

'No such sitting': Julian Tropes the Trinity

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Devotion to the Trinity was growing in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: 'In 1334 Pope John XXII set aside the first Sunday after Pentecost as Trinity Sunday. Increasing devotion to the Trinity can also be seen in the many prayers addressed to the Trinity'.¹ Theology, however, did not necessarily keep pace. In his study of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Thomas Marsh has claimed: 'In spite of the formal, notional acknowledgement of the doctrine, a real understanding of God as Trinity practically disappeared from the Christian consciousness of the Middle Ages'.² This sweeping condemnation, however, ignores the notable contribution of Julian of Norwich, at the heart of whose *Revelation of Love* lies an attempt to come to terms with this central concept by radically reinventing it.

This preoccupation was not an overt part of her original reaction to her showings. As has been noted by others,³ the Short Text, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*, makes only two references to the Trinity. In Section 12, on the Three Heavens (kept and expanded in Chapters 22 and 23 of *A Revelation of Love*) Julian sets up a series of correspondences with the three Persons of the Trinity:

For the firste heven, shewed Criste me his fadere, bot in na bodelye liknesse botte in his properte and in his wyrkinge [...] And in this thre wordes – 'It is a joye, a blisse, and ane endeles likinge to me' – ware shewed to me thre hevens as thus: for the joye, I understode the plesance of the fadere; for the blisse, the wirshippe of the sone; and for the endeles likinge, the haly gaste. The fadere is plesed, the sone is worshipped, the haly gaste lykes. Jhesu wille that we take heede to this blisse that is in the blissedfulle trinite of oure salvation. (*Vision*, 12.9–11; 31–6)⁴

And in Section 24, Julian alludes to the traditional Augustinian interpretation of the Trinity as might, wisdom and love, while stressing that the most immediate or accessible of these 'propertees', or attributes, is love, or the Holy Spirit:

¹ Pamela Sheingorn, 'The Bosom of Abraham Trinity: A Late Medieval All Saints Image', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Halaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 273–95 (286).

² Thomas Marsh, *The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Study* (Dublin, 1994), p. 194.

³ For instance Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (London, 1987), p. 108.

⁴ All quotations are taken from *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (Turnhout, 2006).

Though the persones in the blissede trinite be alle even in properte, luffe was moste shewed to me, that it is moste nere to us alle. And of this knowinge er we moste blynde. For many men and women leves that God is allemighty and may do alle, and that he is alle wisdom and can do alle. Botte that he is alle love and wille do alle, thar thay stinte [...] For of alle the propertees of the blissed trinite, it is Goddes wille that we hafe moste sekernesse in likinge and luffe. For luffe makes might and wisdom fulle meke to us. (*Vision*, 24.15–19; 27–9)

These brief references are the seeds from which grows her more developed trinitarian thought in *A Revelation of Love*. This much longer text was (probably) composed by Julian after many years spent in the anchorhold attached to the church of St Julian, which was (and is) only a short walk away from Norwich Cathedral. Like many a medieval institution, the cathedral priory was dedicated to the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Maybe this dedication served as a focus for Julian's meditations, especially if she followed the recommendations of at least one medieval text directed at anchoresses. The fifteenth-century *Myroure of Recluses* recommends meditation on the Trinity, specifically on its Augustinian properties of might, wisdom and goodness:

of þe myzt of G[od]dys mageste þat maade al the world of nauȝt for man; of the hy wysdom of sothfastnesse, whiche gouerneþ moost ordynatly his affect; and [of] þe greet mercy of his goodnesse, whiche delyuerede & bouȝte mankynde fro perpetuel deep; & of perfyte ryȝtwysnesse of equite, that schal fynaly rewarde or punsche euery good or wykkyd deede.⁵

The *Myroure* continues in terms that Julian would find unexceptionable, explaining how the human person is created in the trinitarian image:

God, by a special prerogatif [privilege] of love, maade man to þe ymage and lyknesse of hym-self [...] Wher-for, lykly yt was þat by þe conseyl of al þe Trinite [...] yt was seyde in þe bygynyng of þe world, "Make we man to þe ymage and oure liknesse" [...] as þouȝ he schold sey in this wyse, "Ryȝt as in the Godhede the Sone [is] of the Fadir, and the [Holy Goost is of the] Fader and of þe Sone togedire, ryȝt so in a maner yt is in a mannys soule" [...] Wherfore, a man may knowe, as þer ben þre myȝtes [faculties] and o substaunce in his soule, ryȝth so lyk in a manere þer bien thre persones in the Godhede, and þo þer ben substancially [in substance] on and þe same God.⁶

