Theological Breadth, Interconnection, Tradition, and Gender: Hildegard, Hadewijch, and Julian Today

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As women theologians, especially, have made clear, we and our world are complex. We need theology which relates that complexity coherently to God. In that regard there is something to be learned from medieval theological reflections, which are often much more comprehensive than we may imagine or than our modern specialists may suggest. Heirs to a classical educational syllabus, writers in the Middle Ages instinctively interconnected and enriched their Godward thinking with their understanding of language, symbolism, society, the physical world, philosophy, ethics, personal being, aesthetics, and more. This is especially true of the three women discussed in the article, all of whom, judged by these criteria, wrote more effectively than even Anselm or Aquinas. Here, then, we have resources and encouragement for a more engaged, more immediate, and more widely “in touch” shared response to God in Christ in the power of the Spirit.

“I have a very simple faith. Why do theologians have to make things so complicated?” Perhaps we sympathize. Yet life is not simple, our world is not simple, and even the simplest of us is very complex. And the God some of us hope to get to know better holds together, and even in some way correlates, all this complexity. The best theological reflection we can each manage individually and engage in together must surely encompass and interlink as much as possible of that complexity.

Women theologians seem more likely to include in their work a greater breadth of interconnected fields of concern, and more disci-

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plined attention to them, than the majority of their male colleagues. That is, admittedly, a subjective conviction, but it is based on reading and on seminars chosen by topic, not by author. In fact, overtly feminist writers do very often explicitly claim just such a breadth of interest, though they leave any comparison with male colleagues implicit.

There is no attempt here to "essentialize" women theologians on the basis either of subjective conclusion or of overt intention, although it would seem understandable that women should be likely to find more that is questionable and so, more questions worth addressing. My concern in what follows is with breadth and interconnectedness in the theological method and concern. First, I mean to argue that a breadth of theological concern is classical, or, one might say, historically foundational, for Christian reflection and believing. Secondly, and at greater length, I wish to show that once we have access to comparable theological reflection from women and men, in the medieval period in the Christian West, it does seem to have been possible for the women to recover something of that early breadth, in ways that many men and women today may find illuminating and formative. Modern Christian theological reflection continues to engage with its past as indispensable resource. I urge that in our current reflections we pay more grateful attention to early, medieval, and contemporary achievements of breadth and interconnectedness; and, to that end, that in church and academy we also pay more expectant attention to this aspect of the work of women colleagues doing theology today in a wide range of contexts.

It is clear to all commentators that the articulate Christian leaders who in the first four centuries settled our canon of writings and shaped our ways of appropriating them, and who gave us our creedal formularies, had all received what we still call a "classical education," the trivium and quadrivium that together encompassed, at least in principle, all accepted ways to attain and share knowledge of all there was to be known.\(^1\) What seems less readily acknowledged is the ex-

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ten to which that breadth was deployed pervasively in the theological reflections of those whose writings have come down to us. Surveys pick out contentious conclusions on divine unity and Trinity and Incarnation and other topoi, abstracted from the original warp and weft, as though the latter were mere packaging. Taking the examples of Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa among the Greeks, and of Augustine and Hilary among the Latins, I try elsewhere to show just how much richer their reflections are than the surveys suggest. All their "doctrines" are in practice integrally bound up with their implicit and explicit understanding of language, symbolism, the wider human and the other-than-human world, of the past and its records, of physical processes, of philosophical schools and their metaphysics, of ethics and aesthetics, and of persons and relationships. Yet a modernist theory of language has encouraged more recent theologians to suppose that a few key words can "contain" all that matters of what these early authors "tried to say," a theory that matches neither the theory nor the practice of the ancient Mediterranean world. The result is rather less helpful than treating a printout of my DNA sequence as me.

The articulate theologians of the high Middle Ages themselves received a version of the same education; and at least by the twelfth century in the West, this again included the works of classical pagan authors. We might then expect much the same classical breadth and interconnectedness in such as Anselm, Bernard, or Thomas. In the event, at least on my reading, and under most headings, while there are important vestiges of the breadth and the interconnections made in the early centuries, they are, in these male writers, disappointing meager, and fewer. Anselm deliberately seeks an abstract logic that will support what he sees as agreed conclusions, Peter Lombard assembles "sentences," loci, and Aquinas works on that basis. Yet, somehow, such women theologians as Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch of Anvers, and Julian of Norwich achieve a breadth of concern

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and interlinkage that comes near to matching that of such as Gregory or Augustine.\textsuperscript{6} It may be that the popular preaching they heard was much richer than the more "academic" writings that have reached us (and in some cases, seem to have reached the women). If that could be shown, it would also be of interest. But the fact remains that neither the "affective" spiritual preaching of a Bernard, nor the "intellectual" spiritual addresses of Eckhart, nor the academic reasoning of such as Anselm or Aquinas display anything equaling the richness of Hildegard or of Hadewijch (dependent though Eckhart is on the latter), or of Julian.\textsuperscript{7} It is, then, puzzling that only Julian from among the three women seems to be much used as a wider theological resource today, while the former two seem to be read for their individual mystical experience or for "green" issues (Hildegard), or are categorized under philosophy.\textsuperscript{8} All these interests are warranted, but not so as to be pursued to the exclusion of the wider and creative theological reflections all three afford us.

What follows surveys something of the richness of theological reflection in Hildegard, Hadewijch, and Julian, comparing them with Anselm and Thomas in particular.


\textsuperscript{7} The following abbreviated forms are used in citations:


Language

Right up to modern times people in the Greek and Latin traditions have taken words primarily as the "names" of things or of discrete notions which the names are expected to evoke in others' minds; compare Hildegard's "only by names can humans discern things" (LDO 1.4.105). But in practice both she and Hadewijch were poets with skills to make words interplay and evoke, and the classical theory does not cramp their style.9 Janet Martin Soskice notes Julian's "rhetorical excess" and "the wealth of bodily and gendered metaphors,"10 and one may compare Hadewijch's "friend, sister, mother, lover, bridegroom" (L 1). Julian explicitly says that she cannot explain the words she received; they are for each to accept as the Lord intended, "according to the grace God gives each in understanding" (Shl 26). We may compare Hadewijch, "with nothing the mind says can one put into words the theme of Love...we are obliged to speak with our soul" (L 19). For these theologians it is experience and conviction that go beyond words, and it is in prayer and devotion that God is found to be beyond words, "so incomprehensible in and above all that no creature's senses can grasp [the Supreme Power] except to realize that this power is much higher than it can know" (Hildegard, Sc 3.1.11; compare Hadewijch, L 17). This is not the definitional full stop of an abstract "incomprehensibility"; it is an insistence, on the basis of awareness to date, that further exploration is always possible and compelling. There is no attempt to argue on the basis of supposed normative meanings of terms, no etymological metaphysics to limit faith's endeavors.

