

**“All Shall Be Well”: An Exposition and Development of
the Theme of Universal Salvation in Julian of Norwich’s
*Revelations of Divine Love***

「一切都會轉好」：闡釋及延伸發展朱利·諾里奇
《天主愛的啟示》中論及天主的普世救恩

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摘要：朱利·諾里奇是十四世紀英國神秘主義者，天主賜給她十六次啟示。在第十三次神視中，十字架上的耶穌向她啟示：「罪惡是必需的，但一切都會轉好。」本文旨在探討朱利作品《天主愛的啟示》中論及天主的普世救恩。

文章先論述朱利神視的核心：天主對一切受造物的愛。基於天主所啟示「一切都會轉好」，與教會有關人的罪惡及地獄永火的教導存在張力，本文分兩個層次，把朱利關於神視經驗的闡釋加以發展。

首先，本文闡述朱利對罪惡的理解，由神視中主人與僕人的比喻，她理解到人犯罪，是因為僕人太急於履行主人的旨意，因而跌倒，導致墮落和屬靈的眼瞎。但這與當時教會對原罪的理解（即原罪是由於亞當厄娃蓄意背叛天主）似乎大相逕庭。由於奧思定對教會訓導有極大影響，本文嘗試把朱利和奧思定的處境脈絡作比較，藉以探討此神學觀點分歧的根源。

此外，天主啟示一切都會轉好，這承諾與天主的普世救恩一脈相成。但教會訓導也談及有些人未必得救，並受地獄永火的懲罰。本文把朱利的反省，與二十世紀有關天主普世救贖的神學觀點，（包括漢斯·巴爾塔薩和卡爾·拉內的神學）加以整合，透過強調人的自由意志，及區別天主普世救恩的意願與普世救恩，嘗試釐清神視與地獄永火兩者之間的張力。

關鍵詞：朱利·諾里奇、普世救恩、天主的愛

Abstract: *Julian of Norwich (ca. 1342-ca. 1416) was a fourteenth-century English mystic. She received sixteen private revelations from God. In the Thirteenth Showing, God revealed that “sin is necessary, but all shall be well.” This paper explores and develops the theme of universal salvation in Julian’s Revelations of Divine Love. It introduces the readers to her reflections on God’s manifestations, with the focus on God’s compassion for all creation. In view of the dynamic tension between Julian’s visions of all shall be well and the teachings of the Catholic Church on human sin and the eternal fire of hell, two developments are presented. First, reference is made to the thought of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) for a deeper comprehension of Julian’s reflection on sin, bearing in mind the different contexts of Julian and Augustine. Then, this paper brings Julian’s loving and joyful trust in the love of God for all things into dialogue with the contemporary calls of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) and Karl Rahner (1904-1984) for Catholics to hope for universal salvation.*

Keywords: *Julian of Norwich, universal salvation, God’s love*

1. Introduction

Julian of Norwich (ca. 1342-ca. 1416) was an English mystic.¹ Out of her love of God, she prayed for three gifts: to see the Passion of Christ, to have a serious illness to purge herself, and to have the gifts of “three wounds”²—the wounds of “true contrition,” “loving compassion,” and “longing with [her] will for God” (2.179).³

At the age of thirty, she was granted a serious bodily illness. When she was about to die holding a cross in her hand, the crucified Christ revealed himself to Julian, without intermediary of any kind (4.181). She received sixteen private revelations⁴ from Jesus Christ in three

1 Unfortunately, there is a lack of detailed information about the life of Julian, except through what she has disclosed about herself in her writings, from evidence deduced from her work, and from other sources which mention about her spiritual guidance. While there is some debate and uncertainty on her place of birth, her family background, and when she died, the scholarly speculation is that she was a Benedictine nun, settling in Norwich as an anchoress. See Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, introduction to Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, trans. and ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1978) (henceforth abbreviated as CW), pp. 17-22. See also Christopher Abbott, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 1-4.