Whatever the reason, Julian has far more to say about the Trinity in *A Revelation of Love*. Indeed, the opening, which lists all the chapters to come (and which, of course, may not have been composed by Julian herself but by a later scribe), reads:

This is a revelation of love that Jhesu Christ, our endles blisse [glory], made in sixteen shewinges.

⁵ *Myroure of Recluses: A Middle English Translation of Speculum Inclusorum*, ed. Marta Powell Harley (Madison and London, 1995), p. 24. E. A. Jones considers the text of the Latin original in his essay also included in this volume.

⁶ *Myroure of Recluses*, p. 24.

Of which the first is of his precious crowning of thornes. And therin was comprehended [included] and specified the blessed trinity [...] in which all the shewinges that foloweth be groundide and oned. (*Revelation*, 1.1–7)

Essentially, this makes the Trinity the foundation of all the individual shewings.⁷ The list ends, too, with a reference to the Trinity, describing the Sixteenth and final showing as ‘that the blisseful trinity our maker, in Christ Jesu our saviour, endlessly wonneth [dwells] in our soule’ (*Revelation*, 1.47–8). This showing takes place in Chapter 68, where Julian sees Jesus, ‘highest bishoppe, solempnest kinge, wurshipfullest lorde’, sitting in the midst of her soul, and asserts that ‘the blessed trinite enjoyeth without ende in the making of mannes soule’ and that ‘if the blisseful trinite might have made mannes soule ony better, [...] he shulde not have been full plesid with making of mannes soule’ (*Revelation*, 68. 5–6; 17; 31–3).

The First Revelation, too, lives up to its description: when Julian sees Christ’s bleeding head in Chapter 4 she immediately comments:

in the same shewing, sodeinly the trinity fulfilled my hart most of joy. And so I understode it shall be in heaven without end, to all that shall come ther. For the trinity is God, God is the trinity. The trinity is our maker, the trinity is our keper, the trinity is our everlasting lover, the trinity is our endlesse joy and oure blisse [glory], by our lord Jesu Christ and in our lord Jesu Christ. And this was shewed in the first sight [vision] and in all. For where Jhesu appireth [appears] the blessed trinity is understand, as to my sight [in my opinion]. (*Revelation*, 4.6–12)

We can connect this with Julian’s description in the Ninth Revelation, Chapter 22 (which develops a passage already present in *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*), of Christ showing her the Father ‘in no bodely liknesse [physical manifestation] but in his properte [attributes] and in his wurking [function]: that is to sey, I saw in Crist that the father is’ (*Revelation*, 22.10–11). It also chimes with her remark in Chapter 58 on our substance and our ‘sensuality’: our substance is in each of the persons of the Trinity, but ‘our sensualite is only in the seconde person, Crist Jhesu, in whom is the fader and the holy gost’ (*Revelation*, 58.53–4). We should also bear in mind a biblical precedent, Saint Paul’s words (2 Corinthians 5:19): ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself’.⁸

Julian describes the vision in Chapter 22 as a ‘touch’. It is enigmatic but, if nothing else, she is clearly dissociating herself here from any claim to represent the Trinity visually. Medieval art, however, was not so fastidious. One of the commonest ways of representing the Trinity is the Throne-of-Grace Trinity (also commented on by Gunn in the essay which precedes this one), which does emphatically present the Father ‘in bodily likeness’. Typically, it represents God the Father as an old, bearded man, usually seated, displaying the Son in the form of Christ Crucified. Sometimes the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, hovers between the two figures. This iconographic type

⁷ The sentence is ambiguous: I take ‘Trinite’ as the primary referent of ‘in which’.

