

*THE ORCHERD OF SYON AND THE ENGLISH  
MYSTICAL TRADITION*

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*Habent sua fata libelli*

*THE ORCHERD OF SYON* has suffered the ups and downs of circumstance, after periods of esteem long centuries of neglect, yet its fate has not been inglorious, and its contribution to late Middle English spiritual writings claims recognition on three scores: what it is in itself; when it was introduced; how it enriched the native stock.

The high regard for this work in the fifteenth century is shown by the three large extant manuscripts, all finely written and elaborate—Harleian MS. 3432, St. John's College, Cambridge, MS. 75, and Pierpont Morgan Library MS. 162. But within a century it was to lie neglected even in its original home. From the colophon of Wynkyn de Worde's printed edition of 1519 we learn that Sir Richard Sutton,<sup>1</sup> Steward of Syon Abbey from 1513, had found a manuscript there, 'in a corner by itselfe. Wyllynge of his greate charyte it sholde come to lyghte, that many relygyous and deuoute soules myght be releued and haue conforte therby, he hathe caused at his greate coste this booke to be prynted.' As Hodnett says,<sup>2</sup> it is 'a rather striking production', with red letter titles and chapter headings, two founts of black letters, one 'a primer of great beauty' (117 mm.), eight large and fairly elaborate woodcuts representing the visions of St. Catherine of Siena, the set freshly copied, appearing in England for the first time, so that, to quote from Warton's description given to Churton<sup>3</sup>: 'in point of ornament and other respects, it is the most superb and curious specimen of ancient English typography I remember.'

<sup>1</sup> One of the founders of Brasenose College, Oxford. See R. Churton, *The Lives of William Smyth, Bishop of Lincoln, and Sir Richard Sutton*, Oxford, 1800.

<sup>2</sup> See E. Hodnett, *English Woodcuts, 1480-1535*, London, 1935, pp. 253-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 421. See also William Herbert, the earlier editor and augmentor of Ames, *Typographical Antiquities*, London, 1785-90, pp. 158-60.

Copies<sup>1</sup> of this edition are frequent exhibits in library showcases, but modern admiration has been limited chiefly to external appearance. The contents have been generally ignored. The rapidly multiplying studies of the English mystical tradition are silent about the *Orcherd*, or at the most give it bare mention, while essays proliferate on Richard Rolle, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe of Lynne.

The *Orcherd* contains a full and faithful version of St. Catherine's dictated composition, she called it her *Book*, about 130,000 words, with no major omissions, not even of the terrible chapters on the corruptions within the Church. The account of her original dictation in Tuscan to her three secretaries, Barduccio Canigiani, Stefano Maconi, Neri di Landoccio, is well known. We can learn the whereabouts of the early manuscripts from editions of modernized Italian versions.<sup>2</sup> There are, in fact, at least twenty-five manuscripts containing an Italian version of the *Book*, and fifteen a Latin translation. The earliest major manuscripts<sup>3</sup> of the Italian were originally transcribed without division into treatises or chapters; these divisions were added later to an official redaction, of which many copies were made. Twice the *Book* was fully translated into Latin in order to ensure wide circulation, first by Cristofano Guidini, a Sieneze notary, and one of her early disciples who had been actually present at the original dictation, and later by Stefano Maconi, one of the original scribes. When a third translator, Raymund of Capua, her spiritual director and biographer,<sup>4</sup> died, he had completed his Latin version of only the first five chapters and the last two of her *Book*.

The search for the source of the Middle English translation is severely handicapped by the fact that there is still no critical edition of either the Italian or the Latin versions. Their inter-relationship remains unknown. Preliminary comparisons of passages from the *Orcherd* with their corresponding parts in early

<sup>1</sup> Copies are known to exist in the British Museum, the University Libraries of London, Cambridge, Glasgow, the Bodleian Library, Peterborough Cathedral Library, Winchester College Library, Blackburn Public Library, Sion College Library, in the collections of Sir R. C. Harmsworth, and at Longleat House, New York Public Library, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> M. Fiorilli, *Libro della Divina Dottrina*, Bari, 1928, pp. 409-34; I. Taurisano, *Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza*, Rome, 1947, pp. liii-lix.

<sup>3</sup> Codici maggiori—Senese t. II. 9, Estense t. 6. 5, Casanatense 292.

<sup>4</sup> He completed her biography, *Legenda Major*, in 1395.

printed editions and manuscripts give warning of likely complications. For example, Wynkyn de Worde's text of 1519 prints also a translation from the Preface of Marcus Civilis which occurs in the early printed edition of a Latin text, Brescia, 1496, attributed then and until recently to Raymund of Capua. The frequent attribution of the Latin translation to Raymund is clearly mistaken. The Brescia version proves to be basically that of Maconi.<sup>1</sup> One would expect the *Orcherd* too to be based on Maconi's Latin version.<sup>2</sup> Most Middle English translations of continental mystical writings were made from Latin versions, and a frequent channel of transmission was Carthusian. After the saint's death, Maconi joined the Carthusian Order, and in 1398 was elected Prior General. Manuscripts of his version certainly reached France and the Netherlands. The manuscripts of the Middle English text contain no information as to their source. But there is no doubt that the English printer in 1519 had before him a manuscript very close indeed to Harleian 3432, and a text based probably on the Latin translation of Guidini, or less probably on the original Italian. The Guidini text is much closer to the Italian than Maconi's.

Until Fr. Benedict Hackett proves me wrong in his forthcoming publications on William Flete and the activities of St. Catherine's immediate circle in England, I shall not relinquish the idea of the possibility of Dominican provenance. Raymund of Capua himself, as Master General of the Dominican Order, between 1393 and his death in 1399, was in close touch with William Bakthorpe, the Prior of Lynne, that active centre of English mysticism.<sup>3</sup> Or again, another Dominican channel—Guidini's well-known story in his *Memoriale* might itself ultimately prove relevant. After many years of hard work Guidini finished his version, sent it off to Maconi, probably in 1389 or before,<sup>4</sup> for correction, and had a fair copy made. This had not

<sup>1</sup> A fairly extensive comparison has been made between the Guidini version in MS. t. II. 4 in the Biblioteca Comunale of Siena and the Maconi version in MS. AD. IX. 36 in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Milan.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Fr. B. Hackett for the information that Maconi, according to Caffarini, sent Catherinian material to King Henry (?IV), though not apparently his version of the *Book*.

<sup>3</sup> At the end of the fourteenth century the Dominicans in England were badly split through disaffection against Raymund. The English party on his side was headed by the Prior of Lynne.