The language of such faith is also obviously meant to be self-involving, if perhaps less clearly for Hildegard than for the others. Hadewijch tells us, "We all indeed wish to be God with God, but God knows there are few of us who want to live as humans with his humanity, or want to carry his cross with him" (L 6). The "trouble" that sin caused Jesus is a trouble we are called to share, Julian insists (Shl 27). It involves will, repeated assent to God, together with awareness of God in us (Shl 52). But for Hildegard, too, it is only in the light of effective words that the Son of God is called Word (Sc 2.1.4), and her visions afford information to be acted on.

10 Janet Martin Soskice, "Trinity and Feminism," in Parsons, Feminist Theology, 135-150, at 144.
For Anselm (although himself a poet), and for Thomas, in contrast, words are relatively unproblematic, save for the nonsense of the nominalists. Anselm accepts, as we would expect, that words are names (compare his *De Grammatico*), but they are names for essences, not names for discrete individual items of experience ("nominalism," *DIV* 1; compare also Thomas, *ST* 3a.2.1 and 7.7). An argument about what there truly is can confidently be based on supposed common usage (compare, of course, the "ontological argument" in Anselm's *Prologion*; but also Thomas' "cosmological arguments"). For Thomas, understanding Christology is a matter of explaining the abstract terms of the (Latin) Chalcedonian Definition, such as "nature" and "person," essences and incipients (*ST* 3a 2.1; 2.2), in terms of etymologies supporting Aristotelian categories.

Anselm talks of "delight in the logic of [the] faith" (*CDH*, Commendatory Preface) and of finding that his efforts please people. A similar intellectual satisfaction seems implicit at least in Thomas, and need not be despised. But nothing much more seems to follow by way of informing life. Perhaps they would have supposed that to state the truth, to find the best words for "the truth" is a valid act in itself, from which nothing other need follow. However, they do not say so.

As we would expect, "metaphor" is seen as the "transfer" of a name from one given reality to another, drawing attention to a specific and specifiable similarity between the two realities, similarity and not identity (for example, Thomas, *ST* 3a 8.2). For the most part, only authorized and/or conventional metaphors are at issue, asking for explanation. It is rare to find a fresh illustration. A language that

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11 The following abbreviated forms are used in citations:


For Aquinas, *ST—Summa Theologiae* (50 volumes; London: Eyre & Spottiswoode).

12 There is no need for me to affirm the depth and brilliance of both within their chosen limits; it is of the limits that I here complain. I find nothing in the secondary literature to suggest I have overlooked what I sought; compare Gillian R. Evans, *Anselm and Talking about God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), and her *Anselm* (London: Chapman, 1989); Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); and Norman Kretzmann and Eleanor Stump (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
could be looser, more explorative, more creative, is either not considered or is rejected. Anselm specifically argues against taking any such risk. Faith cannot be left looking like pictures painted on air or on water (CDH 1.4). It must be given a logically coherent foundation.

Theology is taken to be a matter of unpacking what is given, if as yet only implicitly. Of course, the practice often is creative, if only marginally. New sets of words, new collocations of old phrases are new, whatever the expressed intention of the utterer. But concentrating conservatively as they do on defending the formulas and conclusions of their predecessors, these (and other) male writers not only miss the links with wider experience that helped shape that much earlier work, but they also provide few if any fresh connections of their own.

Signs, Symbols, Tokens

All three of the women authors describe, often in vivid detail, visions they are sure they have received. In Hildegard the detail is meticulous enough to allow a member or members of her community to render them in full color on vellum. Details are seen as symbolic, as all three explain. Some of the symbolism is standardized, while some seems quite novel: for instance, Julian’s little ball like a hazelnut (Shl 5), or Hadewijch’s upside-down tree (V 1.185-198).

For all three the divine Son, the Word, is one who has accepted humiliation and suffering in the past, for the sake of all willing to receive the benefits gained. But for Hadewijch and Julian the Christ they encounter in their visions enacts an empathetic and tender interest and concern for them, addressing them directly and personally (Hadewijch, V 8: Julian, Shl 25, 40). Hadewijch enjoys a fully tactile (and indeed erotic) sensation of being embraced by him during a mass: “he came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt him in full felicity, in accordance with the desire of my heart and my humanity” (V 7.64-93). Even in her sense of Christ’s motherly suckling care, Julian does not seem to go this far (for example, Shl 60).13 Visualizing a present Christ seems to encourage, even if it does not itself ensure, such a

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close imagined relationship. Both insist that the relationship is both with and for each, and for the sake of others.

Hildegard's visions are much less immediate—more of a vivid teaching aid. When she encounters "the Son of Man" it is as one who preaches the church's message to her quite impersonally (for example, Sc 3.10.1-9), and indeed, this figure seems to symbolize the church as Christ's earthly representative (Sc 3.11.9). Somewhat as in Eastern tradition, God is encountered simply as overwhelming light (compare Sc 1.1. Pr; 3.1. Pr.). However, no ontological account of it is given, apart from the term "the living light" as opposed to its "shadow" light, which is what illumines her visions (Sc 3.13.8).

Christ is divine. In him we have more than a symbol of divine love, more than a teaching aid, rather a "real" token of divine concern for us and engagement with us (Hildegard, Sc 2.1.13; Hadewijch, L 6.86-116; Julian, Shl 10). Yet no vision of Christ or encounter with him exhausts the divine incomprehensibility. There is always more to explore.

Only Julian actually mentions paintings, a crucifix, and a vermicle (Shls 1; Shl 3; 12). But commentators make it clear that much of what is "seen" by all three seems prompted by the "imaginary" constituted by Scripture and other traditional sources found in narratives, wall paintings, bas-reliefs, statuary, as well as in civil and ecclesiastical ceremonial, with all these elements feeding from and to each other, within the context of the doctrinal tradition as rehearsed and elaborated in the mass, in the offices, and in readings from older and more recent theologians.\textsuperscript{14} We may trust that this rich context was there for the two men we are considering, but it is certainly not so clearly and closely integrated into the theologizing.

Christ is present, active, and tangible in the sacrament of the altar for Hildegard (Sc 2.6. Pr. & 53), as he is for Julian (Shl 60). The sacrament involves symbolism, but is more than that; here there is a real token of Christ in self-giving, and all the senses are potentially involved in responding to him ("see, taste and feel," Hadewijch, V 7.64-97).

Of course, to interpret all these claims to visionary and even tactile experience as "imaginative" visualizing (and "tactilizing") is to impose an explanation of our own. Yet in their often very closely related poetry neither Hadewijch nor Hildegard deny their own creativity;

\textsuperscript{14} Compare Davy, \textit{Initiation}. 
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nor does the latter in her music. Julian reflects creatively for many years on her visions before finalizing her second account.