⁸ See also Watson’s and Jenkins’s comments on this ‘hermeneutic principle, that references to Jesus also allude to the Trinity’, *Writings*, ed. Watson and Jenkins, p. 134.

first appeared ... in the early twelfth century, and from the beginning had a very strong association with liturgical contexts ... It frequently illustrates the *Te igitur* of the canon of the Mass [and] flourished in the later Middle Ages to such an extent that Wolfgang Braunfels calls it *the* medieval form of the Trinity.⁹

Ironically, such representations, in which the figure of God the Father is usually much larger than, and almost envelops, that of the Son, could be seen as an exact reversal of Julian's perception that 'in Crist the father is': Christ seems enclosed, and certainly dominated, by God the Father. Instinctively or otherwise, Julian knew that this was highly problematic from a theological point of view, and she was not alone in this: as one art historian has commented, 'anthropomorphic representations of the Trinity, with their inevitable suggestion of tritheism, were constantly condemned by theologians'.¹⁰ In Julian's own time, in late fourteenth-century England, the Lollards held strong views on this subject: 'Objects of especial antipathy were the anthropomorphic renderings of the Holy Trinity (on the grounds that God belonged to a different order of being from mortals and therefore was unrepresentable)', even though 'In respect of images of the Trinity the Lollards merely echoed the criticisms voiced by theologians from the middle of the thirteenth century'.¹¹

Nonetheless, Julian is throughout her writings quite happy to use metaphorically words that refer literally to the faculty of sight, such as *saw*, *shewed*, *appereith*, *revelation* and *showing*. But in Chapter 51 of *A Revelation of Love* she expands her intuition that the Trinity cannot be represented visually in any satisfactory fashion. This chapter, of course, contains the 'wonderful example' of the Lord and the Servant and leads into Julian's most extended discourse on the Trinity. It culminates in the apotheosis of the servant, who is also Adam, as the Son or second person of the Trinity:

Now stondest not the sonne before the fader on the lefte side as a laborer, but he sittith on the faders right hand in endlesse rest and pees. (But it is not ment that the sonne sittith on the right hand beside [Sloane reads 'syde by syde] as one man sittith by another in this life – for ther is no such sitting, as to my sight, in the trinite. But he sitteth on his faders right honde: that is to sey, right in the hiest nobilite of the faders joy.) (*Revelation*, 51.272–6)

This casual remark – the parentheses are of course contributed by the modern editors, but they are surely in the spirit of the text – opens up the possibility that, though much has been made of the influence of written texts on Julian, she was surely affected just as strongly by the visual culture of the time, as Gunn has already asserted. But what visual representations of the Trinity current in late fourteenth-century and early fifteenth-century England might Julian have seen which might have prompted this remark?

Art-historical agreement on the precise classification of the medieval iconography of the Trinity remains elusive. However, the Glossary in one recent refer-

⁹ Sheingorn, 'The Bosom of Abraham Trinity', p. 285, referring to *Die heilige Dreifaltigkeit* (Düsseldorf, 1954), p. xxxv.

¹⁰ G. McN. Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery* (Oxford, 1936), p. 405.

¹¹ Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 2004), p. 257.

ence work on images in medieval English manuscripts lists three standard ways of representing the Trinity in fifteenth-century English manuscripts, all of them anthropomorphic. The first, the 'Crucifix-Trinity as God the Father', shows him 'seated, supporting a Crucifix and sometimes blessing; usually with dove'. This iconographical type, which is sometimes called the Throne-of-Grace, Mercy Seat or *Gnadenstuhl* Trinity, has already been mentioned. The second represents 'Father and Son enthroned with dove, often with attributes of cross and orb'; common variations add 'clasping hands; trampling devil underfoot'. Thirdly there is 'Father, Son and Holy Ghost as three personified figures, with attributes, sometimes enclosed in one mantle'.¹²

Possibly Julian had in mind this third method of representing the Trinity, as three human male figures seated side by side.¹³ This iconographic type was, of course, extremely dubious from a theological viewpoint (which did not prevent its appearance in, for instance, the Dutch Hours of Catherine of Cleves, c.1440).¹⁴ It appears in several artistic media, and was particularly common in the fifteenth century. An historian of late-medieval English stained glass commented: 'The representation of the Trinity as three human beings was no innovation of the fifteenth century, though it is most frequent in that period', and proceeded to list several surviving English examples.¹⁵ Sometimes this Three-Person Trinity is crowning the Virgin, in effect a representation of a four-fold Godhead: a stained-glass example, which can be quite precisely dated as 1470, survives in Holy Trinity Church, York. But Julian, by implication, refers to *two* men and *two* men seated ('as one man sittith by another'). She is, I believe, not merely rejecting anthropomorphic representations of the Trinity in general, but one iconographical tradition in particular: the so-called *Dixit Dominus* type.

