THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLICAL APOCALYPSE UPON JULIAN OF NORWICH’S REVELATIONS OF LOVE AND WILLIAM LANGLAND’S PIERS PLOWMAN

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis fills a gap in knowledge by systematically identifying ways in which Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Love* and William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* were influenced by the biblical Apocalypse and exegetical writings. It considers the implications of areas of confluence such as spiritual warfare and other salient thematic elements of the Apocalypse which both writers reapply and emphasise. It contends that the exegetical approach to the Apocalypse is more extensive in Julian’s *Revelations* and more sophisticated in *Piers Plowman* than previously thought, whether through primary or secondary textual influences.

The thesis explores concepts of authority and medieval interpretations of the Apocalypse within the orthodoxy versus heterodoxy debate. It considers Julian’s explications of her vision of the soul as city of Christ and all believers – the fulcrum of her eschatologically-focussed Aristotelian and Augustinian influenced pneumatology. It explores the liberal soteriology implicit in her Parable of the Lord and the Servant in its Johannine and Scotistic Christological emphasis, the Bernardine influenced concept of the Motherhood of God, the absent vision of hell, and the eschatological ‘grete dede’, *vis-à-vis* a possible critique of the prevalent hermeneutic. It contextualises Julian’s writing by considering contemporaneous Apocalypse-influenced women writers such as Marguerite Porete and Margery Kempe.

The thesis argues that Langland transposes Apocalypse 1-17 onto fourteenth-century England as a loose template for his own apocalypse. It considers his poetics with reference to Bakhtinian theoretical concepts which Langland employs within nuanced re-applications of the Apocalypse. It explores the agrarian metaphor and apocalyptic imagery in the poem’s opening, and the innovative employment of the allegorical dream vision genre. In discussing Langland’s apocalyptic dreams’ openings and personifications it highlights his re-imaginings of sections of the Apocalypse, arguing that the didactic *oraculum* of his personification, Lady Holy Church, bears similarities with Apocalypse 2-3. It reconsiders Lady Meed as Whore of Babylon and Langland’s evocation of the *Antichristus Mysticus* comparable to the perceived threat to the nascent Christian community in the Apocalypse.

Key Words: Apocalypse; Mikhail Bakhtin; Christ; eschatology; harrowing of hell; Joachite; Julian of Norwich; William Langland; Piers Plowman; Revelations of Love; spiritual warfare
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii  
Notes viii  

**Introduction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Focus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Summary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Rationale and Main Approaches</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) History and Gender</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Bakhtinian Theory</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorship and Authority of the Apocalypse</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Manuscripts of the Apocalypse</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to the <em>Revelations</em> of Julian of Norwich</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Manuscripts of the Revelations</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to William Langland’s <em>Piers Plowman</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Versions of Piers Plowman</em></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chapters</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 1**

A Comparison of the Apocalypse and the Writings of Julian of Norwich

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts of Authority: the Influence of the Church Fathers and the Prevalent Medieval Interpretations of John's Apocalypse</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visions of Authority</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2

Orthodox and Heterodox Currents in the Writing of Julian of Norwich

Introduction 119
Body and Soul: the Resurrection of the Soul from Sin, from Aristotle to Augustine’s City of God and the New Jerusalem 121
Bernard of Clairvaux: Motherhood and Redemption 128
Joachite Postmillennialism: the Prophesied Unveiling in the Last Days 136
John Wyclif and Lollardy 147
Religious, Literary and Historical Contexts: Julian’s Writing in Relation to Orthodox and Heterodox Religious Women Writers 154
Julian as Spiritual Guide: the Carmelite Influence and the Visit of Margery Kempe 161
The Lord and the Servant 166
Julian’s Conception of Hell: Sin as Ultimate Suffering 175
Julian’s ‘grete dede’ 184
Conclusion 189

Chapter 3

Langland’s Poetics

Introduction 191
Bakhtinian Heteroglossia, Polyglossia and Polyphony
In The Dream Vision 191
Langland’s Style: Alliterative Poetry and Linguistic Code-switching 203
Apocalyptic and Agrarian Imagery in the Opening of *Piers Plowman* 218
Antifratalism, Antimendicantism and Satirical and Parodic Elements 223
Conclusion 234

**Chapter 4**

**Personification and Allegorisation in *Piers Plowman***

Introduction 236
The Allegorical Dream Vision in the Context of Medieval Literature 237
A Comparison between Book I of John Gower’s *Vox Clamantis* and *Piers Plowman* 240
Apocalyptic Elements of the Dreams’ Openings 249
Langland’s Apocalyptic Personifications 252
(i) Lady Holy Church and her Apocalyptic Oraculum 254
(ii) Reimagining the Whore of Babylon: Multifaceted Meed 265
(iii) The Coming of Antichrist 283
(iv) The Metamorphosing Piers 294
The Passion, Harrowing of Hell and Christ as Conqueror 303
Conclusion 315

**Conclusion**

Introduction 317
Summary and Consideration of Findings 318

**Bibliography** 323
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I am grateful to Brother Anthony and Sogang University in Seoul, South Korea for providing me with access to the well-stocked medieval English literature section of Sogang University Loyola Library during the summer of 2012, thereby ensuring smooth continuity in my research during that period.

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I have used the title *Apocalypse* as an alternative to the *book of Revelation* throughout, for two reasons. Firstly, it is the direct translation from the original Greek (*apokalupsis*). Secondly, this usage avoids possible confusion with Julian's text.

Julian’s earlier text is referred to as *A Vision* or *Vision* and her later text as *A Revelation* or *Revelation*. When referring to material within both of these versions the inclusive title ‘*Revelations*’ is adopted. When it is only a particular vision or multiple visions (not Julian’s reflections on the visions) to which I refer, ‘showing/s’ or simply vision/s are used.
INTRODUCTION

‘Thus by lawe,’ quod oure lord, ‘lede Y wol fro hennes
Tho ledes that Y louye and leued in my comynge.
Ac for the lesynge that thow low, Lucifer, til Eue
Thou shal aby ye bittere!’ quod god, and bonde hym with chaynes.¹

God shewed that the feend hath nowe the same malice that he had before the
incarnation, and also sore he traveyleth, and as continually he seeth that all soules of
salvation eskape him worshipfully, by the vertue of his precious passion. And that is his
sorow, and full evil is he attenred, for all that God suffereth him to do turneth us to joy
and him to shame and paine. And he hath as mekille sorow when God geveth him leve
to werke as when he worketh not. And that is for he may never do as ille as he wolde,
for his might is alle lokked in Gods hande. (Revelation, 13, 7-14) ²

And so the Devil is bound throughout the whole period embraced by the Apocalypse,
that is, from the first coming of Christ to the end of the world, which will be Christ’s
second coming, and the meaning of the binding is not that he ceases to seduce the
Church during that interval called ‘the thousand years’, as is shown by the fact that
when unloosed he is evidently not destined to lead it astray. For assuredly if his binding
meant that he is unable, or not allowed, to lead it astray, his unloosing can only mean
that he is now able, or permitted, to do so. But God forbid that this should be the case!
Instead, what the binding of the Devil means is that he is not permitted to exert his
whole power of temptation either by force or by guile to seduce men to his side by
violent compulsion or fraudulent delusion. For if he were permitted for so long a time, a
time when so many were so insecure, he would overthrow very many of the faithful or
prevent very many from believing, and those would be the kind of men to whom God
did not will that this should happen. It was to prevent his achieving this that he was
bound.³

¹ William Langland, Piers Plowman, A New Annotated Edition of the C-text, ed. Derek Pearsall
(Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008), XX, 443-6. References to Piers Plowman are from this
version unless otherwise stated.
² All references to Julian’s writings are from Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins ed., The
Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love
³ Augustine of Hippo, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans, trans. Henry Bettenson
These quotations pertaining to the apocalyptic doctrine of the Harrowing of Hell exemplify the interplay between this eschatological event and these writers’ perceptions of the state of their milieux. From Christ’s legal justification for emancipating Sheol’s inhabitants (from the devil’s charge in Passus XX of Piers Plowman), to Julian of Norwich’s view of sin as a punishment in itself,⁴ and the devil as denuded of soul-incarcerating power, these writers endeavour to expound a theological hermeneutic that accounts for the good/evil dichotomy, contextualising it by considering its socio-religious implications. The Harrowing of Hell provides a basis for optimism because it informs Julian’s liberal soteriology. The quotation, from early in her fifth revelation, is paradigmatic of her pneumatology which, as in the sixteenth revelation⁵ – where she perceives Christ in her soul as though in a city – finds her applying an Augustinian hermeneutic to advance the liberal salvationist view that informs her theodicy. The binding of the devil in the Harrowing of Hell and Apocalypse 20:1⁶ represents a crucial eschatological juncture since it alleviates, although it does not obviate, tribulation. Julian’s adoption of this amillennialist/postmillennial⁷ framework provides one illustration, among many, of her engagement with the Apocalypse and influential authorities that discuss it.

In exploring such aspects of the Apocalypse’s influence upon William Langland’s alliterative poem Piers Plowman and Julian’s Revelations of Love, this thesis identifies both authors’ differences and their shared concerns; it evinces ways in which their respective texts engage with the Apocalypse, stemming from, alluding or directly referring to that which, in Augustinian terminology deriving from the Apocalypse, constitutes the struggle between the city of the world (Babylon) and the City of God (heavenly city/New Jerusalem). Julian and Langland consider the nature and implications of this struggle which requires faith, divine insight and perseverance; in doing so they display a marked degree of theological sophistication in addressing subjects such as spiritual warfare – which is interconnected with their cosmology – sin, renovatio and the quest for salvation. I consider their Christology within their revealed eschatology and its confluence with that of the Apocalypse.

⁴ Revelation, 39, 1.
⁵ Ibid., 68, 1-18.
⁶ This conflation of Apocalypse 20:1-10 (cf. 1:18) with the Harrowing of Hell and the binding of the devil was not unique to Augustine, but, as Richard K. Emmerson points out, Jerome and, later, Bede and Nicholas of Lyra, all believed that ‘The millennium is thus the present, the time of the Christian church, not a future age’: Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Mediaeval Apocalypticism, Art and Literature (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 56.
⁷ See below for full definitions of these terms.
Whilst Julian and Langland diverge in some of their emphases, commonalities in their engagement with the Apocalypse have attracted only cursory interest in literary criticism, which has itself identified the need for further research. Focussing on the apocalyptic thirteenth revelation, Diane Watt discusses Julian’s focus on the last things (death, judgment, heaven and hell), Julian’s request for a vision of hell – that is not granted – and the prophecy of a ‘grete dede’ (Revelation, 32, 46-50), in which Julian implies prophetically that an ultimate salvific act will make all things well. Watt terms this vision *universalist apocalypticism* on account of the implicit liberal soteriology within this emphasis on the last things.\(^8\) This gap is addressed as I explore the nature and extent of such engagement, arguing that the biblical text offers a vehicle for expressing and evoking Julian’s and Langland’s concerns, thereby displaying their conception of the Apocalypse’s meaning/s. Indeed, their scriptural and doctrinal emphases provide apertures into both their shared theological background and the societal issues which inspire their communitarian outlook. Whilst Langland’s references and allusions to the Apocalypse are more overt and indicate his familiarity with the entire book, it is argued that Julian’s writing is also deeply imbued with elements of the Apocalypse and the thesis analyses her more implicit engagement with the text. For all three writers, scripture has contemporary application, and with their acute sensitivity to socio-religious challenges, engagement with apocalyptic concerns and employment of apocalyptic topoi enables them to convey concepts that are enfolded within an eschatological, teleological and anagogical design.

Another area that is discussed in chapter 3 – in relation to *Piers Plowman* – is language. Both Julian and Langland sought to make their works accessible to their respective readerships by writing in the vernacular (Middle English). Following the Hellenisation of Asia Minor, Greek replaced the region’s native tongues to become the dominant and official spoken and written language. R. H. Charles argues that the mother tongue of the Apocalypse’s author was Hebrew and he had learned Greek late in life, which explains why his Greek is ‘unlike any Greek that was ever penned by mortal man’.\(^9\) As discussed in this Introduction, these late-medieval texts were reworked, edited and developed over an extended period comprising decades. Whilst


identifying single authorship – albeit an author who used multiple sources – Charles argues that the Apocalypse also underwent this process of revision (from Hebrew to Greek), which, in his view, was never completed. However, while it is not possible to prove the latter position, the biblical text undoubtedly draws upon numerous other texts, both biblical and secular. Therefore, in this sense, it consists of a mosaic of sources which suffuse the visions.

The texts on which this thesis focusses, and their shared source, the Apocalypse, utilise different types of dream vision. Julian presents her visions as received from Christ himself (as does John) and stresses their accordance with scripture, as similarly, John continually alludes to/incorporates Old Testament sources, thereby reinforcing the Apocalypse’s authority. Langland, moreover, adopts the device for his visions which, despite their fictional status, nevertheless convey perceived realities and are indicative of his socio-religious critique. Whilst, in its entirety, Langland’s poem is more overtly apocalyptic than Julian’s Revelation, Julian’s text reveals her concern with spiritual warfare, the last things, the interrelationship of heaven and earth, the Harrowing of Hell, the New Jerusalem, renovatio, salvation and the issue of God’s love.

The question of the extent of Julian’s orthodoxy or unorthodoxy has fundamental implications for determining her interpretation of the Apocalypse. Initially, the Apocalypse’s emphasis on judgment and retribution does not appear to cohere with her focus on love. Indeed, within her Christology the brief focus on chastisement is far exceeded by references pertaining to forgiveness. Whereas she sees no vision of hell, Julian, in an apparent paradox, nevertheless mentions hell and purgatory and strives to conform to Church orthodoxy. Her professions of faith in Holy Church’s teaching on hell and the biblical warnings, which are predominantly directed towards Christians, create a dilemma for her. Whilst her insertions were conceivably designed to secure the text against charges of heresy, I contend that her belief in hell was genuine, although she is implicitly incredulous that it would be inhabited, despite her assertion that heathens will go there. In apparent contrast, the Apocalypse presents an uncompromising stance on hell and punishment in the Great Throne Judgement in 20:12-15 in which the dead are judged and condemned:

10 Charles, Commentary, I-xcl.
And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne. And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which was the book of life. And the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them. And they were judged, every one according to their works. And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire.

However, to view the Apocalypse solely as illustrating divine vengeance is to misapprehend its totality of meaning. The Apocalypse reveals God's love in the form of numerous warnings and injunctions to change, combined with prophecy. Examples of this include Apocalypse 2-3, 11:1-18 and 14. It is critical of certain kinds of churches (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea) and addresses a Church facing a period of internal crisis in terms of heretical doctrine, such as Docetism. Whereas Langland considers such internal threats via the numerous satirical allusions to the abuse of church privilege, the pursuit of power and status, and the siege of Unity by Antichrist and infiltration by the corrupt friars, Julian broaches such concerns more subtly and implicitly; in the biblical warnings she identifies hope through God's granting of foreknowledge – warnings stemming from divine love, which is a recurring theme of the *Revelations* and constitutes an often overlooked aspect of the Apocalypse and the Johannine corpus which balances it with judgment. This stress on love in Julian's writing bears comparison with the emphasis of the Johannine writings. Such shared thematic focus with the Apocalypse, and other Johannine writings, is also identifiable in the associated areas of *repristination*¹¹, salvation and preaching (*kerygma*). Regarding the latter, Julian, despite her protestations, effectively teaches – albeit through the written word – as she argues that she is the conduit between Christ and her evencristen. Similarly, John claims a role as seer and intermediary between Christ and the congregations of the seven churches.

Langland also arguably expresses incredulity that Christ's mercy is not universal, as evidenced in Passus XI and XII about the righteous heathen (albeit this is Recklessness's viewpoint) and the sixth vision, the Harrowing of Hell – although

¹¹ The ideal of a revivified Church which rejects corruption and conceives of Christ within the soul.
the latter concerns the prophets and patriarchs. Moreover, Langland’s ambivalent attitude towards the Jews implies a degree of optimism for their conversion, as in Book’s prophetic lines: ‘And alle the iewe ioye vnioynen and vnlouen, / And bote they reuerense his resurexioun and the rode honoure / And bileue on a newe lawe be ylost lyf and soule.’ (XX, 266-8) These words reflect the medieval view that the Jews would have a chance to repent and find salvation. Christ’s messages to the churches apply a didactic approach in the warnings/directions, which, if heeded, obviate punishment and encourage believers. It describes the triumph of good over evil, which is consonant with Julian’s conception of a great deed and sin’s impotence – the latter being a feature of her theodicy. She shares with Langland a desire for repristination – which illustrates her sense of community, her implicit Augustinian amillennial/postmillennial position in which the New Jerusalem needs to be considered within her Trinitarian theology that views the first and, in this case, third Persons of the Trinity through the second Person. Christ’s exhortation to persevere and consider one’s spiritual condition bears comparison with his words to Julian.

As the prime exemplar of the apocalypse genre, the biblical Apocalypse provides apposite material for periods of intense crisis, or the perception thereof. A further correlation is between historical fears and contemporary realities, such as: the 1381 Uprising, the military setbacks in France, and plague; the Apocalypse’s red and pale horses, symbolic of war and plague respectively (ever-present dangers in the Middle Ages) and fourteenth- and early-fifteenth century England, thus providing particularly fertile ground for apocalyptic writing. Therefore, this thesis identifies and contextualises references and allusions pertaining to the historical, socio-political and religious setting and foregrounds the upheaval which profoundly impacted these writers. Such dissatisfaction and sensitivity to internal and external threats to the Christian community informed the biblical text, as Adela Yarbro Collins, among others, detects in the Apocalypse’s language of catharsis.¹² Such motivations also constitute an integral element of Langland’s and Julian’s late-medi eval texts. Therefore, I explore the often divergent, but occasionally strikingly similar, ways that Langland’s and Julian’s areas of concern intersect as they draw upon and reimagine aspects of the Apocalypse. Julian arguably embraces this optimism to a greater degree than Langland, whose emphasis on the salvific power of Christ is juxtaposed

¹² I discuss this in chapter 3.
against the desultory efforts of contemporary society’s practical application of a biblical moral code. It is this that inspires his satire and parody – frequently ignored features of sections of the Apocalypse in their indictment of empire and the financial system, the latter being an issue of no less resonance in fourteenth-century mercantile England. In certain respects Langland’s text is less radical than is immediately apparent, whereas in others Julian’s text is more radical than it would initially have seemed to a medieval reader, and less radical than it appears to a modern reader.

**Methodological summary**

(i) **Rationale and main approaches**

The rationale for considering Julian and Langland together in this thesis extends beyond the important fact that they were contemporaries. A major contention is that their texts draw upon the apocalyptic genre, in addition to other genres and styles. They also share teleological assumptions which become apparent as they convey theological insights and socio-religious concerns which comprise an integral part of the reformist thrust of their Apocalypse-influenced texts. This reformist thrust has been noted by Nicholas Watson, who cites both their focus on love and their recognition that the pursuit of perfection and the pilgrimage which seeks an ideal community is a process in which repristination is ongoing with the final realisation lying in the future.\(^\text{13}\)

Their writing contains both similarities and differences in terms of their approach to the Apocalypse. Both convey creative and intellectual insights within their theologically astute and didactic texts. Although they frequently convey their theological insights differently, as in Julian’s accounts and exegesis of her revelations, and in Langland’s alliterative versifying and allegorical approach, it is precisely such differences that illustrate the broad vista of creative religious writing in their milieu. Where they converge in areas pertaining to the Apocalypse, such as their shared teleological view and points of soteriology and eschatology, we benefit

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from analysing the way in which they convey these positions and their employment of the visionary genre – Julian’s visions and Langland’s fictional dream visions.

To highlight another major area of confluence, there is a strong focus on servanthood in Julian’s Parable of the Lord and the Servant and Langland’s multifaceted personification Piers. The servant signifies simultaneously both Adam (humankind), the precursor to Christ, and Christ (the second Adam). As will be mentioned in chapters 2, 3 and 4, Julian’s illustration of their intertwining following the Incarnation and the subsequent salvific act of the Cross bears striking similarities with Langland’s Piers who provides a link, albeit often transitory, between the temporal and spiritual realms, with Christ as a conduit. The inherent typological foundation of the respective servant figures in Julian’s Revelations and Langland’s Piers Plowman displays one key area of confluence – a Christological view within their apocalypse-influenced texts. Such textual convergence of Julian’s Revelations and Langland’s Piers Plowman is attributable to their mutual focus on concerns pertaining to the Apocalypse.

However, rather than undertaking a detailed textual comparison of Piers Plowman and Julian’s Revelations, the thesis mainly considers them separately, thereby enabling extended focus on specific areas within each text – for example, Langland’s use of allegory and personification, or the orthodox and heterodox influences upon Julian’s writing (chapter 2). This approach identifies the confluence and contrasts in specific passages which enhance comprehension of the shared hermeneutical space occupied by these writers at crucial junctures within their respective texts. To this end, the Harrowing of Hell and Julian’s Parable of the Lord and the Servant are considered.

These texts respond to and comment upon, explicitly or implicitly, the turbulence of their respective periods. Their authors use the vernacular as they draw upon multiple sources and employ literary and rhetorical techniques. All exhibit sophisticated theological comprehension. Therefore, an inter-disciplinary approach is adopted. My methodology focusses on contextuality – historical, socio-political, linguistic and theological, canonical, and gender issues. Intertextuality is considered – the Apocalypse’s influence on these two texts – in addition to texts which engaged with the Apocalypse and subsequently influenced their work, such as Augustine’s City of God and Joachite works. Also considered are the implications of multi-
textuality as the advantages and disadvantages of the various recensions of *Piers Plowman* and Julian’s *Revelations* are addressed.¹⁴

The multifaceted contribution to knowledge contained within this thesis illuminates understanding of the extent to which the Apocalypse suffused late-medieval socio-religious and ontological concerns. Apocalyptic thought was ingrained in Christians’ collective consciousness and may be largely attributable to the prevalence of apocalyptic imagery in churches and manuscripts, sermons, the mystery plays, and other writings with associated terminology and concepts, all of which reflected contemporary socio-historical tumult. By considering late-medieval exegetical approaches to the Apocalypse and the prevailing fourteenth-century hermeneutic, combined with awareness of cultural and literary influences and associated writings upon the text, this thesis explores how these intersect with their respective theological, eschatological, soteriological and socio-political concerns; it considers such areas as the orthodoxy/heterodoxy dichotomy, poetics, structure, gender implications, literary tropes and motifs – as well as satirical and parodic elements in *Piers Plowman* and the Apocalypse. In considering these elements the thesis explores inferences from Julian’s and Langland’s respective approaches and apocalyptic concerns.

The thesis argues that both texts contain varying degrees of implicit discontentment revealed in occasional variance from scripture which results in their respective emphases. It explores possible deviation from the prevailing ecclesial orthodoxy and examines areas where their interpretations differ. In exploring their apocalyptic elements it argues that they exhibit prominent shared concerns with the Apocalypse in its focus on *renovatio*, prophecy and judgment and the pursuit of justice. It discusses their attempted reconciliation of John’s eschatology with their own theological stances. Langland uses the Apocalypse as a template more overtly than does Julian. Julian responds to it as she reflects on all the problematical questions raised by the visions. Both draw on the Christology of the Apocalypse. Both deal with the corporeal and the pneumatological. Langland’s thematic focus is ostensibly more earth-centred, although his poem contains a strong anagogical thrust. Both texts identify and prophesy tribulation for the believer and the Church body, the need for repristination within an eschatological framework as well as

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discussing soteriological matters. The methodology employed in the thesis enables me to tackle these previously neglected areas.

By juxtaposing a female authored with a male authored Apocalypse-influenced text, the thesis seeks an inclusive view of the reception of the Apocalypse and the literary creativity which it inspired during this period. It foregrounds differences in style and genre whilst identifying theological insights pertaining to the Apocalypse. Differences in approach and emphasis may be partially attributable to gender and societal position. For example, Julian’s enclosed state within which she was devoted to the intercessory and meditative role. In exploring these areas it is important to consider the precedents of other female thinkers and the prevalent male orthodox writings in order to appraise Julian’s negotiation of the Apocalypse and related writings.

Therefore, although the main methodological approaches employed in this thesis are literary-critical (examining the oneiric, alliterative, apocalypse genres) and theological, I also discuss historical background and issues of gender in relation to the Apocalypse and the treatment of Apocalypse-related issues whilst acknowledging their interaction, as well as the question of Julian’s orthodoxy and the scrutiny which, as a woman, her writings faced. In this area, socio-religious realities such as the condemnation of the Lollards, compelled both Julian and Langland to exercise caution in their writing, although as a male writer Langland had greater licence.

(ii) History and gender

A historicist approach is employed in order to establish the contemporary orthodoxies and socio-religious context. A characteristic of texts within the apocalypse genre is that they respond to contemporary events. Beside their universal themes, all three texts address historically specific concerns. For example, Julian’s prophecy of tribulation needs to be contextualised against the background of contemporary events and her text with the inflow of ideas from the continent, including women visionaries. The genre’s influence is discernible in Julian’s writing, thereby placing Julian’s Revelations, albeit loosely, within the literary context of a group of women writers spanning diverse backgrounds and periods who held a mutual interest in the Apocalypse in terms of certain shared positions and approaches. Therefore historical
events will be noted throughout the thesis in order to show how they inform the apocalyptic thrust of the texts under discussion. Bearing in mind that the precarious situation of the fledgling church in Asia Minor was partly caused by the events in the Roman Empire, a major contention is that the writing of Julian and Langland contains reformist currents which respond to schism or deviation from the tenets of the faith. Thus they share with the Apocalypse the perception of an internal threat. The abrupt transition to a less tolerant period informs the texts and has implications for women whose writing came under greater scrutiny. The historical situation in the first-century Church necessitated the use of symbolism and coded language. The thesis highlights ways in which Julian coded her implicit critique. Heterodoxy as an internal threat within the church in John’s day also of paramount concern to Langland as revealed in the siege of unity and the quest for repristination.

Gender and historical issues may overlap, as shown by Pippin who interlinks history and gender in relation to medieval readings. She views the Apocalypse within an overarching hermeneutic of the history of women’s marginalisation, perceiving their depiction as victimised, their desire countered and controlled. This raises questions, which I address in chapters 1 and 4, about the understanding and approach of Julian and Langland respectively in relation to such passages of the Apocalypse. However, insofar as Pippin admits to not being interested in ‘recovering the historical context or the “original audience”’ our approaches diverge.

The importance of historical context and establishing the theological awareness of Julian and Langland is evident in interpreting a part of the Apocalypse which could be construed as misogynistic – the 144,000 virgins of Apocalypse 14, which are also mentioned in Piers Plowman and Pearl. By drawing on Sarah Salih’s scholarship concerning virginity it is possible to respond to Pippin’s critique in terms of the medieval view. According to the medieval view, virginity encompassed more than simply the physical, and could be regained in the spiritual sense. Besides pointing out ways in which virginity for men differed from virginity for women within the medieval context, she asks whether it is a gender identity itself and finds that it involves self-reformation and it is ‘a process in time, with a beginning, and an end’. Such perceptions affected the contemporary reader’s view of the virgins and martyrs


of the Apocalypse since the two were interrelated. Julian’s devotion to the martyr, St. Cecilia, illustrates this. In relation to the 144,000 then, Pippin’s critique offers an entry point through which the thesis interrogates these texts and their relationship to the Apocalypse.

Chapter 4, also addresses Pippin’s critique of the Apocalypse’s use of gendered female personifications which she claims lack a voice. It considers ways in which Langland’s reconsideration of Lady Meed offers a more nuanced depiction than the biblical Whore of Babylon. If, as argued, Julian and Langland re-imagine aspects of the Apocalypse for their audience while not contradicting it and, particularly in Julian’s case, respond to contemporary attitudes to women, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza offers a more relevant approach than Pippin’s. Fiorenza states that whilst the language of the Apocalypse is androcentric, the naming of Babylon, for example, as Whore/harlot has its roots in precedents belonging to a long tradition.

Writing of the dilemma faced when employing a feminist critical approach, Fiorenza addresses two positions. She dismisses the first of these which is that androcentric texts are purely for males since although it ‘seeks to make readers conscious of internalized male identifications’ it ‘cannot reclaim cultural texts and traditions for women.’ The second approach ‘does not assume linguistic determinism but understands language as a convention or tool that enables readers to negotiate and create meanings in specific contexts and situations’ whilst rejecting ‘sexist assumptions’. Fiorenza contrasts this approach with linguistic determinism which in its ‘rhetorical understanding of language does not identify grammatical gender with “natural sex”.’ This approach instead holds that ‘grammatically masculine language can function both as gender-specific and as generic language’. Therefore Fiorenza rejects the assumption that androcentric texts are necessarily closed to women and views the

.. grammatically masculine language of Revelation as conventional generic language, unless its interrogation indicates that such language functions as gender-specific language in a particular context and seeks to instill patriarchal meanings.

17 See Salih, Versions, 208.
19 Ibid., 13.
20 Fiorenza, Revelation, 14.
According to Fiorenza, the onus is on the reader to ‘dissect’ the text while considering its context and message instead of abandoning the text because of negative portrayals in gender-specific language, such as the Whore of Babylon. Thus, in chapter 4 of this thesis some of the gender implications of Langland’s personification Lady Meed are explored with reference to the Babylon figure. Fiorenza’s more nuanced approach allows a reading which, while it does not ignore such androcentric language, nevertheless foregrounds the core textual message.

While interpreting the ‘sexual language and female images’ of the Apocalypse, which in their perceived misogyny are insurmountable barriers for Pippin, Fiorenza is mindful of the ‘conventional’ language of the Apocalypse which she argues ‘must be understood in its traditional and present-meaning contexts’, adding that

> Whoring and fornication as metaphors for idolatry, as well as the symbolic understanding of Israel as bride and wife of Yahweh, are part and parcel of the prophetic-apocalyptic tradition. They must be subjected to a feminist critique, but their gendered meaning cannot be assumed as primary within the narrative contextualization of Revelation.21

Despite this stance, Fiorenza’s critical-liberationist interpretation of the Apocalypse also identifies what she refers to as the ‘Western classical patriarchal system and its interlocking structures of racism, classism, colonialism, and sexism’. However, besides ‘the sexual characterization of the figure of Babylon’ she also considers ‘its description in terms of high status, ruling power, egregious wealth, and divine aspirations’.22 Fiorenza argues for the efficacy of her ‘differentiated’ reading of the Apocalypse which recognises the androcentric language in her ‘feminist-liberationist strategy of rhetorical reading’ which ‘employs not only literary-cultural but also historical-theological modes of analysis.’23 Such symbolism constitutes a fundamental component of John’s depiction, as it does for Langland’s Lady Meed. Therefore, in comparing the Babylon figure with Meed, this thesis will also focus on wealth, history and eschatology whilst acknowledging the issue of patriarchy. The thesis will ask whether Julian’s omissions signify her discomfort with these aspects of

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 14-15.
the biblical text. In order to examine the Meed figure and other aspects of the texts, interrogating their approach in relation to the Apocalypse, Bakhtinian theory will also be employed.

The subject of gender and feminist scholarship is also germane to Julian’s motherhood *topos*, and the prevalent contemporary view of the female body, as discussed by Liz Herbert McAvoy, is pertinent to Julian’s inclusivist outlook. McAvoy argues that in a patriarchal society language that is associated with women relies on phallocentric terms. Contra David Aers she writes,

> Julian does far more than just ‘accept’ those social models laid down for her by traditional socio-religious ideological stances: she continually ruminates upon them and turns to them in increasingly complex ways in her search for a suitable idiom and hermeneutic with which to express the mystical encounter.\(^{24}\)

The thesis looks at ways in which Julian uses the motherhood *topos* and the idiom which McAvoy describes in relation to her view of Christ. It addresses the implications of this distinctive language in relation to Julian’s treatment of the Apocalypse and Apocalypse-influenced texts in her *Revelations*, as well as her theological stance and hermeneutic.

Thus, whether in Julian’s ventriliquising of Christ’s words or in Langland’s depiction of Lady Meed, the use of language has gender implications and reveals much about these writers’ approaches to the Apocalypse. In considering language (particularly in relation to *Piers Plowman*) a Bakhtinian reading is employed.

(iii) Bakhtinian theory

The thesis draws on Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of *heteroglossia* – a term which denotes the diverse elements within a language – and the *polyphonic* novel, which incorporates multiple voices, in arguing that these terms enrich our understanding of *Piers Plowman* and illuminate some of the many striking parallels with the Apocalypse which also owes much to Old Testament sources in addition to Jewish and pagan writings. In doing this Langland’s use of *polyglossia* is discussed. In *Piers Plowman* this comprises the elements of Middle English, Latin and French. The latter

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text’s alliterative style and polyglot application of languages, combined with the multiplicity of voices, serve a number of functions – artistic, didactic and rhetorical – as Langland moulds language/s according to the textual requirements, personifications and themes. The argument here is that whilst both texts utilise such techniques, Langland allows a number of his personifications a markedly greater voice as they convey a sense of universal spiritual struggle and reveal specific concerns through dialogue. By establishing the relevance of Bakhtinian theory within an *intertextual* context, chapter 3 of this thesis evinces ways in which Langland’s poetics engage with the Apocalypse.

Bakhtin’s explication of the polyphonic novel and *heteroglossia* and dialogical elements within the novel is applicable, retrospectively, if somewhat anachronistically, to Langland’s alliterative poem and, concerning both dialogic elements and heteroglossia, to Julian’s *Revelations* and the Apocalypse. Although I draw on Bakhtin’s theory mainly as he applies it to later literature (the nineteenth-century novel), I contend that many of his insights resonate with *Piers Plowman*, partly because of Langland’s utilisation of literary devices and the text’s length. I argue that *Piers Plowman* is a prime exemplar of a polyphonic and heteroglossic work, albeit in a much earlier literary form.

*Piers Plowman* is a dialogic poem – a term which I use in the Bakhtinian sense: a work that on some level maintains a dialogue with other works of literature, in subject matter and language. Given the sheer number of direct references and allusions to the Bible, the meanings and nuances of *Piers Plowman* cannot be discerned without comprehension of the Vulgate, the writings of the Church Fathers and later theologians. Whilst the poem is not simply a receptacle for these ideas they nonetheless inform its contents.

The polyphonic and dialogic text contains multiple and often contradictory voices; the author/poet seeks to foreground these in place of himself or herself, in contrast to the more conventional *monologic* approach (in which characters and plot serve the purpose/s of the author), adopting an objective approach and allowing the text to follow paths in accordance with whatever directions the ‘freethinking’ characters seem to demand. Such texts facilitate dialogic opposition and *Piers Plowman* is one of the finest exemplars of such writing. Therefore, this aspect of

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25 However, as pointed out in chapter 3, Bakhtin also refers to the medieval mystery play genre in the context of mennipean satire which has direct relevance for a reading of *Piers Plowman*. 

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*Piers Plowman* is comparable to Dostoyevsky’s dialogic novel which is ‘constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other’. Bakhtin points out further that the effect of this is to force the viewer (reader) to become a ‘participant’ along with these characters. Accordingly, ‘everything in the novel is structured to make dialogic opposition inescapable’ and there is no room for ‘nonparticipating “third persons” who are not represented’.27

Bakhtinian theory is also applicable to Julian’s *Revelations*. As Vincent Gillespie has observed:

> The texture of her discourse is always unsettled, provisional and protean. Her writing has many of the dialogic characteristics of Bakhtinian ‘heteroglossia’, eager to exploit ‘whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the artificial constraints of that system’ and using ‘parodic stylisations of canonized genres and styles’.28

These dialogic characteristics of heteroglossia which Gillespie mentions apply to Julian’s ventriloquising of Christ’s words into Middle English in his speech to her. The ‘parodic stylisations’ which Gillespie mentions are found in the scene in which the fiend assaults her – an example of the carnivalesque located within the visionary and apocalyptic genres.

Although I apply Bakhtin’s theory largely to *Piers Plowman*, the term ‘carnivalesque’ is also applicable to Julian’s text. The carnivalesque was found in folk culture with its festivals and events such as the ‘feast of fools’ within which the traditional order was temporarily overturned or inverted, thereby providing relief or catharsis. Carnivalesque literature employs the ‘serio-comical’.30 This is found in Menippean satire (discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis), for example. In seeking catharsis, the carnivalesque involved divesting threats of their power by employing

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27 Ibid.
parodic or satirical elements, laughter and the grotesque. Thus, evil is parodied precisely because it is perceived as a threat. In Julian we find the carnivalesque in her description of the demonic assault during her illness and her subsequent laughter. In *Piers Plowman* it is found in the Feast of Patience in Passus XV, and in the Harrowing of Hell in Passus XX with the defeat of the devils. Tina Pippin applies the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque to show how it relates to the Whore of Babylon in the areas of parody and de-crowning.\(^{31}\) Such representations as these (and those of the mystery plays) set within the socio-religious environment confronted fears of mortality and judgment. They illustrate the spectre of evil through monstrous caricatures comparable to those found in the Apocalypse as they are juxtaposed against Christ’s defeat of evil and atonement for sins resulting in catharsis. The following section will introduce the biblical Apocalypse, before discussing in greater detail the texts on which this thesis will focus.

*Authorship and authority of the Apocalypse*

The claim for the divine origin of the words and visions is first made in Apocalypse 1:1 where it is stated that what follows comes directly from Jesus: ‘The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass: and signified, sending by his angel to his servant John’. Further emphasis on this source appears in 1:17-18: ‘I am the First and the Last, and alive, and was dead. And behold I am living for ever and ever and have the keys of death and of hell.’ Such a claim to divine inspiration constitutes a major distinction between the biblical texts and those of the Apocrypha. The Apocalypse differs from non-canonical apocalypses such as 1 Enoch (c. 300-100 B.C.) and 2 Baruch (late first century/early second century A.D.) by incorporating the author’s name within the text – at the beginning and on three further occasions. By referring to himself as ‘John’ with no further identifying information (except that he wrote the text as a prisoner on the island of Patmos\(^ {32}\) [which is located in the Aegean Sea]) he displays assurance in being sufficiently well-known to be identified by his readers without the need to elaborate further. John the Apostle would certainly have

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\(^{31}\) Pippin, *Death and Desire*, 65-68.  
\(^{32}\) Apocalypse 1:9.
possessed such a reputation; indeed, the early Church Fathers (leaders of the Church before Constantine [306-337]), such as Irenaeus (c. 120/140 – c. 202), attributed the authorship of the Apocalypse to John the Apostle, and it was not until midway through the third century that certain theologians, beginning with Pope Dionysius of Alexandria, began to suggest it may have been authored by another person. Nevertheless, David E. Aune finds ‘insufficient internal evidence to suppose that this “John” either was, or pretended to be, John of Ephesus, the author of the Gospel and Letters of John . . . . However, it does suggest that he was well known to the recipients of the book.’ Following the assessment of R. H. Charles, Aune attributes authorship to a Palestinian Jew, although he deems the evidence insufficient to attribute authorship to John the Apostle or John the Elder.\(^{33}\) Along with Charles, he detects ‘very few features that suggest . . . this author was part of the Johannine community in any meaningful sense.’\(^ {34}\)

Stephen S. Smalley – who finds no evidence to contradict the claim that the Apocalypse could have been written by the Apostle John – provides a compelling counter argument contra Charles as he identifies the Apocalypse’s many similarities with the John’s Gospel and situates it within the Johannine community and corpus.\(^ {35}\) Following the argument of F. F. Bruce, Steve Gregg (as does Smalley) identifies key terms, such as ‘the Lamb' and the 'Logos', that appear in both books, yet not elsewhere in the New Testament. These insights have implications for the profusion of Johannine allusions and references in Piers Plowman and Julian’s Revelations. The thematic continuity between the Johannine writings prompts Julian and Langland to incorporate them intuitively. Moreover, the stylistic and grammatical differences may be explained, as Gregg suggests, by the possibility that John may previously have used an amanuensis, and this service would not have been available on Patmos.\(^ {36}\) Gregg writes, ‘. . . defenders of the apostolic authorship, however, point out that John is described in Acts 4:13 as “unschooled” and may have been incapable of writing cultured Greek’.\(^ {37}\) He concludes that there is not enough evidence to contradict the opinion of the early Church Fathers. Robert H. Mounce similarly concludes:

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\(^{34}\) Ibid.


\(^{36}\) The Apocalypse was most likely written after John’s return from exile.

Since internal evidence is not entirely unfavourable to apostolic authorship and external evidence is unanimous in its support, the wisest course of action is to accept as a reasonable hypothesis that the Apocalypse was written by John the apostle, son of Zebedee and disciple of Jesus.\(^\text{38}\)

For the purposes of this thesis the salient fact is that the orthodox view of the fourteenth century Church in England was that John the Apostle was the author.

**The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages**

In examining the Apocalypse it is essential to comprehend its historical foundation because it is suffused with the concerns of its milieu while simultaneously addressing universal concepts. In this regard it provides a paradigm for *Piers Plowman* and Julian’s text/s. Besides looking at the historical background I focus on medieval interpretations of the text. The term *apocalypse* derives from the Greek *apokalypsis*, meaning to uncover or reveal.\(^\text{39}\) Characteristics of apocalyptic works are the presence of visions, figurative language, the acknowledgment of the existence of good and evil forces, exhibited through descriptions of heavenly conflict mirrored by cataclysmic earthly events – a state of crisis and struggle to which a resolution is sought and achieved only through divine intervention, culminating in a final conflict which has universal implications and outcome. Mounce points out that apocalyptic works may be distinguished, in part, from other writings by several distinctive literary characteristics. Quoting the scholars E. Russell and I.T. Beckwith he writes,

> Russell identifies apocalyptic as ‘esoteric in character, literary in form, symbolic in language and pseudonymous in authorship.’ Beckwith writes that ‘the highly

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elaborated vision, or similar mode of revelation, is the most distinctive feature in the form of apocalyptic literature.’

It should be added that the apocalyptic genre serves to unveil the truth to believers – a means to tackle the ineffable – and to conceal the same from unbelievers. This is achieved by extensive use of symbolism and figurative language. Adopting the literary-analytical approach, Bernard McGinn devotes particular attention to such symbolism within the text. This involves locating the origins of symbolic elements originating from pagan mythology, whilst asserting that it is possible to draw overarching truths from a study of the book. Whilst, in the first-century A.D., writers, considering their readership, commonly referenced earlier well-known templates, the Apocalypse differs from non-canonical texts, such as the Sybilline Oracles, in multiple ways. For example, these pseudonymous works often adopt the name of a major biblical figure to ensure a wider readership. They also frequently employ the literary device ‘history disguised as prophecy’.

Manifestations of the apocalyptic genre can be dated back to the third millennium B.C. The earliest apocalyptic manuscripts include the polytheistic Canaanite texts of the Baal Cycle of the fourteenth century B.C. Persian Apocalypticism was transmitted orally through the Zoroastrian tradition which built up from around the sixth century B.C., appearing in manuscript form later, between the ninth and tenth century A.D. Within the Canaanite texts are the Ugaritic combat myths, which are drawn upon in Apocalypse 12 – albeit by superimposing different warring ‘actors’ on the cosmic and earthly stages, thereby replacing the pagan deities whilst utilising the structure of the former myth in order to arrive at a Christocentric apocalypse; such elements then function to assert the power of the Judeo-Christian God. However, the biblical Apocalypse bears more resemblance to Hebrew apocalyptic writing, as found in sections of a number of books within the Old Testament canon – prominent among which are those from the book of Daniel – for instance, the seven-headed beast of Apocalypse 17 is reminiscent of the four beasts which Daniel describes in Daniel 7. We also detect allusions to the proto-apocalyptic

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Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah. Moreover, the Apocalypse bears many striking similarities in content with the Olivet Discourse, often referred to as the 'Little Apocalypse' or the 'Synoptic Apocalypse' – that is, Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21, in which Jesus discusses the end times. The frequency of such allusions suggests that the author presupposed familiarity among the respective congregations of the seven churches with these authoritative texts. Therefore, in considering the intertextual element of the Apocalypse we should give due attention to these hundreds of allusions to Old Testament passages.\footnote{Different commentators and scholars have come up with wildly divergent figures for the number of Old Testament allusions in the Apocalypse. I have found 487, although some point to a higher figure and others a lower number. Some have found as many as 647. However, as David Mathewson points out in his essay 'Assessing Old Testament Allusions in the Book of Revelation' (at http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/2003-4_mathewson.pdf), a distinction should be drawn between 'allusions' and 'echoes'.}

Another integral element of apocalyptic writing is its eschatological emphasis – a characteristic of the genre that is particularly prominent in the biblical Apocalypse. However, one’s understanding of the text’s historical timeframe is determined by the adopted hermeneutical position concerning which historical age/s John is addressing in chapters 4-22 – if indeed the text is to be read as pertaining to earthly events as well as those in the heavenly realm, or instead given a purely spiritual interpretation. Regardless of the interpretation – and we shall address the prevalent hermeneutical stance which determined the exegetical approach in fourteenth-century England below – the Apocalypse is profoundly eschatological in nature. For the purpose of clarity I define the term \textit{eschatology} not only as \textit{end times}\footnote{The term 'end times' refers to the period beginning after the resurrection up to the Second Coming. However, I use the term in the sense of the eschaton as described in the Apocalypse.} events, or the last things, but also as historical events viewed within a Christocentric framework which claims prophetic foreknowledge of the final years of history, culminating in the Second Coming and the events connected with that occurrence.

The Apocalypse encompasses a number of genres besides the apocalyptic. It differs from other apocalyptic works by incorporating two further genres – namely the prophetic and the epistolary. John presents the text as a work of prophecy in the benedictions of 1:3 and 22:7: ‘Blessed is he that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy: and keepeth those things which are written in it. For the time is at hand’; ‘Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.’ Further reference to the prophetic nature of the book appears in 22:10, 18 and 19. Framing 1:4 and the letters to the seven churches, to the end of the book, is the letter which
comprises the book itself. Within these genres John incorporates a great deal of doxological language and, most prominently, the visions themselves.

It is relevant to point out here that there has been a lack of consensus relating to the date of the Apocalypse which has persisted through the ages. The earliest external reference comes from Irenaeus, who in his Against Heresies or Adversus Haereses (c. 180) writes that the book was in existence towards the end of the emperor Domitian’s (A.D. 81-96) rule. Later the prominent writer Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340) believed it was written in the reign of Domitian. However, it is difficult to prove definitively whether the book was written during Domitian’s rule or earlier, during that of Nero. Consequently, there are differences of opinion regarding the dating of the manuscript. Both positions have strong arguments in their favour. In the later Middle Ages it was thought to have been written during the reign of Domitian – see for instance the illuminations of Domitian in the mid-thirteenth century Getty Apocalypse.46

Whatever the veracity of the actual dating, John was evidently writing to churches that were facing (or anticipating) discrimination or persecution in various forms. Emperor worship originated in Smyrna, at least two centuries before the birth of Christ, and a temple was built for the worship of the goddess Dea Roma in 195 B.C. In 26 A.D. it became the first city in the Roman Empire to adopt worship of the emperor himself, having been granted the right to build a temple to Tiberius (R. 14-37 A.D.) thereby establishing the citizens’ reputation for loyalty to Rome.47 Although the Jews were exempted from emperor worship, the Christians were not and they suffered as a consequence of their non-participation. However, persecution was not invariably overt, as in the case of Thyatira, the fourth of the seven churches addressed in Apocalypse 2:18-29. For those who wished to succeed as artisans in this town it was necessary to belong to one of the trade guilds that were then prevalent – with membership necessitating involvement in idol worship and behaviour that was incompatible with Christian teaching.48 Therefore, in effect, this was an indirect form of persecution which meant that Christians began to be ostracised; they were faced with the choice of assimilating and compromising their beliefs, starving, or

48 Mounce, Revelation, 85. Also see chapter 4 of this thesis.
joining the army. Therefore the Apocalypse fulfilled an important function at a time of immense challenges to the fledgling Church. In a milieu that was unwelcoming and (even hostile) to early Christianity, the Apocalypse exhorted believers to persevere whilst some were falling away or compromising their beliefs by associating with, and participating in, pagan practices. The book acknowledges the presence of suffering and predicts further troubles, whilst offering hope of a final victory for Christ and the promise of heavenly rewards for those who remain faithful. This prominent soteriological view provides balance when juxtaposed with the judgments that are poured out upon the earth; it also complements the passages concerning the last things. Such themes are also integral to Piers Plowman and Julian’s Revelations. Indeed, the particular prominence of Apocalypse-influenced writings (including vernacular literature) in late medieval England is partially attributable to its perceived relevance in light of contemporary events which, in the context of Ricardian literature’s creative flourishing, stimulated profound engagement with the text.

As a result of its adoption by the Church, the Latin Vulgate was the most influential Bible in existence during the fourteenth century, and, consequently, it is hard to overestimate Jerome’s influence in the Middle Ages. Through his translation of the Bible into the Latin Vulgate he became one of the Church’s most influential figures. His approach to the Apocalypse is therefore of much significance, particularly given that he omitted many of the chiliastic elements of Victorinus’ commentary on the Apocalypse when he edited the text. In seeking to establish which manuscripts were used for the Vulgate’s composition we encounter a degree of uncertainty. St. Jerome translated the Apocalypse from the Greek into Latin as part of the Vulgate, having been given the task of revising the sometimes corrupted Latin editions by Pope Damasus I in 382. However, his efforts were concentrated chiefly on the Septuagint (hereafter written as ‘LXX’), and other translators completed the New Testament translations. The identity of the translator/s of the Apocalypse for the Latin Vulgate is still unknown.

Turning to the interpretations of the Apocalypse which have appeared over the centuries, a striking diversity of exegetical approaches becomes apparent. There are four major interpretations of the Apocalypse. Firstly, there is preterism, which is derived from the Latin word praeteritus, meaning ‘gone by’ or ‘past’; the term was
coined by G.S. Faber in 1844. Preterists interpret the entire book in the context of the early Church. The approach, which relies on a pre-70 A.D. dating of the Apocalypse, had an early adherent in the person of Eusebius (c. 325). Secondly, the Alexandrian Fathers, Origen (185-254), Tyconius, (c. 390), Jerome (347-420) and Augustine (c. 354-430), moved to the *ideal* or *spiritual* reading which takes chapters 4-22 as representing eternal truths, but does not read the events described as literal. Thirdly, there is the *historicist* approach which perceives the events of the book as representing Church history from the time of writing and beyond into the future. Since this method of exegesis was promulgated by Berengaudus, the ninth-century author of the Apocalypse commentary *Expositio super septem visiones libri Apocalypsis*, proponents of this view have included Joachim of Fiore (1145-1202) — whom Bernard McGinn has called ‘the most important apocalyptic author of the middle ages’ — and Julian’s contemporary John Wyclif (c.1330-1384). The former may be regarded as the founder of the historicist method of interpretation. Wyclif, whose influence is discernible in Langland’s writing and, arguably, Julian’s, followed the trend during the Papal Schism (1378-1418) period of accusing the papacy of being the Antichrist. Rather more constructively, he made the entire Apocalypse accessible to the laity through his translation of the Bible into Middle English. He also wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse entitled *Postilla super Apocalipsim* (1371), although it remained unpublished. Fourthly, the *futurist* interpretation views chapters 4-22 as referring to future events in world history, and 1-3 as containing a message to churches throughout history, as well as the specific churches of Asia Minor to which John was writing. However, this interpretation did not emerge until the sixteenth century with the teachings of the Jesuit Francisco Ribera (1537-1591). Each of these hermenutical approaches leads to certain wildly divergent readings of specific sections of the text and I now turn to what is arguably the most important of these.

One of the most contentious sections of the Apocalypse concerns the millennium in chapter 20. The interpretations are premillennialism, postmillennialism and amillennialism. Proponents of amillennialism assert that Christ currently rules over the Church, and the millennium is already underway; the resurrection and

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49 George Stanley Faber, *The Sacred Calendar of Prophecy, or, A Dissertation on the Prophecies which Treat of the Grand Period of Seven Times: and especially of its Second Moiety, or the latter three times and a half* (London: W. E. Painter, 1844).

judgment are to take place after the 1,000 years. As the term *premillennialism* suggests, it is a chiliastic view which contends that Christ will return prior to the millennium itself to rule over a renewed world with Jerusalem as the holy capital for this period. This view is further split by historical premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. Historical premillennialists hold that Christ's reign begins immediately after the Second Coming, with the resurrection of the saints occurring just as the millennium begins; judgment for unbelievers takes place at the end of the millennium. Dispensational premillennialism stresses that the nation of Israel will be particularly prominent during the millennium; it also states that there will be two resurrections and three or more judgments. Postmillennialism\(^{51}\) bears similarities with amillennialism in that it takes the view that Christ will rule on earth spiritually and the physical Second Coming will take place after the reign of the Church during the millennium. However, postmillennialists regard this as a future period in Church history rather than one already begun. Joachim of Fiore's prophetic works are examples of early postmillennialism pre-dating the coinage of the term.

I discuss the prevailing medieval Augustinian eschatological viewpoint in chapter 1. After following the prevalent chiliastic (in modern terminology: ‘pre-millennial’) reading, Augustine, through an amillennialist approach, interpreted the Apocalypse allegorically, with the millennium – which he then regarded as a symbolic period rather than a precise number – viewed as the period of the Church's glorious age on earth. However, the issue is complicated by the fact that in Book XX of *City of God* he offers another possible interpretation of the millennium – namely, what we today identify as ‘postmillennial’. Whether Augustine ultimately believed in the amillennialist stance or the more literal postmillennialist view that the millennium was already (or soon would be) underway and precedes the parousia, amillennialism became the orthodox position in England during the Middle Ages, although postmillennialists have also cited and drawn upon the authority of Augustine. In *City of God* he does not say whether he expects the Roman Empire to be taken over by Christians ushering in an ideal millennium age, or whether he believes the Church millennium is already underway. In considering the many interpretations of the Apocalypse – namely, Preterist, Historian, Futurist, Amillennialist and

\(^{51}\) The term first appears in the mid-nineteenth century, although as with the preterist, historicist, pre-millennialist and amillennialist positions, the doctrine itself pre-dates the modern terminology.
Postmillennialist – Steve Gregg’s *Revelation: Four Views*, is an invaluable text as it presents all these interpretations without favouring one over the others.

The direct influence of the Apocalypse is discernible in a plethora of medieval texts. Two of the most important are the English translation of the letter of the reformist monk Adso to Queen Gerberga ‘Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist’ (c. 954) which was so influential – evidenced by the number of times that it was copied during the next two hundred years – and the Benedictine Abbess Hildegard of Bingen’s (1098-1179) *Scivias* (1151). In chapter 3, Book 2 of the *Scivias* Hildegard depicts the Church as the Bride of Christ. Book 3 depicts the Church giving birth to Antichrist and charts the life of the latter; Chapter XI and Chapter XII are entitled ‘Last Days and the Fall of the Antichrist’ and ‘The New Heaven and the New Earth’ respectively. Also prominent among contemporary Apocalypse-related texts is Bede’s Latin commentary entitled *Explanatio Apocalypsis* (c. 710-716), which Penn Szittya has described as ‘the most influential Latin commentary on the Apocalypse between Saint Jerome and the twelfth century’.

Given the prevalence of visionary imagery in the *Revelations* and *Piers Plowman*, which, I argue, frequently derives from the Apocalypse, it is worth noting the influence of Apocalypse art upon congregations and readers of the illustrated Apocalypses. The technique of recontextualisation within fourteenth-century England – which also appears in medieval art depicting biblical figures in contemporary costume – imbues these events with a strong sense of immediacy. Examples of such art include the thirty-five illuminations in the Rupertsburg manuscript (c.1165) of Hildegard of Bingen’s *Scivias*, such as ‘The One Sitting Upon the Throne’ which depicts Christ dressed as a medieval king. Another example is the late fourteenth-century depiction of Antichrist and the Whore of Babylon in the MS. Holkham misc. 48 which illustrates Dante’s *Purgatorio* XXXII 148-6 in an apocalyptic scene transposed upon a medieval pastoral environment.

The prevalence of such Apocalypse-inspired art is reflected in the fifty Anglo-Norman Apocalypse books from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively.

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54 Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy: Inferno*, in Italian North Italy, Genoa(?); 14th cent., third quarter, from Manuscripts from the library of the Earls of Leicester at Holkham Hall, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. MS. Holkham misc. 48, pp. 1-54.
which usually included sections from one of two commentary texts – either the Latin gloss (12th century) written by the Benedictine monk Berengaudus, which was the main commentary used in the thirteenth century, or a vernacular French prose gloss which appeared in the fourteenth-century texts and the twenty-eight such English manuscripts from the fourteenth century are illustrated. With reference to the research of Suzanne Lewis, Szittya comments upon these, writing, ‘Together, these two glosses, one Latin and one vernacular, along with the ordination of the books in which they appear – that is, the conjunction of biblical text, learned commentary, and picture cycle – exemplify a coalescence of the learned and the popular that characterized the history of the Apocalypse in England.’

Szittya further states that, . . . the fourteenth century contains clear evidence of the popularization of these Apocalypse commentaries independent of the sumptuous illuminated manuscripts that only the wealthy could afford. The French prose gloss was translated (at least three times) into Middle English and joined with one of several Middle English translations of the Apocalypse text itself. These later, modest, unillustrated Apocalypses with commentary circulated as independent texts, unaccompanied by other biblical books. Seventeen such manuscripts survive from various periods of the fourteenth century, and their relations are sufficiently complex to suggest the disappearance of a substantial number of others.

The aforementioned Getty Apocalypse belongs to the Westminster group of illustrated English Apocalypses. It contains eighty-two miniatures depicting the biblical Apocalypse, with earth’s inhabitants arrayed in the appropriate medieval attire for their station in life, and incorporates commentary by Berengaudus. Regarding its dissemination, Nigel J. Morgan identifies a waning of interest in such books during the mid-thirteenth century, which he suggests may be attributable to the failure of Joachim’s predicted 1260 date to be realised. However, he identifies strong lay interest: ‘The predominance of vernacular copies implies that the majority were made for lay men and women, although some were made for the religious who doubtless

55 Szitty, ‘Domesday Bokes’, 381.
56 Ibid., 381-382.
preferred to read in Anglo-Norman rather than Latin.\textsuperscript{57} Such recontextualised imagery is a feature of \textit{Piers Plowman}. The thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Apocalypse commentaries of Richard Rolle (c. 1290-1349) and John Wyclif respectively are also notable.

In medieval literature we find the Apocalypse’s influence in Dante Alighieri’s (1265-1321) \textit{Divine Comedy (Divina Commedia)} which was written between 1308 and 1321 and deals vividly with the last things. In turn, Dante influenced Chaucer, for example, in the latter’s dream vision \textit{The Parliament of Fowles}.\textsuperscript{58} The Apocalypse also influenced Jean de Meun’s (c.1240- c.1305) \textit{Romance of the Rose (Roman de la Rose)}, which he composed during the period 1268-1285. It contains much apocalyptic imagery and was translated into Middle English – a significant portion by Chaucer in the 1360s.

The Apocalypse’s influence on Ricardian literature is profound and we see a variety of creative approaches to particular sections of the biblical text, such as those pertaining to Antichrist, Judgment and the New Jerusalem. Part five of the poem \textit{Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus Conscientiae)} [mid-fourteenth century], once attributed to Richard Rolle (c. 1290-1349), is concerned with Antichrist, as is \textit{Piers Plowman}, with other sections on the Whore of Babylon and the new Jerusalem prominent within the text.

The mystery plays are especially prominent within the apocalyptic genre of later Ricardian literature, particularly the Chester Cycle, which incorporates the Antichrist plays and the Harrowing of Hell, but also the Corpus Christi Cycle York pageant which is concerned with the final Judgment. Chaucer’s \textit{Canterbury Tales} (c. 1387-1400) and \textit{House of Fame} (1372-1382) contain eschatological elements and references to the Apocalypse. John Gower’s \textit{Vox Clamantis} (early 1380s) utilises apocalyptic elements in relation to the 1381 Uprising (which he opposed) whilst conveying the message of the imminence of Antichrist’s appearance. At the beginning of Book 1 (57-8) of the Prologue to the Vox he draws on the authority of John of Patmos as his namesake, asking him to guide his work. In discussing apocalyptic imagery in medieval literature, Emmerson highlights Gower’s contrast between John bowing to the angel in Apocalypse 22:8 and the latter’s recorded

\textsuperscript{57} Morgan, Getty, 13.
rebuke in the next verse, against Gower’s pope who, whilst acknowledging that the angel refuses the honour of worship, claims that the papacy is worthy to receive it. As Emmerson writes,

This vivid contrast and subsequent condemnation develop the poet’s understanding of society and religion as reflecting a world turned upside down, in which he, John, the modern-day prophet crying in the wilderness, must ‘honor’ a dishonorable institution. Along with many other Apocalypse allusions in this bitter poem (for example, the association of Wat Tyler’s followers with the armies of Gog and Magog [Apoc. 20:7]), this motif provides a partial explanation for Gower’s despairing picture of ‘these times’.  

Such emphasis on the Apocalypse’s later chapters is a feature of the anonymously authored alliterative poem *Pearl* (late 14th century) which places particular focus on the New Jerusalem (both heavenly and earthly). Due to constraints of length I do not discuss *Pearl* and the mystery play, the Harrowing of Hell, although these apocalyptic texts provide much material for future research given their multiple areas of confluence with Julian’s and Langland’s engagement with the Apocalypse. However, I do compare and contrast aspects of Book 1 of Gower’s *Vox Clamantis* in chapter 4 to illustrate ways in which the political and religious scene of the mid-fourteenth to early-fifteenth century provided fertile ground both for the utilisation of the apocalyptic genre as a vehicle for expressing discontentment with abuses and for offering both negative and positive views of the future.

*The manuscripts of the Apocalypse*

Regarding the manuscripts of the Apocalypse, it is noteworthy that the book was not universally accepted into the canon during the early centuries following its composition. However, as Mounce writes, ‘That the Apocalypse was included in the Muratorian Canon (the earliest extant list of [New Testament] writings) indicates its circulation and acceptance as canonical in Rome by the end of the second century.’

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Nevertheless, the Apocalypse was not canonised in the Greek Church until the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D. and the fact that there are 287 extant Greek Apocalypse manuscripts, compared to hundreds for other New Testament books may indicate an initial hesitancy to assign it equal status with these books. Rather than indicating a certain arbitrariness to its survival, such reluctance to follow the Latin Church’s early acceptance of the Apocalypse may be explained by a sense of disappointment that many of the major prophecies of the book had not come to fruition, despite early expectancy that they were imminent. Such a view was particularly prevalent in the East where the copies were made, thus accounting for the lower number of copies. Furthermore, a mere sixteen of these extant Apocalypse manuscripts pre-date the tenth century – the date of Codex Vaticanus 2066, which in addition to a number of non-biblical texts incorporates the entire Apocalypse.

Only three uncial manuscripts – that is, manuscripts created between the 3rd and 8th centuries A.D. consisting of script that occupies one-twelfth of a standard line of writing and used by Latin and Greek scribes – contain the complete text, and although there is not a discernible majority text underlying the Vulgate, it is possible that one (or more) of these scripts was used. The fourth-century Codex Vaticanus MS (B) has suffered damage and it is not clear whether the Apocalypse, which is missing, was destroyed. In any case, it is doubtful whether the Apocalypse in the Vulgate had this manuscript as its source because of differences between the two versions. Also from the fourth century is the Codex Sinaiticus (London, Brit. Libr., Add. 43725; Gregory-Aland nº א [Aleph] or 01, [Soden δ 2]) no. (Aleph) or 01), and Alexandrian (A) which dates back to the fifth century.

Approaches to the Revelations of Julian of Norwich

In establishing the gap that my research seeks to fill I now engage with modern scholarship of the Revelations, which explores themes such as motherhood, sin and the body/soul dichotomy (or unity), liberal/universal salvation and the resultant question of Julian’s orthodoxy. Referencing earlier Church and religious authorities, such as Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and Joachim of Fiore, I argue that elements of their teachings which are concerned with the Apocalypse account

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61 Derived from the Latin word *uncia* meaning ‘twelfth part’ or ‘ounce’.
inform Julian’s *Revelations*, with the latter text displaying a discernible influence of the former, whether through implicit agreement or discontentment with its eschatological view.

Much traditional critical scholarship has explored Julian’s writing from a theological perspective, whereas more modern research has tended to approach the text/s primarily from a literary viewpoint; my work combines these approaches. I share the view of Colledge and Walsh, as expressed in the introduction to their edition of the *Showings*, in which they stress the centrality of religion in Julian’s text:

Julian shared with such contemporaries as the author of *Piers Plowman* a reverence for the word of Scripture, and it is only in reference to that word that either writer can be evaluated. Their ‘ideal text’ was the sacred text; and both writers were seeking to interpret that text, so as to make it reflect the situation of their own age, and also to affirm the entire message of Christian hope which they had learned from the Gospel.62

In accepting this position a further contention of this thesis is that it is the Apocalypse text which best represents this ‘situation of their own age’ and for Julian especially it serves as a source of ‘Christian hope’ within her hermeneutic. Through her approach Julian displays engagement with major authorities on the text.

Most prominent among the orthodox influences on Julian’s work is St. Augustine. Two examples of his influence are, firstly, the references to the soul as a city, and secondly, Augustine’s belief that the devil had already been bound for the duration of the Church age which, I contend, is implicit in Julian’s emphasis on the devil’s impotence. Whilst this derives from Christ’s victory on the Cross, it is this act, along with the fact that the devil deceived Adam and Eve, which legally entitles Christ to release the souls and bind the devil in the Harrowing of Hell. Therefore, I am largely in agreement with notable critics who have highlighted this influence, such as Denise Nowakowski Baker,63 Sandra J. McEntire,64 Denys Turner65 and Nicholas

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there are clear elements that are indicative of the Augustinian line adopted by the medieval Church in England. Augustine’s concept of the city of God (and the implications of the New Jerusalem) constitutes a major influence upon Julian’s text. However, I also identify clear areas of Julian’s theology which do not accord fully with Augustine’s teachings, such as his stress on hell. David Aers contrasts Julian’s lack of direct biblical references with Augustine’s plethora of the same in *City of God*, arguing that she is depoliticising the crucifixion by omitting details of the historical account and focussing solely on the suffering of the cross. Moreover, Julian arguably diverges from Augustine in her conception of sin and human culpability.

Critics such as Barbara Newman, Sarah McNamer, Nicholas Watson and Diane Watt have argued that there is a discernible heterodox strain in the writing of Julian of Norwich, yet the influence of apocalyptic writings on Julian’s work has, until now, gone unaddressed. However, definitions of orthodoxy in this context contain transitory elements, and whilst there are heterodox facets to Julian’s writing – or material that could be construed as such (areas which are highlighted in the thesis) there are alternative readings which suggest that aspects of Julian’s theology which have previously been interpreted as unorthodox may be closer to the understanding of the early Church. Her writing on salvation and the lack of any vision of hell, or of God’s wrath, points ostensibly to the compelling conclusion that she takes an unorthodox stance (in contrast, or even opposition, to the Apocalypse view) – a reading which would have far-reaching implications signifying a level of discontentment with the orthodox view of hell.

Barbara Newman believes Julian to be closer to the latter. Newman’s *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* explores how becoming a religious person could imbue a woman with a perceived virility and equality with men that was otherwise unobtainable given the existence of a male-dominated hierarchical structure and prevailing societal view. Her sections on

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66 Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, 55.
68 Ibid., 156.
purgatory are particularly pertinent to this thesis, insofar as they elucidate a belief which had become orthodox in the Church in the twelfth century. According to Newman, the fact that women such as Julian display discomfort with the concept of hell indicates the extent to which orthodox purgatorial piety had taken hold in the medieval psyche and given women a prominent intercessory role. Newman’s analysis of Julian’s text portrays her as an unorthodox writer. She posits a view of Julian writing from a place on the margins of the late-medieval period and of greatest relevance in modern times in terms of the acceptance of many aspects of her religious view.

Whilst it is possible to overemphasise Julian’s unorthodoxy – and the numerous biblical allusions in the Revelations, cited most obviously by Colledge and Walsh, but also other editors, illustrate the necessity of qualifying assertions of her unorthodoxy – Julian undoubtedly comes close to expressing unorthodox, even heretical, views at times; however, much depends on how such passages are construed. I contend that such passages constitute part of her response to the Apocalypse which includes elements of discontentment with aspects of the canonical text. I also explore passages in which Julian defends herself in anticipation of accusations of heresy. Newman believes that in these passages Julian is not just providing assurance of her orthodoxy to her ‘even Christians’ but to herself.\textsuperscript{73} She expresses the view that Watson’s ‘revisionist dating’ of A Revelation may be correct given the fact that ‘persecution of Lollard anchoresses was actually taking place as Julian composed her book’.\textsuperscript{74}

Traditional scholarly consensus dated A Vision to the 1370s. However, in 1993 Nicholas Watson challenged this position in his article ‘The Composition of Julian of Norwich’s Revelation of Love’\textsuperscript{75} in which he argues instead that it was written in the mid-1380s or even up to five years later. He also argues for a gap of some 15-20 years between Julian's reworking of A Vision and the more sophisticated A Revelation. He writes that A Revelation ‘may have been written very late in Julian’s life, looking back over a period nearer to half a century than what had come to seem a “mere” twenty years’. If Watson is correct then this enhanced maturity and complexity of content is partially attributable to the time that she devoted to

\textsuperscript{73} Newman, \textit{Virile}, 133.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 132-3.
\textsuperscript{75} Watson, ‘Composition’, 680.
meditating upon the showings. Watson points out that Julian’s protestations of orthodoxy make sense only in this context, and for the purposes of my research the veracity of this claim has significance. If the text is a product of a period of persecution then this provides an interesting parallel with the Apocalypse text. However, if the material that she is hypothetically repressing is unorthodox then its absence may be interpreted as part of her discontentment with the canonical text.

In considering elements of Julian’s writing as in any way unorthodox it must be borne in mind that, as far as we are aware, she was never accused of heresy and she was endorsed by the Church through bishop of Norwich Henry Despenser (c.1341-1406) who had ultimate authority over her enclosure.\(^6\) Considering ‘the fighting bishop’s’ character, he would not have done so if he had harboured reservations about her orthodoxy. Julian also played a valuable pastoral role – a fact that is emphasised by Grace Jantzen, who points out that, by definition, the position of female anchorite necessitated a degree of involvement in the community.\(^7\) Jantzen contextualises Julian’s writing within her milieu and what it meant to be a female anchorite in late-fourteenth century England, whilst addressing theological and psychological aspects of the work. Besides providing a balanced view of the text, the issue of Julian’s contemporary and intended readership is an important one for my purposes if aspects of her writings may contain heterodox elements, or facilitate such interpretations.

In chapter 2 I explore the possibility that Joachite writings pertaining to the Apocalypse may have informed Julian’s writing. Marjorie Reeves’s *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*,\(^8\) and the translations of essential texts in *Apocalyptic Spirituality* are invaluable resources. Also of importance is Kathryn Kerby-Fulton’s essay ‘English Joachite Manuscripts and Medieval Optimism about the Role of the Jews in History: A List for Future Studies’\(^9\) In this essay she provides evidence that Joachite thought and writings had spread to England long before Julian’s lifetime. Whilst links between Julian’s work and Joachite teaching may not be provable, I have found indications that they may be present through implicit references in Julian’s writing. If so, it represents the possibility of gaining new insight into Julian’s

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\(^7\) Jantzen, *Julian*, 29 and 33.  
hermeneutic of the Apocalypse and her response to it – insofar as her writing constitutes such a response directly or indirectly. Both Julian and Joachim experienced a visionary catalyst for writing which inspires the visual quality of their work. Both place great emphasis on the Trinity, and Joachim’s division of history into three status, each defined by a Person of the Trinity, bears comparison with Julian’s discussion and realisation of an equivalent third age of the Holy Spirit that is viewed from a Christological emphasis (Christ sitting in the soul of each believer). This also belongs to their ‘postmillennialist’ view – although this influence is primarily attributable to an Augustinian hermeneutic. Joachim and Julian adopt a liberal soteriology, and whilst Julian’s attitude to the Jews has been dismissed as typical of the prevalent medieval English xenophobic and racist view, this is not entirely accurate, for she does not see them in hell, as was widely believed would be their fate. Herein she deviates from the Augustinian orthodoxy and moves closer to the Joachite view.

In establishing that Julian’s writing displays the influence of Apocalypse exegetes and Apocalypse-influenced writers it should be noted that the dissemination of these influences may have been predominantly oral and she need not have had direct personal access to physical manuscripts. However, my argument that there is a discernible influence of Apocalypse-related texts upon her Revelations is supported by their availability in Norwich, particularly in the case of works on the borders of orthodoxy, such as Joachite writings. Whilst John’s learning derived from scriptural knowledge and first-hand experience with Jesus – assuming the author of the Apocalypse was John the Apostle – the question of the source of Julian’s evident theological knowledge invites conjecture. Her knowledge of other writings becomes explicable if Grace Jantzen is correct in her hypothesis that Julian received an early Benedictine education at Carrow Abbey.80 Other scholars, such as Frances Beer, have also suggested that Julian was involved with the Benedictine nuns at Carrow Road.81 However, it is unlikely that Julian was a nun, not least because during her sickness a priest was called for (Vision, 2, 19-24), and if she had been in a convent there would already have been provision for this on site.

Felicity Riddy describes the circles of Norwich women who formed reading

groups during Julian's lifetime and observes that the fact that some 'owned Latin
psalters and books of hours' indicates the likelihood of them having had some
knowledge of Latin. In relation to her discussion of the Vernon manuscript she
highlights the example of Cecily, the Duchess of York (1415-1495) who listened to
texts read aloud by a clerk and then disseminated them herself by word of mouth. Moreover, in 1407 Adam Easton's library of 228 books arrived in Norwich from Rome
as a bequest to the Cathedral Priory and were likely being read shortly afterwards.
Nicholas Watson suggests that 'If Julian was still writing in 1410 or 1415, the religious
literature available to her in the vernacular was very considerable and included works
by continental women which might have given her a good deal of encouragement,
and possibly much else.' Whether or not Julian acquired these writers' ideas
second-hand by word of mouth, the knowledge that she displays in the Revelation
is notable for her infrequent direct references to theologians or biblical passages. This
may be because, as a woman writer, she wished to conceal her theological erudition
in order to conform to the preconceived view of one who received visions and/or
prophecies. It is also consistent with her employment of the humilitas topos.

Whilst the religious aspect constitutes an integral part of my thesis, attention is
given to literary, historical and linguistic elements within the text/s. Julian’s writing is
contextualised within the historical ‘moment’, drawing parallels and highlighting areas
of disagreement with contemporaneous medieval works of literature (containing
religious elements) and biblical/religious writing. However, this is not to go as far
(within the parameters of the thesis) as Colledge and Walsh who seek to identify
every possible religious and literary allusion and reference in Julian’s writing.

