

## TWO MEDIEVAL SOTERIOLOGIES: ANSELM OF CANTERBURY AND JULIAN OF NORWICH<sup>1</sup>

JOAN M. NUTH

*John Carroll University, Cleveland*

**A**NSELM INCLUDES a short illustrative story in his *Cur Deus Homo* in order to establish humanity's responsibility for the weakness caused by the fall:

Suppose one should assign his slave a certain piece of work, and should command him not to throw himself into a ditch, which he points out to him and from which he could not extricate himself; and suppose that the slave, despising his master's command and warning, throws himself into the ditch before pointed out, so as to be utterly unable to accomplish the work assigned; think you that his inability will at all excuse him for not doing his appointed work?<sup>2</sup>

In her *Showings*, Julian of Norwich records a story remarkably similar in imagery but different in focus:

I saw two persons in bodily likeness, that is to say a lord and a servant. . . . The lord sits in state, in rest and in peace. The servant stands before his lord, respectfully, ready to do his lord's will. The lord looks on his servant very lovingly and sweetly and mildly. He sends him to a certain place to do his will. Not only does the servant go, but he dashes off and runs at great speed, loving to do his lord's will. And soon he falls into a dell and is greatly injured; and then he groans and moans and tosses about and writhes, but he cannot rise to help himself in any way. . . . And all this time his loving lord looks on him most tenderly . . . with great compassion and pity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this essay are summarized or excerpted from my *Wisdom's Daughter: The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> "Nam si quis iniungat opus aliquod servo suo, et praecipiat illi ne se deiciat in foveam quam illi monstrat, unde nullatenus exire possit, et servus ille contemnens mandatum et monitionem domini sui sponte se in monstratam mittat foveam, ut nullatenus possit opus iniunctum efficere: putasne illi aliquatenus impotentiam istam ad excusationem valere, cur opus iniunctum non faciat?" (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.24). For the Latin text of Anselm's works, see F. S. Schmitt, ed., *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1938-61). English translations in the body of this essay are from S. N. Deane, *St. Anselm: Basic Writings*, 2nd ed. (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1979); they will be cited with the book and chapter number, along with the page number from the Deane edition, in parentheses within the text (e.g. 1.24:233).

<sup>3</sup> *Showings*, translated from the critical edition by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J. (New York: Paulist, 1978), Long Text, Chapter 51, 267-68. All further quotations from *Showings* are from this edition, and from the Long Text. The

Both exempla use figures well known in feudal society: master and slave, lord and servant, the former of whom commands the latter to complete a certain task.<sup>4</sup> In both cases, the servant is unable to complete the task because he has fallen into a ditch and has become incapacitated. Both are metaphors for the fall. But there the likeness ends. Anselm's version takes seriously the prohibition given by God to Adam and Eve (Gen 2:16–17), while Julian's version ignores it. As a result, the pictures of both lord and servant which emerge from these deceptively simple stories are different, and each makes a different soteriological point.

This essay compares the soteriologies of Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033–1109) and Julian of Norwich (1342–1416?).<sup>5</sup> Anselm needs little introduction, for his *Cur Deus Homo* has had immense influence upon the development of soteriology, and must still be considered today by the serious student of soteriology. It is my argument that Julian's *Showings* deserves a place alongside the *Cur Deus Homo* as an important medieval soteriological study. Because her work has fallen into the category of devotional writing, it has, until recently, never been studied for its doctrinal import. My purpose here is to propose that this be remedied.<sup>6</sup>

#### PRELIMINARIES

By studying Julian in this fashion, I am following the recommendation of Karl Rahner to consult the writings of the mystics and saints as authentic sources of doctrinal theology in order to repair the rift that

---

chapter number will be included for reference to any edition of Julian's *Showings*, along with the page number from the Paulist edition, in parentheses within the text (e.g. 51:267–68). For the critical Middle English edition, see Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S. J., eds., *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978). This work will be cited hereafter as Colledge-Walsh.

<sup>4</sup> Generically, these stories fall into the category of a medieval preacher's *exemplum*, a short illustrative story used to make more graphic or understandable the point of a sermon. For the genre and its history, see Thomas F. Crane's introduction to *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the "Sermones Vulgares" of Jacques de Vitry* (The Folk-Lore Society, Publication XXVI, 1878; reprint, Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> This essay is not intended to be a full exposition of either, since both works that I will describe, Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and Julian's *Showings*, are far richer in detail and nuance than can possibly be treated in such a limited space. What will be emphasized are points that provide the most direct comparison between the two.

<sup>6</sup> I have argued elsewhere that Julian ought to be considered a doctrinal theologian (*Wisdom's Daughter* 1–4, 23–24). Colledge-Walsh have demonstrated convincingly that Julian was a woman of substantial learning and theological expertise (43–59); see also their "Editing Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*: A Progress Report," *Mediaeval Studies* 38 (1976) 404–27.

exists between "lived piety and abstract theology."<sup>7</sup> The extreme rift Rahner had in mind was most likely a post-Enlightenment phenomenon,<sup>8</sup> for many medieval scholastics were also mystics and saints who wrote their theologies in an atmosphere of piety. Nonetheless the beginnings of such a separation can still be traced to the development of scholastic theology, understood in contrast to monastic theology.<sup>9</sup> While scholastic theology continued to be rooted firmly in the experience of faith, the development of coherent arguments for faith's understanding became more nearly an end in itself. Scholastic theology began, like monastic theology, with the practice of *lectio divina*, but it eventually resulted in a more abstract theology several steps removed from the context of Scripture and prayer.<sup>10</sup> Monastic theology, by contrast, continued to have as its sole purpose the nurturing of the spiritual development of believers, and in it the images and emotional intensity of the contemplative experience remained intrinsic to its rational articulation. In modern times, this latter type of theology has been almost totally ignored for its doctrinal importance.<sup>11</sup> Rahner's recommendation applies most directly to such writers, of whom Julian is an obvious example.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The whole sixteenth volume of *Theological Investigations* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) is concerned with this topic. The full quotation from Rahner's "Faith between Rationality and Emotion" reads: "The different essays in this volume . . . are intended to show how religious experiences of a spiritual or mystical kind can overflow and be transposed into the idioms of theological reflection. In this way the rift, all too common even today, between lived piety and abstract theology may be bridged" (72 n. 12).

<sup>8</sup> Schleiermacher, for example, advocated a sharp distinction between the language proper to dogmatics (Rahner's "abstract theology") and that of poetics or rhetoric (expressions which remain closer to "lived piety"). See *The Christian Faith*, propositions 15–19.

<sup>9</sup> For the contrast between scholastic and monastic theology, see Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham Univ., 1961, 1974) 233–86.

<sup>10</sup> Like the monastic theologians, the scholastics began with the *lectio*, but gradually focused more attention on the *sacra pagina* itself, moving in the direction of the *quaestio* and *disputatio*, instead of *meditatio* and *oratio*. See Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, 1952) 66–82, and Leclercq, *The Love of Learning* 89.

<sup>11</sup> Courses in the history of Christian doctrine begin with representative patristic authors, in whom expressions of piety and doctrine exist integrally. But come the Middle Ages, the scholastics alone are considered, leaving aside more obviously devotional writings. These are never examined for their doctrinal insights, but are relegated to a separate discipline, "spirituality," which is not expected to have anything to do with Christian doctrine *per se*.

<sup>12</sup> See below pp. 618–21 and *Wisdom's Daughter* 23–39. Julian, of course, was not a monk. However, Colledge and Walsh make a strong case for her rootedness in the spirit of Benedictine monasticism.

Anselm defies any easy classification, a point noted by Leclercq, who refuses to put him into either category:

Above and beyond all the representatives of ancient monasticism there stands the figure of St. Anselm. In all truth, it is difficult to place him in any particular category; he is a genius and is therefore beyond classification. He is a monk and clings with every fiber of his being to the Patristic tradition which gives life to monasticism. At the same time, he is passionately devoted to formal logic. At times, in his reflections on the data of revelation, he is inclined to use more the light of reason than the weight of authority.<sup>13</sup>

Richard Southern, comparing Anselm with Bernard, says something similar:

In Anselm, thought and feeling are like two sides of a coin: they are strictly related, but only one can be seen at a time. In Bernard thought and feeling are one; the remote speculations of Anselm meant nothing to him, but he invested feelings, which in Anselm can scarcely be cleared of a charge of sentimentality, with a vigour of thought and practical application which ensured their survival and gave them a deeper importance.<sup>14</sup>

The juxtaposition of thought and feeling in Anselm can be seen in the *Proslogion*, where Anselm's prayerful outpourings of emotion are interspersed with the construction of the highly abstract ontological argument.<sup>15</sup> Julian, however, is more like Bernard, thoroughly integrating thought and feeling, which makes her theology less logically satisfying than Anselm's carefully constructed arguments, but also less emotionally intense than Anselm's prayers.

In order to understand Anselm adequately, it is necessary to read the *Cur Deus Homo* together with his other works, and especially in the context of his prayers.<sup>16</sup> This has rarely been done in modern

<sup>13</sup> Jean Leclercq, "Richesses spirituelles du xii<sup>e</sup> siècle," *La vie spirituelle* 100 (1959) 298-306; translated and quoted in *The Love of Learning* 335-36.

<sup>14</sup> *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1954) 233. An exception is Anselm's "Meditation on Human Redemption" which is a prayerful rendering of the same doctrine contained in the *Cur Deus Homo*. It is perhaps significant that this meditation was composed long after Anselm's other prayers. See Benedicta Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 76 and the Forword by Richard Southern (ibid. 14).

<sup>15</sup> Prayer is preeminent here, for the entire work is addressed to God, and Anselm's insight into the reality of God, developed so logically and abstractly, is itself viewed as prayer's gift. In fact, Ward includes the *Proslogion* in her edition of Anselm's prayers (*The Prayers and Meditations* 77-81). She has arranged this work so that the difference between Anselm's two styles are easily seen: the more speculative sections are printed in prose style, while the more prayerful passages are arranged in versified form (ibid. 238-67).

