



Revelations of Divine Love

Julian of Norwich , Grace Warrack (Editor)

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"Revelations of Divine Love" is a text of Julian of Norwich's dream visions that she had when she was near death. Then, after being miraculously healed, Julian of Norwich dedicated the rest of her life to writing her series of sixteen visions for all to read and understand. During her life, Norwich had suffered through three different bouts of the Black Death. Julian of Norwich remained optimistic in her faith, though; she denied that the plagues were God's punishment on the wicked. Instead, she believed that God was incapable of punishment. In her eyes, every person was worthy of God's salvation, and Hell was not a place of banishment and torture. She thought that God's true intentions of Hell were yet to be discovered. In "Revelations of Divine Love," Julian of Norwich extrapolates on her beliefs and describes the visions she received about the Passion of the Christ as well as the Virgin Mary. In addition to being a truly inspiring work, it is also hailed as the first book written in English by a woman. Regardless if it is read for its historical significance or its religious message, "Revelations of Divine Love" is a truly inspiring text of Christian Mysticism.

Revelations of Divine Love Details

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From Reader Review Revelations of Divine Love for online ebook

Ygraine says

medieval mysticism and the movement towards becoming one with divinity, losing the self in god and finding god in the self, is something both fascinating and unsettling; these are works of vast intimacy, calling upon god as father in his divine creation, and mother in christ's self-sacrificing nurture of humankind, as son in the images of the virgin mary's pain, and as lover in the burning, all-consuming nature of his love, as teacher, as brother, as spouse. this is a vast, all-encompassing yearning for closeness, a spirituality that contains as much romantic, sexual and familial devotion as religious devotion.

and this yearning for closeness manifests itself in an invasive, penetrative sense, the manifestation of christ's wounds as a gateway to heaven, the spiritual meaning of the passion made physical; unity with god is more than a purely metaphysical concept, here it is often literal - the spear wound in christ's side becoming a vaginal image in medieval art, and further, becoming womb-like in julian's visions, its capacity to hold mankind and nurture them there, in love and peace for all eternity. jesus' suffering leaves him bloody and open, a highly feminised figure, and there is something in that that seems highly resonant with women such as julian, or margery kempe, who see the wounds of christ as a way of entering his being, who recognise some sense of womanhood and motherhood in the symbol of god.

Melissa says

This book is a series of essays that Julian of Norwich wrote about 16 revelations she had about God's love. This is a fascinating read with some interesting insights. Julian may not have been spot-on with her theology, but this book is well worth reading.

She is also the first known woman to write a book in English.

Things that stood out to me:

At one point Julian of Norwich had a vision in which God showed her a hazelnut, and from that very simple ordinary thing she learned three lessons. 1) God made it 2) God keeps (sustains) it and 3) God loves it. If it is true of a hazelnut, how true it is of any human that God is our Maker, Keeper and Lover.

Favorite quotes:

"For we are now so blind and unwise that we never seek God till He of His goodness shew Himself to us."

"...it is full great pleasance to Him that a helpless soul come to Him simply and plainly..."

"...It lasteth, and ever shall [last] for that God loveth it"

"... suddenly the Trinity fulfilled my heart most of joy. And so I understood it shall be in heaven without end to all that shall come there."

"For He that is highest and worthiest was most fully made-nought and most utterly despised."

"...each kind compassion that man hath on his even-Christians with charity, it is Christ in him."

"He said not: Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be afflicted; but He said: Thou shalt not be overcome."

This author contradicts the Bible in several areas. She doesn't believe that there is any wrath in God. Many people might find that idea appealing, but it just isn't biblical. There are many passages in the Old and New Testament which refer to God's wrath (although I think it wise to balance that against God's mercy in our thinking).

(John 3:36 - ... whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.)

She also has some strange ideas on sin in her 13th revelation.

Despite her errors, I recommend this book. I especially like what she has to say about why there is pain and suffering:

"For since I [Jesus] have made well the most harm then it is my will that thou know thereby that I shall make well all that is less."

David Sarkies says

Visions of a Medieval Mystic

28 January 2012

I discovered this book when my Bible College lecturer mentioned it and then proceeded to mock it for the rest of the lecture. Once the lecture had finished I went straight to the library, located it, and borrowed it, and I must admit that I quite enjoyed it (it was a much easier read than *An Imitation of Christ*. Basically the book is about a series of 16 visions that a female recluse had in the 1300s and her interpretation of these visions.

