Hildegard von Bingen and Julian of Norwich:
Two Medieval Women Mystics of the Twelfth and Fourteenth Centuries

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

The focus of this work is to explore medieval women mystics of Europe. In examining the works of these mystics, I will concentrate on two major writers. The first, from the 12th century, is Hildegard von Bingen, the first major German mystic. Julian of Norwich, from the 14th century, is the second writer and is titled as the first known woman writer in English literature. The goal of this discussion is to compare an early medieval, mystical writer (12th c.) to a later writer (14th c.). The fact that many people are not even aware of women's achievements as writers during this time period makes this exciting and necessary research.
Women in the Middle Ages

With cities rapidly springing up all over Europe, and some of them became rather large rather quickly, it should come as no surprise that many of the laws that hindered and restricted the rights of women were defeated and wiped away. Even when many of the old, feudal laws were intact, a woman could own and sell land, sue or be sued in court, make a will, and make a contract. A husband could not sell his wife’s land without her permission or deny her the right to enjoy any of the profits of that land or property. If a husband was mismanaging a woman’s land, she could, by legal rights, take him to court and defend her title. The mention of these rights takes many people by surprise as we have been led to believe by many history books that women had no rights and were no more than extra property for a man to manage. However, that is not the case. During medieval times, many intelligent women were going beyond these rights; there were many women who were writing works which were disseminated and read. Some of these women were ladies of court, but most were women from abbeys and monasteries.
MYSTICISM

The experiences of mystics have nothing to do with the reality of logic or the senses. The knowledge they acquire comes from within themselves, like instinct, and yet also feels as if it comes from an outside source as well. A translation of mysticism is secret knowledge of God (Knowles 1). Mystics wish to be somehow united with God (Bradley 212). It means more than just religious demeanor; "Mysticism means communion with God,..." (Inge 20). These mystics hold the "...belief that the human spirit, finite, limited, and clouded though it is, can nevertheless experience the presence of the Divine Reality which undergirds and permeates the world" (Harkness 18). Many mystics looked for this union in visions or trances.

In his book, Christian Mysticism, William Ralph Inge mentions three stages through which mystics must progress before they can achieve this special unity. "The first is called the purgative life, the second the illuminative, while the third, which is really the goal rather than a part of the journey, is called the unitive life, or state of perfect contemplation" (9-10). The steps of the purgative level are like those which pertain to monks, yet although many mystics wished to suffer physically to somehow bring them closer to God, this was not required as part of the ascension. The purging of sins from one's soul, the acceptance of order and discipline, the total commitment to the service of God are all achieved at this level. Yet some aspire or are called on to move higher.

"The second stage, the illuminative life, is the concentration of all the faculties, will, intellect, and feeling, upon God" (12). At this level, the person has become truly virtuous. Good service to God and humanity is not done as a conscious commitment any longer, but instead, has become an integrated part of the person's personality.

"The last stage of the journey, in which the soul presses towards the mark, and gains the prize of its high calling, is the unitive or contemplative life, in which man
beholds God face to face, and is joined to Him” (12). It is at this point that many mystics begin to have visions. “Ecstasy or vision begins when thought ceases, to our consciousness, to proceed from ourselves” (14). This part of the definition of vision ties into the mystics’ belief that these visions did not come from them, but were indeed sent through them by God. These mystics were not insane or mentally troubled at all. “The most sober and practical of the mediaeval mystics speak of them as common phenomena” (14). They were taken very seriously by the Church and were genuinely viewed to be given to “the struggling saint, ..., to refresh him and strengthen him in the hour of need” (16).

Most researchers and scholars of mysticism agree that there are four main characteristics relating to mystical experiences:

(1) The person notices his or her experience (i.e. visions) as being a different and more intense knowledge and love of God.

(2) The experience is perceived as something, immanent and received, moving and filling the powers of the mind and soul.

(3) The experience is felt as taking place at a deeper place of the personality and soul than other thoughts.

(4) The experience is difficult, almost impossible, to explain to others (Knowles 1-3).

Mystics also seem to know their own spirituality better and also can recognize the spirituality of others. They have a deep need to help others hear and understand the word of God and to help save those troubled souls in their time of need; perhaps this comes from their experience of passing through the illuminative phase to the unitive stage.

In the devotional writers of the past whose works have lasted, there is a quality of steadfast reliance on God, concern for
others, a deep humility and absence of self-seeking, a
staying-power and heroic singleness of purpose that enabled them to
confront opposition and not quail before it, and in spite of times
of deep suffering to find luminous joy in God and his creation. (Inge 31)

In speaking of the development of mysticism during the medieval era, there are
several changes to note. At first, mysticism was somehow based mostly in ritual. Then
came a “...Christocentric spirituality which is based upon imagery that is sometimes
biblical and sometimes secular, and upon revelation” (Davies 4). Hildegard von
Bingen is an example of this form of mystical experience. Her visions were indeed full
of imagery, concerned Christ and the Trinity most often, and were a guide for her
everyday life. The third form of mystical experience is found in Julian of Norwich.