The *Dixit Dominus* Trinity was firmly established from at least the thirteenth century.¹⁶ It depicts two regal figures, usually with the Dove between them, sitting side by side, and takes its name from the first verse of Psalm 109, 'Dixit Dominus domino meo' ('The Lord said unto my lord'). In manuscripts it seems to occur more frequently than the Three-Person Trinity. Julian's comment, therefore, even if only made in passing to reject this iconographical type, suggests that she had some personal access not just to late-medieval visual culture in general, but specifically to illuminated psalters.

Most fourteenth-century English psalters divided the text of the psalms into ten sections, at the beginning of each of which stood an historiated initial: 'The initials fall at the beginning of the allotment of psalms for each day of the week (Psalms 1, 26, 38, 52, 68, 80, 97 and 109)'.¹⁷ In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries there was a standard repertory of subjects for each of these.

¹² *An Index of Images in English Manuscripts: From the Time of Chaucer to Henry VIII c.1380–c.1509*, ed. Kathleen Scott *et al.*, 3 vols (Turnhout, 2002), I, p. 105.

¹³ This appears to be the view of Colledge and Walsh: see *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, 2 vols (Toronto, 1978), II, pp. 544–5.

¹⁴ *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, introduction and commentaries by John Plummer (London, 1966), plates 32, 35, 36.

¹⁵ Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery*, p. 405.

¹⁶ See also *An Index of Images in English Manuscripts*, I, 103 and II, 109.

¹⁷ Lucy Freeman Sandler, *The Peterborough Psalter in Brussels and Other Fenland Manuscripts* (London, 1974), p. 95.

Psalm 109 had traditionally been interpreted as referring to the dual nature of Christ, or to the Father and the Son, so the opening of that psalm was often illustrated with a representation of the Trinity or of the Father and Son.

This exegetical tradition went right back to the New Testament, where extracts from Psalm 109 are quoted several times: Matthew 22:41–6, where Christ cross-questions the Pharisees and quotes the first verse; Acts 2:34–35, part of St Peter's speech at Pentecost, which cites the first two verses; and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 1:13 and 10:13, where the anonymous author focuses on the second half of the first verse. Early psalm commentaries continued the tradition, notably Saint Augustine in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos* and the Greek Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). Unorthodox though he was (he was condemned as a heretic and his works survive largely in fragments quoted by his opponents), Theodore's influence reached the West in an abbreviated and revised Latin version.¹⁸

Theodore promoted the Messianic interpretation of Psalm 109. He argued that in the Hebrew text of Psalm 109 the equivalents to 'Dominus domino' in the opening verse were both represented by the tetragrammaton, indicating divinity. From this it was clear that the psalmist is not speaking of a human being, 'sed de eo qui sit et Deus uerus et omnium Dominus, qui Christus est' (but of him who is both true God and Lord of all, who is Christ).¹⁹ He therefore rejected the Jewish interpretation of the phrase 'domino meo' as meaning Abraham or David: rather, David is speaking to 'his lord', who he knows will be born of his seed. Theodore goes on to comment (cross-referring to Psalm 9:5) that this lord is said to 'sit' in order to symbolize his kingdom, rule and judgment. The Father is therefore sharing equality of honour with the Son and both sharing and handing over the power of judgment: the sharing of honour is indicated by the act of sitting at the right hand.²⁰

This, then, was the theological basis for the *Dixit Dominus* image, of which there is a particularly splendid example at the opening of Psalm 109 in the Ormesby Psalter (Oxford Bodley MS Douce 366, fol. 147v – see Plate 1), executed in East Anglia in or around 1300.²¹ The historiated initial *D* has been described as follows:

Within the letter itself ... sit God the Father and God the Son, in formal frontal positions, their hands raised in the ancient 'orans' position. They look straight ahead with solemn gaze. Almost identical ('for he who hath seen me hath seen the Father also'), they are dressed in long blue cloaks, tied with plain, knotted girdles, and long pink cloaks each fastened in the centre with a brooch of almond shape. Their long curly hair and neat beards are brown.²²

¹⁸ Sandler, *The Peterborough Psalter*, pp. 137–8 n. 25.