<sup>4</sup> According to R. Fawtier, *Sainte Catherine de Sienne*, ii, Paris, 1930, p. 341, the version was sent to Maconi at the Carthusian House at Pontignano, which he left in 1389.

been in his house twenty-four hours before he was visited by a venerable French bishop belonging to the Dominican Order, who was collecting information about Catherine and was accompanied by Raymund. Naturally Guidini brought out his beautiful manuscript for inspection, and once in the bishop's hands it stayed there. He wished to make it known in his own country, he said, where it would do more good than in Siena, where it was already known. The bishop begged so hard that Guidini finally gave him it. The bishop later wrote to Raymund of its great influence, and Raymund repeated his words. Perhaps we owe the *Orcherd* to this act of generosity. How far did that little candle throw his beams? We do not yet know, but a manuscript<sup>1</sup> now in the Edinburgh University Library certainly contains Guidini's Latin version.

St. Catherine's *Book* later became known under various titles, *The Dialogue*, *The Book of Divine Doctrine*, *The Book of Divine Providence*. The Middle English sub-title adopts *The Book of Divine Doctrine* and repeats her contemporaries' description of the circumstances of composition:

Here begynneþ þe Boke of Diuine Doctrine, þat is to seie, of Goddis techinge, ʒouen bi þe persone of God þe Fader to þe intellecte of þe glorious virgyn, Seint Katerine of Seene, of þe Ordre of Seint Dominike, whiche was write as sche endited in her moder tunge when sche was in contemplacioun inrapt of spirit, and sche heringe actuali and in þe same tyme tellinge tofore meny what oure Lord God spake in her.<sup>2</sup>

It is beside the present task to pursue the implications of this statement, or to set St. Catherine's colloquies against such admittedly fictional dialogues as St. Augustine's soliloquies or Suso's in the *Book of Eternal Wisdom*. The extraordinary nature of her dictation is well attested—in Raymund's biography, and in the depositions of her friends and disciples in the Process of Venice, 1411–13, whose claim anticipated that in the Bull of Canonization of 1461 (*Misericordias Domini*): 'Doctrina eius infusa, non acquisita fuit.' Suffice it now to say that the earliest

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh University MS. D. b. IV. 18 (Bowland 87). This is probably an English manuscript, but unfortunately its early history is not yet known.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the quotations from the *Orcherd* are taken from MS. Harleian 3432 (H). Where this is defective, the Pierpont Morgan Library MS. (M) is used. Here, M, f. 9<sup>r</sup>. Cf. the Guidini version in the Edinburgh MS.: 'Incipit liber diuine doctrine date per personam dei patris intellectui loquentis gloriose & sancte virginis katerine de Senis ordinis sancti dominici de mantellatis conscriptus ipsa dictante licet vulgariter et stante in raptu & audiente actualiter quid in ea loquaretur dominus deus & coram pluribus referente.'

text extant was edited. It contains third person narrative, and lists in the beginning the four petitions which were to shape the rest. St. Catherine appears to take the initiative, and there is little likeness to any spontaneous interchange. The truths revealed are those of the Scriptures and dogma of the Church, with many echoes of literary sources and references to the saint's earlier visions. One wonders, with her great modern biographer, Edmund G. Gardner,<sup>1</sup> whether Catherine herself would have made any claim of supernatural authorship.

The Prologue of the *Orchard* is explicit that this Middle English translation was prepared for the benefit of the Bridgettine nuns of Syon Abbey. None of the three extant manuscripts gives any indication for whom it was copied; none contains the translator's holograph. The only manuscript certainly at Syon was that rescued by Sir Richard Sutton. A consensus of expert opinion has attributed both the Harley and the Cambridge manuscripts to the early decades of the fifteenth century; the Pierpont Morgan manuscript has been dated *c.* 1470.

According to their marginalia, after that 'sorry 25 dai of November 1539' when 'the house of Syon was suppressed into the kinges hand, and the ladies and brethren put out, the landes and goods to the kinges use', the Harley and Cambridge manuscripts were in the Salop area, where loyalty to the Catholic faith long persisted. Subsequent ownership is traceable,<sup>2</sup> but if we are to avoid the giddiness of unfocused vision, we must

<sup>1</sup> *St. Catherine of Siena*, London, 1907, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> MS. Harleian 3432 passed from William Tarboxe (Tarboke) of Kidderminster to George Horde, of a Bridgnorth family. Four other names appear in this manuscript in a large formal sixteenth-century hand: Roland Gosenell (of an ancient Salop family living at Conover); Walterus de Evereux, Miles, possibly the grandson of Walter Baron Ferrers and Viscount Hereford, whom he succeeded in 1558, becoming a Knight of the Garter and the first Devereux Earl of Essex in 1572; Ebor, ? Archbishop Heath of York 1555-9, Queen Mary's Chancellor who proclaimed Elizabeth's accession in the House of Lords, yet led the other bishops in their refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy; Norwycensis, ? Hopton of Norwich, (1554-8), a merciless persecutor of Protestants.

In the seventeenth century this same manuscript came into the possession of John Battely (1647-1706), the Kentish antiquary and Archdeacon of Canterbury, from whose nephew Wanley bought it on 5 Nov. 1723 for the Earl of Oxford.

In the sixteenth century the Cambridge MS. was in the possession of Robert Baxter of Kidderminster. *C.* 1615, along with much of William Crashaw's collection, it came into the possession of Henry Wriothsley, Earl of Southampton, the friend and patron of Shakespeare.

concentrate on the early history of the English text. One digression might be permitted. In the early seventeenth century the Cambridge MS. rested on the well-filled bookshelves of William Crashaw, the north-country divine, chiefly remembered for his virulent attacks on the papacy, but who also collected *A Handful, or rather a Heartful, of Holy Meditations and Prayers*, translating Catholic devotions for Protestant edification and use. His son was the poet Richard Crashaw, whose devotion to St. Theresa might not have been wholly uninfluenced by the images of blood and fire, the teaching on the Sacrament of the Altar, the 'large draughts of intellectual day' to be found also within the folios of the Cambridge *Orcherd*.

The translator's Prologue is directed to the 'Religyouis modir & deuoute sustren clepid & chosen bisily to laboure at the hous of Syon' (f. 2<sup>ra</sup>). Since both the Harleian and the Cambridge manuscripts belong to the early fifteenth century, the temptation to look for the original recipients proved irresistible. The foundation-stone of the Bridgettine monastery was laid by Henry V on 22 February 1415, and the Foundation Charter granted in March, which designated Matilda Newton, a recluse of Barking, as provisional abbess, and William Alnwick, a recluse of Westminster, as Confessor General. The community began to assemble, but it was not until 1 April 1420 that the first professions were made.<sup>1</sup> What happened between 1415 and 1420 remains confused,<sup>2</sup> but Matilda Newton, never regularly elected, resigned in 1417, to retire to an anchorage at Barking, and was succeeded by Joan North, a nun of Markyate near St. Albans, who ruled until her death in 1433. John of Amundesham records that William Alnwyck also retired in the course of a year, worn out and old, and was followed by Thomas Fyschborn, who had been an anchorite at St. Albans and who died in 1428.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to British Museum MS., Add. 22285, f. 14, there were 27 sisters, 5 priests, 2 deacons, 4 lay brothers.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed accounts of the foundation of Syon Abbey are to be found in M. Deanesly, *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle*, Manchester, 1915, pp. 91-130, D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, ii, Cambridge, 1955, pp. 177-80.