The story goes that Julian of Norwich wanted to have a revelation from God and then one day fell extremely ill, and while she was ill she had a series of 16 visions in which she learnt about God's loving nature. It is not the most theologically sound book that I have read, and there are a few areas that I simply don't agree with, namely that God's love is incompatible with his being angry, and that because of God's love, sin does not matter as much, but it does delve deeply into grace and is a book in which God's love that is demonstrated through his death upon the cross is explored deeply.

What stands out the most about this book is how Julian breaks through the gender barrier, for at the time theology is very much a male dominated discipline, and though things have changed, Julian was writing in the 14th century, and it further appears that she was not as well versed in the scriptures as others probably were. Yet for a book to have lasted for so long from a time when a recluse woman who had visions and then taught from them and was not burnt as a witch is impressive.

There are a couple of things I've noticed about her teachings (if that is what you wish to call it). Firstly, everything occurs in threes. Okay, she has 16 visions, but as she describes these visions, she always describes them in triplets, which reflects the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The second thing is how she explores the feminine nature (or what she sees as the feminine nature) of God, and she generally expresses that Jesus is the mother, however that is something that I don't necessarily see as entirely supportive simply because my reading of the scripture indicates that God is male, and if there is any feminine aspect to God then it is the church. That does not necessarily mean that God does not have feminine characteristics, but it is

not something that I have any desire to speculate on at this time.

Jan-Maat says

[thank goodness, my skin isn't exactly tile red in colour (hide spoiler)]

Rendi Hahn says

It's hard to encapsulate this book in a brief review, but let me say this: if you want to have your heart and thinking stretched about the love of God, read this book! It's unlike any other book I've ever read. Written around 1395, it is the first published book in the English language known to have been written by a woman ... a woman who was both humble and bold in her approach to God. You may find some parts make you uncomfortable, and some you don't feel you can agree with, but if you'll read it with an open mind, you will be blessed.

booklady says

Julian likes lists! So do I! ? At another time in my life, her writings might have sounded like an old-time sermon. The recording I listened to read by Pam Ward and produced by Hovel Audio did use many quaint unfamiliar expressions. And yet, I found myself compelled to love Julian's 'Gracious Lord', so I might be able to claim as she did,

‘Our courteous Lord endlessly beholds us in this work, rejoicing. And we please him best by wisely and truly believing these things, and by rejoicing with him and in him. For as truly as we shall be in the bliss of God without end, praising and thanking him, so truly we have been in the foresight of God, loved and known in his endless purpose from time without beginning. In this unbegin love he made us; and in the same love he keeps us and never allows us to be hurt in a way by which our bliss might be lost. Therefore when the last day is called and we are all brought up above, then we shall clearly see in God the secret things which are hidden from us now. Then shall no one be stirred to say in any way: ‘Lord, if it had been so, then it would have been well.’ But rather, we shall all say with one voice: ‘Lord, may you be blessed for it is so, and it is well; and now see we truly that all things are done as you ordained before anything was made.’

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Set this aside for some reason ... guess I had too many other books started. Picking it up again. Listening to it as well as reading it.

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One of the first e-books I downloaded to my new Kindle Fire. Looked through a number of versions of the this classic work and this was the one which looked the best; hope it is.

Jeremy says

This book seems pretty divisive. Readers either give it five stars or 1-2 stars. For me, I suppose I had a difficult time reading it with its original milieu in mind. I couldn't stop thinking "This would never get published today, this would never get published today".

Obviously, it is a very significant work, as the first recorded English writing by a woman; as a well-recognized anchorite bio. However, I simply didn't get much from it. Also, I am "tainted" by my rebellious protestant upbringing and cannot help being scandalized by strong focuses on "working your way to salvation" and a fixation on longing to see Mary when apparently Christ was in her midst. I can't imagine being visited by God incarnate and saying "Wow, this is incredible! Can you go get your mom, though?"

If you're going to go for it, I recommend finding a copy that has a "short text" and a "long text". If you did the short, invest in the long.

