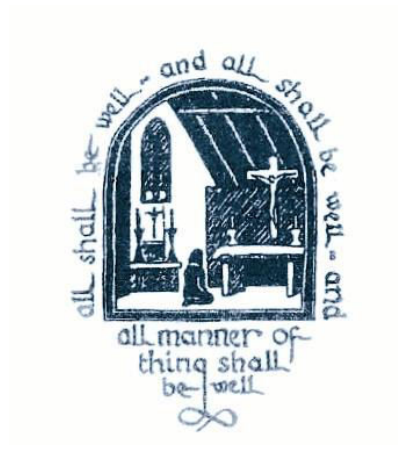


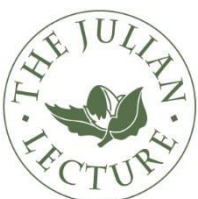
The Julian Lecture 1993

Mother Julian, Radical Psychotherapist



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[1] This is an age of change, fear and disintegration. If that sounds over the top, then you must forgive the skewed perspective of someone who, day in and day out, tries to respond to the pain of those who pour out their minds and hearts in the security of the counselling room. If the truth be told, however, counsellors and psychotherapists, as the twentieth century draws to a close, constitute a beleaguered profession and may perhaps be excused for believing that humankind has moved into a dark and perilous phase in its history. As waiting lists grow longer and the concerns and difficulties of clients apparently more complex and appalling, the therapist has no option but to stay true to his or her own experience and to confront the reality of the flood of psychic pain which threatens to engulf everything. Hope, if it is to be found, lies not in dismissive rationalisations which find expression in such statements as "it's not that bad" or "every age has believed it is facing the ultimate crisis". Even less is hope to be found in the naive but still prevalent belief that science and technology will at the eleventh hour come up with the answers and deliver the world from the jaws of disaster. Authentic hope always lies through and beyond despair and is seldom to be found without moving into the darkness and risking the loss of the few remaining reference points which seem to make some sense of the bewildering landscape.

In recent times, it is as if the therapists' frightening knowledge has erupted on to the front pages of the daily newspapers. We read reports almost every day of the disintegration of what we had previously taken to be 'normal'. It is no longer possible to speak of a 'normal' family or a 'normal' marriage: interpersonal violence has reached the point where children are blown up and ten-year olds kill infants. Addiction is rife and drugs, whether prescribed or illicit, shield millions from the reality of pain and plunge them into even more unimaginable nightmares. We are sitting only yards from the streets where a young woman recently ^[2] moved increasingly towards

disaster and death. Her murder has left in its wake such a lake of grief, anger, bitterness, accusation, resentment, guilt and sheer unadulterated misery in our city that the very streets themselves seem to cry out in anguish.

It is not only in our relationships, however, that violence has finally reduced the concept of normality to meaninglessness. It is no longer possible, for example, to speak of a 'normal' career. Anyone who has experienced the pain of unemployment or redundancy will know something of the violence, internal and external, which surrounds the 'execution' of a person's aspirations or of his or her self-concept. The assaults upon personal identity in a volatile employment situation are legion and our country is now littered with those whose humiliation and depression are but the outward garments of rage and a sense of seething injustice.

What is more, for many millions who remain in employment or in the education system there is now the pervasive and insidious poison of the competitive, accountability culture. There are those who thrive on it, of course. Efficiency, appraisal, financial accountability makes a fine trinity on which to hang many a high-sounding moral principle. But it is an evil trinity for it creates unprecedented stress and anxiety and an environment of distrust where big brother is not only sitting in the next office but comes to reside in the inner sanctuary of a person's own mind. The suicide of the Managing Director is as likely as the depression of the laid-off labourer.