2 For a detailed discussion of the gift of three wounds, see Veronica Mary Rolf, *Julian’s Gospel: Illuminating the Life and Revelations of Julian of Norwich* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), pp. 225-257.

3 Unless otherwise stated, all quotations of Julian’s showings are cited from the Long Text in CW, which was composed based on texts “from all available sources, manuscript and others, presented in their original language (in this case the English of the 15th century).” Foreword to CW, pp. 15-16. All references to CW are cited parenthetically in the form of chapter number.page number.

4 Julian received fifteen showings when she was at the age of thirty in the morning on May 13th, 1373, and the sixteenth vision in the evening on the following day. See Halcyon Backhouse, introduction to Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. Halcyon Backhouse and Rhona Pipe (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), p. xvii. Julian opts most frequently for the term “showings” to refer to God’s revelations made to her. See CW, p. 17. In this paper, the terms showings, revelations, visions, and manifestations are used interchangeably.

ways: by physical sight, by words directly given to her understanding, and by spiritual enlightenment (9.192). Instead of being a passive recipient of revelations from God, Julian was an active participant. She had conversations with Christ on the Cross.⁵ While Julian had the privilege to receive visions from God, she trusted that God's love was revealed to her "in the unity of love with all [her] fellow Christians" (9.191).⁶ Since "God loves everything that he has made" (9.192), she was keen to write the manifestations down in order to share with others her fathoming of God's great love for all.

Although her book *Revelations of Divine Love*⁷ was not widely circulated during her time, it attracts our attention nowadays.⁸ Her

5 Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 166-167.

6 Julian wrote, "in all this I was greatly moved in love towards my fellow Christians, that they might all see and know the same as I saw, for I wished it to be a comfort to them, for *all this vision was shown for all men [and women]*" (8.190; italics mine).

7 There are two versions of *Revelations of Divine Love* written by Julian—the Short Text and the Long Text. While there is scholarly debate on whether the Short Text (with sixteen revelations) was written by Julian immediately after the showings, the consensus is that the Long Text (with the sixteen showings organised in eighty-six chapters) was written in 1393, that is, twenty years after the revelations. See CW, p. 20. See also Nicholas Watson, "The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," *Speculum* 68 (1993): pp. 637-683, as quoted in Abbott, p. xii.

8 Before the mid-seventeenth century, there was only limited circulation on Julian's work. In contrast, some writings by mystics in the fourteenth century (such as the anonymous work of *The Cloud of Unknowing*) received much wider attention at that time. However, there has been a revival in our interest in Julian's writings nowadays, as evidenced by Abbott's observation that her books are found not just in academic libraries, but also "on the shelves of general bookshops and even of quite small local libraries." Abbott, p. xi. See also David Farmer, "Saints and Mystics of the Medieval West," in *The Story of Christian Spirituality: Two Thousand Years from East to West*, ed. Gordon Mursell (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 117.

writings address our perennial concerns of theodicy and salvation of humankind. People of our present age are fascinated by the way Julian reflected and wrote about these issues: through a narration of God’s private revelations which she understood as promises of hope.

2. Central Theme of Showings — God’s Compassion for All Creation

The central theme of Julian’s reflection on the showings is God’s compassion for all creation. Perhaps, the most well-known vision is *all shall be well* in the Thirteenth Showing. While Julian deeply felt that sin hindered her from being “pure and as like our Lord as he created us” (13.224), Jesus in this vision told her, “Synne is behovabil, but al shal be wel, and al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele.”⁹

