

Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal



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in the Anglican Communion and beyond*

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ARTICLES

Part 1: Lucy Menzies: Lucy Menzies, a Scottish scholar and mystic, is commemorated in the liturgical calendar of the Scottish Episcopal Church on 24 November. Ann Loades has curated articles to lend insight into this extraordinary woman's life and work.

Lucy Menzies DD: Twentieth-Century Theology in a New Mould
Ann Loades 7

Grace Warrack, Julian of Norwich and the Early Twentieth-Century Revival of Mysticism
Jane Shaw 11

Evelyn Underhill — *The Grey World*
David Jasper 21

Bearing the Beams of Love: Evelyn Underhill's Spiritual Nurture of Lucy Menzies
Robyn Wrigley-Carr 27

Lucy Menzies (1882–1954) and the Christian Ideal of Sanctity in Medieval Scotland
William Hyland 39

'To Reveal the Eternal': The Spiritual Friendship of Margaret Cropper and Evelyn Underhill
Sabine Hyland 55

Part 2: Real Presence: On Saturday 25 September 2021, the Scottish Episcopal Institute sponsored a discussion via Zoom on 'presence' in online Eucharists. The *Journal* presents the panellists' papers.

Real Presence? Theological Reflection on Online Eucharists
Eleanor Charman, Kelvin Holdsworth, Alasdair Coles and
Stephen Mark Holmes 67

Part 3: Scottish Episcopal Institute: The Sixth Annual Lecture.

To *Filioque* or Not to *Filioque*: The Warrant of Holy Scripture

Michael Hull 105

REVIEWS

Jonathan Chaplin, *Faith in Democracy: Framing the Politics of Deep Diversity*

Reviewed by Anne Tomlinson 119

Philip Rousseau & Janet A. Timbie (eds), *The Christian Moses: From Philo to the Qur'an*

Reviewed by Nicholas Taylor 121

Brian Brock, *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body*

Reviewed by Amy Jo Philip 122

Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England, *God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian-Jewish Relations*

Reviewed by Nicholas Taylor. 124

AUTISM AND LITURGY

A special request regarding a research project on autism and liturgy

Dr Léon van Ommen needs your help for a research project on autism and liturgy.

Léon is a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, a member of St Ninian's Church (Aberdeen) and a member of the Liturgy Committee of the Faith and Order Board.

Léon is conducting a research project on autism and liturgy. He is looking for participants. If you (self-)identify as autistic/on the autism spectrum and are willing to share your experience of worship and liturgy, please get in touch with him at leon.vanommen@abdn.ac.uk. People anywhere on the autism spectrum, including non-verbal, and of all ages, are welcome to join.

The project is based at the Centre for the Study of Autism and Christian Community, at the University of Aberdeen. Ethical permission has been obtained from the University. Please email Léon for more information, he would love to hear from you.

LUCY MENZIES'S RESTING PLACE

A special request regarding Lucy's gravestone

The place where Lucy Menzies lies buried, with her parents, Allan Menzies DD (Professor of Biblical Criticism in the University of St Andrews) and Mary Elizabeth Honey, has been unmarked for many years since the headstone had fallen face-down. The site has now been identified in the Eastern Cemetery at St Andrews Cathedral. Plans are in train to have a local stonemason restore the headstone to its proper position. Donations to the cost of this work would be welcome. If you are interested in making a contribution, please contact the Revd Giles Dove (gileswdove@gmail.com) in the first instance.

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Revised Friday 17 December 2021

Lucy Menzies DD:
Twentieth-Century Theology in a New Mould

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Given widespread neglect and hence ignorance of the Apostles' Creed and its traditional setting in both Morning and Evening Prayer (almost entirely displaced by the Eucharist and the Nicene Creed), it is hardly surprising that we readily overlook the significance of the phrase 'the communion of saints' in the last clause, rounding up commitment to Trinitarian theology. Given that Trinitarian framework, attention can then be given to 'the communion of saints', grouped both with the blessing of forgiveness, and the hope and promise of 'resurrection' and a transformed life. And in Latin, 'communio sanctorum' is splendidly ambiguous, because it can also encompass 'communion in sacred things' — the sacraments all may share, in their variety too, and the many ways in which the 'sense of the sacramental' can enliven gratitude for so much in our lives, however seemingly commonplace.

Recalling the 'saints' — i.e., any and every one, those publicly commemorated and those for whom any of us can be profoundly grateful for the part they played in our lives — can be immensely cheering in comparison with following the news — if we can stomach it at all. For we need to know or be reminded of the extraordinary variety to be found in any church 'Calendar' of the many ways in which people engage with Christian tradition in all its manifestations. If in doubt, Elizabeth A. Johnson's ecumenical exploration of 'the communion of saints' could be a good place to start.¹ We could well add in our own discoveries, one possibility being Jane Haining of Dunscore who had the guts to return to Budapest, faithful to the school and home for girls there financed by the Church of Scotland in the worst days of twentieth-century Europe, herself to end up in a 'death camp'².

Sometimes we can discover someone exceptional who is still just within living memory, such as Lucy Menzies, born into a Church of Scotland household in 1882, who became a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and who died on 24 November 1954. It is usual (though not invariable) to locate someone in a Calendar on the date of their death, an alternative being the date of their baptism, if known. In Lucy Menzies case, in the year of her

¹ See *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (London: SCM Press, 2021).

² See Mary Millar, *Jane Haining: A Life of Love and Courage* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2019).

death she had also been awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of St Andrews, the first such award to a woman. Her grave in the Eastern Cemetery of the town is currently being restored; the memorial tablet in All Saints' Church, St Andrews' side-chapel where she used to sit also survives. The prayer book she wrote for the Rector of All Saints' Church, Piers Holt Wilson, when he became Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness in 1943, was until recently in the possession of Mrs Marie-Louise Moffett, his daughter (herself now living in Edinburgh). A member of the congregation, John Hunter (one of Lucy Menzies's godsons), was the person who made the case for her inclusion in the SEC Calendar. And at last, thanks to the initiative of Professor Judith Wolfe of the School of Divinity in the University of St Andrews, there is now a new oil portrait of Lucy Menzies by Jeffrey Wood for College Hall in the School of Divinity.

In honouring Lucy Menzies, we need also to recall the admirable initiatives taken by at least two Scottish universities in awarding degrees for theological studies to women, St Andrews, for instance, in 1901 awarded degrees of Doctor of Laws to sisters (born Smith) — Margaret Gibson and Agnes Lewis (from Irvine, North Ayrshire). Their father had seen to it that their education included European languages to which they added those languages integral to their extraordinary achievements of discovering and publishing some of the earliest texts of Christianity. St Andrews was following the precedent set by the degrees awarded to them by the Universities of Halle, Heidelberg, and Trinity College, Dublin, the first degrees in theology awarded to women in any university in Europe, their distinction now commemorated in the Smith Lectures in St Andrews. By contrast, the University of Durham had renegotiated its degrees in 1895 excluding Divinity from the Faculties open to women, as in most places restricting such studies to candidates for ordination. There were some other possibilities opening up, however, for born into a Scottish Presbyterian family, Church of England Archbishop Randall Davidson had instigated a Diploma in biblical studies open to women in 1905. Degrees in theology (probably leading to teaching in schools) were open to few women in universities in the UK even after the Second World War as members of the very small proportion of the population attending universities until the expansion post the 1960s. So, the 1938 award of an Honorary DD to Evelyn Underhill by the University of Aberdeen, and to Lucy Menzies in 1954 in her hometown were still quite exceptional. By then both of them had found distinctive ways of becoming theologians.

Before turning to their work directly, there is one area of Episcopalian history which awaits attention from the era when Lucy Menzies was establishing herself. For the 1925 publication of a novel by a now forgotten novelist, Mary H. J. Skrine (*Shepherd Easton's Daughter*) Evelyn Underhill

wrote a 'Foreword' in which she expressed her warmest appreciation of the way the author had explored the 'secret of sanctity', in her depiction of a woman capable of 'creative and protective love' poured out for others in the most humble and obscure circumstances. To begin with, it seemed impossible to find out anything about Mrs Skrine, until by accident I discovered Bampton lectures of 1911 by a J. Huntley Skrine. He was then identifiable as a former Warden of Trinity College, Glenalmond (1888 to 1902), having married Mary in 1873, eventually returning to Oxford. Commemorated in the name of one of Glenalmond's Houses, the College Archives contain his poetry, plays, novels, hymns and sermons, including some for Saints Days. After he returned to Oxford, St Andrews University Library continued to purchase his books, though not the novels written by Mrs Skrine, most of which were published from her new home in Oxford during the new phase of their life there. She wrote about and for people living and working in the countryside, and given that Lucy Menzies grew up in Abernyte, and later became such a close companion and colleague of Evelyn Underhill — herself a prolific book reviewer — it would be interesting to know more about the Skrines, their possible importance for Lucy Menzies, and about the different modes of writing theology the Skrines developed. Like the 'Lakeland Poet' Margaret Cropper, some rediscovery would seem to be in order!

Lucy Menzies and her sister were born into the household of Church of Scotland minister, Allan Menzies, who himself was fluent in German through the fortunate accident of German family connections and ensured that his daughters learned at least two European languages. He himself had become minister at Abernyte near Dundee, in many ways living the kind of life he might have sustained had he become a minister in Germany. That is, whilst with other ministers giving high priority to sermons and to the care of local schools, he worked so as to establish himself as a credible candidate for a university appointment — in his case, as Professor of Biblical Criticism in the University of St Andrews, giving his Inaugural Lecture in 1889, when Lucy was seven years old. She therefore grew up in a household familiar with the translation and exegesis of the New Testament, drawing on up-to-date German scholarship, and attending to what was known about the pre-Nicene context in which the New Testament was produced. Moreover, Professor Menzies drew on German language discussion both of philosophy of religion and among the very few of his day, on Indian religion ('Brahmanism and Buddhism') and the 'History of Religion'. Lucy was to publish an appreciation of his life and work in 1918, two years after his death, he having resigned his Professorship at the beginning of the First World War.

Although accounts of the relationship between Lucy Menzies and Evelyn Underhill usually give pride of place to the importance of the latter,

it is worth attending to the contribution made by Lucy Menzies, with an education in the household of a very distinguished Professor, as compared with that of Evelyn Underhill. From a Midlands family, the latter's upbringing in the household of a formidable lawyer, included three years away at school, but helpfully some attendance at the 'Ladies Department' of King's College, London. Expeditions mostly with her mother touring parts of western Europe, helpfully made possible explorations of Roman Catholic churches until the outbreak of war. So far as the Church of England is concerned, it is easy to overlook the fact that she had a 'High Church' uncle who worked in the most deprived areas of Liverpool, and a cousin, Francis, who had been Vicar of St Alban the Martyr, Birmingham, and became Bishop of Bath and Wells. Both of them may have provided some familiarity with the 'broad church' and 'Modernist' Anglo-Catholicism to which she committed herself in 1921. (The centenary of that commitment was honoured in an international conference at Pleshey in midsummer, 2021). She had hoped to establish herself as a poet and novelist, for which she was to some extent recognised when made Honorary Fellow of King's College for Women in 1913 (King's having been founded as a Church of England College). We have a glimpse of her earliest work as a novelist in this collection of articles.

By the time Lucy Menzies became first an acquaintance and then a friend and colleague, Evelyn Underhill was, in addition to her own writing, working as a reviews editor when T. S. Eliot was responsible for *The Spectator*. Lucy, however, was not only the more learned of the two, but had a life-long education both in the Presbyterian tradition of worship and learning, as well as at least acquaintance with the Scottish Episcopal Church and its distinctive liturgical traditions, (not forgetting the 1929 Scottish Book of Common Prayer). She was crucial to Evelyn Underhill's understanding of both, substantial reference to which she included in her 1936 *Worship*, a book as exceptional in her own day as in our own, and in addition, supplied a profound understanding of the significance of pilgrimage both to Iona and elsewhere, and of Scotland's religious history.

