

Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians

FROM EVELYN
UNDERHILL TO
ESTHER MOMBO



Edited by
Stephen Burns
Bryan Cones
James Tengatenga

WILEY Blackwell

Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians

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Preface

This idea for this book emerged when Stephen Burns co-taught a class on Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians with Kwok Pui-lan at Episcopal Divinity School (EDS) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where both he and Pui-lan were on faculty. Pui-lan and Stephen were agreed that no existing book could serve as a core text for the class, given the Anglo-centric or North Atlantic bias of so much of the literature that exists. Stephen thanks Pui-lan for seeking alternatives to the usual suspects in that class, as in so much of her work.

James Tengatenga sojourned at EDS as a visiting scholar, while he was still chair of the worldwide Anglican Consultative Council, and between his roles as Bishop of Southern Malawi and (currently) Distinguished Professor of Anglican Studies at University of the South in Tennessee. Bryan Cones was also at EDS for an “Anglican Year” to complement his long formation in the Roman Catholic tradition before being ordained as a deacon, then presbyter, in the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago.

Bryan later spent a spell in Melbourne, to study for a doctorate, with Stephen as supervisor (with the thesis later published as *This Assembly of Believers* by SCM Press, 2020), and where he (Bryan) also served as pastor in an Anglican-Uniting ecumenical congregation. Stephen is professor at Pilgrim Theological College, a college of the Uniting Church in Australia in the ecumenical University of Divinity. It was then that the book started to take form.

In a longer view, the origins of this book are likely to somehow be in Stephen’s conversations with Ann Loades, beginning in her classes at Durham University and continuing after that, through her supervision of his doctorate and since that time. For many, Ann has been a guide to the Anglican tradition, is a principal authority on a number of those who feature in the book (Underhill, Sayers, and Farrer especially), and is rightly the subject of a chapter by Stephen. The book owes much to Ann’s commitment to listening to “voices from the past” (see e.g., Loades 2000) as well as to her determination to notice and draw attention to who has been excluded by the usual suspects.

Stephen and Bryan started work on the book and asked James to join them, and the three drew in the team of writers to whom we are so grateful, as those at Wiley-Blackwell who have worked with us throughout the project. We also want to thank Paul Barker, a bishop in Melbourne, for helping us find writers on Morris and Stott.

Across the book as a whole, the writers are Anglicans and from other Christian traditions, and from numerous countries around the world, variously writing about others from their own most familiar cultures, and across them. For all that a book like this still needs more voices – and not least, despite our efforts, more voices of women and those from beyond the West – we have tried to push the circle wider, as it were, so responding to the lack of a suitable textbook for Pui-lan and Stephen’s class. We hope that this book encourages others to keep pushing for wider inclusions, as best they can. We encourage others to prepare a further volume.

During Bryan’s stay in Melbourne, as well as on many other occasions around the household table Stephen shares with his spouse Judith Atkinson, Judith, an Anglican priest, would often comment that the thing she most appreciates about her tradition is that “no matter how faith changes or grows, [she] can always be at home” in it, as there is in practice almost no view Anglicanism does not encompass, whatever the “official” position when such a position is possible to ascertain. This can of course be confronting to any quest for conformity, should that be sought; yet it can also be comforting, not least when whatever the local Anglican scene is, is grim. While the Anglican churches are currently marked by friction and deeply scarred by discord – with Melbourne, for example, just one microcosm of the larger divisions – in its own small way this book points to massive and challenging diversity all at once, cheek-by-jowl, unmerged. Readers may well find perspectives they think odd, as well as, hopefully, some in which they take delight. So be it. Anglican forebears in – and contemporaries influenced by – the Benedictine tradition might well see this diversity, as we do, as a clue to “never lose hope in God’s mercy” (Rule of Benedict 4).

A Note on Referencing

Every effort has been made to establish a consistent pattern of referencing across the book. References are found in parenthesis in the text (e.g., Kwok 1995, p. 1; Kwok and Burns 2016, p. 2) and fuller information can be found by cross-reference to the list of “References” at the end of every chapter. Additional notes, where used, are also found at the end of the chapters. In most cases, this is straightforward and obvious. Matters are complicated, however, in various cases: for example, if books were published in different places at once – generally both sides of the North Atlantic – with differing titles given to the same work; if writers have relied on anthologies and readers of their subject’s previously published or unpublished work put together by persons other than the subjects themselves; if later editions of books made emendations to earlier versions; and when over time multiple editions have been produced by a variety of publishers. Notwithstanding all these factors, the main intent is to signal what seem to be the most readily available versions of texts at the time of this publication.

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Un/Usual Suspects

Stephen Burns and Bryan Cones

Incompleteness is a merit of Anglicanism, at least according to some of its most lauded expositors and advocates (Ramsey 1936, p. 220). Incompleteness marks this collection, just as it does other texts about the same tradition, and perhaps needs must. In the first place, it is hard to get a complete view when even determining what might count as “Anglican” is contested, with different views of the sources, edges, and focus of the tradition.¹ At the very least, though, Anglicanism by its name suggests a pertaining to the English, with a locus of its identity in the Angles/Atlantic/British Isles. Evidently, over time, and through both mission and the colonial expansion of empire – and not just one or the other – it has given the germs for related ecclesial forms in a variety of different cultures (see Sachs 1993; Ward 2007; Kaye 2008; Chapman et al. 2015).