¹⁹ *Theodori Mopsuesteni Expositionis in Psalmos*, ed. Lucas de Coninck, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 88A (Turnholt, 1977), p. 351.

²⁰ *Expositionis in Psalmos*, p. 352.

²¹ On the Ormesby Psalter, see Otto Pächt and J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Vol. 3: British, Irish and Icelandic Schools* (Oxford, 1973), Item 499 (fols 10–45, 58–69), late 13th–early 14th century; Item 536 (additions of historiated and other borders and initial), c.1310; Item 581 (fols 1–9, fols 46–57), c.1320–1330.

²² A. G. and Dr W. O. Hassall, *Treasures of the Bodleian Library* (London, 1976), p. 99.

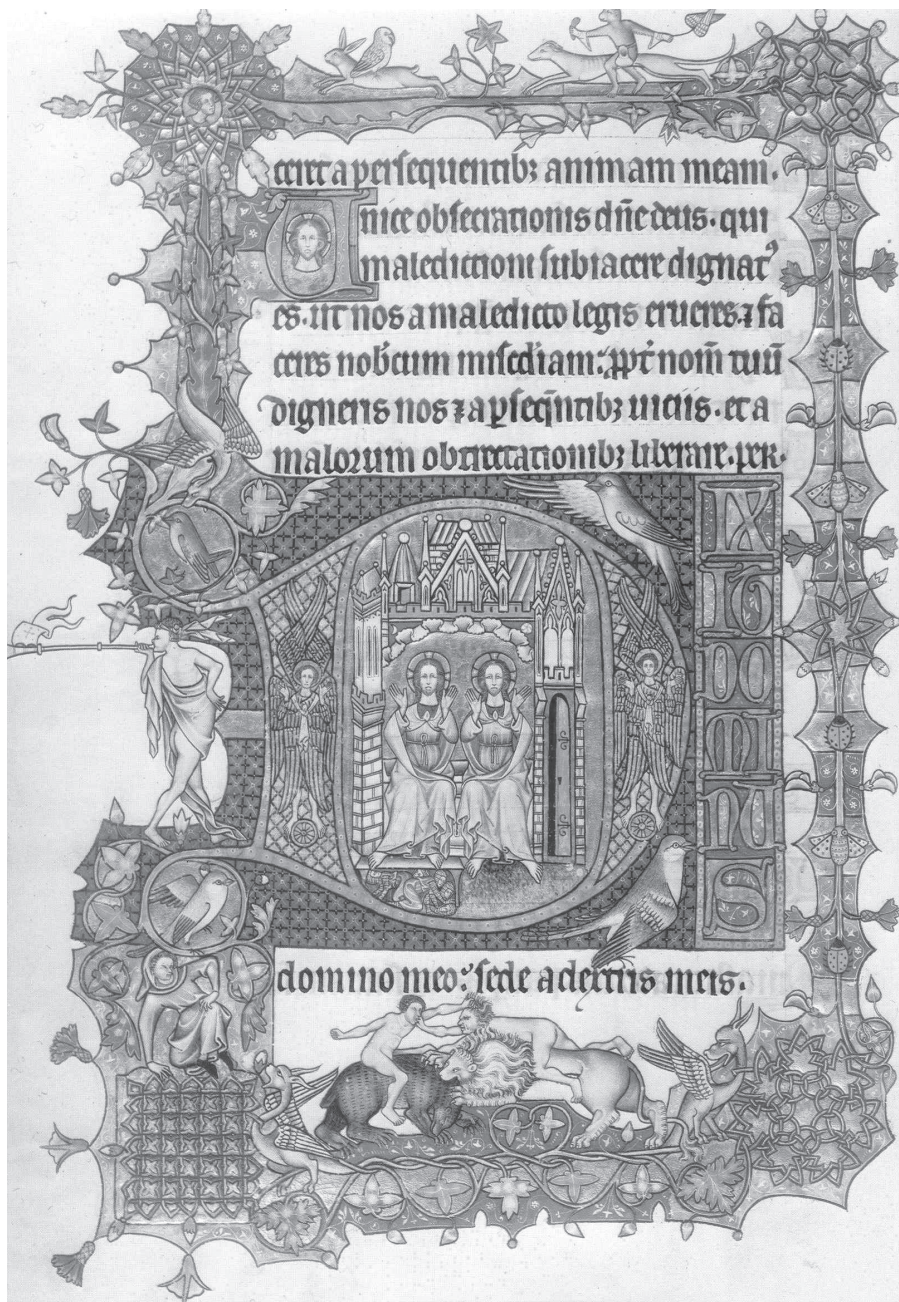


Plate 1. *Dixit Dominus* from the Ormesby Psalter, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. MS Douce 366, fol. 147v.

Sir Sydney Cockerell, too, who was the first to describe the psalter in detail, stresses this aspect of the initial: 'The two first persons of the Trinity, identical in all respects, are seated side by side.'²³ Notably, there is no Dove, so this is strictly speaking a representation of God-the-Father and Son, rather than of the Trinity. In the twenty-four English psalters c.1300–1340 whose decorative schemes have been tabulated by Sandler, the Ormesby Psalter is one of only two to illustrate Psalm 109 in this way (the other is the Douai Psalter, Douai Bibl. Pub. MS 171).²⁴ In contrast, fifteen psalters represent the entire Trinity.

The psalter is so called after its donor, Robert Ormesby, who is represented on the *Beatus* page. There are painted 'the kneeling figures of a mitred ecclesiastic (no doubt the bishop of Norwich) and a Benedictine monk (Ormesby himself)'.²⁵ Joan Greatrex considers that the appearance of his name in a document dated 1336/7 'suggests that he may have been sub-prior' at Norwich.²⁶ William de Ormesby, who was rector of St Mary in the Marsh in the precincts of Norwich Cathedral, may have been Robert's brother:²⁷ he gave the priory a glossed bible, now Cambridge University Library MS Kk. 4. 3. The name 'Ormesby' appears at the end of a late thirteenth-century manuscript of Bartholomew Cotton's chronicle, which is still at Norwich Cathedral.²⁸

