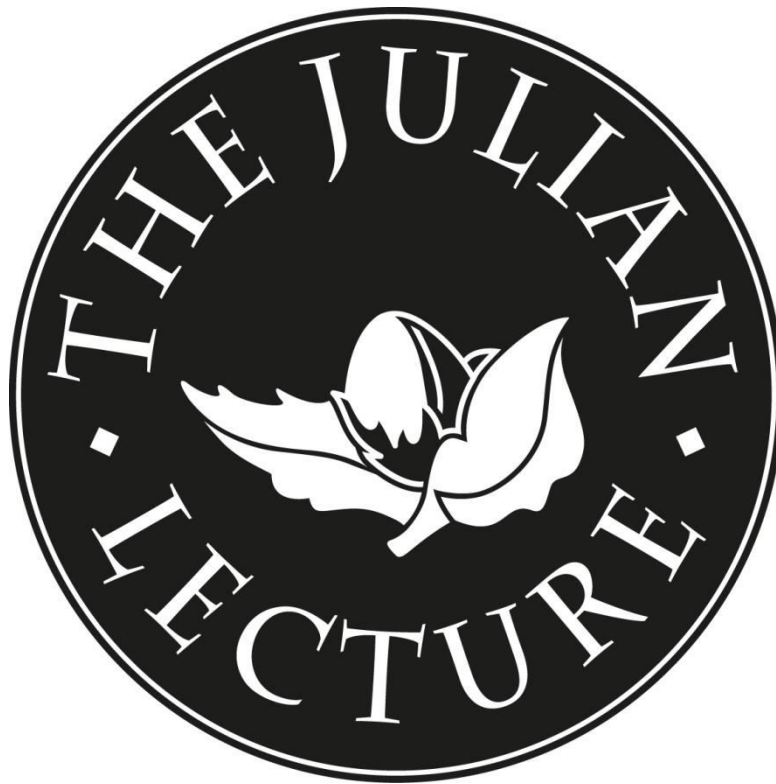


The Julian Lecture 2009

'And All Shall be Well'

Julian's Theology of Hope in an Age of Violence



Professor Mary Grey

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[1] **Introduction**

First, let me explain my title: it was chosen because of the apparent clash between the promise that all will be well - that famous and well-loved phrase that permeates the Revelations of Julian - and the deep-seated problems that affect culture and society today. This promise could seem simplistic or facile at first sight. We are now immersed in a serious recession as well as an unprecedented climate crisis affecting our planet's very survival (and the first crisis threatens to obliterate the second, potentially far more calamitous situation). Thirdly, on a global level there are seemingly intractable violent conflicts that we cannot turn away from. Many of us here have been involved for years in the church's efforts through its Aid Agencies like Cafod, Christian Aid or Tear Fund, to struggle against world hunger and for justice in places like the Bible Lands, Zimbabwe and the Sudan. I have been working for 20 years with a small charity with a water focus, in Rajasthan, India that I helped to found¹ - and things change painfully slowly. Most conflictual situations bleed remorselessly on. I want to believe *all will be well*, but facts seem to fly in the face of it! So I come to Julian with some fear and trepidation. First, with humility as I'm neither a Julian scholar nor a mediaevalist nor an expert in mysticism. And I know I'm in the presence of Julian scholars here. But I am grateful for this privilege for the opportunity in giving this lecture to develop some thoughts, however inchoate, on how Julian's wisdom may be a resource for us in our current struggles.

[2] Secondly, anyone coming to Julian's Revelations today does so from a completely changed worldview, theology and spirituality. I know I have to drop many assumptions and try to enter a different spiritual landscape. I come from a Roman Catholic background, certainly, but also with an Ecofeminist liberationist mindset: it would

be anachronistic to assume Julian would share this. The mediaeval mindset had many aspects we may find difficult today. There was an intense interest in the physical aspects of the suffering of Jesus, for example. I am sure many of you share the interest in Julian's life and context. I would love to know more about her: her family, her possible husband - some think she was a widow- and the people who filled her life. Yet autobiographical detail is almost non-existent and this we must respect: it is not the focus she wants us to have. There is not even a picture of her! Her *Long Text* (LT) gives us even less detail than the *Short Text* (ST).