The term “Anglican” itself only came into common use in the nineteenth century – with the “Anglican Communion” endorsed by the first Lambeth Conference of 1867, twenty years after talk of a “Communion” emerged (Avis 2018). Identifying which churches belong to the Anglican Communion is presently the most obvious way to determine what is Anglican. Formal lists of course exist, and the website of the Anglican Communion keeps an up-to-date record.² Yet aside from such lists, it can be difficult to see what might be Anglican: some Anglican churches are identified by their geography, for example, “The Anglican Church of Australia,” “The Anglican Church of Kenya,” while other Anglican churches are identified by geography but not by tradition, for example, “The Church of Melanesia,” “The Church in the Province of the Indian Ocean.” Some Anglican churches use the descriptor “Episcopal”: “The Scottish Episcopal Church,” while “The Episcopal Church” (TEC) is not just that for the United States but also provinces outside the United States (hence, its name was shortened from its former one, “The Episcopal Church in the USA” [ECUSA]). Brazil has “The Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil.” One Anglican church uses the term “Anglican Communion” in its name, though this is seen to readers of English only in translation: Nippon Sei Ko Kai (“The Anglican Communion in Japan”). The Anglican Church in Hong Kong uses Cantonese in its title, while the church in New Zealand leads with Maori in its full title, “The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.” Some churches that are part of the Anglican Communion are

united churches, The Church of South India being a case where Anglicans are joined with Methodists and Presbyterians, The Church of North India adding to those traditions Brethren and Pentecostals. In vibrant interfaith environments such as these, Christians have perhaps more readily united. Further complications are now present in that in some parts of the world, the descriptor “Anglican” is claimed by groups that are not part of the Anglican Communion while claiming Anglican heritage, “The Anglican Church in North America” (ACNA) a key case in point, where it is TEC that is part of the Anglican Communion, despite ACNA claiming to be more “authentically” Anglican. That leaders of ACNA have been ordained as bishops by those from “inside” the Communion means that lines are murky – and differences great. Note also divergence even in propositions, that is, whether churches deem themselves to be “of” or “in” a setting: New Zealand has “in,” Australia, “of.” Australia, mentioned first above, is an example of one of the most divided Anglican settings in the world, despite the singular “church.” In fact, “Anglican churches in Australia” might be more apt to the ascendant very conservative evangelicalism akin to ACNA not only in Sydney but increasingly across the country, and brittle anglo-catholic ritualism in sharp decline, cheek by jowl. Australia’s “inadequately incorporated pluralism” (Varcoe 1995, p. 192) is perhaps a vivid microcosm of the larger global Anglican picture.

Shared history does not then yield a simple map of the Anglican Communion. But whatever status churches claim within or without the “Anglican Communion,” Anglicans have some shared relation to the 1534 Act of Supremacy, which declared Henry VIII – and not the Vicar of Rome – the “supreme head” of the Church of England. Hence, that 1534 Act looms in much Anglican thinking, with an absence of theses or confessions akin to Protestant precedents, placing Anglicanism somewhat outside a trajectory shared by several other churches of the Reformation. While documents do exist in which convictions of the nascent new English church are specified – notably the 39 Articles of Religion – their status in Anglican provinces around the world that inherited them has wavered, and certainly by today is quite diverse. This in part reflects the ongoing dispute about what period or epoch of history is or might be key for Anglicanism, with more or less weight being placed on, for example, the Reformations era, medieval continuities, and “the early church” with its ecumenical councils. It has often been noted that Anglicans have harbored an affection for “patristics,” and also that Anglicans have rarely been recognized – or seen themselves – as “systematic” theologians like those spawned in other traditions, both Protestant and Catholic. Sometimes Anglicanism has been seen as involving a “pastoral” way of doing theology (e.g., Wright 1980, p. 3), or even a sophisticated take on “common practice” (Hardy 1989). In whatever mode, “untidiness,” “baffling of neatness,” and such like (Ramsey 1960, p. 220) often echoes in much theology by Anglicans. According to Robert McAfee Brown (not himself an Anglican), trying to describe Anglicanism in a simple way might lead one to “despair,” yet the tradition’s resistance to simple definition is at the same time a source of its “greatness” (as cited by Wolf 1979, p. v).

The question of whether or not Anglicanism carries any special doctrines of its own became a quite animated debate in the latter part of the twentieth century (about which discussion has circled around Sykes 1978; for more on the history of the

tradition, see Avis 2002, with Avis becoming something of a flag carrier for ongoing attention to this question, e.g., Avis 2018). Whether special doctrines are or are not asserted as part of Anglican identity, “approach” rather than “content” as it were often tends to take precedence in defining the tradition, and in various ways: with Anglicans regarding themselves as those who are or at their best might be “always open” (Giles 1999), “know what they often don’t know” (Hanson 1965, p. 132, citing Howard Johnson), value being “gentle” (Hanson 1965, p. 141), and perhaps even represent “the appearance of a type of human being the world doesn’t otherwise see” (Hanson 1965, p. 132, again citing Howard Johnson)!