9 Chapter Twenty-Seven in Julian’s Long Text in original language as quoted in Abbott, p. 25. CW translated this passage as “Sin is necessary, but all will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well” (27.225). Besides “all will be well,” “all shall be well” is another translation commonly found. See Julian of Norwich, *The Revelation of Divine Love in Sixteen Showings Made to Dame Julian of Norwich*, trans. M. L. del Mastro (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1997), p. 102; Julian of Norwich, *Showing of Love*, trans. Julia Bolton Holloway (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), p.37. In websites, this sentence is more commonly translated as “all shall be well.” See for instance, Dan Graves, “All Shall Be Well, and All Manner of Thing Shall Be Well: Julian of Norwich (ca. 1342–ca. 1416) in Her *Showings*,” <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/incontext/article/julian> [accessed 5th October, 2022]; Penny Jones, “Julian of Norwich: ‘All Shall Be Well,’” <https://anglicanfocus.org.au/2020/05/01/julian-of-norwich-all-shall-be-well/> [accessed 5th October, 2022]; Lindsay Ross-Hunt, “All Shall Be Well: Reflections on Julian of Norwich,” <https://www.stpaulsbellingham.org/lindsay-rosshunt/all-shall-be-well-reflections-on-julian-of-norwich> [accessed 5th October, 2022]. In this paper, the translation “all shall be well” is used.

While only Jesus appeared in this showing, “the blessed Trinity is understood, as [Julian] see[s] it” because “the Trinity filled [her] heart full of the greatest joy” (4.181). For Julian, the triune God is our lover, our maker, and our keeper. God is love, which is remarkably manifested through Jesus’ Passion to redeem humankind.

Julian described in detail her mystical visions of Christ Jesus’ suffering for us: his bleeding head (4.181), the discolouration of his face (10.193), the copious spilling of his blood (12.199), and the drying of his flesh (16.206-207, 17.207-209). Witnessing the Passion, Julian was filled with pain and anguish (17.209). However, the purpose of her detailed description was not to arouse a guilt feeling for our sins. Nor did she intend to imply a theory of atonement—that Christ has to suffer a violent death in order to repay the debt of our sins. Rather, Julian’s reflection was that God wants us to share in God’s “delight” in our salvation through “the joy and the bliss of the Passion” (23.218).

The Passion of Christ is intimately linked with our redemption. Julian’s emphasis on the extreme suffering of Jesus is to draw our attention to his extreme love. Because of love, Christ is willing to suffer the pain of Passion for humankind (20.213-214). Christ has compassion for us because he longs to have us and he thirsts to gather us into him (31.230). While her writings mentioned the truth and the wisdom of God, love is the most important for Julian. She stated, “but the brightness and clearness of truth and wisdom make [a human being] see and know that *he [/she] is made for love, in which love God endlessly protects him [/her] [italics mine]*” (44.256).

God keeps all creation (8.190). In the showing of a tiny hazelnut in her palm, Julian understood that even though the hazelnut seems small in human eyes, God loves it and keeps it (5.183). To God, every creation he has made is beautiful and good (8.190). Although humankind fell by sin, God keeps us without end (8.190), "makes us to love" all things that he loves (61.300), and wishes to restore us by the same love he makes us (10.194).

Although Julian intended to write for her fellow Christians (8.191, 40.247), her reflections on God's salvation included all creation. In the Fourth Showing, God manifested that Christ's precious blood "overflows all the earth" (12.200). His blood is ready to wash away the sins of "*all* creatures who are, have been and will be of good will" and it flows throughout heaven "rejoicing in the salvation of *all* [humankind]" (12.200; italics mine). The theme of God's universal salvation was repeated in other chapters of *Revelations of Divine Love*: salvation is open for "all men [and women] who are of good will" (30.228), human nature will fill heaven one day through the Lord's own good will (53.283). Most importantly, it is revealed by God in the Thirteenth Showing that *all shall be well* (27.225), "I shall make all things well" (31.229), and "you will see yourself that every kind of thing will be well" (32.231).

From the showings, Julian understood that God wills to save all humankind because God has no wrath towards us for our sins. She highlighted that it is against God's property of goodness and wisdom to be angry (46.259). Since God has made all things good, nothing fails and all is right (11.199). In order to understand why there

is no wrath in God for our sins which Julian described as deserving “pain, blame and wrath” (46.259), we now turn to *what sin is* as revealed by God to Julian.

