

The Julian Lecture 2004

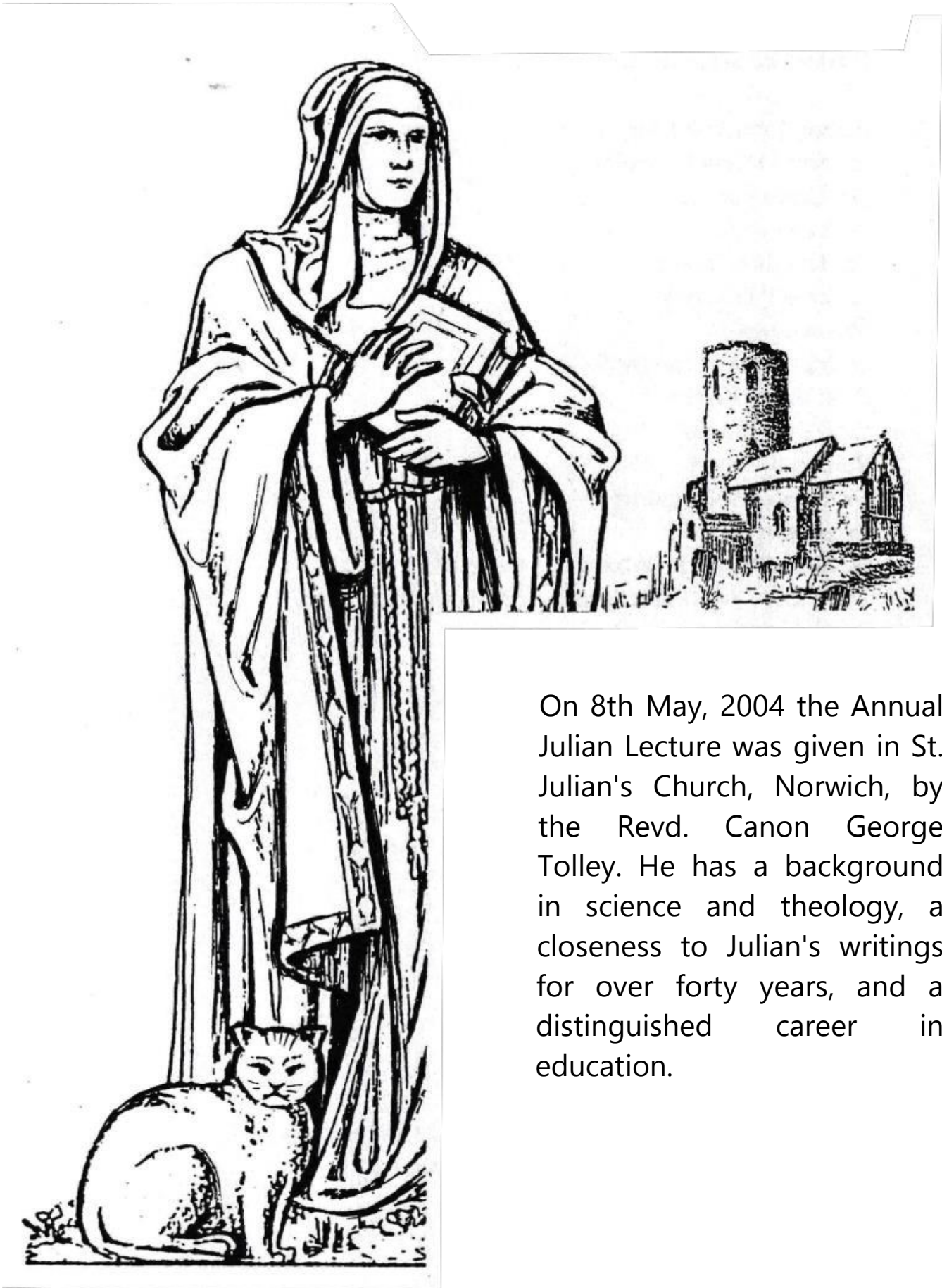
Life in the Trinity

An exploration of Julian's country of the spirit



Reverend Canon George Tolley





On 8th May, 2004 the Annual Julian Lecture was given in St. Julian's Church, Norwich, by the Revd. Canon George Tolley. He has a background in science and theology, a closeness to Julian's writings for over forty years, and a distinguished career in education.