<sup>3</sup> MS. Harleian 3775, f. 109: 'Willelmus Alnewyk, reclusus monachus Westmonasterii, cum aliis monachis diuersorum locorum, in custodiam feminarum prefectus est: set post anni circulum, tedio et senio confectus, ad cellam suam unde egressus fuerat reuersus est... (f. 110<sup>v</sup>). In tempore vero Willelmi Alnewyk, prima Abbatissa monialis de Berkyng a dignitate sua per Regem exonerata est.' Edited by H. T. Riley, *Annales Monasterii S. Albani a Johanne Amundesham, Monacho*, i, London, 1870, p. 27.

'Religyouis modir...clepid and chosen.' 'Clepid and chosen' is a collocation familiar enough in the body of a text, with its scriptural associations, and as a translation of Latin *electi*, but here its unusually emphatic position in the actual address is arresting. Might it not possibly imply here 'titular', 'designate', but not yet actually professed? That is, before 1420. The dating of the manuscripts does not preclude the guess that the abbess could have been Matilda Newton of Barking, the abbey which had a leading position among English nunneries for its books, and prefigured Syon itself in the encouragement of learning. Two other books, near contemporaries with the *Orchard*, are also associated with Barking, *The Chastising of God's Children* (dated before 1408)<sup>1</sup> and *The Cleansing of Man's Soul*. There might be a significant clue to authorship in the fact that the *Chastising* is further linked to the *Orchard*, however tenuously, by Bridgettine influence and a similar ending. The *Chastising* ends: 'And as I am wonte to seie or to write, so heere I seie of al my defautis. A Iesu mercy.' Cf. *Orchard*, f. 192<sup>rb</sup>: 'And for my neclygence & ignoraunce, as I am wont to seye so I now write. A Ihesu mercy.' This does not appear to be a common ending, though one comparable occurs in *The Revelations of St. Maud* (Mechthild),<sup>2</sup> a text which also has Syon associations.<sup>3</sup>

The translator tells us nothing about himself, unless we take his words in the Prologue to be more than a convention, and remember the frail and failing William Alnwick: 'Grete laborer was I neuer, bodili ne gostli. I had neuer grete strengþe myztli to labour wip spade ne wip schouel. Þerfore now, deuoute sustern, helpeþ me wip preiers...azens my grete febelnes.'<sup>4</sup>

The last heading in the early printed edition, *Lenuoye of Dane James the translator*, gave rise to an error perpetuated in most accounts of the *Orchard*,<sup>5</sup> including Gardner's and Hodnett's, but which a careful reading of the following passage will correct: 'In 3oure deuoute prairis haueþ myn helper recomendid, 3oure broþir, Dan Iamys, which for þe mooste partye haþ laborid it to þe ende of þis goostly orcherd.'<sup>6</sup> Wynkyn de Worde's

<sup>1</sup> See J. Bazire and E. Colledge, *The Chastising of God's Children*, Oxford, 1957, pp. 34-37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Egerton MS., f. 212: 'Ande for alle my negligence in þis werke and alle othere, als I seyde in the begynnynge so I saye in the endynge. A Iesu mercy. Amen.'

<sup>3</sup> See *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, E.E.T.S. E.S. xix, 1873, pp. 276-7.

<sup>4</sup> M., f. 7<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> e.g. Gardner, p. xv; Hodnett, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> f. 192<sup>ra-b</sup>.

title, *The Orcherd of Syon*, occurs only once in the manuscripts, in the Explicit of the early Harleian MS. 3432. The double significance of Syon would escape no medieval reader. The rest of the figure is explained in the translator's Prologue and Epilogue. This book of revelations he calls a 'fruytful orcherd'. 'In þis orcherd, whanne 3e wolen be confortid, 3e mowe walke & se boþe fruyt and herbis. And al be it þat sum fruyt or herbis seeme to summe scharpe, hard, or bitter, 3it to purgyng of þe soule, þei ben ful speedful and profitable, whanne þei ben discreetly take and reseceyued by counceil' (f. 2<sup>ra-b</sup>).

This allegorical framework supplied by the Middle English translator is particularly appropriate for what it encloses, for St. Catherine herself frequently used the same image, e.g. God told her: 'Þan made I resonable creature to þe ymage and liknesse of me and sente him into þe orcherd, which orcherd by þe synne of Adam haþ brouzt forþ þornes, where first it brouzte forþ flouris of swete smyllynge innocencie' (f. 155<sup>ra</sup>). And again, man is a 'maner of orcherd...maad wiþ swete fruyt. Napeles þe gardener of þis orcherd, which is fre chois, may make þis orcherd wielde if he wille...if he sowe þereynne venym of his owne propre loue' (f. 155<sup>rb-vb</sup>).<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, this framework is appropriate too for Syon Abbey, for a comparable vision—'I will plant a new vineyard and will surround it with the hedge of my grace'—had inspired St. Bridget to found her Order.<sup>2</sup>

The Middle English translator ends with: 'Now, reuerent modir & deuoute sustren, 3oure orcherd is plauntid & sett, and, at my symple deuyes, apparaylid' (f. 192<sup>ra</sup>). The apparelling must refer to his division into seven parts, five chapters in each part, thirty-five alleys in the orchard in which the sisters might walk. Despite the sevens and fives, numbers of mystical significance, the Middle English divisions are no more arbitrary than those in the Italian and Latin versions, and correspond about equally loosely to changes in dominant imagery and tone. Within the Middle English divisions, the chapter headings inserted by the early editors of the Italian and Latin versions are traceable.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also God's revelation of Himself through His Son: 'I schewide me to pee in a figure of a tre: of þe which tre þou say neiþer bigynnyng ne eendynge, but oonli þou parceyuedist þat þe roote of þe tre was ioyned wiþ þe erþe' (f. 46<sup>ra</sup>); 'þe erþe of mekenes... where þis... tre of discrecioun is sett and plauntid' (f. 16<sup>ra</sup>); 'þe tre of charyte... norischid in mekenes' (f. 17<sup>ra</sup>); 'men... fayre trees of loue wiþ þe liif of a special grace' (f. 35<sup>va</sup>); and many others.

<sup>2</sup> See *A Royal Foundation. Syon Abbey Past and Present*. Syon Abbey, South Brent, Devon, 1946.



