

SCOTT HODGE SHARES HIS LOVE FOR JULIAN OF NORWICH

By Rev. Ken Silva, Southern Baptist Pastor



Scott Hodge

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. ([Galatians 5:1](#))

Romanticizing Roman Catholic Mystics Continues Spreading

[Scott Hodge](#) is one of the fast rising stars of the Druckerite Purpose Driven/Seeker Driven movement ala [Perry Noble](#) and his disciple [Steven Furtick](#). The [About](#) section at his personal blog [Livin' Venti](#) tells us he's "the lead pastor of [The Orchard Community](#) in Aurora, IL." Hodge preaches in what I call a Christian comedian style, very reminiscent of [Emergence Christianity](#) icon [Rob Bell](#) and his co-teaching pastor [Shane Hipps](#), where it seems that virtually every sentence has to contain some attempt at humor.

The sermon I'm discussing here, [Experience](#), is an ode to the Roman Catholic recluse and mystic Julian of Norwich (1342-1420) and was preached by Hodge as part of the series called *Yesterday* in September 12, 2009. In fact, when he reviewed Hodges' sermon on his [March 9, 2010 Fighting for the Faith program](#) Christian apologist Chris Rosebrough called it "an impassioned plea for the validity of

mysticism.” After listening to it, as a former Roman Catholic myself, I heartily concur with Chris.

[Apprising Ministries](#) has long been exposing in the influx of corrupt [Contemplative Spirituality/Mysticism](#) (CSM) as taught by [Living Spiritual Teacher](#) and [Quaker](#) mystic [Richard Foster](#), along with his spiritual twin [Dallas Willard](#), under the guise of so-called [Spiritual Formation](#). For years now I’ve been studying this CSM from various religions and traditions from their own sources and recently in [The Emerging Church, A Lava Lamp, And Leaven](#) I explained how it is that enemy forces have been able to use it to gain a huge foothold even within the mainstream evangelical community.

Sadly, when mainstream evangelicalism made the dubious choice to embrace the [Emerging Church](#) it didn’t realize that the EC would turn out to function as a Trojan Horse from which Satan’s counterfeit [Emergent Church](#) would unload this refried Roman Catholic mysticism inside its walls. What you need to know is it’s really a form pietism where practioners convince themselves they’re closer to God through ascetic “spiritual disciplines.” Now with people like Scott Hodge we’re seeing this CSM spreading and beginning to take root within the wider Purpose Driven/Seeker Driven community.

That’s why I felt led to bring your attention to Hodge’s recent sermon on the Roman Catholic mystic Julian of Norwich, within which he clearly holds up her up as a good example of how we can seek “experience” with God. However, as one who’s read these mystics and has been exposing how their mystic musings are counter to the proper Christian spirituality of Sola Scriptura, I can tell you Hodge is obviously not very familiar with the issues surrounding people like Julian of Norwich; and in fact, he really doesn’t appear to have much of a grasp of what happened with the Protestant Reformation either.

Let me point you to something called [ask the priest](#), which is “is maintained by priests of the [Episcopal \(Anglican\)](#) tradition”; and to Rev. David Simmons, the Rector of [St. Matthias Episcopal Church](#), Waukesha, WI, who’s also associated with the [Order of Julian of Norwich](#). The following comes from Simmons’ post [Feast Day of Julian of Norwich](#):

All we know for certain about Saint Julian of Norwich is that she spent a significant portion of her life as an anchorite, a recluse, at Saint Julian's Church in England's Norwich, that she was granted by God a series of sixteen visions or "showings" (as she called them) of the Crucified Christ, and that she was the first woman to write a book in English – her *Revelations of Divine Love* – which recounts her visions and her own twenty-year process of coming to understand their meaning... ([Online source](#))

Simmons is correct when he tells us that an anchorite (to withdraw) was "a recluse who was literally sealed in one closed room," in her case, "adjacent to" the Roman Catholic "church in Norwich." The Roman Catholic encyclopedia [New Advent](#) tells us that anchorites were people, mostly men, "who have sought to triumph over the two unavoidable enemies of human salvation, the flesh and the devil, by depriving them of the assistance of their ally, the world." And of these ascetics we're further told that, "the earliest of these fugitives from human society were the vast deserts of Egypt and Syria." [1]

Concerning Julian of Norwich, Simmons goes on to explain that "the anchoritic life of seclusion" was actually "highly revered" in the superstitious and pietistic Roman Catholic community of her day. As a matter of fact, Simmons rightly informs us that, "parishes vied with each other to have 'a saint' living in a cell attached to their church." However what's important to understand from actual history, as opposed to the revisionist romanticizing of these mystics today, is the "life of an anchorite was considered the most holy, most ascetic, and most pious life possible in late medieval England."