[1] **Life in the Trinity: an exploration of Julian's country of the spirit**

It is generally accepted that some twenty years separated the *Short* and the *Long Text* of Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*. One very significant difference between the two texts is the greater importance given to the Trinity in the latter. The years of meditation led Julian to emphasise her experience of God as the vital, living community and process of the Trinity. The *Long Text* has very many, direct and indirect references and it is not too much to say that the context of her Revelations becomes, in the later *Text*, that of the relationship between the human person and the divine Trinity. That context is apparent in her presentation of her very first revelation: 'And as part of the same showing the Trinity suddenly filled my heart with the greatest joy. And I understood that in heaven it will be like that for ever for those who come there. For the Trinity is God, God is the Trinity, the Trinity is our maker and protector, the Trinity is our dear friend for ever, our everlasting joy and bliss, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' (4)¹

The postscript at the end of the *Long Text* sums up all that has gone before: 'So ends the revelation of the love of the blessed Trinity shown in our Saviour, Christ Jesus. It is our everlasting strength and comfort and rejoicing as we pass on our journey through life. Amen, Jesus, Amen'.

Julian writes of her experience of God. Her theology is directed towards clarifying that experience, to describing the being of God to whom she relates, the God who is revealed in her showings, the God who is made known in Jesus Christ. The God whom she experiences, in whom she finds herself, is the Trinity, to be understood in the Incarnation. 'Where Jesus is spoken of', she says, 'the Holy Trinity is

to be understood.' (4) Here is an experiential theology but rooted, as she is at pains to tell us, in the orthodoxy of the Church. Throughout the course of her descriptions of and her reflections upon her revelations, she develops her insights into the mystery of the Trinity. She does not do this in an orderly, logical progression but rather as an unfolding of wonder and joy at the riches of her experience of the love of the Trinity. ^[2]The character of a religion, of a faith, is determined largely by its perception of the nature and being of its deity and by the human relationship to that deity. For the Christian, that nature, that being, has been disclosed in the person of Jesus Christ. John Taylor, former Bishop of Winchester, puts it this way: 'being itself (that is, God) consists in "exchange", an eternal giving and receiving. The same is said more simply in the words, 'God's love' - not 'God is a loving God', nor 'God is ever ready to love', but 'God in himself is love'. Or, as Julian puts it: 'Live gladly and gaily because of his love', (81) for 'all in the end will be love' (84).

It seems to me that Julian emphasises two essentials of the nature and being of God. First, the community of the Trinity, the eternal giving and receiving, in John Taylor's words. This is a community of being Julian sees three heavens in the Trinity, described in the words, joy, happiness and delight. 'By joy,' she says, 'I understood the pleasure experienced by the Father, happiness, the work of the Son; eternal delight, the Holy Spirit. The Father is pleased, the Son is worshipped, the Holy Spirit is delighted.'(23) This is a community of perfect understanding and perfect sharing. Julian can say 'there is no anger in God' (13) and 'it is impossible for God to be angry' precisely because the Trinity is a loving, sharing community. She has difficulty squaring that with the orthodoxy of the Church, as she would when she says: 'the whole Trinity was involved in the passion of Christ, giving us an abundance of virtue and grace by him. And because of this the whole Trinity rejoices eternally.' (23)

This first essential leads inevitably to the second, the nature of the relationship between the Trinity and the human person. The God who made us is not a remote cause or origin or principle, but the Being in whom there is perfect fellowship, the perfect relationship of the Trinity. St Hilary of Poitiers said: 'We could not preach God to man if we had to preach a lonely God.' God is not a divine solitariness, a divine ego, but is the divine unity revealed in the Trinity. And God wants us and we are made complete, not in our own achievements as individuals, but in our relations with others and, supremely, in our relations with God. That relationship with God is ingrained in our nature. 'With the concurrence of each person of the Holy Trinity', writes Julian, 'he (God) made us. He joined and united us to himself. So when he made us, God almighty was our kindly Father, and God all-wise our kindly Mother, and the Holy Spirit their love and goodness, all one God, one Lord. In our Father, God almighty, we have our being. In our ^[3]merciful Mother we have reformation and renewal. In yielding to the gracious impulse of the Holy Spirit we are made perfect.' (58)

It is the love of God for us to which we must respond in order to be fulfilled persons. 'Though the persons of the Trinity are all equal in nature, what was shown me most clearly was that love is nearest to us all. And this is the knowledge of which we are most ignorant, for many men and women believe that God is almighty and has power or do everything, and that he is all wisdom and knows how to do everything, but that he is all love and is willing to do everything - there they stop.' (ST 24) Bishop Geoffrey Rowell puts it well: 'For Christians, the fundamental communion is that of God's own being. whose very life as Holy Trinity is a communion, a web of love.' 'The shape that the world takes is in large part determined by what we, the human creation, makes of it. Many disasters, but especially of modernity, derive from a misconstruction of our relationship with

