

‘PRAY INTERLY’ : JULIAN OF NORWICH'S SPIRITUALITY OF PRAYER

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AS A FRESHMAN at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, I sat in a classroom that usually pulsed with nervous excitement and energy due to weekly quizzes and a desire to impress fellow classmates with profound comments and questions. However, on this particular day, the class sat hushed under a dark cloud of somber uncertainty. The profound fear and terror within each student made quizzes and grades and even college seem trivial. We all sat silent, wondering if anyone would even attempt to articulate our existential insecurity. Studying British Literature, we appreciated the power of language yet also knew its limitations and that it would only capture the foam on the surface of our fear.¹ Even so, our professor invited us to share our thoughts.

After more silence, one young woman finally broke the hush, saying that she found comfort in our class's reading assignment. The reading that was due on September 11th, 2001 included excerpts from 'the first known woman of letters in English literature'² who proved to be 'an accomplished prose stylist.'³ The student read the following portion to the class: 'Sin is behovely, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.'⁴ And a blanket of hope fell warmly upon the class.

I recall this class experience every year on May 8th when the Episcopal Church celebrates the Feast of Dame Julian of Norwich. Among the feast's Scripture readings is a crucial clue to the source of Julian's hope: 'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is

within me, bless his holy Name' (Ps. 103:1). Julian's hope emerges from a spirituality of prayer that invites her readers to encounter the divine within their being, even in the midst of emotional dryness. In her spirituality of prayer, the call is to pray with the soul and with all the emotions within and in so doing, bless the Lord.

In the *Showings Long Text*⁵, Julian writes, 'Pray interly, thoughe the thyngke it savour the nott, yett it is profitable inowgh, though thou fele it nowgh(t).'

⁶ Through a closer look at the word 'interly,' a mystical spirituality of prayer emerges in Julian's *Showings* that creates space for radical union with the divine in the midst of emotional barrenness. Translators choose to interpret 'interly' as either 'inwardly' or 'wholeheartedly.' However, Wolters asserts that, for Julian, 'the object of prayer is to be united to our Lord. . . and therefore prayers should be bold and broad.'⁷ In seeing 'interly' as meaning both 'inwardly' and 'wholeheartedly,' we begin to see how bold and broad Julian's spirituality of prayer can be.

This work will investigate the abundant meaning of 'interly' by first probing the linguistic meaning within the context of the Middle English language. Then, in order to find evidence to support the polyvalent meaning, the investigation will plumb the *Showings Long Text* alongside the texts of the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Ancrene Wisse*. After utilizing linguistic and intertextual methods of investigation, the theological and spiritual

implications of praying ‘interly’ will be considered.

Linguistic Investigation of 'Interly'

In examining Julian's word 'interly' in the context of the Middle English language and the surrounding text in Chapters 41 and 51 of the *Showings* Long Text, evidence will emerge that shows two general meanings for the *hapax legomenon*: (1) 'Interly' means 'wholeheartedly' or 'entirely' and (2) 'interly' means 'inwardly.'

'Interly' as 'Wholeheartedly' or 'Entirely'

Wolters, John-Julian, and Skinner interpret the phrase 'pray interly' as 'pray inwardly'.⁸ However, some evidence fails to support this translation. First of all, if Julian had intended to write, 'pray inwardly,' then she would have written, 'pray inwardly' as she does later in the same chapter. Julian had no problem using the word 'inwardly' in describing the joy and gratitude that one feels during prayers of thanksgiving:

Thankyng is a true inward knowing, with grett reuerence and louely drede turning oure selfe with alle oure myghtes in to the werkyng that oure lorde steryd vs to, enjoyeng and thankyng *inwardly*⁹ (emphasis added).

Also, in Chapter 51, Julian writes, 'I cryde inwardly with all my might.'¹⁰ In Middle English, the word translated as 'inwardly' is the very same word. So Julian would have most likely used this same word if she wanted to say, 'pray inwardly.' Instead, she uses an entirely different word: 'interly.' The *hapax legomenon* 'interly' does not appear in Oxford's *A Middle English Dictionary*, which means that it does not appear in any of the numerous Middle English texts available.