The Turn to Mysticism

But what does give me confidence in turning to Julian, is not only that a theology of hope could never be built on an inspirational phrase taken out of context, but that the very severity of our contemporary situation - in both Church and society - invites a turn to mysticism. Karl Rahner's prophetic words in 1966 come to mind:

Der Fromme von Morgen wird ein 'Mystiker' sein, einer, der etwas 'erfahren hat, oder er nicht mehr sein...' (Karl Rahner)²

^[3] *The believer of tomorrow will be a mystic, a person who experiences something, or he/she will cease to exist.. (my translation).*

That being said, what is meant by mysticism? Would Rahner's appeal to experience be something that Julian would understand? Here I appeal to my late colleague and friend Grace Jantzen, whose early death is mourned and whose work on Julian and later theological

projects are much respected. (I will return to this). It was Grace who moved us away from William James's restriction of mystical experience to the private world of the individual. In so doing, she tells us, he obscured a more profound theological dimension of mysticism that is not primarily focused on states of feeling or emotion. In addition, she made us aware of a gendered dimension in the way mystical experiences are frequently described: - the 'ladder' motif, for example is never found in female mystics' descriptions of their visions. Julian certainly never used it. 'The privatised, subjectivised, ineffable mysticism of William James,' Jantzen wrote:

keeps God (and women) safely out of politics and the public realm; it allows mysticism to flourish as a secret inner life, while those who nurture such an inner life can generally be counted on to prop up rather than challenge the status quo of their workplaces, their gender roles and the political systems by which they are governed, since their anxieties and angers will be allayed in the privacy of their own hearts' search for peace and tranquillity.³

[4]This gives the clue I seek: maybe after all, there will be a link between Julian's mystical visions and the concerns for justice and peace with which I began. Jantzen and others alert us to the power and vested interests frequently hidden by the expressions of visionaries. This is not to invalidate their content but to place it in the wider setting of their contemporary religious and political communities. For example it is no accident, as Barbara Newman tells us, that the great 12th century Abbesses Hildegard of Bingen and Gertrude of Helfta appealed to their visions of God as a source of authority, at a time when women's authority was diminished.⁴ We cannot discount this as one of Julian's motives.

But there is further weight to this turn to mysticism than its re-definition after William James. How significant it is that the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, who died in 1968 but is still a great resource for the Justice and Peace movement, ranks Julian with the greatest of theologians, but did not live to be able to study her work in depth - a lack that Grace Jantzen tried to make up for. In the 20th century, two great women activists, Dorothy Day and Dorothee Soelle, were nourished increasingly in their work by mystical writings. I will offer a few connections between these and Julian as a way of entering her world with today's concerns for justice and peace and the need for an end to violent conflicts, before addressing directly her theology of hope.

[5] **Dorothy Day - *The Long Loneliness* (1897-1980)**

The Long Loneliness (Day 1952) is Day's autobiography, as well as a metaphor for her journey of faith. In this I trace an initial link with the life of the anchoress in her cell.

Renunciation and loneliness - although different in nature from Julian's, which was a self-chosen solitude - haunted Dorothy Day from adolescence to adulthood, in her penurious years as a journalist following protests, rallies and strikes, to her struggles as a single parent to bring up her daughter Tamar and throughout the whole Catholic Worker period up till her old age. Not only does loneliness describe her financial situation: it also speaks to her spiritual search as well as to her personal struggle and isolation after she renounced her common-law husband Forster - whom she dearly-loved - on conversion to Catholicism.⁶

Dorothy Day, like Dorothee Soelle, and like Julian - although in the latter case we should speak of the Trinity - was haunted by God and the search for God all her life:

*All my life I have been haunted by God, a character in one of Dostoevsky's books says. And so it was with me.*⁷

[6]The striking point about this yearning for God that haunted her is that it was never separated from commitment to poor people from whom she was never separated:

*I wanted the abundant life. I wanted it for others too. I did not want just the few, the missionary-minded people like the Salvation Army, to be kind to the poor, as the poor. I wanted everyone to be kind. I wanted every home to be open to the lame, the halt and the blind, the way it had been after the San Francisco earthquake. Only then did people really live, really love their brothers. In such love was the abundant life and I did not have the slightest idea how to find it.*⁸