On sign, symbol, token, I find, then, nothing to match for breadth, or for quantity or quality of interlinkages, in Anselm or in Thomas (nor, for that matter, in Bernard, William of St. Thierry, Richard of St. Victor, or Eckhart). Both Anselm and Thomas do refer to painting, but only to provide a metaphor. They do not even seem to allude to crucifixes or church buildings or vestments or liturgical practice. Thomas is sure that Christ, as well as enjoying a perfect vision of divine reality, will have had a human imagination able to summon up “images in which he saw reflected the things of God” (ST 3a.7.8). But there is no suggestion that we, in turn, use our imaginations theologically, nor that we allow them to be stimulated theologically by visual or other experience; imagery is, anyway, only a provisional means to abstract truth, and the truly blessed can already dispense with it (ST 3a.11.2). Christ only had this facility so as to be able to teach others. What is concluded theologically is not subjected, even in theory, to a test of its expressibility in other ways—in painting, carving, poetry, narrative, music, drama, architecture.

Society

“Born into a noble family . . . [Hildegard] enjoyed the inestimable advantages of wealth, high birth, membership in a large and well-connected family and easy access to the holders of political and ecclesiastical power.” Beguines such as Hadewijch were drawn from a similar milieu, as her imagery of courtly love and other incidental allusions confirm. When Julian is compared with her contemporaries, Margery Kempe, it appears that she, too, had grown up in a privileged setting, as had Anselm and Thomas.

Many common social presuppositions appear unquestioned in all five. “People of high birth,” God tells Hildegard, “by my ordinance have the might of secular power” (Sc 3.6.12-14; compare Anselm, CDH 2.16, and Thomas, ST 3a 8.1). Hadewijch is confident that God’s perfections of mercy, charity, wisdom, and perfection inspire the social order around her (L 18.13-50). “It is the greatest honor,” reflects Julian, “which a majestic king or great lord can do for a poor servant, to be familiar with him” (Shl 8); and the “honor” theme is as

clear in the other two (for example, Hildegard, Sc 2.5.35; Hadewijch, Ps 9.3). Social theory clearly structures theological reflection.

If social theory is unquestioned by all five, social practice can be trenchantly criticized by the women, not least by Hildegard, perhaps the most "conservative" of the three. Divine condemnation of insubordination does not refer to "a person who humbly refuses consent to perverse wickedness, for if he does so properly he increases God's justice and does not diminish it" (Sc 3.9.22). If Christology reflects social theory, social practice should reflect Christology; "faithful people both small and great can find in him [Christ] the right step" (Sc 3.8.13).

There is a similar ideal enunciated by Hadewijch, already cited above: "God, who is all powerful and sovereign above all power, gives enough to all humans . . . not by his own exertion . . . but through his divine perfections . . . Mercy gives God's gifts to the indigent . . . charity guards the common people . . . wisdom arrays all the noble knights . . . Perfection gives the peers of the kingdom the lordship over their land," all to serve "the true legal rights of love," where love has been defined in terms of the Incarnation of the Son within the life of the divine Trinity (L 17; and 18.13-15). From Julian we have the assurance that our Lord "takes heed not only of things that are noble and great, but also of those which are little and small, of humble men and simple, of this man and that man. And this is what he means when he says, "Every kind of thing will be well" (Shl 32). We have, besides, her repeated insistence that our Lord Jesus "who is highest, mightiest, noblest and most honorable, is lowest, humblest, most familiar and courteous" (Shl 7). This could, if taken seriously, reshape normal social practice more thoroughly than might the formality of Hildegard or the courtly passion of Hadewijch.

The men do not seem to feel it necessary to spell out any social implications of the central theological reflections they elaborate in the abstract.

Julian the anchorite mentions other people on occasion, and emphasizes compassion for them (for example, Shl 28), but no more than do the male authors does she concern herself much with individual human interactions as a context for her reflections, however much her relationship with her divine lord is shaped by classical friendship models. For Thomas, self-sufficiency is the ideal, and his Jesus exemplified it (ST 3a 19.3; 40.1), as did Anselm's (CDH 2.10), despite the gift for friendship which appears in other writing of the
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latter, and in Eadmer’s biography. Human social solidarity seems less formal in the letters of Hildegard and especially in those of Hadewijch (for example, L 25).

Conventions of female self-bellittling appear in Hildegard and in Julian, but Julian, as we shall see, seems to retract it, and Hildegard actually inverts the convention: how effeminate contemporary male leaders must be, for God to transmit his instructions through a woman! (for example, L 24). However, God does so, and effectively. Neither Hadewijch nor Julian seems to find it at all strange that God in Christ should have a deep and rich relationship with a woman such as she; nor in either case does the relationship seem to be qualitatively different from what a male might hope to be drawn into. There is no suggestion that as “daughter of Eve” a woman might be more prone to sin than men are. For Julian, “even Christians” are simply that.

Significantly, the women (and Anselm, too) are able to take up and develop variations in gendered talk of God. Such imagery is used in prayer by Anselm (but not by Thomas). Julian devotes five chapters of theological reflection to this theme, for “Jesus Christ, who opposes good to evil, is our true mother. We have our being from him, where the foundation of motherhood begins” (Shl 59; compare 59-63). For Hadewijch, in her poems, Christ is not mother but the ideal lady, and Hadewijch is the knight drawn irresistibly to seek the fruition of the love that Christ is. Hadewijch accepts her own bodiliness, and approaches Christ, not as “absolute being,” not as “pure act,” but as one whose very personal allure constitutes a passive object of desire (for example, Ps 15), a strikingly provocative reversal.

There is minimal reference to any women, even to Mary, in the scholarly reflections of Anselm and Thomas surveyed here. Women seem for most theological reflection irrelevant.

By comparison with the male thinkers, Christology in all three of the women theologians involves much more reference to the Trinity and to the relationality of the divine persons. Hildegard’s Trinitarian analogies are themselves impersonal; but the actions of Father, Son, and Spirit towards us are personal, specific, and interconnected, culminating in the Incarnation of the Word and the response the Spirit enables (Sc 2.1.3; 2.2.2-8). It is primarily in terms of active relation-

16 Compare Newman, Sisters of Wisdom, 3.
ships with us that Hadewijch talks of God as Trinity, and it is "by the
demand of the Trinity [that] God's Son was born, and to satisfy the
debt to the Unity he died. By demand of the Trinity he rose again
among men; and to satisfy the debt to the Unity he ascended to his
Father" (L 30.57-67; compare L 28.101-120). Julian, like Hildegard,
knows what one is supposed to say about God as Trinity, but has more
to add: "Though the persons of the blessed Trinity be all alike in their
attributes, it was their love which was most shown me" (Shl 24; com-
pare 23). "Thus in our Father, God almighty, we have our being, and
in our Mother of mercy [Christ] we have our reforming and our
restoring . . . and through the rewards and gifts of grace of the
Spirit we are fulfilled" (Shl 58).