<sup>16</sup> Recent Anselmian scholarship has emphasized the systematic character of Anselm's

times. While the *Cur Deus Homo* has been studied extensively, receiving eminence as a precursor of scholasticism, Anselm's prayers have been ignored. As a result, the *Cur Deus Homo* has been subject to misinterpretation and distortion.<sup>17</sup> While this essay concentrates on the *Cur Deus Homo* it tries to do so within this broader context. Rahner's recommendation might apply as well to Anselm as to Julian, encouraging the study of his works within the context of his monastic milieu.<sup>18</sup> Because both Anselm and Julian are firmly grounded in the monastic practice of *lectio divina*, and construct their theologies out of insights gained through contemplation, they are, generally speaking, more alike than different. However, there are differences in their soteriological emphases, as illustrated by the two exempla cited above, that might prove valuable to explore.

### *Anselm's Influence on Julian*

It is possible that Julian knew Anselm's work, although it is often difficult to prove the direct influence of one text upon another in the Middle Ages. Anselm's prayers were well known in fourteenth-century England, through their inclusion in compilations of theological or devotional writings translated into English.<sup>19</sup> The influence of the *Cur Deus Homo* upon Julian is less easy to establish, although she probably knew Anselm's general doctrine through widely disseminated teaching.<sup>20</sup> The exemplum of the slave falling into the ditch is an incidental

---

theology, advocating that, for adequate understanding, Anselm's works need to be read as a whole, and not as isolated treatises; see James Gollnick, *Flesh as Transformation Symbol in the Theology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1985) 1-6, 43-48.

<sup>17</sup> I am thinking in particular of Gustav Aulén, who reduces Anselm's soteriology to a type, the so-called "Latin type" or "satisfaction theory," and sets it in contrast to Aulén's preferred "patristic" or "classic" type (*Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert [New York: Macmillan, 1969]). There is danger in reducing any work to a type, since one usually misses nuances necessary for appreciating the work's true meaning. In addition, Aulén's prejudice in favor of the "classic type" colors his reading of Anselm, causing him to make what I consider gross misinterpretations of Anselm. My reading of Anselm is very different from his, as will be evident in what follows.

<sup>18</sup> For the monastic context of Anselm's theology, see Gollnick, *Flesh as Transformation Symbol* 9-23.

<sup>19</sup> Colledge-Walsh note two correspondences in particular between Anselm's devotional works and Julian's text: to Anselm's "Meditation to Stir Up Fear," which likely came to Julian by way of the *Ancrene Riwe* where it is quoted (491 n. 16; 492 n. 28), and to Anselm's "Prayer to St. Paul," where he refers to Jesus as mother (606 n. 50).

<sup>20</sup> If Julian had been a Benedictine nun before her enclosure as an anchoress, as Colledge-Walsh think likely, this increases the possibility of her access to Anselm's text

metaphor in the *Cur Deus Homo*, and if Julian were familiar with it, she would have known the *Cur Deus Homo* well. Julian's own version of the story was part of the revelation given to her in prayer, a kind of dream image which she viewed as God's answer to her perplexity about sin. If she were aware of Anselm's parable this could help explain her surprise at the different version of the story contained in her revelations:

I was amazed that this servant could so meekly suffer all this woe; and I looked carefully to know if I could detect any fault in him, or if the lord would impute to him any kind of blame; and truly none was seen, for the only cause of his falling was his good will and his great desire. And in spirit he was as prompt and as good as he was when he stood before his lord, ready to do his will (51:268).

Julian's version of the story reverses Anselm's purpose to establish human responsibility for the fall, implying instead that the fall is an unfortunate accident for which the servant is not responsible.

In their critical edition of *Showings*, Colledge and Walsh make only one note of comparison between the *Cur Deus Homo* and Julian's text.<sup>21</sup> In answering Boso's charge that the Incarnation might be seen as rendering dishonor to God, Anselm points out that, on the contrary, it gives greater glory to God:

We do no injustice or dishonor to God, but give him thanks with all the heart, praising and proclaiming the ineffable height of his compassion. For the more astonishing a thing it is and beyond expectation, that he has restored us from so great and deserved ills in which we were, to so great and unmerited blessings which we had forfeited, *by so much the more* has he shown his more exceeding love and tenderness towards us (1.3:182–83; my emphasis).<sup>22</sup>

Julian's expression is similar:

We know in our faith and our belief . . . that when man fell so deeply and so wretchedly through sin, there was no other help for restoring him, except through him who created man. And he who created man for love, by the same love wanted to restore man to the same blessedness *and to even more* (10:194; my emphasis).

---

through the Benedictine priory at Norwich cathedral, which possessed one of the finest libraries in medieval England (ibid. 39, 43–44; "Editing Julian" 417–20).

<sup>21</sup> Colledge-Walsh 330 n. 53.

<sup>22</sup> "Nos non facimus deo iniuriam ullam aut contumeliam, sed toto corde gratias agentes laudamus et praedicamus ineffabilem altitudinem misericordiae illius, quia quanto nos mirabilius et praeter opinionem de tantis et tam debitis malis in quibus eramus, ad tanta et tam indebita bona quae perdideramus, restituit, tanto maiorem dilectionem erga nos et pietatem monstravit."

Colledge and Walsh were struck by the similarity of phraseology highlighted above, but Anselm's idea that the Incarnation increases human appreciation of God's love, affording greater honor to God, is a constant theme in Julian's text. In fact, it is precisely through meditating on the "homely" love of the human Jesus, evidenced in the Incarnation and particularly in his passion, that Julian is led to praise the glory of the Trinity:

For where Jesus appears the blessed trinity is understood, as I see it. And I said: Blessed be the Lord! This I said with a reverent intention and in a loud voice, and I was greatly astonished by this wonder and marvel, that he who is so to be revered and feared would be so [homely] with a sinful creature living in this wretched flesh (4:181).<sup>23</sup>

There are other correspondences that can be drawn between the *Cur Deus Homo* and *Showings*. In many cases these exhibit agreement, but others suggest that Julian has further developed or altered Anselm's points. Without trying to prove conclusively that Julian was directly influenced by the *Cur Deus Homo*, I believe enough similarity exists between the two to make a comparison between them instructive.

#### *Medieval Theology and the Humanity of Christ*

A distinctive mark of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was a growing interest in the humanity and especially the passion of Christ.<sup>24</sup> Anselm was directly involved in shaping this development in two distinct ways: through his prayers, which detailed the sufferings of Christ with a poignancy and passionate intensity that was new to the age, and through his theological treatise, the *Cur Deus Homo*, which grounded such devotion in a reasoned explanation of the necessity of the Incarnation. This latter work had tremendous influence, not only upon theology, but upon the piety of succeeding centuries. Devotion to the humanity of Christ, particularly to the crucified Jesus, dominated later medieval spirituality. By Julian's day the influence of this movement was everywhere present.

<sup>23</sup> I prefer to use the actual word Julian used, "homely," to describe God's love, which Colledge-Walsh translate as "familiar."

<sup>24</sup> Richard Southern sees this development as consistent with a subtle shift in the feeling of the age from epic to romance, which can best be illustrated by art objects. In the Aaby crucifix (Danish, c. 1050–1100), for example, Christ, crowned with gold, stares out in majesty from a cross that is really a throne. He is the pantocrator, the epic hero, the triumphant warrior Son of God, impassible, divine. By contrast, in the Tirstrup crucifix (Danish, c. 1150), Christ is still crowned with gold, but he suffers: his face is sad, his eyes closed, his head slightly bent. He no longer looks victorious, but he looks more human (*The Making of the Middle Ages* 238 and Plates II and III).

Therefore it is not surprising that, as a devout young woman, Julian should pray for these three graces: to "have mind" of the passion of Christ through a vision of the Crucified, to be given a bodily sickness so as to share literally in Christ's suffering, and to be granted three "wounds": contrition for sin, compassion for Christ's suffering, and longing with her whole will for God.<sup>25</sup> She tells us that, as she matured, she forgot about the first two requests, since they were special favors not essential for growth in the spiritual life, but she constantly prayed for the third (2:177–79). Nonetheless, when Julian was thirty years old, she fell ill to the point of death. The curate attending her held a crucifix up before her eyes, urging her to gaze upon it (3:179–80). Whereupon, much to Julian's amazement, she received the vision of the Crucified she had prayed for in her youth:

Suddenly I saw the red blood running down from under the crown, hot and flowing freely and copiously, a living stream, just as it was at the time when the crown of thorns was pressed on his blessed head. I perceived, truly and powerfully, that it was he who just so, both God and man, himself suffered for me (4:181).

This vision lasted all day and concluded the following night, accompanied by sixteen "revelations" about the love of God for humanity. The experience itself differs little from that of many other mystics and visionaries, predominantly women, of the high Middle Ages.<sup>26</sup> What is distinctive about Julian is the extent to which she attempted to penetrate into the theological significance of her experience. The Long Text of Julian's *Showings* is a wonderful example of how contemplative religious experience can result in doctrinal teaching. Written some twenty years after Julian's original record of her experience in the Short Text, the Long Text reveals how Julian reflected on the meaning of her experience, allowing it to illumine the whole spectrum of Christian doctrine from creation to eschatology.

<sup>25</sup> Such a prayer would have been regarded by many, particularly women, of the high Middle Ages as a conventional expression of piety. The *Ancrene Riwele*, which Julian almost certainly knew, clearly advocated both the cultivation of an acute awareness of Christ's physical suffering and the healing effects of illness sent by God (Mary B. Salu, ed., *Ancrene Riwele*, [London: Burns & Oates, 1955] 46–52, 80). The desire for "wounds" was strongly developed among continental women visionaries. See Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, ed., *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York/Oxford: Oxford Univ., 1979) 14–19; Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) 29, 44–47; Grace M. Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (New York: Paulist, 1988) 61–70.

<sup>26</sup> For a study of the flowering of this tradition, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California, 1982) 170–262.



Julian therefore has more in common with Anselm than with most devotional or mystical writers of her day, whose meditations upon the Crucified focused primarily on piety and devotion. Like Anselm, she saw the importance of Christ's suffering humanity for an adequate understanding of the central mysteries of Christianity, and her contemplation, like his, resulted in a disciplined reflection upon the inner intelligibility of the doctrine of the Incarnation. However, though Anselm and Julian share similar theological motivations, their fundamental questions and methods of proceeding are different.