God. Our creation in the image of God has been understood individualistically, rather than in terms of being in relation. The human creation, made in the image of God reflects most directly the divine being in communion.'⁴

By quite remarkable coincidence, it was towards the end of Julian's life that Andrei Rublev painted, in a far-off country, his icon of the hospitality of Abraham, which has come to be accepted both as probably the best-known and best-loved of all icons and as depicting the essence of the Trinity. At its simplest level the icon depicts three persons having a meal together, a joyful sharing of hospitality. There is a compelling peace and tranquillity about the scene. There is a sense of deep stillness in the picture, but of movement also, for these are not three static figures, they live in and for each other. Our eyes may be drawn to the central figure of the composition, the Christ figure, but they are made to move to the others also. There is no isolation here. And the action is centred upon the chalice, the symbol of self-giving and sacrifice. We are not mere spectators of a tableau; we are drawn into the action, the table is not complete without us; we are invited guests. George Herbert could have been writing of the scene:

And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?

My dear, then I will serve.

You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:

So I did sit and eat.

For me, the Rublev icon depicts the essentials of Julian's Holy Trinity, a loving, living communion into which we are invited, a world of the spirit^[4] which has inexhaustible riches brought to us at our level by the God who humbled himself in the Incarnation, who sustains us by the ever-present working of the Holy Spirit. Julian, it would seem, is

almost carried away by the wonder of the mystery and riches of the Trinity. She cannot have too much of seeking to express the attributes and workings of the Holy Trinity: Father-Mother-Lord; Maker-Lover-Keeper, Nature-Mercy-Grace, All-Mighty, All-wise, All-love; The Father is pleased - the son is worshipped- the Holy Spirit is satisfied; Truth - Wisdom - Delight. Man, too, created in the image of God, is Trinitarian. 'Our soul is a trinity - only created-like the blessed uncreated Trinity, and has been known and loved from before time, and, as I have already said, at its creation united to its Creator.' (55) But Julian does not get carried away; she is earthed in the Word made flesh. Her practicality rescues her, and us, from a 'flight of the alone to the alone'. Notwithstanding her horror of her vision of the passion, the suffering and the death of Jesus, she has an over-riding message of hope. She is not lost in the darkness of the spirit, but calls us to enter a world of the spirit that is challenging and demanding, puzzling and wearying at times, but of infinite riches in the Trinity of love who will never let us go.

Julian gives to the three persons of the Trinity a variety of names, attributes and functions, which may be confusing at times, but only if we are seeking to compartmentalise the activities of the Trinity. What is clear is that in Julian's mind and in her experience, there is no hierarchy of persons and that always there is a bond of love which expresses the purpose of the Trinity. We are conditioned in our modern age to define a person as an individual. The message that is rammed home in our individualistic, consumer-based society is that, to achieve a fulfilled life, to achieve success, as it is more often stated, then you must know yourself, be yourself, do your own thing. But this ignores the real nature of the human person. 'We are not organisms, but persons,' says John Macmurray. 'The nexus of relations which unites us in a human society is not organic, but personal.'⁵ We only exist as individuals. We live as persons.

As we create our individualistic world we project the cult of individualism on to the Trinity, breaking the very community of love which binds together the persons of the Trinity and ourselves. Julian will have none of this. 'Christ means the Holy Trinity,' she says (57), but the whole Trinity is involved in the Incarnation. With the eternal consent and approval of the whole Trinity, the second Person willed to become the foundation and head of human nature.' (53) Julian finds comfort and hope in the community of ^[5]love that is at the heart of the world. 'Our courteous Lord showed very clearly and convincingly the eternal and unchanging nature of his love, and that, through the keeping power of his great goodness and grace, there will be no separation between his love and our souls.' (79) 'This revelation,' she says, 'is a comfort for our soul.' Nevertheless, it is right that we should seek some understanding, some perception, of the workings of the Trinity, for it is in the work of the Trinity that we can find riches in the life of the spirit to which we are called.