Behind the current battle over testing in our schools and aside from the very real issues of excessive work demands on teachers, there resides, I believe, a profoundly more significant and symbolic struggle. Raising standards, improving the quality of teaching, providing evidence of achievement - they all sound worthy

objectives and they appeal to those who relish hitting targets and obtaining hard data. But many teachers know - even those who find it difficult to express themselves with adequate feeling - that learning depends ultimately on love, love between teachers and taught and love for the subjects that are being studied. Testing signifies judgement and where that judgement is divorced from the relationship between teacher and pupil, then the spirit of learning withers and trust is eroded. What is more when testing becomes a corner-stone of the educational edifice then the building rapidly loses warmth and becomes inhospitable and eventually uninhabitable. The battle over testing is about loss of love, loss of tenderness, loss of imagination, loss of trust, loss of soul. And the sad thing is that these ^[3]words of mine will make no sense to those who believe that they are right and that I am a woolly minded liberal whose gravest misfortune was to have been educated in the 1950s and brainwashed in the 1960s.

What is more I have to struggle with the knowledge that the present Minister of Education is a devoted and often charming Roman Catholic, a struggle made somewhat more distasteful by the realisation, if I am to believe what is reported in the press, that he holds to doctrines of original sin and of divine reward and punishment which would not have disgraced advisers to the Holy Inquisition.

I cannot resist telling you an allegory which is recounted by Geoffrey Wilson, former Chief Inspector of Schools for Kirklees. It seems to me to sum up so much that is currently poisoning - and I use that word deliberately and for the second time - both our working and our education worlds. It is couched in humorous terms but this in no way masks the death-dealing influences to which it refers and which are

at work in our society, fuelling the fears and hastening the disintegration of which I spoke at the beginning.

The Company Chairman was given a ticket for a performance of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. He could not go, and passed on the invitation to the company's work-study consultant. The next morning the Chairman asked him how he had enjoyed it. Instead of a few plausible observations he was handed a memorandum which read:

- a. For considerable periods the four oboe players had nothing to do. The number should be reduced, and their work spread over the whole orchestra thus eliminating peaks of inactivity.*
- b. All twelve violins were playing identical notes. This seems unnecessary duplication, and the staff of this section should be drastically cut. If a large volume of sound is really required this could be obtained through an electric amplifier.*
- c. Much effort was absorbed in the playing of demisemiquavers. This seems an excessive refinement; it is recommended that all notes should be rounded up to the nearest semi quaver. If this were done it should be possible to use trainees and low-grade operators.*
- d. No useful purpose is served by repeating with horns, the passage that has already been handled by the strings. If all such redundant passages were eliminated, the concert could be reduced from two hours to twenty minutes. If Schubert had ^[4]attended to these matters, he would possibly have been able to finish the symphony after all.*

This then is the background, which goes some way, I believe, to illuminate the context of the contemporary counsellor's work. The mounting pain among clients who seek therapeutic help is perhaps

unimaginable for those whose lives remain comparatively untouched by the swirling eddies of change - although I sense that such people are now members of a dwindling minority. It is not easy to convey the agony of it all without sounding hysterical or histrionic and yet there are days when I return home haunted by the vision of our culture as a great open wound. Never, it seems, has the search for intimacy been so desperate and yet all around relationships are in turmoil, violence is erupting in the home and on the streets and, as global economic disaster seems increasingly possible competitive materialism is revealed for the demonic trap which it is.

Many people who cross the therapist's threshold are caught up in the paralysing fear of adverse judgement. Their level of stress and anxiety is so great that they have lost all confidence in their own ability to function effectively or to make decisions. They go in fear of ridicule, condemnation and of rejection whether from the work place or the family circle. The broken marriage, the redundancy notice, the escalating anxiety are but the outward signs of an inner desolation where there is no let-up from the ever-present feeling of failure and worthlessness. There are others who bring with them the unspeakable burden of self-hate. It is as if they defend themselves from the adverse judgement of others by passing the ultimate judgement on themselves in order, somehow, to deaden the pain and to anaesthetise themselves against intolerable anxiety. For the counsellor, there can scarcely be a more demanding task than that of accompanying a person who is clearly sensitive, intelligent and beautiful but whose self-hate is so virulent that he or she experiences only total unacceptability. Such persons often subject their bodies to the most vile abuse in a desperate attempt to exert some power over lives which are grotesquely out of control or to experience momentary relief from the total numbness which self-hate frequently engenders. The rise in eating disorders in our society, for example, is

alarming and in almost all cases there is a large element of self-hate or self-disgust in the sufferer.

