Resurrection and Restoration:

Julian of Norwich and The Apostle Paul on Divine Love's Ultimate Triumph

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Term Paper
Ancient Future Insights II
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Nov 10, 2025

Introduction: From Theology to Vision

This paper arises from a desire to understand more deeply the theology of Julian of Norwich, whose *Revelations of Divine Love* stands as one of the most profound contributions to Christian thought in the late medieval period. Writing as an anchoress in fourteenth-century England, Julian articulated a vision of divine love that remains both daring and tender, especially in her assertions that "sin is no thing," that "sin is necessary," and that ultimately "all shall be well."[1] Though she described herself as "a simple creature unlettered," Julian's work displays remarkable theological precision. The *Long Text* of her *Revelations* functions as a theological treatise akin to prophecy—written not for her own spiritual advancement but for the consolation of "her fellow Christians." Moreover, Julian's conviction that "sin is fitting" marks a decisive turn from the scholastic "free-will defense" of her time. She insists that divine providence and love permeate all things, even human failure, revealing a cosmos upheld by mercy rather than judgment. These revelations have long invited theological inquiry into their relation to the Church's doctrines of sin, atonement, and eschatology.[2]

Julian's vision parallels that of the Apostle Paul, whose writings proclaim the same mystery of grace and the ultimate reconciliation of all creation in Christ. For both, revelation is not private possession but charism—a gift freely given for the building up of the Church.[3] Though separated by fourteen centuries, both bear witness to the same mystery of divine love revealed in the resurrection[4]—the reconciliation of all creation in Christ (1 Cor. 15).[5] Their meeting in dialogue

[1] Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, trans. and ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 225.
[2] See Denys Turner. *Julian of Norwich, Theologian.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011.
[3] 1 Corinthians 14:3-4.
[4] David Bentley Hart. *The New Testament: A Translation.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:28, 348.
[5] Douglas A. Campbell, *Pauline Dogmatics: The Triumph of God's Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), Part 1, "Resurrection," 113–89.

is thus both theologically and historically fitting. In staging this exchange, I aim not to conflate their voices but to let their distinct vocabularies of grace—Paul's apocalyptic proclamation and Julian's visionary assurance—illuminate one another.

The dialogue draws directly from Colledge and Walsh's translation of *Showings* and David Bentley Hart's *The New Testament: A Translation*. The former presents Julian's theology with scholarly rigor and "reveals a Julian who experienced God directly,"[6] while the latter's independence from denominational bias allows Paul's apocalyptic vision to emerge with fidelity to the Greek text.[7]

Lastly, the decision to present their encounter as a creative dialogue arises from the conviction that theology is inherently dialogical—an encounter between revelation and interpretation, Scripture and lived experience. This project therefore seeks to reveal the continuity of divine revelation across time and to demonstrate that historical theology is a participatory tradition of faith seeking understanding. Readers are invited to listen in—not as passive observers but as participants in the ongoing conversation of the communion of saints, where faith finds its end in love.[8]

The Dialogue: Saint Paul and Mother Julian on the Triumph of Love[9]

Paul: Sister Julian, let us return to the cornerstone of our faith: the resurrection. If the Anointed has not been raised, our very proclamation is vain. We both preach the glorious tidings upon

[6] "Showings by Julian of Norwich," Renovaré, accessed November 10, 2025, https://renovare.org/books/showings.
[7] Hart, *The New Testament*, xix–xxiv.
[8] In order to fit the scope of the paper, I had to focus on the 13th Revelation from Julian's *Long Text*, and Paul's Epistle to the church in Corinth (i.e., 1 Corinthians 15).
[9] All quotations from Julian of Norwich are taken from *Showings*, trans. and ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). All quotations from the Apostle Paul are drawn from *The New Testament: A Translation*, trans. David Bentley Hart (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017). Minor adjustments in punctuation, wording and line breaks have been made for clarity, flow, and consistency.

which our salvation rests: that the Anointed died because of our sins and was raised on the third day in accord with the scriptures.

Julian: Indeed, blessed Paul. That great deed is the foundation of our hope. I was taught that the glorious atonement is more pleasing to the blessed divinity and more honourable for man's salvation, without comparison, than ever Adam's sin was harmful. This immense honor means that Christ's action has utterly overpowered our failures. But understanding resurrection also requires facing its counterpart: the pain of sin. Can we discuss the pain that makes this resurrection necessary?