Julian points us to three great gifts, three great domains of the spirit in which the Trinity is at work. If we would live fulfilled lives, rich in the gifts of the spirit, we must have right relationships in each domain. These are the domains of Creation, of Redemption, of Human freedom. It was in her first showing, in the passion of Christ on the Cross, that she saw the Trinity as Maker, Keeper and Eternal Lover. Those attributes of the Trinity, those domains of action, she saw again in the image of the hazelnut in the palm of her hand. 'In this 'little thing' I saw three truths. The first is that God made it; the second is that God loves it; and the third is that God sustains it.' (5) Here, it seems to me, is as good a description as we can get, simply, directly, profoundly, of the work of the Holy Trinity.

Creation

In her comments upon her vision of the hazelnut, Julian points to the tension in which we must live and must resolve, if we are to have an enriched life of the spirit. She sees the hazelnut as 'all that is made' and states that God loves and sustains it. Yet she goes on immediately thereafter: 'We need to know the littleness of all created beings and to set at nothing everything that is made in order to love and possess God.'⁽⁵⁾ We need to be both world - affirming and world-renouncing - there is the tension and we must hold both together.

Julian emphasises the immanence of God and God's goodness which is seen in the world. She is no dewy-eyed optimist. She knows the realities of the darkness and evil of the world, she struggles to understand the evil of the world, but she sees also a world of hope because God made it: 'for God is all that is good, as I see it, and God loves all that he has made.'⁽⁹⁾ The last thing that Julian would do is to condemn the material world as evil; how could she with her firm belief in the Christ who came into the world and took our nature upon him. 'For God's goodness enfolds every one of his blessed^[6] works, eternally and surpassingly.'⁽⁵⁾ For Julian, God is no remote Creator, but a sustainer of the world. We are blessed and kept by his continuing love. 'God,' she says, who made everything because of his love, by the same love sustains it for ever.'⁽⁸⁾ In a lyrical passage she extols God's care for, indeed participation in, his world: 'for God is supreme unending truth, supreme unending wisdom, supreme unending love, uncreated; and man's soul is a creature within God which has these same qualities in a created form...and so God rejoices in his creature and his creature rejoices in God, marvelling for ever.'⁽⁴⁴⁾ All this is an echo of Julian's insistence that Christ redeemed the world because it is worth redeeming.

So Julian, who asks us to look at the hazelnut, would have us remember both the greatness and the littleness of God's creation. In so many ways she sees God in the little things of the world. She would have us open our eyes to see God in the ordinary. We must never forget that in our most treasured sacrament, God comes to us in the ordinary everyday stuff of bread and wine. Kathleen Norris is echoing Julian when she writes:

The Bible is full of evidence that God's attention is indeed fixed on the little things. But this is not because God is a Great Cosmic Cop, eager to catch us out in minor transgressions, but simply because God loves us - loves us so much that the divine presence is revealed even in the meaningless workings of daily life. It is in the ordinary, the here-and-now, that God asks us to recognise that the creation is indeed refreshed like dew-laden grass, that it is 'renewed in the morning' (Psalm 90.5), or, to put it in more personal and also theological terms, 'our inner nature is being renewed every day'. (2 Cor. 4.16)

All this is world-affirming, which we can only do if we reverence God's creation. But Julian warns us that we must not get lost in world-affirmation. 'We have got to realise the littleness of creation,' she says. (5) And she reminds us: 'no soul can rest until it is detached from all creation.' (5) It is significant that Julian, although an anchoress never once in her writings mentions the anchoritic life. She does not call us to poverty, neither does she directly renounce the world. But her message is clear: 'I know well that heaven and earth and all that is made is vast and wide, fair and good, but it looked so small to me because I saw it in the presence of him that is Maker of all things; to a soul that sees the Maker of all, all that is made seems very small.' (8) We have a responsibility in and for the world, but we

shall not find our true rest, our true self-fulfilment there. She writes: 'And I saw quite certainly that we must needs be in a state of longing and suffering until the time when we are led so deeply into God that we really and truly know our ^[7]own soul.' (56) There is an echo there, in purely personal terms, of St Paul: 'For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... because creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.' (Romans 8: 19-21)

So, here is creation, the domain of God the Father. Life in the Trinity gives an awareness of God in all creation; it means we want and need to respond to God's presence in the world; it provides us with a focus for prayer and thanksgiving and for the pain of the world. Life in the Trinity means accepting responsibility for stewardship of consumption and use of resources, but it means also that we become more aware of the glory of God in the world, not least in the little things, including all those small encounters that make up so much of the fabric of our lives. To be aware of God in the little things has been called 'the sacrament of the present moment'.