The third kind, on the other hand, aims specifically to transcend images
and to enter the “darkness” and the “nothingness” of the Godhead itself in
a journey which leads the soul to the shedding of all that is superfluous,
contrary or unequal to God.... (Davies 4)

Another important distinction between early and late mystics is how the process of
reaching the union with God is achieved. Earlier mystics stated that humans could
reach this unity intellectually or with divine knowledge (Davies 4). However, the later
mystics believed “...that we enter into a union with God through love, and the unity we
possess with him is the union of the lover with the beloved...” (Davies 4).

“The mystics influenced the development of the Christian and Jewish religions
in their external or exterior forms. The continental women mystics, for example, not
only urged reform of the Church as an institution, but also promoted new devotional
practices based on their ideas” (Szarmach 4). What is important to note here is that it
was unusual for anyone to speak out confidently against the practices or beliefs of the
Church; and it was especially unorthodox for a woman to do so. What is even more
surprising is that members of Church, even the pope himself, took these criticisms seriously and even put them to work in changing the Church. Two women mystics that were confident about their works and adamant about sharing their visionary knowledge and their philosophy about human beings and religion were Hildegard von Bingen and Julian of Norwich.
HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

Hildegard was a woman of great wisdom and intelligence. She was a musician, author, mystic, poet, and abbess; she was even knowledgeable about medicine as well. She had correspondence with popes, emperors, kings, queens, and many influential members of the nobility, as well as many ordinary, common folk. Her visions began at age 5. When she was 8, she joined the Benedictine house at Disibodenberg. Jutta von Spanheim was made her guardian. Jutta must have taken this role quite seriously and taught her student well, for when she died in 1136, the nuns of the cloister voted Hildegard abbess. Due to her growing popularity, Disibodenberg’s community grew quite large. Hildegard felt it necessary for her and the other nuns to transfer elsewhere. Hence, she founded a convent at Rupertsberg near Bingen. In 1165 she founded a daughter house at Eibingen.

Hildegard’s visions were brought by Conon, an abbot, to the attention of the archbishop of Mainz. The archbishop “…examined her visions with his theologians and ruled that they were divinely inspired and that she should begin recording her visions in writing” (Hozeski xxv). “In those times, in principle, women did not have the right to teach in public…” (Brunn and Epiney-Burgard 7). And yet, “The synod of Trier - Nov. 1147 to Feb. 1148 - saw the papal ratification of Hildegard’s visionary writing, and implicitly of the prophetic role which impelled her to write” (Dronke 148). This pope was Pope Eugenius III, and he saw her writings to be of great necessity. Conventions were pushed aside, and Hildegard traveled far and wide throughout Europe in order to share her knowledge. She did so freely and without reservation or regret. She received a great deal of letters from people who were curious about her prophetic powers. People traveled to Disibodenberg and Rupertsberg with the hopes that they would be allowed to visit her.

From about 1151 through 1163, Hildegard was quite busy writing down her
thoughts on medicine and philosophy, as well as her visionary work, *Liber Vitae Meritorum* (Book of Life’s Rewards). Once that was completed in 1163, she began her ten year work on *Liber Divinorum Operum* (Book of the Divine Works). During all this time, Hildegard was also writing wonderful and insightful letters to many, many people from all stations of life; some were written to give advice or discuss personal matters (like the letter to Richardis’ brother); some were written to kings, officials, and higher members of the Church to chide them for their poor behavior and decisions or to praise them for work well done; some were written to special individuals in order to share visions. Hildegard dictated her writings to a secretary. Her first secretary was Volmar, a monk at Disibodenberg. After he died in 1173, Guibert of Gembloux took over his position at Hildegard’s side.

One of her closest helpers and secretaries was Richardis von Stade, whose brother was Archbishop Hartwig of Bremen. In 1151, Richardis decided to accept an appointment as abbess of a convent near Bremen. Hildegard was very saddened by this move and had no qualms about expressing her disapproval. Her love and caring for this friend, secretary, and colleague, was strongly apparent. Richardis, touched by Hildegard’s affection, was going to return to Rupertsberg, but sadly, she died before she could make the journey.

Hildegard also wrote music and words for hymns for her nuns. These songs were gathered “...into a cycle entitled *Symponia Armonie Celestium Revelationum* (The Harmonious Symphony of Heavenly Revelations)” (Hozeski xxix). “...Hildegard also wrote fifty allegorical homilies. And for her own diversion, she originated a language of her own, composed of 900 words and an alphabet of twenty-three letters” (xxix).