The choice of one of the first books to be made especially for the new Bridgettine foundation at Syon has indeed great significance. Its suitability is clear for a community strictly enclosed and partly composed of former anchorites and contemplatives. Moreover, there was a strong spiritual kinship<sup>1</sup> between St. Catherine and St. Bridget, not only in their mystical experiences, for both in ecstasy held long and intimate colloquies with God, but also in their practical concern with the reform of the Church. One may conjecture that it was more feasible to translate St. Catherine's Book than St. Bridget's. The vast compilation in MS. Harleian 612, made for Syon and dated 1427, contains fourteen books of St. Bridget's revelations in Latin, hundreds of chapters, many of which have been described as 'occasional, repetitive and monotonous', with 'frequent lack of cohesion and unity of thought'.<sup>2</sup>

Comparison between the *Orchard* and some of the early vernacular translations<sup>3</sup> of the *Revelations* will show that St. Bridget's work lacks the powerful unity and magisterial authority of St. Catherine's pronouncedly orthodox dogma on the mysteries of Holy Church, the Trinity, the Redemption, the Eucharist, man's innate potentiality, Divine Providence, the unitive way. St. Catherine's Book, though never so colourful and graphic as St. Bridget's could be, was yet more immediate for the needs of Syon abbey.

But the *Orchard* reflects more widely still current interests and tastes. For instance, the growing interest in continental mysticism and in women mystics in particular.<sup>4</sup> Before the late fourteenth

<sup>1</sup> There were also personal connexions. In 1374 Bishop Alphonse of Pecha, St. Bridget's confessor and the editor of her *Revelations*, sought out St. Catherine. In 1378, though there is no evidence of direct association, the Pope was minded to send St. Catherine with St. Bridget's daughter on a mission to the Queen of Naples. At least two witnesses who urged the canonization of St. Catherine in 1412, Stephen of Siena and Bartholomew of Ravenna, had testified to the authenticity of St. Bridget's visions in the Process which led to her canonization by Pope Boniface IX in 1391. It is to be noted that in MS. Harleian 612, col. 755, Bishop Reginald in his *Primum Defensorium* associates St. Bridget and St. Catherine.

<sup>2</sup> W. P. Cumming, *The Revelations of Saint Birgitta*, E.E.T.S. 178, London, 1929, p. xxviii.

<sup>3</sup> See Cumming, loc. cit.; Cotton Claudius MS. B. I, c. 1425; Cotton Julius MS. F. II, c. 1475.

<sup>4</sup> The many fifteenth-century translations include Egerton MS. 2006 and Bodleian MS. 220 of St. Maud (Mechthild of Hackborn). The Egerton MS. belonged to Richard of Gloucester and Anne Warwick. A 'Mauldebuke' was owned by Eleanor Ros of York in 1438. Douce MS. 114 contains the Lives

century I know of no records of women visionaries on English soil apart from the twelfth-century Christina of Markyate<sup>1</sup> and an anonymous Gilbertine nun<sup>2</sup>—in striking contrast to the situation along the Rhine described by Christine Ebner, who knew of only one woman in her convent who never experienced ecstasy, and yet she was a very holy person. The typically English attitude of Walter Hilton and the author of the *Cloud* towards Rolle's descriptions of sensory experience establishes that visions in England were more likely to be discredited than believed. Shortly before the *Orcherd*, the *Chastising of God's Children* had borrowed Bishop Alphonse's proofs of the sanctity of St. Bridget, but only to demonstrate that all revelations may be of diabolical origin, unless they satisfy certain tests. Margery Kempe herself described the rough handling she received when, according to Miss Allen's learned notes, she was but following in the steps of St. Bridget, St. Dorothy of Prussia, St. Mechthild, St. Gertrude, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

The new interest in women mystics was to remain a matter of controversy. The very year of the foundation of Syon (1415) and only seven months after the canonization of St. Bridget was confirmed at the Council of Constance, Gerson was to assert that 'All words and works of women must be held suspect'.<sup>3</sup> St. Bridget's cause was first stated by Bishop Alphonse before 1379, when he set out to prove that her 'glorious book... was wretyn in þe herte of the forseid lady with the fynger of all-mychty god'.<sup>4</sup> It was still being disputed a century later,<sup>5</sup> and many notable Englishmen had risen to her defence.<sup>6</sup> The mighty translation of St. Catherine's Book no less than the royal foundation of Syon can be regarded as an English affirmation of credence.

Monographs could be drawn from the *Orcherd* on favourite

of 'Seint Elizabeth of Spalbeck, Seinte Cristin the marvelous, Seint Mary of Oegines, a letter touchynge the lyfe of Seint Kateryn of Sennys, the which letter endyted in Latyn dan Stephen of Senys'; The Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary is to be found in Cam. Univ. Lib. MS. Hh I. 11.

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Talbot, *Christina of Markyate*, Oxford, 1959. Her visions are to be found in MS. Cotton Tiberius E1, belonging to the second quarter of the fourteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Sermo III, *Sermones de Oneribus B Aelredi*, Migne, P.L. 195, col. 370-2.

<sup>3</sup> *De Probatione Spirituum*, i. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Cotton Julius MS. F II, f. 247.

<sup>5</sup> See E. Colledge 'Epistola solitarii ad reges: Alphonse of Pecha as Organizer of Birgittine and Urbanist Propaganda', *Medieval Studies*, vol. xviii (1956).

<sup>6</sup> See D. Knowles *Religious Orders*, ii, p. 277.

late medieval topics such as the gift of tears, discretion, the *via triplex* of contemplation, the Sacrament of the Altar. We are justified in asking what the translation of St. Catherine's Book added to mystical literature in England. The framework of reference is clear. Passages from or about St. Catherine keep company with those by the key writers of the wholly English tradition, Rolle, the author of the *Cloud*, Walter Hilton; we find them together in manuscript compilations,<sup>1</sup> Carthusian records of gifts and loans,<sup>2</sup> medieval libraries.<sup>3</sup> At least three scholars recently have mentioned investigations into a possible connexion between St. Catherine and Julian of Norwich,<sup>4</sup> between Hilton and the circulation of Catherinian literature in England.<sup>5</sup> With the obvious confluence of native and continental traditions in the fifteenth century one may surmise that there were others before the Duchess of York, mother of Edward IV and Richard III, who, during the time of dinner had a 'reading of holy matter, either Hilton on active and contemplative life, Bonaventure, St. Maud, St. Katerine of Siena or the Revelations of St. Bridget'.<sup>6</sup>

Paradoxically, where St. Catherine would seem in her choice of themes to belong most to her age, she is most strikingly individual. Let us take, for example, the favourite late medieval subject for religious art and literature, the Passion. In English writings we have Rolle's brooding *Meditations*, Margery Kempe's noisier sensibility, the 'showings' of Julian which started in

<sup>1</sup> e.g. University College, Oxford, MS. 14, Royal MS. 17 D v.

<sup>2</sup> See E. M. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England*, London, 1930, p. 321; D. Knowles, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

<sup>3</sup> Some manuscripts of fourteenth-century English mystical writings probably connected with Syon: (i) Rolle Emmanuel Coll. 35

Addit. 24661

Brasenose 15

Trin. Coll. 792.