Paul: Certainly.

Julian: In my visions, I saw that nothing hindered me but sin, and in my folly, I often wondered why, through the great prescient wisdom of God, the beginning of sin was not prevented. The Lord's reply remains sharp: "Sin is necessary, but all will be well."

Paul: His action does not merely cover our sins; it reverses the very nature of existence under the curse of death. We are sown in weakness, but raised in power. What is sown a psychical body, is raised a spiritual body. The perishable must clothe itself in imperishability. This transformation is our victory through our Lord Jesus the Anointed.

Julian: So, this victory *is* absolute! I saw that sin has no kind of substance, no share in being. Its power is temporary pain, which purges and makes us seek mercy. This necessity is manifest in the experience of our lives: For we are all in part troubled, and we shall be troubled, following our master Jesus until we are fully purged of our mortal flesh.

Paul: This troubled life demands constant awareness of our commitment to righteousness–Christ's righteousness. It is this that makes the final transformation meaningful. Thus we become sober, in upright fashion, and not sin. We become steadfast, immovable, ever abounding in the Lord's work, knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain.

Julian: And yet, we constantly fail, for man will do nothing at all but sin. Our Lord showed me that he imposes on every person whom he loves, to bring them to his bliss, something that has no defect in his sight, through which souls are humiliated and despised, scorned and mocked and rejected. And he does this to prevent the harm which they might have from the pomps and the pride and the vainglory of this wretched life, and to prepare their way to come to heaven, into endless, everlasting bliss. He says: "I shall gather you and make you meek and mild, pure and holy through union with me." Even our greatest failing, sin, is used by Him.

Paul: This is the great paradox of grace. My own life testifies to this: I, who am inadequate to be called an apostle, because I persecuted God's assembly, am what I am by God's grace, and his grace to me did not become void. It is this grace that turns dishonor into glory, because the body is sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, but raised in power.

Julian: Our Lord's willingness to allow this evil—his toleration—is itself honourable, through which his goodness will be known eternally. This toleration means by his toleration we fall, and in his blessed love, with his power and his wisdom, we are protected. And when we return, Christ meets us with supreme friendship, saying:

> *My dear darling, I am glad that you have come to me in all your woe. I have always been with you, and now you see me loving, and we are made one in bliss.*

Paul: The final transformation is indeed a radical act of love. When we ask how the dead are raised, we see that what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. God gives the seed a body as he has willed. Just as star differs from star in glory, so the glory of the heavenly is different from the earthly. The perishable and mortal nature we know now must be changed; not all of us shall fall asleep, but all of us shall be changed, in an instant, in a glance of an eye, at the final trumpet.

Julian: That moment of change must be the culmination of the work of the Holy Trinity! I saw this power hidden in the five words of assurance: When He says, "I may," I understand this applies to the Father; "I can," for the Son; "I will," for the Holy Spirit; and "I shall," for the unity of the blessed Trinity. This unity guarantees the deed.

Paul: Indeed. The fulfillment of this universal renewal unfolds in a certain order—three grand phases to this ultimate reconciliation—showing God's steady hand on creation.[10]

Julian: Can you expound on that a bit more for me?

Paul: The first phase of this renewal has already taken place. Christ's Resurrection was the beginning, where the Anointed was raised as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. The second phase will take place at Christs' second arrival, when those who are in the Anointed are gathered into his life. Finally, the third and final phase is the completion, when all things and persons will have been set in order beneath Christ, including the celestial powers, and the whole cosmos is returned to the Father, that God may be all in all.[11]

Julian: This means that the operation of Mercy must, eventually, cease.

Paul: How so?

[10] Hart, *The New Testament*, 348.
[11] Ibid.

Julian: The temporal function of mercy ceases when all are made whole. Mercy is an operation which comes from the goodness of God, and it will go on operating so long as sin is permitted to harass righteous souls. But when the victory is complete, when sin is no longer permitted to harass, then the operation of mercy will cease. And then all will be brought into righteousness and stand fast there forever. This is the final order of peace, as was shown to me. Furthermore, God loves us now whilst we are here as well as he will when we are there. This eternal, unchanging love guarantees that sin will be no shame, but honour to man, for love gives a bliss for every sin. Our painful struggles will be rewarded with various joys in heaven.