In the Thirteenth Showing, sin is brought to Julian’s mind with a general meaning of “all which is not good” (27.225). At the earnest enquiry of Julian asking how *all shall be well* in spite of sins, God granted her a vision of a lord who has a servant in the Fourteenth Showing. Eager to do the lord’s task, the servant not only went but dashed off. With great haste, the servant accidentally fell into a dell and could not help himself out nor to “turn his face to look on his loving lord” (51.267).

With spiritual enlightenment, Julian understood that in this parable, God is the lord. Deeply immersed in the Sacred Scripture, especially the teachings of St. Paul, she reflected upon the parable in the context of the Christian tradition. While Adam is the servant, Christ, who is the second Adam, is also the servant.¹⁰ She stated, “when Adam fell, 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 [humankind]” (51.274).

For Julian, sin is not the cause but is the product of the Fall. Human beings become blind to God’s love after the servant’s Fall from

10 Grace M. Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 99.

God’s immediate presence.¹¹ Moreover, sin in this parable is narrated as a negative consequence of what was initially the good intention of the servant. God is not angry with the Fall of Adam and his subsequent blindness. Christ takes “upon him all our blame; and therefore our Father may not, does not wish to assign more blame to us” (51.275). Christ is willing to suffer for all humankind because he loves all his creation.

In addressing the Fall and the subsequent sins, Julian’s emphasis is on the compassion of Christ. When we fall, the Lord Jesus Christ promptly “raises us up with his loving embrace and his gracious touch” (61.300). However, some people are so shameful of their sins that they doubt if God still loves them. In Julian’s time, there was social and political turmoil. These immense troubles could be interpreted by some as punishment by God and would cause people to doubt. This doubt, according to Julian, implies a lack of trust in the love of God. She exhorted her fellow Christians to remember that God is all love and that God forgives our sin at the very moment when we repent (73.323).¹² She urged us to rejoice in the love of God.¹³

11 As Julian stated, “the reason which we use is now so blind, so abject and so stupid that we cannot recognize God’s exalted, wonderful wisdom, or the power and the goodness of the blessed Trinity” (32.232). See also Mary Lou Shea, *Medieval Women on Sin and Salvation: Hadewijch of Antwerp, Beatrice of Nazareth, Margaret Ebner, and Julian of Norwich* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 137-140; Denise N. Baker, *Julian of Norwich’s “Showings:” From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 99.

12 Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, p. 109.

13 Paul Molinari, *Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a 14th Century English Mystic* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1958), pp. 179-181.

3. “All Shall Be Well”?

God revealed to Julian his unconditional love for all his creation. Bearing in mind the Church teaching that (i) human beings are sinful; and (ii) some people may not be saved and the damned will suffer punishments of eternal fire of hell, Julian repeatedly asked God how *all shall be well*.

Julian was faithful to the teachings of the Holy Church that human beings are sinful. However, in the showings, God reveals that he is present in everything, and that for all which is done is well done since our Lord does all things (11.197). The vision that God has done everything prompts Julian to ask *what sin is*. She reports that she was “certain that [God] does no sin,” “sin is no deed” (11.198), and sin is “nothing.”¹⁴

In order to understand how to hold together these two aspects (that is, sin as a fact of human life but as nothing in the eyes of God), we now turn to the thought of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) who exerted deep influence on Church teaching. Turning to Augustine for a deeper comprehension of Julian’s reflection on sin is justified since scholars believe that Julian herself is “profoundly Augustinian.”¹⁵

14 Chapter Eight in the Short Text, see CW, p. 137.

15 See Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, pp. 16-17; Rolf, *Julian’s Gospel*, p. 505. As Abbott explains, “although at least one critic of [Julian’s] theology has described Julian as ‘deeply Augustinian’, it would be virtually impossible to establish whether she is directly influenced by Augustine through personal study of his work or whether she uses concepts of common theological currency, more or less traceable to Augustine.” Abbott, p. 10. See also n. 7.