However, the word 'enterly' can be found in the Middle English dictionary, where it is understood as an adjective or adverb for 'enter,' equivalent to the modern English 'entire.'¹¹ In another, more exhaustive, Middle English dictionary, the word 'enter' is defined



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as 'whole, entire, intact.'¹² When used as an adjective, the word means 'in entirety' or 'as a unity.' So why does Julian spell 'enterly' as 'interly'?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to be acquainted with the linguistic world of Middle English. Within this linguistic world, the Old French and Latin languages were actively used. As a result of the Norman invasion, the French language dominated the aristocracy in England until the mid-fourteenth century. The gentry also spoke and wrote in French even though it became quickly recognized as a foreign language.¹³ According to Burrow and Turville-Petre, a great deal of exchange and borrowing took place between French, Latin and English 'for various contemporary terms of technology, law and the like.'¹⁴ However, because of its low status among the three languages, English proved to be 'the chief 'borrower.'¹⁵ Because it is nearly impossible to distinguish the Latin roots of Middle English words from the French roots, it is more accurate to label such intermingled words as 'Latin-French.'¹⁶ Julian's unique word 'interly' seems to be one of these Middle English words of Latin-French origin. In French, the word *entier* means 'entire, whole,' whereas in Latin, the same meaning is captured in the word *integrum*. So *interly* appears to be a fusion of these two words, with the 'i' from *integrum* being borrowed and added to the Middle English word 'enter,' which has roots in the Old French *entier*. The -ly ending, of course, makes the word an adverb. Therefore, the

word *interly* could be understood as *enterly* or *entirely*. According to this train of thought, the translation, 'pray wholeheartedly' comes much closer to the Middle English phrase than 'pray inwardly.' Another rendering could be 'pray entirely,' or, in other words, 'pray with your entire self.'

'Interly' as 'Inwardly'

Although evidence supports the translation of 'interly' as *entirely*, evidence still remains for the *hapax legomenon* to be translated as 'inwardly', one cannot dismiss the resemblance that 'interly' shares with the Middle English word 'innerli,' which holds its own plethora of meanings: 'inwardly, strongly, extremely, earnestly, sincerely.'¹⁷ Yet why did Julian not use the word 'innerli' if that was her intention?

Although a vowel may be dismissed as a mere spelling variation, the consonant difference between 'innerli' and 'interly' cannot be ignored. The Middle English word 'innerli' comes from the German word '*innerlich*' and the Danish word '*inderlig*,' which also mean 'internally' or 'inwardly.'¹⁸ The difference between 'interly' and '*inderlig*' is found primarily in the consonants 't' and 'd.' These are called *fortis* and *lenis* consonants with the 'd' as the voiced *lenis* and the 't' as the aspirated *fortis*. Similar to the words *piano* and *forte*, which describe the level of hardness and softness of a particular note, *fortis* and *lenis* describe the level of hardness and softness of a particular phoneme. Thus, the primary difference between 't' and 'd' is in the level of hardness and softness. Julian used the *fortis* 't' where the Danish use the *lenis* 'd.' Such a difference influences pronunciation rather than meaning.

Another Middle English 'interalli' holds the same *fortis* 't' and carries nearly the same meaning as 'innerli': 'within the body, internally; within one's mind, secretly.'¹⁹ This suggests that the *fortis* 't' was already present in Middle English words denoting inward phenomena. The *fortis* 't' persists in such Modern English

words as 'interior' and 'internal.' Therefore, evidence supports the translation of 'interly' as 'inwardly' as well as 'entirely.'

With the evidence given, any attempt to assert exactly what Julian meant in using the word 'interly' remains guesswork. However, I assert that the ambiguity of the word 'interly' was intentional because such ambiguity creates a polyvalence of meanings, which coincides with the rest of Julian's text. Of course, 'interly' does not mean whatever the reader wants it to mean. The word 'interly' holds primarily two general meanings: 'entirely' and 'inwardly.' Instead of arguing over which one of the two Julian meant, the word 'interly' invites the reader to hold both meanings together: 'entirely' and 'inwardly.' A more accurate rendering of the text, which holds the polyvalent meaning of 'interly,' would be 'pray entirely and inwardly.' 'Entirely' connotes the *entire* self, including one's emotional barrenness, while 'inwardly' connotes an introspective meditation and alignment of the soul with God. Both of these approaches to God can be seen in Julian's *Showings* Long Text, thus supporting the above translation and the abundant meaning found in 'interly.'

Throughout the *Showings* Long Text, Julian invites the reader to hold multiple meanings in single ideas. For example, she sees Christ's thirst as both physical and spiritual,²⁰ the Lord's intention as both prayer and trust,²¹ and God's 'one loue' manifested in both sorrow and joy.²² She holds love and fear together like 'brothers'²³ and sees an inward and outward significance in both the lord and the servant of the parable.²⁴ Furthermore, Julian asserts the need to hold multiple meanings rather than 'one special' meaning when contemplating the divine: 'Take it generally, and beholde the curtesy of thy lorde god as he shewyd to the, for it is more worshype to god to beholde hym in alle than in any specyalle thyng.'²⁵

However, even after making the dichotomy between general and particular, Julian

brilliantly calls the reader to hold both the general and the particular together in prayer: 'It is his wylle that we pray therefore eyther in speciale or in generale.'²⁶ With these examples in mind, it is not hard to imagine Julian's invitation to hold multiple meanings within the word 'interly.'