[5] In recent years therapists have had to bear the opening of another Pandora's Box. With sickening regularity now men and women of all ages bring their stories of sexual and physical abuse, usually within their own families or intimate circles. These accounts come from people of all sections of society and sadly from many who are of the 'household of faith'. The abuse has sometimes gone on for many years and points to a disordering of sexuality and physicality which seems to be of epidemic proportions. Those who have suffered in this way usually hold themselves as in some way responsible and therefore drag out their lives beneath a formidable load of inappropriate guilt. Those who perpetrate the abuse, on the other hand, are often unable to accept the implications of what they have done and seek to defend themselves or even block off from any memory of what has occurred. For me in recent times it has come as cold comfort to discover that women are as capable of abuse as men and that for many persons the lovely word 'mother' is as defiled as the word 'father' is for others. The sea of pain around the issues of abuse is vast and there are days when I dread going to my counsellor's office in case I have to listen to yet another story of unimaginable horror. Each time it happens I have to face the fact that so many of our human family do not know how to treasure their bodies and their sexuality and that what should be primary channels for loving have become instruments for torture, humiliation and terror.

The fear of adverse judgement, the burden of self-hate, the agony of abuse contribute mightily to the enormous pools of pain which increasingly, it seems, so many people must contend with in almost every sphere of their lives. For them there can be no trust in

relationships and no safety in the universe. The yearning of love and to be loved is stifled and is replaced instead by a constant watchfulness and a defensiveness against hostile invaders. Not surprisingly a sense of futility and meaninglessness is never far away and this is intensified by loneliness and alienation from family, community and any form of rootedness. Lonely people, belonging nowhere and to nobody, are left to cope as best they can in a world which has declared itself to be implacably indifferent.

When asked, "What is the most important question a person can ask?" Albert Einstein is said to have replied "Is the universe a friendly place or not?" For most clients who come to the counsellor and psychotherapist there can be only one answer to that searching question and it is a resounding 'no'.

In a sinister and ^[6]collusive way, too, in recent years the HIV virus has reinforced on the biological plane the desperation that for many is only too manifest on the psychological plane. In the face of such a hostile environment what response can there logically be except one of cynicism and hopelessness? The therapist's task is thus formidable for he or she has somehow to rekindle hope in the client's heart and that is impossible without the re-discovery of trust. It is as if the therapist must become the representative of a different order and through his or her own response to the client convey that, despite all the seeming evidence to the contrary, there is the possibility of a positive force at the centre of life which is more fundamental than the direst destructiveness. It is the living out of that hope which becomes the therapist's most urgent responsibility and what therefore matters above everything else is his or her belief about human nature, the created order and the meaning of life. Psychological skills, therapeutic insights, sophisticated medication may all have their part to play in the process of healing but, as St

Paul put it in another context, without love they are likely in the end to profit nothing. That is a hard lesson for any therapist and not one which greatly enhances a sense of professional identity. It demands a commitment to penetrate behind the surface of things and to risk discovering whether or not there is any substance to life as we know it. It goes to the heart of the matter; in short, it is the challenge of radical psychotherapy.

When Dame Margery Kempe visited Mother Julian of Norwich in about 1415, the latter was seventy-two years old. Her reputation as a counsellor seems to have spread widely by that time for it is clear that Margery was not the only one to visit her on pilgrimage. In many ways it is remarkable that Julian had survived for so long. She had lived through three outbreaks of the Black Death, she had seen England ravaged by disease, food shortage and bankruptcy brought about by the relentless Hundred Years War with France. She had witnessed the collapse of law and order on many occasions and the cruel suppression by her own Bishop of the Peasants' Uprising in 1380. She had also seen the rise of the lay reform movement in the Church led by John Wycliffe and the subsequent persecution of the Lollards after the horrendous statute *De Heretico Comburendo* in 1401. In short, she had lived through a period of tumultuous change and suffering and one which must have thrown most of her contemporaries into a state of utter ^[7]cynicism and despair. What is more it is a period characterised by the incessant battle for power whether for property and rights or for men's minds. The old order is collapsing and there is chaos and fear as a new order struggles to be born. It is not difficult to imagine that for most people it was an age of anguish, unpredictability and the constant fear of death whether through illness or the aggression of others.