Augustine taught that sin is not created by God. God creates this world and all his creation is good. Sin is a privation of good in the sense that human beings misuse their freedom to disorder God’s wise ordination of the good. Therefore, sin is a failure of created freedom. Instead of choosing the love of God or ranking worldly goods in their proper relation to God, human beings choose self-love and choose to love the created goods in themselves.¹⁶ Ontologically speaking, since sin is a privation, it is nothing. However, God’s grace is a reality in enlightening human beings to become aware of our sins. The insight of Augustine helps to illuminate our understanding of God’s showing that “sin is no deed” (11.198).

Bearing in mind the Augustinian theology of sin, it is worthwhile to revisit God’s revelation to Julian on *what sin is* in the parable of the lord and the servant—sin was revealed as originated from the *good intention* of the servant in carrying out the lord’s will. It appears that this parable is in direct conflict with the Church teaching as influenced by Augustine—original sin as a *wilful turning away* from God.

In this regard, an examination of the different contexts of Julian and Augustine sheds light on resolving the disagreement. The background of the Augustinian theology on sin is the combat of the Pelagian heresy. Pelagius (ca. 340-ca. 420) emphasised that human

¹⁶ On the origin of the first sin, Augustine in *De civitate Dei* 14.11 delineated that Adam and Eve turned away from their “fundamental orientation to God” out of their free wills. The first evil will, which preceded one’s evil acts, was a falling away from the work of God to one’s own works. See also J. Patout Burns, “Grace: The Augustinian Foundation,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff and Jean Leclercq (New York: Crossroad, 1993), p. 339.

freedom is sufficient for leading a moral life and he opined that based solely on human willpower, one can choose either good or evil.¹⁷ In response to the Pelagian crisis, Augustine developed and elaborated on his teachings on the relationship between God's grace and human freedom. This combat forced Augustine to defend that without God's grace, human beings cannot free themselves from the slavery of sin. He was therefore keen to demonstrate God's efficacious grace in turning people from bad to good, and for those who are not called by God, they are not saved but damned.

However, the circumstances of Julian were different. Her role was to offer spiritual advice to her fellow Christians¹⁸ and she was not refuting any heretic views. Therefore, she was freer to offer her own reflection on God's private revelations as compared with Augustine.

Although "sin is nothing" in the showings, Julian did not disregard the belief that human beings are sinful. She considered the Church teaching on sin as true. Also, that the loving God sees no sin in us is also true.¹⁹ Only when we hold both as facts can we come to the whole truth. On the one hand, if one goes to the extreme of focussing only on the Church teaching on sin and hell without paying heed to God's love, one would have a distorted understanding of God—as a punishing God who is full of wrath. On the other hand, if we naïvely believe that it

17 Pelagius' view was recorded in Augustine's *De gestis Pelagii* 22.

18 Jean Leclercq explains that in the Middle Ages, those "who successfully sought to be alone with God" played a role of "praying, counseling" and even teaching. See Leclercq, preface to CW, p. 2.

19 Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich: Theologian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 68-99, especially pp. 98-99.

is good to sin in order to earn a “greater reward,” Julian warned us that this is erroneous and is from the enemy (40.247).²⁰ Indeed, Julian behoved her fellow Christians to hate sin and hold fast to love (40.247).

Bearing in mind the Church teaching on eternal fire for the damned, Julian eagerly pleaded God to show her a vision of hell (33.234). However, no showings were made to her in this respect. Julian reflected upon God’s revelation of his compassion for all despite our sins, and this is what she captured so beautifully:

For we shall truly see in heaven without end that we have sinned grievously in this life; and notwithstanding this, we shall truly see that we were never hurt in his love, nor were we ever of less value in his sight. And by the experience of this falling we shall have a great and marvellous knowledge of love in God without end; for enduring and marvellous is that love which cannot and will not be broken because of offences. (61.300)

In a nutshell, Julian gathered that our value in God’s eyes is not in any manner diminished by our sins. While we are sinful human beings, God still loves us and treasures us. In order to comprehend how Julian attempted to reconcile the visions which she received from God with the Church teaching on hell, we now turn to her discussion of the three “things” by which “man [and woman] endures in this life” for honouring God and for our salvation. The three things, which all are from God, are (i) our “natural reason,” (ii) the teaching of the Holy Church, and (iii) the inward gracious operation of the Holy Spirit (80.335).