It would be unwarranted to argue on the basis of these few ex-
amples that women are (or, that these lay women were) by nature
more open to personal relationships than men are (or the two we
have cited were). But in terms of awareness of persons in relation-
ships, we find here deployed theological resources that are much
richer than those we have in the officially recognized male theo-
logians who were their near contemporaries, and who have, alas,
been much more influential.

The Wider World and Knowledge of It

Only in Hildegard do we find any "theological" fascination with
the physics and cosmology of the world, quaint to us today though
most, if not all, of ancient "science" may seem (for example, LDO
1.2.28-32). But it is this that tells us how God sustains us, and the en-
tire universe, through his creative Word (Sc 2.1). And it is worth not-
ing that the Word remained as indivisibly with the Father throughout
the time on earth as our inner physical life is integral to each of us: a
distinctive and characteristically "organic" analogy (rather than the
traditional lamp and light; Sc 2.1.3). The Holy Spirit breathes on our
cfive senses for our good, for "with the five senses people can regard
the height of divinity, and discern both good and evil" (Sc 3.2.22).

Contemporary science figures very occasionally in Thomas in
passing illustration (for example, ST 3a 5.3; 7.12; 9.1; 131.1), hardly at
all in Anselm, and in neither has it any further theological relevance;
nor are there any such detailed "scientific" interests evident in the
writings of either Hadewijch or Julian. The former just once includes
Ptolemaic cosmology in a vision (V 4; compare Ps 48), and the latter
knows that crucifixion would involve desiccation (Shl 16). More significant in all three of the women is their emphasis on empirical factors in people's lives, rather than on abstract doctrinal or metaphysical nicety (for example, Hildegard, Sc 2.1.4; Hadewijch L 17.123-end; Julian Shl 79).

Among all the authors considered in this survey, Hildegard thus clearly emerges as the one most engaged with the detail of the "natural" world. In her poems and prose, "greenness" is a vivid, even "participative" symbol of spiritual life (for example, LDO 1.2.10, 1.4.11; Sc 1.4.25). Although Hildegard affirms a traditional disjunction between humankind and animals (as rational/irrational, Sc 3.2.9), humankind is seen as integrally part of the same physical world, "so entangled with the strengths of the rest of creation it can never be separated from them" (Sc 1.3.16). So creation is not simply a backdrop or a source for metaphors and illustrations, but an instrument of divine action.17 It is the "clothing of Wisdom," and "all her decrees are gentle and mild since she washes her garments, whenever they become sullied, in the blood of the merciful Lamb" (LDO 3.4.14). This may seem to us unduly optimistic (with Hildegard sure that "each creature possesses the fullness of all that is perfect and useful" (LDO 3.4.2). Further, there is no "ecological ethic" implied, other than an adoring (and aristocratic spectator's) appreciation of created beauty. But Hildegard's approach does at least attempt to show Christ and salvation and the wider world interacting. So she can assert that it was, as it were, entirely in character within the shared activity of the Trinity when the creative Word became incarnate, a still brighter flame of his universal vivifying fire (Sc 2.1.5, 8; compare 3.1.9).

In her sixth Vision Hadewijch sees God's "hiddenness embracing and flowing through all things" (V 6.70), but it is mainly in her poems that Hadewijch adverts to the wider "natural" world, to its seasons, and to living plants. The rural imagery is varied: the rising sap, meadows, individual plants, birds, a bedewed rose among its thorns, storm, flood, and fair weather. However, one soon notes that such themes are mostly restricted to the opening stanza, perhaps to be resumed at the end; and that it is most often spring, "When March begins" (Ps 6.1), that sets the mood. Yet this could well be Christologically signif-

17 Compare Newman, Sisters of Wisdom, 20; and "Wisdom as Creatrix and Anima Mundi," 64-71.
icant (or Mariologically; or both). The Western medieval Christian calendar year begins with Lady Day, March 25th, the Annunciation, and that seems to underlie at least some of the imagery:

The New Year has come to us.  
God be blessed for it.  
Springtime can be gladly received  
By him who has the delight of Love (Ps 18.1).

and,

Thus the soul receives as Mary received,  
And in all this obedient service still deeper humility:  
That is, Ecce ancilla domini.  
Thus the first month is accomplished (Pc 14.60-63).

The lover receives Love to grow within, as Mary did, and as the sap flows upward (Ps 1 and 29). To allow seasonally induced moods and heightened awareness to inform a desire for Christ as object of love sensuously conceived offers a significant enrichment to our theological reflections. There is, however, little further reference to the wider environment in this author, apart from a vision of the Ptolemaic cosmos and all its inhabitants at a standstill to bear witness to the consummation of Hadewijch's fruition in love (V 4). Again, there is no ecological ethic stated or implied.

Julian offers still less detailed descriptions of the world outside (or inside) her cell. But "At the same time as I saw this sight of the head bleeding . . . our good Lord showed a spiritual sight of his familiar love. He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters, surrounds us for his love. . . . And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand." The loving care of creator, sustainer, and redeemer are continuous (Shl 6; compare 8), and are everywhere one might imagine (even on the seabed, Shl 10). "I never remove my hands from my works," God tells her (Shl 11), although the work of redemption is more precious still than the gifts of nature (Shl 12).

Although for Anselm the smallest worm is not superfluous to God's plan, the detailed life of the world plays no articulated part in his exposition of Christ and salvation (CDH 1.16-18). Thomas, of course, supposes that abstract reflection on causation, contingency, purpose, and the like affords us some awareness of God, but the life of Christ is a much better guide, and turns our attention elsewhere (ST 3a 1.1). All but the end is purely incidental (Anselm CDH 2.17;
Thomas ST 3a 45.3). Although both try to take faithfully and seriously the physicality of Jesus, he appears rather as a "method actor" playing a demanding part realistically (for example, Anselm CDH 1.3; Thomas ST 3a 5).

More than the women theologians' attention to the wider world as a part of their Christocentric devotion, what has struck many readers as particularly significant is their ready acceptance of sensuous bodiliness, mentioned earlier. That acceptance is there, despite being accompanied by conventional notes of rationalist body-soul dualism, and despite the convention that female bodiliness is to be seen as especially gross and unspiritual. Hildegard is the most restrained of the three, and very uneasy with genital sexuality, while quite content to discuss human generative organs, and quite certain that body and soul interact in pervasive psychosomatic detail (LDO 1.4.18-19, 79; compare Sc 1.2.20-21; 1.4.13). But her account of human physical being leads her straight into an exposition of John 1:1-18, and the Incarnation of the Word. She still uses the traditional metaphor of "garment" for the body the Word accepted, but it is a "royal robe," "a beautiful adornment" (LDO 1.4.105, "glory"). We have already called attention to the intensely sensuous visionary experiences of Hadewijch (V 7.64-80).

