

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE  
THOUGHT OF THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY  
ENGLISH MYSTICS

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.  
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George Wood Tuma  
1970

THESIS



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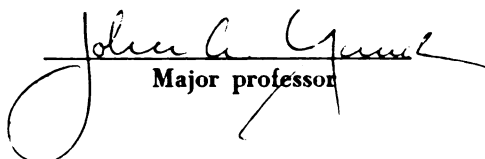
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE THOUGHT OF THE  
FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH MYSTICS

presented by

George Wood Tuma

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

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## ABSTRACT

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE THOUGHT OF THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH MYSTICS

By

George Wood Tuma

The present work analyzes the thought of the fourteenth-century English mystics, Richard Rolle, The Cloud of Unknowing, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe, by means of conceptual fields. First, primary conceptual fields are constructed for the main phases (i.e., purgation, illumination, and union) of the contemplative life for each English mystic. Thus, three primary conceptual fields are developed for each mystic. Each primary conceptual field consists of main informing concepts or ideas which together represent the conceptualization of that phase of the contemplative life by a given mystic. These informing concepts evolve organically from the writings of the English mystics.

The primary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union for the five English mystics are then synthesized in order to create a single secondary conceptual field for each phase of the mystic way. The main informing concepts within each secondary conceptual field, and those words, phrases, and ideas clustering around each concept, are taken from the primary conceptual fields. Thus, each secondary conceptual field summarizes the conceptualization of a given phase of the contemplative life for the five English mystics.

Comparison of the mystical thought of the English mystics is undertaken by comparing carefully the informing concepts and those

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words, phrases, and ideas shaping each concept which constitute each secondary conceptual field. Rather than comparing mystics in terms of single, isolated concepts and ideas, which is frequently done in studies of mystical thought, the three secondary conceptual fields provide a framework within which interrelated concepts and ideas may be compared and contrasted. This procedure provides a rigorous and systematic way to compare the ideas of the English mystics.

These secondary conceptual fields are then used to compare the thought of the English mystics with other mystical and religious literature of the middle ages: (1) older mystical writers such as Augustine, Gregory the Great, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bernard of Clairvaux; (2) vernacular religious and moral treatises such as Edmund's Mirror of Holy Church and Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne; (3) manuals of instruction for parish priests such as Mirk's Instructions; (4) homiletic material from the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries; and (5) general religious literature of the fourteenth century. Comparing the English mystics and these various groups of religious and mystical literature within the general framework of the secondary conceptual fields permits observation and discussion of certain basic similarities and differences in their mystical thought.

The contributions of this study are threefold: (1) the methodology by which the primary and secondary conceptual fields are formed; (2) the primary and secondary conceptual fields themselves; and (3) the results obtained by applying these conceptual fields to the English mystics and other medieval mystics and religious writings

for comparative purposes. These results may be summarized under three main headings: (a) unique characteristics of the mystical thought of each English mystic; (b) significant specific and general relationships between the English mystics in terms of their understanding of the contemplative life; and (c) relationships between the mystical thought of the English mystics and that of other medieval mystics and religious writings.

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE THOUGHT OF THE  
FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH MYSTICS**

**By**

**George Wood Tuma**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The fourteenth-century English mystics, Richard Rolle, the unknown author of The Cloud of Unknowing, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe, occupy a unique and important position with respect to medieval intellectual history, English medieval literature, and medieval religious literature in general. To understand these areas fully, it is necessary to assess the role of the English mystics in their development. For example, our interpretation of intellectual history in the fourteenth century as a reaction to the various attempts in the thirteenth century to synthesize theology and philosophy into systematic structures or as a continuation of a definite mystical and spiritual tradition depends to a great extent upon our attitude toward the English mystics. Similarly, the history of English literature can not be completely understood without considering the role of the English mystics as transmitters of the English prose tradition. In this respect R. W. Chambers<sup>1</sup> has clearly demonstrated the importance of the English mystics and English medieval religious and devotional writings. Finally, the relationship of the

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<sup>1</sup>On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and His School (London: EETS 191A, 1957).

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Life Sciences

Earth and Space Science

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Physical Education

Religion

Home Science

Foreign Languages

Computer Science

Business Studies

Environmental Studies

English mystics to medieval religious literature is obvious and has been acknowledged by most critics.

However, in spite of their importance in these areas, the English mystics remain an unstudied and somewhat unknown group of authors. Literary criticism dealing with them has been primarily general surveys, short introductory works, texts and edition, and articles concerned for the most part with textual and authorship problems. Literary critics, however, have not considered the mystics to any great extent from a contentual point of view. This lack of critical substantive work is understandable. For many readers the world of the English mystics is a foreign one and, as such, not a particularly comfortable or interesting world within which to dwell for any length of time. Furthermore, the writings of the mystics are not easy to read or to understand; they tend to be repetitious, somewhat monotonous, and seemingly devoid of what moderns would call relevant, illuminating ideas.

For the most part contentual analysis of the English mystics has been left to the critical attention of theologians, the religious, and those concerned with establishing patterns for the contemplative life. Literary scholars evidently have been unwilling to criticize the work of the mystics because they seem to have difficulty in seeing the writings of the English mystics as lying within the province of literature rather than theology. Joseph Milosh's recent work, The Scale of Perfection and the English Mystical Tradition,<sup>2</sup> represents the

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<sup>2</sup>Madison, 1966.

rare contribution of a literary scholar, rather than a theologian, who attempts to analyze the content and substance of the writings of one of the English mystics rather than focusing his attention upon the form of their writings. This reluctance of literary scholars to enter the arena of substantive criticism is unfortunate since objective treatment of the teachings and thought of the mystics by theologians has been a rather rare phenomenon. David Knowles' work is perhaps the only exception.<sup>3</sup> For all too often the author's spiritual and religious biases will be stressed to the exclusion of the actual thought of a particular mystic. Molinari's attempt to impose upon Julian of Norwich an orthodox framework for the contemplative life similar to that of traditional mystical guides is by no means an isolated example.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, with the exception of Knowles' short but excellent work, The English Mystical Tradition, there is no systematic critical work on the English mystics which objectively considers their thought and places them in an historical perspective. However, preparatory to such a work, serious thought must be given to the substance of the writings of the English mystics or their thought and teachings concerning mysticism. For before we can fully understand what the English mystics actually said, we must have a clear grasp of what words they used, what ideas they emphasized, what they meant by

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<sup>3</sup>For example, see Knowles' The English Mystical Tradition (New York, 1961).

<sup>4</sup>Paul Molinari, S.J., Julian of Norwich: The Teaching of a Fourteenth-Century English Mystic (London, 1958).

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certain words and phrases, and which of their religious and mystical phrases were traditional and which were unique to the individual mystic himself. In short, a thorough analysis of their mystical thought is required. Such an analysis would enable us to detect various shades of meaning in ideas which on the surface seem to be the same. And on the basis of this analysis, we should be in a much better position to analyze the role of the English mystics in medieval intellectual history, English medieval literature, and medieval religious literature in general.

But before we develop a methodological procedure which will act as a framework for our study of the English mystics, several general comments on the nature of mysticism are necessary. Contrary to popular belief, mysticism is not a static phenomenon which remains unchanged from period to period and from individual to individual. This is particularly true during the medieval period in spite of the fact that medieval mysticism is frequently considered as a single entity. Even though the medieval mystics stood in the mainstream of a definite mystical tradition which included ideas, phrases, and ideological structures, there are many significant differences among them. Oftentimes the differences are not clearly discernable upon first reading; but they do exist and should become apparent in our analysis.

However, many well-defined points of similarity, including words, phrases, and ideas, exist among the English mystics. For under the influence of such mystics as St. Augustine, Gregory the Great, Dionysius the Areopagite, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure, a relatively well-formulated pattern of

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mystical thought had evolved and was well-established by the fourteenth century. Hence it was extremely difficult for the English mystics to be "original" or "creative" in the presence of such a strong tradition. The influence of this established medieval mystical tradition upon the English mystics should become fairly clear after we have analyzed their thought and compared it with that of older mystical writers such as Augustine and Richard of St. Victor.

Too often medieval mystical writings have been considered critically as a genre distinct from medieval religious writings and from scattered work on the contemplative life or certain phases of the contemplative life. Thus, critics have unfortunately viewed medieval mysticism as a special phenomenon, an area apart from the ordinary medieval religious life. Partly because of this attitude mysticism has been understood as an isolated phenomenon which occurs only in specific individuals. Consequently, it is not viewed as an integral part of the way in which medieval society looked at the world. Moreover, some scholars feel that the study of medieval mysticism tells us more about individual mystics than about medieval man in general. However, the best authorities on the history of mystical thought and medieval mystical thought in particular, consistently stress the idea that mysticism is a logical extension of the contemplative or religious life which is within the reach of each individual.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>For example, see Cuthbert Butler, Western Mysticism: The Teaching of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966); Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness, 12th ed. (New York, 1955); and Baron F. Von Hügel, The Mystical Element of Religion, 2 vols. (London, 1908).

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Thus, by viewing mysticism in the above terms, we should be able to avoid understanding it as an isolated phenomenon. We should try not only to see it in terms of the general spiritual life of the middle ages but also to relate it to the great mass of religious writings of the medieval period, especially the fourteenth century.

What, then, is mysticism? What are its defining characteristics? Can the ineffable experience of mysticism be reduced to an intelligible structure so that the thought of various mystics can be compared and analyzed from a systematic point of view? General definitions of mysticism are as numerous as the critics who have dealt with the subject. And frequently these definitions are couched in the language and orientation of a particular school; scholastics, for example, are notorious for their ingenious attempts to over-define mysticism according to scholastic terminology and classifications.<sup>6</sup> A good, general definition, however, should be free from any particular school of theological or philosophical thought; it should state, carefully and succinctly, exactly what the essence of mysticism is so that it can be applied without a great deal of qualification to any mystic.

With these thoughts in mind, we may define mysticism as the state of union with God which is felt or perceived by an individual within the natural order. And in this state God is known, loved, and understood by the mystic. In a broad sense, this state also includes preparation, events, and experiences occurring prior to the unitive state

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<sup>6</sup> See Adolphe Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology, trans. Herman Branderis, 2nd and rev. ed. (Tournai, 1930).

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itself. Although visions and ecstatic experiences of God are sometimes felt by mystics, these phenomena are not integral to the mystical experience itself but can be considered attendant occurrences. The fundamental characteristic of mysticism is the union with God which man experiences in some way in the here and now.

Perhaps the main reason why mysticism seems to be a more esoteric phenomenon than it actually is derives from the fact that most critics of mysticism base their interpretation of it upon the attendant phenomena which the mystic feels are necessary to describe his mystical experience. Different mystics will, of course, describe their experiences in various ways; but the essence of each mystic's experience is his felt or perceived union with God.

In spite of the numerous ways used to describe mystical experiences, there are certain relatively well-defined steps or phases of the mystic way which are found in some form or another in nearly all mystical or contemplative treatises. Purgation, illumination, and mystical union, apparently first used by the Neoplatonists, were adopted by Christian mystical writers, and extensively used throughout the middle ages. Even though these categories or phases were divided and subdivided by later mystics such as St. John of the Cross and St. Catherine of Genoa<sup>7</sup> in order to include certain experiences which could not be accounted for by traditional categories, purgation, illumination, and

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<sup>7</sup> St. John of the Cross, The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross, trans. E. Allison Peers, 3 vols. (Westminster, Maryland, 1953); and Von Hügel, The Mystical Element of Religion.

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mystical union have been generally recognized as the three irreducible elements of the mystic way. For example, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure use these categories with certain modifications for their description of the contemplative life.

Even though the English mystics understood them from slightly different perspectives, a general description of the three categories is necessary. Purgation is the cleansing or purificational process that an individual undergoes prior to his eventual union with God. This phase may include any or all of the following: moral, spiritual, or physical cleansing. And although it varies in expression and content with each mystic, the purgational phase usually includes the following elements: (1) a catalogue and accompanying brief or extensive description of sins; (2) an awareness that these sins have impeded man's union or relationship with God; (3) the importance of knowing oneself, or the nosce te ipsum theme, which is stressed in most but not all mystical literature; and (4) a strong desire to withdraw from the natural order because of its sinful nature. Quite frequently, purgation receives an extensive treatment in medieval mystical and contemplative treatises, e.g., the almost limitless number of sins, lists of sins, their causes and effects, and general suggestions for their remedies as found in The Book of Vices and Virtues.<sup>8</sup>

Usually illumination follows purgation immediately, though not

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<sup>8</sup>W. Nelson Francis, ed. (London: EETS 217, 1942).

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always, since in some instances purgation and illumination seem to be concurrent processes. Illumination is usually accompanied by a realization of God's nature and presence in the world, the ability to view the world in its proper perspective, and a growing awareness of the true nature of man. Several factors, of which the following are descriptive rather than exhaustive, form an integral part of the illuminative phase: (1) a heightened feeling of the presence of God; (2) an increased understanding of God's nature, e.g., his love, forgiveness, grace, and majesty; (3) the complete, or almost complete, re-direction of man's love toward God rather than toward the natural order; and (4) visions and various ecstatic experiences which often, but not always, accompany the illuminative phase. It should also be mentioned that quite frequently during the illuminative phase the individual gains new insights into his own nature as well as into God's.

Mystical union, the last phase in the mystic way and the final goal of the contemplative life, is that state in which the mystic experiences the presence of God in union in an overwhelming and indescribable manner. Even though this phase of the contemplative life may only be momentary, it becomes the focal point for the rest of the mystic's life. And although many mystics, including the fourteenth-century English mystics, claim that this phase of the mystic way is ineffable, each of them tries to describe union with God.

As I have indicated, these three main categories have been divided and subdivided, sometimes interminably, in order to account for the various experiences of the mystics. But purgation, illumination,

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and union remain the sine qua non of the mystic way for most mystics.

Perhaps the most crucial single element necessary for an analysis of the fourteenth-century English mystics is a methodology which can be used to analyze their mystical language and thought. For without a flexible and systematic approach, an analysis of their language and thought would be at best a random affair. Merely analyzing phrases and ideas in a disconnected fashion in order to ascertain their meaning in isolation would not be of much value for an overall understanding of English medieval mystical thought. And even though a series of individual word studies might result, such a study would not provide us with a coherent, systematic analysis of their thought.

Part of the problem lies with the past and present state of semantic theory, which is an enormously complex subject. Controversy among semanticists rages constantly upon such fundamental questions as the proper boundaries of semantic analysis; even the definition of semantics varies from scholar to scholar. Stephen Ullmann's functional definition of meaning, acceptable to most but not all semanticists, gives us some indication as to why traditional semantic analysis has not been used successfully in analyzing religious and mystical language and thought. Ullmann defines meaning as "a reciprocal relation between name and sense, which enables them to call up one another."<sup>9</sup> Within this definition, name or symbol signifies a particular object or sense. Thus, that which is meant by a particular

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<sup>9</sup>The Principles of Semantics, 2nd ed. (New York, 1957), p. 70.

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name or symbol is the object or sense to which that name or symbol refers.

For words which possess an exact one-to-one correspondence within the natural order, this is a reasonably satisfactory, though static, approach to the problem of meaning. But semantic theory which depends upon reciprocal relationships between symbol and sense is singularly deficient for analyzing and understanding mystical language or, for that matter, poetic language. In the case of religious or mystical language, for example, words do not often have exact objective referents or "things-meant" in the natural order. Words in a mystical linguistic framework are used to refer to objects which are or are thought to be in the supernatural order. Furthermore, religious or mystical language often refers to subjective emotions or feelings whose exact status or content is only known by the mystic himself. For religious and mystical language, there can be no one-to-one relationship between symbol and sense, except perhaps in the mind of the mystic.

Consequently, when linguists and semanticists have attempted to analyze religious language for meaning, they have frequently substituted their own subjective and private feelings for a particular feeling or experience that the mystic was trying to express and describe. This phenomenon is not unknown among literary critics who often substitute private feelings for objective reality.

Semantic theory which depends upon an exact reciprocal relationship between symbol and sense is also unsatisfactory for analyzing



mystical language for another reason. Mystical ideas usually cannot be expressed in exact one word equivalents; as in the case of poetic ideas, they require phrases and groups of words. Thus, the meaning of a particular mystical idea is not found in the object to which it refers for it does not refer to a single object. Its meaning can only be found in the relationship between the phrases or groups of words used by the mystic to describe a particular mystical experience or feeling and the object which these phrases or groups of words denote. This will become more clear after we have begun to analyze the mystical writings under consideration.

For the above reasons, traditional forms of semantic analysis, such as the one-to-one relationship between symbol and sense, cannot be used effectively for analyzing religious and mystical phrases and ideas. However, a theoretical model developed by Jost Trier which permits linguistic analysis from a semantic point of view by utilizing linguistic, conceptual, or lexical fields provides us with a methodology which may be used to analyze the mystical thought of the English mystics.<sup>10</sup> Application of this model should also reduce substantially the magnitude of some of the problems involved in semantic analysis considered above.

Rather than analyzing words from a semantic point of view in terms of a strict one-to-one relationship between symbol and sense,

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<sup>10</sup> Jost Trier, Der deutsche Wortschatz im Sinnbezirk des Verstandes. Die Geschichte eines sprachlichen Feldes, I: Von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn des 13. Jh. (Heidelberg, 1931).

Trier theorized that the meaning of a particular word was partially dependent upon its relationship to other words which could be found clustered around a particular concept or idea. He realized that phrases and groups of words used to describe a given idea or object must be considered in terms of their relationship to one another in order to discover the meaning to which they collectively referred. For example, in his studies of intellectual terms in Old and Middle High German, Trier isolated groups of words, which he termed lexical or conceptual fields, which could in their entirety be said to contain the general meaning underlying a particular concept or idea.<sup>11</sup>

Trier's approach was adapted with some success by Helmut A. Hatzfeld in his study of Old French mystical writings.<sup>12</sup> Using the various phases of the contemplative life which were developed and used by St. John of the Cross and St. Catherine of Genoa, i.e., detachment, quietude, illumination, the dark night of the soul, ecstasy, and mystical union, Hatzfeld constructed broad linguistic fields for each phase. These fields consisted of various words and phrases which he found clustered around the different phases of the contemplative life. Then he was able to analyze comparatively the words and phrases which medieval authors had used to describe each of the phases of the contemplative life with those words used by earlier and later mystics.

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<sup>11</sup>"Das sprachliche Feld. Eine Auseinandersetzung," Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung, 10 (1934), 428-49.

<sup>12</sup>"Linguistic Investigation of Old French High Spirituality," PMLA, 61 (1946), 331-78.



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He was also able to determine which words were created by the Old French mystics de novo and which words had simply been translated, or rather "transliterated," into Old French from medieval Latin words. Furthermore, since he demonstrated that Old French possessed words which could be used to express mystical concepts, Hatzfeld found that Old French mystics and spiritual writers were not as dependent upon medieval Latin terms and phrases as had formerly been thought.

With some modifications, Trier's theoretical model, as adapted by Hatzfeld, can be used to analyze comparatively the thought of the English mystics. By constructing conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union consisting of main informing concepts and words, phrases, and ideas which cluster around each concept, we should be able to analyze their use of religious and mystical thought. In short, by considering the phrases and ideas which cluster around the three phases of the contemplative life, the thought of the English mystics can be analyzed.

Using conceptual fields as our basic framework and methodology, we will be able to investigate carefully the following points. First, the substantive content of the thought of the English mystics can be set forth in a clear and systematic manner. Too often critics have isolated certain mystical concepts from mystical writings and then emphasized them to the unfortunate exclusion of other important mystical ideas. Conceptual fields, however, force the critic to note the intricate inter-relationships between phrases and ideas within that field and thus permit him to perceive clearly the object, feeling, experience, or idea to which these phrases and concepts refer. Thus,

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conceptual fields require the critic to deal with mystical thought in context rather than as a series of unconnected and disparate ideas.

Secondly, by using conceptual fields constructed for each phase of the contemplative life, we will be able to compare the general treatment of a given phase by each English mystic, including their use of phrases, words, concepts, and ideas. Thus, rather than comparing an isolated thought of one English mystic with another, it will be possible to compare particular thoughts within the context of a given conceptual field. Furthermore, the entire range of words, phrases, and ideas within a particular conceptual field can be compared with its counterpart in the writings of another mystic. In this way the differences in each mystic's use of words, phrases, and ideas and their various inter-relationships within each conceptual field may be noted.

Finally, we will also be able to compare the various conceptual fields constructed for the English mystics with the treatment accorded to them by older mystical authors such as Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. Conceptual fields should therefore provide us with a rigorous and systematic means for comparing their mystical ideas with those of the English mystics.

Our general procedure will be as follows. First, we will consider the general intellectual and religious atmosphere of the fourteenth century within which the English mystics thought and wrote. Specific attention will be given to such matters as the writings produced by the reform movement of the thirteenth century, particularly

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the religious handbook tradition, mystical and contemplative treatises in the fourteenth century other than the major English mystics, and other religious literature of the fourteenth century. This will be followed by a general discussion of the English mystics of the fourteenth century with whom we will be primarily concerned: Richard Rolle, the unknown author of The Cloud of Unknowing and its attendant treatises, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe.

Secondly, we will construct primary conceptual fields for the three phases of the contemplative life for each English mystic and subject these fields to a preliminary analysis. These primary conceptual fields will include main informing concepts and words, phrases, and ideas which cluster around each concept. Thus, each primary conceptual field will represent the thought of an English mystic with respect to a given phase of the contemplative life.<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly, secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union will be constructed from the primary conceptual fields. For example, the five primary conceptual fields for purgation for each English mystic will be reduced to a single conceptual field consisting of main informing concepts and words, phrases, and ideas which constitute each concept. The secondary conceptual field for purgation will therefore represent the collective thought of all of the English mystics with respect to purgation. Similarly, secondary conceptual

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A for an outline of the primary conceptual fields for each phase of the contemplative life for each English mystic which resulted from the analysis in chapters 3-5.

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fields will be constructed for illumination and union. Using the three secondary conceptual fields as a basic framework, we will be able to compare the thought of the English mystics with respect to each phase of the contemplative life in order to ascertain specific similarities and differences. This procedure will permit an overall comparison of the mystical thought of the English mystics within the context of the secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the thought of the English mystics will be compared with both the religious, devotional, and mystical writings of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries and the writings of older mystical writers such as Augustine, Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure. The basis for this comparison will be the secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union which will have been developed for the English mystics as a group.

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<sup>14</sup>See Appendix B for an outline of the secondary conceptual fields for each phase of the contemplative life which are based upon the primary conceptual fields for each English mystic constructed in chapters 3-5.



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## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF EACH ENGLISH MYSTIC

In order to assess the influence of the intellectual and religious thought of the fourteenth century upon the English mystics, it is necessary to consider and define the intellectual and religious frame of reference or atmosphere within which the mystics thought and wrote. Fourteenth-century thought may be approached from several different perspectives. Most commonly it is viewed primarily as a reaction to the synthesizing tendencies of the thirteenth century, as demonstrated for example in the theological and philosophical enterprise of St. Thomas Aquinas. This approach, however, does not take into consideration such factors as the continuing influence of the school of Chartres and the work of Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. Nor does it account for other traditions and schools which cannot be forced into the great Thomistic synthesis of the thirteenth century.

These factors prompt us to consider another approach to the intellectual history of the fourteenth century which views medieval intellectual history as a continuing series of different intellectual and religious traditions which preserve nearly intact their own integrity throughout the middle ages, even though they might touch tangentially at several points and possibly be synthesized into a

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single structure. From this point of view, the various medieval intellectual traditions, rather than simply culminating in a kind of Thomistic synthesis in the thirteenth century, actually continue with a few modifications into the fourteenth. In this sense the thought of Ockham and Duns Scotus is not a reaction against St. Thomas but rather an extension of the intellectual and philosophical tradition of Augustine, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure. It is from this perspective that the intellectual and religious atmosphere of the fourteenth century will be described.

From the strict point of view of scholastic thought, the intellectual atmosphere of the fourteenth century can be characterized by the following factors: the existence of relatively free and open inquiry; a manifest distrust of reason as the sole means for understanding the articles of faith; a general feeling that reason and faith are incompatible and should be restricted to their own proper domains; a latent suspicion of "models" which attempt to combine faith and reason into an organic structure through which the universe might be understood; a growing realization that the natural and supernatural orders are tangentially rather than integrally interconnected; and finally the existence of scepticism and authority as dual standards for determining certainty.

In addition to these defining characteristics, those indicated by Carré and Leff should be mentioned. Carré notes four main characteristics of the period: an inclination to seek for reality in the individual thing in preference to the universal entity; an increased emphasis upon intuition or sensory apprehension as the basis for

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knowledge; a restriction of the scope of demonstrative reasoning and an enlargement of the province of dialectical or probable reasoning; and a severance of human reason from the truths of revelation.<sup>1</sup> Leff, on the other hand, mentions three dominant traits of fourteenth-century thought: a desire to separate faith from reason; the development of mutually-opposed orientations based upon either faith or reason; and a radical change in the orientation of thought itself marked by a decrease in speculative thought, the failure of intellectuals to accept both faith and reason as valid within one theological or philosophical structure, and a new passionate concern for humanism, classical learning, mathematics, astronomy, and physics.<sup>2</sup>

Although it may be justifiably argued to what extent the intellectual posture of the schools in the fourteenth century influenced the mystics, it can be said that certain mystics such as Rolle, the author of The Cloud, and Hilton, all of whom apparently did have some formal training, were probably influenced in varying degrees by the intellectual posture and the various controversies of the fourteenth century. It is much more difficult, however, to assess the influence of this atmosphere upon such theologically untrained mystics as Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe.

An important part of the religious and intellectual atmosphere of the fourteenth century which affected nearly everyone was created

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<sup>1</sup>Meyrick H. Carré, Phases of Thought in England (Oxford, 1940),

<sup>2</sup>Gordon Leff, Medieval Thought from St. Augustine to Ockham (Harmondsworth, 1958), pp. 258-61.

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by the Hundred Years' War and the intermittent reigns of the plague. Both factors combined to produce a real sense of corporate and individual futility and forced man to turn within himself or towards God as the final arbiter of values and norms rather than to the corporate values and beliefs of the social order. In particular, the Black Death undoubtedly intensified the individual's preoccupation with the ultimate meaning of human existence. As Clark has pointed out, "Civil war, anarchy, ban and interdict were followed by awe-inspiring natural calamities: pestilence, famine, earthquakes, and floods. The natural result of all this was to create a deep sense of the insecurity of human life and the evanescence of human happiness."<sup>3</sup>

Another important component of the general atmosphere of the fourteenth century was an intense individualism which was not solely confined to the schools and universities. This was created and sustained both by the intellectual orientation of the period and by the continual wars and plagues which constantly reminded men of the finitude of existence. In this way both the intellectual atmosphere and internal wars and plagues contributed a great deal toward the creation of an individualistic spirit. The overall image of the Church, a rather tarnished and corrupt one in many respects in spite of the ecclesiastic reforms of the thirteenth century, may have heightened the desire of the individual to search for religious beliefs and values as an individual rather than as a member of a formal religious organization,

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<sup>3</sup>James M. Clark, The Great German Mystics: Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso (Oxford, 1949), p. 1.



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whether it was a particular religious order of the Church itself. To summarize, it seems clear that a strong individualistic spirit existed in the fourteenth century which contributed significantly to the creation and sustenance of the mystical or contemplative life.

Other influences upon fourteenth-century religious thought and practice resulted directly from the ecclesiastical reform movement of the thirteenth century which was initiated for the most part by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and reinforced in England by the synodal constitutions of the English bishops. Innocent III called the Fourth Lateran primarily to correct various ecclesiastical abuses in the Church and to create a new spirit of enthusiasm and reform. Among the many reforms introduced by the Fourth Lateran, we are especially interested in those which deal with the need for better religious education among both the laity and the clergy, particularly the literature which developed as a result of this concern.

In England as elsewhere this emphasis upon lay and clerical religious education culminated in the production of a number of treatises designed to implement educational reforms. As Pantin has indicated,<sup>4</sup> three different types of literature evolved in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the first two stemming directly from the thirteenth-century reform movement: (1) manuals of instruction for parish priests; (2) vernacular religious and moral treatises; and (3) writings of the mystics and various religious lyrics of the

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<sup>4</sup>W. A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 190-191.

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fourteenth century. The mystical and devotional literature of the third type composed in the fourteenth century lies in a definite tradition which included such writers as St. Anselm, St. Peter Damiani, St. Bernard, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and St. Bonaventure.

Among the many works which were created for the specific purpose of informing, and in many instances educating, the English clergy, we might mention the following: the Oculus Sacerdotis of William of Pagula, ca. 1320-28; the Speculum Curatorum, ca. 1340, attributed to Ranulph Higden; the Regimen Animarum, ca. 1343; the Memoriale Presbiterorum or Memoriale Sacerdotum, ca. 1344; Thoresby's Lay-Folk's Catechism, ca. 1357; the Pupilla Oculi, ca. 1385; and finally John Mirk's works, Instructions for Parish Priests, Manuale Sacerdotis, and his Festiall, all ca. 1400. These fourteenth-century manuals were the heirs of a number of Summae or manuals of pastoral theology of the thirteenth century such as the Templum Domini of Robert Grosseteste, ca. 1238-45, and the Cum miseraciones Domini of Thomas of Chabham, ca. 1215-22.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the more important vernacular religious and moral treatises of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which influenced the religious and moral thought and practice of the fourteenth century should also be pointed out. The following are indicative of this type of literature: the Speculum ecclesiae of St. Edmund (ob. 1240); the Manuel des péchés, ca. 1260; Handling Sin, ca. 1303, an English verse translation of the Somme le Roi by Dan Michael of Northgate;

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<sup>5</sup>Pantin, pp. 189-219.

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the Book of Vices and Virtues, ca. 1375, another English prose translation of the Somme le Roi; the Speculum vitae, late fourteenth century, possibly by William Nassington; the Pricke of Conscience, mid-fourteenth century; the Speculum Christiani, post 1350; the Livre de Seyntz Medicines, 1354, composed by Henry Duke of Lancaster; and finally the Desert of Religion, ca. 1400, a northern English poem.

Most of these works deal with the various points of religious instruction considered fundamental for lay education, i.e., the ten commandments, the seven sins, the seven sacraments, and the articles of the creed. Although moderns would probably find them lengthy, monotonous, and contrived, it is quite obvious that they were composed with a great deal of care and were intended to raise the level of lay religious and moral awareness. It is difficult to know the extent to which these works influenced the laity, but we are probably correct in assuming that they did exert some influence upon the general level of their religious education in the fourteenth century. As Pantin points out, "How many priests and laymen actually availed themselves of all this literature we can never know; the important thing is that it was offered to them."<sup>6</sup>

At least theoretically this mass of religious literature in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries provided a solid foundation for the mystical and contemplative literature of the fourteenth century. Pantin feels, and I think correctly, that the extensive contemplative

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<sup>6</sup>Pantin, p. 262.

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literature of the fourteenth century was influenced to a certain extent by the literature which resulted from the program for lay and clerical religious education in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Although I would agree with this point, I would also emphasize the tradition of contemplative, mystical, and devotional literature in English which can be traced to Bede and other Old English literature. Thus the religious and moral literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries reinforced and influenced rather than created de novo the mass of devotional and contemplative literature of the fourteenth century. But it should be stressed that there was a great deal of religious instructional literature produced during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which no doubt affected the overall religious atmosphere by focusing upon the need for religious renewal, a continual theme of the English medieval mystics. That it affected the religious atmosphere of the fourteenth century in some way seems beyond question.

In addition to the writings of the major English mystics with whom we are concerned in this work, the fourteenth century produced a great quantity of mystical, contemplative, devotional, and general religious literature. Unfortunately, much of this literature still remains in manuscript. Although our analysis will be devoted to the major English mystics of the fourteenth century, we will have recourse from time to time to this corpus of fourteenth-century religious material for comparison and illustration.

Among the many works cited by Wells as belonging to this fourteenth century group of religious writings, the following provide a



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good indication of the nature of these writings:<sup>7</sup> A Meditation on the Passion and Of Three Arrows of Doomsday, ca. 1400; The Privy of the Passion, ca. 1430-40; An Epistle on Salvation by Love of the Name of Jesus, ca. 1430-40; On Prayer, ca. 1430-40; The Twelve Profits of Tribulation, ca. 1370-1400, a close translation of Peter of Blois' Duodecim Utilitates Tribulationes; A Talking of the Love of God, ca. 1370-80; The Mirror of Sinners, late fourteenth century, a free translation of Speculum peccatoris; Contemplation of the Dread and Love of God, late fourteenth century; and The Remedy against the Troubles of Temptations, late fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Several fourteenth-century religious treatises, which are actually works of religious instruction cast into an allegorical framework, deal in part with various aspects of the contemplative life and thus should be mentioned: Grosseteste's The Castle of Love in its various fourteenth-century translations; The Abbey of the Holy Ghost, ca. 1370; The Charters of Christ, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century; The Testament of Love, ca. 1387, attributed to Thomas Usk; The Desert of Religion, ca. 1400-50; A Treatise of Ghostly Battle, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century; and The Quatrefoil of Love, late fourteenth or early fifteenth.

In addition to works dealing with the contemplative life, we

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<sup>7</sup>J. E. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400 (New Haven, 1916), pp. 271-302, 338-373, 444-464.

<sup>8</sup>These and other religious and devotional writings of the fourteenth and fifteenth century may be conveniently found in C. Horstman, Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers, 2 vols. (London, 1895-96).

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should also note two minor English mystics of the fourteenth century, William Flete and the Solitary Monk of Farne.<sup>9</sup> Finally, religious lyrics which bear on the contemplative life in the fourteenth century are numerous; many have been collected by Carleton Brown and may be found in his Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century.<sup>10</sup>

Again, it must be stressed that we are not concerned in determining the exact nature of the influence that these writings had upon the work of the English mystics; in fact, some of these works themselves were influenced by one or more of the English mystics since some of them were long ascribed to "Richard Rolle and His School." What is important to remember is that the English mystics lived and wrote during an age in which devotional and mystical writings were produced in quantity. Even if there were no direct parallels between this writing and that of the English mystics, the atmosphere created by these religious and contemplative writings affected the general orientation, if not the content, of the writings of the English mystics.

Thus far we have described briefly the main characteristics of the religious and intellectual climate of the fourteenth century. We have seen that it was an age marked by the following factors: strong individualistic tendencies which oftentimes resulted in a quest for ultimate values and attitudes within the individual himself rather than in corporate structures such as the Church, a

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<sup>9</sup> See W. A. Pantin, "The Monk-Solitary of Farne: A Fourteenth-Century English Mystic," English Historical Review, 59 (1944), 162-86.

<sup>10</sup> Oxford, 1924.

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separation of faith and reason which frequently caused the creation of mutually exclusive conceptual structures whether in theology or philosophy, and an increased concern about the ultimate meaning of human existence, particularly with respect to the individual. Furthermore, we noted the extensive religious literature of the period which included manuals of instruction for parish priests, vernacular religious and moral treatises for lay and cleric alike, and the writings of the major English medieval mystics as well as other mystical and devotional literature. Thus, the fourteenth century seemed to provide a particularly well-suited climate within which the English mystics could think and write.

At this point we should note for each of the major English mystics with whom we will be dealing the general nature and content of their writings, a few bibliographical comments, their main ideas concerning the contemplative life, and a brief description of their conception of the various phases of the contemplative life. Then we will be able to construct primary conceptual fields for the English mystics and to proceed with our analysis of their mystical thought.

### Richard Rolle

Richard Rolle, in order of chronology the earliest of the fourteenth-century English mystics, was the most popular of the English mystics among their contemporaries as well as the most prolific author. His great popularity in the middle ages evidently stemmed from his great reputation for sanctity, and as a result many medieval

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mystical and devotional treatises were ascribed to him. Consequently, the canon of his writings has been very difficult to determine. In spite of Hope Emily Allen's thorough study,<sup>11</sup> several authorship problems still remain. But for the most important works, Rolle's authorship has been fairly well established.

His early works include the Canticum Amoris, a Latin poem to Mary; the Judica Me Deus, four tracts, the last three of which form a manual for parish priests; the Melum Amoris<sup>12</sup> (sometimes referred to as the Melum Contemplativorum), which contains an extensive account of Rolle's mysticism; and a commentary on selected passages from Job. Rolle's scriptural commentaries, both in Latin and in English, include miscellaneous scriptural commentaries as well as commentaries upon the Psalter. His major Latin treatises are the following: Liber de Amore Dei Contra Amatores Mundi, the Incendium Amoris,<sup>13</sup> a major work translated into Middle English by Richard Misyn, and the Eminentio Vitae. There are three English epistles, Ego Dormio, The Commandment, and The Form of Living, and a number of miscellaneous English writings, The Bee, Desyre and Delit, Gastly Gladnesse, Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, On the Ten Commandments, Meditations on the

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<sup>11</sup>Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, hermit of Hampole, and materials for his biography (New York and London, 1927).

<sup>12</sup>Edited by E. J. Arnould (Oxford, 1957).

<sup>13</sup>Edited by M. Deanesly (Manchester, 1915); see also The Fire of Love, and the Mending of Life or The Rule of Living, trans. R. Misyn and ed. Ralph Harvey (London: EETS 106, 1896), and The Fire of Love or Melody of Love and The Mending of Life or Rule of Living, trans. R. Misyn and ed. Frances M. M. Comper (London, 1914).



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Passion,<sup>14</sup> and numerous English lyrics whose authorship has been very difficult to ascertain.

Richard Rolle is probably the most misunderstood and misinterpreted of the English medieval mystics. Overly admired on the one hand as an outstanding example of medieval mysticism and as a teacher of the contemplative life, he is criticized on the other hand as a repetitious, emotional author whose writings are ornate and seemingly devoid of real substance. Somewhere between these two views may be found a more balanced interpretation of Rolle and his mystical writings.

His reputation as an individual who possessed a mature understanding of the contemplative life requires qualification. A close reading of his writings indicates that Rolle probably never advanced from the initial phases of the contemplative life. Comparing the thought of his later work with that of his earlier writing seems to show little development and progress. His overwhelming experience of calor, canor, and dulcor remains the substantive basis for his understanding of the contemplative life. Although Rolle considers purgation as a separate and integral part of the contemplative life, his treatment of illumination and union depends primarily upon a continuous reworking of the basic theme of heat, song, and sweetness. In this respect Rolle demonstrates little development in his mystical thought. However, it should be remembered that even though Rolle

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<sup>14</sup>The English epistles and the miscellaneous English writings are found in Hope Emily Allen's English Writings of Richard Rolle (Oxford, 1931).

had spent several years at Oxford and was familiar with the writings of such mystical writers as Augustine, Bonaventure, and Hugh of St. Victor, his understanding of mysticism was based primarily upon a description and interpretation of his own mystical experiences, particularly his chapel experience. Thus, we should not expect that Rolle's mystical writings will provide a systematic guide to the contemplative life, especially in a traditional sense.

Concerning criticism of Rolle what censures him for ornate prose, unoriginality, and needless repetition, it can only be stated at this point that the analysis and subsequent comparison of his mystical thought with the other English mystics should counter or qualify this criticism.

In spite of the above reservations, Richard Rolle is an important medieval mystic whose mystical writings are particularly well-suited for analysis. First, as Chambers has demonstrated, Rolle's writings do form a central link in the English prose tradition.<sup>15</sup> This judgement seems to be beyond dispute since his influence on later English prose is substantial. Secondly, even though his understanding of the contemplative life is not as advanced as that of The Cloud, for example, his description of his own mystical experiences and thoughts is complete and thorough. Describing even to the point of unnecessary repetition a particular phase of the contemplative life often reveals much more about that phase than the short treatment

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<sup>15</sup>On the Continuity of English Prose, pp. ci-ciii.

often accorded it by an advanced contemplative who considers it rather unimportant when compared to other aspects of the contemplative life. Because Rolle frequently approached the same idea from different points of view and tried to describe his reactions to a particular idea by using different terms and phrases, we are frequently left with a clear picture of what he was attempting to describe.

Rolle's main ideas regarding the contemplative life are quite traditional in spite of his ornate rhetoric which often discourages readers. In fact, compared to most mystical and contemplative treatises, Rolle's thoughts are highly conventional. His overall world view is rather non-complex; it is fundamentally biblical rather than philosophical: man's true nature is to be found in union with God in heaven. His propensity for sin, however, prevents even a foretaste of this heavenly union until man's earthly desires are removed. Nevertheless, he can attain union with God prior to heaven through obedience, purgation, and charity, especially the latter.

Throughout Rolle's works, we find a double emphasis upon God's love for man and man's love for God. Charity is, then, the key to Rolle's thoughts with respect to the contemplative life. God's charity informs man, and man responds in charity to God and to his fellow man. Rolle also emphasizes man's need to purge himself of earthly desires and to turn to and accept God's love. Most of his thoughts concerning the mystical life usually incorporate the themes of purgation, renewal, acceptance of God's love, and union on earth with God which points to a heavenly union.

### The Cloud of Unknowing

The Cloud of Unknowing and its attendant treatises<sup>16</sup> offer us one of the most thorough, systematic, and mature works on the contemplative life composed in the fourteenth century. To be sure, Hilten's Scala Perfectionis is an imposing work, but it does not possess the originality, cohesiveness, and consistent excellence that we find in The Cloud. The author of The Cloud attempts to provide a concise guide which will enable the individual to attain the contemplative life. As such, it is not a description of contemplative life in general but a definite program for achieving the contemplative life as understood by the author. As Knowles indicates, The Cloud "is in fact a manual of traditional ascetic and mystical teaching, based on current orthodox theology and assuming the customary sacramental and devotional life of medieval England."<sup>17</sup> Concise directions are set forth in a straightforward manner with few major digressions which often accompany works on contemplation. The Cloud focuses upon the purgative and illuminative phases of the contemplative life, and The Book of Privy Counseling, which is somewhat more theoretical than The Cloud, continues for the most part with a discussion of the illuminative phase and stops just short of a consideration of mystical

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<sup>16</sup> Works generally attributed to the unknown author of The Cloud may be found in the following: The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: EETS 218, 1944), and Deonise Hid Diuinite and other Treatises related to The Cloud of Unknowing, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: EETS 231, 1955).

<sup>17</sup> The English Mystical Tradition, p. 74.

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We know very little about the author. As Miss Hodgson has pointed out, "it has been suggested that he was a secular priest, a cloistered monk, a Carthusian, not a Carthusian, a hermit, a recluse."<sup>18</sup> However, it may be justifiably assumed that the author was probably a priest, conversant with traditional theological and mystical writings, and informed about contemporary theological controversies such as the important problem of grace to which he often refers.

His major works are of course The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counseling. Other works which he undoubtedly composed are the following: Deonise Hid Diuinite, a rather free translation of Dionysius the Areopagite's De Mystica Theologica, and a translation of Richard of St. Victor's Benjamin Minor, entitled A Treatise of the Study of Wisdom that Men Call Benjamin. Three epistles, The Epistle of Prayer, The Epistle of Discretion in Stirrings, and Of Discerning of Spirits, were probably written by the same author. Definite authorship of the epistles, however, has not yet been firmly established.

As is true for most medieval religious and mystical literature, it is difficult to determine precisely those works that influenced The Cloud and its attendant treatises. As Miss Hodgson has stated:

There is a striking similarity in the testimony of the mystics of all ages, and with the author of The Cloud, himself a contemplative, it is not often possible to decide whether he was describing his own experience, drawing upon the experience of his predecessors, or, still more likely, clothing his own experience in the description of others.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The Cloud of Unknowing, p. lxxxiii.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. lxx.

The major influences upon the author of The Cloud were the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite and Richard of St. Victor. But even though the thought of the Areopagite directly influenced the author of The Cloud, The Cloud of Unknowing remains a highly original contemplative work. It is not simply a reworking of the Areopagite's writings. Other probable influences upon the author of The Cloud were some of the patristic fathers and such late medieval theological and mystical writers as Bernard of Chartres, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventure. These possible influences will be considered in our analysis.

The teaching of the author of The Cloud can be set forth most adequately by choosing several of his ideas which summarize his understanding of the contemplative life. And since he tends to repeat or rephrase several central ideas, as is often the case with mystical authors, his own words will serve as an adequate introduction:

Lift up thi<sup>20</sup> herte vnto God with a meek steryng of loue; & mene him-self, & none of his goodes. & therto loke thee lothe to think on ougt bot on hym-self, so that nought worche in thi witte ne in thi wille bot only him-self. & do that in thee is to forgete alle the creatures that euer God maad & the werkes of hem, so that thi thought ne thi desire be not directe ne streche to any of hem, neither in general ne in special. Bot lat hem be, & take no kepe to hem. (CU 3.16)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Middle English **p**'s in this passage have been silently changed to th. Occurrences of **p** and **ð** in other passages will also be silently changed to th.

<sup>21</sup>The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: EETS 218, 1944), Chapter 3, p. 16. All further references to The Cloud and to The Book of Privy Counselling, unless otherwise indicated, will be made to this edition in the text.

For at the first tyme when thou dost it, thou fyndest bot a derknes, & as it were a cloude of vnknowyng, thou wost neuer what, sauynge that thou felist in thi wille a nakid entent vnto God. This derknes and this cloude is, how-so-euer thou dost, bitwix thee & thi God, & letteth thee that thou maist not see him cleerly by li3t of vnderstanding in thi reson, ne fele him in swetnes of loue in thin affeccion. & therefore schap thee to bide in this derknes as longe as thou maist, euermore crying after him that thou louest; for if euer schalt thou fele him or see him, as it may be here, it behoueth alweis be in this cloude & in this derknes. (CU 3/16-17)

& thou schalt step abouen it stalworthly, bot listely, with a deuoute & a plesing stering of loue, & fonde for to peerse that derknes abouen thee. & smyte apouen that thicke cloude of vnknowyng with a scharp darte of longing loue, & go not thens for thing that befalleth. (CU 6/26)

The theory of contemplation in The Cloud is based upon Dionysius the Areopagite's dictum, which the author of The Cloud quotes, that "the most godly knowing of God is that which is known by unknowing." In fact his entire theory of contemplation not only derives from this statement but it is also a gradual development and clarification of this central thesis. Fundamentally, his theory is a via fidei rather than a via rationis although man's will, particularly his will to love, forms a large and important part of his theory. The author of The Cloud regards man's desire for things in the natural order, his imagination, and his reason as primary stumbling blocks to union with God in this life. In order for union to occur, man's natural desires must be gradually purged, his imagination brought under strict control, and his discursive reason effectively checked.

Man may then proceed to the act of contemplation wherein he considers that God is, not what God is. He focuses his attention, in other words, upon God's being as such rather than upon his several



attributes. In this state man encounters the cloud of unknowing which may be interpreted in several different ways. First, it may be understood as the last barrier between man and God or between the natural order and the supernatural order. Secondly, it may be seen as the state of man's mind, a kind of dark nothingness, after he has by an act of will forced all his thoughts out of his mind except the thought that God is. Then man, in the words of The Cloud, continually "beats upon this cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love." In this sense this action is a definite act of man's will. When his will to love assisted by grace pierces the cloud of unknowing, he may experience union with God. And this union constitutes the last phase of the contemplative life, the mystical union with God.

From this brief discussion of The Cloud's theory of contemplation, we can see that he proposes a specific approach to the contemplative life; it is definitely not a guide to contemplative life in general nor, for that matter, a description of the contemplative life. By using a few carefully chosen ideas, he systematically constructs a particular way for the individual to achieve union with and knowledge of God within the confines of the natural order.

However, even though The Cloud represents a specific approach to the contemplative life, the purgative and illuminative phases of the mystic way are treated in extenso by the author of The Cloud. The last phase, mystical union, is not considered by the author as thoroughly as the first two phases of the contemplative life; in fact, The Book of Privy Counseling apparently ends before mystical union occurs. But since the author of The Cloud alludes to union in his

writings, the final phase of the contemplative life can be considered in our analysis of the mystical thought of The Cloud.

### Walter Hilton

Of the many mystical and devotional treatises composed in the fourteenth century, Walter Hilton's major work, The Scale of Perfection,<sup>22</sup> remained the most popular and widely read in the fifteenth. The reasons for this are clear. Even though the first part of The Scale was written for a particular person, the work as a whole provided a clear, systematic guide to the contemplative life which could be used by any individual. Since it was written in the vernacular, it was undoubtedly popular with the middle class whose literacy gradually increased during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The religious handbook tradition, which Milosh feels exercised a strong influence on The Scale,<sup>23</sup> provided an important foundation for the reception of the work among the middle class.

The treatise's popularity was also further enhanced by its concern for the problem of reconciling the active and the contemplative life. It was not composed exclusively for men in orders, and the fact

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<sup>22</sup>The best and most accessible modernized edition of The Scale of Perfection has been translated and edited by Evelyn Underhill (London, 1948); two other editions, however, should be noted: Edition of Book I of the Scale of Perfection by Walter Hilton, ed. Barbara Eleanor Wykes, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1957; and An Edition, from the Manuscripts, of Book II of Walter Hilton's Scale of Perfection, ed. S. S. Hussey, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 1962.

<sup>23</sup>The Scale of Perfection and the English Mystical Tradition, pp. 140-68.

that its instructions could be followed by those pursuing an active life in the world was undoubtedly an attractive feature. Furthermore, since The Scale sets forth a fairly well-defined theory of contemplation, its understanding of the contemplative life could be appropriated by a wide audience. The work is structurally cohesive and straightforward, not unimportant factors in an age whose religious and devotional writings were frequently prone to countless illustrations and digressions. And even though the author of The Scale was familiar with traditional mystical and devotional literature, his writing is free from the scholarly pretentiousness which often coloured medieval spiritual guides and treatises.

Although Hilton, who was probably an Augustinian canon of the priory of Thurgarton in Nottinghamshire, was primarily known for The Scale of Perfection, a number of other treatises and shorter works have been attributed to him. The following should be mentioned: The Epistle on Mixed Life, The Song of Angels, Encomium Nominum Jesu, Of Deadly and Venial Sin, The Goad of Love (a translation of the Stimulus Amoris), Eight Chapters on Perfection, Qui Habitat, Bonum Est, Benedictus, To a Christian Friend, The Profits and Prerogatives of Religious Life, Ad Quemdam Solitarium de Lectione, Intentione, Oratione et Alii, and Ad Quemdam Seculo Renunciare Volentem.<sup>24</sup>

The extent to which Hilton's Scale was influenced by other mystical and theological writings will become clearer after comparing his

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<sup>24</sup>Many of these may be found in the Minor Works of Walter Hilton, ed. Dorothy Jones (New York, 1929).

mystical thought with other mystical writers. But we do know that he was familiar with the writings of Augustine, Gregory the Great, Dionysius the Areopagite, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, and Richard of St. Victor, besides the work of the author of The Cloud and Richard Rolle. Moreover, since Milosh views Hilton as being within the mainstream of the religious handbook tradition, it may be possible to suggest various points of contact between this tradition and Hilton's mystical thought in our analysis of his thought.

Hilton's theory of the contemplative life, as developed most fully in the Scale, is not particularly complex. The primary phases of the contemplative life, i.e., purgation, illumination, and mystical union, provide the basic framework. Ascent to the final union with God requires passage through the purgative and illuminative phases. The controlling theme for Hilton throughout the contemplative life is man's reformation in faith and feeling. He views man's soul as an image of God which was lost through man's sins; and the object of the contemplative life is to restore this image. After the soul has been restored to its original likeness, man is then capable of experiencing union with God. "No man may come to the contemplation of the Godhead, but he be first reformed by fulness of meekness and charity to the likeness of Jhesu in His Manhood." (SP I.92.221)<sup>25</sup>

The reformation or the restoration of the soul occurs in two main ways: reformation in faith; and reformation in faith and feeling.

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<sup>25</sup>Underhill, The Scale of Perfection, Book I, Chapter 92, p. 221. All further references to The Scale of Perfection, unless otherwise indicated, will be made to this edition in the text.

Hilton uses faith in its normative sense, i.e., acceptance of a particular truth which cannot be fully explained or understood through reason. Feeling, on the other hand, is the mystical or spiritual experience of a particular truth or concept. Hilton notes that "the first kind of reform belongs only to beginners and those who are making progress in the spiritual life, and to men leading the active life. The second is for the perfect and for contemplative souls." Knowles's explanation of these two kinds of reform clarifies the distinction:

The first reform in faith is, in fact, that accomplished by the soul in actively ridding itself of vices by the help of grace and with no perception of God other than the certainty of faith; it is the attempt of the soul using its enlightened reason and the ordinary assistance of grace to conform itself to what it believes, but sees not. The reformation in feeling is that accomplished within the soul when it has a new supernatural knowledge of God in Himself and is possessed by God who then works in and upon it, so to say, not through or by it.<sup>26</sup>

However, it should be emphasized that Hilton requires that man's purgation occur prior to his reformation in faith and/or reformation in faith and in feeling. Finally, throughout the entire process of the restoration of man, Hilton constantly stressed humility and charity as the basic requirements for all men seeking the final goal of the contemplative life. For Hilton as for other mystics, love of God and love of man are absolutely essential for the contemplative life.

Several other points concerning Hilton's understanding of the contemplative life should be mentioned. First, he frequently criticizes contemplatives such as Rolle who stress visions and extraordinary

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<sup>26</sup> Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition, p. 106.

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feelings as the substance of the contemplative life. He was obviously reacting against those individuals who equate the contemplative life with the experience of Rolle's "calor, canor, and dulcor." Restoration of man's soul and union with God were much more important to him than visions and indescribable feelings. Secondly, he stressed the nosce te ipsum theme as integral to the contemplative life. For Hilton it was through man's knowledge of himself that he eventually attained knowledge of God. This particular theme occurs frequently in his writings, especially in The Scale. Finally, we should note his understanding of growth in the contemplative life as a gradual, continual progression to the final perfection of the soul. This may be effectively contrasted to The Cloud whose approach to the contemplative life simulates a military frontal assault. According to Hilton, heaven is not stormed at one blow; attainment of the final mystical union and progress in the contemplative life is slow and methodical. In this sense, Hilton presents a much more mature, realistic, and balanced approach to the contemplative life than the other fourteenth-century English mystics.

### Julian of Norwich

Julian of Norwich's only known work, The Revelations of Divine Love,<sup>27</sup> sets forth and interprets sixteen "shewings" or revelations which she experienced. In contrast to Walter Hilton and the author

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<sup>27</sup> There are several modernized editions of The Revelations; in lieu of a critical edition, perhaps the most adequate is Revelations of Divine Love, ed. Grace Warrack, 13th ed. (London, 1949).

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of The Cloud, Julian's work is not a guide to or treatise upon the contemplative or mystical life; rather, it is an extended description and interpretation of a series of revelations by an English fourteenth-century anchoress who evidently spent the major part of her life as a recluse.

Julian's statement concerning the primary purpose and content of her revelations is clear and straightforward:

It belongeth to us to have three knowings. The first is that we know our Lord God. The second is that we know ourselves-- what we are by Him, in kind and in grace. The third is that we know meekly what we are with regard to our sin and our feebleness.<sup>28</sup> (RDL 72.177-78)

Throughout the entire work, God's love is the dominant concept which Julian constantly refers to and explicates. In fact, the main purpose of each revelation is to clarify the nature of God's love which Julian feels has been shown to her in the series of revelations.

And from that time that it was shewed I desired oftentimes to learn what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after, and more, I was answered in ghostly understanding, saying thus: "Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Learn it well: Love was His meaning. Who shewed it thee? Love. What shewed He thee? Love. Wherefore shewed it He? For love. Hold thee therein and thou shalt learn and know more in the same. But thou shalt never know nor learn therein other thing without end." Thus was I learned that Love was our Lord's meaning. (RDL 86.202)

Although the contents of the different revelations vary, most of them are based upon Christ's passion and suffering. But even though Julian uses the passion of Christ as the basis of a revelation, she

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<sup>28</sup> Revelations of Divine Love, ed. Warrack, Chapter 72, pp. 177-78. All further references to Julian's Revelations, unless otherwise indicated, will be made to this edition in the text.

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customarily considers it in terms of its symbolic meaning, e.g., Christ's physical suffering as indicative of his love for man. This emphasis upon Christ's physical suffering seems to be stressed more by the lay, popular mystics such as Julian and Margery Kempe than by the learned authors of fourteenth-century guides to the contemplative life such as Walter Hilton. The homiletic emphasis upon the passion narrative and ecclesiastical art work in parish churches depicting the passion may explain this phenomenon.

Since Julian records a series of reflections on her experiences over a relatively long period of time, we should not expect an ordered, systematic account of the contemplative life with precise instructions as to how it may be attained. But her thoughts are not scattered in a haphazard fashion throughout The Revelations; order does prevail. The formal order of the work derives from the unfolding series of sixteen revelations and their accompanying interpretation and from the central theme of God's love for man which pervades the entire work.

Further order may also be discerned. Julian carefully distinguishes between the different kinds of revelations that she has experienced. She divides these "shewings" into various categories which provide another ordering device: those of bodily sight, those of ghostly in bodily likeness, those shewings more ghostly without bodily likeness, and those shewings composed of ghostly sight alone. Some scholars, Molinari for example,<sup>29</sup> have attempted to classify

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<sup>29</sup> Julian of Norwich, pp. 73-195.

these types of revelations into the traditional medieval categories for visions originated by St. Augustine, i.e., corporeal, imaginary, and intellectual visions. A final means for ordering The Revelations may be found in Julian's consideration of the contemplative life in terms of the traditional phases of the contemplative life, i.e., purgation, illumination, and union. Even though this treatment is not rigorous or systematic, it will be possible to construct conceptual fields for the phases of the contemplative life in her writings for comparative purposes.

That knowledge of self leads to knowledge of God forms one of the main ideas in Julian's mystical thought. In fact, Hilton is the only other English mystic who uses it with as much frequency. The foundations of this idea, frequently used by medieval mystics, are found in Augustinian psychology, which was popularized by Richard of St. Victor in his Benjamin Minor and thereafter used extensively by later mystical writers.

According to Richard of St. Victor, man's rational spirit or nature has two primary powers, reason and affection, and two secondary powers, imagination and sensuality. Whereas the author of The Cloud denotes five main powers of the soul, three primary (mind, reason, and will) and two secondary (imagination and sensuality), Julian refers to the primary powers as "substance" or "inward parts of the soul" and the secondary powers as "sensuality" or "outward parts of the soul." For Julian the higher part of man's soul or the substance has been made in God's image and remains unified with God. But it is only when the outward parts of the soul or man's natural desires

have been brought under the control of the inward parts that man can become fully the image or likeness of God. When the outward parts of man's soul are dominant, the inward parts of the soul or those which contain the image of God are obscured.

According to Julian, Christ in the incarnation was able to knit together or to "one" the substance and the sensuality of man. By participating vicariously and spiritually in Christ's nature, man is able to restore the original harmony which at one time had existed between the inward and outward parts of man's soul. In this way man can realize his true nature and his inward and outward parts will reflect the image of God.

Julian, adapting the above theoretical framework, felt that knowledge of ourselves, or more precisely knowledge of our "substance," would lead necessarily to knowledge of God since man's substance is united with God. It is to this image of God or to man's substance that man must return in order for him to have increased knowledge of God within the natural order.

This conceptual structure, i.e., the division of man's soul into various levels and the idea that the image of God remains within man, is used by medieval mystics with various modifications to underpin the idea that man's knowledge of God is to some degree proportional to man's knowledge of himself. Even an author such as Julian, who offers us a series of reflections about the contemplative life and her own mystical experiences rather than a concise, learned guide to the contemplative life, employs a version of the psychological theory advanced by Augustine and embellished by Richard of St. Victor in

order to provide a foundation for her theory about how God may be known. As we have seen, Hilton's concept of man's image being reformed into the image of God also depends heavily upon this popular medieval theory.

### Margery Kempe

The final fourteenth-century English mystic whose writings we will analyze presents a number of problems, none of which may be easily resolved. Perhaps Margery Kempe and her single work, The Book of Margery Kempe,<sup>30</sup> can best be introduced by considering some of the criticism that has been directed toward her and her work.

First, some scholars have claimed that she is not a mystic at all, at least not in the sense that Hilton or even Julian may be considered mystics. Rather, her "mystical experiences" are felt to be the direct product of fantasy and emotionalism. Furthermore, much of her thought, as well as the language which conveys her mystical ideas, is said to have been derived from traditional and contemporary mystical works, particularly homiletical material dealing with the passion narrative. Thus, Margery is considered by some to be even less original than other medieval mystical writers whose thought is frequently derivative in nature. Secondly, critics have acknowledged that her writings actually constitute a work which is more important

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<sup>30</sup> The critical edition of The Book of Margery Kempe has been edited by Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen (London: EETS 212, 1940); for the modernized edition see The Book of Margery Kempe, trans. W. Butler-Bowdon (London, 1954).

for social and ecclesiastical history than for fourteenth-century mystical thought. Accordingly, The Book of Margery Kempe is felt to be a biography of a middle class, religiously over-zealous, and somewhat unbalanced woman rather than a treatise on the contemplative life.

In answer to the charge that Margery is not a mystic it must be stated that this is for mystical theologians to answer, not literary critics. That Margery was a sincere and devout woman in her own way most critics, even the most unsympathetic, will agree. And most would also agree that she was hysterical and undoubtedly mentally unbalanced. But we should point out that there is no set of normative criteria by which critics, theological or otherwise, may differentiate between a "true" mystic and a "false" mystic even though there are obvious degrees of spiritual maturity among mystics. As far as analysis of her mystical thought is concerned, it is immaterial whether Margery should be considered a "true" mystic or not. What is important is that she used religious and mystical ideas, words, and phrases to record and to reflect upon her experiences. Our primary concern is her mystical thought, not the validity or invalidity of her experiences.

Margery has also been criticized for being a derivative author, i.e., her language and thought was taken from other traditional and contemporary sources. Again, it must be stressed that we are interested in the religious and mystical thought of the fourteenth-century English mystics; whether it is derivative or not will not substantially affect our analysis. In fact, Margery's mystical

thought, including the ideas, words, and phrases used to convey this thought, since it is derived from a number of different sources, may be able to tell us more about the status of religious and mystical language and thought in the fourteenth century than a "learned" writer such as Walter Hilton or the author of The Cloud of Unknowing. We would expect the mystical thought of Hilton, for example, to reflect his own individual mystical framework; although he might use words, phrases, and ideas from other sources, any significant differences or peculiarities that they might possess would probably be subsumed under Hilton's personal understanding of mysticism. However, the words and phrases from other sources that Margery used would be placed together in a quilt-like pattern whose individual pieces would be clearly discernable. Their individual characteristics would not be subsumed under a single understanding of mysticism. Thus, it may be possible that Margery's writings and mystical thought will provide us with an overview of the different kinds of religious and mystical thought found in the fourteenth century.

The second major criticism, that The Book of Margery Kempe is more important as a social history than as a treatise on the contemplative life, is perhaps a less important criticism with respect to our analysis. For Margery's Book contains enough about the contemplative life and mystical thought to make it an example of fourteenth-century contemplative or mystical literature. But her work is obviously valuable as a source of information for the social history of the fourteenth century.

Several further comments should be made about Margery's work



before proceeding to our formal analysis of the major fourteenth-century English mystics. Even though her Book is not a systematic guide to the contemplative life, the traditional phases of the contemplative life, purgation, illumination, and union, are present in her work and are considered by Margery, although somewhat obliquely at times. Thus, it will be possible to construct conceptual fields for the phases of the contemplative life as found in The Book of Margery Kempe.

As I indicated in the discussion of Julian of Norwich, many of Margery's mystical reflections consider or are based upon Christ's suffering and passion. Passion narratives and sermons on the passion of Christ probably influenced the content and direction of Margery's mystical thought to a great extent. God's love for man, and for Margery in particular, is also emphasized in her writings. And it is frequently, if not always, presented in terms of a marital or love relationship between God or Christ and Margery. This love relationship, perhaps the strongest informing element in her work, seems to undergird her thought at every turn. In fact, it appears more intense at times than the marriage metaphor in Bernard's Canticum Canticorum. Rolle, and to a certain extent Julian of Norwich, are the only other fourteenth-century English mystics who approximate Margery's emphasis upon the love relationship between God and man.

Having surveyed the nature and content of the writings of the major fourteenth-century English mystics, we can now consider their thought in detail by constructing conceptual fields for the various phases of the contemplative life. We will begin with the purgational

phase as developed and described by each of the mystics cited in the present chapter.

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### CHAPTER III

#### CONSTRUCTION OF PRIMARY CONCEPTUAL FIELDS FOR PURGATION FOR EACH ENGLISH MYSTIC

In this chapter primary conceptual fields for purgation will be constructed for each of the medieval English mystics. In the next two chapters primary conceptual fields for illumination and union will be constructed. In general, our procedure in Chapters 3-5 will be as follows: first, the main informing concepts for a particular phase of the contemplative life will be stated; secondly, those words, phrases, and ideas which tend to cluster around each of these informing concepts will be introduced and discussed. Thus, a conceptual field consisting of certain words, phrases, and ideas will be formed for each phase of the contemplative life for each English mystic. Each conceptual field, when viewed as an entity, will provide a fairly firm basis for understanding the thought of each mystic for each phase of the contemplative life.<sup>1</sup>

#### Richard Rolle

For Rolle there are four main informing concepts which structure his treatment of purgation. First, man's love of the world and

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for an outline of the primary conceptual fields for each phase of the contemplative life for each English mystic.

of himself, which Rolle refers to frequently as "earthly or fleshly desires," prevents him from attaining union with God. It is impossible for the love of God and man's love for himself or for the natural order to coexist within man. Secondly, in order for man to achieve union with God, love for God must be substituted for love of self and of the world. Thirdly, God's love or grace enters the individual during purgation and gradually turns man's love for himself and for the world to God. Finally, there is present within the purgational phase an ultimate cleansing or purification of the individual through which he becomes increasingly purified and is able to accept and understand the nature of God's love.

According to Rolle, it is necessary for the individual to understand prior to the purgational process that the love of God and the love of the world cannot exist simultaneously:

Dileccio namque mundi et Dei nunquam simul in eodem animo  
existant . . . . (IA 1.149)<sup>2</sup>

Lufe treuly of god & of this world neuer in one saule may be  
to-gydir . . . . (FL I.2.5)<sup>3</sup>

Non enim aliquis Deo perfecte unitur dum alicui creature mundiali  
affectu alligatur. (IA 10.172)

No man treuly to god parfitely is knyttid qwhils he in desyre  
to any creature worldly is bune. (FL I.11.23)

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<sup>2</sup>Incendium Amoris, ed. M. Deanesly (Manchester, 1915), Chapter 1, p. 149. All further references to Rolle's Incendium Amoris will be made to this edition in the text.

<sup>3</sup>The Fire of Love, and the Mending of Life or The Rule of Living, trans. R. Misyn and ed. Ralph Harvey (London: EETS 106, 1896), Book I, Chapter 2, p. 5. Misyn's Middle English translation of Rolle's Latin original is included in the text for comparative purposes.

Cum uero terrenas res et consolaciones propter seipsas diligimus, Deum sine dubio non amamus. (IA 4.155)

Qwhills we treuly erthly thingis or comforth lufys for the self, god with-oute doutte we lufe no3t . . . . (FL I.5.9-10)

Then, at the beginning of the purgational phase, it is imperative that the individual substitute the love of God for his love of self and the world. This is a consistent theme in Rolle, and the following passages are indicative:

Hec est uia penitencie quam pauci inuenerunt, que ideo dicitur, quia per illam si recta sit, caro ab illecebris et solacio mundi exuitur, et anima a praua delectacione ac immunda cogitacione restringitur, et solummodo diuine dileccioni mancipatur. (IA 18.198)

This is the way of penance that few fyndes; the whilk therefore strait is callid for be it, And it be ryght, the flesh fro vnlefull solace of the world is nakkind & the saule fro schreuyd likynge & vnclene thoghtis is restrenyd & only to goddis lufe it is dressyd. (FL I.19.43)

. . . ut penitus eiciantur scelera, et ad incendium amoris erudiantur corda. (IA 27.222)

. . . that syns playnly be outcast And to byrnyng of lufe our hartis be taght. (FL I.28.61)

This preliminary act of casting out sin and love for the world seems to be accomplished by the individual himself; apparently the initial act of purgation does not depend upon God's grace or assistance.

The next part of the purgational process, the effect upon the individual by God's love, is the most elaborate component of Rolle's theory of purgation. As the following passages indicate, Rolle continually reworks a single important theme, i.e., that God's love, after it has entered the soul, purges it of sin and of love for the world.

Quippe quando amor eternitatis in animabus nostris ueraciter accenditur, omnis sine dubio mundi uanitas, omnisque carnalis dileccio non nisi stercus uilissimum reputatur. (IA 19.201)

Sothely when lufe of euerlastynge in owr saules is treuly kyn-  
dyld, with-out doute all vanite of this warld, & all fleschly  
lufe, bot als foulyst fylth is haldyn . . . . (FL I.20.45)

Hic amore purgat nos a peccatis nostris, et in immenso ardore omnia exurit obstacula que impedirent ad amandum . . . . (IA 40.269)

This loufe clensis vs fro owr synnes, & in vnmesurde heet of  
obstakyls byrnys that suld let to lufe . . . . (FL II.10.97)

Sic quidem amor Dei hominem quem perfecte rapit non solum ab amore huius mundi funditus occidit . . . . (IA 10.171)

So certainly the lufe of god: mane that it parfitely rauischys,  
not onely it kyllis fro lufe growndly of this warld . . . .  
(FL I.11.22-23)

However, even after this initial transformation of the soul, the purgation of the individual is not yet complete. For Rolle purgation also involves a final step, occurring directly prior to the illuminative phase, within which the individual undergoes both a final cleansing and a foretaste of the effects to be experienced during the illuminative and unitive phases. Throughout the next series of passages, Rolle indicates that the individual becomes increasingly purified as he gradually opens himself to the love of God which enters during the purgational phase. Both the form and the content of passages referring to purification tend to be similar; as in Rolle's treatment of other concepts concerning purgation, a few basic ideas are presented and the same phraseology occurs frequently.

Quia cum mens igne Spiritus Sancti succenditur, ab omni ocio et immundicia exuitur et torrente uoluptatis Dei indulcoratur . . . . (IA 28.224)

ffor qwhen the mynde with fyr of the holy gost is kyndlyd, fro  
all ydilnes & vnclennes it is baryd, & with the sprynge of godis  
likeyng it is made swete . . . . (FL I.29.62)

Anima a uiciis seculi segregata et a carnalibus desideriis alienata, a peccatis purgatur. Unde et quandam suauitatem future leticie intelligit sibi adesse . . . . (IA 29.229-230)

The sawl fro the world synnes departyd, & fro fleschly desyrs withdrawen, of syn is pourgyd, & ther-by it vnderstandis a swetnes of myrth commynge to it nere . . . . (FL I.30.66-67)

O dulcis caritas, tu es plane dulcedo carissima, que mentes quam tuo capis amori, tam clare inebrias, quod cito cuncta transitoria, et uana gaudia facis despicere, et in tuis solummodo desideriis mirabiliter anhelare. Uenisti ad me, et ecce omnia interiora precordia anime mee suauitate amenitatis melliphone replentur, et abundant feruencia gaudio spirituali. (IA 16.192-93)

O swete charite, thou artt playnly swetnes darrest, that the mynde that (the caxis) to thi lufe thou takis so clerly thou moistis, that sone all passand thingis & vayn Ioyis thou makis to despise And in to thi desirs onely meruellusly to couett. In to me thou hast cume, & behald, all the inar forpartis of my saule with swetnes of heuenly myrth ar fulfild & boylinge in gostely ioy ar plenteuus. (FL I.17.38)

### The Cloud of Unknowing

The unknown author of The Cloud of Unknowing was primarily interested in producing a succinct, practical, and systematic guide to the contemplative life; he was not particularly interested in recounting his own mystical experiences even though they are mentioned in his works. Consequently, his writings do not contain an undisciplined use of religious and mystical thought and language which often-times accompanies the narration of mystical experiences. The writing and presentation of his mystical thought is straightforward, precise, and controlled. Even though his ideas concerning the contemplative life are few, he is more concerned with conveying these ideas well than with inundating the reader with a barrage of contemplative thoughts.