### *Contrasting Methodologies*

Anselm's effort in the *Cur Deus Homo* is simply to provide a satisfactory answer to the question why God became human to save us. He wants to counter the criticism of unbelievers who think the doctrine of the Incarnation absurd, and to provide believers with clarification for their faith so that "they may be gladdened by understanding . . . and . . . always ready to convince any one who demands of them a reason [for] that hope which is in us" (1.1:178).<sup>27</sup> Anselm thinks that the old, scripturally based arguments establishing the "fittingness" of the Incarnation and atonement by simply contrasting Adam with Christ are not persuasive enough (1.3–1.4:182–84). His method consists in "leaving Christ out of view," i.e. leaving behind any explicit appeal to scriptural authority,<sup>28</sup> so that he may establish a clear, simple argument establishing the "necessary reasons" why God became human (Preface: 177).<sup>29</sup> He thinks such an argument will best persuade believers and

<sup>27</sup> "... ut eorum quae credunt intellectu et contemplatione delectentur, et ut sint, quantum possunt, parati semper ad satisfactionem omni poscenti se rationem de ea quae in nobis est spe."

<sup>28</sup> While Anselm leaves aside any direct appeal to Scripture, his thought continues to have scriptural foundations. See, for example, his indebtedness to Genesis (p. 612 above and n. 37) and to Paul's Adam/Christ typology p. 624 below).

<sup>29</sup> "Ac tandem remoto Christo, quasi numquam aliquid fuerit de illo, probat rationibus necessariis esse impossibile ullum hominem salvari sine illo." Anselm's "necessary reasons" have been much misunderstood, often confused with the ontological or logical necessity of Aristotelian philosophy. What Anselm meant by necessary reasons, however, was probably dependent upon the "necessary arguments" of classical rhetoric. Cassiodorus, for example, distinguished arguments into two kinds: probable and necessary. The former are those whose actual truth or falsehood is not important as long as the argument being made is "probable," i.e. consistent with the particular class of being under discussion. By contrast, "necessary arguments" are based upon objective truth, and are thus capable of producing certitude. Anselm presumes that the Incarnation, as a doctrine of Christian faith, is objective truth, and, as such, deserves a more convincing argument for its reasonableness than mere fittingness. For this interpretation of Anselm's necessary reasons, see A.-M. Jacquin, "Le 'Rationes Necessariae' de Saint

unbelievers alike that the content of Christian faith is entirely reasonable.

Anselm certainly never intended to give human reason an absolute, demonstrative power over the truths of faith. Faith is Anselm's starting point, and his "necessary reasons" are always regarded as mere analogies for the reality of God, always provisional and relative, subject to correction by a higher authority. But because Anselm took very seriously the Christian teaching that the human mind is created in God's image, closest in likeness among all created beings to God's essence, he is confident that the conclusions it comes to with respect to God are trustworthy if performed rightly.<sup>30</sup> Anselm thus began something new in Christian theology by emphasizing the power of natural reason to construct coherent rational arguments for the truths of faith, something that would develop over the next few centuries into the type of theology known as scholasticism.

Julian's theology begins with a more personal experience of salvation, received in the extremities of what she believed to be her final illness:

I accepted it that at that time our Lord Jesus wanted, out of his courteous love, to show me comfort before my temptations began, for it seemed to me that I might well be tempted by devils, by God's permission and with his protection, before I would die. With this sight of his blessed Passion, . . . I knew well that this was strength enough for me, yes, and for all living creatures who were to be saved, against all the devils of hell and against all their spiritual enemies (4:182).

The words of comfort given in the midst of this experience cast out of her mind forever all fear of sin and damnation. They taught her that God's love for her was far stronger than the powers of evil. Rather than scrupulosity regarding her own sinfulness or the fear of eternal damnation, Julian learned that her attitude towards God, even in the midst of suffering, should be trust. Furthermore, she believed that the message of comfort and love she received from God was meant not only for herself personally, but for all Christians:

Everything that I say about me I mean to apply to all my fellow Christians, for I am taught that this is what our Lord intends in this spiritual revelation. And therefore I pray you all for God's sake, and I counsel you for your own profit, that . . . you contemplate upon God, who out of his courteous love and his

---

Anselme," *Mélanges Mandonnet: Etudes d'Histoire Littéraire et Doctrinale du Moyen Age* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1930) 2.67–78.

<sup>30</sup> Because both reason and faith are God's gifts, they cannot be contradictory. I find Anselm's clearest explanation of his analogical method in the *Monologion*, chaps. 65–66.

endless goodness was willing to show it generally, to the comfort of us all (8:191).

Julian sensed that the message of her revelations was directed against the fascination with sin and the often extreme fear about damnation, exacerbated by the episodes of the Black Death, that were part of the atmosphere of the fourteenth century, and that it was meant to replace such attitudes with trust in the love of God.<sup>31</sup>

However, Julian's religious experience raised some troubling theological questions for her. She was perplexed by the fact that God never looked upon sinners with wrath, but only with love (48:262, 49:263–64). Furthermore, through the constantly repeated promise, "All will be well," God seemed to be implying that all would be saved, extending salvation even to those considered damned according to church teaching (32:233). Her contemplation over a twenty-year period was focused on reconciling two apparently contradictory teachings regarding sin and salvation: the teachings of her revelations, which she firmly believed were from God, and the teachings of the Church, which she continued to trust as God's revelation.<sup>32</sup>

Methodologically, far from "putting Christ out of view," Julian focuses upon Scripture as the source of her reflections. In fact, her work can be seen as an explicit example of the monastic practice of *lectio divina*, through which the prayerful meditation upon Scripture results in contemplative insight into the truths of Christian faith. Her reflections, although theologically sophisticated, never lose touch with their source, her personal experience of salvation in the midst of suffering, and with their purpose, the pastoral comfort of her suffering contemporaries.

#### ANSELM'S *CUR DEUS HOMO*

Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* is grounded in the felt human need, illumined by grace, for deliverance from sin, and in the longing for union with Christ that is the way to that deliverance. This feeling is an essential part of the pattern of Anselm's prayers, a pattern repeated in the *Proslogion*.<sup>33</sup> Entering into solitude, shutting out everything but God, Anselm seeks the face of God, praying that his mind will be stirred to greater understanding. But the center of Anselm's prayer is the prayer of compunction, so essential to the spirit of Benedictine

<sup>31</sup> By the time Julian wrote the Short Text in 1373, England had suffered through three episodes of the Black Death; see May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century: 1307–1399* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959) 331–33.

<sup>32</sup> See the full discussion of this in *Wisdom's Daughter* 16–19, 162–69.

<sup>33</sup> For the pattern of Anselm's prayers, see Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations* 51–56.

monasticism.<sup>34</sup> The awareness of God's love encountered in prayer reveals the full horror of sin, producing in the sinner an attitude of fear and self-abasement. Consequently, each of Anselm's prayers contains a long passage of painful self-scrutiny and acknowledgment of guilt. However, the awareness of God's love also gives rise to the longing for union with God, arousing a sense of security and hope in anticipation of the joys of heaven. Anselm asks for this grace of compunction in his prayer to St. Mary Magdalene:

Ask urgently that I may have  
the love that pierces the heart; tears that are humble;  
desire for the homeland of heaven;  
impatience with this earthly exile;  
searing repentance; and a dread of torments in eternity.<sup>35</sup>

The *Cur Deus Homo* presents a theological argument for the doctrine of the atonement which has its source in this experience of compunction. God's love is its beginning and ending point, but God's love as turned toward the need for human redemption from sin. It takes seriously the experience of sinfulness and its accompanying desires for forgiveness and the ability to make amends for the damage caused by sin. And it presents a convincing rationale for how the grace of Christ can effect the fulfillment of such desires. Central to Anselm's soteriology is the fact of sin, not only as it affects the sinner personally, but in its far-reaching effects on society. Central to Anselm's soteriology, too, is human responsibility for sin and the need to participate through union with Christ in its eradication.

#### *The Feudal Order and Social Sin*

The *Cur Deus Homo* is dependent upon the analogy of the medieval feudal order. Much misinterpretation of Anselm's work can be traced to a failure to recognize this; to interpret Anselm's argument in terms of individual retributive justice is to miss the point Anselm is making. In feudalism, a person's meaning came from one's position in society, which was a complicated interweaving of relationships. Honor and obedience to the liege lord guaranteed the smooth running of this society, enabling each member of it to keep one's meaning, identity, and worth intact. Dishonor or disobedience to the liege lord was much

<sup>34</sup> See the description of compunction in Leclercq, *The Love of Learning* 37–41; Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations* 53–56.

<sup>35</sup> "Impetra mihi compunctionem pietatis, lacrimas humilitatis, patriae caelestis desiderium, terreni exilii fastidium, paenitentiae amaritudinem, aeterni cruciatus timorem." English translation from Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations* 55, 202.

more than an insult to his personal dignity; it was an act of disrespect and a wound to the entire social fabric, affecting everyone's place and meaning in it. Satisfaction for such an act must not only repair the breach of trust between the offender and the lord; it must also repair the damage done to the whole social order.<sup>36</sup>

By using this analogy, Anselm is able to do justice to the social nature of sin. Sin is not only an offense against God, with unhappy results for the sinner; it upsets all earthly relationships as well.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, satisfaction is not merely a question of making up for one's own sin and restoring one's own dignity,<sup>38</sup> but it must also be rendered in proportion to the extent of the injury done. Since the relationship between God and all of creation has been ruined because of sin, the sinner must somehow reconcile the whole world to God, effecting a "new creation" (1.23:232). What the sinner restores must be "greater than all the universe besides God, . . . greater than all else but God himself" (2.6:244–45).<sup>39</sup> But the sinner cannot do this. Even if the sinner dies, offering a life in payment, this is only what is owed to God since Anselm regards death as the consequence of sin. Only a sinless one, who freely dies without deserving it, can give back more than is merely owed and can effect this reconciliation (2.11:257–58). Anselm thus concludes that it was necessary that God be the one to make atonement for sin.

#### *Human Participation in Redemption*

But Anselm is also convinced that humanity must play a part in this re-creation. Many interpretations of the *Cur Deus Homo* miss the implications of this point. Here we find in Anselm an instinct which would be more thoroughly elaborated later into the scholastic doctrine of cooperative grace. Anselm's stress upon the humanity of Christ is a deliberate way of saying how important it is that human beings be enabled by God to cooperate in their own salvation. And this idea is dependent upon a profound sense of the solidarity of the human race, of all people with one another and with Christ, the new Adam.

<sup>36</sup> For this theme in Anselm, see Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (New York: Paulist, 1976) 220.

<sup>37</sup> Anselm is thus faithful to the description of the consequences of sin in Genesis 3 where disruption occurs, not only between humans and God but also between humans and the earth, humans and the animal world, man and his work, woman and her work, the man and the woman themselves.