Julian can be as frank as either; one may note her unsqueamish admiration for the neatness of the human excretory system, and calm assurance that God ensures its working for each individual. "He does not despise what he has made, nor does he despise to serve us in the simplest natural functions of our body" (Shl 6). We are made sensual, and Jesus shares our sensuality and "God is in our sensuality" (Shl 55, 58). What we await is as full an integration of soul and sense as Christ achieved, and will enable in us (Shl 56).

None of our three writers displays any of the embarrassment with the physicality of Jesus as God living a human life that we find in our male authors. Hildegard and Hadewijch would both agree with Julian that the incarnate Word was all along "sitting in rest in the divinity" (Hildegard, "eternally with the Father," Sc 2.1.3; Hadewijch, L 6.17), without, on my reading, concerning themselves with metaphysical problems of power, knowledge, and providence. Hadewijch is particularly striking in her affirmation:

We must be continually aware that noble service and suffering in exile are proper to man's condition; such was the share of Jesus Christ when he lived on earth as man. We do not find it written
anywhere that Christ ever, in his entire life, had recourse to his Father or his omnipotent nature to obtain joy and repose. He never gave himself any satisfaction, but continually undertook new labors from the beginning of his life to the end (L 6.86-96).

In the classic male theologians, the divine Word accepts the humiliation of the role while leaving the experience as such to the ensouled human flesh. Here the divine Christ is the entire subject of the experiences.

Julian is rather more allusive; but again, there is no attempt to distance the divine Son as subject from the labors he undertook in solidarity with Adam (humankind; Shl 51; compare 10; 22). The divine Son “rushed from the Father into the maiden’s womb, failing to accept our nature, and in his falling he took great hurt. The hurt that he took was our flesh in which at once he experienced mortal pains.” With Hildegard one is less certain. On the one hand she is sure Jesus’ birth was “without pain,” and takes care to say that it was “in his body” that he knew “the darkness of death” (Sc 2.1.13), yet she can also say that the Son, “born of the Virgin, ate, drank, lay down to sleep and experienced bodily miseries” (Sc 2.6.102).

The reader acceptance by these authors of bodiliness may seem to afford a better context for Christology and soteriology than does the dualistic disparagement of the physical that was already traditional in male Christian circles. And even though an ecological ethic does not emerge, at least there is a potential for it in the affirmation of the divine sustaining creativity.

In the light of this there is in all five disappointingly little attention to the gospel stories of Jesus’ life. Obviously, we find in none of our theologians any critical historical appraisal; but neither do we find any sense of historical distance. Only Hadewijch, as one committed to serve in the world, seems to find present significance in Jesus’ ministry as a whole: “When the hour came, Christ acted: in words, in deeds, in preaching, in teaching, in reprimands, in consolation, in miracles, and in penance [sic]; as well as in labors, in pains, in shame, in calumny, in anguish, and in distress, even to the passion, and even to death. And in all these things he patiently awaited his time” (L 6.102-110). We may compare her first vision, where, again, she finds she is to reenact Christ’s lifestyle in some detail (V 1.288-382): “you will not know where to lodge for a single night, and all persons will fall away from you and forsake you.” That is the same Christ who so warmly embraces her.
Again, by and large, the women draw together a much richer range of awareness and experience in their theological reflections.

Philosophy and Metaphysics

For the two men, metaphysical reflections on such terms as “being,” “power,” and “perfection” determine how Scripture and liturgy are to be interpreted. Anselm explicitly aims to establish the truth independently of the New Testament records, on the basis of definitions of “power, necessity, will” (CDH, Pr. and 1.1; “notitia potestatis et necessitatis et voluntatis”). Thomas readily agrees: “As being infinite a divine person admits of no addition” (ST 3a 3.1). The women also inherit as given dogma a range of the metaphysical conclusions of previous Christian generations. Only God simply and truly “is” (Hildegard, Sc 3.1.10; compare Hadewijch, V 14.70; Julian, Shl 5). Humans are composite, with a rational soul in an evanescent animate body. God, by contrast, is changeless perfection (Hildegard, Sc 1.1.1; 3.1.10; compare Hadewijch, L 22; Julian, Shl 11). As infinite perfection, God is by definition beyond finite human comprehension (Hildegard, Sc 3.1.2-3; compare Hadewijch L 12.31-39), although Julian seems to ignore this definitional argument, and for her (as for Augustine and others, of course), “full knowledge of God” is a realistic if distant goal (Shl 56).

Yet it is noticeable that standard metaphysical conclusions play little, if any, effective part in the actual theological reflections offered, and there is hardly any argument of a standard metaphysical kind. Julian ponders God’s foreknowledge and human failure, sure that all will turn out to have been the best possible (Shl 11; 68; 85). As experienced, however, the essence of God is compassionate and self-involving love, not abstract “being” (Shl 43). Hadewijch urges the importance of “reason,” but reasons to a quite untraditional “logic of love” (L 4). It is in terms of the logic of love that she reinterpret some terms for divine immanence and transcendence in Letter 22. For Hildegard, God creates out of his own eternity, as the sole life by which all life breathes (LDO 2.14, 17), but her theology is almost always “tensed,” as God responds in love to sequential human events (for example, Sc 2.2.4).

18 Compare Flanagan, Hildegard of Bingen, 67-68, “a very different methodology from those of Anselm or Abelard.”
Hadewijch, as noted, reflects on the logic of love as she perceives it. It involves for us a disciplined freedom for God whose freedom is thus, and necessarily, respected in return, with no attempt to adapt God to suit ourselves (Pc 6.10-14; 3.85, 119). We determine to live as Hadewijch takes it Jesus lived (Pc 9.5-10).

Freedom for God involves, just as necessarily, freedom for others, approaching the divine Son where he is most vulnerable, within the triune divine life:

Love's greatest need and love's most urgent business I attend to first. So also does the brotherly love that lives in the charity of Jesus Christ. It supports the beloved brother in whatever it may be—in joy or sadness, with severity or mildness, with services or counsels, and finally with consolations or threats. . . . Thus we touch him on the side where he cannot defend himself, for we do so with his work and with the will of his Father. . . . And this is the message of the Holy Spirit (L 3.26-37).

The love Hadewijch strives to attain is not emotional self-indulgence, pleasure, or "alien consolations" (Pc 3 118, compare 99-102), but neither is the aim intellectual satisfaction (Pc 3. 95-96). Ordinary reason often errs, Hadewijch insists in Letter 4 (compare Pc 10.1-4). The reason she advocates is a practical ethical reflection:

Reason well knows that God must be feared, and that God is great and man is small. But if reason fears God's greatness because of its littleness, and fails to stand up to his greatness, and begins to doubt that it can ever become God's dearest child, and thinks that such a great being is out of its reach . . . reason errs in this, and in many other things (L 439-448).

So the logic of love counters the logic of much traditional metaphysics. God's "being" is not some abstract greatness beyond intellectual grasp, but a love "so vast and so incomprehensible" that it should leave a Christian always seeking for more (L 13.47-63).