Another one of her many works is *Causae et Curae* (Causes and Cures), which is her book about medicine. “Although her theoretical knowledge of medicine as found
in these works may seem crude today, she must have been successful because large numbers of sick and suffering persons were brought to her for cures (Hozeski xxviii). She also wrote *Vita Sancti Disibodi* (The Life of Saint Disibodi), *Vita Sancti Ruperti* (The Life of Saint Rupert), *Solutiones Triginta Octo Quaestionum* (Answers to Thirty-eight Questions), and *Explanatio Symboli Sancti Athanasii* (Explanation of the Symbol of Saint Anthanasius). Hildegard is even responsible for the earliest known morality play, *Ordo Virtutum* (Play of the Virtues). However, she is best known for *Scivias* (Know the Ways), which recounts 26 of her visions. The first 13 of these 26 visions are in the first two books. “The visions of *Scivias* develop Hildegard’s views on the universe -- on the theory of macrocosm and microcosm, the structure of man, birth, death, the nature of the soul, the relationship between God and human beings in Creation, the Redemption, and the Church” (393). They are symbolic and allegorical in nature, and cover the creation of angel and man, the arrival of the Word of God, and the union of man to God. One of the many effective characteristics of Hildegard’s writing is her use of imagery that appeals greatly to one’s sense of the visual. “Hildegard’s visions, converted into marvelous, often hallucinating poetry and prose, are characterized by scintillating lights, fires, colors, stenches, oval and circular shapes, and personages, often larger than life, who speak out of fogs, clouds, and winds” (Thiébaux 107-08).

Near the beginning of the first book of *Scivias*, Hildegard relates:

In the year 1141 of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, when I was forty-two years and seven months old, a burning light coming from heaven poured into my mind. Like a flame which does not burn but rather enkindles, it inflamed my heart and my breast, just as the sun warms something with its rays. . . . I revealed my gift to no one except
to a select few and some religious who were living in my area, and I concealed my gift continuously in quiet silence until God wished it to be manifest by God's own grace. I truly saw these visions; I did not perceive them in dreams, not while sleeping, nor in a frenzy, nor with the human eyes or with the external ears of a person, nor in remote places; but I received those visions according to the will of God while I was awake and alert with a clear mind.... (Hozeski 2) 

In this accounting, Hildegard seems to desire greatly to make it plainly clear that there were no outside influences impinging on her - that these were honest visions given to her by the grace of God.

"The first six visions show how the relationship of God, humanity, and the world evolved. Included are symbolic depictions of the fall of the angels and of Adam, the elemental composition of the universe, the constitution of the soul, the synagogue (embodiment of the Old Testament), and the hierarchic choirs of the angels" (Wilson 114-15). In the second vision, Hildegard describes the casting of Lucifer and the other fallen angels from heaven:

And when Lucifer was puffed up with pride and wanted to do what Lucifer had just thought about, the zeal of God - extending itself - threw Lucifer and the entire company into the burning blackness, so that they seethed against the brightness and clearness which they had had and they were blackened. (Hozeski 14) 

She continues by describing the tortures that God devised for Lucifer and his crew because of their disloyalty to God. She makes the point that those who follow the ways of Lucifer will end up in the same state: disfavored by God and condemned to eternal damnation.
When the devil saw humanity in paradise, the devil cried aloud most horribly and said: “O who touches me in the mansion of true blessedness?” And, accordingly, the devil knew that the other creatures had not yet been filled with the wickedness that the devil had inside. But the devil was angry seeing Adam and Eve in their innocence in the garden of delights, so with amazingness the devil changed into a serpent in order to deceive them. (17-18)

Hildegard takes the time here to discuss the reasoning for Lucifer’s jealousy of Adam and Eve and his plot to bring them down as well. And yet the sins of Adam which were rested on all his sons can be washed away by the Word. Hildegard says:

When the innocent lamb was hung on the cross, the elements of the world trembled, because the very noble Word was struck down bodily by the hands of murderers. By the Word’s death, the lost sheep was carried back to the pastures of life. (23)

In the entries for the fourth vision, she contemplates the mental and spiritual aspects of man. Hildegard stresses firmly that the spirit and soul of men’s bodies are given to them graciously by God. She discusses then the three “footpaths”:

The soul, the body, and the senses. These make the person strong. ... The soul makes the body alive, and it breathes and it uncovers the senses. The senses truly touch the soul, and they draw the body to themselves. For the soul provides life to the body, just as fire pours its light into the darkness. The soul has the strength of two branches, namely the understanding and the will. (51) The will warms the work, the soul supports it, and the power of reason brings it forth. Understanding, however,
understands the work -- understanding good and evil just like the Angels have understanding in order to choose good and to avoid evil. (52)

In vision five, she discusses the fate of those who believed in God before He sent the Word, or His Only-Begotten Son. Hildegard says of them: "She did not, however, have eyes. She had her hands placed under her sleeves. This means that the synagogue did not look at the true light when she saw the Only-Begotten of God" (61).

In vision six of the first book, she tells of her vision of several armies. Each of them represents some aspect of spirituality that Hildegard says a person should have if they truly wish to be faithful to God. Many references to the doing of good works are made, as well as doing things by the will of God. "The sound of joy and that of prosperity is heard because the body has been trampled under foot and the spirit has been raised up. This sound is heard safely in the houses of those who have cast injustice aside and who have embraced justice" (73).