<sup>38</sup> Even this would not be possible, because the person offended is the infinite God, and thus the offense is infinite, which the sinner, being finite, cannot repay (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.11).

<sup>39</sup> ". . . maius quam omne quod praeter deum est. . . . maiorem esse necesse est quam omne quod non est deus."

Anselm makes the point of the need for human cooperation in redemption very clearly. When Boso asks why God doesn't simply forgive sin out of compassion, Anselm gives many reasons involving justice, the nature of God, the nature of sin, and so on. But at one point he says simply that if God just forgives our sin, we will not be happy:

But while man does not make payment [for sin], he either wishes to restore, or else he does not wish to. Now, if he wishes to do what he cannot, he will be needy, and if he does not wish to, he will be unjust. . . . But whether needy or unjust, he will not be happy (1.24:236).<sup>40</sup>

It is out of the desire that humanity be happy, out of faithfulness to who humans are meant to be, that God demands that they participate in the work of redemption. And this participation takes place through humanity's union with Christ, God become human. By accomplishing the work of the atonement, Christ makes satisfaction for guilty human beings in their stead, but as their representative, not their substitute.<sup>41</sup> His action frees human beings and leaves a place open for them to assume their rightful place in relationship to God and to the world, restoring them to who they were meant to be, enabling them to continue as disciples in the offering of Christ to God which effects human salvation.

Anselm best emphasizes the representative nature of Christ's redemptive act in his use of the Adam/Christ typology of Romans 5. As all share in the sin of Adam, representative of the human race, so all share in the self-offering of Christ the representative once they have been freed to do so.

If . . . [God] makes a new man, not of Adam's race, then this man will not belong to the human family, which descended from Adam, and therefore ought not to make atonement for it, because he never belonged to it. For, as it is right for man to make atonement for the sin of man, it is also necessary that he who makes the atonement should be the very being who has sinned, or else one of the same race. Otherwise, neither Adam nor his race would make satisfaction for themselves. Therefore, as through Adam and Eve sin was propagated among all men, so none but themselves, or one born of them, ought to make atonement for the sin of men (2.8:247).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> "At quamdiu non reddet, aut volet reddere aut non volet. Sed si volet quod non poterit, indigens erit. Si vero non volet, iniustus erit. . . . Sive autem indigens sive iniustus sit, beatus non erit."

<sup>41</sup> For the distinction between satisfaction and representation, see Dorothee Soelle, *Christ the Representative*, trans. D. Lewis (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

<sup>42</sup> "Sed si novum hominem facit non ex Adae genere, non pertinebit ad genus humanum quod natum est de Adam. Quare non debet satisfacere pro eo, quia non erit de illo. Sicut enim rectum est, ut pro culpa hominis homo satisfaciatur, ita necesse est, ut sa-

If only a substitute for humanity were sufficient to make atonement for sin, God would not have needed to become *human*. If humanity did not need to participate in repairing the damage done by sin, the Incarnation makes no sense for Anselm. One of the reasons why he rejected the devil-ransom theory as insufficient to explain why God became human, is because the atonement is presented there simply as a clash between God and the powers of evil. Human cooperation is ignored. Anselm's instinct is to supply this missing item.

However, after having made this point so strongly, Anselm leaves a lacuna in his discussion in the *Cur Deus Homo*, neglecting to spell out in any detail *how* human beings participate in the atonement made by Christ in their name. Anselm characteristically concentrates his attention on only one question at a time,<sup>43</sup> and in the *Cur Deus Homo* why God became human is the issue, not how humans participate in Christ's victory over sin. Thus, when Boso remarks, "it is not clear *how* the death of the Son avails for the salvation of man," Anselm replies, "the question concerns only the Incarnation of God, and those things which we believe with regard to his taking human nature" (1.10:200–201).<sup>44</sup>

There are only two places in the *Cur Deus Homo* where Anselm discusses in any detail the connection between Christ's atonement and human participation in it. The most famous is his exposition of the doctrine of merits:

Let us now observe, if we can, how the salvation of men rests on this. . . . There is no need of explaining how precious was the gift which the Son freely gave. . . . But you surely will not think that he deserves no reward, who freely gave so great a gift to God. . . . [But] how . . . can a reward be bestowed on one who needs nothing, and to whom no gift or release can be made? . . . The reward then must be bestowed upon some one else, for it cannot be upon him. . . . Upon whom would he more properly bestow the reward accruing from his death than upon those for whose salvation . . . he became man; and for whose sake, as we have already said, he left an example of suffering death to preserve holiness? For surely in vain will men imitate him, if they be not also partakers of his reward (2.19:283–84).<sup>45</sup>

---

tisfaciens idem sit qui peccator aut eiusdem generis. Aliter namque nec Adam nec genus eius satisfaciet pro se. Ergo sicut de Adam et Eva peccatum in omnes homines propagatum est, ita nullus nisi vel ipsi vel qui de illis nascitur, pro peccato hominum satisfacere debet."

<sup>43</sup> On this point, see Gillian Evans, *Anselm and Talking about God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978) 131–33.

<sup>44</sup> Boso: ". . . nec apparet quid mors ista valeat ad salvandum hominem." Anselm: "De incarnatione tantum dei et de iis quae de illo assumpto homine credimus, quaestio est."

<sup>45</sup> "Intueamur nunc, prout possumus, quanta inde ratione sequatur humana salva-

Christ's merits thus become a kind of spiritual treasury upon which humans can draw for spiritual growth. However, Anselm does not elaborate upon how humans partake of this reward, beyond hinting that the imitation of Christ is involved, and that Scripture provides the key for this imitation: "The Scriptures, which rest on solid truth as on a firm foundation, . . . show us how to approach in order to share such favor, and how we ought to live under it" (2.19:285).<sup>46</sup>

An even more important link between Christ's redemptive work and human incorporation is made in an allusion to the Eucharist:

For what compassion can excel these words of the Father, addressed to the sinner doomed to eternal torments and having no way of escape: "Take my only begotten Son and make him an offering for yourself," or these words of the Son: "Take me, and ransom your souls." For these are the voices they utter, when inviting and leading us to faith in the Gospel (2.20:286).<sup>47</sup>

For Anselm, participation in the Eucharist is the way Christians most fully reenact and enter into the sacrificial death of Christ, becoming one body with him, gaining strength for a life of *imitatio Christi*. Anselm's mention of it reveals the deep devotion to the eucharistic liturgy which formed the center of his Benedictine spirituality.<sup>48</sup> But for a greater elaboration of how humans participate in the life of grace

---

tio. . . Quantum autem sit quod filius sponte dedit non est opus exponere. . . Eum autem qui tantum donum sponte dat deo, sine retributione debere esse non iudicabis. . . Quid ergo retribuatur nullius rei egenti, et cui non est quod dari aut dimitti possit? . . . Necessae est ergo ut alicui alii reddatur, quia illi non potest. . . Quibus convenientius fructum et retributionem suae mortis attribuet quam illis, propter quos salvandos, . . . hominem se fecit, et quibus, ut diximus, moriendo exemplum moriendi propter iustitiam dedit? Frustra quippe imitatores eius erunt, si meriti eius participes non erunt."

<sup>46</sup> "Quemadmodum autem sit ad tantae gratiae participationem accedendum et quomodo sub illa vivendum, nos ubique sacra scriptura docet, quae super solidam veritatem, . . . velut super firmum fundamentum fundata est."

<sup>47</sup> "Nempe quid misericordius intelligi valet, quam cum peccatori tormentis aeternis damnato et unde se redimat non habenti deus pater dicit: accipe unigenitum meum et da pro te; et ipse filius: tolle me et redime te? Quasi enim hoc dicunt, quando nos ad Christianam fidem vocant et trahunt."

<sup>48</sup> Several scholars have noted the particular importance of the Eucharist in Anselm's theology. George Huntson Williams reads the *Cur Deus Homo* as a doctrine of the atonement based on the preeminence of eucharistic rather than baptismal incorporation into Christ. For him, Anselm was an innovator here, representing theologically the shift in sacramental emphasis on the Eucharist, as opposed to baptism, which marked medieval spirituality. See his *Anselm: Communion and Atonement* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960). The whole last chapter of Gollnick's *Flesh as Transformation Symbol* explores specifically how Anselm's central theological symbol of flesh is related to the Eucharist (191–207). Ward demonstrates the relationship of Anselm's prayers to the eucharistic liturgy (*The Prayers and Meditations* 29–35).



inaugurated by Christ, one must go beyond the *Cur Deus Homo* to Anselm's other writings.<sup>49</sup> And because the *Cur Deus Homo* has been read independently of them, this aspect of Anselm's thought has often been ignored.<sup>50</sup>

### *God's Love*

Love is God's sole motivation for demanding that human beings participate in the atonement, a point frequently overlooked in interpretations of the *Cur Deus Homo*. In fact, many associate Anselm's soteriology with the idea of God's justice rather than God's love. Anselm has even been charged with setting up an opposition within God between God's justice and love. However, a careful reading of the *Cur Deus Homo* reveals that God's love is paramount in Anselm's argument. He begins and ends with it, and everything else he says must be understood in light of it. It is interesting that Colledge and Walsh found, for their comparison to Julian, a text which touches upon this core of Anselm's soteriology: the theme of God's "more exceeding love and tenderness towards us" (1.3:183).<sup>51</sup> This love demands that God save humanity:

Does not the reason why God ought to do the things we speak of seem absolute enough when we consider that the human race, that work of his so very precious, was wholly ruined, and that it was not seemly that the purpose which God had made concerning man should fall to the ground; and moreover, that this purpose could not be carried into effect unless the human race were delivered by their Creator himself? (1.4:184).<sup>52</sup>

Thus, justice is an aspect of God's love, a way through which it expresses itself, not something in opposition to it. However, Boso protests

<sup>49</sup> For example, the *De conceptu virginali et de originali peccato* explains the roles played by both baptism and the Eucharist, with a strong emphasis on the latter. In the *De monte humilitatis* (a section, still regarded as authentic to Anselm, of the *De similitudinibus*, no longer attributed to him as a whole; cf. *PL* 159.605–707), Anselm spells out seven progressive steps of repentance; for a discussion, see Williams 28–29 and Southern 226–27.