Julian, too, answers with a sensuous love to the Christ whose love she returns and mirrors (Shl 42-43). It is to the ascended Christ always characterized by human "sensuality," the life of the body with its physical senses, shared in the Incarnation, that she responds: "The honourable city in which our Lord Jesus sits is our sensuality, in which he is enclosed; and our natural substance is enclosed in Jesus, with
the blessed soul of Christ sitting in rest in the divinity” (Shl 56). And when the divine Son suffered our human pains, it was more intensely because divine, rather than at a distance because divine (Shl 20).

All will be well, indeed already is well, and even sin makes sense (Shl 27), but that is because God is that kind of love, not because God must match some abstract definition of “perfection.” God is changeless, and changeless in purpose (Shl 43), and that entails rather than precludes being responsive to us (Shl 11), save that he cannot suffer anger against us (Shl 49). Sin remains for now painful and destructive, but God is able to forget it (Shl 73). Yet that does not mean that God ignores us, or treats us as irresponsible. Rather is it that God is deeply involved with us: “See, I never remove my hands from my works” (Shl 11; compare 72). God, with immense and loving patience, draws us to our fulfillment in God (Shl 10). “If you are satisfied, I am satisfied,” says Jesus to Julian (Shl 23), for God longs for us (Shl 75).

The problems of sin and guilt, so stressed by the ancient (and modern) church, are dealt with by Christ’s solidarity with us and our acceptance of solidarity with him (Shl 50-51, 54). Underlying this there is, explicitly, an unargued metaphysical conviction that, while creaturely, “our substance is in God” (Shl 54); but that, again, undergirds rather than obviates our free response. Julian explicitly insists that speculative concerns unconnected with Christ and salvation should be foregone (Shl 30).

One theme that is still often repudiated as speculative is Julian’s calmly assured talk of Christ as our Mother. Julian knows full well, as we saw earlier, that metaphors and analogies are other than precise pictures. But this is the most appropriate model for her purpose, richly suggestive in the chapters that follow. “The kind, loving mother who knows and sees the need of her child guards it very tenderly, as the nature and condition of motherhood will have. And always as the child grows in age and stature, she acts differently, but does not change her love” (Shl 58-63, citing 59 and 60). Hildegard, too, speaks in passing of the maternal love of God (Sc 2.2.4; as do other, male authors, of course, including Anselm), but does not elaborate on the theme. Hadewijch in her poetry personifies divine love as the ideal lady the Christian is to court, cost what that may; yet her experience of union, as we have noted, is articulated in heterosexuality imagery

(V 7). Courtly though the genre she chooses is, it no more “feminizes” God than it “masculinizes” Hadewijch. It remains a rich vein of metaphor for the striving for fruition, whatever one’s sexuality.

Hildegard, as we have earlier observed, is much more formal in her writing than are the other two women, and is concerned that appropriate discipline be restored and maintained among the religious, the secular clergy, and the laity. God tells her what to say, but does not converse with her as Christ does with Julian, let alone embrace her as Christ does Hadewijch. Though the interconnectedness of things as she perceives them may be welcome, she offers little to modify or enliven the metaphysical or doctrinal components she builds into the interpretation of her visions (compare Sc 3.4.12).

It is perhaps also worth recalling, however, that not only does she refuse to “explain” atonement, but seems to assume that it is simply based in Christ’s solidarity with us, reenacted in the Eucharist (Sc 2.6.1-12; 3.6.18-24), but which we are still free to accept or reject (Sc 1.4.10). God’s foreknowledge and human freedom do not present to Hildegard the anguished problem they were for Julian (Shl 45, 50).

Ethics and the Personal

We noted above the privileged background and something of the social preconceptions of all our writers. In Summa Theologiae 3a, on Christology, there is hardly any ethical reflection, although Thomas does defend Jesus’ willingness to offend Pharisees and to restrict his teaching (ST 3a 7.12; 42). Anselm’s God is bound by the honor code to seek satisfaction, even if it can only be attained by the generous human death of his Son; there is no critical appraisal of the social ethos. Among the women, too, only Hildegard pronounces in any detail on social and ethical issues, and here it is the other two who reflect in more general terms.

Yet none of the women theologians automatically conforms to what one may suppose are the male-dominated public norms. Even self-deprecating allusions to female status are, as we noted earlier, subverted by the claim to divine inspiration.20 It is particularly noteworthy that neither Hildegard nor Hadewijch makes much reference to “honor,” as compared with the two men we are considering. Honor is occasionally ascribed, but nowhere is its maintenance by God or

humans taken as a pressing issue (compare Sc 2.6.92). Rather, humility and charity are to be preferred, being the motives for the birth and ministry of Christ (Sc 1.2.33). Julian does use the term “honor” frequently, but subverts that too. It is primarily our loving response to God that does Christ honor (Slh 51; compare Hadewijch, V 11.134-146), and our response is sought with love, not with his own honor in mind. The honor God seeks is in fact ours, not his (Slh 10). In none of the three is honor “agonistic,” competitive.

Hildegard’s morality is, as we would expect, conventional, but the sustaining “virtues,” or strengths, are presented as aspects of the life and character of Christ incarnate: abstinence, liberality, piety, truth, peace, beatitude, discretion, and salvation (Sc 3.6.25-35; compare 3.8.13). Her ethics are, in intention at least, centered on Christ and salvation.

Although Hadewijch does not discuss in detail the moral issues Hildegard responds to, her ethic is actually more practical and down to earth. “Do not, through pride, refrain from giving little gifts to the poor” (L 24.42). And it is more engaged. It consists in being drawn by love in emulation of Christ’s life in service to others. “Think continually of that holy virtue which Christ himself is, and which he was in his way of acting when he lived as man . . . so ready to assist all men according to the need of each” (L 3.3.9; compare 26-32, cited above).

It is a holistic approach that Hadewijch urges. You are to “pour out yourself in helpfulness—your heart in merciful kindness, your reasoning power in consolation, and your members in energetic service” (L 6.58-60). This is how to “live with the humanity of God here on earth” (L 6.117). Hadewijch is far from sentimental: “In charity men err through injudicious service, for instance, when they give out of mere liking where there is no need, or render superfluous service, or weary themselves when there is no call for it. Often emotional attraction motivates what is called charity” (L 4.60-63).