"In the second book, consisting of seven visions, we see the process of redemption: the coming of the Savior and the battle of his church and sacraments against the onslaughts of the devil" (Wilson 114-15). One of the most symbolic of the visions in the second book is the second vision in which Hildegard says:

Next I saw a very bright light, and inside it there was a person who was the color of a sapphire. This person was completely surrounded by a very pleasant fire of reddish color. The very bright light completely surrounded this fire of reddish color, and at the same time this fire completely surrounded the light. Both the fire and the light surrounded the person, existing as one light with
one force of potentiality. Then I heard the living light
speak to me. (Hozeski 87)

Hildegard interprets this vision to be a message concerning the Trinity. The sapphire-colored person represents Jesus Christ who is surrounded by God and the Holy Spirit, who are symbolized by the light and the fire. She makes the comment, “This signifies that God, the Word, and the Holy Spirit are inseparable in the majesty of their divinity” (88). Another important interpretation she makes is this: “We did not know how to nor were we strong enough to choose God in salvation. Since the creator and lord of all things loved people so much, God sent the Word -- the leader and saviour of the faithful -- for our salvation” (89). In many of her passages concerning this vision, Hildegard stresses the importance of accepting Christ as the second “person” of God. A good example of this is found in the line: “People must never forget to call upon myself alone, God, in these three persons” (88). The focus of this vision is also on the importance of the doctrine that the Word is the only salvation for human beings.

In the fifth vision in the second part, Hildegard begins her discussion of the Church and the impact of its teachings. The light in this vision“...made the woman of the two previous visions bright from her head down to her throat. This signifies that the teachings of the apostles surround the church, which is like an uncorrupted bride” (105). However, it is not until the sixth and seventh visions that the stronger messages of the Word and the battles against the devil are shown.

The sixth vision - as Hildegard explains it - was not long in length, though to read her entries on this mystery, you would believe it to be very long and detailed. It is in this sixth vision that Hildegard explains her own interpretations of the teachings of Jesus. Two passages concern the taking of the blood and body of Christ:

The pouring out of the blood of my Only-Begotten removed
the fall of Adam from you. Ponder in your mind the true healing
possible in the body of my Only-Begotten, so that your repeated sins, when you frequently did unjust things in your works, may be mercifully forgiven. And drink with hope this wine which led you from your eternal punishment. Take and drink of this cup of salvation. (143)

You who wish to stop your foolishness, leave your ignorance behind by which you do not know God. Leave your senselessness behind by which you were sent into exile, and come back to your rightful territory. You can do this by looking at the mirror of faith in the fountain of the living water. Eat my bread. This is bread which no person grew by planting a field for the earth to nourish. This bread came from God and remains with God. (151)

Both of these passages follow Hildegard's constant theme of seeking salvation through the acceptance and love of Christ and by following His teachings. The following passage combines some of the teachings of Jesus:

Further, the elements of the world are like a vat of pleasure for people, as these elements show themselves to the people. These elements lead to sin and to the rod of God. Therefore, o people, forsake the emptiness of shipwrecking greed, because your just inheritance is eternal life. Do good and forsake evil. Give up the harshness of malice and show mercy. Give to the poor from your possessions, and you will imitate God who is merciful by doing this. (153)

Many of the other entries follow such a pattern. Like the teachings of Jesus, they speak out against vanity, greed, sloth, and evil, and they praise generosity and mercy.
The teachings of Jesus and the inherent redemption found by following them having been explored, Hildegard's next vision explores the fight between the faithful and the devil. In this vision, a group of people covered in white are attacking a "...worm of wondrous size and length..." (161). The ugly beast is bound by chains around his neck, hands, and feet. "This signifies that the strength of the devil has been weakened and ground down by the power of the all-powerful God" (167). Meanwhile, there are battles being fought above the worm:

There were three battles going on among these people. These people are very weary from their struggles, but they do not pause at this point to think about the true and unutterable Trinity. One of these battles was continuing near the clouds. This means that while they are fighting strongly against the devil, some of these people do not think about earthly things but about heavenly things -- just as a cloud floats above the earth. One of the battles was in the middle between the clouds and the earth. This means that some of these people restrain themselves with moderation. For they do not sweat because they have not put their complete efforts into seeking heavenly things or into earthly things. Instead, they seek the inner things of their souls, but they have not rejected the outside things of the world. And one battle continues close to the earth. This means that some of these people have not completely given up the fallen things of this world. ... But nevertheless with help from heaven, all of these people are victorious. ... But people were flung out here and there from that flame. This means that these people were blown here and there by the temptations of the devil. (170)
She also describes people who were not falling down (who are strong), people who were having trouble standing (who trying to remain religious, though the devil is wearing them down), and those who fell to earth and then ascended to the heavens again (those people who gave in to temptation but then repented and were saved).