(ii) Hilton *Scale* Harleian 2387

All Souls 25

? Laud. Misc. 602

Uppsala U.L. C 159

? Columbia U.L. Plimpton 257.

(iii) *Cloud* Harleian 993.

For the number and nature of Rolle MSS. at Syon, see H. E. Allen, *Writing Ascribed to Richard Rolle*, London, 1927, pp. 47-49, 411-12. See also N. P. Ker *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, R.H.S., 1941.

<sup>4</sup> A. Levasti, Sister Anna M. Reynolds.

<sup>5</sup> Father B. Hackett.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1955, p. 37.

pictorial visions of Christ's flowing blood, physical sufferings, and death, to set beside Hilton's claim that 'a man schal nouȝt comen to gostli delit in contemplacioun of cristes godhede. bute he come furst in ymaginacioun bi bitternes and be compassioun & be stedfast thinkeng of his manhede' (f. 22<sup>r</sup>).<sup>1</sup> Sometimes in lyrics and prose treatises there is the soul's response of contrition or of rapturous love-longing; more often we find preoccupation with all the stark horror of torture, grief, suffering, and death. Mâle commented that from the wounds of the Crucified ran great rivers of blood in which St. Bridget and many other continental mystics wished to bathe.<sup>2</sup> The great English mystics stand apart in their restraint. Even Julian herself understood later that her graphic physical images were only means of instruction on the Godhead, 'as it were þe begynnyng of an A.B.C.' (f. 36<sup>v</sup>).<sup>3</sup> No saint was more inebriated, 'oonyd & whalwyd in the blessid blood' (f. 73<sup>v<sup>a</sup></sup>) than St. Catherine. But in the *Orcherd* there is a fundamental intellectual and emotional austerity comparable to that of the *Cloud* or the *Scale*. Hilton said: 'Þe gostly biholdynge of þe godhed in Iesu man is more worþi more gostly & more medful þan þe beholdynge of þe manhode alone' (f. 103<sup>v</sup>).<sup>4</sup> St. Catherine goes further. She presupposes the historical life and death of our Lord, not as the author of the *Cloud* presupposes it, in order to still the working of reason and imagination, but rather to concentrate on the eternal redemptive purpose of the Trinity in the Incarnation. Like the doctors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, she translates this ineffable reality into intellectual symbols. The one which spans the whole *Orcherd* and gives its unity is the great apocalyptic symbol of the Bridge. The like of this recurrent imagery is not to be found earlier in English mystical writings. The opening vision of *Piers Plowman* has comparable vastness and sublimity, but it is surpassed in dynamic force by the Bridge, which through its manifold interpretation is essentially a symbol of movement—the Way, the Truth, the Life. This is the Bridge of God's mercy. 'Þe greetnes of þat brigge...streccheþ fro þe heizt of heuene down to þe erþe' (f. 27<sup>r<sup>b</sup></sup>). The Bridge, God's son and His doctrine are 'al oone and þe same' (f. 34<sup>r<sup>a</sup></sup>). After man had broken up the road to heaven, 'of trespas and synne cam forþ

<sup>1</sup> *Scale*, i. 35. Quotations are from MS. Harleian 6579.

<sup>2</sup> E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la fin du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1931, pp. 108 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the quotations from Julian's *Revelations* are from MS. Sloane 2499.

<sup>4</sup> *Scale*, ii. 30; cf. i. 35, 36.

an unrestful flood which smoot him alwey of hise wattris' (f. 27<sup>ra</sup>), 'which flood is a feruent see of þis wrecchid liif' (f. 27<sup>ra</sup>). 'No man may passe ouer þat flood wiþ þe liif, but needis he moste be drenchid' (f. 32<sup>ra</sup>). Before this Bridge was 'areisid up', 'heuene was not til þat tyme undo wiþ þe keye of his precious blood, and þe reyn of riȝtwiisnes wolde suffre no man to passe' (f. 31<sup>rb</sup>). There are three steps to this Bridge, 'tweyne weren maad in þe tre of þe holy cros', the third 'ful greet peyne of bittirnes whanne þei ȝauen hym boþe galle and aysel to drinke' (f. 30<sup>rb</sup>). This Bridge is walled with stones, 'soþfaste vertues' (f. 31<sup>rb</sup>). 'He plauntid hem as lyuyng stoones wiþ His holy blood, þat alle feiþful men mowen frely passe þat brigge withoute ony dreede of greet reyn of þe riȝtwiisnes of þe Godheed' (f. 31<sup>va</sup>). By this Bridge men come to 'þe gate of sothefastnes. Þanne comen þei to me, which am þe pesable se' (ff. 31<sup>vb</sup>-32<sup>ra</sup>). The three steps have become the *via triplex* of perfection. The traditional three stages of contemplation, for the beginner, the proficient, the perfect, are worked out in terms of the feet, the side, the mouth of Christ crucified,<sup>1</sup> in imagery that in its spirituality recalls St. Bernard's Threefold Kiss.<sup>2</sup>

Only the barest reference is made to the instruments of the Passion in the *Orchard*, as when Christ is 'fast held' to the cross 'wiþ naylis of loue'.<sup>3</sup> The blood shed is inseparable from St. Catherine's thought, but it is identified in the sacraments, in Baptism,<sup>4</sup> in Confession,<sup>5</sup> but most often in the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>6</sup> Upon the Bridge 'þe viridarye of myn holy chirche stondeþ in batel and fiȝteþ. Which chirche haþ breed of liif and

<sup>1</sup> 'In þe first gree þei han spoilid þe foot of affeccioun fro delectacioun of vices. In þe secounde gree þei han taastid þe secreet affeccioun of herte, wherby þei han conceyued deliit in vertu. In þe þridde gree, þat is, in pees and tranquillyte of soule... þei fynden reste in þe doctryn of my soþfastnesse... þou maist se and knowe þat to hem I am a mete table, and my Sone is to hem mete, and þe Holy Gost is to hem a seruitour' (f. 78<sup>ra-b</sup>, f. 78<sup>va</sup>).

'Þei ben al brennyd in þe furneyse of my charite. Wherfore þere may noon take hem out fro me, for þei ben imaad oon with me and I with hem' (f. 79<sup>ra-b</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> *Sermons on the Canticles*, III. iv.

<sup>3</sup> f. 76<sup>vb</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> f. 74<sup>vb</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> f. 74<sup>ra</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> 'þe which charite is maad to ȝou visible of my oonli soþfast Sone Ihesu whanne he made it open in his blood. þe which blood makeþ a soule goostly drunke & araieth it rialy wiþ þe fier of dyuyne charite & ȝeueþ to hir þe blessid goostly mete of þe sacrament of þe auter' (f. 65<sup>va</sup>).