While documents such as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral suggest that Anglican theology is located in a balance of authorities drawn into theological reflection, how those authorities are to be weighted in the balance is by no means agreed. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 proposes that Old and New Testaments, the Nicene Creed, “gospel sacraments” of baptism and eucharist, and “historic episcopate” – though “locally adapted” – define the Anglican inheritance. Yet it is not just the balance of identified aspects of the quadrilateral that invites questions, for as Hanson notes, “we have Scriptures, Creeds, Sacraments, and Ministry, but no people . . . The people who constitute the Church are ignored” (Hanson 1965, p. 57).

Sometimes, in lieu of confessional documents, “common prayer” has been said to be the locus of Anglican doctrine (see Hefling and Shattuck 2006; Platten and Knight 2011; yet especially Earey 2013 on how wide notions of common prayer may be). However, Books of Common Prayer emerging from different locations are marked by difference as well as similarity, and those to which variants might all trace their genealogy (those of 1549, 1552, 1559; less so maybe 1662, which settled into long practice) were themselves expressions of incremental development in liturgical practice and so invite some measure of conjecture about the reforms they projected. Whatever stands in the more distant past, through the twentieth century liturgical diversity accelerated to a point where current provisions’ commonality is now sought less in texts (as more so in the past) but rather in elusive qualities that might suggest some “family resemblance” (see Buchanan 2012).³

The Chicago-Lambeth quadrilateral was itself the product of an early Lambeth Conference, with the Lambeth conference of bishops from around the so-called Communion identified as one of four structures in which Anglican connections and “bonds of affection” would later come to be said to rest, the others being the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, a more select meeting of regional bishops (the “primate” or presiding bishop of each province), and from the late twentieth century (1971 onwards) a more representative group – including laypersons – from diverse locations, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC). Just one arm of the ACC is the International-Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC), a forum for bringing forward good practice that is the fragile latter-day legacy of this “family” of churches with books of common prayer. The ACC meets intermittently, while the steady practice of Lambeth Conferences every decade has recently been troubled for the only time apart from during World War II. The current battle lines are about divergent understandings of homosexuality, about which scripture, creeds, sacraments, and episcopacy may say little, at least in common. The current impasse is a signal instance of how “Anglican

theology” can be difficult to expound; a complete picture, were that to be possible, would be quite unlikely to reveal easy ways to agreement.

If the shape and sources of Anglican theology are not straightforward to determine, an alternative approach to taking hold of the tradition might consider what persons within it have had to say. This book takes that angle – but is aware of traps, particularly given that accounts of Anglicanism have often tended to be very Anglo-centric (for criticism of and counterpoints to Anglo-centricism see especially Douglas and Kwok 2000). In these, the wider Communion can be at best marginal,⁴ or employ schemas that use “party” categories (“catholic,” “evangelical,” “liberal,” etc.) commonly used in the English church but which are not equivalent across wider cultures.⁵ These outlooks obscure contexts that are vital to wider understanding or impose categories that at the very least morph in migration. While studies in “Anglican spirituality” in twentieth century have been abundant (e.g., Mursell 2001; Rowell et al. 2001; Schmidt 2002; Loades 2015), and sometimes conceive the tradition broadly,⁶ narratives of Anglican *theology* have sometimes been entirely limited to UK contexts (note the figures discussed in Sedgwick 2005) or otherwise stretched only across the North Atlantic to encircle North America (e.g., Boak Slocum 2015; McMichael 2015). There has also been a tendency to privilege those who do something like systematic theology – somewhat strangely perhaps given at least sometime resistance to the designation – while excluding other modes, including, but by no means limited to, “spirituality.”⁷ Such studies can look far from complete – “skewed,” to echo William Wolf (Wolf 1979, p. viii) – when considered from many parts of the Communion, still too much pertaining to the English, to put it mildly (then note the divide between “global” and “global west” in Morris (2016) and Sachs (2017), albeit sensitively explored in the general introduction to both). What is more, such accounts of Anglican theology may well unwittingly exclude those who – for example, by virtue of their gender – have, until recently at least, been unable to teach theology in academic and/or ecclesial settings in the United Kingdom (see Sayers 1943; Maltby and Shell 2019 for ways in which theology nonetheless emerged), quite apart from those of different genders in many places beyond the United Kingdom (see Kwok et al. 2012).