You are in effect expected to risk the emotional commitment of compassion without demanding an emotional payoff for yourself—without tying the other, least of all tying God (L 6.11-16; 204-214; V 13.178). If you abandon yourself to love, you will soon attain full growth (L 6.42-43). That you will have matured in love is its own reward (compare L 12).21

21 Julie B. Miller in her important “Eroticized Violence in Mediaeval Women’s Mystical Literature: A Call for a Feminist Critique,” Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 15.2 (1999), 24-49, cites Hadewijch among others. Any critique of sado-
Hildegard’s is an ethic of doing good, modeled on Christ as heroic savior; Hadewijch’s is an ethic of love for love’s sake, responding to the Christ of targeted compassionate service. Julian’s is an ethic of interpersonal friendship, in which friends are willing to need each other, where Christ awaits the satisfaction of her satisfaction (Shl 23). Of course the divine Son is infinitely superior, and God is to be respected (“feared,” Shl 76). But he is “courteous” and condescends to be “familiar,” and Julian can rest in that familiarity (Shl 7), confident that it is to be shared with others (which sharing, of course, she was able to undertake from her anchorite cell). We fail God, we sin, and of course, we blame ourselves, but God does not scold or blame (Shl 27-28, 52), and we are not to hate ourselves, but return good for evil—to ourselves as well as to others (Shl 40, 49). This friendship ethic, too, is based in a reading of the life and self-giving of the incarnate Son of God, perhaps especially in the friendship motifs of the fourth gospel (John 15:11-16; compare Shl 23).

All three women can be very critical of the practice of the contemporary church, despite (or even because of) their loyalty to it (compare Hildegard, Sc 3.9.19-20). We may read Hadewijch in this sense: “Do good under all circumstances, but with no care for any profit, or any blessedness, or any damnation, or any salvation” (L 2.16-19, and compare L 5; Julian, Shl 28).

As far as the ethics of personal relationships goes, Anselm, as we mentioned earlier, appears to have been a man who enjoyed and fostered interactive friendship, albeit in the framework of unquestioned hierarchical structures. His picture of the joy of heaven intensified by awareness of the delight of beloved others (Prologion 25) is impressive. But there is no indication there, nor in the two treatises we have mainly been exploring, that Anselm’s heaven includes personal interaction with fellows, let alone with God. We are aware of being loved by God more than we love ourselves, but God remains inaccessible light, in a unified simplicity with which there could be no interaction (Prologion 16-24). We remain passive spectators, rational contemplators (CDH 16), reflecting on our experience (Anselm, Monologion 67). The interactive human relationships which we today might see as

masochism needs, however, to be set in a much wider cultural context, while still emphasizing the dangers to women in particular. I continue to read Hadewijch metaphorically: love involves enhanced sensitivity, and thus psychological as well as physical vulnerability.
ends in themselves would seem for Anselm to be no more than a richly enjoyable preparation for something other.

Thomas is heavily influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius and “the divine hierarchies.” Even Christ’s own divine experience is expressed in terms of vision (ST 3a 1.4). There is no personal interaction, only passive reception. Thomas may have been as rich in friendships with near equals as Anselm seems to have been (for example, Thomas ST 3a 6.1.3), but no such experience figures in his Christological reflection. When he touches on a friendship analogy in passing, it is in a suggestion to be refuted (ST 3a 4.5.2). In loving God for God’s own sake we give God our “friendship”; but there is no sense of personal interchange. We are constituted by our individual rationality and our freely willed obedience to commandments (for example, CDH 2.1; Thomas ST 3a 2.3), not by our relationships with other people. “Father” and “son” and “person” indicate roles and status, not interactions (DIV 2, 12). Women’s varied experience plays no positive role at all.

One may doubt whether Hildegard ever had close interactive relationships either with Jutta, her mentor, or with junior members of her community, such as Richardis, whose departure so angered her. Perhaps she was able to sustain something of the sort with a man, such as her devoted secretary, Volmar. She does not much talk of friendship, as we have seen, and her heaven is very like Anselm’s: people ranked by merit each contemplating God (Sc 3.12). Her impression of the Trinity is formal and (in our sense) “impersonal” (Sc 3.7.9-10), and her human soul is constituted by intellect, reason, and will, rather than by any form of relationality (Sc 1.4.17-23). Erotic pleasure could only be beastly (Sc 1.2.15), even in marriage (Sc 2.5.25). Yet what strikes many readers is how thoroughly modified (or genuinely Platonic?) is much of her inherited body-soul dualism. “It is the senses on which the interior powers of the soul depend. . . . A person is recognized by his face, sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, opens his mouth to speak, feels with his hands, walks with his feet; and so the senses are to him as precious stones and as a rich treasure sealed in a jar” (Sc 1.4.24). The body is no inevitable handicap for anyone. This is the physicality the Son of God shared fully (Sc 1.3.6). Eve was the weaker one for the serpent to attack, but she is not specially blamed. Adam should have known better than to listen

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22 Davies, Aquinas, 289-290, referring to ST 2a. 23.1-2.
to her (Sc 1.2.10); and still a woman can be a spokesperson for God. Although contact with semen should preclude anyone from receiving communion, menstruation should not preclude a woman, who should then only be treated with special consideration (Sc 1.2.20).

Hadewijch would seem from her Letters, especially 25 (to Sara, Emma, and Margriet) to have belonged to a much closer knit and more intimate community of women. Among them she saw herself living as friend, sister, mother, to share her vision of a growth to maturity in love, a love which sought to draw others in, and to serve, without a forced dependency. Her vision of heaven is one “where we shall one day be together” (L 25.28), although we have also noted her perceptive warnings against emotional self-indulgence in service, counsel, and friendship. Her vision of the triune life of God eschews the traditional formal symmetry of Hildegard’s orthodoxy, and accords to each “what is proper to his person,” the universality of the Father, the zeal of the Spirit, the good will and compassion for every need of the Son, all in the perfection of the unity of love. It is into a fuller awareness of this life that Hadewijch is drawn in her visions, when everything else stops; but after that she returns to the works of love along with others of God’s friends, which also mirrors and reproduces the triune life of God (L 17; L 1.33-40). At no point in all this experience and service does Hadewijch apologize for being a woman, and her whole writing would seem to affirm her full acceptability of her own bodiliness, epitomized in the passage quoted earlier, from Vision 7, when “all my members felt his in full felicity” (V 7.72).23 It is a physicality that Christ himself had accepted to the full, as Hadewijch makes clear in some lines already cited: “We do not find it written anywhere that Christ ever, in his entire life, had recourse to his Father or his omnipotent nature to obtain joy or repose” (L 6.86-96). All experience, however harsh and drear, can be integrated into one’s personal life.

Having attempted to argue this account of significant strands in Hadewijch’s writing, it is also important to acknowledge that she often seems more in love with loving, even in love with being loving, than in love with another who encounters her, whether God or those around her. She could find it difficult to receive anything other than the loving perfection she sought (L 1.69-end). She shows herself most

23 Compare, again, Jantzen, Power, 135-138.
aware of this in her account of her eleventh vision, summed up in "I wished to belong to Love alone" (V 11.118).

