

It is I

An Easter Reflection

by Kerrie Hide



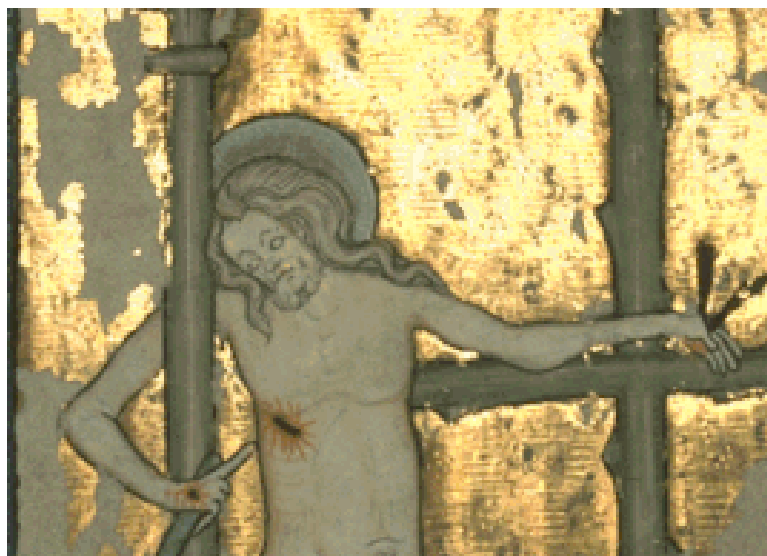
With this year being the six hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the showings of Julian of Norwich, her timeless visions are still as relevant in 2023 as they were when she received them. Essentially these revelations of love hold within them the whole of the paschal mystery, inviting us ever deeper into the pathos and beauty of the Easter story. Julian's showings begin in a darkened room, lit only by the flicker of the "common light" of the cross.ⁱ While Julian feels she is "at the point of death" (Chapter 2), she encounters her crucified lover "at the point of outpassing" (Revelation 8. Chapter 16).ⁱⁱ In this sacred point of intimate presence to one another in suffering, she beholds and sees love. In the deep silence of oneing she hears, "Entend to me, I am enough for you and enjoy in your saviour and your salvation" (Rev 13.36). Julian is inviting us to make these words our own, "to *entend*" to our crucified Beloved and to discover ever anew, depthless sources of love that are endlessly transformational this Easter. Julian's beautiful word, "*entend – intend – attend*", usually translated as "attend", has rich and nuanced meaning. With its roots in the Old French *intender*, to listen, and the Latin *intendere* to desire to lean into, or stretch towards, to attend is literally to longingly turn our attention, to lean into and listen carefully. "In-tend" also implies to be tender, loving, gentle, to sensitively desire, to be compassionate, to feel from the depths of our heart-womb with the crucified Beloved.

Hence, for Julian our attending to the wounded Jesus is not a paying attention to a subject, but a single-hearted attending with the mind of our heart so that our attention becomes beholding.

Throughout her revelations, Julian draws us into silence and stillness and invites a profound simplicity in our prayer. She encourages us to be present to our wounded Beloved naturally, organically, homely and fully, until "all our *entent* and all our might is set whole in the beholding of him" (Rev 13.43). All our ways of sensual knowing, our mind, heart, spirit, our whole attention is to be "set" in beholding our Beloved. To be "set" is to be still, totally focused, single minded, quiet, tranquil, at rest. Gently, quietly, Julian invites us to simply be in silence until, "we can do no more but behold our Beloved, enjoying, with a high, mighty desire to be all oned into him, and *entend to his wonning*, and enjoy in his loving, and delight in his goodness" (Rev 13.43). Importantly, when we behold, and "*entend to his wonning*", the oneing becomes *wonning*, an indwelling. In guiding us to attend, Julian draws us into the intimacy of our mutual indwelling. She inspires and encourages us deeper into this *wonning*, affirming how, "we shall with his sweet grace, in our own meek, continual prayer, come into him now, in this life" (Rev 13.43). Gently, as we attend, pouring out all the love of our heart, as Jesus pours out the love of his heart, graciously the attending moves from beholding Jesus as Jesus beholds us, until in the oneing, we pass into Jesus. In this point of absolute intimacy there is only one beholder, only one loving.



Julian portrays three beholdings of the cross, a beholding of suffering, a beholding of love and a beholding of joy, that are really one beholding. Vividly sensual and radiantly transcendent, they illuminate each other and dynamically elucidate the transfiguring energies of love's oneing. Initially, in the beholding of suffering,ⁱⁱⁱ Julian encourages us to stay with the material world, to remain with the sensuality of "the bodily sight" of the intensely *kenotic nougthing*, where her wounded Beloved pours out his whole being for love. As we attend and behold with Julian, the starkness of the suffering engulfs us. We are drawn into the vulnerability of the crucified body, the fresh, plenteous bleeding of the Beloved's head, the discolouring and blueing of his face, the pain of the violence, the deep drying of his body, his heart cloven, and his spiritual thirst for a blind humanity to truly see love. Essentially though, Julian does not allow us to stay as observers. She invites us to empty our whole being into the darkness of Jesus' suffering, to mirror, and then participate in this pouring out of the blood from the crucified body. And as we attend and behold, we see how this suffering takes place right in the midst of creation, as all creatures, the firmament, the earth, the sun and the moon, and all those who loved the wounded Beloved, sorrowed at his pain. This shared nougthing in suffering, in love, becomes "the great oneing between God and us." (Rev 6:18). As our hearts overflow with pathos, with sorrow, with compassion, Julian invites us to choose Jesus for our heaven in this time of pain, sorrow and woe.