Aware of incompleteness, and yet also determined to recognize not only “standard divines” (as a chapter title in Sykes et al. 1998, pp. 176–187) but some “unusual suspects,” *Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians* considers the work of twenty-three persons. They are both more and less familiar figures in estimates of most esteemed modern Anglican theologians. They come from five continents, include women as well as men, and in some cases those who are associated with other Christian traditions in addition to Anglicanism. Some of them have served as deacons, priests, or (arch)bishops, while others are defiantly lay. Some have worked from academic institutions while others have not. They are variously identified with different theological approaches – “conservative,” “progressive,” and so on, with all sorts of possibilities of one descriptor being ancillary to another or more – with the descriptors signaling somewhat different things in different contexts, in any case. Some may in some respects be controversial, causing consternation to other Anglicans apart from anyone else. And they wrote or write in either more popular or specialist modes across a range of theological disciplines – spirituality as well as systematics, pastoral as well as historical

theology, and sometimes beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries. They were selected in accordance with a number of criteria:

- (i) Not only must the theologian have lived half of their life in the twentieth-century (with living subjects around or over retirement age at the time of publication),⁸ but
- (ii) they must (even if multiply-belonging, that is, also to another tradition) identify with a member church of the Anglican Communion. This, however, includes the united churches in contexts where Anglican churches no longer exist (as in India [Church of South India, 1946–, and Church of North India, 1970–], Pakistan [Church of Pakistan, also 1970–], and in a very different scenario, China), with the situation of the united churches introducing a dynamic that itself impacts questions of Anglican identity.

Then:

- (i) The theologian must have had some international influence as well as shaping the thought of the church in their particular context(s); and
- (ii) they must have produced significant texts in one genre of theology or another, although attention to their influence through an ecclesial role and ministry is by no means put aside.

These criteria make for both guidance and limits around our selection of subjects, though we recognize in-/exclusions are interesting to debate, and the company we have represented remains partial. The skein of people on which we focus involves, *but expands*, attention to figures from the Church of England, UK and North Atlantic settings – that is, it honors some of those commonly, and rightly, considered of influence but complements and challenges them in a wider circle of peers – as it signals the influence of theologians from around wide stretches of the Communion. Each chapter outlines the theologian’s social-political and cultural contexts, sketches a biography with an emphasis on the figure’s theological scope, whilst not excluding attention to what they have made known of their personal lives, political commitments, prayer, ministry, and so on. It outlines two or three key themes in the work of the theologian,⁹ and *possibly*, one way or another, makes some exploration of how the theologian approaches and articulates the doctrine of divine incarnation in Christ Jesus (in general, see Macquarrie 1990; Macquarrie 1998).¹⁰ So the common-place assumption of an earlier generation of Anglican theology, that it “owes many of its characteristics to the central place held within it by the Incarnation” (Ramsey 1960, p. 27) is tested by shifting optics from the period encircling Charles Gore on to William Temple in the United Kingdom through to a wider range of persons in a plethora of settings.

While short descriptors do not do justice to the depth and breadth of their work, which the following chapters go on to represent more roundly, to gain an immediate sense of the scope of this book’s exploration of twentieth century Anglican theologians the chapters in turn focus on the following:

- Evelyn Underhill (England, 1875–1941), among other “firsts,” the first woman to teach theology to Anglican clergy in Britain, and author of highly influential

texts *Mysticism* (Underhill 1911) and *Worship* (Underhill 1936) among many other works, but because of the lack of official church role or university base, is often overlooked in purviews of Anglican theologians.

- William Temple (England, 1881–1944), wartime Archbishop of Canterbury, social theologian and ecumenist, often rightly recognized for his subsequent influence on the Anglican tradition – especially its relationships to wider society, for example in *Christianity and Social Order* (Temple 1942).
- T. C. Chao (China, 1888–1979), a pioneering Chinese theologian, and the first to consider the confrontation between Christian doctrine and Chinese traditions, unjustly neglected in other studies of Anglicanism, no doubt at least in part because Anglicanism ceased to exist in China, being submerged into the state church.
- Sadhu Sundar Singh (India, 1889–1929), an underrecognized Indian convert from Sikhism with a remarkable popularity and international reach in a short life; famously situating Christianity with aspects of Indian religious traditions.
- Dorothy L. Sayers (England, 1893–1957), both creative and unconventional, and who gained a massive audience far exceeding her academic and clerical peers through her shaping influence on radio – *The Man Born to be King* (e.g., Sayers 1943) – the performing arts, and literature, but curiously excluded from many lists of Anglican theologians, perhaps because of the genres in which she wrote.
- Austin Farrer (England, 1904–1968), widely acknowledged as the most significant Anglican theologian of the century, working with then-contemporary philosophical trends and through a highly influential ministry of preaching (with many sermons then published) as an Oxford college don.
- Michael Ramsey (England, 1904–1988), an Archbishop of Canterbury widely appreciated for his shaping influence on subsequent Anglican theology and spirituality, distilled in, for example, his classic *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (Ramsey 1936) and *From Gore to Temple* (Ramsey 1960).
- Donald MacKinnon (Scotland, 1913–1994), a Scottish Episcopalian who was a Cambridge professor with distinctive eclectic, interrogative, and critical tones to his work, and who strongly influenced a generation and more of British theological leadership, including as doctoral supervisor to David Ford and Rowan Williams.
- Leon Morris (Australia, 1914–2006), a biblical scholar who popularized certain interpretations of Jesus’ death across much modern Anglicanism and beyond; and while more conservative than most of those more usually considered in purviews of Anglican theology, is representative of some of Anglicanism’s contemporary evangelical strongholds.
- K. H. Ting (China, 1915–2014), a bishop with a major influence on the ecumenical movement internationally as well as in the public resurgence of Christianity in China after the Cultural Revolution; missed from many surveys of Anglicanism.
- John A. T. Robinson (England, 1919–1983), a bishop who promoted so-called “secular” theology in the best-selling *Honest to God* (Robinson 1963) produced other influential studies, particularly of the New Testament.
- John Macquarrie (Scotland, 1919–2007), a Scottish theologian who worked in both United Kingdom and United States teaching institutions, wrote the influential

Principles of Christian Theology (Macquarrie 1977), and is widely acknowledged as Anglicanism's foremost "systematic" theologian.

