

IV

the littleness of the cosmos

AND THIS same time that I saw this bodily sight, our Lord showed me a GHOSTLY sight of His homely loving. I saw that He is to us all-thing that is good and comfortable to our help. He is our clothing; for love wraps us and winds us, embraces us^{*} and all betakes us,[†] and hangs about us for tender love, that He may never leave us. And so in this sight I saw truly that He is all-thing that is good, as to mine understanding.

And in this He showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel-nut, lying in the palm of my hand; and, to my understanding, it was as round

^{*} *MS*, hales us.

[†] *MS*, alle be teches us = lays hold of us.

as any ball. I looked thereupon, and thought, “What may this be?”

And I was answered generally thus: “It is all that is made.”

I marvelled how it might last, for methought it might fall suddenly to nought for littleness. And I was answered in mine understanding: “It lasts, and ever shall, for God loves it.” And so hath all-thing its being through the love of God.

In this little thing I saw three parts:

The first is that God made it.

The second is that He loves it.

The third is that God keeps it.

But what is that to me? Truly [that He is] the Maker, the Lover, the Keeper; for till I am substantially oned to Him, I may never have love, rest nor true bliss—that is to say, that I be so fastened to Him that there be right nought that is made betwixt my God and me. And who shall do this deed? Truly He Himself by His mercy and His grace, for He has made me thereto, and blissfully restored me.

LADY JULIAN OF NORWICH

In this God brought Our Lady to mine understanding. I saw her spiritually * in bodily likeness a simple maiden and a meek, young of age, in the stature that she was when she conceived. Also God showed me in part the wisdom and the truth of her soul; wherein I understood [the] reverent beholding in which she beheld her God that is her Maker, marvelling with great reverence that He would be born of her that was a simple creature of His making. And this wisdom of truth, knowing the greatness of her Maker, and the littleness of herself that is made, made her for to say meekly to the Angel Gabriel, "Lo, me here, God's handmaiden!"

In this sight I saw truly that she is more than all that God made beneath her in worthiness and in fulness. For above her is nothing that is made but the blessed manhood of Christ.

This little thing that is made, that is beneath our Lady Saint Mary, God showed it unto me as little as it had been a hazel-nut. Methought it might have fallen for littleness.

* *MS*, gastelye.

In this blessed revelation God showed me three noughts, of which noughts this is the first that was showed me—of this needs each man and woman to have knowing that desires to live contemplatively—that it pleases him to [count as] nought* all-thing that is made, for to have the love of God that is unmade.

For this is the cause why they that are occupied wilfully in† earthly business, and evermore seek worldly weal, are not here of His in‡ heart and in soul, for they love and seek here rest in this thing that is so little, wherein is no rest, and know not God, that is Almighty, All-wise, and All-good, for He is true rest.

God willeth to be known, and it pleases Him that we rest in Him. For all that is beneath Him suffices not to us. And this is the cause why no soul is rested, till it be noughted§ of all that is made. When he is noughted for love to have Him that is all that is good, then is he able to receive ghostly rest.

* *MS*, “that hym lyke to nought.”

† *i.e.*, set their hearts on.

‡ *B. & P. MSS*, “in ease of.”

§ *i.e.*, emptied, or stripped.