A feature of A Revelation which contrasts with the Apocalypse depictions of
Christ’s Second Coming is Julian’s discussion of the motherhood of God. A
contention of the thesis is that whilst Julian’s Revelations to some extent display
discontentment with the view of Apocalypse 6-19 and the portrayal of a vengeful God
the Father and Christ the Son, such an interpretation is overly simplistic. Caroline
Walker Bynum’s study of the motherhood of God in the work of pr

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82 Felicity Riddy, ""Women talking about the things of God": A Late Medieval Sub-Culture', in Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 111.
83 Riddy, "Women talking", 111.
84 Norman Tanner, The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 35.
85 Tanner, Church, 35.
their influence is illuminating when considering Julian’s portrayal of Christ, which undoubtedly has its roots in biblical analogy, yet, depending on one’s interpretation, presents a challenge and suggests some discontentment with John’s Apocalypse. My argument draws on Bynum’s view, and explores the implications of Sarah McNamer’s argument that Julian

. . . does not simply illuminate some maternal aspects of the traditionally masculine image of God: she gives the image of the mother equivalence with that of the father. ‘As truly as God is our father,’ she writes, ‘so truly is God our mother; and that he revealed in all . . . .’ I will suggest that the image is indeed present ‘in all’, extending beyond the five chapters in which it is explicitly evoked, and exerting a profound influence on Julian’s insight and expression throughout the entire text.

Whilst I argue that Julian does indeed refer to actions and characteristics which had traditionally been perceived as masculine or feminine, this apparent equivalence between the image of the mother and that of the father stands in contrast to many of her contemporaries. However, in this at least, she is unconventional rather than unorthodox.

In order to comprehend Julian’s theological viewpoint it is crucial to grasp the concept of the unity of Christ’s body and the Church body. Examples of this teaching are found in the writings of both Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux. Therefore, I have explored the influence on Julian of these writers who themselves wrote on the Apocalypse. Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt identifies Julian’s conception of the mystical body of Christ as comprising the ecclesiastical structures and the united believers who gain salvation. As does Norman Cohn, Bauerschmidt addresses social issues, such as the feudal power relationships inherent in the discussion of these persons. For Bauerschmidt, all politics is theological and all theology is political. In his essay ‘Julian of Norwich – Incorporated’ he problematises the modern tendency to ‘pigeon hole’ Julian’s writing in the ‘mysticism’ category:

Such a positioning brackets Julian’s historical situatedness in all its medieval and anchoritic peculiarity and gives to her a universal availability. However, this availability is bought at the cost of isolating Julian from the concrete beliefs and practices that shaped her thought, with the result that her theology is ‘de-politicized’ by being removed from any particular tradition, constituted by actual social practices.\(^89\)

This restrictive view of Julian, which Bauerschmidt describes as resulting from the ‘mysticism’ categorisation, may be the fault of anachronistic definitions of the word ‘mystic’. On this subject Denys Turner emphasises the importance of distinguishing between the modern and medieval concepts of mysticism: ‘It is less misleading to say with McGinn that “no [medieval theologian] practiced mysticism” than to risk major misinterpretation of their theologies by calling either their writing or their practice by that name.’\(^90\) Turner argues that since neither Julian’s experiences nor her visions are ‘ineffable’ she is not a mystic in the ‘anachronistically modern meaning of the word’. Furthermore, he rejects Kevin Magill’s view of Julian as a visionary as opposed to a mystic because her ‘shewings’ are not independent ‘of the complex dialectical interplay that they engage in with her own experience and the common teaching of the Church’.\(^91\) With such qualifications Turner identifies Julian as primarily a ‘mystical theologian’. This view of Julian as theologian is shared by Denise Baker. Julian, as a female anchorite, was a focal point within her community of evencristen whilst she meditated on the divine; her *Revelations* reflect this duality.

A number of Julian’s contemporaries (whose beliefs had been informed by earlier theologians) were heavily influenced by apocalypticism. I have drawn on the research of Bernard McGinn, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Margery Reeves and Norman Cohn in establishing the extent of the dissemination of the teachings of Joachim of Fiore, Bernard of Clairvaux and the Beguines, most notably Marguerite Porete (d.1310). Cohn’s approach is to focus on the social upheaval of the epoch which, according to his argument, provided fertile ground for apocalyptic thought and sects that were considered heretical. In this he differs somewhat from McGinn and Reeves,

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\(^91\) Ibid., 30.
who, whilst acknowledging that this happened, dispute the application to social unrest as a complete argument for the spread of these ideas.

The Manuscripts of the Revelations

Turning to the manuscripts themselves, there is only one copy of *A Vision* (London, British Library, MS Additional 37790), dating back to the mid-fifteenth century. The three extant copies of *A Revelation* are some two centuries older. Of these versions the earliest is the Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Fonds Anglais 40) which dates back to the late-sixteenth century. The later copies are the two Sloane versions: London, British Library, MS Sloane 2499 (seventeenth century) and London, British Library, MS Sloane 3705, which dates to the late-seventeenth or even early-eighteenth century. The Westminster Manuscript (Westminster Cathedral Treasury MS4) is an abridged version found in a late-medieval florilegium from the late-fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Finally, there is the Upholland, Northern Institute MS; *XVI Revelations of Divine Love, Shewed to a Devout Servant of Our Lord, called Mother Juliana, An Anchorete of Norwich: Who Lived in the Dayes of King Edward the Third*, edited and published by R.F.S. Cressy in 1670. This latter text dates back to the mid- to late-seventeenth century.

Critics are divided over the question of the most accurate manuscript of *A Revelation*. Colledge and Walsh use Amherst and Paris as their base texts, but substitute a number of passages with both Sloane manuscripts and the Westminster text when they deem one to provide greater clarity or effect. Marian Glasscoe uses MS Sloane 2499 (S1) as her base text, regarding it as closer to the dialect which Julian used. Watson and Jenkins acknowledge this point, yet they favour the Paris text, pointing out that it is longer than Sloane and ‘on many occasions, P’s greater length is likely attributable, not to wordiness on its part, but rather to truncation on S’s part’. Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, 39.
In their version of the *Revelations* Watson and Jenkins adopt a ‘synthetic approach’ to create an analytic edition, with the text of *A Vision* included below that of *A Revelation*, thus facilitating comparisons and distinctions between the two texts. As they put it, the edition is a hybrid edition which makes use of other manuscripts besides the base text itself. They also include the Westminster text in their book. The Westminster text is ignored by Francis Beer and Glasscoe. Contrary to the view of Colledge and Walsh, Hugh Kempster believes that Julian’s Westminster may have been read by readers other than professional contemplatives, thus situating her in an interactive role. Where Watson and Jenkins favour words from S1 they replace the word given in the Paris manuscript. They seek to stress that Julian’s work is rooted in Middle English as opposed to Latinate English – an aim which prompts them to edit less common words in the text when Paris and Sloane have a different word. An example of this is their insertion of ‘oning’ which they regard as truer to Julian’s teaching than Sloane’s ‘the unite’ or Paris’ ‘the vnithing’. Whilst I am in agreement with Colledge and Walsh that Julian’s *Revelations* is highly theological, I am persuaded by Watson and Jenkins’s representation of Julian as a vernacular theologian. The latter pair also present a compelling case for the merits of their editorial approach. For these reasons I have decided to work from their text, whilst referring to Colledge and Walsh as appropriate.

**Approaches to William Langland’s Piers Plowman**

*Piers Plowman* is an alliterative poem consisting of a series of dream visions recalled by the dreamer/narrator, Will. The text’s division into two parts, comprising what are commonly known as the *Visio*, in which Will is largely an observer, and the *Vita*, in which he takes a more active part in his ‘pilgrimage’, is probably a case of early scribal insertion in the A- and C-texts respectively (although not the B-text). As A.V.C. Schmidt points out, Skeat was responsible for adding these in B since he

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93 Ibid., 37.
94 See below for a detailed discussion of the Z, A, B and C texts.
regarded them as separate poems, whereas the C-text maintains a much greater sense of continuity between the two parts.

From the Prologue onwards Langland provides a vivid depiction of life in medieval England. The great emphasis on social justice emerges from the early passus of the Visio, increasing in intensity until the poem’s culmination in which the consequences of injustice are explored from an eschatological perspective – although soteriological matters are of fundamental importance within the Visio as well.

Addressing such soteriological concerns in Books under Suspicion,96 Kathryn Kerby-Fulton explores the implications of Langland’s liberal soteriology with reference to Uthred de Boldon’s Visio Clara and the Gospel of Nicodemus.97 She shows how such doctrines were incompatible with the orthodox Augustinian teaching which the Bishop of Hippo had adopted in order to guard against pelagianist teachings. Augustine’s stance did not allow for the liberal salvationist exegetical approach of Origen, for example, when glossing such verses as 1 Peter 3:18-20, Romans 11:25-26 and 1 Corinthians 3:15; 5:5; 15:22-24. In passages such as the Harrowing of Hell we see evidence of the influence of these texts/passages in Piers Plowman:

It is tantalizing to believe that Langland wanted it both ways: an overtly orthodox theology hiding a daringly liberal salvational message — or at least its hope. Langland, however, may have been fundamentally Uthredian in his belief in both God’s universal mercy and the primacy of human choice (with FitzRalph’s sense that God seen is necessarily God loved hovering in the background). In any case, Langland, I would suggest, comes by some of his generosity on this point honestly, because he bypasses Augustine’s hardline anti-Pelagianism and reaches back to an even earlier source, the Gospel of Nicodemus, which also dramatizes Christ’s sermon in Hell. And it, too, also relies on silence: indeed, the muteness of its two visionary witnesses to protect a theology of hope with a rhetoric of constraint.98

Kerby-Fulton’s analysis is convincing and illustrated in the culmination of the

98 Kerby-Fulton, Books, 383.
poem for example not only because Langland devotes such space to the emancipatory Harrowing of Hell but also incorporation of the siege of Unity. In this way, he provides balance by warning of contemporary and universally recurring challenges which caution against a complacency and urge instead the pursuit of repristination. In chapter 1 I argue that there is also a discernible Uthredian influence in Julian’s discussion of the ‘grete dede’.

Further characteristics shared by the Visio and the Vita include Langland’s use of satire to attack the prevalent corruption in society, as in Anima’s warnings to the Church, the monks and the friars in Passus XV. The interconnected genre of prophecy appears in the apocalyptic second vision at the end of Passus VI concerning a coming famine. We encounter the genre most notably in the coming of Antichrist in Passus XXII. Moreover, vaticinium ex eventu (telling [prophecy] after the event) occurs in relation to warnings of corruption, for example, in Passus VI of the Visio and in connection with the coming of Antichrist in Passus XXII of the Vita. Therefore, this division (especially in the C-text) is an extremely loose one.

Further divisions appear in the form of a number of Passus, differing in quantity between the poem’s recensions: there are eight in the Z-text, eleven in the A-text, twenty in the B-text and twenty-two in the C-text. Contained within the passus are the visions, of which there are two in the Z-text, three in the A-text, eight in the B-text and seven in the C-text.

A feature of the Visio is the vivid descriptions of fourteenth-century English society, including depictions of many allegorical characters, or personifications, as it exposes the main challenges and threats facing the Church, society (and the individual within it) and their interaction and interrelation. The more extensive Vita can be read as comprising sections concerning Will’s pursuit of the allegorical figures Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. Coexistent with Will’s pursuit of knowledge is an undercurrent of uncertainty which runs through the text – for instance, in the conflicting answers which he receives to his questions.

Depending on one’s interpretation, it is possible to view the poem as ultimately optimistic about the future (for believers) – as is the biblical Apocalypse – or pessimistic. Both texts are critical of their respective epochs and Langland portrays vividly the negative aspects of fourteenth-century England’s perceived socio-religious realities, from the pervasiveness of internal ecclesiastical corruption and the pursuit of Mede through the practice of simony, for instance. He tackles theological matters,
including soteriology and the subject of predestination, and he devotes much space to sacerdotal concerns, including the mendicant controversy. The implication of the text as a whole is that there is a fundamental need for repristination. Above all, he explores the relationship between humanity and God. He foregrounds abuses of power and privilege as dangers which threaten the harmony of the relationship between rulers and ruled. Driven by a strong social conscience, Langland, who is orthodox in many ways, nevertheless frequently challenges hierarchies by highlighting perceived societal abuses, often utilising satirical elements as his chosen medium, as he exposes hypocrisy and greed prevalent within society; he is concerned with the pursuit of a fairer society, the roles of those who belong to it, and the function of kingship. Such subversive and contrary strains in society cause a sense of crisis which pervades much of the poem, as Pearsall recognises:

_Piers Plowman_ is a poem of crises. It records in the minutest detail the conflict which racked late medieval society, as this feudal order and the Church of the west moved into their last stages of institutionalized decay, and as the antagonistic forces over which they had presided moved into the open arena.99

In responding to such turbulence Langland utilises multiple genres. In his seminal work, _Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth Century Apocalypse_,100 Morton W. Bloomfield discusses the poem’s genres:

It appears that _Piers Plowman_ is based on three literary genres: the allegorical dream narrative; the dialogue, _consolatio_, or debate; and the encyclopedic (or Menippean) satire. And it is influenced by three religious genres (or forms): the complaint, the commentary, and the sermon.101

Langland alternates between genres according to his subject matter and in order to convey particular concepts and/or to advance the dialogue. Such shifts distinguish the work from other contemporary poems which are more genre-specific. There are parallels here with Julian’s utilisation of multiple genres. Both visionary texts apply

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101 Bloomfield, _Apocalypse_, 10.
allegory, relating it to biblical and apocryphal sources, or else recounting it directly. Both incorporate prophecy and are concerned with the Church’s state. Crucially, both contain apocalyptic elements, although these are more overt in *Piers Plowman* than in Julian’s *Revelations*. Indeed, Bloomfield argues that *Piers Plowman* itself displays the form of an apocalypse – an apocalypse that is firmly rooted in the contemporary religious and socio-political context. Bloomfield’s recognition of Langland’s theological emphasis informs his focus on the poem’s apocalyptic elements. A problem, which Bloomfield confronts, is whether *Piers Plowman* constitutes what can accurately be termed ‘an apocalypse’, or whether it merely contains apocalyptic elements, which become apparent as Langland addresses the threats to social justice and the Church. In the Preface Bloomfield writes,

... the thesis of this book is that *Piers Plowman* is concerned with the subject of Christian perfection rather than with salvation. The former is the creation of the monastic tradition and is the older and more social Christian world view. This tradition was still alive in the fourteenth century and in England. It is oriented towards the Kingdom of God and eschatology. It finds its natural expression in the apocalyptic frame of mind and in corresponding literary forms. *Piers Plowman* can be best understood as an apocalypse that reflects this older Christian tradition.\(^\text{102}\)

In other words, according to Bloomfield, Langland uses the apocalyptic genre as a didactic tool to highlight the many errors and abuses prevalent within society and the Church, with a view to correcting and eliminating them. Langland does this through his use of personifications throughout the poem. Bloomfield regards Will’s search for perfection, the pursuit of *renovatio* and repristination, as indicative of Langland’s communally-focussed soteriological view and the poet’s affinity with monasticism, as contrasted with a purely individual conception of salvation. Bloomfield is certainly right in stressing the poet’s desire to correct and reform, and the soteriological elements, such as those embedded in the Harrowing of Hell in Passus XX – which provides optimism that might serve as a catalyst for reform – are an integral part of this process for Langland. Therefore, I argue that *Piers Plowman* displays the

influence of the biblical Apocalypse, whilst qualifying this by stating that there are sections which are reminiscent of apocalyptic literature in the Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as fictional works which were themselves influenced by the latter.

If Bloomfield is correct that the poem focuses on the corporate body of believers, it invites some intriguing parallels with the Apocalypse, and indeed Julian’s Revelations. However, I also argue that all three texts emphasise the responsibility of the individual. Indeed, examining Passus XII we can infer from Ymaginatif’s correction of Will’s original misrepresentation of the doctrine of grace in Passus X with a more effectively argued position – which appears to represent a case for semi-pelagianism,\textsuperscript{103} or something close to it – that Langland adopts a position which contends that without good works salvation is not possible. Therefore the implication is that the responsibility for renovatio lies ultimately with the individual, although divine assistance and the Church’s guidance are important.

Bloomfield’s thesis has not gone unchallenged and in chapter 3 (‘Langland, Apocalypse and the Saeculum’) of Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination, David Aers critiques several of Bloomfield’s assumptions and conclusions. For instance, Aers writes,

Bloomfield himself tended to push his thesis to its limits, sometimes merging Langland with such unequivocally ‘apocalyptic thinkers’ as Joachim, Peter John Olivi and Angelo Clareno, ‘men who stressed social perfection and the attainment of the kingdom of God on earth’. . . \textsuperscript{104}

Aers challenges Bloomfield’s ‘unquestioned assumption that apocalyptic beliefs and a commitment to society in history are one’. Moreover, he claims that ‘Langland’s poetry and ideas actually resist Joachite schema’.\textsuperscript{105} This is an area that I explore, with particular reference to Kerby-Fulton’s work, who, as mentioned, identifies strong

\textsuperscript{103} Pelagianism and semi-pelagianism are early modern (1530s) terms for a heresy which Latin Fathers such as Augustine rebutted. The terms derive from the teachings of Pelagius (c.360-c.420), an ascetic who argued that human beings could find salvation through their own will without the need for divine grace. By the fourteenth century these writings had been repeatedly declared heretical at Church Councils, such as those of Carthage and Ephesus in the first half of the fifth century. The heresy would have had particular resonance for the educated in fourteenth century England since the appearance of Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine’s (c. 1290-1349) treatise of 1344 In defence of God against the Pelagians (Summa De Causa Dei contra Pelagium).

\textsuperscript{104} David Aers, Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination (London: Routledge, 1980), 62.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 62-63.
Joachite influence on Langland’s text – albeit influence that is often of the pseudo-Joachite prophetic type which was most commonly known in England during this period through texts such as *Super Esaiam, De oneribus prophetarum* and *Vaticina de summis pontificibus*.\(^\text{106}\) Aers disagrees that Langland’s text reflects the poet’s acceptance of social hierarchies as Donaldson and Bloomfield contend. Instead he interprets the apocalyptic passages within the context of radical social and cultural shifts, whilst highlighting passages such as Passus VI (316-18) as serving to reject ‘the ruling establishment’s version of reason, law and religion by dissident elements of the peasantry’, pointing out (with an allusion to the 1381 Uprising) that ‘Langland disapproves but he has grasped the authentic tones of some radicals who found voice in 1381’\(^\text{107}\).

Critics are divided over the extent to which the poem’s apocalypticism is positive or negative due to the ambiguity within the text. As Bernard McGinn writes,

Debates over Langland’s apocalypticism center on two issues. The first is whether the poem is essentially optimistic, and perhaps therefore Joachite in inspiration, looking forward to a post-Antichrist retribution of the Church, or rather fundamentally pessimistic, seeing current abuses as so powerful and pervasive that they indicate Antichrist is here and the Last Judgment will soon follow.\(^\text{108}\)

McGinn does not detect a strong Joachite influence in *Piers Plowman* however, pointing out that ‘not every form of optimistic apocalypticism need be Joachite in inspiration’\(^\text{109}\) and that Christian apocalypticism consists of optimistic and pessimistic elements. For McGinn, the ambiguity of Langland’s text reflects this effectively. In contrast, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton discerns strong Joachite influences on the text.\(^\text{110}\) Eschewing a traditional Augustinian interpretation of Langland’s eschatology, Kerby-Fulton argues that *Piers Plowman* is part of the genre which she terms *Reformist Apocalypticism* with its apocalyptic references harnessed to highlight and denounce clerical abuses and accentuate the need for reform. This interpretation of Langland’s

\(^{107}\) Aers, *Imagination*, 68.
\(^{109}\) Ibid., 191.
text comprises both negative and positive elements – as does McGinn’s. In *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* Kerby-Fulton argues that Langland utilises the apocalyptic genre in conveying a sense of urgency about the need for Church and societal reform. She defines *reformist apocalypticism* as her term “to denote the medieval "school" of alternative apocalypticism which is concerned primarily with clerical reform. This is usually accomplished by imminent chastisement, and followed by spiritual renewal.”¹¹¹ She argues that the text displays the influence of apocalyptic writers, such as Joachim of Fiore and Hildegard of Bingen, rather than providing an Augustinian emphasis. She perceives apocalyptic terminology and images being used to highlight abuses and corruption within the Church and their consequences. Her research has shown that Joachite texts were widely available in England during the fourteenth century and she perceives the influence of the Calabrian abbot’s writings on *Piers Plowman*, largely through the former’s followers long after his death. However, regarding Langland’s ‘sense of apocalyptic expectation’ she differs from scholars such as Richard K. Emmerson, viewing it as ‘far more sophisticated than the popular Antichrist tradition which is the subject of Emmerson’s book.”¹¹² Moreover, whilst she acknowledges a debt of gratitude to Bloomfield’s work, her focus is somewhat different. As she explains,

> Although the present study differs from Bloomfield’s in attempting to relate Latin religious prophecy rather than the apocalyptic elements of monastic ideology to *Piers Plowman*, the problems in each case are similar and they are not yet entirely soluble.¹¹³

She also addresses repristination and Langland’s anti-mendicant leanings. The question of the extent of Langland’s anti-mendicant/anticlerical approach is taken up in Wendy Scase’s *Piers Plowman and the New Anti-Clericalism*.¹¹⁴ Scase argues that *Piers Plowman* should be read in the context of a new anticlericalism which differed from old forms in not merely attacking particular classes of clerics, but rather all of them. Moreover, whereas others, such as Penn Szitty in *The Antifraternal Tradition*

¹¹² Ibid., 11.
¹¹³ Ibid., 13.
in Medieval Literature, identify the same tradition throughout the mid- to late-fourteenth century, Scase adopts an approach which identifies ‘discontinuities with the past, transformations of the old anticlerical traditions and the emergence from their disparateness of an anticlericalism with implications for all clerics: the new anticlericalism’. Apocalypse 2-3 especially provides an exemplar for such condemnation of perceived malpractice within the faith. However, Langland also draws on other sources.

Whilst the clearest influence upon Piers Plowman is biblical, with John’s Apocalypse and the ‘Synoptic Apocalypse’ prominent, we also find references and allusions to numerous books of both the Old and New Testament; such influence appears in both direct and indirect form, the latter through the writings and glosses of the Church Fathers, particularly Augustine. This is not to say that Langland’s Augustinian influence invariably elicits a conventional response, and Kerby-Fulton has challenged the traditional Augustinian reading of Piers Plowman, focussing instead on other influences such as Joachite texts. Also discernible are the influences of apocryphal works, most notably the Gospel of Nicodemus, pseudo-Joachite texts, and numerous contemporary literary influences. As Malcolm Godden writes,

Langland drew on a variety of literary models. There are some signs of the influence of the thirteenth-century French Romance of the Rose, with resemblances in allegorical method and some similarities of content. Another possible influence was contemporary drama. In his scene-settings and presentation of conflict, especially in the Prologue and in B xviii on the Passion and Harrowing of Hell, Langland shows strong resemblances both to the morality plays and the mystery cycles . . . surviving examples are later than Langland, but both types were current in his time. The major influence, however, and the most important for understanding his development, was the poetic tradition of his own region of England.

Godden states that the particular tradition which Langland embraced was ‘closely associated’ to one belonging to the south-west Midlands – which he describes as

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'radical, populist, anti-intellectual alliterative verse'. Since there are no extant manuscripts of such verse between Wynner and Wastoure, which was probably written shortly after 1351, and those in the twelfth century – the last extant text being Layamon’s Brut or (The Chronicle of Britain [after 1190]) – we face two conceivable scenarios. Either the so-called ‘Alliterative Revival’ of the late fourteenth century, in which Piers Plowman takes such a prominent place alongside the four works of the ‘Pearl poet’, for example, represented a rediscovery of these earlier works, or the tradition continued in the intervening years without any texts surviving and led to the resurgence of interest and creative composition which characterises late-fourteenth-century verse – a tradition, the continuation of which could conceivably have been facilitated by the existence of monastic libraries. The latter seems more probable since it is difficult to believe that the alliterative verse of the latter part of the fourteenth century emerged from a vacuum.

Moving from Langland’s verse form to the language itself, among the most noticeable features of Piers Plowman is Langland’s extensive use of Latin (and occasional use of French) which creates a striking juxtaposition with the frequently colloquial language of the poem. Bloomfield explains that the perceived necessity for the inclusion of this language (Latin and French) arose as a result of Langland’s dilemma over the means with which to convey a message that is steeped in theological concerns; the vernacular was not always sufficient for theologically-based literature such as this:

English in the fourteenth century did not have an established learned vocabulary. In this, it was similar to Hindi or modern Hebrew. Latin provided the scientific and learned language, and the vernacular writers were as yet only groping towards a solution in their own terms. Chaucer and Gower might seem to be exceptions, but they were not struggling with theology and religious genres, as Langland was.

I explore the implications of Langland’s use of language/s in chapter 3.

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118 Pearl; Cleanness; Patience; Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
119 This position is shared by Thorlac Turville-Petre in The Alliterative Revival (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1977) where he argues convincingly that ‘alliteration was used in one way or another right up to the time of the Alliterative Revival’; Turville-Petre, Alliterative Revival, 22.
120 Bloomfield, Apocalypse, 37-38.
Turning to the question of authorship, it is generally accepted that the author of *Piers Plowman* was William Langland, although our knowledge of details concerning his life is limited. Godden writes,

The only contemporary information that survives about the author of *Piers Plowman* is a note in one manuscript of the poem that his name was William Langland and that he was the son of Stacy de Rokayle, a minor landowner of Shipton-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire. The information is probably right. Stacy de Rokayle certainly existed, though little else is known about him, and the identification of the poet’s name in the B version ‘I have lyved in londe,’ quod I, ‘my name is Longe Wille’ (B xv 152).\(^{121}\)

Based upon his theological knowledge, and the apparently autobiographical lines, he was a member of the lay religious, which would be consistent with the Oxford education that he obtained.\(^{122}\) He cannot have been a priest, if we are to read literally the ostensibly autobiographical passage in Passus V of the C-text; it is probable that he was a clerk in minor orders.

*The versions of Piers Plowman*

Langland wrote and edited *Piers Plowman* between 1367 and 1388. In contrast to the scarcity of manuscripts of Julian’s *Revelations*, there are fifty-four complete extant manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*, which are copies of the versions of the text – the A, B, C and Z texts. There are numerous differences, not only between the texts, but also the manuscripts themselves, thereby offering invaluable insights into the creative and editorial development of the poem. In the course of this thesis I address – where appropriate – a number of differences between them.

Most scholars regard the versions of *Piers Plowman* as the work of a single author. This has not always been so, as Godden explains,

\(^{121}\) Godden, *Making*, 5.

\(^{122}\) We can infer that he studied at Oxford from his use of language on the subject of psychological insights and his knowledge of Latin (features of an Oxford education), and that he received minor orders, given that one was obliged to take minor clerical orders as a prerequisite to obtaining this education.
Skeat’s demonstration that there were three successive versions of the poem led to Manly’s\textsuperscript{123} argument, at the beginning of the century, that they were the work of several different authors, and although multiple authorship, after decades of discussion, has now generally been dismissed the controversy was one of the factors which caused twentieth-century criticism to be particularly engaged with the search for a coherent design and unified argument in the poem.\textsuperscript{124}

One of those who ‘dismissed’ the claims of voices who argued for multiple authorship was George Kane in \textit{Piers Plowman: The Evidence for Authorship},\textsuperscript{125} in which he responded to D. C. Fowler, who, in \textit{Piers Plowman: Literary Relations of the A and B Texts},\textsuperscript{126} postulated that the A and B texts did not necessarily share the same author, and this was at least as reasonable as stating that they were by the same author or by multiple authors. Kane disputes the contention that we cannot rule out multiple authorship by examining the internal and external evidence of the texts. He concludes by stating that the most compelling argument is for the single authorship of all three versions. In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary this is the logical conclusion.

Looking at the versions chronologically, the A-text was written between 1367 and 1370 and is incomplete, consisting of a Prologue and twelve passus. Considerably expanded from the A-text is the B-text (c. 1377-79) which is three times the length of the former and is most commonly used by scholars, as it is believed to be the fullest of the three versions. The C-text is an edited version of B with additional material and deletions. Some of the omissions are arguably attributable to historical reasons, insofar as Langland strove to avoid any association with heretical views, such as those of the Lollards. It contains twenty-two passus, compared to the twenty of B. Pearsall provides a probable \textit{terminus ad quern} shortly after 1388, rejecting the argument (for lack of evidence) that it had been completed by 1385-87, during which period Thomas Usk, who was executed the following year, is said to have copied a

\textsuperscript{124} Godden, \textit{Making}, 19.
number of phrases (which appear only in the C-text) in his Testament of Love. The C-text contains more material of an apocalyptic nature (including references and allusions to the biblical Apocalypse) than the others – incorporating passages which are expanded or which do not appear at all in other versions. This is the primary reason why I have elected to work from this recension. The second is that it is apparently the author’s most recent work, according to the majority of scholars. If they are correct in their view that the C-text is Langland’s final version – a view the veracity of which is made evident by virtue of the fact that it contains many alterations and omissions from the previous version/s, which in turn reflect a rapidly changing political climate – it therefore contains Langland’s most up-to-date thought (although we must allow for self-censorship, which in itself is often informative). Finally, the Z text, which was first identified by A. G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer, is a composite of the A and C versions and contains a Prologue and only eight passus. According to Godden, the Z-text was written shortly after 1362. Besides the Rigg and Brewer edition, it is found in the first volume of A. V. C. Schmidt’s two-volume parallel text edition of the A, B, C and Z versions, which was based on W. W. Skeat’s 1886 version. Whilst I focus on the C-text, I refer to other versions for purposes of comparison and contrast.

There is not universal agreement that these texts follow chronologically from each other, and Jill Mann has argued that the A-text is an abbreviated version of the B-text for a lay readership. However, Mann’s view is not the prevailing one. In the C-text Langland is responding to current events and refining his work – a process that he never completed. In the case of the C-text, one of several sections that has been excised is the tearing of the pardon in Passus VII of the B-text (lines 105-138) which Langland may have believed had the potential to be (mis)construed as containing implicitly pro-Wycliffite sympathies, given that Wyclif and the Lollards were opposed to pardons. Such excisions and several other notable amendments of controversial passages arguably indicate the poet’s desire to deflect accusations of

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127 Pearsall, Piers, 1 n.3.  
128 During the course of chapters 3 & 4 I refer to some of the reasons behind these edits.  
130 Godden, Making, 3.  
any association with the 1381 Uprising and the Lollards respectively – a plausible assertion given that the leader of the Revolt, the Lollard cleric John Ball (c.1338-1381), referred to *Piers Plowman* in his allegorical writings. We can infer from such omissions and qualifications that the C-text was composed at a later date than the other versions.

For my core text of *Piers Plowman* I use the 2008 revised edition of Derek Pearsall’s 1978 annotated edition of the C-text, for which he used Huntington Library MS HM 143 (X) as the base text – a manuscript which is similar to MS Add 35157 (U), yet, according to Pearsall, X is ‘superior in several readings’.¹³³ Pearsall’s version is both the most recent rendering of the C-text and the most accurate. By definition, such cross-referencing necessitates the intermittent referencing of other versions where appropriate, and to this end I use both Skeat’s and Schmidt’s Parallel text editions.

**Summary of chapters**

Chapter 1 addresses the influence upon Julian’s writing of the Alexandrian Fathers, particularly Augustine and Origen, and later medieval exegetes, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, as it considers authority, structure, style and genre, including apocalyptic themes, Julian’s focus on the last things, spiritual warfare and tribulation, suffering and endurance, and the concept of the Church as Bride of Christ. It is argued that their exegetical treatment of the Apocalypse is an influence upon Julian. It juxtaposes such authorities with less orthodox figures such as the Beguines, a discernible Joachite influence, and some of Origen’s more controversial views. It argues that Julian’s *Revelations* bears comparison with the letters to the seven churches. The chapter highlights Julian’s depth of theological insight in relation to the Apocalypse. It is argued that her exoneration of Eve, implicit in the fact that Julian does not mention her directly, is developed further with an allusion to Eve and the Woman of Apocalypse 12 who comes under attack in 12:6 – an allusion that derives from knowledge of this chapter of the Apocalypse.

Chapter 2 considers the question of Julian’s orthodoxy versus her possible heterodoxy within the context of medieval thought and Apocalypse exegesis. It

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argues that although Julian’s text is orthodox, aspects of her text demand qualifications to this view. An example of this is the implied position in her omission of a vision of hell. The chapter explores ways in which she draws upon patristic as well as less orthodox sources. It discusses her vision of the hazelnut with reference to Aristotle, and her explications of her Augustinian vision of the soul as city of Christ and all believers that marks the fulcrum of her eschatologically-focussed pneumatology.

The chapter compares and contrasts Bernard of Clairvaux’s teaching on the Apocalypse and related concerns, citing it as an influence on Julian’s text – for example, in his focus on the Harrowing of Hell and inclusivist theology, conception of community and emphasis on renovatio. It also compares his use of feminine imagery with Julian’s focus on motherhood, including the motherhood of God.

The discussion then turns to two major theological movements. Firstly, as mentioned above, it is argued that there is a discernible Joachite influence on Julian’s text. Part of this influence is found in her possible postmillennialism, which also owes much to Augustine. It is also argued that the teaching of the Joachite Peter John Olivi represents one plausible source for Julian. Secondly, aspects of Wycliffite teaching are examined before addressing their impact on female writers.

The Revelations’ religious, literary and historical contexts are analysed before focussing on women’s apocalyptic writing that engages with the biblical Apocalypse – from the orthodox Hildegard of Bingen’s visions, to the heterodox teachings of Marguerite Porete. The discussion then turns to the apocalyptic concerns of Julian in relation to those of the Carmelite-influenced Margery Kempe. In doing so, the thesis posits a Carmelite influence on Julian too.

The final third of the chapter consists of a detailed discussion of Julian’s own theology with reference to her writings. In discussing the Parable of the Lord and the Servant the chapter considers the influence of John’s pneumatology upon Julian’s meditation on the soul’s resurrection, which constitutes her clearest allusion to the Apocalypse as she employs an Augustinian exegetical approach in discussing the city of God/New Jerusalem. This allusion affords an opportunity to compare her Christology with John’s – as do her depictions of Christ and explications of his teaching, her concepts of suffering and discussion of Christ’s motherhood. The chapter asks to what extent Julian problematises/challenges, or redefines the concept of a conquering Christ. Also integral to Julian’s parable is the Incarnation, the
emphasis on forgiveness and the implications for universal/liberal salvation as revealed through her Scotistic hermeneutic of the absolute primacy of Christ deriving from scripture, including the Apocalypse. The final sub-section advances this thematic focus on the last things with particular consideration of her eschatological concept of the ‘grete dede’ and the implications of omission in Julian’s text – particularly concerning hell – with reference to Julian’s contemporary, Uthred de Bolden, whose soteriology resonates with her visionary thought.

The decision to begin with Julian’s _Revelations_ rather than _Piers Plowman_ despite the fact that Langland’s A and B texts predate Julian’s work is based on the rationale that I have worked mainly from the C-text of _Piers Plowman_, therefore, following Pearsall’s dating of shortly after 1388, and assuming the veracity of Watson’s later dating, these texts may be regarded as contemporaneous. Moreover, the discussion of the influence of the Church Fathers merits inclusion early in the thesis, given their prominence.

Whilst in the following two chapters on Langland it would be possible to discuss, as in chapter 1 on Julian, the Church Fathers’ influence upon Langland – which is no less strong, as already documented in such works as David Aers’ _Salvation and Sin_ – I focus upon the less explored areas of Langland’s language and use of personification, discussing how they comprise an integral part of his ‘dialogue’ with the Apocalypse. The justification for this focus is that it enables me to fill a gap in knowledge, or more precisely, an underexplored area, concerning the applicability of a Bakhtinian reading of aspects of the poem. Thus, chapter 3 discusses Langland’s poetics as it draws upon Bakhtinian theory, arguing that the terms _heteroglossia_, _polyglossia_ and _polyphony_ are applicable to interpreting Langland’s dream vision. The chapter also analyses Langland’s agrarian and apocalyptic imagery, and his use of alliterative poetry. It discusses the antifraternal and antimendicant thrust which is intertwined with the poem’s satirical and parodic elements. It argues that awareness of this linguistic theory illuminates Langland’s engagement with the Apocalypse.

Chapter 4 argues that Langland adopts a loose ‘template’ of the Apocalypse up to chapter 17, while alluding to other parts of the text, including those from later chapters of the Apocalypse. It focusses on several passus and stanzas of _Piers Plowman_ rather than attempting to discuss as many allusions and direct references to the Apocalypse as possible. In identifying the intertextual dialogic relationship between these late-medieval texts and the Apocalypse, It is argued that Langland
acknowledges implicitly the Apocalypse’s malleability – its relevance not solely for the first-century nascent Christian community but also his own milieu.

Chapter 4 explores the use of allegory and personification in *Piers Plowman*, analysing the apocalyptic dream visions, contending that, as with Julian’s *Revelations*, there is a strong Joachite influence as mediated through Olivi. The chapter provides an in-depth study of the use of allegory and symbolism within these visions – its purpose and acceptance in the early church and the Middle Ages. It discusses Langland’s reimagining of certain Apocalypse figures. Firstly, Lady Holy Church is representative of the Church Triumphant and the chapter analyses the theological implications of her apocalyptic *oraculum*. Secondly, it considers Lady Meed and her similarities with the Whore of Babylon. Thirdly, in the sub-section ‘Metamorphosing Piers’, the various apocalyptic manifestations of the Piers figure are explored. Late in the poem Langland’s depiction of Piers invites intriguing parallels with Julian’s Servant in her parable, and a number of these are highlighted. Fourthly, the chapter examines Langland’s portrayal of a conquering Christ and the poet’s treatment of the Harrowing of Hell which, following the Passion, marks the defeat of sin, and provides the basis for the future salvation of the Church.

Whilst my argument in chapters 3 and 4 that several of Langland’s personifications may be partially considered as reimagined figures of the Apocalypse is not without precedent, the thesis contends that Langland adopts a more nuanced approach than John does. This is illustrated in his treatment of a figure such as the Whore of Babylon (Lady Meed), whose depiction offers a parallel between the prevalent mercantilism of both periods. The process of reimagining displays an authorial virtuosity which does not restrict this personification to the Whore figure alone. However, it is this aspect which is explored in arguing that Langland creates a personification that possesses greater fullness than the biblical Whore, although it has its artistic origin in this figure; Langland provides her with an independent voice – which, however fleetingly, critiques contemporary constraints and demonstrates that wealth can be appropriated for good or evil. The gender implications of these female personifications are also considered.

In summary, regarding Julian’s *Revelations*, the contribution to knowledge in this thesis lies, firstly, in the uncovering of the hitherto unacknowledged full extent of the influence of the Apocalypse and Apocalypse-related texts upon her text/s as, within her apocalyptic, she innovatively engages with these writings. Secondly, the
thesis advances the literature on Julian in my contention that through this approach she imbues her text with a positive soteriological hermeneutic which defines her perception of terrestrial human existence that is itself viewed through the prism of the eschaton. Such currents within her text have hitherto attracted less attention than they merit.

In relation to *Piers Plowman*, the influence of the Apocalypse is more overt. My contribution to knowledge concerning this poem is, firstly, in the area of Langland’s theological insights and the contention that these are more profound in relation to the Apocalypse than previously thought – for example, the implications of the reference to David (see chapter 4). Secondly, my research has shown that in terms of Langland’s compositional techniques, he uses Apocalypse 1-17 as a basic structural template within which he incorporates his own apocalypse in addition to numerous other scriptural allusions. Thirdly, my employment of Bakhtinian theory in relation to the poem offers another lens through which to view Langland’s innovative response to the Apocalypse.
CHAPTER 1

A Comparison of the Apocalypse and the Writings of Julian of Norwich

Introduction

This chapter explores several thematic and structural elements in Julian’s *Revelations* which resemble or recall those of the Apocalypse, such as her focus on spiritual warfare, whether in the visions of demons during her illness, or the more insidious temptations and obstacles inherent in a believer’s lifelong spiritual struggle. I argue that Julian’s understanding of the Apocalypse displays a discernible patristic influence, with her methodology owing much to the Augustinian exegetical approach. Consequently, this influence informs her thematic focus, thereby enhancing the textual authority of the *Revelations*. Since late medieval ecclesiastical doctrine, as promulgated in England, was most profoundly determined by Augustinian teaching, identifying the latter’s exegetical approach to the Apocalypse is a prerequisite for understanding the teaching that Julian received, as well as analysing the nature of her response to the later chapters of *City of God*, which are also considered in chapter 2. This chapter comments on Julian’s dexterity in applying an allegorical and analogical hermeneutic as she seeks the universal and teleological truths which frame her theodicy.

In arguing that Julian’s thematic focus resembles that of the Apocalypse, the chapter identifies examples of the Aristotelean principles which a writer may adopt to confer authority upon a text and their application in the Apocalypse and the *Revelations* respectively. Throughout her text Julian conveys a sense of authority which is rooted in John’s approach and engages with and draws upon the authority of the Church Fathers. One component within this approach that offers an example of Julian’s evident textual authority is her Trinitarian emphasis in *A Revelation*, which provides a paradigm for the convergence of a particularly prominent thematic element with a structural device. In comparing this with John’s Trinitarian focus in Apocalypse 1:4-5 and 5:6, I argue that both writers view the Trinity in Christological terms.
By exploring the texts’ structural and thematic elements, with particular reference to symbolism and numerology, it is considered whether each might be viewed as partially collaborative, thus providing further areas of intertextual comparison and contrast. In terms of structure, my main comparison concerns the thematic flow by the inclusion of chapters and headings in the respective texts. The implications of this are explored, both for considering Julian’s reading of the Apocalypse (prior to their insertion) and the later scribal additions to her text. The aforementioned symbolism needs to be considered within this thematic flow.

The symbolism in Julian’s *Revelations* reveals her treatment of the interrelated issues of gender and authority; the symbolism of the Apocalypse also raises these issues. The incorporation and depiction, omission of, or allusion to, female figures reveals much about each writer’s milieu which had fundamental implications for the ways in which they express themselves and seek to establish their authority. Whilst John derives his authority from his ostensible relation to Christ himself and his position within his community, supporting his words with Old Testament references and allusions, Julian appeals to the orthodoxy of Holy Church and scripture as she addresses her evencresten in a pastoral role. Symbolism is one way in which both writers engage with their readers/audience through a didactic approach.

To provide an example of the fusion of these textual elements the chapter explores ways in which symbolism, gender and authority coalesce through the trope of virginity, with reference to the 144,000 virgins of Apocalypse 14. It is argued that in both cases there is a figurative meaning pertaining to spiritual cleanliness. Relating this to Julian’s positive view of Mary and, by association, Eve Julian’s vindication of Eve is discerned in *A Revelation*, albeit an implicit one since she omits any direct mention of her, which constitutes the first element of the vindication. My contention is that the second element lies in the fact that Julian simultaneously alludes to Eve and the Woman Clothed with the Sun of Apocalypse 12:1-17. By association, and in accordance with Church doctrine, this woman represents both Eve and Mary (the second Eve). Such allusions are analysed alongside Julian’s Apocalypse-influenced symbolism whilst contextualising the contemporary resonance of this postlapsarian vision and the striving towards a new Eden. The chapter examines here, and elsewhere, the often similar – and in some cases identical – symbolism within the respective texts and Julian’s exegetical approach or response to Genesis 3:1-6 and Apocalypse 12:6-16 as well as the feast of Apocalypse 19:9 (mentioned above)
which constitute examples of Julian’s nuanced re-presentations of specific biblical verses and their reapplication in light of contemporary concerns. This is one way in which she approaches the biblical text through her own meditations with some innovative readings, with implications for a positive reassessment of Eve and a more liberal soteriology borne out of her view of a loving God.

Since the thematic focus of both texts provides contemporary as well as universal resonance, I explore the implications for the respective societal positions of John and Julian in terms of ecclesial authority; the socio-political background offers insights into Julian’s motivations for writing which reveal certain areas of similarity with those of John. I explore ways in which Julian's exegetical writings respond both positively and negatively, and often implicitly, to the range of material within the Apocalypse through the aforementioned re-presentations and allusions. Since the first century A.D., writers have tended to adopt an exegetical approach towards the Apocalypse that has been strongly influenced by the tumultuous events of their particular period. Late medieval England provided fertile ground for such comparisons and applications. For instance, the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor contain descriptions and allusions which, fourteen centuries later, held relevance in the form of practices – for better or worse – that Julian recognised in the medieval Church. Indeed, Christ's exhortations to believers in Apocalypse 2-3 are frequently echoed in Julian's *Revelations*. Moreover, her theological outlook, which is evidenced by her textual emphasis, is consistent with the Apocalypse account of the millennium, the New Jerusalem and Christ's reign over the earth.

Whilst these elements constitute Julian’s orthodox approach, I also address areas of contention within her writing that problematise her professed orthodoxy. For instance, the symbolism of chapters 15 (verses 7-8) and 16 of the Apocalypse (seven golden bowls of God’s wrath [plagues]) present a challenge to Julian’s focus upon God’s love and forgiveness. The images of Christ exhibiting his vengeance at the parousia in 19:11-18 are absent from Julian’s writing and contrast with her depiction of him. Langland’s conqueror on the cross and the latter’s legal battle with the devil resonates more strongly with Julian’s conception of Christ’s eschatological role; indeed, in the Apocalypse it is Christ’s words that are like a two-edged sword. Julian's doctrine of sin and salvation presents challenges to orthodoxy, however much she appears to understate them. Where her text offers content which apparently challenges passages of the Apocalypse, it is possible to perceive her
engagement with the latter text, albeit as a reference point against which she is able to express her discontentment with interpretations that centred on God’s wrath. In contrast, Julian painstakingly delineates the border between sin and God’s view of the sinner – and indeed the sinner’s introspection. Julian also expresses discontentment – albeit implicitly – with ecclesiastical abuses, which is also a feature of the letters to the seven churches and the personifications of Babylon and the beasts which critique mercantilist and religious apostasy and demonic forces respectively.

As Julian propounds her message of God’s love and its triumph over sin she consistently emphasises the necessity of engaging in spiritual warfare by recounting the manifestations of her illness, emphasising the importance of prayer, and resisting sin, even as she reconceptualises the latter challenge. Spiritual warfare dominates the thematic focus of Apocalypse 1-20 as Christ, through John, guides believers through existential threats – often internal ecclesiastical ones – in order to build a Church worthy of the epithet ‘Bride of Christ’ and for individuals within it to gain salvation and glorification. Julian’s stress on redemption, glorification and sanctification as following from earthly spiritual and physical struggle demonstrates confluence between these texts as she conceives of the interconnection between and eschatological uniting with the Church Militant, the Church Triumphant and the Church Expectant, made possible by human submission and co-operation with Christ who sits in the soul of his city – the believer and the Body of the Church.

In summary, Julian maintains a dialogue with the Apocalypse, whether directly or obliquely, and her exegetical approach differs from John’s in that hers is often implicit. Therefore, before turning to the question of the textual authority of the Apocalypse, it is pertinent to address the influence of several of the Church Fathers on fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century theological/ecclesiological thought, and primarily that of Julian, and contextualise Julian’s writing within the canon of authoritative patristic exegetical writings on the Apocalypse, including their views on the millennium. The influence of such authorities represents the origins of Julian’s stance concerning a contentious section of the Apocalypse such as the millennium. This will also set the ground for my discussion of orthodox and heterodox currents in Julian’s writings in chapter 2.
In consistently stressing her orthodoxy Julian abides by Cyprian’s famous maxim: ‘extra Ecclesiam nulla salus’ or ‘outside the Church there is no salvation’. Yet there are fundamental differences between the teachings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers and the later Alexandrian Fathers. Beginning with the former, the beliefs of Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp – who had in turn been a disciple of John the Apostle – bear certain striking similarities with those of Julian on the subject of sin and free will. As Simon Tugwell writes:

Irenaeus stresses human freedom, insisting that sin is due to the wrong use of freedom (IV.4.3; Proof, 11f) – though Adam’s sin is ‘without malice’ and the real original sin is that of the angels (IV.40.3) – and that our service of God must be voluntary (IV. 37.1). But we cannot achieve perfection simply by the exercise of free will. It is our part to ‘be made’, while making belongs to God (IV. II. 2). We must not try to take ourselves out of the hands of our Creator (IV. 39. 2f).

Addressing apocalyptic concerns in Book 5 of Against Heresies, Irenaeus postulates that Antichrist would have Jewish origins and that he would belong to the tribe of Dan. Moreover, Irenaeus expounds a millenarian eschatology, which by Julian’s lifetime ran contrary to the prevailing orthodoxy. Indeed, as Norman Cohn writes on this matter of Irenaeus’ millenarianism,

. . . the very fact that the eminently respectable Irenaeus could have regarded such a belief as an indispensable part of orthodoxy was felt to be intolerable. Determined efforts were made to suppress the millenarian chapters of his treatise Against Heresies, and to such good effect that it was only in 1575 that

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2 The Church Fathers from the late first century up until the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.
they were rediscovered in a manuscript which the expurgators happened to have overlooked.⁴

Similarly, Papias (the second-century bishop of Hierapolis), Tertullian (c.160-c.225) and Hippolytus (170-235) – the latter being the author of the Treatise on Christ and Antichrist and a commentary on the book of Daniel – read the Apocalypse in premillennialist terms, interpreting it in light of the contemporary religio-political situation within the Roman Empire. The sole surviving Apocalypse commentary from the first three centuries of ecclesiastical history is that of the martyr Victorinus of Pettau (d. 304) who, according to Jerome, was an adherent of premillennialism (chiliasm) – although it seems that this commentary was altered by Jerome himself to accord with the latter’s amillennialism. However, we should be cautious not to attribute a universally held belief in chiliasm to the early Church Fathers. After citing Justin Martyr’s (100-165) Dialogue with Trypho – in which Justin argues that there are those who do not hold his premillennialist views yet who nevertheless, in his eyes, belong to the faith – as evidence that the views of non-premillennialists were not considered heretical, Gregg states,

We are certainly at liberty to question the sweeping statements of dispensationalists like Charles C. Ryrie, when he asserts that ‘Premillennialism is the historic faith of the Church.’ A more accurate statement of the case would be that the eschatological fragments of the few writers whose works we can examine bear witness to the pre-millennial convictions of those particular writers.⁵

With this caveat, it is safe to assert that, at the very least, the prevailing view amongst the early Church Fathers was a premillennial one. Yet I argue that Julian does not follow this earlier view, adopting instead an allegorical approach which permits literal readings of certain passages. Therefore, in order to explore this approach and contextualise Julian’s position in relation to it, I now provide an overview of its emergence and establishment.

In contrast to the predominantly chiliastic views of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, the Alexandrian Fathers – Origen, Tyconius and especially Augustine of Hippo – adopted, for the most part, an allegorising and spiritual exegetical approach to the Apocalypse which stood in direct contrast to the chiliastic view expounded by Irenaeus that had predominated in the early Church. Such a departure from the prevalent view of the Ante-Nicene Fathers would be of great significance, as the Alexandrian Fathers were the most prominent influences on medieval theology, which explains why the prevailing medieval exegetical strategies to be employed involved an allegorical reading of many sections of the Apocalypse. Bernard McGinn postulates that the Christianising of the empire under Constantine (272-337) and a distrust of the traditional Jewish literal exegetical approach led to this shift in perception of the Apocalypse and apocalypticism in general:

... in the fourth and early fifth centuries powerful theological forces, both in the East and in the West, reacted against apocalypticism. There were many factors at work in this attack, not least the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity. The empire had generally played a negative role in earlier Christian apocalyptic writings. With Tertullian we have seen the beginnings of a more positive evaluation. When Rome adopted Christianity, the destinies of Imperium and Christianitas seemed to have been providentially united; many Christians felt that any expectation of the downfall of the empire was as disloyal to God as it was to Rome. Even more, on an exegetical level apocalypticism appeared to many to be a throwback to an outmoded ‘Jewish’, literal reading of the Scriptures. The Revelation of John was not to be understood as prophecy of the last events of history, but rather as an allegory of the conflict between good and evil in the present life of the Church. Attempts to determine the time of the End of the world were ruled out with an appeal to ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates’ (Acts 1:7). 6

McGinn rightly highlights this hermeneutical shift on the part of the Church and its primary cause. It should be added that there can be no ‘pure’ allegorical reading in the sense that there are certain historical details in the Apocalypse which are

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mentioned elsewhere in this thesis. In England this allegorical approach to the Apocalypse prevailed as orthodoxy during the Middle Ages. However, from 1200-1500 more apocalyptic readings emerged, as evidenced in the many millennial sects and movements across Europe. Moreover, although Augustine and the other Latin post-Nicene Fathers were anti-apocalyptic to varying degrees, I agree with McGinn’s assessment that, ‘Ironically enough, Jerome, Augustine, and Tyconius, far more widely known to medieval authors than true apocalypticists like Iranaeus, Commodian, and Lactantius, could be used as sources of information for views with which they were not sympathetic.’ Moreover, literal readings of the Apocalypse do not preclude figurative readings since the text is multi-layered and was believed to have both universal and contemporary significance. Julian herself employed both an allegorical and a literal hermeneutic, and whilst I argue that her words indicate a figurative approach, this need not contradict a simultaneously literal reading of given passages. An example is her references to hell – sin as a figurative hell as distinguished from the lake of fire reserved for the devil, the beast, the false prophet and those not found in the book of life and fallen angels of Apocalypse 20:10, 15 (cf. Revelation, 32, 33-40). However, insofar as Julian applies an allegorical reading we see a clear Augustinian influence and, by extension, that of the Donatist Tyconius, who influenced Augustine.

Tyconius also adopted an allegorical rather than a literal reading of the Apocalypse. Although his commentary on the Apocalypse is no longer extant, we can infer much about its contents from other commentaries which were influenced by him. Tyconius interpreted the numerology of the Apocalypse symbolically as part of his spiritual/allegorical exegesis. Accordingly, the earthly millennium in Apocalypse 20 had already begun with the Incarnation of Christ. It is notable that Julian may display some discontentment with such a reading, whereas in other areas she apparently embraces a spiritual reading. In the sixth revelation she depicts (with imagery that recalls the heavenly throne scenes in the Apocalypse, particularly the Wedding Supper of the Lamb in Apocalypse 19: 6-9, 17, 19 which gave rise to the

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7 McGinn, Visions, 27.
8 The allegorical approach of Tyconius and Augustine should be distinguished from theologians preceding them who adopted an extreme allegorical approach or an extreme millenarian one. See Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, ed., The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 21. According to Emmerson they both acknowledged the ‘historical realism while liberating it from the embarrassments of a literal interpretation’ (Emmerson, Apocalypse, 21).
tradition of the feasting of the saints) a heavenly kingdom in which the saved enjoy a feast under the reign of their Lord:

. . . my understanding was lifted uppe into heven, wher I saw our lorde God as a lorde in his owne house, which lorde hath called alle his derewurthy frendes to a solempe fest. Than I saw the lorde taking no place in his awne house, but I saw him ryally reigne in his house, and all fulfilleth it with joy and mirth, himselfe endlesly to glad and solace his derewurthy frendes, fulle homely and fulle curtesly, with merveleous melody of endelesse love, in his awne fair blissed chere. Which glorious chere of the godhede fulfilleth alle heven of joy and blisse. (Revelation, 14, 2-9)

These lines are consonant with Julian’s acknowledgment that the Christian life involves constant struggle which necessitates endurance whilst the afterlife promises heavenly rewards. The communal aspect of the celestial scene also exemplifies Julian’s sense of the interconnectedness of heaven and earth which is a recurrent feature of her text. Notably Julian emphasises that she saw the Lord ‘ryally reigne in his house’ (line 5), providing his presence to his ‘derewurthy frendes’ (line 6), a vision that she develops subsequently in A Revelation as she describes the concept of Christ in the soul of the believer. I argue that Julian believes in a period of awakening (her visions and subsequent insights provide such an example) and she understands that believers and, by extension, the Church as mystical body of Christ, must seek repristination, which anticipates posthumous glorification in heaven. This is linked to Christ’s reign in the soul of each believer which prepares the latter for this heavenly city. Thus, if read as referring to a heavenly as opposed to an earthly reign of the saints, these lines accord with Augustine’s rejection of those who foresaw physical feasting on earth. Indeed, the feast’s solemnity reflects Augustinian disapproval of the popular tradition that this would be an opportunity for overindulgence. Julian’s vision is similarly restrained, emphasising the importance of prior service to God, part of which involves adherence to imparted divine knowledge.

Augustine, proponent of the greater community, the city of God, against its antithesis, the worldly city (Babylon/Chaos) describes the struggle between the two;

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the friction is at once external in the contemporary physical environment, with its dual aspect of community, and internal: every believer’s spiritual struggle. This historically resonant and recurring application has its eschatological apotheosis in the ultimate confrontation between good and evil as described in the Apocalypse. The Christological spiritual vision of chapter 22 in A Vision and chapter 68 in A Revelation is a clear allusion to Augustine’s soul analogy in City of God. God shows Julian her soul in the middle of her heart which she likens to a ‘blisseful kingdom’ and ‘a wurshipfulle citte’. In the middle of the city she sees Jesus and remarks upon his humanity and divinity, then his status as the highest bishop, king and lord:

He sitteth in the soule even righte in peas and rest, and he ruleth and yemeth heven and erth and all that is. The manhode with the godhed sitteth in rest; the godhede ruleth and yemeth withouten ony instrument or besinesse; and the soule is alle occupied with the blessed godhed: that is, sovereyne mighte, soveryne wisdom, and sovereyn goodnesse. The place that Jhesu taketh in our soule he shall never remove it withouten ende, as to my sight, for in us is his homeliest home and his endlesse wonning. (Revelation, 68, 7-13)

Christ’s position in the soul links all believers in a bodily and spiritual community. This simultaneously literal and figurative image/concept encapsulates the divinity/humanity binary which transcends the divide between heaven and earth, enfolding the earthly in the spiritual. The tarnishing of the imago Dei in postlapsarian humankind necessitates repristination.

Julian returns to this concept of the soul in the Parable of the Lord and the Servant as Christ’s city and dwelling place which made the Passion worthwhile: ‘his deerwurthy sonne had brought againe his citte into the nobil fairhede with his harde traveyle’. (Revelation, 51, 128-9) At the end of the parable Julian writes,

Now is the spouse, Goddes son, in pees with his loved wife, which is the fair maiden of endlesse joy. Now sitteth the son, very God and very man, in his citte

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in rest and in peace, which his father hath signified to him of endless purpose, and the father in the son, and the holy ghost in the father and in the son. (*Revelation*, 51, 276-80)

This alludes to the Bridegroom of the Song of Songs and also *Apocalypse* 21:2: ‘And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ God illuminates the city with his presence and in Julian’s parable Christ resides in the believers who comprise the city, thus exemplifying the spiritual and amillennial stance to which Julian adheres – a *renovatio* of the believer’s life and the Church body through attunement to Christ’s will and an awakening to the insights imparted by the Third Person of the Trinity.

To select another example of the Augustinian influence, we need only examine Julian’s hermeneutical approach for her concept of beholding (viewing, meditating and interpreting the visions) which early in *A Vision* sees her differentiate between bodily sight and spiritual sight in relation to the vision of the Passion:

> And in that time that our Lord showed this that I have now said in gasterly sight, I saw the bodily sight last and of the plentiful bleeding of the head. And also long as I saw that sight I said often times: ‘Benedicite dominus!’ (*Vision*, 5, 1-3)

Julian then sees six elements within her understanding: signs of Christ’s Passion, Mary, the Godhead, Creation in relation to God, the concept that creation was made because of love, and the goodness of God. She concludes:

> And alle this our Lord showed me in the first sight, and gave me space and time to behold it. And the bodily sight stinted, and the gasterly sight dwelt in my understanding. (*Revelation*, 8, 18-20)

Subsequently, as Julian explains her hermeneutical method concerning the Parable of the Lord and the Servant, she elaborates on the application of these two kinds of sight (which can both be applied concurrently): ‘Which sight was showed double in the Lord, and the sight was showed double in the servant’ (*Revelation*, 51, 3-4) and the framework of ‘three properties’ (line 63) of understanding:
The furst is the beginning of teching that I understode therin in the same time. The secunde is the inward lerning that I have understonde therein sithen. The third is alle the hole revelation, fro the beginning to the ende, which oure lorde God of his goodnes bringeth oftimes frely to the sight of my understonding. And theyse thre be so oned, as to my understonding, that I can not nor may deperte them. And by theyse thre as one, I have teching wherby I ow to beleve and truste in oure lorde God . . .’ (Revelation, 51, 64-70)

With this Trinitarian terminology and framework Julian loosely applies Augustine’s definitions of the three kinds of visionary experience as found in his The Literal Meaning of Genesis (De Genesi ad Litteram)\(^{11}\) which establishes a hierarchy from most credible to least trustworthy: firstly, intellectual (which generates wisdom [sapientia]) and is a mystical type; secondly, spiritual, which involves the spiritual senses; thirdly, corporeal, distrusted because it offered too much scope for error. Julian utilises the intellectual and spiritual to a greater extent.

Another fundamentally important area of Augustinian influence concerns the subject of my opening remarks in the introduction to this thesis on the binding of Satan. The interpretation of this has implications for our reading of Julian’s theodicy and her understanding of the millennium. In this regard, the following question arises: if Satan had already been bound then how is the suffering in the world – the existence of which Julian acknowledges throughout the Revelations – explicable, unless through the Fall and Satan’s continued presence and interference in human affairs? According to Augustine, Satan had been bound in the sense that Christ’s death and resurrection rendered him powerless, insofar as humanity responds to Christ. Julian adheres to this allegorical exegesis – a view of Christ’s victory over evil that is the fundamental message of the Apocalypse. Augustine, through an amillennialist approach, interpreted the book allegorically for many years, with the millennium – which he then regarded as a symbolic period rather than a precise number – representing the Church’s glorious age on earth. Later he approached the concept of the millennium more literally, regarding it as already under way from a

present ‘postmillenialist’ viewpoint. We can infer from her writing that Julian was sceptical of the latter interpretation due to her realism regarding the state of the Church which is, as I argue in chapter 2, suggested through her implicit criticism of sins such as pride and greed. However, Julian acknowledges the existence of earthly suffering and, indeed, her references to the devil clearly portray him as active in the world – although this statement requires qualification. Julian is prompted to laugh aloud at the devil, upon seeing that, as a consequence of the Passion, he is impotent in terms of being unable to harm believers, insofar as they do not succumb to temptation. \((\text{Vision}, \, 8, \, 43-44)\) Such a paradox must be framed and qualified with her statement, ‘A, wriched sinne! Whate ert thouwe? Thoue er nought. For I sawe that God is alle thine: I sawe nought the.’ \((\text{Vision}, \, 23, \, 23-24)\). For Julian, the devil is powerless in the face of a believer who adheres to Christ’s teaching and is in a state of receiving grace, in accordance with Paul’s teaching in Romans. Indeed, it is significant that in laughing at the devil’s impotence she states, ‘Botte I sawe nought Criste laugh,’ \((\text{Vision}, \, 8, \, 46)\) thereby alluding to the gravity of the sacrifice upon the cross. Julian’s adherence to Augustine’s allegorical exegesis concerning the devil’s eschatological defeat constitutes her orthodox exegetical approach. However, in chapter 2 I focus on a number of controversial influences that are discernible in her writing. I now turn to one of these influences – Origen.

Origen was a prominent and hugely influential theologian and an extraordinarily prolific writer – although much of his corpus is no longer extant. His major work, \textit{On First Principles} (\textit{De Principiis}), explores three exegetical approaches to scripture: literal, ethical (spiritual) and allegorical (figurative). However, it was Augustine’s theology rather than Origen’s which prevailed during Julian’s lifetime and Origen’s orthodoxy was considered questionable on account of certain views (mentioned below), therefore any similarity between Origen’s and Julian’s writing does not necessarily presuppose direct exposure to them. Whether or not Julian encountered them indirectly by their influence on others, such as the Beguines, or whether she arrived at some similar conclusions independently is unknown. There are undoubtedly points of confluence between Origen’s thought and Julian’s work. Despite the fact that he was probably the most notable early proponent of the allegorical/spiritual reading of the Apocalypse and he opposed the earlier chiliastic eschatology that had been dominant between A.D. 175 and A.D. 400, thereby anticipating Tyconius and, subsequently, Augustine, who also expounded the
allegorical reading of the Apocalypse, Origen had some unorthodox views with which Julian’s writing occasionally resonates.

The Beguines' belief in the soul and its union with God arguably accords with Origen’s views. According to Origen (following Plato), souls existed prior to the birth of a human being and Creation itself and had been united with God before their physical (bodily) creation. Origen believed that they somehow became dissatisfied with their idyllic state – consequently, many fell away, with the angels falling further. Origen did not believe in a bodily resurrection on earth but rather in heaven. This would involve a return to an Edenic state when humankind and God were united. Strains of this idea are evident in Julian’s writing. Concerning Origen’s concept of the Fall, Anthony Meredith writes,

First, it was a fall into a body and into the physical order. This suggests that the physical order was to some extent an afterthought and not part of God’s original intention; but it does not lead to the conclusion that the visible order of the universe is evil. Rather does Origen wish us to think of it as a place of correction and education for fallen souls on their way back to the fatherland. Secondly, if humanity does not lose its capacity of intelligence as a result of this faith, neither does it lose its power to love. At the opening of the second of his Homilies on the Song of Songs, Origen writes that ‘the God who made the whole world created all the motions of the soul for good’. In other words, the doctrine of the image of God in humanity remains so strong in origin that one might reasonably ask if he took the doctrine of the fall in its Pauline understanding sufficiently seriously.¹²

Such views as these resonate with Julian’s treatment of the imago Dei, the hypostatic union and Incarnation, as found in her Parable of the Lord and the Servant, for example. Origen’s conception of the soul’s place in relation to God prompts his development of the doctrine of universal salvation (apokatastasis), which brings us to the second area of similarity – soteriology. Origen thought that all beings would ultimately be reconciled with God, including – and this is where his views become

¹² Tugwell, Spirituality, 116.
heretical – the fallen angels, and even Satan. In contrast, Julian is explicit and emphatic regarding the fate of fallen angels and the devil: they are to face perdition.\textsuperscript{13}

Whilst Julian does not, at least explicitly, venture as far as Origen in this regard, her soteriology is at the very least liberal (as explored below), and it is debatable to what extent her words concerning orthodox professions of belief in hell in relation to sinners should be taken at face value (see chapter 2 of this thesis). At times, I will argue, her soteriology leans more towards Origen than Augustine.

To conclude this section on the Church Fathers, it is pertinent to this thesis that there was a discernible shift from a literal reading of certain passages contained in the Apocalypse towards the allegorical exegetical approach in the move from a premillennialist hermeneutic to an amillennial position. Such views were disseminated most prominently through Augustine. However, the later commentaries on the Apocalypse which were inspired by the Early Church Fathers also had an impact. The Greek commentary by Andreas of Cappadocia (sixth century) is essentially moralistic in viewpoint whilst pointing to certain historical fulfilments. Primasius’ (died c. 560) commentary also bears the hallmarks of Tyconius’ and Augustine’s influence. Three centuries later Berengaudus’ moralistic commentary (mentioned in the Introduction) was instrumental in paving the way for the historicist approach which emerged as a force in the early twelfth century. Whilst Julian’s text applies or alludes to her own milieu, its universal applicability is congruent with her allegorical approach which places her largely within the Augustinian exegetical school.

\textit{Visions of authority}

I now turn to the symbolism of the Apocalypse and Julian’s \textit{Revelations} in order to identify areas of confluence and highlight ways in which symbols and concepts imbue Julian’s text with authority. This authority primarily derives from her access to Christ’s words which accord with scripture. This Christological focus of both the Apocalypse and Julian’s \textit{Revelations} is integral even when discussing the Holy Spirit. For instance, early in her first revelation Julian writes, ‘For wher Jhesu appireth the blessed trinity is understand, as to my sight.’ (\textit{Revelation} 4, 11-12) This establishment

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{A Revelation}, 32, 33-38.
of a Trinitarian focus early in Julian’s text compares with the opening of the Apocalypse in which John addresses the seven churches:

Grace be unto you and peace, from him that is and that was and that is to come: and from the seven spirits which are before his throne: And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead and the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. (Apocalypse 1:4-5)

In this passage John establishes his simultaneously Trinitarian and Christological focus with allusions to the Passion which bear comparison with Julian’s visions. The same applies to Apocalypse 5:6:

And I saw: and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing, as it were slain, having seven horns and seven eyes: which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

The Trinitarian emphasis is in the First and Second Persons sharing the throne. As David L. Barr points out, the seven spirits are to be understood qualitatively as representing perfection rather than quantitatively.\(^\text{14}\) Below I discuss Julian’s Augustinian-influenced vision of Christ in the believer’s soul as in a city. Julian’s similarly viewed but even more pronounced emphasis upon the Trinity in Christological terms and the strong allusions to the Passion in the Revelation confer authority upon her text.

In the Apocalypse John interprets certain symbols, such as the stars and the lampstands in 1:20, and the Lamb’s ‘seven horns and seven eyes: which are the seven Spirits of God’ (5:6) mentioned above. John also reports the angel’s interpretations (as in 17:9-18 and the meaning of the symbolism of the Woman on the Beast). However, he does not interpret the main visions that he receives since the symbolism itself is the key to conveying the messages. Julian does interpret her visions at length – despite her protestations about not being a teacher. She re-frames

\(\text{\textsuperscript{14}}\) David L. Barr, Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation (Salem, Oregon: Polebridge Press, 2012), 56.
the concept of the Trinity in language that is conducive to expounding her personal view of God's love and compassion. In doing so she challenges the male-centred paradigm of God the Father and God the Son, not in a rigidly literal sense, but in one which she believed signified a genuine sense of the personhood of Jesus. Pointing to the dominance of male authority in the Middle Ages, Alexandra Barratt somewhat negatively regards Julian's 'heroic effort to overturn more than a thousand years of tradition by redesigning the Holy Trinity on a Father-Mother rather than Father-Son model' as making 'no real difference'.  

This may have been the case during Julian's life, but rather for the reason that the use of feminine imagery was not without precedent, as we shall explore in chapter 2. The intimacy with Christ which Julian experiences prompts this use of language, and the gift of visions is indicative of this sense of proximity to him. Like John, Julian claims to hear Christ's voice directly through a series of visions, and it is instructive to compare the opening line of the Apocalypse with those of Julian's texts respectively. John writes (using the third person):

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass: and signified, sending by his angel to his servant John, who hath given testimony to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, what things soever he hath seen. (Apocalypse 1:1-2)

Significantly, A Vision begins with the words (also in the third person), 'Here es a vision, shewed be the goodness of God to a devoute woman' (Vision, [Rubric] 1), whereas A Revelation is more direct – even daring – in the opening line: 'This is a revelation of love that Jhesu Christ, our endles blisse, made in sixteen shewinges.' (Revelation, 1, 1-2). However, we should bear in mind that these chapter headings were most likely added later by a scribe. This is in itself significant in light of Felicity Riddy's view that 'the complex process of taking the book through the later stages of its evolution – numbering the visions and the chapter headings, inserting cross-references' is part of the collaborative nature of the text, which I mentioned in the

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Introduction to this chapter. I return to this issue in the following section. Julian lays the foundations for the revelations themselves by appealing to the authority of Christ and using language which reflects John’s same appeal in the Apocalypse.

John’s appeal to the veracity, and therefore authority, of the Apocalypse text is underlined in the final chapter:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from these things that are written in this book. (Apocalypse 22:19)

This curse directed at those who add to or subtract from the Apocalypse is the converse of the book’s early benediction directed at those who read it aloud: ‘Blessed is he that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy: and keepeth those things which are written in it. For the time is at hand.’ (Apocalypse 1:3) This assertion of the book’s textual authority seems, at first sight, to contrast with Julian’s approach within her text/s. Her tone in A Revelation is less cautious and more authoritative than in A Vision, despite a number of exceptions – for example, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton identifies evidence of self-censorship in A Revelation. With reference to A Vision 6, Kerby-Fulton points out that besides omitting various ‘overtly visionary (in Augustine’s sense of “imaginative vision”) and overtly iconographic passages,’ Julian omits that of her ‘divine commission’, which ‘prepares the ground for the passage on a woman’s right to teach.’ She also omits the Parable of the Lord and the Servant from A Vision because she has not fully comprehended its meaning; her meditation upon the parable during the intervening years gives her the confidence to incorporate it in A Revelation with her interpretation. As with the Apocalypse, Julian’s showings are didactic in that they unveil mysteries to the seer who subsequently pens the text that is to instruct an audience or reading group or individuals. In her later text Julian is markedly assured in her role as authoritative communicator of Christ’s message and confident in her divinely imparted authority without having to justify herself as a female writer. This sense of authority bears comparison with that displayed by John.

In both the Apocalypse and the Revelations, authorial status and, crucially, the

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orthodoxy of Christ’s words, support this confidence.

We have seen that John adopts a conciliatory tone to open the letters in Apocalypse 2-3, and the words of Christ to the churches balance praise, where merited, with warnings of the consequences of failure to change. John leaves his readers/listeners in no doubt regarding his sense of absolute assurance in his own divinely imparted authority and that of the visions. Indeed, the pace and grammar of the text reflect the intensity and urgency of the words and visions which demand to be disseminated. In contrast, Julian is conscious that accusations of heresy could be levelled at her, so, in her authorial capacity, she uses the text as a platform to protect herself and the vision from such a response. Regarding the question of adherence to the original visions as set against the probability of some degree of authorial license having taken place, it is helpful to consider Nicholas Watson’s contention that there must be doubts as to how closely Julian’s descriptions in A Revelation match the original vision, given the length of time between them. He cites the compositional gap between A Vision and A Revelation, with the additional understanding that she received in 1393, and asks how much A Revelation is relying on A Vision rather than the original visions themselves.\(^{18}\) Subsequently he asks,

Is there any point in continuing to maintain, for example, that even in L [Long Text/A Revelation] she presents us with memories of her visions unchanged by the passage of time? Or must her undoubted fidelity to her experiences now be regarded as being a less literalistic kind?\(^{19}\)

Watson’s inference is plausible, although for the purposes of this thesis it is worth remarking that the function of the Revelations is not simply to recount the visions – as vividly as Julian does this – but to provide a commentary that expounds the insights gained by her lengthy reflections. John’s teleological text is marked by his certitude concerning the veracity of the visions, as we will see in the subsequent section. Julian also writes with authority in A Revelation – for instance when discussing the Trinity – yet she displays caution where her personal liberal soteriology threatens to conflict with orthodoxy.


\(^{19}\) Ibid., Gospel. 47.
A comparison of structures: the Apocalypse and the Revelations

In order to gauge the extent and form of the Apocalypse’s influence upon Julian’s writing, it is instructive to analyse its ancient Greek compositional structure, comparing and contrasting it with A Vision and A Revelation.