Grace Warrack, Julian of Norwich and the Early Twentieth-Century Revival of Mysticism

JANE SHAW

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The early twentieth century saw a revival of mysticism. We can date its beginnings to 1899, when W. R. Inge gave the Bampton Lectures in Oxford on Christian Mysticism, publishing them as a book under that title in the same year. Inge was then an unknown don at Oxford, later a well-known Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. In 1911, twelve years after Inge's book came out, Evelyn Underhill published what was arguably the most significant book of the whole revival, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*.¹ The work of both Inge and Underhill — and they each wrote many books — went into numerous editions and sparked a wide readership; publishers quickly identified mysticism as a potentially lucrative area. As Inge himself expressed it in 1913:

To those who can observe the signs of the time and the deeper currents of contemporary thought nothing appears more significant than the rapid increase of interest in mysticism — which means the religion of direct personal experience [...] Books on mysticism are now pouring from the press, and some of them are sold by the thousand.²

As people read about mysticism, so they wanted to read the work of the earlier mystics discussed by Inge, Underhill and other writers. This created a demand for the texts of the mystics in accessible copies, good translations, and modernized English. Such texts were essential to the general reader who was not familiar with fourteenth-century English as Inge put it, and indeed for those who did not know Latin or Greek or medieval German. The publication of these texts was a central part of the revival of

¹ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1912 [fourth edition]). On the revival of mysticism, see Jane Shaw, 'Varieties of Mystical Experience in William James and other Moderns', *History of European Ideas*, (2017) 43.3, 226–40.

² W. R. Inge, 'The Mystical Revival', *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 March 1913, p. 117.

mysticism. Some of these editions were prepared by scholars, a few under the auspices of the Early English Text Society, which had been founded in the nineteenth century; but many were produced by writers and independent scholars, seekers and people of faith who wanted such copies themselves — and especially important in this enterprise were women like Evelyn Underhill, Lucy Menzies and Grace Warrack.

Grace Warrack was the first person to produce a modern copy of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*. Published in 1901 by Methuen (who also published Inge's *Christian Mysticism* and Underhill's *Mysticism*), it went into many editions and remained the most influential edition until the 1960s (Clifton Wolters produced his Penguin edition in 1966), contributing enormously to the growth of both general interest and critical scholarship in Julian of Norwich.³

Underhill recommended Warrack's edition to her spiritual directees. She wrote to Marjorie Robinson in 1908: 'Isn't the Lady Julian lovely? But Methuen's 3/6 edition is much better than the Kegan Paul one & has quite a nice introduction instead of that stuffy little essay of Tyrell's.'⁴ Underhill was referring to a 1902 reprint of the very first printed edition of *Revelations*, which had come out in 1670 and was edited by Serenus Cressy, an English convert to Roman Catholicism and Benedictine monk. It had an introduction by the Jesuit priest George Tyrell, who was excommunicated for being a modernist. Why did Tyrrell produce yet another reprint of an old edition when Warrack had published such a good, modern edition the year before? It is not clear. Alexandra Barrett speculates that Tyrrell saw Julian of Norwich as 'a fellow Catholic modernist' and in his introduction to the text 'saw himself reflected in a Julian tormented by those very aspects of Catholic teaching on damnation that caused him distress'.⁵ Perhaps that is why Underhill disliked Tyrrell's 'stuffy little essay' and preferred the critical introduction, based on wide reading and up-to-date scholarship, that Warrack wrote for her edition. Barrett also notes that while Tyrrell's version of *Revelations* did go into a second edition, it was not until 1920, 'by which

³ For a history of the editions of *Revelations of Divine Love*, see Alexandra Barrett, 'Julian of Norwich and Her Children Today: Editions, Translations and Versions of Her Revelations', in *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and post-Medieval Reception*, ed. by S. Salih and D. Baker (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 14–26.

⁴ Evelyn Underhill to Marjorie Robinson, 9 May 1908, in *The Making of a Mystic: New and Selected Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, ed. by Carol Poston (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 122.

⁵ Barrett, 'Julian of Norwich and Her Children Today', p. 18.

time Warrack's more successful edition had gone into its seventh edition'.⁶ We might also speculate that Tryell felt that there should be a 'Roman Catholic' edition, given that Warrack was Protestant and writing for a broad audience.

Inge obtained a draft copy of Warrack's edition of *Revelations of Divine Love* in 1899, two years before it was published, which he used for his Bampton Lectures. In his Preface to *Christian Mysticism*, Inge thanked 'Miss G. H. Warrack of Edinburgh' who 'kindly allowed me to use her modernized version of Julian of Norwich'. And in a footnote in the body of the text, he wrote: 'In my quotations from her [Julian], I have used an unpublished version kindly lent me by Miss. G. H. Warrack. It is just so far modernized as to be intelligible to those who are not familiar with fourteenth century English.'⁷ Inge's biographer, Adam Fox, noted the impact that Inge's work had in introducing mystics of the early Church and Middle Ages to a wider reading public. He wrote that Inge, in *Christian Mysticism*:

had read and digested and extracted and ordered a body of ancient authors, all strange and many of them obscure, and had created a demand for their works. He speaks, for instance, of 'the beautiful but little known *Revelations* of Juliana of Norwich'; they were widely known a very few years after.⁸

Fox gives the credit to Inge. Certainly, Inge's book — along with Underhill's later — prompted people to read the mystics such as Julian; but it was Warrack's modernized version of Julian's *Revelations* that made the text so easily available, and therefore made it 'very widely known a very few years after'.⁹

Grace Warrack's edition of Julian of Norwich

In preparing her edition, Warrack worked on two manuscripts of the *Revelations*, that in the Bibiliotheque Nationale in Paris and the Sloane manuscript in the British Museum, deciding to use the latter as the base for her edition. These were both Long Text versions of the manuscript (the earliest manuscript, pre-Reformation, was a Short Text, also in the British Library). In her introductory notes on the manuscripts and editions, Warrack noted that there were only three printed editions available, all rare

⁶ Barrett, 'Julian of Norwich and Her Children Today', p. 18.

⁷ W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 1899) pp. xi and 201, n. 1.

⁸ Adam Fox, *Dean Inge* (London: John Murray, 1960), p. 63.

⁹ *Ibid.*

by that time. Because of that, her edition was ‘designed for general use’ and thus ‘modern spelling has been adopted, and most words entirely obsolete in speech have been rendered in modern English’.¹⁰

Warrack’s critical introductory material demonstrated that she was well-read in the early Christian and medieval mystics, as well as the Platonic tradition — we should remember that she wrote her critical introduction to her edition at the very beginnings of the revival of mysticism, before there was a vast secondary literature to draw on — and had worked on the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century context of Julian’s life and writing. In her critical introduction to the text, Warrack placed Julian the author in the context of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Norwich and discussed the life of an anchoress in this period. By looking at wills from the period, she showed that the author Julian of Norwich was not the anchoress Lady Julian Lampet, as some had thought: the dates of these two women simply did not match up, Julian of Norwich, anchoress and author of *Revelations*, living earlier.¹¹

Warrack discussed the *Revelations* in relation to other mystical writings, pointing to its similarities with, and differences from, other mystical texts. In particular, she noted a silence on ‘preliminary ascetic exercises’ suggesting that Julian did not ‘set out to teach methods of any kind for gradual drawing near of man to God’ but rather ‘record and shew forth a Revelation, granted once, of God’s actual nearness to the soul’. She pointed to the ways in which:

Julian’s Mystical views seem in parts to be cognate with those of earlier and later systems based on Plato’s philosophy, and especially perhaps on his doctrine of Love as teaching the beauties of created things higher and higher to union with the Absolute Beauty above, Which is God.¹²

Here she demonstrated her own familiarity with a range of writers, from Plotinus to Ruysbroeck, while also speculating as to whether and how Julian became familiar with such writers via the Austin Friars next door, or in conversations with her confessor, or by other routes. Warrack regarded the *Revelations* as ‘peculiarly of the English type’, regarding them as a ‘blending

¹⁰ Grace H. Warrack, ‘Notes on Manuscripts and Editions of this Book, in Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. by Grace H. Warrack (London: Methuen, 1901), p. xiii.

¹¹ Grace H. Warrack, ‘Note as to the Lady Julian’, in Julian, *Revelations*, ed. by Warrack, pp. xv–xvi.

¹² Grace H. Warrack, ‘Introduction’, in Julian, *Revelations*, ed. by Warrack, p. xxxiii.

of practice sense with devotional fervour' likening her to Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton. Addressing Julian's gender she wrote, 'Julian, while perhaps more speculative than either of these typical English Mystics, is thoroughly a woman.' Here she fell somewhat into the gendered stereotypes of her own period. She continued: 'Lacking their literary method of procedure, she has a high and tender beauty of thought and a delicate bloom of expression that are her own rare gifts.' She wrote of the 'simple perfection' with which Julian expressed profound insights and described her 'simplicity of speech' as like that of a child. Warrack commented only very briefly — and in the most matter of fact way — on the metaphor of Jesus as mother that Julian used, and which proved so attractive to later twentieth-century readers.¹³

The publication of her edition of Julian's *Revelations* made Warrack known 'beyond local limits' as her obituarist expressed it¹⁴ and marked the beginning of her editing and translating career at the age of forty-six. Despite the fact that she knew a good deal about mysticism, and her edition of *Revelations of Divine Love* was influential upon the broader revival of that subject, she did not go on to publish any further in this area nor does she seem to have made contact with the significant figures in that revival (unlike Lucy Menzies for example, who, having read Underhill's *Mysticism*, went on to forge a close relationship with Underhill).

Warrack spent the next twenty-five years translating and publishing folk songs and poetry, primarily Italian and French. The Tuscan folk tradition was explored in her *Florilegio di Canti Toscani: Folk Songs of the Tuscan Hills, with English Renderings* (1914). Her anthology, *From Isles of the West to Bethlehem: Pictures, Poetry, Tales, Runes of Pilgrimage and Reception* (1921), was sold to raise money 'for the aid of children of Palestine, Armenia, Italy and France in districts suffering from the War'. She noted, however, that 'it was better not to wait for the doubtful proceeds of the sale' and recorded that 'beforehand, and yet in the name of the book as it were, contributions have been secured for the benefit of children in those countries'.¹⁵ The wealth of her family circles and networks likely made such donations possible. *Une Guirlande de Poésies Diverses: From the Song of France, Poetry Early and Recent, with Translations, Music and Pictures* came out in 1924. For promoting an interest in French literature in Scotland, she was awarded the *Palme Académique* by the French Minister of Public

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. xliii, xlv, xliii.

¹⁴ 'The Late Miss Grace H Warrack: An Appreciation', *Scotsman*, 5 January 1932, p. 8.

¹⁵ Grace H. Warrack, *From Isles of the West to Bethlehem: Pictures, Poetry, Tales, Runes of Pilgrimage and Reception* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1921), p. v.

Instruction. A book on the Italian folk tradition quickly followed in 1925: *Dal Cor Gentil d'Italia Canti Dal Veneto Alla Sardegna; Out of the Heart of Italy. Folk Songs from Venetia to Sardinia, Lyrics, Lullabies Sacred Stories*. She had also produced one book in a different genre in 1906: *Little Flowers of a Childhood: The Record of a Child*, which was about her nephew John Dunlop Warrack (October 1894 to March 1899).

Who was Grace Warrack?

According to her obituarist, Grace Warrack was ‘an Edinburgh lady of original gifts and tastes and strong personal initiative,’ who ‘very much disliked fuss’.¹⁶ She was born in Leith, a port area of Edinburgh, in 1855, the second of four daughters of a wealthy merchant and shipowner, and significant businessman in local society, John Warrack, and his first wife Grace. Her mother died when she was two, in 1857, and her father remarried in 1859, to Mary, with whom he had three sons.¹⁷

Warrack was regarded as significant enough that she was given a *Who's Who* entry, but the entry is minimal — perhaps in accordance with her obituarist’s comment that she disliked a fuss — listing only the names of her parents, her address and her publications. She made no mention of either secondary or higher education. However, she was fluent in French and Italian and well-educated, if perhaps largely self-educated.¹⁸ She was of independent means and did not need to work for her living as a single person. She could take on the work of editing and translating for pleasure. She also travelled a good deal, not least to visit two of her half-brothers who had settled in Italy.

Warrack was a person of faith, brought up in the (then new) Free Church of Scotland, and thus in the Presbyterian tradition. Her father provided a model of lifelong Christian faith, involved with the Pilrig Free Church in North Leith from its foundation in 1843 until his death in 1907. He was ordained an elder on 14 April 1844 and remained in this role at the church for sixty-three years, until his death; on the golden jubilee of his ordination as an elder, in 1894, ‘he was an honoured guest at the fiftieth annual meeting, and received a handsomely decorated address’. After his death, he was considered significant enough to have a memorial plaque in the church commemorating him. The new church building, in Gothic style, was opened on 12 February 1863, when Grace was eight. It was a lively and

¹⁶ ‘Warrack: An Appreciation’, *Scotsman*.

¹⁷ For full biographical details, see Joyce Simpson, ‘Grace Harriet Warrack’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (published online 10 December 2020) [accessed 21 July 2021].