This search for the life abundant led her through socialism and communism into Catholicism and the founding of the Catholic Worker movement, with its astonishing achievement of numerous houses of hospitality and its thousands of daily battles against poverty, addictions of every sort, violence-of all kinds - and the attempt to live in genuine community with rejected people. *The Catholic Worker* - still in print - carried the stories of struggles every month: its pages and the pages of Day's writings are alive with names and stories of desperate people. She presents a challenge to abstract theology with its talk of 'the poor'. For her poor people have names, families, hopes and dreams -that she shares. Within the

honesty and admission of failure, *there is also a revolutionary sense of hope.*

[7] But what gives this a claim to be mystical and political holiness? To answer this we plunge deeper into her spirituality.⁹ Day was largely self-educated, leaving university early to plunge into journalism. As we shall find with Dorothee Soelle, she loved literary texts, and was particularly influenced by Dostoevksy, to whom she frequently returned. After her conversion she became immersed in the mystical texts, not of Julian, but of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. But the deepest influence on her spiritual and philosophical education was the French thinker Peter Maurin, who became her teacher and mentor for many years until she caught up with him and was able to take more of a leadership role. Through him she discovered Catholic Social teaching, as well as many French thinkers like Maritain and De Lubac. Maurin was steeped in Aquinas and his aim was to make a new synthesis of faith and culture, just as Aquinas had done. This was to be a revolution comprising cult, culture and cultivation. 'It is this synthesis of Aquinas, fashioning social transformation that stimulated the political dimensions of Day and Maurin's thought. It was this that inspired houses of hospitality, Catholic Worker farms and what Peter Maurin termed 'agronomic universities'. In fact their ideas anticipated much of 'green thinking' today. Life abundant meant the possibility for the very poorest people of enjoying fresh air and eating nourishing food in surroundings that nurtured soul and spirit as well as body.

Praxis - the chosen concept for liberation theology and evangelical discipleship alike - for Day was a rich concept: through it she came to appreciate the 'sacramentality of life' and all that made it possible. Both Day and Maurin seem to [8] have been influenced by Gandhi's ideas, especially in their dedication to non-violence and peace-

making.' Day's mysticism primarily lay in discovering God in these poor communities, (although she does admit to some experiences when alone). As she wrote - and here is a second, specific link with Julian:

*A mystic may be called a man in love with God. Not one who loves God, but who is in love with God. And this mystical love, which is an exalted emotion, leads one to love the things of Christ. His footsteps are sacred.*¹²

This identification with the sufferings of Christ, that is the strongest element of Julian's theology, brought Dorothy Day to a mystical element in the love of a radical for his/her brother (and sister), so that this extended to the scene of sufferings, so that the places of struggle and death became hallowed:

*You know this feeling, as does every other radical in the country. Through ignorance, perhaps, you do not acknowledge Christ's name. Yet I believe you are ^[9]trying to love Christ in His poor, in His persecuted ones.*¹³

It would be also false to limit Day's attitude to practical charity purely on an individual basis. Though she did insist on beginning with a revolution of the heart, her achievement was to unite the personal with the political, the inner and outer expressions of mystical love. Until the end of her life the prophetic and mystical dimensions were held together by that indivisible love. Daniel Berrigan paid tribute to this after her death, while he was still on trial as one of eight Christians, for having destroyed two nuclear warheads:

Without Dorothy, without that exemplary patience, courage, moral modesty, without this woman pounding on the locked

door behind which the powerful mock the powerless...the resistance we offered would have been simply unthinkable. She urged our consciences off the beaten track; she made the impossible probable, and then actual. She did this, first of all, by living as though the truth were true.¹⁴

Mysticism of resistance is a profound concept, and one that I hope to show is present in Julian. It is also a crucial feature in the life of Dorothee Soelle, who is my next dialogue partner.

[10] **Political Spirituality and the Mysticism of Resistance- Dorothee Soelle**

One of the elements linking Dorothy Day and Dorothee Soelle with Julian is longing for God. When I met Dorothee Soelle at a Conference in 1991 I was immediately struck by her argument that the only place to find God today was in the political struggle. She had discovered this painfully at a demonstration in Bonn in 1983 when the police turned water cannons against those protesting against the US nuclear weapons stationed in Germany. Somehow she had to find the courage to speak to the bedraggled protesters and she found herself screaming to God - 'Why have you forsaken us?' But then she found the answer coming from deep within:

The God to whom this prayer was addressed was as grieved as we were, small like us, with no bank account or bombs in the background... And yet God was with us that night.¹⁵

Seeking a language to speak about God was a lifelong quest for Dorothee Soelle, with its roots in her deep shame over the Nazi

responsibility for the horror of the Holocaust. Born in 1929 in Cologne, the bombings of World War II and the Holocaust formed the contours of Soelle's early life (her parents were opposed to the Nazi regime in private, but made it clear that their daughter had to keep her thoughts to herself or she would ^[11]end up in a concentration camp). She found an outlet in a diary, and, like Day, in her love of literature and poetry, where she found a Germany other than the Fascist regime that surrounded her. Her initial studies were in Literary Criticism and as she pursued higher study, she found herself in conflict with the severely traditional and patriarchal system of German Universities: having a baby while engaged in completing her *habilitation*,¹⁶ was definitely disapproved of. So when offered a teaching position at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1975, she accepted and speedily adapted to the new situation in the USA, discovering politically active Christians, and a receptivity to her developing theology. Like Day, whose work she knew, and unlike Julian, Soelle was an activist theologian. Like Johann Baptist Metz she was a political theologian, (indeed, she could almost be considered a co-founder of political theology), but soon changed to be fully identified with Liberation theology and its different struggles.