Hildegard then proceeds by describing the actions of Satan through the beast:

I also saw sharp arrows coming from the mouth of the worm. They were making a noise. This refers to the worst of evils coming out from the rage of the devil. There was black smoke rushing from its breast. This refers to the worst of anger and envy coming from the wicked efforts of the devil. ... In addition, a very foul fog came from this worm. It stunk, and it infected people with its perversity. This refers to the blackness of a bad conscience. The evil which comes from the devil confuses foolish people, and it causes them not to believe in God. (173)

Hildegard continues in her passages to describe the various peoples and the symbolism of the beast's features and actions until she arrives at the last entry:

But behold, the great crowd of people, shining with brightness, came and trampled this serpent everywhere strongly under foot. They tortured this serpent fiercely. This means that the faithful, even though they are still begetting children, hold fast to their desire for heaven. They are embellished and decorated with faith at baptism. They are filled with the blessed virtues. They surround themselves with repentance. And they cast aside and crush the devil with their actions. (174)
Hildegard’s message concerning accepting Christ, following His teachings, and the necessity of this repentance in defeating the devil was clearly made. And so, Hildegard moved on to her third set of visions.

“The final book centers its thirteen visions about an architectural image of salvation. Here Hildegard describes an elaborate edifice containing the various divine virtues -- faith and humility, patience, charity, and the rest -- necessary for the welfare of the soul” (Wilson 114-15). “The eleven visions of the third book are apocalyptic denunciations of evils in the temporal and spiritual spheres” (Lagorio 165). “God created all things,” Hildegard begins in her entries, “and ordained the human race for a glory which the devil, together with followers, lost. God should be worshipped and feared by all creatures with the greatest of honor and fear” (Hozeski 179). Perhaps this is because the “admonisher”, as Hildegard calls her, has spoken so firmly and strictly to Hildegard in the visions of the third book. The “admonisher” tells her:

The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was begotten from God before the beginning of time. And then the Word was made flesh within time, just as the ancient prophets had foretold. The Word took on humanity, but nevertheless did not give up divinity, for the Word existed with God and the Holy Spirit as one and true God. The Word crowned the world with sweetness and lit it up with brightness. (208)

Accompany this message about Christ with another message about man from vision five:

The rest of Creation cries out and complains loudly about such people, because the more vile human nature is in its short existence, the more it is a rebel against God. The rest of creation always fulfills the commandments of God with fear and
reverence. ... Some people exist as rebels against God, but the rest of creation does not change itself since the divine power turns the rest of creation with divine commands. Hardened people imitate Satan in their cruelty. Satan in the hardness of wickedness did not wish to be put under God, the creator. As a result, Satan lost all blessedness, and these hardened people will too, since they do not wish to be put under God either. (236)

The visions of this book as Hildegard is relating them are bent on communicating the importance of following God’s will and the Word in order to avoid damnation and receive salvation. “Therefore, a person who submits himself or herself to God with devotion and humility may work out his or her own salvation” (237).

In vision six, Hildegard personifies the virtues of abstinence, bountifulness, piety, truth, peace, blessedness, discretion, and salvation. She describes the appearances and actions of these women in great detail and discusses quite clearly the significance of each. About salvation she remarks:

I then saw that she had upon her breast a most brilliant cross with the image of Christ Jesus placed upon a tree which was standing between a lily and a rose. These two flowers bent a little toward the cross. This means that this virtue becomes strong within the hearts of the people who believe in the passion of Jesus, the savior. (259)

“...The Trinity ought to be examined carefully and to be believed in as the one and true God in three persons by all the faithful who have a simple and humble heart” (263). This is Hildegard’s focus of the seventh vision. She examines the relationships between each part of the Trinity:
Thus God, the Word, and the Holy Spirit bear witness altogether because they are not separated in their power. ... God creates all things through the Word, that is, through the Word in the Holy Spirit. The Word accomplishes all things in God and in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes all things strong in God and the Word. So these three persons are thus an inseparable unity because they are not transferred or moved around among themselves. (273)

Visions eight through ten seem to repeat further personification of the virtues of vision six; however, the images give long speeches to her in which they continue to support the following of the will of God and the Word, the strength of the Trinity, and the necessities for salvation.

In her entries for vision eleven, Hildegard makes a very important remark (though written from the perspective of the voice speaking to her):

But the catholic faith now staggers in people, and the gospel limps. The very scrolls which the best teachers had explained zealously in detail dissolve with foul disgust. And the food of life found in the divine Scriptures is lukewarm. Therefore, I -- as your God -- speak now through this human person rather than through the Scriptures. This human person has not been taught to say these things by an earthly master, but I who am, speak through her. I speak the new secrets and the many mysteries which had previously been concealed within the scrolls. (349)

Was this another way for Hildegard to justify her writing, or is this an indication of the situation in the Catholic Church at the time? It can be seen as a bit of both. As a
woman writer, she would need to take every opportunity to assure people that it was proper for her to be writing down these visions. Also, past comments about the need for the Church and priests to remain free from corruption and to regain and retain their faith might have needed some type of further justification. "O fruitful teachers of good, redeem your souls. Pay attention to this sermon, and do not be incredulous of it. For if you spurn this sermon, you not only despise that, but myself -- your God -- as well" (349-50). These comments give further proof of Hildegard's need to reform that which had gone wrong in her Church.