Robert's donation was unusual. It was more lavish than the usual book donations made by monks, and it was to be placed in the choir, not in the library. 'Additions to the library', Joan Greatrex has pointed out, 'usually came through gifts, mainly from the monks themselves, who purchased books with their allowances, probably retained them for use, and eventually placed them in the library, as many of the inscriptions on the flyleaves explain.'²⁹ That Robert could afford such an expensive psalter suggests that he came from a wealthy family: 'such gifts may be held to imply some position in the world as well as access to a full purse', as Cockerell wryly remarks.³⁰ Possibly his was the family that held the lordship of Ormesby in Norfolk: in 1294 there is a record of a Sir William de Ormesby, his son John, and his son's sons Robert and William.³¹

The Ormesby Psalter had a complicated history, being decorated over three separate periods. Cockerell argued that 'it was written in Norfolk or Suffolk during the last years of the thirteenth century [and] it remained in quires for at least a quarter of a century, during which time the decoration proceeded intermittently'.³² Heraldic evidence suggests that it was commissioned, as late

²³ S. C. Cockerell and M. R. James, *Two East Anglian Psalters at the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1926), p. 20.

²⁴ Sandler, *The Peterborough Psalter*, pp. 98–9.

²⁵ Cockerell and James, *Two East Anglian Psalters*, p. 3.

²⁶ Joan Greatrex, *Biographical Register of the English Cathedral Priors of the Province of Canterbury c.1066 to 1540* (Oxford, 1997), p. 546.

²⁷ Greatrex, *Biographical Register*, p. 547.

²⁸ N. R. Ker, 'Medieval Manuscripts from Norwich Cathedral Priory', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 1 (1949), pp. 1–28 (13).

²⁹ Joan Greatrex, 'Monk Students from Norwich Cathedral Priory at Oxford and Cambridge, c.1300 to 1530', *English Historical Review* 106 (1991), pp. 555–83 (576).