Margery Kempe goes to Julian because she, too, at this time is the subject of adverse and punitive judgement and is ravaged by guilt. She is a passionate woman and her very intensity has led her into trouble. She is so overwhelmed with feeling at times of public worship that she continually bursts into tears and as a result causes much disquiet to others. She is mortified by her behaviour but seems powerless to stop it: even in the street she is liable to burst into tears when thinking of Christ's Passion. Understandably, perhaps, many people became exasperated with Margery and told her in no uncertain terms to restrain her weeping. Ecclesiastical and social sanctions were used against her and she was even thrown out of church in her own hometown of Lynn and forbidden to speak. There were others who suggested she should wear a different style of clothing! In short, when Margery arrived in Norwich to consult Julian we may imagine that she had lost confidence in the meaning of her experience and was feeling condemned and rejected by her contemporaries and by the church authorities. We may conjecture that she was close to condemning her own nature and full of doubt about its trustworthiness.

Julian's reception of Margery provides us with a precious and unique insight into her work as a counsellor. What is more it is the client's record which we possess, for Julian never herself wrote of her encounters with those in trouble: she knew, it would seem, all about the code of confidentiality! It is clear that Julian did not rush in to give advice. Margery tells us that they held "holy conversation" for an extended time and that she was able to tell Julian in detail about her revelations and experiences and "of the very many holy speeches and conversations" which she had had with Jesus. Julian, it seems, received Margery with friendship and trust. She listens and enters into Margery's experience with respect and increasing thankfulness. She is concerned not to judge but to make it safe for Margery to

express herself fully in all her confusion and ecstasy. When she finally speaks it ^[8]is to validate Margery's experience and to counsel obedience to the will of God as revealed in the depth of her own soul. Margery quotes Julian's words: "The Holy Spirit never moves anything against love, for if he did, he would be contrary to his own self- for he is all Love". Of the tiresome tears, Julian speaks with the greatest tenderness and with the utmost conviction. The tears, she says, are the greatest proof Margery could wish for that the Holy Spirit does indeed dwell in her soul. No evil spirit can give such signs, she says, and quotes both St Paul and St Jerome in support of her understanding. St Jerome, accordingly to Julian, says that "tears torment the devil more than do the pains of hell".

We can imagine the immense relief that must have flooded through Margery as she talked with Julian. Here was someone who was prepared to trust her, to be her soul mate rather than her judge or accuser. Here was someone, too, who would listen in detail and in depth and who, having done so, could restore her faith in the wholesomeness of her own nature and the trustworthiness of her experience. Margery quotes Julian again: "Holy Writ says the soul of a righteous man is the dwelling-place of God; and so I trust, dear sister, that you are". Not that Julian in any way underrates the battle that Margery will continue to experience in the faces of her opponents and those who deride her nature and her experiences. "Set all your trust in God", she says, "and do not fear the language of the world, for the more despising, shame and reproof that you have in the world, the more is your merit in the sight of God. Patience is necessary for you, for in that you shall keep your soul". Margery goes on her way greatly cheered. Her confidence is restored in God, in herself, in the legitimacy of her feelings, in the rightness of speaking out. Julian's response to her is of friend to friend and she shows infinite tenderness and compassion as befits the exchange between

two lovers of Christ. At the same time, Julian in no way evades the truth that for the passionate and impulsive Margery life will continue to be tough. "Patience is necessary for you" she says and at these words we may be sure that Margery nodded in instant agreement. She knew that she was known.

In the encounter with Margery Kempe we discover a Julian who displays the kind of capacity to respond to a human-being in distress which is the fruit of a life spent in communion with God who dwells in ^[9]the depths of her own soul. Julian, the counsellor, embodies the authority of one who has dared to be intimate with God and who can no longer keep to herself the knowledge which flows from that intimacy. It is striking that Margery does not refer to the 'Showings' which are, of course, the consummate outpourings of Julian's own love affair with God and it is clear that Julian herself does not mention her book to Margery although the conclusion of the long text was being written by 1393.