Soelle was a genuine theologian of the struggle, and was never at home in the abstractions of systematic theology. Again, like Day, her theology was based on involvement with real people and experiences in the struggle. Keeping open a '*window of vulnerability*' to people and their suffering was always crucial to her. The move to the USA brought Soelle in touch with the Women's Movement and new feminist theory. Yet Soelle, again like Day, was far more interested in what we do, than in theorising on *who we are*. Like Julian, it is through clouds of unknowing that Soelle seeks God. She moved through radical questioning to discover her own path. The German experience of complicity in structures in an evil regime was

initially a dominating theme for her. She saw how the issue of identity became linked with this supremacy of dominating powers. Far ^[12]more than Dorothy Day, she was able to develop an analysis of structural sin as a demonic counter world to God's creation (we will return to this in discussing Julian's understanding of sin). The most important dualism that she unmasked was that between death-dealing dominating powers and life-giving love. For Dorothy Soelle, *choose life* was a leitmotiv. If the goal of Christianity is life as lived in the presence of the Divine, for both Day and Soelle this could not be separated from the priority of transforming the lives of the most humiliated people of the world.

An important part of this was the struggle to create an appropriate language for the project of liberation. Since abstract and systematic argument does not feed the soul. Soelle gravitated to myth and poetry from many sources, but was also sensitive to where this was offered in the Bible. To say she loved the psalms- also a source of nourishment for Dorothy Day - is an understatement. She even spoke of 'eating the psalms':

For me the psalms are one of the most important foods. I eat them, I drink them, I chew on them. Sometimes I spit them out and sometimes I repeat one to myself in the middle of the night. They are bread for me. Without them the spiritual anorexia that is so widespread among us sets in and often leads to a deadly impoverishment of the spirit and of the heart.¹⁷

^[13]Very early on in her search she visited the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber in Jerusalem. (Buber had been a great influence on Day mostly through his ideas on social change.) On her telling him that she was a theologian, he surprised her by replying, "Theo-logy - how

do you do that? There is no logos of God." This disconcerting answer prompted her life-long exploration in poetry and myth, culminating in what would be recognised as a full-blown mystical theology. Her last book, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, is her most explicit expression of this yearning for God that fuels resistance to injustice and, eluding complete rational expression, is a theme common to many faiths.¹⁸ *The Silent Cry* pulled together the two strands that inspired her life, *God* and *Justice*. Written when she emerged out of a coma from which few thought she would survive, (another link with Julian as she experiences her visions), all her familiar themes are brought together-nature, suffering, community, politics, relation, justice, joy, *eros* - all finding meaning in the yearning for God, a God sought in a diversity of traditions.

In a way, she embodies the old adage: all things begin in mysticism and end in politics, only to begin again. In her search for a mystical language she comes close to Julian's teaching on prayer: 'If there is any verb for the language of mysticism, it is praying', she wrote.¹⁹ 'With the language of prayer she discovered the hope of penetrating beyond domination and control. The language of prayer draws us into paradox, and silence. To pray is also not to give way to despair.

[14] But it should not be thought that the Biblical mytho-poetry is drawn on uncritically. Texts are revisited in a subversive way, in full awareness of centuries of misinterpretation. For example, she writes poetically of Resurrection:

O don't ask about resurrection
 A tale of ages long ago
 That will soon skip your mind I listen to those
 Who dry me out and diminish me
 I accustom myself

To the creeping accommodation to being dead
In my well-heated abode
The big stone at my door.