After all these things, I looked again and behold, all the elements and all the creatures were shaking with horrible motion. The fire, the air, and the water broke open and moved the land. Flashes of lightening and claps of thunder clashed. Mountains and forests fell. As a result, all mortal things breathed forth their life. But all the elements were cleansed, so that whatever had been dirty vanished in such a way that it was no longer visible. And I heard a voice speak with a voice so loud that it could be heard throughout the whole circle of the lands. It said: "O you people who lie on the ground, rise up." ... And I saw the Word of God coming on a cloud with the angelic choirs. ... With a caressing voice, as the gospel reveals, the Word blessed the just ones for the heavenly kingdom; with a frightful voice, the Word pruned off the unjust ones for the punishments of hell,...." (365)

And so it is in the twelfth vision that Hildegard relates the image of Judgement Day. Again and again, the point is made that the just will be saved and the unjust will be condemned to eternity in hell. Also, Hildegard makes a strong effort to point out that the Word of God should be cherished and followed in order for a person to be chosen
on that day of judgement for the good works will be known by the Word.

The last vision, the thirteenth, in the third part is the Ordo Virtutum (Play of the Virtues). It is the earliest known morality play. And since more in-depth study of Hildegard and her works began, it has been studied separately for its own worth.

The conclusion of the entire work, which follows the Ordo Virtutum, should be noted because it summarizes Hildegard's purpose in sharing these visions with her fellow mortals. Hildegard writes:

And whoever has tasted the mystical words of this book and placed them in his or her memory, let his person be like a mountain of myrrh and frankincense, and all the other aromas. Let this person ascend by means of many blessings from blessing to blessing, just as Abraham did. Let the new wedded bride of the lamb join that column to herself in the sight of God. And let the shadow of the hand of the Word protect this person.

... Praise, praise God, therefore, you blessed flesh in all these wondrous things which God has established in your tender form of outward appearance. God foresaw all of you in the first sight of the rib of the first person whom God created. (395)

Hildegard died on September 17, 1179, at Rupertsberg, but not before one last achievement could be made. Because Hildegard had allowed a noble who had once been excommunicated to be buried at Rupertsberg, the ecclesiastics at Mainz placed restrictions on the convent in 1178. Hildegard had allowed his burial because of his reconciliation with the Church and acceptance of the sacraments. Mainz refused to acknowledge this, and the restrictions remained. Hildegard wrote a powerful letter to Archbishop Christian in Rome and pleaded with him that her nuns needed to receive holy Communion, as its absence had sent them into depression. She went on to say
that she had had a vision in which God had told her that the man had made his peace. In March of 1179, the restrictions were lifted. Half a year later, Hildegard passed away at the age of 81:

"According to legend, the very skies celebrated her departure. Two vast arcs illuminated the night, while beneath them a glowing red cross, surrounded by cross-studded circles, waxed to immensity." (Kant 114)
JULIAN OF NORWICH

"There was Juliana of Norwich, a Benedictine nun whose *Revelations of Divine Love* recounts her earlier experiences of visions and auditions, while her more mature emphasis is on pentinence and divine grace" (Inge 102). Julian of Norwich was born in 1342. When she was a young girl, she heard the legend of St. Cecilia. This drove her to seek a deeper understanding of the Passion of Jesus, and she often meditated on pictures of crucifixion (Bradley 195-96). During a series of these meditations, she asked only three things from her Lord. First, she wanted to understand his Love; second, she asked to suffer physically; and lastly, she wanted to have God's gift of three wounds. "Julian was thirty and a half years old when she experienced a critical illness which was to end through a miraculous cure after a series of visions. ... These visions are recorded as having taken place on May 13, 1373, ..." (Jones 270). Julian wrote and spoke of the scriptures in the language of Norwich, so that everyone might read or hear and understand. She was very particular that everyone, not just the clergy or select members of the congregation, should be able to enjoy and understand the Lord's message. "She painstakingly strives to reconcile God's love for us with her own age's preoccupation with God's terrible retribution for our sins. The nature of sin and its effect on our relationship with God are among her chief concerns and led her to consider our special relationship with 'God our Mother'" (274).

"...Julian of Norwich exemplifies the disengagement from secular affairs. After her visions of Christ, she withdrew to a cell attached to the church in Norwich from whose saint she may have taken her name" (Szarmach 4). She used this detachment to contemplate and examine her visions. Many people came to visit her, and she was spiritual counselor to a good many souls. She thought these visions so important that she set them down in her work, *Showings* (or *Shewings*), of which we have two different copies. In the first copy, Julian has only given us brief explanations of the
visions. In the second copy, she expands the work by adding her thoughts and ideas about these visions.

