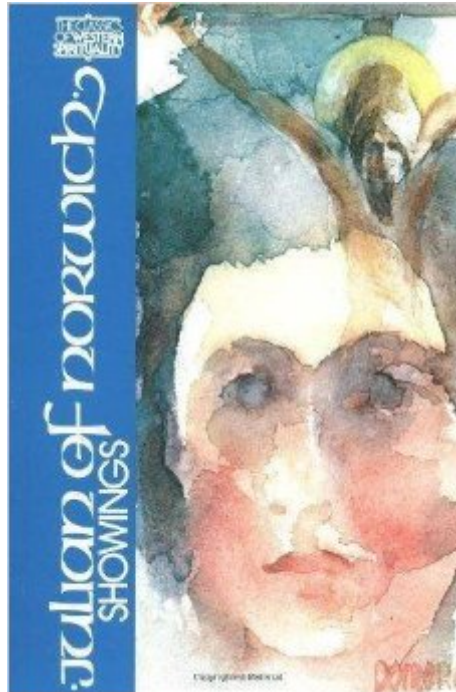


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Julian Of Norwich: Showings (Classics Of Western Spirituality)



Synopsis

Julian, an anchoress who lived in solitude in Norwich, England in the late 14th century, received the 16 "showings" or revelations of God's love in a series of experienced visions. The first version was a short text. The second, longer version was apparently written some years after the first, when she had had time to pray and reflect about the teachings God had given her. In the light of their thirteen years of work on the critical edition of Showings, Colledge and Walsh give us this first modern English rendering from the place of Julian's teaching in Catholic Spirituality. The editors present Julian as a skilled theologian and master of rhetorical style. Jean Leclercz, the noted monk, writer, and medievalist, in his preface addresses himself to the question, "Why is this an important work today?" Showings reveals a Julian who experienced God directly and not self-consciously as "our mother." Her revelations of the feminine side of God represent a significant contribution to the tradition. Her graphic visions of the humanity of Christ are marked by vivid imagery and detail. But the special appeal of Julian lies in her theology of the all-embracing fullness of divine love. Julian is certainly a warm and approachable companion for the mystical journey.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Julian of Norwich is only one of the medieval mystics who attempted to record the unspeakable, that without words, the mystical experience. This book is a record of what she dictated of her experiences, her "showings" of Christ and her relationship with Him. It gives us insight into the

workings of a medieval woman's mind and soul, and into the nature of mysticism itself, something beyond what words can measure. Unlike Aquinas and some other medievals who had one or, at most, a few mystical experiences, and unlike those who seem to have thrived on flaunting their closeness to God, such as Marjorie Kemp, Julian is a quiet soul. She herself doesn't know what to make of her experiences, doesn't feel worthy of them. Yet they are intrinsically a part of her and her religiosity. This is a must-read for students of Western mysticism, for those who want to understand the experience of the truly religious in the Middle Ages, and those who also seek to know Christ first-hand. Not a "how to" guide -- any such would be suspect in Julian's world because she does not control her experiences -- it is more of a guide to "what happens when your soul is in this particular state". Her very inability to explain that perfectly is, I think, proof that her experience was very real.

All that's known about Julian of Norwich was that in 1373 a woman lay, at age 30, on her deathbed. The woman did not die, but instead received a series of visions of Christ's passion. These visions are what is recorded in this book in both short (written more closely after the incident) and long (written much later, after more contemplation) versions. She then became an anchoress living as a recluse in a cell attached to the churchyard of St. Julian in Norwich. Julian's visions, even in translation, are luminous and joyful. She received the assurance that God will, in the end, make all well. The meaning of it all, as she says, is Love. This is one of the most vivid constructions of the medieval image of Christ as mother and is (justly) famous as such. The showings are moving and beautiful. The Paulist Press/Collidge translation is almost comical in its padding. Featuring a preface, forward, and introduction, the actual short text does not begin until page 125.

Julian of Norwich's Showings is yet another indispensable volume in "The Classics of Western Spirituality" series. It contains the sixteen visions given to Julian who lived alone as an anchoress in late 14th-early 15th century England. This volume contains both the short and long text of Julian's visions. Julian writes with a lucid depth of feeling rarely encountered in descriptions of God's love. Julian's love for Christ is clearly felt in these pages. The preface and introduction give ample justification for claiming a place of importance for Julian's writings in the pantheon of mystical and spiritual writers. This is valuable reading for everyone who wants to know the love of God more.

To anyone familiar with the Western contemplative and mystical tradition there will be much that is familiar in Julian's "Showings". But there are also a considerable number of delightful surprises, and

profound insights, that this reader, at least, found moving and valuable, most of them I am sure unique to Julian. Don't bother with the short version, but do read the introduction, even though it is a bit long, maybe after a first reading of the text, and before a second reading and closer study (which is rewarding).

Julian of Norwich was a 15th century anchorite (or anchoress) who lived much of her life in a little chapel on the grounds of her church. This book contains both a short version and a longer version, written later in her life. Learning that she lived much like a hermit, one is tempted to dismiss her writings as unrelated to the busy, interactive life for most of us in the 21st century. However, her focus on her relationship with God (Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit) can be instructive, or even inspirational for the reader. She is best known for her affirmation that "All is well; all will be well; and all will be made well." Her "Showings" (or Revelations) elaborate on this theme, which is a mantra that could well be pasted on the refrigerator or bathroom mirror: a needed reminder in the stress, the rush, and sometimes the tragedies of everyday life.

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