³⁰ Cockerell and James, *Two East Anglian Psalters*, p. 37.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

as 1320, to mark a marriage between a Foliot and a Bardolf, which for some reason never took place.³³ Cockerell speculated: 'The book being again on the market and unfinished, Robert of Ormesby, then or soon afterwards a monk of Norwich, stepped in to acquire it. Under his direction it was brought to hasty completion.'³⁴ After its donation to Norwich Cathedral, it remained there for 200 years.

Robert of Ormesby gave the psalter to his priory with instructions that it was to lie in the choir before whomever happened to be sub-prior at the time: on fol. 1v is formally inscribed, in red, 'psalterium fratris Roberti de Ormesby monachi Norwyc' per eundem assignatum choro ecclesie sancte Trinitatis Norwici ad iacendum coram Supprieore qui pro tempore fuerit in perpetuum.³⁵ As the priory church of the Holy Trinity was also the cathedral, it is entirely possible that Julian had seen this very manuscript lying open at this page in the choir – and never forgotten its 'pulsing vitality',³⁶ even if on reflection she came to problematize it.

If Julian had indeed seen this particular psalter – or any illuminated manuscript – she was in a privileged position. Alabasters and stained glass, for example, would be much more part of common visual experience than illuminated manuscripts, but they preferred to represent the Trinity differently. John A. Knowles has described the kinds of visual representations of the Trinity popular in later medieval English stained glass. The Throne-of-Grace Trinity, representing God the Father displaying Christ on the Cross, sometimes with the Dove hovering above Christ's head, was common, and survives into the incunable period in woodcuts. What Knowles calls the 'Corpus Christi subject' (by some others known as the Trinity Pietà), of 'God the Father supporting the dead Christ', is found in stained glass windows in York at Holy Trinity, St John's Mickelgate and at St Martin-le-Grand. This type is 'rare, but at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries it seems to have enjoyed a considerable amount of popularity'.³⁷

Carved alabaster panels were widespread in late-medieval England. Francis Cheetham, who has extensively investigated these English alabasters, has pointed out that the Trinity was a very popular subject and that more than eighty panels representing it survive, almost all variants on the Throne-of-Grace Trinity. First, there is the standard Throne-of-Grace Trinity, with a seated, old and bearded God the Father, with or without the Dove, inevitably a vulnerable addition in a carving:

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁵ Ker, 'Medieval Manuscripts from Norwich Cathedral Priory', p. 12; and N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2nd edn (London, 1964), p. 285.

³⁶ Hassall and Hassall, *Treasures of the Bodleian Library*, p. 128.

³⁷ John A. Knowles, *Essays in the History of the York School of Glass-painting* (London and New York, 1936), pp. 171–2. This iconographic type, found on a number of Continental oil-on-wood panel paintings, survived well into the Counter-Reformation: there are, for instance, two well-known late sixteenth-century paintings using the same iconography by the Flemish painter Pieter Coecke van Aelst and by El Greco in the Prado, and an early sixteenth-century painting, 'The Trinity and Mystic Pietà', by Hans Baldung Grien (1484/5–1545) in the National Gallery, London.

Often all that remains is a dowel hole by which frequently the Dove was attached. In a number of examples, however, there is no sign of the Dove, in which case it was probably originally painted onto the alabaster, the paint being subsequent [*sic*] lost. But the possibility does arise that occasionally the Dove was not represented at all.³⁸

The second type, known as the Bosom of Abraham Trinity, is similar, but the Father holds a napkin containing the souls of the saved: it 'contains the standard components of the Throne of Grace or Mercy Seat Trinity, that is, God the Father as an elderly, regal figure, God the Son as the crucified Christ supported symmetrically in front of God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit as a dove', but it is 'different from the Throne of Grace Trinities that are quite common in alabaster'.³⁹ In the third type, there are attendant angels but 'the symbol of the Holy Spirit is frequently absent'.⁴⁰ The fourth type, which is very uncommon, represents the Trinity 'as three separate individuals'.⁴¹ The *Dixit Dominus* Trinity, with or without Dove, is not found in late medieval English alabasters.