The author's main ideas concerning the purgational phase are repeated with slight variations throughout his writings, especially in his major work, The Cloud of Unknowing. Fundamental to the purgational phase of the contemplative life is the purging of sin. Whereas most authors of medieval spiritual guides, for example The Book of Vices and Virtues, are particularly fond of enumerating various sins and suggesting ways for their removal, the author of The Cloud apparently does not consider the listing of sins in a traditional manner a major part of his theory of purgation. But he does emphasize the fact that sins must be excised.

. . . al oure liif-tyme, make hidous & wonderful sorow for oure synnes, & ful mochel be mekid in mynde of oure wrechidnes.  
(CU 16.45)<sup>4</sup>

. . . to be mekyd vnder the mynde of oure wrechidnes & oure before-done synnes, euer to the tyme be that the grete rust of oure sinne be in grete party rubbid away . . . . (CU 15.43)

Cam sche therfore doun fro the heigt of desire into the depnes of hir sinful liif, & serchid in the foule stynkyng fen & donghille of hir synnes . . . . (CU 16.46)

Another idea within the conceptual field for purgation in The Cloud is the concept that man must come to an overall knowledge of himself, or "a true knowing and feeling of a man's self as he is." Thus, an important part of the purgational process is founded upon the nosce te ipsum theme, i.e., that man's knowledge of God depends to a great extent upon his knowledge of himself. This idea is frequently stated, using similar words and phrases, throughout the

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<sup>4</sup>The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: EETS 218, 1944), Chapter 16, p. 45.

author's writings.

For thof al I clepe it inparfite meeknes, 3it I had leuer haue  
a trewe knowyng & a felyng of my-self a wrech as I am . . . .  
(CU 14.41)

This nakid entent, freely fastenid & groundid in verrey be-  
leue, schal be nou3t elles to thi thou3t & to thi felyng bot  
a nakid thou3t & a blynde felyng of thin owne beyng . . . .  
(EPC 136)<sup>5</sup>

. . . that the first & the poynte of thi beholding is moste  
substancialy set in the nakid si3t & the blynde felyng of thin  
owne being. (EPC 141)

At this point in the purgational phase, what The Cloud refers  
to as "man's feeling and knowledge of himself" must be excised,  
apparently by an act of will. Both man's feeling and knowledge of  
himself and his love for the natural order must be negated prior to  
any advance in the contemplative life.

. . . nakyn, spoyle & vtterly vnclothe thi-self of al maner  
of felyng of thi-self, that thou be able to be clothid with the  
gracyous felyng of God self. (EPC 156)

& therefore breck doun alle wetyng & felyng of alle maner of  
creatures; bot most besily of thi-self. (CU 43.82)

Sekirly this trauayle is al in tredyng doun of the mynde of  
alle the creatures that euer God maad, & in holdyng of hem vnder  
the cloude of forgetyng namyd before. (CU 26.61)

The next component of the primary conceptual field for purga-  
tion in The Cloud, the blind stirring of love which man directs to-  
ward God, is an intention, desire, longing, or blind stirring initi-  
ated by the individual himself. Its initial impetus, however, depends  
upon God's grace.

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<sup>5</sup>The Book of Privy Counselling, The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: EETS 218, 1944), p. 136. All further references to The Book of Privy Counselling will be made to this edition in the text.

. . . that Almi3ty God with his grace behoueth algates be the cheef stere & worcher, outhur with mene or withoutyn . . . .  
(BPC 155)

& 3if it be thus, trist than stedfastly that it is only God that sterith thi wyl & thi desyre, pleylnly by him-self, withouten mene outhur on his party or on thin. (CU 34.70-71)

. . . with-outyn me first steryng & principally mouyng, & 3e only bot consentyng & suffryng, 3e mowen now3t do thin that is parfiteli plesyng to me . . . . (BPC 162)

According to the author of The Cloud, man must involve his total being in this blind stirring of love toward God. And it must be an act of the individual's will, assisted of course by God's grace. The author, however, seems to differentiate between two different stirrings of love. The first stirring refers to the effect of God's grace working upon man; and the second refers to an act of the individual's will culminating in the love which he directs toward God. It is clear from the following passages that these "stirrings of love" form a controlling theme for The Cloud's theory of purgation as well as for the entire contemplative life.

& herby maist thou see that we schulde directe alle oure beholdyng vnto this meek steryng of loue in oure wille. (CU 50.93)

. . . a man, that schuld worche in this derknes & in this cloude of unknowing with an affectuous stering of loue to God for himself . . . . (CU 8.33)

Therefore, what tyme that thou purposest thee to this werk, & felest bi grace that thou arte clepid of God, lift than up thin herte vnto God with a meek steryng of loue. (CU 7.28)

Bot the hi3er partye of contemplacion hongepth al holy in this derknes & in this cloude of vnknowyng, with a louyng steryng & a blinde beholdyng vnto the nakid beyng of God him-self only.  
(CU 8.32)

Important to The Cloud's theory of purgation is the object, God, to whom this stirring of love is directed. But the author carefully

notes that this stirring of love is directed to God as he is in himself, not to any particular attribute of God or to a conception of God that man might have. Thus, the object of contemplation in The Cloud's theory of purgation, and of the contemplative life in general, is free from all anthropomorphic imagery.

& therefore be as blynde in the louely beholdyng of the beyng of thi God as in the nakid beholdyng of the beyng of thi-self, with-outyn eny corious seching in thi wittys to loke after eny qualite that longeth to his being or to thine. (BPC 144)

For thof al it be good to thin apou the kindenes of God, & to loue hym & preise him for hem: 3it it is fer betyr to think apou the nakid beyng of him, & to loue him & preise him for him-self. (CU 5.25)

& loke that nothing leue in thi worching mynde bot a nakid entent stretchyng into God, not clothid in any specyal thougt of God in hym-self, how he is in him-self or in any of his werkes, bot only that he is as he is. (BPC 135)

The author of The Cloud frequently admonishes the reader to beware overemphasizing the sensual feelings and emotions that abound in Rolle's writings. For The Cloud purgational theory is grounded upon a definite metaphysical base; the union to be finally achieved is a union of beings, of wills, or of souls. Union is also a trans-natural occurrence and is not conditioned by the natural order. Fire, song, and sweetness are to be questioned, if not avoided, at all times. Note the systematic condemnation of feelings and emotions in the following passages:

Bot alle other counfortes, sounes, & gladnes, & swetnes, that comyn fro with-oute sodenly, & thou wost neuer whens, I prey thee haue hem suspecte. (CU 48.91)

. . . & thei sey that thei ben steryd therto by the fiire of charite & of Goddes loue in theire hertes. & trewly the li3e, for it is with the fiire of helle wellyng in theire braynes & in theire ymaginacion. (CU 55.102)

& than as fast the deuill hath power for to feyne sum fals ligh-  
 or sounes, swete smelles in theire noses, wonderful taastes in  
 theire mowthes, & many queynte hetes & brennynges in theire  
 bodily brestes or in theire bowelles, in theire backes & in  
 theire reynes, & in theire pryue membres. (CU 52.96-97)

The Cloud's reaction to Rolle's emphasis upon feelings and emotions may indicate why the mystical thought and language of The Cloud and its attendant treatises are nearly free from the undisciplined, over-descriptive thought and language which almost invariably accompany contemplative writing.

### Walter Hilton

In order to provide a framework for the conceptual field for purgation in Hilton's mystical thought, the following main informing concepts should be initially stated: (1) the negation of the natural order or the setting aside of physical desires and love of the world; (2) consideration of sins to be overcome, e.g., the seven deadlies, and virtues to be acquired during the purgative phase; (3) man's desire and intention for perfection in the contemplative life which is first expressed in the purgative phase; (4) the effect of God's love and grace upon the individual during purgation; (5) the nosce te ipsum theme wherein through increased knowledge of himself man not only becomes aware of his sin and the image of sin or man that dwells within him but also of the image of God into which he must be transformed; and (6) the restoration of man's true image.

The final informing concept in Hilton's theory of purgation, the restoration of man's true or original image, must be considered first since it forms the foundation for his purgational theory. It

is, in fact, the central informing idea for his theory of the contemplative life. According to Hilton, man was originally created in the image of God; but through sin, both Adam's and man's own, this image of God has become the image of sin. In man's original state, i.e., in his original state of perfection as a being created in the image of God, he existed in union with God. Man's sin effectively destroyed this original perfect union between man and God. In terms of the contemplative life, man's original image must be restored in order for him to proceed to the illuminative and unitive phases of the contemplative life, and hence to union with God. Even though the restoration of this image occurs throughout the contemplative life, the beginning of this restoration is effected during the purgative phase. The following two passages clearly indicate what Hilton means by the restoration of man's image which begins during the process of purgation:

. . . no man may come to the contemplation of the Godhead, but he be first reformed by fullhead of meekness and charity to the likeness of Jhesu in his manhood. (SP I.92.221)<sup>6</sup>

And upon this manner wise may this image of sin be broken down in thee and destroyed, by the which thou art forshapen from the kindly shape of the image of Christ. And thou shalt be shapen again to the image of Jhesu man by meekness and charity; and then shalt thou be fully shapen to the self image of Jhesu God, here living by a shadow in contemplation, and in the bliss of heaven by full soothfastness. (SP I.91.219)

Hilton continually refers to the restoration of man's image as a principal informing concept in his discussion of the contemplative

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<sup>6</sup>The Scale of Perfection, ed. Underhill, Book I, Chapter 92, p. 221.

life, particularly as developed in The Scale of Perfection.

The negation of the natural order or the setting aside of physical or "fleshly" desires and love of the world forms the first informing concept in the conceptual field for purgation in Hilton. This is an important theme in Hilton's mystical thought, as it is in other medieval mystical writings, and he refers to it more often than any other concept relating to the purgative phase. The following passages clearly illustrate Hilton's contention that man must purge himself of the love of the natural order and of physical desires in order to continue in the contemplative life:

. . . but also thou shalt arise against the ground of it, for to destroy the feeling and the liking rising of fleshly stirrings.  
(SP I.73.181)

And as thou hast forsaken the world, as it were a dead man turned to our Lord bodily in sight of men; right so that thine heart might be as it were dead to all earthly loves and dreads, turned wholly to our Lord Jhesu Christ. (SP I.1.1)

That is for to say forsake all fleshly love and hate his own fleshly life and vain liking of all his bodily wits for love of me . . . . (SP I.42.98)

According to Hilton, God's love and grace are instrumental in assisting man to destroy his sins and his love of the world. God's love, which is compared to fire, burns man's "fleshly loves and likings" and thus performs an important purgative function during the purgational phase.

The love and the feeling of God was made in mine heart not fire but as fire glowing, for as bodily fire burneth and wasteth all bodily things where it cometh, right so ghostly fire, as is the love of God, burneth and wasteth all fleshly loves and likings in a man's soul, and this fire is stoken in my bones as the prophet saith of himself. That is for to say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind, reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth full the bone . . . .  
(SP I.31.69)

This is a point of the passion of love, the which by great violence and mastery breaketh down all lusts and likings of any earthly thing, and it woundeth the soul with the blissful sword of love . . . . (SP I.30.67)

Hilton's description of the results of being purged from the love of the world and of the self form another informing concept in his conceptual field for purgation. During and after man's purgation, he experiences a transformation which Hilton considers in terms of "new gracious feelings," the ability to love "virtues and cleanness" and to attain the "clear sight of ghostly things," and a general orientation toward perfection.

. . . and that is when he is first healed of his ghostly sickness, and when all bitter passions and fleshly lusts and old feelings are burned out of the heart with the fire of desire, and new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light. Then neareth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling. (SP II.17.287)

For thou shalt hate sin, as all fleshly loves and dreads, in thine heart without ceasing, and thou shalt love virtues and cleanness, and desire them . . . . (SP I.22.52)

As long as his affection is bound, fastened, and as it were glued with the love of any earthly thing that he hath or would have, he may not have nor feel soothfastly the clean love and the clear sight of ghostly things. (SP I.71.174)

Another concept integral to Hilton's treatment of the purgative phase is man's desire for purgation which is necessary in order for him to progress in the mystic way. Man's intention to purge himself of his sins, e.g., "worldly vanities and fleshly affections," must be incorporated into his overall desire to attain purgation, the restoration of his true image, and finally union with God. Finally, according to Hilton, man's intention or desire must be directed toward God himself.



. . . lift up the desire of thine heart to thy good Lord Jhesu, and know thyself for a wretch and a beast, asking him forgiveness. (SP I.76.187)

For that desire and that longing that it hath that time to the love of God, for to see him and have him, driveth out of the heart all worldly vanities and fleshly affections, and gathereth the soul into itself and occupieth it only for to think how it might come to the love of him, and so bringeth it into this rich nought. (SP II.24.324)

And therefore when thou shalt arise against the ground of sin in general or else against any sin in special, hang fast upon this desire and set the point of thy thought more upon Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest. (SP I.91.218-219)

As I have indicated, the restoration of man's image is fundamental to Hilton's conception of the purgational phase. There are three factors which clarify Hilton's thoughts regarding the reforming of man's present image: (1) man's need to recognize his present image, i.e., the image of sin; (2) the aid which God offers in restoring the true image of man; and (3) the final results of the restoration itself. The following passages illustrate the first factor, the nature and recognition of man's present image:

And the love also which was clean in ghostly savour and sweetness, now it is turned into a foul beastly lust and liking, in itself and in creatures and fleshly savours; both in thy wits, as in gluttony and in lechery, and in imagining, as in pride, vainglory and covetise. (SP I.43.101)

. . . but a murk image and a painful image of thine own soul, which hath neither light of knowing nor feeling of love nor liking. This image if thou behold it wittily, is all belapped with black stinking clothes of sin, as pride, envy, ire, accidie, covetise, gluttony and lechery. (SP I.52.126)

. . . I have found a false image, that men call an idol, in myself, well foul disfigured and forshapen with wretchedness of all these sins which I have spoken of, by the which I am cast down in many fleshly likings and worldly vanities from cleanness of heart and feeling of ghostly virtues . . . . (SP I.84.203)

God's aid, which Hilton feels is integral to the restoration of man's true or original image, is expressed as follows:

For he will help thee bear thy body full of corruption, and he will with his merciful might of his gracious presence break down this false image of love in thyself not all at once but little and little, till thou be some deal reformed to his likeness. (SP I.89.214)

Then needed it that if man's soul should be reformed and the trespass made good, that our Lord God himself should reform this image and make amends for this trespass, since that no man might. (SP II.2.229)

Hilton then describes the final restoration of man's true image in terms of man's likeness to Christ, the second Adam, and to the Trinity.

As we have here before borne the image of an earthly man, that is the first Adam, right so that we might now bear the image of the heavenly man, which is Jhesu, the second Adam. (SP I.54.130)

And though we might never get it here, yet we should desire that we might recover here living a figure and a likeness of that dignity, that our soul might be reformed as it were in a shadow by grace, to the image of the Trinity which we had by kind and after shall have fully in bliss. (SP I.45.109)

Several other passages clarify and illustrate Hilton's conception of the nature of this new image of man into which he has been transformed.

And upon this manner wise may this image of sin be broken down in thee and destroyed, by the which thou art forshapen from the kindly shape of the image of Christ. And thou shalt be shapen again to the image of Jhesu man by meekness and charity; and then shalt thou be fully shapen to the self image of Jhesu God, here living by a shadow in contemplation, and in the bliss of heaven by full soothfastness. (SP I.91.219)

And that is when a man's soul first is reformed by fullhead of virtues to the image of Jhesu; and after when he is visited, is taken in from all earthly and fleshly affections, from vain thoughts and imaginings of all bodily creatures, and as it were mickle is ravished out of his bodily wits and then by the grace of the Holy Ghost is illumined for to see by understanding

soothfastness, which is God, and ghostly things, with a soft sweet burning love in him, so perfectly that by ravishing of love the soul is oned for the time and conformed to the image of the Trinity. (SP I.8.14)

The final informing concept for the conceptual field for purgation in Hilton, man's knowledge of himself, forms an important part of the purgative process. For it is only through knowledge of self that man can begin to understand who and what he is. Man must realize that the image of sin remains within him, and, knowing this, he may then prepare himself for the mystic way through purgation and purification.

Ther behoveth for to delve deep in thine heart, for therein he is hid, and cast out full cleanly all loves and likings, sorrows and dreads of all earthly things; and so shalt thou find Wisdom, Jhesu. (SP I.47.115)

. . . how thou shalt be able to enter into thyself, for to see the ground of sin and for to destroy it as mickle as thou mayest, and so shalt thou be able to recover a part of thy dignity. (SP I.52.125)

Draw into thyself thy thought from all bodily things, and then shalt thou find right nought wherein thy soul may rest. This nought is nought else but darkness of conscience, a lacking of love and of light; as sin is nought but a wanting of God. (SP I.53.127-128)

### Julian of Norwich

Since Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love is not a systematic treatise on the contemplative life, the conceptual fields for Julian's mystical thought will have to be based upon certain fundamental ideas which, though occurring frequently, are not developed rigorously as part of a general theory of the contemplative life or of a particular phase within the contemplative life. If,

however, these basic ideas or informing concepts are grouped together within conceptual fields, they do provide a fairly accurate picture of Julian's understanding of the contemplative life in general and of purgation, illumination, and union in particular.

The conceptual field for purgation in Julian may be based upon the following informing concepts: (1) man's initial desire to perfect himself and enter the contemplative life; (2) the relationship between the degree of man's sin and his knowledge of God; (3) the necessity of "noughting" oneself or the negation of the natural order and man's physical desires; (4) man's awareness of his sinful condition which has resulted from comparing his nature with God's; (5) the knowledge of self as it relates to man's understanding of his sinful nature; (6) the purgation of man's sins through reflection upon the passion of Christ and vicariously participating in his suffering; (7) the role of God's mercy, love, and grace during the purgational phase; and (8) Julian's theory of the lower and higher parts of man's soul and its relationship to purgation.

Man's desire to find and know God forms the first informing concept in the conceptual field for purgation in Julian's Revelations. For Julian it is necessary that the individual actively will to seek God in order to begin progress in the contemplative life. Knowledge of God and eventual union with him depend to a great extent upon the quality and intensity of this initial desire. Julian considers this desire or intention to know God frequently throughout her Revelations.

It is God's will that we have three things in our seeking: the first is that we seek earnestly and diligently, without sloth, and, as it may be through His grace, without unreasonable

heaviness and vain sorrow. The second is, that we abide him steadfastly for his love, without murmuring and striving against him, to our life's end: for it shall last but awhile. The third is that we trust in him mightily of full assured faith. (RDL 10.25)<sup>7</sup>

But that same holy assent, that we assent to God when we feel him, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. (RDL 52.123)

And thus I saw him, and sought him; and I had him, I wanted him. And this is, and should be, our common working in this life, as to my sight. (RDL 10.22)

The conceptual field for purgation in Julian also includes the concept that there is a correlation between man's sin and his capacity for knowledge of God. Man must realize, early in the purgational phase, that his sins prevent him from attaining knowledge of God and union with him, the final goal of the contemplative life. The following passages illustrate the words, phrases, and ideas which Julian uses to present this informing concept:

. . . man is changeable in this life, and by frailty and overcoming falleth into sin: he is weak and unwise of himself, and also his will is overlaid. And in this time he is in tempest and in sorrow and woe; and the cause is blindness: for he seeth not God. (RDL 47.99)

But himself was letted and blinded from the knowing of this will; and this is to him great sorrow and grievous distress: for neither doth he see clearly his loving Lord, which is to him full meek and mild, nor doth he see truly what himself is in the sight of his loving Lord. (RDL 51.111)

. . . so far forth that as long as we be meddling with any part of sin, we shall never see clearly the blissful cheer of our Lord. And the more horrible and grievous that our sins be, the deeper are we for that time from this blissful sight. (RDL 72.175-176)

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<sup>7</sup>Revelations of Divine Love, ed. Warrack, Chapter 10, p. 25.

When man realizes that his sins prevent him from attaining knowledge of God, he must then be "made nought to all things that are made." In other words, he must reject the attractions of the natural order and the desires of the "deadly flesh." Everything that is not God must be negated in order for man to know God.

. . . for we be all partly noughted, and we shall be noughted following our Master, Jesus, till we be full purged, that is to say, till we be fully noughted of our deadly flesh and of all our inward affections which are not very good . . . .  
(RDL 27.56)

And this is the cause why that no soul is rested till it is made nought as to all things that are made. When it is willingly made nought, for love, to have him that is all, then is it able to receive spiritual rest. (RDL 5.11)

Another means by which man may recognize the degree of his sinfulness which should be included in the conceptual field for purgation in Julian is for man to compare his own nature with God's. Through this comparison man recognizes his sin, his finitude, and his need for God. Thus, this particular informing concept forms an important and necessary part of Julian's purgational theory. The following passages clarify this concept quite well:

. . . but it belongeth to the worthy might of God thus to be beholden by his creatures, in great dread trembling and quaking for meekness of joy, marvelling at the greatness of God the Maker and at the littleness of all that is made. For the beholding of this maketh the creature marvellously meek and mild. (RDL 75.184)

This greatness and this nobleness of the beholding of God fulfilled her with reverent dread, and withal she saw herself so little and so low, so simple and so poor, in regard of her Lord God, that this reverent dread fulfilled her with meekness. And thus, by this ground of meekness she was fulfilled with grace and with all manner of virtues, and overpasseth all creatures. (RDL 7.15)

It needeth us to have knowing of the littleness of creatures and to hold as nought all-thing that is made, for to love and have God that is unmade. For this is the cause why we be not all in ease of heart and soul: that we seek here rest in those things that are so little, wherein is no rest, and know not our God that is All-mighty, All-wise, All-good. (RDL 5.11)

Knowledge of self which leads to an increased perception of man's sinful nature and hence underscores the need for his renewal constitutes the next informing concept in Julian's conceptual field for purification. The theory of the knowledge of self functions in two primary ways in Julian's mystical thought. First, Julian notes, following St. Augustine, that man's knowledge of God is dependent to a great extent upon his knowledge of himself. In order for man to know God, he must first know himself.

And notwithstanding all this, we may never come to full knowing of God till we know first clearly our own soul. (RDL 51.136)

But our passing life that we have here in our sense-soul knowth not what our self is. And when we verily and clearly see and know what our self is then shall we verily and clearly see and know our Lord God in fulness of joy. (RDL 46.96)

That this is possible is due in part to Julian's belief that God lives within man:

Highly ought we to rejoice that God dwelleth in our soul, and much more highly ought we to rejoice that our soul dwelleth in God. Our soul is made to be God's dwelling-place; and the dwelling-place of the soul is God, which is unmade. (RDL 54.130)

Thus, according to Julian, knowledge of man's inner nature leads of necessity to knowledge of God.

Secondly, knowledge of self enables man to perceive himself as a sinful creature who requires grace and renewal so that he might progress further in the contemplative life. Recognition of his sinful nature through knowledge of self acquired during the purgative

phase is therefore necessary before the individual can experience illumination and eventual union with God.

And hereby was I learned that though we be highly lifted up into contemplation by the special gift of our Lord, yet it is needful to us therewith to have knowing and sight of our sin and our feebleness. For without this knowing we may not have true meekness, and without meekness we may not be saved. (RDL 78.191)

But when we see our self so foul, then ween we that God were wroth with us for our sin, and then are we stirred of the Holy Ghost by contrition unto prayer and desire for the amending of our life with all our mights, to slacken the wrath of God, unto the time we find a rest in soul and a softness in conscience. Then hope we that God hath forgiven us our sins: and it is truth. (RDL 40.81-82)

And thus by this gracious knowing we may see our sin profitably without despair. For truly we need to see it, and by the sight we shall be made ashamed of our self and brought down as anent our pride and presumption; for it behoveth us verily to see that of ourselves we are right nought but sin and wretchedness. (RDL 78.190)

For Julian, therefore, knowledge of self is an integral part of the purgational phase:

And therefore it belongeth properly to us, both by nature and by grace, to long and desire with all our mights to know our self in fulness of endless joy. (RDL 46.96)

Central to Julian's understanding of the purgational process is the purification which results from reflection upon and participation in the passion and suffering of Christ. This particular informing idea forms the core of Julian's theory of purgation; in fact, it is considered more frequently than any other concept relating to purgation in the various revelations of Julian. In the following passages, which occur early in the Revelations, Julian requests knowledge of Christ's passion and suffering as well as a desire to suffer with him so that her sins might be purged.



. . . and therefore I desired a bodily sight wherein I might have more knowledge of the bodily pains of our Saviour and of the compassion of our Lady and of all his true lovers that saw, that time, his pains, for I would be one of them and suffer with him. (RDL 2.4)

. . . I conceived a mighty desire to receive three wounds in my life: that is to say, the wound of very contrition, the wound of kind compassion, and the wound of steadfast longing toward God. (RDL 2.5)

Then came suddenly to my mind that I should desire the second wound of our Lord's gracious gift: that my body might be fulfilled with mind and feeling of His blessed Passion. For I would that his pains were my pains, with compassion and afterward longing to God. (RDL 3.7)

Then, after Julian had gained knowledge of the passion and suffering of Christ, she experienced purgation and purification by her participation in it.

For when we have in mind his blessed passion, with pity and love, then we suffer with him like as his friends did that saw it. (RDL 77.188)

Here saw I a great oneing betwixt Christ and us, to mine understanding: for when He was in pain, we were in pain. (RDL 18.40)

I understood that we be now, in our Lord's meaning, in his cross with him in his pains and his passion, dying; and we, willingly abiding in the same Cross with his help and his grace unto the last point, suddenly he shall change his cheer to us, and we shall be with him in heaven. (RDL 21.45-46)

Thus, according to Julian, the purging of man's sinful nature in order to prepare him for illumination and union, an essential part of the purgational process, involves awareness of and participation in Christ's suffering.

The final informing concept within the conceptual field for purgation in Julian, the doctrine of the lower and upper parts of man's soul, forms a rather fundamental basis for her understanding of the contemplative life, especially for the purgational phase. It is one

of the most systematically developed concepts in the Revelations of Divine Love. According to Julian, man's upper or higher part of his soul was oned or united to God at the moment of man's creation. At the present time, however, even though man is essentially estranged from God, this part of man's soul enjoys continual union with God in the natural order. Man's lower part of his soul, his "sense-soul" or "sense-nature," was separated from God because of Adam's sin and man's continuing propensity for sin. Christ, in assuming man's sense-soul or his sensual nature, re-united the two parts of man's soul so that man could be completely oned to God with respect to both the lower and upper parts of his soul. Within this general theoretical framework, the purgative process for Julian involves the preparation of man for illumination and union by the re-unification of the lower and upper parts of man's soul. And this is effected by the purification of man's sense-soul or the lower part of his soul through awareness of and vicarious participation in Christ's passion and suffering.

At this point the words, phrases, and ideas that Julian uses to illustrate her theory of the lower and upper parts of man's soul and its role in the purgational process should be indicated. In the following passages Julian considers the creation of man in the image of God, the necessity of reforming man's present image to the image of God, the nature and function of the lower and upper parts of the soul, and the union which exists between God and the upper part of man's soul.

. . . so to have been knit and oned to him, that therein was kept a substance which never might, nor should, be parted from him . . . . (RDL 53.127-128)

. . . that the blessed Trinity made mankind to his image and to his likeness. In the same manner-wise we know that when man fell so deep and so wretchedly by sin, there was none other help to restore man but through him that made man. And he that made man for love, by the same love he would restore man to the same bliss, and overpassing; and like as we were like-made to the Trinity in our first making, our Maker would that we should be like Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, in heaven without end, by the virtue of our again-making. (RDL 10.23)

And when he would, by full accord of all the Trinity, he made us all at once; and in our making he knit us and oned to us himself: by which oneing we are kept as clear and as noble as we were made. (RDL 58.142)

For though the soul be ever like to God in kind and substance, restored by grace, it is often unlike in condition, by sin on man's part. (RDL 43.90)

In order to complete this analysis of the final informing concept in the conceptual field for purgation in Julian, several passages should be noted in which Julian discusses Christ's role in the restoration and perfection of the sense-soul which permits the union of the lower and upper parts of man's soul with God.

For in that same time that God knitted himself to our body in the Virgin's womb, he took our sensual soul: in which taking he, us all having enclosed in him, oned it to our substance: in which oneing he was perfect man. For Christ having knit in him each man that shall be saved, is perfect man. (RDL 57.139)

And these two parts were in Christ, the higher and the lower: which is but one Soul; the higher part was one in peace with God, in full joy and bliss; the lower part, which is sense-nature, suffered for the salvation of mankind. (RDL 55.134)

And of these none shall perish: for our nature that is the higher part is knit to God, in the making; and God is knit to our nature that is the lower part, in our fleshtaking: and thus in Christ our two natures are oned. (RDL 57.138)

. . . and in as much as it is hard and grievous by reason of the sin beheld, which sheweth in our sense-soul, our good Lord Jesus reformeth it by the working in our sense-soul of mercy and grace through the virtue of his blessed passion, and so bringeth it to the rightfulness. (RDL 45.94)

At this point in the contemplative life, after the restoration and perfection of man's sense-soul, he is prepared for illumination and union.

### Margery Kempe

For Margery Kempe there are five main informing concepts which seem to constitute the conceptual field for purgation in her mystical writings: (1) general statements relating to contrition and confession; (2) passages concerned with formal confession to a priest; (3) negation of the natural order and the desires of the flesh which, when accomplished, will facilitate union with and knowledge of God; (4) God's gift of afflictions and their function in the purgational process; and (5) the function of the passion and suffering of Christ during purgation.

The first informing concept in the conceptual field for purgation in Margery consists of the various general statements relating to contrition and confession. These statements contain such traditional thoughts relating to purgation as asking God's mercy for her sins, desiring repentance for her sins, and acknowledging her wickedness. They reflect a rather orthodox conception of contrition and confession; it would seem that Margery is reiterating to a certain extent the language and thought of contemporary confessional manuals.

. . . I trost to owyr Lord 3e han these condicyons eythyr in  
owr wyl or in 3owr affeccyon er ellys in bothyn . . . . (MK I.  
18.41)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The Book of Margery Kempe, ed. Meech and Allen, Book I, Chapter 18, p. 41.

Than sche askyd God mercy & forsoke hir pride, hir coueytyse,  
& desyr that sche had of the worshepyys of the world, & dede  
grett bodyly penawnce, & gan to entyr the wey of euyr-lestyng  
lyfe . . . . (MK I.2.11)

Sche bethowt hir fro hir chyldhod for hir vnkyndnes as ower  
Lord wold put it in hir mende ful many a tyme. And than, sche  
beheldyng hir owyn wykkednes, sche mygth but sorwyn and wepyn &  
euyr preyn for mercy & for-geuenes. (MK I.3.13)

The second part of the conceptual field for purgation in Margery,  
directly related to the first, concerns the assignation of penance by  
the priests to whom Margery confessed. Fulfillment of the acts of  
penance assigned to Margery thus prepared her, at least theoretically,  
for illumination and eventual union with God. It should be noted that  
the language and thought of the following two passages which deal with  
penance also reflect the phraseology and thought of confessional manuals.

Than sche teld hym alle hir synnes & al hir heuynes wyth many  
swemful teerys, & he herd hir ful mekely & benyngly. & sythyn  
he enioyned hir penawns that sche xuld do for hir trespas and  
asoyled hir of hir synnes wyth swet wordys & meke wordys . . . .  
(MK I.32.81)

Neuyr-the-lesse sche was shrevyn many tymes & oftyyn, and dede  
hir penawns what-so-euyr hir confessowr wold jn-joyne hir to do,  
& was gouerned aftyr the rewelys of the Chirch. (MK I.4.16)

One of the specific sins to which Margery continually refers is  
that of "fleshly lusts" or, in a more general sense, her desire for  
and love of the world. The following passages include those phrases  
referring to the world and to the desires of the flesh which Margery  
uses rather frequently, e.g., "all fleshly lust," "earthly thoughts  
and earthly sights," and "joys of the world." Words, phrases, and  
ideas relating to the informing concept of the denial of the world  
form an important part of the conceptual field for purgation in Mar-  
gery's writings.

Sche hatyd the joys of the world. Sche felt no rebellyon in hyr flesch. Sche was strong, as hir thowt, that sche dred no devylle in Helle, for sche dede so gret bodyly penawnce. (MK I.4.13)

Hir mende was al drawyn fro the erdly thowtys & erdly syghtys & sett al to-gedyr in gostly syghtys . . . . (MK I.82.198)

. . . al so wistly qwenche in me al fleschly lust & in alle tho that I haue beholdyn thi blisful body in. (MK 249)

Margery's account of purgation also includes periodic references to the afflictions which she feels God inflicts upon her as part of the process of purgation. These afflictions, moreover, are not only inflicted but also requested. Margery seems to think that the temptations, sufferings, pains, and sorrows form a definite part of the purgational process; they prepare her for illumination and union with God through purification.

Afftyrward God ponyschyd hir wyth many gret & diuers sekenes. (MK I.56.137)

. . . and grawnt me so meche peyne & sorwe in this world that I be not lettyd fro thi blisse & the beholding of thi gloryows face whan I xal passyn hens. (MK 249)

And therefore wend sche that he had forsakyn hir & durst not trostyn to hys mercy, but was labowrd wyth horrybyl temptacyons of lettherye & of dyspeyr ny al the next 3er folwyng . . . . (MK I.4.16)

The last informing concept of the conceptual field for purgation in Margery that we will consider is her understanding of Christ's passion and suffering and its function in purgation. Through an increased awareness of the passion and suffering and a vicarious participation in it, Margery felt that her sins would be overcome and forgiven. By participation in the passion and suffering of Christ she prepared herself for illumination and union.

. . . thorw whech beheldyng the Passyon of owr Lord entryd hir mende, wherthorw sche gan meltyn & al-to-relentyn be terys of pyte & compassyown. (MK I.46.111)

&, whan sche was in the chirch at Schene, sche had gret deuocyon & ful hy contemplacyon. Sche had plentivows teerys of compunccyon & of compassyon in the rememorawns of the bittyr peynys & passyons whch ovr merciful Lord Ihesu Crist suffyrd in hys blissyd man-hod. (MK II.10.245)

. . . for now thu xalt knowe the bettyr what sorwe & schame I suffyrd for thy lofe, and thu schalt haue the more compassyon whan thu thynkyst on my Passyon. (MK I.63.156)

To conclude this chapter, it should be pointed out that since the major conclusions of the chapter are represented by the individual primary conceptual fields for purgation and their informing concepts for each English mystic, it is not necessary at this point to summarize or to consider the chapter's findings in detail. This will also be true for Chapters 4 and 5 wherein primary conceptual fields will be created for each English mystic for illumination and union.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONSTRUCTION OF PRIMARY CONCEPTUAL FIELDS FOR ILLUMINATION FOR EACH ENGLISH MYSTIC

#### Richard Rolle

Rolle's well-known "chapel-experience" wherein he experienced God's love in terms of fire, song, and sweetness forms the primary conceptual framework for his thoughts on illumination. His account of this experience can be briefly stated:

Sedebam quippe in quadam capella, et dum suauitate oracionis uel meditacionis multum delectarer, subito sentiui in me ardorem insolitum et iocundum. (IA 15.189)

I satte forsoth in a chappell & qwhilst with swetnes of prayer or meditacion mikyll I was delityd, sodanly in me I felt a mery heet & vnknawen. (FL I.16.36)

. . . nescio quomodo mox in me concentum canorum sensi, et delectabilissimam armoniam celicus excepi, mecum manentem in mente. Nam cogitacio mea continuo in carmen canorum commutabatur, et quasi odas habui meditando, et eciam oracionibus ipsis et psalmodia eundem sonum edidi. Deinceps usque ad canendum que prius dixeram, pre affluencia suauitatis interne prorupi, occulte quidem, quia tantummodo coram Conditore meo. (IA 15.189-190)

. . . on what maner I wote not sodanly in me noys of songe I felt, & likyngest melody heuynly I toke, with me dwellyng in mynde. Forsoth my toyth continually to myrth of songe was chaungyd, end als wer loueynge I had thinkand, & in prayers & salmys sayand the same sounde I scheuyd, & so forth to synge that before I sayd for plente of inward swetnes I bryst oute, forsoth priuely, for allonly befor my makar. (FL I.16.36)

This feeling of fire, song, and sweetness, which Rolle identifies as the effect of God's love, constitutes the basis of his treatment



of the various aspects of illumination. In fact, most of Rolle's thoughts on illumination are but variations upon this initial experience.

In addition to his discussion of this feeling of fire, song, and sweetness, there are other informing concepts which form the conceptual field for illumination in Rolle: (1) during the illuminative phase the love of God that was substituted for man's love for himself and his world gradually causes man to become more like God; (2) the periodic "ravishings," as Rolle refers to them, which occur during illumination; (3) the increase in God's love, or perhaps an increase in the feeling of God's love in terms of fire, song, and sweetness, which gradually enables man to move closer to complete union with God; (4) the capacity of man for greater love which occurs during illumination; (5) the nature and effect of God's love for the individual becomes greater during the illuminative phase; and (6) man's soul gradually increases in perfection during illumination until it is prepared for the final mystical union with God.

During the illuminative phase, God's love, which entered during the purgative phase, gradually transforms the individual into God's likeness. In the following passage, Rolle carefully describes this transformation:

Transformatiuam eciam uim habet amor, quia amantem transformat in amatum et transfert in ipsum. Unde ignis Spiritus Sancti cor quod ueraciter capit totum incendit, et quasi in ignem conuertit, atque in illam formam redigit que Deo simillima est. (IA 17.196)

A turnyng strenght also has lufe, for the lufand it turnnys in to the lufyd & beris in to hym. Qwharfore fyer of the holy gost

the hart that it treuly takis, al hoyll itt byrnys, & als wer  
in to fyer it turns, and in to that forme it ledis that to gude  
is likist. (FL I.18.41)

Elsewhere Rolle further elaborates upon the transformative effect  
of God's love during illumination:

. . . dum canentis cor igne celico funditus exurit, et in  
eius similitudinem figuratur in quo almiphonum est, et amenum  
sapore superno inebrians affectum, unde et affluit internis  
deliciis et canoro cogitatu gaudet in ardore dileccionis.  
(IA 11.174)

. . . whilst the hart of the singar groundly with heuenly fyer  
is byrnde and in-to his lyknes is figurde in the whilk all  
swete songe is & mery, in sauour heuenly moystand owr affeccion.  
(FL I.12.25)

Assimilatur autem omnis amans suo amato, et similem facit amor  
illum qui amat ei quod amatur. (IA 17.195)

All lufand to ther lufe treuly ar likkynd, & lufe makis hym  
like that lufys to that that is lufyd. (FL I.18.40)

Cuius amor, in cordibus radicans stabilisque effectus trans-  
format nos ad suam similitudinem; et aliam gloriam et diuinam  
plane letificantem mentes amore ardencium in nos infundit.  
(IA 4.156)

Whos lufe in hartis rotyd & made sekyr, vs makes lyke vnto hys  
lyknes, and other ioy, that is to say godly, in-to vs he puttis,  
with byrnyng lufe playnly our myndes myrthand. (FL I.5.10)

Another informing concept in the conceptual field for illumina-  
tion in Rolle is "ravishing" or "being ravished." He considers sev-  
eral different kinds of ravishing, and the primary ones should be  
mentioned. Regarding the first kind, Rolle indicates that the in-  
dividual is "ravished in fleshly feeling" or "rapt by love in the  
feeling of the flesh"; in the second kind, the individual is "rapt  
from bodily feeling to a joyful or dreadful sight." Although the  
first kind may occur during the purgative phase, both kinds are in-  
tegral to the illuminative phase.

For Rolle being ravished involves the sudden effect of love upon the individual which culminates in an intense experience of fire, song, and sweetness which is, according to Rolle, the normal result of experiences occurring during illumination. From this point of view, most of Rolle's thoughts concerning illumination simply elaborate upon his chapel experience. The following passages clearly indicate the nature of "being ravished" for Rolle:

*Conuersus quippe toto corde ad Christum, primo per ueram penitenciam afficitur, et sic cuncta que ad uanitatem pertinent derelinquens, post gustum suauitatis interne ad canendum in sonoro iubilo diuinitus rapietur.* (IA 17.194)

Turnyd forsoth with all my hart to criste, first he trew penance I am tyde, & so all thinge that to vanite longis forsakand, after the taste of gostly swetnes to synge in soundly loueynge godly it sall be rauischyd. (FL I.18.40)

*Multa sunt munera mirifica ac magna, sed nulla sunt talia inter uie dona que tam rare confirmant spem specie inuisibilis uite in animo amante, aut que sic suauiter sedentem consolantur et rapiunt ad cacumen contemplacionis, uel ad consonanciam angelice laudis.* (IA 15.191)

Many ar the meruellus giftys & grett, bot non ar slike emonge the gyftis of this way, the whilk full derely confermys in figure of schaplynes of lyfe vnsene in loueand saule, or the whilk comforths so swetely the sittar, & comforthyd tha rauysch to the heght of contemplacion or acorde of Aungels loueynge. (FL I.17.37)

Rolle's treatment of the general spiritual state of the individual during illumination, e.g., his love for God, his understanding of this love, and the psychological effects that this love have upon him, is largely determined by the sensual results of his chapel experience. Except for slight variations on the fire, song, and sweetness theme, Rolle does not offer any perceptive reflections regarding the state of man's soul during this phase of the contemplative life.

Both Rolle's ideas and his phraseology are repetitive; the general feeling of fire, song, and sweetness is simply stated and amplified, most frequently by the addition of descriptive adjectives. There is not a great deal of substantive thought concerning the soul's state during illumination which provides support for the various descriptions. Calor, canor, and dulcor permeate nearly every statement.

These observations are borne out in the following passages:

. . . cum itaque incessanter ardentissime amat, sicut supradictum est, in se sentiat fervorem felicissimum et sciat se subtiliter exuri igne eterni amoris, persentians dilectissimum suum in desiderato dulcore, in canticum glorie mutatur meditatio, et natura innovata almpiona inuoluitur amenitate. (IA 14.186)

When also it vnescyng & byrnyngly lufys that, as before it is sayd, in the selfe it felis happiest heet & itt knawes the self sotelly byrnyd with fyre of lufe endles, feland his moste belouyd in swetnes desyrd, in to songe of ioy meditacion is turnyd, and kynde enuwyd in heuynly mirth is vnbelappyd. (FL I.15.34)

. . . cuius tamen anima amore melliflua facta est, homini siquidem Christum amanti, celestia speculanti, igne Spiritus Sancti suaviter exurenti! (IA 16.192)

. . . whos sawle neuer-the-les with lufe is made swete; to mane forsoth criste treuly loueand, heuynly thingis behaldand, with fyre of the holy goste swetely byrnde. (FL I.17.38)

. . . quia toti succensi igne altissimi amoris et ardentes ineffabiliter intra animabus suis ita dulciter et deuote dilexerunt Deum, quod quicquid in se senserunt fervor fuit spiritalis, canor celicus et dulcor diuinus. (IA 5.159)

ffor thai all-to-gydyr sett on fyre with fyre of lufe moste heghe, and with-in ther saules byrmand, so swetely & deuoutely thai ha louyd god, that what-some-euer tha felt in thame-self, heet it was gostly, heuynly songe and godly swetnes. (FL I.6.12-13)

The final informing concept in the conceptual field for illumination in Rolle is the function of the illuminative phase itself as

a final preparation of the individual for the unitive or mystical phase of the contemplative life. This is a gradual process and requires a total involvement, almost a submersion, of the individual in the love of God. Again, Rolle uses the feelings acquired during the chapel experience to undergird and describe this gradual development. For Rolle it seems as though there is a direct correlation between the individual's sensitivity to fire, song, and sweetness and his progress in the illuminative phase.

Unde et quasi per gradus infusus donis Spiritus Sancti ad diuine contemplacionis celsitudinem ascendit, in qua eterni amoris ardore requietus ac delectatus, supernis deliciis ut mortalibus fas est affluit. (IA 29.229)

And thus als wer be degrese be giftys of the holy goste to the heght of godis behaldynge it ascendis; in the qwhilk heit of endles lufe restid & gladynd, with heuenly likynge it flows als is lefull to dedely men. (FL I.30.66)

Nimirum ualde uidetur quod mortalis homo in tam diuina dilectione capitur, quod in sua secreiori substantia non sentit nisi solacium supernum, et quasi in organo ascendit in altum concupitum clarificantem contemplari. (IA 4.156)

fful grete meruayle it semys, that mortall man in so hegh lufe of god may be takyn, that he in his moste preuay substance no thing felys bot heuenly solace, & als wer goyng to heghe clete desyre, in noys of organes to be contemplatyue. (FL I.5.10)

Unde et in ipso ardore amoris suauissimi assumuntur ad aspectum amati, et per flammam felicissimam florentes sunt in uirtute et fruuntur factore, migratque mens in melodiam mutata iam manente . . . (IA 5.159)

Qwharefore in byrnyng of swettest lufe tha ar takyn vp to the behaldyng of ther lemman, & be flaume happyest florischand that ar in vertew, & frely loues ther maker: and ther mynde now gos, in-to melody chaungyd that lastys . . . (FL I.6.12)

. . . mens ad amandum mirabiliter incendetur, incensa iocundabitur, iocunda in uitam contemplatiuam eleuabitur. (IA 32.235-36)

. . . the mynde to lufe meruelusly sal be warmyd, & warmyd it sal be gladynd, & glad in-to lyfe contemplatyfe sal be lyft. (FL II.2.71)

### The Cloud of Unknowing

The major part of the mystical thought of the author of The Cloud of Unknowing is concerned with the purgative phase or the preparation of the individual for the contemplative life. There is not a correspondingly thorough or systematic treatment of the illuminative or unitive phases of the contemplative life. For the author of The Cloud the preparation for the contemplative life is much more difficult than the final phases of the mystic way. The sharp stirring of love requiring a definite act of will and the rejection or forgetting of man's self and the natural order within the purgative phase comprise for The Cloud the most difficult part of the contemplative life. And it should be emphasized that especially in The Cloud the author is primarily concerned with developing a definite system for the spiritual life. Systems, moreover, tend to emphasize the initial stages of the contemplative life as well as specific means for achieving spiritual growth. Furthermore, the author of The Cloud generally avoids the descriptive rhetoric which Rolle uses for the last two phases of the contemplative life. He is much more practical and pragmatic than Rolle; he consciously avoids consideration of those experiences, emotions, and feelings which frequently accompany the illuminative and unitive phases.

For these reasons The Cloud's thought regarding the illuminative phase, and those which refer explicitly and implicitly to the unitive phase, are rather scattered, not systematically developed, and not repeated frequently as in Rolle's writings. There are several

main informing concepts, however, which seem to provide a general framework for the conceptual field for illumination in The Cloud: (1) the knowledge of God made known during the illuminative phase; (2) the knowledge of man; (3) the spatial suspension of man's soul between the cloud of forgetting and the cloud of unknowing during the illuminative phase; (4) the gradual perfection of man's soul during illumination; (5) the nature and function of revelations occurring during this phase; and (6) the role of the "beam of ghostly light" during illumination.

According to the author of The Cloud, the illuminative phase does not produce or convey any new substantial knowledge about the nature of God. For the most part, God remains incomprehensible to man.

For of alle other creatures & theire werkes--3e, & of the werkes of God self--may a man thorou grace haue fulheed of knowing, & wel to kon thinke on hem; bot of God him-self can no man thinke. & therefore I wele leue al that thing that I can think, & chese to my leue that thing that I can-not think. For whi he may wel be loued, bot not thought. By loue may he be getyn & holden; bot bi thought neither. (CU 6.25-26)

For wite thou rigt wel that in this werk thou schalt ne more be-heldyng haue to the qualitees of the being of God than to the qualitees of the beyng of thi-self. (BPC 143)

& therfore swink & swete in al that thou canst & mayst, for to gete thee a trewe knowyng & a feling of thi-self a wreche as thou arte. & than I trowe that sone after that thou schalt haue a trewe knowyng & a felyng of God as he is; not as he is in hym-self, for that may no man do bot him-self . . . . (CU 14.42)

But the author does point out that what may be known of God in this life is known through love rather than through knowledge or knowing. For example,

For whi loue may reche to God in this liif, bot not knowing. (CU 8.33)

& oure soule, bi vertewe of this reformyng grace, is mad sufficient at the fulle to comprehende al him by loue, the whiche is incomprehensible to alle create knowable mi3t, as is aungel & mans soule. (I mene by theire knowyng & not by theire louyng, & therfore I clepe hem in this caas knowable mi3tes.) (CU 4.18)

However, even though the author of The Cloud indicates that man may attain knowledge of God's nature through love rather than through knowledge itself, he remains rather vague in his descriptions and discussions of this knowledge gained through love. Thus, as the following passages illustrate, statements concerning God's nature during the illuminative phase tend to be both general and rather obvious.

In this tyme it is that a soule hath comprehendid, after the lesson of Seynte Poule, with alle seyntes--not fully, bot in maner & in partyre, as it is acordyng vnto this werk--whiche is the lengthe & the breed, the hei3t & the depnes of Euerlastyng & Al-llouely, Al-mi3ty & Alle-witty God. The euerlastyngnes of God is his lengthe; his loue is his breed; his mi3t is his hei3t; & his wisdam is his depnes. (CU 38.75)

For parauenture he wil bryng to thi minde diuerse ful feire & wonderful pointes of his kyndnes, & sey that he is ful swete & ful louyng, ful gracious & ful mercyful. (CU 7.27)

Bot where schal soche a soule be founden so frely fastnyd & foundid in the fei3, so fully mekid in nou3tmyng of it-self & so louely led & fed the loue of oure Lorde, with ful knowing & felyng of his al-mi3tyheed, his vnwetyn wisdom & his glorious goodnes . . . . (BPC 149)

The Cloud and its attendant treatises are notable for their lack of treatment of the nature of man during the illuminative phase. Most mystical writers stress the changed condition of the individual, the increase in his capacity for love, and the general effects of the contemplative life upon him during the illuminative phase. The author of The Cloud, however, is much more concerned with the mechanics of his contemplative system, e.g., the cloud of unknowing, the cloud of forgetting, and the sharp stirring of love. But he does consider,



although infrequently and indirectly, the nature of man during the illuminative phase. According to The Cloud, man's love of the natural order is gradually changed during illumination to love of the supernatural.

. . . by soche a hid schewyng bryng thee oute of the boistouste of bodely felyng into the purete & depnes of goostly felyng; & so forthermore at the last to help thee to knit the goostly knot of brennyng loue bitwix thee & thi God, in goostly onheed & accordyng of wille. (CU 47.88)

Bot euer when thou felist thi mynde occupyed with no maner of thyng that is bodely or goostly, bot only with the self substaunce of God, as it is & may be in the preof of the werk of this book: then thou arte abouen thi-self & vnder thi God. (CU 67.120)

Wonderfully is a mans affeccion varied in goostly felyng of this nou3t when it is nou3where wrou3t. (CU 69.122)

Finally, several passages from The Book of Privy Counselling should be noted wherein it is indicated that man's nature during the illuminative phase is changed with respect to its ability to receive love and grace.

That is, than schal thi gostly affeccion be fillid with the fulheed of loue & of vertuous leuyng in God, thi grounde & thi purete of spirit. (BPC 144)

For grace in it-self is so hei3, so pure & so goostly, that it may not be felt in oure sensible partye. The tokenes therof mowen, bot not it. (BPC 168-69)

An interesting, and extensively treated, part of the author's consideration of the illuminative phase is his conception of man or man's soul as suspended between the cloud of forgetting (which signifies the natural order) and the cloud of unknowing (which usually signifies the point of entrance to union with God). In order to achieve union with God man must pass through both this middle ground

between the cloud of forgetting and the cloud of unknowing and the cloud of unknowing itself. At this point in the illuminative phase man exists in a state of suspension between the cloud of forgetting and the cloud of unknowing. The author of The Cloud's description of this state of suspension in terms of non-spatial characteristics should be noted:

Bot now thou mayst not come to heuen not bodely, bot goostly.  
& it schal be so goostly that it schal not be on bodely maner:  
nowther upwardes ne donwardes, ne on o side ne on other, be-  
hynde ne before. (CU 59.110)

. . . bot priuely ment in the depnes of spirit, the whiche is  
the heigt (for in goostlynes alle is one, heigt & depnes,  
lengthe & brede). (CU 37.75)

For heuen goostly is as neig down as up, & up as down, bi-  
hinde as before, before as behynde, on o syde as other, in so  
moche that who-so had a trewe desire for to be at heuyn, then  
that same tyme he were in heuen goostly. For the hize & the  
nexte wey theder is ronne by desires, & not by pases of feet.  
(CU 60.112)

& it schuld by sum skyle rather be clepid a sodeyn chaunging,  
then any steedly steryng. For tyme, stede, & body, thees three  
schuld be forgeten in all gostly worching. (CU 59.111)

Several ideas concerning revelations or related phenomena which occur during illumination remain to be considered in order to complete the conceptual field for illumination in The Cloud. Toward the end of the illuminative phase, man, suspended as it were between the cloud of forgetting and the cloud of unknowing, is directed to "smite upon that thick cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love." According to the author of The Cloud, God sometimes responds to man's smiting upon this thick cloud of unknowing with a "beam of ghostly light." In one sense this response of ghostly light may be viewed as a kind of special revelation. But it is most certainly a form of

God's grace, love, or mercy operative within the illuminative phase.

Than wil he sumtyme parauenture seend oute a beme of goostly  
light, peersyng this cloude of vnknowing that is bitwix thee &  
hym, and schewe thee sum of his priuete, the whiche man may not,  
ne kan not, speke. (CU 27.62)

. . . I sey that it behoueth algates be good in his kynde, for  
whi it is a beme of the licnes of God. (CU 8.30)

Finally, the following passages may also refer to this beam of ghostly  
light as a form of God's grace:

In grete comendacion of this listi sleight worching, the whiche  
in it-self is the heig wisdom of the Godheed graciousli de-  
scendyng into mans soule, knitting it & onyng it vnto him-self  
in goostly sleight & prudence of spirit . . . . (BPC 145)

### Walter Hilton

As I indicated in our initial discussion of illumination, the  
illuminative phase of the contemplative life involves two primary  
ideas: (1) an increase in the individual's understanding of the na-  
ture of God and man which is frequently conveyed through various  
revelations and illuminations; and (2) the continuation of the prepar-  
ation of the individual during illumination for union with God, the  
final end of the contemplative life. Walter Hilton's conception of  
the illuminative phase involves in a general way a consideration of  
these two ideas. However, there are a number of other concepts, re-  
lated to these two central ideas, which should be considered as con-  
stituting the conceptual field for illumination in Hilton's mystical  
thought: (1) the concept of murkness or nought; (2) the nosce te  
ipsum theme as found within the illuminative phase; (3) reforming  
in feeling or reforming in faith and in feeling; (4) the nature and

function of visions and revelations during illumination; (5) the role of God's grace and love; (6) Hilton's treatment of understanding and imagination within the illuminative phase; (7) the function of the ghostly or inner eye; and (8) the knowledge of God or Jesus imparted during illumination.

The concept of murkness or nought in Hilton apparently functions in a manner similar to The Cloud's cloud of unknowing. According to Hilton, after the initial stages of purgation when the individual has gradually withdrawn himself from the world, he enters a state of stasis or suspension wherein he is neither in union with the world or with God. Although he has nearly severed his relations with the world, he is not yet in union with God nor does he possess more knowledge of him. In one sense, it is a transitional phase, which occurs prior to the knowledge of God that he will receive through revelation or illumination at later stages in the illuminative phase.

This night is nought else but a forbearing and a withdrawing of the thought of the soul from earthly things, by great desire and yearning for to love and see and feel Jhesu and ghostly things. (SP II.24.321)

. . . then is this murkness restful, when the soul is hid for a time from the painful feeling of all such vain thoughts, and only is rested in desire and longing to Jhesu with a ghostly beholding of him . . . . (SP II.24.326)

And therefore, me thinketh, he that will have the light of grace and fulsomely feel the love of Jhesu in his soul, he must forsake all the false light of worldly love, and abide in this murkness. (SP II.27.343)

And then is the soul alone, mickle estranged from fellowship of worldly lovers though her body be in midst of them; full far departed from fleshly affections of creatures. (SP II.40.421)

Since God or Jesus dwells within man, man is able to attain knowledge of God through knowledge of self. However, the knowledge of God derived from self-examination during illumination tends to be expressed in rather general terms. Such references to this knowledge of God as "ghostly knowing of God," "ghostly sight of Jhesu," and "the knowing of God" are relatively non-informative. Apparently Hilton emphasizes the need to know oneself and through this activity to know that God is present within man more than any actual knowledge of God gained during this process.

It is commonly said that a soul shall see our Lord within all things and within itself. (SP II.33.376)

. . . and that is for to enter within into thine own soul by meditation, for to know what it is, and by the knowing thereof come to the ghostly knowing of God. (SP I.40.92)

. . . for it is a feeling of themselves first, and a rising above themselves through burning desire to the sight of Jhesu, or else if I shall say more soothly this gracious feeling is a ghostly sight of Jhesu. (SP II.27.336-337)

Whereas for Hilton being reformed in faith belongs primarily to the purgative phase, being reformed in both faith and feeling seems to be an important part of the illuminative phase, since it occurs directly prior to contemplation itself which is, according to Hilton, mystical union with God. Being reformed in faith and feeling describes that state of man within which he experiences "new gracious feelings," possesses "perfect love and charity," and, at least for Hilton, is clothed in a "new light of soothfastness, holiness, and righteousness." In this sense reformation in faith and in feeling constitutes a necessary step in the individual's preparation for perfect contemplation of God.

For if it were reformed, then should it have stable mind, clear sight, and clean burning love in God and ghostly things aye lastingly, as it had in the beginning. (SP II.4.237)

For by the first reforming [reforming in faith] the image of sin is not destroyed but it is left as it were all whole in feeling. But the second reforming [reforming in faith and in feeling] destroys the old feelings of this image of sin, and brings into the soul new gracious feelings through working of the Holy Ghost. (SP II.5.242)

. . . neither grace only without full working of a soul that in it is, nor working alone without grace, bringeth a soul to reforming in feeling; the which reforming standeth in perfect love and charity. (SP II.20.300)

. . . your reason, that is properly the image of God through grace of the Holy Ghost shall be clothed in a new light of soothfastness, holiness and righteousness and then it is reformed in feeling. (SP II.31.368)

Hilton constantly stresses the fact that God's grace and love are necessary in order for man to progress in the contemplative life. We have seen that this was true for purgation; and it is particularly valid for the illuminative phase. The love which God confers upon man during the contemplative life, especially during the illuminative phase, is thought by Hilton to be God or Jhesu himself.

But when he giveth himself in his godhead ghostly to our souls for our salvation, and maketh us for to know him and love him, then loveth he us fully. (SP II.34.383)

Therefore the most token of love showed to us, as me thinketh, is this; that he giveth himself in his godhead to our souls. (SP II.34.383)

This love is nought else but Jhesu himself, that for love worketh all this in a man's soul and reformeth it in feeling to his likeness . . . . (SP II.34.386)

Furthermore, because of God's love or grace that is bestowed upon man during illumination, his knowledge of the supernatural order is increased.

This love draweth the soul from fleshlihood into ghostliness, from earthly feeling into heavenly savour, and from vain beholding of worldly things into contemplation of ghostly creatures, and of God's privities. (SP II.34.386)

And what comfort and ghostly delight, savour and sweetness, a soul may feel then in this ghostly work through divers illuminations--inly perceivings, privy knowings and sudden touchings of the Holy Ghost--by assay the soul may wit and else not. (SP II.43.448)

Finally, God's grace during illumination affects man's mind, reason, and will as well as his capacity for love:

That is for to say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind, reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth full the bone . . . . (SP I.31.69)

When these mights [mind, reason, and will] are through grace fulfilled in all understanding of the will of God and ghostly wisdom, then hath the soul new gracious feelings. (SP II.31.367-8)

For love is cause why a soul cometh to this sight and to this knowing; and that love is not the love that a soul hath in itself to God, but the love that our Lord hath to a sinful soul that can right not love him is cause why this soul cometh to this knowing and to this love that cometh out of it. (SP II.34.380-381)

Another informing concept within the conceptual field for illumination in Hilton is his treatment of understanding or reason and imagination. For Hilton the illumination of man's understanding is much more important for the contemplative life than the illumination of man's imagination. This corroborates Hilton's feeling that the imagination is responsible for the various images and visions as found in Rolle's writings. According to Hilton, reason, as a higher faculty than imagination and as that part of man most closely allied with the "image of God," must be gradually transformed during the illuminative phase in order for man to gain knowledge of God.

. . . and illumine their reason in knowing of soothfastness and kindling their affection in burning of love: and then shall

they both burn and shine. They shall through virtue of this heavenly sun burn in perfect love, and shine in knowing of God and ghostly things, for then be they reformed in feeling. (SP II.26.334-335)

But though this be sooth that this love in imagination be good, nevertheless a soul should desire for to have ghostly love in understanding of the Godhead; for that is the end and the full bliss of the soul, and all other bodily beholdings are but means leading a soul to it. (SP II.30.362)

These are not ghostly feelings, for ghostly feelings are felt in the mights of the soul, principally in understanding and love and little in imagination; but these feelings are in imagination, and therefore they are not ghostly feelings . . . . (SP II.30.364)

Hilton's concept of the "opening of the ghostly or inner eye" is an idea to which he frequently refers in his consideration of illumination, especially in The Scale of Perfection. During the illuminative phase, after the initial period of purgation has been undergone, man's inner or ghostly eye is opened. This opening of the ghostly or inner eye represents a new level of man's spiritual awareness during the mystic way. According to Hilton, man not only achieves knowledge of God but also experiences a definite change in his overall spiritual condition. He describes this change, which evidently occurs concurrently with the opening of the inner eye, as follows:

Show me then a soul that through inspiration of grace hath opening of the ghostly eyes into beholding of Jhesu; that is departed and drawn out from love of the world, so far forth that it hath purity and poverty of spirit, ghostly rest, inward silence and peace in conscience, highness of thought, onliness and privity of heart, waking sleep of the spouse; that hath lost liking and joy of this world, taken with delice of heavenly savour, aye thirsting in softly seeking the blessed presence of Jhesu; and I dare hardly pronounce that this soul burneth all in love and shineth in ghostly light, worthy for to come to the name into the worship of the spouse, for it is reformed in feeling, made able and ready to contemplation. (SP II.41.426)



This opening of the ghostly eyes is that lighty murkness and rich nought that I spoke of before, and it may be called: purity of spirit and ghostly rest, inward stillness and peace of conscience, highness of thought and onliness of soul, a lively feeling of grace and privity of heart, the waking sleep of the spouse and tasting of heavenly savour, burning in love and shining in light, entry of contemplation and reforming in feeling. (SP II.40.416-17)

Even though knowledge of God results from this opening of man's inner or ghostly eye, this knowledge apparently remains vague and general.

That is, they shall see God, not with their fleshly eye but with the inner eye, that is understanding cleansed and illumined through the grace of the Holy Ghost . . . . (SP II.11.266)

For he openeth the eyes of the soul and showeth to the soul the sight of Jhesu wonderfully, and the knowing of him, as the soul may suffer it thus by little and by little; and by that sight he ravisheth all the affection of the soul to him. (SP II.34.385)

. . . when the inner eye is opened through grace for to have a little sight of Jhesu, then shall the soul turn lightly enough all such words of bodily things into ghostly understanding. (SP II.33.378)

The final informing concept in the conceptual field for illumination in Hilton is the knowledge of God or Jhesu which is revealed to man during the illuminative phase. The knowledge of God is considered under this last informing concept should be distinguished from the knowledge of God which resulted from the opening of man's inner eye since it represents a more formal and systematic treatment of the knowledge of God by Hilton during illumination. This more thorough discussion of the knowledge of God imparted during illumination may be divided into two main categories: (1) the vision or sight of Jhesu; and (2) the effects of this sight of Jhesu upon the individual. Hilton describes the sight or vision of Jhesu as follows:

Behold him well, for he goeth before thee, not in bodily likeness, but unseeably by privy presence of his might. (SP II.24.318)

. . . right so this ghostly shadow is made of the blessed unseeable light of the godhead, and of the manhood oned thereto, showed to a devout soul. (SP II.30.361)

And if thou find him as I have said that is if thou may in cleanness of conscience feel the homely and the peaceful presence of that blessed man, Jhesu Christ as a shadow or glimmering of Him . . . . (SP I.48.118)

. . . and the soul is so comforted, and so borne up with the soft feeling of love that it hath of the sight of Jhesu . . . . (SP II.36.396)

As these passages indicate, Hilton emphasizes the vision or sight itself and does not attempt to describe the visions in precise detail. Phrases such as "the blessed unseeable light of the godhead," "the homely and the peaceful presence of that blessed man," and "privy presence of his might" are characteristic of his treatment of the vision or sight of God or Jhesu.

Hilton usually expresses the effects of this sight or vision of Jhesu upon the individual in terms of such general phrases as "ghostly sweetness," "inly savour," "ghostly savour and sweetness," and "delight in him of his ghostly presence." The overall effect of the visions is more sensual than intellectual or spiritual. And the description of these effects by Hilton is strikingly reminiscent of Rolle.

. . . in ghostly savour and sweetness of the love and the sight of God; by the which sight and feeling my soul shall be fed. (SP I.32.72)

. . . a soul may never feel ghostly the burning love of Jhesu Christ nor have homeliness of his gracious presence nor clear sight of ghostly things by light of understanding. (SP I.42.97)

. . . but thou might through devout and continual beholding of the meekness of his precious manhead feel his goodness and the grace of his godhead, when thy desire is eased and holpen and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence . . . . (SP I.25.57)

### Julian of Norwich

In constructing a conceptual field for illumination in Julian, we will be particularly concerned with the knowledge of the nature of God and of Christ, two concepts frequently associated with the illuminative phase. However, three other ideas which also form part of the conceptual field for illumination will be considered as well: (1) the effect of the visions or revelations in the Revelations upon the individual during illumination, particularly the effects of the knowledge of the nature of God and Christ; (2) the function of mercy, grace, and love during the illuminative phase; and (3) the general theory of visions and revelations as set forth and developed in Julian's Revelations of Divine Love.

The main informing concepts in the conceptual field for illumination in Julian are the nature of God and the nature of Christ as revealed to her during illumination. As the following passages indicate, Julian frequently uses a single word to denote a particular attribute or characteristic of God. Thus, God is described as truth, love, peace, life, light, might, wisdom, and grace. Goodness is perhaps the most frequent appellation.

And notwithstanding all this, I saw soothfastly that our Lord was never wroth, nor ever shall be. For he is God: Good, Life, Truth, Love, Peace; his Clarity and his Unity suffereth him not to be wroth. For I saw truly that it is against the property of His Might to be wroth, and against the property of His Goodness. God is the Goodness that may not be wroth, for He is not other but Goodness: our soul is oned to Him, unchangeable Goodness, and between God and our soul is neither wrath nor forgiveness in His sight. (RDL 46.97)

I had, in part, touching, sight, and feeling in three properties of God, in which the strength and effect of all the revelation

standeth: and they were seen in every shewing, and most properly in the twelfth, where it saith oftentimes: It is I. The properties are these: Life, Love, and Light. In life is marvellous homeliness, and in love is gentle courtesy, and in light is endless nature-hood. These properties were in one goodness; unto which goodness my Reason would be oned, and cleave to it with all its might. (RDL 83.199)

And all of God's making: for He is endless sovereign Truth, endless sovereign Wisdom, endless sovereign Love, unmade; and man's soul is a creature in God which hath the same properties made, and evermore it doeth that it was made for: it seeth God, it beholdeth God, and it loveth God. (RDL 44.93)

Julian also considers the nature of God as revealed during the illuminative phase in terms of his being present in all things:

And after this I saw God in a Point, that is to say, in mine understanding, by which sight I saw that He is in all things. (RDL 11.26)

. . . See! I am God: see! I am in all thing: see! I do all thing: see! I lift never mine hands off my works, nor ever shall, without end: see! I lead all thing to the end I ordained it to from without beginning, by the same Might, Wisdom and Love whereby I made it. How should any thing be amiss? (RDL 11.28)

And in several other passages Julian emphasizes God's presence with man at all times and in all places.

Thus is God our steadfast Ground: and He shall be our full bliss and make us unchangeable, as He is, when we are there. (RDL 49.105)

But he willeth that we trust that he is lastingly with us. And that in three manner. He is with us in heaven, very man in his own person, us updrawing; and that was shewed in the shewing of the spiritual thirst. And he is with us in earth, us leading; and that was shewed in the third shewing, where I saw God in a point. And he is with us in our soul, endlessly dwelling, us ruling and keeping; and that was shewed in the sixteenth shewing, as I shall tell. (RDL 52.123-124)

Julian discusses the nature and role of Christ during illumination much more frequently in the Revelations than she does the nature of God. In fact most of her revelations, and her reflections on these

revelations, focus either on the nature of Christ or on the relationship between Christ and Julian. The dominant characteristics of Christ's nature which Julian considers within the illuminative phase are his love and compassion. She often notes the graciousness, tenderness, and gentleness with which this love is bestowed.

In this same time our Lord shewed me a spiritual sight of his homely loving. I saw that he is to us everything that is good and comfortable for us: He is our clothing that for love wrap-peth us, claspeth us, and all encloseth us for tender love, that He may never leave us; being to us all-thing that is good, as to mine understanding. (RDL 5.10)

Also our courteous Lord in the same time he shewed full surely and mightily the endlessness and the unchangeability of his love; and, afterward, that by his great goodness and his grace inwardly keeping, the love of him and our soul shall never be departed in two, without end. (RDL 79.192)

Love, joy, and mirth also characterize Julian's descriptions of the nature of Christ during illumination. This is particularly true of her account of the vision of her Lord in heaven.

Then I saw the Lord take no place in His own house, but I saw Him royally reign in His house, fulfilling it with joy and mirth, Himself endlessly to gladden and to solace His dearworthy friends, full homely and full courteously, with marvellous melody of endless love, in His own fair blessed countenance. Which glorious countenance of the Godhead fulfillleth the Heavens with joy and bliss. (RDL 14.33)

Stark, vivid, physical descriptions of Christ's passion and suffering which stem from her visions and revelations also form part of Julian's discussion of the knowledge of Christ during illumination. Frequently Julian uses these descriptions of Christ's passion and suffering to consider the nature of her Lord's relationship to her. For example, the passion and suffering of Christ seem to intensify the love and compassion that Julian feels her Lord has for her. In this sense, the visions of Christ's passion and suffering

during illumination actually convey for Julian knowledge of the nature of Christ.