Szarmach explains his impression of Julian's themes: (1) "relation of the feminine to the experience of the divine"; (2) "contribution of the woman writer to history of prose"; and (3) "role of faith in those living in turbulent century". Whether or not the first two of these themes is on target or not, the third certainly is. She did view her goal in life as being a divine, spiritual guide for those around her, and through her writings, she wanted to help people see the need for faith and give them some hope and direction in the troubled times they were experiencing. She writes:

Everything I say about myself, I intend to apply toward all my fellow Christians, for I am instructed that this is what our Lord intended in this spiritual revelation. Therefore I pray you for God's sake, and counsel you for your own benefit, take no notice of this wretched worm and sinful creature to whom the revelation was shown, but mightily, wisely, lovingly, and meekly contemplate God.... (Jones 281)

Most scholars agree that one of Julian's talents lies in her ability to use metaphors and parables effectively. Ritamary Bradley, in her essay entitled "Julian of Norwich: Writer and Mystic", writes:

Some of the metaphors in Julian's work are common to medieval writings, and to mystical writings generally. Among these well-known metaphors are the journey, to signify the spiritual life on earth, spiritual blindness, the ground of being, light and darkness, the city of the soul. Julian also develops concrete analogies from nature, with references to water, blood, rain, thirst, dryness, the seabed, the garden to be cultivated by God's servants, and the treasure hidden in the earth, which stands for humanity in its capacity to grow and flower.... (207)
"While Julian's language is wonderfully crisp and plain, and she emphasizes an affective rather than a theologically intellectual piety - preferring simple images and homely exempla - she shows that she was well read in Scripture" (Thiébaux 222).

The first set of entries Julian tells of her first vision and the gift of sickness. Julian explains how she received her gift:

And when I was thirty and a half years old, God sent me a bodily sickness in which I lay for three days and three nights; and on the third night I received all the rites of the holy Church and did not expect to live till day. ...Nevertheless I assented to set my eyes upon the face of the crucifix if I could; and so I did.... After this my sight began to fail. In the room it grew dark all about me as though it were night, except for an ordinary light which was focused upon the image of the cross. . . . And suddenly all my pain was taken from me, and I was as sound, ... , as I had ever been before. . . . Thus, I thought to myself that I might with His grace have the wound which I had desired; but in this I never wished for any bodily vision or any kind of revelation from God.... (Jones 279-80)

How different from Hildegard's account, although they do share the fact that God did give this to them without their asking for it. With Hildegard it was sudden knowledge while she was alert and awake; she suffered nothing, but experienced the warmth of the gift as the knowledge was given to her. With Julian, it was a healing grace, accompanied with the gift of her first visions.

The third set is simply titled, "The Motherhood of God." "Julian's experience of God as protector/protectoress who envelops us in a sustaining and all-embracing love finds its fullest expression in her remarks on the motherhood of Christ (Davies 187).

And at this same time that I saw this bodily sight, our Lord showed me a spiritual sight of his homelike loving. I saw
that he is all things good and comfortable to us for our help. He is our clothing, for love wraps us and winds around us, hugs us and teaches us everything, hangs about us - for tender love - so that he may never leave us. (Thiébaux 227)

Julian's approach is plain and personal. She goes on in this passage to relate a story that God showed her all that was made in the form of a tiny thing the size of a hazelnut. When she questions him about how it might survive, God tells her that all survives that God loves. Unlike previous mystics and the teachings of her time, Julian attempts to make people understand the love that God feels for human beings. She states:

From the time it was revealed, I often desired to know what was our Lord's intention. And after fifteen years and more, I was answered with spiritual insight, which said: "Would you like to know your Lord's meaning concerning this thing?" I knew it well, love was His meaning. "Who shows it to you? Love. What did He show you? Love. Why did He show it to you? For love. Hold this within, you will know more of the same. But you shall never understand the eternity of it." (Wilson 293)

And so Julian's understanding of her revelations and of man's relationship with God revolves around this intimate theory of God's love for mankind.

Julian also held the belief that within this intimate relationship, we were one with God, whom she also states as the Trinity, as she writes:

And so in our making, God Almighty is our kindly father and God All-Wisdom is our kindly mother, with the love and goodness of the Holy Ghost, which is all one God, one Lord. And in the knitting and in the "oneing" he is our very true spouse and we his beloved wife, and his fair maiden, and he was never
displeased with this wife, for he says, "I love you and you love me and our love shall never part in two." (Thiébaux 229)

This passage from Julian makes man a part of that Holy Trinity in his own way, whereas Hildegard's accounts separate man from the Trinity. To the mystics of the 12th century, man was beneath this power and could but commune with God through mystical experiences given by Him. Julian sought to make people realize their own personal relationship with the powerful Trinity.

One major difference one will find in comparing the visions of Hildegard and Julian is that Hildegard's vision encompassed symbolic images concerning all of the world, whereas Julian's visions center mostly on her images of Jesus Christ.

In bodily visions Julian saw five phases of the Passion of Christ: his head bleeding from the garland of thorns; his face undergoing changes of color; his flesh marked with the scourging and the consequent profuse bleeding; his body drying from lack of moisture as it neared the moment of death; and the cloven heart, from which flowed an abundance of blood. These were only appearances, she insisted, for had the flow of blood been real, it would have saturated the bed. (Bradley 202)

Unlike Hildegard who represented Jesus as the Word of God put into human flesh, Julian's accounting portrays him in a more personable form as the mother of mankind and their souls:

The mother may give milk to her child to suck, but our precious mother Jesus may feed us with himself, and does so most courteously and most tenderly with the blessed sacrament that is the precious food of true life. And with all the sweet sacraments he sustains us most mercifully and graciously, and this is what he
meant in these blessed words where he said: “I am what Holy Church preaches to you and teaches you. That is to say -- all the health and the life of the sacraments, all the virtue and grace of my words, all the goodness that is ordained for you in Holy Church -- I am these things.” (Thiébaux 230)

Following this theme of Jesus as the mother of all mankind, Julian carries on this allegory to the wounded child running to its mother to seek forgiveness for its mistakes and consolation for its pain:

The mother may allow her child to fall sometimes and be hurt in various ways for its own benefit, but she may never let any kind of peril to come to her child because of her love. ...Our heavenly mother Jesus may never allow his children to perish. For he is might, all wisdom, and all love,... (231)

Although God allows us to suffer some for our sins, he also has given us a means for relieving that suffering through Christ.