Although the use of chapter divisions appeared in the thirteenth century, passing from Latin to other languages, verse divisions of the New Testament did not appear until the Greco-Latin Testament of 1551 by Robert Stephens. The implications of such divisions, which were intended to aid citation, reside in the fact that when divisions are omitted from the mid-section of the Apocalypse it flows at a rapid pace; if adhered to, some of the divisions, particularly chapters 16-22, detract from this flow because the text does not demand a pause. Therefore, during Julian’s life the Apocalypse text had this ‘natural’ flow to it, thereby avoiding such anomalies. However, Julian’s ability to read the text herself would have depended on access to a Wycliffite Bible, assuming we take her claim to be unlettered at face value meaning that she did not read Latin, rather than solely the employment of the humilitas topos. It was not condemned outright under the Constitutions, although according to article 7, these translations had to be ‘approved by the diocesan of the place, or if occasion shall require, by a provincial Council’. Whether or not Julian had access to a Wycliffite Bible, open-air Lollard preachers could have provided one possible source of teaching from this vernacular source, as Veronica Mary Rolf points out.

The Amherst manuscript goes through a similar process of division. Felicity Riddy points out that the Amherst manuscript of A Vision ‘appears as a continuous piece of writing, divided into twenty-five segments by large rubricated initials’. She suggests that the shorter segments of A Vision ‘may possibly preserve the compositional moment, whether in the original process of dictation to a scribe, or of writing her own text, Julian may also have worked in short stints’. By definition, both

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24 Ibid.
the Apocalypse and the *Revelations* claim to be collaborative works in a spiritual context. Both contain words which John and Julian respectively attribute to Christ, and both writers, in effect, claim to serve as scribes for this voice – although Julian never claims that her visions have equal authority with biblical books, but rather that they contain nothing contrary to the teaching of Holy Church. This acknowledgment may have influenced scribes and editors of both texts, considering them to be the property of the entire body of believers. The insertion of chapter divisions in the Apocalypse text is an example of this. As Riddy argues, Julian’s text involves a community, possibly comprised of an amanuensis, later scribes and, according to Julian’s claim and the premise of the whole work, Christ himself.25 Far from this input serving to detract from the work, Riddy equates an acknowledgement of this process as accepting its completeness, the many facets comprising the whole. In summary, the vision may have conveyed a similar sense of rapid flow to the original Apocalypse with which Julian was familiar and both texts lost this with revision. If the chapter breaks which were added to the Apocalypse are adhered to, the effect is comparable to Julian’s incorporation of her gloss on the visions which is much more extensive in *A Revelation* than in *A Vision*.

The Apocalypse contains a number of recapitulations – incorporating events that are repeated with the appearance of different imagery. These scenes are not invariably chronological and linear, as the text shifts between them rapidly, particularly in the middle section. Similarly, in Julian’s *A Revelation*, the contents (if not all the tonal and stylistic elements) could be regarded as a recapitulation of *A Vision* or a further expansion upon it, incorporating additional material.

One of the many ways in which Julian’s authorial voice resonates with the Apocalypse is the use of numerology, which features so prominently in the latter text, where it serves to juxtapose order against disorder. Julian follows John’s use of symbolic numbers throughout her *Revelations*. The numbers 3, 4, 8, 7, 12 and 13 and multiples of these numbers appear throughout the Apocalypse, both in relation to characters in the book such as the four creatures and the seven angels, and repetitions of key words a particular number of times, such as ‘blessed’ and ‘Christ’ or the phrase ‘I am coming’, all three of which are repeated seven times. Augustine explains the significance of this number in his allegorical exegesis of Hannah’s

juxtaposition in 1 Samuel 2 between those Israelites who despite having been ‘full of bread’ forsook this state for the city of the world, and ‘the weak’ who are ‘hungry’. Augustine interprets the latter as the Gentiles who crave spiritual food. Citing Hannah’s words about the barren woman giving birth to seven children ‘while she who has many children is enfeebled’, he writes:

Here the whole of the prophecy becomes illuminated for those who recognize the significance of the number seven; for by that number the perfection of the universal Church is symbolized. This is the reason why the apostle John writes to seven churches; it is his way of showing that he is writing to the entirety of the one Church.\(^{26}\)

Seven is the number of perfection in the Apocalypse, since four represents the earth and three stands for heaven.\(^{27}\) This number recurs in the Apocalypse fifty-four times. Turning back to Julian’s writing, an integral part of her Revelations, besides her groupings of threes which emphasise the triune nature of God, is her incorporation of sevens – the number of completeness in the Apocalypse – in, for instance, the servant’s ‘seven great pains’ for which he is rewarded (51:15-19.275). She is also ill for seven days and seven nights.

Whilst six is the number of imperfection (falling short), half of seven (three and a half) is the number of evil and incompleteness and this is the length of the tribulation that is prophesied in Apocalypse 11. The prophesying of events, whilst incorporating references to specific numbers of people, ostensibly reflects belief in predestination – although such numbers have also been interpreted as symbolic or representative, pointing to overarching truths. The Augustinian tradition emphasised the immediacy of these overall truths. Augustine also believed many of the numbers, particularly large round numbers, to be representative of general truths. So, for instance, a thousand years is indicative of an extended period of time. However, in Book V of City of God he contrasts the Christian concept of free will and God’s foreknowledge (as distinct from predestination) with the pagan tradition of destiny.\(^{28}\)

Julian also foregrounds foreknowledge, emphasising order by reference to

\(^{26}\) Augustine, City, 719.

\(^{27}\) Barr, Tales, 12.

\(^{28}\) Augustine, City, 179-224. Cf. 568.
God’s triune nature, and her conception of the three characteristics of Christ: ‘Oure hye fader, almighty God, which is being, he knew us and loved us fro before any time’. \((\text{Revelation}, 59, 20-21)\) The next sentence illuminates the nature of her understanding of God’s foreknowledge. She continues: ‘Of which knowing, in his full meravelous depe charite, by the forseeing endlessse councel of all the blessed trinite, he woulde that the seconde person shulde become oure moder, oure brother, and oure savioure.’ \((\text{Revelation}, 21-23)\) In Julian’s request for ‘thre woundes’ \((\text{Vision}, 1, 3; \text{Revelation}, 2, 4)\) she uses the word ‘woundes’ to denote contrition, compassion and longing as part of the third gift which she requests. The use of the word is significant, especially given her later focus on the crucifixion and blood of Christ. In the Apocalypse the wounds suffered during the crucifixion are shown to be eternal (see Apocalypse 5:6). From this request to the sixteenth revelation \((\text{A Revelation} 83 \text{ and } 84)\) in which she identifies three kinds of charity and three properties of God, she conveys a strong sense of the Trinity’s involvement and interaction with the world. Indeed, the Trinity is of fundamental importance to her ontological viewpoint and belief in an overarching divine purpose for humanity. Julian’s text therefore shares with the Augustinian interpretation of the Apocalypse an emphasis on divine foreknowledge.

This section has drawn parallels between the artificial divisions within the Apocalypse and the textual development of Julian’s work. This diminution of fluidity – a feature of several aspects of Julian’s text – results from the incorporation of her hermeneutic which, as Watson argues, at times becomes the revelation itself. The structure of both texts relies heavily on number symbolism which reinforces Julian’s Trinitarian emphasis. Such structural elements are subject to the core concept of divine foreknowledge.

\textit{A comparison of style and genre}

Whilst one of the main similarities between the writings of Julian of Norwich and John’s Apocalypse is an authorial assertion of the belief that they are divinely inspired, they both reveal much about the respective ages in which they were written, whilst transcending them. Indeed, John’s aversion to altering the text in any way (to the point of refraining from editing the scroll due to the warning of the curse to
anyone who alters it in Apocalypse 22:19) leads to a rather unconventional style in
terms of grammatical usage (I consider the implications of this in chapter 2).

Both John and Julian experience a sense of urgency to commit to writing all
that they are shown, regardless of whether they fully comprehend the visions initially,
or at all. This is particularly true of A Vision. Indeed, Francis Beer, stressing the
importance of this (in her view) all too often neglected text, highlights the immediacy
and accessibility of its content and style.29 The personal nature of the revelation is
especially noticeable in this work, manifest not least through the liberal use of
personal pronouns, many of which, as Beer points out, are omitted from A
Revelation.30 This is part of the oral register which Julian adopts – ‘oral’ insofar as the
work often seems conversational in tone. Written in the vernacular Middle English,
the texts were intended for a wide readership of Julian’s contemporaries, so the lack
of evidence that they were in wider circulation in her lifetime seems counter intuitive.
We shall return to this inconsistency after examining the contents in detail.

Two of the main characteristics of both the Apocalypse and Julian's
Revelations are the humility and expressions of empathy which the respective
authors convey. Since the former text is a product of the Hellenistic tradition of
writing, it is unsurprising to discern the presence of Aristotle's principles of Ethos
(providing credibility through the use of language), Pathos (as appeals to emotion),
and Logos (as clarity of argument through the appeal to reason) utilised within the
text. The application of these rhetorical devices heightens legitimacy and impact. For
instance, in his introduction to the letters to the seven churches, John writes, 'I, John,
your brother and your partner in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience in Christ
Jesus' (Apocalypse 1:9) – words which, through their humility, convey a sense of
credibility (refraining from elevating himself above his fellow Christians), and unity
through his profession of willingness to endure suffering and remain patient for
Christ. It is also noteworthy that he simply provides his first name, which would
suggest that he was well-known enough to have done so.31 As seen here in relation
to John (and in the next quotation from Julian below), both writers foreground their

29 Francis Beer, Julian of Norwich: Revelations of Divine Love and the Motherhood of God
30 Ibid., 19.
31 This is a commonly cited argument for the author’s identity being John the Apostle, which is not
universally accepted.
work rather than themselves, a technique that reinforces the sublime elements evoked by the spiritual focus of the respective texts.

Albeit in a different context to John's, Julian pursues the same aim of persuading from ethos by asserting her unity with her 'evencristen', a tendency that is particularly self-effacing in A Vision. An example of this occurs early in the text when she reflects upon God's granting of the vision to her:

> For sothly it was nought shewed unto me for that God loves me betere thane the leste saule that is in grace. For I am sekere thare is fulle many that nevere hadde shewinge ne sight botte of the comon techinge of haly kyrke that loves God better than I. For if I loke singulerlye to myselfe, I am right nought. Botte in generalle, I am in anehede of charite with alle mine evencristende. (Vision, 6, 16-20)

Thus, whilst she employs these techniques, Julian downplays her position in A Vision, for example, by refraining from referring to herself by name. On the issue of Julian’s name, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton writes,

> Julian made many revisions, as has often been noted, that strip the Long Text of any reference to its female authorship (indeed, even the name ‘Julian’ is a masculine form for what may have been Julianna). Julian, I think, wanted to be taken seriously as a visionary of intellectual vision, and may have felt her gender was in the way.\(^{32}\)

It is conceivable that the name ‘Julian’ may be a form of the then common name ‘Gillian’ and therefore her birth name. Alternatively, Julian may have given up her name and taken that of her parish church’s patron saint.\(^{33}\) Whatever the veracity of this matter, here, as elsewhere Julian is inextricably connected with the collective body of believers – the truth of which may be attested to by her name itself.

\(^{32}\) Kerby-Fulton, Books, 311-12.

\(^{33}\) Fr. John Julian presents a persuasive case that Julian may have been Lady Julian Erpingham Phelip (d.1414). See John Julian, The Complete Julian of Norwich (Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2009), 23-7. However, Margery Kempe (1373-1438) visited Julian in 1414, the year that the Lady died. Given Julian’s insightful and lucid responses to Margery’s concerns as reported by the latter in the autobiographical/biographical The Book of Margery Kempe, Julian’s death would have been sudden.
Finally, Julian employs Aristotle’s principles of *Pathos* (as appeals to emotion) in her description of Christ’s Passion, and *Logos* (as clarity of argument through the appeal to reason) in her explications of the visions utilised within the text. The application of these rhetorical devices heightens legitimacy and impact for its target audience which we now consider.

A striking aspect of John’s Apocalypse and Julian’s *Revelations* is the richly descriptive language and visual imagery. There is an evident paradox in the way in which the meaning of the word ‘Revelation’ is ‘to unveil’ and the fact that the book can seem obscure and even impenetrable. The key to this is two-fold. Firstly, the Apocalypse is addressed to Christians – especially those who face persecution and possible martyrdom. Secondly, reading it requires a hermeneutical method that recognises the necessity of balancing literal and allegorical readings. The various genres which comprise the text superimpose contemporary events and concerns in the life of the fledgling Church upon the backdrop of Imperial Rome. Historically verifiable information is combined with prophetic elements, which proleptically depict eschatological events with the use of figurative language.

Reading John’s introductory words in Apocalypse 1:9 – ‘I, John, your brother and your partner in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus’ – it is striking that whilst John humbles himself to his brothers in Christ, it is with an air of overarching authority and assurance that the veracity of his words will be acknowledged, which lies beside his Aristotelian appeals to authority (see chapter 2). In examining some of the genres which John utilises, and comparing them with Julian’s approach, some hitherto unrecognised parallels emerge. The content of John’s apocalyptic writing in Apocalypse 4-18 is largely of a more dramatic type than Julian’s, conveying a sense of imminence. An exception, which we shall explore in more depth below, appears in Julian’s descriptions of spiritual warfare. Although she does not use the epistolary form, as John does in writing to the seven churches, she addresses her ‘evencristen’ throughout the *Revelations*. Both writers use a great deal of doxological language and benedictions; we read one such example early in *A Vision*: ‘And than I saide: “Benedicte dominus!”’, (*Revelation* 3) which is repeated in *A Vision*:

34 He also bows to the angel in Apocalypse 19:10 and 22:8-9, presumably because he is so overwhelmed. Intriguingly, in both passages the angel tells him not to bow to him because he is a ‘fellow servant’ and ‘of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus’ (19:10) ‘who have the testimony of the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God’ (22:8-9). This may imply that the messenger is a ‘glorified’ saint.
Revelation (4). Both the Apocalypse and Julian's *Revelations* are based on visions that arise from a confrontation with possible death, and this awareness of mortality and proximity to an anticipated afterlife informs the respective texts. John is in captivity and Julian is on her supposed death bed when their respective visions occur. Amy Appleford contextualises Julian's benediction above as she highlights the centrality of the medieval conception of the 'good death' – that is, preparing for a death, fully focussed on Christ and at peace with God. Julian's concept of community is inextricably bound to this view of death. This sense of a community of the saints is a feature of Bernard of Clairvaux's writings, as discussed in chapter 2.

The Apocalypse addresses each of the individual churches which comprise the seven churches of Asia; by extension the message is also to the collective Church (body of Christ), which consists of the individual believers in the world and other churches, of which each of the seven churches may be seen as a microcosm that is representative of a type of congregation. The book may be read as a handbook for those whom, as we have observed, are under pressure and are either facing or expecting persecution. Julian’s focus on the character of God and her emphasis on the person of Christ complement her professed faith in the teachings of Holy Church. There is a sense that this assertion may derive, at least in part, from the hope that the Church will abide by its core beliefs and not deviate from them. As with the contents of the letters to the seven churches, Julian explicates the standards which should be adhered to in the spiritual life of the Church body and the individual believer, whilst warning of the consequences of deviating from them – acting contrary to one’s true nature – and the folly of embracing sin.

Finally, we encounter the genre of prophecy, in the broad sense of an authorial claim of having received an inspired message from God, and through specific examples of this prophetic insight, for instance, in the thirteenth revelation in which Julian is told that ‘Holy church, shalle be shaked in sorow and anguish and tribulation in this worlde as men shaketh a cloth in the winde’ (*Revelation* 28, 4-6). The cloth represents Christ's flesh, evoking the implications of the Incarnation, his humanity and suffering in the Passion, and the later allusion in chapter 28 with the prophecy of tribulation for the Church. It demonstrates Julian's conflation of Christ and his Church as one body united in endurance through tribulation. In his

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Confessions, Augustine references Psalm 78:39 in applying the analogy of the wind as something ephemeral as he self-critically dismantles his youth in which his studies were conducted unwillingly ‘due to the sinfulness and vanity of life’ and ‘I was flesh and blood, no better than a breath of wind that passes by and never returns.’\textsuperscript{36} In City of God he mentions that demons inhabit the air between earth and heaven.\textsuperscript{37} The word ‘wind’ also appears in Julian’s eighth revelation:

\ldots that same time that our blessed saviour died upon the rode, it was a dry, harre wind, wonder colde as to my sight. And what time that the precious blode was bled out of the swete body that might passe therfro, yet ther dwellid a moister in the swete flesh of Crist, as it was shewde. Blodlessehed and paine dried within, and blowing of the winde and colde coming from without, met togeder in the swete body of Christ. (Revelation, 16, 9-14)

I contend that herein lies an implicit metaphor – as in the previous quotation, the physical body of Christ also represents the Church. This is supported by Julian’s identification of a ‘doubille thurst: on bodily, and another gostly’. The Church faced the ‘winds’ of heresy and the Papal Schism – the dual papacy of Rome and Avignon from 1378 to 1417 – and Julian both receives and imparts encouragement and exhortations to persevere comparable to the words of Christ and St. Paul. Julian receives further prophetic revelations concerning the ‘grete dede’ (Revelation, 32, 46) on the last day, about which she is told, the ‘blessed trinite shalle make wele alle that is not welle’. (Revelation 32, 30) Such prophetic assurances inform her positive soteriology and are reminiscent of Apocalypse 21:4: ‘And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more. Nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away.’ Thus, in both texts, Christ’s words give rise to a recognition of the necessity of suffering juxtaposed with a prophesied reversal for believers. Both John and Julian refer to the revelatory process which results in this fundamental message.

The Apocalypse contains self-referential reflective elements (elements reflecting on their own composition) in 1:11 where Christ commands:

\textsuperscript{37} Augustine of Hippo, \textit{City}, 318.
What thou seest, write in a book and send to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamus and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Subsequently in Apocalypse 10:4 John receives another heavenly command:

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken. And write them not.

The self-referentiality in Julian’s *Revelations* is conveyed through transmission and omission. For instance, after her initial doubt concerning the veracity of her visions, they are verified by the religious person who attends her sickbed, prompting her shameful self-reproach. (*Revelation*, 66, 13-28) This indicates the veracity of the totality of her visions to the reader and confers justification for writing. In terms of omission, whereas John is told not to write, Julian is simply not shown – for instance, her request for a vision of hell and purgatory. In Julian’s *Revelations* transmission and omission occur on both intentional and consequential levels. In the intentional cases Julian endeavours to involve the reader in the process that she has been through/is going through. As Felicity Riddy points out, this approach stands in contrast to contemporaneous devotional works which with their 'self-assured didactic voices have left the throes of composition far behind', and their 'voices are quite different from the fluid identities that are recalled in the complex process of retrospection which is written into Julian's text'.

The nature of the text arguably enhances its accessibility and is a result of a collaborative process which may have involved an amanuensis, later scribes and, finally, the reader. This inclusive approach aligns with the inclusivist text itself which is addressed to all Julian’s evencresten and intended to exhort in the face of earthly tribulation, thereby echoing a fundamental message of the Apocalypse.

The Apocalypse is ostensibly written for those facing impending martyrdom. Julian also deems it necessary to emphasise martyrdom in her textual references that convey the full etymological sense of the word – i.e. (a) witness (for the faith).

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38 Riddy, ‘Self-Textualization’, 104.
Although Julian mentions directly only one authority by name – the second-century Christian martyr St. Cecilia – she nevertheless alludes to others, and her biblical references pervade the text. This St. Cecilia reference however is significant for at least three reasons. Firstly, she is a figure of feminine authority – a Roman woman who was believed to have converted her husband and brother to Christianity. Moreover, as Newman citing Osbert of Clare points out, Cecilia ‘even presumed to preach’. Secondly, Cecilia’s consequent martyrdom makes her a figure comparable with someone such as Antipas in the Apocalypse. Antipas (later St. Antipas) of Pergamum is mentioned in the letter to the church at Pergamum. His Greek name translates as ‘against all’. Jesus, through his amanuensis John, says,

I know where thou dwellest, where the seat of Satan is. And thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith. Even in those days when Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. (Apocalypse 2:13)

If Julian is equating martyrdom with authority, as John does, it is conceivable that she is alluding to a parallel between her sacrifice (for which Christ thanks her) and a martyr's death – the one physical, the other spiritual with certain physical hardships involved. This view is reinforced since Christ’s thanking of Julian appears in A Vision 8, 53-54 and A Revelation 14, 1-2. The latter reads: “I thanke the of thy servys and of thy travelle and namely of thy youth”. This is followed by her understanding being lifted up to heaven (Revelation, 2-3) where she sees the feasting of the saints (cf. Apocalypse 19:9). This beatific scene only appears in the later text, although in A Vision Julian writes of the ‘blisse that ilke saule shalle hafe in hevene’ (Vision, 9, 1). This could represent the transposition of Matthew 22: 1-14 and the Apocalypse verse onto her own text, which indicates her eschatological focus. Thirdly, the way in which Cecilia is martyred is significant: the three strikes of the axe symbolise for Julian (whose writing, as we have seen, has numerous references to threes) the saint’s holiness as Julian alludes to the Trinity. Such references to accounts of martyrdom and authority bear comparison with salient themes in the Apocalypse.

Finally, it is worth noting the intertextual element of the Apocalypse. John alludes to books of the Old Testament hundreds of times, rather than mentioning passages by name, or indeed by quoting directly from any of them. Prominent amongst these are those from the book of Daniel – for instance, the seven-headed beast of Apocalypse 17 is reminiscent of the four beasts in Daniel 7. Furthermore, the book is also linked to the ‘Synoptic Apocalypse’ – that is, Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21 in which Jesus teaches about the end times. Similarly, Julian incorporates biblical allusions rather than citing directly. Both writers' presupposition of familiarity with scripture evokes a sense of complicity with their respective readerships/hearers. As in the Apocalypse, the intertwining of biblical allusions and reapplication of verses to the pertinent themes demonstrates appeals to authority and the reapplication of these verses to the contemporary context.

*Tribulation: the suffering and endurance of the saints*

One of the strongest parallels between the Apocalypse and Julian's *Revelations* is the focus on tribulation and the expectation of ultimate release from suffering, and heavenly reward. Both John and Julian highlight present and future suffering in earthly events and the existence of spiritual warfare. Although Julian did not experience persecution in her lifetime, the concept of enduring tribulation (and for many, the will to avert God's wrath), so evident in the Apocalypse, was far from alien to the medieval believer. Julian's texts share with the Apocalypse the premise that a believer's endurance through the greatest suffering merits eventual eternal reward. Both claim access to insights that are revealed through visions which constitute an unveiling of mysteries, necessitating interpretation with the exercise of discernment.

Julian's acute consciousness of worldly suffering informs her text. Prior to entering the cell in Norwich, Julian must have witnessed horrors first-hand in the form of the legacy of the Black Death and four further outbreaks of plague during the mid to late-fourteenth century; the 1370 famine (to which Langland alludes in his B-text [B.13.264-271]); The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453); civil unrest (such as the 1381 Uprising), and a high perinatal mortality rate (although the latter was not confined to the fourteenth century). The state of the Church was also precarious with the aforementioned Papal Schism (1348-1418), which led to the embarrassing and
damaging dual papacy of Rome and Avignon. Indeed, Kerby-Fulton, citing Reeves, has pointed to the Schism as inspiring increased interest in revelatory theological writing.\textsuperscript{40} A sense that these years constituted the end times may have been heightened still further by the Canterbury earthquake (measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale) of May 21st 1382, which was the origin of the term 'Earthquake Synod' because it was felt in London at precisely the same time as the Blackfriars Synod – that was to condemn the twenty-four theses of John Wyclif – was taking place. Against this backdrop of fear and uncertainty Julian's exhortations directed at believers to persevere bear some resemblance to the words of Jesus found in the letters to the churches of Asia in Apocalypse 2-3. A feature of Julian's writing is her contextualisation of the suffering of the individual within broader suffering of the Church body. Such suffering is, by extension, a projection of Christ’s suffering, because (in her view) it takes place within his body. In focussing upon the compassion of Christ as the cure for the suffering caused by tribulation – a compassion which she reciprocates when reflecting on the image of Christ in his Passion – she writes, 'For fulle wele he loveth pepille that shalle be saved: that is to seye, Goddes servantes, Holy church shalle be shaked in sorow and anguish and tribulation in this worlde . . .' (Revelation, 28, 3-5) In her request to be granted an experience of sickness unto death, Julian elevates suffering to the status of a meritorious condition, stemming from the desire to enter into closer proximity to Christ by way of such experience.

In the Apocalypse there is a potent association between persevering through suffering, and eventually overcoming for God, with glory and the expectation of subsequent posthumous rewards. Writing to the Church at Smyrna in 2:10 Christ promises to reward the one who is ‘faithful unto death’ with ‘the crown of life’. Then to the Church at Pergamum in 2:17 he promises ‘the hidden manna’, and ‘a white counter’ (later translated as 'stone'), containing inside ‘a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.’ Julian identifies with this inversion of prevalent human conceptions of desirability, for instance in her prophecy of tribulation for Holy Church quoted above. Julian juxtaposes the necessary suffering which Christ takes upon himself as a consequence of the Incarnation with the depiction of the

\textsuperscript{40} Kerby-Fulton, Books, 14-15.
triumphant Christ in glory, thereby illuminating the ‘reversal’ first found in Apocalypse 1:7.

The reversal of suffering to glorification is a key element of Julian’s vision in her Parable of the Lord and the Servant. Julian writes that the servant

... stode dreadfully before the lorde, and not even righte, betokeneth that his clothing was not honest to stonde even right before the lorde. Nor that might not, not shulde not, be his office while he was a laborer. Nor also he might not sit with the lord in rest and pees till he had wonne his pheece rightfully with his hard traveyle. (Revelation, 51, 240-244)

Such acceptance of suffering recalls Christ’s exhortations to believers in Apocalypse 3:12 to endure regardless of persecution:

He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God: and he shall go out no more. And I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name.

With such reversal in mind, Julian recounts the celestial throne room scene within the Trinitarian ending of her parable. This beatific vision (which I also discuss in chapter 2) is steeped in the imagery of the Apocalypse. The servant is no longer dressed in poor clothing but is instead crowned and finely attired. Julian sees the triumphant Christ in glory: ‘... righte richely clothed in blisseyfull largenesse, with a crown upon his hed of precious richenes’. (Revelation, 51, 268-9) Employing a characteristically Trinitarian framework, she describes the reward for the community of saints for their suffering and faithful endurance as blissful unity with the Godhead: ‘... it was shewed that “we be his crowne”; which crowne is the faders joy, the sonnes wurshippe, the holy gostes liking, and endlesse, mervelous blisse to alle that be in heven’. (Revelation, 51, 269-272) Julian’s recognition that the servant must first labour and suffer before claiming this reward has implications for her view of the contemporary Church insofar as it must seek to remain true and to undergo repristination prior to the parousia before it can merge with the Church Triumphant as the Bride of Christ which she anticipates in her beatific vision.
The symbolic reference to the crown marks a recapitulation to the ninth revelation, as Veronica Mary Rolf points out: ‘. . . when she saw that those who are saved become the crown of jewels worn by Christ (22:17–18.195)’.\(^\text{41}\) This recalls the rider on the white horse in Apocalypse 19:11-16 described in verse 12 as follows: ‘And his eyes were as a flame of fire: and on his head were many diadems. And he had a name written, which no man knoweth but himself.’ But whereas in Apocalypse 13 he is ’clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood’, Julian sees the Servant ‘righte richely chlothed in blissefull largenesse’.

The references to the crown in this vision of the celestial throne room – which in the succeeding lines emphasises the Trinity – are reminiscent of the promise to those in the church at Smyrna who persevere through the prophesied tribulation, in which Christ tells them through John to 'Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee the crown of life.' (Apocalypse 2:10) Since, in the first century A.D., the emperor was the primary authority, the image of a crown held weight. Smyrna, which was known as 'the crown of Asia', was famous for its games, during which winners were presented with a laurel wreath crown.

In Julian’s Revelations, as in John’s Apocalypse, the earthly and the heavenly converge. Having described Christ’s actions during the Harrowing of Hell at the end of A Revelation 51, in the subsequent chapter Julian returns to the theme of earthly suffering juxtaposed and ameliorated with the promise of heaven and also by her assurance that God does not judge like man and her reassertion of the nature of the Trinity. This contrasts with Langland’s approach as he foresees suffering without the same degree of consolation and optimism when he follows his treatment of the Harrowing in Passus XX with the siege of Unity.

As does the Apocalypse, Julian’s writing seeks to re-centre the believer’s focus on Christ and the fundamentals of the faith. Both texts contain strong didactic elements as they strike a balance between exhortation and criticism – more often implicit in Julian’s writing and overt in John’s. Through her descriptions of and instruction on prayer, meditation on the Cross and the practice of affective piety, Julian eschews worldly diversions as she offers a message of salvific hope and emancipation from the hold of sin, insofar as the believer follows Christ. She presents a paradigm for withstanding and overcoming tribulation. This I argue complements

\(^{41}\) Rolf, Gospel, 485; cf. Apocalypse 4:3.
the lines following the previous quotation from *A Revelation* 28, with their implied criticism of the Church, echoing Jesus’ admonition directed against the arrogance and pride of the congregation of the church of Laodicea: 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.' (Apocalypse 3:15-16) The historical and geographical background to these lines encapsulates Julian’s concern for the unity of her evencresten. Laodicea was situated a few miles from Hierapolis with its hot springs and Colossae with its cold springs; the lukewarm church was located in a setting which was physically lukewarm in a literal sense in terms of the temperature of the water which reached it by way of an aqueduct. If there is a problem amongst the congregation it dilutes corporeal unity, as depicted by Langland in the siege of Unity in Passus XXII of *Piers Plowman*. Geographical reference points serve a didactic purpose through visual images. Despite the scarcity of geographical references in Julian’s text, her concern is similarly with unity and reprimand, as I argue throughout this thesis.

Although Julian does not name any specific geographical locations, there are two evocative images which surely have their origin in Norwich’s location as a coastal fishing and trading hub. There is the reference to ‘the scale of herring’ in *A Revelation* (7, 19-20) and the following lines of *A Revelation*, 10, 16: 'One time my understanding was led downe into the sea grounde, and ther saw I hilles and dales grene, seming as it were mosse begrowen, with wrake and gravel.' A.C. Spearing connects this with the story of Jonah in the whale and Psalm 68, but also suggests that the description may have been influenced by the proximity of Norwich to the North Sea.\(^{42}\) This image works on a number of levels. Its context is God’s protection of believers from harm. Beneath the turbulence of the metaphorical waters there are unseen rocks and seaweed. Julian then, envisaging a person under ‘the brode water’ having ‘sight of God’, explains:

> . . . so as God is with a man continually – he shoulde be safe in soule and body, and take no harme. And overpassing, he should have mor solace and conforte then all this worlde may or can tell. For he will that we beleve that we see him continually, thow that us thinke that it be but litle, and in this beleve he maketh

us evermore to get grace. For he will be seen, and he will be sought, and he will be abiden, and he will be trusted. *(Revelation, 10, 19-24)*

Julian’s concept of unity with Christ involves assurances of protection in the face of threats to ‘soule and body’ and ‘grace’. Such words recall the (comforting) references to ‘sea’ in the Apocalypse – a word which, according to M. Eugene Boring’s interpretation, is suggestive of chaos⁴³ or nature. God’s stilling of the sea/chaotic forces of evil, is evident in the two heavenly throne scenes. In Apocalypse 4:6 the word *sea* is used as a comparison with the image that John sees: ‘And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like to crystal . . . ’ Again, in 15:2 we read: ‘And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had overcome the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God . . . ’ (Apocalypse 15:2) Whilst the fire may signify judgment and the punishment of those who have put to death the martyrs, it may also allude to the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites, as biblical commentators such as Gregory K. Beale⁴⁴ and James L. Resseguie⁴⁵ have suggested. It recurs subsequently in the words, ‘I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth was gone: and the sea is now no more.’ (Apocalypse 21:1) We shall look at this vision again below.

Julian’s visions and hermeneutical approach are spiritual in nature – that is, they have universal applicability and are not specifically related to a particular era. The Apocalypse also has universal applicability – unless read purely from the historicist perspective. This is to say that, since its appearance in the first century A.D., it has been interpreted by many in the succeeding generations as a book of prophecy with relevance to their current situation and immediate future, in the form of literal and spiritual readings. For those who adopt a more literal exegetical approach to the Apocalypse, the numerous precise geographical reference points clearly hold great importance, and their limited and indirect use in Julian’s text constitutes one major difference between the Apocalypse and A Revelation.

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Julian does not refer to specific churches as John does, preferring to focus directly on Holy Church as a whole (in line with the different ecclesiology of her time). Reporting the words of Jesus in the letters to the seven churches, John conveys many critical (and encouraging) words regarding their failings. However, by adopting a more indirect approach Julian displays an awareness of tainted elements within the contemporary Church, through the exceptionally vivid language that she hears Jesus speak:

‘I shal alle tobreke you from youre vaine affections and youre viscious pride. And after that I shalle togeder gader you, and make you meke and milde, clene and holy, by oning to me.’ And than saw I that ech kinde compassion that man hath on his evencristen with charite, it is Crist in him. (Revelation, 28, 15-18)

These words, which recall Hebrews 12:6, convey the assurance that although suffering is a self-inflicted consequence of sin, Christ's forgiveness offers hope. They also recall the stress in the Apocalypse on transient suffering as reformatory. The last lines of the quoted text above are intrinsic to Julian's belief that Christ dwells within all Christians and represents their true nature – a nature which they would invariably prefer to follow, but which is nevertheless corrupted by sin, albeit, in her view, never entirely. Moreover, the oning also anticipates the promise that repentant sinners are to be viewed as though they were Christ, insofar as they accept his imputed righteousness. Significantly, there is no mention of hell here, but rather an assumption that goodness and sense will prevail to the point where it is inconceivable that anyone would choose another way.

*Spiritual warfare*

The Apocalypse juxtaposes the war in heaven and calamitous events on earth. Chapter 12, which is suffused with images of heavenly warfare, opens evocatively with a description of the persecution by 'a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and on his heads seven diadems' (v.3), of a pregnant woman who is 'in pain to be delivered' (v.2) and 'clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (v.1). Through the trope of the dragon, who
proceeds to persecute the woman and her offspring, Lucifer's fall is depicted as the dragon whose 'tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth' (v.4).\footnote{Cf. Isaiah, 27:1.} The creature also symbolises Egypt\footnote{Cf. Psalm 74:14 for references to Leviathan as Egypt, and Isaiah 27: 1 as Assyria and Babylon.} and evokes the memory of persecution which the Israelites suffered under the Pharaohs. Therefore, inherent within these descriptions of tremendous suffering and tumultuous events is the concept of patiently enduring suffering and persecution for Christ.

The polyvalent nature of interpretations regarding this figure of a woman becomes evident when considering the span of the Middle Ages. As Richard K. Emmerson writes, 'Although at first primarily identified with ecclesia, the Woman could be associated with both the Church and the Virgin Mary by the early Middle Ages.'\footnote{Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, ed., The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 322.} The passage was (and is) widely viewed as portraying the woman clothed with the sun (mulier amicta sole) as the Virgin Mary during her Assumption.\footnote{Mounce disagrees with this view of the woman as Mary, writing, 'Although the woman gives birth to the Messiah, she is not to be understood as Mary the mother of Jesus but the messianic community, the ideal Israel', Robert H. Mounce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 231.} The prevalent medieval interpretation of the woman as Mary and the 'man child' as Jesus appears to be particularly apposite in verse 5: 'And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And her son was taken up to God and to his throne.' Medieval readers were adept at identifying multiple symbolic elements in a text, often pertaining to a single character. An example of this is found in Julian's Parable of the Lord and the Servant in which the servant is both Adam and Christ, with the lord representing God the Father. In this passage Julian omits any mention of Eve and her temptation by the serpent (dragon) in the Garden of Eden as described in Genesis 3:1-6. I contend that Julian’s omission of Eve’s guilt – as stressed in contemporary teaching – exonerates Eve implicitly. This positive interpretation represents a precedent set earlier by female writers such as Hildegard of Bingen in her positive portrayal of Eve. Another point of comparison is that as with Julian’s depiction of her parable’s servant, Hildegard presents a character that represents more than one female figure. Hildegard’s approach is summarised by Emmerson:
Hildegard extends the image of the pregnant *mulier amicta sole*, moreover, to mediate between Eve and Mary. In ‘O virga ac diadema’, a sequence for the Virgin, she praises Mary for ‘the new sun’ from her womb that cleanses ‘omina crimina Eve’, while in *De operatione Dei*, she interprets the Dragon’s rage against the Woman and her child (Apoc. 12:4) as representing Satan's envy and fear that Eve would be ‘the root of the whole human race’. The Dragon thus ‘said to himself that he would never cease to pursue her until he had drowned her in the sea, as it were; for in the beginning he had deceived her.’\(^50\)

This scene from book 3 of the *Scivias* foregrounds femininity and its role in maintaining the Church’s purity, in the face of assaults by dark forces. I contend that Julian continues this tradition, albeit less overtly. She does so through her omission of Eve from the parable which represents Julian’s exoneration from primary blame of her and by extension all women, as she seeks to redress the balance of the putative culpability of Eve. As Barbara Newman writes:

Through Eve came sickness, through Mary healing; through Eve sorrow, through Mary joy; death through Eve, life through Mary. Eve sold the human race to the serpent or Satan, but Mary crushed his head (Gen. 3:15) when she gave birth to Christ.\(^51\)

Newman also points out that depictions of Eve in medieval art were frequently less than favourable, juxtaposed against those of Mary which depicted her as the feminine ideal, or as Newman puts it, ‘the authors of damnation and redemption for the human race’.

I contend that one way that Julian seeks to redress this imbalance is through an allusion to Apocalypse 12:6. Here the Woman goes into the wilderness for 1260 days, a period of time which Augustine and others interpreted as the Church's temporal respite from persecution in the last days. According to Augustine the Devil will attack those ‘who cannot be conquered by his great attack and all his

\(^{50}\) Emmerson, *Apocalypse*, 323.
stratagems'; the war is necessary to demonstrate ‘the endurance of the Holy City’. John seems to deviate from a linear progression in order to address the reason for this evil on earth – namely, the fall of Lucifer:

And there was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels. And they prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world. And he was cast unto the earth: and his angels were thrown down with him. (Apocalypse 12:7-9)

The saints petition God in heaven, requesting retribution for their treatment on earth at the hands of Antichrist’s followers and the evil that continues to engulf the world. Evil is depicted in the form of beasts with horns, figures which have been interpreted with a spiritual exegetical approach (representing the evil forces within a recurring spiritual struggle) and an historical interpretation (the rise and fall of empires within a specific geographical region). Notably, the dragon has been bound and therefore, according to Augustine and Julian, ‘cannot harm the inner man, the seat of belief in God’, but the serpent is active in verses 15-16:

And the serpent cast out of his mouth, after the woman, water, as it were a river: that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. And the earth helped the woman: and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

Besides symbolising a powerful and vengeful assault on the Church, the water conveys additional meanings. The river is the antithesis of the river of life. In Julian’s parable the Servant Christ/Adam should

. . . do the grettest labour and the hardest traveyle that is: he shuld be a gardener: delve and dike and swinke and swete and turne the erth up and down, and seke the depnesse, and water the plantes in time. And in this he

52 Augustine, City, 911.
53 Ibid.
shulde continue his traveyle, and make swete flodes to runne, and nobille and
plentuous fruite to spring which he shulde bring before the lorde and serve him
therwith to his liking. (*Revelation*, 51, 163-168)

These lines, which I shall revisit below, conflate the first and last books of the Bible.
Part of their importance is that they simultaneously allude to the postlapsarian state
in which Adam (humankind) was condemned to work as a consequence of the Fall.
Prefiguring the Harrowing of Hell, which Julian alludes to subsequently in this
chapter, the water in *A Revelation* 51, 165-168 of which the servant makes (‘swete
flodes to runne’ [166]), serves as a counterpoint to her description of the Passion and
the running of the rivuletts of blood. Also, towards the end of the fourth showing in *A
Revelation* Julian describes the immense flooding of blood discussed in my chapter
2. This recalls Apocalypse 16:3 in which the sea and subsequently the streams are
turned to blood. Julian then compares God’s provision of water for refreshment with
Christ’s life-giving blood. The last sentence also prefigures the River of Life in
Apocalypse 22 which represents the return to Eden in the New Jerusalem:

And he shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the
throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on both
sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits
every month: the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations. (*Apocalypse
22:1-3*)

The servant’s task of regenerating the land provides a partial metaphor for souls and
also foreshadows the new earth. The earth is a wasteland without the fruit of the
servant’s salvific purpose:

And yet I merveyled fro whens the servant came. For I saw in the lord that he
hath within himselfe endlesse life and all manner of goodnes, save the tresure
that was in the erth, and that was grounded within the lord in mervelous
depnesse of endlesse love. But it was not alle to his wurship till his servant hath
thus nobly dighte it and brought it before him in himselfe present. And without
the lorde was right noght but wildernesse. (*Revelation*, 51, 172-177)
The servant is described as a cultivator and mother, thereby foregrounding his regenerative work. The servant, clad as a labourer, is a literal gardener in the case of Adam (cf. Genesis 2:8, 15), anticipating Christ, the second Adam and gardener of souls.54 The postlapsarian predicament necessitates both physical and spiritual labouring before the servant can return to his Father having completed the redemptive mission. Julian describes the Incarnation in terms that reveal the inherent pain and suffering as she draws on Matthew 13:44 and Jesus’ metaphor of the kingdom of heaven. In both parables the treasure is a metaphor for souls bought at a great price: ‘Ther was a tresoure in the erth which the lorde loved.’ (Revelation, 51,157)

Julian’s focus in her parable therefore shows the devil denuded of power, and a focus on spiritual reward in the New Jerusalem as opposed to blame. Her omission accords with Hildegard’s approach and her multivalent application of biblical imagery and symbolism reflects the Apocalypse in which as Mounce remarks: ‘. . . from the very beginning the church was an eschatological community. John knows no “gap” between Christ and the End’.55 This is a feature of Julian’s Revelations in which she imbues the Passion, Redemption and Heaven with a sense of immediacy juxtaposed against ongoing spiritual warfare.

Although spiritual warfare is a fundamental part of Julian’s Revelations, as it is in the Apocalypse, she tends to approach it less dramatically. The closest that Julian gets to such illustrations as found within the Apocalypse accounts is when she sees, and even smells, fiends in her presence, which torment her during a night of great anxiety: ‘After this, the fende com againe with his heet and with his stinke, and made me fulle besye. The stinke was so vile and so painfull, and the bodely heete also dredfulle and travailous.’ (A Vision, 23, 1-3) Still more vivid is her dream vision nightmare of the devil’s attack in A Revelation 67:

. . . in my slepe, at the beginning, methought the fende set him in my throte, putting forth a visage fulle nere my face like a yonge man, and it was longe and wonder leen. I saw never none such. The coloure was red, like the tilestone whan it is new brent, with blacke spottes therein like freknes, fouler than the tilestone. His here was rede as rust, not scored afore, with side lockes hanging

54 In John 20:11-18 Mary Magdalene initially thinks the resurrected Jesus is a gardener.
55 Mounce, Revelation, 236.
on the thonwonges. He grinned upon me with a shrewde loke; shewde me whit teth and so mekille, methought it the more ugly. Body ne handes had he none shaply, but with his pawes he helde me in the throte, and woulde have strangled me, but he might not. (Revelation, 67, 1-8)

This bestial figure, both human and demonic, is not able to harm Julian, but the menace and physical assault she perceives in the attack is emphasised in her subsequent recollection of her sense that the place was on fire as she smelled ‘a foule stinch’. She perceives ‘it had bene a bodily fyer that shuld have burned us all to deth’ (13-15) which the people who were physically present around her are able to refute. (16) Such descriptions could also be construed as an experience of hell itself. Julian defeats these assaults by seeking assurance in her belief in the power of Christ’s Passion to protect her from sin: ‘A, wriched sinne! Whate ert thowe? Thowe er nought. For I sawe that God is alle thinge: I sawe nought the.’ (Vision, 23, 23-24)

Although she acknowledges that sin exists in the form of vile deeds, ‘passions and paines, gastelye or bodely’, (Vision, 23, 35) she sees Christ’s power overthrowing the power of sin to the extent that it is completely negated: “Whate er we?” And I answere to this: if alle ware departed fra us that is nought goode, we shulde be goode. When wretchednesse is departed fra us, God and the saule is alle ane, and God and man alle ane.’ (Vision, 36-39) As Kerrie Hide puts it,

In the tradition of Augustine, Julian differentiates between the being of God and the nonbeing of sin. Sin has no being. Sin is a nothing with no ontological status, no substance, and no existence in God. Therefore Julian does not see sin because sin is an absence of being.56

Since, for Julian, sinning constitutes an act contrary to our true nature, she therefore expresses the belief that human beings are prone to deviate from their conscience. The spiritual battle involves the forces of evil luring a person into sin – a state that is alien to their innate goodness, as she sees it. Yet, she believes in a fundamental human/divine connection, and we shall look at Julian’s concept of the unity of God and humankind below. To those who are attached to their sinful actions Julian writes,

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'And for that time that man or woman loves sinne, if any be swilke, he is in paine that passes alle paines.' (Vision, 41-43) As we shall explore in more detail, for Julian the act of sinning is equivalent to a hell in itself. We see this described in relation to the cosmic level with the use of apocalyptic imagery in the references to the sun and the moon again in A Vision, thereby indicating the interrelationship of the earthly and the divine and the spiritual struggle that reaches its apotheosis in the Apocalypse. We now turn to this imagery and these concepts in more detail.

Liz Herbert McAvoy interprets Julian’s role in the demonic assault upon Julian in her sickbed as pro-active, viewing the ‘foregrounding of this devilish encounter’ as ‘in keeping with an increasingly confident invocation of the feminine which we have witnessed elsewhere.’ In the more graphic and detailed description in A Revelation the fiend is depicted as a young man. This is significant because, as McAvoy observes, it recalls the suffering Christ of the Passion whilst the fiend’s ugliness contrasts with Christ’s beauty representing a grotesque parody of Christ. Indeed, McAvoy views Julian’s representation of the fiend here as ‘a demonic parody of the central motif of her Passion narrative’, which she describes so vividly earlier, emphasising Christ’s ‘suffering and bodily disfigurement’. The depiction of the fiend ‘diverges radically from traditional representations of the devil which had been growing increasingly sinister since late antiquity’ and the contemporary bestial depictions. In these areas we see Julian’s innovative approach to describing her spiritual struggle. Bakhtin’s term ‘carnivalesque’ is also relevant to this scene.

In interpreting the parodic and grotesque elements of the preceding lines, Bakhtin’s writing on the carnivalesque is relevant. In, for example, the mystery plays, evil is parodied precisely because of its perceived threat. In her account Julian balances solemnity, which she evokes by illustrating this perceived danger, with a simultaneously grotesque parody of the fiend who is himself a parodic inversion of the Christ figure. Bakhtin’s writing on the carnivalesque resonates with Julian’s account of the fiend’s assault. Regarding the role of laughter in the medieval period in the ‘acute awareness of victory over fear’, Bakhtin writes,

57 Liz Herbert McAvoy, Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 154-5.
58 Ibid., 157.
59 Ibid.
This feeling is expressed in a number of characteristic medieval comic images. We always find in these the defeat of fear presented in a droll and monstrous form, the symbols of power and violence turned inside out, the comic images of death and bodies gaily rent asunder. All that was terrifying becomes grotesque.\(^\text{60}\)

As with Bakhtin’s description, parody and laughter appear alongside Julian’s account of the proximity of spiritual forces and the battle for the believer’s soul. It is as though hell itself appears to her, affecting even her olfactory sense. Bakhtin identifies the depiction of ‘hell’ on stage as the culmination of the carnival and emphasises the importance of the ‘grotesque enacting the ‘defeat of fear’ so that ‘The people play with terror and laugh at it; the awesome becomes a “comic monster.”’ Julian’s struggle with the fiend recalls elements of such parodying of evil in the Apocalypse with the overcoming of the parodic beasts whose prophesied defeat provides catharsis to the audience.

Laughter is an integral element of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin’s claim that, ‘The acute awareness of victory over fear is an essential element of medieval laughter’ informs our understanding of the function of laughter in Julian’s text. As discussed, in the fifth revelation Julian recounts how she laughed at the devil’s impotence or ‘unmight’ (Revelation, 13, 19), his powerlessness to harm the believer. When Julian sees that Christ scorns the devil and his malice her laughter leads to communal laughter: ‘For this sight, I laughed mightily, and that made them to laugh that were aboute me, and ther laughing was a liking to me.’ (20-21) She feels that if all her evencristen had seen her vision they would have laughed too. Initially this laughter seems incongruous when juxtaposed against the gravity of the situation until it is interpreted through the concept of the carnivalesque with its inversions and reversal representing the means to attain a state of catharsis.

However, in terms of orthodoxy, Julian is aware that laughter is problematic. Laughter was an integral part of medieval festivals, such as the aforementioned ‘feast of fools’, which as McAvoy points out, ‘was eventually banned by the medieval Church and moved outside into the marketplace and taverns’, where it flourished.\(^\text{61}\)

The feastings and laughter involved the temporary inversion and suspension of order.


\(^{61}\) McAvoy, *Authority*, n.70, 111.
The laughter of the carnival is found in the mystery plays and ‘free joking’ was an essential element of the *risus paschalis* when jokes and laughter were brought into the realm of the religious.\(^{62}\) The carthartic aspect of this transient release from norms and strictures has a clear cathartic objective and its subversive nature raised issues which have implications for laughter in Julian’s text. As Bakhtin discusses regarding the place of holy laughter in the Middle Ages:

> Early Christianity had already condemned laughter. Tertullian, Cyprian, and John Chrysostom preached against ancient spectacles, especially against the mime and the mime’s jests and laughter. John Chrysostom declared that jests and laughter are not from God but from the devil. Only permanent seriousness, remorse, and sorrow for his sins befit the Christian.\(^{63}\)

Julian may be alluding to this orthodox view when she states that she did not see Christ laugh (*Revelation*, 13, 23). The sense of catharsis that Julian conveys is tempered slightly with an implicit acknowledgement that laughter is inappropriate. However, it also underscores her message (Christ’s victory over the spiritual threat), thereby illustrating her didactic approach.

Although the threat is spiritual, it is presented also as a physical threat which seeks to remove Julian as Bride of Christ. McAvoy compares the scene to a ‘hideous parody of the Bride’s relationship with the Bridegroom in the Song of Songs’\(^{64}\) or ‘the soul’s union with God’.\(^{65}\) Drawing on this imagery, the Apocalypse has the divine city (the Bride) replacing Babylon (the Whore). McAvoy interprets the assault upon Julian as ‘an attempted demonic rape upon a woman’s prostrate and paralysed body which threatens to render her the devils’ whore’. Julian’s resistance and faithfulness illustrates her view of the voluntary will to realise the unity of the body of believers regardless of gender and underscores the responsibility of the individual to resist evil. McAvoy identifies Julian as a martyr figure in the tradition of St. Cecilia and her ‘emotionally and physically satisfying relationship with her divine lover’.\(^{66}\) By confronting evil directly through her focus on Christ and adhering to the doctrine of *discretio spirituum* Julian overcomes the perceived spiritual threat.

\(^{63}\) Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 73.
\(^{64}\) McAvoy, *Authority*, 158.
\(^{65}\) Ibid., 160.
\(^{66}\) Ibid., 158.
Julian’s description of her spiritual struggle is innovative in her emphasis on the role of the feminine in overcoming evil. McAvoy argues that Julian associates the demonic figure with a lack of ‘characteristics associated with the feminine in this text (and as possessed in abundance by Julian’s Christ)’ rather than a lack in masculinity. Integral to this is the fiend’s propensity for violence. This lack contrasts with the nurturing, motherly qualities of Christ which inspire Julian’s devotion. Therefore, the fiend’s lack in contrast to Christ makes him impotent insofar as Julian resists him through her intimacy with Christ. Or, as McAvoy puts it, ‘the perfection of a Christ whose male body and unquenchable desire have been palimpsestically overwritten by the feminine’. As McAvoy observes, Julian’s resistance through Christ overcomes her apparent ‘feminine impotency’ which is ‘her paralysed body and inability to defend herself from a diabolic predator’ reversing it so that it becomes ‘a steadfast, determined and infinitely powerful agent by means of its conflation with Christ as embodiment of divine love’. This positive view of femininity defines an important aspect of her apocalyptic text and highlights her intimacy to Christ.

Julian’s ventriloquizing of Christ’s words after the fiend’s assault here and elsewhere in the text also accords with Bakhtin’s definition of heteroglossia as ‘another’s speech in another’s language’ (in this case Middle English). In quoting words spoken to her directly by Christ rather than using from his words from the Gospels, or indeed the Apocalypse, she seeks to convey her intimacy with Christ. Although they are spoken to her in a dream, raising the question of whether the words that she reports are her interpretation or understanding of the message, the fact that they accord with Christ’s words and character in the Bible supports her orthodoxy, and the fact that he speaks to her directly also confers authority on her text. By incorporating such a message and attributing it to Christ in this showing within the context of spiritual warfare Julian recalls his words of encouragement in the Apocalypse and introduces a dialogic element. Indeed, this concept of Christ’s ability to speak to the contemporary Church and believer is an important feature of the Apocalypse. Whereas, his message to John in the Apocalypse is delivered to the latter by way of the angel (Apocalypse 1:1), the direct message from Christ to Julian here represents a bold claim of access to the divine and ‘oning’ with him.

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67 McAvoy, Authority, 161.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
Julian describes her own near-death experience (in greater detail in A *Vision* than in A *Revelation*) and the sense of greater proximity to Christ which resulted from it (*Vision*, 10). This leads to a recurring theme in her writing: union between Christ and humanity, which was made possible through Christ’s hypostatic union at the time of the Incarnation, and forged through mutual suffering which is encapsulated in the Passion:

> Here I sawe a grete aninge betwyx Criste and us. For when he was in paine, we ware in paine, and alle creatures that might suffer paine sufferde with him. And thaye that knewe him nought, this was thare paine: that alle creatures, sone and the mone, withdrewe thare service and so ware thaye alle lefte in sorowe for the time. And thus thaye that loved him sufferde paine for luffe, and thay that luffed him nought sufferde paine for failinge o comforthe of alle creatures. (*Vision*, 10, 44-49)

This passage contains clear apocalyptic elements and displays the influence of both the ‘Synoptic Apocalypse’ and John’s Apocalypse. Julian alludes to both the crucifixion account of Matthew 27:45 (‘Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour’) and Matthew 24:29,\(^\text{70}\) in which Jesus prophesies that ‘immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be moved’. As with her own state, in which (as discussed below) Julian decides to stay and persevere through adversity in order to be with Christ, so in this passage there is a rejection of any special treatment or release (such as rapture) during the time of suffering/tribulation. Instead Christians suffer with non-Christians – albeit for different reasons – in the case of the former, for love, and the latter, God’s withdrawal of the support of physical features, most notably the sun.

Another biblical passage that mentions the sun and moon undergoing changes which cause darkness on earth is Apocalypse 6:12 (the opening of the sixth seal): ‘. . . the sun became black as sackcloth of hair: and the whole moon became as blood.’ In all these passages the supernatural manifestly impacts upon creation.

Significantly, the onset of darkness described in these prophecies (and God’s apparent withdrawal/absence from those who are suffering) precedes direct divine intervention — from the resurrection of the saints before Christ’s resurrection in Matthew 27:52, to the parousia of Matthew 24:30 and the earth’s cataclysmic topographical transformation in Apocalypse 6:14, which signals the onset of God’s wrath (judgment) on the sinful.

It is no coincidence that in this context of impending death (her own and those in the biblical end times prophecies) Julian concludes the passage by mentioning spiritual warfare, the triumph of good over evil, and Judgment Day. When she experiences an urge to look away from the cross she resists it because, as she explains, ‘. . . whiles I luiked upon the crosse I was seker and safe. Therfore I walde nought assente to putte my saule in perille, for beside the crosse was na syekernesse, botte uglinesse of feenandes’ (Vision, 10, 51-53). When her ‘resone’ (53) tells her to look up, she resists, preferring instead to focus on the cross. And although she now sees nothing to distress her, she states that she ‘hadde lever hafe bene in that paine to domesdaye, than hafe comen to hevene otherwise than be him’ (Vision, 58-59).

Julian conveys a sense of unity with Christ and his suffering — a unity forged by the Incarnation and the motivation for the suffering of the Passion. She conveys the belief that suffering is a consequence of living in a fallen world. Whilst she may have experienced an urge to look up to heaven for further insight and chose the cross instead, the context of her earthly predicament suggests that she associated the act of looking up with a premature death and an end to suffering. The implicit suggestion is that giving up on life and the associated suffering constitutes an easy way out — a point she advances in chapter 11:

Thus chese I Jhesu for my heven, wham I saw onlye in paine at that time. Me likede no nothere hevene than Jhesu, whilke shalle be my blisse when I am thare. And this has ever beene a comforthe to me, that I chesed Jhesu to my hevene in alle time of passion and of sorowe. (Vision, 11, 1-4)

In these passages Julian demonstrates a firm eschatological awareness, with the cross, resurrection, parousia and Judgment prominent in the visions, and her relationship and personal participation in this eschatology (as a follower of Christ)
apparent. From this position she is able to foresee her death and subsequent release at the time of Christ's choosing: ‘he that bonde me so sare shulde unbinde me when he walde’ *(A Vision*, 10, 59-60) – a conception that is reminiscent of the Apocalypse view of necessary endurance on earth and an afterlife for the saints where ‘God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes’. *(Apocalypse 7:17)* Such release for the faithful believers relates inversely to the devil’s demise in the Apocalypse.

In chapter 13 of *A Revelation* there is the allusion to the binding of Satan in Apocalypse 20 mentioned in my Introduction, which underscores the effect of the Passion on the devil. In a passage which provides great insight into her theology Julian highlights, as she sees it, his relative impotence:

> God shewed that the feend hath nowe the same malice that he had before the incarnation, and also sore he traveyleth, and as continually he seeth that all soules of salvation escape him worshipfully, by the vertue of his precious passion. And that is his sorow, and full evill is he atteemed, for all that God suffereth him to do turneth us to joy and him to shame and paine. And he hath as mekille sorow when God geveth him leve to werke as when he worketh not. And that is for he may never do as ille as he wolde, for his might is alle lokked in Gods hande. *(Revelation, 13, 7-14)*

This allusion to the binding of Satan is indicative of the dominant medieval Augustinian amillennialist exegesis of the passage, which, as discussed, regards the millennium as figurative rather than a literal period of time. According to this view, the binding of Satan symbolises Christ's victory over evil through the Passion and resurrection. Here Julian focusses on the compassion rather than the wrath of God. Indeed, in the next sentence she states that she sees 'no wrath' in God (14-15), and below this proceeds to see 'oure lorde scorne his malis and nought his unmight' (19). She is portraying a God who has imposed heavy limitations on the devil's power, a fact which adds to her case that there are no real impediments to salvation for those who seek it – with the implicit disbelief that a person would choose otherwise.

To conclude this section, the devil’s binding has its roots both in the Apocalypse and Genesis. Through her notable omission of Eve in the postlapsarian agrarian landscape in her Parable of the Lord and the Servant Julian seeks to emphasise the devil’s guilt and vindicate Eve from the prevalent contemporary
depictions of the Fall. In doing so it has been argued that Julian stresses the ongoing spiritual struggle through her omission which alludes to the struggle with the Woman of Apocalypse 12 as she flees the dragon. Julian conveys a positive view of femininity in such passages, as she does when she recounts her personal struggle with the devil during her illness. Julian’s overarching message is that insofar as the believer stays true to the faith the devil is powerless because of the hypostatic union and Incarnation and the Cross.

*Tribulation to rapture*

In the face of this perpetual spiritual warfare that necessitates constant vigilance in order to remain true to the faith, Julian is offered reassurance that resonates with Christ’s words in the Apocalypse. In A Revelation chapter 64 Julian recalls how she was given the fortitude to continue her earthly struggle. She also considers the hope and future consolation of eventual release from suffering. She recounts the words which she has heard Christ speak to her:

And to all this oure curteyse lorde answered for comfort and patiens, and saide these wordes: ‘Sodeynly thou shalte be taken from all thy paine, from alle thy sicknesse, from alle thy disese, and fro alle thy wo. And thou shalte come up above, and thou shalt have me to thy mede, and thou shalt be fulfilled of joye and blisse. And thou shalt never more have no manner of paine, no manner of sicknes, no manner of misliking, no wanting of wille, but ever joy and blisse withoute end. What shulde it than agreven thee to suffer awhile, sithen it is my wille and my wurshippe?’ (*Revelation*, 64, 8-15)

In lines 22-23 Julian states, ‘when we be taken sodeynly out of paine into blesse, than pain shall be nought’. Although Julian is ostensibly referring to the challenges faced by believers, combined with the natural effects of age upon the body leading to eventual decay, this cathartic passage (with the words ‘Sodeynly’ and ‘come up above’) has a probable source in Apocalypse 3:10-12 which contains Christ’s message to the faithful in the Church of Philadelphia – one of the passages (along

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71 Cf. Apocalypse 6:9-11 and the souls under the altar.
with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:4 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52) that has been used since 1830 in the arguments of the dispensationalists for a 'secret rapture' – that is, a removal of the believers from the earth by Christ to meet him in the air before the tribulation:

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. (Apocalypse 3:10-11)

Julian’s lexical selection is intriguing as she develops the description of resurrection: 'And sodeynly oute of this body sprong a fulle fair creature, a litille child, full shapen and formed, swift and lifly and whiter then the lilye, which sharply glided uppe into heven.' (Revelation, 64, 25-28) Although Julian is describing the soul parting from the body, rather than the bodily resurrection, it is notable that the description of this ascension of the soul draws on bodily imagery, which is suggestive of purity and renewal; this is a common trope in medieval visual representations of death. However, it may indicate her awareness of the bodily resurrection and the interconnected concept of renewal and redemption inherent in the process as described in the Apocalypse. She proceeds to interpret the bloated body as illustrative of the corrupt and sinful nature of the flesh, whilst the child represents the purity of the soul. It is significant that she recognises the resurrection of the body as well as the soul here. I do not propose that Julian was an early proponent of dispensationalism – on the contrary, she acknowledges that believers must experience suffering – but crucially, in accordance with the ultimate eschatological optimism of the Apocalypse, she displays faith in the promise of eventual release from a painful world to a heavenly place, for those who endure. She upholds the concept of reward for endurance through suffering and follows the early Church’s position that this meeting with Christ will take place after the tribulation.

Julian follows this with the promise of the overcomer's place in the New Jerusalem, described in vivid detail in Apocalypse 21. Indeed, her passage here echoes this chapter which we shall look at shortly. According to her view, the believer's perseverance is something noble that will later be rewarded. She writes that God's will is for believers to 'take his behestes and his comforting' (A Revelation,
64, 49) and points to the reward of being made whole in Christ:

... he wille that we take our abidinges and our disseses as lightely as we may take them, and set them at nought. For the lightlier that we take them, and the lesse price that we set at them for love, the lesse paine shalle we have in the feeling of them, and the more thanke and mede shalle we have for them. 

(Revelation, 64, 50-54)

This passage combines an eschatological view with immediate concerns of overcoming both bodily and spiritual corruption. Julian expresses the hope of renewal through Christ.

This hope of renewal is found earlier in the ninth revelation in which Julian’s Trinitarian outlook is exemplified in her use of threes to express and emphasise her points. The centrality of the cross and the willingness of Christ to suffer for humankind is conveyed when he asks whether she is satisfied, then replies to her affirmative answer with the words, ‘If thou arte apaide, I am apaide. It is a joy, a blisse, an endlesse liking to me that ever I suffered passion for the. And if I might suffer more, I wolde suffer more.’ (A Revelation, 22, 3-5) Significantly, the lines which follow serve to accord Christ in his willingness and action a central position within the entire creation, extending to a cosmological level with eschatological significance:

In this feling, my understanding was lefte uppe into heven, and ther I saw thre hevens. Of which sight I was gretly merveyled, and thought: ‘I see thre hevens, and alle of the blissed manhed of Criste. And none is more, none is lesse, none is higher, none is lower, but even like in blisse.’ (Revelation, 22, 6-9)

The imagery draws overtly upon John’s language of the new heaven and new earth and the description of the New Jerusalem of Apocalypse 21:1 (also mentioned in Isaiah 65:17). In order to emphasise the import of Jesus’ words to her ‘if I might suffer more, I wolde suffer more’ and the following vision of these multiple passions for her sake, she juxtaposes the creation of the new heaven and new earth – itself a monumental act according to John’s description of its splendour – as something that could be accomplished with ease in comparison with the Passion:
For if he saide he wolde for my love make new hevens and new erthes, it ware but litille in regarde. For this might he do ech day, if that he wolde, without any traveyle. But for to die for my love so often that the nomber passeth creatures reason – this is the highest profer that oure lorde God might make to mannens soule, as to my sight. (Revelation, 22, 30-34)

It is also significant that Julian identifies Jesus as the Creator. If this insight derives from her understanding of the Apocalypse account, then Apocalypse 3:14 is a key verse: ‘And to the angel of the church of Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God . . .’ To avoid (mis)interpreting this to mean Christ was created, some understanding of the Greek text is required. Gregg writes:

The Greek word translated Beginning is archē, which carries the concept of the ‘beginning, origin, active cause’. Rather than the ‘first thing created’, the expression could be understood to mean ‘he who is the Origin (Source, Creator) of the creation of God’.72

We can speculate that insofar as Julian possessed a profound comprehension of this passage – which without knowledge of Greek could be misconstrued – her knowledge was acquired from listening to a sermon delivered by a priest who had such knowledge, or, more likely, had read the works of those who possessed it. She had surely heard teaching on Jesus through sermons on passages such as John 1 (‘The word became flesh’) and Colossians 1:15 which pertain to the Incarnation which enables the renewal of the believer into one body made possible through the hypostatic union. Julian’s Christological emphasis – through which the other Persons of the Trinity are described and discussed – accords with the focus of the Apocalypse in which Christ is depicted as Creator, Conqueror and Redeemer.

In A Revelation 22-23 Julian interprets the Trinitarian vision of the three heavens in a metaphorical sense: ‘For the furst heven, that is the plesing of the father, shewed to me as an heven . . .’ (22, 14) Her choice of language and use of metaphor correlates with John’s. Moreover, whilst this is metaphorical description, we

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72 Gregg, Four Views, 79.
recall that following Christ’s words regarding the Passion Julian writes, ‘In this feling [her realisation of the implications that Christ was willing to die and would do so again if it were necessary], my understanding was lefted uppe into heven’ before seeing the three heavens. This implies a raising of her level of consciousness, a higher state of awareness, comparable to the state which John finds himself in as he receives his visions, and Paul’s account in 2 Corinthians 2:12:

If I must glory (it is not expedient indeed) but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ: above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I know not, or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven.73

A further feature of the ninth revelation which is shared with the Apocalypse is found in the lines, ‘We be his blisse, we be his mede, we be his wurshipe, we be his crowne. (And this was a singular marveyle and a full delectable beholding, that we be his crowne!)’ (Revelation, 22, 17-19) The crown, as a symbol of kingship, is found in numerous books of the Bible. Watson and Jenkins rightly interpret it as a reference to the crown of thorns74 – an image which Julian clearly wishes to evoke, given the fact that the preceding lines relate to the Passion. However, the emphasis on the crown here also alludes to the positive references in the Apocalypse, particularly the promise given in 2:10 in the letter to Smyrna: ‘Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee the crown of life’. It also recalls John’s vision of the heavenly throne room in Apocalypse 4. The throne room scene also appears subsequently in the Parable of the Lord and the Servant at the time of the servant’s crowning. At this point he is finely attired and rewarded for his endurance. Given that the servant is at once Christ and Adam (the human race), this shows that the saints become as Christ. They are in Christ, and in Julian’s Augustinian terminology, Christ is in them like a city. The centrality of Christ (in this instance Christ is a metonym for the Holy Spirit) reflects the Christocentric focus of the Apocalypse. For Julian, glorification makes all things well, and within her spiritual life this is where her thoughts are directed – always with this end. She and her evencristen will be rewarded in heaven for their perseverance

through their earthly suffering. This outlook is entirely consonant with the Apocalypse.

*The virgin bride of Christ: the 144,000 of Apocalypse 14*

The concept of the corporeal Church and the individual believers which comprise its membership that is so emphasised in the Apocalypse is similarly prominent in *Revelation*, with the body of believers becoming the Bride of Christ. Two examples of this are found firstly in *Revelation*, 51 where we read: 'Now is the spouse, Goddess, in pees with his loved wife, which is the fair maiden of endlesse joy' (276-278), and secondly, in *Revelation*, 58: ‘And in the knitting and in the oning he is oure very tru spouse, and we his loved wife and his fair maiden, with which wife he was never displeased.’ (11-13) The marriage of the Church to Christ is an essential trope that runs throughout the Apocalypse. Besides this holy marriage, the concept of virginity is upheld – whether literally or figuratively.

In historicising the importance of the matter of virginity in the Middle Ages, the lives of several of Julian's contemporaries stand out, such as the visionary Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), and Margery Kempe. Catherine dedicated her virginity to Christ at the age of seven and refused her parents' wish for her to marry eight years later. The year after Catherine's stand against her parents she was admitted to the Dominican third order. Her emphasis on virginity, visions of Christ and the mercy of God, added to her mystical marriage to Christ, convey a number of strong similarities with Julian, who, as a female anchorite was, in a sense, married to Christ. It is perhaps Catherine's concept of marriage with Christ which signifies the depth of spiritual relationship that she enjoyed. We see this too with Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373), who married but became celibate.\(^75\) It is also apparent in Kempe's writings, in which she portrays virginity as her aspirational state – a metaphor for spiritual cleanliness – although, as with Margery, this striving for purity may result in a compulsion to refrain from sexual relations. However, it may be obtained after earlier sexual relations, evidenced by the fact that she believed she attained the state of virginity despite having borne fourteen children.\(^76\) This accords with Sarah Salih's

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contention that ‘Margery did not seek to become a ‘metaphoric’, ‘honorary’ or ‘spiritual’ virgin’. Instead her ‘Book deals with the process of reformulating the self as virginal.’77 Her virginity is ‘non-physical’, ‘constructed’ and ‘reclaimed’.78 This is possible because ‘Virginity is always sited in the soul, which can then bring the body into alignment.’79 Thus, we find a nuanced concept of virginity which depends on the believer’s relationship with God as she looks forward to the mystical marriage to Christ.

Marian devotion to the archetypal virgin served to glorify the state of virginity, upholding the doctrine of Mary’s perpetual virginity. For instance, in A Revelation, 57, 40-50 Julian speaks of the Virgin Mary’s motherhood, which leads Julian to expound on Christ’s motherhood in relation to the renewed believers and the Church. Julian emphasises Mary’s qualities and status to serve as an ideal for the body of the Church on its way to inhabiting the New Jerusalem (whether literally or figuratively) and the eventual glorification of the saints. Mary was believed to be, like Christ, without sin, a model of perfection crossing the gender divide.

The biblical stress upon virginity is particularly pronounced in the Apocalypse. The 144,000 stand with the ‘Lamb’ on Mount Zion (14:1); they are described as ‘they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins.’ (v. 4). The choice of this word, virgins, is intriguing. By examining the text it is by no means certain that the 144,000 of Apocalypse 14 are literal virgins. The word virgins is contrasted with defiled; if a married man stayed faithful to his wife then sexual relations with her would not be said to defile him. For this reason, biblical commentators, throughout the various interpretative streams, agree that this should not be taken literally. Rather, these men have not fallen into the idolatry of fornication, nor have they worshipped the whore of Babylon – in short, they have not given in to sin. The Church is a virgin bride since it has not defiled itself with pagan practices.

The fact that these 144,000 are men (v.4) is partially explained by the fact that, as Beale notes, according to the Old Testament, ‘the representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel were male’.80 It should be noted however that in the Middle Ages, these virgins were often depicted as women, especially in anchoritic literature. In the alliterative poem Pearl the virgins are given a crown of virginity signifying that

78 Ibid, 203.
79 Ibid, 183.
80 Beale, Revelation, 739-40.
their actions display their faith and loyalty and are rewarded with eternal life, united with the Lamb. This is possible since the trope of virginity stands for purity in the face of spiritual corruption. *Pearl* bears certain similarities with the aforementioned anchoritic literature in presenting the 144,000 as female and arrayed for their wedding to the Lamb (*Pearl*, XIII-XIV, 757-93). Moreover, Salih, who asks whether virginity might be regarded as a gender in itself, writes, ‘Binary gender is an irrelevance to the virgin; the same word, “meiden”, refers to both Juliana and St John, the paradigm of male saintly virginity.’ Salih points out that ‘The Middle English words “virgin” and “meiden” are multiple and overlapping. Both are potentially gender-neutral, although more often used of women.’ Such multivalency in medieval readings needs to be borne in mind when considering modern feminist readings of the Apocalypse.

In contrast to the aforementioned inclusive view is Tina Pippin’s interpretation. She draws on Adela Yarbro Collins’ comments about the 144,000 representing the marginalisation of women’s bodies. Pippin writes:

> The virginal 144,000 male followers of the Lamb are allowed to enter the Bride. The scene is disturbing because the imagery is that of mass intercourse. After the holy war all the blessed (men) partake in a double ecstasy: killing the enemy woman and sharing the victor’s spoils of war. Women in this narrative are not safe. They are killed or ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband’ (Apoc 21:2). The female who is safe is in exile in the wilderness and is alone, her child taken from her. Women in the Apocalypse are victims – victims of war and patriarchy. The Apocalypse is not a safe place for women.

Pippin questions the gendering of the symbolic language. I challenge Pippin’s critique at this point since it is clear in Apocalypse 21:26 that the nations (including women) enter into the Bride (the New Jerusalem). Indeed, the apparently male identity of the virgins is not straightforward. As Smalley writes,

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81 Salih, *Versions*, 92.
82 Ibid, 16.
The noun παρθένοι (parthenoi, ‘chaste’, lit. ‘virgins’) is in the masculine, to agree with the preceding pronoun οὗτοι (houtoi, ‘these’) and the participial phrase οἱ ήγορασμένοι (hoi ἐγορασμένοι, ‘the redeemed'); and these may in turn have been altered from the feminine form of ‘the one hundred and forty-four thousand’ in verse 3 because the representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel were men. . .

Whether or not this influenced such medieval portrayals, or was understood by Julian, there is no evidence that Julian believed that only men would inhabit the New Jerusalem; symbolism as well as the historical background is important here – as is Julian’s view of the soul which transcends gender.

