

of Europe and the liberation theology of Latin America, Gonzalez sees the created order as the new locus for recognizing the body of the crucified Christ. Is there a future for the implementation of the Second Vatican Council's theology if there is not even a future for the earth itself? Understanding the fragility of the earth, and the current state of its crucifixion by humans, requires us to attend to the Holy Spirit who breathes over the world, bringing it to being even as that same Spirit guides the church to recognize this "sign of the times."

I highly recommend this collection of essays, not as providing a last word on anything, certainly, but as offering very intriguing arguments to open thoughtful discussion in college classrooms and parish discussion groups.

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*Julian's Gospel: Illuminating the Life & Revelations of Julian of Norwich.* By Veronica Mary Rolf. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013. ix + 660 pages. \$38.00. doi: 10.1017/hor.2014.7

In the introduction to their critical edition of Julian's corpus, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich* (2006), Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins tackle the enigma that is Julian, focusing on two aspects of her personality: the simple "unlettered" creature who experienced an extraordinary visitation from God on her sickbed, and the sophisticated speculative interpreter of the theology implicit in that experience. Watson and Jenkins think recent twentieth-century interpreters have tended to take one or the other approach to Julian, contrasting Marion Glasscoe (1976) with Colledge and Walsh (1978). The former, appealing to students of literature, is content with Julian as the "desiring creature," exploring the possibilities of the newly emergent English language to "think aloud rather than polishing preformulated ideas," thereby involving the reader in "a primary mental process" (*Writings of Julian*, 23). The latter, appealing to theologians, present Julian as the astute interpreter of her revelatory experience, able to bring it into conversation with knowledge of the Bible, patristic and medieval theology, and contemporary vernacular literature. Julian is surely something of both, the first evidenced in the short version of her text, and the second in the long version, written approximately twenty years later.

*Julian's Gospel* fits more securely with Glasscoe's approach than with that of Colledge and Walsh. This is no surprise, since Rolf is not a theologian, but a scholar of medieval literature and a teacher and practitioner of the dramatic arts. She keeps before our eyes the creature Julian, and her commentary on

Julian's text preserves the dramatic literary quality prized by Glasscoe. The book is divided into two parts, unequal in length. The first, comprising a third of the book, situates Julian in her context, that of fourteenth-century Norwich. Rolf explores the importance of Norwich as a bustling center of commerce and religion. She then recounts the disastrous events that affected fourteenth-century England: the plague, the Hundred Years War, the Great Schism, the Peasants' Revolt, and the prosecution of the Lollard heresy. Particularly helpful is her focus on the Corpus Christi plays, which brought to life the stories and mysteries of the Christian faith for a populace largely illiterate. Throughout, she hints at how these contextual realities found echoes in Julian's revelatory experience and text.

Following a suggestion by Benedicta Ward (1988), Rolf portrays Julian as a laywoman, not a nun, before her enclosure as an anchoress. Soon the suggestion segues into an insistence that borders on fact. For Rolf, Julian was the daughter of a wealthy merchant in the wool trade, married with two children, one of whom died of the plague, the other of whom was certainly a daughter. Rolf claims evidence for all this in Julian's text, although much she cites could be explained otherwise. Rolf's purpose is to reconstruct Julian's life, which she claims no scholar has done until now. Perhaps this is because Julian tells us next to nothing about her life, a silence that most respect, in spite of the temptation to speculate.

The next two-thirds of the book contain Rolf's translation into modern English of Julian's text from the Watson and Jenkins Middle English edition. She retains some original words and spellings, as well as the syntax and order of the words, altering these only where necessary for comprehension, thus preserving the rhythm of Julian's prose. Rolf then provides a detailed commentary on Julian's Long Text, arranging it creatively into fifteen chapters, each with subdivisions to alert the reader to a change of topic, or to highlight significant symbols and ideas. Rolf's organization is helpful, and her prose graceful. Particularly felicitous is her frequent insertion of scriptural passages that find an echo in Julian's text, supporting the claim (by Colledge and Walsh) that Julian's work is a mosaic of scriptural borrowings. Rolf also exhibits an adequate knowledge of patristic and medieval theology that she brings into conversation with Julian's ideas.

Rolf never strays from the sequence of ideas as presented in the Long Text, desiring to preserve Julian's revelatory experience in the order in which it occurred. This works well until chapter 10 of the Long Text, when it begins to diverge significantly from the Short Text, bringing us into contact with Julian the interpreter rather than the creature simply recounting her experience. However, Rolf makes no comment about this difference until well into chapter 27 of the Long Text, noting that "this objective analysis did not

occur until some time later" (395), an observation true of much she has already covered. As a result, Julian's erudition and the radical nature of her complex theological ideas are subdued in this study almost to the vanishing point. A greater distancing from the original sequence of events is necessary, something Julian herself understood by writing the second version of her experience.

In general, Rolf provides a thorough and readable introduction to Julian that could work well for undergraduates or anyone with no prior knowledge of Julian, the mystical tradition, or the medieval religious milieu that Julian represents. Its length (660 pages) seems prohibitive for classroom use. I appreciate the obvious care that attended the creation of this work. What comes through loud and clear is the fact that in her suffering Julian was saved, in a concrete way, from both sin and death by a loving God who wants only good for all of us. This is the quintessential Christian message, which Julian believed applied to all her "evenchristens." Rolf's efforts to present this reality to the general reading public are successful and welcome.

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*Promised Bodies: Time, Language, and Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts.* By Patricia Dailey. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. xiv + 260 pages. \$55.00.  
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Much of the initial interest in medieval women's religious lives and writings focused primarily on the bodies of women and women's extraordinary embodied experiences of God. Medieval women writers were initially viewed primarily as saints, mystics, and visionaries, or as exemplars of a distinctively feminine spirituality, and it is only in recent decades that attention has shifted to the properly theological content of their writings, as well as the deceptively simple question of what is meant by "the body" in our interpretation of those writings. As Amy Hollywood has shown, in their own words women frequently show less interest in bodily experience and phenomena than is often attributed to them. Preoccupation with embodiment may be less a feature of medieval women's writings than of contemporary scholarship.

In her *Promised Bodies: Time, Language, and Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts*, Patricia Dailey continues this nuanced reevaluation of medieval women's writings. She asks readers of medieval women's texts to reconsider the way in which embodiment appears in their writings,