ʒeueþ þe drynk þat is mynystrid, . . . þe holy blood, þat by þat, my creaturis, whiche ben pilgrymes & goon in þe weye, faylen not in þe weye' (f. 31<sup>va</sup>).

Though there are many separate treatises on the sacraments in Middle English, it has often been remarked that on the Mass the fourteenth-century English mystical writers are inexplicably reticent. May we not see in the *Orcherd* a forerunner in England of such later devotional writers as Sir Thomas More who explicitly integrated their devotion to the Person of our Lord with the Mass, and were constantly aware of the mystical Body of the Church?

There is a comparable distinction, a touch of intellectual splendour, in St. Catherine's eight chapters on the gift of tears.<sup>1</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe* with Miss Allen's commentary describes Margery's 'plentyous teerys & booystous sobbynges', and recalls continental women mystics who in the intensity of devotion had so great a gift of tears that at length their cheeks were furrowed by continual weeping: the bibliographical notes also give guidance to the long and sober literary tradition going back to the early Church and ultimately to the scriptures, associating tears with penitence and prayer, and systematizing them according to their spiritual sources or their fruits. The methodical and comprehensive chapters of the *Orcherd* have the same essential control. St. Catherine's revelations, made, as she repeatedly says, 'to þe iʒe of intellect', lead almost invariably to the working of the Trinity and the way to perfection. She abstracts all the diverse states of tears, imperfect and perfect, with their fruits, and shows how the soul can rise in succession from the wholly self-centred tears of death, the tears for 'dreede of peyne' (f. 87<sup>vb</sup>), the sensible 'teeris of goostly loue' (f. 88<sup>ra</sup>), the selfless tears wept for 'hertly loue in me (God), and for compassioun of þe offence þat is doon to me' (f. 88<sup>rb</sup>), to the 'teeris of swetnesse by þe feelyng of myn eendeles godheed' (f. 88<sup>va</sup>). The perfect weep with the tears of heaven. 'How glorious is sich a soule þat so rialy can passe out of þis troublous see of þe world & come to me, þat am þe greet peesable see, & fille þe vessel of þe herte in þe see of myn euerlastyng souereyn Godheed' (f. 88<sup>va</sup>). She includes further the tears of those perfect souls who desire to weep and are not able. Theirs are tears of fire, 'mental teris, ful of fier of dyuyne unspicable charite . . . in þe whiche teris of fier þe Holy Goost waylyth & wepiþ for hem' (f. 91<sup>ra-b</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> ff. 87<sup>ra</sup> sqq.

The contribution of the *Orcherd* may perhaps best be assessed by close reference to two of the key figures of the wholly English tradition, Walter Hilton and Julian.<sup>1</sup>

There is promise of a rewarding comparison between the writings of St. Catherine and Hilton, both spiritual directors providing a *summa* which met the needs of all,<sup>2</sup> concerned with the growth in spiritual life from the state of fallen man to the highest sanctification possible on earth. The teaching of neither is esoteric. Both regarded the attainment of contemplation as the goal for all, and progress towards this as a continuous and gradual development of the life of grace begun at baptism. Their end is the same, to come, by degrees of love and enlightenment, 'to þe gostli felyng of God... þat þou miȝtist knowe þe wisdom of God, þe endles miȝte..., & þe grete goodnes of hym in himself and in his creatures' (f. 8<sup>r</sup>).<sup>3</sup>

The idea behind St. Catherine's recurrent figure of the spiritual cell of self-knowledge which the would-be contemplative must enter and never again leave is fundamental of the *Scale*, and indeed controls the whole plan of Book I.<sup>4</sup> God is best known in the soul made according to the scriptures in His image. The echoes of St. Augustine and the Victorines are clear. This self-knowing must be bifocal, both self-knowing and God-knowing, an equilibrium of humility and love, a realization of one's own present nothingness matched against the perfection of God and the dignity for which one was originally created. Like Moses, St. Catherine had heard the voice of God: 'I am He who is; you are she who is not' (cf. f. 25<sup>rb</sup>). Hilton's password for his pilgrim to perfection (ii. 21) signifies the same: 'I am noȝt. I haue noȝt. I coueite noȝt bot on' (f. 85<sup>r</sup>). To seek refuge in this cell of self-knowledge is to flee the ephemeral things of the world, and to persevere in this cell is the only effective discipline to 'reende up þe þornes of deedly synnes and... plaunte þe hizenes of vertues' (f. 28<sup>rb</sup>).

Both describe mystical experience in terms of understanding

<sup>1</sup> The thirteenth-century group (*Ancrene Wisse*, *Wohunge*, &c.) and *Piers Plowman* are most concerned with the stage of Purgation; Rolle is thought not to have progressed beyond that of Illumination; the *Cloud* is esoteric in its concentration on a special exercise of unitive prayer.

<sup>2</sup> This is true of much of the *Scale*, even though Book I was written for a recluse.

<sup>3</sup> *Scale*, i. 12; cf. Eph. iii. 17-19.

<sup>4</sup> This 'Christian Socratism', as Gilson terms it, is the only basis of contemplative life. It is 'an hiȝe pleyn weye as mekil as may ben in mannes werke to contemplacioun'. *Scale*, i. 42, f. 25<sup>v</sup>.

and in imagery of true light.<sup>1</sup> 'I haue tastid & seen wiþ þe liȝt of intellecte,' cried St. Catherine, 'wiþ þi liȝt, þe deppe of þin eendeles trinite... þou art þat fier þat illumynest, & wiþ þi liȝt þou hast maad me knowe þi truþe' (f. 191<sup>r</sup><sup>b-v</sup><sup>a</sup>).

There are many other arresting points of comparison. Both writers show a deep knowledge of the human soul in its operations. They see its nature, its faculties and their mutual relations and interactions under influences both human and divine, and the effect of the soul's action upon the body and the body's upon the soul. The proportions and the emphases are, of course, different, but there are few fundamental ideas in the *Scale* not also in the *Orcherd*, excepting of course the advice on the technique of prayer, which Hilton introduced because the *Scale* was primarily a manual of direction. The *Orcherd* too will serve as a handbook, but, first and foremost, it is a personal spiritual testament. Hilton frequently disclaimed any attainment of unitive prayer,<sup>2</sup> and when he would appear to be writing from personal experience he dreads 'mikel to speke ouȝt of it' (f. 123<sup>r</sup>).<sup>3</sup> In her descriptions of herself 'goostly dronke wiþ þat blessid blood' and 'brennyd in þe fier of love' (f. 79<sup>v</sup><sup>a</sup>), 'abouen hersilf wiþ a greet longynge desier out of coorse of þe bodily feelynge' (f. 87<sup>r</sup><sup>b</sup>), 'þe ponderous body... maad liȝt... lift up fro þe erþe' (f. 79<sup>v</sup><sup>a</sup>), St. Catherine directs our gaze to the sublimest heights.<sup>4</sup> As Gardner says: 'We feel that we have almost passed behind the veil that shields the Holy of Holies, and that we are in very truth hearing Catherine's rendering into finite words of the ineffable things that she had learned by intuition in that half hour during which there is silence in Heaven.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herein lies the great difference between the *Scale* and the *Cloud*. Cf. *Scale*, ii. 46: 'for luf & liȝt goon boþe togidir in a clene soule' (f. 139<sup>v</sup>); *ibid.* i. 8: 'he... bi þe grace of þe holy gost is illumined for to see bi undirstandyng sopfastnesse whilk is god, & gostli þinges, with a soufte swete brenninde luf in him' (f. 5<sup>r</sup>); *ibid.* ii. 46: 'þan is it opned sopfastly to þe eize of þe soule þe onhed in substance & distinccioun of persons in þe blissid trinitee' (f. 139<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> See *Scale*, i. 33, 93.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Orcherd*: 'Euery place is to hem a place, and euery tyme is to hem a tyme of preyer, for her conuersacioun is lift up fro þe erþe and areisid up to heuene' (f. 78<sup>ra</sup>).