- John Stott (England, 1921–2011), a well-known English preacher who found huge international reach around much of the Anglican Communion, shaping both the doctrine (for example, through *The Cross of Christ* [Stott 1986]) and ethical thought of conservative evangelicalism, of which he became the doyen.
- William Stringfellow (United States, 1928–1985), lay theologian, lawyer, and political activist; close to the Jesuit activist Daniel Berrigan and applauded by the Reformed Karl Barth, he has been widely appreciated.
- Desmond Tutu (South Africa, 1931–), perhaps the best-known Anglican of the century, prized for his advocacy of the marginalized; chair of the renowned Truth and Reconciliation Commission in his "post-apartheid" country.
- John Pobee (Ghana, 1937–2020), an ecumenical theologian whose work pioneered sympathetic assessment of African "traditional religions," and a leading contributor to the study of African religions, surprisingly underacknowledged for the significance of his contributions in a tradition becoming more conscious of its non-Western weight of gravity.
- Ann Loades (England, 1938–), the first woman to be granted a CBE (Companion of the British Empire) medal for services to theology, and the first woman President of the Society for the Study of Theology. Her *Searching for Lost Coins* (Loades 1987) was a powerful early exploration of Christianity and feminism (see also Loades 2000).
- Kenneth Leech (England, 1939–2015), an edgy English practical theologian, firmly located in parish (rather than academic) settings, in books like *True Prayer* (Leech 1979) and *True God* (Leech 1985) unusually combining emphasis on both spirituality and social justice.
- Carter Heyward (United States, 1945–), a lesbian feminist theologian at the vanguard of progressive Anglicanism, and one of the irregularly ordained first wave of women priests known as the "Philadelphia 11."
- David Brown (Scotland, 1948–), a Scottish philosophical theologian whose work includes major reassessment in overlapping space between natural theology, sacramentality, and the dynamics of tradition, as well as work on core doctrines of Trinity (*The Divine Trinity*, [Brown 1985]) and incarnation (*Divine Humanity*, [Brown 2011]).
- David Ford (Ireland, 1948–), a creative Irish theologian criss-crossing theological styles within a distinctive (Pentecostal-influenced) celebratory tone – exemplified in *Jubilate: Theology in Praise* (Hardy and Ford 1984) – as well as shaping distinctive approaches to interreligious dialogue.
- N. T. (Tom) Wright (England, 1948–), whose work spans schemas of early Christianity to popular media, and whose strong biblical focus has both endeared him to and alienated him from evangelical constituents within contemporary Anglicanism.
- Esther Mombo (Kenya, 1957–), the first African Anglican female and feminist theologian to rise to wide international attention, and whose work is engaged with both Anglican and Quaker traditions and issues of gender and sexuality arising in African contexts (e.g., Wafula et al. 2016).

Between the opening subject of this book, Evelyn Underhill – the first woman to teach Anglican clergy in England – and the closing focus on Esther Mombo – the first African Anglican woman to rise to prominence, a half-century after Underhill’s death – huge change might be charted. Along the way, quite considerable differences will be seen to exist between the various theologians from the span of time under consideration in this collection, and there is sometimes large space between their convictions. Readers looking for a “core” of Anglican theology expressed across all the thinkers represented here may well be quite frustrated, as aligning and reconciling the biblical “word studies” of Leon Morris – as an example of a writer toward one pole – and the self-identifying “radical” voice of Carter Heyward – in another place – may likely struggle, as startlingly different ideas are at play as to what constitutes “theology.” In looking for common themes across numerous authors, it may be noted at least that war and its aftermath (see e.g., Wilkinson 1978) looms large in the thought of at least some of those who lived through the early or middle years of the twentieth century (Dorothy L. Sayers and Donald MacKinnon being just two examples), while gender and sexuality became a key touchstone for many by the turn into the present millennium. In terms of their actions, while some are noted for being personally kind to “down and outs” (e.g., Leon Morris), others have been heavily involved in political life and movement for social change (most notably, Desmond Tutu).