The Woman is preserved in the wilderness precisely for later fulfilment and union. In contradistinction to Pippin’s analysis, Julian follows Pauline teaching, as adopted by Augustine, that all redeemed believers comprise the Bride of Apocalypse 19-21. Julian’s words are therefore compatible with the Pauline teaching regarding the state of the glorified believer which in turn accords with Julian’s emphasis on the non-gender-specific soul. A belief held by Origen and suggested by Paul who writes, ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ This then is the ideal for the Church as realised in heaven: repentant believers are sanctified and gender hierarchies are removed through glorification, the great leveller. The key for John, Paul and Julian is unity – the body of believers united in Christ. This involves struggle – namely, spiritual warfare – with the aim of achieving victory through devotion to the faith. Indeed, the 144,000 in the Apocalypse are being counted out as though they are an army – a force being readied for spiritual warfare – and come from the tribes. This was a common practice and served as a kind of census in order to assess an army’s strength in those days. In A Revelation 70, 32-34 Julian refers to spiritual enemies who with Christ’s permission test believers in their faith thereby making them strong: ‘For if oure faith had not enmite it shulde deserve no mede . . . ’ (33-4) Thus, evangelism, prayer and resisting evil are part of the spiritual battle which is prominent in both the Apocalypse and Julian’s Revelations.

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85 Galatians 3:28.
Julian’s paradoxically both prominent and hidden position in the community and the cell saw her wedded to Christ and serving the body of Christ through intercession for her evencristen. Her eschatological awareness is defined by her belief that Christ resides within the soul (city) of each believer, souls which collectively will comprise the entire city (the Bride). I look at these passages in greater depth in chapter 2. Julian’s constant striving for this state epitomises the overwhelmingly optimistic nature of her insights into the visions. This hermeneutic is enabled by an eschatological view which is informed by an optimistic soteriology that is itself grounded in the most positive aspects of the Apocalypse. This is to say that, through repristination, the Church may prepare itself for its future role as a virgin bride that is undefiled by heresy or other forms of corruption.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified ways in which the Apocalypse exerts a profound influence upon Julian’s Revelation – most obviously in the visionary elements and in the emphasis on Christ. Julian’s prophetic words, which are based on the visions that she received, and her interpretations, are reminiscent of the prophecies and emphases of the Apocalypse, such as those pertaining to spiritual warfare, tribulation, the last things, the end times and the new heaven and new earth – elements which have their foundation in other biblical books (such as Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah and the synoptic Gospels) which the Apocalypse draws upon.

I contend that the Revelation are in part a response to the Apocalypse – albeit often an indirect one. According to this reading, Julian endeavours to reconcile, on the one hand, the apparent paradoxes of her conception of a loving God, and, on the other hand, a Jesus whom she portrays as a comforting, empathetic and invariably reassuring figure. Her conviction that all will be well, as based on her showings, implicitly problematises the overt nature of John’s vivid depictions of his visions of divine wrath and retribution and the descriptions of Christ as an avenger – which are antithetical to Julian’s personal visionary experience. Whilst these constitute fundamental differences between texts, the absence of comparable visions of retribution in her showings may indicate that Julian disagreed with their literal application in a future fulfilment, or did not wish to dwell upon them. However, despite
her claim not to have received such visions of wrath and judgment, she never denies the veracity of these biblical passages, focussing instead on other elements. Moreover, she declares her agreement with Church teaching on hell, which accords with that of the Apocalypse. Such professions of belief in hell can be taken at face value with such omission viewed as indicative of her sense of sorrow that whilst hell is real she wishes to accentuate positives instead. However, despite the limitations inherent in an argument from silence, I contend that omission of visions of hell and God’s wrath, combined with Julian’s otherwise optimistic view, indicates a soteriology that implies a degree of discontentment with the contemporary exegetical approaches to such passages within the Apocalypse and associated Church teaching. I seek to reconcile these contrasting interpretations in the next chapter as I discuss the implications of her positive soteriology from the perspective of the orthodoxy/heterodoxy dichotomy. Julian undoubtedly responds to the Apocalypse, both through a positive emphasis and through omission or commentary upon omission. As shown earlier in this chapter, she also engages with patristic teaching. However, the influence of later religious writers who penned material on the Apocalypse – both orthodox and heterodox to varying degrees – is also discernible, and it is to these later writers to whom we now turn to explore in greater depth.
CHAPTER 2

Orthodox and Heterodox Currents in the Writing of Julian of Norwich

Introduction

Having established in chapter 1 that Julian’s incorporation of ecclesiastical doctrine and orthodox writings serves to buttress her own authority, the present chapter explores the impact of several pertinent literary, religious and historical influences upon her writing in order to establish the extent to which she treads the boundaries of orthodoxy through her soteriological stance. That she does so is strongly implied in her omissions at crucial junctures in relation to hell, purgatory\(^1\) and sin. Indeed, omission, whether of Eve, visions of hell and purgatory, or the denial of God’s wrath, and her statement that ‘sinne is no dede’ (*Revelation* 11, 17-18), although qualified or presented in terms that allow for plausible deniability, nevertheless stretch the boundaries of orthodoxy, eliciting Lynn Staley’s remark that

Were she to omit her many references to Holy Church, to her humble obedience to that church, or to the anguish she feels over the conflict between faith and sight, the Long Text of the *Showings* might not appear so pristinely orthodox.\(^2\)

Thus, although Julian interprets her visions with remarkable clarity of thought, she also introduces ambiguity, leaving problematical questions unanswered, for instance, in her struggle to reconcile her showings (and lack of a showing of hell) with the concept of hell. Such apparent discrepancies ostensibly militate against marrying sections of her text/s with Church doctrine — which she professes to accept. Her reaction to this disjunction is encapsulated in Christ’s reassuring phrase (which she hears) ‘alle shalle be wele’ (*Vision*, 13, 61).

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In establishing the extent of Julian’s orthodoxy in relation to the concerns of the Apocalypse this chapter contextualises her writing by identifying parallels with prevalent orthodox and heterodox writers/writings from her milieu, all of which, it is argued, impacted upon her thought and expression, or served as catalysts for her intellectual engagement. The significance of these writers resides in their mutual interest in the Apocalypse and/or related themes – the exegetical writings of Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux and the Apocalypse commentaries of Joachim of Fiore, Peter John Olivi (1248-1298) and John Wyclif.

With reference to Aristotle I build on the previous chapter by considering Augustine's Christological Trinitarianism as applied to his concept of the soul of the believer and Christ’s place within it. We then turn to the orthodox Bernard of Clairvaux before discussing Joachim, who in a number of his doctrines (and certainly the nature of particular interpretations propounded by many of his followers) was considered to be highly unorthodox or even heretical. It is argued that Julian’s work also displays a degree of Joachite influence, especially mediated through Joachim’s later follower, Peter Olivi. This focus evinces several striking similarities, including their Trinitarian emphasis, eschatology and prophecy – for instance, Julian’s ‘grete dede’ and Joachim’s third status of world peace and spiritual enlightenment that he believed would follow the defeat of Antichrist.3

John Wyclif’s writings on the Apocalypse and his references to Antichrist within his polemic illustrate the prevalence of Apocalypse-inspired rhetoric and recontextualised symbolism in late-medieval religious writings. Moreover, the employment of the vernacular in his writings and those of the Lollards offers another area of comparison with Julian's approach in addressing her evencristen, as opposed to an elite group or hierarchy, which necessitates caution in avoiding accusations of misleading the laity.

This chapter also discuss two other female writers – Marguerite Porete and Margery Kempe, whose writings/lives present numerous points of comparison with Julian’s in their thematic focus. It argues that Julian and Kempe may have had access (via the Carmelites for example) to sources of Apocalypse-related texts and/or ideas.

Finally, the chapter turns to my own sustained textual analysis of Julian’s *Revelations*, focussing on prominent and interrelated themes, such as sin and suffering. The Parable of the Lord and the Servant is revisited by focussing on Apocalypse-derived themes, imagery and symbols. It also addressed the implications of Julian’s omission of a vision of hell in seeking reconciliation between her paradoxical professions of faith in the Church’s teaching on hell – which drew on the Apocalypse – with her implicit liberal soteriology. In diverse ways the texts of these ancient and contemporary writers (both orthodox and heterodox) also frequently display the influence of the Apocalypse, whether in terms of subject matter or specific references or allusions.

*Body and soul: the resurrection of the soul from sin, from Aristotle to Augustine’s city of God and the New Jerusalem*

This section addresses Julian’s emphasis on the soul and its mediating capacity over the body through the Augustinian concept of Christ’s indwelling of the believer’s soul as in a city, echoing Apocalypse 21, and Julian’s concept of ‘oning’ (union) with God. I contend that this interrelationship, which offers scope for honing one’s soul, overcoming sin on earth in preparation for rewards in heaven, owes much to the biblical Apocalypse. For Julian, the hypostatic union inextricably links humanity and Christ as the soul relates to the body and in illuminating Julian’s pneumatological hermeneutic Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*[^4] is cited in arguing that it is analogically germane to Julian’s ‘ghostely’ vision of the hazelnut. This is then linked to the aforementioned Augustinian metaphor. These pneumatological matters, including the pneumatological / somatic binary, relate to the discussion of Julian’s parable (later in this chapter), where an analogy is drawn between the *imago Dei* and the Scotistic/ Franciscan thesis of Christ’s absolute primacy – an eternally present ontological hypostasis, to be differentiated from the Virgin’s Immaculate Conception – to which Julian alludes. The divergence between the Scotistic and Thomistic positions is considered in relation to the Anselmian question *Cur Deus Homo?* within the context of Julian’s parable. Christ indwells the soul through the Holy Spirit and, proleptically, the New Jerusalem illuminated by God’s presence enfolds the glorified

bodies of the believers. It is instructive to consider Aristotle’s influence upon medieval thought as mediated through Aquinas – allowing for contemporary reservations over Aristotle’s status as a pagan. In answering this question, the Franciscan John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308) draws on Aristotelian teaching on causality – namely, that which is intended is last in execution\(^5\) – as an argument for the predestination of Christ and a fundamental argument for the Franciscan thesis on Christ’s absolute primacy.

In illuminating the pneumatological implications of Julian’s vision of a hazelnut and Scotistic and Aristotelian thought I turn first to the latter. Prior to distinguishing between matter and form and discussing potentiality and actuality,\(^6\) Aristotle explains the four causes.\(^7\) The concept of the final cause is often illustrated with the example of an acorn. As it grows into a tree it is constantly changing in appearance, whilst retaining its matter, the placement of which is determined by its essential form which moves inexorably to the point of its final state as an oak tree, its telos. This coexistence of permanence of essence alongside change – of the link between first cause and final cause – conveys a sense of order in creation, which Aristotle attributes to God, to whom all things strive. In the case of human beings, the soul equates to the person’s form: the soul’s capacity to perceive and to reason, for example, allows the matter of the body to function. For Aristotle, the soul provides the catalyst for the maturation of the body, and the soul/acorn is contained within the body/tree despite being invisible. Stated differently, the acorn brings the tree out from itself; the soul comes from God.

We may draw a comparison between this description and the resultant analogy of the acorn/soul and the oak tree/body\(^8\) (in which both are in a sense interchangeable) with Julian’s allegory of the hazelnut in the palm of the hand:

And in this, he shewed a little thing the quantity of an haselnot, lying in the palme of my hand as me semide, and it was as rounde as any balle. I looked theran with the eye of my understanding, and thought: ‘What may this be?’ And it was answered generally thus: ‘It is all that is made.’ I marvayled how it might


\(^6\) Ibid., 1028a-1045b.

\(^7\) Ibid., 1013a.

\(^8\) Hildegard of Bingen also draws an analogy of a tree to the soul in Book 1 of *Scivias*: Hildegard of Bingen *Scivias*, trans. and ed. Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1990), 124.
laste, for methought it might sodenly have fallen to nought for littlenes. And I was answered in my understanding: ‘It lasteth and ever shall, for God loveth it. And so hath all thing being by the love of God.’ (Revelation, 5, 7-13)

This image serves as both an allegory for the simultaneous transcendence of God above creation and his care for it, and the soul of a human being. The hazelnut will 'give birth' to a tree. From the hand of God who gives birth to it providing it with a soul (round shape of perfection) it will then grow into a tree/body. The enclosed, invisible soul compares to the essence of the hazelnut (soul) which is forever embodied in the tree. This is therefore a near-perfect metaphor for the soul. The image conveys a sense of purpose to life and offers hope of comfort and protection to the fragile yet intricately designed created being. Just as Aristotle believed in divine order over creation, Julian sees the work of the Trinity in creation – an emphasis which is a feature of fourteenth-century writing, for example in Piers Plowman Passus XVI of B (XVIII 208-219 in C) which is more concise at this point than C in which marriage

In tokenynge of the Trinite was taken out of o man –
Adam, oure aller fader; Eve was of hymselfe,
And the issue that thei hadde it was of hem bothe,
And either is otheres joye in thre sondry persones . . . (B. 204-207)

This perceived Trinitarian symbolism in the unity of Adam, Eve and their progeny, originating in God’s words in Genesis 1:26,\(^9\) accords with Julian’s Trinitarianism, although the focus on Adam and fatherhood here contrasts with Julian’s emphasis on Christ’s motherhood which, combined with her Christological understanding of the Trinity, produces a feminised Trinitarianism.\(^10\) Such lines illustrate the imago Dei in humanity and allude to the mystery of the hypostatic union as considered through a Trinitarian perspective:

God, the blisseful trinite, which is everlasting being, right as he is endlesse fro without beginning, righte so it was in his purpose endlesse to make mankind;

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\(^9\) ‘Let us make man to our image and likeness’.
which fair kind furst was dight to his owne son, the second person. And when he woulde, by full accorde of alle the trinite, he made us alle at ones. And in oure making he knit us and oned us to himselfe, by which oning we be kept as clene and as noble as we were made. (Revelation 58, 1-6)

Such symbolic emphasis on an ordered creation imbued with Trinitarian symbolism constitutes an area of confluence with John’s view of the Alpha and Omega (Apocalypse 1:8; 21:6 and 22:13). In Apocalypse 3:14 Christ’s instruction to John to write to the angel of the church of Laodicea includes the words: ‘. . . these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God . . . .’ This exemplifies the eschatology of the Apocalypse which encompasses events that are frequently recapitulations of biblical accounts, for example, from Genesis – in which the end is already present in the beginning.

Julian expresses the belief that she exists within the body of Christ: ‘Hyely owe we to enjoye that God wonneth in oure soule, and mekille hyly we owe to enjoye that oure soule wonneth in God. Our soule is made to be Goddes wonning; and the wonning of oure soule is God, which is unmade.’ (Revelation, 54, 6-9) Despite this, she is indistinguishable from her fellow Christians, insofar as she is prone to temptations which cause profound suffering and tribulation.

The concept of community as intrinsic to the city of God is evident in Julian’s focus upon the functions and importance of both the sensuality and substance of the soul. Julian advances an adapted version of the division of the soul upheld in different ways by Origen who conceived of a duality in terms of a struggle of the ‘two men in man’ stemming from the fall of the pre-existent soul\(^{11}\) and Augustine’s Neoplatonic division of the mind (mens), the higher, rational part of the soul and, within it, between the higher and lower reason leading to either scientia (knowledge) or the higher sapientia (wisdom) in Book 12 of On the Trinity (De Trinitate).\(^{12}\) For Julian, these are the lower sensual part and the higher part, the substance. Through grace Christ united these parts, joining them within believers, so that she is able to say, ‘I sawe no difference between God and oure substance, but as it were all God’. (Revelation, 54, 13) Subsequently, she describes the union between sensuality and


The substance:

. . . I saw full sekerly that oure substance is in God. And also I saw that in oure sensualite God is. For in the same point that oure soule is made sensual, in the same point is the citte of God, ordained to him fro without beginning; in which citte he cometh, and never shall remeve it. For God is never out of the soule, in which he shalle wonne blissemfully without end. And this was said in the sixteenth shewing, where it seyth: ‘The place that Jhesu taketh in oure soule he shall never remeve it.’ (Revelation, 55, 19-25)

Due to the hypostatic union and Incarnation Christ is ‘oned’ to the believer in the soul city. In these lines Julian is assured twice that this is permanent. Julian's concept of the soul created by the Holy Ghost and over which the Trinity then rejoices, is also found in A Revelation (68). In this Augustinian-influenced passage the soul of the believer is depicted as an allegorical city in which Christ dwells: 'I saw the soule so large as it were an endlesse warde, and also as it were a blissemful kingdom, and by the conditions that I saw therein I understode that it is a wurshipfulle citte.' (2-4) All believers are connected within this Christological framework. Julian writes of rising above the mundane world into a higher natural state, with the description of her vision containing imagery reminiscent of the New Jerusalem: 'Al thing that he hath made sheweth his lordshippe' (19). Julian makes a particularly clear allusion to Apocalypse 21:23 (in which the sun or moon are replaced with the light of God’s glory for the new Jerusalem)\(^{13}\) in lines 26-29 where she observes that the soul cannot find rest in anything below and does not regard itself but rather

. . . alle the beholding is blissfully set in God, that is the maker, wonning therin.

For in mannnes soule is his very wonning. And the highest light and the brightest shining of the citte is the glorious love of oure lorde God, as to my sight.

Julian is concerned with Christians building a city of God in their souls; these souls combined embody the Church; crucially, the reformed and renewed Church focusses solely on God.

\(^{13}\) Apocalypse 21:23: ‘And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it: and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.’
The connection between humankind and Christ is forged through the hypostatic union, Incarnation, Passion and resurrection. Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt writes that 'The city of God is not, for Julian, located solely in our substance, but in our sensuality, the soul’s point of contact with the material and historical corporeality of human beings.' He points out that, according to Julian, 'the incarnation is Christ's reunion of humanity's substance and sensuality, thus enabling our sensuality to become God's city.' The city of God has 'an eternal, ideal existence in God', but it also has 'a real historical genesis as a visible community, born from the side of the incarnate and crucified Son of God' and is therefore both 'spiritual' and 'political' in nature. The city of God therefore exists in the soul of the believer, the body of Christ (the Church) and, eschatologically, in the New Jerusalem. Augustine takes an amillennialist stance regarding the city of God in Apocalypse 21, viewing it allegorically as representative of God's people on earth. He writes in Chapter 17 of book XX of City of God, ‘This city has been coming down from heaven since its beginning, from the time when its citizens began to increase in number as they have continued to increase throughout the period of the present age'. For Augustine, this passage in the Apocalypse, which he distinguishes from the thousand years, represents the culmination of this process at which point 'no traces of age will remain, since even our bodies will pass from their old corruption and mortality into incorruption and immortality'. This process of glorification made possible through Christ resonates with Julian's view of the soul indwelt by Christ and also her conception of sin discussed later in this chapter. Augustine writes:

Moreover, when will ‘death be no more’ in that city? Surely only when it will be said, 'Death, where is your strife? Death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin.' Without doubt there will be no more sin when it will be asked: 'Where is it?' But in our present state it is not some weak citizen of that City, but our author, John himself, who cries out in his epistle, 'If we say that we are without sin, we are fooling ourselves and we are remote from the truth.'

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
For Julian and Augustine then, the city of God finds temporal fruition. However, for Julian this is an inclusive process as she implicitly considers the potential for all people to become part of the city. Therefore, from an eschatological perspective, there is a divergence of opinion between them.

With the indwelling of Christ in the soul/city, the working of the Trinity and the results of the Passion, Julian's chapter concludes positively in language deriving from the Apocalypse. She quotes the words that she hears Christ speak to her in various forms: “thou shalt not be overcome” (line 47) and “Herewith is the fende overcome” (line 50). If this refers to the binding of Satan it is indicative of a postmillennial reading. Finally, in the closing lines of the chapter we read:

And this worde, ‘Thou shalt not be overcom,’ was saide fulle sharply and full mightly for sekernesse and comfort against all tribulations that may come. He saide not, ‘Thou shalt not be tempestid, thou shalt not be traveyled, thou shalle not be dissesed,’ but he saide, ‘Thou shalt not be overcom.’ God wille that we take hede at this worde, and that we be ever mighty in seker trust, in wele and wo. For he loveth us and liketh us, and so wille he that we love him and like him and mightely trust in him, and all shall be welle. And sone after all was close, and I saw no more. (Revelation 68, 54-60)

This positive message echoes Apocalypse 20-22 as well as the exhortations to overcome which are addressed to the churches in 2:7, 17 and 26; and 3:5, 12 and 21. As M. C. de Boer points out, ‘Apocalyptic eschatology is fundamentally concerned with God’s active and visible rectification (putting right) of the created world (the ‘cosmos’), which has somehow gone astray and become alienated from God.’ In her Christological stance on unity and reform in the perceptions of God and Eve and the prophecy that ‘all shall be welle’ Julian’s text is both ambitious and daring. This chapter as a whole owes much to Augustine’s amillennial and, possibly postmillennial, stance in which the soul of the believer and the body of believers as a

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18 Although this term is anachronistic it is consonant with Julian’s Augustinian hermeneutic. As I argue, Julian’s text can be regarded as either postmillennial or amillennial in accordance with an Augustinian reading. The former bears similarities with Joachim’s position with which Julian’s text has affinities. I distinguish these terms from ‘chiliasm’ whose adherents hold to a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth (premillennialism).

whole constitute the spiritual city of God.

Bernard of Clairvaux: motherhood and redemption

In this section I consider the impact of Bernard of Clairvaux's studies of the Apocalypse and eschatology upon Julian's writing. The abbot's division of Church history into four ages based upon The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse influenced Joachim of Fiore (1145-1202) whose impact I explore in the following section. Bernard is famous for the importance which he accords friendship and love. The concept of friendship with God and between believers is the hallmark of one of his notable English followers, the mystic Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167). This emphasis bears comparison with Julian's concept of the body and sainthood and her sense of unity with, and concern for, her evencristen. Concerning the afterlife, Bernard believed that the will of the believer merges with the will of God – union with God rather than negation of the individual. This union is realised in Apocalypse 19 with the marriage between Christ and the Church.

A significant feature of Bernard's writing is the use of feminine imagery, which is most evident in his ‘Sermons on the Song of Songs'. I consider this particularly in relation to Julian's discussion of motherhood, since her concept of Jesus as mother is one element of her Revelations that ostensibly diverges from the image of the conquering Christ in Apocalypse 19:11-21. For instance, Julian writes, ‘Thus I understode that all his blessed children which be come out of him by kind shall be brought againe into him by grace' (Revelation 63:43-44), summarising Christ's giving birth and then redeeming humankind. Consideration of relevant Bernardine writings helps inform the study of Julian's stance on the Apocalypse.

Bernard's exegesis in his ‘Sermons on the Song of Songs’ reveals his figurative hermeneutic, and in turn, his use of the imagery of lovers in his own application. An example of this which is also theologically fundamental to Julian's parable is Bernard's figurative description of the hypostatic union as a divine kiss, quoting a number of biblical passages:

O happy kiss, and wonder of amazing self-humbling, which is not a mere meeting of lips, but the union of God with man. The touch of lips signifies the
bringing together of souls. But this conjoining of natures unites the human with the divine and makes peace between earth and heaven.\textsuperscript{20}

This concept of unity between man and God through the hypostatic union constitutes an integral part of Julian's teaching and lies at the heart of her parable which I explore below. By employing the gardening metaphor she connects the first and second Adams to the New Heaven and New Earth, complementing her figurative understanding of the New Jerusalem. In Sermons on the Song of Songs Bernard, citing Apocalypse 21:1 (amongst other passages), conflates these in illustrating Christ's redemptive and renovating role in creation and history. Anticipating Joachim, Bernard writes:

History therefore is a garden in which we may recognize three divisions. Within its ambit we find the creation, the reconciliation, and the renewal of heaven and earth. Creation is symbolized in the sowing or planting of the garden; reconciliation by the germination of what is sown or planted. For in due course, while the heavens showered from above and the skies rained down the Just one (Is 45:8), the earth opened for a Savior to spring up, and heaven and earth were reconciled. ‘For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one’ (Col 1:20), making peace by his blood between all things in heaven and on earth. Renewal however is to take place at the end of the world. Then there will be ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev 21:1), and the good will be gathered from the midst of the wicked like fruit from a garden, to be set at rest in the storehouse of God. As Scripture says: ‘In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land raised on high’ (Is 4:2). Here you have the three aspects of time represented by the garden in the historical sense.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition to anticipating Joachite schema, this agrarian metaphor (also discussed below) is an integral part of Langland’s poem as it is in Julian’s Parable of the Lord and the Servant. Both writers compare ploughing and gardening to the spread of the

\textsuperscript{20} Emilie Griffin, ed., G. R. Evans, trans., \textit{Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works} (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 99. N.B. All quotations from Bernard are taken from this text.

Gospel and a Christocentric view of history (Apocalypse 1:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13) from Eden and the postenetic state through to the new heaven and earth. Intertwined with this Christocentric view is the Harrowing of Hell – when between his death and resurrection Christ descended into Sheol to preach to those who had died in the Flood. Below I discuss in greater detail Julian’s treatment of this event and its appearance in her writing. In the Sermons Bernard uses the image of the kiss (quoted above) in this context. He points out that unlike king Ahaz, who rejected the peace of God, it was given to those to whom Christ preached in hell: 'This came to pass when the Lord descended even to hell and greeted those who dwell there with a holy kiss, so that even they received the sign of peace'.

This is not an isolated reference to the Harrowing of Hell; another one occurs in the sermon On Conversion in which Bernard responds to 1 Peter 4:6: 'I seek, then, the voice the dead will hear and, when they hear it, live. Perhaps it is necessary to preach the Gospel to the dead.' This emphasis on God's mercy clearly resonates and accords with Julian's theology of inclusiveness:

And thus in oure making God almighty is oure kindly fader, and God alle wisdom is oure kindly mother, with the love and the goodnes of the holy gost, which is alle one God, one lorde. And in the knitting and in the oning he is oure very tru spouse, and we his loved wife and his fair maiden, with which wife he was never displesed. For he seyeth: 'I love the and thou loveth me, and oure love shall never be departed in two.' (Revelation, 58:9-14)

Julian applies intimate imagery between the believer and Christ, as in her Christocentric Trinitarian-centred focus on creation, the topos of motherhood, and the relationship of the Godhead to humankind. Following Bernard’s concept of a community with a similar Christocentric focus Julian ascribes the qualities of motherhood to Christ:

And he wille that we take us mightly to the faith of holy church, and find there oure deerworthy mother in solas and trew understanding with all the blessed common. For one singular person may oftentimes be broken, as it semeth to

22 McGinn, Christian Mysticism, 104.
the selfe, but the hole body of holy church was never broken, nor never shall be without ende. And therefore a seker thing it is, a good and a gracious, to wille mekly and mighty be fastened and oned to oure moder holy church, that is Crist Jhesu. For the flode of mercy that is his deerworthy blode and precious water is plentuous to make us fair and clene. The blessed woundes of oure saviour be open and enjoye to hele us. The swet, gracious handes of oure moder be redy and diligent about us. (Revelation, 61, 47-55)

Julian employs the language of motherhood as she illustrates her Christocentric view by conflating Christ with the Church. Similarly, in the context of unity and again employing the motherhood topos, Julian offers both immediate guidance and an eschatological prophecy concerning returning to God ultimately in heaven (recalling Apocalypse 21-22):

. . . we see that we be all bounde to God for kind, and we be bounde to God for grace. Her may we see that us nedeth not gretly to seke ferre out to know sondry kindes, but to holy church, into oure moders brest: that is to sey, into oure owne soule wher oure lord wonneth. And ther shall we finde alle: now, in faith and in understanding, and after, verely in himselfe, clerely in blisse. (Revelation, 62, 18-22)

In this inclusive, nurturing description of the relationship between the earthly Church and the celestial destination, Julian intertwines Holy Church, Christ and the soul with the metaphor of the mother’s breast indicating the nurturing role of the former two that is consistant with her inclusivist hermeneutic.

Despite Julian’s professed submission to orthodoxy, her interpretations of scripture occasionally appear to deviate from doctrinal orthodoxy, as in this concept of Jesus as Mother, a metaphor denoting qualities displayed by Jesus that were putatively associated with motherhood. Concerning the Motherhood of God Liz Herbert McAvoy notes: ‘. . . as developed in the Long Text, Julian’s treatment of it is now probably the best known and most fully expounded example of this trope in fourteenth-century religious writing’.23 Julian writes, 'And thus I saw that God enjoyeth

23 Liz Herbert McAvoy, Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 75.
that he is our fader, and God enjoyeth that he is our moder, and God enjoyeth that he is our very spouse, and our soule his loved wife.' (Revelation, 52, 1-3) Although to a modern reader this may sound controversial, Julian's contemporary readership/audience was more attuned to the subtleties of metaphor than the modern propensity for literal analysis. She highlights characteristics which may traditionally have been more readily associated with the feminine: 'To the properte of moderhede longeth kind love, wisdom, and knowing; and it is God' (Revelation, 60, 41-42). This compares with Bernard's usage (see below) and both were familiar with biblical precedents for the use of such figurative language, most strikingly by Jesus himself through his analogy of the mother hen – which precedes the scene where he whips the money changers out of the temple.24 It is found too in Isaiah (a book that is alluded to numerous times in the Apocalypse), in 46:3-4: 'Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel who are carried by my bowels, are borne up by my womb,' and 66:13: 'As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.' In City of God, chapter XX, Augustine quotes from this passage, reading it as figurative language conveying God's promise to comfort the faithful. Indeed, as Caroline Walker Bynum points out, the image of Jesus as mother was used widely in the twelfth century, particularly by Cistercian monks, although not exclusively. Bynum presents the Cistercian, Bernard of Clairvaux, and the Benedictine (initially) Anselm of Canterbury, as examples. In the case of Bernard in particular this was consistent with his view of community, explored in greater detail below. Significantly though, Bernard did not limit the use of feminine imagery to Jesus. As Bynum writes,

Bernard of Clairvaux, whose use of maternal imagery for male figures is more extensive and complex than that of any other twelfth-century figure, uses ‘mother’ to describe Jesus, Moses, Peter, Paul, prelates in general, abbots in general, and, more frequently, himself as abbot.25

However, Bernard differs from Julian in his conception of the disciplinarian aspect of God's character. The Immaculate Conception is intrinsic to Julian’s view of Christ's

humanity, and it was perceived as being a liberating doctrine for Christian women. Indeed, Alexandra Barratt writes:

Christianity in its earliest form gave women a freedom and status hitherto unparalleled in either Judaic or Hellenistic culture. It preached an incarnate Christ with no human father whose humanity, therefore, must have been wholly transmitted through his mother. It granted to that mother, the Virgin Mary, quasi-divine honours.26

The analogy of Christ as nursing mother stems from the belief that the resurrected Christ nourishes the soul of the believer through the blood that he shed during his Passion. This saving blood is compared to the life-giving/saving mother's milk. Caroline Walker Bynum writes:

. . . in medieval medical theory breast milk is processed blood. According to medieval understanding of physiology, the loving mother, like the pelican who is also a symbol for Christ, feeds her child with her own blood. Thus, the connection of blood and milk in many medieval texts is based on more than merely the parallelism of two bodily fluids.27

Sarah McNamer links the motherhood of Christ to the Virgin Mary.28 After pointing out that Julian’s male contemporaries opposed the use of images, she highlights a fundamental difference between Walter Hilton, the Cloud author and the teaching of the via negativa, which is that despite the fact that the via negativa constitutes contemplative prayer with no images, these men retain the image of the Father. McNamer argues that it is Julian’s addition of the mother to the father image that distinguishes her from such male writers. Indeed, according to McNamer, Julian ‘gives the image of the mother equivalence with that of the father’, and it is this distinction which ‘enables her to explore maternal concepts which remain relatively undeveloped by her contemporaries: immanence, unconditional love and mercy.’29

27 Bynum, Jesus as Mother, 132.
29 Ibid., 21.
She argues that it is the maternal image that allows for the unconditional love that a mother has for her child, and it is this unconditional love that is displayed in Julian’s parable through the mercy (as opposed to the more familiar concept of retribution) of the lord in the wake of the Fall. She states that although the lord in the parable is referred to by Julian as masculine, ‘the attributes she assigns to him are those she articulates elsewhere as being what she calls properties of motherhood, such as comfort, nearness, and above all, mercy’.\(^{30}\) Citing Colledge and Walsh’s observation that the description of the lord’s cloak ‘resembles the iconography of the *Schutzmantelmadonna*’,\(^{31}\) she argues that in the medieval period mercy was regarded as a maternal trait of which the Virgin Mary is the embodiment in medieval literature, whereas justice was perceived as masculine. Crucially, this concept of unconditional love has serious implications for the extent to which we view Julian’s soteriology as orthodox or heterodox: if God offers unconditional love then universal salvation is its corollary. McNamer’s argument that Julian ‘gives the image of the mother equivalence with that of the father’\(^{32}\) needs to be qualified with the fact that Julian is expressing attributes of God, which in the medieval period were considered to be feminine. Besides the aforementioned biblical precedents, such usage may be partially attributable to the fact that abstract nouns in Latin are generally feminine leading the Romans to depict deities anthropomorphically as female.\(^{33}\) However, the personal pronoun that Julian uses to refer to God/Christ is masculine, so in this regard she is orthodox and invokes a tradition (leading back to Jesus himself) of using feminine imagery figuratively to describe Christ. However, her emphasis on ‘feminine’ qualities such as mercy and unconditional love is more subversive due to the suggestion of the possibility of universal salvation. Having now established that the trope of Jesus as mother is prominent within her writing, I will analyse other elements of this parable below.

Julian and Bernard also focus on the concept of the renewal of life through Christ. In *On Loving God* Bernard uses pastoral imagery to describe the Passion and Resurrection. It is a positive view to which he applies Apocalypse 21:5 as he writes of he ‘who changed the coldness of death into the warm spring of a new life’, and

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 27.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 21.
quoting Christ: “Behold,” he says, “I will make all things new”. The other side of this is the need to persevere, which, as noted, constitutes John's message to the churches of Asia. Both Julian and Bernard constantly encourage and warn believers to give their all in service to God. The latter cites the warning to the church of Laodicea (Apocalypse 3:15ff) to this effect. They both recognise this as necessitating self-sacrifice. In the sermon entitled On Conversion Bernard, with reference to John 10:12, states that 'persecution separates and distinguishes the hirelings from the shepherds beyond question. For when did he who seeks worldly reward not fear passing losses? When did he who wants money more than righteousness endure worldly persecution for righteousness' sake? There are parallels here with Julian's parable. For instance, the servant humbly suffers seven torments (Revelation 51, 17-27) as he seeks the treasure in the earth (the treasure of human souls rather than financial rewards). (Revelation, 51,157) However, Bernard is clear about his belief in the eternal punishment awaiting habitual sinners, so that after death when ‘all the gates of the body by which the soul has been used to wandering off to busy itself in useless pursuits and going out to seek the passing things of this world will be shut, and it will be forced to remain within itself’. In vivid language which recalls the lake of fire of Apocalypse 20:14-15, he describes the torment that he foresees for the unrepentant sinner:

Now he lays down his body; now he receives it back again, yet not to penance but to punishment, where the state of sin and flesh will be seen to be so much alike that, however our body is punished, its sin can never be expiated and the body’s torment can never be ended nor the body killed by torture. Truly, indeed, vengeance rages forever, for it can never wipe out sin. Nor can the body’s substance be worn away, for then the affliction of the flesh would come to an end.

Bernard therefore more readily invokes the concept of hell from an orthodox stance than does Julian, whose references to hell I discuss later in this chapter. This

34 Bernard, Selected Works, 58.  
36 Ibid., 45.  
37 Ibid., 9.  
38 Ibid., 10.
becomes apparent when examining the opening of On Conversion. Unlike Julian, he frequently quotes directly from scripture. His approach is summarised in this passage where he quotes first from Ezekiel 18:23 in which God says that it is not his will that people should perish, but rather that they should leave their wickedness and thereby live. Bernard echoes the message, writing that it is only through conversion that a person may find 'true life', stating that 'there is no other way to enter upon it'. 39 He then quotes Matthew 18:3 in which Jesus teaches that one must become like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. Notably, despite the implications of failure (hell), Bernard alludes to Christ's Incarnation, his birth, and portrays him in his childhood state rather than as the judge of humankind. It is an image of compassionate nurturing. He writes, 'Truly, only little children will enter, for it is a little child who leads them, he who was born and given to us for this very end.' 40 He is more willing to focus on the consequences of sin than Julian whilst tempering this with a message of hope. We see this at the beginning of On Conversion when he quotes Ezekiel 18:23: ‘Hear what he himself [God] says. “It is not my will that the wicked should perish,” says the Lord, “but rather that they should turn from their wickedness and live.”’ A few lines below this, again referring to the Harrowing of Hell, Bernard highlights the aforementioned 1 Peter 4:6: ‘Perhaps it is even necessary to preach the Gospel to the dead’. 41

Julian’s hermeneutic largely accords with that of Bernard in its conception of a communal body of believers and emphasis on divine love. Both employ feminine terms and draw on the Apocalypse. The Harrowing of Hell with its optimistic soteriology is important for both and I discuss Julian’s treatment of the tradition below. However, Bernard’s unwavering orthodoxy conveys none of the ambivalence inherent in Julian’s caveats concerning the tenet that some will be damned.

Joachite postmillennialism: the prophesied unveiling in the last days

This section identifies several parallels with Joachim of Fiore and his adherent, Peter Olivi, whose writings were a major influence on the Beguines and, it is argued, Julian. This section contends that Julian’s visionary unveiling (‘apocalypse’) resonates with

39 Bernard, Selected Works, 3.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
Joachim's age of the Holy Spirit which involves an unveiling for monastic orders. It identifies similarities in style, content and symbolism – most notably their Trinitarian eschatological framework (ascribing roles to each Person of the Trinity) and apocalyptic emphasis.

The influence of Joachim – one of the most prominent theologians of the Middle Ages – is implicit within *A Revelation* through the creative study of the Trinity and the concept of universalism. Joachim’s works had long been circulating in England by the fourteenth century. His renown was such that Richard the Lionheart met him on a visit to Italy in late 1190 to early 1191 and Dante includes him in *Paradise* in his *Divine Comedy*. The Calabrian abbot considered the monastic way of life superior to all others and founded his own Florensian order in 1191.

Just as the turbulent socio-political situation in Julian's England informs her writing, so the geopolitical situation in Joachim's regional environment was fraught with uncertainty. Indeed, Marjorie Reeves suggests it inspired his interest in eschatology and the Apocalypse:

... he lived at a point where western Europe thrusts out into a Mediterranean menaced by Saracens, where, in Messina, pilgrims, travellers and crusaders gathered and every rumour of the great conflict with the 'Beast from the Sea' was echoed. The drama of the times, the sense that events were moving to a great climax, must have impressed itself on his imagination.  

Although Joachim’s original writings pre-date Julian's *Revelations* by two centuries, they – along with the pseudo-Joachite writings – remained influential in the fourteenth century. Joachim’s followers – some of whom 'elaborated' upon his teachings – also frequently came to prominence. One such person was the French Franciscan theologian and leader of the Franciscan Spirituals Peter Olivi.

One way in which Julian may have encountered Joachite thought is via Olivi and the Beguines. Whilst Olivi’s writings were declared heretical by Pope John XXII

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in 1326, their influence remained.

As with Joachim, and later Julian, Olivi claimed to be orthodox and did not refrain from making direct criticisms of the Church. However, in his vociferous defence of the Franciscan Spirituals’ cause he earned the enmity of many and was accused of heresy and even of being Antichrist, although, as Emmerson points out, he was also referred to as ‘the seventh angel of the Apocalypse by his supporters’ and indeed he ‘expected Antichrist to become pope. Similarly, Olivi’s disciple 'Ubertino da Casale (1259-ca.1338), who considered Francis and Dominic to be the heralds of Christ’s Second Coming, identified Popes Boniface VIII and Benedict XI with the two beasts of Apocalypse 13.

Nevertheless, like Joachim, Olivi successfully convinced those who mattered of his innocence. As Reeves writes, 'Olivi fused the Joachimist expectation of the Age of the Spirit with the Franciscan sense of a prophetic role in a new age of history.' The relevance of Olivi’s Apocalypse-inspired writing to Julian’s Revelations is apparent in ‘On the seven periods of church history’ in which Olivi writes of the fourth period:

The fourth was that of anchorites, who fled the world in favor of extreme solitude and zealously disciplined their bodies, thus illuminating the whole church by their example, as if they were the sun and stars.

The simplicity, frugality and piety of the life advocated by St. Francis and the Franciscan Spirituals may have appealed to Julian given the relative austerity of her chosen path. Moreover, Reeves points out that Olivi’s prophecies (he also preached directly to the Beguines in France) influenced the Beguines, whose teachings, as we will see, may have impacted upon Julian’s views: ‘By 1317 onwards the followers of Olivi are to be found in the heretical sect called Beguins.’ Reeves cites the findings of the Inquisitor, Bernard Gui (c. 1261-1331), to demonstrate that the Provencal

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 42.
Beguins drew upon the teachings of ‘St. Francis as interpreted by Olivi’. Reeves writes, ‘The evidence from these depositions shows conclusively that in this group of Provençal Beguins expectation was once more openly focussed on the third status of Joachim, as recast by the Spirituals.’ Robert E. Lerner concurs, and furthermore points out that Olivi’s attitude towards the Jews ran counter to the level of persecution which they were experiencing in the pogroms: ‘There is no doubt that among the many teachings of Olivi which the Beguines upheld was his belief in the conversion of the Jews as one of the necessary and joyful events of the millennium’. I return to this issue of the Jews below.

As Joachim was writing his Apocalypse commentary (c. 1195) he experienced his own unveiling of the book. Soon after this another vision appeared to him, this time concerning the Trinity. This informed his description of the structure of history in terms of three stages of the Trinity. He identified a degree of overlap between these stages, but they are broadly as follows: the Age of the Father (essentially the period of the Old Testament), the Age of the Son, extending from the coming of Christ on earth to 1260, when the ‘consummation of the ages’ would take place, and the third age, the Age of the Holy Spirit, which is equivalent to the Millennial kingdom on earth from a postmillennial viewpoint. It should be noted that Joachim did not expect this to be a literal thousand years, not least because he viewed the stages accelerating towards the end of history.

Intertwined with Julian’s profound consciousness of the Trinity working within the soul – itself a creation of the Holy Spirit – she perceives all three Persons as fulfilling key roles in salvation history. Like Joachim, she is positive about the future, resolutely focussing on an expectation of the fulfilment of Apocalypse 20-22. This vehemence stems from her belief that the devil has been bound in the Augustinian sense of being unable to prevent souls from coming to Christ. Although she does not mention Antichrist, as discussed in chapter 1, she presents a vivid picture of the presence of evil in the form of demonic activity and the fiends which assail her, combined with the presence of sin and recognition that the devil is active in the world. Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 1 of this thesis, the devil tries to strangle Julian

50 Reeves, Influence, 207.
Another example comes at the end of A Vision where she writes of the kinds of fear. Having differentiated ‘false fear’ from ‘reverent fear’, she writes, ‘Than is this the remedye, to knawe tham bath and refuse the fals, righte as we walde do a wikked spiritle that shewed him in liknes of a goode angelle.’ (Vision, 25, 24-25) Such spiritual warfare constitutes a testing of faith in the ultimate triumph of good and endurance and the eschatological defeat of evil. This is supported by her Christological visions and their unveiling or implicit message as construed by Julian. It presents intriguing parallels with Joachite thought.

The Joachite tradition anticipated a time during the last days in which there would be a revealing of scripture. Joachim does not predict a literal millennium, but rather half a year as he sees the stages accelerating. Although in this he never ventured as far as his later followers, some of their interpretations would have held an air of veracity in Julian’s milieu - whether through the Abbot’s writings or those of a later adherent such as Telesphorus of Cosenza (c. 1365), most likely a pseudonym used by the author of Libellus fratris Telefori and The Great Tribulations and the State of the Church – texts that were heavily influenced by Joachite prophetic thought and which address the subject of schism within the Church. Julian may have been familiar with interpretations of Joachim’s warnings of schism within the Church, which were applicable to the Great Schism and a view of the Avignon Pope as the Antichristus misticus. The following lines are particularly poignant when considered within the context of the Schism. Linking Christ’s suffering to the tribulation that the body of Christ, the Church, must suffer, she recalls how she was

... in party fulfilled with compassion of alle my evencristen. For fulle wele he [Christ] loveth pepille that shalle be saved: that is to seye, Goddes servantes. Holy church shalle be shaked in sorow and anguish and tribulation in this worlde as men shaketh a cloth in the winde. (Revelation, 28, 3-6)

In extrapolating meaning from these lines we see both Julian’s evident concern with the state of the Church, and a veiled warning of the dangers of infighting, schism and corruption, and implicit support for certain reforms – although she carefully tempers this with claims of allegiance to, and love for, Holy Church. The question arises as to

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whether she is writing solely to believers, or assumes that all are believers. Furthermore, she addresses doctrinal articles that she finds incomprehensible, and by simultaneously affirming their veracity and stressing her perplexity conveys tacit criticism of the prevailing hermeneutic.

For Joachim, the third age, based on his reading of the Apocalypse, would usher in a period of the ideal society on earth, crucially, prior to the parousia, in which all spiritual mysteries would be revealed through a great unveiling of scripture. He believed that he was living in the first stage of this age. This age is inextricably intertwined with the monastic way of life. Bernard McGinn\textsuperscript{53} emphasises Joachim's deviation from early Church practices and reformers, contrasting his progressive view of history which focussed on the future age of reform under divinely guided monasticism ascending in stages until the third status when ‘the papacy and Christian society itself would be fully monasticized and spiritualized’.\textsuperscript{54}

I argue that Julian’s Christologically-focussed Trinitarianism depicts a spiritual kingdom guided by Christ through the Holy Spirit in a way that owes much to Apocalypse 20 and Joachite writing on the Apocalypse. However, there were inherent dangers in this outlook, and for Reeves,

The main issue is whether Joachim expected his third status to supersede the second in such a way as to undermine the once-for-all character of the revelation of Christ and to substitute a more spiritual authority for that of the Church as He founded it.\textsuperscript{55}

Whilst Julian’s mysticism by definition places importance on pneumatology and visions, she supports them with scriptural allusions despite not referencing specific passages. Nevertheless she anticipates a union in which all will be revealed and made well whilst seeking greater intimacy with Christ through the Holy Spirit in the present life. For McGinn,

Joachim’s stress on the domination of the spiritual and the charismatic over the institutional and rational in the future church was diametrically opposed to the

\textsuperscript{53} McGinn, \textit{Antichrist}, 136.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Reeves, \textit{Influence}, 129.
forces that triumphed during the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{56}

Joachim's concept of the third age thereby constituted 'a radical critique of the thirteenth-century church'.\textsuperscript{57} Julian’s Christological treatment of the third Person of the Trinity combined with her daring ventriloquizing of Christ’s words indicate her higher knowledge that is not ostensibly hieratic – thus necessitating her professions of doctrinal orthodoxy. Evidence of the dangers inherent in this concept of a third status lies in the earlier teaching of those such as Gerard of Borgo San Donnino who, according to Reeves, adopted a ‘fanatical belief in the immediate advent of the third status’.\textsuperscript{58} With reference to Gerard’s teaching, Reeves writes of the first public proclamation of the controversial third age/status of the Holy Ghost and the concept of the scandal of the Eternal Evangel which arose in Paris in 1254/5 as pushing

\ldots the doctrine to a dangerously logical conclusion \ldots \textsuperscript{[which]} \ldots Joachim himself had strenuously repudiated. For the core of Gerard’s message was that, with the advent of the third status, the Old and New Testaments were utterly abrogated and authority had wholly passed to the Eternal Evangel of the Holy Ghost contained in the works of Joachim. Thus Joachim, who had always upheld two Dispensations, even while expecting the third status, and had maintained that the two Testaments would last till the end of time, became the prophet of a system which might involve the overthrow of all previous institutions and authorities in a third and final Dispensation.\textsuperscript{59}

Reeves highlights an inherent danger in producing revelatory texts – the scope for them to be misconstrued and any ambiguities seized upon to attack the writer. As she points out, Joachim was orthodox in holding that the two Testaments had lasting applicability. However, the doctrine of the third status was open to misinterpretation. Such concerns lie behind Julian’s many qualifications and assertions of orthodoxy in relation to her own revelations in terms of adherence to the teachings of Holy Church that are based on scripture.

\textsuperscript{57} McGinn, ‘Abbot’, 40.
\textsuperscript{58} Reeves, \textit{Influence}, 60.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
The visual quality of the texts of both Joachim and Julian is particularly prominent in their respective portrayals of the workings of the Trinity, which constitutes an integral part of their respective theological outlooks, enabling both to apply it to their particular teachings in innovative ways. The Trinitarian doctrines of both visionaries highlight figurative meanings as well as literal. An example of Joachim's visual teaching is found in the symbolism of the two trees. The branches of the first represent the twelve tribes of Israel, and those of the second symbolise the twelve churches – the seven of Asia and the five main churches of his day, with Rome as the most important. Julian's description of the hazelnut in the palm of God's hand, representing his care for creation and the souls within it, and that of the Christological Trinitarianism of Christ in the soul city are just two of many examples of Julian's application of evocative imagery.

Like Joachim, Julian seeks to balance interpretations which may be perceived as unorthodox with evidence of orthodoxy. She is careful to stress that each Person of the Trinity works in harmony with the other two. She connects Father, Son and Holy Spirit to the 'roles', or characteristics, of Fatherhood, Motherhood and Lordship respectively. Julian’s understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit bears comparison with Joachim's expectation of the revelations of the third status:

... he werketh, rewarding and geving. Rewarding is large geving of trewth that the lorde doth to them that hath traveyled, and geving is a curtesse werking which he doth frely of grace, fulfills and overpassing alle that is deserved of creatures. (Revelation, 58, 43-46)

In this section Julian refers to the Spirit's role in raising people up to heaven. However, she stresses that the Trinity is at work in humankind in the present as well. We see this particularly in A Revelation (54) where she asserts that our natural state is to reside in God. In this she adopts collective terms, writing that

... the almighty truth of the trinite is oure fader, for he made us and kepeth us in him. And the depe wisdome of the trinite is oure moder, in whom we are all beclosed. And the hye goodnesse of the trinite is our lord, and in him we are beclosed and he in us. (15-18)
For Julian, the characteristics and roles of each Person of the Trinity operating within history are prominent. These combine with their manifestation on a personal level within the individuals, who comprise the collective body of the Church. In her identification of sin as a hell in itself, a Christocentric Church of the Spirit would replace sin with the Lordship and guidance of the Spirit.60

This optimism for an ultimate earthly millennial age is echoed in *A Revelation*, in which Julian implicitly reveals a desire for ecclesiastical reform, although she is careful to temper this with claims of allegiance to and love for Holy Church. She highlights discrepancies, or doctrine that she finds incomprehensible, and by simultaneously affirming their veracity and stressing her perplexity she conveys tacit criticism of them. She refers to mysteries which she prophesies will be unveiled ultimately, such as how God will make all things well, in the face of the apparently irreconcilable paradox of being 'all love' whilst sending people to hell, which has implications for the Jews.

As touched upon in the Introduction to the thesis, Julian’s soteriological stance towards the Jews conveys qualified optimism. In mentioning her visions of the Passion Julian states ‘But I saw not so properly specified the Jewes that did him to deth.’ (*Revelation*, 33, 17-18) I also mention this statement later in this chapter in relation to the lack of a vision of hell. Here she also professes her orthodoxy: ‘But notwithstanding, I knew in my faith that they ware acursed and dampned without ende, saving tho that were converted by grace.’ (18-19) However, the caveat allowing for the possibility of their conversion constitutes an example of Julian’s inclusivist soteriology which provides confluence with Joachim’s belief in the inclusivity of the third status in which even infidels would be united in one body, and I return to this below. As Annie Sutherland comments:

... in speaking of the pain inflicted on Christ (‘dispite, spitting, solewng, and buffeting’; *Revelation*, 10.2-3) without mentioning those who inflicted it, the *Revelations* distinguish themselves from the contemporary trend of naming and demonizing the Jews.61

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60 See *A Revelation*, 68.
For Sutherland, Julian was aware that this omission was unconventional. Whilst this view may have elicited Julian’s sympathy, she could not express it fully due to the Church’s position that Jews could not be saved unless they were converted to Christianity. Although they are separated by over a century, the optimism regarding the salvation of the Jews is apparent – even if Joachim, with his papal backing and influential position, is able to express the view more overtly. Lerner quotes Joachim again: “Do not think it absurd,” he said, “that the synagogue that is now sunk in unbelief can be called the mother of the faithful populace.” In the third status the Holy Spirit ‘would speak fully to both the Jewish and gentile peoples. The preaching of the gospel should return to the people whence it derived’.62 This is the message of Apocalypse 7, for example, in which 144,000 from the twelve Jewish tribes are sealed. However, regarding the contemporary environment, Christ criticises unrepentant and hostile Jews as being ‘the synagogue of Satan’ (Apocalypse 2:9; 3:9). Julian thus reflects this balance and thereby stands apart from other writers of her epoch in her comparative optimism and positivity towards the Jews. As Emmerson writes:

Although medieval Christians denounced the Jews for denying Christ and expecting Antichrist, they believed that immediately before the Second Advent the Jews will be converted to Christianity (Rom. 11:26). According to the legend of the Last World Emperor, they will be converted during the reign of peace before the appearance of Antichrist. Some later interpretations forecast that they will be converted after Antichrist’s death or, as in Joachimist expectations, by the spiritual men and the ‘Angellic Pope’.63

Emmerson adds that the traditional exegetical viewpoint was that Enoch and Elias (the two witnesses of Apocalypse 11:3-12) would seek to ‘turn the Jews from Antichrist to the true Christ’.64 I argue that Julian is implicitly optimistic that the Jews would ultimately repent, which is consonant with Joachite beliefs. Kerby-Fulton highlights, with reference to the writings of Hildegard of Bingen and Joachim, the

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62 Lerner, Feast, 35.
63 Emmerson, Antichrist, 99-100.
64 Ibid., 100.
widely-held belief regarding the possible salvation of the Jews at the end— an expectation shared by Bernard, based on St. Paul's promise in Romans 11:25-27 that following the mission to the Gentiles Israel would be saved. Despite criticising the Jews' rejection of fundamental Christian tenets such as the Trinity, Joachim's tract *Exortatorium ad ludeos or Adversus ludeos* (1190s) expresses optimism for the conversion of the Jews in the Third Status. Rejecting the prevalent contemporary anti-Semitism, Joachim declared that Jews would inherit the third status (although they would have been converted at the end of the second status) along with Christians. Lerner writes,

> Although all Christians were obliged to believe with St. Paul that ‘all Israel shall be saved,’ the conversion of the Jews was supposed to take place at the edge of time, in effect as one of the events of the Last Judgement. Joachim, on the contrary, foresaw the conversion as marking the onset of a new ‘status’ — humanity's greatest fulfilment on earth.

Joachim's immersion in the Apocalypse, with the centrality that it places on the geographical location of Israel and its people, may explain his comparatively favourable assessment of the eschatological place of the Jews. Lerner speculates further (without reaching a definite conclusion), that Joachim may have been of Jewish descent.

Whether Julian's exposure to Joachite thought was through Joachim's texts, or possibly mediated through Olivi's writings, the parallels are compelling. Julian's stress on the veracity of her visions correlates with their significance as revelatory showings that supplement Scripture insofar as they are not contrary to it. The revelatory contents are complemented with the prophetic — both the concrete declarations such as 'Holy Church shalle be shaked' (*Revelation* 28, 4-6) discussed in chapter 1 and those which are yet be revealed, such as the 'grete dede' (*Revelation* 32, 46). Both visionaries prophesy the future fulfilment of their visions — for example, Apocalypse 20:7-14 and *Revelation*, 86, 1-2. Drawing on the

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68 Ibid., 23-37.
Apocalypse both anticipate a further unveiling focussed on Christ through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, whilst stressing individual repristination and, by extension, the Church Militant in unity with the Church Expectant and the Church Triumphant. They also reveal eschatological optimism for the Jews, and indeed all, through the Cross.

*John Wyclif and Lollardy*

This period in English history sees the emergence of several notable challenges to ecclesiastical authority. The teachings of John Wyclif (c.1330-1384) are particularly prominent in this respect. Partially because Julian accepts the prevalent sacerdotalism and expresses belief in transubstantiation (see below), I concur with Nicholas Watson that Julian’s writing displays a response to the eventual condemnation of Wyclif and his later followers the Lollards (some of whom deviated from his teachings). Indeed, one of the religious groups that Wyclif opposed was anchorites. Nevertheless, Julian’s didacticism, her implicit criticism of ecclesiastical abuses and use of the vernacular constitute areas of similarity. I also discuss the influence of the Apocalypse on Wycliffite writings as another possible influence for Julian and further evidence of the pervasiveness of apocalypticism in late fourteenth to early fifteenth-century England.

Although Wyclif acknowledged the presence of figurative language in scripture, he argued that this did not detract from the literal nature of the Word. For example, whilst the parables of Jesus involve figurative descriptions – a constituent facet of parables which do not require literalness – Wyclif viewed them as conveying literal truth. He taught that where a passage could be read at face value then it should be interpreted thus. This literalism is reflected in the translation of the Vulgate into Middle English (the Wycliffe Bible) and accounts for his distaste for apocalypticism. Notwithstanding this, the ubiquitousness of the latter led to overlap, as Kerby-Fulton evidences in citing the Wycliffite author of the *Opus* who was also influenced by Olivi. She refers to Olivi’s Joachist prophecy of the third status in which:

> . . . the remnant of the elect contemplatives, living in apostolic poverty, would

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(re)found the spiritual church (ecclesia spiritualis), just as the disciples once did for the church of the Second Status after Pentecost (fol. 104v). One can see an early Wycliffite responding to this (this is, in fact, why early Wycliffites responded to Langland, because this kind of refounding of the church is exactly what is enacted in Piers Plowman — whether or not this has to do with Olivi, the parallel is striking). For Olivi this remnant will have the power to open the hidden (archana) things of scripture, but will be condemned by the scribes and elders of the ‘carnal church’ (ecclesie carna[fol. 104v]). This is exactly the kind of passage Netter speaks of in the Doctrinale . . . flattening the delicacy of Olivi’s handling into literal heresy.  

The Olivian parallel is indeed plausible and would illustrate the far-reaching influence of Olivi’s thought. It accords with the reformist thrust of Langland’s work and the concept of building a Church upon a foundation of sound doctrine so that it may then pursue perfection. Although, as Kerby-Fulton points out, the concept of ‘refounding’ the church attracted Wycliffite interest it is important to reiterate that whilst Wycliffite thought bears certain similarities with Langland’s text, the poet is firmly orthodox. Anne Hudson comments on the Lollards’ interest in the Apocalypse:

In common with most persecuted sects, the Lollards evinced great interest in the last book of the bible. From the trial of Walter Brut in 1393 to the investigation of Hacker of London in 1520, individual Wycliffites used the obscurities of the Apocalypse both to castigate their orthodox fellows and to justify their own hopes for a better world to come.  

Although Hudson (writing prior to Kerby-Fulton’s findings) views ‘this tradition, at least as it is manifested in Wycliffite texts’, as being ‘largely innocent of the influence of Joachim of Flore, at least in its detailed exegesis’, this does not contradict my contention that there is discernible Joachite influence in Julian's Revelations since she conceivably had multiple sources for her Apocalypse-influenced passages. Hudson provides one intriguingly pertinent example in relation to Julian and Norwich

70 Kerby-Fulton, Books, 99-100.  
71 Hudson, Premature, 264.  
72 Ibid., 264.
– a Latin commentary on the Apocalypse known as the *Opus Arduum*, the provenance of which dates to 1389 or the following year. Hudson refers to this text as 'the most notable example of interest in the Apocalypse in the course of Lollardy'.

Whilst I argue that Julian takes pains to distance herself from Lollardy, this does not preclude her acceptance of non-heretical aspects of Lollard teaching. Neither is this to claim that this Latin text was a source for Julian disseminated through any intermediary – indeed, Julian's hermeneutic tends towards the Augustinian allegorical approach rather than the 'literal sense' readings of Wyclif and the Lollards – but rather, the Latin text's importance within Lollardy further underscores the prevailing interest in the Apocalypse, an interest which I argue is reflected in Julian's textual focus. It should also be noted that emergent thought, whether disseminated through the written word or orally, would not necessarily have been viewed as heretical by readers or hearers at that point in time. Thus, it may not have been clear to Julian that a given text was Wycliffite in that historical moment.

Leff also notes Lollardy's adoption of apocalyptic terminology and epithets intended to disparage and condemn: 'Wyclif's later identification of the pope and church hierarchy with Antichrist had been taken a stage further by Oldcastle in his elaboration of their correspondence to the different parts of the beast.' One example of Lollard references to Antichrist in connection with bishops is in the second conclusion of the *Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards*:

\[\ldots\] to se bisschopis pleye with þe Holi Gost in makyng of here ordris, for þei þeueen crownis in caracteris in stede of whyte hartys, and þat is þe leuere of antecryst brout into holy chirche to colour ydilnesse.\]

Julian's familiarity with the Apocalypse and her emphasis, including her expressed concern with adherence to church doctrine and purity, makes this text a possible source, conceivably transmitted through intermediaries. Wyclif wanted temporal power and authority to reside with the Crown and attacked the Church's worldly concerns. One example that is pertinent to Julian is 'Despenser's Crusade' (or the

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73 Ibid., 264-5.
74 Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages: The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent c1250-c1450* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 602.
‘Norwich Crusade’) of 1383. Hudson writes:

Paradigmatic of the current state of the church to this Wycliffite was the Despenser crusade, mentioned many times: it revealed all the evils of a heretical hierarchy more interested in political power and wealth than in Christ’s flock, prepared to resort to war, offering indulgences to the laity for their support and participating themselves in bloodshed.\(^{76}\)

Citing *A Vision* 6, 20-29, Grace Jantzen detects a possible allusion to the military adventurism against fellow believers of the *episcopus martius* and veiled chastisement in Julian’s exhortations for Christians to love all their fellow believers, with failure to do so putting him in danger: ‘No catholic bishop could disagree with this in principle; but it was far from Despenser’s actual practice, and Julian surely knew it.’\(^{77}\)

During Henry IV’s reign (1399-1413) the suppression and persecution of the Lollards, which had begun a number of years earlier, intensified, culminating in executions following the passing into law of *De Heretico Comburendo* (1401) and then in 1409, Arundel’s Constitutions.\(^{78}\) Jantzen points out that the ‘Lollard Pit’, where the burning of Lollards took place, stood in close proximity to Julian’s cell. She expresses the view that although these executions began after *A Revelation* had been completed, she would have discerned the turn that events were taking.\(^{79}\) She cites the following passage as indicative of a response to this shift towards a climate of suppression and persecution:

> Bot in alle thinge I lyeve as haly kyrke techis. For in alle this blissede shewing of oure lorde I behelde it as ane in God sight. And I understode never nathinge therein that stones me ne lettes me of the trewe techinge of halye kyrke. (*Vision*, 6, 46-49)

Jantzen points out that this should be contextualised, not solely within the contents of

\(^{76}\) Hudson, *Premature*, 266.
\(^{77}\) Jantzen, *Julian*, 12.
\(^{78}\) As its title suggests, *De heretico comburendo* countenanced the burning of heretics and their writings. The first related execution (in 1401) was of William Sawtry of Lynn in Norfolk — just over forty miles from Norwich.
Julian's book in its entirety, but also within 'her overall situation, and not as a solemn pronouncement of fidelity to every aspect of the teachings and practices of the ecclesiastical hierarchy . . .'. Indeed, Julian would have found the Lollards' anti-clerical and heretical views abhorrent, such as the denial of transubstantiation (see below) and the rejection of the validity of confession. Nicholas Watson refers to Julian's specific reference to icons of the Passion in A Vision, in proposing a later date for this text (no earlier than 1382) and therefore A Revelation too, arguing that Julian's caution makes most sense in the context of the increasingly prominent Lollard voices, including female Lollard preachers. Julian's caution is also detectable in her conceivably premeditated decision to avoid wide circulation of her writing in her lifetime. Strong indications that her work was not disseminated beyond an 'inner circle' arise from the paucity of complete manuscript copies. Although there is the mid-fifteenth century copy of A Vision from the Amherst collection, the two earliest copies of A Revelation (Sloane and Paris) are early seventeenth century in date. It is likely that contemporary precedents of persecution may have influenced this probable decision not to circulate her work more widely during her lifetime.

Although Wyclif criticised the church from within, he was only condemned as a heretic posthumously. He found himself in opposition to the Church, particularly in the following three ways. Firstly, in an understanding akin to that of St. Francis and the Franciscan Spirituals, he taught that the Church should discard its wealth and instead adopt the doctrine of apostolic poverty. Secondly, the implication of Wyclif's hermeneutic regarding the doctrine of predestination was that even those who belonged to the Church were not guaranteed salvation – including the pope. This area marks clear divergence between Julian and Wyclif, illustrating the disparity between her inclusivist tendencies and his radical and uncompromising division of the elect and damned (prescriti) based on an extreme development of Augustine’s division. As Leff points out:

. . . the church became defined as the community of the elect. If it remained the expression of the saving will of God, both its membership and the efficacy of its

80 Ibid.
ministrations were confined to those already saved.  

Discussing the subversive implications of Wyclif’s focus on the invisible church of the predestined, he continues:

The Church was a universal concept, and antedated the incarnation. For this reason Wyclif constantly looked beyond the present hierarchy for the true source of Christian doctrine and authority; this led him to question and discard everything and everyone, from pope to parish priest, who did not conform to the precepts and practice of Christ as found in his word in the Bible.

This also relates to Wyclif’s controversial views on dominion, namely – insofar as the Church is concerned – only those in a state of grace had dominion over persons or things. Wyclif views the Church as illegitimate. As Leff writes, for Wyclif, ‘. . . the pope who lived on endowments was Antichrist, the “abomination of desolation” and a usurper. Like Satan and Judas, antichrists in chief, those who had been closest to God fell farthest’. Wyclif was also scathing towards clerics who did not uphold the apostolic tradition, associating them with the mystical Antichrist – the collective body opposed to Christ within the Church which, as Leff points out, Wyclif summarises ‘in the ten signs of Antichrist which he contrasted to the true path of Christ’. Wyclif’s perception of papal and sacerdotal abuses of position elicited his characteristic vitriol.

Thirdly, Wyclif famously rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation in its literal sense: ‘. . . right as it is heresie for to trowe [bat Crist is a spiryt and no body, so it is heresie to trowe] pat pis sacrament is Goddus body and no brede, for it is both togedur’. This view, which would later be termed ‘consubstantiation’, meant that the priest’s role appeared to be diminished since Christ inhabited the host spiritually whilst the bread and wine remained unaltered. By contrast, Julian is more orthodox. Her numerous references to the Passion, Christ’s body and the shedding of his blood reflect her orthodoxy through the expression of her belief in the hypostatic union and,

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82 Leff, Heresy, 517.
83 Leff, Heresy, 519.
85 Leff., Heresy, 536.
86 Ibid., 537.
87 ‘Wyclif’s Confessions on the Eucharist’ (Secunda confessio Wyclif) in Hudson, Writings, 18, 32-3.
far from disputing the doctrine of transubstantiation, passages such as the following indicate a firm belief in its veracity:

Beholde and see the vertu of this precious plenty of his dereworthy blode! It descended downe into helle and brak her bondes and deliverd them, all that were there which belong to the courte of heven. The precious plenty of his dereworthy blode overfloweth all erth, and is redy to wash all creatures of sinne which be of good will, have ben, and shall be. The precious plenty of his dereworthy blode ascendeth up into heven in the blessed body of our lorde Jesu Crist, and ther is in him, bleding, preying for us to the father, and is and shal be as long as us nedeth. And evermore it floweth in all heaven, enjoying the salvation of all mankind that be ther and shall be, fulfilling the number that faileth. (Revelation, 12, 17-25)

In this apocalyptic passage Julian incorporates references to blood metonymically, meaning that Christ is referred to by these references, so that blood becomes the vehicle and means of redemption.\textsuperscript{88} The harrowing of hell in the Gospel of Nicodemus is alluded to and the ascent into heaven is mentioned where Christ prays for believers. This focus on salvific blood and the interconnection between heaven/earth and body/spirit binaries recalls Apocalypse 5, John’s vision of the heavenly throne room and ‘a Lamb standing, as it were slain, having seven horns and seven eyes: which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.’ The four living creatures and the twenty-four ancients sing a new canticle:

‘Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof: because thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation: and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.’ (Apocalypse 5:9-10)

In Julian’s passage, the physicality combines with the divine, alluding to transubstantiation through the blood, and the ascent into heaven (line 22). Julian’s concept of the unified Church, and the centrality of Christ's blood shed during the

\textsuperscript{88} In the subsequent chapter she chronologically moved to the Passion – an example too of the artificiality of chapter headings discussed in the previous chapter.
Passion, accords with Augustine's teaching, which in turn was embraced by the Church. The blood and water that flowed from Christ's pierced side was thought to have given birth to the Church, and the doctrine of transubstantiation helps to explain Julian’s reverence for the blood of Christ which she witnesses in her vision of the Passion. Crucially, Julian's apocalyptic visions invariably exemplify her positive soteriology.

In summary, in A Revelation Julian deliberately distances herself from Lollardy. She asserts her orthodoxy, for example, over the doctrine of transubstantiation. However, her text/s display the aforementioned points of confluence as they draw on the Apocalypse. Julian's decision to write a vernacular, biblically-based text for her evencristen bears comparison with Wyclif's desire for the Bible to reach the laity.

Religious, literary and historical contexts: Julian’s writing in relation to orthodox and heterodox religious women writers

Although the pressures facing Christians during Julian's lifetime cannot be equated with those which faced John and, for example, the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia respectively – not least because of the presence of the institutionalised Church in England – pressure to conform to orthodox doctrines was powerful. The Church adopted the Augustinian hermeneutic and preached accordingly. However, alternative readings spread from the continent to East Anglia, with Norwich at the heart of this information flow.

Julian does not mention other writers, such as John, by name, although their influence is discernible in her work. There are allusions to biblical passages, but not on the scale of the Apocalypse which is replete with Old Testament references that serve the dual function of showing the fulfilment of prophecy – often in the form of recapitulations – and thereby conveying the authority of the text. Thus Julian deviates from the medieval (and ancient) tradition of referencing authority figures in order to enhance the perceived validity of a text. Coupled with the book's composition in the vernacular, this enables her to carve out a space of her own, which is nonetheless part of an emerging canon of female religious writing. Felicity Riddy writes of the 'religious person' who takes Julian seriously when she herself dismisses (with a

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89 Apocalypse 2:8-11.
sense of guilt) the visions as madness:

His reading of her experience locates her in the visionary tradition established by such women as Elizabeth (? of Schönau), Mechtilde of Hackeborn and Bridget of Sweden, and enables her to enter a textual community. Outside that community, she feels herself to be isolated and meaningless.91

Whatever the veracity of the last sentence may be, Julian’s death to the world as a female anchorite afforded her the freedom to devote herself in prayer and meditation to the meaning of her visions, which would otherwise have been problematical. Entry into the religious community, endorsed as it was by the Church, was crucial in this, although the discernible caution, particularly in A Vision, is indicative of the need to avoid conveying the impression of deviating from orthodoxy.

However, there are certain rather less orthodox influences in Julian’s work. The thought of the adherents of the Free Spirit and the Beguines bears certain comparisons with Julian's beliefs – albeit necessitating qualifications. The doctrine of the Free Spirit emerged on the continent, thriving particularly in Bavaria and the Low Countries in the fourteenth century. Due to Norwich’s proximity to the continent, it had grown in importance as a trading city by Julian’s day. It also became a hub for ideas from the Low Countries and Baltic states. The views of the Beguines, who were fundamentally opposed to social inequality, sought to correct material imbalances in their communities.92 Peripatetic Beguines came under most suspicion whilst the stable Beguine communities were shown more tolerance.93 There are two conceivable links to Julian. Concerning the unique place of Norwich as a hub for such religious communities Norman Tanner points out, ‘It was perhaps the only town in late-medieval England known to have contained communities of lay women closely resembling Continental beguinages.’94 Ideas could have been disseminated by way

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92 Penelope Galloway “Discreet and Devout Maidens” Women’s Involvement in Beguine Communities in Northern France, 1200-1500”, in Medieval Women in their Communities, ed. Diane Watt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 109.
93 Leff, Heresy, 19.
of the beguinages, reaching other religious communities and individuals in the city. Tanner, who refers to Julian as ‘one of the most remarkable anchoresses of Christendom’, writes, ‘more hermits and anchorites are known to have lived in Norwich, between 1370 and the Reformation, than in any other town in England’. This geographical and socio-religious influence indicates the reality of the oral exchange of ideas. Jonathan Hsy explores this subject in *Trading Tongues*. He reveals how the language of trade within multi-lingual medieval mercantile centres or ‘contact zones’ is reflected in linguistic polyglot texts such as Chaucer’s *The House of Fame*. Moreover, he also considers *The Book of Margery Kempe* as travel writing, remarking upon Margery’s ‘perpetual orbit through polylingual environments’. Through such cross-cultural exchange, Norwich was ripe for the dissemination of ideas through both oral and textual transmission.

I now consider several areas of confluence between Julian’s *Revelations* and Porete’s *The Mirror of Simple Souls (Le Mirouer des Simples Ames* [c.1300]). The fact that a Middle English translation of the *Mirror* was placed alongside *A Vision* in the fifteenth century Amherst anthology (which originated from a Carthusian monastery) may indicate the presence of related themes and insights. Certainly, both texts anticipate a reader's involvement, albeit in different ways. As Marlene Cré writes:

> The texts evoke an intense experience of God in internal language, to which the audience is given access by the guidance the texts include – direct authorial guidance in Julian's case, mediated guidance in the case of *The Mirror*.

The *Mirror* belongs to a dream-vision genre which, as Marlene Cré states, should be regarded thus not because there is a dreamer character within it (there is not) but 'It is the presence of allegorical figures of authority, which links Marguerite's text to the dream-vision tradition.' This innovative text, similarly to Julian's work, emphasises

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95 Tanner, *Church*, 58.
97 Ibid., 133.
the feminine. Alexandra Barratt writes of the 'unusual' character Lady Love:

L. amor is masculine, though its OF derivative is usually a feminine noun and Love is more usually personified as a male figure, especially as the God of Love, in medieval literature. However, Marguerite's near-contemporary, Mechtild of Hackeborn, also personifies Divine Love as a female figure . . . Finally, the soul too, as always in Christian tradition, is female.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, and as discussed above, Julian describes divine love through the language of a nurturing maternal love, emphasising qualities which were regarded as feminine rather than masculine. This focus on the feminine should be considered in the context of the more stringent demands placed upon female writers who needed to persuade the reader of their pristine orthodoxy. As Barratt notes, the Carthusian monk who translated the French text into Middle English was unaware that the text was written by a condemned heretic.¹⁰¹ Indeed, she had been burned at the stake as such and her text had been banned on the continent. Revealingly though, the monk (known to us by the initials M.N) does comment on the text when he feels it may be misconstrued. Barratt continues: 'In medieval England, therefore, The Mirror of Simple Souls was not perceived as a woman's text', a significant fact indicating 'the difficulty of assigning gender to texts in the absence of external evidence'.¹⁰² Although medieval texts, such as those of Bernard of Clairvaux, make frequent use of feminine descriptions, there is an indication that readers were prejudiced in their different expectations concerning texts written by female authors compared with those written by male authors - for example, in Julian's references to her sex and assurances that she is not seeking to teach: ‘Botte God forbede that ye shulde saye or take it so that I am a techere. For I meene nought so, no I mente nevere so. For I am a woman, lewed, febille, and freylle’. (Vision 6, 35-37) This indicates that Julian was aware that her interpretations of the visions could be perceived as teaching – which the Lollards believed was permissible for both sexes alike within the laity – and concerned that her thought could be perceived as belonging to a radical corpus of writing in the tradition of Porete; this would invite unnecessary scrutiny by authorities.