Margery's apparent ignorance of the existence of Julian's writings is the more surprising because she rather prided herself on being up with all the latest theological and devotional treatises. I am inclined to believe that the most likely reason for Margery's unawareness is the hiddenness of Julian's book. Indeed, scholars have been baffled why there are singularly few surviving copies of Julian's work in contrast to the veritable plethora of extant copies of the writings of such people as Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Could it be that the reason lies in the book's revolutionary and radical insights? Julian was clearly a person of high intelligence and no little sophistication despite her claims to be "unlettered". What is more she must have known that her book in the wrong hands could lead to all kinds of trouble. She was, I suspect, far too wise to make herself a sitting target for the secular of

the ecclesiastical authorities. She had no desire, I suspect, to be an unnecessary martyr. She had, after all, at the age of 30 already risked death (and accepted it) in order to be taken up into the love of her Lord and her task was to communicate what she had learned. It is not, I believe, fanciful to suggest that while it was imperative for her to write her book, it was equally important for the book to be kept under wraps and restricted to a very limited circulation until the time came when it was safe to assume that it would not be destroyed by those who had every reason to fear its message. It seems that it was to be two and a half centuries before that time came and that it is only in our own era that the full significance of her experiences is gradually emerging. Even now, I believe, Julian's *Revelations* are so utterly amazing in their implications that there are few who, in Blake's words, can "bear such beams of love". And yet in my work as a therapist I come with awe and trembling to the belief that the radical psychotherapy which so many in our generation cry out for demands a preparedness on the part of those in my profession to risk being blinded by the dazzling light shining from every page of a book which a devout seventeenth-century ^[10]scribe-editor, fearful that it should fall into the wrong hands, described as "the sublime and wonderful revelations of the unutterable love of God, in Jesus Christ vouchsafed to a dear lover of his, and in her to all his dear friends and lovers whose hearts like hers do flame in the love of our dearest Jesus".

Julian's writing is often so measured and carefully worked over that the unsuspecting reader may fail to see at first that her book is a passionate love story. What is more, beginning as it does with a focus on the suffering of Jesus during his Passion, the modern reader may initially be repelled by the apparent dwelling on the physical gruesomeness of torture and crucifixion. Nor does Julian spare her reader the details of her own near-death experience during which

she received her revelations. It is only gradually that we begin to understand that the body is central to Julian's understanding of God and of herself. Her book is addressed to embodied souls and not to disembodied spirits. The Jesus whom she beholds and loves is a man of flesh who bleeds and thirsts and embraces. The human body for her is something of supreme beauty so that she can speak even of the act of excretion with awe and wonder. The tactile quality of Julian's imagery is sometimes breath taking. She speaks of God's relationship to us, for example, in words which belong to the bridal chamber:

And in the joining and the union he is our very true spouse and we his beloved wife and his fair maiden, with which wife he was never displeased, for he says: I love you and you love me, and our love will never divide in tow. (58th chapter)

The body, however, is only the beginning of Julian's hymn of praise and delight as she celebrates the discoveries she had made about human nature. Gradually the reader begins to experience the passion that flows through Julian's pen. How Julian loves what she calls her even Christians! It is for love that she must communicate what she has learned for she sees how miserable and desperate are so many of her fellow human beings. Time and again she assures us that it is only natural and inevitable that we should sometimes feel depressed and empty and that life is by definition a series of ups and downs. The truth, however, is that God regards us as the noblest thing he has ever made, that we are his 'darlings' and that he never ceases to love us no matter what we feel and no matter what we do. If we could but see ourselves with the eyes ^[11]of God, Julian suggests, we should know assuredly that we are:

wondrous creatures and that we have within us all the properties of the God who made us, all the properties that is of the mother and the father and the lover that God is.

This is astonishing stuff but Julian insists on it time and time again. This is why she wrestles so fiercely with the problem of sin. How can these wondrous creatures that we are perpetrate such vile deeds? In the end Julian must accept a mystery but not before she has concluded that sin is, in some important way, necessary and that our very sins can become medals of honour. God, she sees, does not cease to love us when we sin; indeed we do not even fall in his eyes because he knows that in the deepest recesses of our being (what she calls our substance) we have no desire to sin at all. Nothing is more painful to God - and more wasteful than a person's self-recrimination. God does not even have to forgive us because he has not accused us in the first place. If we sin, we have through our shame and sadness, a wonderful opportunity to be utterly vulnerable, completely child-like and in this state to run to our mother God to find their immediate acceptance, a continuing confirmation of our identity as her beloved, her darling whom she will never abandon.