The reader will also be aware that some chapters unfolding here refer more to the “evangelical quadrilateral” than to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (e.g., the one on John Stott), and that subjects aligned to particular traditions within the wider diversity of the Church of England are found to be in disagreement with others allied to the same tradition (e.g., Leon Morris’ presumed criticism of Tom Wright). Some subjects will be seen to be lifelong Anglicans, while others came to the tradition later, in their cases having first been long identified with other churches, or investing strongly in pan-denominational movements even while committed to Anglicanism (e.g., John Stott). It may be striking to some readers (perhaps depending on the ecumenical openness of their local forms of Anglicanism) that numerous of the subjects here (both long-term and later Anglicans) were in various ways deeply enmeshed in ecumenical work (among others, T. C. Chao and William Temple), while many also evidently prize ideas about Anglicanism’s particular sympathy toward and ability for something like “unity by inclusion” (see Stancliffe 1991). Again perhaps depending on readers’ local versions of Anglicanism, circling in thinkers from churches that united in the course of the twentieth century (e.g., T. C. Chao and T. H. Ting in China) may not at first seem obvious, yet the emphasis on their contexts may help to invite questions about the (often unacknowledged or uncritically normed) environments from which other writers express their own ideas. Thinking outside the West may come from settings that are either evidently interreligious and in which Christianity is marginal (India) or in which Christianity was at times actively suppressed (China) (for insights into these contexts, see e.g., Wickeri 2000; Wickeri and Wickeri 2007; Lott et al. 2013), and may yield clues to Western readers that press back against a history of ideas being carried, for better and worse, from the West to those in colonies and other elsewhere.

We intend this collection to help recalibrate narrowly focused, exclusive lists of recent Anglican theologians, so fundamentally reorienting its topic toward the contemporary global contexts of Anglicanism, the breath of its uneasy embrace, in all its fragility. While “unity by inclusion” may now be tested to breaking point by current intra-Anglican circumstances, we hope that this book challenges readers to imagine how Anglicanism might yet survive with substantial variance unmerged. The figures represent a range of important and vibrant Anglican voices from Evelyn Underhill to Esther Mombo. That both “bookends” are women itself signals intent with our collection to lift up “unusual suspects” and the subtitle stands in intentional relief against Michael Ramsey’s survey from Charles Gore to William Temple (Ramsey 1960), or like-kind (e.g., Page 1967: “from Temple to Robinson,” naming and focusing on men in the West).

For very different reasons, many other diverse figures might have been contenders to be subjects in this anthology; for example, A. M. (Donald) Allchin (Wales), Aiyadurai Jesudasen Appasamy (India), Niam Atteak (Palestine), Sarah Coakley (England), Philip Culbertson (the United States), Don Cupitt (England), Gregory Dix (England), Verna Dozier (the United States), Alan Ecclestone (England), Matthew Fox (the United States), Hans Frei (the United States), Monica Furlong (England), Daniel W. Hardy (the United States/England), Michael Harper (England), David Jenkins (England), Broughton Knox (Australia), Kwok Pui-lan (Hong Kong/ the United States), Sally MacFague (the United States), John Mbiti (Kenya), Arvind P. Nirmal (India), James F. Packer (England/Canada), Barney Pityana (South Africa), Oliver Quick (England), Maggie Ross (England/the United States), Vinay Kumar Samuel (India), Lamin Sanneh (the Gambia/ the United States), Harry Sawyerr (Sierra Leone), Israel Selvanayagam (India), John Spong (the United States), Stephen Sykes (England), John V. Taylor (England), Jenny Te Paa (New Zealand), V. H. Vanstone (England), Miroslav Volf (Croatia/the United States), Esther de Waal (England), Benedicta Ward (England), Maurice Wiles (England), Charles Williams (England), and Rowan Williams (Wales).¹¹ Of course, such further study would reveal both deeper vibrancy and even more tension. May *Twentieth Century Anglican Theologians* encourage discovery and enjoyment of those featured in this book and others in their turn.

Notes

- 1 Contrast, for example Countryman (1999) and Bartlett (2007) in the same “Traditions of Christian Spirituality” series, with the former focused on poets.
- 2 <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/member-churches.aspx> (accessed July 15, 2020).
- 3 Buchanan (2012) provides a very detailed survey, with his introduction dealing with the work of International Anglican Liturgical Consultation.
- 4 For example, Chapman (2012) considers the Communion in the final chapter. As does Wells
- 5 (2011). Sykes et al. (1998) model problems by drawing almost entirely on North Atlantic perspectives (John Pobee contributes a chapter from elsewhere). Note also that Sykes et al. also includes very little writing by women, with only that of Mary Tanner, Fredrica Harris Thompson, and Grace Davie (and Davie a co-author of a chapter). The earlier 1988 edition of the same book had Tanner and Thompson only.
- 6 Note the organization of Spencer (2012), for example.
- 6 It is instructive to compare Allchin (1988) and Loades (2015), on the same topic. The

- emphases are quite different, with the latter very much broader.
- 7 For example, Sedgwick (2005) considers six white male university professors in British universities.
 - 8 At the start of the project, we did not know the age of Esther Mombo, being unable to find any publicly available information. However, that aside, there seemed good sense in “book-ending” the project with this woman.
 - 9 A partial model for this is the sections on “achievement” and “agenda,” which appear in many chapters of Ford with Muers (2005), while Kennedy (2011) has also shaped our thinking. See also Kerr (2007). As editors, we have not imposed a rigid scheme for content upon authors, so as not
- to flatten out the richness of difference either from the subjects’ experience or from their interpreters in this collection.
- 10 Kennedy (2011) refracts the work of various theologians through a particular theme, that of justice and peace. In our book on twentieth century Anglicans, incarnation might seem obvious as a connecting theme given the influence and legacy of *Lux Mundi* (see Wainwright 1988) on many subsequent Anglicans, at least many of the usual suspects – though our expansive list of theologians also to some extent challenges this focus.
 - 11 Indeed we had hoped that some of these persons would have been included in this book, but chapters fell through.

