**Session 5: The motherhood and fatherhood of God. Her conclusions.**

Last time we looked at the central message of Julian’s revelation – the unconditional love of God – like the love of a good parent. And as regard to our failings – he looks on us with pity, not with blame.

In this session I want to look at another important theme of Julian’s work – the motherhood of God. I will give some background to that, and give some extracts from Julian’s writings.

Then I will look at Julian’s concluding chapters – when she expresses the essential learning from her revelations.

In the pages that we shall read Julian speaks of God as our mother and Christ as our mother and explains that in several ways. This can seem startling to the modern reader.

Julian speaks of God in personal terms – in fact she describes Jesus as our mother, brother, husband – it is not as though she is saying God is male or female - she uses these images to describe our relationship with God. Her revelation is that “as truly as God is our Father, so just as truly God is our mother”.

She also uses more metaphysical language to describe God: God in us – or God is our substance or our soul.

God and Jesus are so often referred to in male terms but research would indicate that the image of Christ as mother was not uncommon in Julian’s day – so it not unique to her. Works of St Anselm in the 11th century referred to Christ as our mother. There are many images of God as our mother in the Bible, especially in Isaiah and the psalms. For example in Isaiah 49 v.15. ”Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you.” Christ uses this image on his way to Jerusalem….” Jerusalem, Jerusalem, How often I would have gathered your children together just as a mother hen gather her brood under her wings but you would not let me do it.. “

So lets look at the first page in which she likens God to our mother – in this she refers to the deep wisdom of the trinity is our mother. The Greek word for wisdom is Sophia and it in ancient Greek writings and in the Old Testament wisdom is referred to as feminine.

Last time we looked at Julian’s description of God in us – and ‘there is no difference between God and our substance.’ P. 118

She continues this idea

**Ch 54:p 119**

*For the almighty truth of the Trinity is our Father – for he made us and keeps us within him.*

*And the deep wisdom of the Trinity is our mother – in whom we are all enfolded.*

*The high goodness of the Trinity is our Lord – in whom we are enfolded, and he in us.*

*We are enfolded in the Father*

*And we are enfolded in the Son*

*And we are enfolded in the Holy Spirit.*

*And the Father is enfolded in us*

*And the Son is enfolded in us*

*And the Holy Spirit is enfolded in us – all might, all wisdom, all goodness.*

*One God. One Lord.*

*And our Faith is a virtue that comes from our natural substance into our sensual soul, by the Holy Spirit. All our virtues come to us through faith – for without this no one can receive virtue.*

*For faith is no more than a proper understanding of our being – with true belief and sure trust – that we are in God and God is in us, although we cannot see it.*

I find her summary of faith fascinating – that it is no more than a proper understanding of being – that we are in God and God in us.

In Ch 58 on p. 129 she goes on to refer to God our mother – as creator with the father.

*God the blessed Trinity is everlasting life and, just as he in endless and without beginning, so it was his endless purpose to made mankind….*

*And so in our making God all-mighty is our natural father, and God all-wise is our natural mother, together with the love and goodness of the Holy Spirit – and this is all one God, one Lord.*

*And in the knitting together and the joining he is our own true husband, and we are his beloved wife and his fair maid, and he will never be displeased with his wife.*

Above all, faith is not about creeds, it is about a relationship – like a mother/child, husband/wife.

Later in that chapter she refers again to Christ as our mother who takes our flesh and gives us a new birth out of evil – and his care follows on without end.

We would never have known this bliss of relationship unless evil had been allowed to happen.

Ch 59 p.133 *And so Jesus Christ, who does good to overcome evil, is our true mother. We take our lives from him, which is the start of motherhood, together with all the loving care that follows on, without end.*

In these passages she has given her reasoning for calling Christ our mother – then she goes on to compare in what way Christ is like our mother. She gives examples of what a mother does.