The fourth set centers on the visits paid to her by Satan. This is another important difference between Hildegard and Julian as Julian gives an accounting of surviving through three visits by the devil, who tried at first to strangle her while she slept, while Hildegard discusses Satan only in reference to those visions in which he is defeated. Julian says, however, “During all this time I trusted that I would be saved and protected by the mercy of God. Our courteous Lord gave me the grace to awaken...” (Wilson 291). When she awoke, she noticed smoke around the door and inquired of those around her if the place was on fire. They neither saw nor smelled anything. It was then that she knew that the devil had been defeated and had left her. This first attempt thwarted, Julian tells us that the devil again visited her bedside, during which she lay still while she heard voices talking.
They scorned the bidding of beads, which they recited boisterously and lamely. We owe devotion, intention, and wise diligence to God in our prayer. And our good Lord God gave me grace to mightily trust in Him and to comfort my soul with physical speech, as I should have done for any person that had been so engaged. (292)

She then began to fix her gaze on the cross in her room and to speak aloud the doctrines of the Church. This belief in the Passion of Christ and form of prayer, she tells us, saved her from the evil temptations of the devil.

In the second set of her visions, Julian examines sin: what it is and its purpose; however, these entries are rather brief, and it seems, were written as a reference for the following, third set of visions. In the fifth set of visions, she examines the concept of the soul as the dwelling of God on his throne. It should be mentioned that it is somewhat difficult to analyze each set of visions separately from the others because of Julian's theory of God as mother of all, which she explains throughout all five sets. Because of this theory, each section of visions relates to a previous one and a later one, and so on, until the entire work seems to fold in and on itself in a quite complex manner. It is scholars who have attempted to create some type of formal structure to Julian's visions.

Julian's visions centered mostly around either speaking with or seeing Christ, and her language was simple and plain, her message clear. Mankind is loved by God, and Christ was sent to help them when they are in need, doubt, and pain. Their love of him and the goodness of their souls will take them to his side when it is their time. She viewed mankind's relationship with God as a very intimate and personal one, which anyone could have through the love of Christ.
And our faith is a virtue that arises from our nature, which our soul perceives by the power of the Holy Ghost. By faith all our other virtues come to us -- for without it no man may receive them, for it is nothing more than a true understanding with genuine belief and trust of our being existing in God and He in us, although we can not see it. And this virtue with all the others that God has granted us works great things in us, for Christ, by His mercy, is working in us, and we, by the grace of the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, are responding to Him. This working makes us Christ's children and practicing Christians. (285)
CONCLUSION

"Where Hildegard used visions in order to show her individual map of the Christian cosmos, the 13th century women show the map of a soul in solitude" (Dronke 203). Women mystics of the 14th century followed the revival of religious zeal and introspection of the soul.

"...Hildegard continually remained the instrument of God, transmuting her life of prayer and contemplation into action in behalf of God and her fellow Christians" (Lagorio 166). The visions of Scivias stress the major doctrines of Christianity, and she communicated the teachings of the Word, the importance of the Trinity, and the beliefs and steps necessary for one to achieve redemption and salvation. Hildegard's entries are her thoughts and interpretations of what she had seen. Hildegard, and other women mystics of her time, applied their theories, visions, ideas, and ideals to the whole of the universe: man, beast, and earth alike.

Julian and her colleagues worried more about turning that analysis inward - to examining the inner soul and its ability to commune with God. Man was not viewed as an entity beneath God, but rather as another part of God, directly linked to him through his love for man and man's love for him. This faith and love, along with good works and an honest life is all that is necessary for man to complete his union with God. Another characteristic that distinguishes Julian from Hildegard is the intimate relationship Julian establishes between man and Jesus Christ by symbolizing him as mankind's mother, who wants to help and nourish the souls of men.

Hildegard put her visions and interpretations in writing because of the Pope's request, although she had previously shared some of her experiences with members of her order. Once she began to write and to speak to people, she began to see the great necessity for sharing her visions. The Church was headed for trouble within itself, and the people needed hope. Julian's reasonings were that God had instructed
her to share her new understanding. No matter what the reasons were, both strove to share their blessed, new-found knowledge with others in order to bring peace to people's souls, to give hope and understanding in such troubled times as they were facing. Julian writes:

One time, our good Lord said: "Everything shall be well".... We know He will take note of not only noble and great things but also small and humble things -- and things done to one another. (Jones 283)
Works Cited


