

Laughing at the Devil

by Peter Covington

Almost by accident, I found the book *Laughing At the Devil* by Amy Laura Hall, on Amazon. I'm almost finished reading it now, and I found it offers a great perspective on how to walk in a dark world.

The book is a summary and analysis of the writing and life of Julian of Norwich, a Christian mystic who lived in England during the Middle Ages. She wrote the best known surviving book in the English language written by a mystic, *Revelations of Divine Love*, which also was the first book written in English by a woman.

The essence of Julian's story is that she had a vision of God's love coming through the Cross and wrote about that vision for the next decade.

In one part of the vision, she was sitting next to Jesus while watching the Devil attempt to do great harm in the world, but no matter how hard the Devil tried, Jesus would always make a small adjustment in the situation and everything was fine with no harm done. So Julian began to laugh at the Devil, who started lots of projects but couldn't create any actual harm.

In her vision, Jesus did not laugh at the Devil, but appreciated her laughter, which led Julian to believe that Jesus would always protect us and that she had nothing to fear, summarizing that understanding with "All will be well."

To me this perspective is a great relief as I remember the recent story of vandals and members of our government who actually tried to do harm to the people of this country and who now, in fact are scampering to save their own skins in the aftermath. There is a great deal of relief in the unfolding end to the story that we are safe or will be soon, and the move from concern to relief feels very much like laughter, which does come out of me sometimes.

Then as a step further, I think of the petty ills that get me down such as not having enough money or worry about disease or loved ones, and I see how small these threats are in comparison, then like Julian can laugh at them too.

"All will be well" seems like a trite thing my father would say, but the element of laughter appeals to a kind of joy in faith as well as the power and assurance that we have in Christ. We can't laugh at near disaster in our own strength, but "through Christ who sustains us" we can, and it feels good.

The Gospel does not make us immune from all pain and harm. Julian lived through a worse time than our own of plague and want and injustice, but to remember the love of Christ which rains down on us is a tremendous remedy against worry, as it offers consolation in the midst of grief.