Ch 60 p.136: A mother gives birth in pain. ‘*We know our mother bore us into pain and dying. But our true Mother Jesus, who is all love, bears us into joy and endless living. Blessed may he be!’*

She feeds us: ‘*A mother feeds her child with her milk, but our beloved mother, Jesus, feeds us with himself.’* P.137

She comforts us: *But he wills that we behave as children do. For when they are unhappy or frightened they run quickly to their mother for help, with all their might, saying this: ‘ My own mother, my dear mother, please pity me. I have made myself unclean and unlike you, and I cannot heal myself without your special grace.’* Ch 61 p. 141

She receives this idea about motherhood from her sense of words spoken to her – a direct experience of relationship.

This is like the previous ‘I it am..’ which we read before – an experience she says then which went beyond what she could express. This experience now includes the imagery of motherhood and fatherhood.

*Ch 59:p.133*

*‘It is I’. That is to say,*

*‘It is I, the strength and goodness of fatherhood.*

*It is I, the wisdom of motherhood,*

*It is I, the light and grace of holy love.*

*It is I, the Trinity.*

*It is I, the unity.*

*I am the sovereign goodness in all things.*

*It is I who teach you to love.*

*It is I who teach you to desire.*

*It is I who am the lasting fulfilment of all true desires.*

**This raises some questions to discuss;**

We often speak of God as or father, but what associations does this word have for us in our daily lives and relationships?

If we think of God also as our mother how does that change our idea of God?

**Julian’s concluding chapters**

In these final chapters she reaches her conclusions of what she understands from her revelations.

* Ch 73: p. 163Her understanding of sin as sickness:

*God showed two kinds of sickness that we have:*

*One is impatience and sloth, so that we make heavy weather of our toil and trouble.*

*The other is despair and frightened fear, as I shall tell later.*

* Ch 81 p. 184. Her understanding that God reigns in our soul

*Our good Lord showed himself in many ways, both in heaven and on earth, but I saw him take no place for his own except man’s soul.*

*He showed himself on earth in the sweet incarnation and his blessed Passion, and he showed himself on earth in other ways – as when I said ‘I saw God in a point’.*

*And he showed himself on earth in another way, as though on pilgrimage. He is here with us, and leads us up, and shall, until he has brought us all to his bliss in heaven.*

*He showed himself many times as reigning, but chiefly in man’s soul. He has made it his resting place and his glorious city, and he shall never rise nor move from that glorious throne.*

*For the greatest worship we can give him, that we should live gladly and merrily because of his love while we are here in penance.*

* Ch 83 p.187 The properties of God:

*The properties are these: life, love and light.*

*In life there is a wonderful homeliness*

*in love there is a gentle courtesy*

*and in light is our everlasting nature.*

*These three properties were held in one goodness – and my mind wants to be one with that goodness, and to cling to it with all my strength.*

* Ch 85 p.190 Living in the joy of God

*For notwithstanding our silly way of living and our blindness here on earth, yet our courteous Lord sees the work we do, and rejoices in it. And, of everything that we do, we please him best by wisely and truly believing this, and by rejoicing with him and in him.*

*For as truly as we shall live in the joy of God for ever, praising him and thanking him, just as truly have we been in God’s thought, known and loved, since before time began, in his endless purpose that has no beginning.*

* ch 86 p.191 I am the ground of your praying

*Let us all pray to God for love, thanking him, trusting him, and rejoicing in God’s work*

*For this is how our good lord wants us to pray to him – and this is what I understood from his own meaning, and by the words which he spoke so merrily:*

*‘I am the ground of your praying.’*

* Ch 86 p.192 Love was his meaning

*‘Would you know our Lord’s meaning in this?*

*Learn it well.*

*Love was his meaning.*

*Who showed it you? Love.*

*What did he show you? Love.*

*Why did he show you? For love.*

*Hold fast to this and you shall learn and know more about love, but you shall never know nor learn about anything except love for ever.’*