

# The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 49, SPRING 1988

#### MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

4 June 1988: The Society will hold its Annual General Meeting at 11am at Pusey House, 61 St Giles, Oxford. At the conclusion of the AGM at approx. 11.30, there will be a reading session for members and visitors who are invited to bring and read an extract from CW's prose or poetry and to say briefly why they have chosen it. At 12.30 lunch will be taken. Members and visitors are asked to make their own arrangements, but tea and coffee will be available at Pusey House. A few yards from Pusey House is The Eagle and Child pub (otherwise known as The Bird and Baby) at which The Inklings used to meet to read and discuss their work. It may be possible to reserve some places in a room where The Inklings are commemorated; members may like to see how the association with The Inklings has been preserved by the brewers in the refurbishment of the interior. At 1.30, for those who wish, there will be a short conducted walk to the University Church of St Mary to recall Cranmer and CW's play, returning through Broad Street and by the Martyrs Memorial to Pusey House by 2.20. At 2.30 Mr George Sayer will speak on "Lewis and Williams as Literary Critics" and members of the C S Lewis Society have been invited to attend this talk as guests of the Society.

12 November 1988: Doreen Barry will speak - title to be announced.

25 February 1989: Elisabeth Brewer will speak on "The Role of Women in the Arthurian Poetry of Charles Williams".

The meetings in November and February will be held at Lidden House 24 South Audley Street, London W1.

#### LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday 7 August 1988: We will start reading Descent into Hell. We will meet in St Peter's Church, Kensington Park Road, London W11 (nearest station Notting Hill Gate) at 1 pm. Tea and coffee will be provided but please bring sandwiches.

#### OXFORD READING GROUP

For details please contact either Anne Scott (Oxford 53897) or Brenda Boughton (Oxford 55589).

#### CAMBRIDGE READING GROUP

For information please contact Geraldine and Richard Pinch, 5 Oxford Road, Cambridge CB4 3PH, telephone Cambridge 311465.

#### LAKE MICHIGAN AREA READING GROUP

For details please contact Charles Mattar, 188W.11th St., Holland, Michigan 49423, USA, telephone (616) 396 2260.

#### CW AND THE GOLDEN DAWN

Anne Ridler writes: "A propos Arti Ponsen's letter in your Winter issue: no doubt we must all try to be accurate in speaking about CW and the Golden Dawn, but I wish to put on record that he did himself speak of his membership under that title; and also that in 1932 or 3 he spoke of it as past, so it cannot be true that 'he never really left' the Fellowship."

#### REFERENCE TO C.W.

Gillian Lunn writes: "The late Philip Teynbee's posthumously-published End of a Journey: an autobiographical journal 1979-81 (Bloomsbury 1988: ISBN

0 7475 0132 7) has been much noticed and admired. In an Observer review I read '.... much of the book is spent analysing and often denouncing harmless if feeble thinkers, like Evelyn Underhill and Charles Williams ...'. This seems to me so inaccurate as to be positively misleading; neither writer is mentioned very often and Kierkegaard is far more 'denounced'. A friend's recent gift to Toynebee of a copy of The New Christian Year was clearly, from the journal-comments, much valued. The dying 'seeker' was not looking, perhaps, for what he had earlier found and disliked in CW's own words, and he could not bear CW's style of writing. But he was sufficiently interested, many years later and near to death, to read them 'about the life and works of Charles Willaims ...' (I do wonder what he read) and to puzzle about him: - ' ... obviously a great soul ...' and later 'Yet there is something about his work which is deeply alien to me; even repugnant. What? ...' I found the Journal interesting and moving.

SUPPLEMENT

There is no supplement with this Newsletter.

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On 27 February 1988, Eileen Mable spoke to the Society on "The August Predecessor: Julian of Norwich and Charles Williams". We are very pleased to be able to reproduce the talk in the Newsletter.

"I want to put my remarks this afternoon within the context of three quotations. The first is from Psalm 145, v.9 (BCP version):

'The Lord is loving unto every man : and his mercy is over all his works.'

The second is from Julian of Norwich:

'And he showed me more, a little thing, the size of a hazel-nut, on the palm of my hand, round like a ball. I looked at it thoughtfully and wondered, "What is this?" And the answer came, "It is all that is made."

I marvelled that it continued to exist and did not suddenly disintegrate it was so small. And again my mind supplied the answer, "It exists, both now and for ever, because God loves it." In short, everything owes its existence to the love of God.' (1).