In this moment suddenly I saw the red blood trickle down from under the Garland hot and freshly and right plenteously, as it were in the time of His Passion when the Garland of thorns was pressed on His blessed head . . . . (RDL 4.8)

And after this I saw, beholding, the body plenteously bleeding of the Scourging, as thus: The fair skin was broken full deep into the tender flesh with sharp smiting all about the sweet body. So plenteously the hot blood ran out that there was neither seen skin nor wound, but as it were all blood. (RDL 12.29)

For our courteous Lord shewed his passion to me in five manners: of which the first is the bleeding of the head; the second is, discolouring of his face; the third is, the plenteous bleeding of the body, in seeming as from the scourging; the fourth is, the deep dying: these four are aforetold for the pains of the passion. And the fifth is this that was shewed for the joy and the bliss of the passion. (RDL 23.49)

Finally, to conclude our analysis of this informing concept concerning the nature of God and Christ during illumination, it should be emphasized that God's love for man and God as love dominate Julian's reflections on the nature of God and Christ during the illuminative phase. This is corroborated in her conclusion to the Revelations:

And fifteen years after, and more, I was answered in ghostly understanding, saying thus: Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Learn it well: Love was His meaning. Who shewed it thee? Love. What shewed He thee? Love. Wherefore shewed it He? For Love. Hold thee therein and thou shalt learn and know more in the same. But thou shalt never know nor learn therein other thing without end. Thus was I learned that Love was our Lord's meaning. (RDL 86.202)

And I saw full surely that ere God made us He loved us; which love was never slacked, nor ever shall be. And in this love He hath done all His works; and in this love He hath made all things profitable to us; and in this love our life is everlasting. In our making we had beginning; but the love wherein He made us was in Him from without beginning: in which love we have our beginning. And all this shall we see in God, without end. (RDL 86.203)

Words, phrases, and ideas used to describe the various effects that Julian's visions and revelations had upon her during illumination, particularly those effects resulting from knowledge of God and his relationship with her, constitute the next informing concept within the conceptual field for illumination in Julian. In the following passage Julian considers the general effect of gladness, peace, and rest that she experienced during and after her various revelations:

And after this he shewed a sovereign ghostly pleasance in my soul. I was fulfilled with the everlasting sureness, mightily sustained without any painful dread. This feeling was so glad and so ghostly that I was in all peace and in rest, that there was nothing in earth that should have grieved me. (RDL 15.34-35)

This feeling of peace and serenity seems to be an integral part of Julian's spiritual state or condition following her revelations during illumination. Specific effects produced by a revelation of God's nature upon her capacity to understand God are also mentioned in the Revelations. The following passage illustrates these effects quite well:

He kindleth our understanding, he directeth our ways, he easeth our conscience, he comfortheth our soul, he lighteneth our heart, and giveth us, in part, knowing and believing in his blissful godhead, with gracious mind in his sweet manhood and his blessed passion, with reverent marvelling in his high, overpassing goodness; and maketh us to love all that he loveth, for his love, and to be well-pleased with him and all his works. And when we fall, hastily he raiseth us by his lovely calling and gracious touching. (RDL 61.152)

Other effects of the visions and illuminations such as that man's "life is grounded and rooted in love," that man's soul is both similar to and one to God, and that man has his keeping "in the endless Might of God, in the endless Wisdom, and in the endless Goodness" should also be mentioned as part of this informing concept.

For this was shewed: that our life is all grounded and rooted in love, and without love we may not live; and therefore to the soul that of his special grace seeth so far into the high, marvellous goodness of God, and seeth that we are endlessly oned to him in love, it is the most impossible that may be, that God should be wroth. (RDL 49.103)

And thus was my understanding led of God to see in him and to understand, to perceive and to know, that our soul is made-trinity, like to the unmade blissful trinity, known and loved from without beginning, and in the making oned to the maker, as it is aforesaid. This sight was full sweet and marvellous to behold, peaceable, restful, sure, and delectable. (RDL 55.133)

For as verily as we have our being of the endless Might of God and of the endless Wisdom and of the endless Goodness, so verily we have our keeping in the endless Might of God, in the endless Wisdom, and in the endless Goodness. (RDL 49.103-104)

Finally, a single passage should be noted wherein Julian considers the effects of visions and revelations during the illuminative phase in terms of "five manner of workings":

For I felt in me five manner of workings, which be these: enjoying, mourning, desire, dread, and sure hope. Enjoying: for God gave me understanding and knowing that it was himself that I saw; mourning: and that was for failing; desire: and that was I might see Him ever more and more, understanding and knowing that we shall never have full rest till we see him verily and clearly in heaven; dread was: for it seemed to me in all that time that that sight should fail, and I be left to myself; sure hope was in the endless love: that I saw I should be kept by his mercy and brought to his bliss. (RDL 47.99-100)

God's grace, love, and mercy, previously considered as part of the conceptual field for purgation in Julian, forms the last informing concept in the primary conceptual field for illumination. For Julian God's assistance is evidently present throughout the entire contemplative life. According to Julian, God by means of his grace during illumination brings the individual to "heavenly knowing and higher loving," to "spiritual sights and feelings," and in general to an increased understanding of God and of man's relationship to him.



Her consideration of God's love, mercy, and grace as operative within the illuminative phase may be illustrated by the following passages:

. . . whereby I might, by the help of our Lord and His grace, increase and rise to more heavenly knowing and higher loving. (RDL 46.97)

And then shall we, with His sweet grace, in our own meek continuant prayer come unto Him now in this life by many privy touchings of sweet spiritual sights and feeling, measured to us as our simpleness may bear it. (RDL 43.91)

Mercy worketh: keeping, suffering, quickening, and healing; and all is tenderness of love. And grace worketh: raising, rewarding, endlessly overpassing that which our longing and our travail deserveth, spreading abroad and shewing the high plentiful largess of God's royal Lordship in His marvellous courtesy; and this is of the abundance of love. For grace worketh our dreadful failing into high, worshipful rising; and grace worketh our sorrowful dying into holy, blissful life. (RDL 48.102)

### Margery Kempe

Since those sections of Margery Kempe's The Book of Margery Kempe that deal with the contemplative life are concerned primarily with visions, revelations, and illuminations, the illuminative phase constitutes the most important part of the contemplative life in her writings. Because of her emphasis upon illumination, our discussion of the illuminative phase in Margery will necessarily be more thorough and extensive than for her purgative and unitive phases. The following main informing concepts comprise the conceptual field for illumination in Margery: (1) the objects of her visions, revelations, and illuminations; (2) her references to and descriptions of the various visions; (3) Margery's inability to describe in detail the nature or content of the visions; (4) Margery's consideration of the

smells, sounds, and sights which frequently accompany the visions; (5) the physical effects of the visions upon Margery; (6) other effects of the visions; (7) statements intended to provide "specific" information about the visions; and (8) the nature and function of grace and illumination during the illuminative phase.

The main objects of Margery's visions are Jesus and Mary, particularly the former. These visions, moreover, are apparently limited to the presence of Jesus and Mary in one form or another. Such phrases as "in the sight of the soul," "with the ghostly eye," and "the mind was ravished into beholding" most frequently accompany Margery's accounts of the visions; and they usually describe the manner of reception of the vision itself.

Than was the mende so raueschyd in-to the childhod of Crist  
for desir that sche had for to see hym . . . . (MK I.83.200)

. . . hir mende was raueschyd in-to beholdyng of owr Lady  
offeryng hyr blisful Sone to the preyst Simeon in the Tempyl,  
as verily to hir gostly vndirstondyng as 3yf sche had be ther  
in hir bodily presens for to an offeryd wyth owr Ladys ownny  
persone. (MK I.82.198)

Whan the sayd creatur beheld this gloriows syght in hir  
sowle . . . . (MK I.79.188)

Sche had so very contemplacyon in the sygth of hir sowle as  
yf Crist had hangyn befor hir bodily eye in hys manhode.  
(MK I.28.70)

Events relating to the passion or the passion itself usually provide the setting or context for Margery's visions. In fact, most of her visions are concerned directly or indirectly with Christ's passion and suffering.

Than sche beheld in the syght of hir sowle owr blisful Lord  
Crist Ihesu comyng to-hys-Passyon-ward . . . . (MK I.79.187)

An-other tyme, as the creatur lay in hir contemplycyon in a chapel of owr Lady, hir mynde was ocupijd in the Passyon of owr Lord Ihesu Crist, & hyr thowt verily that she saw owr Lord aperyn to hir gostly syght in hys manhod with hys wowndys bledyng as fresche as thow he had ben scorgyd be-forn hir. (MK I.85.207)

. . . sodeynly ocupijd the hert of this creatur, drawyng hir mende al holy in-to the Passyon of owr Lord Crist Ihesu, whom sche behelde wyth hir gostly eye in the syght of hir sowle as verily as thei sche had seyn hys precyows body betyn, scorgyd, & crucifyed wyth hir bodily eye . . . . (MK I.57.140)

Margery's description of the visions themselves forms the next informing concept in the conceptual field for illumination. She tends to use certain phrases almost exclusively to describe the visions, e.g., "holy thoughts," "holy or high meditations," "high contemplation," and "ghostly dalliance." Rarely does she elaborate upon these phrases or use alternative phrases. The following passages from her Book illustrate clearly her propensity for using the same phrases and for avoiding careful description and analysis.

. . . & schewyd hir the grace that God put in hir sowle of compuncyon, contricyon, swetnesse & deuocyon, compassyon whyth holy meditacyon & hy contemplycyon, & ful many holy spechys & dalyawns that owyr Lord spak to hir sowle, and many wondirful reuelacyons . . . . (MK I.18.42)

And, as sche befor had many gloryows visyonys & hy contemplycyon in the manhod of owr Lord . . . . (MK I.59.145)

. . . owr mercyful Lord Crist Ihesu visityd hys creatur wyth many holy meditacyons & many hy contemplycyonys & many swet comfortys. (MK I.44.107)

In addition to the rather general descriptions of many of the visions, Margery states at several points her inability to describe or consider in detail the content of the visions themselves. Frequently she will indicate that the meaning of a particular vision is beyond her understanding or comprehension.

Sche was so ful of holy thowtys & medytacyons & holy contem-  
placyons in the Passyon of owyr Lord Ihesu Crist & holy daly-  
awns that owyr Lord Ihesu Crist dalyed to hir sowle that sche  
cowde neuyr expressyn hem aftyr, so hy & so holy thei weryn.  
(MK I.29.71-72)

Sche had many an holy thowt & many an holy desyr which sche  
cowde neuyr tellyn ne rehersyn ne hir tunge myth neuyr ex-  
pressyn the habundawnce of grace that sche felt. Blissyd be  
owr Lord of alle hys gyftys. (MK I.78.187)

. . . it wer so holy & so hy that sche was abaschyd to tellyn  
hem to any creatur, & also it weryn so hy abouyn hir bodily  
wittys that sche myth neuyr expressyn hem wyth hir bodily tunge  
liche as sche felt hem. (MK I.83.201)

Another informing concept in the conceptual field for illumi-  
nation in Margery consists of the descriptions of her visions in terms  
of heat, sounds, melodies, and smells. Sounds and melodies, in fact,  
dominate the sensual phenomena which accompany her various visions  
and illuminations.

And also sche herd many tymys a voys of a swet brydde syngyn  
in hir ere, and oftyn-tymys sche herd swet sowndys & melodijs  
that passyd hir witte for to tellyn hem. (MK I.89.219)

Sum-tyme sche herd wyth hir bodily erys sweche sowndys & melo-  
dijs that . . . . (MK I.35.88)

. . . sche herd a sownd of melodye so swet & delectable, hir  
thowt, as sche had ben in Paradyse. (MK I.3.11)

&, whyl sche dalyed in the Passyon of owyr Lord Ihesu Crist,  
sche herd so hedows a melodye that sche mygth not ber it.  
(MK I.17.39)

Several passages referring to smells and heat should be mentioned:

Sum-tyme sche felt swet smellys wyth hir nose . . . . (MK I.35.87)

Also owr Lord af hir an-other tokne, the whech enduryd a-  
bowtyn xvj 3er & it encresyd euyr mor & mor, & that was a  
flawme of fyer wondir hoot & delectabyl & ryth comfortabyl,  
nowt wastyng but euyr incresyng, of lowe, for, thow the wedyr  
wer neuyr so colde, sche felt the hete brennyng in hir brest  
& at hir hert, as verily as a man schuld felyn the material  
fyer 3yf he put hys hand or hys fynger therin. (MK I.35.88)

The effects that the visions and revelations had upon Margery are often considered in terms of "weeping and sobbing," "weeping and sobbing plenteously," "crying," and "weeping or sobbing boisterously." Passages in her Book which describe the effects of the visions demonstrate little substantive variation from these phrases.

. . . & owr Lord sent hir so hy deuocyon & so hy meditacyon & swech gostly comfortys that sche was al inflawmyd wyth the fir of loue, the which encresyd so sor that it brast owt wyth lowde voyes & gret crying . . . . (MK I.83.200-201)

Sche had thes myndys & thes desyrys wyth profownde teerys, syhyngys, & sobbyngys, & sumtyme wyth gret boistows cryingys as God wolde send it, & sumtyme soft teerys & preuy wyth-owtyn any boistowsnesse. (MK I.82.199)

Thes gostly syghtys & vndirstondyngys cawsed the creatur to wepyng, to sobbyn, & to cryin ful lowde . . . . (MK I.81.197)

In addition to the crying and weeping produced by the visions and illuminations, Margery mentions other effects of her visions such as "sweetness and grace," "sweetness and devotion," "great ghostly comfort and gladness," and "love and devotion." As may be seen in the following passages, Margery's description of these other effects produced by her visions does not vary significantly from these phrases.

. . . for sche myth not beryn the swetnesse & grace that God wrowt in hir sowle. (MK I.28.67)

Neuyr-the-lesse as to this felyng of this creatur, it was very trewth schewyd in experiens, & hir dred & hir heuynes turnyd in-to gret gostly comforte & gladnes. (MK I.89.220)

Than had sche so meche swetnes & deuocyon that sche myth not beryn it . . . . (MK I.78.184)

. . . wepyng & sobbyng so sor that vn-ethe sche myth stondyn on hir feet for the fervowr of lofe & deuocyon that God putte in hir sowle thorw hy contemplacyon. (MK I.82.198)

The next series of passages illustrates various words, phrases, and ideas which embody or convey what Margery evidently considered as "specific" information or knowledge revealed to her in visions and illuminations. Even though no definite didactic pattern is discernible, it will be possible to use them for comparative purposes when the primary conceptual fields for illumination for all of the English mystics are compared. At any rate, the passages do consider the knowledge of the nature of God in terms of his love for Julian and of his presence with her.

Dowtyr, I wil han the weddyd to my Godhede, for I schal schewyn the my preuyteys & my counselys, for thu xalt wonyn wyth me wyth-owtyn ende. (MK I.35.86)

. . . for thi sowle xal partyn fro thy body but God xal neuyr partyn fro thi sowle, for thei ben enyd to-gedyr wyth-owtyn ende. (MK I.35.89)

& than sche thankyd God of al, for thorw thes gostly sytys hir affecyon was al drawyn in-to the manhod of Crist & in-to the mynde of hys Passyon vn-to that tyme that it plesyd owr Lord to 3euyn hir vndirstondyng of hys invndirstondabyl Godhed. (MK I.85.208)

. . . & get thu xalt han grettar cawse than euyr thu haddyst to louyn me, for thu xalt heryn that thu neuyr herdist, & thu xalt se that thu neuyr sey, & thu xalt felyn that thu neuyr feltist. (MK I.35.89)

. . . as he had browt hir to se this erdly cyte Ierusalem he wold grawntyn hir grace to se the blysfyl cite Ierusalem abouyn, the cyte of Heuyn. (MK I.28.67)

. . . beleue it is God that spekyth in the, for wher-so God is Heuyn is, & wher that God is ther be many awngelys, & God is in the & thu art in hym. (MK I.35.88)

The final informing concept in the conceptual field for illumination in Margery consists of her references to the nature and function of grace and illumination. Although according to Margery

God's grace is operative throughout the illuminative phase, illumination and grace are specifically mentioned in the following two passages:

. . . & sum-tyme ovr Lady, as ovr God wolde illumyn hir gostly syth of vndirstondyng. (MK I.72.173)

&, as sodeynly as the leuyn comith fro Heuyn, so sodeynly come I in-to thy sowle, & illumyn it wyth the lyght of grace & of vndir-standyng, & sett it al on fyr wyth lofe, & make the fyr of lofe to brenn therin & purgyn it ful clene fro alle erdly filth. (MK I.77.182)

In this sense God's grace primarily provides Margery with increased understanding during the illuminative phase.

## CHAPTER V

### CONSTRUCTION OF PRIMARY CONCEPTUAL FIELDS FOR UNION FOR EACH ENGLISH MYSTIC

#### Richard Rolle

Rolle, like most other mystics, accepts as given the ineffability of the mystic union within which man is united to God. According to Rolle, no man may know God perfectly in this life.

Sufficit ergo tibi ut cognoscas quod Deus est, et oberit tibi si scire uelis quid Deus est. (IA 6.162)

It is I-nough therfor to the to know that god is; and agayns the it wer gif thou wald know qwhat god is. (FL I.7.15)

Ille autem Deum perfecte cognoscit, qui ipsum incomprehensibilem et incognoscibilem esse deprehendit. (IA 6.161)

He treuly knawes god parfitly, that hym felys incomprehensibyll & vnabyll to be knawen. (FL I.7.14)

Laudabile ita est, Deum perfecte, scilicet incomprehensibilem esse, cognoscere; cognoscendo, amare; amando, iubilare in eo; iubilando, in ipso requiescere; et per quietem internam ad requiem peruenire sempiternam. (IA 6.162)

Also it is prays god parfytylly, that is to say, vn-abyll to be consauyd fully, to knaw, hym knawyng to lufe, louandly to syng in hym, syngand in hym to rest, & be rest inward to endles rest to cume. (FL I.7.15)

Consequently, Rolle does not try to describe in detail the nature of the union between God and man. For if God is in fact incomprehensible and unknowable, union with him cannot be carefully analyzed or discussed. But because of his association of feeling and emotion



with certain experiences within which he felt God's presence, Rolle does attempt to describe the nature of the unitive phase in the contemplative life. Too often however he confuses the feeling of fire, song, and sweetness with the unitive phase itself.

In general the words and phrases that Rolle uses to describe mystic union with God are based primarily upon the sensual and psychological effects of his chapel experience. And his discussion of mystic union is usually a heightened or more intense expression of that particular experience. Finally, it should be noted that there is not a great deal of quantitative difference between the ideas and thoughts of the illuminative phase and those of the unitive phase with respect to the effects of the chapel experience.

Before constructing and analyzing the conceptual field for union in Rolle, several other general comments concerning his conception of the unitive phase should be mentioned. Rolle considers the unitive phase, as do other mystics, primarily in terms of the union between God and man. But for Rolle this union is usually described in terms of the effect of God's love upon the individual rather than in terms of an increase in man's knowledge of God or a heightened understanding of the union itself. God as love remains for Rolle the most perfect expression of his nature as understood in the final phase of the contemplative life. And the effects of this love are considered by Rolle in the now familiar terms of fire, song, and sweetness. His writings indicate that he feels a strong correlation between the intensity of the mystical union and the intensity of the sensual feelings which the individual experiences within union.

In addition to Rolle's consideration of the ineffability of the mystic union, there are three other informing concepts which form the conceptual field for union in his mystical thought: (1) descriptions of or references to the union between God and man; (2) the nature and/or knowledge of God imparted during the unitive phase; and (3) the state of the individual during the unitive phase as considered by Rolle in terms of fire, heat, song, and sweetness.

Descriptions of or references to the union between God and man constitute a basic informing concept within the conceptual field for union. In his mystical writings Rolle frequently refers to this union. According to Rolle, within union man and God are united in love and in will. Love, however, is for Rolle the primary binding force which unites man and God.

Unitatiuam uero quia amantes unum efficit in affectu et uoluntate, et Christum et omnem sanctam animam unit. Qui enim adheret Deo, unus spiritus est, non natura sed gracia et idemptitate uoluntatis. (IA 17.196)

Knytynge treuly, for lufars it makis on in deyde & will, & criste a ilk holy saule it makis one. He treuly that to god draws, one spiritt is, not on kynde, bot grace & onhed of will. (FL I.18.41)

Amicicia est connexio uoluntatum, eisdem consencientium et eisdem dissencium . . . . (IA 39.261)

Frenschyp is knytynge of two wyllis to lyke thinges consentyng & to vnlyke dissentyng . . . . (FL II.9.90)

. . . ut Deo nostro perfecte uniamur . . . . (IA 41.271)

. . . that we to god parfytely be knytted in onned. (FL II.11.98)

Est enim Deo amor acceptissimus et dilectissimus, qui ligat non solum exibus sapientie et suauitatis Deoque coniungit . . . . (IA 41.274-75)

Luf to god is most accept & moste likyng; it byndis not onely mynde with bandis of wisdom & swetnes & to god Ioynys . . . . (FL II.11.101)

For the next informing concept in the conceptual field for union, the nature or knowledge of God imparted during the unitive phase, Rolle provides little substantive information as far as the nature of God is concerned. For example, in referring to the nature of God as manifested during union, Rolle uses such phrases as "the face of God," "sight of the most glorious clearness," "blissful sight," "mystery of love," "heavenly mysteries," and "heavenly things." Quite obviously, these general references to the nature of God do not reveal any specific knowledge of God gained during union. The phrases could probably apply equally as well to the nature of God as made known during a pre-unitive phase of the contemplative life. Thus, the essential indescribability of God remains in spite of Rolle's consideration of the nature of God during union. The following passages, in which the above phrases may be viewed in context, illustrate this point quite well:

. . . in continuum iubilum gerentur et conscendent cum Christo culmen claritatis, facie Dei fruentes sine fine. (IA 5.159)

. . . in-to songe euerlastynge thai sall be borne, & with criste go vp the heght of treuyth, the fas of god vsand with lufe with-uten end. (FL I.6.13)

. . . ascenditque superius affectus eius, in quod oculo mentali introitus aperitur, in speculacione misteriorum celestium. (IA 36.249)

. . . & hys affeccion gos vp, so that entre is opynd in behaldynge of heuenly misterys to the ee of his mynde. (FL II.6.81)

. . . et beatifica uisio almiphona ostendet manifeste illud quod amauit. (IA 38.258)

. . . & blistfull syght with loy sall opynly schewe that he desiryd & lufyd. (FL II.8.88)

. . . ita electe anime ardentem in amore, supernis deliciis pascuntur, quibus ad uisionem eterne claritatis perducentur. (IA 26.218)

. . . so chosyn sawlis byrnnand in luff with heuenly likynge is feed, be thee qwhilk to the syght of clerenes euerlastynge that sall be broght. (FL I.27.58)

Rolle's discussion of the general state or condition of the individual during union forms the last informing concept in the conceptual field for union in Rolle. Man's spiritual state during union is considered primarily in terms of his increased capacity for love. During union man, united with God, is filled with love. According to Rolle, man "is made glad with merriest love," is "inspired by a mystery of love," "burns with the sweetest love," and feels himself "lust for everlasting love."

Ad hanc suspirant, aspectibus supernis insistentes, et inflammati medullitus omnia intima sua letantur lufifluis illustrata esse splendoribus letificatos, quia se senciunt amenissimo amore et in gaudio canticorum mirabiliter liquefactos. (IA 37.253)

Here-to truly tha 3erne in heuenly sightis abidyng, & inwardly seet ofyre all ther inhere partys ar glad with playly schynyng in lyghtt, and thameself tha feyll gladynde with lufe miryest & in Ioyful songe wondyrly meltyd. (FL II.7.85)

Inter has autem delicias quas degustat, tam dulci amore experitur arcanum celicus immissum: quod nemo adhuc nouit nisi qui accepit, atque electuarium in se gerit quod debriat diligentes iocundos in Ihesu . . . . (IA 37.253)

Emong this delitys qwhilk he tastis in so swete lufe byrnnand, a heuenly priuyte in-sched he felys, that no man 3itt knew bot he that has resauyd it & in hyme-self berys, the letwary that all ioyfull lufars in Ihesu moystis . . . . (FL II.7.84-5)

. . . quia misterium amoris in se percipit inspirari, et in estu mellifluo superius ascendit, contemplaturque cum iubilo mellifluas laudes emanentes amanti, festinantibus ad interitum, immo ad nihilum carnalium motibus affeccionum. (IA 36.252-253)

. . . for in hym-self he felys inspiryd a mistery of lufe, & in a honyly heet he ascendys on heght, & with gostely songe behaldis sweit louyngis sched to the lufar, to deed hestand & to vnbeingis to mevingis of fleschly affeccions. (FL II.6.84)

Exinde igitur innouatur natura et in diuinam gloriam, formamque felicissimam, transmigrabit, ut sonorum sit, et dulce ac diuinum, quod deinceps in se seciat, delicias quoque eterni amoris cum maxima suauitate indefesse cantat. (IA 32.237)

& so kynde is renwyd & now sal pas in-to a godly Ioy & happy lyknes, so that it sall be happye, sweet, godly & soundly & in the selff, sall feyll luste of euerlastyng lufe & with greet swetnes continually it sal synge. (FL II.2.72)

Rolle also considers man's state or condition during union in terms of his chapel experience categories of fire, song, and sweetness. For Rolle, fire, song, and sweetness characterize to a great extent the state of the individual during the unitive phase. His references to man's state during union in terms of fire, song, and sweetness are numerous. The following passages, which may be considered typical, illustrate his use of these categories to describe man's condition during union:

Et deinceps denique dulcescet ei dileccio, diuina dulcedine quoque delicatissima inebriabitur, melque premirificum degustabit, ut in seipso non senciatur nisi solacium saporis infusi celicus, et signum summe sanctitatis. (IA 32.236)

& so forward godis lufe to hym sal be so sweitt, & with swetnes most likyng so sal be moistyd & meruelus hony he sal taste, that in hym-self he sal not feyll bot solas of heuently sauour in-to hym scheyd, & tokyn off he holynes. (FL II.2.71)

. . . sonum accipiet in se ex supernis inmissum, et meditatio mutabitur in melos, mensque in mirifica morabitur armonia. (IA 32.237)

. . . a sownd holy thoght he sal take fro heuyne sende, and meditation into song sal be chaungyd, & the mynde sall byde in meruelus melody. (FL II.2.71-72)

Dilector siquidem deitatis, cuius interiora precordia amore inuisibilis speciei funditus penetrantur, qui et medullas uniuersas anime sue letificatas habet, gaudet feruore amenissimo quia et deuocioni iugi pro Deo se donauit. (IA 32.236)

The lufer truly of the godhede, qwas inwarde partis with lufe of bewte vnsene varily er thirlyd, Ioys all the pyth of the sawl, gladynd with heytt most mery, & hym-self has gyfin to besy deuocion for god. (FL II.2.71)

These passages clearly represent various modifications of or elaborations upon the words, phrases, and ideas generally associated with Rolle's chapel experience. Finally, with respect to the state or condition of man during the unitive phase, it should be noted that Rolle is apparently more interested in describing the general effects upon the individual of the contemplative life, particularly of mystical experiences, than in considering the intellectual or spiritual status or development of man during the contemplative life in general or the unitive phase in particular.

#### The Cloud of Unknowing

The author of The Cloud, as well as most other mystical writers including the English mystics, does not discuss extensively the nature of the mystical union with God. For The Cloud mystical union in itself is ineffable in the sense that neither the union nor God as he is in himself can be described. However, from periodic references to the union between God and man, we may construct a conceptual field for union, even though it will be rather sketchy and limited. Four main informing concepts constitute the conceptual field for union in The Cloud: (1) during the unitive phase man and God are united, oned, or knitted; (2) the union itself is mysterious and unfathomable; (3) man may live in union with God within the natural order; and (4) the individual who has attained union with God or perfection in the contemplative life is obligated to inform

and teach others.

For the author of The Cloud, union with God is expressed in terms of man being "oned," "knitted," or "united" with God. He frequently refers to this union in terms of the following phrases: "to be knit to God in spirit and in onehead of love and accordance of will," "to be knitted and oned in grace and in spirit to the precious being of God in himself only as he is, without more," and "thou mayest be oned to God in ghostly feeling of himself, the which is perfect charity." This union between man and God, therefore, involves a union in love, in will, in grace, and in spirit. Man thus becomes completely one with God during the unitive phase. The following passages illustrate The Cloud's consideration of man's union with God in context:

. . . & so forthermore at the last to help thee to knit the goostly knot of brennyng loue bitwix thee & thi God, in goostly onheed & acordyng of wille. (CU 47.88)

Abouen thi-self thou arte: for whi thou atteynest to come thedir by grace, whether thou mayst not come by kynde; that is to sey, to be onyd to God in spirit & in loue & in acordance of wille. (CU 67.120)

It chargeth not now in thee bot that thi blynde beholdyng of thi nakid beyng be gladli born up in listines of loue, to be knittid & onid in grace & in spirit to the precious beyng of God in him-self only as he is, with-uten more. (BPC 139)

The union itself, however, may only be referred to and experienced. Although its general nature may be described, i.e., in terms of oneing or knitting, specific knowledge of the union itself can not be conveyed:

. . . that perfeccion of mans soule is not elles bot an oneheed maad bitwix God & it in parfite charitee. This perfeccion is so hei3 & so pure in it-self, abouen the vnderstandyng of man, that it may not be knowen ne perceyuid in it-self. (BPC 153)

The next informing concept in the conceptual field for union in The Cloud, the fact that the union itself is mysterious and unfathomable, is illustrated in a passage wherein the author of The Cloud refers to the cloud of unknowing within which man dwells prior to union with God.

Lat be this eueriwhere & this ou3t, in comparison of this no3where & this nou3t. Reche thee neuer 3if thi wittys kon no skyle of this nou3t; for whi I loue it moche the betir. It is so worthi a thing in it-self that thei kon no skyle ther-apon. This nou3t may betir be felt then seen; for it is ful blynde & ful derk to hem that han bot lityl while lokis ther-apon. (CU 68.122)

Thus, for The Cloud both the cloud of unknowing and mystical union with God during the unitive phase remain mysterious and incomprehensible.

Another informing concept in the conceptual field for union is formed by The Cloud's belief that man may live in union with God within the natural order. Words, ideas, and phrases which are used to illustrate this concept may be found in The Cloud's references to man's being oned or knitted to God during union.<sup>1</sup> With respect to the fact that union with God is possible for man in this life, we should consider The Cloud's treatment of the state or condition of man within the unitive phase. In general, peace, serenity, and love characterize man's spiritual condition during union.

Bot no force therof, for "thou schalt gracyously rest" in this louely onheed of God & thi soule; "& thi sleep schal be ful softe," for it schal be goostly fode & inly strengthe, as wel to thi body as to thi soule. (BPC 147-148)

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<sup>1</sup>See above, p. 119.



For whoso lackith pees and restfulnes of herte, him lackith the liuely presence of the louely si3t of the hei3e pees of heuen, good gracious God, him owne dere self. (DOS 84-85)<sup>2</sup>

And therefore whoso wol haue God contynouly wonyng in him, and liue in loue and in si3t of the hi3e pees of the Godheed . . . . (DOS 85)

The final informing concept in the conceptual field for union in The Cloud is formed by the idea that the individual who has attained union with God or perfection in the contemplative life is obligated to inform and teach others.

. . . a soule that is parfiteley affecte in this werk, & onyd thus to God in spirit, as the proof of this werk witnessith, doth that in it is to maak alle men as parfite in this werk as it-self is. (CU 25.60)

. . . & who-so wile be a parfite dissiple of oure Lordes, him behouith streyne up his spirite in this werk goostly, for the saluacion of alle his brethren & sistren in kynde, as oure Lorde did his body on the cros. (CU 25.61)

### Walter Hilton

Since most mystics, including Walter Hilton, claim that the unitive phase of the contemplative life is an ineffable experience, it is difficult to construct an adequate conceptual field for union based upon Hilton's mystical thought. Mystics generally do not consider fully that which can not be described. For example, even though Hilton considers in part the final phase of the contemplative life, he does not treat it as fully as the purgative and illuminative phases. But this lack of treatment of union is also characteristic

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<sup>2</sup>"A Tretis of Discrecyon of Spirites," Deonise Hid Diuinite and Other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer related to The Cloud of Unknowing, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: EETS 231, 1955), pp. 84-85.

of the other English mystics.

However, in spite of these problems associated with the unitive phase, there are a number of main ideas in Hilton's writings, especially in The Scale of Perfection, which constitute the basis for his treatment of the unitive phase: (1) the general nature of union; (2) mystical union as a foretaste of heaven; (3) the union between God and man; (4) the indescribability of both the union and God himself; (5) the nature of the Trinity as revealed during the unitive phase; and (6) general comments by Hilton concerning the nature of the union between God and man during union, e.g., the effect of union upon man, man's response to union with God, and man's increased understanding of the Godhead as a result of union.

Hilton's references to the general nature of mystical union form the first informing concept in the conceptual field for union. He apparently defines the unitive phase in general and mystical union in particular in terms of the act of contemplation. And contemplation for Hilton can be characterized as involving the knowing, loving, feeling, and sight of God and "ghostly things."

The third part of contemplation, which is perfect as it may be here, lieth both in cognition and in affection: that is for to say, in knowing and in perfect loving of God. (SP I.8.14)

Contemplative life lieth in perfect love and charity felt inwardly by ghostly virtues, and by soothfast knowing and sight of God and ghostly things. (SP I.3.5)

. . . the contemplative life lieth principally in ghostly knowing and feeling of God. (SP I.16.33)

For Hilton union with God, i.e., the knowing, feeling, loving, and sight of God, is a foretaste of the perfect union which will

occur with God in heaven. Even though man can attain a certain degree of union with God in the natural order, full union with God can only occur "in the bliss of heaven."

For this is verily a tasting, so little as it is, and an earnest of the sight of heavenly joy, not clearly, but half in murkness, which shall be fulfilled and openly cleared in the bliss of heaven . . . . (SP I.9.16)

This love may be had a little in part here in a clean soul, through the ghostly sight of Jhesu; but in the bliss of heaven it is fulfilled by clear sight in his godhead, for there shall not affection be felt in a soul, but all godly and ghostly. (SP II.35.391)

The beginning of this contemplation may be felt in this life, but the fullhead of it is kept unto the bliss of heaven. (SP I.8.14)

Hilton's direct references to and descriptions of the union between God and man form the next informing concept in the conceptual field for union. According to Hilton, God and man become one within mystical union, but this occurs in a spiritual sense. He usually refers to this union or oneing in a general fashion and little, if any, descriptive embellishment is involved. In union man is simply overwhelmed by a sense of burning love, and he is perfectly oned to God. Even though this union in spirit is a transitory experience, the union itself to one degree or another may occur in the natural order.

. . . soft sweet burning love in him, so perfectly that by ravishing of love the soul is oned for the time and conformed to the image of the Trinity. (SP I.8.14)

And this gift maketh full peace atwixt God and a soul and oneth all blessed creatures wholly in God . . . . (SP II.36.393)

. . . for to covet with all the mights of it anighing to Jhesu and oneing to him, through feeling of his gracious unseeable presence. (SP II.41.432)

Not in flesh, but in one spirit. And soothly in this oneing is the marriage made atwixt God and the soul, which shall never be broken. (SP I.8.15)

The indescribability of both mystical union and God himself constitute another informing concept in the conceptual field for union in Hilton. For Hilton God as he is in himself and man's union with God can only be described and comprehended approximately. To describe them with any degree of precision lies beyond the capability of man. In the following passages, Hilton considers what may be known about God and the limitations that man possesses with respect to describing God and the unitive experience:

For we may ask what it is, but not wit what it is. (SP II.40.423)

He seeth him not what he is, for that may no creature do in heaven or in earth; nor he seeth him not as he is, for that sight is only in the bliss of heaven. But he seeth him that he is: an unchangeable being, a sovereign might, sovereign goodness, sovereign soothfastness, a blessed life, and endless bliss. (SP II.32.370)

For why, the soul is turned into the eyes and sharply beholdeth the face of Jhesu, and is made sure that it is Jhesu that it feeleth and seeth. I mean not Jhesu as he is in himself in fullness of his blessed Godhead; but I mean Jhesu as he will show him to a clean soul holden in body, after the cleanness that it hath. (SP II.40.440)

And all this ghostly sight is nought else but the sight of Jhesu; not in himself, but in his merciful privy works and in his hard righteous dooms, ilk day showed and renewed to reasonable souls. (SP II.45.456-457)

Hilton mentions at several points in the Scale that in contemplation or union with God the individual gains knowledge of the nature of the Trinity. However, his reflections on the knowledge of the Trinity gained during union remain rather general; except for indicating that knowledge of the Trinity has been revealed to him,

he does not elaborate further.

Then is it opened soothfastly to the eyes of the soul the onehead in substance and distinction of persons in the blessed Trinity, as it may be seen here, and mickle other soothfastness of this blessed Trinity pertinent to this matter . . . . (SP II.46.462)

And then beginneth the soul for to perceive a little of the privities of the blessed Trinity. (SP II.46.461-462)

And then after this by the same light may the soul see ghostly the fairhead of angels . . . . (SP II.46.460)

The last informing concept in the conceptual field for the unitive phase in Hilton consists of three inter-related ideas: (1) the effect of the union upon man; (2) man's response to union with God; and (3) general reflections on the nature of God as revealed during union. The effects of union upon man and man's response to union may be considered together since Hilton rarely distinguishes between them and uses similar words, phrases, and ideas to illustrate them. For Hilton mystical union primarily heightens man's capacity for love. God's love is not only experienced more fully but it also transforms man's own ability to love.

. . . that it is turned into love and affection, ghostly savour and sweetness, into light and knowing of soothfastness . . . . (SP I.46.112)

For but if a soul be first smitten down from height of itself by dread, and be well examined and burnt in this fire of desire, and as it were purified from all ghostly filth by long time in devout prayers and other ghostly exercises, it is not able to suffer the shinings of ghostly light nor for to receive the precious liquor of perfect love of Jhesu; but when it is thus purified and made subtle through this fire, then may it receive the gracious light of ghostly knowing and the perfection of love, that is true sun. (SP II.26.334)

Another major effect of union with God is man's experience of

"ghostly sweetness," "heavenly joy," and "new gracious feelings."

In one sense these experiences of sweetness, joy, and feelings may be considered both as effects of mystical union and responses to union itself.

. . . and gave me assay of his wine, that is for to say a taste of ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy. (SP I.80.194)

. . . for wonderfully he stirreth and mightily he turneth thine heart into beholding of his goodness, and doth thine heart melt delectably as wax against the fire into softness of his love . . . . (SP II.41.434)

These beholdings soothfastly grounded in grace and in meekness, make a soul wise and burning in desire to the face of Jhesu. These are the ghostly things that I spake of before, and they may be called new gracious feelings. (SP II.46.464)

General reflections on the nature of God during union, whose words, phrases, and ideas are quite similar to those used to discuss the effects of union and response to union, are illustrated by the following passages:

. . . and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence . . . . (SP I.25.57)

And therefore, the grace of the Holy Ghost shutting the fleshly eyes, doth the soul sleep from worldly vanity, and opening the ghostly eyes waketh into the sight of God's majest hid under the cloud of his precious manhood . . . . (SP II.40.425)

. . . privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu, feelably fed with savour of his unseeable blessed face. (SP II.41.432)

He showeth privities and proffereth rich gifts of his treasure, and arrayeth the soul with them full honestly. (SP II.46.463)

Such phrases as "his ghostly presence," "sight of God's majesty," "unseeable blessed Face," and "privities," even though they do point to and attempt to describe the nature of God during union, do not actually provide any specific information about the nature

of God. For Hilton, God remains mysterious and ineffable.

### Julian of Norwich

Three main ideas form the basis for the conceptual field for the unitive phase in Julian: (1) the negative effect that Julian's theory of the lower and higher parts of the soul has upon the development of a logical and coherent treatment of the unitive phase; (2) the beholding or contemplation of God as he is in himself, the essence of the mystical state; and (3) the discontinuous and imperfect nature of this union with God in the natural order.

The effect of Julian's theory of the soul upon her treatment of the unitive phase forms the first informing concept in the conceptual field for union. Julian divides man (substance or soul) into two main parts, the lower part (the sense-soul or man's physical nature) and the higher part (man's spiritual nature). Man's higher nature is oned or united with God at the moment of man's creation and remains in union with God in spite of the effects of Adam's sin and man's sins. Obviously, this presents certain difficulties for a unitive phase which should theoretically occur at the end of the contemplative life. For if man is and remains in union with God throughout his life, the role of purgation and illumination is lessened considerably. And Julian's understanding of the contemplative life, and of mystical union especially, would apparently be reduced to a theory of continuous union with God throughout man's life. Thus, in the light of the following passages from Julian's Revelations and her conception of man's soul, it seems that the

beholding of or union with God in the unitive phase is for Julian a heightened experience of that union which man has experienced during his entire life.

And as anent our Substance and our Sense-part, both together may rightly be called our Soul: and that is because of the oneing that they have in God. The worshipful City that our Lord Jesus sitteth in is our Sense-soul, in which He is enclosed; and our Kindly Substance is enclosed in Jesus with the blessed Soul of Christ sitting in rest in the Godhead. (RDL 56.135-136)

For God is never out of the soul: in which He dwelleth blissfully without end. (RDL 55.133)

And I saw no difference between God and our substance: but as it were all God; and yet mine understanding took that our Substance is in God: that is to say, that God is God, and our Substance is a creature in God. (RDL 54.130-131)

God is the Goodness that may not be wroth, for He is not other but Goodness: our soul is oned to Him, unchangeable Goodness, and between God and our soul is neither wrath nor forgiveness in His sight. For our soul is so fully oned to God of His own Goodness that between God and our soul may be right nought. (RDL 46.97)

With respect to the essence of the mystical phase, the ineffable experience of the beholding of God as he is in himself, Julian does little more than state that the continuous beholding of God is the true end of the contemplative life. Since the experience is in itself ineffable, and hence indescribable, Julian does not attempt to describe the union in detail. But she does refer to the mystical union in terms of "that highest bliss," "blissful beholding," "blissful sight," and "sight and beholding of Him."

The highest bliss that is, is to have Him in clarity of endless life, Him verily seeing, Him sweetly feeling, all-perfectly having in fulness of joy. (RDL 72.175)

Thus is that blissful sight the end of all manner of pain to the loving soul, and the fulfilling of all manner of joy and



bliss. And that shewed he in the high, marvellous words where he said: I it am that is highest; I it am that is lowest; I it am that is all. (RDL 72.177)

It is God's will that we set the point of our thought in this blissful beholding as often as we may, and as long time keep us therein with His grace; for this is a blessed contemplation to the soul that is led of God, and full greatly to His worship, for the time that it lasteth. (RDL 64.161)

And therefore we may with grace and His help stand in spiritual beholding, with everlasting marvel of this high, overpassing, inestimable Love that Almighty God hath to us of His Goodness. (RDL 6.14)

The final informing concept in the conceptual field for union in Julian includes her discussion of the briefness of the beholding of God, the inability to describe the beholding of God and its attendant mysteries, and the idea that the beholding is only a foretaste of the continuous beholding of God in heaven. That any union with God in the natural order is a transitory experience is a fixed constant for Julian. The beholding of God remains only for a brief moment.

And yet in all this I beheld in the Shewing of God that this manner of sight may not be continuant in this life, and that for His own worship and for increase of our endless joy. And therefore we fail oftentimes of the sight of Him, and anon we fall into our self, and then we find no feeling of right. (RDL 47.100)

Julian feels that she is unable to describe precisely the content of the beholding of God and its mysteries. The final disclosure and understanding is reserved for heaven.

But what is to me verily the Maker, the Keeper, and the Lover, I cannot tell; for till I am Substantially oned to Him, I may never have full rest nor very bliss: that is to say, till I be so fastened to Him, that there is right nought that is made betwixt my God and me. (RDL 5.10)

. . . for our ghostly eye is so blind and we be so borne down by weight of our mortal flesh and darkness of sin, that we may

not see our Lord God clearly in His fair Blissful Cheer.  
(RDL 72.176-177)

And in these words I saw a marvellous high mystery hid in God, which mystery He shall openly make known to us in heaven: in which knowing we shall verily see the cause why He suffered sin to come. In which sight we shall endlessly joy in our Lord God. (RDL 27.57)

Finally, the beholding of God on earth is only a foretaste of the sight of God and union with him that Julian hopes to experience in heaven.

And then shall we see God face to face, homely and fully. The creature that is made shall see and endlessly behold God which is the Maker. For thus may no man see God and live after, that is to say, in this deadly life. But when He of His special grace will shew himself here, he strengtheneth the creature above its self, and He measureth the shewing, after his own will, as it is profitable for the time. (RDL 43.92)

And therefore when the Doom is given and we be all brought up above, then shall we clearly see in God the secret things which now be hid to us. (RDL 85.201)

And then shall we all come into our Lord, our Self clearly knowing, and God fully having; and we shall endlessly be all had in God: Him verily seeing and fully feeling, Him spiritually hearing, and Him delectably in-breathing, and of Him sweetly drinking. (RDL 43.92)

### Margery Kempe

Constructing an adequate conceptual field for the unitive phase in Margery Kempe's mystical writings involves several difficult, if not impossible, problems. Margery apparently progressed no further in the contemplative life than the illuminative phase, if even that far. It would seem logical, therefore, that no conceptual field for union in Margery can be constructed. However, even though she does not consider the unitive phase directly in her Book, there are

a few passages that seem to point indirectly to the unitive phase both as an integral part of the contemplative life and as a foretaste of union with God in heaven. But the references are very few.

Consequently, in lieu of a conceptual field for union in Margery, those passages will be noted that obliquely refer to, or seem to refer to, the unitive phase of the contemplative life.

Welcome to me wyth al maner of joye & gladnes, her to dwellyn wyth me & neuyr to departyn fro me wyth-owtyn ende, but euyr to dwellyn wyth me in joy & blysse, whch non eye may se, ne eer heryn, ne tunge telle, ne non hert thynkyn, that I haue ordeynd for the & for alle my seruawntys the whch desyryn to lofe me & plesyn me as thu dost. (MK I.22.53)

Dowtyr, I wil han the weddyd to my Godhede, for I schal schewyn the my preuyteys & my cownselys, for thu xalt wonyn wyth me wyth-owtyn ende. (MK I.35.86)

A, dowtyr, how oftyn-tymes haue I teld the that thy synnes arn for3oue the & that we ben onyd to-gedyr wyth-owtyn ende? Thu art to me a synguler lofe, dowtyr, & therfor I behote the thu schalt haue a synguler grace in Hevyn, dowtyr, & I behest the that I shal come to thin ende at thi deyng . . . . (MK I.22.50-51)

Than knew sche wel be hir feyth that ther was gret joye in Hevyn, wher the lest poynt of blys wyth-owtyn any comparyson passeth al the joye that euyr myt be thowt er felt in this lyfe. (MK I.17.39)

In the above references to mystical union in Margery's Book may be found such traditional concepts regarding the unitive phase as continual union with God in this world and in heaven, the constancy of God's love, and the joy of mystical union with God.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECONDARY CONCEPTUAL FIELD FOR PURGATION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TREATMENT OF PURGATION BY THE ENGLISH MYSTICS

In the last three chapters, primary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union were constructed for each English mystic. This procedure permitted us to examine the treatment by each mystic of the various phases of the contemplative life within the context of the primary conceptual fields and their informing concepts. In the next three chapters, the thought of the English mystics with respect to purgation, illumination, and union will be analyzed comparatively. However, in order to compare their treatment of the contemplative life, secondary conceptual fields for each phase of the contemplative life will be constructed on the basis of the main informing concepts which constituted each of the primary conceptual fields for each English mystic.

To clarify our procedure for the construction of secondary conceptual fields, let us consider carefully how the secondary field for purgation will be constructed. For each of the English mystics, there are several main informing concepts which, when viewed as an organic whole, constitute his conception of the purgative phase.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A for an outline of the primary conceptual fields for each phase of the contemplative life for each English mystic.

By combining the informing concepts of each primary conceptual field for each English mystic with respect to purgation, it is possible to construct a secondary conceptual field consisting of several main informing concepts and words, phrases, and ideas which shape each informing concept. This conceptual field therefore represents in a collective manner the thought of all of the English mystics with respect to purgation. These conceptual fields, which will be constructed for purgation, illumination, and union, will not only permit us to compare the thought of the English mystics with respect to the various phases of the contemplative life but also to compare the thought of the English mystics and that of other medieval mystics.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the following informing concepts, which were considered in our discussion of each English mystic's treatment of purgation, will constitute the basic structure of the secondary conceptual field for purgation: (1) man's initial desire for purgation; (2) his denial of the world and fleshly desires; (3) the nature and function of God's grace, love, and mercy during the purgational process; (4) the nesce te ipsum theme within purgation; and (5) man's purification during purgation which results from an awareness of and participation in Christ's suffering and passion. Under each of these informing concepts a number of ideas, which cluster around and frame each concept, will be discussed and compared. In this way we will be able to compare the words, phrases, and ideas that the English mystics used to discuss the purgational phase of the contemplative

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<sup>2</sup>See Appendix B for an outline of the secondary conceptual fields for each phase of the contemplative life for the English mystics.

life. This procedural model for purgation will be duplicated for both illumination and union.

# 1. Man's initial desire for purgation

Although each English mystic indicates that man must express an initial desire for purgation, only three of them, the author of The Cloud, Walter Hilton, and Julian of Norwich, treat it extensively. This desire, which forms the first informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for purgation, is necessary in order to progress in the contemplative life.

The author of The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian each consider the need for persistence with respect to the desire for purgation. This desire is not a momentary occurrence; rather, it is necessary that the desire for purgation be consistently maintained throughout the purgational phase. In fact, it is to be maintained throughout the entire contemplative life. The author of The Cloud, for example, indicates that:

Alle thi liif now behoueth algates to stonde in desire, 3if thou schalt profite in degre of perfeccion. This desire behoueth algates be wrou3t in thi wille, bi the honde of Almi3ti God & thi consent. (CU 2.15)

. . . seese neuer in thin entent, bot bete euermore on this cloude of vnknowyng that is bitwix thee & thi God with a scharp darte of longing loue. (CU 12.38)

Vse thee contynowly in this blynde & deuoute & this listy steryng of loue that I telle thee . . . . (CU 48.92)

Thus, he admonishes man to live his entire life in terms of a constant desire for purgation. Hilton also recommends steadfastness or persistence with respect to man's desire for purgation. The individual is encouraged to "set thine intent and thy purpose upon

thy Lord Jhesu" (SP I.52.125-26) and to "hang fast upon this desire and set the point of thy thought more upon Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest." (SP I.91.218-19) This same emphasis upon persistence is also found in Julian. She urges that "we seek earnestly and diligently, without sloth" (RDL 10.25) and that "we abide here steadfastly for his love, without murmuring and striving against him." (RDL 10.25) Even though The Cloud's phrases, "a sharp dart of longing love" and a "listy stirring of love," are more emphatic than "desire" or "intent," they may be understood as equivalent to the sense of desire or intent as expressed by Hilton and Julian.

An important aspect of the nature of the desire for purgation in Hilton and Julian is their concern for the thoroughness and fullness of this desire. Hilton states that it is necessary for man to have "an whole and a stable intention; that is for to say an whole will and a desire only for to please God." (SP I.22.50) Similarly, Julian indicates that "that same holy assent, that we assent to God when we feel him, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might." (RDL 52.123)

Hilton's treatment of the desire for purgation also includes the idea that man must recognize his sinful condition; desire for purgation must be accompanied by an awareness of man's sin.

. . . lift up the desire of thine heart to thy good Lord Jhesu, and know thyself for a wretch and a beast, asking him forgiveness. (SP I.76.187)

. . . lift up thine heart to God acknowledging thy wretchedness, and cry mercy with a good trust of forgiveness. (SP I.33.75)

Julian of Norwich also mentions this need for the recognition of man's

sinful condition as part of her understanding of man's desire for purgation:

But that same holy assent, that we assent to God when we feel him, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. And then we hate and despise our evil stirrings and all that might be occasion of sin, spiritual and bodily. (RDL 52.123)

In her consideration of the desire for purgation, Margery Kempe indicates the need for becoming aware of her sins. For Margery, becoming aware of her sins, her wickedness, and her "worship of the world" constitutes an integral part of purgation.

Than sche askyd God mercy & forsoke hir pride, hir coueytyse, & desyr that sche had of the worshepys of the world, & dede grett bodyly penawnce, & gan to entyr the wey of euyr-lestyng lyfe . . . . (MK 2.11)

Neuyr-the-lesse sche wept for hir owyn synnes ful plentyuowsly whan it plesyd ovr Lord to visityn hir wyth hys grace. (MK 57.140)

Sche bethewt hir fro hir chyldgod for hir vnkyndnes as ewer Lord wold put it in hir mende ful many a tyme. And than, sche beheldyng hir ewyn wykkednes, sche mygth but sorwyn and wepyn & euyr preyn for mercy & for-3euenes. (MK 3.13)

Even though the desire for purgation is stressed by Hilton, Julian, and the author of The Cloud, the object toward which this desire for purgation is directed is significantly different. Whereas Hilton and Julian feel that Christ is the person toward whom this desire is directed, a strong theocentric orientation may be discerned in the writings of The Cloud. Hilton, for example, indicates that man should "lift up the desire of thine heart to thy good Lord Jhesu" (SP I.78.187), "set thine intent and thy purpose upon thy Lord Jhesu" (SP I.52.125-126), "offer the desire of thine heart only to thy Lord Jhesu" (SP I.23.54), and "hang fast upon this desire and set the



point of thy thought more upon Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest" (SP I.91.218-219). Similarly, Julian states that man must direct his desire for purgation to Christ:

Flee we to our Lord and we shall be comforted, touch we him and we shall be made clean, cleave we to him and we shall be sure, and safe from all manner of peril. (RDL 77.189)

In contrast to this Christocentric orientation in Hilton and Julian, the author of The Cloud displays a strong theocentric orientation. As the following passages indicate, the object toward which man directs his desire for purgation is God himself: "with an affectuous stering of loue to God for himself" (CU 8.33), "with a leuyng steryng & a blinde beholdyng vnto the nakid beyng of God him-self only" (CU 8.32), and "loke that nothing leue in thi worching mynde bot a nakid entent streching into God" (BPC 135).

As might be expected, the expression of the desire for purgation in Hilton and Julian, especially in the former, is considerably more personal and perhaps more intensive than in The Cloud. This difference is probably caused by the object toward which man's desire for purgation is directed: in Hilton and Julian, Jhesu; in The Cloud, God. Hilton, for example, will use such phrases as "to thy good Lord Jhesu" (SP I.76.187), "the grace and ghostly presence of Jhesu" (SP I.52.125-6), "offer the desire of thine heart only to thy Lord Jhesu" (SP I.23.54), and "Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest" (SP I.91.218-9). Julian's writings also demonstrate this same personal tone:

. . . and then we can do no more but behold him, enjoying, with an high, mighty desire to be all oned unto him, centered to his dwelling, and enjoy in his loving and delight in his goodness. (RDL 43.91)

And when we fall, hastily he raiseth us by his lovely calling and gracious touching. And when we be thus strengthened by his sweet working, then we with all our will choose him, by his sweet grace, to be his servants and his lovers lastingly without end. (RDL 61.152-153)

Finally, Margery Kempe's references to the desire or need for purgation convey a personal, relational quality. Her writings and thoughts, moreover, always emphasize the personal relationship which she feels exists between herself and her Lord.

An important factor in The Cloud's treatment of the desire for purgation, not considered extensively by the other mystics, is his insistence that this desire must be responded to. Desire for purgation is not sufficient; man must respond to and reflect upon the nature and function of this desire. Furthermore, man's desire for purgation is enhanced by God's response to this desire. Man is then able to reflect not only upon his initial desire for purgation but also upon God's response and man's increased understanding of the importance of the initial desire for purgation. The following passages illustrate this rather clearly:

& therefore lene meekly to this blinde steryng of loue in thin herte. I mene not in thi bodily herte, bot in thi goostly herte, the whiche is thi wil. (CU 51.94)

& herby maist thou see that we schulde directe alle oure beholding vnto this meek steryng of loue in oure wille. (CU 50.93)

& therefore I preie thee, lene listely to this meek steryng of loue in thin herte, & folow ther-after; for it wil be thi gyde in this liif, & bring thee to blisse in the tethur. (CU 49.92)

Localizing or fixing the desire for purgation upon a single point is the final idea to be considered within the first informing concept, the desire for purgation, in the secondary conceptual field for purgation. According to Hilton, man's efforts should be directed

during purgation toward focusing his desire upon a fixed point in order to intensify and heighten the desire itself.

And therefore when thou shalt arise against the ground of sin in general or else against any sin in special, hang fast upon this desire and set the point of thy thought more upon Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest . . . . (SP I.91.218-219)

To a certain extent, but in less precise terminology, this intensification of desire for purgation created by focusing upon a single point is also found in Julian of Norwich.

And thus I saw him, and sought him; and I had him, and I wanted him. (RDL 10.22)

But that same holy assent, that we assent to God when we feel him, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. And then we hate and despise our evil stirrings and all that might be occasion of sin, spiritual and bodily. (RDL 52.123)

And then we see not, for the time, what we should more pray, but all our intent with all our might is set wholly to the beholding of him. (RDL 43.90)

It is God's will that we have three things in our seeking: the first is that we seek earnestly and diligently, without sloth, and, as it may be through His grace, without unreasonable heaviness and vain sorrow. The second is, that we abide him steadfastly for his love, without murmuring and striving against him, to our life's end: for it shall last but awhile. The third is that we trust in him mightily of full assured faith. (RDL 10.25)

## 2. Denial of the world and fleshly desires

Consideration of the denial of the world and fleshly desires by the English mystics forms the next informing concept in the conceptual field for purgation. The denial of the world is probably the most extensively discussed part of the purgational phase. And each of the English mystics constantly refers to this part of the purgational phase as necessary preparation for the contemplative life.

The first main idea which forms in part the informing concept of the denial of the world consists of general references to the need for man to negate the world and fleshly desires. These references to this need constitute the core of the mystics' consideration of the informing concept of the denial of the world. Walter Hilton, who refers to it more often than the other mystics, frequently admonishes the individual to reject both the world and fleshly desires. Furthermore, his references to the need for denying the world follow a rather consistent pattern; there is little significant variation in form or in content.

. . . if they that have this knowing keep them in meekness and charity, and flee worldly and fleshly sins of their mights . . . .  
(SP I.4.7)

. . . but all thy travail shall be for to draw in thy thought from all beholdings of all earthly things, that thy desire might be as it were made naked and bare from all earthly things, aye upward stying into Jhesu Christ . . . . (SP I.25.57)

. . . for they wit well if that they should be good men, they must needs forbear the great liking and the lust of this world that they have in earthly things. (SP II.15.280)

A similar emphasis upon the need for denying the world is found in Rolle, Julian, and Margery. Rolle, for example, states that:

Hec est uia penitencie quam pauci inuenerunt, que idee dicitur, quia per illam si recta sit, caro ab illecebris et solacio mundi exuitur, et anima a praua delectacione ac immunda cogitacione restringitur, et solummodo diuine dileccioni mancipatur. (IA 18.198)

This is the way of penance that few fyndes; the whilk therefore strait is callid for be it, and it be ryght, the flesch fro vnlefull solace of the world is nakkind & the saule fro schreuyd likynge & vnclene thoghtis is restrenyd & only to geddis lufe it is dressyd. (FL I.19.43)

Julian also indicates that the desires of the flesh and man's inward affections must be negated or brought under control:

. . . for we be all partly noughted, and we shall be noughted following our Master, Jesus, till we be full purged, that is to say, till we be fully noughted of our deadly flesh and of all our inward affections which are not very good . . . .  
(RDL 27.56)

And Margery's references to the need for denying the world, especially fleshly desires, are also significant:

. . . al so wistly qwenche in me al fleschly lust & in alle the that I haue beholdyn thi blisful body in. (MK 249)

Sche hatyd the joys of the world. Sche felt no rebellyon in hyr flesch. Sche was strong, as hir thowt, that sche dred no devylle in Helle, for sche dede so gret bedyly penawnce.  
(MK 4.13)

Hir mende was al drawyn fro the erdly thowtys & erdly syghtys & sett al to-gedyr in gostly syghtys . . . . (MK 82.198)

Another main idea which shapes the informing concept of the denial of the world is the impossibility of man's love for himself or the world co-existing with love for God. According to both Rolle and Hilten, the realization that these two kinds of love cannot exist simultaneously in man forms an integral part of the need to purge himself of love for self and for the world. In Rolle's mystical thought, we find that:

Dileccio namque mundi et Dei nunquam simul in eodem animo existunt . . . . (IA 1.149)

Lufe treuly of god & of this warld neuer in one saule may be to-gydir . . . . (FL I.2.5)

Non enim aliquis Deo perfecte unitur dum alicui creature mundiali affectu alligatur. (IA 10.172)

No man treuly to god parfitely is knyttid qwhils he in desyre to any creature wardly is bune. (FL I.11.23)

Cum uero terrenas res et consolaciones propter seipsas diligimus, Deum sine dubio non amamus. (IA 4.155)

Qwhills we treuly erthly thingis or comforth lufys for the self, god with-uten doutte we lufe no3t . . . . (FL I.5.9-10)

Similarly, Hilton points out that:

As long as his affection is bound, fastened, and as it were glued with the love of any earthly thing that he hath or would have, he may not have nor feel soothfastly the clean love and the clear sight of ghostly things. (SP I.71.174)

For the more love and covetise of any earthly thing is in thee, the less is the love of God in thine heart . . . .  
(SP I.71.174-175)

The necessity for sorrow and contrition which enable the individual to purge himself of his love for himself and the world forms the next part of the theme of denial or negation. The author of The Cloud considers the need for sorrow and contrition in precise, straightforward terms:

. . . al oure liif-tyme, make hidous & wonderful sorow for oure synnes, & ful mochel be mekid in mynde of oure wrechidnes.  
(CU 16.45)

. . . not er their haue clensid their consience of alle their special dedis of sinne done bifore . . . . (CU 28.63)

. . . thof al sche my3t not vnfele the depe hertly sorow of hir synnes . . . . (CU 16.45)

And in a somewhat similar manner, Hilton considers contrition and sorrow. For him they constitute an integral part of the purgational phase.

And also if he will dispose a man for to receive any special gift of the love of God, him behoveth first be scoured and cleansed by such a fire of compunction for all the great sins before done. (SP I.34.78)

Julian points out that through contrition man can effectively purge himself of love for the world and love of self:

And by this meek knowing after this manner, through contrition and grace we shall be broken from all that is not our Lord. And then shall our blessed Saviour perfectly heal us, and one us to Him. (RDL 78.190)

But himself was letted and blinded from the knowing of this will; and this is to him great sorrew and grievous distress: for neither doth he see clearly his loving Lord, which is to him full meek and mild, nor doth he see truly what himself is in the sight of his loving Lord. (RDL 51.111)

Margery's conception of sorrew and contrition, usually set forth in stark, realistic terms, emphasizes the need for physical penance which is symbolic of sorrow and contrition.

Sche hatyd the joys of the world. Sche felt no rebellyon in hyr flesch. Sche was strong, as hir thowt, that sche dred no devylle in Helle, for sche dede so gret bodyly penawnce. (MK 4.13)

Hilton provides an interesting variation on the theme of the denial of the world and those sins which stem from love of the world. Rather than being concerned primarily about specific sins, Hilton notes that the ground of sin itself must be dealt with. He realizes that man's total orientation toward the world and himself must be changed radically in order for him to progress further in the contemplative life.

. . . but also thou shalt arise against the ground of it, for to destroy the feeling and the liking rising of fleshly stirrings. (SP I.73.181)

. . . right so thee behoveth now in this ghostly werk within thyself, for to destroy and break the ground of sin in thyself . . . . (SP I.42.99)

The author of The Cloud stresses, in a much more radical manner than the other English mystics, the need for the individual to alienate himself from other persons or creatures in order to prepare himself for the contemplative life. In short, total isolation from everything that exists is required by The Cloud as necessary for purgation.

& therefore breek doun alle wetyng & felyng of alle maner of creatures; bet most besily of thi-self. (CU 43.82)

Sekirly this trauayle is al in tredyng doun of the mynde of alle the creatures that euer God maad, & in holdyng of hem vnder the cloude of for3etyng namyd before. (CU 26.61)

. . . when thou hast for3eten alle other creatures & alle other creatures & alle their werkes . . . . (CU 43.82-83)

Another indication of the radical nature of The Cloud's idea that man must deny the world is his feeling that he must purge or rid himself of any thought of himself that he might have. According to The Cloud, progress in the contemplative life, particularly during the purgational phase, is seriously impeded if the self is not negated.

. . . nakyn, spoyle & vtterly vnclothe thi-self of al maner of felyng of thi-self, that thou be able to be clothid with the gracyous felyng of God self. (BPC 156)

& therefore breek doun alle wetyng & felyng of alle maner of creatures; bot most besily of thi-self. (CU 43.82)

The final ideational component of the theme of denial of the world is the treatment by the English mystics of the condition or state of the soul after it has been purged of earthly thoughts and fleshly desires. Rolle and Hilton specifically consider this idea:

Anima a uiciis seculi segregata et a carnalibus desideriis alienata, a peccatis purgatur. Unde et quandam suauitatem future leticie intelligit sibi adesse . . . . (IA 29.229-30)

The sawl fro the world synnes departyd, & fro fleschly de-syrs with-drawn, of syn is purgyd, & ther-by it vnderstandis a swetnes of myrth comynge to it nere . . . . (FL I.30.66-7)

. . . proximum est ut anima tua terrena transcendens in amore Christi proficatur. (IA 27.221)

. . . then is full nere that thi saule, erthly thingis passand, in cristis lufe be made parfyte. (FL I.28.60)

. . . and that is when he is first healed of his ghostly sickness, and when all bitter passions and fleshly lusts and old feelings are burned out of the heart with the fire of desire,



and new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light. Then neareth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling. (SP II.17.287)

And as thou hast forsaken the world, as it were a dead man turned to our Lord bodily in sight of men; right so that thine heart might be as it were dead to all earthly loves and dreads, turned wholly to our Lord Jhesu Christ. (SP I.1.1)

Thus, according to Rolle and Hilton, after man has denied the world and fleshly desires, he begins to be made perfect in love, to experience new gracious feelings, and to be turned toward God.

### 3. The nature and function of God's grace, love, and mercy

The next informing concept is the English mystics' consideration of God's role during purgation, particularly his love, grace, and mercy. Even though Rolle, The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian are concerned with God's role during purgation, there are only two main ideas within this informing concept which are treated by two or more of the mystics. First, there is the definite effect that God's love and grace have upon sins, fleshly desires, lusts, and so forth. Secondly, God's love and grace are important factors in the reformation of man's false image into his original image or nature.

According to both Rolle and Hilton, God's grace, as manifested under the form of love, exercises a definite effect upon man's love for the world, his love for himself, and other physical desires such as "fleshly desires" or "fleshly lusts." Rolle, for example, specifically considers the purgative effect that God's love or grace has upon man's sins. Love, usually presented by Rolle in terms of fire, purges the individual of "all vanity of this world," "all fleshly love," "love of lusty things here beneath," and "all idleness and uncleanness." Similarly, Hilton considers the purgative

effect of God's love or grace upon man's love of the world and his fleshly desires:

This is a point of the passion of love, the which by great violence and mastery breaketh down all lusts and liking of any earthly thing, and it woundeth the soul with the blissful sword of love . . . . (SP I.30.67)

. . . the love and the feeling of God was made in mine heart not fire but as fire glowing, for as bodily fire burneth and wasteth all bodily things where it cometh, right so ghostly fire, as is the love of God, burneth and wasteth all fleshly loves and likings in a man's soul, and this fire is stoken in my bones as the prophet saith of himself. That is for to say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind, reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth full the bone . . . . (SP I.31.69)

When Rolle's treatment of the effect of grace and love upon sin are viewed in context, the parallels between his and Hilton's consideration of the role of God's love and grace during purgation become quite apparent. For example, Rolle indicates that:

Quippe quando amor eternitatis in animabus nostris ueraciter accenditur, omnis sine dubio muni uanitas, omnisque carnalis dileccio non nisi stercus uilissimum reputatur. (IA 19.201)

Sothely when lufe of euerlastynge in owr saules is treuly kyndyld, with-out doute all vanite of this world, & all fleschly lufe, bot als foulyst fylth is haldyn . . . . (FL I.20.45)

Amor enim eius ignis est igneus faciens animas, ut sint lucentes et urentes, et expurgat eas ab omni fece peccati. (IA 4.156)

His lufe treuly is fyer, firy makand oure saules, & pourgis thame fro all degres of synne, makand thame ly3t & byrnde . . . . (FL I.5.10)

Hic amore purgat nos a peccatis nostris, et in immenso ardore omnia exurit obstacula que impedirent ad amandum . . . . (IA 40.269)

This loufe clensis vs fro owr synnes, & in vnmesurde heet of obstakyls byrnys that suld let to lufe . . . . (FL II.10.97)

Thus in both Rolle and Hilton we find love expressed in terms of fire; and, more important, we may also note the similar purgative effects upon man's love for the world and his sins.

The second main idea constituting the informing concept of the role of God's love and mercy during purgation is the particular function that his love and mercy perform in the restoration of man's original image which he possessed prior to his sin. Both Hilton and Julian consider this idea extensively. Hilton suggests that God will:

. . . help thee bear thy body full of corruption, and he will with his merciful might of his gracious presence break down this false image of love in thyself not all at once but little and little, till thou be some deal reformed to his likeness.  
(SP I.89.214)

And in a somewhat different context, Hilton clarifies the effect that God's love and grace have upon man's present, imperfect image:

And upon this manner wise may this image of sin be broken down in thee and destroyed, by the which thou art forshapen from the kindly shape of the image of Christ. And thou shalt be shapen again to the image of Jhesu man by meekness and charity; and then shalt thou be fully shapen to the self image of Jhesu God, here living by a shadow in contemplation, and in the bliss of heaven by full soothfastness. (SP I.91.219)

Julian considers the effect of God's grace upon the individual from a similar point of view. For Julian, God's grace is able to transform man and to destroy sin.