<sup>50</sup> This has had some disastrous results. When the *Cur Deus Homo* was read in isolation from Anselm's whole theological system, the lack of any more explicit mention of the life of grace in it led to a reduction of Anselm's teaching to the merely extrinsic application of Christ's merits to the sinner, with the importance of human cooperation greatly minimized.

<sup>51</sup> See pp. 616–17 above.

<sup>52</sup> "Nonne satis necessaria ratio videtur, cur deus ea quae dicimus facere debuerit: quia genus humanum, tam scilicet pretiosum opus eius, omnino perierat, nec decebat ut, quod deus de homine proposuerat, penitus annihilaretur, nec idem eius propositum ad effectum duci poterat, nisi genus hominum ab ipso creatore suo liberaretur?"

that this will not hold weight unless it is proved "necessary" for God to save humanity by becoming human; otherwise God will look either foolish or powerless (1.6:185-86). And so Anselm sets out to demonstrate the necessity of the Incarnation, in order to enable appreciation for the depths of God's love and compassion.

At this point, Boso interjects another objection: Why do we give God thanks for saving us if God did it out of necessity? In answer, Anselm distinguishes between two kinds of necessity:

There is a necessity which takes away or lessens our gratitude to a benefactor, and there is also a necessity by which the favor deserves still greater thanks. For when one does a benefit from necessity to which he is unwillingly subjected, less thanks are due him, or none at all. But when he freely places himself under the necessity of benefitting another, and sustains that necessity without reluctance, then he certainly deserves greater thanks for the favor. For this should not be called necessity but grace, inasmuch as he undertook or maintains it, not with any restraint, but freely (2.5:243).<sup>53</sup>

The necessity out of which God acts is this latter kind of necessity, a self-imposed faithfulness to the created order as God intended it from the beginning, motivated solely out of God's goodness and love:

Much more, therefore, do we owe all thanks to God for completing his intended favor to man; though, indeed, it would be improper for him to fail in his good design, because wanting nothing in himself he began it for our sake and not his own, . . . by freely creating man, God as it were bound himself to complete the good which he had begun. . . . Yet we may say, although the whole work which God does for man is of grace, that it is necessary for God, on account of his unchanged goodness, to complete the work which he has begun (2.5:244).<sup>54</sup>

In other words, it seems to Anselm that we understand the depth and intensity of God's love for humanity, only if we acknowledge that such a love involved being faithful to creation to the extent of becoming human to save it. And he has already shown that the motivation for

<sup>53</sup> "Est necessitas quae beneficienti gratiam aufert aut minuit, et est necessitas quae maior beneficio gratia debetur. Cum enim aliquis ea necessitate cui subiacet, invitus bene facit, aut nulla aut minor illi gratia debetur. Cum vero ipse sponte se necessitati beneficienti subdit nec invitus eam sustinet, tunc utique maiorem beneficii gratiam meretur. Non enim haec est dicenda necessitas, sed gratia, quia nullo cogente illam suscepit aut servat, sed gratias."

<sup>54</sup> "Quare multo magis, si deus facit bonum homini quod incepti, licet non deceat eum a bono incepto deficere, totum gratiae debemus imputare, quia hoc propter nos, non propter se nullius egens inceptit. . . . et tamen bonitate sua illum creando sponte se ut perficeret inceptum bonum quasi obligavit. . . . Dicamus tamen quia necesse est, ut bonitas dei propter immutabilitatem suam perficiat de homine quod inceptit, quamvis totum sit gratia bonum quod facit."

the Incarnation was the need for humans to participate in their own atonement, something that could only be accomplished by God's becoming one of them. God's love for humanity demands this.

It is in light of God's loving fidelity to creation that all talk of necessity, justice, and satisfaction in the *Cur Deus Homo* needs to be placed. In Anselm's scheme, God's faithful love includes just anger at the destruction of creation by sin as well as the just demand that satisfaction be made for the ruin of humankind. "God cannot be inconsistent with himself," and so God's compassion cannot be such that God can overlook sin without demanding satisfaction (1.24:235). Further, "God's compassion seems to fail" if God forgives the sinner without demanding satisfaction from the one who committed the offense, for, as we saw above, the sinner will be either needy or unjust, and in either case not happy (1.24:236). Anselm's view of God's love resembles what in today's common parlance is called "tough love." Because God desires human fulfillment and happiness, God demands that humans participate in the repair of creation through union with Christ; only then will they become who they were truly meant to be, who they deeply desire to be. This is why God needed to become human.

#### JULIAN'S SHOWINGS

Julian was the product of the same Benedictine spirit that was Anselm's.<sup>55</sup> The prayer in which she petitioned for the three wounds of contrition, compassion, and longing for God, was a prayer for that same compunction Anselm desired.<sup>56</sup> If anything, the late fourteenth century was even more acutely aware of the fact of sin and its destructiveness than was the case in Anselm's cloister. The Fourth Lateran Council had set down detailed instruction for both clergy and laity in the awareness of sin and the need for sacramental confession, instruction that found its way to the general populace by way of penitential manuals and detailed preaching. In addition, the episodes of the Black Death had exacerbated feelings of guilt and fear of eternal punishment.<sup>57</sup> Julian's own experience of sin and need for redemption was likely as intense if not more so than that of Anselm. But Julian learned through her revelations to transfer her attention from the fact of sin and to fasten it more directly on the love of God. It is this emphasis that eventually makes her soteriology different from that of the *Cur Deus Homo*.

<sup>55</sup> In Norwich cathedral, in a stained glass window commemorating Benedictine saints, Julian appears in their company.

<sup>56</sup> See Colledge-Walsh 72-73.

<sup>57</sup> See *Wisdom's Daughter* 117-18 for a more thorough discussion.

In the midst of her revelations, Julian has an experience of God which teaches her the difference between God's eternal perspective and the human, historically conditioned one:

I saw God in [a point],<sup>58</sup> . . . by which vision I saw that he is present in all things. I contemplated it carefully, seeing and recognizing through it that he does everything which is done. I marvelled at that vision with a gentle fear, and I thought: What is sin? For I saw truly that God does everything, however small it may be, and that nothing is done by chance, but all by God's prescient wisdom. If it seem chance in [our] sight, our blindness and lack of prescience is the reason. . . . I was compelled to admit that everything which is done is well done, for our Lord God does everything. And I was certain that he does no sin; and here I was certain that sin is no deed, for in all this sin was not shown to me. . . . I saw most truly that [God] never changed his purpose in any kind of thing, nor ever will eternally. For there was nothing unknown to him in his just ordinance before time began, and therefore all things were set in order, before anything was made, as it would endure eternally. And no kind of thing will fail in that respect, for he has made everything totally good. . . . Then I saw truly that I must agree, with great reverence and joy in God (11:197-99).<sup>59</sup>

Because of her union with God, Julian sees the world, momentarily, as God sees it. And in God's view all is well, sin is nothing, and everything is accomplished as God intends. This is a perspective essentially different from the way humans, conditioned by time, view events as destructive or arbitrary or happening by chance. It is an insight foreign to Julian and she must struggle to understand it. In the Long Text, Julian describes this struggle in some detail, at one point praying desperately:

Ah, good Lord, how could all things be well, because of the great harm which has come through sin to your creatures? And here I wished, so far as I dared, for some plainer explanation through which I might be at ease about this matter (29:227).

<sup>58</sup> Colledge and Walsh translate Julian's word "poynte" as "an instant of time." In their commentary on this passage, they compare Julian's experience to that of Benedict as described in Gregory's *Dialogues*: Benedict, praying one night at his window, "saw a wonderful light shining in the darkness; and the whole world was brought before his gaze, gathered as it were under this one ray of light. . . . It was not that the heavens and earth were contracted but that the soul of the beholder was dilated, because, being rapt in God, he could see without difficulty all that was beneath God" (PL 66.198-200; English translation in Colledge-Walsh 317-18 n. 10).

<sup>59</sup> The argument of this passage is remarkably similar to that found in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, which Julian probably knew through Chaucer's translation. See IV, Prose 6; V, Prose 1.

*The Parable of the Lord and the Servant*

The "plainer explanation" was given to Julian in the parable of the lord and the servant cited above, and it forms the centerpiece of her soteriology. As with Anselm, the underlying analogy is drawn from the feudal order. However, Julian emphasizes less than Anselm does the social order as such, and focuses instead upon the personal relationship which ideally existed between lord and vassal, a relationship founded upon mutual love and respect and fidelity to the obligations willingly assumed by both parties.

Julian sees in her imagination a lord sitting in state, and a servant standing before him, ready to do his will. When the lord sends him on a mission, the servant runs off speedily, eager to fulfill it. But in his eagerness, he falls into a ditch from which he cannot extricate himself. Understanding this as a parable for the fall, Julian is struck by the fact that she can see no fault in the servant, and that God looks upon him only with love, not with blame:

I understood that the lord who sat in state in rest and peace is God. I understood that the servant who stood before him was shown for Adam, that is to say, one man was shown at that time and his fall, so as to make it understood how God regards all men and their falling. For in the sight of God, all men are one man, and one man is all men. This man was injured in his powers and made most feeble, and in his understanding he was amazed, because he was diverted from looking on his lord, but his will was preserved in God's sight. I saw the lord commend and approve him for his will, but he himself was blinded and hindered from knowing this will. And this is a great sorrow and a cruel suffering to him, for he neither sees clearly his loving lord, who is so meek and mild to him, nor does he truly see what he himself is in the sight of his loving lord (51:270-71).

Julian knew this image was given to her to clarify her sense of the nothingness of sin and God's message "All will be well." But she remained in perplexity concerning it, because it did not seem to fit with church teaching: "For in the servant, who was shown for Adam, . . . I saw many different characteristics which could in no way be attributed to Adam" (51:269).<sup>60</sup>

Eventually, after twenty years of meditation upon the parable, Julian reached a new level of understanding, realizing that there was a double significance to the servant:

In the servant is comprehended the second person of the Trinity, and in the servant is comprehended Adam, that is to say all men. . . . When Adam fell,

<sup>60</sup> So great was Julian's perplexity that she did not include the parable in the Short Text, even though it was part of the original revelation (*Wisdom's Daughter* 27-28).

God's Son fell; because of the true union which was made in heaven, God's Son could not be separated from Adam, for by Adam I understand all mankind. Adam fell from life to death, into the valley of this wretched world, and after that into hell. God's Son fell with Adam, into the valley of the womb of the maiden who was the fairest daughter of Adam, and that was to excuse Adam from blame in heaven and on earth. . . . In all this our good Lord showed his own Son and Adam as only one man (51:274-75).