¹⁸ ‘Warrack, Grace Harriet’, in *Who Was Who* [accessed 22 July 2021].

growing church, with 90 members when it was founded in 1843, 400 by 1868 and 500 by 1898. Aside from regular services, it had mothers' meetings, a working men's club, cycling and rambling clubs, a literary society, a musical association, a branch of the Band of Hope (a temperance society), sewing classes, Women's Work Society, Girls' auxiliary society, mission study circle, and Boys' Brigade as well as regular bazaars and lectures.¹⁹ Whether Grace was involved in any of these events and clubs, we do not know, but this was the Christian milieu in which she was raised, one in which social activities were often linked to the church, and the community of the congregation formed much of a family's social network. After her father's death, Grace moved to her own large Victorian home on St Margaret's Road in Edinburgh, a wealthy area of the city, and worshipped at the High Kirk of the Free Church of Scotland.

Warrack also learnt philanthropy from her father. John Warrack was generous to his church. In 1895, he gave a large harmonium for the session house. In 1896, he gave £820: £270 for church schemes, £50 for a new organ and £500 for congregational funds. The gift was used to help balance the annual accounts and install electric light (which was completed in 1902).²⁰

Grace Warrack was especially a patron of the arts, brought up in a household that valued the arts (her father wrote poetry). She commissioned a series of stained-glass windows from the artist Douglas Strachan, the most significant Scottish twentieth-century designer of stained glass, for her church, the High Kirk of the Free Church of Scotland. The windows were begun in 1911 and completed in 1934 (two years after Warrack's death). They depicted many biblical scenes but, as the New College Library's notes on the windows reveal, 'The artist was conditioned in his treatment of the subjects by the strong aversion of Miss Warrack to the depiction of suffering and evil.'²¹ This must have been tricky as there are windows depicting the Crucifixion and the martyrdom of St Stephen. In 1936, four years after Warrack's death, the High Kirk became the New College Library at the University of Edinburgh, where the windows still exist.²²

¹⁹ Eben Turner, *The Story of Pilrig Church 1843, 1863, 1913* (Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1913) pp. 18, 35, 64, 46, 48–52.

²⁰ Turner, *Story of Pilrig Church*, pp. 63, 61–62.

²¹ *Details of the depictions in the windows in the Library Hall. New College, Edinburgh, n.d.* (AA1.12.17 New College Library, Edinburgh; available from the New College Librarian).

²² C. Love-Rogers, 'The woman behind the windows at New College Library', *New College Librarian*, 5 March 2018 (available from the New College Librarian).

Warrack's 1901 edition of *Revelations of Divine Love* has a frontispiece designed by Phoebe Anna Moss Traquair, an Irish-born artist who had married a Scotsman and lived in Edinburgh, which, presumably, Warrack commissioned. Traquair worked in the Pre-Raphaelite style and did a lot of book illustrations and book bindings, as well as embroidery, enamel and metal work, and she painted murals in St Mary's Cathedral, the Children's Hospital, and the Catholic Apostolic Church, in Edinburgh.



REVELATIONS
of DIVINE LOVE

Recorded by JULIAN,
Anchoress at NORWICH
ANNO DOMINI 1373

In lumine tuo videbitur lumen.



A version from the MS.
in the BRITISH MUSEUM
edited by
GRACE WARRACK

Methuen & Company
36 Essex Street Strand
London
1901



In January 1906, Warrack sent an enamel made by Traquair to W. B. Yeats, saying that she would 'like this little enamel of Mrs. Traquair's to go to the country that she comes from, and I should like it to be yours since you care for it'. Writing to his compatriot and theatre collaborator, Lady Gregory, about his lecture tour in Scotland, Yeats related his conversation with Mrs. Traquair and also told her of Warrack's gift: 'A lady in Edinburgh has given me a beautiful pendant made of enamel by Mrs. Traquair.'²³ This was a gift discreetly made. Warrack's obituarist wrote that 'she had the instinct to give and to give quietly' and of her commissioning of the stained-glass windows, 'she always made it a point that it should not be spoken of'.²⁴

Grace Warrack died on 3 January 1932 at her home in Edinburgh, of acute lobar pneumonia.²⁵

²³ W. B. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 15 January 1906, in *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats Vol. 4, 1905–1907*, ed. by John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 316; see also footnote 3, p. 316.

²⁴ 'Warrack: An Appreciation', *Scotsman*.

²⁵ A stained-glass window in Martyrs' Kirk, St Andrews, dedicated to Harriet Grace Warrack by her sister Frances Warrack in 1936, has been erroneously regarded as a window in Grace Harriet Warrack's honour. For example, the ODNB entry on Grace Warrack states: 'Her sister, Frances Warrack, organized a small memorial window in Martyrs' Kirk, St Andrews, now the Richardson Research Library, University of St Andrews'[accessed 22 July 2021]. This is wrong. The window in St Andrews was in honour of *Harriet Grace* Warrack, born 1860, died 1930, who had a younger sister named Frances Jane Warrack. The 1871 census for the household of James Warrack (wife Martha) gives this information. Harriet Grace Warrack's death certificate shows that she died on 24 June 1930. Grace Warrack's sisters were named Robina, Mary and Margaret (none of them Frances), as can be seen on the 1861 census of the household of John Warrack (wife Mary). In addition, there is a memorial plaque to Martha and James Warrack, the parents of Harriet Grace Warrack, on the pulpit in Martyrs' Kirk, St Andrews, suggesting the family had a long-standing relationship with the church. See Places of Worship in Scotland [accessed 22 July 2021].

Evelyn Underhill — *The Grey World*

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And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

(Tennyson — *In Memoriam*)

In *The Grey World*, Evelyn Underhill is self-consciously writing in the Victorian literary tradition, drawing on writers from Tennyson to George MacDonald in a first novel that has faults and rough edges, but at the same time is a much better example of fictional writing than Underhill is normally credited with. It was her first novel, published in 1904, and it looks forward in many ways to her later writings on mysticism and spirituality, and is evidence of remarkable learning and maturity in a writer still in her twenties.

It was in 1904 that Underhill joined an occult companionship known as the Order of the Golden Dawn. Later she was to write:

Philosophy brought me round to an intelligent and irresponsible sort of theism which I enjoyed thoroughly, but which did not last long. Gradually the net closed in on me...¹

But it was not until much later in 1921 that she became a practising member of the Church of England. What is notable is that she never quite lost her sense of the spiritual world, nor her tendency towards dualism which she displays in *The Grey World*. In the Introduction to her book *Mysticism* (1911), which is subtitled 'A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness,' she wrote:

All men, at one time or another, have fallen in love with the veiled Isis whom they call Truth. With most, this has been but a passing passion: they have seen early its hopelessness and turned to more practical things. But there are others who remain all their lives the devout lovers of reality: though the manner of their love, the vision which they make unto

¹ Quoted in Brenda and Stuart Blanch, compilers, *Heaven a Dance: An Evelyn Underhill Anthology* (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 1.

themselves of the beloved object varies enormously. Some see Truth as Dante saw Beatrice: a figure adorable yet intangible, found in this world yet revealing the next.²

Both of these 'types' appear in *The Grey World* in the personae of Willie Hopkinson, the embodiment of the soul who knows the intangible world, and his friend Stephen Miller, who glimpses the spiritual world, but chooses conventional marriage with Willie's 'materialist' sister Pauline.

In the broadcast talks published in 1937 as *The Spiritual Life*, Underhill suggests the reality of the spiritual world, affirming that

When we take it seriously it surely suggests that we are essentially spiritual as well as natural creatures, and that therefore life in its fulness, the life which shall develop and use all our capacities and fulfil all our possibilities, must involve correspondence not only with our visible and everchanging, but also our invisible and unchanging, environment....³

These words might almost have been lifted from *The Grey World* written more than twenty years before and express the 'truth' that Willie Hopkinson comes to know, but to his prosaic sister exists simply as a realm of 'morbid ideas.'⁴

Underhill wrote two further novels, *The Lost Word* (1907) and *The Column of Dust* (1909), both of them before her major religious writings which began with what remains perhaps her greatest work, *Mysticism* (1911), and that work's romantic and somewhat a-historical character owes much to her writing of fiction. *The Grey World* has been most frequently reprinted of the three novels.⁵ It attracted some early favourable reviews, and with good reason, for despite its unevenness and rather programmatic nature, as a novel it has virtue, not least in Underhill's psychological insight into her characters. The central character, Willie Hopkinson, is the reincarnation of a young boy who died, and whose soul enters the grey world of the spirits. Not for the boy the trite consolations of conventional religion: 'He, then, was a spiritual pauper, shut out from the pretty heaven which the

² Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 1918), p. 4.

³ Reprinted in *Heaven a Dance*, p. 12.

⁴ Evelyn Underhill, *The Grey World* (1904) (Mesa, Arizona: Scriptoria Book, 2009), p. 205.

⁵ As a young writer she also wrote three collections of poetry, *The Bar-Lamb's Ballad Book* (1902), which was her earliest published work, *Immanence* (1916) and *Theophanies* (1916).

nurses had often described to him.’⁶ Willie struggles with the conventional, materialist and ‘scientific’ middle-class world of London and his family, learning after the death of his mother to live the simple ‘mystical’ life of an anchorite devoted to beauty.

The Grey World looks back to the fantasy fiction of George MacDonald, and *Lilith* (1895) in particular,⁷ and forward to the writings and novels of Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis. It bears some comparison with Lewis’ *The Great Divorce* (1946), which, in turn, looks back critically to William Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c. 1790-93). More movingly, the account of the death of Mrs Hopkinson looks forward to Lewis’ *A Grief Observed* (1961), the account of how he has to learn to free his wife’s soul from his own possessiveness. Underhill’s account of death and bereavement, with its ‘boredom of sorrow’⁸ is, in its way, as moving and as perceptive as that of the aged Lewis. Throughout *The Grey World* there is evidence of Underhill’s immersion in both contemporary culture and society, and the mystical tradition.

Not only are there references to Maeterlinck and the French ‘symbolistes’, but also Underhill’s closeness to the popularity of the cult of the ghost story from the writings of Henry James, H. G. Wells and E. F. Benson. She shows her familiarity with the history of the English novel by references that begin with Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), and Willie’s ‘glimpse of the Delectable Mountains shining in the sun.’⁹ The scenes in the book binders in which Willie works are reminiscent of the working world of Henry James’ *Princess Casamassina* (1886), and there is the clear presence of Arthur Machen,¹⁰ whose story ‘The Bowmen’ gave birth to the legend of the Angel of Mons in the trenches of the First World War. In her description of Willie’s attraction to the Roman Catholic Church (pp. 116 ff), Underhill also looks forward to the young convert Graham Greene in his earlier novels.

But more significant than these literary references, perhaps, are those to the mystical tradition and to the dark night of the soul of St. John of the Cross.

⁶ *The Grey World*, p. 10.

⁷ *Lilith* was published less than ten years before *The Grey World*. The bewitching Mrs Elsa Levi is, at one point, described as Lilith (p. 185).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

The dark night of the soul was upon him. He felt spiritual realities slipping away, yet the pleasures of life seemed savourless and dull.¹¹

Already it is clear that Underhill is deeply involved with the European mystical tradition, though still at this stage in her work it is linked with the theosophical preoccupations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a young boy, Willie is obsessed (somewhat unconvincingly) with European mystical literature.

If Earth was illusion, Heaven was emptiness. So he was driven to his dreams, in default of more actual possessions, and to certain visionary books he had met with – Blake and Swedenborg and the Dutch mystics. These were congenial if unintelligible to him.¹²

In her numerous references to Willie's 'mystical' journey, Underhill also refers to the writings of Jacob Boehme and St. John of the Cross.

Underhill's remarkable scholarship often shows too close to the surface in this early novel, and references betray themselves. In a description of Stephen Miller's negotiating with Mr. Hopkinson and his daughter, Pauline, whom Stephen is to marry, he decides that 'a bold excursion into the enemy's country seemed his only hope.'¹³ Stephen is the only character who understands, to a degree, Willie's spiritual nature and is well aware of the materialism of his future family. Underhill, it must be assumed, draws the image from Sir William D'Avenant's epic poem *Gondibert* (1651), in which one must 'travail...' as 'through the Enemy's country.'¹⁴

The most moving episode in *The Grey World* is the extended description of the death of Mrs Hopkinson and Willie's role in that. The 'death bed scene' is a stalwart of Victorian fiction, invariably, to modern taste, over sentimental and tiresomely religious, perhaps the most public example being the death of Little Nell in Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841). Dickens idealizes the passage from one world to the next.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from

¹¹ Ibid., p. 137.

¹² Ibid., pp. 46-47.

¹³ Ibid., p. 174

¹⁴ See further, Geoffrey Hill, *The Enemy's Country* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.¹⁵

Underhill's dourly realistic description of the death of Mrs Hopkinson stands in stark contrast to Dickensian sentimentality, and indeed Newman's vivid and exaggerated poetry in *The Dream of Gerontius* (1865). In *The Grey World*, death is strangely ordinary in the conventional setting of the middle-class house.