For nature is all good and fair in itself, and grace was sent out to save nature and destroy sin, and bring again fair nature to the blessed point from whence it came: that is God . .  
. . (RDL 63.157)

Thus are sins forgiven by mercy and grace, and our soul is worshipfully received in joy like as it shall be when it cometh to heaven, as oftentimes as it cometh by the gracious working of the Holy Ghost and the virtue of Christ's Passion.  
(RDL 40.82)

There are several apparently unique aspects of the function of God's grace, love, and mercy during the purgational phase which should be considered at this point. First, The Cloud places considerable emphasis upon man's inability to continue in the contemplative life without the presence of God's grace. According to the author of The Cloud, man is unable to begin the process of purgation without God's active assistance through the medium of grace. Even though this particular idea may be found implicitly in the mystical thought of the other English mystics, The Cloud seems to be the only work in which this idea is emphasized. The following passages illustrate his treatment of this idea:

. . . that Almi3ty God with his grace behoueth algates be the cheef stere & worcher, outhur with mene or withoutyn . . . .  
(BPC 155)

& 3if it be thus, trist than stedfastly that it is only God that sterith thi wyl & thi desyre, pleyndly by him-self, withouten mene outhur on his party or on thin. (CU 34.70-71)

. . . with-outyn me first steryng & principally mouyng, & 3e only bot consentyng & suffryng, 3e mowen now3t do thing that is parfiteli plesyng to me . . . . (BPC 162)

Thus, not only does man's progress in the contemplative life depend upon God's grace but his initial entry into the contemplative life is also dependent upon it.

The second unique aspect of God's grace during purgation is Julian's consideration of the effect of his grace upon man's sins and his soul rather than exclusively upon his sins.

And thus when we, by the working of mercy and grace, be made meek and mild, we are fully safe; suddenly is the soul oned to God when it is truly peaced in itself: for in Him is found no wrath. (RDL 49.104)

And when we fall, hastily he raiseth us by his lovely calling and gracious touching. And when we be thus strengthened by his sweet working, then we will all our will choose him, by his sweet grace, to be his servants and his lovers lastingly without end. (RDL 61.152-153)

And when we give our intent to love and meekness, by the working of mercy and grace we are made all fair and clean. (RDL 40.83)

#### 4. The nosce te ipsum theme

Knowledge of self, which leads to an increased understanding of man's sinful nature and further knowledge of God, forms the next informing concept in the conceptual field for purgation. Even though this informing concept is considered by The Cloud, Walter Hilton, and Julian of Norwich, it does not seem to be a particularly well-developed theme in Richard Rolle and Margery Kempe. The following passages clearly illustrate the importance of knowledge of self for Hilton and Julian as a prior condition for knowledge of God's nature and man's sinful nature.

It needeth a soul that would have knowing of ghostly things, for to have first knowing of itself. For it may not have knowing of a kind above itself but if it have knowing of itself . . . . (SP II.30.356)

And notwithstanding all this, we may never come to full knowing of God till we know first clearly our own soul. (RDL 56.136)

But our passing life that we have here in our sense-soul knoweth not what our self is. And when we verily and clearly see and know what our self is then shall we verily and clearly see and know our Lord God in fulness of joy. (RDL 46.96)

Both Hilton and Julian, therefore, equate knowledge of self with knowledge of God. And there is also a similarity in phraseology; compare, for example, "for it may not have knowing of a kind above itself but if it have knowing of itself" with "we may never come to full knowing of God till we know first clearly our own soul."

Even though the theme of knowledge of self is in general similarly treated by The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian, both the specific knowledge of self and the knowledge of God which results from this knowledge of self are treated in a significantly different fashion by each mystic. The Cloud, for example, remains consistently vague in his treatment of what is known about the individual. Such phrases as "see what thou art," "a true knowing and feeling of myself as I am," "a naked thought and a blind feeling of thine own being," "the feeling of thyself," "the naked feeling of thine own being," "not what himself is, but that himself is," and "the naked sight and the blind beholding of thine own being" are characteristic descriptions of the specific knowledge of self gained during the purgational phase.

In definite contrast to The Cloud's general consideration of the knowledge of self, Hilton's discussion of this knowledge is precise and clear. For example, he requests that the individual search within himself to find not only "the ground of sin" and its various component parts but also God or Jhesu. Of particular concern for Hilton is the discovery of the false image of man which man finds within himself. Hilton's treatment of the ground of sin, its various parts, and the false image of man may be found in the following passages:

. . . how thou shalt be able to enter into thyself, for to see the ground of sin and for to destroy it as mickle as thou mayest, and so shalt thou be able to recover a part of thy dignity. (SP I.52.125)

Thee behoveth for to delve deep in thine heart, for therein he is hid, and cast out full cleanly all loves and likings, sorrows and dreads of all earthly things; and so shalt thou find wisdom, Jhesu. (SP I.47.115)

Draw into thyself thy thought from all bodily things, and then shalt thou find right nought wherein thy soul may rest. This nought is nought else but darkness of conscience, a lacking of love and of light; as sin is nought but a wanting of God. (SP I.53.127-128)

Hilton's description of the image of sin or man's false image is especially specific and vivid when compared to man's "feeling of himself" as found in The Cloud:

. . . but a murk image and a painful image of thine own soul, which hath neither light of knowing nor feeling of love nor liking. This image if thou behold it wittily, is all belapped with black stinking clothes of sin, as pride, envy, ire, accidie, covetise, gluttony and lechery. (SP I.52.126)

. . . I have found a false image, that men call an idol, in myself, well foul disfigured and forshapen with wretchedness of all these sins which I have spoken of, by the which I am cast down in many fleshly likings and worldly vanities from cleanness of heart and feeling of ghostly virtues . . . . (SP I.84.203)

And the love also which was clean in ghostly savour and sweetness, now it is turned into a foul beastly lust and liking, in itself and in creatures and fleshly savours; both in thy wits, as in gluttony and in lechery, and in imagining, as in pride, vainglory and covetise. (SP I.43.101)

For Julian of Norwich knowledge of self leads to a general awareness of man's sinful condition. Although she is not as specific in her treatment of man's sin as Hilton, Julian is not as vague as The Cloud. For example, she indicates that:

And thus by this gracious knowing we may see our sin profitably without despair. For truly we need to see it, and by the sight we shall be made ashamed of our self and brought down as anent our pride and presumption; for it behoveth us verily to see that of ourselves we are right nought but sin and wretchedness. (RDL 78.190)

Furthermore, she feels that knowledge of man's sinful state leads, almost of necessity, to contrition and repentance. In short, knowledge of self prepares the individual for the contemplative life.

That contrition and repentance are produced by knowledge of self does not seem to be emphasized in The Cloud and Hilton even though it is considered indirectly. It is, however, an important part of Julian's treatment of the purgative phase.

But when we see our self so foul, then ween we that God were wroth with us for our sin, and then are we stirred of the Holy Ghost by contrition unto prayer and desire for the amending of our life with all our mights, to slacken the wrath of God, unto the time we find a rest in soul and a softness in conscience. Then hope we that God hath forgiven us our sins: and it is truth. (RDL 40.81-82)

Between knowledge of man's sinful condition and repentance and contrition lies Julian's conception of meekness which is evidently preparatory to contrition. Meekness seems to follow knowledge of self in Julian's consideration of the purgative phase.

And hereby was I learned that though we be highly lifted up into contemplation by the special gift of our Lord, yet it is needful to us therewith to have knowing and sight of our sin and our feebleness. For without this knowing we may not have true meekness, and without this meekness we may not be saved. (RDL 78.191)

It is known that afore miracles come sorrow and anguish and tribulation; and that is for that we should know our own feebleness and our mischiefs that we are fallen in by sin, to meeken us and make us to dread God and cry for help and grace. (RDL 36.75)

It should be noted at this point that whereas for Julian knowledge of self produces meekness, the author of The Cloud tends to equate meekness with knowledge of self.

Meeknes in it-self is not ellis bot a trewe knowyng & felyng of a mans self as he is. (CU 13.40)

Related to the nosce te ipsum theme is Julian's consideration of the knowledge of self which comes from man's comparison of his own nature with God's. According to Julian, this act of comparison



enables man to understand with greater insight the actual state of his soul and, consequently, his need for contrition, repentance, and eventual renewal. Her conception of the need for man to compare his nature with God's forms an integral part of the general need for man to know who he is and what he is as thoroughly as possible during the purgational phase.

This greatness and this nobleness of the beholding of God fulfilled her with reverent dread, and withal she saw herself so little and so low, so simple and so poor, in regard of her Lord God, that this reverent dread fulfilled her with meekness. And thus, by this ground of meekness she was fulfilled with grace and with all manner of virtues, and overpasseth all creatures. (RDL 7.15)

. . . but it belongeth to the worthy might of God thus to be beholden by his creatures, in great dread trembling and quaking for meekness of joy, marvelling at the greatness of God the Maker and at the littleness of all that is made. For the beholding of this maketh the creature marvellously meek and mild. (RDL 75.184)

This comparison of natures is not found to any great extent in The Cloud or Walter Hilton; it appears to be a rather unique idea with Julian.

5. Man's purification during purgation which results from an awareness of and vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion

Participation in the suffering and passion of Christ and the purification resulting from it forms the final informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for purgation. This particular concept is most fully developed in the writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. Both mystics feel that identification with and participation in the suffering and passion of Christ will necessarily produce a form of purification or purgation which will enable them

to progress in the contemplative life. Their treatment of this important theme, in both form and content, is quite similar. Julian continually requests that she be permitted to share Christ's suffering and passion:

In this sickness I desired to have all manner of pains bodily and ghostly . . . . (RDL 2.4)

Then came suddenly to my mind that I should desire the second wound of our Lord's gracious gift: that my body might be fulfilled with mind and feeling of His blessed Passion. For I would that his pains were my pains, with compassion and afterward longing to God. (RDL 3.7)

And her various pleas for both bodily and ghostly visions frequently include a request for a sight or understanding of Christ's suffering and passion.

. . . and therefore I desired a bodily sight wherein I might have more knowledge of the bodily pains of our Saviour and of the compassion of our Lady and of all His true lovers that saw, that time, His pains, for I would be one of them and suffer with Him. (RDL 2.4)

The effects of these visions of Christ's suffering and passion produce similar results in both Julian and Margery. In general, pity and compassion are emphasized by Margery; for Julian, however, participation in the passion produces a foretaste of the union with God which occurs at the end of the mystic way. The following passages illustrate Margery's consideration of the effects of her visions in terms of pity and compassion:

. . . which syght & gostly beheldyng wrowt be grace so feruently in hir mende, wowndyng hir wyth pite & compassyon, that she sobbyd, roryd, & cryed . . . . (MK 57.140)

Sche had plentivows teerys of compunccyon & of compassyon in the rememorawns of the bittyr peynys & passyons which our merciful Lord Ihesu Crist suffyrd in hy blissyd manhod. (MK 2.10.245)

. . . thowr which beheldyng the Passyon of owr Lord entryd hir mende, wherthorw sche gan meltyn & al-to-relentyn be terys of pyte & compassyown. (MK I.46.111)

For Julian, the suffering and passion of Christ produce both purgative and unitive effects:

And this I meant for that I would be purged, by the mercy of God, and afterward live more to the worship of God because of that sickness. (RDL 2.4)

I understood that we be now, in our Lord's meaning, in his cross with Him in his pains and his passion, dying; and we, willingly abiding in the same cross with his help and his grace unto the last point, suddenly he shall change his cheer to us, and we shall be with him in heaven. (RDL 21.45-46)

Julian also considers the effects of Christ's passion in terms of the transformation of man's present, sinful image. This idea is strikingly reminiscent of Hilton's conception of the reformation of man's image.

. . . and in as much as it is hard and grievous by reason of the sin beheld, which sheweth in our sense-soul, our good Lord Jesus reformeth it by the working in our sense-soul of mercy and grace through the virtue of his blessed passion, and so bringeth it to the rightfulness. (RDL 45.94)

To conclude our comparative analysis of the final informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for purgation, it should be noted that even though the suffering and passion theme is not a part of the purgational process as developed by Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton, its importance in Julian and Margery requires its inclusion in our analysis of the purgative phase in the thought of the English mystics.

The main conclusions of this chapter may be subsumed under three main areas: (1) the nature and content of the secondary conceptual field for purgation itself which, when viewed as an organic whole, contains the combined or collective understanding of the purgational phase of the English mystics; (2) significant similarities and

differences between the English mystics with respect to each informing concept and their component parts; and (3) individual emphases of each English mystic which have been revealed through comparison.

The first area requires little further comment except to point out that the five main informing concepts and those words, phrases, and ideas which shape them clearly represent as a total entity the conception of purgation by the English mystics. Furthermore, the field provides a conceptual structure within which the comparison of the thought of each English mystic with respect to purgation may be undertaken with some degree of precision and thoroughness. In one sense, the field itself represents the primary conclusion of the chapter.

The second area, significant similarities and differences among the English mystics, requires more extensive elaboration. But first it should be noted that because of the exploratory nature of our analysis of the purgational phase in terms of a conceptual field and the subsequent emphasis upon the construction of the field itself, it has not been possible to consider extensively the manifold relationships between the English mystics regarding purgation. The various comparisons, therefore, have been limited to important similarities and differences. And, at this point, rather than merely listing and repeating these similarities and differences discovered in our comparison, we should only note the significant ones in this summary.

For each one of the English mystics purgation is a necessary and important part of the contemplative life. Without some form of purgation it is virtually impossible to continue in the mystic way.

The initial desire for purgation, which forms the first informing concept in the conceptual field, is emphasized by each mystic. No further progress in the contemplative life is possible without this initial desire for purgation. The need for denying the world and man's fleshly desires is also stressed by each mystic; for the most part, their treatment of the denial of the world and negation of fleshly desires is quite similar in form and content with little significant variation. In contrast to the other mystics, however, Rolle and Hilton alone consider the condition of man after being purged from his love of the world and himself.

With the exception of Margery, the English mystics all emphasize the effect that God's love, grace, and mercy have upon man's sins during the purgational phase. Rolle and Hilton, however, consider this effect much more extensively than the other mystics. Within the context of the effect of God's love, grace, and mercy, Hilton and Julian deal with it in terms of its power to restore man's original image. Thus, because of God's grace, man's present, imperfect image is erased and his true image is restored.

The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian consider extensively the implications of the nosce te ipsum theme for the purgational phase. Rolle and Margery, however, do not include this in their treatment of purgation. For The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian, during purgation man becomes more aware of his nature and God's nature through the process of knowledge of self. Hilton's treatment of the nosce te ipsum theme, however, is much more specific than The Cloud's. For Hilton the knowledge of self and God gained during purgation is relatively

specific and exact when compared to The Cloud's treatment of this concept. Finally, it should be pointed out that only in Julian and Margery do we find a careful, systematic treatment of participation in Christ's suffering and passion. Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton fail to develop this concept to any great extent.

There are several individual emphases concerning purgation which should also be included as part of the summary. With respect to the initial desire for purgation, only The Cloud considers the idea that man's desire for purgation must be responded to and reflected upon in order for the desire to be complete. Another unique aspect of the first informing concept is Hilton's emphasis upon the need for man to fix his desire upon a single point so that the desire for purgation may be strengthened and intensified.

In his treatment of the denial of the world and fleshly desires, Hilton is the only English mystic who considers it necessary to deal with the ground of man's sin as well as with specific sins. And The Cloud's consideration of the necessity to alienate and isolate oneself from others during the purgational phase is also unique among the English mystics' treatment of purgation.

Two final individual emphases should be noted. First, The Cloud extensively considers the idea that God's grace is necessary throughout the entire contemplative life as well as during purgation. Secondly, in her treatment of the fourth informing concept, the knowledge of self during purgation, Julian is the only English mystic who emphasizes the fact that knowledge of self results from man's comparison of his nature with God's.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECONDARY CONCEPTUAL FIELD FOR ILLUMINATION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TREAT- MENT OF ILLUMINATION BY THE ENGLISH MYSTICS

From the analysis in Chapter Four of the treatment of the illuminative phase by each English mystic, five main informing concepts emerged which may be used as the basic structure for the secondary conceptual field for illumination. These concepts may be noted as follows: (1) the knowledge of God and/or Christ made known during the illuminative phase; (2) the changes within the individual during illumination; (3) the function of God's grace, love, and mercy; (4) the nature of visions and revelations occurring during illumination; and (5) the general and specific effects of visions and revelations upon man during the illuminative phase.

Following the procedure adopted for the comparative analysis of purgation in Chapter Six, each of these main informing concepts will be analyzed comparatively in the present chapter in terms of the main ideas which cluster around each of them. In this way we will be able to compare the words, phrases, and ideas used by the English mystics to consider illumination.

#### 1. The knowledge of God and/or Christ

Even though each English mystic considers to a certain extent the knowledge of God as revealed to them during illumination, only

the author of The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian treat this particular concept extensively. Rolle and Margery Kempe, on the other hand, are apparently more concerned with visions and revelations than with substantive or new knowledge of God. In general The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian consider the knowledge of God within illumination in a rather vague way. For the most part little specific information about the nature of God is set forth. Both The Cloud and Hilton tend to use theoretical and rather imprecise terms in order to convey their understanding of the nature of God. Julian, however, even though her descriptions of the nature of God are rather general, tends to be more precise and informative from a substantive or contentual point of view than either The Cloud or Hilton.

Before examining the various words, phrases, and ideas used by The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian to describe the nature of God as it has been made known to them during the illuminative phase, the general theoretical approaches which they use for treating the knowledge of God should be considered. For the author of The Cloud, God is known or comprehended through an affective rather than an intellectual approach. It is through love rather than through the intellect that man arrives at an understanding of the nature of God.

& oure soule, bi vertewe of this reformyng grace, is mad sufficient at the fulle to comprehende al him by loue, the whiche is incomprehensible to alle create knowable mi3t, as is aungel & mans soule. (I mene by theire knowyng & not by theire louyng, & therefore I clepe hem in this caas knowable mi3tes.) (CU 4.18)

For whi loue may reche to God in this liif, bot not knowing.  
(CU 8.33)

Furthermore, The Cloud feels that the qualities of God, or specific



attributes of his nature, remain unknown to man.

For wite thou ri3t wel that in this werk thou schalt no more beholdyng haue to the qualitees of the being of God than to the qualitees of the beyng of thi-self. (BPC 143)

Obviously, with this approach to what may be known about God, The Cloud would not be expected to consider the nature of God in terms of specific words or phrases.

For Hilton, on the other hand, the knowledge of God is identified to a certain extent with the sight of God or of Jesus. There appears to be a definite correlation in Hilton between the vision or sight of God and what is known about him or his nature. The words and phrases that Hilton uses to describe the nature of God during illumination, therefore, usually emphasize the sensual effects of the vision or sight of God or Jesus. Julian's approach is somewhat different than either The Cloud's or Hilton's. Her description of the nature of God within the illuminative phase is determined or structured by her strong emphasis upon the unique relationship which she feels she has with God and Christ. Her conception of the nature of God, therefore, is coloured by words and phrases which stress the personal and close relationship with God.

With this general theoretical background in mind, we may now compare the words and phrases which The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian use to describe the nature of God during the illuminative phase. Because of The Cloud's belief that man is unable to know God as he is in himself, that the qualities of God remain unknown, and that God insofar as he may be known may only be comprehended through love, we find as expected a definite lack of words and phrases describing the

nature of God within the illuminative phase. The following passages illustrate The Cloud's description of the nature of God during illumination:

In this tyme it is that a soule hath comprehendid, after the lesson of Seynte Poule, with alle seyntes--not fully, bot in maner & in partyre, as it is acordyng vnto this werk--whiche is the lengthe & the breed, the hei3t & the depnes of Euerlastyng & Al-llouely, Al-mi3ty & Alle-witty God. The euerlastyngnes of God is his lengthe; his loue is his breed; his mi3t is his hei3t; & his wisdam is his depnes. (CU 38.75)

For paraenture he wil bryng to thi minde diuerse ful feire & wonderful pointes of his kyndnes, & sey that he is ful swete & ful louyng, ful gracious & ful mercyful. (CU 7.27)

Bot where schal soche a soule be founden so frely fastnyd & foundid in the fei3, so fully mekid in nou3tynyng of it-self & so louely led & fed the loue of oure Lorde, with ful knowing & felyng of his al-mi3tyheed, his vnwetyn wisdom & his glorious goodnes . . . . (BPC 149)

Phrases relating to the nature of God such as "full sweet and full loving" or "full gracious and full merciful" may be contrasted with similar phrases in Hilton's Scala Perfectionis which emphasize the sensual or physical effects of the vision or sight of God or Jesus.

. . . in ghostly savour and sweetness of the love and the sight of God; by the which sight and feeling my soul shall be fed. (SP I.32.72)

. . . but thou might through devout and continual beholding of the meekness of his precious manhead feel his goodness and the grace of his godhead, when thy desire is eased and helpen and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence . . . . (SP I.25.57)

. . . and never had feeling of ghostly savour or sweetness, or ghostly knowing of God . . . . (SP I.44.104)

Such phrases as "ghostly savour or sweetness," "ghostly knowing of God," "ghostly sweetness or inly savour," "ghostly savour and

delight," and "ghostly savour and sweetness of the love and sight of God" seem to result from Hilton's reflections upon the visions or sights of God or Jesus rather than from any attempt to describe the nature of God.

Julian's Revelations provide a much more complete treatment of the nature of God and Jesus within the context of illumination than either The Cloud or Walter Hilton. Words and phrases used by Julian to describe the nature of God fall into two main categories: (1) succinct one word appellatives which characterize God's nature and (2) phrases descriptive of God or Jesus which apparently have resulted from her reflections upon her relationship with God and/or Jesus. Terms such as "truth," "love," "peace," "life," "light," "might," "wisdom," "grace," and "goodness" occur frequently. And she usually uses them in such phrases as "God as peace," "God as love," or "God is goodness." Both The Cloud and Hilton refer to God in terms of these words but they customarily elaborate upon them rather than using them as one word appellatives. Julian's constant references to her relationship with God or Jesus, particularly those references which consider the nature of God, provide a much stronger basis for comparison with The Cloud and Hilton than the one word appellatives. For example, Julian's emphasis upon God's love for her as indicated in the following passages may be compared effectively with Hilton's consideration of God's nature as love.

In this same time our Lord shewed me a spiritual sight of his homely loving. I saw that he is to us everything that is good and comfortable for us: He is our clothing that for love wrap-peth us, and claspeth us, and all encloseth us for tender love, that He may never leave us; being to us all-thing that is good, as to mine understanding. (RDL 5.10)

Also our courteous Lord in the same time he shewed full surely and mightily the endlessness and the unchangeability of his love; and, afterward, that by his great goodness and his grace inwardly keeping, the love of him and our soul shall never be disparted in two, without end. (RDL 79.192)

God as love may perhaps be seen most vividly in the next passage:

And I saw full surely that ere God made us He loved us; which love never slacked, nor ever shall be. And in this love He hath done all His works; and in this love He hath made all things profitable to us; and in this love our life is everlasting. In our making we had beginning; but the love wherein He made us was in Him from without beginning: in which love we have our beginning. And all this shall we see in God, without end. (RDL 86.203)

Julian's conception of God's nature as love forms a more extensive treatment of a particular aspect of the nature of God within the illuminative phase than in either The Cloud or Hilton. Even though her treatment of God's nature as love is far from being thorough and systematic, it is far more so than The Cloud or Hilton.

In general, however, The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian consider the nature of God within the illuminative phase in relatively vague and nonspecific terms. Aside from a few individual emphases which stem primarily from their theoretical approaches to what may be known about God, we find no real attempt to describe God's nature from a systematic point of view within the illuminative phase.

## 2. Changes within the individual during illumination

The next informing concept within illumination which may be analyzed comparatively is the mystics' conception of the changes which occur within the individual during the period of illumination. This particular concept is treated most extensively by Richard Rolle, The Cloud, and Walter Hilton. It is referred to, but not considered

at length, by Julian and Margery Kempe. There are several aspects of change within the individual which may be treated comparatively. First, we may compare Hilton's conception of the "new gracious feelings" which are indicative of the change during illumination with Rolle's understanding of the state of the individual after illumination which he presents in terms of such phrases as "everlasting sweetness," "high sweetness," and "inward delights." "New gracious feelings" is the phrase most frequently used to describe the change that the individual undergoes during illumination. It should also be noted that the ability to experience these new gracious feelings seems to be synonymous with the individual's reformation in "faith and feeling," the end result and most important part of the illuminative phase.

But the second reforming [reforming in faith and in feeling] destroys the old feelings of this image of sin, and brings into the soul new gracious feelings through working of the Holy Ghost. (SP II.5.242)

. . . and when all bitter passions and fleshly lusts and old feelings are burned out of the heart with fire of desire, and new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light. Then neareth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling. (SP II.17.287)

Clearly, the phrase "new gracious feelings" implies an attitude or an orientation of the individual; but Hilton does not specify what the nature or content of these feelings are.

Rolle, on the other hand, describes the state of the individual at the end of the illuminative phase in terms of high sweetness, inward delights, and full great sweetness. Even though these phrases are not particularly precise, Rolle at least attempts to describe more carefully than Hilton the general state of man at the conclusion

of illumination. For example, Rolle indicates that:

. . . unde et affluit internis deliciis et canoro cogitatu  
gaudet in ardore dileccionis. (IA 11.174)

And wherfore withinward delitys he folowes, & in songe &  
thought loyes in byrnyng of lufe. (FL I.12.25)

. . . et sana in sublimitate sonora semper subsistat modulans  
premirifice in melliphona meditacione. (IA 5.159)

. . . & hole in hee swetnes euermore it abydis, full mer-  
uellusly syngand in henyly swete meditacion. (FL I.6.12)

Feruor enim et canor mirabilem in anima causant dulcorem; et  
eciam ob nimiam dulcedinem illa causari possunt. (IA 14.185)

Heet treuly & songe in the sawle causes a meruellus swetnes;  
& alsoo of full grete swetnes that may be causyd. (FL I.15.33)

Hilton does, however, mention several other characteristics of the soul after illumination. Particularly important is his emphasis upon the individual's increased capacity for love and charity. In one sense, man's love is part of the new attitude or orientation which Hilton describes in terms of "new gracious feelings." As such, it would be much more realistic than Rolle's emphasis upon delights and sweetness.

Another area for consideration and comparison within the informing concept of change during illumination is The Cloud's conception of the unifying effect of love and Rolle's emphasis upon the transforming character of love within the illuminative phase. The author of The Cloud indicates both in The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counselling that man's capacity to love and to receive love increases during the process of illumination. For example, he states that:

Wonderfully is a mans affeccion varied in goostly felyng of  
this nou3t when it is nou3where wrou3t. (CU 69.122)

That is, than schal thi gostly affeccion be fillid with the fulheed of loue & of vertuous leuyng in God, thi grounde & thi purete of spirit. (BPC 144)

. . . by soche a hid schewyng bryng thee oute of the boistouste of bodely felyng into the purete & depnes of goostly felyng; & so forthermore at the last to help thee to knit the goostly knot of brennyng loue bitwix thee & thi God, in goostly onheed & acordyng of wille. (CU 47.88)

Phrases such as "thy ghostly affections be filled with the fulness of love" and "at the last help thee to knit the ghostly knot of burning love betwixt thee and thy God" clearly indicate the nature of change within the individual with respect to his capacity for love during illumination.

Rolle's treatment of love within the illuminative phase is much more extensive than The Cloud's, both in terms of its transformative effect and man's capacity for love. According to Rolle, not only is man's capacity for love increased but he is also changed into another form. Thus, during illumination man is "altogether turned into another likeness" or "turned into another joy and another form." The following passages further illustrate the change which occurs within man because of the transformative effect of love.

Cuius amor, in cordibus radicatus stabilisque effectus transformat nos ad suam similitudinem; et aliam gloriam et diuinam plane letificantem mentes amore ardencium in nos infundit. (IA 4.156)

Whos lufe in hartis rotyd & made sekyr, vs makes lyke vnto hys lyknes, and other ioy, that is to say godly, in-to vs he puttis, with byrnynge lufe playnly our myndes myrthand. (FL I.5.10)

. . . cuius eciam interior homo in aliam gloriam aliamque formam iam mutatur. (IA 11.176)

. . . whos saule also with-in in-to A-nother Ioy and a-nother forme now is turnyd . . . . (FL I.12.26)

Transformatiuam eciam uim habet amor, quia amantem transformat in amatum et transfert in ipsum. Unde ignis Spiritus Sancti cor quod ueraciter capit totum incendit, et quasi in igne conuertit, atque in illam formam redigit que Deo similima est. (IA 17.196)

A turnyng strenght Also has lufe, for the lufand it turnnys in to the lufyd & beris in to hym. Qwharfore fyer of the holy gost the hart that it treuly takis, al hoyll itt byrnys, & als wer in to fyer it turns, and in to that forme it ledis that to gude is likist. (FL I.18.41)

A final area for comparison within the informing concept of change during illumination should be briefly mentioned at this point. There seems to be a definite relationship or similarity between The Cloud's conception of man's "affection" which gradually changes during illumination and Hilton's understanding of man's transformation in faith and feeling, especially the latter. We noted the relationship between Hilton's faith and feeling and Rolle's "high sweetness" and "inward delights," but the correlation between The Cloud's "affection" and Hilton's "faith and feeling" may be more exact from a theoretical point of view. Both "affection" and "faith and feeling" seem to refer to a spiritual orientation than to a physical or worldly one. As The Cloud indicates:

Wonderfully is a mans affeccion varied in goostly felyng of this nou3t when it is nou3where wrou3t. (CU 69.122)

That is, than schal thi gostly affeccion be fillid with the fulheed of loue & of vertuous leuyng in God, thi grounde & thi purete of spirit. (BPC 144)

And these may be compared with the following passages from Hilton:

. . . neither grace only without full working of a soul that in it is, nor working alone without grace, bringeth a soul to reforming in feeling; the which reforming standeth in perfect love and charity. (SP II.20.300)

. . . and when all bitter passions and fleshly lusts and old feelings are burned out of the heart with fire of desire, and



new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light. Then neareth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling. (SP II.17.287)

### 3. The function of God's grace, love and mercy

The nature and effect of God's grace, love, and mercy constitutes the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for illumination. In general each mystic, with the exception perhaps of The Cloud, considers the role of grace during illumination. Moreover, they tend to focus upon the definite effects that grace or God's action during illumination has upon the individual. With a few exceptions, these effects may be divided into two main categories which are considered by Rolle, Hilton, and Julian: (1) specific effects such as Rolle's idea that grace removes the "love of earthly things" and Julian's thought that grace "keeps, suffers, quickens, and heals" the individual; and (2) the more general effect of grace or God's love which results in the sight or vision of God and knowledge of his nature.

Rolle's conception of God's grace during illumination depends to a great extent upon his understanding of "being ravished." Evidently, being ravished is synonymous with the effect of God's grace. For example, he speaks of man's mind being "ravished by God to sing the delights of everlasting love" and of God ravishing his "lovers from all earthly things." Consequently, Rolle's treatment of the effect of God's grace upon man during illumination must be approached in terms of his use of the phrase "being ravished" and the effect of being ravished. The following passages illustrate the range of terms and phrases which Rolle employs to consider the

effects of God's grace or of "being ravished."

. . . rapitur mens ad canendum delicias amoris eterni.  
(IA 11.174)

. . . rauschyd is the mynde to synge likeyngis of lufe euer-  
lastynge. (FL I.12.25)

Interim tamen amatores tuos a cunctis terrenis rapis . . . .  
(IA 2.152)

. . . fro all erthly thou rauysches thi lufers . . . .  
(FL I.3.7)

Anima equidem a terrenorum uiciis separata, et a carnis uenenosa  
suauitate alienata, celestibus desideriis dedita immo et rapta,  
mirabili iocunditate perfruens . . . . (IA 26.218)

A sawl forsoth partyd fro warldly wys & fro venumus swetnes of  
the flesch sondyrd, gyfyn to heuenly desyrs, als wer rauschyd  
a meruelus myrth vsys . . . . (FL I.27.58)

Conuersus quippe toto corde ad Christum, primo per ueram peni-  
tenciam afficitur, et sic cuncta que ad uanitatem pertinent  
derelinquens, post gustum suauitatis interne ad canendum in  
sonoro iubilo diuinitus rapietur. (IA 17.194)

Turnyd forsoth with all my hart to criste, first be trew pen-  
ance I am tyde, & so all thinge that to vanite longis for-  
sakand, after the taste of gostly swetnes to synge in soundly  
loueynge godly it sall be rauschyd. (FL I.18.40)

Certain phrases such as "a marvellous mirth" and "the taste of ghostly  
sweetness" are rather vague. Rolle does not attempt to analyze them  
substantively. At several point he refers to God's grace in terms  
of the phrase "marvellous gifts." And even though he does not speci-  
fy what these particular gifts are, he does, as the following pas-  
sage indicates, consider the effects of these gifts upon the indi-  
vidual.

Multa sunt munera mirifica ac magna, sed nulla sunt talia  
inter uie dona que tam rare confirmant spem specie inuisibilis  
uite in animo amante, aut que sic suauiter sedentem consolantur  
et rapiunt ad cacumen contemplacionis, uel ad consonan-  
ciam angelice laudis. (IA 15.191)

Many ar the maruellus giftys & grett, bot non ar slike emonge the gyftis of this way, the whilk full derely confermys in figure of schaplynes of lyfe vnsene in loueand saule, or the whilk comforths so wetely the sittar, & comforthyd tha rauysch to the heght of contemplacion or acorde of Aungels loueynge. (FL I.11.37)

In general, Walter Hilton's discussion of God's action during illumination centers on the effect that God's love has upon man. According to Hilton, God's love is bestowed during the illuminative phase either in terms of God's gift of himself "in his godhead" or in terms of Jesus himself.

But when he giveth himself in his godhead ghostly to our souls fer our salvation, and maketh us fer to know him and love him, then loveth he us fully. (SP II.34.383)

Therefore the most token of love showed to us, as me thinketh, is this; that he giveth himself in his godhead to our souls. (SP II.34.383)

This love is nought else but Jhesu himself, that for love worketh all this in a man's soul and reformeth it in feeling to his likeness . . . . (SP II.34.386)

In direct contrast therefore to both Rolle and Julian, Hilton's conception of God's grace involves the bestowal of God or Jesus himself rather than God's grace or mercy as in Rolle and Julian. For Hilton God's love or the gift of God himself affects both the individual's rational and affective powers. For example, he indicates that:

That is for to say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind, reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth full the bone . . . . (SP I.31.69)

When these mights are through grace fulfilled in all understanding of the will of God and ghostly wisdom, then hath the soul new gracious feelings. (SP II.31.367-368)

. . . for it is of such men and women that by long travail bedily and ghostly, or else by such sharp smittings of love as I have before said, come into a rest of spirit so that their affection is turned into a ghostly savour . . . . (SP I.32.71)

Such phrases as "new gracious feelings" and "ghostly savour," although relatively vague and perhaps deliberately so, describe the general state of the soul after the reception of God's love. Certain other phrases which Hilton uses to consider the effect of God's love might also be mentioned. According to Hilton, love draws the soul from "fleshlihood into ghostliness" "earthly feeling into heavenly savour," and "vain beholding of worldly things into contemplation of ghostly creatures." These phrases may be contrasted with Rolle's treatment of the effects of grace as found in such phrases as "ravishest thy lovers from all earthly things," "a soul parted from worldly vices, and sundered from venomous sweetness of the flesh," and "forsaking all things that long to vanity."

Julian's discussion of the specific effects of God's grace and mercy during illumination emphasizes the close, personal relationship which she feels exists between herself and God. Mercy and grace, therefore, are couched in terms and phrases reminiscent of those which might be employed to describe how one friend might help another. The following passage, in which Julian explicates the effect of mercy and grace most completely, clearly illustrates the personal orientation which words and phrases relating to mercy and grace assume:

Mercy worketh: keeping, suffering, quickening, and healing; and all is tenderness of love. And grace worketh: raising, rewarding, endlessly overpassing that which our longing and our travail deserveth, spreading abroad and shewing the high plenteous largess of God's royal Lordship in His marvellous courtesy; and this is of the abundance of love. For grace worketh our dreadful falling into plenteous, endless solace; and grace worketh our shameful falling into high, worshipful rising; and grace worketh our sorrowful dying into holy, blissful life.  
(RDL 48.102)

The second main category under the informing concept of the nature and effect of God's grace during illumination is constituted by the more general effect of grace or God's love which results in the sight or vision of God and knowledge of his nature. This is considered by Rolle, Hilton, and Julian. Hilton, however, seems to treat this idea more extensively than either Rolle or Julian, particularly the former. For example, Hilton indicates that:

The lover of Jhesu, through inspiration of his grace taken up from outward feeling of worldly love and ravished into privy of ghostly love . . . . (SP II.40.422)

But when he giveth himself in his godhead ghostly to our souls for our salvation, and maketh us for to know him and love him, then loveth he us fully. (SP II.34.383)

For love is cause why a soul cometh to this sight and to this knowing; and that love is not the love that a soul hath in itself to God, but the love that our Lord hath to a sinful soul that can right not love him is cause why this soul cometh to this knowing and to this love that cometh out of it. (SP II.34.380-381)

Elsewhere Hilton states that God's love draws the soul "from vain beholding of worldly things into contemplation of ghostly creatures, and of God's privities" (SP II.34.386) which indicates that man is able during illumination to arrive at an understanding or knowing of God by means of the effect of God's grace or love.

And what comfort and ghostly delight, savour and sweetness, a soul may feel than in this ghostly work through divers illuminations--inly perceivings, privy knowings and sudden touchings of the Holy Ghost--by assay the soul may wit and else not. (SP II.43.448)

Finally, several passages from Julian and Rolle which consider the effects of God's mercy and grace in terms of an increased understanding of God's nature conclude our comparative analysis of the effect of God's grace, love, and mercy during the illuminative phase:

. . . whereby I might, by the help of our Lord and His grace, increase and rise to more heavenly knowing and higher loving. (RDL 46.97)

And then shall we, with his grace, in our own meek continuant prayer come unto Him now in this life by many privy touchings of sweet spiritual sights and feeling, measured to us as our simpleness may bear it. (RDL 43.91)

. . . et diuine maiestatis conspectui tam crebro raptu representas! (IA 2.152)

. . . & with so oft rauyschyng to the sight of godis maiestee vs representys. (FL I.3.7)

#### 4. The nature of visions and revelations during illumination

Visions and revelations, the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for illumination, form an important part of the thought of the English mystics. They are especially important because of the range and intensity of the words, phrases, and ideas used to describe them. Furthermore, there is a great deal of similarity in the treatment of visions and revelations by the English mystics during the illuminative phase. Particularly striking is the rather close resemblance in the language of visions between Richard Rolle and Margery Kempe. Hilton's criticism of Rolle's emphasis upon the sounds, smells, and other physical phenomena accompanying his accounts of visions indicates Hilton's close familiarity with Rolle's discussion of visions.

Another important area for comparison within the informing concept of visions and revelations is Julian's and Margery Kempe's consideration of the sight or appearance of Jesus. Their conception of visions is particularly significant since it closely approximates the traditional understanding of visions, i.e., that a definite

object such as Jesus appears in some form during the illuminative phase.

Our comparative analysis of visions will also include a comparison between Margery's references to "high contemplations" and "holy dalliances" and The Cloud's and Hilton's thought that visions are essentially indescribable. Julian's attempt to describe her visions will also be compared with those of Margery, The Cloud, and Hilton. Other general areas for comparison will include Julian's and Hilton's "sight" of Jesus, Margery's and Julian's emphasis upon the suffering and passion of Jesus as the basis for their conception of visions, and Hilton's unique treatment of the "sight" of Jesus during illumination.

Richard Rolle and Margery Kempe, rather than attempting to describe what they saw or visualized in their imaginations, emphasize the effects that they felt the visions had upon them. These effects, moreover, are most frequently considered in terms of the sounds, sights, smells, and so forth which these visions seemed to produce. Rolle's descriptions of visions often involve such phrases as "a merry and unknown heat," "the noise of song," "the most liking heavenly melody," "plenteousness of inward sweetness," "continual song of mirth," "all sweet and merry song," "burnt with the fire of endless love," "everlasting sweetness moistens their minds," "abides in high sweetness," and "sweetly burned with the fire of the Holy Ghost." Margery's account of visions and revelations also stresses the effect of visions in terms of song and melody. As the following phrases illustrate, fire, song, or melody usually forms the basis

for her treatment of visions: "she had in her mind the mirth and the melody that was in heaven," "oftentimes she heard sweet sounds and melodies," "so hideous a melody that she could not bear it," "great sounds and great melodies," "a sound of melody so sweet and delectable, and right comfortable," "melody so sweet that it surpassed all melody that ever might be heard in this world," and "she felt the heat burning in her breast and at her heart."

The similarity between Rolle's and Margery's description of visions is obvious. The influence of Rolle upon Margery may be described as a similarity in general approach, perhaps even a similar mind set, with respect to their description of the effects of visions. Exact parallels, perhaps with the exception of the "songs and melodies" phrases and themes, would be difficult of course to prove; and, at best, they would be rather tenuous. But the general similarity between Rolle and Margery is apparent.

Even though Hilton is extremely critical of Rolle's visions, his criticism is important from a linguistic point of view. For his criticism indicates that he was not only familiar with Rolle's mystical thought but also with the language associated with Rolle and his school, particularly those words and phrases closely associated with Rolle's descriptions of visions. The following passages illustrate both Hilton's basic attitude toward Rolle's treatment of the effects of visions and Hilton's own conception of visions.

Soothly I had liefer feel and have a soothfast desire and a clean in mine heart to my Lord Jhesu Christ, though I see right little of him with my ghostly eye, than for to have without this desire all bodily penance of all men living, or visions or revelations of angels appearing, songs and sounds,



savours and smells, burnings and any pleasing bodily feeling  
 . . . . (SP I.47.114)

. . . that thou see any manner of light or brightness with thy  
 bodily eye, or in imagining, other than every man may see; or  
 if thou hear any merry sounding with thy bodily ear, or in thy  
 mouth any sweet sudden savour, other than of kind, or any heat  
 in thy breast as it were fire, or any manner delight in any  
 part of thy body . . . . (SP I.11.21)

. . . visions or revelations of any spirit, in bodily appearing  
 or in imagining, sleeping or waking, or else any other feeling  
 in bodily wits made as it were ghostly, either in sounding of  
 ear, or savouring in the mouth, or smelling at the nose, or  
 else any sensible heat as it were fire glowing and warming the  
 breast, or any other part of the body, or anything that may be  
 felt by bodily wit, though it be never so comfortable and liking,  
 are not very contemplation . . . . (SP I.10.19)

It is especially important to note those passages in Hilton's criticism of Rolle which are similar to the words and phrases continually used to describe the visions in Rolle and Margery: "songs and sounds, savours and smells, burnings and any pleasing bodily feeling," "merry sounding," "sweet sudden savour," "any heat in thy breast as it were fire," and "sounding of ear, or savouring in the mouth, or smelling at the nose, or else any sensible heat as it were fire glowing and warming the breast."

Julian's and Margery's consideration of the sight or appearance of Jesus forms the next area for comparison within the informing concept of visions in the secondary conceptual field for illumination. Their visions are most frequently presented in terms of Jesus' passion and suffering. But rather than presenting a particular vision of Jesus as he appears in a resurrected or glorified form, which is somewhat common among most mystical writers, the emphasis is usually placed upon the suffering and passion, including especially the

physical details. Sermonic material, visual didactic devices such as stained glass windows, crucifixes, and sculpture probably formed the basis for this preoccupation with the suffering and the passion. Physical suffering seems to be not only something generally capable of extensive description but also something with which both Julian and Margery easily identify.

For the most part, Margery's description of the passion tends to be rather vague and general, whereas Julian's is objective, specific, and extremely vivid. Margery, for example, will usually merely mention the fact that Jesus appeared to her in his passion; there is little, if any, elaboration upon the statement itself. The following passages illustrate clearly her normal procedure for considering visions.

An-other tyme, as the creatur lay in hir contemplycyon in a chapel of owr lady, hir mynde was ocupijd in the Passyon of owr Lord Ihesu Crist, & hyr thowt verily that sche saw owr Lord aperyn to hir gostly syght in hys manhod with hys wowndys bledyng as fresche as thow he had ben scorgyd be-forn hir.  
(MK I.85.207)

Than sche beheld in the syght of hir sowle owr blisful Lord Crist Ihesu comyng to-hys-Passyon-ward . . . . (MK I.79.187)

. . . sodeynly ocupijd the hert of this creatur, drawyng hir mende al holy in-to the Passyon of owr Lord Crist Ihesu, whom sche behelde wyth hir gostly eye in the syght of hir sowle as verily as thei sche had seyn hys precyows body betyn, scorgyd, & crufified wyth hir bodily eye . . . . (MK I.57.140)

In direct contrast to Margery, Julian elaborates rather extensively upon the visions of Jesus associated with the passion. In her frequent reflections upon Jesus' suffering, she often describes it in terms of such physical aspects of the crucifixion as blood, physical agony, and tortured flesh. Julian is far more realistic

and vivid than the other mystics in this respect; however, since the visions are based primarily upon the passion and the suffering, it is quite probable that Julian's visions are reflections upon written material and visual media concerned with Jesus' passion rather than upon visions in a strict mystical sense. But this in no way detracts from the power and realism of her descriptions of the passion.

In this moment suddenly I saw the red blood trickle down from under the Garland hot and freshly and right plenteously, as it were in the time of His Passion when the Garland of thorns was pressed on His blessed Head . . . . (RDL 4.8)

And after this I saw, beholding, the body plenteously bleeding of the Scourging, as thus: The fair skin was broken full deep into the tender flesh with sharp smiting all about the sweet body. So plenteously the hot blood ran out that there was neither seen skin nor wound, but as it were all blood. (RDL 12.29)

After this Christ shewed a part of His Passion near His dying. I saw His sweet face as it were dry and bloodless with pale dying. And later, more pale, dead, languoring; and then turned more dead into blue; and then more brown-blue, as the flesh turned more deeply dead. (RDL 16.36)

Another important area for comparison within the context of visions during illumination is Hilton's and The Cloud's attitude toward visions and revelations. For the most part both are extremely critical of visions; even though union with God is understood to be desirable both in this life and after death, they doubt the general validity of "visions" in a traditional sense. Both authors seem to emphasize the ineffability of visions, revelations, and other related phenomena. In The Cloud, for example, we find almost nothing that can be considered a vision in a traditional sense. The only exception, perhaps, would be The Cloud's references to the "beam of the likeness of God," but the author does not elaborate upon

this "beam" with respect to either its general nature or specific characteristics. His one direct criticism of revelations and visions is indicative of his general attitude toward visions:

Alle the reuelacions that euer sawe any man here in bodely  
licnes in this liif, thei haue goostly bemenynges. (CU 58.107)

Moreover, as the following passage clearly indicates, The Cloud is especially wary of visions and revelations:

& than as fast the deuil hath power for to feyne sum fals  
li3t or sounes, swete smelles in theire noses, wonderful  
taastes in theire mowthes, & many queynte hetes & brennynges  
in theire bodily brestes or in theire bowelles, in theire  
backes & in theire reynes, & in theire pryue membres.  
(CU 52.96-97)

Hilton, on the other hand, even though he is generally critical of visions, does not apparently feel that visions in the natural order are necessarily beyond the reach of man. His visions, rather than being extensive descriptions of a particular vision, tend to stress the "sight of Jesus" or the "ghostly sight of Jesus." Hilton refers to this "sight of Jesus" very frequently in the Scala and consequently it seems to represent the fundamental basis for his discussion of visions. Moreover, it should be stressed that Hilton does not attempt to elaborate on the substantive content or nature of the sight of Jesus. For him it remains essentially indescribable. A few passages indicate his usual way of considering the sight of Jesus:

. . . thou shalt set in thine heart wholly and fully, that thou  
wouldest nothing have but the love of Jhesu, and the ghostly  
sight of Him as He will show Him . . . . (SP II.21.308)

. . . also this meekness that the soul feeleth through grace,  
in sight and beholding of the endless being and the wonderful  
goodness of Jhesu . . . . (SP II.21.306)

. . . and the soul is so comforted, and so borne up with the soft feeling of love that it hath of the sight of Jhesu . . . . (SP II.36.396)

But then through grace it is drawn into the privy chamber into the sight of our Lord Jhesu . . . . (SP II.40.422)

Julian of Norwich also mentions the "sight" of God or Jesus in her Revelations. But, as we indicated in our discussion of the knowledge of God imparted during the illuminative phase, she customarily elaborates on the sight of God or Jesus by using comparatively stock attributes and characteristics of God such as "endless sovereign truth," "endless sovereign wisdom," and "unchangeable Goodness." These characteristics are not dependent upon visions.

In Margery's writings may be found the same general reluctance to describe the exact nature of her visions and revelations. She does not attempt to provide any further discussion or explanation of her visions other than considering them as "high meditations," "high contemplation and dalliance," "glorious visions and high contemplation," and other similar phrases. These phrases indicate not only the indescribable nature of visions from Margery's point of view but also a certain ideological similarity with respect to the ineffability of visions and revelations as found in both Hilton and The Cloud. It might be indicated at this point that Julian's visions, excluding those dealing with the passion which are apparently based upon such non-visionary factors as homiletic material and visual media, also have a tendency to be rather vague and general. Thus, there is a similar tendency in Julian toward the indescribability of visions and revelations.

## 5. The effects of visions and revelations during illumination

The final informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for illumination to be considered is the English mystics' treatment of the effects that their visions had upon them. Although our discussion will be concerned primarily with the effects of the visions themselves, it should be pointed out that the various changes that occur within the individual during illumination possess some relevance to our present discussion of the effects of the visions.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, several aspects of the changes during illumination will be introduced where applicable.

Three English mystics, Hilton, Julian, and Margery, specifically consider the effects of visions and revelations. Rolle's discussion of the overall effects of the visions, which might be included at this point, were considered within the context of the discussion of visions during illumination since visions and the effects of visions in Rolle's mystical thought seem for the most part to be synonymous.<sup>2</sup> The Cloud will not be considered as the author does not discuss at length either visions or the effects of visions.

The major areas to be compared under the informing concept of the effects of visions during illumination may be noted as follows: (1) Hilton's "ghostly savour and sweetness" and Margery Kempe's "sweetness and grace," both of which apparently refer to the same

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<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 164-169.

<sup>2</sup>See above, pp. 174-181.

phenomenon; (2) Julian's and Margery's consideration of the aid or help that the vision of God and/or Jesus provides them; and (3) Hilton's and Julian's discussion of the knowledge of God as it is considered specifically under the overall effect of their visions.

Both Hilton and Margery discuss the effects of their visions in terms of heightened physical feelings such as sweetness and savour. Their phrases are strongly reminiscent of the language employed by Rolle in his discussion of visions. These heightened physical feelings, moreover, constitute a major part of Hilton's and Margery's conception of the effects of visions. Both mystics indicate that it is the vision of God which produces these heightened feelings. The phrases which they use to describe these feelings are quite similar in both form and content. Hilton, for example, considers the effects of his visions of God during illumination as follows:

. . . in ghostly savour and sweetness of the love and the sight of God; by the which sight and feeling my soul shall be fed. (SP I.32.72)

. . . and thy desire is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence  
. . . . (SP I.25.57)

. . . and never had feeling of ghostly savour or sweetness, or ghostly knowing of God . . . . (SP I.44.104)

. . . the which felt never ghostly sweetness nor inly savour in the name of Jhesu or in the love of Jhesu. (SP I.44.105)

And Margery's description of the effects of her visions closely parallel Hilton's:

. . . for sche myth not beryn the swetnesse & grace that God wrowt in hir sowle. (MK I.28.67)

Than had sche so meche swetnes & deuocyon that sche myth not  
beryn it . . . . (MK I.78.184)

In both Julian and Margery the vision of God strongly affects their spiritual attitude toward God. And it also aids them in understanding their human condition as well as providing them with general aid and assistance. For example, Margery indicates that:

& euyr the more that sche encresyd in lofe & in deuocyon, the  
mor sche encresyd in sorwe & in contrycyon, in lownes, in meke-  
nes, & in the holy dreed of owr Lord, & in knowlach of hir owyn  
frelte . . . . (MK I.72.172)

. . . wepyng & sobbyng so sor that vn-ethe sche myth stondyn  
on hir feet for the fervowr of lofe & deuocyon that God putte  
in hir sowle thorw hy contemplacyon. (MK I.82.198)

In these passages particular emphasis is placed upon the increase in Margery's love for God and upon the understanding of her own sinful condition. Julian, on the other hand, considers the vision of God in terms of the aid it provides her in understanding God and herself, the comfort she receives from the vision, and a general increase in her love and knowledge of God.

He kindleth our understanding, he directeth our ways, he easeth  
our conscience, he comforteth our soul, he lighteneth our heart,  
and giveth us, in part, knowing and believing in his blissful  
godhead, with gracious mind in his sweet manhood and his blessed  
passion, with reverent marvelling in his high, overpassing good-  
ness; and maketh us to love all that he loveth, for his love,  
and to be well-pleased with him and all his works. (RDL 61.152)

The last main area for comparison under the effects of visions during the illuminative phase is that knowledge of God which the mystics feel proceeds directly from the effects of the visions. Since this particular knowledge of God derives directly from the visions themselves, it should be considered apart from the general knowledge of God gained during illumination.



Hilton, Julian, and Margery each consider the effects of their respective visions in terms of their increased knowledge of God.

For example, Hilton states that:

And then after this our Lord bringeth him out into the right way and fasteneth him to him, and gladdeth him, and then showeth him his privities, and giveth him his treasure of knowing and understanding of righteousness. (SP I.39.90)

He also indicates that God's goodness and grace are more fully comprehended because of the visions:

. . . but thou might through devout and continual beholding of the meekness of his precious manhead feel his goodness and the grace of his godhead, when thy desire is eased and holpen and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence . . . . (SP I.25.57)

Similarly, Julian of Norwich considers the increased awareness of God's goodness as a result of her visions. This is an especially strong theme in her mystical thought.

For this was shewed: that our life is all grounded and rooted in love, and without love we may not live; and therefore to the soul that of his special grace seeth so far into the high, marvellous goodness of God, and seeth that we are endlessly oned to him in love, it is the most impossible that may be, that God should be wroth. (RDL 49.103)

And in addition to a more thorough understanding of God's goodness, his nature becomes clearer because of the effect that visions have upon man's soul or being.

For as verily as we have our being of the endless Might of God and of the endless Wisdom and of the endless Goodness, so verily we have our keeping in the endless Might of God, in the endless Wisdom, and in the endless Goodness. (RDL 49.103)

And thus was my understanding led of God to see in him and to understand, to perceive and to know, that our soul is made-trinity, like to the unmade blissful trinity, known and loved from without beginning, and in the making oned to the maker, as it is aforesaid. This sight was full sweet and marvellous to behold, peaceable, restful, sure, and delectable. (RDL 55.133)

Finally, Margery also comments upon the increase in her understanding of her Lord's goodness and love which stems directly from the effects of her visions:

Than was hir sowle so delectabely fed wyth the swet dalyawns  
of owr Lorde & so fulfilled of hys lofe . . . . (MI I.41.98)

. . . al rauyschyd wyth gostly comfort in the goodnes of owr  
Lord that wrowt so gret grace for hys seruawnt . . . .  
(MK I.60.147)

In general, then, the effects of the visions of the English mystics tend to be considered in terms of heightened physical feelings such as sweetness and savour, spiritual aid which results from the visions, and an increased knowledge of God which is a direct consequence of the effects of the visions themselves. And it should be pointed out that each of these effects produced by the visions tends to be treated rather similarly by the English mystics in both form and content.

The main conclusions of the present chapter, as in the last chapter, may be grouped in three areas: (1) the secondary conceptual field for illumination constructed in this chapter which, when viewed as an organic whole, not only represents the collective thought of the English mystics with respect to illumination but also permits comparisons to be made between individual mystics; (2) significant similarities and differences between the English mystics in terms of the informing concepts and those words, phrases, and ideas which constitute them; and (3) individual emphases of each English mystic concerning the illuminative phase.

Since the secondary conceptual field for illumination represents the primary conclusion and its importance is obvious, we may consider

at this point the significant similarities and differences between the English mystics concerning illumination. The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian, who consider the knowledge of God during illumination most fully, consistently emphasize the indescribability of this knowledge. And even though each mystic attempts to describe the nature of God as revealed during illumination, the words and phrases generally used are standard, traditional terms which are frequently employed to characterize God's nature. Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton each consider the change occurring within man during illumination. The basic similarity in their treatment of change lies in their consideration of the transformative effect of love upon man during illumination. And there is a particularly close correlation between Hilton's "new gracious feelings" and Rolle's "everlasting sweetness," "high sweetness," and "inward delights" which they use to describe this change.

The function of God's grace, love, and mercy is considered by Rolle, Hilton, and Julian primarily in terms of the effects that it has upon the individual during illumination. And each of these mystics emphasizes the importance of God's grace throughout the illuminative phase. Rolle and Margery discuss the visions occurring during illumination chiefly in terms of their effects upon them. Words and phrases used by Rolle and Margery to describe these effects bear close similarities to the language employed by Hilton in his criticism of visions. In contrast to Rolle and Hilton, Julian's and Margery's accounts of visions are usually presented in terms of Christ's suffering and passion. But throughout their consideration

of visions during illumination, each English mystic consistently emphasizes the essential ineffability of visions and revelations.

Several individual emphases concerning the illuminative phase should be noted. In her discussion of the nature of God as revealed during illumination, Julian, more than any other English mystic, considers it in terms of love. Rolle's treatment of God's grace with respect to its ravishing effect upon man is an especially important individual emphasis within the illuminative phase. Hilton, on the other hand, stresses the idea that God's grace is to be equated with the gift of God himself. But he does carefully consider its effects upon man during illumination. Another unique aspect of the treatment of God's grace during illumination is Julian's discussion of his grace, love, and mercy within the context of a close personal relationship with God. Finally, we should note the emphasis by the author of The Cloud upon the need for man to remain wary of visions and revelations that occur during the illuminative phase.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECONDARY CONCEPTUAL FIELD FOR UNION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TREATMENT OF UNION BY THE ENGLISH MYSTICS

The treatment of mystical union by the English mystics is the last phase of the contemplative life to be analyzed comparatively before we compare their conception of the contemplative life with the traditional mystical writings of Augustine, Gregory, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor and the various mystical and devotional writings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

As we have indicated at several points, discussion of the English mystics' treatment of the unitive phase involves several important problems. First, even though the validity of the mystical experiences considered by the mystics may be doubted, each English mystic does refer to some form of the unitive phase. But it should be emphasized again that our primary concern is to analyze what each English mystic said about union by means of the initial conceptual fields constructed in Chapter Five and the secondary conceptual field to be constructed in the present chapter. Validation of mystical experiences is not to be considered part of our procedure. Secondly, since the English mystics rarely treat union in a thorough and systematic fashion, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether they are referring to union with God experienced during the

illuminative or the unitive phase. For our purposes, however, references to union with God by the English mystics will be considered to be within the unitive phase. Finally, references to union do not occur as frequently in the writings of the English mystics as references to purgation and illumination. This is, however, to be expected because of the difficulties inherent in any attempt to express the union with God. Thus, the comparative analysis of the unitive phase will be less extensive than that of purgation and illumination.

The secondary conceptual field for the unitive phase, which forms the basis for the comparative analysis of the English mystics' treatment of union, is constituted by five main informing concepts: (1) the description of and/or references to the union between God and man; (2) the mysterious and ineffable nature of union with God; (3) the knowledge of God imparted during union; (4) the general state of the individual during the unitive phase; and (5) the concept of union with God in this world as a foretaste of the union expected with him in the next. As we have done for purgation and illumination in the preceding two chapters, each of the above informing concepts will be considered in terms of the words, phrases, and ideas which tend to cluster around them.

#### 1. Description of and/or references to union

Richard Rolle and the author of The Cloud provide the most thorough discussion of the first main informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union, the description of and/or

references to the union with God. Both Rolle and The Cloud consider man's union with God primarily in terms of being oned or knitted to God. As the following passages clearly illustrate, each mystic describes union with essentially similar phrases and ideas:

*Dum enim mens sanctorum eternitatis amori inseparabiliter immittitur, et dulcedinem celestis uite saltem raptim quamuis cum melodia se pergustasse gloriatur.* (IA 24.214)

Qwhils the mynde truly of sayntis, to lufe endles, vnabyll to be lowsyd, is knyttyd, and swetnes of heuenly lyfe, thof all it wer als rauyschyd, with melody before felt as wer in that is gladynd. (FL I.26.55)

*Amicicia est connexio uoluntatum, eisdem consencienrium et eisdem dissencium . . . .* (IA 39.261)

Frenschyp is knytyng of two wyllis to lyke thinges consentyng & to vnlyke dissentyng . . . . (FL II.9.90)

. . . ut Deo nostro perfecte uniamur . . . . (IA 41.271)

. . . that we to god parfytely be knyttyd in onned. (FL II.11.98)

Knyt thee therfore bi him by loue & by beleue; & than by ver-tewe of that knot thou schalt be comoun parcener with him & with alle that by loue so ben knittyd vnto him . . . . (CU 4.21)

Abouen thi-self thou arte: for whi thou atteynest to come thedir by grace, whether thou mayst not come by kynde; that is to sey, to be onyd to God in spirit & in loue & in acor-daunce of wille. (CU 67.120)

It chargeth not now in thee bot that thi blynde beholding of thy nakid beyng be gladli born up in listines of loue, to be knyttid & onid in grace & in spirit to the precious beyng of God in him-self only as he is, with-uten more. (BPC 139)

Rolle and The Cloud in their references to union also stress both what factors are responsible for the union between God and man and what factors are unified in the mystical union itself. The Cloud, for example, considers the following factors to be responsible for the mystical union with God:

Knyt thee therefore bi him by loue & by beleue; & than by ver-  
tewe of that knot thou schalt be comoun parcener with him &  
with alle that by loue so ben knittyd vnto him . . . .  
(CU 4.21)

Factors unified in the mystical union itself are treated extensively by both Rolle and The Cloud. The Cloud mentions "in spirit," "in onehead of love," "in accordance of will," "in truth," "in depth of spirit," "in grace," and "in ghostly feeling of himself." Rolle, on the other hand, indicates "in deed," "in will," "in grace," and "in onehead of will."

For both Rolle and The Cloud God's love for man and man's love for God constitute the primary binding force between man and God in mystical union. In this sense, love is the dominant factor unified in union.

Dum enim mens sanctorum eternitatis amori inseparabiliter im-  
mittitur, et dulcedinem celestis uite saltem raptim quamuis  
cum melodia se pergustasse gloriatur. (IA 24.214)

Qwhils the mynde truly of sayntis, to lufe endles, vnabyll to  
be lowsyd, is knyttyd, and swetnes of heuenly lyfe, thof all  
it wer als rauyschyd, with melody before felt as wer in that  
is gladynd. (FL I.26.55)

. . . amor attamen Deum et hominem copulat et breui labore  
facit sustentantes. (IA 40.270)

. . . lufe neuer-the-lesse, god & man cuppyls & with schort  
labore fulfyllis the abidars. (FL II.10.98)

Est enim Deo amor acceptissimus et dilectissimus, qui ligat  
non solum nexibus sapientie et suauitatis Deoque coniungit  
. . . . (IA 41.274-275)

Luf to god is most accept & moste likynge; it byndis not  
onely mynde with bandis of wisdom & swetnes & to god  
Ioynys . . . . (FL II.11.101)

And the author of The Cloud's emphasis upon love is as equally ap-  
parent as Rolle's:



It chargeth not now in thee bot that thi blynde beholdyng of thi nakid beyng be gladli born up in listines of loue, to be knyttid & onid in grace & in spirit to the precious beyng of God in him-self only as he is, with-uten more. (BPC 139)

. . . & so forthermore at the last to help thee to knit the goostly knot of brennyng loue bitwix thee & thi God, in goostly onheed & acordyng of wille. (CU 47.88)

. . . & peynfully bere the birthin of thi-self as a cros, er thou maist be onyd to God in goostly felyng of him-self, the whiche is parfite charite. (BPC 157)

Rolle's and The Cloud's descriptions of God, as he is encountered during union, should be noted and compared. The Cloud, for example, refers to God as the object of union as follows:

In this tyme it is that thou bothe seest thi God & thi loue, & nakidly felist hym also bi goostly onyng to his loue in the souereyn poynte of thi spirit, spoylid of thi-self & nakidly clothed in hymself as he is, vnclothed & not lappid in any of thees sensible felynges (be thei neuer so sweet ne so holy) that mowen falle in this liif. (BPC 169)

Rolle, on the other hand, usually refers to the object of union simply as "God." He does, however, also refer to God as love during union, as the following passage illustrates:

Dum enim mens sactorum eternitatis amori inseparabiliter immittitur . . . . (IA 24.214)

Qwhils the mynde truly of sayntis, to lufe endles, vnabyll to be lowsyd, is knyttid . . . . (FL I.26.55)

The description of union in Hilton and Julian may also be effectively compared and contrasted. For Hilton, mystical union is frequently described in terms of the state of the individual during union within which the knowing and the perfect loving of God or the ghostly knowing and feeling of God occurs. This idea may be illustrated by the following passages:

. . . the contemplative life lieth principally in ghostly knowing and feeling of God. (SP I.16.33)

The third part of contemplation, which is perfect as it may be here, lieth both in cognition and in affection: that is for to say, in knowing and in perfect loving of God. (SP I. 8.14)

Contemplative life lieth in perfect love and charity felt inwardly by ghostly virtues, and by soothfast knowing and sight of God and ghostly things. (SP I.3.5)

On the other hand, in considering union with God Julian of Norwich seems to emphasize the sight or beholding of God rather than the union itself. Thus, Julian refers to the union with God as follows:

The highest bliss that is, is to have Him in clarity of endless life, Him verily seeing, Him sweetly feeling, all-perfectly having in fulness of joy. (RDL 72.175)

Thus is that blissful sight the end of all manner of pain to the loving soul, and the fulfilling of all manner of joy and bliss. And that shewed he in the high, marvellous words where he said: I it am that is highest; I it am that is lowest; I it am that is all. (RDL 72.177)

It is God's will that we set the point of our thought in this blissful beholding as often as we may, and as long time keep us therein with His grace . . . . (RDL 64.161)

And this is an high unperceivable prayer, as to my sight: for all the cause wherefore we pray, it is oned into the sight and beholding of Him to whom we pray . . . . (RDL 43.90-91)

In spite of the above differences in the English mystics' references to or descriptions of union with God in the unitive phase, love forms the dominant element which underlies their understanding of mystical union. Love, however, is approached or understood from several points of view. It can refer to God's love for man, man's love for God, or the love which is created by the union of God and man. Rolle, The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian each refer to union with God in terms of love. Rolle, for example, refers to the role of love in union as follows:

. . . amor attamen Deum et hominem copulat et breui labore facit sustinentes. (IA 40.270)

. . . lufe neuer-the-lesse, god & man cuppyls & with schort labore fulfyllis the abidars. (FL II.10.98)

Est enim Deo amor acceptissimus et dilectissimus, qui ligat non solum nexibus sapiencie et suauitatis Deoque coniungit . . . . (IA 41.274-275)

Luf to god is most accept & moste likynge; it byndis not onely mynde with bandis of wisdom & swetnes & to god loynys . . . . (FL II.11.101)

Unitatiuam uero quia amantes unum efficit in affectu et uoluntate . . . . (IA 17.196)

Knytynge treuly, for lufars it makis on in deyde & will . . . . (FL I.18.41)

Dum enim mens sanctorum eternitatis amori inseparabiliter immittitur . . . . (IA 24.214)

Qwhils the mynde truly of sayntis, to lufe endles, vnabyll to be lowsyd, is knyttyd . . . . (FL I.26.55)

For the author of The Cloud, love is at the center of his conception of union:

Knyt thee therefore bi him by loue & by beleue; & than by vertewe of that knot thou schalt be comoun parcener with him & with alle that by loue so ben knittyd vnto him . . . . (CU 4.21)

Abouen thi-self thou arte: for whi thou atteynest to come thedir by grace, whether thou mayst not come by kynde; that is to sey, to be onyd to God in spirit & in loue & in acordaunce of wille. (CU 67.120)

Hilton's emphasis upon man's increased awareness of the perfect loving of God in the unitive phase is also indicative of the English mystics' concern for love as the dominant element in mystical union.

The third part of contemplation, which is perfect as it may be here, lieth both in cognition and in affection: that is for to say, in knowing and perfect loving of God. (SP I.8.14)

Contemplative life lieth in perfect love and charity felt inwardly by ghostly virtues, and by soothfast knowing and sight of God and ghostly things. (SP I.3.5)

And finally, even though Julian's description of union usually involves a discussion of the sight and beholding of God, love also forms an important part of her conception of the contemplative life, including especially the unitive phase.

## 2. The mysterious and ineffable nature of union with God

As we have frequently indicated, most mystics, including the English mystics, are unable to consider the mystical union with God in the unitive phase with any degree of precision, particularly from a substantive or contentual point of view. References to and subsequent treatments of union with God tend to be vague and imprecise. For the most part, words and phrases relating to or descriptive of the nature of God revealed during union are usually based upon such traditional characteristics of God's nature as his wisdom, goodness, mercy, and his love for man. New insights into the nature of the union itself are very infrequent.

In spite of this, however, Richard Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian of Norwich do consider the problems involved in attempting to describe the nature of the union with God within the unitive phase. Comparing and contrasting the words, phrases, and ideas that they use to describe the ineffability of union is important since it affords another opportunity to compare their use of mystical language and thought.

Even though Rolle's, The Cloud's, and Julian's references to the indescribability of mystical union are not extensive, they do indicate that the mystics were aware of this important problem. As the following series of passages illustrates, each mystic states

rather clearly, using similar words and phrases, that mystical union and the nature of God are difficult, if not impossible, to describe:

Ille autem Deum perfecte cognoscit, qui ipsum incomprehensibilem et incognoscibilem esseprehendit. (IA 6.161)

He treuly knawes god parfitly, that hym felys incomprehensibyll & vnabyll to be knawen. (FL I.7.14)

Laudabile ita est, Deum perfecte, scilicet incomprehensibilem esse, cognoscere . . . . (IA 6.162)

Also it is prays god parfytely, that is to say, vnabyll to be consauyd fully, to know . . . . (FL I.7.15)

Lat be this eueriwhere & this ou3t, in comparison of this no3where & this nou3t. Reche thee neuer 3if thi wittys kon on skyle of this nou3t; for whi I loue it moche the betir. It is so worthi a thing in it-self that thei kon no skyle ther-apon. This nou3t may betir be felt then seen; for it is ful blynde & ful derk to hem that han bot lityl while lokid ther-apon. (CU 68.122)

. . . that perfeccion of mans soule is not elles bot an one-heed maad bitwix God & it in parfite charitee. This perfeccion is so hei3 & so pure in it-self, abouen the vnderstandyng of man, that it may not be knowen ne perceyuid in it-self. (BPC 153)

But what is to me verily the maker, the keeper, the lover, I cannot tell; for till I am substantially oned to him, I may never have full rest nor very bliss: that is to say, till I be so fastened to him, that there is right nought that is made betwixt my God and me. (RDL 5.10)

. . . for our ghostly eye is so blind and we be so borne down by weight of our mortal flesh and darkness of sin, that we may not see our Lord God clearly in his fair blissful cheer. (RDL 72.176-177)

And in these words I saw a marvellous high mystery hid in God, which mystery he shall openly make known to us in heaven . . . . (RDL 27.57)

For Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian, therefore, both mystical union itself and God as encountered in union are incomprehensible and indescribable. Rolle's statements that God is "incomprehensible and

unable to be known" and "unable to be full conceived" can be compared with The Cloud's thought that the union of man and God "is so high and so pure in itself above the understanding of man, that it may not be known nor perceived in itself." Both Rolle and The Cloud stress the essential mystery inherent in mystical union. The Cloud's use of the term "nought" may also be compared with Julian's "marvellous high mystery hid in God." Both of these references to that which is encountered in union are understandably vague. Nothing specific is mentioned about the union itself or the nature of God beyond the fact that something was encountered and perceived but could not be described. Most mystical writings, in fact, use such unspecific words and phrases as "nought," "perfection of man's soul," and "marvellous high mystery" to describe union with God.