It was suggested earlier that of the three, Julian's ethos was most clearly one of friendship. We may well note both her concern for "a certain creature whom I love" (Shl 35), as well as her Lord's insistence, "I am enough for you" (Shl 36). But it is surely still more significant that rather than simply listening during her visions, maybe waiting to be asked questions, she takes the initiative in engaging Christ in conversation, and is willing to ask further when a first response does not satisfy her. "'Ah, Lord, how could all things be well, because of the great harm which has come through sin to your creatures?' And here I wished, so far as I dared, for some plainer explanation through which I might be at ease about this matter." In fact, she is told to enjoy the positive aspects of salvation and let God sort out the negative; but she still says, "And so our good Lord answered to all the questions and doubts that I could raise" (Shl 29; compare 32).

I also find it significant that Julian accepts that a three-fold reassurance from Jesus involves all three persons of the Trinity (Shl 29-31). Certainly our redemption does not need (as in Anselm) to resolve tensions within God, for "all the Trinity worked in Christ's passion" (Shl 22-23), as all three persons are involved, together and distinct, in our making and sustaining and completing (Shl 58):

In our Almighty Father we have our protection and our bliss, as regards our natural substance, which is ours by our creation without beginning; and in the second person in knowledge and wisdom we have our perfection, as regards our sensuality, our restoration and our salvation, for he is our mother, brother and saviour; and in our good Lord the Holy Spirit we have our reward and our gift for our living and our labour, endlessly surpassing all that we desire in his marvellous courtesy, out of his great plentiful grace [where our "substance" is our underlying creaturely reality eternally contained within God] (Shl 54, 58).

Finally our Lord "will make us all at unity with him and with others in the true lasting joy which is Jesus" (Shl 71).

Julian, as we have already noted, has a very positive view of our "sensuality," which Jesus shared, and in which our faith and reason and memory work (Shl 55). She has no problems with her own physicality, nor, after reflection, with being a woman. Grace Jantzen draws attention to Julian's significant omission, in the long text, of all of her
original apology for daring, as a woman—and therefore ignorant, weak, and frail—to seem to teach (Shs 6, compared with Shl 9). It is with this in mind that we recall again Julian's elaborate account of Christ's motherly care for us (Shl 57-63), without playing off mother against father.

Yet again it is the women who evince a willingness to pull a much richer and deeper experience into their theological reflection.

Aesthetics

Anselm and Thomas deploy an occasional aesthetic metaphor or simile from painting (CDH 1.4; ST 3a 5.2), without telling us their criteria. Anselm, himself a poet, of course finds beauty in the complementarity of ideas (the wood of the tree in Eden, the wood of the cross), and in the divine logic displayed in the Incarnation (CDH 1.1, 3, 14). None of this seems integral to their theological reflections.

All three of the women theologians talk more of "beauty," and link that with ethical appraisal, in standard classical style. Like the men, they take care to write well in prose; two of them are also poets, one setting words to music, with the apparent implicit conviction that these are appropriate to the theological matters in hand (compare Hadewijch, Ps 2.6; 9.4). All three "see" in their visions forms and details that hold their attention and that seem very well worth careful articulation in words.

Although this constitutes a richer aesthetics than we find in the men we surveyed, there is still little or nothing to explicate the criteria involved. Julian sees the whole of creation "great, generous, beautiful and good" (Shl 8), without telling why it seems so. Hadewijch tends to claim a loss for words: her vision of the heavenly Jerusalem (representing manifold virtues) is "unspeakably beautiful" (V 10; compare Pc 12). However, in an earlier vision of a mountain, also unspeakably beautiful, she does explain that it was high and broad, soaring ever higher; and at the summit she sees a face, it, too, ineffably beautiful, but "like a great fiery flood, wider and deeper than the sea" (V 8). Later, there is an inexpressible loveliness of flames, "ample, wide and beautiful" (V 13.124-146), this time accompanied by sweet music. In general, it would seem to be size, power, brightness that im-

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24 Jantzen, Power, 176-179.
press. "Radiance" is a term of strong approval (L 1). But she can also evoke

... the beautiful rose [as it]
appears to us in the dew between thorns (Ps 2.11),
and
blossoms, joy, summer, and daylight (Ps 4.2).

Hildegard is similarly impressed by size, bright light, contrasting darkness, bold colors of red and green, and pure whiteness. Christ must have been physically beautiful, though that is of no account in comparison with his wisdom and humility, for the divine Trinity "does not delight in the beauty of the flesh" (Sc 3.1.8). Even so, Hildegard could without qualms decorate the highborn young women of her community with jewelry (L 116), and accept church buildings as divinely demanded (Sc 3.5.22).

These three "classical" women theologians seem to have included in their work a generous and very welcome breadth of interconnected fields of concern, and disciplined attention to them—more than the two men achieved, or thought relevant. I hope that the breadth and interconnectedness of the women's reflections go a fair way towards demonstrating their own worth.

Where might we go with this in the future? Specifically, if this example were followed, we would have more attempts to map theology as it is done and as it might be better done. 25 We (women as well as

25 I attempt a brief sketch of this in "A Theology Complex Enough To Live With," Modern Believing 44 (July 2003). There I list a few writers (men as well as women) whose reflections include some in-depth integrated reference to more than just one or two favored "other fields." A selection from that list might further illustrate what I mean. So, D. Balsch, The Logic of Theology (ET, London: SCM, 1986), by my count touches usefully on five "fields": A. Peacocke, Theology for a Scientific Age (London: SCM, 1993), 5; B. Lonergan, Method in Theology (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1972), 6, but with the focus really on "transcendental method"); E. Graham, Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood, and Theology (London: Mowbray, 1995) uses six, touches on a seventh; G. Jantzen, Becoming Divine: Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Religion (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 9. Among non-theologians I might cite the aim (but not the achievement) of E. O. Wilson, Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge (London: Little, Brown, 1998); and more impressively, P. Bourdieu, Méditations pascaliennes (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997), which is translated by Richard Nice as Pascalian Meditations (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000). I also have in draft a wide-ranging study of theological method, for which this and two or three similar surveys of Christian theologians down the ages are meant to afford both illustration and precedent. Whether this latter will appear in print is somewhat uncertain.
men) might well find it worth our while paying fuller attention to today’s women theologians. Doubtless, we would still have academic monographs focusing on specific conventional or unconventional theological themes, as well as wider and more popular (and multimedia) studies, just as we have now. But all of these would increasingly include at least brief but integrated notes of methodological presuppositions and entailments. And, more importantly, there would be a warranted assessment of a wide range of implications, practical and theoretical, covering not less than the matters touched on here. To be precise, we would expect explicit attention to what might be the lifestyle implications of the survey or the exposition in question, and if none could be offered, they would not be published.

And the outcome of all this would be that we might hope for enhanced tools for Christian discipleship, ancillary means of grace at all levels of intellectual and spiritual maturity, to assist in enabling a greater and more coherent loving openness to God in and for more and more different people, in and for more and other aspects of God’s world. Bluntly, theology at all levels would be expected to be more user-friendly, more so than we as individuals or we in our networks currently achieve.