The third quotation, and the briefest, is the phrase which appears on Charles Williams' gravestone: 'Under the Mercy'.

Those of you who were present at the Society's October meeting will remember Dr Gisbert Kranz's references to the Archdeacon of Fardles's habit of chanting verses from the psalms as, for instance: 'O give thanks unto the God of all gods, for His mercy endureth for ever', and his linking this with Julian of Norwich and her themes of mercy and pardon. Some of you may also have recalled that, when the Archdeacon waited in the back room of the infernal chemist's shop for his apparently imminent death, he turned from the window and began reading the Revelations of Lady Julian. Charles Williams's choice of book was surely deliberate.

Williams's writings are rich in quotations from, and references to, Julian of Norwich. His thinking is deeply imbued with hers. Sometimes his writing illuminates hers, as in his essay on 'Sensuality and Substance' in The Image of the City. Here he writes of Julian's use of the word 'sensuality' and moves on, via a sympathetic critique of D H Lawrence, to the Incarnation and the need to recover for creation the Way of the Affirmation of Images; and he cites Julian as among those from whom we may learn.

There is, however, one passage in particular where Williams acknowledges his indebtedness to Julian. Towards the end of The Forgiveness of Sins, he quotes William Blake:

' O point of mutual forgiveness between enemies,  
Birthplace of the Lamb of God incomprehensible! '

and he continues: 'It was worth remembering Blake. But beyond Blake lies the Lady Julian of Norwich. Few, if any, of the English have written so greatly of pardon as she. She has been quoted already, and it is no part of this book's purpose to rewrite journalistically what she wrote celestially. But on the other hand no one can write a word of the absorption of human activities into that final Glory which the Church declares without remembering his august predecessor; and no book on such a subject ought to close without remembering the final Glory. The Atonement is the name given to an operation; an operation beyond our comprehension, but not beyond our attention; an operation by which everything - even hell - was made a part of that final Glory. The Atonement made possible the forgiveness of sins; or at least made it possible after the best manner. It enabled sin to be fully sin, and it fully counteracted sin. The maniacal obsession of selfishness in which, both necessarily and voluntarily, we live, was nowhere arbitrarily destroyed. I do not say that we do not wish it has pleased God to destroy it; of course we do, even (many of us) at the small cost of destroying us with it. The penance of our life is too heavy. But in fact he neither forbore to create because we were about to sin nor ceased to sustain when we had begun to sin. It is the choice of a God, not of a man; we should have been less harsh. We should not have created because we could not have endured; we could not have willed; we could not have loved. It is the choice of a God, not of a man.'

Then he quotes Julian again. 'This place is a prison and this life is penance; and in the remedy he willeth that we rejoice. The remedy is that our Lord is with us, keeping and leading into the fulness of joy.' Williams comments: 'The joy is to be complete and universal; even (mystically) hell is to be part of that joy.' (2).

I have quoted at such lengths because the passage, both in its actual use of words as well as in its thought, shows Williams's indebtedness to Julian. We shall return to its theme later.

We know very few facts about Julian. She was born in 1342 and, with Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton and the author of The Cloud of Unknowing, comprises that brief fourteenth century flowering of English mysticism. Chaucer and Langland were among her contemporaries. Evelyn Underhill called her 'the first English woman of letters'. Her life-span included part of the Hundred Years' War, the Black Death, the Peasants' Revolt and the murder of Richard II.

Julian received her revelations during the course of a serious illness in May 1373 when she was thirty and a half years old; and she is thought, on the evidence of certain wills, still to have been alive in 1416 when she would have been in her seventies. Her garrulous younger contemporary and visionary, Dame Margery Kempe, has described her meeting with Julian in her later years. One notes Julian's encouragement of Margery, coupled with an attempt to temper her over-egotistical, self-centred outlook. (If anyone wants 'a good read', I thoroughly recommend Margery Kempe's Book (3). I found it fascinating.)

We do not know whether Julian was already an anchoress at the time she received her revelations, or shewings. The presence of her mother and other companions at her supposed death-bed suggests that she was not. Nor do we know whether she ever became a professed nun. Her anchorhold was attached to the Church of St Julian and St Edward's, Conisford, Norwich. Clifton Welters, in his introduction to the Penguin edition of the Revelations suggests that the link of her cell with the Benedictine Community at Carrow indicates that her profession was a possibility. Certainly, that balance which is so evident in the Rule of St Benedict is a notable trait in Julian's character as revealed in her writings. We do not even know whether her original name was Julian. Sister Anna Maria Reynolds suggests that she may simply have taken it from the name of the church to which her anchorhold was attached.