### 3. The knowledge of God imparted during union

The next main informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union to be considered is the English mystics' treatment of the knowledge of God imparted to them during union. Although our comparative analysis of the illuminative phase contained a discussion of the knowledge of God revealed during illumination,<sup>1</sup> we are concerned at this point with specific references to the knowledge of God within mystical union. Only two mystics, Rolle and Hilton, seem to consider specifically the knowledge of God revealed during union. Our comparative analysis of the knowledge of God within union,

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<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 159-164.

therefore, will be confined to these two mystics.

Three main areas characterize Rolle's and Hilton's treatment of the knowledge of God during union. First, both mystics emphasize the sight, presence, or beholding of God or Jesus. But knowledge of God as such seems to be limited to rather vague and general references to an awareness of God's presence or to a sight or beholding of him rather than to any specific references to his nature. Secondly, Hilton stresses the fact that it is not God himself as he is in himself or Jesus himself that is perceived or understood in mystical union. For example, references to "Jesus in his privy works" rather than to Jesus as he is in himself are frequent in Hilton. Rolle, on the other hand, although he does not describe God as he is in himself, usually does not elaborate upon the knowledge of God imparted during union beyond a reference to the sight or beholding of God. Knowledge of God is therefore limited in Rolle to vague references to the sight of God. Finally, Hilton, though he criticizes Rolle's emphasis upon the descriptions of visions and revelations in terms of heat, song, and heightened physical feelings, seems to consider the knowledge of God imparted during union in language close to that of Rolle. In fact, the words and phrases used by Hilton to describe the knowledge of God bear a strong resemblance to Rolle's descriptions of visions during the illuminative phase.

At this point we may examine the words and phrases used by Rolle and Hilton to describe the knowledge of God revealed during union. Both mystics consider this knowledge primarily in terms of the sight or presence of God. Rolle frequently employs phrases such

as the following to indicate the sight of God: "facie Dei fruentes sine fine" (IA 5.159), "beatifica uisio" (IA 38.258), "ad uisionem eterne claritatis" (IA 26.218), and "ad uisionem gloriosissime claritatis" (IA 26.219). Hilton's references to the sight or presence of God are similar: "the soul is turned into the eyes and sharply beholdeth the face of Jhesu" (SP II.42.440), "and all this ghostly sight is nought else but the sight of Jhesu" (SP II.45.456), "and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of ghis ghostly presence" (SP I.25.57), "and opening the ghostly eyes waketh into the sight of God's majesty" (SP II.41.425), and "privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu" (SP II.41.432). Thus, in both Rolle and Hilton, particularly the latter, knowledge of God is considered extensively in terms of the sight or presence of God or Jesus.

Hilton emphasizes the fact that during union God and Jesus are not seen as they are in themselves; rather, they are seen "that they are" or in such general terms as "endless might," "wisdom and goodness," "holiness and mercy," "unchangeable being," and "sovereign might." At several points, however, Hilton refers to the sight or presence of Jesus with respect to his "privy works" which for the most part are left undefined. For example, he points out that:

And all this ghostly sight is nought else but the sight of Jesus; not in himself, but in his merciful privy works and in his hard righteous dooms, ilk day showed and renewed to reasonable souls. (SP II.45.456-457)

In one sense Hilton seems to be indicating that man's recognition of the sight of Jesus is limited to his manifestation of himself within the natural order rather than to special private visions or



illuminations. His references to "privy works" would seem to bear this out. At any rate Hilton does stress the fact that whatever knowledge of God derives from union, no matter how fragmented and general in nature it might be, does proceed from the sight or presence of God in union. He is, however, quite emphatic that the knowledge of God stems from a vision of God in which he is disclosed but not as he is in himself. Several passages illustrate this idea quite clearly:

For why, the soul is turned into the eyes and sharply beholdeth the face of Jhesu, and is made sure that it is Jhesu that it feeleth and seeth. I mean not Jhesu as he is in himself in fullness of his blessed Godhead; but I mean Jhesu as he will show him to a clean soul holden in body, after the cleanness that it hath. (SP II.42.440)

For we may ask what it is, but not wit what it is. (SP II.40.423)

He seeth him not what he is, for that may no creature do in heaven or in earth; nor he seeth him not as he is, for that sight is only in the bliss of heaven. But he seeth him that he is: an unchangeable being, a sovereign might, sovereign goodness, sovereign soothfastness, a blessed life, and an endless bliss. (SP II.32.370)

This is one manner sight of Jhesu as I said before: not as he is, but clothed under likeness of works and of words, per speculum etiam in aenigmate; by a mirror and by a likeness, as the apostle saith. Jhesu is endless might, wisdom and goodness, holiness and mercy. And what this Jhesu is in himself may no soul see nor hear. (SP II.43.449)

As we have indicated, Rolle also confines his references to the knowledge of God to the sight or beholding of him. Moreover, he does not usually elaborate upon the knowledge of God beyond a straightforward statement that the sight or vision of God has been perceived. He does, however, use terms other than "God" to indicate God's nature. As the following phrases indicate, these terms are

for the most part rather general: "in speculacione misteriorum celestium" (IA 36.249), "misterium amoris agnoscens" (IA 37.254), and "iugiter aspicit in superna" (IA 37.254). It should be noted at this point that Rolle's elaborate commentary on the effects of his visions and illuminations during the illuminative phase should not be confused with his reluctance to consider extensively the knowledge of God imparted in union through visions, especially through visions and sights of God. Quite obviously, the knowledge of God imparted during the unitive phase is for Rolle largely mysterious and indescribable.

In his several references to the knowledge of God during union, Hilton attempts to describe this knowledge in terms of its physical and emotional effects upon him. Even though these descriptions may not be properly called "knowledge of God," his consideration of the effects of these visions should be mentioned. The following passages, which illustrate these effects, may also be compared with those words and phrases that Rolle uses to consider the effects of visions and illuminations during the illuminative phase. The resemblance is striking.<sup>2</sup>

This is a little tasting of the sweetness of the love of God  
 . . . . (SP I.6.11)

. . . and for to have him aye in our sight with reverence, and  
 aye feel the sweetness of his love by a wonderful homeliness  
 of his presence. (SP II.41.431)

. . . privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu, feel-  
 ably fed with savour of his unseeable blessed face.  
 (SP II.41.432)

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<sup>2</sup>See above, pp. 169-171, 175.

. . . and gave me assay of his wine, that is for to say a taste of ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy. (SP I.80.194)

. . . that it is turned into love and affection, ghostly savour and sweetness, into light and knowing of soothfastness . . . . (SP I.46.112)

#### 4. The general state of the individual during the unitive phase

Another important informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union, which is treated rather fully by Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton, is the overall state or condition of the individual during union. The term "state" in this sense means the spiritual and physical changes which occur in the individual during union and his final condition at the end of the unitive phase. Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton approach the problem of man's state or condition during union in somewhat different ways. For example, both Rolle and Hilton discuss it almost exclusively in terms of changed or heightened physical feelings such as sweetness, song, and so forth. The Cloud, on the other hand, considers it primarily in terms of man's capacity to live in love and peace with God.

Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton each mention that union between God and man is the sine qua non of the state or condition of man during the unitive phase. Their conception of union with respect to man's state is revealed in the following passages:

. . . tanquam in paradiso positus, subsistam, sedens in solitudine, illic suauiter sonans amorosum canticum, in deliciis quas didit mihi dilectus. (IA 16.193)

. . . thof all now als wer in paradise sett stabyll I am sit-tand in wyldernes, swetely ther soundand a lufly songe in likyngis that my lufe has gyn me. (FL I.18.39)

Exinde igitur innouatur natura et in diuinam gloriam, formam-que felicissimam, transmigrabit, ut sonorum sit, et dulce ac

diuinum, quod deinceps in se seciat, delicias quoque eterni amoris cum maxima suauitate indefesse cantat. (IA 32.237)

& so kynde is renwyd & now sal pas in-to a godly Ioy & happy lyknes, so that it sall be happye, sweet, godly & soundly & in the selff, sall feyll luste of euerlastynge lufe & with greet swetnes continually it sal synge. (FL II.2.72)

Bot no force therof, for "thou schalt graciously rest" in this louely onheed of God & thi soule; "& thi sleep schal be ful softe," for it schal be goostly fode & inly strengthe, as wel to thi body as to thi soule. (BPC 147-148)

And therefore whoso wol haue God contynouly wonyng in him, and liue in loue and in sigt of the hige pees of the Godheed . . . (DOS 85)

. . . and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence . . . . (SP I.25.57)

. . . prively perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu, feelably fed with savour of his unseeable blessed face. (SP II.41.432)

Rolle and Hilton use remarkably similar words and phrases to describe man's condition during mystical union with God. The following passages from the Incendium Amoris clearly illustrate Rolle's treatment of man's state:

. . . in ipso fonte ueri et eterni gaudii iugiter iocundetur. (IA 40.270)

. . . in the spryngis of endles & tru Ioy is myrthyd. (FL II.10.97)

. . . et inflammati medullitus omnia intima sua letantur ludifluis illustrata esse splendoribus letificatos, quia se sentiunt amenissimo amore et in gaudio canticorum mirabiliter liquefactos. (IA 37.253)

. . . & inwardly seet ofyre all ther inhere partys ar glad with playly schynynge in lyghth, and thameself tha feyll gladynde with lufe miryest & in Ioyful songe wondyrly meltid. (FL II.7.85)

Ex quo in omnem amenitatem decantans introducitur et fons feruoris interni exuberans in amenitatem in amplexus

suscipitur, et singulari solacio cum impetu meatus amenissimi dilectus debriatus in ardoribus optimis adornatur. (IA 34.241)

Therfor syngand in-to all myrth is led, & the well of endles heyte, brekand vp in myrth, is takyn in halsynge & singuler solas & with my3tt of the lufflyest passage the lufer refreshyd in sweit heit is arayd. (FL II.4.75)

. . . ut in igneum celum assumptus, ibi incenderetur ineffabiliter ad amandum, et ureretur intra se amplius quam aliquis exprimere potuerit, et gradus graciaram amplexaretur. (IA 33.240)

. . . so that he to be raisyd to a firy hevin & ther he suld be stirryd to lufe more then may be spokyn, & in hym-self suld more be byrnd then may be scheuyd & the degreis of grace suld hals. (FL II.3.74)

Hilton, on the other hand, indicates that man during mystical union is "lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence" (SP I.25.57), that his soul is "turned into love and affection, ghostly savour and sweetness, into light and knowing of soothfastness" (SP I.46.112), and that God "stirreth and mightily he turneth thine heart into beholding of his goodness, and doth thine heart melt delectably as wax against the fire into softness of his love" (SP II.41.434).

Thus, Rolle and Hilton emphasize the following factors in their treatment of the state or condition of the individual during union: (1) man is raised up to a new and enlightened understanding of God's presence; (2) his capacity to love God and to be loved by God is increased; (3) there is a general re-orientation of man's relationship to God during union; (4) a heightened perception of God during union in terms of love; and (5) a general increase in such physical and spiritual feelings as sweetness, love, taste, delight, and gladness.

The Cloud considers the state of the individual during mystical union primarily in terms of a more intensive awareness and feeling of love and peace within himself and in his relationship with God.

And certes in that soule that moste is occupied in thoughtes of pees hath God made his woning-place. (DOS 85)

For whoso lackith pees and restfulnes of herte, him lackith the lively presence of the lovely sight of the heavenly pees of heuen, good gracious God, him owne dere self. (DOS 84-85)

And therefore whoso wol haue God continually woning in him, and live in love and in sight of the heavenly pees of the Godhead . . . (DOS 85)

And a passage from The Book of Privy Counselling clarifies even more this general feeling of peace in terms of rest and sleep that man experiences during union with God:

But no force therof, for "thou shalt graciously rest" in this lovely oneness of God & thy soul; "& thy sleep shall be full soft," for it shall be ghostly food & only strength, as well to thy body as to thy soul. (BPC 147-148)

The following passages from Rolle and Hilton concerning the state or condition of man during union may be understood as elaborations on the feeling of peace and love experienced during the unitive phase as considered by The Cloud:

. . . in ipso fonte veri et eterni gaudii iugiter iocundetur. (IA 40.270)

. . . in the spring of endless & true Joy is mirthed. (FL II.10.97)

Dilector siquidem deitatis, cuius interiora precordia amore invisibilis speciei funditus penetrantur, qui et medullas universas anime sue letificatas habet, gaudet fervore amenissimo quia et devocioni iugi pro Deo se donavit. (IA 32.236)

The lover truly of the godhead, whose inward part with love of bewte vnsene verily ever thrives, joys all the while of the

sawl, gladynd with heytt most mery, & hym-self has gyfin to besy deuocion for god. (FL II.2.71)

Exinde igitur innouatur natura et in diuinam gloriam, formamque felicissimam, transmigrabit, ut sonorum sit, et dulce ac diuinum, quod deinceps in se seciat, delicias quoque eterni amoris cum maxima suauitate indefesse cantat. (IA 32.237)

& so kynde is renwyd & now sal pas in-to a godly Ioy & happy lyknes, so that it sall be happye, sweet, godly & soundly & in the selff, sall feyll luste of euerlastyng lufe & with greet swetnes continually it sal synge. (FL II.2.72)

. . . then may it receive the gracious light of ghostly knowing and the perfection of love . . . . (SP II.26.334)

This is a little tasting of the sweetness of the love of God . . . . (SP I.6.11)

Another comparison may be made between The Cloud's idea that men who do not possess "peace and restfulness of heart" are unable to attain a sight of God or an awareness of his presence and Hilton's statements that in union man is "made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections" (SP I.25.57), that the "soul sleeps from worldly vanity" (SP II.40.425), and that man is urged to shape himself "for to be arrayed in his likeness, that is in meekness and charity" (SP I.51.123). In both The Cloud and Hilton, therefore, there is a tendency to consider man's state or condition during union in terms of the relationship between man's present spiritual condition and what he may expect to perceive and experience in mystical union.

##### 5. Union with God in this world as a foretaste of the union with him in the next

The final informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union to be considered is Hilton's and Julian's conception of mystical union with God as a foretaste of that union to be experienced by man in heaven. Both Hilton and Julian indicate that

union with God in the natural order is partial and fragmented; the fullness of the vision of God and union with him can only be realized in heaven. Words, phrases, and ideas that they use to discuss this concept are very similar in both form and content. Hilton, for example, in referring to man's union with God, indicates that:

For this is verily a tasting, so little as it is, and but an earnest of the sight of heavenly joy, not clearly, but half in murkness, which shall be fulfilled and openly cleared in the bliss of heaven . . . . (SP I.9.16)

This love may be had a little in part here in a clean soul, through the ghostly sight of Jhesu; but in the bliss of heaven it is fulfilled by clear sight in his godhead, for there shall none affection be felt in a soul, but all godly and ghostly. (SP II.35.391)

The beginning of this contemplation may be felt in this life, but the fullhead of it is kept unto the bliss of heaven. (SP I.8.14)

These passages may be compared with several from Julian of Norwich within which she considers the union of God and man in heaven:

And then shall we see God face to face, homely and fully. The creature that is made shall see and endlessly behold God which is the maker. For thus may no man see God and live after, that is to say, in this deadly life. (RDL 43.92)

And therefore when the Doom is given and we be all brought up above, then shall we clearly see in God the secret things which now be hid to us. (RDL 85.201)

And then shall we all come into our Lord, our self clearly knowing, and God fully having; and we shall endlessly be all had in God: him verily seeing and fully feeling, him spiritually hearing, and him delectably in-breathing, and of him sweetly drinking. (RDL 43.92)

In addition to the importance of the secondary conceptual field for union which has been constructed in this chapter, there are several significant similarities and differences between the



English mystics in their treatment of union which should be summarized at this point. Among the five English mystics, Rolle, Hilton, and The Cloud discuss, describe, and refer most extensively to union with God. Moreover, they consistently emphasize love as the primary binding force between man and God during union. Rolle and Hilton are the only mystics who refer specifically to the knowledge of God revealed during union; however, they refer to this knowledge in terms of the sight or presence of God rather than in more specific terms.

Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian refer to the ineffable and indescribable nature of union with God during the unitive phase. For them, as for other mystics, union with God is impossible to describe in detail. The fourth informing concept, the general state of man during union, is considered by Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton. However, whereas Rolle and Hilton discuss this state of man during union in terms of changed or heightened physical feelings such as sweetness, song, and so forth, The Cloud considers man's state or condition in terms of his capacity to live in union, love, and peace with God which is intensified during union. Particular emphasis should be placed on the fact that Rolle and Hilton use similar terms and phrases such as "joy," "song," "ghostly savour," and "sweetness" to describe man's feelings during union which are indicative of his new state. Finally, we should note that Hilton and Julian consider union with God as a foretaste of that union to be experienced by man in heaven. Little substantial difference exists between the words, phrases, and ideas used by Hilton and

Julian to express this concept.

Two individual emphases should be mentioned. The first is Hilton's frequent description of union in terms of man's state or condition during union; and he discusses this state or condition in terms of man's spiritual and physical feelings experienced during union. The second individual emphasis is Julian's consideration of union with God in terms of the sight or beholding of God rather than the union itself.

## CHAPTER IX

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TREATMENT OF PURGATION BY THE ENGLISH MYSTICS AND OTHER MEDIEVAL MYSTICS AND RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

In the last three chapters we considered the English mystics' treatment of the contemplative life by comparing the various words, phrases, and ideas found within each of the main informing concepts which constituted the secondary conceptual fields constructed for purgation, illumination, and union. This procedure permitted us to articulate the differences and similarities in the English mystics' conception of the mystic way. In the next three chapters their understanding of the contemplative life will be compared with several different groups of medieval mystical, devotional, and religious writers.

By comparing the words, phrases, and ideas under each informing concept of the secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union as used by the English mystics and other medieval authors, it should be possible to clarify the differences and similarities between the English mystics and other medieval mystics with respect to their mystical thought. To a certain extent we will also be able to ascertain the influence of other medieval mystical and religious writings upon the thought of the English mystics. The term "influence," however, is employed here with reservations.

Rather than attempting to establish a series of one-to-one correspondences between the mystical ideas of various medieval authors, we will be primarily concerned with comparing and contrasting the English mystics and other medieval mystics by delineating and considering their mystical thought within the conceptual fields which we have constructed. Thus, the influence of a particular medieval mystic or mystical concept upon the English mystics will be considered in terms of the influence exercised by an informing concept within a conceptual field or those ideas forming that concept rather than specific mystical or religious ideas.

Establishing exact relationships between authors, especially in the area of mystical thought, is frequently rather tentative and tenuous. However, comparing mystical ideas in terms of conceptual fields, informing concepts, and the words, phrases, and ideas that shape the informing concepts may provide a better and more manageable means for establishing correspondences in medieval mystical thought.

From a procedural point of view, the medieval mystical and religious writings with which we will be concerned may be subsumed under the following general categories: (1) older mystical writers such as St. Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory the Great, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, and St. Bonaventure; (2) manuals of instruction for parish priests such as The Lay Folks' Catechism and Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests; (3) standard religious and moral treatises such as St. Edmund's The Mirror of Holy Church, Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, and

Speculum Christiani; (4) homiletic material from the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries; and (5) general religious literature from the fourteenth century including such works as The Privy of the Passion, The Abbey of the Holy Ghost, The Twelve Profits of Tribulation, and Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God. Obviously, no attempt will be made to include the vast number of mystical and religious works produced during the middle ages. Rather, I have tried to include a broad representation of works within each general category which should provide a convenient and workable basis for comparing the mystical thought of the English mystics with other medieval mystics and religious writers.

In order to discuss the ideational differences and similarities between the mystical thought of the English mystics and other medieval mystical writings, the secondary conceptual fields developed in Chapters 6-8 for purgation, illumination, and union will be utilized in the next three chapters. In the present chapter, in which purgation will be considered, the following main informing concepts for the secondary conceptual field for purgation, including those ideas under each informing concept, will be used as the basis for comparison: (1) man's initial desire for purgation; (2) denial of the world and physical desires; (3) the nature and function of God's grace, love, and mercy during purgation; (4) knowledge of self and its role during purgation; and (5) participation in the passion and suffering of Christ and its effect upon man during the purgational phase.

#### 1. Man's initial desire for purgation

Under the first informing concept of man's initial desire for

purgation there are a number of ideas which cluster around, and thus constitute, this informing concept. These ideas, which were discussed in Chapter Six with respect to the English mystics, will form the basis of the present discussion of the first informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for purgation: (a) the need for man to persist in his desire for purgation; (b) the thoroughness and fullness of this desire; (c) the recognition of man's sinful condition; (d) the presence of a christocentric or theocentric orientation during the purgational phase; (e) the personal or relational quality of the desire for purgation; (f) the necessity for response to the desire for purgation; and (g) the focusing of this desire upon a single, fixed point.

In the other medieval mystical writings being compared with the English mystics, we find a particularly strong emphasis upon the need for persistence and fervour in man's desire for purgation. For example, as the following passages from Bernard of Clairvaux clearly illustrate, the need for man to persist in his quest for purgation and eventual union with God forms a consistent theme.

After a soul has been thus pressed by frequent aspirations toward God, or rather by continual prayer, and is afflicted by its longings, it is sometimes the case that he who is so earnestly desired and longed for . . . .<sup>1</sup>

The grace of contemplation is granted only in response to a longing and importunate desire: nevertheless he will not present himself, even in passing, to every soul; but to that

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, sermon 31, paragraphs 4-6, trans. Dom Cuthbert Butler, Western Mysticism: The Teaching of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966), p. 103.

soul only which is shown, by great devotion, vehement desire, and tender affection, to be his bride, and to be worthy that the word in all his beauty should visit her as a bridegroom.<sup>2</sup>

If, having been brought among the choirs of the saints by the fervour of your devotion, you deplore before them your troubles and miseries, you plead your necessities with frequent sighs and groans too deep for utterance, and entreat their compassion; if, I say, you act thus, I have full confidence in Him Who said: Ask and ye shall receive, and I believe that if you persevere in knocking, you shall not go away empty.<sup>3</sup>

If any of us finds it good for him to draw near to God, and is so filled with an earnest longing that he desires to be dissolved to be with Christ; but desires it vehemently, thirsts for it ardently, and without ceasing dwells upon the thought of it: he shall, without doubt, receive the Word, and in no other form than that of the Bridegroom in the time of visitation; that is to say, in the hour when he shall feel himself inwardly embraced, as it were, by the arms of Wisdom, and shall receive an inpouring of the sweetness of divine love.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, for Bernard all of man's thoughts and feelings should be oriented toward God in his desire for purgation and final union with him. Devotion, desire, affection, and longing must be present in a persistent fashion throughout the contemplative life.

In a similar manner the need for persistence in the desire for purgation is also found in Hilton, The Cloud, and Julian. In fact there seems to be little substantive difference in their conceptions of the need for persistence throughout purgation and the contemplative life. In Hilton man is admonished to "set thine intent and thy purpose upon thy Lord Jhesu" (SP I.52.125-126) and to "hang fast

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<sup>2</sup>Bernard of Clairvaux, Canticles, 32.3, Butler, Western Mysticism, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard, Canticles, 49.3, Butler, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard, Canticles, 32.2, Butler, p. 107.

upon this desire and set the point of thy thought more upon Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest" (SP I.91.218-219). And the author of The Cloud indicates that:

Alle thi liif now behoueth algates to stonde in desire, 3if thou schalt profite in degre of perfeccion. This desire behoueth algates be wrougt in thi wille, bi the honde of Al-mighti God & thi consent. (CU 2.15)

Julian of Norwich also stresses the need for persistence. She points out that man must "abide here steadfastly for his love, without murmuring and striving against him" (RDL 10.25) and "seek earnestly and diligently, without sloth" (RDL 10.25).

Other medieval writings also emphasize the need for man to persist in his desire for purgation. In general, the overall treatment of this desire is quite similar to that of the English mystics. In each of the following passages from various mystical writings this desire for purgation is especially evident. And even though exact parallels to the thought of the English mystics should not be suggested, the traditional weight obviously assigned by other medieval mystics and religious writings to the need for persistence in man's desire for purgation was no doubt a formative element in the English mystics' treatment of this particular part of the purgational phase.

The soul loves one and is devoted to one, it thirsts for and desires the one. It clings to one, sighs for him, is kindled by him, rests in him. In him alone it is re-created and satisfied. There is not sweetness nor taste except for him only.<sup>5</sup>

We must indeed ask earnestly, seek diligently, knock loudly and continue perseveringly in all these things, if we would

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<sup>5</sup>Richard of St. Victor, "Of the Four Degrees of Passionate Charity," Richard of St. Victor: Selected Writings on Contemplation, ed. Clare Kirchberger (London, 1957), p. 217.



obtain what we desire.<sup>6</sup>

For one is not disposed to contemplation which leads to mental elevation unless one be with Daniel a man of desires.<sup>7</sup>

Lierne him to loue wysliche, 3ueteliche, strongliche, and sted-  
euestliche. Wysliche: thet thou ne by y-stered be none pros-  
perite. Strongliche: thet thou ne by ouer-come be none aduer-  
sete.<sup>8</sup>

He is blessyd that is perseueraunt vnto his lyves ende.<sup>9</sup>

Strength es in the wythstondynge generally al wyckednes; and  
this es nedful ageyne the worlde, the flesch, and the deuyll,  
that thou felowe not worldly men to do euyl, ne that thou go  
not after fleschly desyres, ne bowe thou not to the sugges-  
tions of the deuyll.<sup>10</sup>

It is, indeed, to be understood that true repentance is that  
which practises with great constancy, never again doing the  
wickedness that one formerly delighted in. And repentance is  
by no means estimated by the number of years, but by the con-  
trition of the heart. Because God does not look at the length  
of the time, but considers the desire and fervour of the heart.  
Any man, then, although he is very sinful, and wicked, and un-  
righteous, shall not doubt the possibility of his obtaining  
God's mercy, if he will turn to repentance. For God's mercy  
helps each of those who will repent in this life.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Richard of St. Victor, "Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 217.

<sup>7</sup>St. Bonaventure, The Mind's Road to God, trans. George Boas  
(New York, 1953), Prologue, 3, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwytt or Remorse of Conscience, ed.  
R. Morris (London: EETS 23, 1866), p. 233.

<sup>9</sup>"Contemplation of the Dread and Love of God," Yorkshire Writers:  
Richard Rolle of Hampole and His Followers, ed. C. Horstman (London:  
1895-96), II, 86-87.

<sup>10</sup>Speculum Christiani, ed. G. Holmstedt (London: EETS 182, 1929),  
p. 46.

<sup>11</sup>"The Second Sunday in Lent," Twelfth Century Homilies, ed.  
A. O. Belfour (London: EETS 137, 1909), p. 53.

But travail and busyness of heart is ever needful through which a man cutteth away his affection from love of earthly things and raiseth it up to yearning of love of heavenly things and so it is both travailous and it is restful.<sup>12</sup>

The thoroughness and fullness of man's desire for purgation is the next main idea within the informing concept of the desire for purgation to be considered. In addition to Hilton and Julian, it may be found in other medieval mystical writings as an integral part of the treatment of purgation. For example, Bernard, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor indicate that man's desire for purgation and his anticipated union with God must possess a certain thoroughness in order for him to progress in the contemplative life.

Therefore the perfect soul wholly given to the contemplation of the highest things, must at all times await with great desire the end of her pilgrimage . . . .<sup>13</sup>

. . . when she [the soul] begins to ponder her ways, she gathers together, piles up, and grinds in the mortar of conscience her many and different kinds of sins, and within the crucible of a burning breast melts them all down, as it were, over the fire of repentance and sorrow.<sup>14</sup>

The second ascent is made from the heat of the west, for the next thing needed is that we should tread our fleshly vices underfoot, so that we walk not after our own desires but

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<sup>12</sup>The Goad of Love: An Unpublished Translation of Stimulus Amoris Formerly Attributed to Saint Bonaventure, ed. Clare Kirchberger (London, 1952), p. 123.

<sup>13</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, Book IV, Chapter 10, Selected Writings, ed. Kirchberger, p. 161.

<sup>14</sup>Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, sermon 10, paragraph 5, Saint Bernard on the Love of God, trans. Terence L. Connolly, S.J. (Westminster, Maryland, 1951), p. 87.

mortify our members that are upon the earth, that we serve sin no more.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Hilton and Julian indicate that man's desire for purification should be complete and thorough. Hilton states that man should have "an whole and a stable intention; that is for to say an whole will and a desire only for to please God" (SP I.22.50). And Julian points out that "that same holy assent, that we assent to God when we feel him, truly setting our will to be with him, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might" (RDL 52.123).

The necessity for the thoroughness of man's desire for purification is also developed in several other medieval mystical and religious works which should be mentioned. From a contentual point of view, the following passages indicate definite similarities to the English mystics.

The fyrste is that thou haue a feruent wyll. The seconde is that thou be besy in deuoute prayers. The thirde is that thou fyght strongely ayenst all temtacyons. The fourth is that thou be perseueraunt in good dedes.<sup>16</sup>

. . . do out all thogtes ulessliche uoule and wordleliche and quo bide thine uader of heuene ine halke.<sup>17</sup>

As ye have given up your body to obey foul and wicked lusts, also henceforth make your body to be obedient to purity and righteousness and holiness, so that each limb may severally

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<sup>15</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark: I (De Arca Noe Morali), Bk. II, Ch. 10, Hugh of Saint-Victor: Selected Spiritual Writings, trans. by a Religious of C.S.M.V. (London, 1962), p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> "Dread and Love," Horstman, II, 90.

<sup>17</sup> Ayenbite of Inwyte, ed. Morris, p. 210.

turn to God and amend its guilt.<sup>18</sup>

. . . that es, to draw to perfeccione, and also thou will thi saluacyone, to leue all that es in this worlde and all that ther-to langys, and sett thi myghte to lyffe perfitly.<sup>19</sup>

. . . rygt soo ge schull clanse the howse of your soule, doying away the fyre of lechery and of dedly wrath and of envy, and straw ther swete erbes and flowres; and that be vertues of goodnes and of mekenes, of kyndnes, of loue and charite, of pes and of rest; and soo make the howse of your soule abull to receyue your God.<sup>20</sup>

Recognition of man's sinful condition or state forms an important part of man's initial desire for purgation. In fact, no medieval treatment of purgation is complete without a consideration of man's need to become aware of his sinful state. As indicated in our comparative analysis of the writings of the English mystics with respect to purgation, Hilton, Julian, and Margery each stress the need for man to recognize his sinful nature.

. . . lift up the desire of thine heart to thy good Lord Jhesu, and know thyself for a wretch and a beast, asking him forgiveness. (SP I.76.187)

But that same holy assent, that we assent to God when we feel him, truly setting our will to be with Him, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might. And then we hate and despise our evil stirrings and all that might be occasion of sin, spiritual and bodily. (RDL 52.123)

This same theme is found throughout other medieval works which

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<sup>18</sup>"In Capite Ieiunii," Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. R. Morris (London: EETS 53, 1873), p. 64.

<sup>19</sup>Speculum S. Edmundi, Ch. 1, Horstman, I, 219.

<sup>20</sup>John Mirk, "De Festo Pasche," Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies, ed. Theodor Erbe (London: EETS 96, 1905), pp. 129-130.

consider purgation. The primary emphasis, as in the writings of the English mystics, is usually the same: man must acknowledge his own sinful nature and his subsequent need for grace and forgiveness prior to further progress in the contemplative life. Several examples from other medieval mystical works should suffice to indicate the nature of the treatment of man's recognition of his sinful condition and its similarity to the English mystics' understanding of man's sinful nature.

Alas! alas! the bitterness of my venomous sins is the hindrance. My sins are the wall between me and thee. My sins deny me all this sweetness. My sins have grievously impaired me, and made me at enmity with thee, O lovely Lord, and that is little wonder, for I am with their pollution so filthily defiled, that I may not, nor dare, O lovesome God, to come into thy sight.<sup>21</sup>

If we investigate thoroughly, I think we shall see that all our troubles arise from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life.<sup>22</sup>

Ffyrst als vn-to thi body. Thou erte nowe vylere thane any mukke. Thou was getyne of sa vile matire and sa gret fylthe that it es schame for to nevunne and abhomynacyone for to thynke.<sup>23</sup>

Ac he ssel thenche of his 3ennes mid greate drede and mid great zorge of herte and him-zelue ssende ine him zelue and habbe greate ssame to-uore god and uest wil thet neuremo to zenne ne ssel wende ayen tha3 me ssolde hine al to-heawe.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>"An Orison of Our Lord," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. R. Morris (London: EETS 34, 1868), p. 186.

<sup>22</sup>The Mirror of Charity: The Speculum Caritatis of St. Aelred of Rievaulx, trans. Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (London, 1962), Part II, Ch. 4, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup>The Mirror of St. Edmund, Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse, ed. George G. Perry (London: EETS 26, 1867), Ch. 3, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup>Ayenbite of Inwyte, ed. Morris, p. 178.

. . . so monnes hert hauand moysture and liking of flessshely loue, ne is not departid fro the perelous world, but more drawis therto with loue and lyking . . . .<sup>25</sup>

Ah Jesu! Mine heart is full of venom, blown full of pride and poisoned with malice and bitterness of the fiend, and with fleshly lust all overcast and that seemeth well, for it breedeth all full of wicked thoughts and of fleshly yearnings as a stinking carrion breedeth full of worms and of maggots.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, recognition of man's sinful nature as preparatory to advancement in the mystic way was acknowledged by many of the various groups of medieval mystical and religious writers being considered: older mystics, manuals of instruction, standard moral and religious treatises, homiletical material, and general religious writings of the fourteenth century. The influence of this particular idea upon the English mystics' treatment of purgation is rather clear.

Both Hilton and Julian indicate that man's desire for purgation must be fixed or focused upon a single point so that the desire for purgation might be heightened and intensified.

And therefore when thou shalt arise against the ground of sin in general or else against any sin in special, hang fast upon this desire and set the point of thy thought more upon Jhesu Christ whom thou desirest . . . . (SP I.91.218-219)

And then we see not, for the time, what we should more pray, but all our intent with all our might is set wholly to the beholding of him. (RDL 43.90)

This idea is most apparent in the writings of Richard of St. Victor who consistently stresses the need for focusing man's desire for purgation upon a fixed point in order to effect subsequent

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<sup>25</sup> "Twelve Profits of Tribulation," Horstman, II, 50.

<sup>26</sup> The Goad of Love, ed. Kirchberger, p. 111.

progression in the contemplative life.

Can anything be sweeter and happier than to fix the mind's eye in contemplation of the highest wisdom?<sup>27</sup>

Everybody knows how difficult or almost impossible it is for the carnal mind still untaught in spiritual studies to raise itself to the understanding of unseen things and fix its eye upon contemplating them.<sup>28</sup>

For by discretion that sun of the intellectual world, that inner eye of the heart, namely the intention of the mind is directed . . . .<sup>29</sup>

To love with one's whole heart, soul and all one's strength is to concentrate all one's efforts, desires and powers upon this one thing.<sup>30</sup>

Of the various medieval mystical and religious writings selected for comparison with the English mystics, Richard of St. Victor seems to be the only one who emphasizes this particular idea as integral to the purgational phase.

## 2. Denial of the world and physical desires

Denial or negation of the world and man's physical desires constitutes the next informing concept in the secondary field for purification. Since most medieval mystical and religious writers felt that man's moral perfection must precede knowledge of and union with God within the contemplative life, much emphasis was placed upon the

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<sup>27</sup>Benjamin Minor, Selected Writings, ed. Kirchberger, Ch. 3, p. 81.

<sup>28</sup>Benjamin Minor, Ch. 14, p. 91.

<sup>29</sup>Benjamin Minor, Ch. 69, p. 107.

<sup>30</sup>"Four Degrees," Selected Writings, p. 222.

theme of denial and negation. Such a theme, as well known and developed as it was, no doubt exercised a decisive influence upon the formation of the English mystics' conception of purgation and the contemplative life.

The main ideas which shaped the informing concept of the denial of the world used to compare the English mystics' treatment of this concept will form the basis of our present comparison: (a) the general importance of the individual's denial of the world and fleshly desires; (b) the impossibility of man's love for himself and his love for God co-existing; (c) the necessity for sorrow and contrition; (d) the need to deal with the ground of sin as well as with specific sins; (e) alienation from other men which is necessary for purgation; and (f) the state of the soul after being purged from early thoughts and fleshly desires.

The general importance of man's denial of the world and fleshly desires both as an integral part of purgation and as preparatory to further progress in the contemplative life is considered extensively by medieval mystical and religious writings. It is perhaps the most consistently stressed theme in their treatment of purgation. Before comparing their treatment of this idea with that of the English mystics, however, several ideas central to the concept of purgation which pervade their writings with respect to the importance of man's denial of the world should be mentioned. First, God may not be known or understood unless man has been successfully purged of his sins and his attraction for the world. Secondly, man's love for the world stands between himself and his anticipated union with God.



The English mystics consider at length the general importance of man's denial of the world and his fleshly desires. As the following passages indicate, their primary intention is both clear and consistent.

. . . but all thy travail shall be for to draw in thy thought from all beholdings of all earthly thing, that thy desire might be as it were made naked and bare from all earthly things, aye upward stying into Jhesu Christ . . . . (SP I.25.57)

Hec est uia penitencie quam pauci inuenerunt, que ideo dicitur, quia per illam si recta sit, caro ab illecebris et solacio mundi exuitur, et anima a praua delectacione ac immunda cogitacione restringitur, et solummodo diuine dileccioni mancipatur. (IA 18.198)

This is the way of penance that few fyndes; the whilk therefore strait is callid for be it, and it be ryght, the flesch fro vnlefull solace of the world is nakkind & the saule fro schreuyd likynge & vnclene thoughtis is restrenyd & only to goddis lufe it is dressyd. (FL I.19.43)

Hir mende was al drawyn fro the erdly thowtys & erdly syghtys & sett al to-gedyr in gostly syghtys . . . . (MK I.82.198)

Other medieval mystical writers indicate the same emphasis upon the necessity and importance of man's denial of the world and his fleshly desires. In fact it is possible to follow a consistent tradition of this idea from St. Augustine to fourteenth-century homiletic material. For the most part there is little substantial variation in either form or content in their treatment of this idea. The main point always remains clear: man must deny the world and his fleshly desires in order to experience union with God within the contemplative life.

In the following passages from Dionysius the Areopagite, Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard, we may note their insistence upon the importance of the denial of the world as preparatory to union

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with God.

For, by the unceasing and absolute renunciation of thyself and all things, thou shalt in pureness cast all things aside, and be released from all, and so shalt be led upwards to the Ray of that Divine Darkness which exceedeth all existence.<sup>31</sup>

Destroy in thyself whatever is contrary to the truth, and when thou hast seen thyself to be comparatively free from irrational passions, be not contented to stay where thou art, as if there was nothing further for thee to long for.<sup>32</sup>

Whoever has already subdued the insolencies of the flesh, has this task left him, to discipline his mind by the exercises of holy working; and whosoever opens his mind in holy works, has over and above to extend it to the secret pursuits of inward contemplation.<sup>33</sup>

. . . it [the mind] must first have learned to shut out from its eyes all the phantasmata of earthly and heavenly images, and to spurn and tread underfoot whatever presents itself to its thought from sight, from hearing, from smell, from bodily touch or taste, so that it may seek itself interiorly as it is without these sensations.<sup>34</sup>

. . . but as One who would strike her with terror that she might be purged of every stain, and thus purified be made worthy of the vision for which she longs. For that vision is reserved for clean of heart.<sup>35</sup>

Other medieval mystical and religious writers consider the same theme

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<sup>31</sup>Dionysius the Areopagite, The Mystical Theology, The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology, trans. C. E. Rolt (London, 1920), Ch. 1, pp. 191-192.

<sup>32</sup>Augustine, Commentary on the Psalms, Psalm 41, par. 3, Butler, Western Mysticism, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup>Gregory the Great, Morals on Job 6.56, Butler, Western Mysticism, p. 68.

<sup>34</sup>Gregory the Great, Homilies on Ezechiel, II.v.9, Butler, p. 69.

<sup>35</sup>Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 38.3, Connolly, p. 156.

without significant difference: man must deny the world and its delights and purge himself of sin before he can experience union with God. The following passages indicate the general importance of the necessity for the denial of the world as found in other medieval mystical writings which the English mystics encountered in one form or another as they formed their conception of purgation.

. . . so that we might understand that every man who intends to gain the heavenly kingdom must, the while that he is in the world here, keep his life from all sinful lusts and from such worldly desires.<sup>36</sup>

. . . and carnal pleasures be held in abomination before we may experience the nature of those inner and eternal pleasures. Truly the more fully the love of God overcomes any other affection, the more often and more abundantly it refreshes the soul with inward gladness.<sup>37</sup>

For we should not have to flee from the world itself, were not the lust of it evil. So when we flee from the lust of the world, we do so because it is evil; but when we flee the substance of the world, we do not so because it is evil of itself, but because it is the occasion of evil.<sup>38</sup>

This worlde es fikel and desayvable,  
And fals and unsiker and unstabel.<sup>39</sup>

Of this treacherous world, or of her false bliss, let us never take any heed, for all that is on the earth is but a shadow . . . .<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>"The Transfiguration," Twelfth Century Homilies, ed. Belfour, p. 111.

<sup>37</sup>Richard of St. Victor, "Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 225.

<sup>38</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.4.17, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 145.

<sup>39</sup>The Pricke of Conscience, The Pricke of Conscience or Stimulus Conscientiae, ed. R. Morris (Berlin, 1863), Part II, ll. 1088-89, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup>"Sawles Warde," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 252.

The outstanding characteristic of the soul of man, which no other living thing shares, is that it strives towards higher things by leaving on one side the allurements presented by the senses of the body. This striving is satisfied only after a long but pleasant search, when the highest and best object is reached.<sup>41</sup>

The impossibility of man's love for himself and his love for God existing at the same time forms the next idea under the informing concept of denial of the world. A strong precedent for including this idea within purgation may be found in the various groups of medieval mystics and religious writings under consideration. Thus, the basis for Rolle's and Hilton's understanding of this idea as an integral part of the purgational process may be seen in its treatment by mystics such as Gregory, St. Edmund, Richard of St. Victor, and Bernard as well as in other medieval mystical writings. Compare, for example, Rolle's statement that "non enim aliquis Deo perfecte unitur dum alicui creature mundiali affectu alligatur" (IA 10.172) and Hilton's "for the more love and covetise of any earthly thing is in thee, the less is the love of God in thine heart" (SP I.71.174-75) with the following passages:

So long as we are beset by the corruptions of the flesh, we in no wise behold the brightness of the divine Power as it abides unchangeable in itself, in that the eye of our weakness cannot endure that which shines above us with intolerable lustre from the ray of His Eternity.<sup>42</sup>

But if your way of thinking is distracted by corporeal images you will never be able to enquire into the nature of God, because the soul will find that all such thoughts by which she

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<sup>41</sup>Aelred, Mirror of Charity, 1.16, Webb and Walker, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup>Gregory the Great, Morals on Job, 5.52, Butler, p. 88.

is led become obstacles to her progress.<sup>43</sup>

Truly if you seek or enjoy any kind of alien consolation you cannot love God with singular devotion though you may love him greatly.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, to express it briefly, to love with the whole heart is to prefer the love of his incorruptible body to the allurements of the flesh in ourselves or others.<sup>45</sup>

Each of these passages illustrates clearly that man's love for the world and himself cannot exist simultaneously with his love for God. In order to love God perfectly, man's love of the world must be purged. Other examples from medieval mystical writings may also be mentioned which further clarify the essential incompatibility of man's love for God and his love for the world. Their similarity to the English mystics is clear.

The gaze of our soul being directed upwards to that inheritance in heaven which never spoils or fades, we look down on worldly wealth as corruptible, on fleshly desires as poisonous to the soul, and on worldly pride as passing.<sup>46</sup>

But one thing I warn thee of, that thou be ware of all inordinate affection to any creature, man or woman. For why? There is no man that may be perfectly oned to God and changed into Him, that hath his affection holden and bounden to any creature.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Edmund, The Mirror of Holy Church, The Mediaeval Mystics of England, ed. Eric Colledge (Oxford, 1957), Ch. 1, pp. 136-137.

<sup>44</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, 4.16, Kirchberger, p. 170.

<sup>45</sup>Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 20.7, Connolly, p. 114.

<sup>46</sup>Aelred, Mirror of Charity, 1.20, Webb and Walker, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup>The Goad of Love, Kirchberger, p. 146.

Loo, frendes, here may 3e well see be this ensampull butt  
3iff a man sett more is herte in God than of anny erthly  
thinge, that he muste nedis mysfare.<sup>48</sup>

And ther-fore 3iff that thou wylte haue God in thin herte,  
firste clense it with contricion fro all filth of synne, and  
than God will not haue dispite for to dwell there.<sup>49</sup>

Within the informing concept of the denial of the world, sorrow  
and contrition are considered by the English mystics as necessary  
for the purgation of man's love for himself and the world. Hilton,  
Julian, and Margery Kempe consistently stress this need for sorrow  
and contrition.

And by this meek knowing after this manner, through contrition  
and grace we shall be broken from all that is not our Lord.  
And then shall our blessed Saviour perfectly heal us, and one  
us to him. (RDL 78.190)

And also if he will dispose a man fro to receive any special  
gift of the love of God, him behoveth first be scoured and  
cleansed by such a fire of compunction for all the great sins  
done before. (SP I.34.78)

Sche hatyd the joys of the world. Sche felt no rebellyon in  
hyr flesch. Sche was strong, as hir thowt, that sche dred no  
devylle in Helle, for sche dede so gret bodyly penawnce.  
(MK I.4.13)

Since sorrow and contrition was a well-defined part of the medi-  
eval church's teaching on penance, it is not surprising that the  
theme of sorrow, contrition, and penitence was included in the  
writings of most medieval mystical and religious authors. An ex-  
tremely well-documented theme in works dealing with penance, it  
appears constantly in homiletic material:

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<sup>48</sup>Sermon #33, Middle English Sermons, ed. Woodburn O. Ross  
(London: EETS 209, 1940), p. 175.

<sup>49</sup>Sermon #44, ibid., p. 291.

Thys most yche man that wyll haue pardon of God: he most haue full contrycyon wyth schryft, and hole charite wythout faynyng, and stydfast beleue wythout flaterynge.<sup>50</sup>

Be-knawe than thi synne and sorow by thre daies. First day is shryvyng of thi synnes; second is detestacion other lothyng of thi synne; the iii day is levyng of thi synnes. And 3iff thou sorowe for thi synnes in this maner, Crist hym-selfe will apere to the and comforte the like as he dud Seynt Petre.<sup>51</sup>

Firste, I sey thou muste be clene shryven and full repentante and do penaunce for the vii dedely synnes; that is to sey, pryde, wrathe, and envye, the wiche the dewell tempeste the in day by daye. And for these thre dedely synnes take to the mekenes, love, and charite. God leue grace that 3e don so.<sup>52</sup>

The holy man needs to be confirmed in his holiness, the righteous to continue in his righteousness; and the sinful man has need to forsake his sins and to mourn them greatly, and to show them to his priest at shrift, and to do penance for them according to his instructions.<sup>53</sup>

A similar emphasis upon sorrow and contrition within the general context of penance is also found in the Speculum Sacerdotale and The Lay Folks' Catechism:

Penaunce is a nedeful thyng vnto a synner that desireth for to recouere heleth of his soule. And in doying of penaunce there be thre thynges to be considerid, scilicet, compuncion of herte, confession of mowthe, and satisfaccion by dede.<sup>54</sup>

The third sacrement is cald penaunce,  
That is sothefast forthinking we have of our syn

<sup>50</sup>"De Dominica in Quinquagesima," Mirk's Festial, p. 78.

<sup>51</sup>Sermon #42, Middle English Sermons, p. 275.

<sup>52</sup>Sermon #7, Middle English Sermons, p. 31.

<sup>53</sup>"De Confessione," Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. Morris, pp. 56-58.

<sup>54</sup>"Of Penaunce," Speculum Sacerdotale, ed. Edward H. Weatherly (London: EETS 200, 1936), p. 63.



Withouten will or thoght to turne ogayne to it.  
 And this behoues haue thre thinges if it be stedefast:  
 Ane is sorow of our hert that we have synned;  
 Anothir is open shrift of our mouth how we haf synned,  
 And the third is rightwise amendes makyng for that we have  
 synned.  
 This thre, with gode will to forsake our synn,  
 Clenses us and wasshes us of alkyn synnes.<sup>55</sup>

These examples of sorrow, contrition, and penance vary little in content from those of the English mystics. The primary emphasis remains the same: man must experience sorrow, contrition, and penance in order to purge himself of his sins and his love for the world as preparation for the contemplative life. Finally, this particular idea of sorrow and contrition is especially well-developed in Richard of St. Victor in his Benjamin Minor and Benjamin Major. The similarity to the English mystics is both striking and apparent:

Truly and surely, the more often and the more acutely a man is moved with inward sorrow for his sins, the more secure and safe will he be made by pardon for sin.<sup>56</sup>

The prayer that is made by a contrite and humble heart is quickly granted, a heart contrite by fear and humbled by sorrow.<sup>57</sup>

For we know that the depths of the heart is better purged, the purity of the mind restored, clouds of obscurity cleared away, the heart's serenity more quickly and more completely brought about by true contrition of heart, by deep and inward spiritual sorrow, than by any other means.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>The Lay Folks' Catechism, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons and Henry Edward Nolloth (London: EETS 118, 1901), lines 307-315, pp. 64-6.

<sup>56</sup>Benjamin Minor, Ch. 10, Kirchberger, p. 88.

<sup>57</sup>Benjamin Minor, Ch. 9, Kirchberger, p. 87.

<sup>58</sup>Benjamin Major, Bk. IV, Ch. 6, p. 155.

Numerous other examples from medieval mystical and religious writings could be mentioned, but the above passages illustrate clearly the strength of the medieval tradition of sorrow and contrition for sin as a necessary part of purgation and as preparation for the contemplative life.

The Cloud's idea that man must alienate himself from other men in order to prepare himself for the contemplative life, which forms another part of the informing concept of the denial of the world, may be briefly compared with similar thoughts in the mystical writings of Hugh and Richard of St. Victor.

. . . when thou hast forgotten alle other creatures & alle theire werkes, ge, & therto alle thin owne werkes . . . (CU 44.82-83)

Sekirly this trauayle is al in tredyng doun of the mynde of alle the creatures that euer God maad, & in holdyng of hem vnder the cloude of forgetyng namyd before. (CU 26.61)

We leave our kindred, when we renounce the vices that arise in us and from us. We leave our father's house, when we put the whole world and all that it contains right out of our thought, and fix the whole intention of our souls on things eternal only.<sup>59</sup>

For indeed singular love loves solitude, seeks a lonely place; and it is necessary to cast out the whole crowd, not only the thoughts but also the affections, so that we may cling to the embraces of our beloved with greater freedom and thus with greater joy.<sup>60</sup>

Of the medieval mystical and religious writings under consideration, only Hugh and Richard seem to stress this need for alienation and

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<sup>59</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.3.6, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 105.

<sup>60</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, Bk. 4, Ch. 15, Kirchberger, pp. 167-168.

isolation as a necessary part of the purgational phase. The basic similarities are obvious.

The condition or state of the soul after being purged from earthly thoughts and fleshly desires forms the last idea under the informing concept of denial. Since man must attain a certain state of perfection before illumination, the mystics' consideration of the state of the soul after being purged of its love for the world forms a rather important part of their theory of purgation.

Hilton and Rolle consider the state of the soul after purgation in terms of three main ideas: (1) a certain "sweetness of mirth" and "new gracious feelings" which man experiences after purgation; (2) a new perfection in love; and (3) a state of purification wherein man experiences knowledge of God. These ideas are clearly expressed in several passages from Rolle and Hilton.

*Anima a uiciis seculi segregata et a carnalibus desideriis alienata, a peccatis purgatur. Unde et quandam suauitatem future leticie intelligit sibi adesse . . . .* (IA 29.229-30)

The sawl fro the world synnes departyd, & fro fleschly desyrs withdrawn, of syn is purgyd, & ther-by it vnderstandis a swetnes of myrth commynge to it nere . . . . (FL I.30.66-7)

. . . proximum est ut anima tua terrena transcendens in amore Christi proficiatur. (IA 27.221)

. . . then is fulle nere that thi saule, erthly thingis passand, in cristis lufe be made parfyte. (FL I.28.60)

. . . and that is when he is first healed of his ghostly sickness, and when all bitter passions and fleshly lusts and old feelings are burned out of the heart with the fire of desire, and new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light. Then neareth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling. (SP II.17.287)

And as thou hast forsaken the world, as it were a dead man turned to our Lord bodily in sight of men; right so that thine

heart might be as it were dead to all earthly loves and dreads, turned wholly to our Lord Jhesu Christ. (SP I.1.1)

Rolle's "sweetness of mirth" and Hilton's "new gracious feelings" may be effectively compared with the following passages from Hugh of St. Victor and St. Edmund:

For when a man's mind has been torn away by fear from carnal pleasures with what might be called a certain violence, it must needs begin forthwith to have a foretaste of spiritual joy.<sup>61</sup>

After this, when you have in this way looked at your Creator and his creatures, put every corporeal image outside your heart, and let your naked intention fly up above all human reasoning, and there you shall find such great sweetness and such great secrets that without special grace there is no-one who can think of it except only him who has experienced it.<sup>62</sup>

The English mystics' conception of man's new perfection in love which results from being purged of his sins and in which he exists at the end of the purgative phase is also dealt with by other medi-  
eval mystics, particularly Richard of St. Victor, Aelred, and Bernard. Their treatment of this idea is quite similar to Rolle and Hilton.

. . . before the soul is fully cleansed from the stain of earthly love and is truly consumed by the fire of love.<sup>63</sup>

Perfect love finally brings its devotees to calm rest, and refreshes them with its delightful sweetness. But this can happen only when the body's death has finally conquered the allurements of the flesh, when the vision of God's own brightness has banished the darkness of error, and when the reverses

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<sup>61</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.3.2, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 96.

<sup>62</sup>Edmund, Mirror of Holy Church, Mediaeval Mystics of England, ed. Colledge, p. 139.

<sup>63</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, Bk. 4, Ch. 6, Kirchberger, p. 155.

of this world have been exchanged for the security of heaven.<sup>64</sup>

But although it is good, that love is carnal by which the life of the flesh is shut out and the world is condemned and overcome. It makes progress in this, that it becomes rational. It becomes perfect when it is made spiritual as well.<sup>65</sup>

. . . denote the hearts of the believer, which are washed clean of anxieties, of carnal lusts, and dried through the heat of the true love to God and to man.<sup>66</sup>

Man's ability in his state of purification at the end of the purgational phase to experience knowledge of God is commented upon rather frequently by medieval mystical and religious authors. In the following passages, for example, we may discern a basic similarity to the thought of the English mystics regarding man's new knowledge of God which he experiences as a result of purification.

. . . and after all purification hears the many-voiced trumpets and sees many lights flash forth with pure and diverse-streaming rays, and then stands separate from the multitudes and with the chosen priests presses forward to the top-most pinnacle of the Divine Ascent.<sup>67</sup>

The mind is first to be cleansed from the affection for temporal glory and from all taking pleasure in carnal concupiscence, and then to be raised up to the ken of contemplation.<sup>68</sup>

If, then, we have begun to live persistently in our own heart through the practice of meditation, we have already in a manner

<sup>64</sup> Aelred, Speculum, I.22, Webb and Walker, p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 20.9, Connolly, p. 115

<sup>66</sup> "In Media Quadragesima," Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. Morris, p. 86.

<sup>67</sup> Dionysius, Mystical Theology, Ch. 1, ed. Rolt, p. 193.

<sup>68</sup> Gregory the Great, Morals on Job, 6.58, Butler, p. 68.

ceased to belong to time; and, having become dead as it were to the world, we are living inwardly with God.<sup>69</sup>

Any soul then, may truly be raised to any one of these heavens when it leaves off consideration of earthly things and attaches itself to the contemplation of heavenly things.<sup>70</sup>

And therefore, sires, let vs clense vs ageyns the tyme of syche a solempnyte fro alle spottes of flesche and of spirit that we may be worthi in that day to take the Holy Gost to our sanctification and be his temple.<sup>71</sup>

Men, now that we hear that God will dwell in us, and we in him, there is for us very great necessity that we should make ourselves worthy to be a dwelling place for him, and that we may be able to dwell in him. Through these six things shall every Christian man prepare and cleanse himself, that he be worthy of God's dwelling in him. These are confession, repentance, holy watchings, fastings, prayers, and acts of charity.<sup>72</sup>

. . . thorough mekenes thy flessshely lustes ben destroyed by that destruccion all vyces be put out & vanysshed awaye by puttynge out of vyces than vertues begyn to waxe and sprynge. Of the shyngynge of vertues the clenness of the herte is purchased. By clenness of thy herte thou shalte come to full possessyon of the holy loue of Cryste.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, several passages should be included which both comment upon man's general condition after purgation and clearly delineate the main characteristics of his condition prior to further progress in the contemplative life. These passages compare closely with those from Rolle and Hilton which portray the state of man's soul prior to

<sup>69</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.2.1, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 73.

<sup>70</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Minor, Ch. 74, Kirchberger, p. 112.

<sup>71</sup>"Pentecost," Speculum Sacerdotale, ed. Weatherly, p. 159.

<sup>72</sup>"The Second Sunday in Lent," Twelfth Century Homilies, ed. Belfour, p. 51.

<sup>73</sup>"Dread and Love of God," Horstman, II, 77.

illumination.

In the first place I would have you cleanse your conscience from every defilement of anger and murmuring and envy and dispute; and that you should hasten to banish from your heart all that evidently conflicts with the peace which ought to reign among brethren, and the obedience due to your elders. In the next place I would wish you to adorn yourself with the flowers of good works and laudable studies of every kind, and seek the sweet perfumes of virtues . . . and endeavour to employ yourselves in them . . . that your conscience may everywhere be fragrant with the perfumes of piety, of peace, of gentleness, of justice, of obedience, of cheerfulness, of humility.<sup>74</sup>

. . . sanctification includes the cleansing of a man from his uncleanness and the purgation of his mind from all malice and wickedness.<sup>75</sup>

The image of our mind must therefore be clothed also in the three theological virtues by which the soul is purified, illuminated, and perfected; and thus the image is repaired and is made like the heavenly Jerusalem and part of the Church militant.<sup>76</sup>

For aye, may thai noght out of payn wyn,  
Til thai be clensed and made right clene  
Of alle spottes of syn that may be sene.  
And when thai er thus clensed wele  
Than sal thai namare payn fele,  
Bot als time that-after thai sal wende  
Tille the blis that es with-uten ende.<sup>77</sup>

### 3. The nature and function of God's grace, love, and mercy

The third informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for purgation consists of the nature and function of God's grace,

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<sup>74</sup>Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 46.5,7, Butler, p. 98.

<sup>75</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, I.1, Kirchberger, p. 132.

<sup>76</sup>Bonaventure, Mind's Road to God, 4.3, Boas, p. 29.

<sup>77</sup>The Pricke of Conscience, Bk. IV, ll. 3239-46, Morris, pp. 88-9.

love, and mercy. In comparing the writings of the English mystics with respect to this informing concept, four main ideas that shaped it were used as the basis for discussing the function of God's grace during purgation. In the present comparison of the English mystics with other medieval mystical and religious writings, the same four ideas will be used: (a) the overall effect of God's grace upon man's love for the world, himself, and his various "fleshly lusts and desires"; (b) the role of God's grace with respect to the restoration of man's original image; (c) the inability of man to continue in the contemplative life without the presence of God's grace during purgation; and (d) the general effect of God's grace upon the soul during the purgational phase. However, since the other mystical writings under consideration focus their discussion of the function of God's grace during purgation upon the first and fourth ideas, the present comparison will be primarily concerned with these two ideas although the other two will be considered briefly.

Rolle and Hilton, who consider the overall effect of God's grace upon the individual during purgation more extensively than the other English mystics, view God's role during purgation primarily in terms of a purgative and transformative effect. God's love not only purges man of his love for the world and his fleshly desires but it also transforms man's love for himself and the world into love for God. Their treatment of these two aspects of the effect of God's love remains consistent and straightforward throughout their mystical writings as the following passages illustrate:

This is a point of the passion of love, the which by great violence and mastery breaketh down all lusts and likings of



any earthly thing, and it woundeth the soul with the blissful sword of love . . . . (SP I.30.67)

Quippe quando amor eternitatis in animabus nostris ueraciter accenditur, omnis sine dubio mundi uanitas, omnisque carnalis dileccio non nisi stercus uilissimum reputatur. (IA 19.201)

Sothely when lufe of euerlastynge in owr saules is treuly kyn-  
dyld, with-out doute all vanite of this world, & all fleschly  
lufe, bot als foulyst fylth is haldyn . . . . (FL I.20.45)

Amore enim eius ignis est igneus faciens animas, ut sint lucentes et urentes, et expurgat eas ab omni fece peccati.  
(IA 4.156)

His lufe treuly is fyer, firy makand oure saules, & pourgis  
thame fro all degres of synne, makand thame lygt & byrnande  
. . . . (FL I.5.10)

. . . the love and the feeling of God was made in mine heart  
not fire but as fire glowing, for as bodily fire burneth and  
wasteth all bodily things where it cometh, right so ghostly  
fire, as is the love of God, burneth and wasteth all fleshly  
loves and likings in a man's soul, and this fire is stoken  
in my bones as the prophet saith of himself. That is for to  
say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind,  
reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow  
filleth full the bone . . . . (SP I.31.69)

Other medieval mystics consider the effects of God's love during  
purgation in a manner similar both in form and content. Since the  
function of God's mercy, love, and grace during purgation is an  
established theme in medieval mystical and religious thought, ex-  
treme variations from Rolle's and Hilton's position are relatively  
infrequent. The following passages from other mystics illustrate  
the same emphasis upon the purgational and transformative effect of  
God's love that are found in Rolle and Hilton.

We may sum up, therefore, by saying that the fruit of the  
first visitation is our conversion to God, while the second  
visitation means the mortification of all our passions and  
of our self-will, the final reward being perfect happiness.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Aelred, Mirror, 2.12, Webb and Walker, p. 54.

Only yesterday drawn out of the mire will you today be admitted to the glory of his countenance? For you there must be a transition effected by way of his hand. It must first cleanse you: it must first raise you up. How ill it raise you up? By giving you that whence you will derive confidence. What is that? The beauty of sinlessness and the worthy fruits of penance, which are the works of devotion.<sup>79</sup>

Truly nothing else [grace] so purifies the heart of all worldly affection, nothing inflames the soul more with heavenly love! It is this which purifies and this which sanctifies, so that a man may be made clean and hold the world in contempt by diligent contemplation of the truth and may be sanctified by the love of God.<sup>80</sup>

Now [after the gift of grace has been received] , it [the heart] no longer merely leaves the world, it flees it; it not only turns its back on it, it hates it.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the treatment of the function of God's mercy during purgation by Aelred, Bernard, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, we should also note its development in homiletic material and several religious treatises:

And this is the pryncipall comaundement that is conteyned in oure lawe. And this is the skill, as seyth a grett clerke, Crisostomus: Like as triackle distroyse all maner of venome and is nedefull to mans bodye in euery sekenes, ryght so the loue of God all myghtye, the wiche is goostely tryacle, fordothe all maner synnes and kepeth a mans sowle euermore in clenness.<sup>82</sup>

He sent the Holy Ghost on the earth, and he with his blast enkindled earthly men's hearts. Then burneth the earth when the earthly man is kindled to the love of God, which before

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<sup>79</sup> Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 3.4, Connolly, pp. 75-76.

<sup>80</sup> Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, I.1, Kirchberger, p. 133.

<sup>81</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.3.3, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 97.

<sup>82</sup> Sermon #36, Middle English Sermons, ed. Ross, p. 209.

was cold through fleshly lust.<sup>83</sup>

My love and my counsel, all my help and my comfort, help me  
ever for good and turn me from sin, and give me will and  
might and wisdom to forsake every sin, and to work well.<sup>84</sup>

But sithen onliche in 3ow & in non nothur, is welle of alle  
Merci that euermore floweth: ffor that muchel Merci clanse  
my soule, and wasch hit of that fulthe that hit is fuyled  
with . . . .<sup>85</sup>

Whene goddes grace hase styrrrede mane and wakkenede hyme  
with this thre, & hase mad hyme to know the perelle that he  
es in: thane he consyues a ferdenes of goddes awfull dome,  
& thare-thorowe he begynnes to sorowe that euer he dyd amyse,  
and gernys to amende hyme, thurgh goddes grace that stirres  
hym to fle the euyl & gyf hym to do the gude. Than commes  
grace folowande to helpe the gud will of mane to fulfill it  
in dede.<sup>86</sup>

The role of God's grace in restoring man's original image during  
purgation, i.e., to his status prior to the Fall or to his sins,  
forms the second part of the comparative analysis of the function  
of God's grace during purgation. This restoration of man's original  
image, effected during purgation by God's grace, was implicit in the  
preceding discussion of the purgative effect of God's grace and love  
upon man's love for himself and the world. However, since Walter  
Hilton and Julian of Norwich specifically consider the restoration  
of man's image as the end result of the purgational process, their  
treatment of this idea should be compared with that of other medi-  
eval mystics.

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<sup>83</sup>"In Die Pentecosten," Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. Morris, p. 96.

<sup>84</sup>"A Hymn to Our Lord," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 214.

<sup>85</sup>"A Talking of the Love of God," Horstman, II, 353.

<sup>86</sup>"De Gracia Dei," Horstman, I, 309.

Hilton's and Julian's conception of the restoration of man's original image may be found in the following passages:

. . . help thee bear thy body full of corruption, and he will with his merciful might of his gracious presence break down this false image of love in thyself not all at once but little and little, till thou be some deal reformed to his likeness. (SP I.89.214)

And upon this manner wise may this image of sin be broken down in thee and destroyed, by the which thou art forshapen from the kindly shape of the image of Christ. And thou shalt be shapen again to the image of Jhesu man by meekness and charity; and then shalt thou be fully shapen to the self image of Jhesu God, here living by a shadow in contemplation, and in the bliss of heaven by full soothfastness. (SP I.91.219)

For nature is all good and fair in itself, and grace was sent out to save nature and destroy sin, and bring again fair nature to the blessed point from whence it came: that is God . . . . (RDL 63.157)

Thus are sins forgiven by mercy and grace, and our soul is worshipfully received in joy like as it shall be when it cometh to heaven, as oftentimes as it cometh by the gracious working of the Holy Ghost and the virtue of Christ's Passion. (RDL 40.82)

Although this particular theme of restoration is frequently found implicit in medieval works dealing with purgation and the contemplative life, the medieval expression which most closely approximates Hilton's and Julian's is found in Aelred's Speculum Caritatis:

. . . the stripping of our old selves, the renewal of our inner life, the reshaping of the divine image within us. Our power to love was poisoned by the selfishness of our desires, and stifled by lust, so that it has tended always to seek the very depths of vicious practices. But when charity floods the soul and warms away the numbness, love strives towards higher and more worthy objects. It puts aside the old ways and takes up a new life, and on flashing wings it flies to the highest and purest Goodness which is the source of its being.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Aelred, Speculum, I.7, Webb and Walker, p. 11.

The next idea to be considered under the informing concept of the function of God's grace during purgation is the inability of man to continue in the contemplative life, especially during purgation, without the presence of God's grace. Of the English mystics, only the author of The Cloud considers this idea extensively. A passage from "De Gracia Dei" compares closely with The Cloud's conception of the effect of God's grace upon man's continuing progress in the contemplative life. Both authors consider God's grace to be absolutely essential.

. . . ffor with-owttyne wyssynge & stirrynge of grace nane may wyne to the lastand lyfe . . . . And for-thi wene we no gud to do with-owttyne grace, or 3it haue gud wille, for noghte es gud that mane does thofe it gude seme, bot goddes grace it lede.<sup>88</sup>

. . . that Almygty God with his grace behoueth algates be the cheef stere & wercher, outhur with mene or withoutyn . . . . (BPC 155)

& gif it be thus, trist than stedfastly that it is only God that sterith thi wyl & thi desyre, pleyonly by him-self, withouten mene outhur on his party or on thin. (CU 34.70-71)

. . . with-outyn me first steryng & principaly mouyng, & 3e only bot consentyng & suffryng, 3e mowen now3t do thing that is parfiteli plesyng to me . . . . (BPC 162)

The general effect of God's grace upon the soul forms the final part of our comparison of the English mystics and other medieval mystics with respect to the function of God's grace, love, and mercy during purgation. This effect upon the soul is discussed by both the English mystics and other medieval mystics primarily in terms of the soul's new experience of sweetness, brightness, rest, and

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<sup>88</sup>"De Gracia Dei," Horstman, I, 305.

peace. These effects or experiences should be distinguished from the overall purgative effect of God's grace during purgation which was discussed under the first idea in the informing concept of God's grace during purgation.<sup>89</sup>

That the soul is filled with sweetness, brightness, and peace as a result of God's grace during purgation is considered frequently by medieval mystics and religious writings. For them it is an especially important part of the purgational process. The following passages illustrate this clearly:

Often we approach the altar and begin to pray with a heart lukewarm and dry. But if we steadily persist, grace comes suddenly in a flood upon us, our breast grows full of increase, a wave of piety fills our inward heart; and if we press on, the milk of sweetness conceived in us will spread over us in fruitful flood.<sup>90</sup>

And what, indeed, could be a greater sign of divine clemency than that the pure sweetness, joy, and serenity of God should come down to the soul that is still foul with sin?<sup>91</sup>

The soul is moved by a spiritual attraction when in some mysterious and unexpected way the Holy Spirit comes to it, giving a taste of that sweetness which comes to us in our love for God and for our fellow men.<sup>92</sup>

And therefore the Holy Ghost, who teaches both righteousness and meekness, should be manifested both as fire and as a dove, for he causes men's hearts, whom he enlighteneth with his grace, that they shall be meek through innocence, and kindled through love and wisdom. God is, as Paul said, a consuming

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<sup>89</sup> See above, pp. 239-242.

<sup>90</sup> Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 9.7, Butler, p. 100.

<sup>91</sup> Aelred, Speculum, 2.10, Webb and Walker, p. 51.