²⁰ Jantzen highlights that Julian’s teaching in this regard follows St. Paul in Romans 6:1-2. See Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, p. 100.

By our *natural reason*, Julian used the phrase “oure kyndly reson” which means human beings’ honest use of our natural reason in accordance with our conscience.²¹ Since God is love and human beings are made in God’s image, Julian’s interpretation of natural human reason is closely linked with love.²² The Lord “kindles our understanding, ... illumines our heart and gives us *partial knowledge and love* [italics mine] of his blessed divinity” (61.299-300).

With reason as a gift from God, Julian noted that our constant seeking for God is illuminated by the special grace of the Holy Spirit (10.195). In her contemplation of the divine revelation “with reverent fear” (83.340), Julian described an intimate link between our reason and the light of faith, and this light is the triune God. “Our reason is in God,” Julian stated, and “our faith is a light, coming in nature from our endless day, which is our Father, God; in which light our Mother, Christ, and our good Lord the Holy Spirit lead us in this passing life” (83.340).

While God is the foundation of human reason and our reason is illuminated by the light of faith, there is a limitation in our created reason to understand God’s love and his plan for us. Julian reminded us that God may choose to keep his plan hidden and that we should

21 Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, pp. 94-95.

22 In this regard, Jantzen makes a helpful comparison between the positions of Julian and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Jantzen points out that while *The Cloud* author stated that “[God] can be taken and held by love but not by thought,” Julian would not object to this stance if “‘thought’ here means the calculating intellect, separated from love.” See Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, p. 95.

equally be satisfied with both what God chooses to reveal and what God chooses to conceal (33.235).

Although Julian in the showings did not receive an answer on why the Church teaches the existence of eternal fire of hell while God reveals that *all shall be well*, she did not claim authority on her visions over and above the Church teaching. She chose to insist on believing in the teachings of the Holy Church as a simple child.²³

Based on God's showing that "sin is necessary, but all will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well" (27.225), she understood that even the least thing will not be forgotten, though our limited reason does not fathom this hidden mystery now. Although Julian lived in a difficult era full of social, political, and religious turmoil,²⁴ she remained optimistic and placed her trust in God's love for all things. This optimism had the solid ground on her understanding of God's love and compassion for all creation. One can get a glimpse of her trust in God when she said, God "himself will do it" (36.238), and "we shall truly see it in his endless bliss" (36.239). In the showings, Julian was convinced that God thirsts and longs for the entire humankind to be with him. She assured her fellow Christians that God has three longings: (i) to teach us to know him and love him;

23 Abbott suggests that "Julian does not propose an anti-ecclesiological personal mysticism over against communal Catholic orthodoxy." See Abbott, p. 142. See also Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, pp. 181-182.

24 There was the plague, schism, heresy and revolt in the time of Julian. See Rolf, *Julian's Gospel*, pp. 67-84, pp. 143-167.

(ii) to have us in his bliss; and (iii) to fill us with bliss (75.326).²⁵ With Julian's trust in God's love of all creation, the theme of universal salvation is woven in her writings.

4. Dialogue with Contemporary Calls to Hope for Universal Salvation

Julian's reflection on the Fall in the showings and her emphasis on God's love for all creation are the foundation of the theme of universal salvation in her works. "All [humankind]," she indicated, "will be saved by the sweet Incarnation and the Passion of Christ" (51.276). Her writings betrays her Jesus-oriented and ecclesiocentric understanding of soteriology:

And [Christ] wants us to commit ourselves fervently to the faith of Holy Church....For one single person may often be broken, as it seems to him, but the entire body of Holy Church was never broken, nor ever will be without end. And therefore it is a certain thing, and good and gracious to will, meekly and fervently, to be fastened and united to our mother Holy Church, who is Christ Jesus. For the flood of mercy which is his dear blood and precious water is plentiful to make us fair and clean. The blessed wounds of our saviour are open and rejoice to heal us...