The Adam/Christ typology that plays such a large role in Anselm's soteriology is present strongly in Julian's as well, but with a difference. For Anselm's argument it is just as essential that Christ's difference from humans be emphasized (divine and innocent as opposed to human and sinful) as it is that he be one with humanity, enabling human incorporation into his body and participation in his redemptive work. In Julian's parable this difference is not emphasized. In fact, there is almost a virtual identification between Christ and all humanity because the one figure of the servant represents both.

Thus, when God sees us, even in our sin, God sees Christ. What humans see in process, and interpret in terms of time sequence or cause and effect, is seen as eternally accomplished by God. Because in God all is eternally present, God never views the fall apart from the Incarnation and its fruits. Therefore, from God's perspective, the powers of evil are overcome, humanity is God's own city and dwelling place in whom God eternally rejoices, and all is well.

### *The Union of Christ and All Humankind*

Once Julian made the identification between Christ and all humanity in the figure of the servant, she was able to meditate on the meaning of the parable with greater clarity. Christ is the new Adam, who took upon himself "all the harm and weakness" which are humanity's lot because of the fall. The task for which the servant was sent was "to do the greatest and the hardest labor there is . . . to be a gardener." Christ the new Adam performs correctly the work given to the first Adam "to till and keep the garden," a work which involves suffering because of sin. The parable also speaks of a treasure for which the lord longs, understood as all humanity, which in its fallen state is not fit to be in the company of its lord (51:273). The servant's task is to return this treasure, restored and renewed, back to the lord. This is a work of re-creation, a doing over again, a reliving in the proper way of the original creation which was marred by sin, a bringing back to God of what had strayed off course and become displeasing. By taking upon himself fallen human nature, and by enduring the suffering caused by sin totally, even to the extent of dying and descending into hell, Christ recreated in himself what all humanity was called to be from the

beginning, God's favorite "city and dwelling place," a comfortable home for God, wherein God and humanity are joined in love's unity. He is the true Adam through whose life the harm caused by the first Adam was repaired and all humanity was recreated.

Julian frequently refers to Christ as the "perfect human," which she interprets not only in a qualitative but also in a quantitative sense. Christ is the perfect human because in him are contained all those who will be saved (57:292). Thus all who are united to Christ *are* Christ, members of his one body, the Church, and loved by God as Christ is loved, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The Christian life on earth is therefore rightly understood as the continuation of Christ's life, and the participation of humanity in God's act of salvation.

Julian's soteriology, like Anselm's, is heavily dependent upon Paul's Adam/Christ typology. But rather than using it as Anselm does to emphasize the need for humanity to participate in the repair of the damage caused by sin, Julian emphasizes the continuity it reveals between God's work of creation and re-creation, and the eternal love of God for humanity that motivates both. Using the Pauline notion of the predestination in Christ of all who will be saved, the figure of Wisdom from the Hebrew Scriptures, and Augustine's doctrine of creation,<sup>61</sup> Julian elaborates on the role Christ plays in the continuity between creation and re-creation in God's eternal plan. Since all human souls were created at once with the human soul of Christ in the image of the Logos before time began, humanity is inextricably "knitted" to Christ from all eternity (53:284).

Julian is indebted here to the neoplatonic notion of the eternal, purely spiritual soul, unaffected by human bodiliness, which she calls the soul's "substance." It is the fullness of human nature, the image of God, eternally reflecting the Trinity's might, wisdom, and love. By contrast, the soul's "sensuality" is the soul in contact with the body and affected by the vagaries of time and space.<sup>62</sup> But this too becomes united to Christ through the Incarnation: "In the same time that God knit himself to our body in the maiden's womb, he took our sensuality, and in taking it, having enclosed us all in himself, he united it to our substance" (57:292).

Humanity is thus doubly knit to Christ: in the creation of the soul's "substance" in his image, and in his taking upon himself human "sensuality." In this "double knitting," God's work of creation and redemption are united (57:291). The union of Christ and all humanity is the new Adam, human nature increased beyond its original splendor by

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.* 60–69.

<sup>62</sup> For Julian's anthropology, see *ibid.* 104–16.

the fact of God's entering into human flesh. Human predestination in Christ is the secure guarantee of eternal bliss. Since God's loving will is effective to complete what God had planned from the beginning, one can trust that "all will be well."

### *The Reason for the Incarnation*

Because of this focus, sin is no longer the main reason why the Incarnation was necessary. Julian intimates that the Incarnation had a purpose other than repairing the damage caused by sin:

Our reason is founded in God, who is nature's substance. From this substantial nature spring mercy and grace, and penetrate us, accomplishing everything for the fulfillment of our joy. These are our foundations, . . . for in nature we have our life and our being, and in mercy and grace we have our increase and our fulfillment. . . . For we cannot profit by our reason alone, unless we have equally memory and love; nor can we be saved merely because we have in God our natural foundation, unless we have, coming from the same foundation, mercy and grace. For from these three operating all together we receive all our good, the first of which is the good of nature. For in our first making God gave us as much good and as great good as we could receive in our spirit alone; but his prescient purpose in his endless wisdom willed that we should be double (56:290).

Here God's works of mercy and grace, brought into operation by the Incarnation, were part of God's "prescient purpose" for humanity from all eternity.

Julian calls sin "necessary," by which she means not ontological necessity but the fact that sin is part of human experience which cannot be denied (27:225).<sup>63</sup> It is not willed by God, since God cannot will evil, but God does "tolerate" it, and even uses it as one of the vehicles for human salvation. But sin is not the only reason for the outreach of God to humanity through God's works of mercy and grace. Thus salvation for Julian means more than the forgiveness of sins or the restoration of fallen human nature to its original state of justice. From all eternity God willed not only that humankind be created in its "natural substance," but that it also be "increased" and "fulfilled" by sensuality's being lifted up into the very life of God. The eternal substance of the soul, created in God's image, becomes *more* through its sensuality, bound to earthly, bodily creation. As we saw above, this union was

<sup>63</sup> "Behovely" is the word used by Julian, which, besides the idea of necessity, includes the meaning of being beneficial. In Julian's theological construction, she explains various ways whereby sin, under the power of God's grace, can actually become beneficial for the sinner (ibid. 129-35).



permanently effected by Christ's assuming human fleshly existence in time.

This perspective allows Julian to place great value on materiality and human bodiliness. They are not to be dismissed as useless or detrimental to spiritual growth. Their development over the course of time contributes to that increase of God's image in the human which God predestined "from before beginning" and in which humanity and God will eternally rejoice in heaven.<sup>64</sup> This is salvation, something Julian intimates would have occurred whether or not sin was a reality.

### *Sin as Suffering*

Julian has a broad understanding of the word "sin." It means more for her than the active free choice of evil on the part of the sinner. As she uses it, the word "sin" embraces everything that is not good, including "the passions, spiritual and bodily, of all God's creatures" that result from sin, and the pains and sufferings of Christ (27:225). While she agrees with the logic of the idea that sin is nothing in light of the love of God, Julian does not think this does justice to the way humans experience sin. Sin may well be nothing on the ontological level, but the pain it causes is something that theology must consider: "I believe that [sin] has no kind of substance, no share in being, nor can it be recognized except by the pain caused by it. And it seems to me that this pain is something for a time" (27:225). Consistent with the way God looks at human sinfulness, with compassion rather than blame, Julian regards sin primarily as something humans suffer from, whatever their degree of personal guilt might be:

Sin is the sharpest scourge with which any chosen soul can be struck, which scourge belabors man or woman, and breaks a man and purges him in his own sight so much that at times he thinks himself that he is not fit for anything but as it were to sink into hell (39:244).

As was the case with her use of feudal imagery, Julian pays less attention than Anselm does to sin's effects on the social order, and concentrates instead on its effects upon the individual psyche, sufferings graphically symbolized by the servant in the ditch:

<sup>64</sup> Gerhard Ladner claims that the Western tradition differs essentially from the East in its emphasis upon the corporeality of what is brought back to God as a result of Christ's redemptive activity (*The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1959] 71-75, 175-77, 184-85). Julian is squarely in the Western tradition here, as is Anselm. Gollnick's whole work is an effort to explain how crucial the symbol of flesh is to Anselm's theological system.

He cannot rise or help himself in any way. And of all this, the greatest hurt which I saw him in was lack of consolation, for he could not turn his face to look on his loving lord, who was very close to him, in whom is all consolation; but like a man who was for the time extremely feeble and foolish, he paid heed to his feelings and his continuing distress. . . . He was blinded in his reason and perplexed in his mind, so much so that he had almost forgotten his own love (51:267–68).

Julian spells out the painful effects of the fall in some detail: loss of might and wisdom, preoccupation with suffering, and confusion of will. Furthermore, the weakness caused by the fall induces personal sin, something from which no one is exempt. Here Julian emphasizes, in particular, the detrimental effects of false guilt, scrupulosity, and self-hatred, which can lead to the denial of God's love, the sin of despair.<sup>65</sup>

### *The Power of God's Love*

Nonetheless, the most important lesson Julian learned from her revelations, strongly dependent on the message of Romans 5, is the fact that the power of God's love is far greater than the power of sin. She sensed that much of the worry about guilt and the fear of damnation which characterized her age ignored the fact that evil has been overcome by the power of God's grace. As Julian puts it, we usually have no trouble believing that God "is almighty and may punish me greatly, and . . . all wisdom, and can punish me wisely," but we have great difficulty believing that God "is all goodness and loves me tenderly" (77:330).<sup>66</sup> Julian shrewdly penetrates into the strange inability of human nature to accept the self as lovable, making us paradoxically more comfortable with God the judge, whom we must always strive to please and appease, than with God the mother, who simply loves us as we are. Julian's revelations taught her that love is the most essential aspect of the nature of God, affecting God's other attributes: God's love "makes might and wisdom very humble to us" (73:323). And this love will simply not allow us to be lost.

Julian describes God's love as both courteous and homely.<sup>67</sup> The

<sup>65</sup> For more detail, see *Wisdom's Daughter* 121–29.

<sup>66</sup> "Though the three persons of the blessed Trinity be all alike in the self, the soul received most understanding of love. Yes, and [God] wants us in all things to have our contemplation and our delight in love. And it is about this knowledge that we are most blind, for some of us believe that God is almighty and may do everything, and that he is all wisdom and can do everything, but that he is all love and wishes to do everything, there we fail. And it is this ignorance which most hinders God's lovers" (73:323).