¹⁰⁰ Barratt, Women's Writing, 66.
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 61.
¹⁰² Ibid.
who, if looking for heterodox thought, could conceivably find it – for instance in relation to Julian’s statements about sin. This denial illustrates Julian’s efforts to elude detection and finds her conceiving of her work as part of a corpus of radical religious writing, even if only in anticipating potential accusations.

Whilst Julian does not draw all the same conclusions as the Beguines, aspects of her writings bear resemblance to the Free Spirit doctrine, albeit on a largely superficial level. A core tenet held by adepts of the Free Spirit, such as Porete, was the process of union with God, and for Porete, God is all love and anything else is valueless in comparison. She describes a union between the soul of the believer and God – a concept of the intertwining of the human and divine, which was interpreted by some followers to mean that the two were indistinguishable from each other and that therefore any actions undertaken by the adherent were justified. Some of its teachings verged on pantheism, and others suggested that universal salvation would occur at the end of time, with human souls returning to their source. Norman Cohn writes that:

. . . the more consistent of the Brethren of the Free Spirit did in fact hold that heaven and hell were merely states of the soul in this world and that there was no afterlife of punishment or reward. To have the Holy Spirit incarnated in oneself and to receive the revelation which that brought – that was to rise from the dead and to possess heaven.\(^{103}\)

The Brethren of the Free Spirit concluded that they were able to become divine on earth, a metamorphosis that left them invulnerable to sin; indeed, their actions would henceforth be free from sin, even those which for outsiders would be deemed sinful. Through the act of kenosis, no longer serving virtue, the soul would become the will of the Spirit. Adherents believed they had been granted higher knowledge. This access to knowledge is a premise of Julian’s text, although she takes pains to point out that this does not make her special.

Adherents of the Free Spirit also believed in the concept of intimate union with Christ through identification with the Passion and union with God through the soul. In seeking this union both Porete and Julian actively embrace hardship, attempting to

transcend earthly obstacles as part of their kenotic emphasis and \textit{imitatio Christi}. In Chapter 76 of the \textit{Mirror}, Soul alludes to Mark 14:51-2 as she contrasts John’s shame (losing his robe in order to escape arrest) with the glory that he attained by writing the Apocalypse. Citing also the infamous actions of Mary Magdalene and St. Peter, Soul argues that God ensures that the divine purpose transcends shameful actions.\textsuperscript{104} This is consonant with \textit{A Vision} 23, 23-31 and Julian’s understanding of sin’s impotence contrasted with God’s power.

Related to this perception of sin is Julian’s Christological Trinitarianism, Jane Chance, who views \textit{A Vision} as more radical in its presentation of motherhood than \textit{A Revelation}, observes that particularly in the former text,

\ldots Julian’s physical feminization of the persons of the Trinity – through Jesus’s humanity and her concomitant annihilation of original sin – strongly relates to Marguerite’s. In Julian’s Short Text it is the divine status of Mary as mother of Jesus that allows her to apotheosize into the second person of the Trinity, whereas divinity for Marguerite, as a spark in humanity, allows the annihilated soul (for example, Mary Magdalene) to ‘plant’ her will in God. Either way, it is a woman’s ‘physical humanity’ that allows for her divinity, and with it \ldots an erasure or relaxation of original sin.\textsuperscript{105}

As Chance points out, the way in which Julian and Porete emphasise their concept of access to the divine takes a different form, yet both writers highlight the feminine in describing union with the divine, presenting femininity as facilitating rather than hindering such access. Although Julian never ventures as far as Porete, she intimates that original sin need not hinder a soul’s intimacy with God because of the Incarnation and Passion. Neither Julian nor Marguerite mentions Eve as at fault for the Fall. Chance also deems heretical Julian’s distinction between the beastly will and the higher will that never assents to sin:

\ldots Julian here draws on what has been regarded as a heretical doctrine: she believes that in our unredeemed state we are good enough for God to love us.

\textsuperscript{105} Chance, ‘Heresy’, 62.
before death, before redemption. Her ‘goodely wille’, viewed as equivalent to the desire for good in the persons of the Trinity, appears to mirror Marguerite’s own concept of the soul’s original goodness. Nevertheless, Julian cautiously anticipates accusations of heresy throughout her writings, pre-emptively defusing them with orthodox assertions.

Porete’s identification with Christ and his suffering, which is embraced by the believer, is a desire that is echoed by Julian in her affective piety. Indeed, in her account in A Vision, Julian’s suffering merges with that of Christ as she experiences the Passion in vivid detail. The vision focusses on the final stage of the Passion. Just as Christ is near death the scene switches to the ailing Julian and her mother who closes Julian’s eyes thinking she has expired (26-28) Such is Julian’s identification with Christ here that she says, ‘I feled no paine botte for Cristes paines’ (30-31). Similarly, in Porete’s text such identification with Christ and willingness to suffer is exemplified in the section of the Middle English translation of Porete’s text entitled ‘The Simple Soul Abandons Herself to the Will of God’:

And than I seude this, that if I hadde of my propir condicion this foreseid, I shulde love bettir this foreseid, I shulde love bettir and rather chese that it went to nought withouten recoveryng, than I shulde have it but if it came of hym. And if I hadde as grete tormentis as he is of myght, I shulde love bettir these tormentors, if it cam of hym, than I shuld the glorie that cam not of him, to have it everlastyngli. The willingness to embrace suffering for Christ that is conveyed in these lines displays a self-abnegating, kenotic element that seeks union with Christ. This outlook is also an integral characteristic of Julian’s text. In accord with Apocalypse 14:13, for example, Julian views suffering as something to be endured with joy always with the hope of future heavenly rewards:

For I saw full sekerly that ever as oure contrariousnes werketh to us here in erth paine, shame, and sorow, right so, on the contrary wise, grace werketh to us in

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106 Ibid., 74.
107 Barratt, Women’s Writing, 68, 105-112.
heven solace, wurship, and blisse overpassing – so ferforth that, when we come uppe and receive that swete reward which grace hath wrought to us, there we shall thanke and blisseoure lorde, endlessly enjoyeng that ever we suffered wo. And that shalle be for a properte of blessed love that we shalle know in God, which we might never have knowen withoute wo going before. (Revelation, 48, 33-39)\textsuperscript{108}

These lines which recall the aforementioned promise of Christ of heavenly reward to the faithful of the Church at Smyrna for their earthy endurance in Apocalypse 2:10 also stress Julian’s emphasis upon the body of believers. However, although Julian’s sense of the unity of believers residing within the body of Christ is ostensibly anti-individualistic, such self-deprecation is more limited in A Revelation – attributable to factors which emerged in the intervening years such as an enhanced sense of security in her position as a female anchorite, growth in her theological understanding and belief in the importance of her visions as a didactic tool as well as a rich source for contemplation – wisdom that is revealed in her ultimate reading of her parable, for example.

Porete’s Mirror is influenced by aspects of the Apocalypse in its emphasis on unity with God through its pneumatological focus and references to the Seraphim.\textsuperscript{109} Porete and Julian share several points of thematic focus: the feminised Trinitarianism,\textsuperscript{110} pneumatology, kenosis, and suffering. However, Julian diverges from Porete in other respects. For instance, Porete argues that the adherent transcends reliance on Holy Church, whereas Julian repeatedly emphasises its centrality. Thus Julian preserved her reputation and became a respected spiritual advisor, as I now discuss.

\textit{Julian as Spiritual Guide: the Carmelite Influence and the Visit of Margery Kempe}

In the introduction to this thesis I mentioned possible sources of Julian’s knowledge and Riddy’s research into reading groups. Whilst Julian’s writing provides original and independent viewpoints, aspects of her writing reveal a degree of confluence with

\textsuperscript{108} See also A Revelation, 21.
\textsuperscript{109} Porete, Mirror, 209-10.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 138.
such groups and writings – comprising female and male religious writers – including mystics whose Apocalypse-influenced texts contain implicit challenges to orthodoxy, such as Porete and the visionaries Margery Kempe and the orthodox Hildegard.

Within the context of this thesis Kempe’s importance in relation to Julian rests in the intersections in their shared geographical, spiritual and communal environment and the interpersonal and textual connections which their mutual interest in the Apocalypse created. As Liz Herbert McAvoy notes, Julian and Kempe ‘emerged from the same geographical and socio-religious specificity of mercantile East Anglia, and were part of the same chronology within the movement towards religious writing in the vernacular and a female-identified desire for *imitatio Christi*. ¹¹¹ Moreover, Diane Watt, has highlighted Julian’s focus upon the last things in this chapter. She points out that Julian’s apocalyptic emphasis, which she terms ‘universalist apocalypticism’, is on salvation rather than damnation and Julian’s ‘showings are also concealings’ – a subject which I address below. Watt points out that Margery Kempe either ignores this response to Julian’s apocalyptic, or she had not read Julian’s text. She highlights the divergence of their apocalyptic:

She [Margery] seems to be aware that, while both emerge from a prophetic tradition that is concerned with the last things, the doctrine of damnation and the fate of the souls of the dead, their showings and beliefs diverge in important respects.¹¹²

Despite their divergent emphases regarding the Apocalypse I argue that these women visionaries plausibly shared a number of sources which informed their respective approaches to the Apocalypse. One major source of knowledge conceivably came through the Carmelites.

The interest in the Apocalypse exhibited by the Carmelites, or White Friars, who had eremitic origins and first entered England in 1241/2 ¹¹³ presents an intriguing possible source of information and influence for Julian. Norwich was home to Augustinian, Benedictine, Carmelite, Dominican and Franciscan religious houses,

which were, as Jantzen points out with reference to the latter three, ‘easily accessible to influences from abroad, especially from the Rhineland and the Low Countries, from whence the thought of Eckhart, Tauler, and other Rhineland mystics penetrated English thinking’. Jantzen suggests that Julian may have been permitted to access books from their libraries, with the house of the Augustinian friars representing the most plausible source, not least due to its immediate proximity to St Julian Church. One such book may have been Henry of Costesy’s Apocalypse commentary, which, as Kathryn Kerby-Fulton points out, was widely disseminated. It was also indexed by the Carmelite Alan of Lynn (c. 1348-1432), a spiritual mentor to Margery Kempe, and he is described by Kerby-Fulton as ‘an Olivian-influenced Joachite’. A copy of this text was held in Benedictine libraries. The confluence of interest between the Carmelites and Julian in areas pertaining to the Apocalypse and Apocalypse-influenced texts is striking. Margery Kempe’s links with the Carmelites and shared interest in the Apocalypse as revealed in her text – for instance, her meeting with Julian which I discuss below – provides evidence of the prevalence of Apocalypse-related concerns in writing and conversation.

Naoe Kukita Yoshikawa identifies a correlation between Julian’s articulation of ‘the common operation of the Trinity in the work of redemption’ and Carmelite influence. She remarks that ‘Julian’s understanding of the co-inheritance of Trinitarian love illuminates the context for Margery’s meditation on the will of the Father in the scheme of Redemption. By linking the Coronation with the Passion, Christ reveals the Coronation as symbolic of what awaits beyond his suffering.’ Yoshikawa identifies the contemporary beatific illumination of the Throne of Grace with the Coronation of the Virgin Mary and depiction of the Trinity from the Carmelite Missal as a devotional source that Margery may have known through, she suggests, Alan of Lynn, or the Norwich Carmelite and friar William of Southfield whom Margery consulted because of his reputation for receiving supernatural visitations. More recently, Yoshikawa has highlighted the contrasting approaches of Alan and Thomas Netter of Walden (c.1372-1430). She points out that the Carmelites encouraged the

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115 Jantzen, Julian, 19.
116 Kerby-Fulton, Books, 102.
117 Ibid., 100.
education of the laity. However, whereas Alan was supportive of Margery’s practising of *discretio spirituum* and peripatetic life involving public speaking, Netter, in seeking to safeguard orthodoxy and rigid hierarchy, favoured sedentary anchorites.\(^\text{120}\)

Considering Julian’s meeting with Margery and encouragement in the area of *discretio spirituum* we see evidence of community and an interest in matters pertaining to the Apocalypse sanctioned by this prominent Carmelite although distrusted by Netter.

Julian’s sensitivity to the strictures of ecclesiastical orthodoxy and related scepticism, whether her own or socially conditioned, is implicit in her initial hesitance to accept the validity of the visions. In her account she experiences a sense of shame that she momentarily doubted the veracity of the visions prior to their validation by the religious person who attends her sickbed. (*Revelation*, 66, 13-28) As mentioned in chapter 1, this recollection not only indicates the visions’ veracity but represents her justification for writing. Julian’s early qualifications in *A Vision* are reduced or removed altogether from *A Revelation*, as with the aforementioned disclaimer and defence:

> Botte God forbede that ye shulde saye or take it so that I am a techere. For I meene nought so, no I mente nevere so. For I am a woman, lewed, febille, and freylle. Botte I wate wele, this that I saye I hafe it of the shewinge of him that es soverayne techare. (*Vision*, 6, 35-38)

This early tentativeness is absent from the later text in which a greater sense of authority emanates from her words. Such authority stems from earning her reputation for orthodoxy.

Julian’s reputation for wisdom evidently spread because Margery Kempe – who earlier in life had a near death experience with similarities to Julian’s in terms of its visionary nature – sought her out in 1413, as she recounts in her *Book of Margery Kempe*.\(^\text{121}\) Although Margery was suspected of heresy and questioned, she was not actually tried, partially because of her ability to persuade bishops of her orthodoxy. She may have seen Julian as part of this group of respected religious and one whose


position as female anchorite besides giving her visions more credence than those of a lay woman nevertheless also required her to deflect any suspicions of heterodoxy. Julian provides Margery with reassuring and instructive words and, significantly, Julian, responding to Margery’s request, discusses the subject of *discretio spirituum* – a major theme in the Apocalypse. The *Book* tells us that she

... schewyd hir þe grace þat God put in hir sowle of compunccyon, contricyon, swetnesse & deuocyon, compassyon wyth holy meditacyon & hy contemplacyon, & ful many holy spechys & dalyawns þat owyr Lord spak to hir sowle, and many wondiful reuelacyons which sche schewyd to þe ankres to wetyn yf þer wer any deceyte in hem, for þe ankres was expert in swech thyngys & good cownsel cowd þeuyn.122

Julian broaches the subject of spiritual warfare in the context of its place in fighting against heterodoxy and advises Margery

... to be obedyent to þe wyl of owyr Lord God & fulfyllyn wyth all hir mygthys what-euyr he put in hir sowle yf it wer not a-geyn þe worshep of God & profyte of hir euyn-cristen, for, yf it wer, þan it wer nowt þe mevyng of a good spyryte but raþar of an euyl spyrit. ‘Þe Holy Gost meuyth neuyr a þing a-gyen charite, & yf he dede, he wer contraryows to hys owyn self, for he is al charite’.123

Significantly, Julian alludes to Margery’s will to reclaim her virginity: ‘Also he meuyth a sowle to al chastnesse, for chast leuars be clepyd þe temple of þe Holy Gost, & þe Holy Gost makyth a sowle stabyl & stedfast in þe ryght feyth & þe ryght beleue.’124 I addressed the issue of virginity in the previous chapter, but it is worth considering that Margery, who had fourteen children, believed she could attain the state of virginity by making a vow of chastity and seeking renewal in Christ, herein illustrating the convergence of her conception of chastity and virginity. By becoming chaste and re-orienting her spiritual focus on Christ she believed that she was from that point viewed by Christ as a virgin would be. Indeed, elsewhere in the *Book* Margery is told

123 Ibid., 19-26.
124 Ibid., 26-29.
by Christ to wear white clothing, which signifies the purity of one who has been made new in Christ.\textsuperscript{125}

Julian also displays a degree of empathy with the suffering that Margery experienced. She prays that Margery will have perseverance:

‘Settyth al ȝour trust in God & feryth not ȝe langage of ȝe world, for ȝe mor despyte, schame, & repref ȝat ȝe haue in ȝe world ȝe mor is ȝowr meryte in ȝe syght of God. Pacyens is necessary vn-to ȝow, for in ȝat schal ȝe kelyn ȝowr sowle.’\textsuperscript{126}

Julian’s advice accords with Margery’s later recollection of the voice of Christ who says, ‘Ȟa, dowtyr, ȝe mor wondryng ȝat ȝow hast for my lofe, ȝe mor ȝu plesyst me.’\textsuperscript{127} The image is of a pilgrim and willing martyr (in the original sense of the Greek word meaning \textit{witness}) for the faith.

Although Kempe was only informally questioned concerning her beliefs, the fact that she was accused of heresy – specifically Lollardy – illustrates both the precarious position of women visionaries and the seriousness with which Lollardy was viewed in the early fifteenth century. The concept of a priesthood of the pious laity was anathema to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It is to such concerns and their implications for Julian that I now turn.

This chapter has so far discussed the influences on Julian’s writing. For the remainder of the chapter I examine key sections of her text beginning with the Parable of the Lord and the Servant.

\textit{The Lord and the Servant}

The Parable of the Lord and the Servant represents the fulcrum of Julian’s theology. By employing textual analysis within the framework of the orthodoxy/heterodox debate I build upon my discussion of Eve and Mary in chapter 1 and identify further parallels with the Apocalypse. Although her liberal soteriology in the parable ostensibly contradicts the Apocalypse stress on judgment and guilt of sinners, I argue

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid, p32, 16-18.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Kempe, \textit{Book}, 18, p43, 13-18.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p32, 22-23.
\end{itemize}
that Julian conveys a discernible Scotistic influence that is rooted in the concept of Christ as the Alpha and the Omega in the Apocalypse.

By historicising the word servant we illuminate further its nuanced referents within Julian’s milieu. Bauerschmidt argues that the parable should be read in the context of the 1381 Uprising, which had as its catalyst excessive taxation, and the consequent financially detrimental effect upon sections of society. The relationship between the lord and the servant rests uneasily with the socio-political context of inequality between peasants and their lords. From John’s perspective as writer of the Apocalypse, Jesus combined the qualities of the ideal servant with those of leadership. In the later chapters of the Apocalypse Christ fulfils the role of avenger and judge. The text also constitutes a call to believers to imitate his earthly example of servanthood, loyalty and faith, adherence to which may result in martyrdom. Both John and Julian therefore re-apply their sources to their respective periods, however Julian’s emphasis on crowning recalls John’s usage.

The many years of meditation that it took for Julian to attain a satisfactory understanding of the parable’s meaning explains its omission from A Vision:

And yet culde I not take therein full understanding to my ees in that time. For in the servant that was shewed for Adam, as I shall sey, I sawe many diverse properteys that might by no manner be derecte to singel Adam. And thus in that time I stode mekille in unknowinge. For the full understanding of this marvelouse example was not geven me in that time . . . (Revelation, 51, 55-60)

The symbolic nature of the parable determines Julian’s hermeneutical approach which bears comparison with the command in Apocalypse 3:22 ‘He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches’:

For twenty yere after the time of the shewing, save thre months, I had teching inwardly, as I shall sey: ‘It longeth to the to take hede to alle the propertes and the condetions that were shewed in the example, though the thinke that it be misty and indefferent to thy sight.’ (Revelation, 51, 73-76)

The opening verse of the Apocalypse establishes the importance of this word servant: ‘The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass: and signified, sending by his angel to his servant John’. In my Conclusion to this thesis I discuss the archetypal servant and precursor of Christ, Moses, in the context of Apocalypse 15. Another relevant reference is Apocalypse 7, in which the first 144,000 of the twelve tribes comprising the servants of God are sealed. Significantly, in 7:9 the great multitude of Gentile saints’ attire (white robes) signifies their sanctification and glorification. The elder tells John that ‘These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’ (7:14). The purifying function of blood here reveals the martyr’s sacrifice leading to renewed life and union with Christ.

Julian describes the servant’s tunic as white but in poor condition. Upon consideration she interprets the image as follows:

The whit kirtel is his fleshe. The singlehede is that ther was right noght betwen the godhede and the manhede. The straighthede is poverté. The elde is of Adams wering. The defauting is the swete of Adams traveyle. The shorthede sheweth the servant laborar. (Revelation 51, 207-210)

Adam’s sweat, itself a consequence of his demotion to a postlapsarian agrarian life, signifies the corruption or obscuring of the imago Dei in humankind.129 Here Julian alludes to the hypostatic union and the Incarnation. Since the servant is simultaneously Adam and Christ the inference is that through Christ humankind is redeemed. Crucially though, Julian sees no divine blame directed at sinners since it has been transferred to Christ, subsequently referring to Christ’s entombed body as ‘oure foule dedely flesh, that Goddes son toke upon him – which was Adams olde kirtel, straite, bare, and shorte . . . . ’ (259-260) Through Christ this flesh . . . was made fair, new, whit, and bright, and of endlesse clennesse, wide and side, fair and richar than was the clothing which I saw on the fader. For that

129 This passage also evokes the ideal of the Franciscan Spirituals regarding the rejection of wealth and the alternative path which followed the apostolic example (as they interpreted it) of a life of poverty with the aim of attaining spiritual enrichment.
clothing was blew, and Cristes clothing is now of fair, semely medolour which is so mervelous that I can it not discrive, for it is all of very wurshippe. (*Revelation*, 51, 260-264)

Julian’s perception of the servant’s inherent goodness stresses unity with Christ despite his human condition because of the *imago Dei*. Earlier she conveys this positive soteriology within a celestial perspective recalling Apocalypse 4-5 and also invokes Christ’s earthly mission which involved servanthood:

For all mankinde that shall be saved by the swete incarnation and the blisseful passion of Crist, alle is the manhode of Crist. For he is the heed, and we be his membris, to which membris the day and the time is unknowen whan every passing wo and sorow shall have an ende and the everlasting joy and blisse shall be fulfilled. Which day and time for to see, all the company of heven longeth or desireth. And all that be under heven which shall come theder, ther way is by longing and desyering; which desyering and longing was shewed in the servant stonding before the lorde – or elles thus, in the son stonding afore the fader in Adam kirtel. For the longing and desyer of all mankind that shall be safe apered in Jhesu. For Jhesu is all that shall be saved, and all that shall be saved is Jhesu – and all of the charite of God, with obedience, mekenesesse, and patiens, and vertues that longeth to us. (*Revelation*, 51, 216-227)

Julian emphasises the concept of the mystical body of Christ in which he is ‘heed and we be his membris’. She refers to the union with the Church Triumphant and Christ being ‘all that shall be saved’ (line 226) as she looks to salvation and glorification in heaven. Christ’s servanthood means that believers must also become servants. Within this duality the servant’s humble clothing is that of Adam as adopted by Christ in the Incarnation. Having previously explained that the servant represents both Christ and Adam, Julian writes:

When Adam felle, Godes sonne fell. For the rightful oning which was made in heven, Godes sonne might not be seperath from Adam, for by Adam I understond alle man. Adam fell fro life to deth: into the slade of this wreched worlde, and after that into hell. Godes son fell with Adam into the slade of the
maidens wombe, which was the fairest daughter of Adam — and that for to excuse Adam from blame in heven and in erth — and mightely he feched him out of hell. (Revelation, 51, 185-191)

With these lines Julian conveys a Christologically viewed conception of salvation history as she emphasises the unity between humankind and Christ. I discuss further the soteriological implications of these lines below. There are three essential elements: the allusion to the hypostatic union; the prominence of Mary; and the Harrowing of Hell.

The first element relates to the Franciscan/Scotistic thesis of the absolute primacy of Christ, upheld by Rupert of Deutz\(^{130}\) (c.1070-1129) and Duns Scotus contra Augustine, Ambrose, Anselm and Aquinas. Within this Christocentric hermeneutic the hypostatic union and the Incarnation are eternally and unconditionally predestined as the Alpha and Omega of Apocalypse 1:8; 21:6; 22:13 and 3:14 (‘beginning of the creation of God’ [Alpha/Genesis] and the final cause over it [Omega/Apocalypse]).

I contend that Julian’s position regarding the Fall is Scotistic and relates to her understanding of God’s view of sin contrasting with human judgment (see below). Julian’s parable simultaneously alludes to/depicts Genesis (Creation/the Fall) and the Apocalypse (heavenly throne room/new Eden) within a Christocentric framework which advances the theological belief in the pre-existence of Christ and his absolute primacy. According to the Scotistic hypothesis, the fact that the Fall necessitated the coming of the Redeemer would not have precluded the Incarnation (the *summum opus Dei*) had the Fall not taken place, since the Incarnation was predestined before the Passion.\(^{131}\) Whereas the Thomist thesis renders the Incarnation contingent upon the Fall as its primary cause, so that Christ would have a relative primacy, for Scotus, Jesus would have come as mediator to enable *theosis* irrespective of the Fall. Following the Fall, his decision to become incarnate took on a redemptive secondary but necessary purpose — a corollary to this prior motive (*theosis*) for the Incarnation. Therefore, when Julian writes of the Passion: ‘. . . he yelding the soule into the faders hand, with alle mankinde for whome he was sent’ (Revelation, 51, 52-3) she refers to


the purpose of the Incarnation based upon this antecedent motive and not the Thomist thesis. Denys Turner also perceives (qualified) similarities with the Scotistic position:

. . . Julian agrees with Scotus that the Incarnation is not caused by the Fall, as if occasioned by a change in the divine plan; but this is not for Julian as it is for Scotus, because the Incarnation would have happened had Adam not fallen, but because God causes the lot — Creation, Fall, and Incarnation — in a single providential act of self-disclosure, as a single revelation of love. Within that providential act the Fall is indeed a crucial element, but not as if standing outside it and as if necessitating it causally. That, of course, was the principal burden of the example of the Lord and the Servant: Adam’s fall and the falling of the divine Word into Mary’s womb were one and the same falling. Hence Julian, unlike Scotus, has no need to distinguish between what God would have willed absolutely had human beings not in fact fallen, and a secondary motivation arising out of the fact that human beings did in fact do so. From all eternity ‘sinne is behovely’. That is all we can know as governing the Incarnation’s necessity, because all you need to know by way of answering Anselm’s question is that ‘it is a joy, a blisse, and endless liking to me that ever I suffered passion for the[e].’

I challenge Turner over his position that, for Julian, God causes the Fall as well as creation and the Incarnation, since, although Julian does indeed consider God’s acts and intervention holistically, this is the nature of the vision which reflects biblical revelation, its recapitulations and foreshadowings – for instance, Moses and David as prefigurations of Christ. Julian’s position is Scotistic in her recognition of God’s will to draw humanity closer to him through Christ; the Fall led to a less desirable way of this occurring if we apply modal logic. Whilst Apocalypse 13:8: ‘the Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world’ would appear to support Turner’s thesis with the Fall predestined, it can instead be interpreted as illustrating divine foreknowledge according to the Franciscan/Scotistic thesis of Christ’s primacy as

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Alpha and Omega.

Integral to Julian’s parable is an exploration of the doctrine of free will. Here again I diverge from Turner when he writes elsewhere 134 ‘Julian is resolute that everything is part of the plot, including sin’. I contend that by ‘sinne is behovely’ Julian, employing the Scotistic hermeneutic, means that given the reality of the Fall and sin, Christ takes on a redemptive mission which is to be welcomed. This is not to contend that the Fall was predestined by God or desirable from his perspective. Moreover, Julian’s belief that human beings act with good intentions means that despite their propensity to fall into sin there is a removal of guilt. Also significant is that one is not privy to the divine purpose behind everything.

In chapter 1 I discussed Julian’s treatment of a postlapsarian Eden and her allusions to the Woman of Apocalypse 12. In writing of the servant’s fall into the womb Julian alludes to the Incarnation and the hypostatic union but also the Woman signifying Mary who gives flesh to Christ and Eve as mother of the human race. The Woman of Apocalypse 12 is pregnant with the man Child (Christ/humanity). David E. Aune notes that her passivity makes the Woman of the Apocalypse a ‘victim-hero’ as opposed to a ‘seeker-hero’ 135 in the drama, thereby raising an intriguing parallel with Julian’s depiction of Mary as sufferer of the Passion with Christ, the Word made flesh (John 1:14). Mary is also predestined as co-redemptrix/mediatrix – albeit subordinate to Christ – by giving flesh to Christ. In writing of the second Person falling into Mary’s womb Julian recalls John 1:1-18 and Apocalypse 13:8, thereby alluding to the pre-existent Logos – not a ‘creature’, but more than God’s foreknowledge. Creation and the hypostatic union are interlinked and the ultimate goal of theosis is realised in the new creation in the Apocalypse. As a result of the Fall, the Incarnation also involves the Passion as well as the birth and persecution of the Church. Julian alludes to this proleptic prophecy of tribulation through a Christological and Marian focus.

As discussed in chapter 1, Eve’s guilt is not addressed – nor indeed is she mentioned, so that in A Vision we read of ‘Adames sinne’ (Vision, 14, 6) and the ‘sinne of Adam’ (Vision, 14, 11). This accords with Clemence of Barking’s depiction of Eve as a victim (see Life of St. Catherine) 136 – a presentation of gender equality

which Diane Watt addresses thus: ‘Clemence of Barking does not depict Eve as disobedient or deceptive, but as the victim of treachery that in turn brings down Adam. Neither is inherently evil; both have free will.’

It also accords with Hildegard’s treatment of the Fall in which she places the main blame on Satan rather than Eve. By mentioning Adam’s fall more than once, but not that of Eve, Julian is attempting to redress the balance of the Church’s emphasis, which she sees as having focussed excessively on Eve’s guilt. Referring to Christ, she writes that the ‘merciful beholding . . . descended downe with Adam into helle, with which continuant pitte Adam was kepte fro endlesse deth’ (Revelation, 51, 116-118). Julian views Christ and Adam (the human race) as inextricably connected, since ‘When Adam felle, Godes sonne fell’ (185-6), thereby apparently assuming that the defeat of sin and death by the Passion and Resurrection is universally applicable. Immediately above this sentence we read, ‘The pity was erthly and the blisse hevenly’ (113), intimating that earthly life is itself purgatorial in contrast to the bliss of heaven awaiting the believer. Moreover, if the fall of the servant is a metaphor for sin then the lines that he ‘shulde be hyely and blissefully rewarded withoute end, above that he shulde have been if he had not fallen’ (Revelation, 48-49) ostensibly convey a subversive challenge to the teaching of an authority such as St. Paul in Romans 6:1-2: ‘What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?’ Paul is referring to justification by faith and eventual salvation as offered by or through Christ to repentant sinners, and the teaching that Christ’s justice and sacrifice brings glory in place of sin and death, since it is impossible to become justified for salvation through the law. This is not to contend that Julian is actually unorthodox by medieval standards here, as her words belong to a tradition that recognised the felix culpa or ‘happy/fortunate fault/fall’ – the idea that the Fall could be construed as ultimately positive, given that it led to Christ’s choice to adopt human form (according to the Thomist thesis), and for Christ to become Redeemer (in both the Thomist and Scotistic schools). Without the Fall there may have been no Mary. Indeed, Ambrose, Augustine and Aquinas all wrote about it in positive terms. Reversal of the situation inspires praise and the use of figurative language.


Through affective piety Julian seeks to experience the Passion itself in the hope of attaining a state of ultimate proximity to Christ as she acknowledges the postlapsarian necessity of the Redeemer and also suffering. She draws on Christ’s incarnate experience of doubting, rejection and exposure, to inform her reference to his descent into hell in the form of the absence of the lord (God), thereby alluding to his experience of the absence of his Father on the Cross. More extreme manifestations of this desire to experience suffering in searching for closer proximity to Christ arose during Julian's lifetime, most notably amongst the flagellants. This was more of a continental phenomenon and extreme in nature, although, the Ancrene Riwle\textsuperscript{139} forbade female anchorites from beating themselves with nettles and wearing hedgehog skins. This was surely in response to those such as the mystic and beguine, Marie d’Oignes, who engaged in acts that were physically painful as part of her devotions.\textsuperscript{140} However, Julian draws an analogy between the pain caused by the scourge and the worse damage caused by sin:

\begin{quote}
Sinne is the sharpest scorge that ony chosen soule may be smitten with. Which scorge alle forbeteth man and woman, and alle forbreketh him, and noyeth him in his owne sight – so ferforth that otherwhile he thinketh himselfe he is not wurthy but as it were to sinke into helle. (Revelation 39, 1-4)
\end{quote}

These lines illustrate Julian’s view of sin as being worse than physical pain. She regards being in a state of sin as unnatural and destructive. It is dangerous not least because it leads to despair rather than hope. In her view, the self-critical judgment of the believer (see the next section) contrasts with God’s desire to redeem the person from sin. For Julian, the necessary and joyful suffering is undergoing tribulation for Christ. Later in the text, referring to overcoming the devil by enduring worldly suffering as penance, she writes that it is right to ‘wifully and gladly take the skorging and the chastising that oure lorde himselfe wille give us’. (Revelation 77, 17-19). Then finally, recalling the thirteenth revelation she writes:

... whan we have minde of his blessed passion, with pitte and love, then we suffer with him, like as his frendes did that saw it. And this was shewd in the thirteenth, nere at the beginning, where it speketh of pitte. For he seyeth: ‘Accuse not thyselfe overdon mekille, deming that thy tribulation and thy wo is alle thy defaut; for I wille not that thou be hevy ne sorowfulle undiscretly. For I telle thee, howsoever thou do, thou shalle have wo. And therfore I wille that thou wisely know thy penance, which thou arte in continually, and that thou mekely take it for thy penance. And than shalt thou truly se that alle this living is penance profitable.’ (Revelation, 77, 25-32)

Again, as in the Apocalypse, worldly suffering precedes celestial rewards for the saints. Whilst, according to Watson and Jenkins, her following frequently quoted lines ‘This place is prison, this life is penance’ (Revelation, 77, 33) are ‘a standard image, in ascetic texts, for human life in the world’, they also echo Apocalypse 1:9 concerning John’s incarceration on Patmos. Julian’s balanced view of the necessity of suffering for future bliss constitutes a summation of Christ’s message to the seven churches prompting her encouraging words about the path to heaven where she summarises the meaning of the vision of the Passion ‘... where he made me mightily to chose him for my heven’. (Revelation, 77, 38-39)

Following the Apocalypse, Julian in her parable balances this treatment of suffering with the promise of heavenly rewards and unity with the Church Triumphant as she draws on the symbolism of the Apocalypse in describing the heavenly throne room, crowns and the Tree of Life. She also focusses on its redemptive thrust and exhortations to persevere through tribulation. However, the parable is Julian’s implicit critique of prevalent contemporary emphases focussing on retribution and wrath. Julian’s admonitions directed to her evencresten are subtle and gentle. She also offers hope through her soteriological approach which explains the triumphant celestial scenes. The following section considers this approach to the question of sin and judgment.

*Julian’s conception of hell: sin as ultimate suffering*

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This section argues that Julian’s parable and her understanding of hell offer a thinly veiled critique of the contemporary ecclesiastical teaching on perdition, even as she professes to accept it. From the fourteenth-century ecclesiastical viewpoint, in 1302 Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) issued the Unam sanctum bull which stated that ‘Outside the Church there is no salvation’ (Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus) meaning that, by definition, only subjects of the pontiff could be saved. In exploring how Julian engages with this disjunction, this section highlights the nuances inherent in her text as she conveys optimism that although hell is a reality, it need not be populated by human souls. In doing so it is argued that without denying the veracity of the Apocalypse Julian reinterprets the text contrary to the contemporary stress on judgment, instead offering an optimistic hermeneutic consonant with her liberal soteriology.

In her parable Julian alludes to the Harrowing of hell:

The merciful beholding of his lovely chere fulfilled all erth and descended downe with Adam into helle, with which continuant pitte Adam was kepte fro endlesse deth. And this mercy and pitte dwelleth with mankinde into the time that we come uppe into heven. (Revelation, 51, 116-119)

This however is Sheol (see following section) rather than the Lake of Fire, and the Harrowing concerns emancipation through Christ (cf. Apocalypse 20:13-14). In Apocalypse 1:17-18 Christ tells John: ‘Fear not. I am the First and the Last, And alive, and was dead. And behold I am living for ever and ever and have the keys of death and of hell.’ Julian emphasises Christ’s power to redeem rather than his power to damn. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, the portrayal of Christ in much of the Apocalypse is of an avenger who wields overwhelming power:

And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he may strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty. (Apocalypse 19:15)

Baptism was considered to be essential to salvation and those who died un-baptised were expected to go to hell – although Augustine introduced the concept of limbo as a concession to babies who died before they could be baptised. Augustine himself was not baptised until A.D. 387 when he was 33.
Such retribution preceding the ultimate restitution of the divine order constitutes a recurrent textual theme. References to blood abound, as in this verse in which those who have persecuted the Christian martyrs are destroyed. The proleptic portrayal of Christ in the Apocalypse therefore ostensibly contrasts with that in *A Revelation*. Moreover, since most of the biblical references to hell come from the lips of Jesus and mainly constitute warnings to Christians, there are areas of evident tension in writing on the subject. On the one hand, Julian regards it as contradictory that a loving God would send anyone to hell, yet conversely, she acknowledges that hell must exist according to biblical teaching and Holy Church. Referring to Judgment Day in the fifth revelation, for example, she contrasts the outcome for those who are to be saved with that of the devil who is to be punished for the suffering that he has caused them. Whereas their suffering ‘shall be turned into encresse of ther joy without ende’ (*Revelation*, 13, 39), in contrast, the subsequent line reads ‘all the paine and the sorrow that he wolde have brought them to shalle endlesly go with him to helle’. Alluding to Apocalypse 20:10, Julian mentions hell again, in relation to the devil and other fallen angels:

... one point of oure faith is that many creatures shall be dampned: as angelis that felle out of heven for pride, which be now fendes, and man in erth that dyeth out of the faith of holy church – that is to sey, tho that be hethen – and also man that hath received cristondom and liveth uncristen life, and so dyeth oute of cherite. All theyse shalle be dampned to helle without ende, as holy church techeth me to beleve. And stonding alle this, methought it was unpossible that alle maner of thing shuld be wele, as oure lorde shewde in this time. (*Revelation*, 32, 33-40)

However, the identification of hell’s inhabitants (other than the devil and other fallen angels) is more problematical for her and she struggles to reconcile it with the message of the visions.

Indeed, it is tempting to speculate whether Julian would have been more comfortable with the idea of annihilation for sinners (now known as ‘annihilationism’) as opposed to eternal suffering. Referring to the subject of the devil’s punishment, Marion Glasscoe writes, ‘Julian uses the conventional word “hell”, but the formulation of the showing reveals it as a state of annihilation, in that what the fiend has done
has been transfigured through suffering, and he has no reality but his own pain.\textsuperscript{143} From Julian's perspective, the act of sinning itself equates to an experience of hell. In this sense, humans send themselves to a hell of their own making. Although she sympathises with the difficulty of resisting all sin, she is optimistic concerning the capacity of human beings to resist evil:

> With this sight of his blissede passion, with the godhede that I sawe in min understandinge, I sawe that this was strengh enoughe to me – ye, unto alle creatures lyevande that shulde be safe – againes alle the feendes of helle and againes alle gostelye enmies. (\textit{Vision}, 3, 21-24)

Moreover, by implicitly conveying a sense of incredulity that God would send anyone to hell, Julian introduces (whether intentionally or not) a potentially heretical aspect of her teaching: Universal Salvation – the belief that 'there is no hell but sin' (\textit{Revelation}, 40). Her orthodoxy depends upon whether she is referring to forgiven sinners who sin in spite of themselves, or all human beings. Yet she expounds the philosophy that for a fellow Christian the act of sinning should be so abhorrent as to constitute a punishment in itself: 'And to me was shewed none harder helle than sinne. For a kind soule hateth no helle but sinne . . .' (\textit{Revelation}, 40, 33-34) A few lines above she writes of 'alle the paine that is in hell and in purgatory' (30), therein adhering to orthodoxy rather than denying their existence.

Having written about the result of the Passion and God's grace, Julian cautions against complacency and the misapplication of this doctrine. In \textit{A Revelation}, 40, 22-29 she cautiously professes her orthodoxy in her endorsement of Paul's warning concerning the danger to those who make the heretical claim that they are justified in sinning because it gives God an opportunity to show his grace. There then follows her personal definition of hell in which she expresses her repulsion caused by sin:

> For if it were leyde before us, alle the paine that is in hell and in purgatory and in erth – deed and other – and sinne, we shulde rather chese alle that paine than sinne. For sin is so vile and so mekille for to hate that it may be liconned to

no paine which paine is not sinne. And to me was shewed none harder helle than sinne. For a kind soule hateth no helle but sinne, for alle is good but sin, and nought is evel but sinne. And whan we geve oure intent to love and meknesse by the werking of mercy and grace, we be made alle fair and clene. *Revelation, 40, 30-36*

This view of sin is diametrically opposed to the one held by those who would sin to 'enable' God to display his grace – an excuse condemned by St. Paul. There is detectable optimism here, which links neatly with the biblical view of the seven trumpets of Apocalypse 8-9, which serve as final warnings to attract humankind's attention and lead people to faith. But in reading the seven last plagues of Apocalypse 14-16 which constitute seven judgments on unjust rule and society, we can speculate that Julian would have been comfortable with a preterist reading (interpreting the Apocalypse in the context of the early Church), seeing these as judgments on Jerusalem, climaxing in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, or the demise of pagan Rome. What is certain is that here, as elsewhere, she alerts us to her unorthodoxy precisely by pleading orthodoxy. She reveals her own will to holiness and abhorrence of sin, and whilst she is referring to the 'Well-natured soul' rather than all, her incredulity that any would prefer to be separate from God leads to a hope for the salvation of all.

However, a caveat is required since at the end of *A Revelation* 40 Julian makes a statement that recalls Christ’s words to the angels of the seven churches. The context is doing good works against evil, following Christ as charity. However, for Julian, sin, which would interfere with this relationship, is cause for hatred:

No more than his love is broken to us for oure sinne, no more wille he that oure love be broken to ourselfe nor to our evencristen, but nakedly hate sinne, and endlesly love the soule as God loveth it. Than shulde we hate sinne like as God hateth it, and love the soule as God loveth it. For this word that God said is an endlesse comfort: 'I kepe the fulle sekerly.' *Revelation 40, 41-45*

The hatred of sin juxtaposed with Christ’s consoling promise to keep the believer who endures secure (see Apocalypse 3:12) indicates the influence of the Apocalypse that is consonant with orthodox teaching.
Whilst both Julian's incredulity regarding the concept of hell and her repugnance concerning sin are striking, she prophesies that on the last day God will unveil a solution to the great mystery of how all things shall be made well. We might read this statement as implicit criticism of the Church's tenets regarding hell and judgment, a statement expressing incomprehension and dissatisfaction with related contemporary teaching. In another line which imbues my earlier discussion of Joachim's favourable view of the Jews with further import, Julian writes,

But I saw not so properly specified the Jewes that did him to deth. But notwithstonding, I knew in my faith that they ware acursed and dammed without ende, saving tho that were converted by grace. (*Revelation*, 33, 17-19)

Again, whilst this ostensibly signals an affirmation of orthodoxy and alignment with Church teaching, ultimately she does not see the Jews here, possibly implying that they will escape hell. This is a remarkable inference given that the Jews were expelled from England in 1290 having been accused of committing ritualistic child murder and causing the Plague. As Lerner writes, 'The church considered Jews, sorcerers, and heretics each in their way as minions of the devil whose threat was age-old.'\(^{144}\) As mentioned above, such implicit optimism may have roots in Joachim of Fiore's belief in the ultimate salvation of the Jews.

Despite Julian's many references to Judgment Day and eternal damnation, she struggles with the thought that ordinary individuals will end up there. If this seems a perverse concept for Julian, so does hell itself. Regarding *Revelation* 12, 1-25, in which Christ’s blood from the Passion descends to hell ‘and brak her bondes’ to deliver those who belong to the court of heaven (18-19), Watson and Jenkins note that if “her” is taken as feminine, hell is being personified as a female monster'.\(^{145}\) I suggest that this is because Julian regards it as an inversion and perversion of her positive view of Mary as ‘Mediatrix’ and queen of heaven.\(^{146}\) Indeed, Julian writes of two judgments, thereby offering an implicit critique of the contemporary focus on the

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\(^{145}\) Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, n.166.

\(^{146}\) For insight into the medieval presentation of the feast of the Assumption and the liturgical sources (including the Apocalypse and Apocalypse-related books) in contemporary lyrics and those lyrics themselves see Karen Saupe, ed., *Middle English Marian Lyrics* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998).
Apocalypse stress on Judgment: ‘God demeth us upon oure kindely substance, which is ever kepe one in him, hole and safe without ende, and this dome is of his rightfulhede.’ (*Revelation* 45, 1-2) She juxtaposes the often arbitrary human judgments with God’s:

And in as mekille as it is good and esy, it longeth to the rightfulhede. And in as mekille as it is hard and grevous, oure good lorde Jhesu reformeth it by mercy and grace thorow vertu of his blessed passion, and so bringeth into the rightfulhede. And though these two be thus acorded and oned, yet it shall be knowen, both, in heven without ende. The furst dome, which is of Goddes rightfulhede, and that is of his owne high, endlesse love – and that is that fair, swete dome that was shewed in alle the fair revelation, in which I saw him assigne to us no maner of blame. (*Revelation*, 45, 5-13)

Julian’s emphasis on the redemptive and salvific power of the Passion, combined with God’s love and lack of blame in relation to human beings, contrasts with the prevalent hermeneutic. The Church taught that there were two judgments – the first upon death when the soul would be sent to purgatory; the second was the final judgment. Julian also writes of this final judgment, yet she expresses her liberal soteriology and offers a critique of the contemporary view of judgment:

And though this was swete and delectable, yet only in the beholding of this I culde not be fulle esed. And that was for the dome of holy church, which I had before understonde and was continually in my sight. And therfore, by this dome, methought that me behoveth nedes to know myself a sinner. And by the same dome I understode that sinners be sometime wurthy blame and wrath, and theyse two culde I not see in God. And therfore my advice and desyer was more than I can or may telle. For the higher dome God shewed himselfe in the same time, and therfore me behoved nedes to take it. And the lower dome was lerned me before time in holy churche, and therfore I might not by no weye leve the lower dome. (*Revelation*, 45, 13-22)

The teaching of Holy Church to which Julian refers derives from Apocalypse 19:20, 20:13-14 and 21:8 as well as the Gospels and other biblical books. Julian asserts
that the only answer to this paradox is contained in her parable. Since she professes to accept this teaching it is a question of emphasis and stress on the redemptive work of God as revealed in the Apocalypse.\textsuperscript{147} She mentions the power of the Passion, and in order for the Cross to be intelligible as the means for freeing believers from the power of death and hell, by definition the latter exists. The question is who will inhabit hell other than the devil, false prophet and demons. Denys Turner encapsulates the necessity of the existence of hell given the Fall and a sense of the irrationality of choosing it, combined with incredulity that anyone would choose it – ‘choose’ being the operative word in relation to the Dantean perspective, which he relates to Julian’s theological outlook:

If hell were not at least a possibility available to free human choice, then something about the nature of the love that moves the sun and the other stars would remain undisclosed . . . . hell’s very existence bears witness to a love so all-encompassing as of necessity creating the space in which its inhabitants may endlessly rehearse their pre-mortem and final rejection of it. The possibility of hell is an expression of the divine love, but everything in hell is premised on the refusal of the love that made it possible. For hell is hell because it is the condition of not being able to see the fact that love made it.\textsuperscript{148}

This analysis does indeed accord with Julian’s perspective in which she recognises free will but is incredulous than anyone would willingly choose evil over good. By definition, redemption involves deliverance from an alternative, undesirable state. For Julian, sin and hell involve privation; they represent the antithesis of the state that she seeks for herself and her evencristen. However, her consistent message is that the devil has been overcome, therefore she displays a fear of sins rather than the more commonplace dread of hell. The theological justification for this emphasis derives from passages such as Matthew 1:21 and 2 Corinthians 5:15, 21, which teach that Jesus died to save the world from sin. There is also a sense that sin is of no final consequence, and, literally nothing, in that it is the absence of God. This resembles Augustine’s definition of evil, as the absence of good, and therefore a nothing: 'There is no such entity in nature as 'evil'; 'evil' is merely a name for the

\textsuperscript{148} Turner, Theologian, 90-91.
privation of good'. Referring to a further negation, or denial of one major characteristic of God upheld as orthodox by the Church, Julian states that God cannot forgive our sins because there is no wrath in him; rather it is Christians who suffer through their own guilt at falling prey to sin. Besides her revealing assumption that her readership will be Christians, this outlook is patently contrary to the passages in the Apocalypse which describe Jesus' wrath at man's sin, and the image of the avenging Messiah contrasts sharply with Julian's.

The concept of purgatory offers a degree of soteriological hope in this dilemma. The primary duty of a female anchorite was intercession which could extend to souls in purgatory. As only men were permitted to teach and preach to congregations, the intercessory role represented a space in which women were able to fulfil a function that was considered useful and necessary. As Barbara Newman writes, 'Such prayer constituted a safe, invisible, contemplative mission that could put women's devotion and compassion to work without violating any gender taboos.' In the early fifteenth-century text, A Revelation Showed to a Holy Woman, the anonymous author writes to her confessor about a number of dream visions in which she sees the soul of her friend, a deceased nun named Margaret, in purgatory. The prominent intercessory role of religious women and the Virgin Mary doubtless enhanced the perceived efficacy of Julian's role in the community since female anchorites spent much time in prayer on behalf of its inhabitants, including their deceased relatives, as evidenced in wills.

It should be borne in mind that purgatory was for those already under a state of grace – that is, they are to be saved, but are not yet ready for heaven. It therefore follows that this doctrine provided hope for Julian that all would eventually be well regarding the salvation of souls and in this sense it is positive. However, Julian's lack of a vision of purgatory is consistent with the focus on God's mercy and love consonant with her beatific visions. Moreover, certain theologians anticipated an indeterminate period of time following the parousia (and defeat of Antichrist) in which there would be a second opportunity to come to faith before the final judgment – the forty-five day period, part of the 'The Refreshment of the Saints'.

149 Augustine, City, 454.
150 Newman, Virile, 111.
151 See Barratt, Women's Writing, 163.
proponents of this view were Jerome and, later, the reformist monk Adso, whose letter to Queen Gerberga 'Concerning the Origin and Life of Antichrist' was so influential, evidenced by the number of times that it was copied during the next two hundred years. Both allot a period of forty days to those who have fallen away into sin yet are still part of the elect, in which time they may do penance, a length which, as McGinn points out, equates to the period of Lent.\footnote{McGinn, \textit{Antichrist}, 103.}

As in the Apocalypse where the martyrs are rewarded for their endurance through sufferings with proximity to Christ posthumously, and the sinful create their own suffering by their submission to evil, the \textit{Revelations} emphasise the necessity of identifying and rejecting sin as contrary to the human will. (\textit{A Vision}, 17, 8-9) Whilst acknowledging the reality of sin, Julian conveys a comparable eschatological message of hope. The suffering caused by sin is shared by the believer and Christ. As in the Apocalypse, believers endure for their faith and also suffer many of the same catastrophes as non-believers. From her request for the three wounds onwards Julian voluntarily embraces suffering as a refining reality. I addressed this correlation between the suffering of the Passion (both Christ’s suffering and that of his followers) and the apocalyptic effects upon the elements in the previous chapter in relation to the Passion scene of \textit{A Vision}, 10, 44-49. Chapter 28 is also fundamentally important in presenting the concept of collective suffering that has its precursor in the Apocalypse prophecies of tribulation. Finally, although Julian accepts the veracity of hell, she sees no need for it to be populated. Her focus is on the salvific mission of Christ rather than divine vengeance. I now consider how she reconciles her showings with Church teaching.

\textit{Julian’s ‘grete dede’}

In this section I transfer my thematic focus from the various influences on Julian to a more detailed interpretation of her text, still having in mind both the extent of her orthodoxy and her thematic focus in areas pertaining to the Apocalypse. The essential question in this context concerns the extent and nature of Julian’s exegetical approach to the stress on judgment and hell in the Apocalypse. I therefore focus on her concept of the mysterious ‘grete dede’ (\textit{Revelation} 32, 46) that will be
performed at the end of time to make all things well. This key example constitutes an implicit critique of the prevalent hermeneutic. In discussing Julian’s position I reference the teaching of Uthred de Bolden.

Since Julian cannot reconcile the Church’s teaching on hell (which she professes to accept) and the visions, she implies prophetically that the ‘grete dede’ will be an ultimate salvific act:

For this is the grete dede that oure lorde God shalle do, in which dede he shalle save his worde in alle thing and he shalle make wele all that is not welle. But what the dede shal be, and how it shall be done, there is no creature beneth Crist that wot it, ne shalle wit it, till it is done, as to the understanding that I toke of our lordes mening in this time. (Revelation, 32, 46-50)

However, Julian cannot conceive of a state in which some are damned as one that is acceptable or consistent with her view of God, so the implication is that all will be saved. Whilst the great deed that she is alluding to is inextricably bound with the Cross, we infer from the text that the former will be an extension of the latter’s salvific power – for how could all be well if any were damned? Julian cannot however state this, either because she is not sure what constitutes the great deed, or more likely, to do so would invite accusations of heresy.

Julian’s conviction that ‘alle shalle be wele’ is a theme which runs throughout the Apocalypse, even in its depiction of the darkest periods in earth’s history. Juxtaposed against this is the Church teaching that some will be damned, which she addresses in A Revelation (32). Julian is told that even things which seem evil now will be revealed to have something good emerge from them at the end: he ‘shalle make wele all that is not welle’. This is comparable to the refreshment of the saints who have overcome (the tribulation) and the promise, 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more. Nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away.' (Apocalypse, 21:4) Julian also stresses the fact that human beings have a will, so there is no reason for anyone to go to hell if they choose not to do so. She implies that even where there is

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the slightest will to belong to God then that preference ultimately prevails.

Given that Julian acknowledges the presence of sin and suffering in the world and, from an eschatological perspective, the existence of an ultimate hell, the act of faith and belief in the statement ‘alle shalle be wele’ is based on an absurd notion, from a human perspective as opposed to a divine one. Julian’s intellectual dilemma (what we would today term) ‘cognitive dissonance’ – in the case of a dual acceptance that hell exists as a place where heretics and heathens are sent whilst she sees no vision of hell (or purgatory) and embraces a liberal salvationist view. Julian believes, for example, the Apocalypse account in which, after all the suffering that is described, comes the promise of the new heaven and new earth and the new Jerusalem along with the words of 21:4 (directed to those who have come through the great tribulation) that ‘God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more. Nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away’. However, humanly speaking, this appears to constitute faith on the strength of the absurd given the vivid description of hell in the same book. Julian’s act of resignation is her acknowledgement of the presence of suffering in the world as the state of things since the Fall. Whilst Julian must be resigned to the presence of sin and suffering in this life, on the strength of the absurd, what is humanly impossible is nevertheless divinely possible: she can believe that ‘alle shalle be wele’. The implication is that God will somehow overturn this state given that, according to Julian, hell and suffering are incompatible with a perfect state in an afterlife. Julian too struggles with this paradox in that she conceives of a framework of society containing all her evencristen, who are included by a God who exhibits no wrath in her visions. Indeed, she says that she sees no wrath in God. Her faith thereby allows apparently mutually exclusive doctrines and rests in an impossible action, if what she has claimed is true. This outlook is encapsulated in her statement that what is impossible for human beings is possible for God. Key to this is her understanding of the hypostatic union and Incarnation, uniting Christ and Adam.

Julian’s postulation of a ‘grete dede’ appears to offer a way in which to reconcile the Church teaching on hell (which she professes to accept) and the absence of a vision of hell. We might speculate whether Julian conceived of something similar to Uthred de Boldon’s (c. 1315-1396) Visio Clara – that is, a belief that every person on the verge of death experiences a beatific vision and is given the
choice between good and evil. Although this borders on heretical second chance salvationist teaching, the operative word is dying – in other words, the subject is still alive when he or she witnesses the vision. An indication that Julian may have been thinking along these lines, either solely through her own meditations or through contact with other sources, is discernible from her allusion to the Harrowing of hell, as found in 1 Peter 3:18-20, 4:6; Matthew 12:40 and Acts 2:27 and the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemos. The Harrowing of hell, which developed as a tradition within a tradition through representations in literature, such as the one found in the Chester Cycle of the Mystery Plays, refers to the time when Jesus, between his death and resurrection, descended into Sheol in order to preach to those who had died in the Flood, thus offering them a chance to come to faith. Julian writes,

And at this point he beganne furst to show his might, for then he went into helle. And whan he was ther, than he raised uppe the gret root oute of the depe depnesse, which rightfully was knit to him in hey heven. (Revelation, 51, 254-256)

Here, as noted earlier in the chapter, she does not refer to the figurative hell of the Passion, but rather 'Sheol', the Hebrew word meaning 'holding place' used in the Vulgate - somewhere between this world and the next. Christ's victory over death means that Adam could be released from Sheol. Julian relates how Christ released Adam, who 'fell fro life to deth: into the slade of this wrecched worlde, and after that into hell' (Revelation, 51, 187-188). Using the word 'hell' in a figurative sense, she continues: 'Goddes son fell with Adam into the slade of the maidens wombe, which was the fairest doughter of Adam – and that for to excuse Adam from blame in heven and erth – and mightely he feched him out of hell.' (188-191) Liberal or universal salvationist views were also influenced by non-canonical books, such as the

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155 Kerby-Fulton, Books, 361.
157 Many of the events of the Apocalypse, such as the rise of Babylon/Tower of Babel, in addition to the plagues and environmental calamities, are, in a sense, a recapitulation of the Genesis account of the Flood and the events preceding it, which resonates with Julian's conception of salvation history and eschatology as evidenced in her parable's postlapsarian allusions and reconstituted Eden mentioned in my previous chapter. Alluding to this Julian writes, 'And at this point he beganne furst to 'Sheol'. The Harrowing illustrates a further connection between Christ and Adam.
Apocalypse of Peter,\textsuperscript{158} which holds that people could not learn about universal salvation, otherwise they would become even more sinful, and the \textit{Gospel of Nicodemus} which influenced Uthred de Boldon. Such speculation was contrary to orthodox teaching. As seen in \textit{City of God} Augustine rejects any notions of second chance theology:

My belief is that the words were added to preclude the notion that after the end of the life lived in this mortal body a period remains for the performance of justice and righteousness, which a man has failed to achieve while in the flesh, and so there is a chance of escaping the divine judgement.\textsuperscript{159}

By highlighting this apparent doctrinal discrepancy, Julian may be positing such a liberal salvationist alternative, or else she may be exhibiting simple faith stemming from assurances which she gained from the visions. Despite this evident conflict, there is insufficient evidence to state categorically that she does more than problematise orthodoxy whilst covering herself against allegations of heresy. She seeks to reconcile Church teaching and the biblical passages on hell, including those in the Apocalypse, with her view of a God without wrath.

Julian’s selection of tense when discussing soteriological matters is revealing. She invariably writes of those who ‘will’ be saved, or those who are ‘being’ saved. Her deliberate use of the future form conveys an eschatological view that accords with the biblical Apocalypse. The great salvific work is ongoing and not to be completed until the Day of Judgment, which is why Julian begins the final chapter of \textit{A Revelation} with the words, ‘This boke is begonne by Goddes gifte and his grace, but it is not yet performed, as to my sight.’ (\textit{Revelation}, 86, 1-2) Her eschatological awareness is also consistent with the many biblical warnings regarding the dangers inherent in backsliding from the faith. This is indicative of Julian’s awareness that personal salvation cannot be assumed until Judgment Day. She asserts that there is a hell from which people need saving; the question is whether it will ultimately be populated by any other than the devil and other fallen angels. The possibility of choosing hell over heaven must exist if there is free will, and although Julian does not


\textsuperscript{159} Augustine, \textit{City}, 722.
recognise sin’s power, since it has been defeated by Christ, she acknowledges the active struggle and faith that is required in order to continue overcoming it.

To conclude this section, although Julian’s writing mentions hell, the lack of an associated vision, which she requests, is suggestive of a liberal soteriology which accords with an Uthredian interpretation. Her focus is on forgiveness and the salvific power of Christ as in her Parable. Like John in the Apocalypse, she addresses believers and therefore assumes they are going to heaven; the issue is rather that they maintain their path and not become discouraged at setbacks. Whilst she mentions the heathens who (the Church teaches) will be damned, she conveys implicit optimism for their conversion.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored ways in which Julian approached the boundaries of orthodoxy with her inclusivist soteriology and treatment of sin. However, Julian invariably presents caveats to such tendentious passages, as she negotiates her way through the prevailing orthodoxy of her milieu. This chapter, and chapter 1 of the thesis, have shown that Julian was profoundly influenced by Augustine, including his writings on the Apocalypse, his view of the Trinity and the soul – although she deviates fundamentally regarding the questions of sin and judgment. Insofar as Julian follows Augustine she is orthodox, according to contemporary ecclesial definitions of orthodoxy. Attuned to the state of motherhood, she draws on Bernard of Clairvaux and biblical passages to foreground Christ’s compassion and empathy for human beings whilst employing terminology associated with motherhood. In this she is innovative, but also orthodox. Joachite and Olivian influence is reflected in Julian’s stress on repristination and optimistic soteriology as advanced through an Apocalypse-centred hermeneutic and symbolic language. She engages with the thoughts and practices espoused by several women writers, from the heretical Porete to the orthodox Hildegard of Bingen. The Carmelites’ focus on the Apocalypse provides a still more accessible source of engagement and influence. I have also discussed problems posed by Wycliffite and Lollard teachings and areas of confluence, such as the use of the vernacular and implicit critique of abuses, whilst stressing that Julian never crosses the boundary into heresy and, in her approach to
images and icons, adheres to orthodoxy.

Although Julian acknowledges the effects of sin and resultant tribulation, she views it as already overcome by Christ. Rather than constituting a heterodox denial of elements of the Apocalypse it instead illustrates that she relates to its emphasis on overcoming and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. The doctrine of the hypostatic union, integral to Julian's theology, as broached in her parable presents Julian's response to the Fall and Passion and offer of redemption, illustrating her approach to the Apocalypse which identifies unity with God in suffering and redemption. Her many textual allusions and discernible engagement with the exegetical writings of Apocalypse exegetes also advances this position.

I have argued that Julian's soteriology is liberal, rather than constituting a belief in universal salvation, although I have qualified this with reference to Uthred de Boldon's *Visio Clara* which allows for human agency that predicates a presupposition of a universal preference for good over evil. Uthredian thought elucidates Julian's reconciliation of the paradox of a belief in hell and the scepticism that God would send anyone there. Several of the passages explored above are strongly suggestive of the possibility of salvation for many – perhaps even most – whilst stopping short of explaining how this might be possible. For Julian, hell exists, but it need not be populated by human beings and indeed should not, for in Julian's view unchecked sin diminishes humanity.

My contention that Julian's omissions of visions of hell and her strong emphasis on redemption and salvation indicate liberal salvationism necessitates the caveat that this constitutes an argument from silence. However, such omissions and chosen subject matter make her repeated professions of belief in Church doctrine regarding hell seem disingenuous. When considered holistically, Julian's *Revelations* accord with the hopeful passages of the Apocalypse. Julian approaches heterodoxy, but recognising the climate of the early fifteenth century she adroitly exercises textual caution, and her reluctance to disseminate her work in her lifetime (assuming this was her decision) may indicate an intention to preclude unsolicited attention.
CHAPTER 3

Langland’s Poetics

Introduction

This chapter explores aspects of Langland’s poetics – his use of metaphor, alliteration, language, satire and parody – which emerge from his amalgamation of genres within the polyvalent poem *Piers Plowman*. It compares the poem’s didactic elements with those of the Apocalypse. As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis draws on Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of *heteroglossia* – and the *polyphonic* novel, in establishing and analysing the influence of the Apocalypse upon *Piers Plowman* and our understanding of the poem itself. It also explores Langland’s alliterative style and the artistic, didactic and rhetorical function of *polyglossia* in his polyglot employment of Middle English, Latin and French. The present chapter will argue that whilst both texts utilise such techniques, Langland allows a number of his personifications a markedly greater voice as they convey a sense of universal spiritual struggle and reveal specific concerns through dialogue. By establishing the relevance of Bakhtinian theory within an *intertextual* context the chapter evinces ways in which Langland’s poetics engage with the Apocalypse.

Of the various sections of the poem that are analysed, the focus is predominantly on the later passus. The second section addresses Langland’s agrarian metaphor. It discusses the Siege of Unity (Passus XXII) in the third and final part of this chapter because it captures the essence of the apocalyptic genre’s identification of, and emphasis upon, crisis, which requires contextualising with antifraternal and antimendicant writings. It argues that the vehemence of the lexis is comparable to that found in the letters to the churches at Thyatira and Pergamum respectively, in addition to subsequent chapters/verses.

*Bakhtinian heteroglossia, polyglossia and polyphony in the dream vision*

In addressing the subject of heteroglossia and the dialogic and polyphonic aspects within *Piers Plowman* it should first be noted that the parallels with Bakhtin’s terms
extend beyond Langland’s compositional approach and the obvious inclusion of the dreamer in his didactic role. The numerous differences between the manuscripts of Piers Plowman within the text’s versions and the different styles within particular manuscripts are attributable to the many scribes who worked on them. Each brought their regional linguistic dialects which affected lexical renderings. This is one sense in which heteroglossia is manifested in the text.

Two specific examples of the polyphonic and dialogic text described in the introduction to this thesis are, firstly, the speech of Recklessness versus the words of Scripture, Study and Clergy in Passus XI, 193-310 then throughout XII and XIII; secondly, Conscience versus Lady Meed in Passus III, 50-500. However, in arguing that Bakhtin’s terms are applicable to Piers Plowman I do not contend that all the poem’s personifications possess equal authority – they clearly do not and Recklessness is a case in point in terms of lacking credibility – nevertheless, they are assigned an equitable platform from which they vocalise their perspectives. Even the devils debate with Christ in the Harrowing of Hell speech, and whilst Antichrist does not speak, this lends weight to my argument in chapter 4 of this thesis that the Antichrist here is a Joachite Antichristus mysticus, a collective noun which is defined as the body of evildoers, both the laity and the clergy, who prefigure the final demonically-inspired individual human Antichrist.

The various personifications in Piers Plowman adopt the Aristotelian principle of ethos as they seek to make credible (with varying degrees of success) their respective perspectives through their rhetoric. Whilst each of Langland’s personifications only represents one facet of the human psyche, this enables him to focus on the function and application of each facet in relation to seeking the ideal Christian life. Collectively they represent the human self, and their individual representation is suggestive of the fractured and disordered self. Interrelated is the language of each personification in the context of heteroglossia – each is a facet of the whole whilst possessing its own distinct voice and perspective.

Britton J. Harwood acknowledges this presence of a Bakhtinian heteroglossia within Piers Plowman whilst qualifying the assertion somewhat:

Within the novel, M. M. Bakhtin has pointed out, the reader ‘is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities,’ among the basic types of them being ‘stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration’ and ‘various forms of
literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth).’ No doubt there is heteroglossia in *Piers*: its concerns are filtered through the voices of Cheapside on the one hand, as in the lines closing the Prologue, and, on the other, through Anima’s long quotation from Isidore of Seville. Yet it would be hard to show the presence of that basic type of compositional-stylistic unity that Bakhtin calls ‘the stylistically individualized speech of characters.’ In fact, Will narrator shares the viewpoints and voices of Lady Holy Church, Conscience, Repentance, Truth, Wit, Dame Study, Clergy, Scripture, Reason, Imaginative, Patience, Haukyn, and Anima, among others.¹

Harwood makes legitimate qualifications regarding the dreamer and the inherent difficulties in seeking to discern heteroglossia in the text. However, whilst caution needs to be exercised, it is apparent that by juxtaposing the personifications which Harwood mentions against those of a more morally dubious bent, and others of an evidently evil one, Langland is displaying the conflicts which he perceives to be active in his society and the Church. For a reader who is unversed in the prophetic ending of the Apocalypse it would by no means be apparent whether good or evil is to ultimately prevail based upon the ending of *Piers Plowman*. However, Langland’s orthodoxy elsewhere offers no reason to doubt his acceptance of the Apocalypse’s ultimate realisation, despite his focus on the allegorical and spiritual meanings. The time of the prophesied victory of good over evil is unspecified, and the imperfect society as well as tribulation in the Church may continue for an extended period of time before repristination can transpire. Such open-endedness contrasts with the Apocalypse, although the structure of the dream vision, which involves the dreamer returning physically, but not intellectually, to where he started, underscores Langland’s emphasis upon contemporary applications of the Apocalypse account. There is a cyclical/spiritual element here, although there is a linear chain of events within this. Yet beyond the eschatological aspect these are recurrent issues which have universal application since they concern every age. Therefore, the following observation of Victor Shklovsky, as quoted by Bakhtin, is pertinent as it addresses this very question of the fundamental open-endedness of the polyphonic novel:

As long as a work remained multi-leveled and multi-voiced, as long as the people in it were still arguing, then despair over the absence of a solution would not set in. The end of a novel signified for Dostoevsky the fall of a new Tower of Babylon. . . .

We can apply this observation to the ending of *Piers Plowman* in which Langland fuses pace and polyphony, thereby drawing it to a crescendo that is terminated only with the dreamer’s awakening and the realisation of the reader that the struggle for the kingdom of heaven, or millennial kingdom, takes place in the present and the threats to its realisation remain.

In relation to the respective endings of Dostoyevsky’s novels Bakhtin writes,

In essence only *The Brothers Karamazov* has a completely polyphonic ending, but precisely for that reason, from the ordinary (that is, the monologic) point of view, the novel remained uncompleted.

Again, this quotation is congruent with an accurate understanding of the significance of the poem’s ending. Skeat considered the A-text to be incomplete, yet Langland’s polyphonic poem in its B and C versions has also been regarded as unfinished or evolving. As I argue below, the apparently attenuated ending is attributable to Langland’s concern with reaching the future ideal state through repristination rather than describing its future fulfilment. Although the Apocalypse concludes with the prophecy of the restoration of Christ’s kingdom, the penultimate line of the Vulgate, ‘He that giveth testimony of these things, saith: Surely, I come quickly: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus’, indicates that the prophetic elements remain unfulfilled. Similarly, Will’s awakening completes the dream visions even while the poem is open-ended.

In his essay entitled ‘Discourse in the Novel’, Bakhtin writes:

Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever the forms for its incorporation), is another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express

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2 Bakhtin, Poetics, 39.
3 Ibid., 40.
authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. . . \(^5\)

These competing voices, which are often mutually exclusive in their contradictoriness, are embedded within the overall structure. No other book in the New Testament draws as extensively upon the Old Testament as the Apocalypse; it establishes ‘dialogue’ with these books and derives authority by referencing them. There is therefore polyphony of voices within the text, and John, the self-confessed scribe, in his capacity as visionary observer is tasked with recording these voices and their accompanying visions through the medium of language. The text offers resolution in which humanity, nature and the cosmos are brought to a state of peace with the victory of Christ, the defeat of chaos and the restoration of order and a fertile new earth.

*Piers Plowman* presents Christ’s victory in his capacity as the conquering Messiah without the ultimate realisation of the earthly millennial kingdom. I examine the reasons for this in the following chapter. The end’s structure fits within these competing elements as the text relies heavily on other books of the Bible. Langland incorporates and interweaves his biblical and apocryphal sources within the visions which contain the personifications and their dialogue, enabling a degree of autonomy from the biblical ending and the latter’s foregrounded resolutions whilst nevertheless relating to these through the foreshadowing of the end. Within the parameters of Langland’s eschatological framework he incorporates contemporary events, transposing them onto the biblical account whilst focussing on action points within these, which is a characteristic of the Apocalypse; there are a series of ‘set pieces’ marked by evocative language – both features of the dream vision genre.

The Mennipean genre, named after the Greek satirist and cynic Menippus (third century BC), comprises satirical works which incorporated both prose and verse. Originally found in Greek and Latin literature, its seriocomic characteristics and satirical and parodic elements made it an ideal genre for the writers of the mystery plays, as Bakhtin notes. Bakhtin considers the Menippea, as applied in Dostoyevsky’s short story *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877), in relation to the

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genre of the medieval mystery play. This later story in Dostoyevsky’s oeuvre contains parallels with Langland’s Prologue which displays his debt to the mystery play genre and utilisation of three forms of the dream vision genre – oraculum, somnium and visio. Bakhtin states that Dostoyevsky’s story

. . . presents us with a full and complete synthesis of the universalism of the menippea – a genre of ultimate questions of worldview – with the universalism of the medieval mystery play portraying the fate of mankind: earthly paradise, the Fall, redemption.6

All of these elements are prominent in Piers Plowman which predates Dostoyevsky’s text by some 400 years.7

Beyond these characteristics, the poem’s polytemporal nature – itself a feature of the Apocalypse – incorporates language that at turns addresses the past, contemporary times and often functions proleptically. Bakhtin elaborates on the comparison above, beginning with a quotation from the aforementioned short story:

. . . everything was happening the way it usually happens in dreams when you leap over space and time, over all laws of life and reason, and only pause where your heart’s desire bids you pause. [SS X, 429]

This is in fact a completely true characterization of the compositional method used for constructing a fantastic menippea . . . . In his works Dostoevsky makes almost no use of relatively uninterrupted historical or biographical time, that is, of strictly epic time; he ‘leaps over’ it, he concentrates action at points of crisis, at turning points and catastrophes, when the inner significance of a moment is equal to a ‘billion years’, that is, when the moment loses its temporal restrictiveness. In essence he leaps over space as well, and

6 Bakhtin, Poetics, 149.
7 Indeed, thematic confluence between Langland and Dostoyevsky in their spiritual, social and psychological concerns, combined with genres such as the Menippean and techniques such as polyphony, also make them valid sources of comparison. For instance, Dostoevsky’s Menippean satire (amongst other genres) in the Grand Inquisitor, which, as Bakhtin points out, ‘is constructed on the synecrisis in the Gospels between Christ and the Devil’, (Bakhtin, Poetics, 156) presents a particularly intriguing study in relation to the Mystical Antichrist and the friars of Piers Plowman, Passus XXII. Cf. ‘The Grand Inquisitor’, in Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. David McDuff (London: Penguin, 1993), 283-304.
concentrates action in two ‘points’ only: on the threshold (in doorways, entrance ways, on staircases, in corridors, and so forth), where the crisis and the turning point occur, or on the public square, whose substitute is usually the drawing room (the hall, the dining room), where the catastrophe, the scandal; take place. Precisely this is his artistic conception of time and space. He often leaps over elementary empirical norms of verisimilitude and superficial rational logic as well. This is why he finds the genre of menippea so congenial.8

Similarly, Langland’s employment of the dream vision genre provides him with a form that enables him to frame these ‘points of crisis’ with their major soteriological implications as he transposes biblical passages onto the contemporary socio-religious setting. Moreover, Bakhtin’s description here is comparable to Langland’s Prologue and the dreamer’s vision of the symbolic tower, dungeon and fair field full of folk, which, Anna Baldwin likens to the pageant wagon that was used in staging the mystery plays. As she explains, ‘Plays were staged on a three-level structure with heaven on the upper storey, earth on the cart, and hell beneath the wheels.’9 Here we see the parallels with the Menippea to which Bakhtin refers in relation to Dostoyevsky. This pastoral scene doubles as a stage set for the Judeo-Christian view of history, from prelapsarian to post-redemptive.

