



Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists
Paderborn University, Germany

Hope in Julian of Norwich (1342–1416)

Ellen Miller

Rowan University

Julian of Norwich's optimistic voice—her fearless writings in the vernacular despite edicts that forbid such writings—is amplified by the content of her revelations. Julian wrote when the Black Plague was ravishing Europe; pessimism was prevalent. Julian's sanguinity in the face of severe realities provides a hope that transcends her individual virtues and temperament.

Julian's views on hope emerge through her revelations on the problem of evil, assurances that everything will be well, parable of the lord and servant, and her expansive understanding of Jesus as Mother. She focuses on interpersonal relationships, including the connection among believers (1989: 68). She explains that she must respond to the gift of hope.

For Julian, hope needs to be concretized through prayer, service, and releasing oneself to God:

"So charity keeps us in faith and in hope, and faith and hope lead us in charity. And at the end, all shall be charity" (Beer 1989: 84).

Throughout her writings, Julian addresses the problem of evil. How could the loving God she encounters permit sin? Julian illuminates:

"... 'In this way the devil is overcome'—just so he said the last words with the very greatest certainty. 'You shall not be overcome.'"

Julian explains that Christ approves of her laughter in the face of the Devil's wickedness. Even though Christ does not partake in this laughter, "it pleases him that we should laugh to cheer ourselves, and rejoice...because the Fiend has been conquered" (1989: 13).

One of the most famous sections of Julian's Revelations is where she assures readers and herself that God acknowledges the difficulty of hope and yet promises:

"...I shall keep my word in all things, and I shall make all things well." Indeed, the Revelations remain rooted in an optimism and hope that begin with an early meditation where Julian finds wonder and hope in the most quotidian object—a hazelnut (1989: 5).

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