A few years ago, the playwright Dennis Potter gave a memorable and moving interview on television with Melvyn Bragg. He knew that he had but a short time to live, the interview had to be interrupted from time to time while he dosed himself against the pain of cancer. One striking thing Dennis Potter said was that the approach of death had changed his way of looking at things, had changed his appreciation and his experience of his relationships with the world. "Things are both more trivial than they ever were," he said, "and more important than they ever were. And the difference between the trivial and the important doesn't seem to matter. But the nowness of everything is absolutely wondrous; there's no way of telling you; you have to experience it. But the glory of it, the comfort of it, the reassurance!"

I think that Julian would know very well what Dennis Potter was talking about. One of her much used words is 'delight'. God is our delight and we are his. To be open to the little epiphanies of creation - of the natural world and of the world of relationships is to enter into a rich world of the spirit. It is to be given hope and reassurance alongside the pain of the world. For Julian, her over-riding assurance is the goodness of God and his love. It is with that assurance that Julian can pray to God the Father, the Maker: 'God of your goodness, give me yourself, you are enough for me, and anything less that I could ask for would not do you full honour. And if I ask anything that is less, I shall always lack something, but in you alone I have everything.' (5)

[8] **Redemption**

The first of the gifts that Julian had asked of God was that she should understand the passion of Jesus. That meant, not only perceiving the physical and mental anguish of Jesus, but comprehending the purpose of his suffering and understanding the nature of his work on the Cross. Her experience of the pains of his passion leads to understanding of his great work of salvation, work to which she gives central place in her great parable of the Lord and servant. We have seen how she emphasises God's acts of creation as the work of his love. Because creation is an act of God's love, love continues its work in and through the activity and purpose of the whole Trinity. 'In our almighty Father we have our protection and our bliss, as regards our natural substance, which is ours by our creation from without beginning; and in the second person, in knowledge and wisdom we have our perfection, as regards our sensuality, our restoration, our salvation, for he is our mother, brother and saviour, and in our good

Lord the Holy Spirit we have our reward and our gift for our living and our labour, endlessly surpassing all that we desire in his marvellous courtesy, out of his plentiful grace. For all our life consists of three. The first is nature, the second is mercy, the third is grace.' (58)

She dwells upon the physical aspects of Christ's suffering in painful detail, but it was through her experience of the pain and anguish that Julian was led into the deep mystery of God's love, so that she could, at the end, say with a note of triumph: 'Love was his meaning. (86) For God can make all things new. Julian insights are worked out in some detail in her parable of the Lord and servant, in which she emphasises the saving work of Christ. 'In his future purpose he was to be Man, to save man by fulfilling his Father's will. So he stood before his Father as a servant, deliberately, making himself responsible for us. For all the humanity that will be saved by his blessed incarnation and passion is included in Christ's humanity.' (51) In her tenth revelation, as our Lord considers his wounds, he says: 'See how I loved you. And now I have died for you. How can you pray then for anything that delights me, and I not most gladly give it to you? For my delight is in your holiness and in the endless joy and happiness you share with me.'(24)

This brings us to a central message of her revelations - that Christ's work of renewal and re-creation (viz. redemption and salvation) is the way of the Cross. In her simple, homely words she expresses the profound truth of God's love in coming to us in Christ: Then our good Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Are you well satisfied with my suffering for you?' 'Yes, thank you, good Lord,' I replied. And the kind Lord Jesus said, 'If you are satisfied, I am ^[9]satisfied too. It gives me great happiness and joy and, indeed, eternal delight ever to have suffered

for you. If I could possibly have suffered more, I would have done so.'
(22)

Deeply troubled and burdened though she is with the guilt of her own and the world's sin, she is filled with hope because God's message to her is that the human soul is of infinite worth; is loved by God. Her experience of the Trinity confirms that worth and her exploration of the richness of the love of God to be found in the domains of the Trinity strengthens that hope. 'Jesus wishes us to consider,' she says, 'the delight which the Holy Trinity feels in our salvation and wishes us to long for as much spiritual pleasure, through his grace, as has already been described; that is to say, that our pleasure in salvation should be, as far as possible here on earth, like the joy Christ has in our salvation.' (23) She grounds the hope of salvation in the fact of the Incarnation: 'For the Trinity is comprehended in Christ - in whom our higher nature is rooted and grounded. And Christ has taken our lower nature upon him and this nature was designed first of all for him. For at the same time as God knitted himself to our flesh in the maiden's womb, he took our fleshly soul. In doing this, because he had already had us enfolded in him, he joined it to our substance.' (57) 'He is here with us,' she says, 'as it were on pilgrimage, leading us on and staying by us until he has brought all to his blessedness in heaven.' (81) She would, I am sure, wish to echo the author of the letter to the Hebrews: 'Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.' (Heb. 10.23)