25 As Farley explains, Julian's "theodicy is entirely different from what might be more familiar in her time....Like Julian, we may remain bewildered by suffering and find it difficult to reconcile experiences of sin and pain with divine love and compassion. But she insists that we can be confident in the tender wisdom of the Mother, the energizing goodness of the Spirit, and the efficacious power of the Father that the promise that 'all will be well' is woven in from the beginning and will not be thwarted." Wendy Farley, *The Thirst of God: Contemplating God's Love with Three Women Mystics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), pp. 133-134.

...It is his office to save us...for he wants us to love him sweetly
(61.301-302).

For Julian, human beings are redeemed by Christ our saviour. In order to be fair and clean as well as healed and redeemed, one needs to be committed to the faith of the Holy Church. She also made an identification of the Church with Christ himself.²⁶

While Julian’s discussion on human redemption centred on the revelation of Christ on the crucifix, she also reflected on salvation from the Trinitarian perspective. A good indication of her position is her repeated reference to the blessed Trinity: In Christ’s Passion for the salvation of human beings, “the Father is pleased, the Son is honoured, the Holy Spirit takes delight” (23.218); “Ah, Jesus, let us pay heed to this bliss over our salvation which is in the blessed Trinity” (23.219); and “All the Trinity worked in Christ’s Passion” (23.219).

Julian’s exclusive link of salvation to Church membership was based on the understanding common in her time—it was assumed that the Gospel had been preached to all. Therefore, those who were not in the Church were guilty of a wilful rejection of the Gospel. It was believed that baptism, Church membership, explicit faith in Jesus Christ, and being in the state of grace are all prerequisites for salvation. However, the Discovery of the New World in 1492 exposed that in these newly discovered territories, people were not baptized because they were not aware of the Gospel. The question is: Bearing in mind God’s revelation made to Julian that he loves all

26 See also Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, p. 96.

his creation, are the unbaptised also loved by God and will they be redeemed by God? Since it is anachronistic to have expected Julian to address the redemption of the religious others (that is, those who are not Christians), it would be useful to bring the theme of God's compassion for all in her writings into dialogue with our contemporary discussion of the possibility of universal salvation.

In *The Mystery of Easter*, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) pondered on Christ's descent into the underworld on Holy Saturday. He explained that while salvation is a result of the redemptive work of Christ, redemption is extended to all human beings, including past sinners.²⁷ However, it does not mean that all are surely saved. In *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?* Balthasar further elaborated that eternal damnation is a real possibility, because in principle it is possible for human beings to reject God's grace. Nevertheless, our "faith in the un-boundedness of divine love and grace also justifies hope for the universality of redemption [emphasis in the original]."²⁸ However, this hope does not call for an absolute certainty because all

27 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), pp. 148-188, especially pp. 176-181. See also Edward T. Oakes, "Christ's Descent into Hell: The Hopeful Universalism of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988)," in *"All Shall Be Well": Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. Gregory MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), pp. 386-387.

28 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?: With a Short Discourse on Hell*, trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 220.

human beings “are *under judgment*”²⁹ and we do not know in advance even the outcome of one’s own salvation.³⁰

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) teaches that God offers grace to the religious others as well. *Lumen Gentium* affirms that because of God’s grace, those who do God’s will according to their conscience could receive salvation in Jesus Christ even though they do not know Christ.³¹

With the above-mentioned affirmation by the Church, Karl Rahner (1904–1984) further developed his innovative notion of “anonymous Christians.” Based on the theological conviction that God’s salvific will is a universal call, he highlighted that the grace for salvation is the grace of Christ, who is the mediator of salvation. Christ instituted the Church as the tangible and historical presence in the world. For those who are outside the Church, if they live by Christ’s grace, they could be “in supernatural communion with the church,” even without an explicit knowledge that Christ is the source of grace.