Paul: This confidence transcends humanity's present, limited comprehension. Many in the faith are told that many creatures will be damned such as the angels who fell out of heaven…and many men upon earth who die out of the faith.

Julian: I acknowledge that Holy Church teaches me to believe this. Yet, when our reason which we use is now so blind, so abject and so stupid that we cannot recognize God's exalted, wonderful wisdom, or the power and the goodness of the blessed Trinity, we must trust the higher revelation. Don't you agree?

Paul: So we leave the mystery of the damned to God's hidden will?

Julian. Mustn't we?

(There is a holy pause as both take in the gravity of the moment).

Julian: To my question about the impossible damnation, the Lord answered:

What is impossible to you is not impossible to me. I shall preserve my word in everything, and I shall make everything well.

Paul: Your vision of total well-being truly aligns with the final scope of Christ's work.

Julian: When we contemplate those who are damned, our Lord tenderly reminds us: "I am enough for you, and rejoice in your saviour and in your salvation." The highest joy which can be contemplated in the deed is that God himself will do it. Christ is that Holy Church. He is the foundation, he is the substance, he is the teacher, he is the end, he is the reward. We rest in him until the great deed which the blessed Trinity will perform on the last day is revealed.

Paul: The consequences of Adam's sin—that in Adam all die—are counteracted by the life-giving work of Christ, so that in the Anointed all will be given life. This scope includes not just mankind, but all rebellious forces.

Julian: Indeed, since our Lord has set right the greatest of harms (Adam's sin), then it is also his will that we should know through this that he shall set right everything which is less. The full extent of Christ's power guarantees that every kind of thing will be well. Yet I still struggle to comprehend the full reach of this encompassing love.

Paul: But this reality grounds not just our hope, but our daily effort. The Anointed must reign till he puts all enemies under his feet. When He delivers the Kingdom to God and Father, He will have rendered every Principality and every Authority and Power ineffectual. The last enemy to be rendered ineffective is death. The final goal of this victory is precisely so that God may be all in all.

Julian: True. This promise of universal healing—that the smallest thing will not be forgotten—must apply to all beings under creation. Inevitably, this is the full reconciliation of all things and persons, confirming the secret of the Trinity's deepest intent. This full restoration is the exalted and wonderful mystery, which he will make plain and we shall know in heaven. This is truly the great deed which the blessed Trinity will perform on the last day, making everything well which is not well.

Paul: Then, though we acknowledge the temporary need for sorrow and penance, we stand in awe of Christ's completed work, confident that sin and death are defeated, and the entire cosmos is destined for righteousness.

Julian: And we must unreservedly hate sin, because it is no-thing, and endlessly love the soul as God loves it. For our ultimate destiny is to be one in God's intention, seeing truly, in fullness of joy.

Paul: Amen. And so we labor with hope and endure suffering, not for fear of wrath, but knowing that the victory has been won, and we await the glorious moment when Death has been swallowed up in victory. We stand secure.

Conclusion: Love's Final Word

This dialogue between Paul and Julian reveals a shared theological horizon in which the resurrection of Christ is not merely the reversal of death but the renewal of all creation in divine love. Their distinct idioms—Paul's apocalyptic proclamation and Julian's visionary assurance—converge upon a single mystery: that redemption's scope is as vast as creation itself. For both, sin is neither final nor substantial; it becomes the very place where grace unveils its

inexhaustible power. Julian's conviction that "all shall be well" does not diminish Paul's call to steadfast participation in resurrection life but deepens it, reframing divine justice as restorative rather than retributive.

In their meeting, eschatology and mysticism harmonize: mercy finds its completion not in exclusion but in consummation, where love renders wrath obsolete and death is overcome. The triumph of love that unites their voices thus fulfills the promise Paul proclaimed and Julian beheld—that God will be "all in all," and creation will rest in wholeness.

In witnessing their exchange, I came to see that this conversation belongs not only to history but to every soul awakened to resurrection's truth: that divine love is both the origin and the end of all things.

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