Willie knelt by her bedside; held her hand; watched her face. The whole scene had a horrible fascination for him. The brightly lighted bedroom, with its white enamelled furniture, pink striped walls, cretonne hangings, made the idea of immanent death incredible. All seemed orderly, earthly, actual.¹⁶

And in this dreadful ordinariness the struggle between two worlds, truly only understood by Willie, takes place. "Two worlds, two powers, were fused in that little room, and she was the link between them."¹⁷ Underhill catches well the complexity of Willie's reaction to his mother's death – a mixture of morbid fascination, love, fear, and a helpless anxiety to help. The death is described as a kind of failed conversation between two people who are drawing apart, modulating from moments of fear and helplessness, to moments of release and separation, and finally the moment of separation this later is caught in six words by C. S. Lewis in *A Grief Observed*: 'She smiled, but not at me.'¹⁸

Underhill follows the process of dying precisely and without any histrionics.

Presently her lips moved; she was trying to speak to him. He leaned to her, but the words were difficult to hear. Two only he caught – an intense and bitter whisper – 'Help me!' an appeal as it were from behind the barrier to some potent but negligent saviour still on the remembered shore....

... it was too late; his words could not reach her. In her twisted lips, the fixed gaze of her stony eyes, he could see the signs that the agony of the passage had begun....

¹⁵ Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) Collected Edition (London: Chapman & Hall, n.d.), p. 692.

¹⁶ *The Grey World*, p. 157.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (1961; London: Faber & Faber, 1966), p. 64.

The stress passed from her face then; it did not seem that she was frightened any more. In another moment, the hand that he held became limp in his grasp.¹⁹

Underhill can be a meticulous observer of the passage of small, yet momentous events, free from the cloying sentimentalism of so much late Victorian fiction.

Once one has grasped the fundamental premise of her novel – that Willie is indeed a soul who has passed through death once before (in his former life he was a street urchin in London) and now seeks peace in the meeting of two worlds, the material and the spiritual – then Underhill's narrative can be read as a well-observed description of lower middle class London life in the early years of the twentieth century. Her occasionally ill-concealed learning is impressive, and Willie's progress of the soul already paves the way for her description of the 'mystic way' in Part II of her most well-known book, *Mysticism* (1911). Underhill would never, we might presume to suggest, have made a great novelist and we should be thankful that her energies were redirected early in her career. Nevertheless, *The Grey World* is an interesting exercise in fiction in which many of the great achievements of Underhill's later work are shadowed within an imaginative exercise that indicates that the poet and the imaginative writer are important elements in all of her work.

¹⁹ *The Grey World*, pp. 159-60.

Bearing the Beams of Love: Evelyn Underhill's Spiritual Nurture of Lucy Menzies

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The celebrated writer on Christian spirituality, Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941),¹ repeatedly quoted William Blake who wrote, we're put on earth so we may 'learn to bear the beams of love'.² Perhaps no human more received the warm embrace of Evelyn Underhill's unique expression of the 'beams of love' than her Scottish friend and colleague, Lucy Menzies (1882 to 1954). Here we explore some of the ways that Evelyn spiritually nurtured Lucy. But firstly, we briefly trace some of the different facets of their close friendship, before reflecting upon some of the main contours of Evelyn's role in Lucy's spiritual formation.³

An evolving friendship

Lucy unequivocally named Evelyn as her 'greatest friend'.⁴ She first heard of Evelyn through a parish minister of Innellan on the Clyde, and thereafter she borrowed Evelyn's book, *Mysticism*.⁵ The British publisher, J. M. Dent, introduced Lucy to Evelyn in 1919, but they didn't begin corresponding until after December 1920, when Evelyn anonymously reviewed Lucy's *Life of St Columba* in the *Westminster Gazette*, then sent Lucy one of her books. They corresponded for a couple of years before meeting in person at Evelyn's home in 1923. Lucy was nervous about this initial meeting, but their talk was 'intimate' and Lucy 'went away on wings' knowing she had found a 'true and understanding friend'.⁶ Lucy found Evelyn so 'natural' and easy to talk to,

¹ For a taste of Evelyn's retreat talks, please see: Robyn Wrigley-Carr, *Music of Eternity: Meditations for Advent with Evelyn Underhill: The Archbishop of York's Advent Book for 2021* (London: SPCK, 2021).

² Quoted by Lumsden Barkway, 'Introduction', in *An Anthology of the Love of God*, ed. by Lumsden Barkway and Lucy Menzies (London: Mowbray, 1984 (first published 1953), p. 53.

³ For a sense of the spiritual nurture that Evelyn Underhill received see: Robyn Wrigley-Carr, *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill* (London: SPCK, 2020).

⁴ Lumsden Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies: A Memoir' in Margaret Cropper, *The Life of Evelyn Underhill* (Woodstock: Skylight Paths, 2003), p. xviii.

⁵ Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies' in Cropper, *Life*, p. xvii.

⁶ Cropper, *Life*, p. 107.

with 'no alarming hint' of being a scholar.⁷ She described Evelyn as conveying a strength that would move her mountains, coupled with a willingness to pay the price.⁸

The closeness of their friendship is clear through Evelyn's bequeathing to Lucy some of her most precious items: the 'Russian Crucifix with silver cover and chain' Evelyn wore when conducting retreats, personal devotional books, her Trinity Icon plus her 'Eternity' Embroidery.⁹ In some ways this gesture was symbolic of Evelyn 'handing over the baton' of retreat conductor to Lucy, whom she also appointed as her literary executor. Lucy adopted this Executor role with relish, ensuring that several of Evelyn's retreat talks were published posthumously, plus editing an anthology of her writings.¹⁰ Lumsden Barkway argues that Lucy achieved so much work because she didn't mind who got the credit. For example, Lucy did 'by far the greatest part' of the work finding and editing Evelyn's letters for Charles William's volume.¹¹

A scholarly friendship

The closeness of Evelyn and Lucy's friendship is repeatedly revealed through their scholarly activities. Like Evelyn, Lucy was a scholar of the medieval mystics and they dedicated publications to each other — Evelyn's *The Golden Sequence* to Lucy, and Lucy's *Mirrors of the Holy*, to Evelyn.¹² Evelyn 'mothered' this book of Lucy's as if it were her own, even suggesting the title. In a similar gesture of generosity, Lucy read Evelyn's final draft of *Worship*. Her approval, 'support and encouragement' were a 'tremendous help', making Evelyn feel 'much happier' about it.¹³ Lucy had Evelyn write the introductions to her translations of *A Simple Method of Raising the Soul to Contemplation* (1931) and Abbé de Tourville's *Letters of Direction* (1939). So, we see both women supporting each other in their scholarly publications.

⁷ Lucy Menzies, 'Memoir' in Evelyn Underhill, *Light of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1944), p. 16.

⁸ Lucy Menzies, 'Memoir', in Evelyn Underhill, *The Fruits of the Spirit* (London: Longmans, 1960), p. 21.

⁹ Kings College London (KCL), Underhill Papers: K/ PP 075 8/4.

¹⁰ Publications Lucy edited include: *The Fruits of the Spirit* (1942), *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill* (1943), *Light of Christ* (1944), *Collected Papers* (1946), *Meditations and Prayers* (1949) (which she arranged to be privately printed), *Shrines and Cities of France and Italy* (1949), plus *The Anthology of the Love of God* (1953).

¹¹ Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies' in Cropper, *Life*, pp. xx, xix.

¹² Cropper, *Life*, p. 151.

¹³ Cropper, *Life*, pp. 195–96.

Given Lucy's closeness to Evelyn, her unpublished biography of Evelyn lends a particular quality of authenticity. Lucy wrote this draft during her final nine months before she died in December 1954. Following her death, Lucy's draft biography, plus letters she had uncovered were given to Margaret Cropper, who wrote *The Life of Evelyn Underhill*, published in 1958. But as Olive Wyon argues, *The Life* is 'very inadequate' and 'does not give the right impression of Evelyn at all. Several close friends feel this [...]'¹⁴

Honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees were awarded to both Lucy and Evelyn; Evelyn's from the University of Aberdeen (1938) and Lucy's from the University of St Andrews (1954). Evelyn told Lucy she wished hers had come from the University of St Andrews, given it was her beloved Baron von Hügel's 'gloryhole'.¹⁵ When awarding Lucy's doctorate, Professor Baxter alluded to Lucy's 'rarer gifts of intuition and insight' and 'unusual spiritual charm'.¹⁶ Clearly, both Evelyn and Lucy were incredibly gifted women, but not confined in a narrow, academic straitjacket. Evelyn wrote to Lucy after the dinner when she was made a Fellow of Kings College London, 'how completely these intellectualists miss the bus!'¹⁷ As well as having a scholarly friendship, Lucy and Evelyn worked together as colleagues.

A collegial friendship

In June 1923, Evelyn told Lucy about 'The House of Retreat' at Pleshey (near Chelmsford, England). Having recently taken a retreat at Pleshey, Evelyn encouraged Lucy to attend a conducted retreat to ensure 'unbroken silence'.¹⁸ Evelyn later ushered Lucy into becoming Warden at 'The House of Retreat' at Pleshey, which she embraced with gusto for the decade 1928 to 1938. Evelyn provided spiritual nurture for Lucy during her decade as Warden, initially very involved with finding staff, upgrading the library and 'strengthening the hands of the new Warden on many points'.¹⁹ Evelyn was anxious that Lucy, as Warden, didn't wear herself out and wrote house prayers Lucy could use in the chapel, advising her of the importance of using the *Opus Dei*, and telling her that if leading prayers is a strain, she should just read a bit and 'be there'.

¹⁴ KCL, Underhill Papers: PP75, Letters from Olive Wyon to John Manola, 1963, 1/30/1, 8 August 1963.

¹⁵ Cropper, *Life*, p. 218.

¹⁶ John Hunter, '[Lucy Menzies: Scholar and Mystic](#)' [accessed 15 April 2021].

¹⁷ *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, ed. by Charles Williams, (London: Longmans, Green, 1943), p. 178.

¹⁸ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 316.

¹⁹ Cropper, *Life*, p. 158.

During this decade Evelyn and Lucy worked closely together to make retreats rich, meaningful experiences for retreatants. Lucy observed Evelyn's meticulous preparation and listened to all of her retreat talks from 1928 to 1936, providing needed support for Evelyn. Evelyn was never 'lonely' at Pleshey if Lucy was there.²⁰ Evelyn was vividly aware of Lucy's supportive prayers, when she led retreats.²¹ As well as working tirelessly as Pleshey Warden, Lucy offered powerful prayerful support to Evelyn, and was also part of Evelyn's discernment group when she decided to take a year off retreat-leading in 1935 to write *Worship*.²² Lucy also supported Evelyn in practical ways. She sent garments for Evelyn to take to her bi-weekly visits of poor families in Kensington, and made new clothes for Evelyn in blue, grey and silver hues as she became a more public figure in the late 1920s.²³ When Lucy eventually retired as Warden in 1938 on account of failing eyesight, Evelyn remarked that it would 'seem strange to have anyone in her place!' After meeting Lucy's replacement, Cecil Baines, Evelyn quietly approved but remarked, 'Not Lucy's personality — of course [...].'²⁴

As well as sharing their energies as scholars and retreat leaders, Lucy's friendship with Evelyn involved holidaying together. Lucy accompanied Evelyn and her husband, Hubert, on a holiday to Norway in 1933.²⁵ Evelyn planned to go with Lucy to Palestine on two occasions, but sadly a car accident stopped her in 1934, and in 1935, she was unable to join Lucy because Hubert was ageing noticeably, and she was by then engaged in the writing of *Worship*.²⁶

Evelyn's close friendship with Lucy began with letter writing and they corresponded frequently for eighteen years. Evelyn wrote more letters to Lucy than any other person she spiritually nurtured, with an average of about twenty letters per year. Our primary source of knowledge about the nature of Evelyn's spiritual nurture of Lucy is provided through these letters. It is intriguing that in Williams's edited volume of Evelyn's letters, we have twenty-nine letters written to 'L. M.' (Lucy Menzies) in the main body of the text, then fifty-three unidentified 'letters to a friend' at the back of the

²⁰ Cropper, *Life*, p. 168.

²¹ Cropper, *Life*, p. 131.

²² *The Making of a Mystic: New and Selected letters of Evelyn Underhill*, ed. by Carol Poston (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 318.

²³ Cropper, *Life*, p. 139; Dana Greene, *Evelyn Underhill: Artist of the Infinite Life* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1991), p. 100.