After making the case for two general meanings of the *hapax legomenon* rather than one single meaning, it is now necessary to follow Julian's advice and hold the general meanings along with the particular. Through intertextual analysis, the phrase 'pray interly' will begin to take on particular meanings with both theological and spiritual implications.

Intertextual Investigation of 'Pray Interly'

The intertextual investigation of the phrase 'pray interly' will examine evidence within the *Showings Long Text*, the texts of the *Cloud* author and the *Ancrene Wisse* to support two general meanings of the phrase: (1) To 'pray interly' means to pray with the entire self, including dry and barren emotions and (2) to 'pray interly' means to pray inwardly in order to encounter God within one's very being.

'Pray Interly' as 'Pray with Entire Self, Including Dry Emotions'

In examining the *Showings Long Text*, a spirituality of prayer emerges which includes many aspects of the entire self: dry emotions, a variety of bodily experiences,²⁷ questioning God,²⁸ and even laughter.²⁹ However, within the scope of this project, a close look will be given to dry emotions in prayer since that is the particular emphasis in Chapter 41 when Julian writes, 'Pray interly.' Before delving into the dry emotions, it will behoove the reader to be acquainted with how emotions were discussed among the religious authors of fourteenth-century England.

Due to Richard Rolle's excessively emotional *Fire of Love*, many English authors in the fourteenth century reacted with condemning words to those who relied

too heavily on their emotional experience of God. For example, the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* wrote a particularly clear condemnation against those who felt moved to rebuke sin in others: 'Alle men wil thei reproue of their defautes... thei sey that thei be steryd therto by the fiire of charite & of Goddes loue in their hertes.'³⁰ Notice the 'fiire' and 'loue' in the above quote, which appear to be directed towards Richard Rolle and his readers. '[T]rewly thei lighe,' the *Cloud* author continues, 'for it is with the fiire of helle wellyng in their braynes & in their ymaginacion.'³¹

Julian shared a similar distrust towards emotions when she wrote: 'For we be alle in part trobelyd, and we schal be trobelyd, folowyng our master Jhesu, tylle we be fulle purgyd... of all oure inwarde affections which be nott very good.'³² Based on the rest of her *Long Text*, however, it seems clear that Julian is not saying that all inward affections are 'nott very good,' but is rather referring to all the inward affections that are not good.

Julian does not condemn emotions with the same directness as the *Cloud* author, but rather counterbalances Rolle's intense emotionalism by emphasizing the presence of God in the midst of dry and barren feelings.³³ In order to understand Julian's position on emotions, it is helpful to explore her image of 'oure curtesse lorde'³⁴ who 'drawyth us to hym by loue.'³⁵ Often describing the Lord as 'curteys,' Julian even refers to Christ as 'feyer,' which is best translated as 'handsome.'³⁶ This same word is used to describe Christ in a parable found within the *Ancrene Wisse*, which will be referred to as the Christ-Knight parable.

As an anchoress, it is very likely that Julian was acquainted with the *Ancrene Wisse*, a Guide for Anchoresses written in the thirteenth century for three young anchoresses of noble birth.³⁷ Within the *Ancrene Wisse*, a parable describes Christ as a rich, powerful and handsome ('feire')³⁸ knight who falls madly in love with a lady. Yet the

lady responds to all of Christ's gifts and tender messages with hard-hearted scorn until finally Christ dies in order to protect her from her enemies. 'But,' the story concludes, 'by a miracle he rose from death to life.'¹³⁹ The story never describes the lady eventually falling in love with the Christ-Knight, but simply asks the question, 'Would not this lady have a base nature if she did not love him after this above all things?'¹⁴⁰

When Julian uses the words 'curteys' and 'feyer,' she invokes the 'Christ-Knight' motif. With this passage from the *Ancrene Wisse* in mind, one can assume that this story, with which Julian was most probably familiar, was implied in her imagery. Although loving and prayerful emotions are upheld in Julian's spirituality of prayer, she also makes room for dryness and barrenness. Even when one lacks love and warm emotions towards Christ, the divine knight still persists in wooing his beloved. Even when one feels no tenderness, God is still present. Merely directing one's attention to the divine knight makes God 'ful glad and mery.'¹⁴¹ This is why she says, 'Pray interly, though thou fele nought...for in drynesse and barnesse, in sicknesse and in febelnes, than is thy prayer fulle plesannt to me.'¹⁴² Praying interly means praying entirely, even if that includes dry and arid emotions.

'Pray Interly' as 'Pray Inwardly to Encounter God within One's Being'

In order to understand the 'inward' nuance of the word 'interly,' an intertextual analysis will be made between the *Showings* Long Text and two texts by the *Cloud* author: *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Book of Privy Counselling*. The analysis will investigate the possibility of apophatic prayer in Julian and the presence of God within one's being.