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Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941)

Julie Gittoes



Evelyn Underhill is well-known as a prolific and influential writer who, in the midst of the upheavals of the early twentieth century, brought the riches of ancient mystical texts to a wide audience. In our own generation, her insights remain challenging, inspiring, and practical. Her work opens up the meaning of life in communion with God: through honesty about her own struggles and through rekindling an interest in the diverse lives of the mystics.

At the heart of her work is the conviction that God extends an invitation to be loved to every human being; her own quest for God found expression in her vocation to write; to communicate in “plain and untechnical language” how people might participate in and experience the reality of that love (Underhill 1914b, p. 2). One of Underhill’s biographers wrote that she believed “mysticism was a way of life, open to all, achieved by the few whose lives were transformed by that which they loved” (Greene 1991, p. 51).

It was this conviction that she shared by means of the written word and as a retreat conductor and broadcaster. The aim of this introduction to Underhill is to place her life and work by rooting it in her wider context, and discerning points of resonance with contemporary perspectives.

Underhill’s life spanned the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: a period that saw significant changes in the lives of women but which was also shaped by the impact of two world wars. This social and political context will frame an exploration of her distinctive contribution to Christian theology, including her understanding of pacifism.

Underhill began writing as a poet and novelist and became an accomplished interdisciplinary scholar. The things that attracted her to the ordinary and extraordinary lives of saints and mystics was their passion, intelligence, and authority. Though her work, what was awakened in her is disseminated to us: not just transformed lives, but the power of the love divine provoking such transformation. Her own passion, intelligence,

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and authority finds its focus on the life of prayer and adoration. That, as well as her emphasis on both liturgy and service, makes her a figure of enduring influence within the Anglican Communion. This is perhaps best summed up in a line from one of her (handwritten) books of private prayers: “Let us ask for a closer communion with our God” (Wrigley-Carr 2018, p. 11).

Pioneer

Born in 1875, Evelyn Underhill grew up in the final decades of the nineteenth century; and her life (and theology) was shaped both by positive changes to the lives of women, but also the impact of conflict. She was undoubtedly a pioneer as a woman studying mysticism and spirituality, becoming an authority on theology and prayer. As Ann Loades notes, she had “no qualifications and no institutional position such as a job in a church or university which might have been hers had she been a man” (Loades 1997, p. xi).

Over her lifetime, in Great Britain, there were significant changes to the lives of women in terms of legal rights, access to education, and the campaign for universal suffrage. Her accomplishments as a scholar and spiritual director are to be set against this backdrop of changing status. In 1867 the National Society for Women’s Suffrage was formed. Following shortly after the Married Women’s Property Act (1870) came into effect, which allowed married women to own property. It was not until 1918 that women over thirty (and men over twenty-one) were granted the right to vote by the Representation of the People Act. A decade later women over the age of twenty-one were given equal voting rights with men. These changes in law and suffrage were significant in themselves and also signaled something important in terms of intellectual freedom and educational equality. In the 1860s the Taunton Commission said that men and women had the same mental capacity. There were incremental shifts in access to education over the course of the nineteenth century, although gender and class continued to be limiting factors.

However, Underhill was well placed to take advantage of the growing possibilities. The daughter of a barrister, she had been educated at home and spent a spell at a private school. In addition, traveling to Europe nurtured her fluency in and capacity for languages. The opening of a Ladies’ Department at King’s College, London (KCL) was a significant opportunity for her. She read history and botany but it was her aptitude for languages along with the opportunity to engage with philosophical thought that was to shape her approach to scholarship.

Against this backdrop, her legacy in major works alone is significant: from the impact of *Mysticism* published in 1911 through to *Worship*, published toward the end of her life in 1936.¹ Among other noteworthy “firsts,” in 1921 she was the first woman invited to give a series of lectures in religion at Oxford.² In 1927, her *alma mater* welcomed her as their first woman Fellow; in 1938 she received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the University of Aberdeen. That a married, lay Anglican woman had become an authoritative voice on spiritual life and mysticism was a significant accomplishment. It was one which Underhill embraced “quietly and without fuss,” in the words of A. M. Allchin (himself a priest and theologian who echoed Underhill’s sensibilities) (Allchin 1993, p. 2).

As well as being a pioneer, she was also a pilgrim. As we will explore in the next section, she was influenced by both Roman Catholic and Anglican thinkers. Her own teaching, writing, and direction reflected the breadth and generosity of the ecumenical spirit. The personal is echoed in the wider context. In 1942 the British Council of Churches (now known as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) was formed to foster interdenominational cooperation.