Fariba says

Mystics (especially female mystics) are often dismissed as enthusiasts; they are not taken as seriously as academic theologians. But Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love* is as theologically sophisticated as anything the Scholastics wrote in the late Middle Ages. Dame Julian's visions lead her to comment on all of the great metaphysical questions (sin, Grace, predestination, salvation, etc). Unlike the Scholastics, however, Julian insists that many of these questions just cannot be answered and some should not even be asked. There is a lot of pain and suffering in this world, and all explanations are unsatisfactory, but God is love and mercy and Grace. Julian does not arrive at this conclusion from a position of comfort. She constantly fights against personal weakness, sin, self-doubt, pain, and fear. Despite everything she believes, "*All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well.*"

Revelation of Love is incarnational mysticism at its finest. Written in the late 14th century, the showings are in the tradition of affective spirituality. The crucified is described in excruciating detail. This is the "Christ is wounded for you" atonement of Bernard of Clairvaux. Still, Julian insists that God never blames humans. God only loves. We separate ourselves from God, but God is always near. Many analogies from the created world are used to describe the Trinity. Julian shatters the myth that mysticism is only concerned with the "other world".

Emma says

Since the late 1970s, thanks to the series Classics of Western Spirituality, English readers have had access to an excellent text in modern English of the Book of Revelations by Julian of Norwich, both in its short and long versions. Mirabai Starr thought time had come for a much more daring translation, theologically speaking, of the mystic's sixteen visions (in its long version). She states doing so on the basis of what she thinks are Julian's ideas. This leads her to move quite far away from the literal text in some cases, under the pretext of providing a more accessible text to the reader. Nevertheless, one can often wonder about the merits of such a choice, even if it is true that translating is always a matter of interpretation, but to what extent? The

textual expression "those who will be saved" for example, was translated as "all beings." To move away from the usual consensus can sometimes create more confusion than clarity for the reader. Thus, automatically replacing the uses of the word "sin" in Julian's text by "missing the mark" seems to lead readers too far away from Julian's perspective. Especially if they ignore the Greek etymology of this word, they will not even be able to identify the true meaning of the expression used. In a similar desire for clarification, the translator has divided each vision in several paragraphs, each introduced by a title of her own. Finally, a printing defect makes the reading very painful: there is often a small vertical sign added to certain letters

Stephanie Ricker says

Medieval Lit: sometimes you are so cool, and other times you make me want to stab my eyes out with a quill pen.

Julian of Norwich falls into the category of written dream vision, of which there seems to have been jillions in the middle ages. Nobody just had regular dreams, oh no; they had religiously significant dreams that must be recorded for all to read about and for professors today to torture their students with. Thanks, Julian. Thanks a bunch.

In all seriousness, I appreciate her sincerity and obvious depth of belief. Julian was an anchoritess, meaning she chose to be walled into a small cell attached to a church to have the time and peace to contemplate her visions and write them down. Pretty serious jazz. Her images and discussion of God as mother are theologically sound, even if she does carry them a little too far (kinda vampiric with the whole drinking the blood of Christ thing). I also liked the line "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." Apparently T.S. Eliot did too, because he put it in his poetry. So I guess you're not all bad, Julian...but I just can't bring myself to like most dream visions. I'll stick to the Dream of the Rood, at least that's in Old English.

Tiffany says

The translator here worked to create a text faithful enough to educate students in medieval anchorite texts and readable enough for devotion. While I enjoy the text in middle english as well--and look forward to showing it to students--I found her hope met, as the text was particularly fine as a devotional read. I am excited about the wonderful lines that i hope will continue to run round in my head. I want to read it again and again.

Rachel says

"And I saw quite certainly in this and in everything that God loved us before he made us; and his love has never diminished and never shall. And all of his works were done in this love; and in this love he has made everything for our profit; and in this love our life is everlasting."

I don't know what sort of criteria one should use to rate this book, so I'm not going to attempt it. I approached it from the perspective of an agnostic leaning towards atheist, and I came out of my reading experience realizing that the reason I was so unshakably stuck in this position, unable to even consider the possibility of personal belief, is because I was looking at faith in the wrong way. The conservative God of the political right-wing and the forced church attendance of my childhood were never going to have any spiritual impact on me. But a God of love, discovered on my own terms, could and would.

Thinking of God as existing -- not in epistemological terms but in spiritual terms -- in human manifestations of love (family, friends, and the man Jesus) had a powerful effect. So many times, Julian would mention that sin and times of suffering only exist to help bring the sufferer into the fold of God's love, which is stronger and outlasts all suffering. It has been a miserable year for me and I picked this book up not understanding why I did. As I read it, I felt my anxiety relax -- this while standing in the bookstore on a browse trip, even before the realization that a part of me might be susceptible to actual, genuine belief.