An example of Langland amalgamating heteroglossic and polyphonic elements within the compositional framework characterised by the Mennipea is his treatment of the trope of feasting. As mentioned in chapter 2, the concept of the ‘refreshment of the saints’ was prevalent in the Middle Ages, as exemplified in Bernard of Clairvaux’s Second Sermon for the Feast of All Saints in which disembodied souls feast upon Christ’s words.10 There are three ‘feasts’ in the Apocalypse – and I include the eating of the words in 10:9-10:

And I went to the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the book. And he said to me: Take the book and eat it up. And it shall make thy belly bitter: but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the book from the hand

8 Bakhtin, Poetics, 149-50.
9 Baldwin, Guidebook, 20.
of the angel and ate it up: and it was in my mouth, sweet as honey. And when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

Subsequently there is the marriage supper of the Lamb in 19:9: ‘And he said to me: Write: Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith to me: These words of God are true.’ Finally there is the macabre feasting of the birds of prey upon the flesh of the fallen in 19:21: ‘And the rest were slain by the sword of him that sitteth upon the horse, which proceedeth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.’ Langland’s warning against gluttony as one of the Seven Deadly Sins has its apotheosis in the feast of Patience in Passus XV. During the feast the friar is mercilessly mocked, for such incongruities as his preference for stews over the food of scripture:

Clergie cald aftur mete and thenne cam Scripture
And serued hem thus sone of sundry metes monye,
Of Austyn, of Ambrose, of alle the foure euangelies,
*Edentes et bibentes que apud eos sunt, &c.*
Ac of this mete that maystre myhte nat wel chewe;
Forthy eet he mete of more cost, mortrewes and potages.
Of that men myswonne they made hem wel at ese,
Ac here sauce was ouer-sour and vnsauerly ygrounde
In a morter, *post mortem*, of many bittere peynes
Bote yf they synge for tho soules and wepe salte teres:
*Vos qui peccata hominum comeditis, nisi pro eis lacrimas et orationes effuderitis, ea que in deliciis comeditis, in tormentis euometis.* (XV, 42-51)

These lines allude to both the marriage supper of the Lamb mentioned by the angel in Apocalypse 19:9, and Isaiah 25:6: ‘And the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain, a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow, of wine purified from the lees.’ This passage, along with the Apocalypse excerpt and the Langland passus quoted last, are all preceded/followed by punishment. The sauce with its bitter aftertaste is comparable to those who no longer take pleasure in wine anymore in Isaiah 24:9: ‘They shall not drink wine with a song;
strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.' This also recalls the bitter/sweet dichotomy quoted above.

Besides the voices of the personifications, the dreamer himself and the poet, there are polyglot elements in the text which vocalise their respective viewpoints, incorporating languages that are extracted from their sources and recontextualised within a reworking of church history, social commentary, the Apocalypse and other genres. A prominent example of polyglossia appears in the closing lines of the previous excerpt in which Middle English operates in conjunction with Latin and its didactic function. The translation of the Latin ‘You who feast upon the sins of men, unless you pour out tears and prayers for them, you shall vomit up amid torments the food you now feast on amid pleasures’ constitutes a stern warning of future retribution for those who profit from the sins of others – conveying implicit criticism of the higher echelons of society who are leading the lower orders astray. Although the source is unknown, its tone is biblical and comparable to the Apocalypse’s warnings. The language of the Church, Latin, strengthens the impact of these authoritative words. Viewed from another angle, Langland daringly employs the language of the literate elite against the wealthy elite whilst combining it with the vernacular. As Alistair Minnis comments,

. . . Latin offered a vehicle for radical teaching [at] least as much as did the vernaculars – indeed, it may be acknowledged that Latin offered more possibilities for the powerful expression of radical thought, since dangerous doctrines expressed therein knew no European frontiers, and the tares of heresy could thus be scattered more easily and take root the more readily in foreign fields.¹¹

Although Minnis is referring to the Wycliffite thought of the Opus Arduum as evidence of this, since copies of it remained on the continent but not in English manuscripts, Langland’s code-switching (see the next section) fuses the vernacular with Latin, thereby buttressing his text with its authority, addressing elites and commons alike on the issue of reform which in itself could be perceived to be daring. Langland writes on behalf of the lower estate in these lines whilst adopting the language of the higher

estates, a practice which in this context creates a subversive textual element. Langland conveys his perception of the discrepancy between doctrine and practical application, which is evident in the parodic form of the feast in which the friar’s worldliness is foregrounded. Whilst this scene constitutes commentary on contemporary abuses of position it also alludes – in parodic form – to millennial feasting, a subject about which earlier thinkers had much to say.

The North African Donatists (4th – 5th century) drew on a number of biblical source texts, which I mention below, constructing an elaborate view of the afterlife in which the saints would be permitted to indulge in feasting. Augustine, for one, reacted negatively to this materialistic interpretation with its anticipation of corporeal delights, considering the concept to be illustrative of the worldliness in the Church, as expounded in Book XX, Chapter 7 of City of God, in which he discusses the two resurrections and the millennium and challenges the chiliasts’ belief in a literal and physical millennium:

This notion would be in some degree tolerable if it were believed that in that Sabbath some delights of a spiritual character were to be available for the saints because of the presence of the Lord. I also entertained this notion at one time. But in fact those people assert that those who have risen again will spend their rest in the most unrestrained material feasts, in which there will be so much to eat and drink that not only will those supplies keep within no bounds of moderation but will also exceed the limits even of incredibility.12

By conveying this anti-materialist view of the period in contrast to such expectations, Augustine laid the ground for later literary treatments of the subject. Through his parodic and satirical depiction of the Friar and the feast Langland may be exhibiting a degree of Augustinian uneasiness with contemporary chiliastic expectation of physical indulgence – the movement from scriptural teaching as the source of sustenance to gustatory excess. Langland portrays a grotesque parody of the marriage supper of the Lamb in Apocalypse 19:9 in which John recounts the angel’s command: ‘And he said to me: "Write: Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he saith to me: These words of God are true.’

(Apocalypse 19:9) The marriage and the subsequent feast are therefore metaphors for the marriage between the Church, comprised of God’s people, and its head, Christ. The destruction of the Harlot (Whore of Babylon) removes the major earthly obstacle which blocks this marriage. Despite the figurative language, there is a tangible contemporary applicability to this focus on food in both the Apocalypse and the medieval poem. In relation to the wedding feast itself Mounce writes,

Although the feast is nowhere described, we should understand that the time of blessedness it portrays is presented under different symbolism in the last two chapters of the book. This great feast is prefigured in Isa 25:6-8, where the Lord prepares on Mt. Zion a great banquet, removes the reproach of his people, and 'swallow[s] up death forever.' The concept of a sacred meal shared by Israel and the Messiah is common in Jewish thought. According to 3 Enoch 48:10 this banquet takes place in Jerusalem. The idea is found in apocalyptic settings as well. According to the Apocalypse of Elijah the righteous are to feast with the Messiah during the forty-year interregnum between this age and the age to come. In Luke 13:29 Jesus speaks of those from all points of the compass who will come and take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Later in his ministry he foretells a day when he will drink the fruit of the vine anew with his disciples in the kingdom of his father (Matt 26:29). Such promises cause the believer to anticipate with joy the great messianic banquet that will celebrate the long-awaited marriage of the Lamb and his bride the church. Note that in vv. 7-9 the church is pictured both as the bride and as the guests who are invited to the wedding. Far from constituting a contradiction, this sort of freedom is a normal characteristic of apocalyptic writing.13

The last line supports my arguments elsewhere in this thesis about the fluidity of apocalyptic and visionary language, for instance, bridal imagery. The examples which Mounce provides here of verses which were drawn upon in support of millennial feasting provide some context for the Augustinian exegesis which was

informed by a recognition that such verses could be misapplied and unjustifiably embellished.

The implicit feast of the marriage supper in the Apocalypse has its deathly equivalent in the feasting of the birds upon the bodies of kings. This judgment is mirrored at the end of this passus. Having drawn upon numerous biblical stories Langland writes,

Angeles that in helle now ben hadden somtyme ioye
And Dyues in his deyntees lyuede and in douce vie
And now he buyth hit bittere – he is a beggare of helle.
Many man hath his ioye here for al here wel dedes
And lorde and ladys ben cald for ledes that they haue
And slepeth as hit semeth and somur euere hem folleweth.
Ac when deth awaketh hem of here wele that were er so rych
Then aren hit puyre pore thynges in purgatorie or in hell.
Dauid in the sauter of suche maketh mynde and sayth, Dormierunt
et nichil inuenerunt, &c.

Et alibi: Velud sompnum surgencium, &c. (XV, 298-306a)

Again, Latin is conspicuous and it is instructive to identify the subject for which Langland reserves its usage. Their ‘Douce vie’ (‘life of luxury’) is ultimately to lead to abject loss. Langland uses French here and elsewhere in connection with materialism and surfeit – which can be positive in the case of charite – and aesthetic and sensory language, such as beau, chaud/chaut, douce. Pearsall translates the last lines and the related biblical text as “They have slept, and (all the rich men) have found nothing (in their hands)” (Ps. 76:5 [Vg. 75:6]).’ The second part is “And elsewhere: Like the dream of those awaking, (O Lord, so in thy city thou shalt reduce their image to nothing)” (Ps. 73 [Vg. 72]: 20).14

Through satire and parodic language Langland presents a penetrating critique of the friars. He employs the trope of gustatory excess, drawing on the grotesque in a way that is similar to the larger than life figures in the Apocalypse and indeed the

14 Pearsall, Piers, 264, n.306 & n.306a.
demonic feasting which counterposes the heavenly banquet. In Langland’s polyphonic lines he employs Latin, which conveys a sense of authority from which he may condemn the hypocrites, whilst his French accentuates the sense of gluttony and excess due to the preconceived stereotypes.

Langland’s style: alliterative poetry and linguistic code-switching

In this section I focus on Langland’s alliterative poetry and techniques such as enjambement, in considering the effect on his poem. I also explore his use of multiple languages. I have referred to this by the linguistic term ‘code-switching’ rather than macaronic style because the latter term is frequently associated with parodic and punning verse. Although there are parodic and satirical elements in Langland’s poetry, his use of Latin has the primary function of conferring authority on his text as he brings the language of the Church into his communitarian vision and critique of the mendicants along with his treatment of social issues such as poverty, corruption and the use of wealth.

*Piers Plowman* employs an alliterative style that contrasts with Chaucer’s preference for iambic pentameter in *The Canterbury Tales*. Of the four stresses in the line Langland tends to place the emphasis on the first and third syllables, although he frequently deviates from this system by incorporating irregular lines. Each line is punctuated by a caesura. Langland’s use of alliteration suits his desired effect of buttressing the content with heightened emphasis and accentuating the poem’s dreamlike quality; it also functions as an anchor that is juxtaposed against the multiple ambiguities which the dreamer encounters. Another effect is to convey the visions’ immediacy, which is consonant with the sense of urgency that is achieved through the utilisation of the apocalyptic genre and the transposition of elements of the biblical Apocalypse onto a text that is concerned with fourteenth century socio-religious dilemmas and physical landscapes. The language belongs to the quest text, which is characterised by the use of metaphor to create astonishment and heighten expectancy. One such example is the metaphor of pilgrimage, representing the good Christian life. This becomes the allegory of the Pilgrimage to Truth. Through the actions and words of Piers – Perkyn, the diminutive of Peter (here St Peter) – it
becomes apparent that the honest work involved in the ploughing of the half acre itself constitutes the pilgrimage to truth:

‘And Y shal parayle me,’ quod Perkyn, ‘in pilgrimes wyse
And wende with alle tho that wolden lyue in treuthe.’
And caste on hym his clothes of alle kyn craftes,
His cokeres and his coffes, as Kynde Wit hym tauhte,
And heng his hopur on his hals in stede of a scryppe;
A buschel of breed-corn brouht was ther-ynne.
‘For Y wol sowen hit mysulf and sethe wol Y wende
To pilgrimage as palmeres doen, pardon to wynne.
My plouh-pote shal be my pyk-staff and pyche a-to the rotes
And helpe my coltur to kerue and clanse the forwes'. (VIII, 56-65)

Again, the agrarian context is intertwined with Langland’s concept of the good Christian life. Verses in Matthew’s Gospel discussed below bear comparison with the communitarian vision permeating this Passus. The sartorial references are striking in terms of their description of the substitution of the familiar fourteenth-century pilgrim’s garments with those of the ploughman. Whilst not directly influenced by the Apocalypse, it is worth noting that in the latter text clothing has symbolic importance. In Apocalypse 3:5, in his message to the church at Sardis, Christ promises a robe to the one who overcomes: ‘But thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy.’ The act of overcoming still has future application here, and in these lines in *Piers Plowman* the emphasis is on striving towards the realisation of the ideal Christian life in the communal field. Since the poem constitutes a quest for self-knowledge and external knowledge it bears similarity with a pilgrimage itself and the linguistic techniques that are employed reflect this pursuit. As Bloomfield writes,

In spite of the rhythm and alliteration, at times Langland’s verse reads remarkably like blank verse. It is a segmented but smooth style. . . It is the style, not of a fourteenth-century mystic, but of a puzzled man who is both detached and terribly involved in his problem, who is both spectator and actor. It
is vivid with apt metaphors, appropriate pictures and images, and delight in word play.¹⁵

The sense of immediacy which these features serve to reinforce and enhance is also heightened through the use of enjambment. Regarding Langland’s propensity for applying this device A.V.C. Schmidt writes, ‘Langland differs from most alliterative makers in his partiality towards enjambement, the product, perhaps, of his clerkly training in Latin, with its preference for hypotactic syntax.’¹⁶ I would point out that accented verse which replaced quantitative metre as the dominant verse form in England broke the Latinate models of versification. Enjambment is far less common in Latinate models of versification than it is in accented verse. Schmidt continues:

Langland thus has at his disposal a verse-form with a freedom comparable to that of blank verse, having an internal ratio (structural alliteration) which resists the tendency of unrhymed metre to dissolve into prose, with syntax predominaing over rhythm, and the line becoming subordinate to the verse paragraph, as in Milton (this never happens in Langland).¹⁷

Langland’s verse form does indeed offer him flexibility, although I would challenge Schmidt’s comments concerning unrhymed metre, which represent something of a misreading. In the fourteenth century verse was becoming tighter and if anything more sophisticated. As regards Milton’s poetry, it does indeed contain beat tension – it is stressed, and expert use of enjambment (serving to heighten the effect of the verse) – a way of accentuating the accent not the accent itself. Moreover, blank verse is essentially accented verse that allows additional syllables. These points aside, Schmidt correctly points out that ‘Enjambement is a means of attaining fidelity to the contours of living speech,’¹⁸ although he points out that ‘the pressures of his form occasionally compel Langland to stress words in a way that probably differs from that common in speech or prose’.¹⁹ In Piers Plowman enjambment contributes to the heightening of suspense and is supported by the dreams’ cinematic quality in

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¹⁷ Ibid., 29.  
¹⁸ Schmidt, Clerkly Maker, 47.  
¹⁹ Ibid., 41.
relation to which the poet eschews any superfluous description. One example from Passus XX is the crucifixion scene:

Two theues tho tholed deth that tyme
Vppon cros bisyde Crist; so was the comune lawe
A cachepol cam and craked a-to here legges
And here armes aftur, and of euereche of tho theues. (XX, 73-6)

A second example is found in line 184. Peace celebrates that Jesus ‘ioustede wel’, which enables the emancipation and salvation of Adam, Eve, Moses and others. She adds,

Loue that is my lemman such lettres he me sente
That Mercy, my suster, and Y mankynde shal saue
And that god hath forgyue and graunted to alle mankynde
Mercy, my suster, and me to maynprisen hem alle
And that Crist hath convoerted the kynde of rihtwisnesse
Into pees and pyte of his puyr grace. (XX, 185-190)

The poignancy of these two quotations derives from the former’s emphasis on the cruelty of the crucifixion and its consequences, which leads to the positive soteriological view espoused in the second. Enjambement facilitates the extended meditation on these subjects. The oral quality of both typifies this prominent feature within the dialogic poem as a whole.

The Apocalypse lends itself to oral readings and of the seven beatitudes in the book the first appears early in the first chapter with three key verbs – read, hear, keep: ‘Blessed is he that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy: and keepeth those things which are written in it. For the time is at hand.’ (Apocalypse 1:3) The subsequent letters which address the angels of each of the seven churches are intended for reading aloud to the congregation. In the quoted lines the word ‘aloud’ does not appear in the Greek text, however, as Metzger states, it is indicated in 1:3
and 22:18. Metzger also sheds light on the existence of reading groups in the early church:

In New Testament times reading was usually a group activity, with one person reading to others. Not all people, of course, could read; furthermore, manuscripts of books were expensive, and few Christians could afford them. In the absence of printed books, great emphasis was laid in the early church on the public reading of handwritten copies of communications to congregations (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; cf. 1 Tim. 4:13). John calls his book prophecy; it has the weight of the words of the prophets of the Old Testament. For this reason, therefore, a divine blessing can be pronounced on those who read and who hear the book.

The orality of the language within the letters to the seven churches, with its exhortations and admonitions, is notable for two reasons in particular. Firstly, the intended recipient is the angel of each church, who, according to Stephen S. Smalley, ‘are best interpreted as the heavenly counterparts of the Johannine communities in Asia; they are the spirituality of the earthly congregations, considered as single entities, rather than angelic beings in the strict sense.’ Notably, in Passus I, Lady Holy Church represents the Church similarly, with the difference that she is the personification of the Church Triumphant. In both cases the messages come from heaven and are delivered to believers.

Secondly, the orality of Piers Plowman is one of its most striking features; the text largely consists of dialogue in the form of pronouncements and debates. As John in the Apocalypse is commanded to listen, see and hear, so too Will, through the dream device, continually finds himself the recipient of advice and rhetoric. Techniques such as enjambement therefore serve to convey this conversational element, and as Schmidt points out subsequently, ‘Enjambement is one of the most important means by which Langland creates an impression of conversational naturalness rather than rhetorical formality: we speak, after all, in sentences, not in

21 Ibid., 22.
lines of verse.' He continues: ‘It is also one of his favourite devices, developed with great resourcefulness and variety as a technique for sustaining the rhythmic pulse of his poetry.’ And: ‘At its most basic, enjambement arises because of the primacy of syntax over metre at a particular point in the flow of verse.’

In relation to XIII, 416-7, in which Langland complements Study’s words about the corruption of clerks by their lay patrons which detracts from the moral nature of the writing and leads to a focus on the trivial, Schmidt writes,

The intensity of Langland’s indignation seems due to a sense that life as well as art is being betrayed: that a ‘Judas’-like attitude to one’s clerkly wit and makerly craft is treachery to one’s own soul and to the souls of one’s hearers. Langland sees clerks and makers as bearing a special responsibility towards language, the divine gift with which they in particular have been endowed, and which they should use for the glory of God and the good of their fellow men. As early as Wit’s speech in Passus IX, misuse of language is vehemently denounced, and proper cultivation of it figured, with unpremeditated naturalness, as the exercise of sober minstrelsy. . . .

Langland displays this sense of responsibility to his ‘makerly craft’ by channelling his indignation into a focussed socio-religious critique. He does this by way of the reimaginings or reapplications of the Apocalypse and other biblical sources and the dialogue of his personifications as he frames these elements with the dream vision genre and reinforces them with scriptural allusions which frequently derive from the liturgy – the Missal and Breviary. Another feature of the poem is the use of Latin which Langland employs to a far greater extent than Julian in her Revelations. Below are three examples of the use of Latin within Passus XX. This passus is crucial in terms of the eschatological timeframe because it offers an aperture into the root cause behind the presence of sin as Langland describes the fall of Lucifer and one-third of the angels of heaven through the words of Gobelyne:

‘For thy lesinges, Lucifer, we losten furst oure ioye
And out of heuene hidore thy pryde made vs falle;

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23 Schmidt, Clerkly Maker, 43.
24 Ibid., 10.
For we leued on thy lesynges there losten we blisse
And now for a later lesynge that thowlowe til Eue
We haen ylost our lordschip a londe and in helle:
* Nunc princeps huius mundi.* (XX, 345-49)

The Latin line, which translates as ‘Now the ruler of this world’, derives from the full line in John 12:31 which is *‘Nunc iudicium est mundi nunc princeps huius mundi eicietur foras’* and translates as ‘Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.’ The second example is when Christ breaks into Hades and those whom he has come to save give their joyful response: ‘Patriarkes and profetes, *populas in tenebris,* / Songen with seynt Iohan ‘*Ecce agnus dei!*’ (XX, 366-7). *The Gospel of Nicodemus* and John 1:29, 36 are the source texts here and the lines are intimately connected to the Apocalypse in terms of the portrayal of the conquering Messiah of the Apocalypse and the focus of the title ‘Lamb of God’ in reference to Christ, an epithet which is mentioned twenty-eight times in the Apocalypse compared with four times in the rest of the New Testament.\(^\text{25}\) The epithet refers to the book of Leviticus in the Feast of Weeks just prior to the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) in which along with food offerings seven male lambs, a young bull and two rams followed by a male goat (the scapegoat prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ in the Christian tradition) and two more lambs were offered as sacrificial animals that were used as an imperfect atonement for sin.\(^\text{26}\) The Latin here therefore reinforces the apocalyptic tone of *Piers Plowman.*

The third example involves the speech of Christ as he makes his case in legal language in arguing for the legitimacy of the action of breaking into Hades to release the patriarchs and prophets:

Y may do mercy of my rihtwysnesse and alle myn wordes trewe.
For holy writ wol that Y be wreke of hem that
Wrouhte ille,
*As nullum malum impunitum, et nullum bonum irremuneratum.*
And so of alle wykkede Y wol here take veniaunce. (XX, 431-4)

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\(^{25}\) It is also found in Acts 8:32 and 1 Peter 1:19.

\(^{26}\) (Cf. Leviticus 23:15-22).
Langland conveys the two aspects of a theologically sound awareness of God’s nature – his righteousness, which results in the need for reclaiming the debt incurred by sinful actions, and his mercy, which can be legally applied as a substitution due to the Cross. Pearsall is correct to link the first line above to Julian: ‘Cf. Julian, Revelation of Love 34: “I shal save my worde in al thin g and I shal make al thing wele” (quoted in Watson 1997:164).’ These lines successfully negotiate a balance between justice and mercy, the necessity of divine vengeance against sin but the possibility of redemption, a conquering Christ who seeks to save and yet to punish sin and the wilfully sinful. This accords with the Apocalypse account, in which the mercy/retribution binary is prominent during the period in which repentance is possible. Julian’s stress is different and she eschews mention of Christ’s vengeance but we see that Christ’s statement that it is his decision to enact mercy as he sees fit accords with the same conception of Christ’s nature to redeem.

The religious hierarchy’s disdain for the vernacular’s use in theological and philosophical speech – as opposed to Latin – stemmed from a perception amongst scholars that it was too inconsistent and corruptible to be a suitable vehicle for such teachings and it increased the danger of heresy due to possible misinterpretations and/or different lexical interpretations. Latin, on the other hand, was perceived to be stable and authoritative given its use by the educated classes – a view which seems to be reflected by Langland. For instance, none of the personified seven deadly sins speaks Latin in the text because they are immoral, unreliable and devoid of authority. A further indication of this perception occurs in the interchange between Activa Vita and Patience in Passus XVI, which constitutes part of a defence of the benefits of the endurance of those living in poverty and their alleged reduced susceptibility to sin in contrast to the rich:

Quod Actyf tho al angryliche and arguinge as hit were:
‘What is pouerte, Pacience?’ quod he, ‘Y preye that thow telle hit.’
‘Paupertas,’ quod Pacience, ‘est odibile bonum, remocio curarum, possessio
sine calumpnia, donum dei, sanitatis mater, absque sollicitudine semita, sapiencie temperatrix, negocium sine dampno, incerta fortuna,

27 Pearsall, Piers, 340, n.431.
absque sollicitudine felicitas.’
‘Y can nat construe al this,’ quod Actiu Vita.
‘Parfay! quod Pacience, ‘propreliche to telle hit,
Al this in Engelysch, hit is ful hard, ac sumdel Y shal telle the.’ (XVI, 114-119)

Patience then adopts the vernacular. Significantly the acknowledgement is used with the Latin which precedes it and also beforehand. In line 54 Apocalypse 14:13 is quoted: ‘Opera eorum sequuntur illos’ or ‘Their deeds follow them’. Langland’s amalgamation of Latin with the vernacular fulfils at least two main functions. Firstly, it serves to convey a sense of authority. Secondly, Latin enriches the text by providing another voice, another linguistic tradition, and the vernacular appeals to a broader readership. Bloomfield cites the lack of a learned lexis in the vernacular as one reason for interspersing lines in Latin throughout the text; whereas had the former existed it could have been employed to express complex theological concepts.28 In stressing this lack of a ‘scientific and learned language’, Bloomfield identifies three main motivations for including Latin lines:

The way Langland uses them shows they represented at one and the same time his desire for authority, his reaching after the absolute, and his way of dealing with intellectual perplexities. Above all, they were normal concomitants of the religious literary forms to which he was indebted.29

However, translations of the biblical passages into Middle English were regarded with suspicion as a consequence of antipathy towards Wyclif and the Lollards and their belief that the Bible should be accessible to all in the vernacular, a stance which led to De heretico comburendo (1401) and Arundel’s Constitutions (1409) mentioned in chapter 2. Although these postdate the C-text by some thirty years, they represent the culmination of such sentiments. Nicholas Watson has argued that vernacular theology was treated with suspicion and the use of English became problematical from the Church’s perspective. He points out that whilst this requirement did not

28 Bloomfield, Apocalypse, 37-38.
29 Ibid., 38.
cover the practice of quoting biblical passages in sermons it did have ramifications for vernacular texts:

At least in principle, the ownership of works as varied as Pearl, Cleanliness and Patience, The Scale of Perfection, The Holy Book Gratia Dei, The Chastizing of God’s Children, Book to a Mother, the works of the Cloud author, Pore Caitif, Dives and Pauper, and Piers Plowman – all of them written during or since Wycliffe’s time and all of them making heavy use of scriptural quotation – was now forbidden for those who failed to obtain due permission. More significant still, the composition of any similar texts became, in principle, directly illegal: given their use of biblical quotation and their extensive treatment of an array of theological subjects, none of these works could have been written after the publication of the Constitutions without contravening several of the articles therein.

This religious didacticism is not the only aspect of the poem that would shortly render it a questionable text in the religio-political environment of the early fifteenth century. As Watson writes, ‘I know of no clearly orthodox works after Piers Plowman in which a rusticus acts as a teacher, as Ullerston’s opponent predicts will happen if the Bible is available in English.’ The late fourteenth century marks a period of relative freedom in which writers could experiment with language/s and appeal to a broader readership; the amalgamation of the Latin of the cloister and university with the vernacular is evidence of this.

Greta Hort’s scholarship dates back to the 1930s yet it still contains certain valid insights pertinent to this discussion. She writes that the text’s Latin quotations show Langland’s ‘intimate knowledge of the Breviary’, his familiarity with the Missal and that he had attended a grammar school. They also indicate his erudition in both devotional and theological books. Hort distinguishes between the similar number of appeals to authority in theological literature that was written in Latin and those in

32 Ibid., 849.
34 Ibid., 46-55.
vernacular literature by highlighting the greater use of rhetorical language in the latter.\textsuperscript{35} She does however identify some parallels with the writings of Peter Lombard.\textsuperscript{36} She observes further that \textit{Piers Plowman} stands apart from other vernacular texts of the period in its use of Latin, with some three quarters of the hundreds of Latin quotations stemming from biblical sources, whilst French is used more sparingly.\textsuperscript{37} This element of \textit{polyglossia} exemplifies Langland’s attempt to convey his ideas and anchor the polyphony of voices within the text. Such aspects of the poem frequently serve to prompt the reader to cross-reference the words of a personification or character with the relevant biblical source text, thereby facilitating involvement in exegesis and/or forming or exercising his or her own hermeneutic in response to the language.

Those areas of the Apocalypse which influenced \textit{Piers Plowman} most pronouncedly are firstly the poem’s application of the apocalyptic genre, which besides serving as a vehicle for foregrounding the turbulent contemporary background to the poem in addition to its eschatological aims, also provides a frame of reference for the reader; secondly, the treatment of Babylon; thirdly, the attack from within as well as outside the Church (Unity), and the effects of sin on society and the Church, the pursuit of a godly life and truth and salvation. All of these elements are enhanced through language that is variously satirical, admonitory, didactic and edifying.

The numerous didactic passages, such as the speech of Lady Holy Church in Passus I, are characterised by the use of rhetoric. This ability to encapsulate orthodox teaching and appeal to the conscience of believers was, as Hort points out, likely used by priests for its theological insights when answering parishioners’ questions in an entertaining and concise way that may have been beyond the ability of an uneducated priest. She hypothesises that the poem was thus transmitted from clergy to laity.\textsuperscript{38}

Adela Yarbro Collins argues that the Apocalypse’s language serves more of an encouraging and unifying function for the nascent Christian community. The text itself is potentially isolating and dangerous if implemented. Langland’s reformist stance meant that \textit{Piers Plowman} was also potentially a tool of social radicalism. This

\textsuperscript{35} Hort, \textit{Piers Plowman}, 40.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. 40-43.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 43-43.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 157.
is evidenced by John Ball’s (a prominent instigator and leader of the 1381 Uprising) allusion to the text. As Ann Hudson argues,

Few works of literature can match the record of *Piers Plowman* in having been used within twenty years of their composition as the rallying cry for a serious civil rebellion. Yet in their accounts of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 (Dobson) both the chroniclers Thomas Walsingham and Henry Knighton record the production by one of the leaders of the revolt, John Ball, of propaganda that seems to have alluded to the poem to incite support.\(^{39}\)

The engagement of both texts with contemporary crises is manifested in the language of urgency and continual search for resolution. Collins has drawn on Aristotle’s *Poetics* in arguing that the Apocalypse seeks to achieve a sense of catharsis by disempowering the perception of unknown threats by foregrounding them. Insofar as this is the case, both the author and the reader who face crisis and a sense of threat may benefit from this cathartic language. Collins considers the Apocalypse’s language to have evolved as a consequence of the disparity between the expectations of the early Christians and the reality of the social situation which they experienced within the pagan environment of the empire. She suggests that their perceived status as second-class citizens conflicted with their expectations that had been formed through their sense of exceptionalism. Thus, according to Collins, the crisis which they faced was more one of identity and dissatisfaction with the reality of the situation than with overt persecution and discrimination, which is not to contend that these never took place or to deny that they were a plausible possibility based on contemporary trends and sentiments. However, Collins views the biblical response as disproportionate to the reality of the situation, arguing that the text’s language serves another function than recounting a contemporary reality:

The power of the Apocalypse lies in its ability to articulate this perceived crisis and to deal with it in an effective way. Its means of dealing with it is the creation of a new linguistic ‘world’. By means of effective symbols and narrative techniques, the book of Revelation releases tension aroused by the perceived

crisis in a process similar to the phenomenon of catharsis which Aristotle discussed in connection with Greek tragedy. Much of the Apocalypse can be explained persuasively as literary means for dealing constructively with the aggressive feelings aroused by the perceived crisis.40

The text also incorporates lexis from the Old Testament which function as anchors for the reader who is acquainted with the earlier texts, as well as serving, in part, as expressions of the eschatological and Christocentric viewpoint – the Christological exegetical approach to the Old Testament. In both texts the language of crisis and prominence of condemnatory language in reaction to perceived abuses of power facilitates catharsis, which is ultimately achieved through a three-point process: acceptance of the worst, promise of retribution and restitution and salvation.

There is a similarly cathartic aspect to Piers Plowman in which threats to the Church are identified and addressed, including spiritual warfare and the earthly implications which ensue. Implicit within every satirical description, monologue and dialogue which foregrounds the flawed aspects of the Church and society is the concept of the ideal state. By approaching what was known, and perhaps at times embellished, within the apocalypse framework, it becomes easier to absorb mentally, and possession of knowledge and awareness facilitates a sense of empowerment.41

This is most pronounced in the harrowing of hell, yet insofar as the poem as a whole foregrounds injustice and utilises the genre of satire, the experience for many medieval readers or aural recipients would likely have been of a cathartic nature, in the sense that it is through satire and parody that threats can be divested of their power, whether in a transitory psychological manner or in the sense of regained perspective – an eschatological overview. Since Langland’s poem conveys sympathy for the oppressed and mistreated lower estate, it may have been (mis?)interpreted as sympathetic towards the rebels of the 1381 Uprising – in contradistinction to John Gower’s overt disgust at their actions in his Vox Clamantis. This heated climate probably persuaded Langland to distance himself from the revolt and references to it. Hence, whilst Langland writes favourably of the poor, who in Anna Baldwin’s words

41 In relation to the cathartic role of apocalyptic rhetoric in the Apocalypse see Collins, Crisis, 141-61.
are ‘the true inheritors of Langland’s kingdom’,\textsuperscript{42} the C version diverged from B in its self-censorship – or, to quote Anne Middleton, in Langland’s ‘effort specifically to discourage association of his work with either Lollard views [such as on preaching] or the actions of the 1381 rebels’ and ‘more unequivocal condemnation of vagrants and of those workers who spurn the traditional terms of “leel” service, both of which groups had been seen as the cause of the 1381 revolt’.\textsuperscript{43}

Langland’s treatment of historical events incorporates factual elements, such as the Good Parliament of 1376, whilst using the very fable that was used as a sermon to open that parliament. Such inventiveness offers greater insight into the events than merely recounting them would achieve. In this way Langland initiates suggestion and recognition. The infiltration and siege of Unity is one example of what would happen if Unity did not defend itself from those who would compromise its morals which, as with the warnings to the churches at Pergamum and Thyatira in Apocalypse 1, would happen otherwise. This resonates with the words of Aristotle in his discussion of Universality in which he compares poetry to history:

\ldots the function of the poet is not to say what has happened, but to say the kind of thing that \textit{would} happen, i.e. what is possible in accordance with probability or necessity. The historian and the poet are not distinguished by their use of verse or prose; it would be possible to turn the works of Herodotus into verse, and it would be a history in verse just as much in prose. The distinction is this: the one says what has happened, the other the kind of thing that \textit{would} happen.

For this reason poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history. Poetry tends to express universals, and history particulars. The \textit{universal} is the kind of speech or action which is consonant with a person of a given kind in accordance with probability or necessity; this is what poetry aims at, even though it applies individual names. The particular is the actions or experiences of (e.g.) Alcibiades.\textsuperscript{44}


By taking the universally applicable aspects of the Apocalypse then re-imagining figures and transposing them onto his text, Langland displays implicit agreement with this view. As the Apocalypse incorporates historical references such as the coded list of emperors in Chapter 17 within the drama of the text, Langland adopts a similar approach and thereby accords with Aristotle’s description. Indeed the latter’s insight here highlights one way in which it is possible to interpret the Apocalypse’s prophetic passages – potential eventualities if humanity takes a particular path. Smalley’s observations regarding the biblical text’s dramatic structure, themes and linguistic constructs accord with this hermeneutic.45

According to the Apocalypse, God reverses the Judgment of guilt for the repentant believer. This doctrine is mirrored in Piers Plowman with Passus XX and the victory of Christ on the cross and the harrowing of hell most strikingly foregrounding this reversal of fortunes. In the final Passus Langland describes the rise of Antichrist, and the precarious position of Unity which is both infiltrated and under siege to the forces of Antichrist. By acknowledging the worst conceivable outcome – for it is surely an exaggeration of contemporary events – and prophecies of future events as well as revealing a figurative truth, Langland creates a cathartic effect for the interested reader, since it is only by acknowledging the threat that repristination becomes a possibility. The church requires renovatio to be worthy of the epithet ‘Bride of Christ’. With this eschatological perspective the reader gains a more balanced view of threats that were/are posed and anticipates eventual reversal.

This section has explored Langland’s alliterative poetry and techniques such as enjambement, in facilitating the oral qualities of the dialogic poem. His ‘code-switching’ utilises Latin in order to confer authority on his text by employing the learned language of the day and the language of the Church. He interlinks this within a communitarian vision and critique of the mendicants as he incorporates his consideration of social issues such as poverty, corruption and the use of wealth. Such stylistic elements combined with the utilisation of satire and parody serve to divest threats of their power and achieve a cathartic effect in terms of encouraging the reader to face contemporary problems. This constitutes a major similarity with John’s style in the Apocalypse. Another area of comparison concerns imagery, to which we now turn.

The Apocalypse and *Piers Plowman* utilise language to access the divine and impart insights. The former text describes those things spiritual and visual that exceed its scope to replicate visually, prompting John to incorporate imagery that approximates to the nearest point at which an appreciation of the splendour of the visions is possible, using easily recognisable images from the contemporary world and relying heavily on similes and metaphors. For example, regarding the New Jerusalem:

> And he took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain: and he shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone even as crystal. (Apocalypse 21:10-11)

The merging of similes with fixed emphases indicates the reality of the vision for John. Langland also utilises this approach as he grapples with spiritual and immediate contemporary societal issues and seeks to comprehend them. He incorporates satire and parody in an attempt to disarm and achieve a cathartic effect by tackling elements in society and the Church which he deems to be detrimental to both. He creates visually evocative language, as in the description of Lady Meed and later in the Harrowing of Hell. There is nothing comparable to the New Jerusalem as found in another alliterative poem, *Pearl*, and Chaucer’s *Parson’s Tale* (1396-1400) because *Piers Plowman* is concerned with the state of the Church Militant (*Ecclesia Militans*) rather than the Church Triumphant (*Ecclesia Triumphans*), although this statement needs to be qualified slightly. The Prologue alludes to the New Jerusalem/heaven in the form of the Tower – also considered below and in chapter 4 – which in the description is juxtaposed against the dale/dungeon (hell). The dreamer says, ‘A fair feld ful of folk fond Y ther bytwene.’ (1, 19) The fair field full of folk is an allegory for contemporary society which can be swayed in the direction of either good or evil; it must be figuratively ‘ploughed’ in the sense of spreading the gospel, as in Matthew 13. The ideology which these verses present is reflected in Langland’s social concerns which undergird, and indeed define, the entire poem. They are also
comparable to the messages to the seven churches – the cleansing of the Church as preparation for the marriage of the Bride to Christ and the coming of the New Jerusalem and the millennial kingdom, whether it is interpreted as a literal period on earth or in a spiritual (idealistic) sense.

In the Prologue Langland’s implicit social critique offers an initial indication of the poem’s didactic function in relation to the dreamer, and indirectly to the reader, even as it conveys a sense of realism regarding its reception. Indeed biblical parables and prophecies are designed to exclude from the ‘mysteries’ those who have hardened their hearts to the message. In Isaiah 6:9-10 God commands Isaiah to prophesy publicly:

Go, and thou shalt say to this people: Hearing, hear, and understand not: and see the vision, and know it not. Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted and I heal them.

Matthew recounts Jesus’ parable of the sower. The seed scattered on the wayside is eaten by the birds; the seed on the stony ground is ultimately scorched by the sun because of its lack of roots, and the seed that fell in the thorns is choked by them. We read that ‘others fell upon good ground: and they brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’ Jesus’ subsequent explanation warns of the dangers of the seed falling to those who lack depth of faith (without root) and receive the seed (message) ‘by the wayside’ or ‘stony ground’ and therefore fail to cope when ‘there ariseth tribulation and persecution because of the word’. The one who receives ‘seed among thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word, and he cometh fruitless.’ Fertile ground is therefore required for the seed to yield its crop. The riddles which the dreamer encounters constitute challenges to the state of the soul, and Piers must preach this message which incorporates the main principle behind the letters to the seven churches in the Apocalypse. Subsequently Matthew incorporates further parables in which the

47 Matthew 13:22.
agrarian theme remains prominent. The account of the coming of the kingdom of heaven is only mentioned in this most apocalyptic of the Gospels:

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the good man of the house coming said to him. Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.\(^{48}\)

In this passage the field has been contaminated covertly. There is the analogy with the Last Judgment and the separation of the sheep and the goats but it also serves as a metaphor for the Church Militant. I contend that this is Langland’s source text for the allegory that is the Barn of Unity in Passus XXI. With the description of the friars’ infiltration, the injunction to keep the barn with the wheat pure becomes an even more sombre and urgent warning in terms of the spiritual health of the Church.

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven further reinforce the concept of preparing through small steps the greater yield of the kingdom of heaven. The origin of the fair field full of folk in the Prologue, and the catalyst for the poem as a whole, are the following lines which evoke the language of the Apocalypse. Langland creates a vista through which he comments on the state of the Church and society. Both texts encapsulate the dilemmas facing the body of believers and warn of the consequences of acquiescence or collusion with the forces/practices which are antithetical to the well-being of the Church. The agrarian allegory with its descriptions of sowing and reaping in these lines in Matthew is illuminated by the Apocalypse and Langland draws on both. Matthew continues:

\(^{48}\) Matthew 13:24-30.
He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. And the field is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them, is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the angels. Even as cockle therefore is gathered up, and burnt with fire: so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.49

The apocalyptic message in this passage is conveyed with the use of agrarian analogies and a specific reference to the end of the world and the destruction of the wicked. The last line of this section is echoed in Apocalypse 2:7: 'He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of my God.' The tree of life is an important trope that I shall address below. The kingdom of heaven is further described by Jesus as he draws the following analogies. He says it is

. . . like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. So shall it be at the end of the world. . . .50

Again there is the concept of the separation of good from bad, and the salvaging of the treasure for heaven. There are thus striking parallels between this description of the kingdom of heaven and the fair field full of folk in which Langland depicts a panorama of society with the tower and the dungeon representing heaven and hell

50 Matthew 13:44-49.
respectively – the interrelationship between heaven and earth. In the Gospel passage quoted above, Matthew introduces angels at precisely this point:

   The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. . . He said unto them: Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.\textsuperscript{51}

This concept of the interrelationship of heaven and earth is a hallmark of \textit{Piers Plowman} from the opening of the Prologue. The Apocalypse anticipates the eventual realisation of this kingdom described in Matthew and which, in turn, Langland seeks in his own cultural milieu. There is a figurative sense in which ‘the end’ permanently exists as both a concept and a prophecy insofar as it is ‘engraved’ on the consciousness of believers – as is exemplified in the use of symbolism which is so prominent in the early lines of the Prologue:

\begin{verbatim}
Estward Y beheld aftir the sonne
And say a tour – as Y trowe, Treuthe was there-ynne.
Westward Y waytede in a while aftir
And seigh a depe dale – Deth, as Y leue,
Woned in tho wones, and wikkede spiritus.
A fair feld ful of folk fond Y ther bytwene
Of alle manere men, the mene and the riche,
Worchyng and wandryng as this world ascuth. (Prologue, 14-21)
\end{verbatim}

Several allusions and symbols are evident here, including the allusion to Jesus’ parable of the Tares in Matthew 13:38 quoted above. The tower and the dale/dungeon are ever-present symbols. According to the Apocalypse and quest elements in relation to the Church and society within \textit{Piers Plowman}, the interconnectedness of heaven and earth ultimately leads to the fulfilment of the prophecy of Apocalypse 21-22 concerning the inauguration of the ideal kingdom/age

\textsuperscript{51} Matthew 13:49-52.
on earth. This period which is analogous with the Joachite Age of the Spirit (or third status) is precisely what Langland – through the dreamer – is concerned for society to create, although in the poem the realisation of such a status has a future application, despite the prescience in the text’s relationship to the eschaton.\textsuperscript{52} Langland’s social conscience is evidenced as the text’s language engenders a sense of urgency which is necessitated by the eschatological timeframe, the imminence of a transition to a new age. A caveat is that the Church Triumphant appears proleptically in Passus I with the introduction of Lady Holy Church, its personification. The language in this \textit{oraculum} is comparable to a medieval sermon and bears striking similarities with the letters to the seven churches. The personification of the Church Triumphant incorporates a figurative concept which in the prophecy of the New Jerusalem of Apocalypse 21 belongs later on the eschatological timescale. This \textit{oraculum} serves to identify conditions that are necessary in order to inaugurate the repristination of the Church that is required before the Second Coming of Christ – the need for truth and love which are revealed through charity and the redistribution of wealth from the wealthy to the needy.

\textit{Antifraternalism, antimendicantism and satirical and parodic elements}

Turning to the closing two passus and the nature of Langland’s prominent satirical and parodic language, which is rooted in the antifraternal and antimendicant tradition, I explore the passus’ relationship and partial derivation from the events described in the Apocalypse and the assaults on the Church by Antichrist and the secular world. I analyse examples of Langland’s employment of satirical language as he comments on contemporary events, social concerns, the Church and theological questions. One commonly overshadowed aspect of the Apocalypse is its satirical elements, as encountered in its depictions of monstrous figures of evil.\textsuperscript{53} Both texts utilise political satire and respond to a perceived crisis in the Church, a threat which is the most insidious; they also acknowledge and describe the secular world, heavenly spaces and their interrelationship.

\textsuperscript{52} See chapter 4 of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{53} Tina Pippin and James L. Resseguie have drawn on Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘carnivalesque’ in their hermeneutical approach. See my chapter 4, n.34.
The depiction of Jezebel as a nefarious individual in the description of her influence within the Church in Apocalypse 2:20, resembles that of the corrupted/ing and hypocritical friars and what might be termed ‘the spirit of the mystical Antichrist’ (Antichristus mysticus), which is also applicable to the Whore of Babylon. James L. Resseguie points out that ‘Jezebel is a religious prostitute who seduces some at Thyatira to practice idolatry (2:20).’\(^{54}\) He notes that the Whore of Babylon is linked to Jezebel through the words ‘mother of whores and earth’s abominations’. As he puts it, ‘Both Jezebel and Babylon are synonymous with promiscuous compromise and adulterous assimilation to the popular culture.’\(^{55}\) The name derives from 2 Kings in which Jezebel is described as the wife of Ahab, the king of Samaria, seducing him into turning towards Baal worship as well as persecuting believers in Yahweh. Also condemned as a false prophet in Apocalypse 2:14 is Balaam, who in Numbers 22-25 is prevented by God from cursing the Hebrews for financial reward but instead recommends luring the Israelites to sexual relations with the Moabite women, which leads to the former’s consequent corruption to pagan practices (31:16). In both texts economic corruption and avarice are prominent concerns. Language denoting sexual immorality, as defined by the Bible, is applied in relation to the corrupt or avaricious. Just as the kings of the earth weep as a consequence of the destruction of Babylon – itself a demonic opposite of the twenty-four elders in the heavenly throne room of Apocalypse 4:10-11 – and, just as the merchants in 18:17-18 wail, the coterie around her weeps at her fall. A comparison of the language notes her jewels and bribes, indicative of economic dominance resulting from imperialism. As Resseguie comments regarding the passage in 18:11:17a,

All twenty-eight items of cargo are strung together with ‘and’ (‘Cargo of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls . . .’) to allow each commodity to stand out from the others. Although the list could be expanded or contracted, the twenty-eight types of goods symbolize Babylon’s worldwide dominance. As Bauckham notes, ‘It is certainly no accident that the list of cargoes which Babylon (Rome) imports from “the merchants of the earth” (18:11-13) comprises twenty-eight (4 x 7) items. They are listed as representative of all the products


\(^{55}\) Ibid., 222.
of the whole world.' The listing of goods also metaphorically heaps up Babylon’s sins to the heavens (18:5). By themselves the commodities are a normal part of trade and commerce in the ancient world. But taken together – piled one upon the other – the lengthy list underscores Babylon’s ‘gross materialism and mammon worship.’

Resseguie points out that some of these products appear in the New Jerusalem after the destruction of Babylon, which is itself characterised in visual language evoking its opulence. This demonstrates that they are not inherently bad; the issue is rather the exploitation and avaricious pursuit of wealth. The inclusion of slaves leaves no doubt as to the exploitative nature of these cargoes.

Langland’s verbal assaults on corrupt friars who are beguiled by wealth are similarly uncompromising; he conveys a sense of the conflict of interests between self-preservation and the perceived necessity of flattering others in order to maintain themselves and the temptations brought about by avarice which leads to compromise and abuse of position. There is a stark difference between sections which explore the viability of adopting a more liberal soteriological approach and lines which address the issue of the friars and their ultimate posthumous dwelling place. Alluding to the 144,000 of Apocalypse 7:4, in contrast to the limitless capacity of hell (as in Apocalypse 20:8), Conscience states: 'Heuene haeth euene nombre and helle is withoute nombre'. (XXII, 270) reveals the entrenched antimendicantism of Langland’s verse.

The vitriol against the friars is seen in other Antimendicant writings, such as those of William of St Amour, Archbishop FitzRalph and John Wyclif and those of the Wyclifite tradition. The former launched a propaganda campaign against the friars in which he compared them to the Pharisees. We also find antimendicant sentiments

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56 Resseguie, Narrative Commentary, 230.
57 In Pearsall, Piers, n.270, 373 Pearsall interprets Apocalypse 7:4 (the 144,000) and 7:9 (the great multitude) as contradictory. This ignores the influential belief upheld by those such as Bede in his Explanatio Apocalypsis that the number represented the entire Church: ‘Hoc numero finito, innumerabilis significatatur totius ecclesiae multitude...’ J.A. Giles ed., The Complete Works of Venerable Bede, in the Original Latin, Collated with the Manuscripts, and Various Printed Editions, Accompanied by A New English Translation of the Historical Works, and A Life of the Author (London: Whittaker and Co., 1844), 367.
in literature, for example in Chaucer’s satirical *Summoner’s Tale* in which the friar’s requests for donations (and blatant hypocrisy) precipitate Thomas’ fury:

This sike man wax wel ny wood for ire;  
He wolde that the frere had been on-fire  
With his false dissymulacioun.  

Langland’s antifraternal writings are reminiscent of Apocalypse 3:10 containing Christ’s encouraging words to the angel of the Church of Philadelphia which also condemn imposters within the faith:

I know thy works. Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut: because thou hast a little strength and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and adore before thy feet. And they shall know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God: and he shall go out no more. And I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name. (Apocalypse 3: 8-12)

This comparison is valid in at least three main respects. Firstly, it points to an internal ecclesiastical danger. As Kathryn Kerby-Fulton points out, Langland’s 'sense of justice' in tackling this issue distinguishes him from 'propagandists', thereby showing that he sought Church reform.  

Secondly, troubles precede improved conditions.  

Thirdly, it constitutes a condemnatory linguistic assault employing figurative language and drawing on biblical pronouncements concerning sexual immorality. Langland

draws upon this tradition which the Apocalypse extends from the Old Testament, applying it figuratively in relation to Meed in Passus II-IV and to deviant priests and corrupt friars in Passus XXII in the assault on Unity:

And there was Consience constable, cristene to saue,
And biseged soethly with seune grete geauntes
That with Auntecrist helden harde ayeyn Conscience.
Sleuthe with his slynge an hard sawt he made.
Proute prestes cam with hym – passyng an hundred
In paltokes and piked shoes and with pissares longe knyues . . . (XXII, 214-19)

Penn Szittya has focussed on the function of Need and compromise illustrating the perversion of beliefs. The figure of Sire Penetrans Domos illustrates Langland’s view of the corrupt friars and their penetration of Unity:

The friars’ opposition to Conscience is also signified by the allusive name of the last friar to appear: Sire Penetrans Domos. He is a fleshly embodiment of the figures prophesied for the Last Days in 2 Tim. 3:6, William of St. Amour’s favorite text. The domos that they penetrate were conventionally understood to be metaphoric, and in at least two senses to be houses of Conscience. On the one hand, the friars break into the house of the individual conscience, especially through confession, and probe the secrets of strangers. This is an ‘interior’ house, existing within the soul, but they also break into an exterior one, the church, which is the house of God. They are ecclesiastical house-breakers because they have forced themselves upon an unwilling church and, as a religious, apostolic order, usurped the pastoral functions of the secular clergy.61

Once individuals within the Church body have been corrupted – although this may have occurred involuntarily – the entire body risks compromise, thus precipitating the loss of divine favour and ensuring its downfall. Any doubts as to the association with

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the apocalyptic 2 Timothy 3:1-6\textsuperscript{62} are dispelled in the subsequent lines of the dreamer’s description:

\begin{quote}
And shoten ayeynes hym with shotte, many a shef of othes
And brode-hokede arwes – goddess herte and his nayles,
And hadden almost Vnite and holynesse adowne. (XXII, 225-7)
\end{quote}

The Latin rendering of 2 Timothy 3:6 reads as follows: ‘ex his enim sunt qui penetrant domos et captivas ducent mulierculas oneratas peccatis quae ducuntur variis desideriis.’ This embodiment of pride, corruption and sexual sin in the order of friars provides an illustration of the mystical Antichrist. Szittyia states that the friars with their unwelcome ‘tag’, penetrans domos, which was to remain with them until well into the fifteenth century, were regarded by William of St. Amour as

\begin{quote}
\ldots like the antichristi and pseudoprophetae of other New Testament passages, precursors of Antichrist who in the Last Days will come in great multitudes. Their name gives an indication of their nature. Penetrare means to force entry, but domos in Scripture may be understood two ways: as the material house of the Christian or as his spiritual house, the conscience. These two meanings dictate the two primary interpretations, literal and figurative, that William offers for the penetrantes domos.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

This juxtaposition of Christ who is being shunned in favour of these imposters, the corrupt friars and other hostile elements is also reflected in the example of Antichrist against Piers. The lines recall Apocalypse 3:20: ‘Behold, I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him: and he with me’ – this message addresses the church rather than the individual. With the Barn of Unity Langland portrays the vulnerability of the corporeal Church to infection (infiltration) when a part succumbs to sickness; if Christ

\textsuperscript{62} ‘Know also this, that in the last days shall come dangerous times. / Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, / Without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, / Traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasure more than of God: / Having an appearance indeed of godliness but denying the power thereof. / Now these avoid. For of these sort are they who creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, who are led away with divers desires . . .’

\textsuperscript{63} Szittyia, Antifraternal Tradition, 58.
is excluded from the body the alternative is assimilation with the world which precedes the coming of Antichrist.

The end of Passus XI is concerned with the last things, including the prophecy of another Flood in the last days and a warning of the proximity of Judgment day, a recurrent concept in apocalyptic literature. One indication that this original ending displays Langland’s intention of concluding the poem by emphasising latent dangers from within the Church can be deduced from the involvement of Recklessness who expounds cases in which sinners were believed to have escaped purgatory and hell. This personification is an example of what is described as taking place, both internally and externally, in relation to Unity as a whole in the respective endings of B and C, which culminate in the siege of Unity by the forces of Antichrist and its infiltration by false friars. The thief on the cross and his avoidance of purgatory despite having lain with the devil are mentioned. Also at the end of Passus XI in A and Passus XVIII in C Langland incorporates the trope of the tree of life (*lignum vitae*) found in the Apocalypse:

And he shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month: the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations. (Apocalypse, 22:1-2)

'Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are dogs and sorcerers and unchaste and murderers and servers of idols and every one that loveth and maketh a lie. I, Jesus, have sent my angel, to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star.' And the spirit and the bride say: 'Come.' And he that heareth, let him say: 'Come.' And he that thirsteth, let him come. And he that will, let him take the water of life, freely. (Apocalypse, 22:14-17)

This description encapsulates the soteriology of both writers with the figurative tree representing eternal life. Access to the tree and the water of life is for those who have
been purified through the blood of the Lamb. Langland, following the Apocalypse, contrasts purity and impurity on the way to obtaining this goal.

David Aers has challenged the propensity amongst some scholars ‘to transplant Langland’s tree into a pleasant “Biblical milieu” and then turn it into an exegete’s picturing model’, contending that they ‘ignore Langland’s poetic domination of words and images, his own creation of nuances and discriminations in his own handling of allegorical modes’. He argues,

. . . we must surely cast out all the exegesis of those critics who insist that Langland is portraying the *lignum vitae* of Genesis 2.9 or Apocalypse 22.2. The fruit of the *lignum vitae* is the fruit of achieved salvation. But here, besides the dark undertones already mentioned, and developed later on, the tree is attacked by the World, Flesh and Fiend (XVI.27–49). All is dramatic activity, change and mutability around the tree. The fruit grows and ripens although it is sometimes prevented from this by adversaries. There is a desperate energy needed to protect the tree, even to let the fruit ‘ripen’ and become ‘somdel y-fruitéd’. Such action is more appropriate to the terrestrial sphere of time present, with all its chances and changes, than to the Paradise where the *lignum vitae* and its fruit of achieved salvation grow. (Nor is ‘somdel’ appropriate to the latter.) Later we will come to the lines where the fruit falls and is taken to ‘*lymbo inferni*’ and this too refutes the exegesis that the tree is the tree of Life. . .

Whilst Aers is correct in stating that the action belongs to the present, he does not make sufficient allowance for the fluidity of the Apocalypse’s imagery; it reapplies symbols, such as this one from Genesis, and conveys multiple levels of meaning. The *lignum vitae* is a constituent of Christian thought and the apocalyptic elements and framework of *Piers Plowman* identify it as such. Moreover, his point about the tree coming under attack ignores the fact that Genesis describes the guarding of the tree and the vision in the Apocalypse which acknowledges the eschatological function of the tree. The collective singular for tree (*xylon*) appears in Apocalypse 22:2, 14 and earlier in 2:7 where Jesus says, ‘To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of my God.’ In verse 2 the leaves are to

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65 Ibid.
be ‘for the healing of the nations’, and in verse 14 those who have washed ‘their robes in the blood of the Lamb’ gain ‘a right to the tree of life and may enter in by the gates into the city’. The assault on the tree signifies spiritual warfare as dark forces seek to prevent the believer obtaining the salvation granted by the cross, which cannot be fully obtained until the future. In Genesis 3:24 God ‘cast out Adam; and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubim, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life’. Therefore, figuratively speaking, from the individual believer’s perspective, the tree is indeed in a state of limbo until the believer’s glorification. The tree of life and the New Jerusalem are juxtaposed against those outside – dogs, and sorcerers and unchaste and murderers – which equates to the language used to describe the threats to Unity. In this passage eternal life is found in the Messiah. It is inconceivable that Langland did not associate them.

Having introduced the trope of the Tree of Life, Langland incorporates a reference to angels, thereby recalling line above (I, Jesus have sent my angel, to testify these things in the churches’):

Matrimonye, a moist fruyt that multiplieth the peple;
And thenne aboue is bettere fruyt (ac bothe two ben gode),
Wydewhode, more worthiore then wedlok, as in heuene.
Thenne is Virginite, more vertuous and fayrest, as in heuene,
For that is euene with angelis and angeles pere. (XVIII, 85-9)

This language reflects the Apocalypse’s equation of virginity with purity. The virginity of the angels, who possess the status which glorified believers attain, is given an earthly resonance and application in relation to those who live in accordance with the Spirit and his fruit (Tree of Charity in Passus XVIII); their deeds provide an aperture into the state of their soul. A millennial period would include adherence to these branches. The biblical application of the tree trope is figurative of salvation history, in Genesis in connection with the Fall and ultimate salvation, in Numbers 21 (and the final fulfilment, insofar as this communicates on a figurative level), and in the stump of Jesse of Isaiah 11:1. This is the subject of the Old English poem The Dream of the Rood (c. 750),66 another dream vision in which the tree is shown a vision of the cross.

that it is to become and baulks at serving such a function, although it is persuaded to agree to its function when shown the salvific purpose. The tree’s description in the first section of the poem as encrusted with jewels, followed by the suffering which it experiences as the cross, suffering with Christ, and subsequent resurrection with him points to a totemic symbol which derives from pagan traditions recalling, unwittingly or not, this literary as well as biblical tradition. Langland adopts the tree trope earlier with the Tree of Charity which describes the virtues of the Holy Spirit which are lived by those who do well:

Erber of alle pryuatees and of holynesse.
Euene in the myddes an ympe, as hit were,
That hihte Ymago-dei, graciousliche hit growede. (XVIII, 5-7)

There is the concept of the believer growing this figurative tree within their spirit in a renovatio of the soul, which is required for Unity to survive the onslaught of Antichrist in Passus XX:

Bytokeneth trewely the trinite of heuene,
Thre persones indepartable, perpetuel were euere,
Of o will, of o wit; and herwith Y kepe
The fruyt of this fayre tre fro thre wikkede wyndes
And fro fallynge the stok, hit fayle nat of his myhte.
The world is a wikkede wynde to hem that wolde treuthe . . . .
(XVIII, 26-31)

The strong Trinitarian thrust combines with apocalyptic language as it foreshadows the final passus; Creation, Christ and Holy Spirit are juxtaposed against the three opponents, and in the case of the latter two, their antitheses – the world, Antichrist and Satan.

The Tree of Charity represents a pivotal part of Langland’s social gospel and is intertwined with the new covenant replacing that of the Old Law. As he recalls miracles the language accelerates as the climax approaches, with verbs such as ‘smote’, ‘ouerturned’ and ‘ouerthrowe’ to indicate the controlled anger and violence of the action:
'Vnkynde and vnkunynge!' quod Crist, and with a roep smote hem And overtorned in the temple here tables and here stalles And drof hem out, alle that ther bouhte and solde, And saide, 'This is an hous of orysones and of holynesse And when that my will is Y wol hit owerthrowe And ar thre dayes aftur edefye hit newe.' (XVIII, 155-60)

The prophetic elements are also pronounced in the last line. The following lines are uncompromising in their criticism of the Jews and mention Judas:

The Iewes tolde the iustice how that Iesus saide: Ac the ouerturnynge of the temple bitokened his resurreccioun. Enuye and euel wil ern in the Iewes And pursuede hym priueliche and for pans hym bouhte – Ne forte tumultus fieret in populo – Of luedas the Iew, Iesus oune disciple. (XVIII, 161-5)

Such targeted anger against wrongdoing features prominently in the Apocalypse. Two Greek words are used for anger – orge and thymus – both of which appear in the Apocalypse. In 14:10 and 16:19 they appear in the same sentence reflecting a distinction. Orge denotes a rapid realisation of anger which is irreversible until it is exhausted. Thymus, which appears elsewhere in the New Testament – Romans 2:8 for example, where it is also used in the same sentence as orge – is defined as a slow-burning and steadily increasing anger. The Apocalypse provides a demarcation between the point where people may still repent and that at which the hardening of their hearts exceeds their capacity/will to repent. This second word for anger appears at times of crisis. In Apocalypse 15:1 it appears in connection with the seven bowl judgments. This state of crisis in both the Apocalypse and Piers Plowman belongs to a binary that is spiritual and earthly – the latter defined in great part by misapplication of power. Although Langland displays no moral objection to hierarchies, he identifies a correlation between wealth and corruption.
Following the section quoted above there is a description of the events of Jesus’ betrayal by Judas. Despite these negative references the language is not anti-Semitic and the real target is the moneychangers; by including the prophetic lines about resurrection Langland intimates that Jesus’ attitude to money precipitated his death. Moreover, the lines suggest that the overturning also had a figurative meaning in that it signified release from slavery to money and interest. As the figure of Lady Meed demonstrates, monetary wealth can compromise the Church and society (Dives and Pauper/rich man and Lazarus). The Apocalypse warns that a society which prostitutes itself to finance ensures its own destruction. God leaves Babylon to its self-destructive urges – an integral part of Langland’s powerful social gospel, in which stark choices are reflected in the condemnatory language concerning the friars.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed Langland’s agrarian and apocalyptic imagery deriving from the Gospel of Matthew and the Apocalypse respectively. I have also analysed some of the satirical and apocalyptic language within his poetics and his innovative use of alliterative poetry and the device of enjambment. I have argued that Langland’s code-switching in the polyglot application of languages, combined with the multiplicity of voices, further enriches the artistic, didactic and rhetorical qualities of the poem, conferring added authority on the text and enlarging his readership or audience and thereby extending the reach of his critique.

I have contended that awareness of Bakhtinian linguistic theory illuminates Langland’s engagement with the Apocalypse. I have shown that the Bakhtinian terms *heteroglossia, polyglossia* and *polyphony* are applicable to interpreting Langland’s dream vision since they serve to represent the inherent conflict involved in the spiritual struggle as Langland brings salvation history to life, amalgamating scripture – particularly the New Testament – with his own apocalypse for the late Middle Ages mirroring the complexity of perceived crisis. Through the devices of the dream vision and its narrator, heteroglossia and polyglossia, Langland creates a dialogic, as opposed to an author-centred, text in which all voices are created under a controlled monologic canopy. The poem’s dialogic features contribute to its didactic function
whilst the heteroglossic and polyglossic elements create an environment conducive to questions posed by those seeking justice. The divergent voices in *Piers Plowman* comprise the competing human faculties in constant friction as the individual seeks equilibrium. These elements enable Langland to present the need for repristination if Unity is not to succumb to the mystical Antichrist as revealed in his antifraternal and antimendicant thrust which is intertwined with the poem's satirical and parodic elements. In the next chapter I explore in greater detail the thematic nature of this critique conveyed through Langland's personification allegory for which the Apocalypse provides a template and inspiration that resonates with the turmoil of Langland's own milieu.
CHAPTER 4

Personification and Allegorisation in *Piers Plowman*

*Introduction*

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, John transposes the combat myths onto a Christian theological perspective and different geographical locations. This chapter argues that whilst Langland incorporates allusions and direct references to later chapters of the Apocalypse, he also transposes a partially recontextualised contemporary variation of Apocalypse chapters 1-17 onto the poem, adopting it as a basic framework which recalls key moments in biblical ecclesiastical history, whilst intimating the necessity of *renovatio* and reprivation within a Joachite age of the Spirit. The technique of recontextualisation within fourteenth-century England – which also appears in medieval art depicting biblical figures in contemporary costume – imbues these events with a strong sense of immediacy.¹ This chapter explores some of these aspects, and their place within the concept of recapitulating history and the ascending spiral of recurring events of increasing devastation which culminate in an eschatological realisation. It analyses the nature and extent of this emphasis, much of which is achieved through reliance on personification and allegorisation that innovatively develops the biblical source/s, for instance, in relation to Lady Meed. The chapter examines how Langland revivifies this ekphrastic image, moulding it into a more nuanced figure than the Whore of Babylon of Apocalypse 17 and 18. This chapter highlights such recontextualised imagery within *Piers Plowman*.

¹ Examples of such art include the thirty-five illuminations in the Rupertsburg manuscript (c.1165) of Hildegard of Bingen’s *Scivias*, such as ‘The One Sitting upon the Throne’ which depicts Christ dressed as a medieval king. Another example is the late fourteenth-century Ms. Holkham misc. 48, p110 depiction of Antichrist and the Whore of Babylon which illustrates Dante’s *Purgatorio* XXXII 148-160 in an apocalyptic scene transposed upon a medieval pastoral environment. In English art the mid-thirteenth century *Getty Apocalypse* – part of the Westminster group of illustrated English Apocalypses – contains eighty-two miniatures depicting the biblical Apocalypse, with earth’s inhabitants arrayed in the appropriate medieval attire for their station in life. It incorporates commentary by Berengaudus. Regarding its dissemination Nigel J. Morgan identifies a waning of interest in such books ‘by the fourth quarter of the thirteenth century’, which he suggests may be attributable to the failure of Joachim’s predicted 1260 date to be realised. However, he identifies strong lay interest in the first half of the fourteenth century: ‘The predominance of vernacular copies implies that the majority were made for lay men and women, although some were made for the religious who doubtless preferred to read in Anglo-Norman rather than Latin.’ Nigel J. Morgan, *Illuminating the End of Time: The Getty Apocalypse Manuscript* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Publications, 2011), 13.
Despite a similarly strong reliance on the Apocalypse in *Vox Clamantis*, Langland’s contemporary John Gower adopts a markedly different approach from his fellow poet. In evincing examples of this difference the chapter juxtaposes another representation of contemporary English society which in a different style and language holds a prominent place within the English literary tradition of Apocalypse-influenced writing. It advances the argument that Langland imbues several of his strongly vocal characters with multi-faceted natures in accordance with the poem’s didactic function, a technique which paradoxically creates ambiguity. It identifies the apocalyptic elements of four of the dreams’ openings, considering their textual function. Finally, it analyses Langland’s depiction of Christ as conqueror in Passus XX, deciphering the meaning of Antichrist and the Barn of Unity – the latter offering a beginning rather than a denouement since the text is cyclical rather than linear.

In his allegorisation Langland employs venality satire in order to highlight the implicit dangers of monetary wealth, both to the Church’s spiritual health and the kingdom’s moral standing. His implicit criticism is explicable when contextualised within the tumultuous socio-economic transitions of late-fourteenth century England. As in the Lady Meed passus, Langland supplements the biblical text with his own material in order to explore the implications for his milieu; in this restricted sense the technique constitutes Langland’s gloss on the Apocalypse.

The allegorical dream vision in the context of medieval literature

Langland employs all four medieval exegetical approaches, or ‘four-fold sense of scripture’ propounded by Origen – *literal, anagogical, tropological* and *typological* – within his teleological hermeneutic, as exemplified in *Piers Plowman*’s scriptural allusions and quotations. Langland applies the *literal* in accepting the veracity of biblical accounts. He adopts the *anagogical* in, for instance, the words of Lady Holy Church, the personification of the Church Triumphant, and in the symbolic ‘tour’ (Prologue, 15) possibly alluding to the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) and ‘depe dale’ (Prologue, 17) together representing heaven and hell, and Conscience’s exegesis of Old Testament references to David which views him as a prefiguration of the eschatological apocalyptic conquering Messiah (see below). Langland displays the *typological* in the poem’s progression through biblical history; finally, he adopts
characteristic features of the biblical Apocalypse as he employs a *tropological* interpretation to reflect on recapitulated events of universal significance and prophecies which possess contemporary resonance; he frames this multi-faceted exegesis within the oneiric vision.

In medieval literature the dream vision constitutes a fictional device for conveying sometimes controversial ideas as the author explores/seeks fundamental truths. Steven F. Kruger discusses the influence of Aristotelian thought upon dream theory in the late-medieval period. Aristotle’s treatises on dreams ‘reinforced the growing tendency to associate dreams with somatic and psychological process. More radically, they reintroduced into European discourse the possibility that dreams are never divine in origin.’ Despite Aristotle’s influence, by no means all writers adopted the latter precept and even Aristotle conceded that a minority of dreams could be prophetic or daemonic. Yet doubt in the veracity of dreams is a feature of *Piers Plowman*. Kruger identifies the ‘middle vision’ – that is, a vision which is between the purely heavenly and the wholly earthly:

Chaucer’s dream poems, Boccaccio’s *Corbacio*, and Langland’s *Piers Plowman* are all middle visions, evoking the possibility of revelation even as they nervously question their own reliability.

The convention often alludes to, and thereby comments indirectly upon, the contemporary socio-political situation and is marked by the use of symbolism and allegory. According to Macrobius, the fifth-century Roman author and influential medieval authority on dream theory, the genre comprises three main subdivisions – the *somnium*, *oraculum* and *visio*. The *somnium* is an enigmatic dream vision, one function of which is to ruminate upon humankind’s relationship with God, even as it obscures the meaning of the dream’s elements which are embedded in the language. This is the defining focus of the contemporaneous poem *Pearl*, which draws evocatively upon the Apocalypse’s description of the New Jerusalem (Langland’s

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2 Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84.
3 Ibid., 18.
4 Kruger, 130.
5 Other influential authorities include the Neoplatonist Calcidius (who challenged Aristotle’s focus on somatic causes for dreams), Augustine, Gregory the Great and Aristotle himself.
poem stops well short of this eschatological point). The oraculum is a didactic sermon in which an authority figure (or figures) addresses and instructs the dreamer, imparts wisdom and directs the latter to follow a particular course, besides warning of potential dangers. Finally, there is the visio, or prophetic dream. All these types are constituent parts of the Apocalypse and Piers Plowman. John receives his visions in an altered state, allowing access to the unveiled mysteries and imparted prophecies. Techniques pertaining to the dream state in Piers Plowman which bear comparison with the Apocalypse include the visions’ future applicability, and contemporary implications/significance as well as past relevance.

The oneiric vision could be hortatory, as are Julian’s analytical explications of her earlier visions. Although there is a distinction between ostensibly real dreams and visions and fictional ones, the latter also had to be (or at least appear to be) orthodox and edifying. The didactic function of Langland’s dreams becomes evident as Will, the dreamer, receives advice – albeit frequently contradictory – from multiple figures of differing authority and trustworthiness, often surpassing his understanding. The didactic function is also a fundamental element of Julian’s visions which are often closer to a visio, and sensory in nature as they exemplify the practice of affective piety. Dreams were believed to offer spiritual sight, although interpretation necessitated discernment since evil spirits could infiltrate the vulnerable dreamer’s mind. The influence of Augustine’s three-fold definition of vision – corporeal, spiritual and intellectual – extended to the later Middle Ages, and is found in The Chastising of God’s Children.7

A notable example of the oneiric vision is the beast fable (closely related to allegory) and mock epic, Chaucer’s The Nun’s Priest’s Tale (1396-1400). Animals had symbolic meaning in the Middle Ages, as illustrated in the Bestiaries, and through the rooster Chanticleer’s prophetic dreams warning of his death, and his recourse to the tales of figures who ignored prophetic dreams warning of their imminent demise. Chaucer draws on one of the most famous dream visions – Cicero’s The Dream of Scipio (Somnium Scipionis) which is also a visio – in which the Roman general Scipio Africanus foresees his own death. Although the text was unavailable in the Middle Ages, it was known through Macrobius. The moralising text

7 See chapter 1 of this thesis for definitions. Also see Kruger, Dreaming, 61-2, and Rosalynn Voaden, God’s Words, Women’s Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries (York: York Medieval Press, 1999), 10-11.
explores the issue of the afterlife, and indeed Cicero drew on Plato’s *Phaedrus*, from which he incorporated his translation of a passage on the immortal soul. In this text Socrates seeks to prove the soul’s existence with the argument of first principles. He defines a first principle as ‘something that does not come into being’ yet that which does come into being must do so from a first principle. Cicero argues that duty demands one live out one’s allotted lifespan rather than succumb to suicidal impulses – a theme mentioned briefly in *Piers Plowman* in relation to Judas. (I, 63-4) The reward for a well-lived life is a place in the eternal habitation of heaven. Scipio is inspired by this path to heaven for those who have served their country well. The *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* cautions against succumbing to recklessness and pride, which are also key themes in *Piers Plowman*. The employment of the beast fable is a feature of other medieval texts, such as Gower’s *Vox Clamantis*, which offers an interesting counterpoint to Langland’s approach to the Apocalypse. I now turn to this text.