²⁴ *Making*, ed. by Poston, pp. 317, 318. Given her failing eyesight Lucy's retirement gift from Pleshey was a home radio (p. 320).

²⁵ Menzies, 'Memoir', in Underhill, *Fruits*, p. 15.

²⁶ Cropper, *Life*, p. 197.

volume (1923 to 1941). Reading these unidentified letters, it is clearly evident they were written to Lucy, as confirmed by Bishop Lumsden Barkway.²⁷ These letters document Lucy's spiritual and personal struggles, particularly in the early years, so presumably Lucy wanted to maintain her privacy. Similarly, Lucy's will requested that her nephew burn all of her letters from Evelyn.²⁸

Having established the close scholarly and collegial friendship that Evelyn and Lucy shared, we now turn to examine Evelyn's spiritual nurture of Lucy, focusing on the main contours of the spiritual direction that Evelyn gave to Lucy between 1923 and 1941. Here we briefly consider just four aspects found in the eighty-two letters Evelyn wrote to Lucy: care of the body, non-religious interests, and the sacramental life and prayer. But first I want to acknowledge the recurring element of humour in Evelyn's spiritual nurture of Lucy.

Humour

Lucy highlighted Evelyn's humour as 'characteristic of the saints'.²⁹ Evelyn tried to imitate the Abbé Tourville's ability to 'learn to laugh at our own interior hurly-burly'; it's taking ourselves as we are and showing the same 'gentleness and tolerance' towards our weaknesses that 'God shows towards' us — his 'imperfect creatures' yet 'peculiar objects of His love'.³⁰ We see repeated evidence that Lucy and Evelyn could have a good laugh together. In 1924, when Evelyn told Lucy about a spirituality questionnaire from an American University containing ridiculous questions about religious experiences, she told Lucy she would keep it for her 'entertainment' when she next visited.³¹ Further, Lucy's dog, Danny, and Evelyn's cat, David, carried on a correspondence for several years, revealing the sharp wit and playfulness of both women. Lucy recalls, Evelyn 'never stood on her dignity' and Danny made 'pointed remarks' about Evelyn, and David replied with 'great gusto'. Lucy reflects, it 'somehow led to greater intimacy'.³² Before

²⁷ Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies' in Cropper, *Life*, p. xvii. He was Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, 1939 to 1949.

²⁸ *Making*, ed. by Poston, p. xvi.

²⁹ Menzies, 'Memoir' in Underhill, *Fruits*, p. 20.

³⁰ Evelyn Underhill, 'Introduction' in *Letters of Direction. Thoughts on the Spiritual Life from the Letters of the Abbé de Tourville* (London: Dacre Press Westminster, 1939), p. 10.

³¹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 161.

³² Cropper, *Life*, p. 108.

Lucy's first retreat at Pleshey, Evelyn wrote to Danny, Lucy's dog, telling him to tell Lucy to 'keep calm and not overdo it'.³³

Evelyn's spiritual direction of Lucy

Evelyn's love and care for Lucy were her attempt to embody von Hügel's favourite saying — 'caring matters most'.³⁴ Cropper witnessed Evelyn's 'motherly care' of Lucy, who was the most 'intimate' of all of the 'family' that Evelyn directed, providing a 'quietening and restraining' influence, with Lucy, an 'ardent follower'.³⁵ Lucy described Evelyn's letters as putting all she knew and showing us where 'she herself was in her inner life', revealing her 'own thought and practice'.³⁶ From the beginning, we see Evelyn's generosity when she tells Lucy never to hesitate to write if it would be helpful. Initially, Evelyn found engaging with Lucy a 'great pleasure and privilege', particularly appreciating Lucy's trust. However, she warns Lucy always to weigh her advice and not assume her suggestions are always right for her.³⁷ Evelyn tried to tailor her spiritual nurture to Lucy's unique *attrait*, an emphasis from the Baron.³⁸

When Evelyn spent a week with Lucy in St Andrews giving two lectures at the University in February 1924, Evelyn was disturbed to witness Lucy's suffering and spiritual stress.³⁹ She was adamant that Lucy 'rest' and be 'kind' to herself, to help her recover her 'spiritual balance' and she hoped to see her at Pleshey with 'steadier nerves' plus a 'less careworn face'.⁴⁰

At one stage, Evelyn began to feel 'less competent' as Lucy's spiritual director, believing Sorella Maria from the Benedictine hermitage in Umbria would be 'much better fitted' to nurture her spiritually.⁴¹ Both women feared Lucy's 'intensity' so encouraging Lucy to care for her body became a key emphasis in her nurture.⁴²

³³ Cropper, *Life*, p. 124.

³⁴ Menzies, 'Memoir', in Underhill, *Fruits*, p. 21.

³⁵ Cropper, *Life*, pp. xiv, 64.

³⁶ Lucy Menzies, Unpublished biography, IV, 1–2 (The Diocesan House of Retreat, Pleshey Archive). Some of Evelyn's letters that didn't get selected for publication in Williams's edition are provided in her unpublished manuscript.

³⁷ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 320, 312.

³⁸ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 335, 332.

³⁹ Cropper, *Life*, p. 123.

⁴⁰ Cropper, *Life*, p. 124.

⁴¹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 160; Cropper, *Life*, pp. 139, 129.

⁴² Cropper, *Life*, p. 139.

Care for the body

Evelyn was alert to bodily concerns in her spiritual direction of Lucy, particularly Lucy's ongoing fits of nervous exhaustion, hence her constant call to rest. Reginald Somerset Ward had identified Evelyn's own 'delicately balanced psycho-physical nature', which was in line with von Hügel's assessment, so it wasn't hard for Evelyn to recognise this similar trait in Lucy.⁴³ From personal experience, Evelyn recognised how our bodily and spiritual dimensions are intimately connected. Thus, she tells Lucy she wants her to be 'physically' and 'spiritually' 'quieted and normalised', for her body 'must not be driven beyond its strength'. Lucy's 'nerves and mind' had been under great strain and needed wise looking after in a 'quieting-down process.'⁴⁴ We see this repeated refrain: 'Do take care of yourself — I mean your body, not your soul! Make up your mind to some sort of complete rest.' If she avoided strain, staying 'quiet, trustful and accepting', the light would return sooner.⁴⁵ Evelyn also highlighted the exhaustion of Lucy's contemplative type of prayer, hence her need to carefully preserve her strength.⁴⁶ Given her fragile health, Lucy is discouraged from fasting.⁴⁷ Rather than putting her nerves into everything, Evelyn encourages her to simply be a 'channel, a kind of spiritual Robot', particularly when 'things are very thick' to ensure that she doesn't wear herself out.⁴⁸ But Evelyn speaks with sparkling wit (knowing first-hand about health challenges), when she exclaims, 'Sometimes I think the resurrection of the body, unless much improved in construction, a mistake!'⁴⁹

In the early days, Evelyn repeatedly tells Lucy to 'avoid strain', take some days off and 'keep quite quiet'. Rather than saturating herself with mystical books like St Teresa, 'hot milk' and a light novel were the preferred bedtime ritual; later she recommends 'Ovaltine', 'gentle aspirations' and a preference for her 'secular interests', being 'kind' to herself.⁵⁰ In July 1924, when Lucy was finding sleep difficult, Evelyn tells her to 'Meditate upon the Sacred Cow and strive with Ruysbroeck to "become that which you behold"'.⁵¹ A general rule Evelyn gives Lucy is that the more an aspect or

⁴³ *Fragments from an Inner Life*, ed. by Greene (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1993), p. 71.

⁴⁴ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 314.

⁴⁵ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 318.

⁴⁶ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 333.

⁴⁷ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 333.

⁴⁸ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 337.

⁴⁹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 339.

⁵⁰ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 313, 320.

⁵¹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 156.

spiritual exercise attracts her, the more 'ordered' and 'moderate' should be her use of it.⁵² Years later when reflecting upon Evelyn, Lucy vividly remembered Evelyn's words — 'avoid all strain'.⁵³

Non-religious interests

Echoing Baron von Hügel's advice, engaging in non-religious interests was meant to provide a 'steadying' effect for Lucy's spiritual health.⁵⁴ Repeatedly Evelyn told Lucy not to 'overstrain' and to keep her 'non-religious interests alive'.⁵⁵ As Lucy's first degree was in music, it was natural for her to gravitate towards musical interests, thus she joined a choral society and also started reading novels.⁵⁶ Evelyn told Lucy that when she feels the 'blues' coming on, she should stop and do something that takes her entire attention and isn't religious, for this acts 'like a charm!' She also invites Lucy to write to her about her struggles.⁵⁷ When in desolation, Lucy was to engage in 'needlework, gardening, any quiet and congenial work' during the time she would usually set aside previously for mental prayer.⁵⁸ In addition to non-religious interests, church attendance was another area of Evelyn's spiritual nurture of Lucy.

The sacramental life

Lucy was a Presbyterian before converting to the Scottish Episcopal Church, mainly due to Evelyn's influence. She was confirmed in early 1925 and entered into a season of 'real peace' afterwards.⁵⁹ Evelyn knew from her own error of having neglected church practices, that attendance would help protect Lucy from her 'narrow intensity' and 'verticalness'. Some 'participation' in corporate religious life plus some 'sacramental practice' would have a 'steadying and mellowing effect' to help 'carry' Lucy over the 'blank times.' So, Lucy was encouraged to a 'simple rule' of church attendance, fixed when in 'peace and joy' to give her spiritual life 'backbone' across all seasons.⁶⁰

The sacramental life was crucially important to Evelyn, so in the early years, Lucy was encouraged to go to communion as often as possible,

⁵² *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 313–14.

⁵³ Menzies, 'Memoir', in Underhill, *Fruits*, p. 14.

⁵⁴ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 313.

⁵⁵ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 335, 332.

⁵⁶ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 314.

⁵⁷ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 338.

⁵⁸ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 318.

⁵⁹ Cropper, *Life*, p. 135.

⁶⁰ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 311–12.

weaving the practice into her prayers.⁶¹ This 'regular sacramental practice' was an essential 'discipline', practised steadily in 'darkness or in light' as the 'simplest' and the 'most direct channel' for grace to come to the soul, providing 'strength'.⁶² In terms of frequency, Evelyn's advice shifts over the years from 'once a week', to 'as many Communion's as possible, to go 'when you can', to 'daily' if it's not 'too much physically'.⁶³ Alongside these varied recommendations was the repeated refrain of moderation in spiritual practices to safeguard Lucy's health. Evelyn mentioned Fénelon's 'moderation and avoidance of introspection' as 'so good' for her, as long times of prayer are only helpful if done 'without strain', and alongside 'opportunities for relaxation' to safeguard from 'intensity and monotony'.⁶⁴ The necessity of not overdoing activity was a firm directive — 'you MUST settle down and quiet yourself'.⁶⁵ Evelyn was so forthright about the necessity of not being overwrought that she says apologetically to Lucy 'You will think I give nothing but unpleasant lectures.'⁶⁶ Though Evelyn was direct, her playful twinkle, mentioned earlier, repeatedly softened her own intensity.

Guidance about prayer

Evelyn's main spiritual nurture of Lucy centres around prayer. Much of the time she was providing reassurance. On one occasion, Evelyn tells Lucy not to be concerned about what 'degree' of prayer she is experiencing, but to try less hard and simply leave it to 'happen'. Evelyn encouraged her to set aside at least thirty minutes daily in the same place for 'prayer and recollection', in addition to her ordinary morning and night prayers; the goal was a constant, 'steady course' rather than 'ecstasy'.⁶⁷ Though part of Lucy's rule of life included 'meditation or mental prayer', the contemplative prayer shouldn't be practised unless she felt 'peaceful and rested', for such prayer contains a 'psychic' and 'spiritual' side and Lucy's 'equilibrium' was already upset because her 'psychic' side had been too 'fully aroused'.⁶⁸ 'Deep, quiet, peaceful, humbling' prayer, moving gently from vivid, passionate reactions was what was required. Evelyn believed that sometimes it was Lucy's 'eagerly enjoying psyche', rather than God, that kept her awake, tearing her

⁶¹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 316.

⁶² *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 317, 319.

⁶³ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 318, 319, 320, 333.

⁶⁴ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 324, 328.

⁶⁵ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 312.

⁶⁶ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 315.

⁶⁷ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 311.