Cf. also: 'And aftir tyme þei ben so goostly dronke wiþ þat blessid blood and be brennyd in þe fier of my loue, anoon þei taste in me þe eendeles Godheed, þe which is to hem as a pesible see, in þe which see þe soule haþ cauȝt sich an vnyoun and oonheed þat sich a soule haþ no maner of mouyng but in me' (f. 79<sup>v</sup><sup>a</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 355.



In this she is more comparable with Julian. Not primarily concerned with growth in the spiritual life, Julian gave no 'map and general information for those setting out to explore a country for themselves', but, as Father Sitwell says,<sup>1</sup> 'as a traveller returned with a first-hand description of what she has seen there'. Julian also was pronounced *theodidacta, profunda, ecstasica*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the two are somewhat alike both in their kind of enlightenment and in the circumstances of literary composition. Both had imaginative visions and divine locutions, sensible manifestations which were accidental compared with the knowledge received in infused contemplation, when their minds, directly and supernaturally impressed, were flooded, not so much with new knowledge as with new light on basic theological truths. Both found in their revelations the nucleus of their books, and both reflected long, Julian for twenty years or more, before setting them down in writing. Both described God exhorting, affirming, revealing, and expounding in answer to petition, and both in turn gave thanks in outpourings of devotion. And if St. Catherine suffers more, hopes, demands, implores more fervidly—'al brennyng in loue and goostly drunke...wondirly woundid in herte of so grete bittirnesse' (f. 146<sup>ra</sup>)—the differences lie in personality, intensity, and amplitude, and, of course, national temperament, rather than in kind.

For example of this difference in amplitude let us take their intellectual visions of the operations of the Trinity. Theirs is the mystics' apprehension of the Trinity which Hilton described, though he declined to enlarge upon the theme.<sup>3</sup> Both women bring all things into focus with the Trinity, writing with a profundity of feeling and intimacy that recalls St. Theresa's description of 'that mysterious manifestation of the truth... when all three Persons communicate Themselves to the soul and explain the Lord's words that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul which loves Him and keeps His commandments. What a difference there is between hearing and believing these words and being led in this way to realise how true they are.'<sup>4</sup>

St. Catherine, like St. Francis before her and Dante, uses in

<sup>1</sup> G. Sitwell, *Medieval Spiritual Writers*, London, 1961, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> The judgment of a seventeenth-century French Protestant. Quoted from E. I. Watkin, *The English Way*, London, 1933, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *Scale*, ii. 46.

<sup>4</sup> *Interior Castle*. Mansion vii, c. 4.

explanation the favourite medieval image of the sun with its light, heat, and fire. God the Father is the 'verry sonne' (f. 111<sup>v</sup><sup>b</sup>), of whom 'goop̄ out bope þe Sone and þe Holy Goost' (f. 112<sup>r</sup><sup>a</sup>). 'My myzt is neuere departid fro his wisdom, ne þe heete of þe fier of þe Holy Goost is neuere departid fro me, þe fadir, ne fro my sone, for he is oon wiþ us' (f. 112<sup>r</sup><sup>a</sup>). 'Þe toon of us may not be departid fro þat opire no moore þan may þe heete of þe sonne fro þe lizt ne þe lizt fro þe heete. That sonne is neuere dyuydid, and zit to al þe world and to ony creature þat wil be maad warm by hym it zeueþ lizt' (f. 111<sup>v</sup><sup>b</sup>).

In her initial revelation the Trinity filled Julian's heart with the utmost joy. 'The trinite is our Maker & keeper. the trinite is our everlasting lover, everlasting ioy & blisse...where Iesus appereith the blissid trinite is vnderstond' (f. 3<sup>v</sup>).<sup>1</sup> The Trinitarian providence manifested in the Creation, the Incarnation, the Redemption, is the main motif of the *Orcherd*. St. Catherine is far more detailed than any of the English mystics as to how man is made in the image of the Trinity in the three powers of his soul, mind, reason, and will, that he might participate in everything belonging to God. This belief overflows into her view of all the soul's activities as within the Trinity, and conditions her description of the soul's mystical progress, its shortcomings, its highest achievement, or its ultimate perdition.

Þei þat ben slayen in þe wickid flood of þe worldly mysgouernyd loue ben dede as to grace. And bycause þei ben dede, her mynde hap forȝete þe greet benefeete of my large mercy. Also her iȝen of intellecte seen not and knowen not my soopfastnes, for his witt and feelyng is deed...his wil is deed as fro my resonable wil, for his wil loueþ not but þingis þat ben deed (f. 35<sup>r</sup><sup>b</sup>).

The title given by modern editors to Julian's Book, *The Revelations of Divine Love*, would serve equally well for the *Orcherd*. St. Catherine's keywords are love and mercy. Both women, in the apostolic degree of the contemplative way, were motivated by the same wish: to communicate the deep knowledge of the love of God revealed to them, that their fellow Christians might be sped in the way of salvation. Both counter-balanced a horror of sin with boundless trust, though their reasoning differs. Both wrote repeatedly that 'sin is right nought',<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See also *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. by James Walsh, London, 1961, ch. 4, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Orcherd*, f. 160<sup>r</sup><sup>b</sup>; Julian, Add. MS. 37790 (Shorter version), f. 101<sup>v</sup>; Sloane MS. 2499 'synne is no dede' (f. 10<sup>r</sup>).