Because of the tragic self-righteousness at the core of this lifestyle, these are not people to be emulated; but rather, they are to be pitied for wasting their lives by abusing themselves and refusing basic creature comforts thinking this was somehow pleasing to God and would bring them closer to Him. Though he is obviously sympathetic to Julian of Norwich, which is why I chose to feature his piece, Simmons actually confirms what I just told you as he shares that "often the truly devout soul" wanted a "personal avenue of asceticism" because it was considered the deepest "solitary anchoritic life."

Revelations That Keep People Enslaved In Pietistic Religious Bondage Aren't From God

Then Simmons gives us the background for Julian's visions:

In early May in her thirty-first year (confusion in surviving manuscripts makes it uncertain whether it was May 8 or May 13), Julian was struck with an apparently terminal illness. When she was expected to die, her parish priest was sent for and he placed a crucifix before her, telling her to cast her eyes upon her Savior.

When Julian did so, the crucifix came alive for her and she began to receive the fifteen showings in which she experienced being present at the Crucifixion of Christ, and then listening to and speaking with Christ afterwards. She apparently wrote an account of her revelations shortly afterwards, and then twenty years later she expanded that short account to include the conclusions of her two-decade-long study and meditation on the meaning of her visions. ([Online source](#))

The above is confirmed in [The Shewings Of Julian Of Norwich: Introduction](#), edited by Georgia Ronan Crampton, where we're told that these revelations—or “shewings” (means showings) as she called them—of Julian of Norwich came in “an intense experience that took place within a few days and nights of May, 1373, in Norwich.” And further, the book *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*:

is a first-person account of a young woman's visions. They came, she tells us, when she was thirty and a half years old, after seven days and nights of illness. At the very point of death – her curate holds a crucifix before her eyes to comfort her, and she is aware that her mother, thinking her dead, has moved to close her eyes – she received fifteen “shewings,” to be confirmed the next day in a sixteenth. Health restored, she lived on into old age, almost certainly as an anchorite.

Two accounts of the showings, or revelations, as Julian also calls them, one much longer than the other, survive. She apparently wrote a first, short narrative soon after the 1373 illness, and a second, six-fold longer, twenty years later: “For twenty yeres after the tyme of the shewing, save three monethis [months], I had techyng inwardly” (lines 1865-66). Much of the short text reads as if it were immediately, spontaneously, recounted. An

authorial consciousness as well as a bolder and a more elaborated theology mark the long text. ([Online Source](#))

It's important to note a couple of things here: 1) As with most mystics, Julian had these visions while in ill health; and 2) often their visions/experiences were only received over a brief period of time. By the way, the reason the Roman Catholic has a crucifix—where Jesus is depicted upon the cross—is because of the heresy called the Mass in Roman Catholicism where Christ is sacrificed, albeit in an “unbloody” mystical way, each time the empty ritual of the Mass is performed. Returning to *The Shewings Of Julian Of Norwich: Introduction* we're also told even more about these ascetic anchorites.

“[A]nchoritism's most flourishing century” happened to be the one in which Julian lived; in other words, it was at the height of this spiritual endeavor that she chose this wasteful lifestyle. And to desire to “be an anchorite was to choose a more severe and idiosyncratic” lifestyle; a “solitary” one, which included “a more deeply contemplative” approach to God. For one who became an anchorite:

After enclosure they remained, normally for life, in the same restricted quarters, most attached to a church or convent... The prescribed size for a solitary's cell was twelve square feet... An anchorhold found at Compton in Surrey allowed barely room to turn around,... Cells were to have three windows, the first opening to the church to allow the recluse to hear Mass, receive the Sacrament, and speak with a confessor; the second for delivery of necessities; the third, for light, was to be covered so as to be translucent, but not distracting...

Enclosure rituals for the neophyte recluse included a mass with prayers for the dead; the anchorite was henceforth to be one dead to the world...the center and reason for being of reclusive life was contemplative prayer. ([Online source](#))

Lord willing, I'll have more on Julian of Norwich another time; but for now, this is the backdrop against which to listen to the sermon lauding this apostate (at best) Roman Catholic mystic Julian of Norwich whose faith rested not in Christ, but in the pietistic non-gospel of the Church of Rome. Jesus says to His Church — “*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*” ([John 20:21](#)). Quite obviously Jesus didn't live in a secluded cell abusing

Himself physically; nor did His Apostles, or their immediate disciples. And no less an authority on than the late [Thomas Merton](#), whom you'll hear Hodge mention in his sermon above, has said these ascetics didn't come along until the hermits of the desert in the early third century.

Endnotes:

[1] <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01462b.htm>, accessed 3/18/10.