In *The Book of Privy Counselling*, the *Cloud* author refers to his contemplative prayer practice as the 'inward ocupacion.'¹⁴³ Also writing in fourteenth-century England,

the *Cloud* author may provide the reader with insight into the 'inward' nuance of Julian's word 'interly.' However, the contemplative prayer practice of the *Cloud* author is heavily apophatic. Is the cataphatic anchoress encouraging her readers to pray apophatically when she writes, 'Pray interly'?

In the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the anonymous author exhorts his readers to 'put a cloude of forghetyng bineth thee...and alle the cretures that euer ben maad'¹⁴⁴ in order to penetrate the cloud of unknowing. 'Although Julian of Norwich does not directly speak of such a cloud in her *Showings*,' Masson explains, 'she does refer to a moment of forgetting prior to receiving her revelations.' Julian's desires to see the Passion and experience bodily sickness both 'passed from mynd.'¹⁴⁵

Masson highlights the juxtaposition of Julian's forgetting her desire for bodily sickness in Chapter 2 and the description of her bodily sickness 'during which she experiences her showings' in Chapter 3.46 Masson suggests that Julian puts her desire for bodily sickness under the cloud of forgetting and in so doing, penetrates the cloud of unknowing in her visions. Although her visions include vivid images that seem far from apophatic, Masson asserts that the ineffable God is still at the center of her experience. The ineffable God is expressed in 'the coincidence of opposites—a concept rooted in Christ, the embodiment of coincidence between the human and divine.'¹⁴⁷ Perhaps Masson's assertions about apophatic prayer in Julian suggests that praying 'interly' involves beholding the ineffable God who cannot be contained by images alone, but remains hidden behind the clouds of paradox and unknowing.

It is a bold assertion that apophatic prayer spawned Julian's sixteen revelations of divine love, which overflow with images of the blood and motherhood of Christ, the freckled-faced devil, the Christ-Knight and much more. Not only is it bold, this writer asserts that Masson's

reading is actually a misunderstanding of Julian's spirituality of prayer. Although Julian invites the reader to hold multiple meanings in single ideas, she does not hold both the apophatic and the cataphatic approaches to God. Julian upholds the cataphatic approach to the divine, which welcomes a variety of images and expressions of God. Julian clearly utilizes images to understand and penetrate the divine. One might argue that the apophatic Cloud author also uses imagery (like a 'cloud' for instance) to point to the ineffable God and Julian perhaps does the same with her images. However, such an argument would collapse the distinction between apophatic and cataphatic. Authors of the apophatic tradition intentionally reject thoughts and images as vehicles for encountering the divine whereas cataphatic authors intentionally utilize images to encounter the divine. Julian clearly belongs to the latter category. In fact, in order to understand Julian's 'inward' spirituality of prayer, one of her many images will now be revisited.

The image of the Christ-Knight, which was examined above in the *Ancrene Wisse*, will now be investigated within the *Showings* Long Text. In Chapter 68, Julian writes,

I saw the soule so large as it were an endless warde, and also as it were a blessyd kyngdom; and by condicions that I saw there in I understode that it is a wurschypfulle cytte, in myddes of that cytte (sitts) oure lorde Jhesu, very god and very man, a feyer person and of large stature, highest bysschoppe, most solempne kyng, wurschypfullest lorde. And I saw hym clothyd solemply in wurschypes. He syttyth in the soule evyn right in peas and rest, and he rulyth.¹⁴⁸

Here, Julian places the handsome Christ-Knight within the soul. With the Christ-Knight image, the phrase 'pray interly' resounds with both the 'entire self' meaning and the 'inward' nuance. By praying 'interly,' Julian encounters the 'curteys' Lord in the midst of her emotional dryness and also within her own soul, where the 'feyer' Lord dwells. The divine is experienced both transcendentally and immanently in the act of praying 'interly.'

A closer look at the immanent experience of the divine will require looking at the theology within *The Book of Privy Counseling* by the *Cloud* author, for the theology underlying this work offers a helpful entry way into Julian's 'inward' spirituality of prayer. Although it has already been established that Julian and the *Cloud* author are not describing the same prayer practice (the *Cloud* author is apophatic while Julian is cataphatic), the word 'inward' is used by the *Cloud* author in *The Book of Privy Counseling* and therefore can still offer insight into the 'inward' nuance of Julian's 'interly.'