**A comparison between Book I of John Gower’s *Vox Clamantis* and *Piers Plowman***

John Gower draws heavily on Apocalypse in the imagery which suffuses his *Vox Clamantis* as he ostensibly conveys a sense of repulsion at the destruction wrought by the momentous Uprising of 1381 and its perceived threat to established hierarchies. A fundamental difference between Langland’s and Gower’s stylistic approach and emphasis is that whilst both evoke a sense of upheaval and suffering in society, Langland is more overtly sympathetic towards the Third Estate’s suffering. However Gower’s texts may implicitly convey sub-conscious identification with the rebels’ predicament whilst simultaneously conveying disapprobation of their actions.

If Langland is a radical conservative, as Alastair Minnis contends, then Gower is ostensibly conservative, even elitist, in his conception of order and hierarchy. Despite their shared thematic focus, Gower’s style and humourless moralising tone contrasts markedly with Langland’s strong satirical emphasis which he shares with Chaucer, although the latter’s ubiquitous irreverence in *The Canterbury Tales*, is more sustained than Langland’s. For instance Chaucer satirises the Uprising in *The

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Nun’s Priest’s Tale which alludes to Jack Straw’s murder of a number of Flemish wool traders:

Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynée
Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille
Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.\(^\text{10}\)

Whilst Langland’s verse contains a strong didactic element, it nevertheless allows free rein to the personifications – as discussed above in connection with a Bakhtinian reading – and is unrestrained in attacking the friars. Gower is more measured, although similarly vehement in his desire for reform. As Edward W. Stockton writes,

Few men, indeed, have ever desired reform so passionately. Here Gower is at one with Piers Plowman, which also urges for reform along established lines, never by violence and revolution.\(^\text{11}\)

Indeed, Gower’s Vox Clamantis was written as a direct response to the Uprising. The similarities with Piers Plowman lie partly in their concerns, such as the breakdown of society, but also the apocalyptic and prophetic elements, and vaticinium ex eventu that they both transpose onto the backdrop of late fourteenth-century England. Situating his text within the dream genre in ‘The Voice of one Crying’ Prologue, Book I, Gower writes,

Sompnia vera quidem, quorum sentencia cordis
Intima conturbat, plena timore canam:
Insula quem Pathmos suscepit in Apocalipsi,
Cuius ego nomen gesto, gubernet opus.\(^\text{12}\)


Filled with apprehension I shall sing of true dreams, the import of which disturbs
the depths of my heart. May the one whom the Isle of Patmos received in the
Apocalypse, and whose name I bear, guide this work.\textsuperscript{13}

Book 1 of \textit{Vox Clamantis} exudes Gower’s palpable abhorrence of the Third Estate’s
violence against the perceived natural order. The Apocalypse and the apocalyptic
genre provide a template for these tumultuous events, conveying a sense of the
enormity of rising against the establishment. The apocalyptic aspect is visible in, for
example, the allegorical depiction of the peasants as animals, many of which are
domesticated but become feral. The interrelationship between the earthly and the
divine, so prominent in the Apocalypse, is also depicted by Langland and Gower,
albeit with contrasting styles and emphases. In apocalyptic language Gower depicts
Gog and Magog as epitomising those who reject God, instead succumbing to an
unrestrained mob mentality:

\begin{verbatim}
Narrat Ysaias, Ysidorus, Apocalipsis,
Tangit et in titulis magna Sybilla suis:
Gog erat atque Magog dictum cognomen eorum,
Actibus in quorum stat magis omne scelus.
Quid sit rex vel lex furiis nescitur ab illis,
Regula nulla ligat ordo nec vltus eos:
Non homines metuunt, superos cultu nec adorant,
Sed quod habet mundus turpius illud agunt.
Carnibus humanis solet hec gens sordida vesci,
Taleque dat populo vita ferina forum:
Turpia sunt plura quibus vtitur atra figura,
Quo capit exemplum turba maligna malum.
Hec etenim rabies furiens connexa malignis
Conuenit hiis furiis, de quibus ante loquor:
Conueniunt eciam socii quos nuper Vluxis
Mutauit Circes, et sociantur eis:
Nunc facies hominum, nunc transformata ferarum
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{13} Stockton, \textit{Gower}, 50.
Gestabant capita, que racione carent. (I, 765-782)

Isaiah, Isadore, and the Apocalypse tell (and the great Sibyl touches upon it in her books) that their name was called Gog and Magog, in whose deeds was utter wickedness. These madmen did not know what a king was; no rule or order restrained them [770]. They did not fear men and they did not worship the gods devotedly, but they did what the world considered most shameful. This vile tribe was wont to devour human flesh, and their beastly life gave a similar right to the people. They were many shameful things which their malign nature practised, and for this reason the malicious mob followed their bad example. Indeed, the raving frenzy of these malicious people joined with the madmen of whom I spoke before. Also, Ulysses’ companions, whom Circe had transformed long before, met and allied themselves with them . . . Now they wore the faces of men and now their transformed heads of wilde beasts, and they had no power of reason.¹⁴

Whereas Langland excises lines from B, such as those concerning the tearing of the pardon, which could have been (mis)construed as sympathetic to the rebels, and amends other lines (such as Prologue 139-46 from the B-text's 112-22 concerning the commons and the king),¹⁵ Gower explicitly condemns the actions of the rebels in vitriolic language. In the subsequent chapter he identifies John Ball as a figure like a false prophet to the people; he has been taught by a ‘malicious spirit’ yet ‘he then constituted their deepest learning’.¹⁶

In Chapter 8 the insurrectionists metamorphose into flies (cf. Exodus 8:15-28) and frogs (cf. Exodus 7:25 – 8:11 & Apocalypse 16:13); these join locusts (cf. Exodus 10:1-20 & Apocalypse 9:3-11) as the narrator refers to the biblical plagues of Egypt in Exodus which also constitute a reference point to readers of the Apocalypse.¹⁷ The reversal of the laws of nature causes sorrow and fear: ‘Even as I was grieving over these many things, I was very much afraid at this time; and above all, the wrath of

¹⁴ Stockton, Gower, 67.
¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid., 62-3. Related verses between Exodus and Apocalypse mentioning similar plagues: Ex. 7:14-24 / Apoc. 8:8; 11:6; 16:3-4; Ex. 7:25-8:11 / Apoc. 16:13; Ex. 9:8-12 / Apoc. 16:2, 11; Ex. 9:13-35 / Apoc. 8:5, 7; 16:21; Ex. 10:1-20 / Apoc. 9:3-11; Ex. 10:21-19 / Apoc. 8:12 & 16:10; Ex. 11:1-10 & 12:29-30 / Apoc. 9:13-19.
God was a considerable cause of fear on my part."\textsuperscript{18} Adopting the refrain ‘This was the day’ the narrator laments, ‘This was the day which raised peasants to high place and put down the nobles, and did not allow them even to be their equals.’ Gower describes the all-pervasive fear ‘that the manifest wrath of God was approaching because of his sins’. As in the Apocalypse, he demands retribution: ‘May celestial vengeance, severe, swift, and direct, destroy those whom that day thus drove mad.’\textsuperscript{19} This anticipation of judgment looms over the beginning of Chapter 9 in which Wat Tyler, who is compared to a Jackdaw, stirs up the people and orders them to kill.\textsuperscript{20} In Chapter 15 the peasants are ‘Wicked men turned aside from veneration of the king’ and ‘madmen’, the mob: ‘The mob burned with more ungovernable fury.’ They are portrayed as irreligious: ‘When prayers were used, the peasant raged even more violently, and he did whatever worse thing he could.’\textsuperscript{21} The hierarchy is reversed with the peasants seizing power having achieved revolution. The nobles behave like those in Apocalypse 9:6 who seek their own death, which nevertheless eludes them, implying that the nobility have brought the overturning of the old order upon themselves:

Confusum tanto subite terrore ruine,  
Vix genus ingenuum scit genus esse suum.  
Diffugit ingenuus, vagat, et nec menibus vbris  
Aut nemorum latebris fert loca tuta satis:  
Mille domos adit sortem repetendo salutis,  
Set potuit nullo ferre quieta loco:  
Nunc huc, nunc illuc, quasi mocio nubis aquose,  
Se mouet ingenuus, fit neque firma salus:  
Vir cubat in puteis, latebras magis optat Auerni,  
Quam periturus erat, dum latitare queat. (I, 1197-1206)

Confused by the great terror of such sudden destruction, the nobility scarcely knew whether its own class existed. The nobleman fled and wandered about, and there were no places quite safe either in the ramparts of the city or in

\textsuperscript{18} Stockton, Gower, 81.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 64.  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 65.  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 76.  

244
woodland retreats. In seeking a measure of safety he approached a thousand houses, but nowhere could he find peace and quiet. The noble went now here, now there, like a raincloud in motion, yet there was no sure safety. A man lay down in well pits when he wanted to hide; he yearned for hiding places in hell rather than be on the point of death.\(^{22}\)

Gower evokes a palpable sense of the breakdown of the natural order combined with the destruction of the social structure: ‘Nature wandered so far from her regular course that a pig did not keep to the behavior of a pig, but rather of a wolf’.\(^{23}\) In chapter 3 the ploughshares lie idle:

\[\ldots\text{ the ox was a lion, the ox was a panther, the ox was a bear, but it was evident that the ox did not know its own nature. And so because I saw the oxen wandering destructively and unbroken to the plow, my thoughts were disturbed. ‘Alas! O!’ I cried. ‘Tillage of the fields will come to an end, so my times should be afraid of famine.’}\(^{24}\)

This is an inversion of Isaiah 11:6\(^{25}\) and 2:4\(^{26}\); it reflects both the upheaval in society reflected in nature, including the real threat of famine (see below). Here Gower creates an animal fable that contrasts markedly with Chaucer’s *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*. For all the characteristic humour in the latter both convey a serious message. Here humans have metamorphosed into threatening feral creatures:

\[\text{The peasant said to the nobles, ‘We have great power, and from this time on there will be an end of respect for you.’ O people stunned by the chilling fear of death, how fickle a fate placed such evil things upon you! There is a reason hidden in the vaults above as to why such a great storm overwhelmed the nobles.}\(^{27}\)

\[^{22}\text{Stockton, Gower, 76.}\]
\[^{23}\text{Ibid., 57.}\]
\[^{24}\text{Ibid., 56-57.}\]
\[^{25}\text{The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them.}\]
\[^{26}\text{And he shall judge the Gentiles, and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war.}\]
\[^{27}\text{Stockton, Gower, 78.}\]
Here Gower alludes to the fault of the nobles which has brought about divine vengeance manifested through the overturning of the social order – a major theme of the Apocalypse.

The title ‘The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness’ alludes to John the Baptist – for Gower the wilderness was England. Animals become haughty and bold, arrogating actions otherwise reserved for human beings. Drawing on classical literature and the dogs from the underworld in classical mythology, dogs of all kinds join together to form a vast pack:

Cumque canum strepitus Sathane descendit in aures,
Gaudet et infernus de nouitate soni,
Cerberus ecce canis baratri custosque gehenne
Prebuit audítum letus et inde furít;
Aque suo collo, quibus extitit ipse ligatus,
Ignea disrupit vincla furore suo;
Exiliensque statim centri penetrauit abissos,
Promptus et in terras acceleravit iter.
Sic socius sociis, sic par paribus sociatur,
Prefuit et canibus dux malus ipse malis;
Dux ita tartareus violens violencius omne
Vertit, et ex homine conficit ipse canem. (I, 429-440)

And when the noise of the dogs descended to Satan’s ears, and hell rejoiced to hear the new sound [430], behold, then Cerberus the dog of the lower world and guardian of Hades lent an ear and went mad with joy. And in its madness it broke from its neck the fiery chains by which it was bound. Springing forth, it at once broke through the abysses of the center region and promptly hastened its journey to earth. Thus this comrade was joined with its fellows, like joined with like, and an evil leader was in charge of evil dogs. So the savage leader of hell turned all the more savage, and himself made a dog of man.²⁹

²⁸ Stockton, Gower, 11.
²⁹ Ibid., 59.
Here the celestial penetrates the earthly realms; the dream frame allows the fears to manifest themselves poignantly in nightmarish imagery which indicates deep-seated fears about the contemporary situation and apocalyptic expectations. Langland also utilises the apocalyptic dream vision, albeit with more subtle symbolism and figuration and less uncompromising and condemnatory language than is found in *Vox Clamantis*.

Both Gower and Langland utilised the three languages – Middle English, French and Latin, yet *Vox Clamantis* is written in the latter. By addressing the Uprising in Latin, Gower appears to compound his clear sympathy with the authorities as opposed to the rebels which he reveals in the contents of the book. However Diane Watt citing 1.799-814 challenges this view held by David Aers and Steven Justice as evading textual difficulties: ‘we can hear the Latin sounds actually mimicking the peasants’ shouts; despite the difference in language, the two combine together to make the outcry even louder’. So whilst Gower’s use of Latin initially appears to distance the narrator from the unruly masses and the rebels, whose voices are dehumanised and linked to anarchic violence, there the text is more complex. The language contains an undercurrent suggesting Gower’s cognitive dissonance in which he abhors the violence and the challenge to order yet subverts this stance by the evocative imagining of the rebel’s perspective, or as Watt puts it,

Gower may have hoped that his portrayal of contemporary horrors would serve as an admonition that would inspire reform within the established political and social framework. However the extent of his poetic engagement with the world of the violent mob and its leaders, and the power he attributes to their voices, indicates that his response to the changes of his time, social as well as linguistic, was a complex one. Paradoxically Gower’s Latin text might be seen as adding its voice to that of the peasants whose asinine bellows and outrageous behavior he sets out to decry.

By writing in Latin a work was more likely to reach a wide readership since it was the language of the educated elite in Europe and, as Watt points out, writing in this

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31 Ibid., 32.
language of the educated elites could be construed as subversive. This perspective of the perpetrators is absent from the biblical Apocalypse, whereas, in contrast, Gower’s problematic rendering and Langland’s Lady Meed, for instance, exemplify the problematisation (conscious or otherwise) of specific actions of characters/personifications which in the Apocalypse are firmly on the side of evil in the clear delineation of the good-versus-evil dichotomy. R. H. Charles views the biblical Apocalypse as a pastiche of texts, but whereas in his view these are necessary to ‘fill in gaps’, there is another angle to the use of pastiche and parody. For Diane Watt and Eve Salisbury, Gower’s Vox is a ‘literary pastiche’, and in reference to the rebels’ parody of the Eucharist as they used human flesh, Watt points out that ‘Just as disrupted syntax can cause as well as signal sexual or moral confusion, so textual fragmentation both parallels and is embroiled in social disorder.’ She cites Salisbury’s argument that Gower’s cento technique is not simply parodic, as Bakhtin held, but ‘with its fragmented form and feminine origin’, is ‘the monstrous birth of Gower’s maternal (rather than paternal) imagination’. Watt describes Gower’s re-creation of the rebels’ invasion of London as a ‘bloody carnivalesque drama’ – language that Tina Pippin also employs in a different context as she interprets the death of the Whore of Babylon in Apocalypse 18 as a ritualistic overthrow of a female scapegoat in which she is de-crowned.

Whereas Chaucer incorporates the comic, and Gower’s text is didactic, conservative, and overtly critical of the commons, Langland’s approach is didactic and pro-commons. However, by penning such an evocation of the rebels’ excesses Gower’s text inevitably incorporates a subversive undercurrent, regardless of authorial intention. There are parallels with Langland’s treatment of Lady Meed here. I now turn to the openings to the dreams within Piers Plowman in order to analyse

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33 Watt, Amoral Gower, 31.
34 Ibid., 32.
35 Ibid., 32.
36 Tina Pippin, Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 67. See also James L. Resseguie, The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009), 43-4 and 83. Resseguie also relates Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque to the ‘apocalyptic world of John’: ‘... what John sees is an inverted world in which everything or nearly everything is turned inside out and upside down’. (Resseguie, Commentary, 43) Resseguie cites the parodies in the good versus evil binaries and worldly perspective of goodness with its diametrically opposed divine perspective. He gives as an example the Church at Laodicea in which, for all its riches and reputation, the members are spiritual paupers.
their apocalyptic characteristics. Many of these elements differ from those found in Gower’s text.

Apocalyptic elements of the dreams’ openings

There are two visions in the Visio in which Will is an onlooker, as is John in his capacity as questioner and seeker of truth. Of the six visions in the Vita some are not necessarily temporal in nature, whereas others are fixed in time, for example the life and death of Christ, and the birth and growth of the Church. Four of these dream openings contain apocalyptic elements or eschatological referents. Langland historicises his material by transposing biblical scenes and doctrine onto contemporary events, as the events of the Apocalypse allude to occurrences in the first century AD whilst carrying sustained prophetic applicability. In the Prologue (line 8 onwards) the dreamer has a vision of the field of folk, discussed in my chapter 3. The symbolic imagery of the dungeon and the tower represents Augustine’s two cities and heaven and hell, thereby establishing the poem’s apocalyptic framework.

Turning to the second dream in Passus V (of which the last three lines could be read as a foreshadowing of the coming of Antichrist in Passus XXII):

And thenne mette muche more then Y byfore tolde
Of the matere that me mette furste on Maluerne hulles.
Y saw the felde ful of folk fram ende til other
And Resoun yreuestede ryht as a pope
And Consience his crocer byfore the kyng stande.
Resoun reuerentliche tofore al the reume prechede
And preuede that this pestelences was for puyre synne
And the south-weste wynde on a Saturday at euene
Was pertliche for pruyde and for no point elles. (V, 109-17)

The allusion to the Black Death and subsequent outbreaks of plague in line 115, thought to be God’s punishment for sin, also recalls the pale horse of Apocalypse 6:8. The dreamer’s return to the vista of the Field of Folk impresses upon the reader the poem’s societal concerns. He now sees ‘fram ende til other’ (line 111), indicating
deepened visionary insight. In this dream opening, the Field is under the rule of Reason in the guise of the *pastor angelicus*, a tradition which emerged out of fear of a Papal Antichrist.\(^{37}\) McGinn writes,

Although the Christian Emperor early assumed a role in the drama of the last days, it was not until the thirteenth century that the papacy achieved a similar apocalyptic stature. It is obvious that the creation of the figure of the Angelic Pope was made possible by the new universal role in Christian society given the papacy during the Great Reform movement. Indeed, the Last Pope was both an apocalyptic validation of the universal significance of the papacy, and thus an example of positive apocalypticism, and also a critique of the papal government of the time, as made clear in the contrast between the worldliness of present popes and the holiness that would characterize the *pastor angelicus*.\(^{38}\)

McGinn’s insights accord with Langland’s inclusion of this *pastor Angelicus* figure at the beginning of the aforementioned dream: ‘And Resoun yereustede ryht as a pope’ (112). The apocalyptic, as well as historically significant line, ‘pestelences was for puye synne’ (115), which alludes to the Black Death, further indicates that this is an authoritative ideal papal figure. As McGinn points out, this both validates the papacy and critiques its contemporary state since the Papal Schism was underway during the writing of the C-text.

In introducing this figure Langland draws upon Joachite thought. Joachim was instrumental in establishing the concept of an eschatological Angelic Pope who was to proselytise the pagans during Antichrist’s reign.\(^{39}\) It is significant that this Passus follows those concerning Lady Meed because in Joachim’s *Liber Concordia* he prophesies that the universal pontiff of the New Jerusalem, that is, of Holy Mother Church’ will ‘ascend from Babylon’.\(^{40}\) The dream’s opening proleptically explores an earthly millennial Kingdom; this is reinforced in Passus III in the speech of Conscience and the prophecy of the parousia based on Isaiah 2 – 5 which not only


\(^{38}\) Ibid., *Visions*, 34.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 129.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 135.
prophesies the parousia and the New Jerusalem but also prefigures the Apocalypse’s depiction of Babylon and Antichrist as threats to be eliminated before universal peace can prevail. In this prophecy, war is a thing of the past in the millennial kingdom and the New Jerusalem:

*Ac Kynde Loue shal come yut and Consience togyderes*
*And maky of lawe a laborer; suche loue shal aryse*
*And such pees among the peple and a parfit treuthe*
*That lewesshal wene in here wit and wexen so glade*
*That here kyng be ycome fro the court of heuene,*
*Moises or Messie, that men ben so trewe.*
*For alle that bereth baslard, briht swerd other launce,*
*Ax other hachet or eny kyne wepne,*
*Shal be demed to the deth but yf he do hit Smythye*
*Into sykel or into sythe, to shar other to coltur.*

*Conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres et lancias suas in falces.*

(III, 452-461a)

These lines bear comparison with Julian’s Parable of the Lord and the Servant, both in the agrarian focus and the reference to Moses, a precursor of the Messiah, and the mention of the redeemer coming from the court of heaven. The references to the conversion of weapons of war into tools of productivity finds Langland characteristically contemporising the language of Isaiah 2:4 (from which he also quotes in Latin):

*And he shall judge the Gentiles, and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war.*

The lines in Passus III, like those in Isaiah are written with an apocalyptic emphasis in terms of content which besides the ‘turning of swords into ploughshares’ trope includes the parousia, the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and consequent incorporation of the Jews, the ‘court of heuene’ from which Christ comes. It anticipates the prophecy in Apocalypse 2:26-27 of the millennium when they who
overcome and keep Christ's words will be given power to rule over the nations 'with a rod of iron', whilst simultaneously portraying an environment in which corruption and self-seeking behaviour intimate its prophetic application.

Passus XV contains the Feast of Patience discussed in my chapter 3 as a satirical and parodical antithesis to the millennial feast. In XX, 5, the dreamer sees Christ preparing to do combat in the crucifixion and then the Harrowing of Hell. In lines which recall the host in the Eucharist and simultaneously allude to Apocalypse 19:13 the one trampling out the vintage in Isaiah and repeated in Apocalypse 14:19-20, Passus XXI reads:

Y ful eftesones aslepe and sodeynliche me mette
That Peres the plouhman was peynted al blody
And cam in with a cros before the comune peple
And riht lyke in alle lymes to oure lord Iesu. (XXI, 5-8)

The multivalent scene evokes the spiritual effects of the Passion (see below) and resurrection and offers a foreshadowing of the parousia. The simile indicates that Piers represents the manifestation of the Christological apocalyptic message; he symbolically embodies the uniting between a suffering and redeeming Christ and his earthly representatives and the common people. I shall return to this quotation in relation to the apocalyptic and metamorphosing Piers as part of my discussion on Langland’s apocalyptic personifications.

Langland’s Apocalyptic Personifications

The sections which follow focus on the poem’s most prominent personifications – Lady Holy Church, Lady Meed, and various incarnations of Piers. They highlight the interplay between the former two personifications. Each fulfils a didactic function – the former intentionally and the latter through Langland’s making. Lady Holy Church may be viewed as the Church Triumphant (see below) and as representing the ideals propounded by Christ through John in the letters to the seven churches. Lady Meed bears many similarities to the Whore of Babylon, although Langland develops this personification. The use of these two personifications in the opening passus of the
poem lays the groundwork for the entire poem’s concerns and represents Langland’s engagement with Apocalypse chapters 1-17 to which his work is partly a response. The section also discusses Langland’s Antichrist, whom, it is argued, is not the final Antichrist (beast from the sea) of Apocalypse 13 but the Mystical Antichrist, included in this section because he prefigures the final human Antichrist. Also, by employing this epithet in the sense that he is given a single name, Langland denotes simultaneously the man and the spirit of Antichrist. Additionally, more minor personifications, such as Hunger, are mentioned.

Many of Langland’s personifications are highly developed allegorisations of vices or qualities, thus ostensibly limiting their characterisations to the confines of this narrow nature, for instance Lady Meed and Recklessness. However the extent to which the former is entirely negative is questioned, for Langland problematises gender roles, whether intentionally or otherwise. As argued in chapter 3, Langland’s portrayal of Lady Meed is an example of his polyphonic approach. The primary concern here is with her allegorical function. David Aers cites D.W. Robertson’s description of the late medieval Christian allegory:

. . . in his [Robertson’s] opinion, it also seems true of exegesis, in which the Bible is interpreted to show the omnipresence of ‘the spirit as it was revealed in the acts and teachings of Christ’. The instrument of revelation is allegory, and to Robertson the relationship between ‘the spirit’ disclosed by allegory and Old Testament history is analogous with the relationship between Plato’s ideal city and the earthly city. Here Robertson makes some striking observations about allegory’s treatment of time: ‘Thus allegory has the effect of reducing the events of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and one’s own actions, together with those of contemporaries, to a kind of continuous present . . . . There is a sense in which the spiritual understanding of Christian allegory produces a similar effect, so that temporal sequence acquires something of the nature of an allusion . . . The same treatment of time frequently appears in medieval literary texts.’

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This definition can be applied to Lady Meed, as well as other biblically-derived sections of the poem in that they represent recurrent universal truths. Within the dream vision genre the allegorical elements are complemented with the cyclical nature of the poem which reinforces this sense of a ‘continuous present’. As with the Apocalypse, the proleptic elements convey a sense of the present and the future eliding. In *Piers Plowman* such merging and flux between realistic and phantasmagoric presentations respectively creates a sense of unease which highlights the slippage between the two, foregrounding events and thereby consistently challenging preconceptions. Langland’s structural approach resembles that of the Apocalypse in certain respects, notably the latter’s reliance on the Old Testament as it recontextualises events in the present, whilst incorporating recapitulations including prophetic ones. Langland condenses biblical history, superimposing it onto his allegorical poem. He creates a framework, incorporating material from the apocalyptic genre and transposing it upon fourteenth-century England.

(i) *Lady Holy Church and her apocalyptic oraculum*

Passus I consists of an *oraculum* in which Lady Holy Church takes centre stage. Langland’s gendering of this personification of the Church Triumphant is entirely orthodox and accords with the Bride of Christ in Apocalypse 7:9-17; 18:23; 21:2; 21:9 and 22:17. Moreover, this idealised personification also bears comparison with the angels symbolised by the stars of Apocalypse 1:16 which, as Charles points out, are ‘the Churches as they should be ideally’.42 However, the positive emphasis on her femininity juxtaposed against Lady/Maid Meed, whom Lady Holy Church points out to Will at the end of Passus I, both mimics the Apocalypse and finds Langland giving a hierarchical and noble voice to this personification. This early focus on Lady Holy Church recalls the letters to the seven churches, particularly in terms of identification with fundamental epoch-specific problems; it also affords an interesting comparison with Julian’s gendered reference to Holy Church:

. . . And he [Christ] wille that we take us mightly to the faith of holy church, and find there our deere worthye mother in solas and trew understanding with all the blessed common. For one singular person may oftentimes be broken, as it semeth to the selfe, but the hole body of Holy Church was never broken, and therefore it is a certain thing, and good and gracious to will, meekly, fervently, be fastened and oned to our moder holy church, that is Crist Jhesu. *(Revelation, 61, 47-52)*

In relation to Langland’s feminine personification of the Church, Pearsall writes that Holy Church

. . . is commonly represented in medieval art and literature as a beautiful woman because of the allegorical interpretation of the bride of the Song of Songs as the Church, the similar interpretation of the Bride of the Lamb in the Apocalypse (who is clothed in ‘fine linen’, Rev. 19:8), and the gender of the Latin *ecclesia*. She is also called ‘Mother Church’, because she nourishes her children with sound doctrine.  

In her perfection Dame Holy Church represents the celestial Church – as distinct from the earthly Church. This positive female personification sets the stage for her antithesis, Lady Meed, whom she points out to the dreamer in II, 19. The introduction of the Church Triumphant at this point followed by Lady Meed sees Langland reordering the Apocalypse, yet it implicitly condemns the state of the terrestrial Church and bears relation to the Siege of Unity in Passus XXII. However, as with the letters to the seven churches, Lady Holy Church’s words demonstrate at this early point in the dreamer’s journey the disparity between the state of the contemporary Church and what it needs to become in deserving the epithet ‘Bride of Christ’.

Passus I introduces the thematic base for the rest of the poem in its incorporation of major themes, such as the Fall, which I address below. Lady Holy Church introduces Truth (God), who resides in the Tower. Her sermon is on the nature of love which links heaven with earth when believers embrace it, and Truth.

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43 Pearsall, *Piers*, 56, n.3.
She is also highly critical of licentious and gluttonous clergy whose abuse of power destroys their charity:

Chastite withouten charite worth cheyned in helle;
Hit is as lewed as a laumpe that no liht is ynne.
Mony chapeleynes aren chaste, ac charite hem fayleth;
Aren none hardore ne hungriore then men of holy chirche,
Auerous and euel-willed when thei ben avaunsed,
Vnkynde to here kyn and to alle cristene,
Chewen here charite and chiden aftur more
And ben acombred with coueytise – thei can nouht crepe out,
So harde hath auaryce yhapsed hem togederes.
And that is no treuthe of the trinite but triccherye and synne
And a luther ensaumple, leef me, as for the lewed peple. (l, 184-194)

Lady Holy Church preaches a gospel of active Christianity: deeds must match professions of faith. These lines allude to some of the fault lines within the Church which threaten its spiritual health. The consequences of corruption become all too apparent in the siege and infiltration of Unity late in the poem. I now analyse aspects of Lady Holy Church’s oraculum which reveal much about Langland’s response to the Apocalypse and influential sources.

Integral to Langland’s treatment of the physical/spiritual binary and soteriological concerns are the references to the Passion and Christ’s wounds – which is a major subject in Passus XX along with the subsequent Harrowing of Hell. Although many scholars regard the linguistic and stylistic differences between the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse as indicative of different authorship,44 I would caution that different genres require different styles. However, beyond this, there are similarities between the Johannine texts in terms of symbolism. One such example is the references to serpents/dragons and allusions to serpent worship. The relevance

of the dragon in Apocalypse 12:3, 13:1 and 20:2 to the Lady Meed passus discussed below is, as Baldwin points out, ‘The dragon was generally thought to represent the Seven Deadly Sins, and these sins are all named as Meed’s dowry.’ Also in Passus I is a strong allusion to Numbers 21 which recounts how the Hebrews, having complained about the monotony of eating manna, were punished by God for their ingratitude with a plague of snakes which bit and killed many of their number. Following the appeal of Moses to God they were given an antidote of a serpent on a wooden pole. Against Ames’s assertion that Langland never mentions prefigurations of the Cross this is one such allusion since the passage in Numbers does indeed prefigure the redemptive power of the Cross which enables believers to have their sin atoned for as Christ takes it upon himself. We read, ‘For Treuthe telleth that loue ys triacle to abate synne / And most souerayne salue for soule and for body.’ (146-7) As Pearsall notes, ‘tribble’ was "herbal medicine" (originally an antidote to a snake-bite. . . ." Seventeen lines below, Langland alludes to John 3:16 which itself, when contextualised with John 3:14-15, is closely connected with Numbers 21. In contrast to Julian’s strong emphasis and vivid descriptions of the crucifixion, with one main exception, Langland elects to allude to it. The allusion to John’s Gospel in these lines and their relevance to the crucifixion becomes explicable when considering the latter. Speaking of love, specifically God’s love in allowing his Son to die for the world, Lady Holy Church says,

And for to knowe hit kyndly, hit comeseth by myhte,
And in the herte ther is the hed and the heye welle.
For of kynde knowynge of herte ther comseth a myhte
And that falleth to the fader that formede vs alle,
Lokede on vs with loue, let his sone deye
Mekeliche for oure mysdedes to amende vs alle.
And yut wolde he hem no wo that wrouhte hym al that tene
Bote mekeliche with mouth mercy he bysoughte
To haue pitee on that peple that paynede hym to dethe.
Here myhtow se ensaamples in hymself one

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45 Anna Baldwin, A Guidebook to Piers Plowman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 42.
46 Ames, Fulfillment, 111.
47 Pearsall, Piers, p64, n.146.
That he was myhtfull and meke, and mercy gan
graunte
To hem that hengen hym hye and his herte thorlede. (I, 159-170)

The last line, with its allusions to John 19:34, exemplifies Langland’s highly perceptive exegesis. In the biblical passage Christ has already died when the spear is thrust into his side (not heart). The mixture of blood and water which comes out is consistent with a ruptured pericardium.\(^{48}\) Both literally and figuratively then, Christ died of a broken heart. Langland, through Lady Holy Church, therefore emphasises the point about God’s love for the human race, whilst grounding it in a balanced view of the wrath and gentleness and love of God. Both the biblical passages which are alluded to, and the Passion scene above address this binary implicitly or overtly. In including these biblically-based lines within a short space it is reasonable to surmise that Langland is displaying an awareness of their interconnectedness, which indicates advanced exegetical ability. These two passages serve the key function of giving prominence to the salvific effect of the Passion, thereby setting a precedent and foundation for a recurrent textual theme – namely, and to apply Thomas Bradwardine’s terminology, the requirement of good works as evidence that one is being saved (\textit{de congruo}) and accumulating additional future heavenly treasure rather than earning salvation in a pelagianist position (\textit{de condigno}).\(^{49}\) These lines emphasise both God’s love and the necessity of finding a remedy for sin, and establish the foundation for the entire poem in which the salvation of the soul occupies Will, and from which the goal of the Church’s eventual repristination stems. Lady Holy Church introduces the concept of knighthood, contrasting David with Lucifer. With the loss of the latter there are nine orders of angels which she views as knights. The revolt in heaven constitutes war against Truth and provides spiritual and eschatological context for terrestrial tribulation. Drawing on the Old Testament, Conscience mentions Moses and David in their capacities as prefigurations of the Messiah. David is a prefiguration of Christ and, significantly, a conquering Christ who

\(^{48}\) Pierre Barbet, \textit{A Doctor at Calvary: The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ As Described by a Surgeon}, (Harrison, New York: Roman Catholic Books, 1953). Whilst a number of Barber’s speculations have since been disproved, he cites medical facts in order to provide insights into the crucifixion as it is described in the Gospels.

will appear later in Passus XX. David is depicted as a feudal king who epitomises knighthood, foreshadowing the knight Christ of XXI:

Dauid in his daies dobbed knyghtes,  
Dede hem swere on here swerd to serue treuthe euere.  
And god whan he bigan heune in that grete blisse  
Made knyghtes in his couert creatures tene,  
Cherubyn and seraphyn, suche seuene and another –  
Lucifer, louelokest tho, ac litel while it duyred.  
He was an archangel of heune, on of goddess knyghtes;  
He and other with hym helden nat with treuthe . . . (I, 102-109)

The significance of these lines lies partly in their association with the Davidic Covenant. Of the five biblical covenants (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic50 in Apocalypse 3:7, 5:5) and Messianic, the Abrahamic, Davidic and Messianic have permanent applicability, but only the Davidic has both temporary (until the parousia) as well as post-parousia relevance in 22:16. God’s first promise is of national sovereignty (over the Jews) and international sovereignty (over the Gentiles) the length of which is conditional, based upon the Hebrews’ fulfilment of the requirements of the covenant. However, the unconditional promise is of the Messiah and the final realisation of the millennium. Therefore, in synthesising the meanings of David (king of Israel, and the Messiah) through the comparison between the earthly and heavenly courts, Langland alludes to the fulfilment of the two promises, which is realised (proleptically) only in the Apocalypse as Christ takes the throne of David.

The references to the cherubim and seraphim who comprise two of the nine orders of angels (after the Fall) and are presented as knights in the celestial court in this passage have their biblical roots in Genesis 3:24 where the cherubim guard the tree of life which later appears in Apocalypse 22. They also appear in Ezekiel and the four living creatures of Apocalypse 4:6-8 bear similarities (and certain differences) with the Cherubim in Ezekiel 1.51 The Cherubim and seraphim are respectively the creatures who perform God’s mercy and justice. This balance of justice and mercy is

50 Also found in Matthew 12:23, 21:9, 15, 22:42; Mark 11:10; Luke 1:32ff; John 7:42; Acts 13:34, 15:16; Rom 1:3. N.B. There is no scholarly consensus regarding the number of biblical covenants.

51 See Mounce, Revelation, 124-5.
a recurring theme throughout the poem. The references to the Fall at this early stage of the poem set the theological framework for the quest for salvation of the individual as well as the Church. The eschatological implications are underscored in Lady Holy Church’s words here, revealing much about Langland’s eschatology. She continues, still referring to Lucifer, who,

‘. . . Lepen out in lothly forme for his luther wille
That hadde lust to be lyk his lord that was almyghty.
Ponam pedem meum in aquilone, et similis ero altissimo.’
‘Lord! Why wolde he tho, that wykkede Lucifer,
Luppen alofte in the north side
Thenne sitten in the sonne syde there the day roweth?’
‘Nere hit for northerne men anon Y wolde yow telle
Ac Y wol lacky no lyf,’ quod that lady, ‘sothly.
Hit is sikerore bi southe ther the sonne regneth
Then in the north by many notes, no man leue other.
For theder as the fende fly his fote for to sette,
Ther he faylede and ful and his felawes alle,
And helle is ther he is, and he there ybounde.’ (I, 110-121)

These lines refer to the fall of Lucifer and his pride which saw him aspire to be like God. The reference to his binding also mentions points of the compass and before considering what these lines reveal about Langland’s exegetical approach to the Apocalypse it is helpful to refer to Pearsall’s comments on the apocalyptic and prophetic reference to the north:

The biblical association of Lucifer and the north, already well developed in St Augustine, was strengthened by the patristic association of heat with charity and of cold with unrepentant sin . . . by German mythology which also placed Hell in the north (Mount Hecla, in Iceland, according to some ecclesiastical historians), as well as by a more or less natural geographical prejudice (for which Holy Church half-playfully apologizes:115) which can be found expressed
A mixture of biblical and popular associations provided context for Langland’s reference to the north. Perhaps the most famous biblical reference to evil coming from the north is found in Apocalypse 20:7-9 and the prophetic unbinding of Satan after the millennium when he inspires Gog and Magog to surround the New Jerusalem. The references in Ezekiel are to the north (of Israel) whereas in the Apocalypse Gog and Magog are from the four corners of the earth. The concept of an evil north is evidenced from the writing of the Jewish historian Josephus and the Pseudo-Methodius, which draws on the legend of Alexander’s Gate (or Gates of the North) and the fear of the Huns (Gog and Magog) breaching the gates. As Bernard McGinn writes:

The legend of Alexander’s Gate and the enclosed nations, which medievalist Andrew R. Anderson has aptly described as ‘the story of the frontier in sublimated mythologized form’, took on a more apocalyptic flavour in the fifth and sixth centuries as the enclosed nations of Gog and Magog came to be identified with the invading Huns seen as a sign of the end.\(^{53}\)

According to Pseudo-Methodius these outsiders will break through, or rather the gates will no longer keep them out. The major question raised by these apocalyptic lines is whether we are to interpret these words as proleptic in nature or as referring to the contemporary spiritual state in which the devil is bound. If the latter then this fundamentally affects our reading of the poem, for if the devil has already been bound then the poem takes place during the millennium and a postmillennial view is warranted. Accordingly, the (peaceful) millennium – assuming it is literal – is already underway. This is Augustine’s problematic interpretation, problematic because whilst Satan has been bound Antichrist has been active. Another possibility is an allegorical spiritual or figurative reading. Thirdly, we could adopt a premillennialist historical reading. Fourthly, there is what I regard as the most plausible interpretation – historicist with allegorical elements. The poem is premillennialist in the sense that it

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52 Pearsall, *Piers*, 62 n.111a.
anticipates the ideal age of the Church/Holy Spirit. As mentioned, this age is already under way, but it is not yet the repristination of the Joachite Third Status. Langland displays his Joachite influences in searching for routes to this state. There are indications of the first, but if this is so then we would expect a medieval view of a shorter reign of Christ to come and the millennium as the age of the Holy Spirit. As mentioned below, the binding of Satan in the Harrowing could be interpreted as a loss of power over souls who would otherwise have faced perdition instead being saved from hell by the cross – and indeed, those already in hell being rescued. This raises the problem of Antichrist, who appears in Passus XXII. If Langland is applying a chronological approach to the Apocalypse then Antichrist comes before the binding of Satan. In Passus XXII, which I explore below, Satan is bound in the Harrowing of Hell and this binding refers to his inability to prevent Christ from emancipating souls from hell. Another explanation, which permits the interpretation that the millennium is underway, draws on the medieval belief that there would be two Antichrists. This theory had its major proponent in the Franciscan Spiritual and Joachite apocalypticist Peter John Olivi (1248-1298). Bernard McGinn writes,

Building on Joachim and also upon earlier Franciscan exegesis of the Apocalypse, Olivi interprets this Antichrist as twofold – the Antichristus mysticus and the Antichristus magnus, the terms magnus and maximus Antichristus are found in Joachim, but Olivi appears to have been the first to speak of an Antichristus mysticus or misticus. Basically, Olivi argues that the two Beasts of Apocalypse 13 signify both Antichrists or rather the dual aspect of each Antichrist: ‘Know that anywhere in this book [the Apocalypse] where it treats of the Great Antichrist in prophetic fashion, it also implies the time of the Mystical Antichrist preceding him.’ The Mystical Antichrist, whose persecution Olivi sees as active in the present moment, is the body of evildoers within Christianity, consisting of both evil laity (carnal Christians and their leaders) and also wicked clergy (false religious and false prophets).54

Langland could conceivably have encountered Olivi’s writings in England since copies were available, although not common. Bloomfield provides evidence that a

54 McGinn, Antichrist, 160.
number of prominent thinkers and institutions in England possessed copies of Olivi’s works:

John Bale (d.1563) possessed a copy of his [Olivi’s] Postilla on the Apocalypse and on Genesis, although this work may have been purchased on the Continent . . . There are some MSS of his works in English libraries, and one in the Vatican (Urb. lat. 480) is of English provenance. Syon Monastery possessed some of his works . . . Duns Scotus certainly knew his purely philosophical works in spite of not, as was customary when referring to contemporaries, mentioning his name. William Butler, regent master of the Franciscans at Oxford, in his ‘determination’ against the lawfulness of translating the Bible into the vernacular quotes Olivi with discrimination . . .

That Syon Monastery held some of Olivi’s works is significant since it reveals that these ideas were brought within geographical reach of East Anglia. Indeed, the accessibility of the monastery, which was founded in 1415, and its library, is evidenced by Margery Kempe’s visit in 1434, as she recounts towards the end of her Book. Indeed, Liz Herbert McAvoy has suggested that Kempe may have found Julian’s Short Text there.56

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton cites Bloomfield’s list, extending it by two: ‘Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 321 and Oxford, New College MS 49’ .57 She adds however that Olivi’s non-apocalyptic works seem to have been more common.’58 Whilst the mendicancy of the Franciscan Spirituals is anathema to Langland’s ideals, their apocalyptic expectations and outlook accord with his apocalyptic emphasis in Piers Plowman.

Richard K. Emmerson argues that the human descriptions of Antichrist in Passus XXII indicate he is the final biblical figure.59 However, Langland’s depiction is more nuanced than this, and needs to be viewed within the context of Langland’s

58 Ibid.
personification allegory. Emmerson points out that the Mystical Antichrist is depicted with human features. However, their purpose is to reveal its nature which is to have its final realisation in the eschatological human figure; these descriptive details like those of Lady Holy Church point proleptically to the final figure whilst simultaneously describing the immediate spiritual threat.

The Fall of Lucifer and one-third of the angels initiates the chain of eschatological events, and the apocalyptic genre foregrounds the earthly impact of these spiritual events. As Pearsall notes, ‘Not all the fallen angels fell into hell. Others inhabited the elements, as (more or less) evil spirits. See Chaucer, House of Fame 930; Bartholomaeus, II. xix.’

In addressing the confusion between daemon and demons, Augustine cites Apuleius’ description of their characteristics as ‘situated between gods and men, belonging to the “animal” species, with a rational mind, a soul subject to passions, a body made of air, a life-span of eternity’.

The poem seeks insight into the attainment of salvation against which the main impediment – and reason for the Passion – is the Fall. This reference also sets the stage for Lady Meed by foreshadowing the consequences of following Babylon. This passus also introduces the concept of the ideal ruler – the ‘cristene kyng’ of line 442) – a king to whom Reason refers in his prophecy in Passus V discussed below. In the fourteenth-century context he is an idealised king who might be expected to rule during the millennium – a forerunner to Christ’s rule, or, to adopt another reading, the tradition of a final good king/emperor and final pope after the evil ones have been deposed.

I, Consience, knowe this, for Kynde Wit me tauhte
That resoun shal regne and reumes gouerne
And riht as Agag hadde happe shal somme:
Samuel shal sle hym and Saule shal be yblamed
And Dauid shal be ydyadem and adaunte alle oure
enemyes
And o cristene kyng kepe vs echone.
Shal no Mede be maistre neuere more after . . . (III, 437-443)

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60 Pearsall, Piers, 62, n.127.
61 Augustine of Hippo, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans (London: Penguin, 2003), 356.
‘...And yf eny smyth smethen hit, be smyte therwith to
dethe.

Non leuabit gens contra gentem gladium, nec exercerbuntur ultra ad prelium.
Ac ar this fortune falle fynde me shal the worste
Be sixe sonnes and a ship and half a shef of arwes;
And the myddell of the mone shal make the lewes turne
And Saresines for that syhte shal syng Credo in spiritum sanctum,
For Machameth and Mede schulle mishap that tyme,
Quia melius est bonum nomen quam diuicie multe.’ (III, 478-483)

Here the dreamer looks to the millennial kingdom and the world city’s downfall – one
of the final occurrences in the Apocalypse’s eschatological timeframe, which is not
directly realised in the poem, but alluded to in line 47. We see optimism in the
anticipation of the salvation of the Jews and Saracens. Lady Holy Church’s oraculum
is comparable with John’s letters to the seven churches in terms of its subject matter
and exhortations to adhere to the faith. The personification also prepares the ground
for the subsequent focus on Meed in the next three passus and, indeed, Lady Holy
Church directs the Dreamer’s attention to Meed.

(ii) Reimagining the Whore of Babylon: multifaceted Meed

The name ‘Babylon’ appears in Genesis 11:1-9 with the story of the tower of Babel
which became Babylon. Daniel 4:29ff recounts King Nebuchadnezzar’s (634-562 BC)
fall, and Isaiah 13:17ff and Jeremiah 51:41ff contain the prophetic visions of
Babylon’s fall. In the Apocalypse the ‘Whore of Babylon’ is a term which derives from
Old Testament passages which, as Mounce writes,

In OT prophetic discourse the imagery of the prostitute is commonly used to
denote religious apostasy. Isaiah laments that the once faithful Jerusalem has
become a prostitute (Isa 1:21). Jeremiah speaks of Israel’s ‘adulteries and
lustful neighings’ (elsewhere she is a wild donkey ‘sniffing the wind in her
craving,’ Jer 2:24) and ‘shameless prostitution’ (Jer 13:27; cf. Jer 2:20-31; Ezek
16:15ff.; Hos 2:5). Since the prostitute of the Apocalypse is a pagan city (cf.
17:18), it is more likely that a passage like Nah 3:4 or Isa 23:16, 17 supplies the immediate background. In the former, the prostitute is Nineveh, who betrays nations with her harlotries and her charms (cf. Rev 17:4). Isaiah pictures Tyre as a forgotten prostitute. In the context of Revelation 17 and 18 the imagery is not that of religious profligacy but of the prostitution of all that is right and noble for the questionable ends of power and luxury.62

As Mounce indicates, the whore trope is employed in the Bible to condemn worldly compromise. The figure in the Apocalypse represents widespread devotion to materialism which obscures the imago Dei. The strongly mercantilist Roman rule in the Mediterranean is evocatively depicted by the Apocalypse in such worship of wealth, as are its spiritual consequences. The misapplication of worldly riches is shown to awaken deviant traits in the body of the Church with particularly disastrous consequences in the case of the hierarchies. There is a corollary in the church of Laodicea which is financially rich and prosperous but spiritually dead (lukewarm) because of its compromise with Babylon. In a comparable way, Langland depicts a Church that is corruptible and susceptible to the lure of Meed. As Resseguie points out,

Laodicea is the mirror image of Babylon. Like Babylon it is bloated with economic success, but appearances are deceptive in this book. The angel of the church appears prosperous and rich, yet is ‘wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked’ (3:17).63

Also referring to Apocalypse 3, Adela Yarbro Collins identifies John’s ‘strict position on eating meat sacrificed to idols and his denunciation of “harlotry”, that is, syncretism or perhaps even a mild religious tolerance.’ As Collins argues, John ‘was calling upon Christians to avoid membership in guilds or other Gentile associations’.64 Babylon is the counterpoint to the Bride of the Lamb who personifies the Church and has been interpreted as the Church in a corrupted state, the idol of money and lust.

64 Collins, Crisis, 124.
In Augustinian terms ‘Babylon’ represents the city of the world standing in opposition to the city of God. Contextually, the Apocalypse is concerned with the early Christians’ precarious position within the first-century A.D. Roman Empire and prevailing currents of hostility or persecution. Deploying an eschatological hermeneutic: Babylon represents the past city of Babylon where the Jews were held captive (some later chose to remain following their emancipation), first-century Rome – an ever-present and eschatological city. She is described evocatively in Apocalypse 17:1-7:

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven vials and spoke with me, saying: ‘Come, I will shew thee the condemnation of the great harlot, who sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication. And they who inhabit the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her whoredom.’ And he took me away in spirit into the desert. And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed round about with purple and scarlet, and gilt with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of the abomination and filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: A mystery: Babylon the great, the mother of the fornications and the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And I wondered, when I had seen her, with great admiration.

In John’s figurative description she sits upon many waters, proving an irresistible temptation to the merchants and kings of the earth who ‘have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ The references in the Old Testament to fornication frequently refer to the Hebrews defiling themselves with pagan gods. John learns that the Whore represents a city which is the head of the kings:

And he said to me: 'The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest in the beast: These shall hate the harlot and shall make her desolate and naked and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her with fire. For God hath given into their
hearts to do that which pleaseth him: that they give their kingdom to the beast, till the words of God be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is the great city which hath kingdom over the kings of the earth.’ (Apocalypse 17:15-18)

The depiction of the whore is ekphrastic – that is, a detailed description of a work of art. David E. Aune identifies striking similarities between a Roman coin (the Dea Roma) which was in circulation in the province of Asia Minor during the reign of the emperor Vespasian (r. A.D. 69-79). It depicts the goddess Roma in military uniform and, as in the Apocalypse, sitting on Rome’s seven hills with the river god Tiber on the reverse of the coin.65 The Smyrnaeans (the inhabitants of Smyrna) claimed to be the first to worship Roma. Significantly, Roma spelt backwards is amor; she sits above the city signifying the merchants’ avaricious desires. The prostitution of the city is a metaphor for the sacrifice of its morals – focus on God displaced by wealth. In Apocalypse 2:8-11 Christ praises the persecuted church in Smyrna, (modern-day Izmir) for enduring suffering and financial poverty; he exhorts it to continue and alludes to its spiritual riches. Langland provides a double ekphrasis; combining allusions to this apocalyptic image of the whore with contemporary fourteenth century portrayals of the figure, such as the one in the Peterborough Apocalypse depicting a woman riding a beast with seven heads, like the dragon which was believed to represent the seven deadly sins.66 The remarkable aspect of this depiction is the rider’s femininity, which contrasts with the grotesque description in the biblical Apocalypse 17:1-18. The combination of the grotesque and the lifelike is also found in the Getty Apocalypse (BL Add. 35166, f. 20r). The Harlot is dressed in a similar fashion to the Peterborough Apocalypse – a lady on a beast which has seven heads and ten horns as in Apocalypse 17:3. In both works of art the woman’s portrayal is much closer to Langland’s emphasis on Meed, who is a corrupting influence, a temptress, but simultaneously in need of protection which the king, as her guardian, is keen to provide whether motivated by duty, benevolence or opportunism. Such ambivalence illustrates Langland’s didactic and hortatory approach which encourages the Dreamer and reader to guard against avarice.

In Apocalypse 17 and 18 John dwells on a point late on the eschatological timeframe, and whilst he simultaneously presents the spiritual and universal

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66 See Baldwin, Guidebook, 43.
applicability – for instance, the Whore’s influence is discernible in the letters to the seven churches, insofar as congregations choose wealth over patient endurance – this is the physical and spiritual denouement. She is an allegorical figure in representing a final prophetic ultimate realisation of the displacement of godliness with a negative lust for wealth and commerce. Whilst Langland depicts this ever-present character, his treatment of her marriage and trial serves to reveal corruption and compromise and does not provide a direct parallel to the events of Apocalypse 17 and 18. However, he does engage with the former chapter. This therefore does not contradict my contention that *Piers Plowman* parallels the first seventeen chapters of the Apocalypse. Both represent wealth; both are seductive and corrupting influences on morality and the Church. However it could be argued that Meed is morally neutral in *Piers Plowman*, not inherently evil in contrast to John’s overtly negatively depicted Whore/city of Babylon who drinks the blood of the saints and speaks blasphemies. As Colette Murphy (quoting John A. Yunck) writes:

> Although in the eyes of some readers of the poem, Meed may seem to be fixed as ‘a curious fusion of the Whore of Babylon and Richesse of the *Roman de la Rose*, Saint John’s oriental vision of evil reclothed in courtly medieval splendour’ (a view which might be encouraged by Lady Holy Church’s description of her), Meed’s role in the narrative has more complex resonances which undermine any simplistic oppositional distinctions between herself and Lady Holy Church and make the reading of these two figures a more demanding experience.67

Whilst Meed’s character is indeed multifaceted in terms of the reasons given above, this is no reason to view her in isolation from the biblical figure of the Whore of Babylon. Langland’s figure constitutes part of his engagement with the Apocalypse as he explores some of the implications of wealth in relation to power. In doing so he draws heavily upon this biblical figure even as he adapts it (or her).

> Beyond the recurring universal spiritual struggle, the Apocalypse’s eschatology includes a prophesied denouement when the appearance of the Whore

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of Babylon (in the later part of the biblical text) is quickly followed by an account of her destruction in Chapter 18; Babylon is left desolate to become the haunt of wild animals. No catastrophe comparable to the prophetic account of the Whore of Babylon’s destruction befalls Meed in her downfall. She represents a contemporary problem and although her trial culminates in the king’s rebuke, the verdict at the end of Passus IV is that she is to be guarded rather than incarcerated: 'A shyreues clerk cryede, "A! capias Mede / Et saluo custodias set non cum carceratis."' (IV, 164-5) The inclusion of the trial and condemnation (but not destruction) of Meed is on one level suggestive of a flawed judiciary. Meed is summoned by the king. In Passus V Reason echoes the earlier reference to the ideal ruler by Conscience in Passus III as the former prophesies the coming of an apocalyptic king, a millennial ruler who may be Christ himself:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Ac ther shal come a kyng and confesse yow alle} \\
&\text{And bete yow, as the bible telleth, for brekynge of youre reule} \\
&\text{And amende yowe monkes, bothe moniales and chanons} \\
&\text{And potte yow to youre penaunce – Ad pristinum statum ire . . . (V, 168-171)}
\end{align*}
\]

He will come to rebuke and reform yet the process of repristination is to begin before his arrival: "'Ac ar that kyng come, as cronicles me tolde, / Clerkes and holy kyrke shal be clothed newe.'" (V, 178-9) The need for such a ruler is implicit in the imperfect religious and secular law that is depicted so vividly in the passus concerning Lady Meed. In this acknowledgment of the need for repristination and ideal rule Piers Plowman follows the Apocalypse in which imperfect rule and its eschatological demise alongside the Whore of Babylon is juxtaposed against the divine King:

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\begin{align*}
&\text{And the angel said to me: 'Why dost thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of} \\
&\text{the woman and of the beast which carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and} \\
&\text{ten horns. The beast which thou sawest, was, and is not, and shall come up out} \\
&\text{of the bottomless pit and go into destruction. And the inhabitants on the earth} \\
&\text{(whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the} \\
&\text{world) shall wonder, seeing the beast that was and is not. And here is the} \\
&\text{understanding that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, upon}
\end{align*}
\]
which the woman sitteth: and they are seven kings. Five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come: and when he is come, he must remain a short time. And the beast which was and is not: the same also is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into destruction. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom: but shall receive power as kings, one hour after the beast. These have one design: and their strength and power they shall deliver to the beast. These shall fight with the Lamb. And the Lamb shall overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings: and they that are with him are called and elect and faithful.' (Apocalypse 17:7-14)

The complicity between the kings of the earth and the Whore of Babylon is evident in Apocalypse 17:9-17. In the description above John employs symbolism as part of his critique of Roman rule juxtaposed against the prophesied triumph of Christ and the reversal of the Church’s position. In historicising Langland’s treatment of kingship in relation to Lady Meed it is worth considering that Nigel Saul’s biography of Richard II (r. 1377-1399) presents an image of a king who, whilst far from perfect, sought peace and reconciliation wherever possible and was concerned with fashioning an imposing and regal image at court and beyond. Richard’s extravagance came later in his reign after Langland's C-text and it was arguably necessary to project national power. During the writing of Piers Plowman money was in short supply given the demands of the war with France. The pre-Appellant period in the 1380s when Richard was lavishing his young favourites such as Robert de Vere with titles, led to this perception, however it postdates the B-text when Richard was not yet in his teens. Given his youth, power lay in the hands of his uncle John of Gaunt, although the young king rode out to the rebels at Mile End during the Uprising, and his fair handedness in limiting reprisals to the ring leaders and pardoning others after its failure suggests a degree of sympathy as well as self-preservation. Richard was also keen to end the war with France and he did finally achieve a truce in 1396. He then sought to alleviate the burden of taxation late in his reign, albeit with limited success. The corruption which is condemned in Piers Plowman concerns bodies such as the law courts and the Church which were open to abuses; Langland’s

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69 Ibid., 231-2; 253-5.
70 Saul, Richard II, 439.
references pertain rather to the previous reign of Edward III (r. 1327-77), particularly the later years when he was in physical decline, although not senile as tradition has it. Langland is not intimating that Edward III or Richard II is literally one of these kings, but by placing the monarch in Meed’s company he alludes to his perceived susceptibility to Meed’s deception.

At the beginning of Passus II Langland introduces Meed (who is the focal point of Passus II-IV) through Lady Holy Church, the personification of the Church Triumphant (Bride of Christ), which, on the eschatological timeline, will replace Babylon. This positive personification instructed Will in the oraculum of Passus I. This proleptic female authority figure is significant because women were prohibited from preaching, hence the aforementioned protestations of Julian in A Vision, 6, 35-38. However, the fictional Meed’s exegesis is deeply flawed and decontextualised, as Conscience swiftly protests. Langland’s emphasis upon Lady Holy Church’s nobility presents a positive antithesis to Lady Meed whom Derek Pearsall refers to as ‘Meed the Maid’, who, by definition, can never have belonged to any man. This introduces a degree of ambiguity, but the Dreamer’s description of Meed in Passus II reveals some striking similarities with the allegorical figure of the Apocalypse, including the strong physical resemblance and overtly displayed wealth and luxury. The latter is described vividly as sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns; Lady Holy Church calls Will’s attention to Lady Meed in Passus II:

Y lokede vppon my luft half as the lady me tauhte
And say a womman as hit were wonderly yclothed.
She was purfiled in pelure, non puyrere on erthe,
And crouned with a croune, the kyng hath non bettre;
On alle here fyue fyngeres ful richeliche yrunged
And thereon rede rubies and othere riche stones.
Here robynge was rychere then Y rede couthe,
For to telle of here atyer no tyme haue y nouthe;
Here aray with here rychesse raueschede my herte. (II, 8-16)

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Line 15 of the B-text reads: ‘Hire robe was ful riche, of reed scarlet engreyned’, thus providing a further indication of the origins of the description. Besides her finery, the crown signifies her influence over kings and nobles. In the first line a further allusion to Apocalypse exemplifies Lady Holy Church’s didactic approach, which is juxtaposed against Meed’s suspect character. Since the Dreamer is facing east, his left side is the north which was associated with the devil. The references to the Fall at this early stage of the poem establish the theological framework and soteriological concerns pertaining both to the individual and the Church. The eschatological implications are underscored by Lady Holy Church’s musings in Passus I, 112-121 discussed above regarding Lucifer’s desire to be like God, and his subsequent fall.

Langland’s application of this popular apocalyptic association of the north enriches these feminine personifications. Langland is therefore simultaneously reflecting contemporary fears and treating the biblical passage proleptically, alluding to the millennium (Reason) and the foreshadowing of the siege of Unity.

In her discussion of gender and class issues, Lees notes most critics’ silence on Meed’s role as a whore, as object rather than subject: ‘how Mede is produced as female by the processes of use and exchange that mark Passus II-IV.’ Drawing on Marx, she considers the moment when the Dreamer identifies Meed and is ravished – crucially due to her array as she comments on the image’s ‘social significance’:

. . . her dress and wealth suggest an aristocratic woman, dressed in the style of her class. What is singularly lacking in this description, however, is a female body. As a result, the dreamer is seduced by the product of his own desires, which are socially encoded. The implications of this description are profound. Mede-as-woman is fetishized by the gaze of the dreamer. In a classic act of substitution and displacement that conceals its psychogenesis, it is Mede’s clothing, her ‘array’, that is the dreamer’s object of desire. At the same time, Mede-as-wealth is also presented as a fetish of the ‘pure commodity’ of wealth, alienated from its origins in social relations, to paraphrase Marx. Langland has

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conflated into one overdetermined sign, ‘mede’, two signs (women/money), which are themselves substitute signs indicated by their status as fetishes . . .

The dreamer’s wonder stemming from Meed’s attire is connected to her commoditisation: ‘Mede’s worth, her worthy dress, is here linked to the question of ownership and expressed in the grammar of possession “whos wif she were.”’

Meed is . . . produced as the wife-as-exchanged object, worthy of desire for her ‘goodes’, Meed is consumed and used up by the courts, by the economy, by marriage. She is the quiet and passive center of a veritable storm of masculine activity that passes her from father to father, spouse to spouse, the fair field to the London courts. Every man wants Mede, it would seem: some use her while some use her up.

Such commoditisation of woman bears comparison with the quoted passage in Apocalypse 17:1-7 in which the woman is described in relation to her lavish attire. Her femininity and status as a mother are foregrounded in connection with whoredom, fornication and abominations. Lady Meed reminds the reader of this figure, thereby representing a warning. However, the grotesque depiction of the Babylon figure is not to be found in Langland’s personification which is more nuanced and less overtly parodic. In this way Langland engages with Apocalypse 17.

Tina Pippin has argued that the biblical Apocalypse is misogynistic. Despite praising its anti-colonial stance, she contends that women are marginalised and categorised as either whores or saints, with even positive personifications such as the woman clothed with the sun of Apocalypse 12:1 and the Bride portrayed according to male terms. She contends that,

The female figures in the Apocalypse are given symbolic names and symbolic tasks; they are not allowed to speak their own identity. This technique distances

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74 Ibid., 119.
75 Ibid., 122.
the reader from the female images, leaving only women stereotypes of good and evil and no real flesh and blood women.\textsuperscript{76}

This accords with Murphy's critique of Lady Holy Church whom she regards as constrained and defined in relation to patriarchy:

In describing her position as validated by her father, her lover, her potential husband, Lady Holy Church reveals that her authority in society is delegated and administered by men. It is clear that aristocratic ladies are not exempt from this patriarchal society's 'traffic in women'.\textsuperscript{77}

This broader context of patriarchal society is emphasised by Pippin in her critique of the Apocalypse in explaining why she dismisses the defence that male figures such as the False Prophet and the Antichrist figure are ostensibly physical men, as opposed to the figurative Whore. Pippin does concede however that 'the Apocalypse is about a symbolic universe, and is a parody of flesh and blood reality.' However, for Pippin, 'The female images are part of the larger paradigm of the final scenes in the liberation of the oppressed.'\textsuperscript{78} She sees the females as victims of war with only the heavenly Bride able to celebrate victory.\textsuperscript{79} She problematises the victory of the Lamb over the Beast as inaugurating a 'utopian political fantasy' which despite reversing the formerly pessimistic expectations for men leaves women,

. . . exactly where they were in Mediterranean society – excluded from the realm of power. The utopia ('no place') for men is an atopia ('not a place') for women. The marriage of the Bride and the Lamb brings hope (brings utopia), but it is not an inclusive model for women. Women have historically been excluded from many areas of culture, but are they also excluded in this text from the New Jerusalem? What happens to the female believers other than being subsumed under this image of the Bride? Here the text is silent.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{76} Pippin, \textit{Death and Desire}, 103.  
\textsuperscript{77} Murphy, 'Lady', 151.  
\textsuperscript{78} Pippin, \textit{Death and Desire}, 103.  
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 97.  
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 103.
However, this ignores a more radical and positive contextual exegesis which involves answering Pippin’s questions and last statement above with recourse to passages such as Galatians 3:28: ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus,’ and Matthew 22:30: ‘For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.’ If the New Jerusalem is understood as a heavenly city in which the Church Militant and the Church Expectant unite with the Church Triumphant comprising non-gender-specific souls or glorified beings, then earthly gender ceases to have relevance in terms of power struggles and oppression since the redeemed have a different relationship, based not on gender but rather, to use Julian’s term, ‘on-ing’ with Christ. This, however, was far from the physical reality of first-century Asia Minor. This more inclusive reading accords with Julian’s understanding and her innovative, yet selective, engagement with the Apocalypse, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis.

Whereas, for Pippin, the ‘sexual language and female images’ of the Apocalypse constitute insurmountable barriers due to perceived androcentric and misogynistic language, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza rejects the position that androcentric texts are closed to women. There are indeed multiple hermeneutical approaches and Fiorenza’s position resonates with that of both Julian and Langland who locate soteriological, eschatological and reformist messages whilst engaging with and reimagining problematic aspects of the Apocalypse through expansion or deliberate omission. In their positive re-readings they also illustrate the medieval awareness of generic language. Regarding the problem of androcentric language in the Apocalypse Fiorenza is mindful of ‘its traditional and present-meaning contexts’, reading references to the ‘Whore’ and fornication as metaphors for idolatry – in this case the worship of wealth. In Fiorenza’s words the ‘gendered meaning cannot be assumed as primary within the narrative contextualization’ of the Apocalypse. Nevertheless, consideration of this area facilitates interrogation of Julian’s and Langland’s texts.

Returning to the earthly figures, the woman Jezebel in Apocalypse 2:20 is described as an immoral influence on the Church at Thyatira. The name conveys negative associations with her namesake, the wife of King Ahab in 2 Kings who outlawed the prophets and introduced idol worship. Both this ostensibly real woman and the figurative Whore of Babylon are condemned as corrupting influences. Whilst
the Apocalypse is uncompromising with its good versus evil dichotomy, Langland’s
gendered personification of Meed introduces ambiguity.

By using the name *Meed* Langland may be ingeniously alluding to the Medes
under their king, Cyrus, who destroyed Babylon, as prophesied in Isaiah 13:17.
Given that Babylon in Apocalypse 18 destroys itself, this name may allude to her self-
destructive nature. In Middle English *Mede* means *reward* or *bribery*.81 Lavinia
Griffiths writes,

... Langland exploits the binary structure of personification allegory, which
allows a term to appear in a text both as the name of a person in a *story*, one
seen acting, suffering and speaking, and also as an element of discourse. In the
Mee Episode, a large number of personified nouns are caught up by codes
sufficiently sustained to create an isotopy, and are held in a story, where they
participate in a complete action.82

Conscience draws a distinction between Meed and the latinate term *Mercede*,
meaning *true reward*. Conscience reflects gender prejudices by blaming Meed for
corrupting men, not men for choosing Meed over Mercede. Alongside Watt’s
argument about subversive linguistic undercurrents in Gower, we may consider
Lees’s observation in reference to Conscience’s grammatical analogy of Meed’s
disruption of social ties rooted in patrilineal family bonds in III, 362-72:

It is no accident, therefore, that Conscience’s analogy hinges on grammatical
gender and lineage: correct grammatical concord ensures direct relations, direct
exchange, between man and man or man and God (C III 355-59); incorrect
concord causes chaos, the indefinite, polymorphous relations that cannot be
constrained by syntax.83

Such slippage and disruption provides an aperture into contemporary society and its
commoditisation of women. As Murphy comments,

81 *Middle English Dictionary*, 13 vols, ed. Hans Kurath et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan
83 Lees, ‘Gender and Exchange’, 120.
Her changing form (from, for example, illegitimate rich maid to illegitimate ‘muliere’ to common whore) is an index of the contested definition of her proper name. In the story of the changing marital prospects of this very much man-made object of desire, no less than in the story of Lady Holy Church, we can see something of the operations of the traffic in reward in the Dreamer’s society and something, too, of his society’s ‘traffic in women’.ма

I now turn to some of this society’s challenges which resonate with this discussion of the apocalyptic Meed.

The fourteenth century saw sweeping social changes, particularly as a consequence of the Black Death (1348-9), the loss of 40-60 percent of the population,85 and the subsequent empowerment of the workforce to move and sell their services to the highest bidder, which prompted the implementation of the Statute of Laborers in 1351.86 As Pearsall states, ‘Meed stands for a new structuring of society based on monetary transactions rather than loyal service.’87 Whilst Meed, like the Whore of Babylon, is described in gender-specific and sexual terms, Langland’s portrayal is less condemnatory than John’s. Both personifications represent wealth – its seductive and corrupting influence on morality and the Church. In the venality satire of Passus II-IV, in which Meed is the focus, we learn that she is the daughter of False, king of the castle of care (hell). There is a suggestion of incest in the similarity of Meed’s bridegroom’s name Fals Fikel-tongue, to that of her father, False. She also begins to beguile the Dreamer, Will. However, as Pearsall points out,

Allegorically, she is not essentially sinful, as Theology explains (II 123), since there is proper reward, allowed by God, for honest work, just as there is proper ‘amends’ (Mee’d’s mother is called Amends) sanctioned by law for reparation in cases of injury and offence (and by God for sin).88

Both the Whore of Babylon and Lady Meed are allegorical figures who represent wealth and the dangers inherent in its misapplication. Whether or not Meed is morally

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84 Murphy, ‘Lady’, 144.
85 John Aberth, From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague and Death in the Later Middle Ages (Oxford: Routledge, 2001), 89-94.
86 Ibid., 201-5.
87 Pearsall, Piers, 29.
88 Ibid., 30.
neutral, 'she is the cause of corruption in others, an "instrumentality" rather than an agent, her own ambiguity and lack of will and identity conveyed allegorically in the doubts about her legitimacy (she is declared to be both a bastard [II 24], and legitimate [II 123]) and in the swarm of fathers that throng about her.'\(^{89}\)

In Passus II (178-96) in which sins ride on morally bankrupt men, the sub-deans are already corrupted:

Somnours and sodenes that *supersedias* taketh
On hem that loueth leccherye lyppeth vp and rydeth,
On secatours and such men cometh softly aftur.
And lat cople the commissarie, our cart shal he drawe
And fecchen our vitailes at *fornicatores*. (II, 190-194)

Corruption of the clergy could take the form of sexual deviance, as Conscience explains to the King, incorporating an allusion to the Donation of Constantine:

. . . [S]he hath apoisend popes, [s]he appeyreth holy churche.
Is nat a bettere baud, by hym that me made,
Bytwene heuene and helle, and erthe thogh men soughte.
For she is tikel of her tayl, talewys of tonge,
As comyn as the cartway to knaues and to alle,
To munekes, to alle men, ye, musels in hegge;
Lyggeth by here, when hem lust, lered and lewed. (III, 165-171)

In addressing the issue of illiterate bishops and simony, Conscience attacks Meed's sexual promiscuity again:

[S]he blesseth this bischopes thow thei ben ny lewede;
[S]he prouendreth persones and prestes [s]he maynteneth
To holde lemmanes and lotebyes al here lyf-dayes
And bringeth forth barnes ayenes forbodene lawes.
*Sunt infelices, quia matres sunt meretrices*. (III, 187-191)

\(^{89}\) Pearsall, *Piers*, 30.
As in the Apocalypse, the language of sexual immorality is incorporated within the socio-religious critique. Conscience conflates the issue of the consecration of these illiterate bishops with sexual corruption of ‘persones and prestes’ and the problem of illegitimate children. The Latin line which translates as ‘They are accursed, for their mothers are whores’, alludes further to the Whore of Babylon. Subsequently, in Passus IV, 158-9, Honesty warns, “Ho-so wilneth here to wyue . . . for welthe of / here goodes, / But he be knowe for a cokewold, kut of my nose.” Langland contextualises this emphasis on sexual promiscuity with subsequent lines which address bribery and corruption, thereby according with the biblical references to Babylon which convey a sense of betrayal and pollution that is caused by worshipping foreign gods. The purity embodied in Lady Holy Church is juxtaposed against Meed and the contemporary state of the Church. The Papal Schism was often referred to as the ‘Babylonian captivity’, which illustrates the term’s multifunctionality. Babylon represents worship of wealth, pagan practices and implies sexual immorality.

Langland specifically creates the frame of the royal and legal court to reveal Meed’s corrupting influence facilitated by her charming and alluring charisma. She is also a satirical portrait of Alice Perrers (1348 – 1400), Edward III’s mistress who was notorious for her ostentatious displays of jewellery and dress. As Ormrod points out, from 1364 to 1369 she secretly drew from the royal coffers to invest in property.

It is often assumed that Alice was the model for the figure of Lady Meed, the infamous embodiment of moral and legal corruption in William Langland’s *Piers Plowman*. In fact, the first version of this poem was written in the early 1360s, before Alice was in the public eye; it was only later, in his successive revisions of the poem in c.1377 and c. 1381, that Langland adapted Meed to reflect some of the details of Perrers’s career.

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90 Baldwin, *Guidebook*, 28-9, 42.
92 Ibid.
The Good Parliament of 1376 dealt with avaricious and corrupt courtiers and inspired Langland’s ‘Belling the Cat’ animal fable in the Prologue. At this point Alice was estimated to have been costing the Treasury over £2,000 a year which, as Baldwin points out, was ‘an enormous sum at the time’.\textsuperscript{93} Her influence and corruption resulted in her banishment.

The fact that Langland’s female personifications are outnumbered by male ones does not reflect a misogynistic bias; the positive depiction of Lady Holy Church may be explained by biblical precedent and tradition, but there are others, such as Dame Study, and even Lady Meed. Langland creates a degree of ambiguity rather than simply blaming Meed outright. In both texts men are depicted as corruptible and women as temptresses. Whilst independent female figures are a threat to a male-dominated society, the male figures around Meed require little encouragement in their corruption, and even the king is not exempt from struggling to retain his morality and benevolence. In contrast to the Whore of Babylon, Meed argues her case, initially persuading the king before Conscience responds.

In Passus II Meed initially seeks marriage to False, for which Theology chastises Simony. Theology points out, ‘Mede is moylore, a mayden of gode;/ A myhte kusse the kyng as for his kynnes-womman.’ (II, 148-9) The import of the line ‘Whos wyf a were and what was here name’ (II, 17) within the context of fourteenth century gender roles is explained by Pearsall: ‘A woman’s nature, her moral and spiritual status as well as her social status, is known by her husband; hence the significance of Meed’s forthcoming marriage.’\textsuperscript{94} Later Conscience is proposed. Marrying Meed entails ethical compromise. The significance of the marriage trope is its dichotomous relationship to the eschatological wedding of the Bride (Church) to the Lamb (Christ).