The practical consequence of perceiving the hope that is at the heart of the Trinity, is that fragmented lives can be made whole and guilt, which threatens and demeans, can be overcome. Julian's message is positive and reassuring: 'If God forgives, who are we to withhold forgiveness from ourselves? As by his courtesy God forgives our sins

when we repent, even so he wills that we should forgive our sin and so give up senseless worrying and faithless fear. Nor does he will that we should busy ourselves with too much self-accusation; nor is it his will that we should despise ourselves. But he wills that we should quickly turn to him.' (73, 79) For Julian, redemption is a living, vital experiencing of the Holy Trinity at work in and through Christ, a work that is personal and direct, a transforming effect in our lives, now. 'In our Father, God almighty, we have our being. And in our mother of mercy we are remade and restored. Our fragmented lives are knit together and made perfect. And by giving and yielding ourselves, through grace, to the Holy Spirit, we are made whole.' (58) The significance and beauty of ^[10]Julian's insight into the motherhood of God have been much commented upon. Her insight brings home the immediacy and the personal character of Christ's love. In a beautiful passage she links the Incarnation, the Passion and the saving work of Christ under the attributes of motherhood: 'Our natural Mother, our gracious Mother, undertook to begin his work very humbly and very gently in the Virgin's womb. Our great God, the most sovereign wisdom of all, was raised in this humble place and dressed himself in our poor flesh to do the service and duties of motherhood in every way. So he sustains us within himself in love and was in labour for the full time until he suffered the sharpest pangs and most grievous sufferings that ever were or shall be, and at the last he dies. And when he had finished, even this could not satisfy his marvellous love and that showed in these high surpassing words of love, 'If I could suffer more, I would suffer more.' (60)

Much of our culture and society revolves around the cult of the individual in various manifestations. This is especially evident in the emphasis given to the search for identity - the endeavours to establish the real me', to do 'one's own thing', to 'fulfil one's potential'. What is being ignored is that personal identity which, in

any case, can be realised only in relationship, becomes obscured, becomes belittled, when we lose sight of God. In particular (to use Julian's description) we need to know God, not only as All-Mighty and All-Wisdom, but as All-Loving. It is this characteristic which Julian brings out most strongly in placing the saving work of Christ as a vital, living experience of the Trinity. The remaking of broken lives, the making whole of fragmented lives, is achieved through the saving work of Christ. Through that work comes about the Easter experience of knowing the power of the risen Christ and the realisation of the hope that is expressed in Julian's 'all shall be well.'

The Holy Spirit and human freedom

The many, rich and varied New Testament references show the Holy Spirit as powerful and unpredictable, but, most of all, as active (lively) and personal. Julian, too, presents us with the Holy Spirit who is ever active, interacting constantly with the human person, directly participating in the human condition. She has no rushing, mighty wind, but she has a great deal of the Holy Spirit as Comforter and as a dynamic force in our lives.. The Holy Spirit, according to Julian, comforts and strengthens, touches the soul, brings us to contrition and repentance, teaches, is a channel of grace, brings insights of love, moves us to prayer. And the note of hope, which is never ^[11]absent from Julian, leads her to emphasise that the Holy Spirit takes delight in the human soul. Jesus has great joy in all the deeds which he has done for our salvation.... We are his bliss, we are his reward, we are his honour, we are his crown... And in these three sayings; it is a joy, a bliss and an endless delight to me, there were shown to me three heavens, and in this way. By 'joy' I understand that the Father was pleased, by 'bliss' that the Son was honoured,

and by 'endless delight' the Holy Spirit.' (ST 12) 'For it was revealed that we are his crown, which crown is the Father's joy, the Son's honour, the Holy Spirit's endless delight, and endless marvellous bliss to all who are in heaven.' (51)

That the Holy Spirit takes delight in the human creature is a profound and comforting insight. We are not bits of chaff to be blown here and there by the Holy Spirit as a powerful, irresistible, controlling force, over-riding and subjugating the human spirit. Each one of us is a precious person, in whom the Holy Spirit takes delight. I am sure I don't deserve this but I find it very reassuring, nonetheless. The Holy Spirit empowers but does not enslave us. The Holy Spirit is a channel of grace, helping us to achieve new life in Christ, taking us as we are as children of God. Julian is insistent that in the pain and suffering of Jesus on the Cross we see God's love for us. It is where God comes closest to us. Reflecting upon her first revelation, centred upon the physical suffering of Jesus, she writes: 'Truly it is the greatest possible joy, as I see it, that he who is mightiest, noblest and most honourable, is lowest and humblest, most familiar and courteous. And our good Lord wants us to believe this and trust, rejoice and delight, strengthen and console ourselves. But no man can know this wonderful familiarity in this life, unless by a special revelation from our Lord, or from a great abundance of grace, given within by the Holy Spirit.' (7)