By praying inwardly, one focuses on what the *Cloud* author calls 'being' and Julian calls 'substance.' In *The Book of Privy Counseling*, the *Cloud* author writes,

For he is thi being, and in him thou arte that at thou arte, not only bi cause and bi beyng, bot also he is in thee bothe thi cause and thi beyng.⁴⁹

In *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing*, William Johnston develops the phrase that the *Cloud* author repeats like a refrain in *Privy Counseling*: 'He is your being.'⁵⁰ Johnston attempts to unpack this phrase when he writes,

God is united with all men, including sinners, precisely because they exist. God is one with all that he has created in such a way that the author can address his disciple with the words: 'He is your being.'⁵¹

God is intimately connected to everyone and everything that exists because God is Existence, because God is everyone's and everything's Being; and because God is being, the author wants his disciple to get in touch with his being, which is God. Johnston explains, 'God is the cause of all things and the being of all things: to think on oneself, in the true sense of the word is to think on God.'⁵²

Furthermore, when the one thinks on God as the ultimate cause and being, one actually discovers the true self in God. 'See God as your true being,' Johnston continues, 'and you see your real self.'⁵³ For Julian of Norwich, this

is when 'substance' and 'sensuality' unite, when God and the soul become one. Praying 'interly' means focusing on the reality of one's existence. One is connected with all things by one's very being, which is God. In fact, all things that exist are one in that all things share existence, which is God. This prayer, in the words of the anchoress, 'onyth the soule to god.'¹⁵⁴

With the theology of the *Cloud* author in mind, a deeper penetration into the words of the anchoress can now be made. Julian describes God as Being in her own words:

'I saw that he is in althyng'¹⁵⁵

'He is beyng'¹⁵⁶

'Our lyfe and our beyng is in god'¹⁵⁷

'Oure god in whome we haue oure beyng'¹⁵⁸

'He is the grownde, of whom we haue alle oure lyfe and oure beyng'¹⁵⁹

Julian understands God as Being, similar to the *Cloud* author. By praying inwardly, Julian directs her attention within to encounter God in her very being; and in her being, Julian meets the source and foundation of all things. She continues to use the image of foundation or 'grounde' for God in her visions:

'I am grounde of thy besekyng'¹⁶⁰

'I am grounde'¹⁶¹

'Oure lorde is grounde in whom that oure prayer spryngyth'¹⁶²

'I am the grounde of they besechyng'¹⁶³

'I am grownde of thy besechyng.'¹⁶⁴

According to Julian, praying inwardly involves directing attention to one's very being. By doing so, one encounters not only the God who is Being and the source of Being, but also the God who is the source of prayer. 'Oure lorde,' Julian says, 'is grounde in whom that oure prayer spryngyth' and 'we can pray right nought but as he steryth us for the tyme.'¹⁶⁵ In praying inwardly, one encounters the God who moves one to pray in the first place. 'And in this grounde,' Julian continues, '[God] wyll that we take oure stede and oure dwelling.'¹⁶⁶ Inward prayer for Julian involves more than encountering the divine Being and ground within. Inward prayer calls one to dwell

within the divine Being and ground. This is why Julian describes the soul as castle where the handsome Christ-Knight rules. This is why Julian describes Christ as a Mother in whose arms one falls.⁶⁷ Julian uses a colorful panoply of images to describe the divine, who dwells within, constantly inviting the individual to accompany him. Praying 'interly' or 'inwardly' is Julian's way of accepting the divine invitation.

So what prevents Julian and others from dwelling permanently in this 'grounde'? According to Julian, this divine being and ground is 'substance.' All humans have this 'substance,' but humans also have 'sensuality.' In describing the nature of Christ, Julian describes these two aspects of humanity: 'And theyse two pertyes were in Crist, the heyer and the lower, whych is but one soule. The hyer perty was evyr in pees with god in full joy and blysse. The lower perty, whych is sensualityte, sufferyd for the saluacion of mankynd.'¹⁶⁸ Because humans are made in the image of God, Jantzen asserts that these same two 'pertyes' are present in humans, which coincides with the rest of the Long Text. 'Our essential selfhood, our substance,' Jantzen elaborates, 'is eternally united with God from whom it flows forth.'¹⁶⁹

The union of substance and God is clearly seen when Julian writes, 'And I sawe no dyfference betwen god and oure substance, but, as it were all god'¹⁷⁰ and 'betwene god and oure soul may be right nought.'¹⁷¹ However, Jantzen also highlights the 'sensuality' of humanity when she writes, 'Our sensuality, our ordinary physical and psychological life, is something else, and is very far from being always united with God.'¹⁷²

Sensuality serves as a helpful word to describe the aspects of the entire self mentioned above: the varieties of bodily experience, questioning God, laughter and especially dry emotions. As discussed above, dry emotions do not cause one to feel close to God, but rather the opposite. God often feels distant and difficult to perceive. '[W]e fayle

oftymes of the syght of hym,' Julian admits, 'and anon we falle in to oure selfe, and than fynde we felyng of ryght nowght but the contraryous that is in oure selfe'⁷³ Though the substance of humanity is united with God, the sensuality seems to distance humanity from God.