There are two versions of Julian's Revelations. The first and shorter one, A Shewing of God's Love, appears to have been written soon after the event. The second, longer and better known version, Revelations of Divine Love, containing the fullness of Julian's meditations on the revelations, was not written until almost twenty years after they had occurred.

Although we know so few facts about Julian's life, when we read and re-read her book, we begin to know her as an individual. She comes alive for us. I should like to speak personally here. I first read Revelations of Divine Love about four years ago: I did so seriously and with considerable care because I had been asked to prepare a synopsis for a possible monograph of Julian. The monograph has not been written but I am grateful for the chance - not chance, surely, but rather Holy Luck - which led me to read Julian. I am grateful too that I read Julian before I read any of the commentaries on her book. Some of these seem more concerned to fit Julian and her writings into already prescribed ways of sanctity and methods of prayer than to clarify what Julian is saying. - A Procrustean bed indeed!

Although there was, and still remains, much in Julian's writings that I find hard to understand, Julian's own impact was immediate and direct. I formed a strong impression of her as a person.

She is a loving and sometimes impulsive woman, possessing a natural and attractive holiness. She has a gentle sense of humour. She combines deep humility with strong independence of mind: she maintained, for example, that there is no wrath in God. And one sometimes wonders whether her repeated deference to the teachings of Holy Church and her insistence on the truth of the meaning of her visions can always be equated. She has a fine mind which is reflected in her theologically sophisticated understanding and her command of language.

Julian has a wholesome, balanced sanctity far removed from any hint of neuroticism; and she has the maturity to accept and live with ambiguities and things she cannot wholly understand. She has homeliness (a word she uses of Our Lord Himself in the shorter version of her book) and she has a warmth to which the reader readily responds. She is, we may say, 'in love' with Our Lord; but there is about her none of the soft and cloying piety which can irritate in a writer such as Richard Rolle.

I have already referred to Julian's sense of humour. Speaking of the visit of the priest when she was supposedly dying, she writes:

'My parish priest was sent for to be at my end, and by the time he came my eyes were fixed, and I could no longer speak. He set the cross before my

face and said: "I have brought you the image of your Maker and Saviour. Look at it, and be strengthened."

'I thought indeed that what I was doing was good enough, for my eyes were fixed heavenwards where by the mercy of God I trusted to go. But I agreed none the less to fix my eyes on the face of the crucifix if I could. And this I was able to do. I thought that perhaps I could look straight ahead longer than I could look up.' (4).

Julian is very much her own woman, as I have indicated by reference to the firmness with which she held to the truth of her visions, even when some of her insights appeared to clash with the accepted orthodoxy. In the shorter version of her book (I quote here from A Shewing of God's Love edited by Sister Anna Maria Reynolds), she writes:

'But God forbid that ye should see or take it thus, that I am a teacher, for I do not mean that, nor meant I ever so. For I am a woman, unlettered, feeble and frail. But I know well this that I say - I have it on the shewing of Him who is Sovereign Teacher - and truly charity argeth me to tell you of it, for I would that God were known and my fellow-Christians helped (as I would be myself), to the more hating of sin and loving of God. Because I am a woman should I therefore believe that I ought not to tell you about the goodness of God since I saw at the same time that it is His will that it be known? And that shall ye see well in the same matter that follows after, if it be well and truly received. Then shall ye soon forget me that am a wretch, and act so that I hinder you not, and behold Jesus who is Teacher of all.' (5).

Julian's 'Because I am a woman ...' is no medieval feminist outburst. It sounds very much like a direct reply to a passage in the Ancrene Riwe (that strange mixture of spirituality, advice as to the ordering of an anchoress's life of prayer and devotion, practical concern for her physical well-being and devastating distrust of any form of human sexuality) which forbids an anchoress to teach. 'Do not preach to any man, not let any man ask you for advice or give you advice; give your advice only to women. St Paul forbade women to teach: "I suffer not women to teach".' (6).