<sup>92</sup> Aelred, Speculum, 3.11, Webb and Walker, p. 99.

fire; and he is the ineffable and invisible fire.<sup>93</sup>

. . . or that it wyll please God with swetenes or some hye vysytacyon of the Holy Ghoost to vysyte and touche hym . . . .<sup>94</sup>

Then comes the Holy Ghost who is an all burning fire, as He came upon the apostles, and inflames the heart, and reminds it often by day and by night and brings it into good will.<sup>95</sup>

Jesus, all fair! before whom the sun is but a shadow, even she that loseth her light and becometh ashamed of her darkness before thy bright face. Thou that givest her light and hast all that light, enlumine my dark heart. Give thy bower brightness, and brighten my soul that is sooty.<sup>96</sup>

These passages may be compared in both form and content with the consideration of the general effects of God's grace upon the soul during purgation by the English mystics.

That is for to say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind, reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth full the bone . . . . (SP I.31.69)

Amor enim eius ignis est igneus faciens animas, ut sint lucentes et urentes, et expurgat eas ab omni fece peccati. (IA 4.156)

His lufe treuly is fyer, firy makand oure saules, & purgis thame fro all degres of synne, makand thame lygt & byrnande . . . . (FL I.5.10)

And thus when we, by the working of mercy and grace, be made meek and mild, we are fully safe; suddenly is the soul oned To God when it is truly peaced in itself: for in Him is found no wrath. (RDL 49.104)

And when we give our intent to love and meekness, by the

<sup>93</sup>"In Die Pentecosten," Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. Morris, pp. 94-96.

<sup>94</sup>"The Remedy against the Troubles of Temptations," Horstman, II, 117.

<sup>95</sup>"Of Charity," Vices and Virtues, ed. F. Holthausen (London: EETS 89, 1888), p. 34.

<sup>96</sup>"An Orison of Our Lord," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 184.

working of mercy and grace we are made all fair and clean.  
(RDL 40.83)

The overall similarity in the treatment of the effect of God's grace upon the soul during purgation by the English mystics and other medieval mystics and religious writings is striking; both strongly emphasize the soul's new experience of sweetness, brightness, rest, and peace. According to the above passages from medieval mystical and religious writings, the description of the effect of God's grace seems to have remained fairly constant throughout the middle ages. Consequently, the general influence upon the English mystics' conception of the effect of God's grace upon the soul in terms of sweetness and peace seems apparent.

#### 4. The nosce te ipsum theme

The nosce te ipsum theme forms the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for purgation. Four main ideas which constitute this concept form the basis of our discussion of the nosce te ipsum theme with respect to the English mystics and other medieval mystical writings: (a) the equating of knowledge of self with knowledge of God; (b) the specific content of what is known about the self and about God; (c) knowledge of self as leading specifically to a general awareness of man's sinful condition; and (d) the knowledge of self which results from man's comparison of his nature with God's. The primary focus, however, will be upon the mystics' equating of the knowledge of self and the subsequent knowledge of God and the specific content of what is known about the self and God.



The nosce te ipsum theme is considered to be an integral part of the purgational phase by most of the medieval mystics that we have examined for comparative purposes. It is dependent upon two main ideas. First, in order to progress in the contemplative life and attain union with God, man must achieve a rather complete understanding of himself, particularly of his sinful nature. When he has arrived at this point and is aware of his sinful nature, he may begin to effect purgation of his sins. Secondly, since most medieval mystics thought that man's soul was created in the image of God, they felt that knowledge of self actually led man to knowledge of God. These two ideas formed the rationale for emphasizing knowledge of self during the purgational phase. Consequently they are reflected in most medieval writings concerned with articulating the purgative phase.

The first main idea under this informing concept, the equating of the knowledge of self with the knowledge of God, is treated extensively by medieval mystics. The following passages illustrate clearly how the English mystics consider this particular idea:

It needeth a soul that would have knowing of ghostly things, for to have first knowing of itself. For it may not have knowing of a kind above itself but if it have knowing of itself . . . . (SP II.30.356)

And notwithstanding all this, we may never come to full knowing of God till we know first clearly our own soul.  
(RDL 56.136)

But our passing life that we have here in our sense-soul knoweth not what our self is. And when we verily and clearly see and know what our self is then shall we verily and clearly see and know our Lord God in fulness of joy.  
(RDL 46.96)

That knowledge of God may be realized through knowledge of self is

found most frequently in older medieval mystics such as Gregory, Edmund, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure. Since this idea is not particularly complex, we may anticipate a great deal of similarity in both form and content in its treatment by these mystics and the English mystics. This similarity is indicated by the following series of passages from the older mystics:

When with marvellous efforts it [the soul] strives to rise up from corporeal things and images, it is a great thing indeed if the soul, thrusting aside the bodily form, be brought to the knowledge of itself, so as to think of itself without bodily figure, and by thus thinking of itself, to prepare a pathway to contemplate the substance of eternity. In this way it exhibits itself to itself as a kind of ladder, whereby in ascending from outward things it may pass into itself, and from itself may tend unto its Maker.<sup>97</sup>

The first step in contemplation is for the soul to retreat within itself and there completely to recollect itself. The second step in contemplation is for the soul to see what it is when it is so recollected. The third step is for the soul to raise itself beyond itself and to strive to see two things: its Creator, and its own nature.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, when speaking of spiritual and unseen things, something is said to be "the highest," it is said to be so not as if it were some place above the topmost peak of heaven, but as deepest of all within us. To ascend to God means, therefore, to enter into oneself, and not only to enter into oneself, but in some ineffable manner to penetrate even into one's depths. He, then, who, if I may say, enters really deeply into himself and, penetrating deep within, transcends himself, he of a truth ascends to God . . . .<sup>99</sup>

It happens that we may contemplate God not only outside of us but also within us and above us. Thus we contemplate him outside through his traces, inside through his image, and above

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<sup>97</sup> Gregory, Morals on Job, 5.61, 62, Butler, p. 71.

<sup>98</sup> Edmund, Speculum, Colledge, p. 137.

<sup>99</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, III.2.3, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 176.

us through his light, which has signed upon our minds the light of eternal truth, since the mind itself is immediately formed by truth itself.<sup>100</sup>

Let him rise up by himself above himself, and from self-knowledge to the knowledge of God. Let a man first learn from the image of God, let him learn from the likeness of God what he ought to think about God.<sup>101</sup>

Of these older mystics, the idea that knowledge of self necessarily leads to knowledge of God is especially dominant in the mystical thought of Richard of St. Victor. Several passages from his Benjamin Minor illustrate this emphasis quite clearly:

The soul which is attempting to rise to the height of knowledge must make self-knowledge its first and chief concern. The high peak of knowledge is perfect self-knowledge.<sup>102</sup>

For the soul which has been long exercised in self-knowledge and is not yet fully taught cannot be raised up to the knowledge of God. In vain does the eye of the heart which is not yet fit to see itself, try to see God. First man must learn to know his own invisible nature before he presumes to approach the invisible things of God.<sup>103</sup>

A mind which does not raise itself to consideration of its own nature, how can it fly away on the wings of contemplation to that which is above itself?<sup>104</sup>

But when the mirror [man's soul] has been cleansed and examined for a long time carefully, a brightness of the divine light begins to shine through to him and a great beam of illumination not known hitherto, appears before his eyes.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Bonaventure, Mind's Road to God, 5.1, Boas, p. 34.

<sup>101</sup> Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Minor, 83, Kirchberger, p. 122.

<sup>102</sup> Benjamin Minor, 75, Kirchberger, p. 114.

<sup>103</sup> Benjamin Minor, 71, Kirchberger, p. 109.

<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Minor, 83, Kirchberger, p. 122.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

Comparing the passages from the older medieval mystics with those from the English mystics, we find an extremely close relationship between them in several respects. First, and perhaps most important, is the thought that knowledge of self occurs prior to and necessarily leads to knowledge of God. Second is the idea that God is located in some fashion or another within man. And the fact that God is thought to be found within man permits each mystic to equate knowledge of self with knowledge of God.

The content of what is known about the self and about God forms the next idea within the nosce te ipsum theme. As indicated in our discussion of the English mystics with respect to purgation, this particular idea focused upon two main factors: (1) that knowledge of self produces an understanding of man's nature as primarily sinful; and (2) that knowledge of self provides a certain comprehension of the nature of God, even though it is rather vague. These two factors, the realization that man's nature is sinful and becoming aware of the nature of God, form the specific content or substance of what is known by man during purgation with respect to self-knowledge.

The Cloud's discussion of what is known about the self in terms of "see what thou art" and "the naked sight and blind beholding of thine own being" is similar to the conception of the knowledge of self found in Richard of St. Victor and St. Edmund. In both cases, however, what is known about the self is considered in a vague and general manner.

What mase man haly? I say the twa thynges with-owtten man,  
that is knawyng and lufe. Knawyng of sothefastnes and lufe  
of gudnes. Bot to the knawyng of Godde, that es sothefastnes,  
ne may thou noghte come bot be knawyng of thi self, ne get to

the luf of Godde may thou noghte come bot thurghe the lufe of thynne evyne-cristyne. To the knawing of thi self thou may come one this manere. Thynke besely and ofte what thou erte, what thou was, and what thou sall be.<sup>106</sup>

Joseph must not only know the vices of the heart perfectly but also the infirmities of the body and according to each need seek the health-giving remedy.<sup>107</sup>

. . . this man Joseph must fully know the whole condition and disposition of man, outward and inward, and must skilfully search out and carefully investigate not only what he is but what he should be.<sup>108</sup>

With respect to what is known about the self in terms of its sinful nature during purgation, Hilton's consideration of the image of sin or man's false self image may be compared effectively with the Stimulus Amoris and the Speculum Christiani:

. . . but a murk image and a painful image of thine own soul, which hath neither light of knowing nor feeling of love nor liking. This image if thou behold it wittily, is all belapped with black stinking clothes of sin, as pride, envy, ire, accidie, covetise, gluttony and lechery. (SP I.52.126)

. . . I have found a false image, that men call an idol, in myself, well foul disfigured and forshapen with wretchedness of all these sins which I have spoken of, by the which I am cast down in many fleshly likings and worldly vanities from cleanness of heart and feeling of ghostly virtues . . . . (SP I.84.203)

This shalt thou first consider, and after, as a man that thirsteth after his Lord's worship, thou shalt mourn and weep that thou seest his fair image so blacked and his precious blood so defiled, and the wooing of the Holy Ghost so polluted, and Christ's spouse so fouled, and endless

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<sup>106</sup> Edmund, Speculum, Ch. 3, Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse, ed. Perry, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Minor, 70, Kirchberger, p. 108.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

bliss so despised for stinking filth of this life.<sup>109</sup>

How may any man sey truly hym-self to loue god and to desyr hys loue, if he see the ymage of god be defoulede and ly in the dounge-hepe of synnes, and the moste precyus blode of Criste to be troden vndyr fote, the dwellynge place of the holy gooste to be defoulede, Cristes spouse to be a strompet, alle-holy feyth to be caste down, our lordes commaundment and al hys blyssyd hede to be dyspysede or for-sake for vyle lustys and vices, and he rekkyth not ther-of, ne cryes ther-azeyns, bot as a fenynge man sekyth only his owne quiete?<sup>110</sup>

On the other hand, medieval mystics such as Aelred, Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure indicate that the knowledge of God as well as the knowledge of self as sinful is known during self-examination. In fact, the knowledge of God as a result of knowledge of self rather than the knowledge of self as sinful seems to dominate their understanding of the nosce te ipsum theme. The following passages which illustrate this particular idea may be compared to English mystics such as Hilton and Julian who consider a relationship between the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God.

. . . for the Author of Creation has endowed the soul with three qualities or powers which enable it to share the eternity and wisdom of God, and to taste His sweetness. These three qualities or powers are memory, knowledge and love, which is the same as will. Of these the memory can share in God's eternity, knowledge can share in His wisdom, and love can taste His sweetness. Man can find God in his own image of the Trinity, for memory has never forgotten its Maker.<sup>111</sup>

The rational soul truly finds in itself the chief and principal mirror for seeing God. If the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, where, I ask, are the traces of knowledge distinctly impressed

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<sup>109</sup>The Goad of Love, ed. Kirchberger, p. 135.

<sup>110</sup>Speculum Christiani, ed. Holmstedt, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup>Aelred, Speculum, I.3, Webb and Walker, p. 5.

to be found, but in this image of God in the soul?<sup>112</sup>

What is this entering in, but a complete gathering of oneself into oneself? Therefore the entering of the soul into the chamber with her beloved and remaining alone with him alone in the enjoyment of sweetness, is nothing but a forgetting of of all external things, delighting above all and most intimately in his love.<sup>113</sup>

And thus, through the operations of the memory, it appears that the soul itself is the image of God and his likeness, so present to itself and having him present that it receives him in actuality and is susceptible of receiving him in potency, and that it can also participate in him.<sup>114</sup>

It should be pointed out, however, that even though the nature of God is set forth by these mystics as the result of man's self-knowledge, words and phrases describing God's nature are rather vague and general.

The strong emphasis during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries upon man's sinful condition may have caused the English mystics, particularly Hilton and Julian, to shift the emphasis regarding the object of knowledge during the act of self-knowledge from knowledge of God as found in the earlier medieval mystics to an emphasis upon the sinful condition of man. At any rate, knowledge of the nature of God as the result of self-knowledge is strongly attested to in the writings of early medieval mystics and this tradition is continued in the mystical thought of the English mystics.

That knowledge of the self leads specifically to an awareness

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<sup>112</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Minor, 72, Kirchberger, p. 109.

<sup>113</sup>Benjamin Major, Kirchberger, Bk. 4, Ch. 16, p. 169.

<sup>114</sup>Bonaventure, Mind's Road to God, 3.2, Boas, p. 23.

of man's sinful condition is the next main idea to be considered under the informing concept of knowledge of self. Passages in the English mystics which refer to this idea may be represented by Julian's reference to the knowledge of man's sinful condition gained during purgation:

And thus by this gracious knowing we may see our sin profitably without despair. For truly we need to see it, and by the sight we shall be made ashamed of our self and brought down as anent our pride and presumption; for it behoveth us verily to see that of ourselves we are right nought but sin and wretchedness. (RDL 78.190)

Other medieval mystics refer to this same idea without much substantial difference in tone or content:

For whene thou was noghte, he made the, in saule aftire his awene lyknesse and his ymage, and thi body made of feule stynkande skyume of the erthe ware-of es abhomynacyone to thynke; he made the in witte and in membirs sa nobill and sa faire that nane cane duyse. Thynke now besyly 3e that has fleschely frendis and kynredyne, why 3e luffe thame sa derely and sa tendirly.<sup>115</sup>

The uerste stape of mildenesse is to know his pourehede and his defeaute.<sup>116</sup>

. . . for I have made gates of all my five senses for the entrance of sinful vices. I have looked amiss, hearkened amiss, felt amiss, spoken amiss, loved sweet smells. Pride and desire of praise have sore wounded me; also wrath and envy, leasing, perjury, unfaithfulness, cursing, backbiting, and flattery.<sup>117</sup>

Wherfor, for Cristis loue, yche man sech well his consiens and clanse hyt, that he may abull to receyue hys sauour.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Edmund, Speculum, Ch. 3, Horstman, I, 220.

<sup>116</sup>Ayenbite of Inwyte, ed. Morris, p. 132.

<sup>117</sup>"A Hymn to Our Lady," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 204.

<sup>118</sup>"De Festo Pasche," Mirk's Festial, p. 131.



And of this sight a man is raised up then for to shame of his own filth and hath disdain of the vilety of sins and of the stink of fleshly lust and stirreth himself to recover that nobility and that gentle kind that it had first.<sup>119</sup>

In both the passage from Julian and the passages from other medieval mystics and religious writings we find emphasized the idea that knowledge of self gained during purgation enables man to become aware of his sinful condition as man. Hence, this particular phase of the purgational process further prepares man for illumination and eventual union with God.

5. Man's purification during purgation which results from an awareness of and vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion

Man's participation in the suffering and passion of Christ constitutes the final informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for purgation. For several reasons medieval mystics and other medieval religious authors dealing with purgation have considered this particular concept rather extensively. First, from a theological point of view the idea of participation in Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection is constantly stressed by St. Paul; participation in Christ's suffering in a vicarious way for the Christian was symbolic of his death to sin and his new life in Christ. Secondly, the passion and suffering of Christ conveniently served as an objective exemplum with which the medieval mystic could identify concretely as he progressed through the contemplative life. More than any other idea, it symbolized the purgation necessary for growth in

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<sup>119</sup>The Goad of Love, Ch. 6, Kirchberger, p. 75.

the mystic way.

In the discussion of the English mystics with respect to the theme of participation, we found that Julian and Margery continually emphasized the need for participation as necessary for purgation and purification. Julian considers this need quite forcefully:

Then came suddenly to my mind that I should desire the second wound of our Lord's gracious gift: that my body might be fulfilled with mind and feeling of His blessed Passion. For I would that his pains were my pains, with compassion and afterward longing to God. (RDL 3.7)

I understood that we be now, in our Lord's meaning, in his cross with him in his pains and his passion, dying; and we, willingly abiding in the same cross with his help and his grace unto the last point, suddenly he shall change his cheer to us, and we shall be with him in heaven. (RDL 21.45-46)

Margery's treatment of the suffering and passion of Christ indicates a similar emphasis upon the importance of participation:

. . . whеч syght & gostly beheldyng wrowt be grace so feruently in hir mende, wowndyng hir wyth pite & compassyon, that sche sobbyd, roryd, & cryed . . . . (MK I.57.140)

Sche had plentivows teerys of compunccyon & of compassyon in the rememorawns of the bittyr peynys & passyons whеч owr merciful Lord Ihesu Crist suffyrd in hys blissyd manhod. (MK II.10.245)

. . . thorw whеч beheldyng the Passyon of owr Lord entryd hir mende, wherthorwsche gan meltyn & al-to-relentyn be terys of pyte & compassyown. (MK I.46.111)

Corresponding treatment of the theme of participation in the writings of other medieval mystics and religious writings is numerous. In them we find little variation from the basic conception of participation as found in Julian: purgation and purification necessarily follow from participation in Christ's suffering and passion. The following passages are representative of the treatment usually accorded to the theme of participation by other medieval mystics:

Meditate upon these things [i.e., the passion and suffering of Christ], dwell long upon them. With such perfume as these restore the sweet fragrance of your hearts which the rather noisome odor of your sins has too long made offensive.<sup>120</sup>

. . . to the cry of prayer through Christ crucified, by whose blood we are purged of the filth of vice . . . .<sup>121</sup>

A lorde, Ihesu, what made the to suffire all this hard penance, tourmentez and paynez? Sothely thynne vnmesurabyll luffe that thou hade to vs, and owre grette wikkednes that myghte not be weschende awaye bot with the precyouse licoure of thi precyouse blode.<sup>122</sup>

Through the stark streams and the flood that flowed from thy wounds for to heal mankind, cleanse and wash my sinful soul; through thy five wounds opened on the cross, pierced through with nails, and sorrowfully filled up, heal me sore wounded through my five wits with deadly sins, and open them, heavenly king, toward heavenly things, and turn to the world thy precious cross upon which thou outstretchedst thyself.<sup>123</sup>

. . . so that thy death may mortify the deadly lusts of my body and the laws of my limbs. Let the world be dead to me, and me to the world. Through thy arising to life immortal, O Lord, raise me from the death of the soul; and give me life in thee; that I love not this world, but only thee, living Lord.<sup>124</sup>

Participation in Christ's suffering and passion is treated particularly effectively and extensively in "A Hymn to Our Lady," "An Orison of Our Lord," and "The Wooing of Our Lord."

May his torment on the cross and his death destroy my sins; and may his rising raise me into holiness of life; and may his uprising cause me to advance upwards in high and holy virtues, from high to higher virtues ever until I see in

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<sup>120</sup>Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 11.8, Connolly, p. 98.

<sup>121</sup>Bonaventure, Mind's Road to God, Prologue, 4, Boas, p. 4.

<sup>122</sup>"The Privy of the Passion," Horstman, I, 203.

<sup>123</sup>"A Hymn to Our Lord," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 210.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

Zion, the high tower of heaven, the Lord of light, whom the angels ever behold and ever the longer they behold him the more they desire it.<sup>125</sup>

Let thy wounds heal the wounds of my soul; let thy death mortify in me the pleasures of the flesh and the bodily lusts, and cause me to live to thee.<sup>126</sup>

Let my body hang with thy body nailed on the rood, and enclosed transversely within four walls; and hang I will with thee, and never more from my cross come until I die; for then shall I leap from the rood into rest, from woe to weal and into eternal bliss.<sup>127</sup>

Purification and purgation or the final effect of participation in Christ's suffering and passion, which is illustrated by the above passages from other medieval mystics and religious writings, closely parallels the effect of participation as considered by Julian and Margery.

In a number of other medieval mystical and religious works, the focus is upon the concrete details of the suffering and passion rather than upon the benefits of participation. The specific details of the passion, as the following passages illustrate, parallel quite closely Julian's treatment of Christ's suffering and passion. And even though purgation and purification are not expressly considered in these passages, they are implicit within them.

. . . the bodily cross is the pain that a man endures when his body is spread out and fastened to the cross, as our Saviour's holy body was on the holy rood, when that he suffered thereon,

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<sup>125</sup>"A Hymn to Our Lady," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 206.

<sup>126</sup>"An Orison of Our Lord," ibid., p. 188.

<sup>127</sup>"The Wooing of Our Lord," ibid., p. 284.

as his will was, and had a crown of thorns upon his holy head, which pricked him severely, and in his hands iron nails, and in his feet also; and was pierced in his side by a spear, and his holy body was spread and drawn out on the cross, and for our trespasses piteously drawn asunder.<sup>128</sup>

Than thai gederd thornes kene,  
And made a corowne tham bitwene,  
And on his heuid thai it thrust,  
On ilka side the blude out brast;  
With staues of rede thai set it down,  
And clapped it fast vntill his crowne,  
So that the thornes went in than  
Till thai pperced the hern than;  
The thornes made the woundes wide,  
The blude ran down on ilka side,  
And than als sone the blude keleing  
Gert his clathes fast to him cling.<sup>129</sup>

And hou heo the bounden so egerlych & so faste, that the blod sprong out at the fynger nayles: as holy halwen hit siggen & writen is in boke. And bounden the so harde & ladde the forth ruydlich, betynde reuthlich, on bac & on scholdres: and on vch a syde. And bi-foren the princes, buffeteden the & scornden & blyndfellede thyn egen, pleieden a-bobbeth & maden the heor fool, & spitten in thi face.<sup>130</sup>

Afterwarde vpon the crosse his bones were draw out of Ioynte the veynes & the senewes and so fayled the blood of kynd with bytter paynes of deth. He betoke his spyryte to the fader of heuen and than suffred at the last his glorious herte to be thorough-percyd with a sharpe spere for to gyue his herte-blood to bye man body and soule into Ioye without ende.<sup>131</sup>

Finally, several passages from "A Hymn to Our Lady" underscore this emphasis upon the concrete details of Christ's suffering and passion:

. . . by his scorning, and by his spitting and buffeting, and

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<sup>128</sup>"Sermo in Marcum 8.34," Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. Morris, p. 204.

<sup>129</sup>The Northern Passion, ed. Frances A. Foster (London: EETS 145, 1913), ll. 1207-1212b, p. 125.

<sup>130</sup>"A Talking of the Love of God," Horstman, II, 359.

<sup>131</sup>"Contemplation on the Dread and Love of God," Horstman, II, 73.

by his blinding; by the crown of thorns . . . .<sup>132</sup>

. . . by his own cross, so hard dragging on his soft shoulders;  
by the blunt nails; by the sore wounds . . . .<sup>133</sup>

. . . by his bloody stream that ran in many places, in his cir-  
cumcision, in his blood-sweating, in his pain through the crown  
of thorns . . . .<sup>134</sup>

The above passages may be compared with several passages from Julian's Revelations in which she describes quite vividly the physical details of Christ's suffering.

And after this I saw, beholding, the body plenteously bleeding of the Scourging, as thus: The fair skin was broken full deep into the tender flesh with sharp smiting all about the sweet body. So plenteously the hot blood ran out that there was neither seen skin nor wound, but as it were all blood.  
(RDL 12.29)

After this Christ shewed a part of His Passion near His dying. I saw His sweet face as it were dry and bloodless with pale dying. And later, more pale, dead, languoring; and then turned more dead into blue; and then more brown-blue, as the flesh turned more deeply dead. (RDL 16.36)

These passages from other medieval mystics and religious writings are important as they provide a clear indication of the general attitude toward the suffering and passion of Christ in those works concerned with purgation. But it should be emphasized that the English mystics were influenced more by the general attitude toward Christ's suffering and passion and vicarious participation in it as reflected in the above passages than by specific treatments.

For several reasons the secondary conceptual field for purgation,

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<sup>132</sup>"A Hymn to Our Lady," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 206.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

constructed initially in Chapter Six and used in the present chapter to compare the English mystics and other medieval mystics, constitutes a major conclusion of this chapter. First, the general outline of the field, including the informing concepts and the words, phrases, and ideas forming those concepts which evolved organically from our analysis of the treatment of purgation by each English mystic in Chapter Three, provides a basic conceptual structure for the purgational thought of other medieval mystics. For example, on the basis of the findings of the present chapter, it is possible to use the secondary conceptual field in its broad, general form to consider the main ideas concerning purgation of other medieval mystics such as Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard. Secondly, and equally important, the field also contributes to our understanding of medieval mystics since it provides a convenient, systematic, and reasonably accurate means for comparing the purgational thought of medieval mystics.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to the conclusions represented by the field itself, there are a number of significant similarities and differences between the English mystics and other medieval mystics and religious writings found in this chapter which may be briefly summarized at this point. That man should possess an initial desire for purgation, a concept considered by The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian, is treated similarly in both form and content by Bernard of Clairvaux.

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<sup>135</sup> These comments will also apply to the secondary conceptual fields for illumination and union which will be considered in Chapters 10 and 11 respectively.

Furthermore, Bernard and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor each indicate that this desire for purgation must be thorough in order for man to progress in the contemplative life. The recognition of man's sinful condition, emphasized by Hilton, Julian, and Margery, is consistently stressed by other medieval mystics and religious writings. Richard of St. Victor, however, seems to be the only other medieval mystic who stresses Hilton's and Julian's idea that man must focus his desire for purgation upon a single point.

The denial of the world and man's fleshly desires is considered by nearly all medieval mystics. And, in a manner similar to the English mystics, two main ideas are usually mentioned: (1) purgation must occur in order for God to be known fully; and (2) man's love for himself and for the world impedes eventual union with God. These ideas are consistently emphasized by medieval mystics from St. Augustine to the English mystics. The impossibility of man's love and his love for God coexisting, a concept developed by Rolle and Hilton, is also considered by other medieval mystics such as Gregory, Edmund, Richard of St. Victor, and Bernard. It appears to be a relatively standard mystical concept. Whereas the need for sorrow and contrition is discussed by Richard of St. Victor, it is much more predominant in homiletic writings and in popular works such as the Speculum Sacerdotale and The Lay Folks' Catechism than in other medieval mystical works. The Cloud's emphasis upon the need for man to alienate himself from others in order to progress in the mystic way is apparently only found in Hugh and Richard of St. Victor each of whom develops this concept in detail. Hugh of St. Victor and Edmund both



consider the state of man's soul after purgation in a manner similar to that found in Rolle and Hilton. And phrases such as "sweetness of mirth" and "new gracious feelings" which are used by Rolle and Hilton to describe this state have similar counterparts in both Hugh and Edmund.

Rolle's and Hilton's treatment of God's grace and love during purgation in terms of its purgative and transformative effect, i.e., by which man's love for himself and the world is changed into love for God, appears to be a standard theme in medieval mystical writings and receives a similar treatment in the works of Aelred, Bernard, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. Hilton's and Julian's consideration of the restoration of man's true image through the working of God's grace during purgation has significant parallels in Aelred's Speculum Caritatis. The general effect of God's grace, mercy, and love upon man during purgation, considered by Rolle, Hilton, and Julian in terms of sweetness, brightness, rest, and peace, is treated extensively by other medieval mystics. It is particularly evident in Bernard and Aelred although it is also found in homiletic literature.

The nosce te ipsum theme is evidently integral to the purgational thought of other medieval mystics. Hilton's and Julian's treatment of this concept receives a similar discussion by Gregory, Edmund, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure. It is especially clear in Richard of St. Victor who feels that knowledge of self during purgation necessarily leads to knowledge of God. Earlier medieval mystics stress the idea that knowledge of God rather than knowledge of oneself as sinful proceeds from knowledge of self;

later medieval religious and mystical writings, such as homiletic and popular religious works, emphasize the fact that knowledge of self produces primarily the knowledge of man's sinful condition.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion and its benefits are stressed more by later devotional and religious writings than by earlier medieval mystics. And the treatment of this concept in later medieval writings closely parallels its discussion in Julian and Margery.

## CHAPTER X

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TREATMENT OF ILLUMINATION BY THE ENGLISH MYSTICS AND OTHER MEDIEVAL MYSTICS AND RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

In this chapter the comparative analysis of the illuminative phase will follow the general procedure developed for purgation in Chapter Nine. By using the main informing concepts that constituted the secondary conceptual field for illumination which was created in Chapter Seven as the basis for the present discussion of illumination, the English mystics and other medieval mystics and religious writings will be compared with respect to illumination. The main informing concepts may be noted as follows: (1) the knowledge of God or Jesus revealed during illumination; (2) changes that occur within man during illumination; (3) the function of God's grace, love, and mercy during the illuminative phase; (4) visions during illumination; and (5) the effects of the visions.

#### 1. The knowledge of God or Jesus revealed during illumination

The first of these concepts, the knowledge of God or Jesus revealed during illumination, is shaped by two main ideas: (a) the general theoretical approach to the knowledge of God as set forth by each mystic; and (b) the words and phrases describing the nature of God. However, since a thorough comparative analysis of the first idea would involve a lengthy discussion of the theoretical basis for

the knowledge of God acquired during illumination by each mystic, the analysis of the first informing concept will be limited primarily to the words and phrases used by medieval mystics to describe the nature of God.

The references by the English mystics to the knowledge of God revealed during illumination tend to be vague and unspecific; in fact, with the possible exception of Julian of Norwich, the English mystics make no real attempt to describe systematically God's nature during illumination. For the most part this attitude is similar to that of earlier mystics such as Gregory, Bernard, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, as well as to other medieval religious writings. Thus, references to the nature of God within illumination by other medieval mystics and religious writings also tend to be rather general.

Even though each English mystic considers to some extent the knowledge of God revealed during illumination, only The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian deal with this area extensively enough to justify analysis of their treatment. The author of The Cloud, who indicates that man may approach God through love rather than knowledge, stresses at the same time God's incomprehensibility and man's inability to describe God's nature.

For wite thou rigt wel that in this werk thou schalt no more beholdyng haue to the qualitees of the being of God than to the qualitees of the beyng of thi-self. (BPC 143)

& oure soule, bi vertewe of this reformyng grace, is mad sufficient at the fulle to comprehende al him by loue, the whiche is incomprehensible to alle create knowable migt, as is aungel & mans soule. (I mene by theire knowyng & not by theire louyng, & therefore I clepe hem in this caas knowable migtes.) (CU 4.18)

This hidden or incomprehensible quality of God's nature, a typical medieval attitude, is clearly reflected in the mystical thought of Hugh of St. Victor:

Not without reason is it, therefore, that when God calls man back after sin from the blindness of ignorance, He so qualifies his apprehension of Himself as to let Himself be known of him and yet at the same time always to be hid from him.<sup>1</sup>

The full knowledge of the Godhead, which is promised to the saints in the life everlasting, and of which the apostle says, we shall see Him "face to face," and again, "Then shall I know, even as also I am known," is veiled and hidden from those still living in this mortal state.<sup>2</sup>

However, in spite of The Cloud's conception of the incomprehensibility and indescribability of God, he does refer to God's nature, although in a general manner:

For parauntere he wil bryng to thi minde diuerse ful feire & wonderful pointes of his kyndnes, & sey that he is ful swete & ful louyng, ful gracious & ful merciful. (CU 7.27)

In this tyme it is that a soule hath comprehendid, after the lesson of Seynte Poule, with alle seyntes--not fully, bot in maner & in partyre, as it is acordyng vnto this werk--whiche is the lengthe & the breed, the heigt & the depnes of Euerlastyng & Al-llouely, Al-migty & Alle-witty God. The euerlastyngnes of God is his lengthe; his loue is his breed; his migt is his heigt; & his wisdam is his depnes. (CU 38.75)

Such general references to God's nature as revealed during illumination may be found throughout other medieval mystical and religious works. But as in the case of the English mystics, these references tend to be vague, general, and somewhat "stock" from a theological point of view. The following passages provide a good indication of

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<sup>1</sup> Noah's Ark, I.4.8, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Noah's Ark, I.1.10, ibid., p. 57.

the normative content of such references to God.

. . . when godd that es withowttyne begynnynge and es with-  
owttene chaungeyng and duellys with-owttyne Endynge, for he  
es althir-myghtyeste and althir-wyseste, and alswe althire-  
beste that mannes herte may noghte thynke, in whaym es lufe  
and loy endles . . . .<sup>3</sup>

I saye not to you thre goddes but thre persones and one god  
in whome is all blysse and glory. He is so fayre and bryght  
shynynge that all the aungelles meruayle of his beaute his  
glorious blessyd-full beaute & presence fedeth and fulfylleth  
all the courte of heuen with suche myrthe and melody that is  
euerlastynge. In hym is all benygnyte kepyng vs from venge-  
aunce, and in hym is all grace and gentylnes, curtesy, fre-  
dome, and largenes, pyte, mercy, and forgyuenes, loye, swet-  
nes, and endles helth; our socour he is in all trybulacyons  
whan we call vpon hym, our comforte, our strength, our helpe,  
and our soules helth.<sup>4</sup>

And for this skill only thou shuld be keende and lovyng to  
hym that so tendirly loueth the; for tho causes of loue that  
thou can thenke in this world, thou may fynde hem in hym.  
3iff thou covett fayrenes, he is fayreste of all; 3iff thou  
covett lykyng and solace, in hym is all comforte; 3iff thou  
covett witt and wisdam, in hym is all witt and prudens; 3iff  
thou covett longe liyf, in hym is liffe withowten ende; and  
what thinge that thou can thenke that good is, all thou may  
fynde in hym.<sup>5</sup>

The fyrst blys that the saules salle have  
Of ryghtwise men, that salle be save  
Es wisdom; for thai salle know and se  
Alle that was, and es, and yhit salle be.  
Thai salle have knowyng of God fully,  
And of the myght of the Fader alle-myghty,  
Thai salle know the wytt of the son and taste,  
And the gudeness of the Haly-gaste:  
Thus salle thair knowyng parfyt be,  
In alle the haly trinite.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Edmund, Speculum, Horstman, I, 229.

<sup>4</sup>"The Remedy against the Troubles of Temptation," Horstman,  
II, 121-122.

<sup>5</sup>Sermon #7, Middle English Sermons, ed. Ross, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup>The Pricke of Conscience, Ch. 7, ll. 8187-8196, ed. Morris,  
p. 220.

Whereof should I have joy or liking, but of the sovereign might, and of the sovereign wisdom and of the sovereign goodness of God? Soothly of nought else.<sup>7</sup>

Since these passages, as well as others, refer to God's nature in very general and common terms, phrases, and ideas, it is difficult if not impossible to establish any direct parallels except a general influence between the treatment of the knowledge of God during illumination by the English mystics and other medieval mystics and religious writings. The idea, however, that the knowledge of God's nature is revealed during illumination and that it is vague and general is common to both.

A comparison may be made at this point between Dionysius' references to the nature of God and its later treatment in Bonaventure:

We must then attribute unto It all things in one All-Transcendent Unity, inasmuch as, starting from Being, and setting in motion the creation Emanation and Goodness, and penetrating all things, and filling all things with Being from Itself, and rejoicing in all things, It anticipates all things in itself, in one exceeding simplicity rejecting all reduplication; and It embraces all things alike in the Transcendent Unity of Its infinitude, and is indivisibly shared by all.<sup>8</sup>

If you wish then to contemplate the invisible traits of God in so far as they belong to the unity of his essence, fix your gaze upon being itself, and see that Being is most certain in itself; for it cannot be thought not to be, since the purest Being occurs only in full flight from Non-Being, just as nothingness is in full flight from Being.<sup>9</sup>

And therefore it is all-inclusive, not as the essence of all things, but as the superexcellent and most universal and most

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<sup>7</sup> The Goad of Love, Ch. 9, ed. Kirchberger, p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> Dionysius, The Divine Names, 5.9, Rolt, p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> Bonaventure, Mind's Road to God, 5.3, Boas, p. 35.

efficient cause of all essences.<sup>10</sup>

Even though a consideration of God's nature in terms of "being" is not found specifically in the English mystics, the approach may be contrasted to that of the English mystics who use such standard terms as love, goodness, and power to refer to God's nature during illumination. In this sense there is a marked absence of a strong philosophical tradition in the mystical thought of the English mystics with respect to their conception and description of the nature of God revealed during illumination.

Finally, we should note that Julian's consistent treatment of the nature of God as love during the illuminative phase is a typical approach to the nature of God and is reflected in the mystical thought of most medieval mystics and religious writings. However, since presenting the nature of God in terms of love during illumination is a frequent and standard occurrence, as well as a relatively non-complex idea, it is not necessary to illustrate its treatment from other medieval works.

## 2. Changes that occur within man during illumination

Changes that occur within man during illumination form the next informing concept. Even though man is prepared for eventual union with God through purification during the purgative phase, further growth and change, particularly in his capacity for love, is necessary prior to union. These further changes frequently occur during

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<sup>10</sup> Bonaventure, Mind's Road to God, 5.7, Boas, p. 38.



the illuminative phase. In addition to Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton, who consider extensively the concept of change during illumination, other medieval mystics, particularly Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, deal with this part of the illuminative phase at great length.

Although the English mystics, especially Rolle and Hilton, describe change during illumination in terms of such words and phrases as "new gracious feelings," "high sweetness," and "inward delights," which would seem to make comparisons with other medieval writings rather difficult, their general approach to change justifies using the main ideas constituting the informing concept of change as developed in Chapter Seven. Thus, the comparative analysis of change during illumination in the present chapter will include an examination of the following ideas: (a) Hilton's "new gracious feelings" and Rolle's "everlasting sweetness," "high sweetness," and "inward delights"; (b) Hilton's concept of "reformation in faith and feeling"; (c) Hilton's emphasis upon the individual's increased capacity for love and charity during illumination; (d) the unifying effect of love in The Cloud and its transformative character in Rolle; and (e) The Cloud's conception of man's change in affection during illumination and Hilton's conception of man's transformation in "faith and feeling." In general each of these ideas or components of the informing concept of change considers the overall change in man's capacity for love and the various feelings or effects he experiences during illumination which are indicative of his new state at the end of the illuminative phase. But there is enough difference between them to warrant discussing them separately.

Rolle and Hilton attempt to describe man's changed state during illumination primarily in terms of new feelings or attitudes of which he is now aware. And both continually use such phrases as "new gracious feelings," "high sweetness," and "inward delights" to delineate this new state of awareness during illumination.

. . . and when all bitter passions and fleshly lusts and old feelings are burned out of the heart with fire of desire, and new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light, then neareth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling. (SP II.17.287)

. . . et affluit internis deliciis et canoro cogitatu gaudet in ardore dileccionis. (IA 11.174)

And wherfore withinward delitys he folowes, & in songe & thought he loyes in byrnyng of lufe. (FL I.12.25)

. . . et sana in sublimitate sonora semper subsistat modulans premirifice in melliphona meditacione. (IA 5.159)

. . . & hole in hee swetnes euermore it abydis, full meruelusly syngand in henyly swete meditacion. (FL I.6.12)

But the second reforming destroys the old feelings of this image of sin, and brings into the soul new gracious feelings through working of the Holy Ghost. (SP II.5.242)

Fervor enim et canor mirabilem in anima causant dulcorem; et eciam ob nimiam dulcedinem illa causari possunt. (IA 14.185)

Heet treuly & songe in the sawle causes a meruellus swetnes; & also of full grete swetnes thai may be causyd. (FL I.15.33)

Although descriptions of this changed state of man are found in most medieval literature dealing with illumination, they are particularly prevalent in Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. There is a strong similarity between Rolle and Hilton and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor both in their description of man's state and their conception of the state itself. Particularly striking is Hugh's and Richard's use of such phrases as "interior sweetness," "inward

delights," and "divine sweetness" to describe man's change during illumination.

This is when we, being utterly dead to the world, are allowed to catch, as it were from afar, some hint of joys to come. For the soul on whom the Holy Spirit breathes is gladdened with an unaccustomed joy; and, when a mere fragrance so refreshes it, it wonders what the taste itself can be.<sup>11</sup>

. . . for anyone to whom inward joys have been revealed must for the sight of them gladly set at nought all the things that could give him pleasure in this world.<sup>12</sup>

The human mind can enjoy its peace fully and truly when it is altogether relaxed into that divine sweetness which it feels inwardly. But if this peace is to be full it must consist in two things, contemplation of the truth and in the fullness of inward delights.<sup>13</sup>

The abundance of delights, therefore, is the cause of the ascent when, by that infusion of divine sweetness, the holy soul does not understand what she feels in her inmost heart, inasmuch as the greatness of her exultation and joy casts her out of herself and ravishes her above herself.<sup>14</sup>

Do you not feel as if sometimes you were shot through the heart when the fiery dart of this love penetrates the inmost mind of man, pierces his affections so that he can in no way contain or hide the burning of his desire. He burns with desire, his affections are stirred, he is in fever and gasps, sighing deeply and drawing long breaths.<sup>15</sup>

Other medieval mystics and religious writings use phrases similar to those used by Rolle, Hilton, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor

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<sup>11</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.3.6, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>13</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Psalm 4.9, Mystical Notes on the Psalms, Kirchberger, p. 234.

<sup>14</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, 5.14, Kirchberger, p. 204.

<sup>15</sup>Richard of St. Victor, "Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 223.

to describe man's general state during illumination. The following passages illustrate this similarity clearly:

On this level, when the inner senses are renewed in order to perceive the highest beauty, to hear the highest harmony, smell the highest fragrance, taste the highest delicacy, apprehend the highest delights, the soul is disposed to mental elevation through devotion, wonder, and exultation, in accordance with those three exclamations which are in the Cantic of Canticles.<sup>16</sup>

For the that incerches it with depe thoghte and with all hys hert lastandly, he sall fynde full many thynges thare-in styrande hym to newe compassione, newe luffe, newe gostely comforth, and so sall he be broghte in to a newe gostely swetnesse.<sup>17</sup>

Contemplacione es a deuote rysynge of herte with byrnyng lufe to god to do wele, and in his delites loyes his saule, and some-dele ressaynes of that swetnes that goddis chosene childir sall haf in heuene.<sup>18</sup>

The various passages quoted from the English mystics and other medieval mystics and religious writings indicate clearly a common use of similar words, phrases, and ideas to describe man's change during illumination. Furthermore, there is also a basic similarity in the conception of the change which man experiences during illumination. Apparently both the English mystics and other medieval mystics view and describe man's state during and at the end of illumination in a similar fashion.

One aspect of the change within man during illumination that Hilton considers is his "reformation in faith and feeling" which he felt was indicative of man's growth during illumination.

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<sup>16</sup> Bonaventure, Mind's Road to God, 4.3, Boas, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> "Privy of the Passion," Horstman, I, 198.

<sup>18</sup> "The Abbey of the Holy Ghost," Horstman, I, 324-325.

But the second reforming [the reforming in faith and in feeling] destroys the old feelings of this image of sin, and brings into the soul new gracious feelings through working of the Holy Ghost. (SP II.6.242)

Hilton's conception of man's growth during illumination in terms of being reformed in faith and feeling, even though it is not developed by other medieval mystics in precisely similar terms, resembles the standard mystical conception of man's restoration to the image of God in which he was originally created. In this sense, Aelred's discussion of man's new image formed during illumination is quite close to Hilton's conception of being reformed in faith and feeling.

. . . but because the mind diverts its love away from the highest good, and, growing hardened in pride, deforms in the soul the image of God: and so if in humility it directs its love back towards God, it is restored to the image of God who created it.<sup>19</sup>

. . . for in it the new law of love are contained the stripping off of the old man, the renewing of the mind and the reforming of the soul to the divine image.<sup>20</sup>

The next two ideas within the informing concept of change during illumination are much more thoroughly developed by the English mystics and other medieval mystics than Hilton's brief consideration of the reformation in faith and feeling. The first idea consists of The Cloud's and Hilton's conception of man's increased capacity for love and charity during illumination. And the second is formed by the unifying effect of love as expressed in The Cloud and the transforming character of love in Rolle. These ideas are especially

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<sup>19</sup> Speculum, I.8, ed. Colledge, pp. 110-111.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

well-developed in other medieval mystical literature.

According to the author of The Cloud, man's capacity to love and to receive love increases during the process of illumination. This increase in love further prepares man for progress in the contemplative life and finally for entrance into the unitive phase.

Wonderfully is a mans affeccion varied in goostly felyng of this nougt when it is nougwhere wrougt. (CU 69.122)

That is, than schal thi gostly affeccion be fillid with the fulheed of loue & of vertuous leuyng in God, thi grounde & thi purete of spirit. (BPC 144)

. . . by soche a hid schewyng bryng thee oute of the boistouste of bodely felyng into the purete & depnes of goostly felyng; & so forthermore at the last to help thee to knit the goostly knot of brennyng loue bitwix thee & thi God, in goostly oneheed & acordyng of wille. (CU 47.88)

Man's need for growth in love is also considered in a similar manner by other medieval mystics. Aelred, for example, stresses the importance of love within the contemplative life:

We who seek after the heights of perfection by giving our will to God in a life dedicated to the pursuit of holiness, must, above all, keep charity in our mind's eye as the goal of our endeavour. Charity draws us to God. Charity makes us cleave to God by conforming us to him. In charity all the fullness of perfection is contained. It is the end towards which we strive, and to which all our life must be directed.<sup>21</sup>

Several medieval homilies also reflect this same concern for love. Even though the following passages from homilies consider love in rather general terms, the emphasis upon the need for love remains strong. Thus, in this sense, they may be compared effectively with The Cloud's treatment of love during the illuminative phase.

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<sup>21</sup>Speculum, III.32, Webb and Walker, p. 130.

For of all the seruyce that a man may do to his lord here in erthe, loue shuld be moste acceptable, for iii skilles: one, for loue maketh a man welwylled; and loue maketh a man dredefulle; and loue maketh a man servisabull.<sup>22</sup>

There are also thre maner of loues that thou shuld loue God wyth: fleshly loue, and kyndly loue, and gostly loue is the thridd. And these thre maner of loues vsen men in this worlde.<sup>23</sup>

For every one, the more love he has to Almighty God, the more he desires that love; and always the more strongly he feels the sweetness of the divine life in his mind, so much the more do all these earthly things seem bitter and sour to him.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, several passages from Bernard and Richard of St. Victor which consider the role of love during illumination should be mentioned:

Such conformity joins the soul in marriage to the word, when, being already like unto him in nature, she shows herself no less like unto him in will, loving as she is loved. If, then, she loves perfectly, she has become his bride. What is more delightful than this conformity? What is more to be desired than charity?<sup>25</sup>

The human mind is raised above itself by the greatness of its devotion, when it is kindled with such fire of heavenly desire that the flame of inner love flares up beyond human bearing.<sup>26</sup>

In this way the ardour of heavenly desire when it kindles the human soul fiercely with divine love, raises it fervently above itself.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Sermon #10, Middle English Sermons, ed. Ross, p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Sermon #46, ibid., p. 303.

<sup>24</sup> "Transfiguration," Twelfth Century Homilies, p. 119.

<sup>25</sup> Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 83.3, Connolly, p. 228.

<sup>26</sup> Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, 5.5, Kirchberger, p. 189.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Major, 5.7, Kirchberger, p. 192.

In general the above passages from The Cloud and other medieval mystics reflect a common and consistent concern for man's growth in and understanding of love as a necessary part of the change which man experiences during illumination.

The Cloud's conception of the unifying effect of love and Rolle's conception of the transforming character of love, which are both integrally related to the presence of love during illumination, are important ideas and hence necessary for a complete understanding of the nature of change during illumination. Both ideas have striking parallels in other medieval mystical works; and both are integral parts of the illuminative phase in them.

The Cloud's and Rolle's understanding of this particular function of love during illumination is articulated in the following passages from their works:

. . . by soche a hid schewyng bryng thee oute of the boistouste of bodely felyng into the purete & depenes of goostly felyng; & so forthermore at the last to help thee to knit the goostly knot of brennyng loue bitwix thee & thi God, in goostly onheed & acordyng of wille. (CU 47.88)

Cuius amor, in cordibus radicatus stabilisque effectus transformat nos ad suam similitudinem; et aliam gloriam et diuinam plane letificantem mentes amore ardencium in nos infundit. (IA 4.156)

Whos lufe in hartis rotyd & made sekyr, vs makes lyke vnto hys lyknes, and other ioy, that is to say godly, in-to vs he puttis, with byrnyng lufe playnly our myndes myrthand. (FL I.5.10)

. . . cuius eciam interior homo in aliam gloriam aliamque formam iam mutatur. (IA 11.176)

. . . whos saule also with-in in-to A-nother Ioy and a-nother forme now is turnyd . . . . (FL I.13.26)

Transformatiua eciam uim habet amor, quia amantem transformat in amatum et transfert in ipsum. Unde ignis Spiritus Sancti



cor quod ueraciter capit totum incendit, et quasi in ignem conuertit, atque in illam formam redigit que Deo simillima est. (IA 17.196)

A turnyng strenght also has lufe, for the lufand it turnnys in to the lufyd & beris in to hym. Qwharfore fyer of the holy gost the hart that it treuly takis, al hoyll itt byrnys, & als wer in to fyer it turns, and in to that forme it ledis that to gude is likist. (FL I.18.41)

Phrases such as "at the last help thee to knit the ghostly knot of burning love betwixt thee and thy God, in ghostly onehead and accordance of will," "altogether turned into another likeness," "turned within into another joy and another form," and "whose love . . . makes us like unto his likeness" illustrate clearly the unitive and transformative effect of love and its capacity for radically changing man in order to prepare him for union.

The above effects of love are reflected most clearly in the mystical thought of Bernard, Aelred, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and especially in a late medieval treatise, "The Dread and Love of God." The unitive and transformative effects of love, central to the concept of change during illumination, are thus well-documented in medieval mystical literature.

Bernard, for example, considers at several points the role of love in creating a new condition or state of the soul during illumination:

Again, the return of the soul is her conversion to the word, to be reformed through him and to be made conformed to him. In what respect? In charity.<sup>28</sup>

. . . and when he was melted within, his heart glowing with the fire of charity, the fulness of his pity flowed out through

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<sup>28</sup> Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 83.2, Connolly, p. 228.

the channels of his eyes.<sup>29</sup>

Richard of St. Victor discusses both the general effects of love upon man and his new state as he is lifted into ecstasy.

And certainly the more passionately any man's love affects his soul, the more deeply his feelings are touched by the harmonies that he hears, and the deeper the feeling, the more effectively is he renewed in his desires.<sup>30</sup>

How can you love or be loved perfectly if, in your desire for the highest things, you are not rapt away to supernal heights and do not pass over by ecstasy into those upward strivings?<sup>31</sup>

Aelred of Rievaulx also notes the transformative effect of love upon man during the illuminative phase:

At the moment when we make our choice, love moves towards the object we have chosen, filling the soul with desire and carrying it towards that object. This movement of desire is also known as love, and if the object of our choice is something that God wishes us to have, then our love is good. If not, it is bad.<sup>32</sup>

For when the lusts of the flesh are quietened, or rather absorbed by the love of God, there is nothing hard in a life of virtue, because the soul has nothing to disturb it any more that cannot be dissolved in love.<sup>33</sup>

The love of God is like a fire in our hearts that burns brighter and brighter, and the sparks that fly out from it are the lesser loves, which belong to it and fall back into the fullness of the flame. It is a fire that carries us up with it to the supreme goodness of God, in which all lesser love is turned into the love of God.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 12.4, Connolly, p. 101.

<sup>30</sup>Benjamin Major, 5.17, Kirchberger, pp. 208-209.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 4.16, p. 170.

<sup>32</sup>Speculum, 3.8, Webb and Walker, p. 95.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 2.20, pp. 71-72.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 3.2, p. 83.

In commenting specifically upon the transformative effect of love, Hugh of St. Victor also indicates that man's new nature during illumination will be informed primarily by love.

We daily drop some word respecting love lest, if we do not heed it, its fire perhaps should kindle in our hearts and burst into a flame, whose property is either to consume or purify a thing entire.<sup>35</sup>

At the third stage, since the truth has now been found and charity made perfect, nothing but the one thing is sought; in the pure fire of love, with the utmost peace and joy, the soul is gently beaten back. Then, the whole heart being turned into the fire of love, God is known truly to be all in all. For he is received with a love so deep that apart from him nothing is left to the heart, even of itself.<sup>36</sup>

But among all these there is one that is supremely necessary, namely, charity, which unites us to God . . . .<sup>37</sup>

At this point we should note again the basic similarities in the above passages from Bernard, Aelred, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor to a key passage from Rolle wherein he considers carefully the transformative effect of love during illumination.

Transformatiua[m] eciam uim habet amor, quia amantem transformat in amatum et transfert in ipsum. Under ignis Spiritus Sancti cor quod ueraciter capit totum incendit, et quasi in ignem conuertit, atque in illam formam redigit que Deo simillima est. (IA 17.196)

A turnyng strenght also has lufe, for the lufand it turnnys in to the lufyd & beris in to hym. Qwharfore fyer of the holy gost the hart that it treuly takis, al hoyll itt byrnys, & als wer in to fyer it turns, and in to that forme it ledis that to gude is likist. (FL I.18.41)

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<sup>35</sup>"De Substantia Dilectionis," Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 187.

<sup>36</sup>"Commentary on Ecclesiastes," Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 185.

<sup>37</sup>Noah's Ark, I.2.8, ibid., p. 82.

Finally, to complete our comparative analysis of the informing concept of change during the illuminative phase, several passages from "The Dread and Love of God" should be included which contain a particularly incisive and complete discussion of the effect of love upon man during illumination.

In the loue of God ben fyue gracyous thynges: fyre, lyght, hony, wyne, & sonne.<sup>38</sup>

The fyrst is fyre, clensynge the soule of all maner vyces thurgh holy medytacyons. The second is lyght, shynyng in the soule with clerenes of vertues thorough holy prayers. The thyrde is hony, makynge swete the soule whan he hath in mynde the befaytes & the grete gyftes of god almyghty & yeldynge to hym thankynge. The fourth is wyne, fulfyllynge the soule with a grete gladnes thorough a swete contemplacyon. The fyfth is a sonne, makynge the soule clere with a shynyng lyght in myrthe withouten ende, & gladyng the soule with an easy hete in loye & blysse euer-more lastynge.<sup>39</sup>

These passages succinctly summarize the transformative influence of love upon man during illumination and provide a clear understanding of the general change in terms of love that occurs during illumination.

### 3. The nature and function of God's grace, love, and mercy during illumination

The nature and function of God's grace, love, and mercy during illumination constitutes the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for illumination. The main ideas which shaped this informing concept and were used to compare the thought of the English mystics in terms of God's grace during illumination will also be used

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<sup>38</sup>Horstman, II, 79.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

as the basis of our present analysis: (a) Rolle's conception of man's being "ravished" and its general effects; (b) Hilton's discussion of the effect of God's love upon man during illumination, particularly its effect upon his rational and affective powers; (c) Julian's consideration of the effects of God's grace in terms of her close, personal relationship with God; and (d) the effects of God's grace resulting from this grace. Each of these ideas or components of the informing concept of God's grace have definite counterparts in other medieval mystical and religious literature.

Rolle's conception of the ravishment of man during illumination may be understood as a sudden, total action of God upon man which results in his negation of earthly desires, a foretaste of such spiritual feelings as "ghostly sweetness" and "marvellous mirth," and the reception and effect of certain "marvellous gifts." Being ravished and its effects are illustrated in the following passages from Rolle:

. . . rapitur mens ad canendum delicias amoris eterni.  
(IA 11.174)

. . . rauischyd is the mynde to synge likeyngis of lufe euerlastyng. (FL I.12.25)

Anima equidem a terrenorum uiciis separata, et a carnis uenenosa suauitate alienata, celestibus desideriis dedita immo et rapta, mirabili iocunditate perfruens . . . . (IA 26.218)

A sawl forsoth partyd fro warldly wys & fro venumus swetnes of the flesch sondyrd, gyfyn to heuenly desyrs, als wer rauischyd a meruelis myrth vsys . . . . (FL I.27.58)

Conuersus quippe toto corde ad Christum, primo per ueram penitenciam afficitur, et sic cuncta que ad uanitatem pertinent derelinquens, post gustum suauitatis interne ad canendum in sonoro iubilo diuinitus rapietur. (IA 17.194)

Turnyd forsoth with all my hart to criste, first be trew penance I am tyde, & so all thinge that to vanite longis forsakand,

after the taste of gostly swetnes to synge in soundly loueynge  
godly it sall be rauschyd. (FL I.18.40)

Multa sunt munera mirifica ac magna, sed nulla sunt talia inter  
uie dona que tam rare confirmant spem specie inuisibilis uite  
in animo amante, aut que sic suauiter sedentem consolantur et  
rapiunt ad cacumen contemplacionis, uel ad consonanciam angelice  
laudis. (IA 15.191)

Many ar the mervellus giftys & grett, bot non ar slike emonge  
the gyftis of this way, the whilk full derely confermys in  
figure of schaplynes of lyfe vnsene in loueand saule, or the  
whilk comforths so wetely the sittar, & comforthyd tha rauysch  
to the heght of contemplacion or acorde of Aungels loueynge.  
(FL I.17.37)

This sudden effect of God's grace upon man, which Rolle refers  
to as being ravished, is also considered by Aelred, Bernard, and  
Richard of St. Victor. Each of these mystics, however, portrays the  
violent, immediate effect of God's grace in terms of a cleansing fire  
or brightness which raises man up into a form of ecstasy.

For only after much trouble and striving may the soul be re-  
warded by the most wonderful of all God's visitations, and set  
so completely on fire by charity that all lusts are burned  
away. Then at last there is rest in the contemplation of God,  
in His perfect peace, and in the fullness of His wisdom.<sup>40</sup>

In truth, the fire which is God consumes, to be sure, but it  
does not destroy. It burns sweetly. It leaves one desolate  
unto bliss. It is truly a desolating burning, but one which  
directs the flame of fire against sin in such a way that it  
has the effect of unction upon the soul.<sup>41</sup>

And the more deeply the splendour of divine brightness pene-  
trates the mind of a man, shaking him by the greatness of his  
wonder and raising him to ecstasy, the higher it springs up  
into the most sublime recess of divine secrets.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Aelred, Speculum, 2.14, Webb and Walker, p. 60.

<sup>41</sup>Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 57.7, Connolly,  
p. 196.

<sup>42</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, 5.11, Kirchberger,  
p. 199.

. . . perhaps he would enlighten the eyes of your intelligence so greatly with the effulgence of his light and inebriate the desire of your heart with such a taste of his intimate sweetness, that thereby he would carry you up above yourself and lift you up to divine things by ecstasy.<sup>43</sup>

Ecstasy of mind is brought about by inebriation and the infusion of supernal revelation leads only those who are greatly beloved into ecstasy.<sup>44</sup>

An effective comparison may be made between Rolle's treatment of the effect of grace upon man's love of earthly desires, e.g., "A soul departed from worldly vices, and sundered from venomous sweetness of the flesh" and "so forsaking all things that long to vanity," and Aelred's idea that by the infusion of grace man is "set so completely on fire by charity that all lusts are burned away." Bernard's discussion of God's love compares closely with both Rolle's and Aelred's: "It burns sweetly. It leaves one desolate unto bliss. It is truly a desolating burning, but one which directs the flame of fire against sin." Finally, Rolle's conception of being ravished is similar to Richard of St. Victor's thought that man is raised into ecstasy through the effect of God's grace.

To conclude our analysis of Rolle's conception of man's being ravished by God's grace and its parallel treatment in other mystical works, we should note several points of contact between Rolle's discussion of God's grace in terms of "marvellous gifts" and the extensive treatment of God's gifts and their effects in the Ayenbite of

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<sup>43</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Major, 5.5, Kirchberger, p. 190.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 4.16, p. 171.

Inwyte. A single passage from the Ayenbite, which considers the gift of wisdom as a manifestation of God's grace, indicates definite similarities to Rolle's discussion of the gifts of love and mercy during illumination.

The laste yefthe, and the meste, and the hegeste: is the yefthe of wysdom. Thet is a grace thet the holy gost yefth to the contemplatiue herte. Huerby he is ynome of the loue of god. Thet he na3t ne wylneþ ne ne zegth other thing thanne him to zylene and to habbe ine him uor to likni mid him uor to bleue. This is thet grete of perfeccion the ende of contemplacion. The yefthe of onderstondinge huerof we habbeth aboue yspeke maketh knawe god and the gostliche thinges ase be zizthe and be simple lokinges. Ac the yefthe of wysdom maketh to yuele god an te y-knawe ase be zuel3.<sup>45</sup>

The next idea under the informing concept of God's grace during illumination consists of Hilton's conception of the effect of God's love upon man in the form of God himself and its effect upon his rational and affective powers. Hilton describes this form of love as the gift of God himself as follows:

But when he giveth himself in his godhead ghostly to our souls for our salvation, and maketh us for to know him and love him, then he loveth us fully. (SP II.34.383)

Therefore the most token of love showed to us, as me thinketh, is this; that he giveth himself in his godhead to our souls. (SP II.34.383)

And the effect that this love has upon man's rational and affective powers may be illustrated by the following passages from Hilton:

That is for to say, this love filleth full the mights of my soul, as mind, reason, and will, of grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth full the bone . . . . (SP I.31.69)

When these mights [mind, reason, and will] are through grace fulfilled in all understanding of the will of God and ghostly

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<sup>45</sup>Ayenbite of Inwyte, ed. Morris, p. 245.



wisdom, then hath the soul new gracious feelings.  
(SP II.31.367-68)

Hilton's discussion of the effect that God's love has upon man during illumination, particularly its effect upon man's affective powers, parallels the attitude toward the effects of God's love during illumination in other medieval mystical works. For example, both Aelred and Richard of St. Victor comment on the effect that God's love has upon man and his ability to love.

All that is beneath him he gathers to himself, and transfuses into all things his own sweet savour, his light and his splendour, drawing everything to his own love. He alone, in all these, above all these, takes all our love to himself, demanding it for his use alone. He makes his dwelling over all else in our hearts, and in the very depths of our souls.<sup>46</sup>

But above all these degrees there is that ardent and burning love which penetrates the heart, inflames the affection and transfixes the soul itself to the very core, so that she may truly say, "I am wounded by love."<sup>47</sup>

Hugh of St. Victor considers the effect of God's love in a similar, but more extensive, manner:

Then, when the mind is strengthened with the flame of love and this begins to burn more steadily and shine more brightly, all the darkness of its upheavals quickly disappears, and then the soul, with a pure heart, gives itself over to the contemplation of the truth. And finally, when diligent beholding of the truth has pierced the heart, and it has entered with its whole desire totally into the very fount of truth supreme, then, being as it were completely set on fire with the sweetness of the same, and itself transmuted into the fire of love, it sinks down to rest in utter peace from every conflict and disturbance.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Aelred, Speculum, 3.34, Webb and Walker, p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> Richard of St. Victor, "Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 213.

<sup>48</sup> "Commentary on Ecclesiastes," Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 185.

Hilton's description of the effect of God's love in terms of "ghostly sweetness" and "new gracious feelings" may be compared with Aelred's idea that God "transfuses into all things his own sweet savour, his light and his splendour, drawing everything to his own love" and to Richard's reference to "that ardent and burning love which penetrates the heart, inflames the affection and transfixes the soul itself to the very core." And Hugh of St. Victor's thought that "the mind is strengthened with the flame of love and this begins to burn more steadily and shine more brightly" may be compared to Hilton's treatment of the effects of God's love during illumination.

Finally, we should mention several passages from two late fourteenth-century treatises which illustrate the effect of God's love during illumination and which may be compared with Hilton.

. . . and thus he does for to draw vs fro werldly besynes and the lykyng ther-of, and for to enflame oure hertes with lufe-3ernynges, ffor to wyne and to hafe the lykyng of that loye alle at the full, in body and saule with hym for to be euer-more with-owttene ende.<sup>49</sup>

Some of these men as I haue herde and redde were vysyted by the grace of god with a passyng sweteness of the loue of cryste whiche sweteness for an example they shewed afterwarde by theyr wrytyng to other men folowyng yf any wolde trauayle to haue that hyghe desyre or degree of loue.<sup>50</sup>

And whan that he is saddely sette in this lyfe and in this loue, with his ghoostly eyen than may he se in to the blysse of heuen; and than his eyen be soo enlumyned and so clere lyghted with grace of ghoostly loue, and also thugh-kyndeled with the gracyous fyre of crystes loue, that he shall haue a

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<sup>49</sup>"The Abbey of the Holy Ghost," Horstman, I, 334.

<sup>50</sup>"Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God," Horstman, II, 74.

maner of brennyng loue in his herte euermore lastynge, and his thought euermore vpwarde to God.<sup>51</sup>

The effect of God's love upon man's rational powers, which enables him to perceive God more clearly, is considered carefully by several medieval mystics. Both Augustine's and Bernard's treatment of this particular function of God's love are similar to Hilton's conception.

. . . because he both filleth the soul that thirsteth for knowledge, and every one who hath "understanding" is enlightened by a certain light; not a corporeal, not a carnal one, not an outward, but an inward light!<sup>52</sup>

When shall the mind experience affection like this, so that, inebriated with divine love, forgetful of self, and become to its own self like a broken vessel, it may utterly pass over into God, and adhering to God, become one spirit with Him?<sup>53</sup>

The effect of God's love upon man's mind and reason is also considered by Richard of St. Victor:

. . . when the human intelligence is promoted to the grace of contemplation by divine inspiration and revelation.<sup>54</sup>

For the whole system of human reasoning succumbs to that which the soul perceives of the divine light, when she is raised above herself and ravished in ecstasy.<sup>55</sup>

And, in a similar fashion, Hugh of St. Victor notes that:

For when we learn the mysteries of Holy Scripture, we come by the illumination of our minds to the knowledge of his Godhead

<sup>51</sup>"Dread and Love," Horstman, II, 75.

<sup>52</sup>Augustine, Enarration on Psalm 41, 2, Butler, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup>Bernard, "De Diligendo Deo," 27, Butler, p. 107.

<sup>54</sup>Benjamin Major, I.2, Kirchberger, p. 134.

<sup>55</sup>Benjamin Minor, 73, Kirchberger, p. 111.

who is before all things and after all things.<sup>56</sup>

. . . ignorance is dispelled when the mind is enlightened; the mind is enlightened when enkindled by the love of its Creator, it is moved strongly to compunction.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, a pertinent passage from Bonaventure should be included which considers specifically the effect of God's grace upon man's mind:

All these sciences have certain and infallible rules, like the rays of light descending from the eternal law into our minds. And thus our minds, illumined and suffused by such great radiance, unless they be blind, can be led through themselves alone to the contemplation of that eternal light. The irradiation and consideration of this light holds the wise suspended in wonder.<sup>58</sup>

The final idea to be considered within the informing concept of the function of God's grace during illumination is the vision and knowledge of God which results from grace. This idea is discussed at some length by Hilton and Julian. Hilton, for example, indicates that:

. . . the lover of Jhesu, through inspiration of his grace taken up from outward feeling of worldly love and ravished into privity of ghostly love . . . . (SP II.40.422)

For love is cause why a soul cometh to this sight and to this knowing; and that love is not the love that a soul hath in itself to God, but the love that our Lord hath to a sinful soul that can right not love him is cause why this soul cometh to this knowing and to this love that cometh out of it. (SP II.34.380-381)

But when he giveth himself in his godhead ghostly to our souls for our salvation, and maketh us for to know him and love him, then loveth he us fully. (SP II.34.383)

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<sup>56</sup> Noah's Ark, I.1.10, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Mind's Road to God, 3.7, ed. Boas, p. 27.

Julian also indicates that God's grace produces knowledge of his nature which may be understood by man:

. . . whereby I might, by the help of our Lord and His grace, increase and rise to more heavenly knowing and higher loving. (RDL 46.97)

And then shall we, with his sweet grace, in our own meek continuant prayer come unto Him now in this life by many privy touchings of sweet spiritual sights and feeling, measured to us as our simpleness may bear it. (RDL 43.91)

A number of medieval mystics, particularly Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure, consider the effect of God's grace upon man's knowledge of God within the illuminative phase. Richard of St. Victor treats this idea especially thoroughly and effectively.

For this kind of grace is given to us for this purpose, for this, I say, is this understanding of eternal things infused into us, that we may know what we are to look for in our unwearied search and to long for with desire. Otherwise it is in vain that we grow in the riches of divine knowledge unless by them the fire of love is increased in us.<sup>59</sup>

The contemplative soul ascends beyond her own powers, when the divine condescension manifesting its secrets, and as by the spreading and raising of wings, carries the soul to that peak of super-eminent knowledge whither she could never go by her own efforts.<sup>60</sup>

. . . so that at any time the wind of divine inspiration may blow away the clouds upon our minds, and reveal the rays of the true sun when all the darkness of the cloud is removed. Immediately then the mind shakes out the wings of her contemplation, lifts herself and flies upwards and fixing her gaze upon that light of eternity that radiates from above, with the power of a flying eagle she passes through and transcends the clouds of earthly worldliness.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Benjamin Major, 4.10, Kirchberger, p. 161.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 5.4, p. 188.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 4.10, p. 160.

Even though the knowledge of God's nature received from the effect of his grace is not described in a specific sense, the idea that God's grace does result in an increased understanding of his nature may be found in the mystical thought of Hilton, Julian, and Richard of St. Victor. Comparison of the following excerpts from their thought clearly illustrates this idea: "ravished into the privy of ghostly love," "the love that our Lord hath to a sinful soul . . . is cause why this soul cometh to this knowing," "more heavenly knowing and higher loving," "this understanding of eternal things infused into us," "grow in the riches of divine knowledge," "carries the soul to that peak of super-eminent knowledge," and "reveal the rays of the true sun when all the darkness of the cloud is removed."

Gregory and Bernard also refer to the idea that knowledge of God is effected through his grace. Several passages from their works may be compared with Hilton's and Julian's treatment of the same idea.

Furthermore, the revelation which is made through the Holy Spirit not only enlightens the soul to knowledge but also enkindles the soul to knowledge and also enkindles it to love.<sup>62</sup>

. . . by the grace of contemplation the voice of the supernal intelligence occurs in the mind. . . . the words of God are perceived in the ear of the heart . . . and by supernal grace we are led to understand higher things.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, Augustine's treatment of God's grace and its effect upon man's knowledge of God should be mentioned. In the following passage Augustine refers to God as "that Light Itself," actually a

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<sup>62</sup>Bernard, Canticles, 8.5, Connolly, pp. 80-81.

<sup>63</sup>Gregory, Homilies in Ezechiel, II.i.17, Butler, p. 79.

form of grace, which not only illuminates man's mind but also functions as the object of his quest for knowledge of God.