Increasingly, as Julian's beholding the suffering of her Beloved becomes a oneing, this icon of suffering transforms into a beholding of love, reaching a climax in the tenth revelation.^{iv} In an ineffable, spiritual sight, the crucified one, who is also the risen Christ, looks into his wounded side and beholds. Julian carefully describes how: "with his sweet looking, he leads the understanding of his creature by the same wound, into his side within." (Rev 10.24). There is a pure silence, ineffable being in one another in the wound, as Christ's looking draws Julian, and her readers, into his gaze. As eye meets eye, and the looking becomes one loving

beholding, Christ takes us into his wound, into his vulnerability, into the hollow, into the emptiness, until we indwell within the heart of Christ. In being drawn into the vibrant luminosity of the heart, we see spiritually: "a fair and delectable place large enough for all humankind, ... to rest in peace and love" (Rev 10.24). In the mystical depths of heart understanding, we are immersed in this peace and love, in the womb-like heart of the risen Christ. In an intense oneness in love, we become one with Christ, the ground of Love, one with all humankind at rest, one with the luminous presence, who says: "See, how I love you" (Rev 10.24). In returning and entering more deeply into this showing over many years, Julian beholds how in this shared suffering in love, Christ is our mother, bearing us into endless life. In this recognition that Christ is our mother, giving birth to us, we behold joy.



After this intimate being in one another in the divine heart, Julian describes a blissful, numinous sight of her Beloved glorified.^v Her longing that she be so fastened to her Beloved, "that there be nothing between my God and me." (Ch5) comes to fruition, as all the pain and suffering of the cross transfigures into joy. Paradoxically, deep in the midst of the most horrendous suffering, Julian is filled with the bliss of the eternal. She is becoming what Christ crucified and

risen is. In the intimacy, she comes to understand in the depths of her being how: "between that one and the other shall be no time, and then we shall all be brought to joy" (Rev 8. 21). The showing glows with transcendence as in the silence of this beholding of joy, the wounded and glorified one, emanating Resurrection light says to her, and to us, in the silence of our heart:

It is I. It is I.
It is I who is highest.
It is I you love.
It is I you like.
It is I you serve.
It is I you long for. It is I you desire.
It is I who gives you meaning.
It is I who is all.
(Rev 12.26).

Jesus' words are luminously sapiential, as he identifies himself in his risen nature as our "I". Jesus in his risen identity is the one who is "All", the only one who can fulfill our desires, the only love that gives us meaning, the one who is our "I". Echoing the Holy One's word's to Moses "I am who I am," "I am Presence" "I am who you have been, who you are, and who you will be" (Exodus 3:14), this risen "I" is revealing how the crucified and risen "I" is who we truly are in essence. This Beloved "I who is all" is eternally present within us every moment of our suffering, dying and living. Christ crucified and risen is our ground (Rev 13.42). Through, with and in the one who is "I", we participate in Christ's consciousness. Through the passion, death and resurrection, we are Christified. Now, every part of our life, well and woe, can be knit and oned into the loving of the Christ within us, into love, into joy.



Julian tells us that Christ continued to reveal many times how the Christ-self is our "I" in the showings, drawing out further layers of meaning, until Christ shows how through our oneing in Christ, we participate in the unity of the Trinity.^{vi} Again, the risen Beloved's words are luminous:

It is I the might and the goodness of the Fatherhood.
It is I the wisdom of Motherhood.
It is I the light and the grace that is all blessed love.
It is I the Trinity. It is I, the Unity.
It is I the sovereign goodness of all manner of things.
It is I who makes you love.
It is I who makes you long.
It is I the endless fulfilling of all true desires.
(Rev 14:59).

"It is I the unity", resounds, encompassing all things and placing us in the ever-unifying energy field of oneing. Notice especially how, in this triune unity, all gender distinctions are divinized, as this "I" is truly both Father and Mother to us. In this triune unity, all dualisms, all oppositions between darkness and light, suffering and joy dissolve in love as they are knit within this dynamism of being drawn into a deepening Trinitarian unity, endless evolving. Ceaselessly, this delightful dynamism of loving, longing and desiring continues to draw us into the fullness of joy, in well and woe.

Thus, we can see how this resurrection joy is not the opposite of suffering. Joy arises from the depths of the divine within suffering. We can continue to love securely in the medley of well and woe as we hold within us the archetypal energy of the suffering death and resurrection of Christ. In be-holding the passion, death, time in the tomb, and resurrection this Easter, in our communion in the one who is our "I", in our contemplative evolution network, we can be deeply engaged in the suffering and grief of creation. We can hold the woe of the world, feel, and be a womb of compassion, but not become overwhelmed, despairing, or get lost in the extent of all the unnecessary suffering on our beautiful planet earth. We can exude healing, hope, and joy because our wounded Beloved is here, as our "I", intimately, personally, and communally, in this naked point within space-time and within the fullness of time. Our Beloved is right in the midst of our suffering world, loving, transforming, transfiguring, transubstantiating all that is, into the fullness of risen identity, into joy. Beholding this joy, being this joy is seeing salvation, being salvation.



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- i Image 1: Crucifix in Julian's cell, Kerrie Hide.
- ii Translations are my own, from *The Writings of Julian of Norwich, A Vision Showed to Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, eds, Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2006).
- iii Image 2: "Crucifixion", Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. [Wikki Commons](#).
- iv Image 3: "Man of Sorrows", in *Rothschild Canticles*, Beinecke Library, Yale University C 1300's. [Wikki Commons](#).
- v Image 4: "Christ", in *Rothschild Canticles*, Beinecke Library, Yale University. [Wikki Commons](#).
- vi Image 5: "Trinity", in *Rothschild Canticles*, Beinecke Library, Yale University. [Wikki Commons](#).