Julian walks the Way of the Affirmation of Images. There are her vivid descriptions of the Lord's Passion, her detailed parable of the Lord and the Servant, the picture of Christ enthroned in the human heart, the vision of the Heavenly City where God is not in any one particular place, her evocative picture of the green hills and valleys of the sea-bed, with its intimations of Psalm 139. Not least is Julian's understanding of God as our Mother as well as our Father and the homely naturalness with which she pictures the consequences of this:

'The human mother will suckle her child with her own milk, but our beloved Mother, Jesus, feeds us with himself, and, with the most tender courtesy, does it by means of the Blessed Sacrament, the precious food of all true life. And he keeps us going through his mercy and grace by all the sacraments ..... The human mother may put her child tenderly to her breast, but our tender Mother Jesus simply leads us into his blessed breast through his open side, and there gives us a glimpse of the Godhead and heavenly joy - the inner certainty of eternal bliss.' (7).

Julian is thoroughly incarnational and Trinitarian in her teaching:

'For the Trinity is God, and God the Trinity; the Trinity is our Maker and keeper, our eternal lover, joy and bliss - all through our Lord Jesus Christ. .... for where Jesus is spoken of, the blessed Trinity is always to be understood as I see it.' (8).

Apart from Julian's frequent overt references to the Trinity, there are many occasions when she groups virtues, qualities, images, in threes - a kind of trinitarian patterning.

Julian is insistent that her visions were not given her for herself alone but for all her fellow-Christians which, in that medieval, non-pluralist society, meant everyone. I want to carry this further. In reading Julian, I have had the growing conviction that here is someone who writes about life as it really is and who does not ignore or fudge the dark and cruel side of human experience in this world. She writes about reality. And that reality - the way things actually are, the way life actually works - is the same whether one is a Christian or not. Because Julian writes within a Christian framework, using Christian language and imagery, then Christians should most readily respond to what she is saying. But the many non-Christians who acknowledge a spiritual dimension to experience, will also find much in Julian to which they can respond.

Paul Molinari wrote of Julian: 'It was Julian's conviction that these sights conveyed to her intellect a special light by which she saw and grasped the inner and real value of those vital truths which are at the basis of our life. (my underlining). However, she is concerned not with the perception of those truths in the abstract, but with their impact on our relationship towards God, with the understanding of the way in which this relationship should be lived.' (9). But it is precisely because of her grasp of 'those vital truths which are at the basis of our life' that Julian can speak to many of our contemporaries outside the visible Church.

I want to move on to explore, in brief, two themes which are common to both Julian and Charles Williams. They are, first, what we have learned from Charles Williams to call the Co-inherence and, second, the apparent necessity of sin and the problem of evil and suffering. It is not, of course, possible entirely to separate the two themes, for any consideration of the former will at some point include the latter.

All things hold together in Christ. Because of their relatedness to Him, they are also related to each other. From the Co-inherence of the Trinity itself (which is the origin and pattern), the Co-inherence spreads outwards. There is no such thing as chance, only what Charles Williams would, I think, call Holy Luck. We are interdependent on each other, whether we like it or not. We are affected by the actions of others, as they are by ours. We, each one of us, with the whole created universe, are part of this web of glory which is the means of God's activity in his creation.

It requires but a little reflection, a little consideration of some of the events in our own lives, a little tracing back of our own personal history, to see that this is so. Charles Williams writes of the act of conception;

'That new life exists literally within its mother; it inheres in its mother. The value of the sexual act itself is a kind of co-inherence; the two participators intend (violence apart) a renewal of mutual vigour from the most extreme intimacy of physical relationships. With conception comes the physical inherence of the child. And this is renewed through all generations; each generation has inherited in that before it; in that sense without any doubt at all, we carry, if not another's burden, at least the burden of others.

'Such is the natural fact. At the root of the physical nature of man (so long as free choice exists) lie exchange of liking, substitution, inherence. The nature of man which is so expressed in the physical world is expressed after the same manner, only more fully, in the mental and spiritual.'

He goes on to write of other ways in which we live 'from others', asserting that 'If this principle of exchange, substitution and co-inherence (inhering in each other) is at all true, then it is true of the whole nature of man'. (10). Again, he writes in The Descent of the Dove:

'.... co-inherence did not begin with Christianity; all that happened then was that co-inherence itself was redeemed and revealed by that very redemption as a supernatural principle as well as a natural. We were made sin in Adam but Christ was made sin for us and we in him were taken out of sin. To refuse the ancient heritage of guilt is to cut ourselves off from mankind as certainly as to refuse the new principle. It is necessary to submit to the one as freely as to the other.' (11).