Allchin himself vividly describes his experience at an Evelyn Underhill festival held in Washington, DC: speakers from the Episcopal, Russian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic traditions – lay and ordained – talked about the way in which her work sustained, liberated and reshaped them.³ What he summarizes as her clarity, intensity, simplicity, and humor continues to be a gift to Anglicanism and other churches too. She was careful to weave together and engage with the different strands that shape what we have come to know as Anglican theology: “she herself became a notable exponent of the Anglican way with its respect for tradition and its openness to change, its sense of belonging to a Catholic whole which is more than simply English, yet which has its rootedness in the history and experience of a particular people” (Allchin 1993, p. 5).

In terms of shifts in Evelyn Underhill’s own thought, one of the most marked was directly related to the seismic impact of two world wars. The context is made explicit in the Preface of *Practical Mysticism*. She considered postponing the publication of “this little book, written during the last months of peace, [that] goes to press in the first weeks of the great war” because it might be felt that in “a time of conflict and horror, when only the most ignorant, disloyal, or apathetic can hope for quietness of mind, a book which deals with that which is called the ‘contemplative’ attitude to existence is wholly out of place” (Underhill [1914b], p. 1).

Her rationale for going ahead is rooted in a seriousness about “practical” mysticism that cannot be a fair-weather habit. Rather she sees in the lives of mystics – including Joan of Arc and Florence Nightingale – an intense spiritual vision in opposition to suffering and disharmony. She wrote that “it becomes part of true patriotism to keep the spiritual life, both of the individual citizen and the social group, active and vigorous” (Underhill [1914b], p. 2). Hope, beauty, and charity lay beyond violence and ruthlessness. Underhill herself worked at the Admiralty (naval intelligence department), but her views changed. In 1939 she adopted a Christian pacifist stance, joining the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship – writing a pamphlet entitled *The Church and War* in 1940. This sacrificial understanding of pacifism is related to her developments in understanding the doctrine of the incarnation.

Pilgrim

Evelyn Underhill’s pioneering work was rooted in her journey of faith as well as her impressive learning, which included psychology, philosophy, theology, liturgy, and languages. Best known for *Mysticism* (1911) and *Worship* (1936) these texts reveal the scope of her thinking and depth of her scholarship as well as shifts in her thinking.

Beyond these major texts, which in a sense “bookend” her life and work, Underhill was exceptionally prolific in producing articles, addresses, essays, and letters as well as

other books. There are many substantial biographies of, or introductions to, Underhill (e.g., Armstrong 1975; Greene 1991; Loades 1997). The purpose of this section is to note the figures who shaped Underhill's own exploration of religion. Through the lens of her personal life, we see something of the shifts in her thinking, but also the depth and scope of learning that opened up the lives of the saints to those seeking to find life in communion with God.

In 1907, Evelyn Underhill married one of her childhood friends, Hubert Moore. By that point, her scholarship was being established through her work on *Mysticism*; and her journey of faith had begun to intensify and find focus as she considered converting to Roman Catholicism. Although she had been confirmed at boarding school, her parents and husband were surprised by her conviction. Evelyn herself vividly describes this shift: having thought herself to be an atheist she “was driven nearer and nearer to Christianity, half wishing it were true, and half resisting violently” (Williams 1944, p. 38).

Although drawn to Catholicism, in the end she became a devout anglo-catholic. Loades notes that Underhill's husband was concerned about her relationship with a priest as confessor. However, it was also the support of such spiritual advisors that helped nurture and shape her vocation as a guide to others (both in conducting retreats and in spiritual direction). The Catholic layman Friedrich von Hügel was a particularly significant influence – enabling her to move from an abstract spiritual quest toward an experience of Christ. In her own words, Underhill says: “I owe him my whole spiritual life” (Williams 1944, p. 196). In the introduction to *Evelyn Underhill's Prayer Book*, Robyn Wrigley-Carr describes the way in which von Hügel sought “to balance her intellectual focus with the institutional: care for the poor, church attendance, partaking in the Eucharist” (Wrigley-Carr 2018, p. 5).

Von Hügel's influence on Underhill's ministry can be traced in her correspondence and writings, but also in her choice of texts used in her *Prayer Book*.⁴ Wrigley-Carr carefully re-presents this collection – including prayers from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries, across all Christian traditions and including those written by Evelyn herself. Augustine's *Confessions* and *The Imitation of Christ* were important to von Hügel and included by Underhill: their words and their lives continuing to shape the lives of directees and retreatants.

It was in 1922 that Underhill made her first retreat to Pleshey and three years later, she conducted her first retreat there. At first, she was alarmed at the idea of silence; “the mysterious peace and light distilled by it”; and also her distress when it ended and the “clatter began” (Cropper 2003, p. 124). Underhill treasured the light and life of Pleshey, distilled by generations of prayer. It was a place where she was both pilgrim and pioneer – as a woman retreat conductor. Through her meditations, addresses, and offering focal points around her overarching theme/metaphor she was able to support and guide the spiritual life of those who attended Pleshey (and other retreat houses).⁵

Underhill's theological writings leave us a legacy that reveals her own spiritual pilgrimage and also inspired others to immerse themselves in the writings of the mystics. By drawing on the diverse patterns of their lives – rooted in the primary commitment to prayer and adoration – she explores what it means to be grasped and transformed