Both texts implicitly or explicitly condemn such ostentatious wealth and contextualise Babylon within the contemporary mercantilist environment. Babylon represents the trading hub, Rome, which received merchandise via the Mediterranean from the Empire and beyond. The Apocalypse adumbrates the physical and spiritual consequences of worshipping wealth. The misapplication of worldly riches is shown to awaken deviant traits in the body of the Church with disastrous consequences. In 3:14-22 the financially prosperous but spiritually

\textsuperscript{93} Baldwin, \textit{Guidebook}, 28.
\textsuperscript{94} Pearsall, \textit{Piers}, n. 17, 69.
lukewarm church of Laodicea is condemned for its compromise with Babylon, valuing wealth over patient endurance. In Apocalypse 18:4 believers are warned to leave Babylon to avoid corruption. By mentioning such extravagance both texts criticise such ostentatious wealth; marriage to Meed risks compromising oneself. Langland alludes to corruption in the form of simony for example and his critique of the friars appears here. However, if Meed were to marry Truth then wealth would be used for good.95

Similarly, Langland depicts a Church that is susceptible to Meed’s lure. The collusion of religious authorities and Meed (worldly compromise) is apparent in Friar Confessor’s speech in which the latter, upon receiving a gold coin asks her “Wolde ye glase that gable and graue ther youre name / In masse and in mataynes for Mede we shal synge / Solempneliche and softlyche as for a suster of oure ordre.” (III, 53-54) Although not alluding to the Apocalypse, it is reminiscent of the issue of compromising with the world.

Lady Meed is not the eschatological Whore of Babylon but rather an immutable allegorical figure representing the displacement of God with materialism as the focus of worship. Langland’s emphasis upon the downfall of Meed in Passus IV, in which the king removes her from influence, provides an aperture into fourteenth-century conceptions of authority. Langland’s gendering of Meed is more nuanced than that of the biblical Apocalypse as he gives voice to gendered epithets in his polyphonic poem.

The coming of the beast from the sea (Apocalypse 13) precedes the Whore’s destruction in Apocalypse 16. Langland reverses this chronology with Meed’s incarceration preceding the Coming of Antichrist in Passus XXII. I argue that whilst Langland draws on these biblical figures for his personifications, he aims to deal with present threats in apocalyptic terms and imagery and deals with a foreshadowing of the eschaton in contemporary events and prophecy pertaining to the near future.

This section has considered Lady Meed as a female personification. It has looked at the historical context in relation to the first-century A. D. and Langland’s period. It has considered feminist criticism and underscored the advantages of Fiorenza’s approach over that of Pippin while considering the latter’s concerns. The Whore of Babylon is an example of John’s employment of generic language and

95 See Passus II, 119-49.
symbolism. Langland’s Meed is a reimagining of the biblical figure but a more nuanced and multifaceted one. Fiorenza’s reading of the biblical figure accords with Langland’s nuanced reading and reimagining of the Babylon figure. We now consider Langland’s Antichrist.

(iii) *The coming of Antichrist*

A tenet of the Christian faith in the Middle Ages was the relationship between the concepts of the Church Militant (*Ecclesia Militans*), the Church Expectant (*Ecclesia Expectans*) and the Church Triumphant (*Ecclesia Triumphans*), mentioned elsewhere in this thesis. Within an eschatological framework these branches relate to each other simultaneously – hence the practice of offering prayers for those in purgatory – and given the low life expectancy (by modern standards) and high mortality rate for women in childbirth, plagues and wars, belief in the concept of a spirit world existing alongside the physical earthly life and beyond five sense reality took on a significance and an immediacy amongst believers which is evident in *Piers Plowman*. As in the biblical text, the present can only be understood in relation to the end; disasters are interpreted as warnings for believers but also offer inducement to change and repristination. The Church Militant can prepare itself to fight spiritually and become ready as the future bride of Christ when it will join with the Church Triumphant. Such a multi-dimensional conception explains the apparently abrupt ending in *Piers Plowman*; insofar as the struggle against evil is ongoing the end is prefigured; there have been and will be further antichrists. I now turn to look in greater detail at this figure, his significance and what he represents.

Although the figure of Antichrist appears in the Old Testament in Daniel 7:8, 21 and Zechariah 11:17, the actual name *Antichrist*, or the plural form, is only found in 1 John 2:18; 4:3 and 2 John 1:7. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9,10, we read of ‘the lawless one’, and in the ‘Synoptic Apocalypse’, Jesus teaches about false prophets and false Christs. Antichrist is prominent in Apocalypse 13 under the epithet ‘beast out of the sea’. These references may be variously interpreted as past, contemporaneous and future types. Alternatively, they may be read as incorporating all three of these, with or without a final fulfilment of each. These references are insightful in identifying the spirit of Antichrist and many historical Antichrists. This, I
argue, accords with Langland’s depiction of Antichrist in the setting of contemporary England. Writing on Langland’s portrayal of Antichrist in relation to the latter’s overturning of the crop of truth, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton interprets similarly:

Langland’s Antichrist is the type which apocalyptic writers referred to as a mystic antichrist: his attack is moral and spiritual rather than social or political. This particular attack of Antichrist is primarily an attack on the Church and it comes largely from within the Church’s ranks.  

The word itself does not mean ‘against Christ’ – although his actions place him in opposition to Christ – but rather ‘instead of Christ’. Antichrist exalts himself above all others as an alternative to worship of Christ. In 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 the final Antichrist is described thus:

And then that wicked one shall be revealed: whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: him Whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power and signs and lying wonders: And in all seduction of iniquity to them that perish: because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Antichrist is described as the beast from the sea in Apocalypse 13:1-10. He is portrayed as a seven-headed figure given power by the dragon, Satan. Mounce writes,

That the beast has seven heads stresses its relationship to the seven-headed dragon of 12:3. The power and authority of the beast come from the dragon (13:4). It is unlikely that John arrived at the number seven by adding the total number of heads on Daniel’s four beasts (four beasts, one of which had four heads, for a total of seven). In apocalyptic the number seven carries the idea of completeness. A seven-headed beast would be an appropriate symbol for the ultimate enemy of the believing church. The names of blasphemy upon the

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96 Kerby-Fulton, Apocalypticism, 158.
seven heads reflect the increasing tendency of the Roman emperors to assume titles of deity.\textsuperscript{97}

In this description we once again see the importance of numerology (discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis). The use of these numbers enabled the message to be concealed from hostile readers/listeners but revealed to believers who knew their significance in relation to the beast mentioned here. The beast can simultaneously represent a system of control, such as the Roman Empire, and a leader, such as an emperor. However, Langland’s Antichrist differs in certain aspects from the beast from the sea. As Pearsall writes, ‘. . . there is nothing in Langland of the usual paraphernalia and personnel of apocalyptic writing –trumpets, vials, seals, Gog and Magog. Antichrist represents rather the moral evil within humans’.\textsuperscript{98} Langland associates this figure with Pryde who ‘gadered hym a grete oeste’ (XXI, 336). In XXII, 69 this army is hundreds strong as Pryde bears Antichrist’s banner ‘baldly aboute’ (70). Behind the personification of Pride leading the Seven Deadly Sins in their assault on Unity, is the fact that pride was thought to be the root of the seven deadly sins and therefore the main threat to Holy Church. Pride becomes pope – Antichrist’s lieutenant. Bloomfield however views Pride as Antichrist. More important than this is his conclusion that Langland’s Antichrist is the Mystical Antichrist, a position which I share. An indication that this is not the final Antichrist but an ever-present ‘social evil’ lies in Bloomfield’s comment that the final Antichrist is to be defeated by Christ himself in the parousia:

. . . but for lesser Antichrists, as Pride here seems to be, there appears to be no regular pattern. The fact that Conscience cries after the Holy Ghost, or seems to, suggests again a Joachite point – that the new age will be that of the Holy Ghost.\textsuperscript{99}

This apocalyptic personification of evil appears in a passus which, as Anna Baldwin points out, contains parallels with the Apocalypse and apocalyptic writing in general:

\textsuperscript{97} Mounce, \textit{Revelation}, 245.
\textsuperscript{98} Pearsall, \textit{Piers}, 365 n. 53.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 147.
The battle between the Vices and the inhabitants of Unite [Unity] which takes up most of the rest of the Passus is a traditional part of apocalyptic prophecy, where the Dragon with Seven Heads . . . was interpreted as the Seven Deadly Sins warring against the Woman clothed with the Sun, interpreted as the Church (*Revelation* 12, 17).^{100}

Unity can flee like the woman clothed with the sun – which in itself alludes to the Hebrews’ exile in the desert and the Church – but it is under siege and in its current state must fall, and repristination is required for it to rebuild.

Before returning to the question of Antichrist’s identity it is necessary to examine the events which precipitate his coming and those who are associated with him in *Piers Plowman* with reference to the Apocalypse. The beast from the earth (or false prophet) of Apocalypse 13:11-18 is represented in *Piers Plowman* collectively by the friars – who foreshadow the former – joining forces with Antichrist. The perception that many of them had been corrupted stemmed from the fact that as mendicants they relied upon the offerings of others, the sale of indulgences and, along with other responsibilities, were authorised to hear confession, give penance and pardon. Given that those whose confession they heard were often strangers whom the friars were unlikely to see again, the system became open to abuse and the result was inevitably compromise and indifference regarding individuals’ salvation. Also relevant is their accountability to the Pope rather than English bishops. Significantly, Grace prophesies the coming of Antichrist and initiates the preparations of Unity.

The Apocalypse is explicit in its warnings to retain/obtain purity within the Church, to avoid or flee the earthly city of Babylon and eschew all reliance on worldly goods and practices, insofar as they conflict with scripture. The result of failure to check corruption is exemplified in the portrayal of the friars, whose actions and corruption make them allies of Antichrist in *Piers Plowman*, and in Langland’s treatment of the friars there is a prefiguring of Apocalypse 16:13-14 and the simile of unclean spirits (which may represent lies) leaping out of the mouths of false prophets:

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^{100} Baldwin, *Guidebook*, 264.
And I saw from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are the spirits of devils, working signs: and they go forth unto the kings of the whole earth, to gather them to battle against the great day of the Almighty God.

In both cases the frogs signify something unclean. Regarding the origin of this imagery in verse 13, Mounce posits that, ‘The drying up of the Euphrates may have suggested the frogs of v. 13, which in turn would remind the reader of the second Egyptian plague (Exod. 8:1-15). In any case, preparation for war is the common theme.’ Crucially, this is preceded by the verse about the kings of the East invading, which does not refer to the ten kings of 17:12 and the final battle of 19:11-21. Whilst this description evokes the final eschatological battle, Langland’s portrayal offers a foreshadowing of this spectacular and devastating event in the ongoing struggle between good and evil in the Church Age. In other words, at this point, as elsewhere, he is foregrounding an ‘idealistic’ (‘spiritual’) reading of the Apocalypse.

In Apocalypse 12:7, war in heaven precedes and precipitates war on earth and the appearance of Antichrist. And there is a correlation between the coming of the pale horse (also called Death) when the Church comes under the heaviest pressure of Apocalypse 6:7-8 and the rider of Passus XXII, 100. The latter reads, ‘Deth cam dryuyng aftur and al to duste paschte’. A feature of the End Times is persecution, which leads to spiritual health, as with the Church at Smyrna, whereas the ostensibly successful (but spiritually dead) Sardis faces criticism and the complacent or corrupted churches die out or are punished by Christ withdrawing from them. The Friars’ practices illustrate this message, insofar as they lead to the downfall of Unity. Again, the harnessing of the elements to create disasters such as earthquakes is precipitated by human disobedience. Initially they are promptings or warnings to repent, and eventually simply punishments:

Knde Consience tho herde and cam oute of the planetes
And sente forth his forreours, feueres and fluxes,
Cowhes and cardiacles, crampes and tooth-aches,
Reumes and radegoundes and roynouse scabbes,

101 Mounce, Revelation, 298-9.
These lines highlight the perceived consequences of disobedience to divine commands and the cosmological elements which impact upon the earthly. As in the Apocalypse, war in the heavens leads to turbulence on earth. There is also a reformative as well as a retributive element insofar as plague can be interpreted as a stimulus to reform. As in the Apocalypse account, there is no distinction between rich and poor in the plagues that popes and emperors suffer.

Line 100 alludes to the rider on the pale horse of Apocalypse 6:8. The references to ‘pokkes and pestilences’ in line 98 are clearly reminiscent of the Black Death, but the sheer number of afflictions immediately recalls the Apocalypse descriptions in which the initial pestilences are designed to turn people to repentance and later simply to punish. As Pearsall writes regarding these lines,

Nature’s allies in the fight against sin are disease, age and death, since these reminders of mortality most surely bring man to an understanding of the transience of the things of the world. But coercion is a desperate expedient, and
no substitute for spiritual reformation, as Piers Plowman found earlier when he called in Hunger to discipline the people (VIII 168).102

The labour shortage created by the Black Death’s decimation of the work force, killing half the population, meant the demand was such that labourers (bond men) were able to provide their services to the highest bidder as wage labourers whilst the country moved from a feudal to a waged-based system. The government’s attempts to control this trend through the Ordinance of Labourers (1349) and the aforementioned Statute of Labourers introduced by the parliament of Edward III were deemed unfair by the labourers themselves as the legislation was widely perceived to favour landowners. They imposed a maximum wage set at the pre-plague amount and required those under the age of sixty to work. Langland’s attitude to these statutes and the workers themselves is ambivalent – the text (Passus VIII) is critical of those who refuse to work but compassionate towards the poor and weak (the deserving poor). The implicit solution is a Christian communal effort (line 197 onwards). In this passus Langland stresses the critical importance of the working populace, including the itinerant labourers, working in unity and avoiding the spectre of famine. This fear was not unfounded given that forty years before the A-text, England, along with the rest of the British Isles and Northern Europe, suffered the Great Famine (1315-22). Rosemary Horrox and John Aberth have identified a sense of apocalyptic trauma that was experienced by the populace resulting from the Black Death.103 An example is the contemporary account of the Italian lawyer Gabrile de Mussis’ ‘Historia de Morbo’ which is suffused with apocalyptic language and views the plague as a physical manifestation of God’s judgment on the people.104 The shortage of labour provides context to the apocalyptic prophecy at the end of Passus VIII:

    Ac Y warne yow werkmen, wynneth whiles ye mowe,  
    For Hunger hiderwardes hasteth hym faste.  
    He shal awake thowr water wastors to chaste,  
    And ar fewe yeres be fulfeld famyne shal aryse,

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102 Pearsall, Piers, 367, n.80.
103 Rosemary Horrox, trans. & ed., The Black Death (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Aberth, Apocalypse, 1-5.
104 Horrox, Black Death, 14-26.
And so sayth Saturne and sente vs to warne. 
Thorw flodes and thorw foule wederes fruyttes shollen fayle; 
Pruyde and pestilences shal moche peple feche; 
Thre shypes and a schaef with a vii folwynge 
Shal brynge bane and batayle on bothe half the mone; 
And thenne shal deth withdrawe and derthe be justice 
And Dawe the deluare dey for defaute 
But yf god of his goodnesse graunte vs a trewe (341-352)

The uncompromising words of Hunger in this passus and the quoted prophetic passage are partially reminiscent of Apocalypse 6 which describes the seven seals of which the third marks the arrival of the black horse and the third rider who brings famine. After the Lamb has opened the third seal John writes,

I heard the third living creature saying: Come and see. And behold a black horse. And he that sat on him had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard, as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying: Two pounds of wheat for a penny, and thrice two pounds of barley for a penny: and see thou hurt not the wine and the oil. (Apocalypse 6:5-6)

The black horse is followed by the pale horse which brings death:

And behold a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death. And hell followed him. And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, to kill with sword, with famine and with death and with the beasts of the earth. (Apocalypse 6:8)

The pessimism and irresolution pertaining to the contemporary epoch, which are features of the ending that lacks a description of the New Jerusalem, indicate Langland’s ambivalence regarding the Church’s capacity to earn the epithet ‘Bride of Christ’. Likening this desultory body to a society that lacks the Blakean concept of the ‘Divine Vision’ Aers writes,
Antichrist’s success is inevitable in a society lacking what Blake called ‘the Divine Vision’. Langland’s scene depicts this situation . . . No ending could be better integrated to the total movement of Langland’s poem than the resolve amidst the social discord and individual bafflement of time present ‘to seke Piers the Plowman’, the figure who embodies ‘the Divine Vision in time of trouble’ . . . 105

Since the poem does not end with the final judgment and end of the world at least two interpretations remain. Kerby-Fulton writes: ‘Langland’s “Antichrist” may well be such a forerunner too, or he may be a Joachite antichrist but, in that he precedes renewal, he can be best read as part of the reformist apocalyptic tradition.’ 106 Claudia Rattazzi Papka appears to agree that a reading of Piers Plowman is suggestive of this stance:

. . . Langland’s revelation of Christ leads only to the disintegration that goes on and on in the anticipation of apocalypse. As Robert Lerner has pointed out, the Black Death did not generate any real novelty in the nature (or even the amount) of apocalyptic expectation in Western Europe. Indeed, the chiliastic currents evident in both Dante and Langland are part of a long and steadily flowing river of millenarian tradition in early and medieval Christianity. The similarity of the poets’ [Dante and Langland] diagnoses of what ails their respective societies is profound, as is their shared millennial ‘hope for supernaturally inspired, imminent, and sweeping this-worldly change. . .’ 107

I argue that Langland is pragmatic in his view that swift reform is unlikely, however desirable, whilst nevertheless remaining possible – indeed necessary – in time. As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, Bernard McGinn is much more sceptical of the extent of any Joachite influence, whereas Kathryn Kerby-Fulton interprets the poem within the tradition of reformist apocalypticism.

105 Aers, Christian Allegory, 130-1.
106 Kerby-Fulton, Apocalypticism, 55.
An indication of whether Langland’s Antichrist is the final Antichrist or one of the many preceding antichrists is his eschatology. If it is the final Antichrist to which he refers, can we take this to mean that he anticipated a church age with Satan bound before the second coming? As seen in Passus I, Langland foreshadows the binding with a similar surrounding and infiltration. The poem does not end with the biblical Apocalypse’s resolution of good triumphing over evil because it does not attempt to resolve the societal and religious problems it exposes, as does the Apocalypse, thereby indicating an Augustinian exegetical approach in this area and an amillennial or (what would later be termed) postmillennial stance. However, as mentioned above, the figure of Antichrist poses problems for adopting this interpretation.

Given that the poem does not describe the end of the world but rather the beginning of the end, Langland’s Antichrist should be identified either as a foreshadowing of the final Antichrist – i.e. one of the many antichrists throughout history, beginning with Antiochus Epiphanes – or a Mystical Antichrist. In Passus XX Christ is to bind Satan – an action which anticipates the millennial kingdom and is found in Apocalypse 20:1-3 where Satan is to be released for a brief time following the millennium. There are vexed questions of how Satan can possess Antichrist if he is bound and how continued suffering in the world can accord with the postmillennial view which sees the Church reforming itself through repristination. They are explained by the immutable presence of original sin in human beings which outlasts the binding of Satan.

Since there is no mention of when he is bound we do not necessarily need to adopt a postmillennialist chiliastic reading. The devil’s binding means he cannot destroy Holy Church insofar as she adheres to biblical precepts and Christ’s words to the seven churches, but the church is susceptible to internal corruption due to the fallen nature of its members. The Mystical Antichrist is more insidious.

However there are indications that Langland had in mind a Joachite age of the Holy Spirit in which repristination would take place. Notably, Langland’s Antichrist is a religious one. There is likely a fusion of the Apocalypse beast from the sea and the beast from the earth. The end is alluded to through references to judgment and hell. Cohn writes of Joachim’s prophecy of Antichrist:
During the three and a half years immediately preceding the fulfilment of the third dispensation Antichrist would have his reign. He would be a secular king who would chastise the corrupt and worldly Church until in its present form it was utterly destroyed. After the overthrow of this Antichrist the Age of the Spirit would come in its [fullness].

Alternatively, or concurrently, these lines permit an idealist or spiritual reading. Langland indicates that people will follow this Antichrist into the future age of the Church, or Joachim’s third status. The name was used as a composite term for sin in general, elements which the demonically-inspired/possessed human Antichrist infamously possesses and which the final Antichrist will display. Proposing an allegorical exegetical approach here, Ruth M. Ames argues convincingly that Antichrist for Langland represents the challenges to the Church through sin: ‘The Antichrist against whom the Christian is warned to prepare in the last cantos is comprised of the sins of Christians.’

Bloomfield shares this immediate and universal relevance of Langland’s treatment of Antichrist:

Just as Will is both historical and normative – he is both William Langland of London and every questing sinful man – so the settings and events of this final section – the attack of Antichrist on Unitas, the Church – are both particular and typical. The age of Antichrist is with us now, Langland is saying, but it is also a recurrent feature of Heilgeschichte. The struggle with Antichrist is a perpetual element in eschatological history, but there are acute phases when he actually appears and causes an apocalyptic crisis. It is with such a crisis, because

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110 ‘Salvation history’ from the German ‘heil’ meaning ‘salvation’ and ‘geschichte’ meaning ‘history’.
111 Bloomfield, *Apocalypse*, 123.
Langland thinks it is historically relevant to his age, that the author is primarily concerned. However, above and beyond the acute crisis of his time, the general notion is not forgotten. Until the millennium, Antichrist – seductive and vicious social evil – will be the continuing problem for the true Church.¹¹²

Langland responds to and presents his own apocalypse which draws upon the biblical Apocalypse. He replaces the eschatological beast from the sea with the Mystical Antichrist, a tradition which nevertheless retains elements of the eschatological beast of Apocalypse 13:1-10.

(iv) The Metamorphosing Piers

Langland’s character Piers adopts the role of spiritual guide as he appears, disappears and reappears in different guises – from the Everyman figure, to the ploughman who leads the pilgrims (Passus VIII), to Peter (St. Peter), to the Good Samaritan and Christ himself. However, David Aers is correct in warning against promoting simplistic direct equivalence with any of these figures, for Piers is never wholly one but strongly alludes to and is representative of each. The shifting representations are imbued with a similar didactic function as the figures in the Apocalypse who appear and address John directly – Christ and angels – imparting revelatory knowledge. However, Piers is both an allegorical and an apocalyptic figure whose appearance coincides with key moments in Church history which prefigure the eschaton. Piers serves as a spiritual guide, a foil to the fallible dreamer. The former rather than the latter is arguably the main protagonist of the poem.

_Piers Plowman_ is a pilgrimage allegory in which Will who, in a major sense, represents the universal human will for knowledge of truth, also seeks salvation. It is a spiritual and intellectual pilgrimage – as becomes apparent in Passus VIII in which the conventional pilgrimage evolves into the ploughing of the half-acre – which is both a metaphorical pilgrimage and serves as an allegory of the Christian life within the body of believers – the pilgrimage to Truth. In this passus Langland emphasises that collectivism and dutiful application to manual labour that is beneficial to the community is inextricably linked to spiritual development and salvation. In chapter 3 I

discussed Jesus’ use of agrarian imagery within a number of apocalyptic verses of Matthew and related it to Conscience’s use of the ‘swords into ploughshares’ trope and Piers as ploughman. I would add that the biblical references to plough/ploughshares all resonate with Piers’ ethical approach to work as constituting an act of worship. Piers’ message accords with Jesus’ teaching in Luke 9:62: ‘No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God’. There is the apocalyptic Isaiah 2:4 (quoted above) and the similar line of Joel 3:10 ‘Cut your ploughshares into swords, and your spades into spears. Let the weak say: I am strong.’ Whilst acknowledging the allegory’s ‘political, social and economic’ reference and ‘spiritual dimension’ between the community and the soul and kingdom of heaven, Pearsall comments:

... but the secondary significance and inexplicit nature of that spiritual reference ... are clearly brought out by comparison with the later ploughing scene of XXI 258, which is exclusively spiritual and totally non-literal. 113

In the dream opening at the beginning of Passus XXI Piers appears as the resurrected Christ:

Thus Y wakede and wrot what Y hadde ydremed
And dihte me derely and dede me to kyrke
To here holly the masse and to be hoseled aftur.
In myddes of the masse, tho and men yede to offrynge,
Y ful eftesones aslepe and sodeynliche me mette
That Peres the plouhman was peynted al blody
And cam in with a cros bifore the comune peple
And riht lyke in alle lymes to oure lord Iesu. (XXI, 1-8)

As does John in the Apocalypse, the dreamer recounts this vision, the latter experiencing it as he receives communion. The symbolism of the sacraments and the visual manifestation of Piers as Christ, thereby allude to the concept of transubstantiation. Piers’s bloody state alludes to Christ, in Apocalypse 19:13: ‘And

113 Pearsall, Piers, 33.
he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood. And his name is called: THE WORD OF GOD’ – the final prophesied fulfilment of God’s anger against sin. In this example the three estates (commons, clergy and knights) are unified. The Eucharist anticipates glorification as the congregation receives it. Piers and Christ have become indistinguishable in the eyes of the ‘comune peple’, prompting the dreamer to ask Conscience,

‘Is this Iesus the ioustare,’ quod Y, ‘that lewes dede to dethe? Or hit is Peres the plouhman? who paynted hym so rede?’
Quod Conciense and knelede tho, ‘This aren Peres armes, His colours and his cote armure, ac he that cometh so blody
Is Crist with his croes, conquerour of cristene.’ (XXI, 10-14)

Conscience highlights the similarities in appearance between Piers and Christ. They are not identical but the former reveals different facets of Christ’s character and actions. In Piers as Everyman the Christian strives to become like Christ – an end which is to be achieved with glorification. Their armour and coat of arms are identical but the bloodiness is the distinguishing feature signifying his conquest of sin and death through the resurrection.

The allusion to the hypostatic union and Incarnation is comparable to the one in Julian’s parable. Both texts emphasise Christ’s redeeming mission out of which humanity will ultimately become sanctified, glorified and in a position of grace intended for the first Adam in his prelapsarian state. The itinerant evangelistic elements are clear in both. For Langland (as for Julian), bearing in mind the dream focusses on the period after the resurrection, the Cross constitutes the main battle. Langland’s emphasis on Christ as conqueror (of sin) is on one level indicative of his apologetics relating to Christ’s messianic status, thereby responding to the Jewish expectation of a conquering messiah:

Quod Peres the ploghman: ‘Pacentes vincunt.
Byfore perpetuel pees Y shal preue that Y saide
And avowe byfore god and forsaken hit neuere
That disce, doce, dilige deum
And thyn enemy helpe emforth thy myhte,
Caste hote coles on his heued of alle kyn speche,
Fond thorw wit and word his loue to wynne,
Yef hym eft and eft, euere at his nede,
Conforte hym with thy catel and with thy kynde speche,
And ley on hym thus with loue til he lauhe on the;
And bote he bowe for this betynge, blynde mote he worthen!’
And whan he hadde yworded thus, wiste no man aftur
Where Peres the plogman bycam, so priueyliche he wente.

(XV, 138-149)

As Pearsall writes,

The dramatic intervention of Piers Plowman . . . is an important innovation in C. He speaks now as Christ in his life upon earth, verifying, in the presence of his Father, his own words in the gospels, concerning the charity which grows out of patience. *Pacientes vincunt*: ‘the patient conqueror.’

Langland’s allusion to Christ’s prophetic words in which he exhorts his disciples to endure in the face of worldly hatred in Matthew 10:22 compares with Julian’s focus on the servant’s earthly suffering rooted in the Apocalypse. However, she balances this with her depiction of the crowning in the heavenly throne room which evokes the passages of the Apocalypse referring to glorification and the majesty of Christ which she juxtaposes against the Passion. That Langland is most concerned with contemporary worldly threats is apparent in his agrarian metaphor, also employed by Julian within a soteriological framework.

In Passus XX the dreamer is transported to Palm Sunday. He sees a knight who resembles both the Samaritan and Piers, riding to a joust in Jerusalem on a donkey rather than the white horse of a conqueror he also represents Christ – in his Incarnate state rather than the conqueror of the parousia in Apocalypse 19:11-16:

Oen semblable to the Samaritaen and somdeel to Pers the plouhman

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114 Pearsall, *Piers*, 256, n.137.
Barfoet on an asse bake boetles cam prikynge
Withouten spores other spere – sprakeliche he lokede,
As is the kynde of a knyhte that cometh to be dobbet,
To geten his gult spores and galoches ycouped.
And thenne was Faith in a fenestre and criede ‘A, fili David!’ (XX, 8-13)

Barbara Raw points out that insofar as he resembles the Samaritan it is ‘because, in the double allegory of that incident, the Samaritan represents both charity, pursued by faith and hope, and Christ, foreseen by Abraham and Moses’. 115 Whilst Langland depicts the earthly joust, the knightly description fused with the labourer demonstrates the liminality inherent in the Passion and the resurrected Christ whose next eschatological ‘moment’ is the parousia. The knight engages in spiritual warfare. The former rides a donkey to the joust against the devil, thereby, as Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway note, defying ‘sumptuary laws which regulated very precisely what could be worn by knights and peasants’. 116 As they put it, ‘God as man as knight as laborer join forces to conquer sin and to dramatize the promise of redemption’. 117 Regarding Langland’s depiction of the crucifixion they add:

. . . Langland’s clerkly wordplay stiffens the sinews of affective piety to express stark theological truth. Compassionate suffering and doctrinal significance are as indivisible as God’s human and divine nature. 118

In Passus XX, 21 the knight wears Piers’s armour, symbolising the spiritual and physical battle and the hypostatic union and Incarnation along with the salvific mission, itself part of his will to re-unite humankind with God. In this armour, or the flesh of humankind, he is incognito. Faith-Abraham informs the dreamer that he will joust in Jerusalem: "And feche that the fende claymeth, Pers fruyt the plouhman." (18) In answer to the dreamer’s question concerning whether Piers is in the place, Faith, winking at him, replies,

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
'Liberum-dei-arbitrium for loue hath vndertake
That this Iesus of his gentrice shal iouste in Pers armes,
In his helm and in his haberion, humana natura;
That Crist be nat ynowe for consummatu deus,
In Pers plates the plouhman this prikiare shal ryde
For no dynt shal hym dere as in deitate patris.' (XX, 20-25)

For both Langland and Julian the Passion constitutes Christ’s joust with the devil. In fetching the fruit, according to Faith, he must joust with

‘. . . the fende, and Fals-doem-to-deye.
Deth saith a wol fordo and adown brynge
Alle that lyueth or loketh a londe or a watre.’ (XX, 27-29)

As Pearsall points out, the epithet in line 27 refers to ‘the judgment of death on mankind’.\textsuperscript{119} As Ames puts it: ‘The Passion and the harrowing of hell are, in fact, represented as a battle between Christ and Satan, between life and death, light and darkness, truth and falsehood.’\textsuperscript{120} As personified in Piers, Christ becomes the knight on the Cross with his identity concealed. This disguise issue may reflect an optimistic soteriology as Julian’s servant’s fall is forgiven by the lord. As Ames notes perceptively, the Jews could not identify him because of his armour and therefore ‘could not have been guilty of [wilful] deicide’.\textsuperscript{121} In Langland’s case it points to the perceived spiritual blindness of Jesus’ fellow Jews in not recognising their Messiah. And as Ames again points out, Langland ‘did not deduce the mass guilt of the Jews from the actual crucifixion; indeed, he cited Jesus’ forgiveness on the cross of his crucifiers’,\textsuperscript{122} and it was not the Jews with whom Christ jousted ‘but the foul fiend, and Falsehood and Death’.\textsuperscript{123} However, Ames further points out that Langland’s ire towards the Jews derived from their subsequent refusal to believe ‘and their continued expectation of a true Messias who would prove Jesus false.’\textsuperscript{124} Such concealment is a theme that appears in relation to the devil whose awareness,

\textsuperscript{119} Pearsall, \textit{Piers}, 323, n. 27.
\textsuperscript{120} Ames, \textit{Fulfillment}, 184.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 195.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 195.
according to the medieval Harrowing tradition, of the potential emancipatory consequences for the souls in his charge, causes him to fear Christ’s death. Piers’s guises are comparable to the servant who represents Christ and Adam. In contrast to the ‘one like to the Son of man’ in Apocalypse 1:12 whose ‘eyes were as a flame of fire’ (v14) and from whose ‘mouth came out a sharp two-edged sword’ (v16), Langland’s portrayal of Piers as Jesus, as with Julian’s Servant, is of one who is comparatively self-effacing, through kenosis and the hypostatic union, ultimately taking Adam’s flesh through the Incarnation, deliberately incognito. This is partly due to their depiction of his pre-parousia Incarnation, although Langland portrays him differently in the Harrowing of Hell.

Concerning Piers as the divine image, Barbara Raw writes:

St. Augustine, for instance, points out that the image of God will only be made perfect in man when the vision of God is perfect; in this world we possess the image only in faith and hope, not in fact. Yet Piers, it seems, has this image by likeness of glory, and this is why he cannot be found in this world. Piers is the embodiment of the image through history, and it is right that he should embody the final stage, in glory.125

Insofar as Piers represents the ideal believer, his disappearances reflect this peripatetic guide’s simultaneous belonging to the world and the heavenly realms. The ploughing, on the other hand, conveys an allegorical meaning: it is concerned with the structure of the Church and the dreamer. As Raw observes, the dreamer realises the impossibility of an ideal society since it requires,

. . . the guidance of the divine image, something which is possessed in this world only in hope. Will must die before he can meet Piers again, and Antichrist must destroy the world, because it is only through this final abandonment of this world that the divine image, symbolized by Piers, can be found.126

Whilst sin cannot prevent the salvation of faithful and repentant believers – a salient theme particularly in Julian’s text – the harm caused by the Fall continues to cause

126 Ibid., 179.
pain, reflecting a fundamental message of the Apocalypse. The inference is that repristination involves human effort in accordance with the divine and patient will. Julian’s servant and Langland’s Piers illustrate the Christology of both writers which, particularly for Julian, offers a redemptive emphasis which derives from the Apocalypse in which the faithful are rewarded in heaven. Langland emphasises to a greater degree the work that remains to be done for repristination.

The allusions to Adam as the first gardener (Genesis 2:8, 15) after God commanded him and his descendants to till the earth, anticipating Christ emerging as a gardener, are consonant with his identity as the second Adam. Related to this is the metaphor of tilling the earth with the Four Evangelists in Passus XXI, 262. In this allegory of the Christian community Piers is given four oxen and the four seeds by Grace (the Holy Spirit). The seeds or ‘cardinales vertues’ are: Spiritus prudencie; Spiritus temperancie; Spiritus fortitudinis; Spiritus iusticie. (XXI, 274-319) In 312-14 Piers has to deal with the weeds (vices) which threaten the crops (virtues) that are essential to the community. This also relates to the curse of the thorns and thistles which Adam will face in his work after the Fall (Genesis 3:17b-19) and the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30). Within Langland’s agrarian metaphor the earth, as in Matthew, is worked by the gospel. The evangelisation conducted by the allegorical oxen (in Apocalypse 4:7 the second living creature is like an ox) represents a process which is continued by the Church, culminating in the parousia and the new heaven and new earth. This work is taken on by Piers who is to establish the Church which comes under threat as Langland moves back to his epoch. With reference to Chapter 51 of Julian’s Revelations, Laws notes the connection between Langland’s gardening metaphor and that which Julian employs: ‘it was used by Anselm and appears in the Revelations of Divine Love by Julian of Norwich, in the vision of the servant standing before his lord’ before quoting the passage on the treasure in the earth and the gardening metaphor. And as Barbara Raw writes, ‘The guiding principle of this reformed society is the duty of work. It is both a social duty and a religious duty, for work was imposed on Adam as a

127 In John 20:11-18 Mary Magdalene initially thinks the resurrected Jesus is a gardener.
128 Pearsall notes: ‘The idea was perhaps prompted by the fact that Luke is represented by an ox in the traditional symbolism derived from Ezek. 1:10 and Rev. 4:7 (Matthew by a man, Mark by a lion and John by an eagle), but the association of oxen with apostles and preachers was traditional in the agricultural imagery of the commentators. . .’ Pearsall, Piers, 354, n. 262.
129 Raw, ‘Piers’, 149.
punishment for his sin, and work therefore forms the means by which man can return to God.\textsuperscript{130}

We have discussed how in the Apocalypse the task is set by Christ for the churches themselves with the ascended Christ’s advice and the Holy Spirit. Piers as a pastoral figure who initiates the building of Unity (XXI, 318-28) and guides the Church, as in the age of the Apostles tilling the ground (spreading the Gospel), having taught: ‘As wyde as the world is with Peres to tulye treuthe / And the londe of bileue, the lawe of holi churche.’ (333-4) However, the poem’s vision is ostensibly more pessimistic than Julian’s parable, since as soon as Piers disappears, entrusting the task to the believers, Unity comes under immediate internal threat.\textsuperscript{131} We saw (in chapter 2) that Julian also prophesies that Holy Church will face tribulation (Revelation, 28, 4-6). Crucially, Unity is, as Pearsall notes,

\textit{...} founded in Christ’s Passion, in which may be gathered (as in Luke 3:17) the ripened corn of properly prepared human souls (cf. the fate of the fruit of the Tree of Charity, XVIII 111). The name ‘Unity’ is used to suggest the union of God and man in Christ and through him in his church (cf. John 17:11).\textsuperscript{132}

Herein lies a major parallel with Julian’s parable, in that she interlinks the agrarian imagery of the servant’s labour for the treasure in the earth with the evocation of the union between man and God through the hypostatic union and the bridging of the divide through Christ. It is conceivable that both Julian and Langland emphasise this apocalyptic expectation of suffering in response to Apocalypse 2:4-5 and Christ’s warning to the Church at Ephesus of the consequences for leaving their (‘first charity’) as he threatens to remove their ‘candlestick’.

To conclude this section, Piers fulfils a didactic role in preparing believers to endure as in the Apocalypse. The work of the conqueror of sin (Christ) is juxtaposed with the postlapsarian elevation of work as a necessity and means of purgation in seeking to fulfil the prophecy of ultimate unification with Christ, enabled through the Incarnation. This Christological focus which links heaven and earth and the soteriological and eschatological interrelationship is fundamental to Julian’s parable

\textsuperscript{130} Raw, ‘Piers’, 144.
\textsuperscript{131} Cf. (XXI, 335-348).
\textsuperscript{132} Pearsall, Piers, 356, n.318.
and the final manifestation of Piers as intermediary, representing through the symbolism of the work of ploughing the focal point of the Passion, ultimate sanctification and glorification. The task for believers is to realise that sin has been conquered and embrace the necessary tribulations whilst rejecting and resisting the Mystical Antichrist. In seeking to guide believers to salvation, Piers, as does Julian’s servant, demonstrates that hardship is normative in this journey – the realities of the physical and spiritual struggle impinging upon their progress. Both Langland and Julian progress chronologically into the harrowing of hell. Whereas Julian approaches this abstractly, Langland is more descriptive, depicting Christ as a knight jousting in a legal battle. Both Langland and Julian portray Christ fulfilling the role of advocate for humanity before his Father.

*The Passion, Harrowing of Hell and Christ as Conqueror*

Langland’s soteriological convictions range from ambiguous to suggestively liberal, and both the contents and structure of *Piers Plowman* are fundamental in determining his soteriological and eschatological outlook. In this section I argue that the triumph of the latter thrust is compelling. A concern for believers’ souls constitutes the essence of both the prophetic warnings and exhortations to repent in both Apocalypse and *Piers Plowman* – with the main subject of the latter text essentially being how to save one’s soul, along with the poet’s emphasis upon the importance of repristination within the Church. In this section I argue that a parallel reading of the Apocalypse and *Piers Plowman* suggests that Langland perceived the Church of fourteenth-century England as participating in the Church Age without yet having achieved an ideal state of repristination – indeed the text implicitly denies the possibility of it happening in the near future. Langland does this by focussing upon contemporary fourteenth-century concerns, which for all their immediacy constitute recurrent historical dilemmas. An example is the aforementioned prophecy in III, 452-461a, which pertains to an eschatological point after the parousia and the millennial reign of Christ and the Saints. Due to this clear eschatological view I do not regard the ending of *Piers Plowman* as inconclusive. Rather, it provides further evidence that the poem has Apocalypse 17 as its apotheosis and corollary – ergo, Langland looks towards that point in time, whilst recontextualising it in contemporary England,
as evidenced by the dreamer’s awakening and the consequent fulfilment of the text’s cyclical nature. In defending these statements I apply textual analysis which identifies both Langland’s soteriology and his portrayal and positioning of eschatological events, as well as his treatment of the character of Christ compared with that of the Apocalypse.

Langland’s soteriology has been variously interpreted. Robert Adams argues that *Piers Plowman* advocates semi-pelagianism, citing lines such as those in Passus XII in which Ymaginatif tells Will that human beings have a role to play in striving to do well. Others, such as David Aers, dispute this view, citing the role of mediators in Augustinian thought. Aers’s view is that

\[\ldots\] Langland leaves the issue of universal salvation open but, like Karl Barth, ‘with a strong tilt toward universal hope’. Most commentators have acknowledged such a ‘tilt’, although some have doubted this. But given God’s infinite resourcefulness, the groundless love of such a sovereign creator, reconciler, and redeemer, a vision of the Trinity shared by Augustine, Aquinas, and Langland, to exclude the possibility of universal salvation, to exclude the hope of universal salvation, should not seem compelling. Christ’s unequivocal affirmation of his identity with humankind and his promise to be kind rather than ‘vnkynde’ encourage such hope.\[135\]

Aers acknowledges the nuances of Langland’s soteriology here. There is indeed an important distinction to be made between outright universalism and soteriological optimism involving human responsibility – the belief that salvation is open to all in theory balanced with a realisation that not everyone will grasp it. The poem leans towards an optimistic soteriology in enough lines to make such leanings plausible however. Indeed, in one of Langland’s references to a servant which is resonant with Julian’s servant he writes regarding the universal offer of salvation:

\[\text{Rihte so Peres the plouhman payneth hym to tulie} \]
\[\text{As wel for a wastour or for a wenche of the stuyves}\]

\[134\] Aers, *Salvation and Sin*.
\[135\] Ibid., 115-6.
As for hysulue and his seruauntes, saue he is furste yserued. (XXI, 434-6)

Whether or not Langland himself held the view of Ymaginatif, the underlying message throughout the poem is that the individual and, by extension, the body of the Church, must play their part in repristination; the latter must cleanse itself to be worthy of its eschatological destiny of becoming the Bride of Christ in the Marriage to the Lamb, which is the essential message of the letters to the seven churches of Asia and described in Apocalypse 19:7-9:

Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb is come: and his wife hath prepared herself. And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white. For the fine linen are the justifications of saints. (7-8)

The application of this ongoing process of repristination involves submitting to the Holy Spirit (who in Piers Plowman is personified by Grace) in order to emancipate repentant sinners and do good works – deeds which are the outward display of inner holiness. In terms of theological background, after the Ascension the third person of the Trinity ‘replaces’ on earth the second person; the Spirit is not restricted to physical limitations of movement but can instead potentially indwell all believers simultaneously when, with the Pentecostal coming of the third Person of the Trinity in Acts 2:1-4, the Church Age commences. Through his guidance the Church may grow and make itself worthy for the parousia and the millennium. This is clearest in Passus XXI, lines 201ff as the Age of Grace replaces the Age of the Law. The subsequent depiction of Unity, and the external and internal threats within, mirrors the challenges faced by the church at Sardis in Apocalypse 3:1-6. Both become the antithesis of the ideal – a Church in crisis, succumbing to the threat of Pride.

The eschatological significance of the crucifixion, the Harrowing of Hell and the resurrection of Christ is that they usher in the transition from one age to another, namely the Church Age. In the aforementioned Passus XX, line 322, which is framed by the literary device of the oneiric vision, the dreamer conveys the reader back to the liturgy and, retrospectively, to the events of Palm Sunday when Will sees Piers, who here bears resemblance to Christ: ‘Oen semblable to the Samaritaen and somdeel to Pers the plouhman’. (8) Through this allusion to John’s observation ‘one
like to the son of man’ of Apocalypse 1:13 we see reclamation (in retrospect) of Christ’s *Via Dolorosa* as a conquest (of death).

Although the practice of trial by combat was disappearing by the fourteenth century, the concept remained alive in the collective consciousness of the English population. Evidence for this is found in Chaucer's *Knight’s Tale* (1380-87) in which Theseus orders trial by battle between the two suitors Palamon and Arcite. In Passus XX two duels are described – the Duel of Right which takes place at the crucifixion, and the Duel of Treason which takes place at the Harrowing of Hell. We shall look at these chronologically. Christ is described in terms of a warrior knight and the crucifixion will be the first stage in the battle with the devil – the second will be the harrowing of hell. As Pearsall states, this duel involves the depiction of Christ as a ‘lover-knight’ and a ‘duel at law’. The former term is found in Part VII of *The Ancrene Riwle* which presents Christ’s willingness to joust as a knight on behalf of his spouse (the Church). This legal emphasis is also found in the York (Saddlers) mystery play *The Harrowing of Hell*.

The vividness of the crucifixion scene in *Piers Plowman* bears comparison with Julian’s – firstly in meaning and secondly in imagery. As discussed, Julian stressed the centrality of the crucifixion – through her ekphrastic evocations of the Passion – and, by association, the resurrection that destroys sin’s power. In exploring Langland’s treatment of the crucifixion and the concept of the *felix culpa* in Passus XVIII, to which I shall turn next, A.V.C. Schmidt argues that Langland is not as radical in his soteriology as is Julian, although he regards them as thinkers who occupy different stages along the same line of development:

The ‘behoveliness of sin’ and even the possibility of universal salvation are both themes that will be taken up only later by Julian of Norwich whose work, though intellectually more adventurous, in many ways belongs to the same line as that of Bernard, Bonaventura, John of Hoveden, Rolle and Langland.

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136 *The Riverside Chaucer*, I (A) 1845-69.
137 Pearsall, *Piers*, 322, n.11.
Langland devotes far less space to describing the crucifixion than Julian and he does not meditate to the same degree on the physical suffering of Christ. However, the following lines contain multiple allusions to the crucifixion and to Isaiah 63:17 and Joel 3:13. They also prefigure Apocalypse 14:20 in which Christ (whose status as the conquering Messiah has been depicted in 14:14 through his sitting on a white cloud [ruler] holding a sickle [to punish] and wearing a golden victor's wreath) as the vintage [the bodies of the forces of Antichrist] is trampled). Moreover, the lines provide a measured allusion to the crucifixion: ‘That Peres the plouhman was peynted al blody / And cam in with a cros bfore the comune peple / And riht lyke in alle lymes to oure lord Iesu. (XXI, 6-8) Langland conveys a strong sense of pathos through the language that he does use: ‘Pitousliche and pale, as a prisoun that deyeth, / The lord of lyf and of liht tho leyde his eyes togederes. (XX, 58-59) This line’s extraordinary beauty and power is achieved partly through the juxtaposition of its succinctness and the linguistic evocation of the magnitude of the event’s significance. In contrast to Julian’s affective piety and her contemplation of the blood of Christ in the Passion scene, Langland is more understated. However, both stress the spiritual effect of Christ’s death, and the following passage bears comparison with Julian’s thirteenth revelation (discussed above):

The daye for drede therof withdrouh and derke bicam the sonne;
The wal of the temple to-cleyef euene a to peces;
The hard roch al to-roef and riht derk nyht hit semede.
The erthe to-quasche and quoek as hit quyk were
And dede men for that dene cam oute of depe graues
And tolde why that tempest so longe tyme durede:
‘For a bittur bataile,’ the ded bodye saide;
‘Lyf and Deth, in this derkenesse here oen fordoth her other,
Acshal no wyht wyte witturlich ho skal haue the maistry
Ar Soneday, aboute the sonne-rysynge,’ and sank with that til erthe. . . .’ (XX, 60-69)

In these lines, which allude to Matthew 27:51-54, we see Langland’s apocalyptic emphasis which is however less grandiose than in the Apocalypse. Langland’s
restraint is found in Julian’s writing, an approach that I commented on in chapter 2 with reference to Diane Watt’s term ‘universalist apocalypticism’ and the nature of Julian’s showings as also concealings. In the quoted text above, the impact of the crucifixion upon the earth recalls Julian’s words about Holy Church: ‘Holy church, shalle be shaked in sorow and anguished and tribulation in this worlde as men shaketh a cloth in the winde.’ (Revelation, 28, 4-6) Watt cites these lines in connection with Gascoigne, who in the context of persecution of Catholics in seventeenth-century France, incorporates them yet edits them ‘to remove the strongest assertions of universalist apocalypticism’. Langland’s focus on Christ and the earthquake is mirrored in Julian’s focus on the drying of Christ’s skin in the wind. Christ’s corporeality also represents the Church. Death in Christ leads to salvation, which allows Julian to link the apocalyptic with a liberal soteriology. Langland is more specific than Julian in evincing the tribulations faced and to be faced by the Church, yet, he too offers hope amidst the gloom – quite literally, for in mentioning this darkening he follows it with Passus XX. This is significant because the darkening is the physical manifestation of a spiritual activity signifying the absence of God, which according to the biblical account, occurred during the crucifixion. It is the defining feature of hell, although it is not the lake of fire of Apocalypse 19:20 to which Christ descends but rather Sheol or Hades. The latter is for the souls of those who have died and await the final judgment which takes place at the end of history and for which the body and soul are reunited and either sent to heaven or condemned to suffer the second death which is to be thrown into the lake of fire. The latter place is reserved for Satan, the False Prophet and the beast (Antichrist). Later, Langland places further emphasis upon the interrelation between the natural elements and spiritual realms when, after speaking of the star pointing to Jesus’ birthplace, Book continues:

The water witnesseth that he was god, for a wente on hym druye:
Peter the apostel parseyued his gate
And as he wente on the watur wel hym knewe and saide,
‘Domine, iube me venire ad te.’
And lo! how the sonne gan louke here lihte in heresulue
When [s]he sye hym soffre that sonne and se made.
Lo! the erthe for heuynesse that he wolde soffre

308
Quakid as a quyk thyng and al to-quasch the roches. (XX, 251-7)

Besides emphasising Christ’s divine status, these lines highlight the geophysical effects of spiritual intervention on earth – a major feature of the biblical Apocalypse – stars falling from heaven, the sea turning to blood and earthquakes. In both texts the earth is responsive to the will and feelings of the Creator.

In the same Passus Langland focusses on Christ’s actions during the three days following his death and descent into hell (Sheol) and the resurrection. The harrowing of hell epitomises Langland’s optimistic soteriology. Whereas we saw that Julian’s omissions are suggestive of a liberal soteriology, Langland is much more explicit, although his omissions may also be significant.

The depiction of Christ as the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9 and Apocalypse 4:2 with hair as white as snow and coming in vengeance before the reign of the saints is absent from *Piers Plowman* because this revelation belongs significantly later within the eschatological timeframe. However, Langland’s Christ puts on armour for battle in accordance with the medieval concept of chivalry, and in Passus XX he prepares to joust with the devil by dressing as a knight in armour. However, the conflict ensues in the spiritual context/realms, albeit with earthly eschatological implications; there are earthly manifestations of spiritual occurrences, such as the darkening of the sky and the tearing of the veil in the temple when God absents himself, and the Harrowing scenes, but the parousia and the earthly fulfilment of the final ‘annihilation’ of evil, as prophesied in the Apocalypse, lies in the distant future, although its preconditions have been met through the Cross. In broaching the subject of the Church Age Langland reserves his main focus for the ‘Church Militant'. The poem’s visions pertain to the period during which the conditions for the Second Coming are in the process of being met as they foreground apocalyptic expectation, in terms of the events preceding and including the coming of Antichrist, without dealing with the Second Coming itself.

Although Christ appears as a conqueror in Langland’s treatment of the Harrowing of Hell in Passus XX, his joust with the devil is a verbal and intellectual one. It is noteworthy then that, in the Apocalypse, Christ avenges through his speech with the metaphor of the sword from his mouth in Apocalypse 2:16, 19:15 & 21 – the

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141 Langland upholds a distinction between Lucifer the fallen angel and Satan, the malevolent spirit of darkness, and they argue with each other.
Word which destroys falsehood. Thus in *Piers Plowman* Christ outwits the devil in entering hell, yet it is by recourse to a legal framework that he engages with the devil. There is literary precedent for this in the mystery plays – for instance, in the Chester Pageant Satan recognises that he has acted ‘illegally’ in facilitating the Fall:

I tempted the folk in foul manner;
Aisel and gall to his dinner
I made them for to dight,
And hang him on a rood-tree.
Now he is dead right so through me;
And to hell, as you shall see,
He comes anon in hight.\(^\text{142}\)

There is biblical precedent for this legal framing of Christ’s points as he makes the case for and against each of the seven churches. For instance, he admonishes the Church at Ephesus as follows: ‘But I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity.’ (Apocalypse 2:4) In reference to the devil’s words in line 299, ‘Yf he reue me of my rihte, a robbeth me of his maistre’, Pearsall notes that this theory of ‘devil’s rights’

\[\ldots\text{ was evolved to provide a legalistic framework for the act of Redemption.} \]

The devil was granted the right of legal possession \(\ldots\) to the souls of all sinful men after the Fall. He might forfeit this right by ‘abuse of power’, that is, by attempting to seize a sinless soul; or it might be annulled by ransom, the offer of soul for soul. Langland alludes to both schemes of Redemption \(\ldots\) even though the theory of ‘devil’s rights’ had been repudiated by Aquinas \(\ldots\) on the grounds that those ‘rights’ were forfeited by his treasonous deceit.\(^\text{143}\)

This concept of forfeit appears in Christ’s verbal duel with Lucifer in which they debate their rights to the souls after which he releases the patriarchs and prophets:

\[\text{142} \quad \text{A. C. Cawley, ed., *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays* (London: Everyman, 1993), 154, 122-128.}\]

\[\text{143} \quad \text{This concept of ‘devil’s rights’ appears in other literary works – for example, Chaucer’s *The Pardoner’s Tale* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), VI. 847-8: ‘For-why the feend foond hym in swich lyvynge / That he hadde leve him to sorwe brynge’.}\]
‘Lo! Me here,’ quodoure lord, ‘lyfand soul bothes,
For all synfole soules to saue our bothe rihte.
Myne they were and of me; Y may the bet hem clayme.
Althouh resoun recorde, and rihte of mysulue,
That if they ete the appul alle sholde deye,
Y biihhte hem nat here helle for euere.
For the dedly synne that they dede, thi deseite hit made;
With gyle thow hem gete agaynes all resoun.
For in my palays, paradys, in persone of an addere
Falsiche thow fettest there that me bifull to loke,
Byglosedest hem and bigiledest hem and my gardyne breke
Ayeyne my loue and my leue. The olde lawe techeth
That glyours beth bigiled and in here gyle falle,
And ho-so hit out a mannes eye or elles his fore-teth
Or eny manere membre maymeth other herteth,
The same sore shal he haue that eny so smyteth:
Dentem pro dente, et oculum pro oculo. (XX, 370-385a)

In these line Christ stresses his will to emancipate souls from the devil’s hold. The latter is blamed for the Fall and his deception (appearing as ‘an addere’) invalidates his claim to the souls. Christ invokes the Old Testament in relation to the New, pointing out that the law is indeed being followed; he has every right to take upon himself the sins of others because of his action on the cross:

. . . as Adam and alle thorwe a tre deyede,
Adam and alle thorw a tre shal turne to lyue.
And now bygnneth thy gyle agayne on the to turne
And my grace to growe ay gretter and wyddore. (XX, 397-400)

Moreover, Christ is legally entitled to outwit the devil in the Harrowing of Hell due to the latter’s deceit, which meant that Eve’s choice was not a considered one that was based upon full knowledge of the implications of the action – a suggestion of partial
exoneration for Eve that is compatible with Julian’s and Kempe’s silence. In lines 445-6 we read: “Ac for the lesynge that thow low, Lucifer, til Eue / Thou shalt abyye bittere!” quod god, and bonde hym with chaynes.’ This equates to the Binding of Satan in Apocalypse 20:1-3. He is bound in the sense that he is prevented from exercising further power over the inhabitants of hell who instead can now be redeemed. It is noteworthy that Gobelyne, who is otherwise, as Pearsall points out, ‘a demon who leads wayfarers astray in the Fasciculus morum . . . is instead here an alter ego for Satan who states, “Y wolde haue lenghded his lyf, for Y leued, yf he deyede, / That if his soule hider cam hit sholde shende vs all.”’ (XX, 335-6) He proceeds to refer to his understanding that Christ’s death would bring about the downfall of the devils. There is a counter-intuitive reversal of the power structure here: implicitly the devil possesses more power and freedom when Christ is alive, whereas the latter’s death thwarts him. Here, in this matter at least, Langland arguably attributes greater intelligence or foresight to the devil than does the biblical Apocalypse. His precedents are located in the tradition based on Matthew and developed in the Gospel of Nicodemus. But the devil’s acknowledgment that in the event of Christ’s death the latter’s intervention on behalf of those in Sheol was a possibility is also significant insofar as it highlights the eschatological inevitability of the Harrowing and the devil’s comparative impotence. Although the Apocalypse does not deal with the Harrowing, heavenly actions are revealed to have significance for human salvation and the interplay between heaven and earth is a feature of the text.

In contrast to the devil’s drink of death, Christ offers the drink of life, which is salvation. There is an allusion to the cup of suffering which he asks to be taken away on earth until he decides to drink the cup of God’s wrath. It is at this point that Langland introduces a degree of soteriological ambiguity with Christ’s prophecy of his parousia and the resurrection of the dead: ‘And I drynke riht rype must, resurreccio mortuorum. / And thenne shal Y come as kynge, with crowne and with angeles, / And haue out of helle alle mennes soules.’ (XX, 412-414) In other words, sinners are indebted to Christ who has earned the right to forgive them. In the following lines Christ’s action is described in chivalric terms with the same concern for blood that is crucial in redemption and the promise of salvation: ‘Shal neuere in helle eft come, be he ones oute:/ Tibi soli peccaui, et malum coram te feci.’ (XX, 420)

Lines 430-475 of Passus XX constitute one of the poem’s strongest examples of positive soteriology as they stress that Christ has won the right to judge the
severity of sins, and anticipates a display of mercy rather than retribution that is more explicit than anything in Julian’s *Revelations*. It is a tradition that is closer to Origen’s thought than Augustine’s, and whilst Langland refrains from saying that all will be saved, the possibility is certainly implicit. This is of course a dream, a form which in itself can be used to reduce authorial culpability. However, we should note that there is a reference to purgatory – a place which was believed to illustrate God’s mercy for Christians who had committed lesser sins – in B.XVIII, 392-4. Although there are thirteen references to purgatory in the C text, the omission at this point in C where Christ speaks might conceivably point towards a pelagianist reading, a more inclusive soteriology, or, conversely, a starker distinction between the sheep and the goats of Matthew 25: 31-46 at the Last Judgment. Langland’s portrayal of the post-resurrection Christ follows the Apocalypse rather than the mystical emphasis on the humanity (along with the divinity) of Christ in his Incarnation. Bloomfield, again stressing the influence of the monastic tradition upon Langland’s writing as distinct from mystical writing, writes: ‘Christ as King and Ruler is more important than the suffering Jesus. Human nature ennobled is more important than divine nature humbled.’

Langland portrays this apocalyptic redeeming king, turning suffering into conquest of hell and death as he again employs an innovative reapplication of an apocalyptic Old Testament passage:

Y fault so me fursteth yut for mannes soule sake:

*Sicio.*

May no pyement ne pomade ne preciouse drynkes
Moiste me to the fulle ne my furst slokke
Til the vantage valle in the vale of losophat
And Y drynke riht rype must, *resurreccio mortuorum.*
And thenne shal Y come as kynge, with crowne and with angeles,
And haue out of helle alle mennes soules.
Fendes and fende kynes byfore me shal stande
And be at my biddynghe, at blisse or at payne.

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144 II, 111; 6:299; VII, 117; IX, 11, 186, 279; XI, 31, 295; XII, 68; XIII, 31; XV, 92, 305; XVIII, 15. Note that IX, 186 and XV, 92 refer to earthly purgatory.

145 For a further possible allusion to the Last Judgment see Prologue, 2 (‘as Y a shepe were’).

146 Bloomfield, *Apocalypse*, 64.
Ac to be merciable to man thenne my kynde asketh,
For we beth brethren of o bloed, ac nat in baptisme alle.
Ac alle that beth myn hole brethren, in bloed and in baptisme,
Shal neuere in helle eft come, be he ones oute:

_Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci._ (XX, 408-420a)

This optimistic passage mentions the drink of love, as opposed to the devil’s cup of death and the cup of suffering of which Jesus becomes aware in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:42). In Apocalypse 14:9-10 those who have taken the mark of the beast are forced to drink the wine of God’s wrath poured out against sinners, whereas here the focus is on a drink of life. The valley of Josaphat is a reference to Joel 3:2ff, which concerns both the resurrection of the dead and a gathering of nations hostile to Israel at the end of history (cf. Apocalypse 16:16; 19:19). What is most remarkable about Langland’s lines is that the verse in Joel which concerns God’s judgment upon the nations for scattering the Hebrews among them is here turned into a verse of forgiveness. Whereas the biblical passage mocks the enemies of Israel, here the tone is soothing and the content is inclusivist in import – for example, line 418 which reads, ‘For we beth brethren of o bloed, ac nat in baptisme alle.’ Indeed, the word ‘Josaphat’ means ‘the Lord judges’. The place is located in the Kidron valley east of Jerusalem where – it is prophesied – Christ will judge who goes to hell and who goes to heaven. It is the place of resurrection. Clearly Langland cannot be speaking of his own time since the majority of the Jews did not reside in Palestine. But the references to wine and cups have further significance when read intertextually with Joel 3:3: ‘And they have cast lots upon my people: / and the boy they have put in the stews, / and the girl they have sold for wine, / that they might drink.’ Langland’s optimistic soteriology here derives from the apparent optimism that the cross’s redeeming power can turn judgment into redemption. Crucially, both the biblical verse and the passage in _Piers Plowman_ are prophecies: Christ the King will arrive for his Bride later in history. The ending of the Passus is apposite with the dreamer awakening to the Easter bells of Langland’s day and the creeping to the cross.
Conclusion

This chapter has explored Langland's personification allegory within the dream visions of *Piers Plowman*. Langland's transposition of a reimagined and recontextualised version of Apocalypse 1-17 onto contemporary medieval England serves to frame the contents that expose the perceived need for Unity's repristination. As we have seen, the poem also deals with later parts of the Apocalypse, though in differing ways: the marriage supper of the Lamb (Apocalypse 19); the binding of Satan and the millennial reign (20); the tree of life (Apocalypse 22). The lack of resolution (parousia and New Jerusalem) lends the poem's ending a degree of ambiguity regarding Langland's milieu. However, the eschatological view is not in doubt since Unity will only merit and gain the epithet 'Bride of Christ' following repristination and with the eschatological fulfilment of the biblical prophecy of the wedding of Apocalypse 19:7-8. The loose transposition of biblical history onto a contemporary canopy allows Langland to reimagine the apocalyptic figures and introduce a dialogic element which contrasts with the biblical Apocalypse. It also provides a cyclical effect that contrasts with the linearity of the Apocalypse – although the latter may be interpreted as representing recurrent cycles/recapitulations of history and in this sense each age finds relevance in the letters to the churches, as does Langland with his Lady Holy Church and other 'fluid' personifications which imbue the text with a sense of unease and ambiguity even as they provide insight into contemporary and universal issues.

Regarding Langland's apocalyptic personifications, this chapter has explored some of the relevant theological implications of Lady Holy Church as representative of the Church Triumphant and her apocalyptic oraculum. For instance, the lines in Passus I which concern the Davidic covenant with its temporary and post-parousia relevance further stress Langland's Apocalypse-based focus. By analysing pertinent lines of the Lady Meed passus the chapter has addressed her similarities with the Whore of Babylon whilst arguing that Langland's reimagining of this figure creates a more nuanced personification than the biblical Whore from which she derives artistically. In providing Meed with a more independent voice, he allows her to critique contemporary constraints, demonstrating that wealth can be appropriated for good or
evil. Through this personification we find a parallel between the prevalent mercantilism of fourteenth-century England and first-century Rome. The chapter has also considered the gender implications of these female personifications, arguing that Langland is more sensitive in his depiction of Meed than John is with the Whore. I have engaged with Pippin's critique in this regard.

In the apocalyptic manifestations of the metamorphosing Piers and conquering Christ, Langland displays the centrality of the hypostatic union and Incarnation in relation to the *imago Dei*, which is obscured through worldly corruption of tenets of the Church and social practices, and the susceptibility of Unity to succumb to the Mystical Antichrist. Langland's depiction of Piers thus provides areas of confluence with Julian's Servant. Like Julian, Langland acknowledges suffering and he presents the solution in Holy Church and, above all, the defeat of evil by Christ - and the positive soteriology inherent in the Harrowing of Hell. As with the letters to the seven churches in the Apocalypse, Lady Holy Church vocalises the gulf between the Church's contemporary state and its goal of becoming Bride of Christ.
CONCLUSION

As explained in the introduction to this thesis, my approach has been to address the texts separately, with the exception of brief consideration of particularly pertinent points of confluence. In doing so I have underscored elements deriving from the Apocalypse itself. In chapter 2, I examined Julian’s Parable of the Lord and the Servant as an allegory and exemplum for salvation history that alludes to the Fall and the Incarnation, as well as the resultant interconnectedness between the servant, who signifies simultaneously both Adam (humankind), the precursor to Christ, and Christ (the second Adam). As mentioned in chapters 2, 3 and 4, Julian’s illustration of their intertwining following the Incarnation and the subsequent salvific act of the Cross bears striking similarities with Langland’s Piers who provides a link, albeit often transitory, between the temporal and spiritual realms, with Christ as a conduit. Numerous other theological concerns with which Julian and Langland engage have been discussed. With such confluence in mind, a further stage of my research would be to draw out more of these parallels.

The emphasis on certain parts of the Apocalypse over others constitutes a study in itself. The rest of the Johannine corpus also reveals many areas of confluence with Julian’s focus. Research could also extend to other medieval texts, some of which I have mentioned. The importance of the New Jerusalem, in its figurative sense of fulfilment in the soul as city in Julian’s writing, and as distant hope in Langland’s poem, offers scope for intriguing comparisons with its treatment in the alliterative poem Pearl. The latter text, with its focus on the psychological effects of bereavement resonates with Julian’s putative loss of child and husband and certainly her sense of sorrow at the current state of the contemporary world and reassurance that all shall be well stemming from her eschatological focus and, for instance, the repristination and glorification indicated in her pneumatological focus. Other late medieval texts to analyse in future research include The Harrowing of hell mystery play and Chaucer’s House of Fame and The Canterbury Tales. Research could also extend to the earlier Westminster group of illustrated English Apocalypses such as The Getty Apocalypse. These texts also reveal the richness of creative composition and art inspired by the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages. We now turn to the core findings of the thesis.
Summary and consideration of findings

In this thesis I have advanced the scholarship on the writing of Julian and Langland by proving that the influence of the Apocalypse upon their work is more extensive than previously thought. I have shown how they engage with the Apocalypse, often in nuanced ways, stressing textual elements that accord with their soteriology. Julian and Langland draw on the spiritual and universal concerns of the Apocalypse with the latter serving as an archetype in its visionary features, symbolism and didacticism, theodicy, eschatology and soteriology which both Julian and Langland revisit as they employ its visionary features. As argued in chapter 4, Langland adopts a loose ‘template’ based on sections within Apocalypse 1-17 – although he also alludes to other parts of the text – for his own reimaginings of figures and textual concerns.

I have established that Julian and Langland address the concerns of the Apocalypse as they recontextualise it in accordance with the preoccupations of their milieu. In doing so, they recognise universal and figurative readings. This thematic focus indicates that sections of the Apocalypse text were embedded in the medieval collective consciousness – plague, war and the last things. Both writers mediate John’s vision whilst offering a critique of their milieu, and, in Julian’s case, an implicit critique of contemporary views of judgment and womanhood, as revealed in her hermeneutic, thematic content and stylistic elements. However, Julian’s focus differs from Langland’s in that she places greater emphasis on heaven. Both writers are attuned to the spiritual realms – spiritual warfare is evident in their respective texts and Langland personifies the Church Triumphant through whom he argues for repristination in the Church Militant. However, Julian’s throne room visions are consonant with her broader heaven-attuned pneumatology. Her adoption of the Augustinian concept of Christ in the soul as a city, based on Apocalypse 21, reveals greater optimism for renewal and glorification. This stems from her position as a female anchorite, a conduit between heaven and earth, fighting her own spiritual warfare as the Desert Fathers fought demons in the desert.¹

I began this thesis by illustrating the textual engagement in Julian’s *Revelations* and Langland’s *Piers Plowman* with facets of Augustine’s reading of the Harrowing of Hell, emphasising its integral position within the soteriology of both writers. Julian stresses the kenotic element involved in the hypostatic union and Incarnation which adds poignancy to the nature of Christ’s redemptive mission (*Revelation*, 51, 254-264). Augustine’s depiction of Christ as conqueror of sin and death also epitomises the portrayal of Christ by both Julian and Langland – although Julian’s concept of the city of God constitutes an integral part of her figurative hermeneutic within her pneumatological and eschatological view. In her concept of community she has much in common with Langland. Indeed, their mutual emphasis on salvific mission through the Incarnation, perpetuated through believers under divine guidance and the tenets of the Church, evokes Christ’s message in the letters to the seven churches – although Julian eschews any reference to divine wrath at human deviations from the divine will. In *Piers Plowman* it is the poet who overtly vents his disapprobation at abuses through his penetrating satire. Elements of Julian’s writing offer a veiled critique of ecclesiastical failings in terms of deviation from tenets of the faith. She also conveys implicit discontentment with the contemporary emphasis on hell, as distinct from the question of its existence, which she professes to accept.

By identifying a discernible Joachite influence on Julian’s text I have sought to address an area that has hitherto not received the scholarly attention that it merits. Indeed, both texts strongly indicate exposure to Joachite thought – particularly mediated through Olivi and the Franciscan Spirituals. I have focussed on this primarily in relation to Julian since it has not received scholarly attention. Many of the teachings of this group resonate with the communitarian thought of Julian and Langland. I have also discussed the influence of the Beguines and Porete in particular, as well as the associated Olivi influence, itself Joachite.

Both texts’ Trinitarian historical hermeneutic is strongly visual and Christological. I have identified liberal salvationist strains in both Langland’s and Julian’s work, whilst arguing that they are more pronounced in the latter, thereby offering an implicit critique of the contemporary contrasting view of hell and sin, drawing on the Apocalypse treatment of divine wrath and the Lake of Fire. In attempting to reconcile Julian’s genuine belief in hell, and adherence to the core tenets of Holy Church, with her equally strong personal view of God as supported by
her visions, I have concluded in chapter 2, that for Julian, hell exists but it is sparsely populated, if at all, other than by the devil and other fallen angels. I have shown how these views can be reconciled by drawing on the thought of Uthred de Bolden. As argued (as has Newman in a different context), I would go further and contend that Julian sees heaven as excluding neither Jew nor Greek, and heaven as the great leveller. I have suggested that this is reflected in her belief in the two parts of the soul, substance and sensuality, both attached to God, and the possible allusion to the visio clara. Julian’s dual profession of faith in Church teaching on hell, and her evident optimism concerning Christ’s conquering, and the earthly suffering caused by sin as purgatorial in itself, also reflects this view. Whether through Langland’s Mystical Antichrist, which equates to internal ecclesiastical corruption, or Julian’s focus on heaven as the reward for enduring suffering, both writers’ texts represent the interplay between heaven and earth.

A major aspect of my original contribution to knowledge in chapter 3 concerns revealing how Langland’s employment of the fictional versifying medium facilitates the reimagining of figures and problematises any imminent utopian solution. My Bakhtinian reading of Langland’s treatment of Lady Meed in relation to the Whore of Babylon has demonstrated the progressive nature of Langland’s versifying, which finds him employing heteroglossia, polyglossia and polyphony. Both writers reimagine the Apocalypse in different ways, without ever contradicting the biblical text. Instead, they recontextualise it to fourteenth-century England, thus acknowledging its applicability to each age. This approach applies the Apocalypse to Langland’s cultural and geographical location, which itself reflects the approach of the Apocalypse with its focus on universal themes and the good/evil dichotomy in the Roman context and fledgling Christian community.

Whereas the parousia is alluded to in A Revelation 51, as discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, in Piers Plowman it seems much more remote. Julian foregrounds her beatific visions of the saints in heaven, juxtaposed with the struggle of the Church Militant which is longing to be with Christ. Julian is aware of the earthly tasks yet she focusses more on the spiritual places, foreseeing the reward, ostensibly with greater optimism as evidenced by her servant. Langland’s text is

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more rooted in earthly concerns and contemporary events, although, as discussed, not exclusively.

Both Langland and Julian grasp that sanctification and glorification begin with repristination on earth, necessitating *renovatio* of the individual and the Church body – the fundamental message to the seven churches – thus anticipating the eschatological new earth and heaven. Yet Julian’s *Revelations* are ostensibly more optimistic, albeit at the expense of achieving unquestionable orthodoxy. Langland awaits the parousia, as evidenced by his allusions to the Davidic covenant, the precursor to the Messianic covenant, and implicitly imagines a chiliastic reading, foreseeing future fulfilment with Christ as king in the line of David, as he embraces the related soteriology. Nevertheless, Langland is seemingly more pessimistic than Julian since this prospect lies in the distant future. Thus, his concerns to a greater extent pertain to the present.

It would be a simplification to say that Julian creates her own version of the Apocalypse through selective inclusion and omission. Whereas Langland overtly satirises greed and corruption, Julian is more implicit and through the main didactic element in her text she seeks to project a Christocentric view incorporating a positive soteriology, guiding the audience towards the ultimate salvation of the soul, a process that begins during the earthly life. Both warn of future tribulations and implicitly or overtly implore Holy Church to be worthy as future Bride. Julian’s *Revelations* adhere to Christ’s exhortations and injunctions in the Apocalypse to endure and stay pure, as she warns against giving power to sin whilst expressing contempt for the devil. She conveys a sense of God’s wrath at sin rather than the person. Suffering is caused by sin, and with contempt for sin she may look to the New Jerusalem.

In writing ‘This boke is begonne by Goddes gifte and his grace, but it is not yet performed, as to my sight‘ (*Revelation*, 86, 1-2), Julian anticipates the book’s role as facilitating the *renovatio* of the believer and, as indicated in its prophetic passages, the repristination of the Church Militant before its eschatological union with the Church Triumphant. In contrast, Langland’s poem is cyclical because Unity is not yet ready for the ultimate fulfilment, since repristination is a process. Both writers employ their considerable theological insight in the service of creating nuanced and penetrating reapplications of the biblical Apocalypse within the late-medieval context. In doing so they intertwine the temporal with the eternal, juxtaposing quotidian
concerns with a Christologically-centred teleological lens which regards repristination as a prerequisite to the eschatological fulfilment recounted in the biblical Apocalypse.
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