

Twentieth Century **Anglican** **Theologians**

FROM EVELYN
UNDERHILL TO
ESTHER MOMBO



Edited by
Stephen Burns
Bryan Cones
James Tengatenga

WILEY Blackwell

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**From Evelyn Underhill to Esther
Mombo**

Edited by

Stephen Burns, Bryan Cones, and James Tengatenga

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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.

References

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Kwok, P.-l. and Burns, S. (eds.) (2016). *Postcolonial Practice of Ministry: Leadership, Liturgy, and Interfaith Engagement*. Lanham, MD: Lexington.

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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](#)).