Science itself bears witness to the inter-relatedness of matter; and the ecologist demonstrates the dependence of living thing upon living thing and of living things on non-living things. We cannot escape the fact of co-inherence, by whatever name it is called. As Williams wrote: '... to refuse the Co-inherence is to separate oneself from the nature of things.' (12).

The natural world is a paradigm of the spiritual. But it would be wrong to make rigid divisions between the two, for it is precisely through the physical that the spiritual is expressed.

And what of Julian? Co-inherence is not part of her vocabulary but it is most definitely part of her understanding. I referred earlier to her equation of Jesus with the Trinity. Again, she writes: 'The whole Trinity was involved in the passion of Christ, giving us an abundance of virtue and grace by him, though only the Maiden's Son suffered. And because of this the whole Trinity rejoices eternally.' (13). Julian repeats more than once that her visions are not exclusive:

'The vision was for all and sundry. .... And though I speak of myself I am really speaking of all my fellow Christians, for I was taught by the inner meaning of this revelation that God intends this. .... For it is God's will that you should receive it with great joy and pleasure, as if Jesus himself had showed it to you all. The fact that I have had this revelation does not mean that I am good. I am good only in so far as I love God the better: if you love God more than do I then you are by that much better than I. .... When I look at myself in particular I am obviously of no account, but by and large I am hopeful, for I am united in love with all my fellow Christians. It is upon this unity that all those of mankind who are to be saved must depend. God, as I see it, is everything that is good; he has made the whole of creation, and loves all that he has made. And whoever loves his fellow Christians for God, loves all there is. For everything is included in the "mankind who are to be saved": everything, I say, that has been created, and the Maker of all as well! For God is in man, and God is in everything. And by the grace of God I hope that anyone who looks at it in this way will be taught aright, and greatly comforted if need be,' (14).

'For God is in man and God is in everything.' We are united at the source: this surely is the basis of Co-inherence and the exchange and substitution which flows from it. 'Our faith is nothing else but a right understanding, and true belief



and sure trust, that with regard to our essential being we are in God, and God in us, though we do not see him.' (15). Again, Julian writes, 'The charity of God makes such a unity within us that when it is seen for what it is in truth no one can separate himself from anyone else.' (16). Julian's Revelations is a discursive book rather than a closely developed argument; but the theme of completeness, wholeness, unity in and with God runs throughout it. It is as if Julian both longs for and already possesses it.

I want to move on to a brief examination of some of the reactions of Julian and Charles Williams to sin and suffering. Both were troubled and distressed by the sufferings of their own times and by that which they knew had been part of creation's experience since the Fall. Both of them were questioners and both exemplified Charles Williams's splendid dictum: 'Man was intended to argue with God.' (17). 'Humility', he writes, 'has never consisted in not asking questions; it does not make men less themselves or less intelligent, but more intelligent and more themselves.' (18). And, in addition to examining at some length Job's questioning of God, he also cites the Virgin Mary's 'How shall these things be?' in response to the angelic Annunciation. Julian may have questioned less vehemently than Williams, but she was very persistent. Williams cites Aquinas: 'God would not know good things perfectly, unless he also knew evil things .... for, since evil is not of itself knowable, forasmuch as "evil is the privation of good", as Augustine says (Confess. iii.7), therefore evil can neither be defined nor known except by good.' Williams himself continues, 'Things which are not and never will be he knows, "not by vision", as he does all things that are, or will be, "but by simple intelligence". It is therefore part of that knowledge that he should understand good in its deprivation, the identity of heaven in its opposite identity of hell, but without "approbation", without calling it into being at all.' (19).

But the Adam, our earliest forebears, could not know evil by pure intelligence, only by experience. 'Since there was not - since there never has been and never will be - anything else than the good to know, they knew good as antagonism. All difference consists in the mode of knowledge. They had what they wanted. That they did not like it when they got it certainly does not alter the fact that they certainly got it.' (20). So man knows good and he knows good as evil. This I do not understand and it appears to contradict what Williams later wrote in his essay on The Cross. However, Williams maintains that there was something in man which 'had remained everlastingly related to the good.' Referring to St John's Gospel, he writes, 'The Divine Thing is there identified with the knowledge of good which indefectibly exists in every man - indefectibly even though it should be experienced only as hell - "the light which lighteth every man".' (21). Julian maintained that 'Adam, as we know, was loved from eternity, and, securely kept in his time of need, is now happily restored to great and superlative joy. For our Lord is so good, so gentle, so considerate, that he never faults those who are going to bless and praise him for ever. '..... I understood with absolute certainty that there is in every soul to be saved a godly will that never has assented to sin, and that never will. This will is so good that it never wills evil, but always wills good, and, in the sight of God, does good.' (22).