Chapters 54 to 60 of *A Revelation of Love* are the heart of what Julian has to say on the Trinity. She develops a model – or perhaps one should say a model evolves – of the First and Second Persons as father and mother, but of the Holy Spirit as 'our good lord'. Just as the Holy Spirit is too often an afterthought in the iconography of the Trinity – many representations of the Trinity might as well be entitled 'Father and Son (and optional Dove)', as the Dove is often not prominent and sometimes is absent altogether – so he does not fit easily into the new paradigm. 'Father' and 'mother' are interdependent and mutually defining terms, but the phrase 'good lord' (the complexities of which I have discussed elsewhere) belongs to a quite different conceptual field, that of political rather than familial relationships.⁴² Similarly, even allowing for the bizarre appearance to modern eyes of the anthropomorphic Trinities, the Holy Spirit as Dove seems visually out of place and can too easily be lost (literally, in the case of the alabasters).

Like the artist of the Ormesby Psalter, who omits him altogether, Julian has trouble fitting the Holy Spirit into her Trinitarian scheme. Or perhaps it is truer to say that she has trouble finding a metaphor for the Holy Spirit that can happily co-exist with her images of God our Father and our Mother. She has no problems with the functional aspects of the Spirit, who sits happily within the tradi-

³⁸ Francis Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 296–7.

³⁹ Sheingorn, 'The Bosom of Abraham Trinity', pp. 274 and 275.

⁴⁰ There is a small high-relief German alabaster, dated c.1430, by Hans Multscher (b. c.1400), now in the Liebighaus, Frankfurt, of a related type: an angel, not God the Father, supports the dead or dying Christ, God the Father stands by with his hand raised in blessing, and the Dove is represented between his head and that of Christ's.

⁴¹ 'It is very uncommon in alabaster in the Trinities alone, but is to be found on a panel combining the Trinity with the Annunciation (Cat. 236). The only other recorded example in English alabaster is the Trinity in the Yorkshire Museum, York', Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters* (Oxford, 1984), p. 297 and plate 236, p. 310.

⁴² See my 'Julian of Norwich and the Holy Spirit, "Our Good Lord"', *Mystics Quarterly* 28 (2002), pp. 78–84, and 'Lordship, Service and Worship in Julian of Norwich', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII*, ed. E. A. Jones (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 177–88.

tional 'power-wisdom-love (or goodness)', or 'nature-mercy-grace' model (e.g. Chapters 56, 58, 59), in a formula like 'Oure fader willeth, oure mother werketh, oure good lorde the holy gost confirmeth' (*Revelation*, 59.24–5). And there is no doubt that she is convinced of the primacy of Love: 'For of alle the propertees of the blisseful trinite, it is Goddes will that we have most sekernesse and liking in love' (*Revelation*, 73.36–7); 'What, woldest thou wit thy lordes mening in this thing? Wit it wele, love was his mening' (*Revelation*, 86.13–14). It is the attempt to trope the Spirit that causes the problems.

Finally, it is interesting to reflect that the *Dixit Dominus* Trinity, even though firmly rejected by Julian at the rational level, might have subliminally suggested the basic Father-Mother model. For it presents two similar figures seated side by side, young rather than elderly, both with long hair and wearing fairly indeterminate clothing, so they look like two equal consorts.⁴³ For as Julian moves into her consideration in Chapters 59–63 of God's fatherhood and motherhood, the focus falls almost as much on a binary as on a Trinitarian godhead: 'As verely as God is oure fader, as verely is God oure moder' (*Revelation*, 59.10), he 'is very fader and very moder of kindes' (*Revelation*, 62.12). Sometimes she lays an almost exclusive emphasis on 'our swete, kynde, and ever lovyng Moder Iesus'.⁴⁴ In Chapter 68, though, balance is restored and Julian stresses that the whole Trinity, not just the Second Person, takes part in the creative act. Creation thus becomes much closer to the human experience of reproduction, in that it requires more than one participant.⁴⁵

⁴³ Although the figures are bearded more often than not, in the Ormesby Psalter this is discreet.

⁴⁴ This phrase appears in the chapter heading to the Sloane manuscript version. See *A Revelation of Love*, ed. Marian Glasscoe (Exeter, 1976), p. 73.

⁴⁵ On this, see further Alexandra Barratt, "'In the Lowest Part of Our Need": Julian and Medieval Gynecological Writing', in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York and London, 1998), pp. 239–56 (247).