'it hath no maner of substance ne no party of being'.<sup>1</sup> Neither ignored the paradox of only too obvious evil in a world created and held in being by an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, unalterable God. Julian sought to resolve this paradox chiefly by metaphysical argument; St. Catherine, perhaps more disturbed by the reality of the human wilful and sinful soul, is more militant in exhortation. But her understanding that 'from the nouzt of synne which is a þorn þat prickeþ þe soule' God has 'drawn out a rose' (f. 160<sup>rb-va</sup>) is no less comforting than Julian's celebrated conclusion that 'Synne is behovabil, but al shal be wel, & al shal be wel, & al manner of thyng shal be wele' (f. 18<sup>v</sup>). Julian's speculations on sin drew her to faith in 'a mervelous hey privitye hid in God' (f. 19<sup>r</sup>), and to the often challenged conviction that 'in every soule that shal be savid is a godly wil þat never assentid to synne ne never shal' (f. 24<sup>v</sup>). St. Catherine's answer likewise was a doctrine of the will, but one more orthodox and more easily comprehensible:

Pat fredom of wil þat a man haþ is so myche, and maad so strong by vertu of þis precious blood þat þe feend may not compelle hym to do þe leeste synne, and no creature moore þan he wole hymself (f. 23<sup>ra</sup>).<sup>2</sup>

I am he þat is iocunde and myrie, which kepip a soule in greet goostly gladnesse þat arayep hersilf wiþ my wille (f. 156<sup>va</sup>).

The radiant confidence of both springs from their awareness that the Redemption realized the desire of God. The *Orchard* reiterates the theme: 'myn owne loue constreyneþ me, for I louede þou eer þan 3e loueden me, & eer þan 3e myzt loue I louede þou meruelously' (f. 160<sup>va</sup>). God has a thirst and love-longing for us here, says Julian, 'lestyng in hym as long as we be in nede. us drawing up to his blis' (f. 20<sup>v</sup>). And St. Catherine:

Al woundid in loue, me semeþ þat þou hast nede of us wrecchide creaturis... þou canst not lyue wiþoute us, notwiþstondyng þou art eendeles liif, of whom alle þinges taken liif, & wiþout whom may noþing lyue (f. 173<sup>rb</sup>).

I knowe wel, lord, þat first þou openest þe gate eer þanne we knocke þerate, for wiþ þe affecioun and loue þat þou hast 3oue to þi seruauntis, þey knocke to þee (f. 148<sup>rb</sup>).

Apart from the vivid 'showings' of the agony of the Passion and the somewhat unorthodox speculations on sin, there is little matter in the *Revelations* not also to be found in the *Orchard*. And

<sup>1</sup> Sloane MS. f. 19<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 'þis gate of wille which is fre I wil not suffre goostly enemyes to vndo it' (f. 161<sup>rb</sup>).

one might add that apart from the passages on the Sacrament of the Altar there are few mystical themes in the *Orcherd* to which Julian or Hilton do not give some prominence. The differences are almost always those of magnitude and personality. One last, but essential, example must suffice—their treatment of the second great commandment, to love one's neighbour as oneself. St. Catherine felt herself far more involved in the evil of the world than either, 'þe moost cause and þe instrument of alle mennys synnes' (f. 21<sup>ra</sup>), for which she would take punishment upon herself: 'I praie þi dýrva charyte þat þou take veniaunce of me, but spare þi peple. I schal neuere go fro þi presence til I se þee haue mercy on þat peple. What were it to me to haue liif & se þi peple haue deef?' (f. 21<sup>ra</sup>). The beginning of Julian's experience lay in a threefold petition for herself, for mind of the Passion, for a purifying bodily sickness, for the three wounds of true contrition, kind compassion, and earnest longing for God. St. Catherine's initial petition was for mercy for herself that she might be worthy to help others, the second for the reformation of Holy Church, the third for mercy for the whole world, and the fourth for Divine Providence in things general and particular. Such dimensions and such a combination of the practical and sublime are characteristic of the whole *Orcherd*.

'For the honour of God and the salvation of souls' was her watchword throughout. God declared all these things to her, he told her, 'þat þe fier of holy desier myȝte encrease in þee, and compassioun and sorowe of dampnacioun of soules' (f. 86<sup>rb</sup>), that she and others 'togyderis schulen preye and in maner constreyne me for to schewe mercy to al þe world, and to þe mysterial body of holy chirche' (f. 86<sup>va</sup>). Holy Church should be reformed, not 'by werre or by cruelte...but by pees and reste, and by weilynge and wepynge of my seruauntis' (f. 86<sup>va</sup>); 'ȝit schulen ȝe not ceesse to ȝeue me encense of ȝoure wel smyllynge and riȝt swete prayeris for heelpe of soulis, for I wil do mercy to þe world and to holy chirche' (f. 86<sup>va-b</sup>). Hunger for the salvation of souls must accompany the stages of spiritual ascent of beginners and proficients, of purgation and illumination. The English mystics in their decriptions stop short before the highest degree of contemplation. St. Catherine passes beyond the peace and joy of union to a fourth degree which comprehends the mystery of vicarious suffering:

Siche ben so ful of loue, and fro hemsilf, for þe worschip & honour of my name, and so hungry upon þe mete of soulis heelpe, þat þei renne to þe mete table of my sones cros, and þere desiringe to suffre myche

greuous peyne, þerby for to wyne and purchace vertues, to edificacioun and profiȝt of her neiȝboris, berynge contynuely þe blessid [prentis] of þe woundis of my sone . . . þat is, þe ynly loue þat þei han for heelpe of her neiȝboris soulis, crucifinge hem so in her bodies, and schewyng by schynyng to opire, insomyche þat þei sett riȝt nouȝt by her owne bodies, but rapir desyren with greet delyte for to suffre rēpreuys, heuynes and peynes, rekyng neure in what wise þei ben ȝeue to hem, for heelpe of her neiȝboris soulis (f. 77<sup>va-b</sup>).

I have been able to indicate only a part of the *Orcherd's* claim to recognition. The prose of the translation merits attention in its own right, as I hope the illustrations have shown. Those interested in Syon Abbey will find in the *Orcherd* strong proof of the intellectual and spiritual attainment of its early days. After reading the *Orcherd* those studying the English mystical tradition will return to the great fourteenth-century writers with fuller understanding. Rolle, Hilton, the author of the *Cloud*, Julian, are all very different. The *Orcherd* speaks of divine love as passionately as Rolle; elsewhere it has the austerity and restraint of the *Cloud*, the wide embrace of Hilton, the immediacy of personal rapture and the profundity of meditation found in Julian. In addition, it offers us the first version in English of the revelations of a unique saint.

The *Orcherd* was first rescued from neglect in the twentieth century by Miss H. E. Allen<sup>1</sup> in her researches into the contemporary world of Margery Kempe. It will soon be given fitting dress for publication again, this time by the Early English Text Society.<sup>2</sup> The Middle English translator's counsel might once again be followed: 'clerely to assaye & serche þe hool orcherd, and taste of sich fruyt and herbis resonably aftir ȝoure affeccoun, & what ȝou likeþ best, aftirward chewe it wel' (f. 2<sup>rb</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> This article owes much to Miss Allen's notes and correspondence.

<sup>2</sup> A critical edition has been prepared by the present writer in collaboration with Dr. G. M. Liegey.