But later on in the poem, she cries,

O do ask me about resurrection;
O don't stop asking me.²⁰

This is poetry as theology, a method that continues to offer a way to express yearning for God that breaks out of the tired categories of abstract theology. But a closer link with Julian was Soelle's absorption with Christ, a life-long passion. As you might guess, based in *praxis*, in relation and in human experience, her Christ is a political Christ, because historically Jesus of Nazareth took a stance against institutional power, his presence evokes imagination, freedom to risk, and brings liberation:

[15] *The unchaining of all powers which lie imprisoned in all of us.*²¹

Christ symbolises truth, the concrete truth of right relation where the blind see, the hunger of the poor is satisfied, and the mighty are dethroned. This concreteness, cutting through abstractions, blazed a trail for a transformed future. She sees Christ as *enabling* liberating praxis. *Christopraxis* but not Christolatry - the 'idolising' of Christ the man-lifted the weight from the man Jesus, and paves the way for the development of diverse liberation Christologies within different countries, such as African-American and *Mujerista* (Hispanic American). As time progressed, although Soelle's passionate social engagement did not falter, the incarnational project faded from central place, as the focus shifted from Christ to the God of

mysticism. There is barely a mention of Christ in *The Silent Cry*.²² It is in the recurrence of the theme of resistance within the context of mysticism that is my entry point to Julian's theology of hope.

Julian and a Theology of Hope

By choosing this focus on two activist liberation theologians I attempted to show that while hope was grounded in concrete projects of political and social action it was nourished by a faith that became increasingly mystical. Hope seeking embodiment by feeding the hungry and resisting the oppressive ^[16]and dominating powers of violence is how many faith groups and NGOs act today. But Julian deliberately did not choose this route. And yet there is no way that she could have been insensitive to the poverty and degradation around her. She would have been aware of the horror of the Black Death, and the way those that ministered to the dying would themselves be in danger of dropping dead. Members of her own family must have died. She lived close to where the Lollards - heretics- were burnt; the smoke from this pit could be smelled from where she lived. She was loyal to the Church- this is a remarkable feature of her theology, (here closer to Day than to Soelle) yet must have been aware of the political machinations of the Crusades and the rivalry of the Popes in Rome and Avignon. Yet, when she received the visions in 1373 it is thought she was not yet in her anchoress's cell, and 15 years later, she is.

How do we understand this? It would have been possible for her to have joined the Benedictines or the Beguines, and become more involved with works of charity to poor people. Catherine of Siena, also a mystic, chose this way, of 'seeing the face of Christ in the poor'

- and we have seen that both Day and Soelle are influenced by this strain. Hildegarde of Bingen was always on the road, preaching to a variety of audiences -- including the Pope.

The silence of the text as to why she chose the solitary way speaks volumes. We are not told of the personal sacrifice of her choice. Lack of attention to herself is striking. Indeed when she speaks of herself she often means all human nature, human kind. No-one arrives at this point without struggle. Dorothee Soelle often speaks of the relentless ego that keeps getting in the way! So I understand that this chosen way was the only way to understand the visions given to her, and the way to minister to those whom Julian calls her 'even - Christians', people like you and me, ordinary people trying to discern a ^[17]way in faith and to respond - like Day and Soelle - to the needs of the times. Whereas she clearly had a role in counselling and spiritual advice, we have only the textual evidence of Margery Kempe to witness to this. (Of course we have a long unwritten tradition as to this.) So the fact that Julian chose this way of reflection and interpreting her visions, not as a direct ministry of social justice, but as a voice that in fact did transcend historical distance, is the first point to ground a theology of hope.

Secondly, hope is not only confined to a this-worldly success and fulfilment of our dreams. Whereas there used to be an unhealthy extreme focus in spirituality on the next world, (actually dating from the time of the Black Death) to the exclusion of happiness in this, spirituality today, as Dermot Lane wrote, will have a this-worldly and another-worldly dimension,

*bringing together into a creative unity elements of the mystical imagination and political praxis.*²³

I think this creative unity is the basis of a vibrant theology of hope in Julian. In the context of the violence of her times and our own times, what should we hope for? Grace Jantzen's project, (and tragically she did not live to complete it), was to provide an alternative to the structures of violence that have formed the parameters of so-called civilisation, and to replace them with something more positive. She coined the metaphor 'mortality' to encapsulate the structures of death and mortality, ^[18]and that of natality or natalité, birth-giving or creativity to call forth a different kind of culture.²⁴

Let us trace the seeds of this in Julian. Let us try to understand her focus on the sufferings of Christ within her own mediaeval context, a focus that brought the humanity of Christ to the fore. It also brought increased devotion to his mother Mary: it was as if the hymn writers and spiritual leaders were saying- 'Look, of course He is human: he has a mother! And friends.' At the same time it brought a new role to women, who felt called to share the sufferings of Jesus- and felt that they could in their own lives. Anselm's understanding of Atonement as the wounded honour of God, for which only Jesus was worthy to atone, (a theology we now find difficult), in Julian's time had general acceptance. In suffering willingly with the passion of Jesus there was also a sense of increased authority for women. In this sense we can understand Julian praying for her three wounds - contrition, compassion and longing for God. In our contemporary context I understand these as of vital importance for a spirituality of justice. Jantzen thought that Julian's wounds became honours.²⁵