I still believe that faith or lack of faith is a highly personal feeling, so it is not something I plan to talk about too much beyond this review. But I will say that personally, I didn't realize how much of an impact this book and #22 in particular had on me:

For although the dear humanity of Christ could only suffer once, his goodness makes him always ready to do so again; he would do it every day if it were possible; and if he said that for love of me he would make new heavens and a new earth, it would be but little in comparison, for he could do this every day if he so wished, without any hardship; but to offer to die for love of me so often that the number of times passes human comprehension, that is the most glorious present that our Lord God could make to a man's soul, it seems to me.

Until I went to church willingly this morning for the first time in years, just to see if it felt differently, and it was so moving to be there after internalizing all of these things (maybe even believing them for once in a rare while) that I almost cried.

Time will tell if this reaction stands. Being naturally skeptical, I'm sort of inclined to chalk up these new feelings to Julian's hypnotically lovely prose rather than any real faith. But again, as I type this and think about the book, my usually tense body is calm. So I don't know.

Saralyn says

The first book known to have been written by a woman in the English language. Julian is loved by feminist theologians and Catholic conservatives alike. Out of her mystical visions of Christ, comes an exploration of the feminine aspects of God, the problem of evil and suffering, and God's love for humanity. Most known for the phrase "all shall be well", but I also love "Love was His meaning". I love this book.

Drury says

In chapter 51 of Julian of Norwich's Showings, she introduces a parable of a lord and a servant (267ff). The

servant falls into a dell while serving his lord and Julian then perceives the situation from both the perspective of the lord and the servant. Although the lord and servant are later revealed to be God and Adam respectively, Julian's account of and the reasoning behind the fall of Adam differ greatly from the traditional story and interpretation.

Traditionally the fall of man comes from Genesis chapter 3, where God creates Adam and Eve, placing them in the Garden of Eden and forbidding them to eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Eve is convinced by a serpent to eat the fruit and she convinces Adam to partake of it with her. They then become aware of their nakedness and attempt to hide it from each other and from God.

In the traditional version of the events, man is tempted into sin, and disobeys God. Whereas in Julian's version of event, the servant, Adam, falls into the dell while attempting serve the Lord. This interpretation not only removes the woman, Eve, from the story, but also challenges the doctrine of original sin. Julian feels that sin is something that man must encounter and overcome in his spiritual journey with God, but he is not to blame for it (266). According to her "internal spiritual revelation of the lord's meaning," God is aware of our trials and tribulations and rewards man for his steadfastness in a manner that is greater than anything man could have achieved on his own (269). In order to better understand this sentiment, the sagacious reader should contemplate Julian's definition of sin.

Julian defined sin in the third revelation as "our blindness and lack of prescience," comparing man to God as a blind man to a man with sight (197). She feels that man is not to blame for his sin, because everything that transpires on Earth was pre-ordained during the creation (198ff). She feels that the division of good and evil are man-made creations, "for everything that exists in nature is of God's creation" (198). Ultimately, Julian feels that "the Lord wants to have the soul truly converted to contemplation of him and of all his works in general" (198). The question for her then becomes in what manner we should observe God.

Towards the end of the Showings, Julian reveals the three properties of God present in all her revelations: life, love and light. These properties mirror the trinity in that they are all "seen in one goodness" (339). She sees one's reason as a part of this equation, as "the highest gift that we have received" with its foundation in nature (340). Faith also springs from nature; she compares it to "light in the night," where the light is God. For Julian of Norwich, faith springs naturally from the awesomeness of God. Reason is a tool that we use to observe God and His creation. Since God's ultimate desire for our lives is for us to contemplate Him and His creation, reason is a tool that brings us closer to God. God is omnipresent, and God is all good; therefore all of His creation is good, including his servant, man.

Rob says

(classic) Fever dreams can be some crazy shit. Sometimes you think God is talking to you and delivering a whole new theology. Less skeptically, Revelations of Divine Love is a kind of mystical manifesto, laying out a more kind and liberal version of Christian theology in which love and mercy become the central aspects of the faith. It's a fascinating primary source, even if actually reading through it is a bit of a slog. I'm an angry atheist, but this is a more palatable (if not necessarily more believable) version of religion, which for the fourteenth century makes it incredibly progressive. Unfortunately, the church failed to learn much about divine love, but this book still stands as an example of what could have been and what still can be.