⁶⁸ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 312, 314, 318.

to bits with an 'over-exciting joy'. Evelyn was firm — 'get away from it now!'⁶⁹ Gentler approaches to 'passive' prayer, such as sitting in the Chapel 'looking at the Crucifix' were encouraged.⁷⁰ Lucy was also reassured that it was fine not to kneel in prayer, given her health, but rather to imagine she was kneeling before the Cross.⁷¹

One of Evelyn's primary concerns was that Lucy not go overboard in prayer, as she tended to be over-zealous. A 'prayerful attitude' was viewed as more important than a 'prayerful *act*'.⁷² Lucy was also encouraged to live in a 'quiet spirit of prayer' so that in her leisure and work she could turn 'simply and gently' towards God.⁷³ Evelyn reiterates this: 'Keep very quiet.'⁷⁴ As advised by Sorella Maria, extra times for prayer were not necessary. Lucy was to reduce her early morning prayer if it tired her, and she should definitely *not* get up any earlier!⁷⁵ In terms of time spent in prayer, Lucy was not to pray for more than an hour and a quarter, in two or three separate portions, so long as it didn't interfere with her other activities, plus making occasional momentary prayers a habit.⁷⁶ Evelyn ushered Lucy into an evening ritual of prayers that were 'rather short, very quiet, more or less on a set form', and weren't too 'mental' but more in line with Psalm 23. She was gently to let herself 'sink down into God's Love in complete dependence', and though prone to have the light 'rush in' on her, she was to keep the eyes of her soul 'shut, intent on falling asleep in Him'.⁷⁷ Lucy had become overly reliant on experiences rather than 'acts of faith' which Evelyn said she had to now 'follow for a bit'.⁷⁸ Also, intercession for others was to be an essential part of her daily rule.⁷⁹ Years later, in 1946, Lucy wrote of finding prayer 'difficult' and it being a 'matter of blood and tears'; though she knew prayer was 'everything', Lucy admitted she found it 'almost impossible'.⁸⁰

⁶⁹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 314, 318.

⁷⁰ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 336.

⁷¹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 324–25.

⁷² *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 325.

⁷³ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 313.

⁷⁴ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 164.

⁷⁵ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, pp. 333, 335.

⁷⁶ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 315.

⁷⁷ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 313.

⁷⁸ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 319.

⁷⁹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 326.

⁸⁰ Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies' in Cropper, *Life*, p. xxi.

The cost of nurturing Lucy

Though early on Evelyn 'enjoyed' Lucy's letters and we see the warmth, fun and mutual support of their friendship, her journals also indicate the personal cost of nurturing Lucy.⁸¹ While on retreat at Moreton in June 1929, Evelyn writes of her 'inordinate dislike' of Lucy's 'emotional clinging and dependence', which caused 'disturbance' to her 'own inner life'.⁸² Later in October 1936, Evelyn discusses with Reginald Somerset Ward — 'Personal relations — L. M.' — indicating some form of relational strain.⁸³ Also, it is clear that Evelyn hid much of her own internal turmoil and conflict from Lucy during these years, outlined in her personal journals (her Green and Flowery notebooks later published as *Fragments from an Inner Life*).⁸⁴ When Lucy read these personal journals after Evelyn's death, she was stunned as she 'had no idea' of what Evelyn had been going through.⁸⁵ Spiritually nurturing another always has a personal cost and despite the closeness of Evelyn's friendship with Lucy, she only really shared her own personal struggles with her spiritual directors.

Coda

In an obituary that Lucy wrote for Evelyn, she recalled how Evelyn once remarked that when she got to heaven she would say, 'Don't look at me but only at those I have been able to help to bring to You.'⁸⁶ Lucy Menzies was one of those who Evelyn profoundly helped. She spiritually nurtured Lucy with humour, directness and love over nearly two decades. This short discussion of Evelyn's letters to Lucy has focused upon Evelyn's concern for her physical health, her encouragement of non-religious interests to help moderate her intensity, advice on church engagement and the sacramental life, plus guidance about prayer. After Evelyn died in June 1941, a major imperative of Lucy's remaining thirteen years was to edit volumes of Evelyn's writings to ensure that people were able to gain from the retreat addresses, meditations and prayers that had lovingly nurtured her. One could say that Evelyn helped Lucy to embody the words of her bookplate: 'a

⁸¹ *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 154.

⁸² *Fragments*, ed. by Greene, p. 86.

⁸³ *Fragments*, ed. by Greene, p. 101.

⁸⁴ *Fragments*, ed. by Greene, p. 105.

⁸⁵ Menzies, Unpublished biography manuscript, IV, 5 (The Diocesan House of Retreat, Pleshey Archive).

⁸⁶ King's College London Archives, Papers of Evelyn Underhill, 1875-1941, K/PP75, 9/5, Lucy Menzies, 'Evelyn Underhill: Obituary', *Chelmsford Diocesan Chronicle*, n.d., pp. 93-94.

lantern for the divine Light' (*'Ego sum lux; tu es lucerna'*).⁸⁷ As Charles Williams writes, Evelyn 'shone' and this 'light she was [...] communicated [...] something of the secrets of its own clarity'.⁸⁸ But it certainly must be acknowledged that Lucy's tireless editing of Evelyn's volumes has enabled the light of Evelyn's words to keep on shining.

⁸⁷ Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies' in Cropper, *Life*, p. xvi.

⁸⁸ Williams 'Introduction' in *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 44.

Lucy Menzies (1882–1954) and the Christian Ideal of Sanctity in Medieval Scotland

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I knew Lucy Menzies and Evelyn Underhill with a good degree of intimacy, and loved them both, and always feel myself deeply indebted to them. To see them together was to have a sight of a very dear friendship, full of heavenly values, and fun, and freedom to say anything, and a love which warmed and comforted their friends. Life was supremely with them an enduring search for the Will of God, sometimes in great darkness and suffering, sometimes in the light.¹

With these words, Margaret Cropper, the Lake District poet, dramatist, and biographer, described the deep friendship between her mutual friends Lucy Menzies and Evelyn Underhill. Cropper completed the first important biography of Underhill, which Lucy Menzies had laboured over until her own death in 1954. While Evelyn Underhill is rightly acknowledged as one of the twentieth century's most important writers and authorities on Christian mysticism and spirituality,² her friend Lucy Menzies is much less well known. Menzies was indeed a close friend, spiritual disciple and collaborator of Underhill and was an accomplished scholar and spiritual writer in her own right. Nonetheless, Menzies has fallen into relative obscurity, despite the fact that she was given an honorary doctorate in Divinity by the University of St Andrews in 1954 and is commemorated on 24 November in the calendar of the Scottish Episcopal Church. After first presenting an overview of Lucy's life and work, this article analyses her views on Christian sanctity in medieval Scotland as expressed in her biographies of saints Columba and Margaret.

¹ Margaret Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill* (London: Longmans, Green, 1958), p. ix.

² In addition to the biography by Margaret Cropper, see e.g., Ann Loades, *Evelyn Underhill* (London: Fount, 1997); Christopher John Richard Armstrong, *Evelyn Underhill, (1875–1941): An Introduction to Her Life and Writings* (London: Mowbray, 1975); Dana Greene, *Evelyn Underhill: Artist of the Infinite Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

The life and writings of Lucy Menzies³

Lucy Menzies was born in 1882 to the Reverend Allan Menzies and Mary Elizabeth Honey. As a young girl, she began what would be a long association with the town and university of St Andrews when her father became Professor of Biblical Criticism there.⁴ Lucy and her sister May were educated by their father at home, and later were sent to finishing school in Heidelberg where Lucy deepened the formidable language skills which would later serve her well in her scholarly work. In her childhood the family began a long tradition of holiday stays on the isle of Iona, and also made frequent visits to the continent. After both her parents died in 1916, Lucy continued to live in St Andrews and soon began to produce varied writings. The first was a translation from the French of *General Foch on the Rhine* (1918),⁵ and that same year she penned a personal memoir as a preface to her father's writing on Calvin and other subjects.⁶ Lucy would go on over the next decade to produce more translation volumes on a variety of interests: *Caucasian Folk-Tales selected and translated from the originals by Adolph Dirr* (1925)⁷ and *The First-Friend: an anthology of the friendships of man and dog compiled from the literature of all ages 1400 B.C.–1921 A.D.* (1929).⁸

Beginning in 1920 with her publication of the first version of *St Columba of Iona*,⁹ Lucy entered upon what Lumsden Barkway aptly called

³ The following overview draws upon the two most extended published memoirs of Lucy Menzies: Lumsden Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies, A Memoir', in Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill*; and 'Lucy Menzies, Scholar and Mystic', abridged from a talk given at All Saints' Church, St Andrews by her godson John Hunter [accessed 21/08/2021].

⁴ For the significance of Allan Menzies work, see William Johnstone, 'Biblical Criticism in the Nineteenth Century', in *History of Scottish Theology*, ed. by David Ferguson and Mark Elliott (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2019), II, pp. 353–54.

⁵ Charles Le Goffic, *General Foch at the Marne: an account of the fighting in and near the marshes of Saint-Gond*, trans. by Lucy Menzies (London: J. M. Dent, 1918).

⁶ Allan Menzies, *A Study of Calvin and other papers; with a memoir of Allan Menzies by his daughter* (London: Macmillan, 1918).

⁷ Adolph Dirr, *Caucasian Folk-Tales selected & translated from the originals*, trans. by Lucy Menzies (London; Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1925).

⁸ Lucy Menzies, *The First-Friend: An Anthology of the Friendships of Man and Dog compiled from the Literature of All Ages 1400 B.C.–1921 A.D.* (London: E. P. Dutton, 1929).

⁹ Lucy Menzies, *Saint Columba of Iona: a Study of His Life, His times, & His Influence* (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1920).

'her own proper field' of spirituality.¹⁰ When Lucy became aware that the anonymous review of this book in *The Westminster Gazette* was by Evelyn Underhill, the two began a correspondence that soon led to a deep friendship. This study of Columba, which would see several revisions over the years, would be followed by an impressive series of books exploring issues related to Christian mysticism and spiritual biography. These included *A Book of Saints for the Young* (1923);¹¹ *The Saints of Italy* (1924);¹² *Saint Margaret of Scotland* (1925);¹³ and her most famous work, *Mirrors of the Holy: Ten Studies in Sanctity* (1928).¹⁴ Lucy and Evelyn's shared love of the French School of prayer and spiritual direction was reflected in two collaborative projects in which Lucy translated the works and Evelyn wrote the introductions: François Malaval's *A Simple Method of Raising the Soul to Contemplation: in the form of a dialogue* (1931)¹⁵ and *Letters of Direction: Thoughts on the Spiritual Life, from the letters of the Abbé de Tourville* (1939).¹⁶

Although she had been raised in the Church of Scotland, in 1924 Lucy was confirmed as an Anglican, which, according to Margaret Cropper, brought to her great peace of mind. Lucy always considered herself to be both Presbyterian and Episcopalian,¹⁷ while at the same time developing a deep appreciation of Roman Catholic spirituality, both in the Middle Ages, but also down to her own time. Her developing life as an Anglican led to a momentous step when, at the urging of Evelyn Underhill and others, Lucy took up the wardenship at the retreat house at Pleshey in Essex.¹⁸ Lucy held the wardenship at Pleshey for ten years, before retiring to St Andrews in

¹⁰ Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies' in Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill*, p. xvii.

¹¹ Lucy Menzies, *A Book of Saints for the Young* (London; Boston: Medici Society, 1923).

¹² Lucy Menzies, *The Saints in Italy: A Book of Reference to the Saints in Italian Art and Dedication* (London: The Medici Society, 1924).

¹³ Lucy Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland* (London: Dent, 1925).

¹⁴ Lucy Menzies, *Mirrors of the Holy: Ten Studies in Sanctity* (London, A. R. Mowbray, 1928).

¹⁵ François Malaval, 1627–1719, *A Simple Method of Raising the Soul to Contemplation: in the Form of a Dialogue*, trans. by Lucy Menzies (London; Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1931).

¹⁶ Abbé de Tourville, *Letters of Direction: Thoughts on the Spiritual Life, from the letters of the Abbé de Tourville*, trans. by Lucy Menzies (Westminster (London): Dacre Press, 1939).

¹⁷ Hunter, 'Lucy Menzies, Scholar and Mystic', p. 5.

¹⁸ Hunter, 'Lucy Menzies, Scholar and Mystic', p. 5.

1938 for health reasons. Bishop Barkway, echoing the sentiments of so many retreatants at Pleshey over those years, reflected:

There she left a lasting heritage in the spiritual atmosphere and way of life which she established, and, more obviously in the lovely chapel which might almost be called her creation. She spent herself unsparingly on her retreat work [...] when you found her, you discovered something very rare — a heart at leisure with itself, which is the essence of the rarest of all virtues, that of Humility —not thinking badly of you, but not thinking of yourself at all. Everything was immediately referred to God [...] She seemed to be completely in rapport with you, and without explanation to see your point of view and to be completely at your service.¹⁹

Following the death of Evelyn Underhill in 1941, Lucy undertook the formidable task of acting as Evelyn's literary executor. In this capacity, she oversaw the publication of many of Evelyn's unpublished writings and addresses, including letters, retreat conferences, diary excerpts, and collected papers.²⁰ Despite her own declining health and eyesight, Lucy continued to produce new scholarship of her own. These included an edition of and introduction to the retreat addresses given at Pleshey by Father

¹⁹ Barkway, 'Lucy Menzies', p. xvii. For an excellent discussion of Pleshey and the work of Evelyn Underhill there while Lucy was Warden, see Robyn Wrigley-Carr, *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill* (London: SPCK, 2020), pp. 113–37.