I call them movements or modes of being. First, contrition or repentance has to be the mode of being and acting in the face of the violence we face. Rosemary Ruether has said that conversion to the earth is the greatest challenge of this century. Julian's call to contrition and repentance, in her case, a turning to God in Christ, has

to be the start of any journey to justice. Dorothee Soelle, in an early book, mythologizes this as a no-saying, the great refusal to the ^[19]world. She tells the old Grimm brothers story, *The Golden Bird*. In her early interpretation Soelle explored the meaning of the mystical quest. *The Golden Bird* symbolises our yearning for something beyond the ordinary. Nothing that is fabricated or manufactured can satisfy this yearning - or compare with *the golden bird, or water of life, or the red flower*. The yearning for the absolute is the yearning for transcendence, the desire for the whole. This world is not enough. Working and consuming we destroy our souls:

*The bird is the great no spoken to this world and all its fulfilments, and the refusal to be fed by them, the refusal to be fed by bread alone. The bird is nothing extraordinary but is the wish of ordinary people that has been muted.*²⁶

The movement of repentance, of no-saying is thus linked with Julian's third wound, that of longing for God. In my book *Sacred Longings* I connected desire for God with the Scriptural theme of longing for water, because I believe the mystical quest of longing for God is not separated from basic needs of this life.²⁷ Transcendence is not longed for at the expense of all earthly life. Joy, eros, justice, relation, resistance, are all to be embodied *here* on this earth.. As Carter Heyward wrote about Soelle, and I think it true of Julian:

^[20]*She does not accept mysticism as an 'inward' journey taken by and on behalf of the self. The mystical journey 'leads into a healing that is at the same time resistance.'*²⁸

Julian repeats more than once that God delights in our happiness and the fullness of joy will be to see God in all things (Chapter 35). But this process of seeing, (and she lays great emphasis on our lack

of seeing, and spiritual blindness), has to be nourished by prayer. Again God provides the hope:

I am the foundation of your praying (Chapter 41).

'Once we know this, how could we not pray?', she says. Prayer is our longing for God. There is no liberation movement that is not sustained by prayer. If all is reduced to political activity, if resistance becomes merely a tool of violence, there remains only despair and burn-out. Hopes of justice and reconciliation are for the long haul. Bill McKibben, a well-known US environmentalist, made the same point.

*The wolf will not return overnight. Nor will we build a sense of rural community in a generation, nor will we transform our cities with an election or two, nor will we unwind the global economy in our lifetime.... And it will take longer than seventy five years for the recovering forests of the East to mature again into old growth.*²⁹

[²¹]For him what is crucial is to be moving in the right direction- Julian would agree - and he flags up for us a crucial point about hope: don't expect instant results! Hope is embedded in the complex ecological processes that we have lost touch with over the centuries. In the same way Julian tells us that God rewards patient waiting. Here I make a link with a remarkable spirituality emerging in Palestine, the spirituality of *sumud*. *Sumud* is an Arabic word for steadfastness, recalling *hesed*, the steadfastness of God. When there is no solution, when the situation gets steadily worse, as it is in Palestine, with hunger increasing, confiscation of land, and growing illegal

settlements, do not give up hope, take a deep breath, a long breath and remain steadfast.

Julian's other sought-after wound is compassion. For her the focus is compassion for the suffering of Christ. For liberation theology compassion is for the victims of oppression and violence. I have shown how for Dorothy Day and Dorothee Soelle compassion was to see the face of Christ in the afflicted and act with compassion. But there is a problem for us limited human beings: our emotions are fragile, our compassion is limited, and Julian knew this. We suffer from compassion fatigue. One Liberation theologian, Sharon Welch wrote in the midst of a struggle:

*My sanity lay in my insensitivity: my humanity lay in my ability not to care.*³⁰

For Julian, acute observer of human nature that she is, the problem lies in our alienated nature. We may not agree today with all aspects of her account of creation and Fall, but she is second to none in understanding the woundedness of our human personality, brokenness, heartsickness that will only be remedied by turning back to God as a central orientation.