Julian's repeated assurance about the nature of God and about our own natures is simply too much for most of us. It is literally unbearable because to internalise it fully requires that our lives be turned upside down; in essence, it leaves us with no way out. It makes nonsense, for example, of all our notions of reward and punishment and the contractual systems which as individuals and as communities we establish to regulate our lives. It does away at a stroke with such notions as hell and purgatory and it is interesting, to say the least, that Julian did not perceive anyone in those places. Julian's understanding of the Passion of Christ and its operation does away, too, with the idea of human-beings as divided creatures.

Constantly she affirms the integrity of the human personality: "I saw that our nature is wholly in God", she says. What she terms our substance and our sensuality are joined in union because of Christ's Passion: "That honourable life in which our Lord Jesus is our sensuality in which he is enclosed".

[12]The devil still has an honourable place in Julian's scheme of things but it is striking that his chief preoccupation seems to be in shaking Julian's trust in her own visions. His activity leads to the appearance of the unsung hero of the *Showings*, namely 'a man of religion' - presumably a priest or monk - to whom Julian states that she has been raving and suffering from hallucinations to the extent of seeing the figure on the cross before her bleeding profusely. The cleric's immediate seriousness and surprise pulls her up short and, just in time, she realises that she is on the point of not believing our Lord God! The devil, it is clear, is intent on making her devalue her experience and on driving her away from her perception of the true nature of God and of her own being. It seems to me that the debt we owe to that unknown priest or monk is incalculable. He was a man with a fine sense of humour for he "laughed aloud and heartily" and his subsequent seriousness was thereby all the more powerful. The devil, according to Julian, is often best vanquished through humour and contempt and she succeeds in reducing him to a rather pathetic figure who can be sent packing through ridicule. Julian clearly loved laughter and she saw heaven as a place of much merry-making. She would, I believe, have endorsed Meister Eckhart's reflection on the Trinity:

Do you want to know

What goes on in the core of the Trinity?

I will tell you.

In the core of the Trinity

the Father laughs
and gives birth to the Son.
The Son laughs back at the Father
and gives birth to the Spirit
The whole Trinity laughs and gives birth to us.

The unknown cleric, Julian's parish priest who comes to her in her grave sickness, her beloved even Christians to whom she refers constantly, the blessed saints especially Mary, the Lord's mother, and those who have sinned grievously like Mary Magdalene, Peter and her contemporary John of Beverley - all these constitute for Julian the community of Holy Church of which she writes that it "was never broken, nor ever will be without end".

And yet there is no escaping the underlying tension which Julian experiences as she attempts to relate the ^[13]truth and meaning of her visions to many of the doctrines and practices of the Church of her day. Sometimes the tension cannot be resolved and she is content to let paradoxes remain as mysteries which will only be illuminated when the blessed Trinity performs a "deed in the last day". Her expressed submission to the Church is therefore no abject capitulation but rather one made on her own terms - yet another reason for ensuring that her book was for private circulation only! Indeed, her vision of the Church seems to be one where all men and women acknowledge their common membership of the body of Christ and know that they are all the darling of God. She goes so far as to state that the blood of our own beloved Mother will be sprinkled on us all and that we shall all be healed gently in the course of time. "From this sweet and gentle operation", she says, "He will never cease or desist, until all his beloved children are born and brought to birth". This is a breath-taking vision of the whole of humanity throughout all time and all ages being brought back home

to the loving father and mother and lover who cherishes them infinitely for ever.

The counsellor who listened patiently to the garrulous Margery Kempe had no desire to intervene with gratuitous or pious platitudes. She knew that letting Margery talk about herself was a sure way to bring her back to trust in herself and in God - as long as she was not impeded by adverse judgements or condemnatory looks. I have no doubt that Julian regarded Margery with great compassion and tenderness in the manner that she believed God regards us all and that, held in this loving regard, Margery was enabled, through self-exploration, to find her way back to her own soul. I often think about Julian's eyes and the message they transmitted to all who sought her help. Those eyes must have spoken the words which for me sum up the radical, revolutionary and utterly transforming knowledge which resulted from Julian's intimacy with her Lord and lover.