However, praying 'interly' means praying with both substance and sensuality, inwardly and entirely. Praying 'interly' means praying with the parts of the self that feel deeply connected to God and also the parts of the self that feel far from God. This prayer unites the soul to God while also uniting substance with sensuality. 'Prayer,' Julian explains, 'onyth the soule to god, for though the soule be evyr lyke to god in kynde and in substance restoryd by grace, it is ofte unlike in condescion by synne of mannes perty.'⁷⁴ By praying 'interly,' even the parts of the self that feel far from God are enveloped in God who 'is all.'⁷⁵ Dry and barren emotions along with anger and frustration are welcomed in the practice of praying 'interly.' Even such negative emotions are met with God's benison. 'For thowe we fele in us wrath, debate and stryfe, yet we be all mercyfully beclosyd in the myldehed of god and in his mekeded, in his benynngnite and in his buxomnesse'⁷⁶ Julian sees 'wrath, debate and stryfe' as parts of the entire self and 'sensuality' which are brought to the Lord in the act of praying entirely.

God mercifully encloses these negative emotions with love the same way the Christ-Knight showers the hard-hearted dame with tenderness. By enveloping the dry and negative emotions, God who 'is all' unites substance and sensuality. '[God],' Julian explains, 'is the mene that kepyth the substannce and sensualyte to geder, so that it shall nevyr departe.'⁷⁷ The God encountered within one's very being is the same God who lovingly holds one's dry and negative emotions. By praying with both parts of the self, the inward and the entire, the substance and the sensuality, one encounters the God who sustains and unites them together.

Theological and Spiritual Implications of Praying 'Interly'

The *hapax legomenon* 'interly' holds two general meanings: 'entirely' and 'inwardly.' Within the *Showings* Long Text, 'entirely' refers to the variety of bodily experiences, questioning God, laughter, and an array of human emotions. All of which can be summed up in Julian's word 'sensuality.' 'Inwardly' refers to the divine ground and being which unites the human soul with God. Although the apophatic author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* primarily calls this 'being,' the cataphatic, the anchoress uses the word 'substance.'⁷⁸ By engaging the Christ-Knight image in both the *Ancrene Wisse* and the *Showings* Long Text, it is clear that God is lovingly present both transcendentally and immanently. God lovingly woos and sacrificially gives in the midst of one's dry and negative emotions while also dwelling within one's being, inviting the individual to accompany Him. Just as God unites 'substance' and 'sensuality' in prayer so does the word 'interly' unite 'entirely' and 'inwardly.' In order to participate in the reconciliation and union of 'substance' with 'sensuality,' the reader is invited to pray 'entirely' and 'inwardly,' that is, to pray 'interly.'

The word 'interly' in the *Showings* Long Text implies a God who is deeply invested in the human experience since God, like the word, is able to hold and be present in both the 'entire' range of human experience, even negative emotions, along with the 'inward' ground of all being. God does not exclude or condemn those who experience dryness, barrenness, sickness, weakness, anger, and strife. God does not exclude or condemn those who boldly question Him about the problem of evil or those who seek to experience Him bodily. Instead, God is 'ful glad and mery...and he lokyth ther after, and he wyll haue it.'⁷⁹ This is a God who loves and enjoys it when His children bring to Him their human experience, even (and especially) when the experience feels dry and difficult. God encloses the human

experience of 'sensuality' within His loving womb and unites it with the human and divine 'substance.'

So how does one pray 'interly'? Because the word holds polyvalent meaning, praying 'interly' can involve either praying with the entire self or praying inwardly to meet God in one's being. Both prayer practices are expressed in the word. However, to enjoy the fullness of 'interly,' one can practice holding both the entire 'sensuality' and the inward 'substance' together in prayer. Just as Julian invites her readers to hold multiple meanings in single ideas, praying 'interly' involves holding one's 'sensuality' along with one's 'substance.' During times of anger, 'interly' calls the one in prayer to hold the angry emotion before God while also acknowledging that God is already present within. Since God is the ground of beseeching, the very act of turning to God in prayer reveals the truth that God is already present within.

According to Julian, prayer is not possible without God's inward initiation. If one brings dry or angry emotions to God in prayer, God certainly welcomes the emotions and encloses them in his love. Yet more than that, God is the one who directed the prayer in the first place. Simply put, one cannot pray 'entirely' without praying 'inwardly.' The immanent God springs forth prayer within the individual to pray to the transcendent God. Yet the immanent God and the transcendent God are One and the same. So the immanent God is praying to the transcendent God, uniting the 'entire'

sensuality and the 'inward' substance of the one who is in prayer.