[22] Sin is behovely, but
All shall be well, and
All manner of things shall be well.³¹

Slowly the ground of our hoping becomes clear. This is why the three wounds can be seen as medicinal, as healing. In a way she is foreshadowing some feminist theological thinking of sin as wrong relation, as separation, and redemption as right relation, as restoring lost connections. When I was writing this, - just before Easter - I was

in France, in Brittany, and struck by the secularity of French culture. Looking for Easter cards I found only eggs and rabbits. And Obama was winging his way around the world with his agenda of hope. A man whose best-seller book is based on the *audacity of hope*. It seemed to me that Julian was right. Hope has to be based on a complete re-orientation. It is in this sense I understand sin as nothing. When we see levels of brutality and cruelty on a massive level, it seems appalling to say sin is nothing; but if God is all in all, as Julian says, except that our blindness stops us seeing this, there is no place that the goodness of God will not fill and therefore no place for sin.

In a way she is a foretaste also of Gandhi in his view not that God is truth, but that truth is God. Julian says:

*Truth sees God: wisdom gazes on God. And these two produce a third, a holy, wondering delight in God, which is love.*³²

I think what she gives us is a pedagogy of hope. In a life grounded on love, God is our true peace. For example, in her ^[23]teaching on the motherhood of Jesus, this is no simplistic tinkering with gender pronouns but a redemptive pedagogy. As we know, her understanding of God is Trinitarian, and her visions are sprinkled with three-ness that she sees everywhere. So there is no opposition between God our Father and Jesus our mother. But if we talk on the level of incarnation Jesus is our mother, because our human nature is made, and Jesus shares that. The motherhood of grace begins in his assumption of humanity. And thirdly is:

The motherhood of work which flows out all over by that same grace -

The length and breadth and height and depth of it is everlasting.

*And so is his love.*³³

Julian has an extended comparison between earthly mothers and the motherhood of Jesus. If our own mother bore us with pain and towards death in our earthly life, Jesus our mother bears to life everlasting, feeding us with the sacrament of the Church.³⁴ We might wonder at Julian's attitude and complete trust in the church and its sustenance, given the politics of her day. Musing on this in France, where, as I said, I saw an almost total lack of interest in the Church generally, and a disillusionment at the Pope's revocation of the excommunication of the *integristé* Bishops like Archbishop Lefebvre within Church circles, I came across an article in La Croix, by Jean Vanier, on exactly this point. Called "*L'Église que j'aime*", "The Church I love".³⁵ Aware of these problems, he declared, he loved the Church of Jesus, John, James, St Vincent de Paul -- all who put beggars, poor and sick at the ^[24]heart of the Church. Even if there is a tension between a 'Church of principles' and that of persons, in L'Arche he is dealing with people on the margins and there are many communities like his trying to live the Spirituality of the Beatitudes. I think Julian's vision is similar - redirecting us to the heart of Church which is God's love- life, love and light, she says. This motherhood of Jesus comprehends our whole life-being, growth and perfection - as redeeming love in action. We will in fact carry on sinning, in today's language - performing acts of evil and violence. The devil remains active -meaning, today, that the structures of violence are never completely overcome.

How can that be a pedagogy of hope in all the struggles we are involved in? I think Julian means we should be rooted in God's love, in the experience of 'Love is his meaning' - the marvellous conclusion

of her book - knowing that through Christ, the Trinity is drawing us deeper into saving grace and trusting that Christ has done everything for our redemption. But that does not mean that God has abandoned the violence and affliction of the present world. Julian stresses that it is the sense of the absence of God that gives pain. It has been an insight of the last century - theologians like Jürgen Moltmann -to stress the pathos and affliction of God, to see that God suffers with us, and it is also a scriptural theme. Julian would see that Christ suffers with us - in the heart of his mothering role.³⁶ Yet we can rely on his promise:

You will not be overcome.

And this strikes a chord with all justice movements. The voices of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, have already been foreshadowed by Julian in her solitude, rooting our compassion and thirst for justice in that of God's. Only with these roots and the constant ^[25]nourishing in grace by Christ our Mother, can we believe that all will be well, (Chapters 29, 32). This does not mean that we should not strive to bring to birth a world of creativity and joy, characterised by *natalité*. but our commitment is nourished by the increasing hope that violence and oppression are not the last word. They will not prevail.

*But all manner of things shall be well
When the tongue of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.*³⁷

But I am going to end, not with how Eliot was inspired by Julian but with a poem of Dorothee Soelle, which I think leaves us with the image of Julian in her chosen solitude, with a small window on the

world, symbolising her total openness to God's will, but also her compassion, longing and contrition, her gifts to us in our struggles:

*The window of vulnerability
Must be closed -
So the military say
to justify the arms race.
My skin is a window of vulnerability
Without moisture, without touching
I must die*

*The window of vulnerability
Is being walled up
My land
Cannot live*

^[26] *We need light
So we can think
We need air
So we can breathe
We need a window
Open toward heaven³⁸*

Julian offers us, grounded in our struggles, this window toward heaven to sustain our hope.