²⁰ *Collected Papers of Evelyn Underhill*, ed. by Lucy Menzies (London; New York; Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1946); Evelyn Underhill (with a memoir by Lucy Menzies), *Light of Christ: Addresses Given at the House of Retreat, Pleshey, in May, 1932* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1944); Evelyn Underhill, *Shrines and Cities of France and Italy, from an early diary of Evelyn Underhill*, ed. by Lucy Menzies (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949); Evelyn Underhill, *An Anthology of the Love of God from the Writings of Evelyn Underhill*, ed. by Lumsden Barkway and Lucy Menzies (London: Mowbray, 1953). Concerning *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill, edited with an introduction by Charles Williams* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1946), Bishop Barkway in his memoir asserts that although she was not credited as editor, Lucy did much of the work for this volume. As he remarks, p. xix, 'Similarly, her self-effacement had hidden her remarkable efficiency in the arts and in practical life. She got things done because she did not mind who got the credit for doing them.'

Edward Keble Talbot,²¹ and a memorial of the London Anglo-Catholic slum-priest Father Wainright.²² She also produced an abridged version of Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*.²³ Lucy's last completed book was published in 1953, an immense scholarly effort editing and translating the mystical text of the thirteenth century German Mechthild of Magdeburg entitled *The Revelations or The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, translated from the Manuscript in the Library of Einsiedeln.²⁴ This project proved to be very taxing, and with her health in continual decline, Lucy undertook the final task, left unfinished at her death, of writing a full biography of Evelyn Underhill.²⁵ Lucy was buried in the graveyard adjoining St Andrews Cathedral. A plaque in the Sacrament chapel in her beloved All Saints Church on North Castle Street, across the street from her home, marks the spot where she frequently prayed and meditated.²⁶

In her literary output, Lucy Menzies was much more than a populariser, although she did successfully reach large audiences with some of her works. She was in fact a fine critical scholar who succeeded in making many important areas of the Christian spiritual tradition accessible to an English-speaking audience for the first time. Moreover, she accomplished this from an informed and sympathetic point of view that went beyond mere hagiography and combined an enviable analytic depth with a transparent love for her subject and the implications of it for contemporary spiritual life. As Professor Baxter put it in his address marking her honorary doctorate in Divinity from St Andrews,

²¹ Edward Keble Talbot, *Retreat Addresses of Edward Keble Talbot*, ed. by Lucy Menzies (London, S.P.C.K., 1954).

²² Lucy Menzies, *Father Wainright: A Record* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947).

²³ Charles Kingsley, *The Water Babies*, abridged with a memoir by Lucy Menzies (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1946).

²⁴ Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Revelations of Mechthild of Magdeburg (1210-1297): or The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. from the manuscript in the library of the Monastery of Einsiedeln by Lucy Menzies (London; New York: Longmans, Green, 1953). Lucy's annotated copy of *Offenbarungen der Schwester Mechthild von Magdeburg, oder Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*, ed. by P. Gall Morel (Regensburg: G.J. Mainz, 1869), which had previously been owned by Evelyn Underhill, can be found in the Special Collections of the library of the University of St Andrews.

²⁵ Lucy's notes and preliminary draft, utilized by Margaret Cropper in her biography of Evelyn Underhill, can be found in the Special Collections of the library of the University of St Andrews.

²⁶ Hunter, 'Lucy Menzies, Scholar and Mystic', p. 1.

Possessing deep historical scholarship and linguistic equipment both wide and accurate, Miss Menzies brought to the understanding of St Columba and Queen Margaret the rarer gifts of intuition and insight, and as the list of her writings lengthened, so this unusual insight deepened into an unusual spiritual charm.²⁷

In writing about the two great saints of medieval Scotland, Lucy applied the highest standards of scholarship with a keen spiritual sympathy for the foundations of the Church in her own native country.

Sanctity in medieval Scotland

As noted earlier, Lucy Menzies had an intimate acquaintance with the isle of Iona from an early age, and her love for the place never left her. Her first scholarly biography, dedicated to St Columba, the sixth century Irish monk and missionary founder of the monastery at Iona, afforded her ample scope to present the history of Iona in the context of reflections that combined a high degree of Celtic Romanticism with an intense appreciation of the historical realities of medieval monastic life. Likewise, her biography of St Margaret, which was based upon close reading of primary sources, gave her the opportunity to reflect upon the place of asceticism and monastic prayer in the pursuit of Christian holiness by the laity. Menzies is also noteworthy in that, almost alone among early twentieth century Protestant writers, she did not attempt on the one hand to portray Columba as an anti-Roman champion of a 'Celtic Church', or on the other to condemn Margaret for supposedly contributing to the demise of an independent 'Celtic Church' by sweeping away older forms in favour of new Roman ones. In this sense, her writings on both these saints are important landmarks in both historical and ecumenical studies.²⁸

In a foreword to a later revision of her life of St Columba, Lucy reflected upon how the original book brought her into contact with Evelyn Underhill. Here she articulated what she saw as the most important aspect of this biography, namely Columba's gradual spiritual transformation:

That was an anonymous review but I learned later that it was written by Evelyn Underhill, more interested in St Columba's gradual transformation into sanctity than in his historical

²⁷ Cited in Hunter, 'Lucy Menzies, Scholar and Mystic', pp. 9–10.

²⁸ On these points see the cogent comments of Ian Bradley, *Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 174–77.

background. It is a characteristic of the saints that they tend to be transformed by that which they seek. In spite of Columba's tempestuous nature it is eventually the man of prayer who wins through. A background of prayer and a continual tendency towards God shine through his life. And in the end he achieved selflessness and humility. The story of his struggles with others, his conquest of himself and finally his evening of serenity at Iona, forms one of the most moving pages of history. The intimate domestic life of Columba at Iona is shown us in a vivid way. We see him just as he was, his quick temper, his impetuous ways, his petulance about troublesome guests — and yet his never failing hospitality — his love for his fellows and for every living thing, even for his trees, his devotion to those under his rule, his absolute belief in prayer, above all his love for God.²⁹

Throughout her discussion of Columba's life and activities, based mostly on Adamnan's seventh century hagiography of the saint, Lucy balanced critical scholarly skills with an approach equally close to her heart, a certain Romantic view of what could be called the Celtic temperament and spiritual landscape. This tendency is found throughout the book, in passages where Lucy reflected upon the numerous miracles attributed to Columba. She noted how the miracle stories found in Adamnan's *vita* were an expected part of the story for Christians of that time and were seen as an important way for Columba to imitate Christ.³⁰ Thus, his miracle stories, whatever may be the case of their portrayal as supernatural, were intended to reflect aspects of Columba's sanctity which Lucy considers to be genuine. Just as she felt the later poems attributed to him retained something of the force and effect of his sentiments and personality,³¹ the miracle tales genuinely reflected that Columba had 'gifts of insight and discernment which give rise to many a story of his supernatural powers'.³² The stories of his hospitality to birds and beasts, however romantically they are presented, were a manifestation of his sanctity and a deep kinship with all of creation:

Compassionate love for animals was characteristic of many of the saints. Selfless lives possess a strange power over the lesser

²⁹ All subsequent references to this work are taken from the revised version of the 1920 original: Lucy Menzies, *St. Columba of Iona*, 6th edn (Glasgow: The Iona Community, [1949]1974), pp. viii-ix.

³⁰ Menzies, *St Columba*, pp. 8-9.

³¹ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 13

³² Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 53

creation; the barrier between man and beasts seem to be swept away; instead there is mutual recognition that all creatures share the universal life given by God.³³

Lucy specifically asserted that this is something that Columba shared with St Francis of Assisi.³⁴ Likewise, Columba's solicitude for the poor and those suffering from various kinds of illness was at the heart of stories that reflected his genuine gift of healing, something she feels was confirmed by our own personal experience:

His own gift of healing is easily understood; there must have been a sense of spiritual power about him which surrounded and emanated from him and which exerted an immediate and direct influence on a people ready to believe in the supernatural. Many of us have experienced something of this sort in our own lives.³⁵

Lucy's views on the relationship of the miraculous to sanctity, at times, were linked with her appreciation of what she viewed as characteristics of the 'Celtic character'. For example, the numerous episodes of prophecy attributed to Columba by Adamnan were part of what she sees as the gift of 'second sight', and in alluding to this Lucy attaches this faculty with sanctity more generally and specifically a posture of humble receptivity to God's word:

The strange gift of the second sight, which Adamnan calls 'the divine gift of prophecy', was possessed by Columba in high degree. He knew of things happening at a distance — 'Heaven has granted to some', he said, 'to see on occasion in their minds clearly and surely the whole of the earth and sea and sky'. It has been suggested that the Celtic peoples may be less separated from the universal consciousness than the rest of mankind, that perhaps they live closer to the Eternal. That, of course, is true of the saints, of all who train themselves by lives of waiting on God to be able to receive his messages. The Columba of the later, and still more of the latter years, was a very different being from the impetuous hot-head of his youth. He had more to overcome in

³³ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 54

³⁴ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 38.

³⁵ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 55.

himself than many, but towards the end we see all the marks of selflessness and humility, the true hall-marks of sanctity.³⁶

There are also other ways in which Lucy portrays Columba, particularly in the first four decades of his life, as the very image of the Romantic Celt. He is described as possessing an eager temperament and love of fighting, but also as a poet and bard akin to Ossian, a lover of all things beautiful marked by a holy cheerfulness, and a scholar and servant of God with a passion for travel and spreading the Gospel.³⁷ If monastic discipline and prayer were the keys to Columba's evolution from tempestuous youth to an elder marked by humility and sanctity, Iona was the arena where this spiritual transformation took place by providing Columba with an environment of beauty and solitude.³⁸

Based upon her own extensive time there and her vivid imagination, Lucy seamlessly combines reflection upon Columba's life with that of those who experience Iona as modern pilgrims.³⁹ She employed lovely and evocative words to describe how it felt to sail around the Western Isles, and described in detail the landscape of Iona stressing how from earliest times the island had 'an aura of sanctity',⁴⁰ citing Fiona MacLeod on how Iona was a 'thin place'.⁴¹ For Lucy, Iona literally had an infinite appeal to the artist and painter, uniquely blending aesthetics with holiness.⁴²

As important as solitude could be to Columba's growth in holiness, Lucy also stressed that his spiritual development was fundamentally worked out within the social world of the monastic community, where Columba was shown to be both a brother and a father to his family of monks. Thus, while Columba could at times be stern, Lucy stressed how he also often went out walking or riding to encourage his brethren in their work, and how they were constantly in his thoughts. His prayers and affections were with them, comforting them and strengthening them.⁴³ Finally, in her description of Columba's servant Diarmid, Lucy articulated yet another aspect of holiness

³⁶ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 58.

³⁷ Menzies, *St Columba*, pp. 10–16.

³⁸ Menzies, *St Columba*, pp. 58–59.

³⁹ E.g., she recounts the story of how Columba sent out his spirit to refresh the monks returning from work, and how the same happens to modern pilgrims, who find themselves 'no longer sensible of trouble or fatigue'. Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 24

⁴² Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 24.

⁴³ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 35

— the life of hidden yet indispensable service which perhaps gave voice to her own path:

Diarmid was Columba's personal attendant, one of those devoted disciples who knows no fame but is always in the background, supporting and strengthening the master he serves and worships, enabling him to fulfil his destiny unhindered by care for everyday details.⁴⁴

Turning to Menzies's 1925 study of the eleventh-century queen, St Margaret, in the preface she notes how this work naturally follows her earlier work on Columba.⁴⁵ Yet from the outset Lucy made it clear that a key to understanding Margaret's life was to place her in the category of mystic. Thus, she began by quoting Evelyn Underhill on how each mystic possesses 'the power of stinging to activity the dormant spark in the souls of those whom they meet'.⁴⁶ Throughout the book Lucy referred to the scholarly work of Evelyn Underhill and William James, and to mystical writers such as Catherine of Siena, Ruysbroek and John of the Cross, to explain aspects of Margaret's inner life. She justified this practice in her 'Acknowledgements': 'Mystic experience being of the same nature in whatever land or age, we come to passages which explain Margaret's thoughts and ideals in many contemplatives of later date, and I have quoted freely from them.'⁴⁷

However, this does not mean that Lucy portrays Margaret as a sort of ahistorical mystical figure who could have lived nearly an identical life in any period. While drawing upon important secondary scholarship and above all on the early twelfth century life of Margaret by the saint's friend Turgot of Durham, monk and subsequently bishop of St Andrews,⁴⁸ Lucy took great pains to place Margaret's life and work in the context of eleventh century

⁴⁴ Menzies, *St Columba*, p. 37.