Distinct, however, is that Light Itself, whereby the soul is so enlightened that it beholds, whether in itself or in that Light, all things truly the object of the intellect. For that Light is God Himself; but the soul, although rational and intellectual, is a creature made after his image, which when it endeavours to fix its gaze upon that Light, quivers through weakness and is not able.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4. The nature of visions and revelations during illumination

Visions that occur during illumination form the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for illumination. Four main ideas which evolved from the comparative analysis of the English mystics' discussion of visions during illumination will form the basis of the present comparison of visions: (a) the effects of the visions upon man, particularly as considered by Rolle and Margery Kempe; (b) Hilton's discussion of visions, especially the language used to describe and criticize visions; (c) the sight or appearance of Jesus in Julian and Margery, particularly with respect to the suffering and the passion; and (d) the essential indescribability of visions as considered by The Cloud and Hilton.

In their treatment of visions during illumination Rolle and Margery emphasize the effects of the visions rather than attempting to describe the visions themselves. Rolle, for example, usually articulates the effects of the visions in terms of sounds, sights, and smells. Thus, his descriptions of visions, or rather the effects of visions, frequently involve such phrases as "a merry and unknown

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<sup>64</sup> Augustine, De Genesi ad litteram, 12.31.59, Butler, p. 54.

heat," "the noise of song," "the most liking heavenly melody," "plenteousness of inward sweetness," "continual song of mirth," "all sweet and merry song," "burnt with the fire of endless love," "everlasting sweetness moistens their minds," "abides whole in high sweetness," and "sweetly burned with the fire of the Holy Ghost."

Margery Kempe's account of the effects of visions follows a similar pattern; sights, sounds, and feelings which describe the effect of visions are enumerated rather than an analysis of the visions themselves. The following phrases are typical: "she had in her mind the mirth and the melody that was in heaven," "oftentimes she heard sweet sounds and melodies," "so hideous a melody that she could not bear it," "a sound of melody so sweet and delectable," "sweet smells with her nose," "a flame of fire, wondrous hot and delectable, and right comfortable," "melody so sweet that it surpassed all melody that ever might be heard in this world," and "she felt the heat burning in her breast and at her heart."

Similar descriptions of the effects of visions, recorded in terms of sights, sounds, and feelings, are frequently found in other medieval mystics with varying degrees of intensity. Augustine, for example, indicates that:

From that everlasting, perpetual festivity there sounds in the ears of the heart a mysterious strain, melodious and sweet, provided only the world does not drown the sounds.<sup>65</sup>

And in his commentary on verses 9 and 10 of Psalm 41, Augustine uses the following phrases which refer to the effects of visions rather

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<sup>65</sup>"Enarration on Psalm 41," 9, Butler, p. 23.



than to the content or substance of the visions themselves: "a mysterious and hidden interior pleasure," "something melodious and sweet to the ears of the heart," "ravished by desire to the inward sweetness of God," and "rejoiced by a certain inward sweetness."

Bernard of Clairvaux's accounts of the effects of visions also bear a striking resemblance to the descriptions of the effects of visions in Rolle and Margery. Several passages from his Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles illustrate this quite clearly:

Happy is the soul to whom it is given to experience an embrace of such intense delight. This is nothing else than love holy and chaste, love full of delight and sweet, love as untroubled as it is sincere, love that is mutual, intimate and strong . . .<sup>66</sup>

Let us suppose that someone, in prayer, is raised in ecstasy and admitted into the hidden secrets of the Divinity, whence he returns all aflame with divine love and burning with zeal for justice, glowing with excessive fervour in the performance of all his spiritual duties and in all spiritual pursuits. As a result, he can say: my heart grew hot within me: and in my meditation a fire shall flame out.<sup>67</sup>

Descriptions of the effects of visions, similar in many respects to those found in Rolle and Margery, are frequently found in the mystical thought of Richard of St. Victor. In the following passages the emphasis upon sweetness, delight, fire, and love should be especially noted.

For what is "flowing with delights" but to abound in the fullness of spiritual joys? What is "flowing with delights" but an abundance of true sweetness and infused gladness given from above?<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>83.6, Connolly, p. 232.

<sup>67</sup>49.4, Connolly, p. 177.

<sup>68</sup>Benjamin Major, 5.14, Kirchberger, p. 203.

For by this exultation the soul is imbued with a marvellous and immense sweetness which no sense can appreciate nor can words explain. For when that heavenly bridegroom is united to his bride in the embraces of love and bends down to her kiss, the soul is immediately filled at his touch with this heavenly sweetness: a thing which anyone can feel but which cannot be explained by any elaboration of words.<sup>69</sup>

He is seen by contemplation, until at the sight of this unexpected vision and in wonder at his beauty, the soul grows warm, burns more and more and at last is wholly enflamed until she is altogether reformed unto true purity and inward beauty.<sup>70</sup>

He is heard from the garden and seen in the hall, kissed in the chamber and embraced in the bed. He is heard by our memory, seen by the intelligence, kissed by the affections, embraced in all willingness. Heard by remembering, seen by wonder, kissed by love, embraced by delight. Or if you prefer, heard by revelations, seen by contemplation, kissed by devotion, held close for the inflowing of his sweetness.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, a passage from Sawles Warde may be effectively compared with Rolle's and Margery's description of the effects of visions upon man during the illuminative phase. The basic similarity in the use of smells, tastes, and sights are especially striking.

I saw the shining and bright company of the blessed maidens most like to angels, and most participating with them in their blisses and joys; who living in the flesh surpass the laws of the flesh and overcome nature, who lead a heavenly life on earth, and so they win their mirth and their bliss. The beauty of their features, the sweetness of their song, no tongue may tell. All sing who are there, but their song none may sing but they. So sweet a smell followeth them whithersoever they go, that one might live ever by the sweetness.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Richard of St. Victor, "Mystical Notes on the Psalms," Psalm 30, Kirchberger, p. 236.

<sup>70</sup> Benjamin Major, 4.15, Kirchberger, p. 168.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 4.12, p. 168.

<sup>72</sup> Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, ed. Morris, p. 260.

Walter Hilton's discussion of visions comprises the next idea under the informing concept of visions. Even though he was extremely critical of Rolle's visions and of the language Rolle used to describe his visions, Hilton's criticism involves words and phrases quite similar to those used by both Rolle and Margery. For example, Hilton uses such phrases as "songs and sounds, savours and smells, burnings and any pleasing bodily feeling," "merry sounding," "sweet sudden savour," "any heat in thy breast as it were fire," and "sounding of ear, or savouring in the mouth, or smelling at the nose, or else any sensible heat as it were fire glowing and warming the breast." These phrases compare quite closely with those used by other medieval mystics such as Augustine, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor to describe the effects of visions upon man during illumination which were considered under the last idea under the informing concept of visions. Particularly important to note is the similar emphasis upon smells, sounds, feelings, and fire.

Julian's and Margery's various accounts of the sight or vision of Jesus, especially with respect to the suffering and passion, comprise the next part of the informing concept of visions. Margery's description of her visions involving Jesus' suffering and passion tend to be rather general. For example, she usually describes her visions of the suffering and passion as follows:

An-other tyme sche saw in hyr contemplacyon owr Lord Ihesu Crist bowndyn to a peler, & hys handys wer bowndyn a-bouyn hys heuyd. (MK I.80.191)

. . . sodeynly ocupijd the hert of this creatur, drawyng hir mende al holy in-to the Passyon of owr Lord Crist Ihesu, whom sche behelde wyth hir gostly eye in the syght of hir sowle as

verily as thie sche had seyn hys precyows body betyn, scorgyd,  
& crucifyed wyth hir bodily eye . . . . (MK I.57.140)

Than sche beheld in the syght of hir sowle owr blisful Lord  
Crist Ihesu comyng to-hys-Passyon-ward . . . . (MK I.79.187)

Julian of Norwich, on the other hand, describes the passion and suffering of Jesus in great detail and emphasizes such aspects as blood, physical agony, and tortured flesh. Her accounts of her visions therefore tend to be objective, specific, and extremely vivid. Several passages clearly illustrate her descriptions of those visions which involve the passion:

And after this I saw, beholding, the body plenteously bleeding of the scourging, as thus: the fair skin was broken full deep into the tender flesh with sharp smiting all about the sweet body. So plenteously the hot blood ran out that there was neither seen skin nor wound, but as it were all blood.  
(RDL 12.29)

In this moment suddenly I saw the red blood trickle down from under the Garland hot and freshly and right plenteously, as it were in the time of His Passion when the Garland of thorns was pressed on His blessed head . . . . (RDL 4.8)

After this Christ shewed a part of His Passion near His dying. I saw his sweet face as it were dry and bloodless with pale dying. And later, more pale, dead, languoring; and then turned more dead unto blue; and then more brown-blue, as the flesh turned more deeply dead. (RDL 16.36)

Visions within the illuminative phase considered by such medieval mystics as Augustine, Gregory, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bernard of Clairvaux did not usually involve descriptions of Jesus' suffering and passion. Rather, their descriptions of visions normally included general references to the presence of God or the effects of visions upon man in terms of sweetness, delight, love, and fire. Later medieval mystical and religious literature, however, contains numerous descriptions of the suffering and passion

which parallel quite closely those visions involving the passion in Julian and Margery. However, even though these later treatments are not to be considered as visions but only as accounts of the passion designed to intensify in the mind of the reader or listener the importance of Jesus' suffering and passion, they do compare closely with the descriptions of visions found in Julian.

Passages from such treatises as "A Talking of the Love of God," "The Wooing of Our Lord," "A Hymn to Our Lord," "A Hymn to Our Lady," and "An Orison of Our Lord" illustrate clearly this later medieval preoccupation with the physical aspects of Christ's suffering and passion.

. . . for love of me, with knotty whips beaten, so that thy lovely body might be torn and rent asunder; and all thy blissfull body streamed in one blood-stream. Afterwards on thine head was set the crown of sharp thorns, so that with every thorn the red blood poured out from thine holy head.<sup>73</sup>

Ther weore thou for my loue with harde knotti scourges, swongen and beten so smart and so sore: so that thi louely leor, that was so briht and so cleer, was al to-fouled and I-schent, thi skin to-riuen and to-rent; ther stremed on vche syde a flood, of water and of red blod; thow lord with so meke mood tholest al heore wille. Sithen on thin hed was set a Coroune of scharpe thornes: so that after vche a thorn the rede blod gon folwen. Sithen git thei beoten doun the coroune vppon thin hed; and dresseden hit and thraste, and duden hit sitte faste, so that the scharpe thornes wente in to the brayn.<sup>74</sup>

. . . and how mekely that he than wente to the crosse. He spreadeth his armes abroad but strayer with cordes they drewe forth his armes tyl the synewes & the loyntes be all to-broke. And than with full grete nayles they nayled his precyous hondes to the crosse. In the same maner thou mayst se how greuously

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<sup>73</sup>"The Wooing of Our Lord," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, p. 280.

<sup>74</sup>"A Talking of the Love of God," Horstman, II, 359-360.

they drawe his dere-worthy legges and nayled his feet downe  
to the tree.<sup>75</sup>

Descriptions of the suffering and passion in homiletic material may  
be illustrated by a passage from The Northern Passion:

Than thai gederd thornes kene,  
And made a corowne tham bitwene,  
And on his heuid thai it thrust,  
On ilka side the blude out brast;  
With staues of rede thai set it down,  
And clapped it fast vntill his crowne,  
So that the thornes went in than  
Till thai pperced the hern pan;  
The thornes made the woundes wide,  
The blude ran doun on ilka side,  
And than als sone the blude keleing  
Gert his clathes fast to him cling.<sup>76</sup>

The similarities in both form and content between these passages and  
those quoted above from Julian's Revelations are apparent and re-  
quire little further commentary. But it should be stressed again  
that even though these passages from later medieval literature are  
not visions in a traditional sense, they do parallel Julian's phrase-  
ology and thought.

The final idea for comparative analysis under the informing con-  
cept of visions during illumination consists of the ineffable nature  
of visions. This particular idea involves primarily statements by  
medieval mystics which emphasize the indescribability of visions ex-  
perienced during illumination. For the most part the English mystics,  
even though they discuss their visions during illumination in terms  
of their effects, agree that visions are in fact ineffable. The

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<sup>75</sup>"Dread and Love of God," Horstman, II, 103.

<sup>76</sup>The Northern Passion, ed. Foster, ll. 1207-12b, p. 125.

Cloud, for example, adopts a generally critical attitude toward visions:

& than as fast the deuil hath power for to feyne sum fals  
 ligh or sounes, swete smelles in theire noses, wonderful  
 taastes in theire mowthes, & many queynte hetes & brennynges  
 in theire bodily brestes or in theire bowelles, in theire  
 backes & in theire reynes, & in theire pryue membres.  
 (CU 52.96-97)

Walter Hilton, on the other hand, although he is very critical of visions or descriptions of the effects of visions as found in Rolle, usually refers to his visions as a sight or vision of Jesus without any further elaboration.

. . . and the soul is so comforted, and so borne up with the  
 soft feeling of love that it hath of the sight of Jhesu . . . .  
 (SP II.36.396)

But then through grace it is drawn into the privy chamber into  
 the sight of our Lord Jhesu . . . . (SP II.40.422)

Julian's and Margery's discussion of visions also indicates that visions are for them indescribable. Julian's use of relatively stock characteristics of God's nature such as "endless sovereign truth," "endless sovereign wisdom," and "unchangeable Goodness" in describing her visions clearly indicates that her visions are difficult to describe. And Margery's descriptions of her visions as "high meditations," "high contemplation and dalliance," and "glorious visions and high contemplations" also underscores the essential indescribability of visions experienced by the English mystics during the illuminative phase.

Other medieval mystics and religious writings reflect a similar attitude toward the indescribability of visions during illumination. This attitude is expressed in statements by medieval mystics

concerning the ineffable nature of visions and in their somewhat limited attempts to convey the content of their visions. For example, Gregory and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor point out the ineffable nature of God, even when he is experienced to a certain extent in visions during illumination.

Falling back upon herself [from a contemplation] the soul is drawn to him with closer bonds of love, whose marvellous sweetness, being unable to bear, she has but just tasted of under an indistinct vision.<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless he reveals his presence but without showing his face. He infuses his sweetness but does not show his fair beauty. His loveliness is felt but his form is not discerned.<sup>78</sup>

Not without reason is it, therefore, that when God calls man back after sin from the blindness of ignorance, he so qualifies his apprehension of himself as to let himself be known of him, and yet at the same time always to be hid from him.<sup>79</sup>

Even though in the following passage Hugh of St. Victor refers to the knowledge of God that may be experienced within the natural order and not directly to the ineffable nature of visions, it does illustrate the general indescribability of visions.

The full knowledge of the Godhead, which is promised to the saints in the life everlasting, and of which the apostle says, we shall see him "face to face," and again, "then shall I know, even as also I am known," is veiled and hidden from those still living in this mortal state.<sup>80</sup>

Augustine also carefully considers the difficulty inherent not only

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<sup>77</sup>Gregory, Morals on Job, 5.53, Butler, p. 80.

<sup>78</sup>Richard of St. Victor, "Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 225.

<sup>79</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.4.8, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 130.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., I.1.10, p. 57.



in discerning God but also in describing him:

Distinct, however, is that Light itself, whereby the soul is so enlightened that it beholds, whether in itself or in that Light, all things truly the object of the intellect. For that Light is God Himself; but the soul, although rational and intellectual, is a creature made after his image, which when it endeavours to fix its gaze upon that Light, quivers through weakness and is not able.<sup>81</sup>

In the discussion of the first component of the informing concept of visions during illumination, the effect of visions, we noted that both the English mystics and other medieval mystics usually described visions in terms of their effects rather than their content or substance. This phenomenon and the preceding discussion of the ineffability of visions during illumination for medieval mystics firmly buttress the idea that visions during illumination were essentially indescribable for both the English mystics and other medieval mystics.

##### 5. The effects of visions and revelations during illumination

The effects of visions occurring during illumination constitute the last informing concept of the secondary conceptual field for the illuminative phase. Within this informing concept, three main ideas or components may be distinguished: (a) Hilton's emphasis upon "ghostly savour and sweetness" and Margery's emphasis upon "sweetness and grace"; (b) Julian's and Margery's consideration of visions during illumination in terms of the general aid that these visions provide; and (c) Hilton's and Julian's discussion of the effect of

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<sup>81</sup>De Genesi ad litteram, 12.31.59, Butler, p. 54.

visions with respect to the knowledge of God imparted through them.

Both Hilton and Margery consider the effects of visions during illumination primarily in terms of heightened physical feelings such as "ghostly savour and sweetness" and "sweetness and grace." Their discussion of the effects of visions upon man, therefore, bears a strong resemblance to Rolle's description of visions as feelings, smells, delight, and fire. Hilton's conception of the effects of visions are clearly illustrated in the following passages from his Scale:

. . . the which felt never ghostly sweetness nor inly savour  
in the name of Jhesu or in the love of Jhesu. (SP I.44.105)

. . . in ghostly savour and sweetness of the love and the  
sight of God; by the which sight and feeling my soul shall  
be fed. (SP I.32.72)

. . . and thy desire is mickle lift up by ghostly might into  
a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence  
. . . . (SP I.25.57)

Margery's treatment of the effects of visions closely parallels

Hilton's:

. . . for sche myth not beryn the swetnesse & grace that God  
wrowt in hir sowle. (MK I.28.67)

Than had sche so meche swetnes & deuocyon that sche myth not  
beryn it . . . . (MK I.78.184)

Similar effects of visions experienced during illumination are recorded by other medieval mystics and religious writings. In general these effects are expressed in terms of sweetness, delight, taste, and various inner feelings. For example, Augustine states that "sometimes thou dost admit me to an interior experience most unwonted, to a wondrous sweetness." He also refers to the effects of visions as "a holy inebriation," "fixed with sweet delight in the

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contemplation of Truth," "arriving at a shrine of quiet," and "a breath of serenity and eternity." In a somewhat similar fashion, Richard of St. Victor refers to these effects as follows:

But what more healthgiving thing can be sought than the sweetness of this vision? What is more delightful to feel? What makes the soul happier?<sup>82</sup>

So this inner joy which only spiritual men possess, the sweetness that is felt inwardly . . . .<sup>83</sup>

There are also similarities between Hilton's and Margery's descriptions of the effects of visions and those of Hugh of St. Victor:

In contemplation, the taste of a wondrous sweetness changes everything to joy and gladness.<sup>84</sup>

Her soul melts within, her spirit, burns, her inmost being is one fire, she is jubilant, she rejoices, she dances and is gay, she fairly runs to meet him who comes to her.<sup>85</sup>

We shall then have begun to see God as He is, so that we shall desire nothing else save to behold His face unceasingly, to fill ourselves unwearyingly with His sweetness, and fully and unfailingly enjoy His love. This is what it is to tend to him, and to attain to him, always to seek him by desire, find him by knowledge and touch him by taste.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, in several later medieval writings we find other parallel treatments of the effects of visions upon man during illumination:

Sum are for perfite saules the whilke in this lyfe ware fulfilled of grace of the haly gaste and sang louyngs to godd

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<sup>82</sup>Benjamin Minor, 73, Kirchberger, p. 111.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 36, p. 100.

<sup>84</sup>"Commentary on Ecclesiastes," Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 185.

<sup>85</sup>Noah's Ark, I.4.9, ibid., pp. 132-133.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., I.1.15, p. 68.

in contemplacione of hym with wondirfull swetnes and heuenly  
savour . . . .<sup>87</sup>

. . . and on thi lofsum leor euer-more to loke, then in alle  
blisse ben euer with-outen ende, and of that briht leor for-  
gon that swete sihte.<sup>88</sup>

Omang tham alswa sal be swete savour,  
Swa swete com never of herbe ne flour . . . .<sup>89</sup>

And, with that, thai sal ay here  
Alle other manere of melody,  
Of the delytable noys of mynstralsy,  
And of alkyn swet tones of musyke,  
That til any mans hert mught like;  
And of alkyn noyse that swete mught be,  
Ilkan sal here in that cite . . . .<sup>90</sup>

The above medieval mystics and religious writings, in emphasizing sweetness, delight, savour, and general feelings in the descriptions of the effects of visions, demonstrate a remarkable similarity to Hilton and Margery. On the basis of these similarities there does seem to be a set or traditional way to describe these effects. At any rate the words, phrases, and ideas generally associated with the effects of visions upon man during illumination seem to be both standard and consistent.

The second idea under the informing concept of the effect of visions is formed by Julian's and Margery's discussion of visions with respect to the aid that they provide. Margery for example notes

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<sup>87</sup>"An Epistle on Salvation by Love of the Name of Jesus," Horstman, I, 294.

<sup>88</sup>"A Talking of the Love of God," Horstman, II, 353.

<sup>89</sup>The Pricke of Conscience, 7, ll. 9276-77, ed. Morris, p. 249.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., ll. 9257-63.

that her visions not only increase her love and devotion for God but also help her to understand her sinful condition.

& euyr the mor that sche encresyd in lofe & in deuocyon, the mor sche encresyd in sorwe & in contrycyon, in lownes, in mekenes, & in the holy dreed of owr Lord, & in knowlach of hir owyn frelte . . . . (MK I.72.172)

. . . wepyng & sobbyng so sor that vn-ethe sche myth stondyn on hir feet for the fervowr of lofe & deuocyon that God putte in hir sowle thorw hy contemplacyon. (MK I.82.198)

Similarly, Julian indicates that visions provide her with comfort and aid, growth in her love for God, and an increased ability to understand herself and God.

He kindleth our understanding, he directeth our ways, he easeth our conscience, he comforteth our soul, he lighteneth our heart, and giveth us, in part, knowing and believing in his blissful godhead, with gracious mind in his sweet manhood and his blessed passion, with reverent marvelling in his high, overpassing goodness; and maketh us to love all that he loveth, for his love, and to be well-pleased with him and all his works. (RDL 61.152)

Other medieval mystics also reflect upon the general help that visions provide during illumination. However, the primary emphasis seems to be upon the effect that these visions have upon man's intellect or understanding although some consideration is given to the effect upon his capacity for love. Richard of St. Victor, for example, comments on the effect that visions have upon man's mind and his ability to understand:

. . . the character of contemplation varies in three ways. Sometimes it effects an enlarging of the mind, sometimes a raising and sometimes an abstraction of the mind.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, even thus, the human intelligence flushed with divine light, is suspended in contemplation of intellectible things

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<sup>91</sup>Benjamin Major, 5.2, Kirchberger, p. 183.

and enlarged as it wonders upon them.<sup>92</sup>

Hugh of St. Victor and Bernard of Clairvaux, on the other hand, consider the effects of visions in terms of man's increasing ability to understand and love.

He loved one only thing, and the motive of all his desires and actions had reference to it. The depth of his spirit was always unfailingly turned towards that one object, his maker. Never, therefore, could he be in any doubt about his maker, who was ever present within him by contemplation. The sight of him enlightened his mind with knowledge, and made him rise up and to lie down with love.<sup>93</sup>

Now, there are two kinds of ecstasy in divine contemplation, one in the intellect and the other in the will. One consists in the enlightenment of the understanding, the other in an increase of love.<sup>94</sup>

In spite of the fact that the correlation between Julian's and Margery's treatment of the aid resulting from visions and other medieval mystics' consideration of this same idea is not as close as it was for the effects of visions upon man during illumination, there does seem to be a similar emphasis upon the idea that visions do help during the illuminative phase with respect to man's ability to love and to understand God and himself.

The discussion by Hilton, Julian, and Margery of the effect that visions during illumination have upon their understanding of the nature of God constitutes the final part of our consideration of the effects of visions. Since this understanding of the nature

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<sup>92</sup>Benjamin Major, 5.9, Kirchberger, p. 196.

<sup>93</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, I.4.10, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 135.

<sup>94</sup>Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 49.4, Connolly, p. 177.

of God proceeds directly from the visions themselves, it should be considered separately and in addition to our analysis of the general knowledge of God gained during illumination.

Hilton, Julian, and Margery each comment upon the effects of their visions in terms of increased understanding of God. For the most part this knowledge of the nature of God includes a more heightened awareness of God's goodness, love, and mercy. For example, Hilton and Julian state that:

. . . but thou might through devout and continual beholding of the meekness of his precious manhead feel his goodness and the grace of his godhead, when thy desire is eased and holpen and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence . . . .  
(SP I.25.57)

For this was shewed: that our life is all grounded and rooted in love, and without love we may not live; and therefore to the soul that of his special grace seeth so far into the high, marvellous goodness of God, and seeth that we are endlessly oned to him in love, it is the most impossible that may be, that God should be wroth. (RDL 49.103)

At another point in her Revelations, Julian indicates that visions affect both her knowledge of herself and of God. In fact, the two are apparently inter-related.

And thus was my understanding led of God to see in him and to understand, to perceive and to know, that our soul is made-trinity, like to the unmade blissful trinity, known and loved from without beginning, and in the making oned to the maker, as it is aforesaid. This sight was full sweet and marvellous to behold, peaceable, restful, sure, and delectable.  
(RDL 55.133)

Finally, Margery's descriptions of the effect that her visions have upon her understanding of God's nature also indicates that her knowledge of God involves a more complete comprehension of his goodness and love.



Than was hir sowle so delectably fed wyth the swet dalyawns  
of owr Lorde & so fulfilled of hys lofe . . . . (MK I.41.98)

. . . al rauyschyd wyth gostly comfort in the goodnes of owr  
Lord that wrowt so gret grace for hys seruawnt . . . .  
(MK I.60.147)

Although other medieval mystics and religious writings consider the effects of visions upon man's increased understanding of the nature of God, they tend for the most part to be more abstract than the English mystics. Richard of St. Victor, for example, uses such phrases as the following to refer to the knowledge of God produced by visions: "the human intelligence is illuminated with regard to divine things," "having been rapt to a perception of the Godhead," and "granted the sight of some divine manifestation." These phrases, however, should be noted in context:

. . . the cloud of unknowing with the cloud of the enlightened intelligence; unknowing and the forgetting of things known and experienced, with the revelation and understanding of things previously unknown and not experienced hitherto. For at one and the same time the human intelligence is illuminated with regard to divine things and darkened in respect of human things.<sup>95</sup>

We bring the external vision into ourselves, when having been rapt to a perception of the Godhead, we later assimilate it as it were to our own thoughts, by reasoning.<sup>96</sup>

. . . for while it [the human mind] is burning ardently with the flame of heavenly desire, it is granted the sight of some divine manifestation by which it may be strengthened in its ecstatic contemplation.<sup>97</sup>

Bernard of Clairvaux treats the effect of visions during illumination

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<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Major, 4.22, Kirchberger, p. 176.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 4.12, p. 166.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 5.8, p. 195.

with respect to the knowledge of God in equally general terms:

Thus the Great Bridegroom will appear to great souls and he will glory to treat with them, communicating to them his light and his truth, leading them on and bringing them to his holy mountain and into his tabernacles . . . .<sup>98</sup>

This means, I think, nothing else than to weave certain spiritual likenesses, and to bring the most pure meanings of divine wisdom into the sight of the mind which is contemplating, in order that it may perceive, at least by a mirror and in an enigma, what it cannot at all as yet look upon face to face.<sup>99</sup>

And several later medieval works also reflect a similar emphasis upon the knowledge of God resulting from visions:

Jesu, my precious darling, my love, my life, my beloved, my most worthy of love, my heart's balm, my soul's sweetness, thou art lovesome in countenance, thou art altogether bright.<sup>100</sup>

With the sight of God thai sal be fed,  
And with brightnes of light thai sal be cled,  
And thair work sal be ay lovyng,  
In whilk thai sal haf gret likyng.  
Bot thair mast ioy in heven sal be  
The blisful sight of the trinite . . . .<sup>101</sup>

Even though these passages are not reflections upon the effect that visions have upon man's increased understanding of God since they cannot be termed visions in a precise sense, they do at least contain the idea that the sight of God or reflections upon God or Jesus produces a heightened awareness of God's nature in terms of love.

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<sup>98</sup>Canticles, 32.9, Connolly, p. 145.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 41.3, p. 105.

<sup>100</sup>"The Wooing of Our Lord," Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, p. 268.

<sup>101</sup>The Pricke of Conscience, 7, ll. 9371-76, ed. Morris, p. 252.

In this sense they are comparable with Hilton, Julian, and Margery.

A number of significant similarities and differences discussed in the present chapter between the English mystics and other medieval mystics and religious writings may be summarized briefly at this point. The knowledge of God revealed during illumination, which was considered by The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian in terms of God's incomprehensibility and man's inability to describe God's nature, receives a similar emphasis by other medieval mystics, especially Hugh of St. Victor who stresses the indescribability of God as he makes himself known during illumination. In spite of the fact that general references to God's nature with respect to illumination may be found in other medieval mystics, these references, by virtue of their vague and general nature, parallel the descriptions of God's nature found in the English mystics.

Rolle's and Hilton's attempt to describe man's changed state during the illuminative phase in terms of new feelings or attitudes such as "new gracious feelings," "high sweetness," and "inward delights" is remarkably similar to the treatment of this concept by Hugh and Richard of St. Victor who use such phrases as "interior sweetness," "inward delights," and "divine sweetness." The conception of man's increased capacity for love and charity during illumination, considered by both The Cloud and Hilton, and the unifying and transforming effect of love in The Cloud and Rolle are both well-developed in other medieval mystical literature. The need for growth in love during the illuminative phase is emphasized by Aelred, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and homiletic literature.

And Aelred, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and "The Dread and Love of God" treat the transformative effects of love in a manner similar to The Cloud and Rolle.

Rolle's concept of God's grace in terms of man being ravished is also considered by Aelred, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor each of whom discusses God's grace as a cleansing fire which lifts man up into a form of ecstasy. Hilton's discussion of God's grace in terms of its effect upon man's affective powers receives a similar treatment in Aelred and Richard of St. Victor. This concept is particularly important in the thought of Hugh of St. Victor; several close parallels to Hilton may be found in Hugh in this respect. And Hilton's thought that God's grace affects man's reason in a significant way is considered at length by Augustine, Bernard, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. That God's grace produces knowledge of God during the illuminative phase, a concept developed by Hilton and Julian, is also considered by Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure. It is particularly well-developed by Richard of St. Victor.

Rolle's and Margery's consideration of the effects of visions rather than attempting to describe the visions themselves receives a similar treatment in Augustine, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor. Julian's accounts of visions during illumination, which are usually considered in terms of the suffering and passion, are apparently not found extensively in earlier medieval mystics who frequently treat visions in terms other than the suffering and passion. Later medieval treatments of visions, such as those found in "A Talking of the

Love of God," "The Wooing of Our Lord," and "A Hymn to Our Lord," are quite similar to Julian and Margery. That the visions themselves are ineffable, frequently noted by the English mystics, is also stressed by other medieval mystics such as Gregory, Augustine, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor.

The discussion of the effects of visions by Rolle, Hilton, and Margery in terms of heightened physical feelings such as "ghostly savour and sweetness" and "sweetness and grace" is similar to that found in other medieval mystics such as Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor who describe the effects of visions in terms of sweetness, delight, taste, and various inner feelings. The close similarity in words and phrases used to describe the effects of visions suggests a traditional manner of describing visions. Julian's and Margery's treatment of the effects of visions in terms of the aid that they provide is also considered by other medieval mystics. Richard of St. Victor, for example, considers the effects of visions in terms of their effect upon man's intellect and understanding. On the other hand, Hugh of St. Victor and Bernard indicate that man's ability to understand and his capacity for love increase because of the visions experienced during illumination. Finally, the idea that visions effect an increased understanding of God and his nature, developed by Hilton, Julian, and Margery, is also found in Richard of St. Victor and Bernard, except in a much more abstract and theoretical manner. However, that visions produce knowledge of God is found in most medieval mystical literature.

## CHAPTER XI

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TREATMENT OF UNION BY THE ENGLISH MYSTICS AND OTHER MEDIEVAL MYSTICS AND RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

In this chapter the comparative analysis of the unitive phase will follow the same general procedure adopted in Chapters Nine and Ten. Thus, the English mystics will be compared with other medieval mystics and religious writings in terms of the main informing concepts, and those ideas forming these concepts, which constituted the secondary conceptual field for the unitive phase developed in Chapter Eight. The main informing concepts may be categorized as follows: (1) the description of and/or references to the union between God and man; (2) the mysterious and ineffable nature of union with God; (3) the knowledge of God imparted during union; (4) the general state of the individual during the unitive phase; and (5) the concept of union with God in this world as a foretaste of the union expected with him in the next.

#### 1. Description of and/or references to union

The first informing concept of the secondary conceptual field for union, general references to and descriptions of union, will be analyzed in terms of the following ideas or components: (a) Rolle's and The Cloud's conception of being oned or knitted to God; (b) descriptions of union which refer to the nature of God;

(c) Hilton's conception of union as that state within which the knowing and the perfect loving of God occur; (d) Julian's description of union in terms of the sight or beholding of God; and (e) descriptions of union with respect to love.

Richard Rolle's and The Cloud's references to man's union with God in terms of being oned or knitted form the first idea within the informing concept of general references to and descriptions of union. Conceiving union with God as being oned or knitted is frequently used by the English mystics, especially Rolle and The Cloud, to refer to union. In fact, there is little substantial difference in their discussion of union with respect to being oned or knitted:

Dum enim mens sanctorum eternitatis amori inseparabiliter immittitur, et dulcedinem celestis uite saltem raptim quamuis cum melodia se pergustasse gloriatur. (IA 24.214)

Qwhils the mynde truly of sayntis, to lufe endles, vnabyll to be lowsyd, is knyttyd and swetnes of heuenly lyfe, thof all it wer als rauyschyd, with melody before felt as wer in that is gladynd. (FL I.26.55)

. . . ut Deo nostro perfecte uniamur . . . . (IA 41.271)

. . . that we to god parfytely be knyttyd in onned . . . .  
(FL II.11.98)

Abouen thi-self thou arte: for whi thou atteynest to come thedir by grace, whether thou mayst not come by kynde; that is to sey, to be onyd to God in spirit & in loue & in acord-  
aunce of wille. (CU 67.120)

It chargeth not now in thee bot that thi blynde beholding of thi nakid beyng be gladli born up in listines of loue, to be knittid & onid in grace & in spirit to the precious beyng of God in him-self only as he is, with-uten more. (BPC 139)

For other medieval mystics union with God is also frequently referred to as being oned or as a union of two natures. And even though the words and phrases used to describe this aspect of union

differ somewhat, the essential idea of union or being oned remains the same. For example, in Richard of St. Victor union with God is expressed as follows:

How carefully will he remember and joyfully wonder at and consider the light he has seen, turning it over with a longing mind, sighing for it, contemplating it until at last, he be transformed "into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

We incorporate into ourselves what we taste and are made, as it were, one with it. So most certainly when we receive an infusion of the divine spirit we are in a measure united with it.<sup>2</sup>

Hugh of St. Victor refers to the union between God and man within the unitive phase in essentially the same manner:

By love, therefore, the rational creature is brought into fellowship with his maker; the bond of love is the one link that binds the two in one, and the stronger the bond the greater the blessedness.<sup>3</sup>

And, in Noah's Ark, Hugh states that:

In the same way, as we rise from out of this deep, this vale of tears, we grow steadily in the virtues as by certain ordered stages in our hearts, and we are gradually drawn towards a unity, until we attain even to that simple oneness, that true simplicity and everlasting changelessness, that is in God.<sup>4</sup>

Then let us contemplate the vast and horrible confusion that prevails in that world down there, and the infinite distraction of the minds of men. But up above, with God, there is perpetual, unshakable stability. Having seen these, let us picture to ourselves a human soul rising out of this world

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<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Major, 4.7, Kirchberger, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>Psalm 4.9, "Mystical Notes on the Psalms," Kirchberger, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup>"De Substantia Dilectionis," Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 189.

<sup>4</sup>I.4.4, ibid., pp. 126-127.



towards God and, as it rises, gathering itself ever more and more into a unity.<sup>5</sup>

Bernard of Clairvaux, whose discussion of the union between God and man usually tends to be rather figurative, considers union in the following passage in a relatively straightforward manner:

Happy kiss! . . . in which God is united to man . . . this union of natures joins things human with those that are divine . . . .<sup>6</sup>

Finally we may note a passage from Vices and Virtues which indirectly alludes to Hilton's and The Cloud's conception of man and God being oned:

. . . then comes thereafter Almighty God the Father and gives the power to do all this, and makes his abode in this blessed soul.<sup>7</sup>

In general both the basic conception and expression of that union which occurs between man and God during the unitive phase seems to be considered in essentially the same way. Although our comparative analysis of the other informing concepts of the secondary conceptual field for union will reveal differences, the medieval mystics' basic understanding of what actually occurs within the unitive phase, i.e., the union between man and God, remains the same.

The next idea under the first informing concept consists of those descriptions of union which refer to or consider the nature of God. Both The Cloud and Richard Rolle refer to this particular

<sup>5</sup>Noah's Ark, I.4.4, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 126.

<sup>6</sup>Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 2.3, Connolly, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup>Vices and Virtues, ed. Holthausen, p. 36.

idea. The Cloud's consideration of the nature of God as revealed within the union between God and man is clearly illustrated in the following passages:

It chargeth not now in thee bot that thi blynde beholding of thi nakid beyng be gladli born up in listines of loue, to be knittid & onid in grace & in spirit to the precious beyng of God in him-self only as he is, with-outen more. (BPC 139)

In this tyme it is that thou bothe seest thi God & thi loue, & nakidly felist hym also bi goostly onying to his loue in the souereyn poynte of thi spirit, as he is in hym-self, bot blyndely, as it may be here, vtterly spoylid of thi-self & nakidly clothed in hymself as he is, vnclouted & not lappid in any of thees sensible felynges (be thei neuer so sweet ne so holy) that mowen falle in this liif. (BPC 169)

Although Rolle usually refers to the object of union as "God," he sometimes refers to it as love:

*Dum enim mens sanctorum eternitatis amori inseparabiliter immittitur, et dulcedinem celestis uite saltem raptim quamuis cum melodia se pergustasse gloriatur.* (IA 24.214)

Qwhils the mynde truly of sayntis, to lufe endles, vnabyll to be lowsyd, is knyttyd and swetnes of heuenly lyfe, thof all it wer als rauyschyd, with melody before felt as wer in that is gladynd. (FL I.26.55)

In their general references to the union between God and man within the unitive phase, other medieval mystics, such as Dionysius, Bernard, and Bonaventure, apparently emphasize the nature of God within union rather than the union itself. This idea is illustrated by Dionysius at several points in his mystical thought:

But hereafter, when we are incorruptible and immortal and attain the blessed lot of being like unto Christ, then we shall be for ever with the Lord, fulfilled with His visible Theophany in holy contemplations, the which shall shine about us with radiant beams of glory; and so shall we, with our mind made passionless and spiritual, participate in a spiritual illumination from Him, and in an union transcending our mental faculties, and there, amidst the blinding blissful impulses of His dazzling rays, we shall, in a diviner manner

than at present, be like unto the heavenly intelligences.<sup>8</sup>

And yet on the other hand, the divinest knowledge of God, the which is received through unknowing, is obtained in that communion which transcends the mind, when the mind, turning away from all things and then leaving even itself behind, is united to the Dazzling Rays, being from them and in them, illumined by the unsearchable depth of wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

Bernard also considers the nature of God in several references to the union between God and man:

. . . [in the union of the soul with God] the word utters no sound, but penetrates; it is not full of words, but full of power; it strikes not on the ears, but caresses the heart; the form of its Face is not defined, and it does not touch the eyes of the body, but it makes glad the heart, not with charm of colour, but with the love it bestows.<sup>10</sup>

. . . but that after the manner of a spouse we might be joined to you in embraces joyous, chaste and eternal, when, in the revelation of your countenance we are admitted into the contemplation of your glory, which you have equally and in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost forever.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, in a passage from Bonaventure we find a very definite emphasis upon describing the nature of God within union rather than the union itself.

. . . manifestly it follows that the eternal light generates out of itself a likeness or coequal radiance which is consubstantial and coeternal. And he who is the image and likeness of the invisible God and "the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance," he who is everywhere through his primal generation, as an object generates its likeness in the whole medium, is united by grace of union to an individual of rational nature--as a species to a corporeal organ--so that by that union

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<sup>8</sup>The Divine Names, 1.4, ed. Rolt, p. 58.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 7.3, p. 152.

<sup>10</sup>Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 31.6, Butler, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 12.11, Connolly, p. 106.

he may lead us back to the Father as to the primordial source and object.<sup>12</sup>

The third main idea under the first informing concept, Hilton's references to union, usually involves a discussion of union as that state within which the knowing and the perfect loving of God occurs. Hilton frequently refers to the union between God and man as follows:

The third part of contemplation, which is perfect as it may be here, lieth both in cognition and in affection; that is for to say, in knowing and in perfect loving of God. (SP I.8.14)

Contemplative life lieth in perfect love and charity felt inwardly by ghostly virtues, and by soothfast knowing and sight of God and ghostly things. (SP I.3.5)

Hilton's emphasis upon the "knowing" or knowledge of God within union is reflected in the thought of other medieval mystics. In these other mystics, however, it is much more systematically considered than in Hilton. And even though the words, phrases, and ideas used by other medieval mystics to refer to the knowledge of God in their general references to union are general and vague, they are much more precise in comparison to Hilton's references to the "knowing and sight of God and ghostly things."

A conception of union within which a knowing of God occurs is considered by several medieval mystics, especially Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory, and Richard of St. Victor. Dionysius, for example, indicates that in union men will

. . . pass beyond the topmost altitudes of the holy ascent and leave behind them all divine enlightenment and voices and heavenly utterances and plunge into the Darkness where truly dwells,

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<sup>12</sup>Mind's Road to God, 2.7, Boas, pp. 17-18.

as saith the Scripture, that One which is beyond all things.<sup>13</sup>

An emphasis upon the knowledge of God in general references to union is particularly strong in St. Augustine:

In this kind of vision is seen the brightness of God, not by some corporally or spiritually figured signification, as through a glass in an enigma, but face to face, or, as Moses, mouth to mouth; that is, by the "species" by which God is what He is, how little soever the mind, even when cleansed from all earthly stain, and alienated and carried out of all body and image of body, is able to grasp him.<sup>14</sup>

The desire of the truly pious, by which they long and eagerly are inflamed to see God, is to see him not under any appearance, but in the substance in which he is that he is.<sup>15</sup>

And when this power also within me found itself changeable, it lifted itself up to its own intelligence, and withdrew its thoughts from experience, abstracting itself from the contradictory throng of sense images, that it might find what that light was wherein it was bathed when it cried out that beyond all doubt the unchangeable is to be preferred to the changeable; whence also it knew That Unchangeable: and thus with the flash of one trembling glance it arrived at That Which Is. And then at last I saw thy "invisible things understood by the things that are made"; but I could not sustain my gaze, and my weakness being struck back, I was relegated to my ordinary experience, bearing with me but a loving memory and a longing for what I had, as it were, perceived the odour of, but was not yet able to feed upon.<sup>16</sup>

Using ideas quite similar to Augustine and Hilton, Gregory considers mystical union in terms of the knowledge of God that stems from it:

Then Almighty God is found out by clear thought, when the corruption of our mortality being once for all trodden underfoot, he is seen by us, taken up in the Brightness of His Divinity.

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<sup>13</sup> Mystical Theology, 1, Rolt, p. 193.

<sup>14</sup> De Genesi ad litteram, 12.28.56, Butler, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> Liber de videndo Deo, 31, Butler, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Confessions, 7.23, Butler, pp. 31-32.

In the height of the rewarding the Almighty may be found in the appearance afforded to contemplation, but not in perfection. For though sooner or later we see him in his brightness, yet we do not fully behold his essence. For the mind, whether of angels or men, while it gazes toward the unencompassed Light, shrinks into little by the mere fact that it is a creature.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, several passages from Richard of St. Victor in which he discusses the knowledge of God revealed in union should also be noted:

But we must understand by the term "contemplative" those to whom it is given to see face to face, who contemplating the unveiled face of the glory of God see truth uncovered in its simplicity, without a mirror or darkness.<sup>18</sup>

But he who is taken out of himself by ecstasy, goes forth as if from the tent to meet the Lord as he comes, and sees him as it were face to face, contemplating the light of the highest wisdom without any veil or shadow of image; indeed not in a glass darkly but as I have said, in actual fact.<sup>19</sup>

In our comparative analysis of the third informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union in this chapter, the knowledge of God imparted during union, the mystics' conception of the knowledge of God within union will be considered more thoroughly than has been attempted here. However, since knowledge of God seems to be an integral part of general references to and descriptions of union, it was necessary to consider it briefly at this point.

The next idea within the informing concept of general references to union consists of Julian's consideration of the sight or beholding of God in her treatment of mystical union. Several passages from her

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<sup>17</sup> Morals on Job, 10.13, Butler, p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 113.4, Mystical Notes on the Psalms, Kirchberger, p. 242.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Major, 4.11, Kirchberger, p. 163.

Revelations indicate that the sight or beholding of God seems to be much more important to her than the mystical union itself.

The highest bliss that is, is to have Him in clarity of endless life, Him verily seeing, Him sweetly feeling, all-perfectly having in fulness of joy. (RDL 72.175)

Thus is that blissful sight the end of all manner of pain to the loving soul, and the fulfilling of all manner of joy and bliss. And that shewed he in the high, marvellous words where he said: I it am that is highest; I it am that is lowest; I it am that is all. (RDL 72.177)

And this is an high unperceivable prayer, as to my sight: for all the cause wherefore we pray, it is oned into the sight and beholding of Him to whom we pray . . . . (RDL 43.90-91)

Even though Julian's emphasis upon the sight or beholding of God within union is clearly reflected in the writings of other medieval mystics considered in the previous two components of the first informing concept, i.e., descriptions of union which refer to the nature of God and union as that state within which the knowing of God occurs, other relevant references to the sight or beholding of God may be found in Dionysius, Augustine, and Richard of St. Victor. In Dionysius' De Divinis Nominibus, for example, we are informed that:

. . . inasmuch as when our soul is moved by spiritual energies unto spiritual things, our sense, together with the thing which they perceive, are all superfluous; even as the spiritual faculties are also such when the soul, becoming Godlike, meets in the blind embraces of an incomprehensible union the Rays of the Unapproachable Light.<sup>20</sup>

And two particularly important passages from Augustine's Confessions illustrate the fact that the sight or vision of God is for him the most important part of union with God.

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<sup>20</sup>4.11, Rolt, p. 103.

. . . that the sweetest conceivable delight of sense in the brightest conceivable earthly sunshine was not to be compared, no, nor even named, with the happiness of that life, we soared with ardent longing towards the "self-same," i.e., the unchanging God, we passed from stage to stage through all material things, through heaven itself, whence sun and moon and stars shed their radiance upon earth.<sup>21</sup>

. . . and he alone speak, not by them but by himself, so that we may hear his word, not through any tongue of flesh nor angel's voice nor sound of thunder, not in any similitude, but his voice whom we love in these his creatures--may hear his very self without any intermediary at all--as now we reached forth and with one flash of thought touched the Eternal Wisdom that abides over all:--suppose that experience were prolonged, and all other visions of far inferior order were taken away, and this one vision were to ravish the beholder, and absorb him and plunge him in these inward joys, so that eternal life were like that moment of sight for which we sighed--were not this: Enter into the joy of thy Lord!<sup>22</sup>

Finally we should include a passage from Richard of St. Victor that compares closely with Julian's conception of the sight or beholding of God as the most important thing within union:

Therefore the third degree of love is when the mind of man is ravished into the abyss of divine light so that the soul, having forgotten all outward things is altogether unaware of itself and passes out completely into its God.<sup>23</sup>

In the discussion of the English mystics' references to and descriptions of union within the unitive phase, we found that their conception of love formed the primary element in their treatment of union. Furthermore, love within union could refer to God's love for man, man's love for God, or the love which proceeds directly from the union between God and man. Rolle and Hilton consider the role

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<sup>21</sup>Confessions, 9.23, Butler, p. 32.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 9.25, p. 33.

<sup>23</sup>"Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 228.



of love in union as follows:

. . . amor attamen Deum et hominem copulat et breui labore facit sustinentes. (IA 40.270)

. . . lufe neuer-the-lesse, god & man cuppyls & with schort labore fulfyllis the abidars. (FL II.10.98)

Unitatiuam uero quia amantes unum efficit in affectu et uoluntate, et Christum et omnem sanctam animam unit. (IA 17.196)

Knytynge treuly, for lufars it makis on in dyd & will, & criste a ilk holy saule it makis one. (FL I.18.41)

Contemplative life lieth in perfect love and charity felt inwardly by ghostly virtues, and by soothfast knowing and sight of God and ghostly things. (SP I.3.5)

According to The Cloud, love within union is especially important:

Knyt thee therfore bi him by loue and by beleue; & than by ver-tewe of that knot thou schalt be comoun parcener with him & with alle that by loue so ben knittyd vnto him . . . .  
(CU 4.21)

. . . bot that thi blynde beholdyng of thi nakid beyng be gladli born up in listines of loue, to be knittid & onid in grace & in spirit to the precious beyng of God in him-self only as he is, with-uten more. (BPC 139)

Other medieval mystics, Gregory and Richard of St. Victor for example, also emphasize the importance of love in their general references to and descriptions of union. Man's love for God and his love for man within union is especially important for Gregory:

Their minds are inflamed with the love of that interior brightness, which they are able neither to see as it is, nor to utter as they see it.<sup>24</sup>

Almighty God, when he is now known through desire and intellect, dries up in us every fleshly pleasure, and whereas aforetime we seemed to be both seeking God and cleaving to the world, after the perception of the sweetness of God, the love of the world grows feeble in us, and the love of God

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<sup>24</sup>Homilies in Ezechiel, 1.5.13, Butler, p. 80.

alone waxes strong; and while there increases in us the strength of inmost love without doubt the strength of the flesh is weakened.<sup>25</sup>

And a passage from Richard of St. Victor's Benjamin Minor also reflects an understanding of love within union similar to that found in the English mystics.

For God is the soul's true spouse and he is joined to us when truly we cleave to him with real love. He truly knits us to himself when by some interior communication he excites us to love him and binds us closer. It is a hard and steely heart that is not softened by the divine presence and not attracted by its sweetness.<sup>26</sup>

Finally this emphasis upon love as the main element in the union between God and man is illustrated in a passage from Vices and Virtues:

God dwells within all who have this holy love, and they within God. Understand now well, how God dwells in the man who has this blessed virtue, and so thou mayst know, whether God dwells in thee and whether thou hast this virtue. God dwells in the man who loves Him in such a wise that He kindles his heart and his thoughts with the fire which Christ brought on earth.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. The mysterious and ineffable nature of union with God

References to the ineffability of union with God comprise the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union. Of the English mystics, Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian consider most thoroughly the problems involved in attempting to describe the nature of this union. For the most part their descriptions of union tend to be vague, general, and rather imprecise. Other medieval

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<sup>25</sup>Homilies in Ezechiel, 2.2.13, Butler, pp. 66-67.

<sup>26</sup>Ch. 11, Kirchberger, p. 88.

<sup>27</sup>Ed., Holthausen, p. 34.

mystics demonstrate a similar difficulty in their attempt to articulate the nature of union with God as it is experienced within the unitive phase.

At this point we should briefly consider several passages from Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian in which they refer to the ineffability of the nature of union with God. For example, Rolle states that:

Ille autem Deum perfecte cognoscit, qui ipsum incomprehensibilem et incognoscibilem esse deprehendit. (IA 6.161)

He treuly knowes god parfityly, that hym felys incomprehensibyll & vnabyll to be knawen. (FL I.7.14)

Laudabile ita est, Deum perfecte, scilicet incomprehensibilem esse, cognoscere . . . . (IA 6.162)

Also it is prays god parfytyly, that is to say, vn-abyll to be consauyd fully, to know . . . . (FL I.7.15)

And the author of The Cloud clearly indicates that union with God cannot be comprehended or described:

Reche thee neuer gif the wittys kon no skyle of this nou3t; for whi I loue it moche the betir. It is so worthi a thing in it-self that thei kon no skyle ther-apon. This nou3t may may betir be felt then seen; for it is ful blynde & ful derk to hem that han bot lityl while lokid ther-apon. (CU 68.122)

. . . that perfeccion of mans soule is not elles bot an one-heed maad bitwix God & it in parfite charitee. This perfeccion is so heig & so pure in it-self, abouen the vnderstandyng of man, that it may not be known ne perceyuid in it-self. (BPC 153)

Man's union with God is also described by Julian in a way which underscores the idea that union is ineffable:

But what is to me verily the maker, the keeper, the lover, I cannot tell; for till I am substantially oned to him, I may never have full rest nor very bliss: that is to say, till I be so fastened to him, that there is right nought that is made betwixt my God and me. (RDL 5.10)

. . . for our ghostly eye is so blind and we be so borne down by weight of our mortal flesh and darkness of sin, that we may

not see our Lord God clearly in his fair blissful cheer.  
(RDL 72.176-177)

And in these words I saw a marvellous high mystery hid in God,  
which mystery he shall openly make known to us in heaven . .  
. . (RDL 27.57)

No other single informing concept of the secondary conceptual field for union is treated more consistently or frequently than the indescribability of union with God within the unitive phase. Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, Bonaventure, and other medieval religious writings clearly state that union with God is indescribable. Thus we find that Dionysius, Augustine, and Gregory each consider God's incomprehensibility, man's inability to describe the vision of God within union, and the fact that God as he is in himself may not be known by man in this life.

For as It hath lovingly taught us in the Scriptures concerning Itself, the understanding and contemplation of Its actual nature is not accessible to any being; for such knowledge is super-essentially exalted above them all.<sup>28</sup>

The soul in contemplation will arrive at that most high and secret reward for sake of which it has so laboured; and in which are such joys, such a full enjoyment of the highest and truest Good, such a breath of serenity and eternity, as are indescribable.<sup>29</sup>

When the mind is hung aloft in the height of contemplation, whatever it has power to see perfectly is not God. . . . Then only is there truth in what we know concerning God, when we are made sensible we cannot fully know anything concerning Him.<sup>30</sup>

In contemplation it is the divine Wisdom that is contemplated, and even touched; when in contemplation we are brought to the

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<sup>28</sup>Dionysius, The Divine Names, 1.2, Rolt, p. 53.

<sup>29</sup>Augustine, De Quantitate Animae, 74, 76, Butler, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup>Gregory, Morals in Job, 5.66, Butler, p. 89.

contemplation of wisdom, the mere immensity thereof, which by itself lifts man to itself, denies the human mind full knowledge, so that it should be touching love this wisdom, and yet never by passing through penetrate it.<sup>31</sup>

A similar approach to the problem of the ineffability of the nature of God as experienced in union is found frequently in the mystical thought of Richard of St. Victor:

For that glory of the divine wisdom which is seen from the extreme height of contemplation, cannot be described in any way by the experience of the human faculties.<sup>32</sup>

From this, I think, it will appear how far everything that is done or felt in this ecstasy of mind, is above man and transcends human categories.<sup>33</sup>

Who is able to contemplate things as they really are in this life? But everyone describes them figurately according to his judgement, not as they are but as he can imagine them.<sup>34</sup>

. . . that some when they return to themselves according to the normal state of the soul after ecstasy, cannot in any way understand or remember what they have perceived in that state.<sup>35</sup>

And finally the same idea is expressed in Aelred's Speculum and Bonaventure's Itinerarium Mentis in Deum:

With David I must admit that the knowledge of God as He is in Himself is too wonderful for me to grasp, too lofty for me to attain.<sup>36</sup>

But when you contemplate these things, see that you do not

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<sup>31</sup>Gregory, Morals in Job, 22.50, Butler, p. 79.

<sup>32</sup>Benjamin Minor, 80, Kirchberger, p. 118.

<sup>33</sup>Benjamin Major, 5.16, ibid., p. 207.

<sup>34</sup>Benjamin Minor, 19, ibid., p. 96.

<sup>35</sup>Benjamin Major, 5.1, ibid., p. 182.

<sup>36</sup>Speculum, 1.6, Webb and Walker, p. 9.

think yourself able to understand the incomprehensible.<sup>37</sup>

Because accustomed to the shadows of beings and the phantasms of the sensible world, when it looks upon the light of the highest being, it seems to see nothing, not understanding that darkness itself is the fullest illumination of the mind, just as when the eye sees pure light it seems to itself to be seeing nothing.<sup>38</sup>

Numerous other examples from these and other medieval mystics could be used to illustrate further the theme of the ineffability of union with God, but the above passages should suffice to indicate the close relationship between the English mystics and other medieval mystics concerning the essential indescribability of union with God.

### 3. The knowledge of God imparted during union

The knowledge of God imparted during the unitive phase constitutes the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union to be considered. Within this informing concept, five main ideas were used to analyze the knowledge of God imparted during union as considered by the English mystics. These same five ideas or components will serve as the basis for our present analysis: (a) the knowledge of God as discussed by Rolle and Hilton in terms of the sight of God; (b) Hilton's references to the fact that God is, not what he is; (c) Hilton's conception of God's nature which proceeds from a vision or visions of God; (d) general references to God's nature by Rolle such as "beholding of heavenly mysteries," "the knowledge of the mystery of love," and "continual beholding of heavenly

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<sup>37</sup>Mind's Road to God, 6.3, Boas, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 5.4, pp. 35-36.

things"; and (e) Hilton's description of the knowledge of God in terms of such effects as "sweetness of his love," "savour of his blessed face," and "ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy."

Since Rolle and Hilton are the only English mystics who consider extensively and systematically the knowledge of God imparted during the unitive phase, our comparative analysis of the knowledge of God within union will involve the mystical thought of Rolle, Hilton, other medieval mystics, and various religious writings. Both Rolle and Hilton frequently consider the first idea in the informing concept of the knowledge of God imparted during union, i.e., the knowledge of God as considered in terms of the sight or presence of God. In referring to the sight of God, Rolle tends to use phrases such as "*facie Dei fruentes sine fine*" (IA 5.159), "*ad uisionem eterne claritatis*" (IA 26.218), "*Beatifica uisio*" (IA 38.258), and "*ad uisionem gloriosissime claritatis*" (IA 26.219). Hilton employs similar phrases to describe the knowledge of God in union by means of references to the sight or presence of God: "the soul is turned into the eyes and sharply beholdeth the face of Jhesu" (SP II.42.440), "and all this ghostly sight is nought else but the sight of Jhesu" (SP II.45.456), "privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu" (SP II.41.432), "and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence" (SP I.25.57), and "opening the ghostly eyes waketh into the sight of God's majesty" (SP II.41.425)

Although most of the medieval mystics that we have been comparing with the English mystics refer to the sight or the presence

of God, apparently only Hugh and Richard of St. Victor mention the sight or presence of God in conjunction with the knowledge of God.

Hugh, for example, states that:

The sight of him enlightened his mind with knowledge and made him to rise up and to lie down with love.<sup>39</sup>

We shall then have begun to see God as he is, so that we shall desire nothing else save to behold his face unceasingly, to fill ourselves unwearyingly with his sweetness, and fully and unfailingly enjoy his love. This is what it is to tend to him, and to attain to him, always to seek him by desire, find him by knowledge and touch him by taste.<sup>40</sup>

The correlation between the sight of God and the knowledge of God is, however, most apparent in Richard of St. Victor. Especially in his Benjamin Major we find a close relationship between the vision or sight of God and the knowledge of God which stems directly from it.

A man draws the inward vision outwards when by much reflection and close examination, he apprehends or even makes intelligible to himself what he has seen in ecstasy, and then by the evidence of reason and illustrated by similes brings it forth for the understanding of all.<sup>41</sup>

For at one and the same time the human intelligence is illuminated with regard to divine things and darkened in respect of human things.<sup>42</sup>

And the more deeply the splendour of divine brightness penetrates the mind of a man, shaking him by the greatness of his wonder and raising him to ecstasy, the higher it springs up into the most sublime recess of divine secrets.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Noah's Ark, I.4.10, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 135.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., I.1.15, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup>Benjamin Major, 4.11, Kirchberger, p. 163.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 4.22, p. 176.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 5.11, p. 199.



We bring the external vision into ourselves, when having been rapt to a perception of the Godhead, we later assimilate it as it were to our own thoughts, by reasoning.<sup>44</sup>

And in a passage from Richard's "Of the Four Degrees of Passionate Charity" which considers the hidden presence of God, we find a similar relationship between God's presence and the knowledge of God. This knowledge, however, is described in terms of the effect that the sight of God has upon man.

Nevertheless he reveals his presence but without showing his face. He infuses his sweetness but does not show his fair beauty. His loveliness is felt but his form is not discerned.<sup>45</sup>

Frequently in medieval religious literature which considers the vision or sight of God to be experienced in heaven, a very close correlation may be found between the sight and the knowledge of God. Several lines from The Pricke of Conscience illustrate the characteristic treatment of this particular idea:

Right swa men salle se God als he es,  
In the myroure of his bryghtnes,  
Als properly als possible may be,  
Tylle any creature him to se.  
Thai salle se tham-self in him so bryght,  
And alle men to-gyder, at a syght,  
And alle other thyng thai salle knawe,  
And se over-alle, both hegh and lawe.<sup>46</sup>

Thare salle be schewed than tylle tham, apertly  
Sere privetese of God alle-myghty  
That na man here moght knaw ne wytt  
Thurgh clergy, ne thurgh haly-wrytt

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<sup>44</sup>Benjamin Major, 4.12, Kirchberger, p. 166.

<sup>45</sup>Kirchberger, p. 225.

<sup>46</sup>Ch. 7, ll. 8221-8228, Morris, p. 221.

That es, how God invysible es,  
And unchaungeable, and endles . . . .<sup>47</sup>

Alle salle thai se, thurgh myght and grace,  
In the bryghtnes of Godes face,  
Of whilk thai salle ever-mare have syght,  
That the mast ioy es in heven bryght.  
And for thai salle ay thus God bihald,  
Thai salle know alle thyng, that thai know wald.  
In this lyfe here men sese him noght,  
Bot anely thurgh ryght trowth in thought,  
Als thurgh a myroure be lyknes,  
Bot thare salle men se him als he es.  
Here men him sese gastly, thurgh grace,  
Bot thare salle men se him, face tylle face.<sup>48</sup>

Even though these lines from the Pricke of Conscience do not constitute a description of mystical union within the unitive phase, they do illustrate clearly the probable influence that descriptions of the "vision of God" to be experienced in heaven had upon the conceptualization of the unitive phase by the English mystics, particularly the correlation between the vision or sight of God and knowledge of him.

Hilton's references to the fact that man may know that God is but not what he is form the next idea under the informing concept of God imparted during union. For Hilton, knowledge that God is but not what he is stems in part from that knowledge of God which proceeds from a vision or sight of God. As the following passages from the Scala Perfectionis indicate, Hilton realizes, as do most mystics, that knowledge concerning God as he is in himself can not be described nor experienced by man within the natural order, even

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 7, ll. 8231-8236, p. 222.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 7, ll. 8667-8678, p. 233.

within the unitive phase.

For we may ask what it is, but not wit what it is. (SP II.40.423)

For why, the soul is turned into the eyes and sharply beholdeth the face of Jhesu, and is made sure that it is Jhesu that it feeleth and seeth. I mean not Jhesu as he is in himself in fullness of his blessed Godhead; but I mean Jhesu as he will show him to a clean soul holden in body, after the cleanness that it hath. (SP II.42.440)

This is one manner sight of Jhesu as I said before; not as he is, but clothed under likeness of works and of words, per speculum etiam in aenigmate; by a mirror and by a likeness, as the apostle saith. Jhesu is endless might, wisdom and goodness, holiness and mercy. And what this Jhesu is in himself may no soul see nor hear. (SP II.43.449)

He seeth him not what he is, for that may no creature do in heaven or in earth; nor he seeth him not as he is, for that sight is only in the bliss of heaven. But he seeth him that he is: an unchangeable being, a sovereign might, sovereign goodness, sovereign soothfastness, a blessed life, an endless bliss. (SP II.32.370)

Other medieval mystics also affirm that God may be known that he is but not what he is. The mystical thought of Gregory, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor not only illustrates a similar understanding of this idea but also indicates that a rather fixed tradition existed prior to the English mystics.

As long as we live this mortal life, God may be seen by certain semblances, but by the actual appearance of his nature he cannot, so that the soul, being breathed on by grace of the spirit, should by certain figures behold God, but not attain to the actual power of his essence.<sup>49</sup>

But we must know that so long as we live in this mortal flesh no one so advances in power of contemplation as to fix the mind's eyes as yet on the unencompassed ray itself of Light. For the Almighty God is not yet seen in this brightness, but the soul beholds something beneath it, by

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<sup>49</sup>Gregory, Morals on Job, 18.88, Butler, p. 90.

the which refreshed it may progress, and hereafter attain to the glory of the sight of Him. When the mind has made progress in contemplation it does not yet contemplate that which God is, but that which is under him.<sup>50</sup>

The soul slumbering in contemplation dreams God; for through a mirror and in an enigma, and not face to face, does it behold him; and it warms with the love of something conjectured rather than seen, momentarily, as if in the flash of a passing spark and touched scantily and barely.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile so great a variety of forms and so great a number of species in created things--what are they but rays of the Sun of Divinity, as it were, showing indeed that he truly is from whom they derive their being, but not defining what he is!<sup>52</sup>

Let no one think that he can penetrate to that effulgence of the divine light by argument, or think that he may understand it by human reasonings.<sup>53</sup>

Finally a passage from Sawles Warde which underscores the idea that God may be known that he is but not what he is should be mentioned:

"Yea, truly," quoth Love of Life, the messenger of mirth, "I have seen him oft, yet not as he is, for against the brightness and the light of his countenance the sun-gleam is dark and seemeth a shadow; and therefore I was not able to look toward nor behold the gleam of his countenance, except through a bright mirror between me and him, that shielded my eyes. So have I often seen the holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three and indivisible."<sup>54</sup>

Hilton's conception of the nature of God proceeding from his visions of God and Rolle's general references to the nature of God,

<sup>50</sup>Gregory, Homilies in Ezechiel, 2.2.14, Butler, p. 67.

<sup>51</sup>Bernard, Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 18.6, Butler, p. 120.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 31.3, Connolly, p. 135.

<sup>53</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Minor, 74, Kirchberger, p. 112.

<sup>54</sup>Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, p. 268.

the next two ideas in the informing concept of the knowledge of God imparted during union, may be conveniently grouped together and compared with similar ideas in other medieval mystics and religious writings. For both Hilton and Rolle these attempts to describe the nature of God proceed directly from a vision or sight of God. Hilton, for example, describes God as "endless might, wisdom and goodness, holiness and mercy" and as "an unchangeable being, a sovereign might, sovereign goodness, sovereign soothfastness, a blessed life, and endless bliss." Rolle, on the other hand, merely records the fact that a particular vision or sight of God has been experienced. Thus, in referring to a vision of God, he indicates that he has experienced "*misterium amoris agnoscens*" (IA 37.254), "*in speculacione misteriorum clescium*" (IA 36.249), and "*iugiter aspicit in superna*" (IA 37.254).

Words or phrases which attempt to describe the nature of God which stems from a vision or sight of God experienced within union may be found in nearly all medieval mystical literature. In general these words and phrases, which convey knowledge of the nature of God, usually include or refer to the following attributes of God: his mercy, love, holiness, might, goodness, and righteousness; his unchangeable nature; and his presence in terms of light. These same words and phrases, or terms similar to them, are used by the English mystics. For the most part these phrases are quite general, usually undefined, and represent what might be called "stock" characteristics of God or phrases that nearly all mystics use when referring to the nature of God. Since these references to the nature of God tend to

be rather conventional for most mystics, it is not necessary to compare all of them closely with those used by the English mystics.

However, we might consider the use of two important characteristics of God's nature, unchangeability and light, which possessed a wide currency in medieval mystical literature. Augustine and Gregory, who used these characteristics most frequently, exercised a strong influence upon later medieval mystics with respect to their attempt to describe the nature of God as experienced during union. Butler's discussion of Augustine's and Gregory's use of these two concepts should be quoted at length:

And so his [Augustine's] mystical experiences are often expressed in terms of this idea: e.g., as a perception of something unchangeable; a beholding with the mind's eye something unchangeable; a learning something divine and unchangeable. The same fundamental idea runs through the following descriptions of the act of contemplation, as the perception of unchangeable Good; as the vision of unchangeable Truth; as the search for some unchangeable Truth.<sup>55</sup>

Or again, the Light unchangeable; as where he says he "saw with the eye of his soul, above his mind, the Light unchangeable"; or "arrived by some kind of spiritual contact at the Light unchangeable."<sup>56</sup>

He [Gregory] uses the same epithets as Augustine: thus he speaks of the Light eternal of contemplation, the Light invisible, the Light incorporeal, an infusion whereof is received in contemplation; of the true Light, a sight whereof flashes in the soul with a ray of brightness by the grace of contemplation, but which man, placed in darkness, knows not as it really is; of the unchangeable Light which does not in contemplation burst forth as it is on the mind's eye; of the incorruptible Light; of the supernal Light which our contemplation discloses to us, agape for it, and anon hides from us, failing through weakness.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Butler, Western Mysticism, p. 35.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-78.

References by Rolle, Hilton, and other medieval mystics to the nature of God within union which results from a vision of God illustrate the idea that most of these references to or descriptions of God's nature not only possess a definite generic similarity but also remain essentially vague, general, and undifferentiated. In this sense they underscore the indescribability of God's nature. And they also support Hilton's contention that "we may ask what it is, but not wit what it is."

With respect to descriptions of God's nature that stem from visions, as in other areas of mystical thought when we have attempted to indicate similarities and differences, we may conclude that: (1) most mystics make some attempt to describe a particular phase of the contemplative life, e.g., descriptions of God's nature during union; (2) general similarities, differences, and parallels can best be indicated by using conceptual fields, main informing concepts, and ideas constituting these informing concepts; and (3) particularly when dealing with very general stock phrases such as those used to describe the nature of God as experienced in mystical union, no direct parallels or influences may, and probably should, be found.

The final idea under the informing concept of the knowledge of God imparted during union consists of Hilton's description of the knowledge of God in terms of various physical and emotional effects caused by visions occurring during union. In one sense knowledge of God during the unitive phase for Hilton depends upon the effect that visions have upon him. Phrases such as "the sweetness of his love," "the savour of his blessed face," and "ghostly sweetness and

heavenly joy" are characteristic of those phrases in Hilton which refer to the effects of visions during union. These phrases should be noted in context:

This is a little tasting of the sweetness of the love of God . . . . (SP I.6.11)

. . . and for to have him aye in our sight with reverence, and aye feel the sweetness of his love by a wonderful homeliness of his presence. (SP II.41.431)

. . . and gave me assay of his wine, that is for to say a taste of ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy. (SP I.80.194)

. . . privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu, feelably fed with savour of his unseeable blessed face. (SP II.41.432)

. . . that it is turned into love and affection, ghostly savour and sweetness, into light and knowing of soothfastness . . . . (SP I.46.112)

. . . but when it [the soul] is thus purified and made subtle through this fire, then may it receive the gracious light of ghostly knowing and the perfection of love, that is true sun. (SP II.26.334)

Similar effects of visions experienced during union are described by other medieval mystics. Enjoyment of God's presence in union and the effects of his presence upon man, for example, are noted by Augustine:

And the highest spiritual state of the soul in this life consists in the vision and contemplation of Truth, wherein are joys, and the full enjoyment of the highest and truest Good, and a breath of serenity and eternity, such as certain great and incomparable souls have described in some measure, who, we believe, have seen and see such things.<sup>58</sup>

In language similar to that of Hilton, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor comment upon the effect of visions of God in terms of the sweetness

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<sup>58</sup> De Quantitate Animae, 76, Butler, p. 43.



that they produce within man:

O how good, how kind he is, it says, how gentle and sweet, loveable and homely, altogether admirable, altogether desirable.<sup>59</sup>

So this inner joy which only spiritual men possess, the sweetness that is felt inwardly.<sup>60</sup>

. . . the taste of a wondrous sweetness changes everything to joy and gladness.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, several passages from Bernard's Canticum Canticorum further illustrate the basic similarity in the treatment of the effects of visions during union by Hilton and other medieval mystics.