29 Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, pp. 13–15.

30 Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, p. 13.

31 *Lumen Gentium* 16 states, “those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God... as Saviour wills that all men [and women] be saved. Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life.”

Rahner named these people “anonymous Christians.”³² While the religious others may also be saved through God’s grace, the duty of the Church to preach the Gospel is not undermined.

In the contemporary exploration of the theme of salvation for all, the focus is on God’s universal salvific will and the human response to God’s grace of salvation. The Sacred Scripture reveals that “God our Savior... desires everyone to be saved” (1 Tim 2:3-4). Although God wishes all to be saved and Catholics could hope for universal salvation, it is not an absolute certainty. Since human beings are endowed with freedom, they can choose to reject God.³³ In other words, while Heaven is a reality and is the destiny intended by God for all, hell, being the human rejection of Heaven, is a possibility.³⁴

In this way, the distinction between the universal salvific will of God and universal salvation sheds light on resolving the dilemma faced by Julian in her reconciliation of the vision of *all shall be well* and the Church teaching on hell. In fact, Julian in her writing also briefly mentioned about human choice in response to God’s love. She wrote,

32 Karl Rahner, “The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation,” in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, Theological Investigations 16 (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 199-224.

33 John R. Sachs, “Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell,” *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): pp. 230-233.

34 Peter C. Phan, *Responses to 101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), p. 72.

And when we fall, quickly [the Lord Jesus] raises us up with his loving embrace and his gracious touch. And when we are strengthened by his sweet working, then we *willingly choose* him by his grace, that we shall be his servants and his lovers, constantly and forever (61.300; italics mine).

Unfortunately, Julian did not further develop on the role of human free will on our salvation. Probably, since she was so deeply touched by God's love, she would have assumed that by the grace of God, human beings would choose to be God's "servants" and "lovers, constantly and forever" (61.300).

5. Conclusion

We have been expositing, clarifying, and proposing developments to the theme of universal salvation in Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*. We began by placing Julian's reflections on God's love for all creation in her social and historical context. In a word, her emphases that "God loves everything that he has made" and "in [humankind] which will be saved is comprehended all" (9.192) are the bases of her optimism for universal salvation, bearing in mind the Church teaching on human sin and the possible damnation of some who will suffer punishments of eternal fire of hell.

In terms of human sin, we have seen how Julian fathomed the origin of human sin in the parable of the lord and the servant revealed in the showing. She understood the Fall as a negative consequence of what was initially the good intention of the servant

who denotes all humankind. Since Julian herself was profoundly Augustinian, we analysed how the different point of departure for theological reflection in the Augustinian tradition could result in an understanding of human sin from a seemingly different perspective. Rather than dismissing one of the interpretations as erroneous, comprehension of human sin from diverse points of view could be held in fruitful tension.

We have also pointed out that a distorted image of God as a punishing God who is full of wrath could be re-oriented in order to recover one that is more appropriate for a theology of God as love. In this regard, Julian encouraged her fellow Christians to hate sin and hold fast to love. Her optimism and trust in God's love is not a naïve ignorance of evil, but a deep pondering of God's promise of hope in her visions, amidst the great sufferings which she witnessed during her life-time. Julian's reflection sheds light on our contemplation of God's love for us despite our sin and also guides our praxis of loving God and others in ways that are appropriate in our contemporary age.

Although Julian intended to write for her fellow Christians, her discussion on God's salvation included all human beings. Her emphasis on God's love for all creation and her reflection on God's showing that *all shall be well* are biblically based and replete with Post-Vatican II Catholic Church teaching on the possibility of salvation outside the Church.

Page limits permitted us only to revisit Julian's writings through a brief dialogue with the contemporary calls of Balthasar and Rahner

for Catholics to hope for universal salvation. We have seen that the tension between God’s revelation of *all shall be well* and the Church teaching on eternal fire for the damned can be understood in light of the distinction between the universal salvific will of God and universal salvation.

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