Whether we are moved to know God or our soul, either motion is good and true. God is closer to us than our own soul, for he is the foundation on which our soul stands and he is the mean which keeps the substance and the sensuality together, so that they will never separate. For our soul sits in God in true rest, and our soul stands in God in sure strength, and our soul is naturally rooted in God in endless love. And therefore if we want to have knowledge of our soul, and communion and discourse with it, we must seek in our Lord God in whom it is enclosed. (Chapter 56)

[¹⁴]Perhaps it is now becoming clear why Julian may be seen as perhaps the most radical psychotherapist there has ever been and why she deserves to be studied by every aspiring therapist in our

own generation. To the person who is trapped in the fear of judgement or who had succumbed to the temptation of self-hate she brings news of surpassing wonder. God, she says, is endless love and there is no judgement and no anger in him. What is more, you are his most precious darling and nothing you can do will ever alter that fact. You are safe in God's love and with him you can celebrate the wonder of your own being, the beauty of your body, the glory of your soul. To those who have been abused by their fellow human-beings, even perhaps by their own parents, she brings the startling news that God is their most tender Mother and Father since the beginning of time and will never abandon them. To those who feel alienated and alone and for whom there is no meaning in life she reveals the tender compassion of God who created everything for love and preserves it by the same love. Love is the meaning of the created universe and we are all born that we may be both lovers and beloved and share in the eternal dance of love which is the life of the Holy Trinity. There can be no greater belonging than that and no meaning more sublime.

The therapist who shares Julian's vision and knows for himself or herself the reality of which she speaks will look upon those who seek help with the eyes of God. Tenderness, compassion, understanding, and total lack of judgement, the ability to recognise a beloved son or daughter or friend or lover of surpassing beauty - these will be the characteristics of radical psychotherapists who will possess them because that is how they experience God's love in the citadel of their own souls. There can be no simulation of such characteristics and the therapist will be constantly aware that he or she cannot for one moment deliberately risk losing sight of the blessed face of God: the beams of love must be borne whatever the outcome.

It would be tempting to end on that high note of mystical rhetoric, but I want instead to return to the streets of Norwich in 1993. This, after all, is Julian's city and it is here that she wrote her book and fulfilled her counselling ministry. What has this radical psychotherapist to say to her fellow-citizens today? We may be sure that she would look upon us with infinite compassion but I am persuaded that she might also be ^[15]saddened that a city, which has at least thirty times as many inhabitants as it did in her day, remains so ensnared in the coils of a manipulative, power-hungry and destructive world.

She would see our dear city populated by many who drag out their lives in the darkness of self-doubt, low self-esteem, self-rejection and depression. She would see the corrosive effects of a political and economic climate which chooses to ignore the weak and despises the vulnerable. She would see thousands of human beings who have been rejected from the moment of conception and others who have known no real human warmth but only betrayal and abuse since their earliest years. She would see thousands of young people who have little hope of finding meaning in their lives and working and many who are prepared to risk death from Aids so desperate is their craving for intimacy and communion. In short she would see a city where people are as ignorant of their true natures as they were in 1415 and where the devil continues to do his best to undermine those who catch a glimpse of the truth about themselves.

It is that truth which the radical psychotherapist from the fourteenth century would wish to proclaim from the steps of the City Hall. To each and every citizen she would say with utter certainty: "You are the beloved from all eternity and held safe in an embrace which will never let you go." To the clergy and the counsellors of our city she would speak, I believe, with the utmost tenderness but her question

would be direct and solemn: "Do you truly believe that you are beloved from all eternity?"

This is the question which I ask myself daily for I know that when I can answer confidently and trustingly that I do indeed so believe I will have begun to understand the amazing news which Julian brings to her even Christians. What is more, if I can hold fast to the truth that God is all love and that I and all humanity with me constitute his noblest creation, then, and only then, will I have entered the school of radical psychotherapy whose foundress we are met to honour today.

Brian Thorne



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