I do not suppose that in this vision there is presented to the senses any images of his flesh or of his cross, or any other kinds of likenesses of our weak flesh; for in these respects "he hath no form nor comeliness." But that the soul beholding him now pronounces him fair and comely, shows he appeared to her by means of a nobler vision . . . a vision certainly sublime and sweet.<sup>62</sup>

I would not say, however, that when he appears in this wise, he manifests himself as he is, although he does not manifest himself as altogether different than he is. Nor will he be constantly manifest in this manner even to the most devout minds. And neither will he manifest himself in one and the same way to all. For according to the various desires of the soul, the savour of the divine presence must vary, and the infused taste of heavenly sweetness must delight the palate of the hungry soul now in one way, not in another. Also, you have noticed in this song of love how often he has changed his countenance and with how great a multitude of sweetness

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<sup>59</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Minor, 12, Kirchberger, p. 89.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 36, p. 100.

<sup>61</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, "Commentary on Ecclesiastes," Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 185.

<sup>62</sup>45.4, 6, Butler, p. 119.

he is pleased to be transformed in the presence of his beloved.<sup>63</sup>

#### 4. The general state of the individual during the unitive phase

The general state of man during union constitutes the next informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union. Within this concept, three main ideas were used to compare the English mystics' treatment of man's state during union: (a) Hilton's and Rolle's emphasis upon changed or heightened physical feelings such as sweetness, song, and savour; (b) The Cloud's discussion of man's state during union in terms of a heightened awareness and feeling of love and peace; and (c) Hilton's and The Cloud's discussion of the relationship between man's state during union and his ability to perceive, understand, and experience union. These ideas will be used as the basis for our present comparison of the treatment of man's state during union by the English mystics and other medieval mystics.

Hilton and Rolle describe man's condition or state during union and the various changes which occur within him primarily in terms of such general feelings as sweetness, song, savour, and delight. Rolle's description of man's state is clearly illustrated by the following passages from the Incendium Amoris:

. . . in ipso fonte ueri et eterni gaudii iugiter iocundetur.  
(IA 40.270)

. . . in the spryngis of endles & tru Ioy is myrthyd.  
(FL II.10.97)

Ad hanc suspirant, aspectibus supernis insistentes, et inflammati medullitus omnia intima sua letantur ludifluis illustrata

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<sup>63</sup>31.7, Connolly, pp. 137-138.

esse splendoribus litificatos, quia se senciunt amenissimo amore et in gaudio canticorum mirabiliter liquefactos. (IA 37.253)

Here-to truly tha 3erne in heuenly sightis abidyng, & inwardly seet ofyre all ther inher partyes ar glad with playly schynynge in lyghtt, and thameself tha feyll gladynde with lufe miryest & in Ioyful songe wondyrly meltyd. (FL II.7.85)

. . . ut in igneum celum assumptus, ibi incenderetur ineffabiliter ad amandum, et ureretur intra se amplius quam aliquis exprimere potuerit, et gradus graciary amplexaretur. (IA 33.240)

. . . so that he to be raisyd to a firy hevin & ther he suld be stirryd to lufe more then may be spokyn, & in hym-self suld more be byrnd then may be scheuyd & the degreis of grace suld hals. (FL II.3.74)

. . . tanquam in paradiso positus, subsistam, sedens in solitudine, illic suauiter sonans amorous canticum, in deliciis quas dedit mihi dilectus. (IA 16.193)

. . . thof all now als wer in paradise sett stabyll I am sit-tand in wyldernes, swetely ther soundand a lufly song in likyngis that my lufe has gyn me. (FL I.17.39)

Exinde igitur innouatur natura et in diuinam gloriam, formamque felicissimam, transmigrabit, ut sonorum sit, et dulce ac diuinum, quod deinceps in se seciat, delicias quoque eterni amoris cum maxima suauitate indefesse cantat. (IA 32.237)

& so kynde is renwyd & now sal pas in-to a godly Ioy & happy lyknes, so that is all be happye, sweet, godly & soundly & in the selff, sall feyll luste of euerlastynge lufe & with greet swetnes continually it sal synge. (FL II.2.72)

Hilton's treatment of man's state during union is quite similar to Rolle's; emphasis is consistently placed upon such feelings as sweetness, savour, love, and light.

. . . and as it were made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is mickle lift up by ghostly might into a ghostly savour and delight in him of his ghostly presence . . . (SP I.25.57)

. . . for wonderfully he [God] stirreth and mightily he turneth thine heart into beholding of his goodness, and doth thine heart melt delectably as wax against the fire into softness of his love . . . . (SP II.41.434)

. . . privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jhesu,  
feelably fed with savour of his unseeable blessed face.  
(SP II.41.432)

. . . turned into love and affection, ghostly savour and  
sweetness, into light and knowing of soothfastness . . . .

However, in addition to their description of man's state in terms of sweetness, love, and so forth, Rolle and Hilton also consider several other ideas regarding his state which are contained in the above passages: an increase in man's capacity for loving God and for being loved by God; a heightened understanding of God in terms of love; an increased perception of God's presence; and a general renewal in man's relationship with God. These ideas are found in the writings of other medieval mystics in their descriptions of man's state during union in terms of heightened physical and spiritual feelings.

In this respect we may note several pertinent passages from Richard of St. Victor and Gregory. The emphasis upon sweetness, love, and light, man's increased capacity for loving God, his understanding of God in terms of love, and his perception of God's presence is well illustrated.

As soon as she is admitted to that inner secret of the divine mystery, through the greatness of her wonder and abundance of joy, she is wholly dissolved in herself or rather into Him who speaks, when she begins to hear words that it is not lawful for man to utter and to understand the strange and hidden things of God. In this state she who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with him, in this state, as we have said, the soul is altogether melted into him whom she loves and is herself fainting away.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Richard of St. Victor, "Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 229.

Sometimes the soul is admitted to some unwonted sweetness of interior relish, and is suddenly in some way refreshed when breathed on by the glowing spirit; and is the more eager the more it gains a taste of something to love. And it desires that within itself which it feels to taste sweet within, because it has in truth, from the love of its sweetness, become vile in its own sight . . . .<sup>65</sup>

So also, the soul absorbed in the consuming fire in the furnace of the divine love, surrounded by the glowing body of eternal desires, first kindles then grows red hot, at last liquefies completely and is altogether changed from its first state.<sup>66</sup>

Similar phrases and ideas can be found in Bernard's mystical thought which clearly indicate his understanding of man's state during union. As the following quotation from Butler illustrates, strong resemblances in both form and content to Rolle and Hilton may be noted:

Throughout the Sermons on the Canticle such expressions abound as the following, describing the experiences of the soul in the mystic union: it is an inpouring of the Spirit (7.2); an inpouring of the sweetness of holy love (32.2); an inpoured savour of heavenly sweetness (31.7); a virtue which changes the heart, and a love which fires it (57.7); a wave of piety (9.7); a taste of the Presence of God (31.7); the soul is inwardly embraced (32.2); drawn into the secret of the Divinity (49.4); set aglow with the love of God (52.7); sweetly refreshed with delicious love (50.4); experiences joy ineffable (57.11).<sup>67</sup>

Finally, in another quotation from Butler, we find striking parallels between Gregory's descriptions of the state of man during union and those found in Rolle, Hilton, Richard of St. Victor, and Bernard. Butler's selected passages from Gregory's mystical thought compares quite closely in both general tone and content with passages from

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<sup>65</sup>Gregory, Morals on Job, 23.43, Butler, pp. 73-74.

<sup>66</sup>Richard of St. Victor, "Four Degrees," Kirchberger, p. 229.

<sup>67</sup>Western Mysticism, p. 104.

both the English mystics and other medieval mystics which attempt to describe man's condition or state during the unitive phase.

The soul is admitted to a certain unwonted sweetness of inward savour (Mor. 23.43); it seeks after, and attains to, the sweetness of inward knowledge (Mor. 30.39); it is caught away to the sweetness of supernal contemplation (Mor. 8.50); it tastes a wondrous sweetness (Mor. 5.53); it touches by a fore-taste the sweetness of inmost delight, and knows the sweetness of eternal delight (Hom. in Ezechiel I.5.12); thus it is absorbed in the joy of a certain security (Mor. 24.11); it is brought into the secret joys of quiet (Hom. in Ezechiel II.5.6); it is overflowed by the light of inmost quiet (Hom. in Ezechiel II.2.14); and it already tastes with inward savour the rest that is to come (Hom. in Ezechiel I.3.9).<sup>68</sup>

The last idea within the informing concept of the general state of man during union consists of The Cloud's discussion of man's state in terms of a heightened awareness and feeling of love and peace. A close relationship exists between the consideration of man's state during union by Rolle, Hilton, and The Cloud since each mystic attempts to describe this state in terms of various heightened feelings. However, in contrast to Rolle and Hilton, The Cloud emphasizes the general state of love and peace within which man lives during union rather than such feelings of sweetness, savour, and delight which are present in Rolle and Hilton.

The Cloud's emphasis upon this heightened awareness and feeling of love and peace during the unitive phase may be illustrated as follows:

And, certes, in that soule that moste is ocupied in thougtes of pees hath God maad his woning-place. (DOS 85)

Bot no force therof, for "thou schalt graciously rest" in this louely oneheed of God & thi soule; "& thi sleep schal be ful

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

softe," for it schal be goostly fode & inly strength, as wel to thi body as to thi soule. (BPC 147-148)

For whoso lackith pees and restfulnes of herte, him lackith the liuely presence of the louely sigt of the heige pees of heuen, good gracious God, him owne dere self. (DOS 84-85)

And therefore whoso wol haue God contynouly wonyng in him, and liue in loue and in sigt of the hige pees of the Godheed . . . . (DOS 85)

This general feeling of love and peace which man experienced during union according to The Cloud has been illustrated by those passages from Gregory and Richard of St. Victor which were compared with Rolle's and Hilton's discussion of man's state during union.<sup>69</sup> And the series of passages from Gregory and Bernard quoted by Butler should also be noted as comparing closely with The Cloud's emphasis upon peace and love during union.<sup>70</sup>

Several other passages from Gregory further illustrate the similarity between his treatment of man's state during union and The Cloud's. Both Gregory and The Cloud emphasize the love, peace, and general sense of tranquillity that is experienced during union.

Not even in the sweetness of inward contemplation does the mind remain fixed for long, in that, being made to recoil by the very immensity of the light, it is called back to itself. And when it tastes that inward sweetness, it is on fire with love, it longs to mount above itself.<sup>71</sup>

When the mind, employed in prayer, pants after the form of its Maker, burning with divine longings, it is united to that which is above, it is disjoined from that below; it opens itself in the affection of its fervent passion, that

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<sup>69</sup> See above, pp. 346-347.

<sup>70</sup> See above, pp. 347-348.

<sup>71</sup> Morals on Job, 5.58, Butler, p. 81.

it may take in, and while taking in kindles itself; and whilst, with longing desire, the soul is agape after heavenly objects, in a marvellous way it tastes the very thing it longs to get.<sup>72</sup>

Their minds are inflamed with the love of that interior brightness, which they are able neither to see as it is, nor to utter as they see it.<sup>73</sup>

Often the mind of him that loves is filled with so great a gift of contemplation, that it has power to see what it has not the power to utter. The inundation of the Holy Spirit in exuberant outpouring is gathered in the soul of one in contemplation, when his mind is full beyond what he is able to comprehend.<sup>74</sup>

A similar treatment of the theme of love and peace as descriptive of man's state during union is found in two especially illustrative passages from Bernard of Clairvaux:

The delight of contemplation is likened to the feeling of rest "in the sleep of a most sweet stupor and tranquil admiration."<sup>75</sup>

. . . if any one among us is so much a man of desires that he has a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, and moreover desires it ardently, feels a burning thirst for it, and meditates upon it without ceasing, he certainly will receive the word at the time of his visitation in no other wise than as a bridegroom. I am speaking of the hour when he will feel himself inwardly clasped in the arms of Wisdom and then will be aware that the sweetness of divine love has been infused into his soul.<sup>76</sup>

Defining man's state or condition during union in terms of love, peace, and serenity is also found in a number of later medieval

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 15.53, p. 79.

<sup>73</sup>Homilies in Ezechiel, 1.5.13, Butler, p. 80.

<sup>74</sup>Morals on Job, 15.20, Butler, p. 80.

<sup>75</sup>Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, 23.11, Butler, p. 117.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 32.2, Connolly, p. 141.



treatises:

Also I may say one a nother wyse that he that cane noghte lufe this blessedde name Khesu with gastely myrthe, ne en-loye in it with heuently melodye here, he sall neuer hafe ne fele in the blisse of heuene that fulhede of souerayne Ioye . . . .<sup>77</sup>

Sum sayse, as I vndirstande, that he that cane noghte lufe this blyssed name Ihesu ne fynd ne fele in it gastely Ioye and delitabilite with wondirfull swetnes in this lyfe here, ffra the souerayne Ioy and gastely swetnes in the blysse of heuene he sall be aliene and neuer sall he come thar-to.<sup>78</sup>

The thyrde degre of loue is hyghest and moost wonderfull for what man cometh to that loue all comferte and all solace is closed oute of his herte but onely the Ioye of Ihesu cryste other Ioye may his herte not receyue, for swetnesse that he hath of the Ioye euermore lastynge. This loue is so brennynge & so gladynge that who so hath that loue may as well fele the fyer of brennynge loue in his soule as an other man fele his fynger brenne in erthely fyre. This loue may well be called a brennynge loue.<sup>79</sup>

God dwells within all who have this holy love, and they within God. Understand now well, how God dwells in the man who has this blessed virtue, and so thou mayst know, whether God dwells in thee and whether thou hast this virtue. God dwells in the man who loves him in such wise that He kindles his heart and his thoughts with the fire which Christ brought on earth.<sup>80</sup>

. . . and in the fellowship of our Lord himself and of all his saints shall have eternal life and endless bliss, and all happiness and perfect mirth, which is so great and so beautiful and so sweet, as St. Paul saith, Quod oculus non vidit, et auris non audivit, et in cor hominis non ascendit; so much mirth is in the city of heaven, that eye may not behold so much, nor ear hear, nor heart think.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>"An Epistle on Salvation by Love of the Name of Jesus," Horstman, I, 294.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>79</sup>"Dread and Love," Horstman, II, 75.

<sup>80</sup>Vices and Virtues, ed. Holthausen, p. 34.

<sup>81</sup>"De Sancto Andrea," Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. Morris, p. 184.



Even though the last passage refers to man's union with God in heaven rather than with mystical union as experienced on earth, the state of man which it describes may be compared with The Cloud's discussion of love and peace during union with God within the natural order. For the purposes of the present comparison, the two unitive states, earthly and heavenly, may be regarded as the same in terms of the words, phrases, and ideas used to describe them.

Finally, a passage from Augustine, which not only describes man's state in heaven but which also may be compared with The Cloud, should be included as it summarizes the medieval mystics' conception and description of man's state or condition during his experience of union with God within the unitive phase.

There the sole and all-embracing virtue is to love what you see, and the supreme happiness to possess what you love. For there the blessed life is drunk at the fountain head, whence there drop some sprinklings on this human life, that amid the trials of this world may one live with temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence. Since it is for the sake of attaining unto that where will be an untroubled quiet, and an ineffable vision of truth, that the labour is undertaken of restraining oneself from pleasure, and enduring adversities, and helping the needy, and resisting deceivers. There is seen the brightness of the Lord, not by an symbolic vision, whether corporal or spiritual; but by species, not by enigmas, in so far as the human mind can grasp it, according to the grace of God who takes hold of it, that God may speak mouth to mouth to him whom he hath made worthy of such colloquy: not the mouth of the body but of the mind.<sup>82</sup>

5. Union with God in this world as a foretaste of the union with him in the next

References to mystical union as a foretaste of that union with God to be experienced in heaven forms the final informing concept of

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<sup>82</sup>De Genesi ad litteram, 12.26.54, Butler, p. 53.

the secondary conceptual field for union. For Hilton and Julian, the only English mystics who consider this idea to any great extent, union with God within the natural order is only a partial and incomplete experience; the fullness of the vision of God and union with him will only occur in heaven.

For this is verily a tasting, so little as it is, and but an earnest of the sight of heavenly joy, not clearly, but half in murkness, which shall be fulfilled and openly cleared in the bliss of heaven . . . . (SP I.9.16)

The beginning of this contemplation may be felt in this life, but the fullhead of it is kept unto the bliss of heaven. (SP I.8.14)

And then shall we see God face to face, homely and fully. The creature that is made shall see and endlessly behold God which is the maker. For thus may no man see God and live after, that is to say, in this deadly life. (RDL 43.92)

And then shall we all come into our Lord, our self clearly knowing, and God fully having; and we shall endlessly be all had in God; him verily seeing and fully feeling, him spiritually feeling, him delectably in-breathing, and of him sweetly drinking. (RDL 43.92)

With the exception of references to the ineffability of union with God, consideration of mystical union as a foretaste of union with God in heaven is the most consistently and similarly treated informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union. Hugh of St. Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard of St. Victor, Aelred of Rievaulx, and various medieval mystical and religious treatises continually emphasize mystical union as a foreshadowing of union with God in heaven. Not only are their respective treatments of mystical union as foretaste quite similar to one another but there are also close parallels between their consideration of union as a foretaste and that of the English mystics.

Aelred's and Bernard's discussion of union as a foretaste displays striking similarities to that found in Hilton and Julian. Aelred and Bernard both emphasize the peace, delight, love, and vision of God which will be experienced fully in heaven but which is now only realized in part.

Such a vision is not for the present life, but it is reserved for our final state—for those, at least, who can say: we know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is. And now, even he appears to whom he will; but as he wills, not as he is. No man of wisdom, no saint, no prophet can see him as he is, or ever could see him in this mortal body. But he who will be considered worthy will be able to see him, in a body that is immortal. But that will be hereafter, as I have said.<sup>83</sup>

"That vision which you ask to be shown is far beyond your powers, O my spouse," says the bridegroom, "nor are you now strong enough to look upon the marvellous light of midday wherein I dwell. . . . That is reserved for you until the last day when I shall reveal myself to you and you are filled with glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." How can you who are not yet all beautiful, consider yourself worthy to behold him who is the sum of all beauty?<sup>84</sup>

In the next life the earthly creature, like the heavenly creature, no longer through a mirror and in an enigma, but face to face will see God, and his wisdom will be contemplated with clearness in itself.<sup>85</sup>

Aelred illustrates this theme especially well; and the correlation between his discussion of mystical union as a foretaste and that found in Hilton and Julian is quite close.

This peace, this calm, this happiness is to be looked for in our Father's home: there, when we live in eternity, there will be no room for forgetting, when we rejoice in truth there will

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<sup>83</sup>Bernard, Canticle of Canticles, 31.2, Butler, p. 135.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 38.5, pp. 156-157.

<sup>85</sup>Serm. de div., 9.1, Butler, p. 120.

be no deception by error, when we are swallowed up in God's love there will be no impulse of cupidity. O eternal and true love, O true and lovely eternity, O eternal and true and lovely Trinity! Here will be rest, here peace, here happy tranquillity, here tranquil happiness, here happy and tranquil joy.<sup>86</sup>

And even if we enjoy the light of contemplation and the sweetness of compunction which are certainly a foretaste of the delights that await us with God, when we consider the infinitely greater joys that will be ours in heaven, the consolations of this life are clearly not the full enjoyment of God; they are simply a benefit which God confers on us.<sup>87</sup>

And as our souls strive longingly for the things of heaven and experience even now a foretaste of eternity's gifts, we increase and multiply with a progeny of good works.<sup>88</sup>

Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, particularly the latter, consider mystical union as a foretaste in a manner similar to the English mystics. Both Hugh and Richard point out that even though the union with God may be experienced in this life, it can only be fully consummated in heaven.

There [in heaven] we shall be the food of God, for He will be well pleased with us; and He will be our food; for, when we behold His glory face to face, we shall delight in Him.<sup>89</sup>

He reached the outskirts of that blessed land because by frequent ecstasies he had a foretaste of eternal life.<sup>90</sup>

The perfection of this fullness begins in this life but will be consummated in the next.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Speculum, 1.5, Colledge, pp. 108-109.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 3.35, Webb and Walker, pp. 138-139.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 1.21, p. 32.

<sup>89</sup>Hugh of St. Victor, Noah's Ark, 1.3.14, Selected Spiritual Writings, p. 119.

<sup>90</sup>Richard of St. Victor, Benjamin Minor, 39, Kirchberger, p. 103.

<sup>91</sup>Benjamin Major, 4.5, Kirchberger, p. 154.

. . . not only raise our minds to that which we may have in this life but also consider that vision of divine contemplation which we hope for in the world to come, and hold with strong desire to this hope.<sup>92</sup>

For the contemplation of truth begins in this life but is carried on perpetually in the next.<sup>93</sup>

Finally, we should mention several passages from Sawles Warde and a medieval homily which also illustrate the theme of mystic union as a foretaste:

And their life is the sight of God and the knowledge of God, as our Lord hath said.<sup>94</sup>

And they are therefore, like him, in the same form that he is, for they see him as he is, face to face.<sup>95</sup>

O Lord, thi grace is a fayre sight and a faire bryghtenes. Than when ther shall be no bodies gadered to-thether than is sterres on heven or graweyll in the see, and eueryche of hem so bright, than ther will be a glorious sight. 3itt shall that be but as a shadow to the bryghtnes of Goddes blessed face.<sup>96</sup>

And all the swetnesse and likyngges of metis and drynkys or spyserie or mystralsi that anny man or angell may thenke, 3e shall haue in the sight of the blessed Trinite, the wiche shall last euer with-owten ende.<sup>97</sup>

These passages from medieval mystics such as Aelred, Bernard, and Gregory, and other medieval religious literature clearly illustrate the similarity in both form and content between their discussion

<sup>92</sup>Benjamin Major, 4.10, Kirchberger, p. 161.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 1.1, p. 133.

<sup>94</sup>Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises, p. 262.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Sermon #19, Middle English Sermons, ed. Ross, p. 114.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

of mystical union as a foretaste of union in heaven and that of the English mystics. For Hilton, Julian, and other medieval mystics consistently emphasize the fact that the vision of God which man experiences during the contemplative life will only be consummated fully in heaven.

As in the summaries at the end of Chapters Nine and Ten, no attempt will be made at this point to consider all of the relationships between the English mystics and other medieval mystics with respect to union which were considered in the present chapter. Only those relationships which seem to be significant will be summarized. Rolle's and The Cloud's conception of union in terms of man's being oned or knitted to God is similarly conceived by other medieval mystics such as Bernard and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. References to union in terms of the nature of God, considered by Rolle and The Cloud, are also found in Dionysius, Bernard, and Bonaventure who emphasize the nature of God as imparted during union rather than the union itself. Hilton's discussion of union as a state within which knowledge and perfect love of God may occur receives a similar treatment by Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory, and Richard of St. Victor. Even though similar terms and phrases are used to convey this concept by these other medieval mystics, the terms themselves are as vague and general as those employed by Hilton.

Julian's emphasis upon the sight or beholding of God during union rather than the union itself is paralleled in the works of Augustine, Dionysius, and Richard of St. Victor who also emphasize the sight or vision of God. The role of love within the unitive



phase, considered extensively by Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton, is also discussed by Gregory and Richard of St. Victor. The main ideas relating to the role of love during union are considered in a similar fashion: man's love for God, God's love for man, and the love created by the union itself are integral to union.

The third informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union, the knowledge of God imparted during union, which is considered by Rolle and Hilton, receives a similar treatment by other medieval mystics. Rolle's and Hilton's discussion of the knowledge of God revealed during union in terms of the sight or presence of God is quite similar to that found in Richard of St. Victor. And Hilton's references to the fact that man may know that God is but not what he is is stressed consistently by other medieval mystics such as Gregory, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor. A strong medieval tradition exists which emphasizes both man's inability to describe God during union and the essential incomprehensibility of God. Hilton's description of the knowledge of God in terms of various physical and emotional effects caused by visions during union in terms of such phrases as "the sweetness of his love," "the savour of his blessed face," and "ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy" have definite parallels in other medieval mystical literature. For example, Augustine's descriptions of the knowledge of God in terms of an enjoyment of God's presence during union, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor's emphasis upon visions with respect to the sweetness that they produce, and Bernard's consideration of the knowledge of God in terms of its effect upon man indicate striking similarities

to Hilton's treatment of this concept.

From our discussion of the ineffability of union with God in the present chapter, it should be noted that most other medieval mystics have the same difficulty as Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian in their attempt to describe union with God. In fact, this particular informing concept receives more consideration by other medieval mystics than any other informing concept in the field for union. Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and other medieval mystical writings all emphasize God's essential incomprehensibility and man's inability to describe him as he is or union with him. For other medieval mystics, as for the English mystics, man may not know God as he is in himself in this life.

Man's state or condition during union, which was considered by Rolle and Hilton in terms of various changes which occur within man such as sweetness, song, savour, and delight, finds corresponding treatment by Richard of St. Victor and Gregory who employ similar terms and phrases to consider man's state during union. And The Cloud's treatment of man's state during union in terms of a heightened awareness and feeling of love and peace bears close similarities to the consideration of this concept by other medieval mystics such as Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and Augustine. Other religious writings such as "An Epistle on Salvation by Love of the Name of Jesus" and "Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God" also reflect close similarities.

Nearly all medieval mystics, particularly Bernard, Aelred, and Hugh of St. Victor, emphasize the fact that union experienced within

the unitive phase is a foretaste of that union expected in heaven. In both form and content these other mystics consider this concept in a manner similar to that found in Hilton and Julian. In general, the central idea remains constant: what man experiences in union in this life is only a foretaste of what he may expect in heaven.

## CHAPTER XII

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter we will be primarily concerned with the following three main areas: (1) an overall description and critical assessment of the methodology that has been used to understand the thought of the fourteenth-century English mystics; (2) a brief summary of the conclusions which have resulted from the comparison of the English mystics with one another and with other medieval mystics; and (3) areas for further exploration and analysis which have been suggested by our study of the English mystics and other medieval mystics.

The methodology used in this study may be summarized as follows. First, primary conceptual fields for each phase of the contemplative life were constructed for each English mystic. By examining carefully the writings of each mystic, several main informing concepts were selected for each phase of the contemplative life which, when viewed as a totality, represented the thought of each mystic with respect to a given phase. Each informing concept included words, phrases, and ideas, also selected from the writings of each mystic, which shaped or constituted the concept. Creating these primary conceptual fields enabled us to accomplish two primary objectives: (1) to reduce the thought of the English mystics into manageable,

convenient structures so that their understanding of each phase of the contemplative life could be readily grasped and understood; and (2) to provide a basic structure that would facilitate comparison among Rolle, The Cloud, Hilton, Julian, and Margery Kempe, and between these English mystics and other medieval mystics.<sup>1</sup>

From the primary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union established for each mystic, three secondary conceptual fields were created. Thus, a single field for each phase of the contemplative life was constructed which represented the collective thought of all of the English mystics with respect to a given phase.<sup>2</sup> For example, in order to clarify the transition from primary to secondary conceptual fields, the five primary conceptual fields for purgation for the English mystics were reduced to a single conceptual field consisting of main informing concepts and those words, phrases, and ideas which constituted or clustered around each concept. These concepts and the "clusters" of words, phrases, and ideas were taken from the five primary conceptual fields. Using the same procedure, secondary conceptual fields were constructed for illumination and union. These three secondary conceptual fields provided the framework for our comparative analysis of the thought of the English mystics in Chapters 6-8.

Then, these secondary conceptual fields were used to compare the thought of the English mystics with that of other medieval mystics

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A for an outline of the primary conceptual fields.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix B for an outline of the secondary conceptual fields.

and of various medieval religious, devotional, and homiletic works. This procedure, followed in Chapters 9-11, permitted us to note and discuss the main differences and similarities between the English mystics and other medieval mystics. However, rather than observing and commenting impressionistically upon "parallels" in a traditional sense, we considered similarities and differences in terms of conceptual fields, specific informing concepts, or words, phrases, and ideas under each concept.

Before summarizing the main conclusions of our analysis of the fourteenth-century English mystics, we should attempt to assess critically and in detail the conceptual field methodology used to analyze the thought of the English mystics and its relationship to that of other medieval mystics. For the methodology itself is perhaps the most significant contribution of this work toward a complete and balanced understanding of fourteenth-century English mystical thought. The conceptual field methodology can be assessed most adequately by considering carefully both its advantages and disadvantages.

The primary advantage in using a conceptual field methodology to understand fourteenth-century English mystical thought is that it permits the expression of the contemplative life or mystic way as a total entity with clearly defined components. Rather than approaching contemplative thought in terms of several isolated mystical concepts or ideas, we can thus view and understand the entire mystic way as a complete inter-related ideational structure. Furthermore, a conceptual field methodology, in which the contemplative life is reduced to purgative, illuminative, and unitive phases, each one of which is

defined by its own conceptual field, provides an organic approach to mystical thought in that the main informing concepts and the ideas that constitute these concepts evolve from the thought of the mystics themselves rather than being imposed by the critic.

Similarly, each phase of the contemplative life can be understood as an organic unity whose main informing concepts define the entire phase. For example, in our discussion of purgation, we defined the purgational phase in terms of five main informing concepts which, together with the words, phrases, and ideas which shaped each concept, constituted this phase of the contemplative life. Thus, rather than defining the purgational process exclusively in terms of a single idea, e.g., man's need to purge himself of his sins in order to progress in the contemplative life, purgation was considered by examining the various informing concepts individually and collectively as well as noting the different relationships existing between them. Defining and considering each phase of the contemplative life in terms of several informing concepts provides a thorough and systematic rationale for examining the total ideational composition of a particular phase. Also, it is easier to determine the relative importance of each informing concept and to avoid the danger of overemphasizing or underemphasizing a particular idea relating to that phase.

By delineating each informing concept as a group of words, phrases, and ideas organically related to one another, it is possible to view and understand the subtle ideational configuration of each concept rather than simply defining it exclusively in terms of one

central idea. Since most ideas or concepts, particularly mystical ideas, are constituted by a number of secondary ideas, these secondary ideas must be considered individually and collectively in order to grasp the full implications of a particular informing concept. Defining informing concepts in terms of component parts therefore permits a more complete understanding of the concept itself. And, at the same time, it is possible to note the varying degrees of emphasis placed upon the different components of the informing concept.

Conceptual fields also provide a convenient means for comparing and contrasting the thought of a given mystic, or a group of mystics such as the English mystics, with that of other mystics. Rather than comparing single, isolated mystical ideas or concepts out of context, we can note and consider similarities and differences within the structure provided by the conceptual field as a whole or by its various components. This is especially important in comparing the thought of mystics for frequently the same words, phrases, and ideas are used in mystical thought to express a concept which relates to several phases of the contemplative life. For example, since God's love, grace, and mercy function as an informing concept in both the purgative and illuminative phases, valid comparison must involve relating the concept to the entire phase in question. Using a conceptual field methodology therefore permits the comparison of ideas or thoughts within the context of the same phase or an informing concept in that phase.

A conceptual field methodology also facilitates comparison of certain mystical, religious, devotional, and homiletic material with that of other medieval mystics whose understanding or treatment of



the contemplative life is much more highly developed. For example, it is rather difficult without having recourse to a conceptual field to compare effectively a medieval homily which stresses a single idea with a given medieval mystic whose mystical thought is elaborate and well-developed. However, by using a conceptual field it is possible to establish a definite relationship between the homily's main point and its appropriate counterpart in the conceptual field. Various similarities and differences can then be indicated and discussed.

The development of a particular mystical idea or thought may be traced fairly carefully by using a conceptual field methodology. By comparing its treatment within the context of a given conceptual field, additions, diminutions, similarities, and differences can be considered. For example, the nosce te ipsum theme can be followed from Augustine to the fourteenth-century English mystics by carefully noting changes in the words, phrases, and ideas used to express this particular informing concept in the conceptual field for purgation.

A final advantage of the conceptual field methodology lies in the fact that even though many mystics do not offer a coherent, systematic interpretation of the contemplative life, the creation of conceptual fields does provide a means for structuring their mystical thought so that it can be analyzed and understood. Thus, by using certain central ideas clearly expressed in the writings of a particular mystic, it is possible to create ideational structures or conceptual fields which permit a more complete understanding and interpretation of the mystic's thought. This is especially important

since the thought of many mystics is frequently so disorganized and subjective that it is virtually impossible to discern any recognizable and coherent ideational pattern. Conceptual fields do much to alleviate this problem.

There are, however, several disadvantages or shortcomings in the conceptual-field methodology. First, we should mention the subjective nature of the selective procedure involved in choosing informing concepts and especially the words, phrases, and ideas which constitute or shape a specific informing concept. In selecting the main informing concepts for each phase of the contemplative life, it was necessary to choose very carefully only those concepts which constituted in an absolute sense the particular phase in question. In short, only those concepts were chosen which actually determined a given phase in terms of both importance and frequency. With respect to those words, phrases, and ideas that constituted each informing concept, only those terms and ideas closely associated with a specific informing concept were selected. However, in spite of a careful and methodical procedure, subjective choice was unavoidable. To alleviate partially the subjective nature of selection, it should be stated that the conceptual fields and their component parts are not absolutely fixed; other informing concepts can be added and existing concepts can be excluded if necessary. But this does not negate the overall validity of the general methodology which we have used.

Another possible criticism of the conceptual-field methodology is its assumption that changes in the expression of mystical thought in both form and content result primarily from the interaction of

ideas and thoughts. In other words, mystical ideas and concepts are formed, develop, and mutate into other ideas within the context of a closed ideational framework. For example, our methodology seems to assume that the nosce te ipsum theme is affected primarily by mental concepts and ideas rather than non-ideational forms lying outside the conceptual field such as sculpture, stained glass, illuminations, and so forth. In responding to these criticisms, it should be stated that our primary concern has been to understand the mystical thought of the fourteenth-century English mystics as present in their writings rather than attempting to understand the process of formation of mystical ideas and concepts even though the formation of conceptual fields has permitted certain comparisons with other medieval mystics. Other investigations are necessary in order to assess the influence upon fourteenth-century mystical thought of non-ideational forms.

However, the above criticism also raises several important questions which concern the area of both epistemology and the history of ideas, particularly the way in which mystical ideas are formed, experience transformation, and are transferred from one mystic to another. Is mystical thought primarily the result of reflection upon other mystical writings? Are changes in the expression of mystical ideas or concepts due to the interaction of ideas which cluster around and support the main concepts? Can the history of a given mystical idea or concept be traced by simply noting its occurrence and the way it is expressed in various mystical, religious, devotional, and homiletic literature? These are serious questions which

must be answered in order to understand fully the mystical thought of the fourteenth century.

From our analysis of the writings of the fourteenth-century English mystics some tentative answers to these questions can be stated. Because of the strong similarities between the mystical thought of the English mystics and other medieval mystics, which became apparent primarily from a comparison of conceptual fields, it does seem that fourteenth-century mystical thought reflects to a great extent that of earlier medieval mystics. Also, changes in the expression of mystical ideas or concepts by later mystics seem to result partially from the interaction of words, phrases, and ideas which cluster around each informing concept and which derive for the most part from earlier mystical thought. Finally, even though our methodology depends upon an affirmative response to the last question concerning the history of certain mystical ideas or concepts, it has tried to avoid the facile one-to-one correspondence approach present in much "influence" literature. As I have suggested at several points, similarities and differences between various mystics have been discussed in terms of conceptual fields, informing concepts, and words, phrases, and ideas relating to these concepts rather than in terms of "specific" parallels. Areas of influence rather than specific influences have been my chief concern. However, in spite of the problems associated with the nature of the movement of mystical ideas, the conceptual-field methodology does provide a sound approach for understanding the thought of individual medieval mystics.

Another criticism of the conceptual-field methodology is that it is too structured and mechanical. Furthermore, because of its structure, it may even be reductionist in nature. But there is freedom to add new informing concepts or to elaborate upon existing concepts. And because of the inherent flexibility of the conceptual fields, they do not exist as static or fixed ideational structures. New relationships may be found among the words, phrases, and ideas which constitute the various informing concepts. Finally, due to the somewhat loose critical approach to mystical thought taken in the past, it seemed necessary to create conceptual fields which would permit a relatively coherent approach in spite of the possible dangers introduced by structuring mystical thought.

A final criticism is that the various influences or points of similarity or difference established among the various English mystics and between these mystics and earlier mystics are untenable because the selections from other medieval mystics and medieval religious literature have been representative rather than all-inclusive. However, as I have indicated, we have been primarily concerned with areas of influence within the context of conceptual fields rather than with specific parallels. From this point of view, a sound representative selection from other mystics and religious literature provides an adequate basis for discussing these areas of influence.

The conceptual fields which have been constructed for each phase of the contemplative life constitute the primary contribution made by this study to the understanding of the thought of the fourteenth-century English mystics and its relationship with that of other

medieval mystics. These fields include both the primary conceptual fields constructed for each English mystic and the secondary conceptual fields which were created in order to compare the English mystics with one another and with other medieval mystics.

The primary conceptual fields for each English mystic which were developed in Chapters 3-5 provide a basic ideational structure or framework which, when viewed as a totality, contains the individual mystic's understanding of each phase of the contemplative life. Without some means for ordering the thought of the English mystics, such as that provided by the conceptual fields and their informing concepts, it would be very difficult to understand the English mystics' treatment of the various phases of the mystic way. The primary conceptual fields, therefore, represent a major contribution to a full understanding of the contemplative life as expressed by the English mystics.

The secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union, which were based upon the primary conceptual fields and developed in Chapters 6-8, are a contribution of this study equally as important as the primary conceptual fields. The secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union combine the informing concepts of the primary conceptual fields for each English mystic and thus represent a single conceptual field for each phase of the contemplative life which is representative of the mystical thought of all the English mystics with respect to that phase. In short, the secondary conceptual fields represent a collective representation of each phase of the contemplative life by the English mystics. Thus,

the primary and secondary conceptual fields which we have constructed are significant in that they permit us to understand clearly the treatment of the various phases of the mystic way by each English mystic as well as by all of the English mystics in a collective sense.

The application of these primary and secondary conceptual fields in this study has led to conclusions which may be summarized under three main headings: (1) specific conclusions about the mystical thought of each English mystic; (2) significant specific and general relationships between the English mystics in terms of their understanding of the contemplative life; and (3) relationships between the mystical thought of the English mystics and that of other medieval mystics.

For several reasons there are difficulties involved in attempting to summarize the conclusions of this work with respect to the above three areas. First, most of the specific conclusions in terms of similarities and differences have been carefully noted in our consideration of the informing concepts and their components for both the primary and secondary conceptual fields. To list them again at this points seems redundant. Consequently, it will be much more profitable to consider briefly those conclusions for the three areas listed above which seem especially significant. For other conclusions the reader is referred to our discussion of the primary conceptual fields in Chapters 3-5 and the secondary conceptual fields in Chapters 6-8 and 9-11. A second reason for the difficulty in summarizing the conclusions is that discussions of many of the similarities and differences noted within the various conceptual fields and their

informing concepts have, because of the limitations imposed by length, had to be kept somewhat general and brief. In order to test the feasibility of the conceptual-field methodology, it seemed important that the various phases of the contemplative life be worked out completely in terms of the methodology. But this meant minimizing our analysis of each informing concept. Consequently, only the most significant relationships under each informing concept could be noted. However, even though our conclusions for each of the three areas are both interesting and important, further extensive analysis of the conceptual fields and their informing concepts is necessary for a complete study of fourteenth-century English mystical thought and its relationship to other medieval mystical thought.

On the basis of our analysis of the thought of the English mystics, especially in Chapters 3-5 and 6-8, several significant conclusions may be made about the individual emphases of each mystic with respect to the contemplative life. These individual emphases were determined from the comparative analysis of the secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union. In short, they represent several unique ideas of the English mystics which had no exact parallels or counterparts in the thought of the other English mystics.

With respect to purgation, the following individual emphases may be noted. Whereas the other English mystics consider the importance of man's desire for purgation, only The Cloud notes that this desire for purgation must be responded to and reflected upon. Hilton's emphasis upon the need for man to fix his desire for purgation



upon a single point in order to intensify his desire should be mentioned. Another individual emphasis is Hilton's treatment of the necessity for man to deal with the ground of his sin or his primary sinful condition rather than with specific sins. The Cloud's thought that during purgation man must alienate or isolate himself from others in order to progress in the mystic way is also unique among the English mystics. Finally, Julian's consideration of the idea that knowledge of self results from man's comparison of his nature with God's is not treated by other English mystics.

Several emphases unique among the English mystics regarding the illuminative phase should also be mentioned. Julian's conceptualization of the nature of God revealed during illumination primarily in terms of love forms an especially important individual emphasis. Even though the other English mystics, particularly Rolle and Hilton, consider God's nature as revealed during the illuminative phase in terms of love, Julian's treatment is much more emphatic and consistent. With respect to the function of God's grace during illumination, there are several important individual emphases. Rolle's consideration of God's grace in terms of its ravishing effect upon man is a more intense expression of grace than that of the other mystics. And Hilton, rather than viewing grace as a gift of God, sees it as the gift of God himself. Julian's treatment of grace during illumination is unique compared to that of the other mystics in that she considers it within the context of a close, personal relationship with God. This degree of personalism is not found in the other mystics. Finally, in spite of Hilton's cautious attitude toward visions,

particularly those which are accompanied by song, sweetness, and light, The Cloud is the only English mystic who consistently warns man to be wary of visions and revelations during the illuminative phase.

Concerning the English mystics' treatment of the unitive phase, two individual emphases should be mentioned. The first unique treatment of union is Hilton's description of union in terms of man's state or condition during union; and he discusses this state or condition in terms of man's spiritual and physical feelings experienced during union. The second is Julian's consideration of union with God in terms of the sight or beholding of God rather than in terms of the union itself. For Julian, the sight of God seems to be more important than the actual union with God experienced during the unitive phase.

The next group of conclusions to be summarized consists of various significant specific and general relationships, including similarities and differences, among the English mystics with respect to their treatment of the contemplative life. These relationships evolved from our analysis of the secondary conceptual fields for purification, illumination, and union in Chapters 6-8.

With respect to the purgational phase, the following similarities and differences may be noted. Rolle and Hilton, in contrast to The Cloud, Julian, and Margery, consider man's condition or state after he is purged from his love of the world and himself. With the exception of Margery Kempe, each English mystic emphasizes the effect that God's love, grace, and mercy have upon man's sins during

purgation. Rolle and Hilton, however, consider this effect much more extensively than the other mystics. Hilton and Julian consider the informing concept of God's grace during purgation in terms of its power to restore man's original image. For them, God's grace eradicates man's present, imperfect image and restores his true image.

The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian consider extensively the implications of the nosce te ipsum theme for the purgational phase. That knowledge of self leads to knowledge of God is for them an important part of purgation. And knowledge of self also leads to an increased awareness of man's nature and his sinful condition. Hilton's treatment of the nosce te ipsum theme during purgation is, however, much more specific than The Cloud's. Finally, it should be noted that only in Julian and Margery can be found a careful, systematic treatment of the benefits deriving from vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion. Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton do not develop this concept to any great extent.

Several important similarities and differences in the mystics' treatment of the illuminative phase may be summarized briefly. The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian, who consider the knowledge of God during illumination most fully, consistently emphasize the indescribability of this knowledge. And even though each mystic attempts to describe the nature of God revealed during illumination, the words and phrases generally used are standard, traditional terms which are frequently employed to characterize God's nature. Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton each consider the change occurring within man during illumination. The basic similarity in their treatment of change lies in their

consideration of the transformative effect of love upon man during illumination. And there is a particularly close correlation between Hilton's "new gracious feelings" and Rolle's "everlasting sweetness," "high sweetness," and "inward delights" which they use to describe this change.

The function of God's grace, love, and mercy is considered by Rolle, Hilton, and Julian primarily in terms of the effects that it has upon man during illumination. And each of these mystics emphasizes the importance of God's grace throughout the illuminative phase. Rolle and Margery discuss the visions occurring during illumination chiefly in terms of their effects upon them. Words and phrases used by them to describe these effects bear close similarities to the language employed by Hilton in his criticism of visions. In contrast to Rolle and Hilton, Julian's and Margery's accounts of visions are usually presented in terms of Christ's suffering and passion. Finally, throughout their consideration of visions during illumination, each English mystic consistently emphasizes the essential ineffability of visions and revelations.

There are several significant similarities and differences between the English mystics in their treatment of the unitive phase. Among the five English mystics, Rolle, Hilton, and The Cloud discuss, describe, and refer most extensively to union with God. Moreover, they consistently emphasize love as the primary binding force between man and God during union. Rolle and Hilton are the only two mystics who refer specifically to the knowledge of God revealed during union; however, they refer to this knowledge in terms of the

sight or presence of God rather than in more specific terms.

Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian each refer to the ineffable and indescribable nature of union with God during the unitive phase. For them, as for other mystics, union with God is impossible to describe in detail. The general state or condition of man during union is considered by Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton. However, whereas Rolle and Hilton discuss this state during union in terms of changed or heightened physical feelings such as sweetness, song, and so forth, The Cloud considers man's state or condition in terms of his capacity to live in union, love, and peace with God which is intensified during union. It should be especially emphasized that Rolle and Hilton use similar terms and phrases such as "joy," "song," "ghostly savour," and "sweetness" to describe man's feelings during union which are indicative of his new state. Finally, we should note that Hilton and Julian consider union with God as a foretaste of that union to be experienced by man in heaven. There is little substantial difference between the words, phrases, and ideas used by Hilton and Julian to express this concept.

The next series of conclusions to be summarized consists of significant relationships, including similarities and differences, between the thought of the English mystics and that of other medieval mystics and medieval religious, devotional, and homiletic literature. It should be emphasized at this point that only primary relationships stemming from our analysis of the secondary conceptual fields for purgation, illumination, and union will be summarized. For other similarities and differences between the English mystics and other

medieval mystics, the reader is referred to Chapters 9-11.

With respect to the purgational phase, the following similarities and differences may be noted. That man should have an initial desire for purgation, a concept developed by The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian, is treated similarly in both form and content by Bernard of Clairvaux. Furthermore, Bernard and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor each indicate that this desire for purgation must be thorough in order for man to progress in the contemplative life. The recognition of man's sinful condition, emphasized by Hilton, Julian, and Margery, is consistently stressed by other medieval mystics and religious writings. Richard of St. Victor, however, seems to be the only other medieval mystic who stresses Hilton's and Julian's idea that man must focus his desire for purgation upon a single point.

Nearly all medieval mystics consider the need for man to deny the world and his fleshly desires as a necessary part of the purgational phase. In a manner similar to the English mystics, two main ideas are usually mentioned: (1) purgation must occur in order for God to be known fully; and (2) man's love for himself and the world impedes eventual union with God. These ideas are consistently emphasized by medieval mystics from St. Augustine to the English mystics. The impossibility of man's love for himself and his love for God coexisting, a concept considered by Rolle and Hilton, is also considered by Gregory, Edmund, Richard of St. Victor, and Bernard. It appears to be a relatively standard mystical concept. Whereas the need for sorrow and contrition during purgation is discussed by Richard of St. Victor, it is much more predominant in homiletic

writings and in popular works such as Speculum Sacerdotale and The Lay Folks' Catechism than in other medieval mystics. The Cloud's emphasis upon the need for man to alienate himself from others in order to progress in the mystic way is apparently only found in Hugh and Richard of St. Victor each of whom develops this concept in detail. Hugh of St. Victor and Edmund both consider the state of man's soul after purgation in a manner similar to that found in Rolle and Hilton. Such phrases as "sweetness of mirth" and "new gracious feelings" which are used by Rolle and Hilton to describe this state have similar counterparts in both Hugh and Edmund.

Rolle's and Hilton's treatment of God's love and grace during purgation in terms of its purgative and transformative effect, i.e., by which man's love for himself and the world is changed into love for God, appears to be a standard theme in medieval mystical writings and receives a similar treatment in the works of Aelred, Bernard, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. Hilton's and Julian's consideration of the restoration of man's true image through the working of God's grace during purgation has significant parallels in Aelred's Speculum Caritatis. The general effect of God's grace, mercy, and love upon man during purgation, considered by Rolle, Hilton, and Julian in terms of sweetness, brightness, rest, and peace, is treated extensively by other medieval mystics. It is particularly evident in Bernard and Aelred although it is also found in homiletic literature.

The nosce te ipsum theme is evidently integral to the purgational thought of other medieval mystics. Hilton's and Julian's treatment of this concept receives a similar discussion in Gregory,

Edmund, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure. It is especially clear in Richard of St. Victor who feels that knowledge of self during purgation necessarily leads to knowledge of God. Whereas earlier medieval mystics stress the idea that knowledge of God rather than knowledge of oneself as sinful proceeds from knowledge of self, later medieval religious and mystical writings, such as homiletic and popular religious works, emphasize the fact that knowledge of self produces primarily the knowledge of man's sinful condition.

Finally, it should be mentioned that vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion and its benefits are stressed more by later devotional and religious writings than by earlier medieval mystics. The treatment of this concept in later medieval writings closely parallels its discussion in Julian and Margery.

There are several important relationships between the thought of the English mystics and other medieval mystics with respect to the illuminative phase which should be mentioned. Knowledge of God revealed during illumination, considered by The Cloud, Hilton, and Julian primarily in terms of God's incomprehensibility and man's inability to describe God's nature, receives a similar emphasis in other medieval mystics, particularly in the writing of Hugh of St. Victor who stresses the indescribability of God as he makes himself known during illumination. In spite of the fact that general references to God's nature with respect to illumination may be found in other medieval mystics, these references, because of their vague and general nature, parallel the descriptions of God's nature as



found in the English mystics.

Rolle's and Hilton's attempt to describe man's changed state during the illuminative phase in terms of new feelings or attitudes such as "new gracious feelings," "high sweetness," and "inward delights" is remarkably similar to the treatment of this concept by Hugh and Richard of St. Victor who use such phrases as "interior sweetness," "inward delights," and "divine sweetness." Man's increased capacity for love and charity during illumination, considered by both The Cloud and Hilton, and the unifying and transforming effect of love in The Cloud and Rolle are both well-developed in other medieval mystical literature. The need for growth in love during the illuminative phase is emphasized by Aelred, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and homiletic literature. And Aelred, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, and "The Dread and Love of God" treat the transformative effects of love in a manner similar to The Cloud and Rolle.

Rolle's concept of God's grace in terms of man being ravished is also considered by Aelred, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor each of whom discusses God's grace as a cleansing fire which lifts man up into a form of ecstasy. Hilton's discussion of God's grace in terms of its effect upon man's affective powers receives a similar treatment in Aelred and Richard of St. Victor; several close parallels to Hilton may be found in Hugh in this respect. And Hilton's thought that God's grace affects man's reason in a significant way is considered at length by Augustine, Bernard, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. That God's grace produces knowledge of God during the illuminative phase, a concept developed by Hilton and Julian, is

also considered by Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure. It is particularly well-developed by Richard of St. Victor.

Rolle's and Margery's consideration of the effects of visions rather than attempting to describe the visions themselves receives a similar treatment by Augustine, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor. Julian's and Margery's accounts of visions during illumination, which are usually discussed with respect to the suffering and passion, are apparently not found extensively in earlier medieval mystics who frequently treat visions in terms other than the suffering and passion. Later medieval treatments of visions, however, such as those found in "A Talking of the Love of God," "The Wooing of Our Lord," and "A Hymn to Our Lord," are quite similar to Julian and Margery. That the visions themselves are ineffable, frequently noted by the English mystics, is also stressed by other medieval mystics such as Gregory, Augustine, and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor.

The discussion of the effects of visions by Rolle, Hilton, and Margery in terms of heightened physical feelings such as "ghostly savour and sweetness" and "sweetness and grace" is similar to that found in Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor who describe the effects of visions in terms of sweetness, delight, taste, and various inner feelings. The close similarity in words and phrases used by the English mystics and other medieval mystics suggests a traditional manner of describing visions. Julian's and Margery's treatment of the effects of visions with respect to the aid that they provide is also considered by other medieval mystics. Richard of St. Victor,

for example, considers the effects of visions upon man's intellect and understanding. On the other hand, Hugh of St. Victor and Bernard indicate that man's ability to understand and his capacity for love increase because of the visions experienced during illumination. Finally, the idea that visions effect an increased understanding of God and his nature, which is developed by Hilton, Julian, and Margery, is also found in Richard of St. Victor and Bernard, though in a much more abstract and theoretical manner. That visions produce knowledge of God, however, is found in most medieval mystical literature.

At this point we may summarize several relationships between the English mystics and other medieval mystics with respect to the unitive phase. Rolle's and The Cloud's conception of union in which man is oned or knitted to God is similarly conceived by other medieval mystics such as Bernard and Hugh and Richard of St. Victor. References to union which emphasize the nature of God, considered by Rolle and The Cloud, are also found in Dionysius, Bernard, and Bonaventure who stress the importance of the nature of God as imparted during union rather than the union itself. Hilton's discussion of union as a state within which knowing and perfect loving of God may occur receives a similar treatment by Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory, and Richard of St. Victor. Even though similar terms and phrases are used to convey this concept by these other medieval mystics, the terms themselves are as vague and general as those employed by Hilton.

Julian's emphasis upon the sight or beholding of God during union rather than the union itself is paralleled in the works of Augustine, Dionysius, and Richard of St. Victor who also emphasize the sight or

vision of God. The role of love within the unitive phase, considered extensively by Rolle, The Cloud, and Hilton, is also discussed by Gregory and Richard of St. Victor. The main ideas relating to the role of love during union are considered in a similar fashion: man's love for God, God's love for man, and the love created by the union itself are each integral to union.

The third informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union, the knowledge of God imparted during union, which is considered by both Rolle and Hilton, receives a similar treatment by other medieval mystics. Rolle's and Hilton's discussion of the knowledge of God revealed during union in terms of the sight or presence of God is quite similar to that found in Richard of St. Victor. And Hilton's references to the fact that man may know that God is but not what he is is stressed consistently by other mystics such as Gregory, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor. A strong medieval tradition exists which emphasizes both man's inability to describe God during union and the essential incomprehensibility of God. Hilton's description of the knowledge of God in terms of various physical and emotional effects caused by visions during union in terms of such phrases as "the sweetness of his love," "the savour of his blessed face," and "ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy" have definite parallels in other medieval mystical literature. For example, Augustine's descriptions of the knowledge of God as an enjoyment of God's presence during union, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor's emphasis upon visions with respect to the sweetness that they produce, and Bernard's consideration of the knowledge of God in terms of its effect

upon man each demonstrate striking similarities to Hilton's treatment of this concept.

It should be emphasized that other medieval mystics have the same difficulty as Rolle, The Cloud, and Julian in attempting to describe union with God. In fact, this particular informing concept receives more consideration by other medieval mystics than any other informing concept in the secondary conceptual field for union. Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, Bonaventure, and other medieval mystical writings all emphasize God's incomprehensibility and man's inability to describe him as he is in himself or as he is experienced and known in union. For other medieval mystics, as for the English mystics, man may not know God as he is in himself in this life.

Man's state or condition during union, which was considered by Rolle and Hilton in terms of various changes which occur within man during union such as sweetness, song, savour, and delight, finds corresponding treatment by Richard of St. Victor and Gregory who employ similar terms and phrases to describe man's state during union. And The Cloud's treatment of man's state in terms of a heightened awareness and feeling of love and peace bears close similarities to the discussion of this concept by other medieval mystics such as Gregory, Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, and Augustine. Other religious writings such as "An Epistle on Salvation by Love of the Name of Jesus" and "Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God" also reflect parallels.

Nearly all medieval mystics, particularly Bernard, Aelred, and

Hugh of St. Victor, emphasize the fact that union experienced within the unitive phase is a foretaste of that union expected in heaven. In both form and content these other mystics consider this concept in a manner similar to that found in Hilton and Julian. In general, the central idea remains constant: what man experiences in union in this life is only a foretaste of what he may expect in heaven.

As I have indicated, the above similarities and differences between the English mystics and other medieval mystics with respect to the purgative, illuminative, and unitive phases constitute only the more significant relationships. For other similarities and differences, Chapters 9-11 should be consulted again.

To conclude our analysis of the mystical thought of the English mystics, we should briefly consider several areas for further exploration which have been suggested by the study. First, in order to understand more thoroughly the various relationships between the thought of the English mystics and between their thought and that of other medieval mystics, a careful linguistic analysis of the words, phrases, and ideas used by the English mystics seems necessary. Whereas our study has been confined to an analysis of the ideational structure of conceptual fields, linguistic fields consisting of certain key words and phrases such as those devised by Trier and Hatzfeld could be constructed in order to analyze carefully the changes in words used to express mystical ideas. Thus, this procedure would provide a means for tracing the gradual development of a particular mystical idea; and it would also have important implications for the history of ideas, particularly the way in which a mystical term or

idea passes from one mystic to another. The conceptual fields in the present work, especially the words, phrases, and ideas clustering around each main informing concept, could be used as the primary structural model for such a study.

As far as the present work is concerned, a more extensive analysis of the inter-relationships between the words, phrases, and ideas which constitute each informing concept is necessary. Although basic similarities and differences have been indicated, a more thorough discussion is required in order to understand the complexities of mystical thought in terms of the conceptual fields. Because of the length and limitations of the present study, it has been necessary to limit our comments concerning each informing concept.

Similarities and differences between informing concepts in different phases of the contemplative life also need to be analyzed. Whereas the present work has focused upon comparing treatments by various mystics of concepts within the same conceptual field, certain informing concepts, such as the function of God's grace, which are present in several conceptual fields, could be compared effectively with respect to the words, phrases, and ideas which shape them. Furthermore, since similar terms and phrases are present in many informing concepts, it is important that similarities and differences be noted.

Another area for further exploration might be a careful study of the influence of the vast amount of medieval homiletic material upon the formation of mystical thought in terms of both form and content. The conceptual fields that we have constructed would

provide a basic structure upon which this study could be founded.

There is also a need to examine the influence of non-literary factors such as stained glass, sculpture, and illuminations upon the content and form of fourteenth-century mystical thought. As I have suggested at several points, particularly in reference to Julian's and Margery's treatment of the suffering and passion of Christ, non-literary factors undoubtedly influenced to a great extent the nature of medieval mystical thought. Examination of these non-literary influences could be undertaken within or outside the context of a conceptual-field methodology.

Using the conceptual fields that we have constructed, the mystical thought of the English mystics could be compared with various European medieval mystics such as Tauler, Suso, and Eckhart. For without the structure provided by conceptual fields, it is difficult to compare English and European mysticism of the fourteenth century. In fact most comparative criticism, either within or outside the context of mystical thought, usually compares isolated ideas in a random manner; hence, no attempt is generally made to relate ideas within a total conceptual structure so that significant inter-relationships can be indicated. The present conceptual-field methodology, however, would permit comparisons to be made without difficulty.

Another important area for investigation would involve the use of conceptual fields to illustrate the influence of biblical literature and medieval scriptural commentary upon the formation of mystical thought. Again, conceptual fields would provide a convenient structure within which this influence could be considered. This



study could be approached from either a linguistic or ideational point of view by using appropriate conceptual fields.

The conceptual-field methodology could also be used to analyze the content of the religious, devotional, and homiletic material of the medieval period. Without a means for structuring this material, which conceptual fields would provide, it is extremely difficult to view or understand this material as a whole. Conceptual fields would also be especially helpful in examining collections of homilies by individual authors in order to ascertain dominant ideas and thoughts and their inter-relationships.

Finally, conceptual fields, particularly the words, phrases, and ideas associated with the informing concepts, provide a sound basis for examining the nature of mystical figurative language, particularly figurative language which is used to describe visions and the ineffable nature of God.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### OUTLINE OF THE PRIMARY CONCEPTUAL FIELDS FOR PURGATION, ILLUMINATION, AND UNION FOR THE ENGLISH MYSTICS

#### I. PURGATION

##### A. Richard Rolle

1. The inability of man's love for himself and the world to coexist with his love for God.
2. Substitution of God's love for the love of self and the world.
3. God's love during purgation turns man from himself and the world to God.
4. The ultimate cleansing or purification during purgation prior to illumination.

##### B. The Cloud of Unknowing

1. Purgation of sin.
2. Man's knowledge of himself and its relationship to the knowledge of God.
3. Negation of man's feeling and knowledge of himself.
4. The intent, desire, longing, or blind stirring of love which is directed toward God.
  - a. The initial operation of God's grace.
  - b. The effect of God's grace with respect to the blind stirring of love.
  - c. The act of will of man with respect to the blind stirring of love.

d. Stirring of love directed toward God as he is in himself rather than to a particular attribute of him.

5. Criticism of feelings and emotions, especially fire, song, and sweetness.

C. Walter Hilton

1. Negation of the natural order and the setting aside of fleshly desires.

2. Consideration of the sins to be overcome.

3. Man's initial desire to purge himself of his sins.

4. God's love or grace in the purgational process with respect to the negation of the natural order and the setting aside of fleshly desires.

a. The result of man's being purged from love of the world and himself.

5. Man's knowledge of himself with respect to purgation.

6. The restoration of man's original image.

a. Man's recognition of his present image.

b. God's aid in restoring this original image.

c. The final results of the restoration.

D. Julian of Norwich

1. Man's initial desire to perfect himself and enter the contemplative life.

2. The relationship between the degree of man's sin and his capacity for knowledge of God.

3. The negation of the natural order and the setting aside of fleshly desires.

4. Man's awareness of his sinful condition which has resulted from comparing his nature with God's.

5. Man's knowledge of himself.

a. Man's knowledge of God dependent to a great extent upon his knowledge of himself.



- b. Knowledge of self leads to an awareness of man's sinful nature.
- 6. Purification resulting from reflection upon and vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion.
- 7. The function of God's grace, love, and mercy.
- 8. Julian's theory of the lower and higher parts of man's soul and its relation to purgation.

#### E. Margery Kempe

- 1. General statements relating to contrition and confession.
- 2. Assignment of penance by the confessors.
- 3. Negation of the natural order and fleshly desires.
- 4. The role of vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion during purgation.

## II. ILLUMINATION

#### A. Richard Rolle

- 1. The chapel experience.
- 2. The transformation of man into the likeness of God.
- 3. Rolle's conception of being ravished or the effect of God's love upon him in terms of fire, song, and sweetness.
- 4. Man's increased capacity for love during illumination.
- 5. The nature and function of God's love for man.
- 6. The gradual perfection of man's soul during the illuminative phase.

#### B. The Cloud of Unknowing

- 1. Knowledge of God.
- 2. Knowledge of man.
- 3. The spatial suspension of man between the cloud of forgetting and the cloud of unknowing during illumination.

4. The gradual perfection of man's soul.
5. The nature and function of revelations.
6. The role of the "beam of ghostly light" during illumination.

C. Walter Hilton

1. The concept of murkness or night.
2. The nosce te ipsum theme.
3. Reformation in faith and in feeling.
4. Visions and illuminations during illumination.
5. God's grace, love, and mercy.
6. The role of understanding or reason and imagination during illumination.
7. The function of the "opening of the ghostly or inner eye."
8. The knowledge of God and/or Jhesu revealed during illumination.
  - a. The vision of Jhesu.
  - b. The effects of this vision upon man.

D. Julian of Norwich

1. The knowledge of God and Jesus made known during illumination.
2. The effects of Julian's visions and revelations.
3. The function of God's mercy, love, and grace during illumination.
4. The general theory of visions in the Revelations.

E. Margery Kempe

1. The main objects of Margery's visions.
2. References to and descriptions of the visions and revelations.

3. Margery's inability to consider in detail the visions and revelations.
4. The descriptions of heat, sounds, and smells during the visions.
5. The effects of visions and revelations upon Margery.
  - a. Weepings and sobbings.
  - b. Other effects of visions and revelations such as "sweetness and grace," "sweetness and devotion," and so forth.
6. "Specific" information revealed to Margery during her visions.
7. The function of grace and illumination during the illuminative phase.

### III. UNION

#### A. Richard Rolle

1. The ineffability of God and union with him.
2. Descriptions of or references to the union between God and man.
3. The nature and/or knowledge of God imparted during union.
4. Man's state or condition during union in terms of fire, song, and sweetness.

#### B. The Cloud of Unknowing

1. The mystical union between God and man in terms of being oned, knitted, or united.
2. The mysterious and ineffable nature of union.
3. Union with God as possible within the natural order.
  - a. Man's state during union with God.
4. The obligations of the individual who has attained union.

**C. Walter Hilton**

1. The general nature of union.
2. Mystical union as a foretaste.
3. References to and descriptions of the union between God and man.
4. The indescribability of the union and God himself.
5. The nature of the Trinity which is revealed during union.
6. General comments concerning the nature of the union between God and man.
  - a. Effects of the union upon man.
  - b. Man's response to the union with God.
  - c. Man's increased understanding of the Godhead.

**D. Julian of Norwich**

1. The negative effects of Julian's theory of the soul upon her conception of union.
2. The beholding or contemplation of God in union as he is in himself.
3. The discontinuous and imperfect nature of union with God in the natural order.
  - a. Julian's inability to describe union with God in detail.
  - b. Union with God in this world as a foretaste.

**E. Margery Kempe**

1. Margery's general references to union and the unitive phase.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **OUTLINE OF THE SECONDARY CONCEPTUAL FIELDS FOR PURGATION, ILLUMINATION, AND UNION FOR THE ENGLISH MYSTICS**

#### **I. PURGATION**

- 1. Man's initial desire or intent for purgation.**
  - a. Persistence in the desire for purgation.**
  - b. Thoroughness and fullness of the desire for purgation.**
  - c. Recognition of man's sinful condition.**
  - d. Christocentric or theocentric orientation with respect to purgation.**
  - e. The personal quality of the desire for purgation.**
  - f. The necessity for response to the desire.**
  - g. Localization of the desire for purgation upon a single, fixed point.**
- 2. Denial or negation of the world and physical desires.**
  - a. The individual's need to deny the world and fleshly desires.**
  - b. The impossibility of man's love for himself and his love for God coexisting.**
  - c. The importance of sorrow and contrition.**
  - d. The necessity for dealing with the ground of sin as well as with specific sins.**
  - e. Alienation from the world and other men.**
  - d. The condition of the soul after purgation from earthly thoughts and desires.**

3. The function of God's grace, mercy, and love during purgation.
  - a. The effect of God's grace upon man's love for the world, for himself, and for his "fleshly lusts and desires."
  - b. The role of God's grace with respect to the restoration of man's original image.
  - c. The inability of man to initiate purgation without God's grace.
4. The nosce te ipsum theme
  - a. The equating of knowledge of self with knowledge of God.
  - b. The specific content of what is known about the "self."
  - c. Knowledge of self as leading to an awareness of man's sinful condition.
  - d. Knowledge of self which results from man's comparison of his nature with God's.
5. Participation in the suffering and passion of Christ.
  - a. Purification and purgation which follow from a vicarious participation in Christ's suffering and passion.
  - b. The effects of participation such as pity and compassion.

## II. ILLUMINATION

1. Knowledge of God and/or Jesus.
  - a. Theoretical approaches, e.g., affective and intellectual, to the problem of the nature of God as revealed during illumination.
  - b. Words and phrases used to describe the nature of God.
2. Change within the individual during illumination.
  - a. Hilton's "new gracious feelings" and Rolle's "everlasting sweetness," "high sweetness," and "inward delights."
  - b. Hilton's conception of man's increased capacity for love during illumination.
  - c. The Cloud's conception of the unifying effect of love and Rolle's conception of the transforming character of love.

- d. The Cloud's conception of man's "affection" changing during illumination and Hilton's conception of man's reformation in "faith and feeling."
3. The function of God's grace, love, and mercy during illumination.
    - a. Rolle's conception of man's being ravished and the general effects of ravishment.
    - b. Hilton's discussion of the effects of God's grace, especially in terms of God's gift of himself, upon man during illumination.
    - c. Julian's discussion of the effects of God's grace in terms of the close, personal relationship with God.
    - d. The effects of God's grace in terms of the sight, knowledge, and vision of God which stem from his grace.
  4. Visions during illumination.
    - a. The effects of visions, especially as considered by Rolle and Kempe.
    - b. Hilton's discussion of visions, particularly the language he uses to describe and criticize visions.
    - c. The sight or appearance of Jesus in Julian and Margery.
    - d. The Cloud's and Hilton's emphasis upon the indescribability of visions.
  5. The effect of visions.
    - a. Hilton's "ghostly savour" and "sweetness" and Margery's "sweetness and grace."
    - b. Julian's and Margery's discussion of visions in terms of their aid for man.
    - c. Hilton's and Julian's discussion of the knowledge of God imparted through visions with respect to their effect upon man.

### III. UNION

1. References to and descriptions of union with God.
  - a. Rolle's and The Cloud's conception of being oned or knitted to God.

- b. Factors which are unified within mystical union, e.g., love, will, truth, spirit, grace.
  - c. Descriptions of union with particular reference to God.
  - d. Hilton's conception of union as the state within which the knowing and the perfect loving of God occurs.
  - e. Julian's description of union in terms of the sight or beholding of God.
  - f. The conception of union in terms of love, e.g., man's love for God and God's love for man.
2. The ineffability of the nature of mystical union.
    - a. Rolle's, The Cloud's, and Julian's statements with respect to the indescribability of union with God.
  3. The knowledge of God imparted during union.
    - a. Rolle's and Hilton's discussion of the knowledge of God in terms of his sight, presence, or beholding.
    - b. Hilton's references to the nature of God as "endless might," "wisdom and goodness," and "holiness and mercy"; also references to the fact that man may know that God is but not what he is.
    - c. Hilton's conception of God's nature which is revealed by visions of him.
    - d. Rolle's general references to the nature of God as "beholding of heavenly mysteries," "the knowledge of the mystery of love," "continual beholding of heavenly things."
    - e. Hilton's description of the knowledge of God in terms of such effects as "sweetness of his love," "savour of his blessed face," and "ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy."
  4. The general state of the individual during union.
    - a. Hilton's and Rolle's consideration of man's changed or heightened feelings during union such as sweetness and song.
    - b. Hilton's and Rolle's conception of man's experience of God's presence, his ability to love and to receive love, and his perception of God in terms of love.



- c. The Cloud's consideration of man's state during union in terms of an intense awareness of love and peace.
  - d. Hilton's and The Cloud's discussion of the relationship between man's condition during union and his ability to perceive, understand, and experience union with God.
5. Mystical union as a foretaste.
- a. Hilton's and Julian's treatment of mystical union as a partial and fragmented understanding of what is to be experienced fully only in heaven.