Mary Grey



References

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2. Rahner, Karl (1966). 'Frömmigkeit Früher und Heute' in *Schriften zur Theologie* VII. Einsiedeln, Switzerland; Zurich; Köln: Verlaganstalt Benziger and Co. pp. 11-31. (p. 22).
3. Jantzen, Grace (1995). *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. p. 346.
4. Newman, Barbara (1987). *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*. Aldershot, UK: Scolar.
5. Merton, Thomas (1966). *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. New York: Doubleday. pp. 191-192.
6. This was because Forster would have nothing to do with religion or the Church, to the extent of refusing all conversations on the subject. The crisis and separation came over the Baptism of their daughter Tamar Teresa. Day makes frequent reference to a subsequent loneliness that persisted all her life.
7. Ellsberg, Robert (editor) & Day, Dorothy (1992) [1983] *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis. p. 9.
8. Day, Dorothy (1952). *The Long Loneliness*. San Francisco, California: Harper and Row. p.39.
9. I first admit that unlike contemporary feminist theologians Day used the language of her day which was not gender sensitive. This does not prevent her from being close to the sorrows of poor women, by which she herself was personally affected.
10. Day, op cit., pp. 170-172.
11. I have to admit that I have found very few explicit references to Gandhi. But his imprint is there in what Peter Maurin tried

to achieve. Sharing the humblest of household tasks was a principle, for example. But Maurin also aimed in the Catholic Worker farms for self-sufficiency with vegetables and keeping poultry. As well as baking their own bread there was an attempt to look for ethical sources of food. It is interesting that Day's daughter Tamar chose an unusual education, learning crafts like spinning and weaving, and how to budget for a poor family, at the same time ensuring that they were able to eat nourishing food. Life with Tamar and her family on their farm would become one of the joys of Day's later life.

12. Ellsberg & Day, op cit., p. 7.
13. Ibid., p. 7.
14. Berrigan in Day, op cit., p. xxiii.
15. Soelle, Dorothee, 'Liberating our God-Talk: From Authoritarian Otherness to Mystical Inwardness' in King, Ursula (editor) (1991). *Liberating Women: New Theological Directions*. Bristol, UK: University of Bristol Press. pp. 40-52.
16. The German University system requires a second doctoral thesis before granting permission to teach in the academy.
17. Soelle, Dorothee & Schottroff, Luise (1966). *Der Himmel Erden. Eine ökofeministische Annäherung an die Bibel*. Munich, Germany: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag. p. 31.
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19. Ibid., pp. 292-293.
20. Soelle, Dorothee 'Über Auferstehung', in Soelle, Dorothee & Verlag, Wolfgang Fietkau (1979). *Fliegen Lernen: Getichte*. Kleinmachnow, Germany: p. 21
21. Heyward, Carter 'Crossing Over', in Pinnock, Sarah A. (editor) (2003). *The Theology of Dorothee Soelle*. London; New York: Trinity Press International. p. 215.

22. Nor was she very interested in the Holy Spirit. Many of us in feminist theology have focused on the Spirit, or preferably Spirit-Sophia as a way not only of shifting emphasis from Jesus the Man- hero, but of opening up Christianity to dialogue with goddess and indigenous religions and the world of other faiths.
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25. Jantzen, Grace (1987). *Julian of Norwich*. London: SPCK. Part 4, 'Wounds into Honours'. p. 165.
26. Soelle, Dorothee (1979) [1975]. *The Inward Road and the Way Back*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd. p. 51.
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28. Carter Heyward in Pinnock (editor), op cit., p. 235.
29. McKibben, Bill (2007). *Hope, Human and Wild: True Stories of Living Lightly on the Earth*. Milkweed Editions, Canada. p. 225.
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32. Wolters, Clifton (translation and introduction) (1962). *Revelations of Divine Love*. London: Penguin. p. 130.
33. Ibid. p. 168.
34. Ibid. p. 169-170.

35. Vanier, Jean 'L'Église que j'aime', in *La Croix* (8th April 2009).
36. Wolters, op cit., p. 185.
37. Eliot, op cit., p. 223.
38. Soelle, Dorothee (1990). *The Window of Vulnerability: a Political Spirituality*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress. p. 7.