Conclusion

When Episcopalians chant the opening line in Psalm 103, Julian's spirituality of prayer can be heard, 'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.' Like the Psalmist, Julian invites her readers today to pray 'interly,' with their inner being ('my soul') and with all of their emotions ('all that is within me'). Even (and perhaps especially) when the emotions are dry and empty, the invitation is to direct attention to God who dwells within the soul, who unites 'substance' with 'sensuality,' and who is Existence itself. By praying 'interly,' Julian was able to encounter the loving presence of God within, even in the midst of emotional dryness. She could bring her emotions honestly to the Lord, trusting that He would be 'ful glad and mery'⁸⁰ and meet her in very being. As a result, she could confidently assert the loving presence of God in the midst of barrenness: 'Synne is behouely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thyng shalle be wele.' And in so doing, Julian's bold words of hope provided comfort to a classroom full of terrified college students on September 11th, 2001. By following Julian's path in praying 'interly,' this hope and consolation can be accessed even now by uniting fragmented selves in a world that may often feel dry and barren.

NOTES

1 Homage to Paul Ricoeur who said, 'Language only captures the foam on the surface of life.' Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory* (Texas: Texas University Press, 1976), 63.

2 Ritamary Bradley, 'Julian of Norwich: Writer and Mystic' In *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe*, ed. Paul Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press 1984), 195.

3 This is a translation from the Middle English text from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* used in class. The Middle English text itself will be

used in subsequent references. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 7th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2000), 1: 356.

4 Ibid, 360-361.

5 Although Julian wrote a Short Text soon after receiving her visions, this study will focus solely on the Long Text, which was written later, after many years of theological reflection and maturation.

6 *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Edmund College, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of

Medieval Studies, 1978), 464.

7 Clifton Wolters, trans. *Julian of Norwich: Revelations of Divine Love* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 39. *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Ancrene Wisse*. After utilizing linguistic and intertextual methods of investigation, the theological and spiritual implications of praying 'interly' will be considered.

8 Wolters, *Revelations*, 124 and Father John-Julian, *The Complete Julian of Norwich* (Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2009), 193, and John Skinner, *Revelation of Love Julian of Norwich* (New York: Image, 1997), 81.

9 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 466.

10 *Ibid*, 512.

11 *A Middle English Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) s. v. 'enter.'

12 *Middle English Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1953) s. v. 'enter.'

13 J. A. Burrow and Thorlac Turville-Petre, *A Book of Middle English*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 17-18.

14 *Ibid*, 18.

15 *Ibid*, 18.

16 *Ibid*, 19.

17 *Middle English Dictionary*, 'Innerly (adv.)' University of Michigan Digital Library Production Service, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED22829> (accessed November 20, 2009)

18 *A Middle English Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) s. v. 'innerli.'

19 *Middle English Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1953) s. v. 'interalli.'

20 'Oon bodily and a nother gostly.' *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 360.

21 'One is ryghtfulle prayer; a nother is seker trust.' *Ibid*, 460.

22 'This blyssydfulle felyng...and sufferyth...both is one loue.' *Ibid*, 356.

23 'Loue and drede are bredryn.' *Ibid*, 673.

24 'Oone owtwarde...another inwarde.' *Ibid*, 516.

25 *Ibid*, 432.

26 *Ibid*, 472.

27 Julian prays specifically for a 'bodily sicknes' and desires a 'bodely sight...of the bodily paynes of our sauour.' *Ibid*, 286. Julian even appreciates the body in the wondrous process of bowel elimination. *Ibid*, 306.

28 Julian asks why the prescient God did not prevent sin from the beginning. *Ibid*, 404. Even

after receiving the answer that all shall be well, Julian continues to ask, 'How might alle be wele?' *Ibid*, 412. Finally, Julian states, '[O]ure good Lord answeryd to alle the questions...that I might make.' *Ibid*, 417.

29 Julian writes, 'I light myghtely,' and continues, 'we may laugh, to comforyng of oure selfe and joyeng in god for the feend isovercome.' *Ibid*, 348-349. Again, in Chapter 77, Julian says, 'This made me myghtely to lawgh.' *Ibid*, 690.

30 The Middle English letter 'thorn' which looks like 'p' but sounds like 'th' will be written in the text as 'th.' *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the *Book of Privy Counseling*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 102. Translation: 'They reprove all men of their faults...saying that they are moved todo this by the fire of charity and of God's love which is in their hearts.' *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Translated by James Walsh, S.J. *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1981), 226.

31 *The Cloud and the Book*, Hodgson, 102. Translation: 'But they are liars for it is rather by the fire of hell welling up in their brains and in their imaginations.' *Cloud*, Walsh, 226.

32 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 406.

33 Julian unintentionally forged a Via Media between Richard Rolle's saccharine *Fire of Love* and the anti-emotionalism found in the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, which is appropriate considering her recognition as a saint in the Anglican Communion.

34 *Ibid*, 477.

35 *Ibid*, 479.

36 *Ibid*, 640.