This may not be as universal as Williams's Johannine deduction; but it is certainly one of Julian's theologically contentious statements from which, from time to time, she protects herself by protestations of her submission to the teachings of Holy Church. Christ knew evil in his Passion, says Williams. For there 'He experiences a complete and utter deprivation of all knowledge of the good. .... The Thing that was Christ Jesus, knew all things in the deprivation of all goodness.' (23). Like Julian, Williams holds that in that hour creation itself suffered and was darkened; 'though', writes Julian, 'the mighty, secret keeping of God did not fail.' (24) From the Passion and Resurrection, Williams says that a new knowledge came into being. 'Men had determined to know good as evil; there could be but one perfect remedy for that - to know the evil of the past itself as good, and to be free from the necessity of the knowledge of evil in the future; to find right knowledge and perfect freedom together; to know all things as occasions of love.' (25). But do we indeed know the

evil of the past as good? Are we free from the necessity of the knowledge of evil in the future? If Williams is talking about our present life in time, then I find this hard to accept. Can we know all things as an occasion of love? To this I would answer yes, that such knowledge is a kind of redemption, that I have known it in my own experience and that I thank God for it. But I have in honesty to add that, as I understand it, the evil itself remains no less evil because good has come from it

It is in his essay on "The Cross" (published in 1941) that Charles Williams most forcefully and sombrely confronts the issue of God and suffering. Writing of the consequences of the Fall, he says, "Our distress then is no doubt our gratuitous choice, but it is also His. He could have willed us not to be after the Fall. He did not. .... We are instructed that he contemplates, from his infinite felicity, the agonies of His creation, and deliberately maintains them in it. I do not refer merely to the agonies of the present time; they are more spectacular and more destructive, but not more lasting, nor perhaps very much worse, than the agonies of a more peaceful time. But man has not often known a more peaceful time. And if he had, in the times that he has known, the very burden of daily existence too often seems a curse. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together:

'This then is the creation that "needs" (let the word be permitted) justifying. The Cross justifies it to this extent at least - that just as He submitted us to His inexorable will, so He submitted Himself to our wills (and therefore to His). He made us; He maintained us in our pain. At least, however, on the Christian showing, He consented to be Himself subject to it. If, obscurely, He would not cease to preserve us in the full horror of existence, at least He shared it. He became as helpless as we under the will which is He. This is the first approach to a sense of justice in the whole situation. Whatever He chose, He chose fully, for Himself as for us.' (26).

Christ, says Williams, by that central substitution of the Cross, took up the torn web of humanity and made it whole. There is nothing that happens that is outside His will. 'As in bombings from the air, cancer, or starvation, for instance? Yes I suppose so; if at all, then certainly in those examples.' (27). Is it true? On Williams's showing, yes. Julian is, like Williams, grieved and appalled at evil and suffering. Like him, too, although with less vehemence, she places the responsibility on God:

'For I saw that God in fact does everything, however little that thing may be. Indeed, nothing happens by luck or chance, but all is through the foresight and wisdom of God. If it seems chance or luck to us, it is because we are blind and short-sighted. .... A man will reckon some things to be well done, and others to be evil, but our Lord does not see them so. For as all natural things have been made by God, so all that has been done is in some ways God's doing. It is not difficult to see that the best deed has been done well, and as the best and highest deed has been done, so the least deed has been done just as well. All this is in accordance with the nature and plan that God decided for everything from before creation. There is no doer but he.' (28).