The Holy Spirit, as the channel of grace, brings us to repentance, not by coercion, but by love. The fracture in the human personality, which is sin, denies inner peace, peace with ourselves, with God and with others. There can be no resolution of the soul's conflict without response to love. Julian points us to the remedy: 'Sin is the sharpest scourge that any chosen soul can be struck with, it is a scourge which lashes men and women so hard and damages them so much in their

own eyes that sometimes they think they only deserve to sink down into hell, until the touch of the holy Spirit brings contrition and turns the bitterness into hopes of God's mercy...The Holy Spirit leads a man on to confession, and he earnestly shows his sins, nakedly and truly, with great sorrow and shame.' (39) 'God helps us,' she says, 'by ^[12]enabling us to be sorry for our sins through the blessed touch of the Holy Spirit.' (74) She tells us: 'grace works with mercy and especially in two ways. The work is that of the Holy Spirit, who works by rewarding and giving. Rewarding is the generous gift of truth that the Lord makes to him who has suffered. Giving is a magnanimous gesture which he makes freely by his grace: perfect and far beyond the deserts of any of his creatures.' (58)

It is the sure touch of the Holy Spirit that moves us to prayer. 'Prayer', she tells us, 'is the deliberate and persevering action of the soul.' (41) But it is more than that and it is not unaided. 'It is true and enduring, and full of grace. Prayer fastens the soul to God and makes it one with his will, through the deep inward working of the Holy Spirit.' (41) For God is the ground of our praying and we are 'moved by the Holy Spirit through contrition to prayer, and we desire with all our might an amendment of ourselves until the time that we find rest of soul and ease of conscience'. (40)

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to put us and to keep us on the path to wholeness. In all of this, it seems to me, that Julian is being thoroughly orthodox and traditional. But the message is one that we need to take to heart in our confused, complex modern world. What she has to say is fresh and revealing and full of hope. Our modern, Western society places enormous value upon freedom, both political and personal. By personal freedom is meant, all too often, the right to do as we choose, which, by elevating rights above duties leads to an expectation of freedom from responsibility. Personal freedom

then becomes a matter of seeking self-fulfilment according to one's own life, following one's own desires. It occupies firmly the world of self. But as human beings we are not made for ourselves. We are made for others and for God. 'Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.' We are free, truly free, persons when we act spontaneously, naturally, that is, in accordance with our essential nature. It is not our essential nature to live in the world of self, of self-gratification, of self-love. To live in that world brings only delusion, emptiness, an unrealised self. Yet so many pressures and so many fashions in the world are directed to that end. We realise ourselves, live real lives, only in relationship with others. 'All reality converges upon the real relationship of one person with another,' says John Macmurray. 'Human freedom', he says, 'demands not merely free people, but the relationship of free people.'?

The Holy Spirit is the guardian of human freedom, that most precious gift of God to us who are the crown of his creation. The Holy Spirit guards ^[13]that freedom, and so enriches our lives, gives them purpose and fulfilment by calling us to a knowledge of ourselves, by making us aware of our need for forgiveness, by working as the channel of grace for the gift of love. Whether as rushing, mighty wind, or as Comforter, the Holy Spirit calls us to be what we can be, he meets us as we are and offers transformation, new life. What was true for the apostles is true for us: 'The apostles on Pentecost were not turned into men they never were before. Rather they became themselves for the first time. The Spirit called out of them what was most creative, most courageous, most generous, most fully and completely human; and he does that to us, too.' He made them free. The Holy Spirit comes, not as a one-off experience, but as a constant companion. Julian puts it well: 'God showed himself as being as it were on pilgrimage; in other words, he is here with us, leading us on, and staying by us until he has brought

us all to his blessedness in heaven,' (81) God on pilgrimage seems to be to be a good description of the Holy Spirit, reassuring and exciting. It is to a rich life in the spirit, the adventure of pilgrimage, that we are called.