37 Although it is not certain that Julian read from the *Ancrene Wisse*, it is highly probable that she did, or was at least acquainted with its stories and motifs.

38 *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 114.

39 A translation is provided for the benefit of the reader. The Middle English reads, 'Thurh miracle aras thah from deathe to liue.' *Ibid*, 114.

40 Again, a translation is provided as the Middle English reads, 'Nere theos ilke leafdi of ueeles cunnes cunde yef ha ouer alle thing ne luuede him herefter?' *Ibid*, 114.

41 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 463.

- 42 *Ibid*, 464-465.
- 43 *The Cloud and the Book*, Hodgson, 135.
- 44 The Middle English letter 'yogh' which looks like '3' and sounds like either 'y' or 'gh' will be written in the text as either 'y' or 'gh' depending on the context. *The Cloud and the Book*, Hodgson, 24.
- 45 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 288.
- 46 Cynthia Masson, 'The Point of Coincidence: Rhetoric and the Apophatic in Julian of Norwich's Showings,' in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire, 153-181 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 153.
- 47 *Ibid*, 174.
- 48 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 288. Translation: 'I saw the soul as wide as if it were an endless citadel, and also if it were a blessed kingdom, and from the state which I saw in it, I understood that it is a fine city. In the midst of that city sits our Lord Jesus, true God and true man, a handsome person and tall, highest bishop, most awesome king, most honourable lord. And I saw him splendidly clad in honours. He sits erect there in the soul, in peace and rest, and he rules.' Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J. *Julian of Norwich Showings*, (New York: Paulist 1978), 313.
- 49 *The Cloud and the Book*, Hodgson, 136. Translation: 'He is your being and in him, you are what you are, not only because he is the cause and being of all that exists, but because he is your cause and the deep center of your being.' William Johnston, *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling*, (New York: Image Book by Doubleday, 1996), 138.
- 50 *The Cloud and the Book*, Johnston, 139.
- 51 William Johnston, *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing: A Modern Interpretation. The Religious Experience Series Vol. 8* (Indiana: Abbey Press, 1975), 218.
- 52 *Ibid*, 219.
- 53 *Ibid*, 24.
- 54 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 475.
- 55 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 336. Translation: 'He is present in all things.' Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 197.
- 56 *Ibid*, 470. Translation: 'He is being.' *Ibid*, 251.
- 57 *Ibid*, 507. Translation: 'Our life and our being are in God.' *Ibid*, 264.
- 58 *Ibid*, 592. Translation: 'Our God in whom we have our being.' *Ibid*, 296.
- 59 *Ibid*, 697. Translation: 'He is the foundation from whom we have our life and our being.' *Ibid*, 332.
- 60 *Ibid*, 461. Translation: 'I am the ground of your beseeching.' *Ibid*, 248.
- 61 *Ibid*, 468. Translation: 'I am the ground.' *Ibid*, 250.
- 62 *Ibid*, 469. Translation: 'Our Lord is the ground from which our prayer springs.' *Ibid*, 251.
- 63 *Ibid*, 474. Translation: 'I am the foundation of your beseeching.' *Ibid*, 253.
- 64 *Ibid*, 732. Translation: 'I am the foundation of your beseeching.' *Ibid*, 342.
- 65 *Ibid*, 477. Translation: 'We cannot pray at all except as he moves us at the time.' *Ibid*, 254.
- 66 *Ibid*, 470. Translation: 'And he wants us to take our place and our dwelling in this foundation.' *Ibid*, 251.
- 67 *Ibid*, 675. Translation: 'Fall into our Lord's breast, as the child into the mother's arms.' *Ibid*, 325.
- 68 *Ibid*, 569. Translation: 'And these two parts were in Christ, the higher and the lower, which are only one soul. The higher part was always at peace with God in full joy and bliss. The lower part, which is sensuality, suffered for the salvation of mankind.' *Ibid*, 287.
- 69 Grace M. Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988), 147.
- 70 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 562.
- 71 *Ibid*, 493.
- 72 Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich*, 147.
- 73 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 499. Translation: 'Often we fail to perceive him, and presently we fall back upon ourselves, and then we find that we feel nothing at all but opposition that is in ourselves.' Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 261.
- 74 *A Book of Showings*, Colledge and Walsh, 475.
- 75 'I it am that is alle.' *Ibid*, 664. Translation: 'I am he who is all.' Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 321.
- 76 *Ibid*, 506-507. Translation: 'For though we may feel in ourselves anger, contention and strife, still we are all mercifully enclosed in God's mildness and in his meekness, in his benignity and in his accessibility.' *Ibid*, 264.
- 77 *Ibid*, 571.
- 78 Julian also uses the word 'Being' as seen above.
- 79 *Ibid*, 464.
- 80 *Ibid*, 463.