Julian has a saint's depth of love for, and trust in, God. But this does not prevent her from questioning why God, in his foreseeing wisdom, had not prevented the beginning of sin, 'for then, thought I, all would have been well.' (29). It was at this point in her vision that Jesus answered her with the words which have become so familiar to us: 'It behoved that there should be sin; but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.' (30). She meditates on these words at length. Julian saw, in her vision, all the pain and suffering that ever has been or can be and knew that, of it all, the passion of Christ was the greatest. 'All this was shown in a flash', she writes, 'and quickly passed over into consolation - for our good Lord would not have the soul frightened by this ugly sight. 'But I did not see sin. I believe it has no substance or real existence. It can only be known by the pain it causes.' (31). And again the Lord comforts her, saying that sin is indeed the cause of the pain and reassuring her once again that 'All shall be well,

and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.'(32). But still Julian persisted in her questioning: 'Good Lord, how can everything be all right when such great hurt has come to your creatures through sin?' She is told that Adam's sin was the greatest wrong ever done and this had been set right by Christ's Passion. 'The meaning of our blessed Lord was this, "Since I have now made the greatest wrong good, I want you to know by this that I shall make good all wrongs of whatever degree."'(33). Julian is shown that the Trinity will perform a deed at the last Day which will make everything turn out well. When she considered those who would be damned she did not see how this could be. 'But I had no answer to this revelation save this: "What is impossible to you is not impossible to me. I shall honour my word in every respect, and I will make everything turn out for the best." Thus was I taught by God's grace to hold steadfastly to the faith I had already learned, and at the same time to believe quite seriously that everything would turn out all right, as our Lord was showing.'(34).

For many years, Julian meditated on her visions that she might more fully understand the Lord's meaning. 'It was more than fifteen years after that I was answered in my spirit's understanding. "You would know our Lord's meaning in this thing. Know it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For love. Hold on to this and you will know and understand love more and more. But you will not know or learn anything else - ever!"'(35). I conclude by repeating one of the quotations at the beginning of this paper as a fitting summary of the understanding shared by Julian of Norwich and Charles Williams: 'Under the Mercy'.

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#### List of References

1. Revelations of Divine Love translated by Clifton Wolters (Penguin 1966) p. 68.
2. The Forgiveness of Sins (William B Eerdmans Publishing Co 1984) pp. 99-100.
3. The Book of Margery Kempe translated by B A Windeatt (Penguin 1985).
4. Revelations of Divine Love, p. 65.
5. A Shewing of God's Love edited by Anna Maria Reynolds (Sheed and Ward 1974)p.17.
6. The Ancrene Riwe translated into modern English by M B Salu (Burnes and Oates 1955) p. 31.
7. Revelations of Divine Love p. 170.
8. Ibid. p.66.
9. Julian of Norwich Paul Molinari (Longmans, Green & Co., 1958) p.32.
10. The Image of the City (Oxford University Press 1958), 'The Way of Exchange'p.150.
11. The Descent of the Dove (Faber & Faber Ltd 1950) pp. 69-70.
12. Ibid., p. 217.
13. Revelations of Divine Love p. 99.
14. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
15. Ibid., p. 158.
16. Ibid., p. 180.
17. He Came Down From Heaven (William B Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1984) p. 33.
18. Ibid., p. 36.
19. Ibid., p. 17.
20. Ibid., p. 19.
21. Ibid., pp. 71, 72.
22. Revelations of Divine Love p. 155.
23. He Came Down From Heaven pp. 75, 77.
24. Revelations of Divine Love p. 91.
25. He Came Down From Heaven p. 77.
26. The Image of the City, 'The Cross' p. 132.
27. Ibid., p. 138.
28. Revelations of Divine Love pp. 80. 81.
29. Ibid., p. 103.
30. Revelations of Divine Love edited by Grace Warrack (Methuen 1901) p. 56.
31. Revelations of Divine Love edited by Clifton Wolters, p. 104.
32. Revelations of Divine Love edited by Grace Warrack, p. 57.

- 33. Revelations of Divine Love edited by Clifton Wolters, p. 106.
- 34. Ibid., p. 111.
- 35. Ibid., pp. 211 - 212.

The two quotations from the Warrask edition were used because of the felicity and familiarity of their wording.

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STOP PRESS

Members may be interested to know of two forthcoming events:

- there is an exhibition of paintings by Anne Spalding in the Sally Hunter Fine Art Gallery, 2 Motcomb Street, Belgrave Square, London SW1 from 25 May - 17 June, open Monday to Friday from 10am to 6pm.

- on Thursday 16 June at 7.15pm in the South Bank Centre Purcell Room, John Heath-Stubbs will give a poetry reading to celebrate the publication of his Collected Poems 1943 - 1987.

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