<sup>67</sup> See, for example: "I saw our Lord God as a lord in his own house, who has called all his friends to a splendid feast. . . . I saw him reign in his house as a king and fill it all full of joy and mirth, gladdening and consoling his dear friends with himself, very

Middle English word "cortaysye" captures well the ideal relationship between lord and vassal in the feudal system.<sup>68</sup> Applied to God, it indicates God's desire to be generous and faithful to creatures, but in a way that demands a similar response. For Julian, God's courteous love includes the fidelity to creation that hates sin and provides a strong bulwark against it, but also the demand that sinners recognize their sinfulness, "meekly . . . accuse" themselves of it, and join in the struggle for its eradication (52:281). This picture of God's love is not essentially different from Anselm's.

Julian's uniqueness lies in her description of God's love as "homely." While the word "courteous" as applied to God allows for graciousness and generosity, it also implies nobility, majesty, and a certain distance. The word "homely," by contrast, emphasizes the intimacy of God's love for humankind. The Middle English word "homely" simply meant "feeling comfortable or at home with," best translated by the modern English words "intimate" or "familiar."<sup>69</sup> Julian uses various images to describe the effects of God's homely love. God is "our natural place, in which we were created by the motherhood of love" (60:297). We are enclosed in this God as in a womb (57:292). God is our clothing, "who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us" (5:183). On the other hand, we are God's home, a fact obviously reflected in the Incarnation, through which God makes humanity the place where God chooses to dwell by becoming human flesh.

This closeness of God to humanity makes separation from God impossible: "in this endless love we are led and protected by God, and we shall never be lost." The human soul has its foundation in God, "preciously knitted to [God] in its making" (53:284). So close is this unity that Julian can say, "I saw no difference between God and our substance, but, as it were, all God; and still my understanding accepted that our substance is in God, that is to say that God is God, and our substance is a creature in God" (54:285). This unity is due to the

---

[homely] and courteously, with wonderful melody in endless love in his own fair blissful countenance" (14:203).

<sup>68</sup> The primary meaning of the word signifies the desire to find pleasure in giving to others, but it also implies hospitality, the avoidance of contention, and strict adherence to the truth; see W. O. Evans, " 'Cortaysye' in Middle English," *Mediaeval Studies* 29 (1967) 143-57.

<sup>69</sup> See Anna Maria Reynolds, " 'Courtesy' and 'Homeliness' in the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich," *Fourteenth-Century English Mystics Newsletter* 5.2 (1979) 12-20. The notion of God's homeliness in Julian's text has deep affinities with John's Gospel; see James Walsh, "God's Homely Loving: St. John and Julian of Norwich on the Divine Indwelling," *The Month* 19 (1958) 164-72.

homely love of God; because of it we need not fear the destructiveness of sin, but trust that "all will be well."

If Anselm emphasized the love of God as the beginning and end of his treatise on the Incarnation, Julian's whole work can be seen as a commentary on the Johannine theme that God is love, and that those who abide in love abide in God and God in them (1 John 4:16). Her sole purpose in publishing her revelations was to promote a better understanding of God's love.

### *Human Participation in the Work of Redemption*

This brings us to the most problematic area of Julian's soteriology. Her description of the power of God's love to keep humanity united to God can seem deterministic. Unlike Anselm, Julian seems at first glance to give scant attention to the need for humans to participate in their own salvation. The weakness in Julian's soteriology is the lack of a formal treatment of human freedom. However, we can draw implications from her discussion of other issues to speculate about how she saw the role of freedom in the Christian life.

An important clue is found in the parable of the lord and the servant, where the servant, representing all humanity, stood eager to do the lord's will, which will is also what the servant himself most deeply wanted. Further, Julian describes an "opposition" within the human self between "reluctance and deliberate choice" (19:212). The reluctance to move in the direction of God, which humans experience as a result of sin, prevents them on occasion from freely and fully choosing what they most deeply desire. Freedom is hindered, not increased, by choosing other than what God wills. The fact that God holds human beings in an eternal bond of love thus enables the exercise of human freedom, allowing the "deliberate choice" of God's will, which is consistent with the heart's deepest desire.

Thus it is appropriate that God should reward those who have "voluntarily served God" (14:203). Humans are not automatons mechanically doing what God wills, but "partners in [God's] good will and work" (43:253), exercising free will in cooperation with God. Christ is working in us, but "we are by grace according with him" (54:286). Christ "wants us to be his helpers, giving all our intention to him" (57:292) and "preserving ourselves faithfully in him" (71:318).

While we have concluded that the *Cur Deus Homo* points out the need for human cooperation with God's work of redemption more adequately than Julian does, Julian actually describes better how this cooperation is effected through her development of the theme of the *imitatio Christi*. The life of the earthly Jesus provides the exemplar for human spirituality. Meditation upon it, particularly upon the passion,

under the influence of grace, leads one to the same trust in and love for God operative in the life of Jesus, which Julian sees as fundamental for growth in likeness to him. Faith is a dynamic virtue through which we are taught how to live:

From [faith] comes all our good, by which we are led and saved. For in that come the commandments of God, of which we ought to have two kinds of understanding. One is that we ought to understand and know what things [God] commands, to love them and keep them. The other is that we ought to know what things [God] forbids, to hate them and refuse them. For in these two is all our activity comprehended (57:291–92).

These commandments and virtues are “treasured” in Christ (57:292), who, through the example of his life, has become “our way, safely leading us in his laws” (55:286). It is Christ, dwelling in the soul through the Spirit, who effects the life of virtue in Christians. But he “wants us to be his helpers, giving all our intention to him, learning his laws, observing his teaching, desiring everything to be done which he does, truly trusting in him” (57:292). Under the power of God’s indwelling, the Christian gradually acquires Christ’s own “mind,” the inner vitality which animated his life on earth, and is enabled to reproduce in his or her own life the pattern of Christ’s life. The virtues which Julian emphasizes, consistent with her fourteenth-century English milieu, are humility, patience in suffering, and compassionate love for others. By this imitation of God incarnate, the image of God in the soul is increased and fulfilled according to God’s eternal plan for human salvation. All of this is accomplished within the framework of the sacramental life of grace provided by the Church, to which all Christians are united in the one Body of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Anselmian Themes in Julian*

With this cursory summary of Julian’s soteriology before us, we are in a position to consider Julian’s treatment of specific Anselmian themes. Julian agrees that Christ’s work of salvation was necessary: “the redemption and the buying-back of mankind is *needful* and profitable in everything” (53:283; my emphasis). Like Anselm, Julian means by this necessity the fact that the Incarnation is the best possible means by which God could have saved humankind. But rather than looking for a satisfying intellectual argument to establish this, she focuses upon Christ’s attitude toward it:

This deed and this work of our salvation were as well devised as God could devise it. It was done as honorably as Christ could do it, and here I saw

<sup>70</sup> For further elaboration, see *Wisdom’s Daughter* 135–47.

complete joy in Christ, for his joy would not have been complete if the deed could have been done any better than it was (22:218).

However, as we saw above, the reason for this necessity is not the fact of sin, as it is in Anselm's construction, but God's desire that human creation be increased and fulfilled beyond its original splendor through God's assuming human flesh. The need to repair the damage done by sin is certainly subsumed into Julian's soteriology, but her discussion of the reason for the Incarnation transcends it.

Julian never describes the Incarnation as making satisfaction to God for the damage caused by sin, which is a central focus for Anselm. However, as we saw above, this satisfaction is inclusive of us, since it involves God's fidelity to all creation. Julian makes this point even more clearly, for, in a rather dramatic departure from Anselm, she applies the word "satisfy" not to God but directly to human beings. In the course of her revelations, Christ asks, "Are you well satisfied that I suffered for you? . . . If you are satisfied, I am satisfied" (22:216). Julian thus stresses, more strongly and directly than does Anselm, how important human happiness is to God.

Julian agrees with Anselm that God's honor required that Christ be rewarded for what he did:

Then this courteous lord said this: See my beloved servant, what harm and injuries he has had and accepted in my service for my love, yes, and for his good will. Is it not reasonable that I should reward him for his fright and his fear, his hurt and his injuries and all his woe? And furthermore, is it not proper for me to give him a gift, better for him and more honorable than his own health could have been? Otherwise, it seems to me that I should be ungracious (51: 268-69).

Compare this with Anselm's words:

I see that it is necessary for the Father to reward the Son; else he is either unjust in not wishing to do it, or weak in not being able to do it; but neither of these things can be attributed to God. . . . If a reward so large and so deserved is not given to him or any one else, then it will almost appear as if the Son had done this great work in vain (2.19:283-84).<sup>71</sup>

But Julian's meditation on this reward gives an interesting twist to Anselm's thought. In the Anselmian construction, Christ received a reward which he did not need, since he was God, and thus the reward

<sup>71</sup> "Immo necesse esse video, ut pater filio retribuatur. Alioquin aut iniustus videretur esse si nollet, aut impotens si non posset; quae a deo aliena sunt. . . . Si tanta et tam debita merces nec illi nec alii reddatur, in vanum filius tantam rem fecisse videbitur."

was transferred over to us. But in Julian's construction, *we* are the reward given to Christ by God:

[The Father] rewards his Son, Jesus Christ. . . . Therefore we are his, not only through our redemption but also by his Father's courteous gift. We are his bliss, we are his reward, we are his honor, we are his crown. And this was a singular wonder and a most delectable contemplation, that we are his crown (22:216).

By the marvellous increase and fulfillment of human nature wrought by Christ, humanity becomes his glory and honor, and through him, that of all the Trinity: "the Father's joy, the Son's honor, the Holy Spirit's delight" (51:278).<sup>72</sup> This reflection strengthens Julian's stress on the motivation of love which guided the work of the Incarnation, and on the great regard God has for humanity. These ideas are not absent in Anselm, but Julian makes them more forceful.

Like Anselm, Julian sees no conflict between God's love and justice. For her, God's justice is truth, both utterly consistent with God's love. God therefore sees humans only one way, through the eyes of love: "The . . . judgment which is from God's justice is from his own great endless love, and that is that fair, sweet judgment . . . in which I saw him assign to us no kind of blame" (45:257). For God, humans are always the good and rightful recipients of love. God's justice is never wrathful toward humans, but is always turned lovingly toward them. This is a different understanding of God's justice from Anselm's, who saw it, albeit motivated by love, as the rightful demand for satisfaction for the damage done by sin.

#### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Anselm's and Julian's soteriologies have much in common. Each is a theologically sophisticated meditation on the central mysteries of the Christian faith, probing into the nature of God's love for humanity, sin's detrimental effects upon creation, and the role of Christ in the work of redemption. But each places emphasis upon a different aspect of the salvation story, an emphasis directly related to the religious experience which gave it birth.

The experience undergirding the *Cur Deus Homo* is the experience of compunction, amply illustrated in Anselm's prayers. Grace produces the realization of the horror of sin and the longing for God who alone

<sup>72</sup> This emphasis also alters Julian's view of heaven. Traditionally understood as the joy humans receive in the vision of God and in partaking of the life of the Trinity, heaven, for Julian, includes God's joy and delight in us. Humans are seen to give something to God, if not to God's essence, certainly to God's eternal rejoicing over human creation.

can save, an experience corresponding to what analysts of the mystical life have called the purgative way. Anselm also prayed for greater understanding of the mysteries of faith, confident that this would lead him to a deeper love and devotion to God. Such insights gained in prayer became the content of his theological arguments, and this whole experience bears a resemblance to the illuminative way of Christian mysticism. As the fruit of such experiences, Anselm describes in the *Cur Deus Homo* the ruin sin has brought to human nature and to all creation. He reminds us of human responsibility for sin and of the need to participate in its eradication, along with a frustrating awareness of the inability to do so. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* is finally a hymn of praise to the gracious love of God who became human to overcome human weakness and enable human participation in the work of redemption through union with Christ.

We can suppose that for most of her life Julian's experience was similar to Anselm's. She, too, prayed for the grace of compunction. She speaks often and knowingly about the pain caused by sin, and of the tremendous longing for God that is always part of the earthly sojourn. But besides experiences of purgation and illumination, Julian is privileged, at least for an instant, with the experience of mystical union, which changed her perspective forever.<sup>73</sup> It is in light of this that her soteriology was motivated and formulated. From the vantage point of God's loving gaze, all other viewpoints, including human experiences of guilt and responsibility for sin, become relativized. Her *Showings* is a hymn to the unitive love of God which will not allow God's creation to be lost, in spite of the fact of sin. Her basic message is not that humanity recognize and make up for the damage done by sin, but that they learn to place absolute trust in God who holds all in loving union, thus assuring salvation.

In attempting to reconcile her revelations with church teaching, both of which she regarded as God's word, Julian eventually worked out a distinction between them, based upon her understanding of God's

<sup>73</sup> Julian tells us her revelations came to her in three modes: bodily sights, spiritual sights, and words formed in her understanding. Of these her spiritual sights seem best to correspond to what the Western mystical tradition called the higher type of intellectual vision, wherein no phantasms previously existing in the mind are utilized; they are sudden enlightenments. For this analysis, see Paul Molinari, *Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a Fourteenth-Century English Mystic* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958) 61. Julian's experience of "seeing God in a point" cited above is this type of vision. In his study of mysticism, David Granfield mentions that such visions are "a touch of divinity, an experience and a taste of God" which John of the Cross called "a part of the union towards which we are directing the soul." Only those who have reached the state of union can have these manifestations of knowledge; see David Granfield, *Heightened Consciousness: The Mystical Difference* (New York: Paulist, 1991) 156.



mercy. Before her revelations she had considered mercy to be the "remission of [God's] wrath after we have sinned" (47:260). But her revelations showed no wrath in God. Technically, since God eternally sees humans as good, without the blame caused by sin, God does not forgive.<sup>74</sup> Rather than forgiveness, mercy is simply that aspect of God's love that preserves humanity against the forces of evil. Yet humans certainly experience something that they describe as the wrath and forgiveness of God.

Julian found the solution to her perplexity in the distinction between human and divine judgment. Unlike God's judgment which is based on our true "natural substance" eternally united to God, human judgment is based upon "our changeable sensuality." Human judgments are therefore "sometimes . . . good and lenient . . . sometimes . . . hard and painful." To the extent that they are good and lenient, they match God's justice, God's truth, God's eternal point of view. But to the extent that they are hard and painful, they cause humans to experience what seems like the wrath and forgiveness of God (45:256).

Both types of judgment are important and necessary. Human judgments grow from our existential situation, and therefore contribute something essential to understanding ourselves as historical beings. Thus it is right that we describe our experience of being forgiven by God, even though God was not actually angry with us and has no need to forgive. It is right that we characterize our sin as mortal or deadly, though technically it is not that in God's sight.<sup>75</sup> There is a place for church teaching on eternal damnation, even though Julian's revelations seem to imply that all will somehow be saved.<sup>76</sup> These "human" judgments are frequently illumined by grace, and can be understood as

<sup>74</sup> "Our Lord God cannot in his own judgment forgive, because he cannot be angry—that would be impossible. . . . For this was revealed, that our life is all founded and rooted in love, and without love we cannot live. And therefore to the soul which by God's special grace sees so much of his great and wonderful goodness as that we are endlessly united to him in love, it is the most impossible thing . . . that God might be angry" (49:263–64).

<sup>75</sup> "Through the temptations and the sorrow into which on our side we fall, we often are dead by the judgment of men on earth. But in the sight of God the soul which will be saved was never dead, and never will be (50:265). . . . It often seems to us as if we were in danger of death and in some part of hell, because of the sorrow and the pain which sin is to us, and so for that time we are dead to the true sight of our blessed life. But in all this I saw truly that we are not dead in the sight of God, nor does he ever depart from us" (72:320).

<sup>76</sup> Space does not permit an adequate development of this point here, although from all that has been said, it is perhaps obvious that the message of Julian's revelations tends toward universal salvation. Julian's conclusions regarding this are careful and nuanced; see *Wisdom's Daughter* 162–69.

God's revelation filtered through human understanding; in fact, Julian places church teaching within the realm of human judgment. However, Julian's mystical experience taught her that such judgments are always provisional, limited, never the last word on God. Even though she proclaims that God is holy Church (34:236) and takes the Church's identity as the Body of Christ seriously,<sup>77</sup> she emphasizes even more strongly that the Mystery of God transcends the Church.

Julian would likely put the *Cur Deus Homo* within the category of human judgment. Though certainly illuminated by grace, it is focused upon the existential fact of sin and the felt need for salvation. Furthermore, Anselm's whole methodology is a brilliant experiment in the use of human reason illumined by faith. It is grounded in the conviction that the human mind, the creature that most fully images God, is apt for just such exploration into the nature of God. It represents the quite considerable lengths the human mind can progress in the effort to understand the truths of faith. The logic of Anselm's argument is intellectually satisfying, which perhaps explains its perennial appeal. Julian, as we have seen, is in sympathy with most of it.

But through her experience of mystical union, Julian had a fleeting glimpse of God's perspective, which she calls the category of divine judgment. This is a perspective not time-bound, but eternal, revealing a God infinitely more loving than the human mind can understand. It remains unclear and mysterious to Julian, however much she struggles to grasp it. As a result, rather than being appreciated as a brilliant experiment in the use of reason, Julian's soteriology appears at times to defy the logic of human experience and judgment. But as such it reminds us that God's ways are not our ways, and that however confidently we may exercise our minds in understanding the central mysteries of faith, God remains Incomprehensible Mystery. Anselm, for all his confidence in the powers of human reason to penetrate into the nature of God, agrees: "If I say anything not upheld by greater authority, though I appear to demonstrate it, yet it should be received with no further certainty than as my opinion for the present, until God makes some clearer revelation to me" (1.18:220).<sup>78</sup>

Anselm's and Julian's soteriologies balance one another. Julian was aware that such confidence in salvation as taught by her revelations could degenerate into presumption unless balanced by true humility, awareness of sin, and the need for God's grace.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, perspec-

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 63–65, 136.

<sup>78</sup> "Si quid dixero quod maior non confirmet auctoritas—quamvis illud ratione probare videar—non alia certitudine accipiatur, nisi quia interim ita mihi videtur, donec deus mihi melius aliquo modo revelet."

<sup>79</sup> See *Wisdom's Daughter* 127, 130–34, 200 nn. 37–38.

tives such as Anselm's are subsumed into her theology, and continue to be valid. But she was more firmly convinced that concentration on sin and guilt could degenerate into the sin of despair unless balanced by an adequate sense of God's love. Unlike the faith-filled atmosphere of the eleventh-century cloister, fourteenth-century England was in need of greater appreciation of the compassionate love of God. Thus, Julian warns constantly against an undue preoccupation with sin and guilt:

When we have fallen through weakness or blindness, then our courteous Lord, touching us, moves us and protects us. And then he wants us to see our wretchedness and meekly to acknowledge it; but he does not want us to remain there, or to be much occupied in self-accusation, nor does he want us to be too full of our own misery. But he wants us quickly to attend to him. . . . And he hastens to bring us to him, for we are his joy and his delight, and he is the remedy of our life (79:334–35).

Instead of focusing on sin and guilt, growth in the Christian life is better served by focusing on the love of God which saves.

The twentieth-century Church needs both perspectives. The fact that "God does not look upon us with wrath in our sin" may not be the message our society as a whole needs to hear today, given the extreme damage sin has caused the oppressed peoples of the world and even the earth itself. A fresh reading of the *Cur Deus Homo* could renew a sense of human responsibility for sin and for repairing sin's damage in our world through union with Christ. But many individuals, even those involved with the work for justice, suffer from self-hatred, scrupulosity, and false guilt. It is to such as these that Julian's *Showings* is addressed. It reminds us that any consideration of the horror of sin and the reality of human guilt must be placed firmly within the context of God's all-abiding, eternal, salvific love. The realization with which Julian sums up her revelations must be ours as well:

So I was taught that love is our Lord's meaning. And I saw very certainly in this and in everything that before God made us he loved us, which love was never abated and never will be. And in this love he has done all his works, and in this love he has made all things profitable to us, and in this love our life is everlasting. In our creation we had beginning, but the love in which he created us was in him from without beginning. In this love we have our beginning, and all this shall we see in God without end (86:342–43).

This kind of trust in God's love can provide a certain poise to Christian living without which we would be off-balance, a poise necessary for sustained and fruitful participation in God's creative and redemptive work in our world.