Live gladly and gaily because of his love

For Julian, theology and spirituality are one. Her doctrine of the Holy Trinity is derived from her experience of God as the living Being active in the world and in our lives. Fourteenth century she may be, but she is neither a medieval scholastic nor an other-worldly mystic. What she has to say is fresh and relevant for today because she speaks of the God who is responsive to our needs, our feelings, our fears. In spite of the tremendous growth of knowledge, the enormous power that science and technology have placed into our hands, we are, as human persons, vulnerable, fragmented and isolated. These conditions are neither answered nor relieved by the power of reason and not at all by talking of 'man come of age' to use the phrase that was so popular not so long ago. These conditions, these experiences, are life-diminishing, life-destroying. Julian speaks to these conditions as she leads us into life in the Trinity.

In spite of the protective shields in our society, in spite of praise and admiration for strength and tenacity of character we are, at bottom, vulnerable persons. Few people have not been hurt or damaged in some way as a result of the failure of a human relationship or some failing in their lives. There is more fear than hope in the world - fear of pain, of separation, of failure, It is not a vulnerability we can overcome in our own strength, It is a ^[14]fear at the heart of living. We are fragmented people. There is a muddle, a brokenness, at the heart

of our personality. We are not at peace with ourselves, whether because we do not achieve what we set out to achieve or, because, in St. Paul's words: 'I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do - wretched man that I am. Who will rescue me from the body of this death?'. (Rom. 7.19, 24) Julian roots our fragmentation in sin, the fracture between our substance (the God-given life of the soul) and our sensuality (our insistence upon following the way of self). 'With regard to our essential being (our substance)', she says, God made us noble and rich. As far as our essential nature goes we are complete. It is in the realm of our sensuality that we fail.' (57) And we are isolated persons. One illustration of that is the lack of community in our urban environments. But at a much deeper, personal level is the lack of love in the lives of so many people, the lack of trust, the lack of ability to share one's life fully, to give oneself to others.

Vulnerability, fragmentation, isolation are at the heart of the human condition. Finding life in the Trinity enables us to confront these failings, threats, fears, what you will, and to put us on the path to wholeness. Julian's world of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was insecure and threatening. So too our own day is fraught with risk. But there is hope in the world, the hope that enables us to live with and to face up to that risk. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: 'When we hold on to the ultimate word of love which Jesus speaks we can begin to live the life of faith out there in the world, a life of responsibility, risk-laden action, but we will be doing so over an abyss of not-knowing.' The reassurance is that we are offered a path of trust and faith. I have tried to show how Julian points us to God the Father who is aware of our vulnerability, who continues to reveal himself in the small things of life, who brings strength and reassurance in the little epiphanies of his glory. He is no remote Creator. She points us to God the Son, who remakes broken lives

through the redemptive power of his work on the Cross; who heals our fragmentation in the promise of new life in the resurrection. She points us to God the Holy Spirit supporting, guiding, teaching, enabling us to find ourselves and our freedom in relationships with others and with God, the one who would not have us isolated but fulfilled in communion.

And, supremely, she points us to the God who acts indivisibly in the world. Three in one and one in three. A modern writer says that the Trinity, ^[15] 'the God who creates, the God who speaks, and the God who calls have been involved in an eternal love affair with one another and are now inviting us to join their dance of loving joy and joyous love'. But let Julian have the last word, 'Of all the things we may do for him the most honouring to him is to live gladly and gaily because of his love.' (81) She can, with all confidence, make her great life-affirming statement: 'But the one thing that matters is that we always say 'Yes' to God.' (52) For 'in the end all will be love.' (84) and 'love was his meaning' because the very essence of the being of God is in the eternal communion of the Trinity.

George Tolley



References

1. Numbers in brackets refer to Chapter numbers in Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*. ST: *Short Text*. Otherwise *Long Text*.
2. Taylor, John V. (1986). *A Matter of Life and Death*. London: SCM Press. pp. 72, 73.
3. Rowell, Geoffrey (8 October 2003). *The Times*.
4. Gunton, Colin E. (1993). *The One, the Three and the Many*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 216.
5. John Macmurray (1970). *Persons in Relation*. London: Faber and Faber. p. 46.
6. Norris, Kathleen (1998). *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy, and "Women's Work"*. New York: Paulist Press. p. 12.
7. John Macmurray (1948). *Freedom and the Modern World*. London: Faber and Faber. p. 173.
8. Greeley, Andrew M. (2003). *The Great Mysteries: Experiencing Catholic Faith from the Inside Out*. Lanham, Maryland: Sheed and Ward. p. 30.
9. Ibid. p. 36.