapter 49 verse thirteen: “Sing for joy, O Heavens, and exult, O Earth; break forth, O mountains into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will compassion on his suffering ones.”
Conclusion

Julian’s text and her revelations offer us today a beautiful and very spiritual insight into the meaning of the crucifix and the Holy Trinity. Our understanding for our own Christian living is enhanced greatly by Julian’s perceptive and deeply spiritual reflections alongside her brilliant language. She uncovers for me and for all Christians, the mystical body of Christ that dwells within my own soul and the souls of others. The image of a compassionate God and a merciful and equally compassionate Christ emerge today as wonderful lights from Julian’s text.

The Holy Church as the Body of Christ through the sacrament of the Eucharist clarifies my own Catholic faith and the faiths of all Christians who read Julian’s text. The message from Julian’s text should be taken today well beyond even faithful Christians to be more appreciated by people of other mainstream religious faiths. The universal message of love cuts across all known boundaries.

It is a message from Julian that her text has increased in popularity worldwide. Julian’s text has become very popular as a spiritual guide for many people in ministry work and pastoral care of the terminally ill. Julian’s words reach so many in our world today, her words and messages have very beautiful meanings and simple images. The study of Julian’s text should not be restricted to academic courses or units, it moves far beyond lecture rooms and colleges to be a universal Christian classical text for any faithful Christian and even non-Christian. The text guides us to a meaning of life through the crucifix and the image of Christ within the Holy Trinity.

Julian’s text could easily be taught in schools, colleges, liturgy groups, meditation groups, and retreats both at school, parish and adult levels and for general reading as a great literary text. It is daily readings from Julian’s text that provides spiritual nourishment. In prayer meetings where groups meditate and contemplate the fuller meanings of Julian’s readings, their own lives should seek a better understanding of how the text may change the way they live.

The Julian centre in Norwich provides essential learning guides and key curriculum links for schools to incorporate Julian’s text into the Religious Education courses at various age levels. It would be a benefit to Religious educators to actively pursue the use of Julian’s text within teachings on the Trinity, the crucifix, the nature of sin, eternal life, contemplative prayer and the soul.
If one contemplates in prayer more spiritually about the crucified Christ and how Christ through Julian’s revelations may impact of how one sees the world more through a compassionate heart, then Julian is making a significant impact. Julian’s revelations may speak to us differently each day depending of our own life experiences. In prayer groups and retreats, Julian’s text may affect each of us as we encounter our own challenges to our Christian faiths. The spiritual journey we take in this life should be personally enriched by the reading of Julian’s text. The text returns us all to the teachings of the gospels and the richness of God’s image in the Old Testament.

Julian’s text will continue to be a vital tool for all faithful Christians. Even though seven hundred years have passed since the time of Julian, her revelations and words have just as much importance and contribution to contemporary Christian spirituality. In the end, it still remains for each individual Christian and if necessary a non-Christian who wishes to understand more about the Christian faith, to read and enjoy Julian’s text on a personal, private and spiritual level. Julian’s revelations should awaken own sense of the divine within us. Julian’s text continues to grow within the Julian network and small prayer groups to parishes, schools and educational institutions, ministry workshops, live in retreat centres and into countless homes of individuals.

Julian’s text and her key Christian messages continue to contribute enormously to contemporary Christian spirituality. As Professor of English Barry Windeatt of the University of Cambridge stated in the annual Julian lecture on May 8th 2010 that Julian’s text is still “a work in progress”109 For all of us today Julian continues to offer something new and vital about the way we see God in Christ. Above all, Julian’s message is a simple message for us today as one modern Christian writer Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B clearly acknowledges: “Julian of Norwich belongs to a new time as simple witness of God’s love in the face of human futility, full of faith, full of challenge, full of personal responsibility, believing surely that God’s spirit is in all of us and begging to set us free.”110

Julian’s work must not be over complicated for any reader she speaks a different tongue about God to every different reader. The visions, voices and spiritual messages

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109 Professor Barry Windeatt’s lecture will be made available on the [www.friendsofjulian.org.uk](http://www.friendsofjulian.org.uk) website in the near future.
within her revelations speak a language for each individual who feels moved by her words. To see the impact of Julian’s words first hand from different minds for one who attends Julian meetings is a very deep spiritual experience. Julian opens minds, hearts and souls with her text and revelations. We need only to place our own trust and hope in ourselves after appreciating her revelations.
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Primary Texts


## Secondary Sources

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**Journal Articles**


Appendix A
The constitution (page one only) of the Companions of Julian of Norwich downloaded from the following website www.freindsofjulian.org.uk/companions

THE COMPANIONS OF JULIAN OF NORWICH

The Companions of Julian of Norwich are a core grouping within the wider community of the Friends of Julian, men and women, lay or ordained, who wish to commit themselves at a deeper level to living out the insights and teaching of Julian of Norwich in their own personal lives. The Companions bring together the many people throughout the world who find inspiration in The Revelations of Divine Love and who wish to pursue a life based on Julian’s insights into the nature of God and the human person. They welcome Christians of all denominations, and any others who find in Julian a reliable guide on their spiritual quest.

While not being a religious community in any formal sense, as Companions of Julian they commit themselves as best they are able:
1. To reflect the unconditional love of God in their response to others and to themselves
2. To exercise compassionate empathy in their daily lives
3. To meditate and intercede for the world for at least 30 minutes a day
4. To seek spiritual nourishment from regular study of The Revelations of Divine Love
5. To make at least one visit to the Julian Shrine in Norwich during their lifetime if possible.

In addition, Companions accept responsibility for furthering the educational work of the Julian Centre in Norwich through prayer and regular financial support.

The Companions of Julian of Norwich will be entitled to wear the hazelnut badge, and to use the postnominal CJN, as long as membership of the Friends of Julian and the commitment to this way of life are maintained.

THE WAY OF LIFE OF A COMPANION

Preface

The Companions of Julian of Norwich is a grouping within the Friends of Julian which has evolved from the desire experienced by a number of people to give a deeper expression to their devotion to Julian and her teachings, as lived out in daily life.

Julian was a woman of her time who tried to communicate to others the compassionate nature of God. Compassion, prayer and times of silence and reflection will characterise those who wish to take Julian as a spiritual guide and mentor.

Julian also challenges everyone to reflect on the meaning of life and not be afraid to confront the big questions concerning God and the reasons they have