⁴⁵ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. viii.

⁴⁶ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, frontispiece.

⁴⁷ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 198.

⁴⁸ Lucy drew extensively upon the English translation, including its learned notes: Turgot, Bishop of St Andrews, *The Life of St Margaret, Queen of Scotland*, ed. by William Forbes-Leith (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1896). For an overview of Turgot's life and work, see Robert Bartlett, 'Turgot (c. 1050–1115)', in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published online 23 September 2004. For the influence of Turgot on Margaret's ideas of reform, see Bridget Nichols, 'Women and Liturgical Reform: The Case of Margaret of Scotland', in *Priscilla Papers*, 22 (2008), 23–27.

Scotland. Furthermore, building upon insights of Turgot and other sources, as well as her own knowledge of the history of Christian spirituality, Lucy announced in her preface how Margaret embodied and adapted a specifically monastic and Benedictine spirituality in her own life:

[...] but it is surely just because Reality is the sole quest and joy of the mystic that we find Margaret's life transfigured by it. The Light at which she aimed 'enwrapped and penetrated her as the air is penetrated by the light of the sun' and shone through everything she did. But, much as she did for Scotland, she was greater than her best work. Thinking of her, living with her, it is not her achievements which strike us so much as the selfless spirit in which she achieved them. 'The height and perfection of blessedness', said Cassian, in words which were probably known to Margaret, 'does not consist in the performance of wonderful works, but in the purity of Love'.⁴⁹

This theme of Margaret as pursuing an essentially lay Benedictine, what today might be called a Benedictine oblate, path of holiness is developed in detail throughout the book and constitutes an important and highly original insight. Lucy described how the young princess' early days at the English court were marked by her education at the hands of Benedictines, where she learned to read and pray with the Scriptures, studied the lives of saints, and the works of two key monastic authors, John Cassian and Pope Gregory the Great.⁵⁰ Likewise, Margaret's friendship with Archbishop Lanfranc, himself a Benedictine reformer, was seen by Lucy as crucial to Margaret's own efforts while queen in the reform and re-vitalization of the Scottish church.⁵¹

This emphasis on the Benedictine spirituality of Margaret is developed further in chapter 8. Drawing upon the recently published Dom Cuthbert Butler's *Benedictine Monachism*,⁵² Lucy discussed in some detail the nature of Benedictine life, seeing it as a balance of manual labour, self-discipline and prayer. The moderation of the Benedictine Rule was stressed, as well as its roots in the earlier writings of Basil, Augustine and John Cassian. The Benedictine ideal lay, 'not in the annihilation of the natural appetites, but in

⁴⁹ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. xi.

⁵⁰ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, pp. 20–21.

⁵¹ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 25.

⁵² Cuthbert Butler, *Benedictine Monachism: Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule*, 2nd edn (London, New York & Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1924).

their sanctification'.⁵³ It was primarily concerned with the monks seeing Christ in everyone they encountered, and following Christ in obedience, patience, and self-denial. Lucy considered its humane spirituality a prime means for the development of sanctity: 'It is enlightening to consider the standard aimed at by St Benedict, a broad, human standard, inspired equally by idealism and common-sense, the latter quality being highly recommended to us by the saints.'⁵⁴

Lucy further expounds these ideas by stressing that Margaret learned from the Benedictine ideal to practise purification of self, and to put into place in her own life values such as ongoing conversion of life (*conversio morum*), commitment to place (*stabilitas*), and obedience. On the issue of poverty, Lucy understood this in the Benedictine context as being essentially an exhortation to simplicity and frugality, linked to the obligation for a person to practise stewardship of the things entrusted to them, a sense fully applicable to the life of Margaret.⁵⁵ Above all, Lucy saw Margaret as epitomizing the Benedictine ideal of humility.⁵⁶

In describing Margaret's dedication to Benedictine ideals of balance, moderation and prayer, Lucy did voice concern about how Margaret fasted to the point of infirmity. As she put it, 'Margaret is not a good example of the balanced life as regards to fasting.'⁵⁷ Lucy went on to say that while we must not approve of this excessive fasting, still we are obliged to try to understand it as a way to enter in some small way into the sufferings of Christ. If such fasting was done for the right reason, Lucy argued, such as pain borne for a friend, it could be, apparently, liberating and give an almost heavenly joy. Lucy speculated that Margaret's excessive fasting was offered to God for the bellicose Malcolm in expiation for his violence and warfare. In saying this, Lucy assumed the role of trying to explain to her audience what can seem to be questionable medieval practice, while also providing a plausible theological rationale for ascetical practices that she would analyse in her later works. In walking the thin line between her own developing thought and the sensibilities of her audience, Lucy, in the traditional manner, linked fasting with Margaret's equally strenuous efforts at almsgiving:

If Margaret's ardour in fasting was mistaken — and of that we are not in a position to judge — it was a discipline she did not allow to interfere with her work for others. She spent long hours

⁵³ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 71.

⁵⁴ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 69.

⁵⁵ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 76.

⁵⁶ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 153

⁵⁷ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 154

of prayer in the morning, and she did not break her fast till with the king she had served the poor who waited for them in the great hall. This daily observance is really an allegory of her life-service of God and of her fellow-men, before service of self.⁵⁸

While Lucy maintained that Margaret was clearly shaped by Benedictine ideals, it was in the sphere of domestic life and court where the queen lived out these values. Lucy described at length Margaret's devotion to her husband Malcolm and their children. Acknowledging that Malcolm refused to curb his warlike behaviour, Lucy did however follow her medieval source, Turgot, in describing how Malcolm was devoted to his wife, respected her piety and learning, and most importantly of all, supported her plans for reform of both Church and state. In other words, as Lucy explained it, Malcolm responded well in the presence of a sanctity that he himself could not fully understand. Likewise, Malcolm entrusted to his wife the moral education of their sons; one of her greatest accomplishments for the future of Scotland was inculcating her sons with her own love of religion, education, and responsibility.

Ultimately, for Lucy, Margaret's sanctity lies in the fact that she, following the example of her teacher Lanfranc and ultimately Pope Gregory the Great, admirably combined the contemplative and active life. Margaret quotes Turgot referring to how Margaret was like another Mary, sitting at Christ's feet meditating on his teaching day and night.⁵⁹ But she also was like Martha, founding and restoring abbeys and schools, establishing the high art of embroidery, encouraging pilgrimage, helping captives and refugees, extending hospitality to all classes of people, including the poor. As Lucy sums it up, this ideal of sanctity, the combination of the active and contemplative, was of the highest importance to subsequent Scottish history:

In any case, such profound personal experience as hers was not dependent on books. The path of the mystic is in all cases much the same — the awakening to the Divine, the purifying of self, the eager course of self-denial to purge away everything out of harmony with the enlightened vision. Then, all the powers transformed, the enlightened spirit must inevitably spend itself on others [...]. And it was because of her deep spiritual anchorage that she was able to deny herself the cloistered life and throw herself actively into the affairs of her adopted country. She was

⁵⁸ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 157.

⁵⁹ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, p. 41.

the instrument through which the spiritual life of Scotland was to be revived.⁶⁰

Conclusions

It has been noted⁶¹ as a mark of the Anglican tradition that the boundaries between important works of theology and spirituality can often blur. The same could be said for works of biography and history; if subjects are treated in a particular way, they can cross over boundaries of literary genre, and we see this at work in Lucy Menzies's two spiritual biographies of medieval Scottish saints. While both biographies are meant to reach a non-specialist audience and are written in a charming and accessible style to achieve this, they also represent an original synthesis of up-to-date scholarship. This commitment to make scholarship accessible and relevant to a lay audience is in itself a significant accomplishment and indeed vocation and was one that Lucy Menzies also extended in her writings about saints for children and travellers, as well as her essays on women mystics. While it does position her as joining in the work of Evelyn Underhill in this regard, it also places her among other important Anglican female writers, such as Margaret Cropper with her three volumes of biographies of Anglican spiritual writers,⁶² and the medievalist Eleanor Shipley Duckett in her studies on saints and scholars in the early English and Carolingian churches.⁶³

The multiple editions of her spiritual biography of Columba served as an influential introduction to the saint and Iona for countless pilgrims. Lucy's books on Columba and Margaret also fulfilled an important ecumenical role, as they removed the consideration of both saints from the polemical interdenominational squabbling that had marked so many discussions of Celtic Christianity, revealing them to be extremely significant ecumenical figures belonging to the whole Church. Along with this, Lucy handled, with nuance, sensitivity and knowledge aspects of medieval spirituality that could seem alien to many in her audience, including

⁶⁰ Menzies, *Saint Margaret Queen of Scotland*, pp. 148–49.

⁶¹ *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness*, ed. by Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson, and Rowan Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. xxxiii.

⁶² See the following by Margaret Cropper: *Flame Touches Flame* (London: The Religious Book Club, 1950); *Sparks Among the Stubble* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1955); and *Shining Lights: Six Anglican saints of the 19th century* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1963).

⁶³ See Susan Mosher Stuard, 'Eleanor Shipley Duckett (1880–1976)', in *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, ed. by Jane Chance (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), pp. 213–26.

mysticism and monastic asceticism. This final point fits in with a vocation dedicated to these goals, and presents Lucy Menzies, along with her friend Evelyn Underhill, as a living embodiment of the ideals of sanctity she so persuasively and disarmingly articulated for a wide audience. As Julia Bolton Holloway wrote about Evelyn and Lucy, 'It is a chorus of voices across time, culminating in Evelyn Underhill and Lucy Menzies, both women who explored the past for spiritual greatness in order to give it to the present and the future.'⁶⁴

⁶⁴ A preface to her publication of John Hunter's memoir on Julia's [website](#) dedicated to Julian of Norwich and other mystics [accessed 21/08/2021].

'To Reveal the Eternal': The Spiritual Friendship of Margaret Cropper and Evelyn Underhill

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In her Introduction to Margaret Cropper's *Christ Crucified: A Passion Play*, Evelyn Underhill heaped praise on the playwright's ability to express spiritual truths:

Here, it seems to me, CHRIST CRUCIFIED is true to the noblest tradition of religious drama; which is required — as indeed all great art is required — to reveal the Eternal, and evoke our love and wonder [...] The narrative scenes of CHRIST CRUCIFIED have a touching beauty which no one can miss. But that which lifts them to the level of greatness, and endows them with purifying power, is the overwhelming sense of their eternal and universal significance as vehicles of Divine action.¹

Underhill's words focus on what she believed to be the essence of Christian art — the representation of 'the awful realities and mysterious movements of the spiritual world', far from the dross of 'our hurried and self-centred modern' lives.² Yet who was the dramatist to whom she addressed such lavish and heart-felt appreciation for her capacity to 'reveal the Eternal'? Margaret Cropper is best known in Anglican circles for completing Lucy Menzies's biography of Underhill. Cropper's own writings, however, have been almost entirely forgotten, although she was considered one of the pre-eminent Lake District poets of her day, renowned for 'her supreme skill [...] clear, individual voice [...] and deep understanding of the [Lake] folk and their dialect'.³ Cropper's influential friendship with Underhill has likewise been largely overlooked. The two writers corresponded frequently, sending rough drafts of their manuscripts to the other for comment and correction. Underhill stayed with Cropper at the latter's home in the Lake District on numerous occasions, and it was Cropper who recommended Reginald

¹ Evelyn Underhill, 'Introductory Note', in *Christ Crucified: A Passion Play in Six Scenes*, by Margaret Cropper (London: The Sheldon Press, 1932).

² Underhill in *Christ Crucified* by Cropper.

³ Michael Ffinch. 'Foreword', in *Poems: Margaret Cropper*, ed. by Anne Hopkinson (Kendal: WG Print, 1983).

Somerset Ward to Underhill as a future spiritual director, which eventually became possible in 1932, two others having supported her in the interim after Baron Friedrich von Hügel's death in 1925. This essay will present a brief survey of Cropper's life and career before examining Underhill and Cropper's friendship.

Margaret Cropper (1886–1980)

Cropper's published works include plays, hymns, histories, biographies, prayer books, and ten volumes of poetry. The renowned English poet and critic, Norman Nicholson OBE, described her as 'one of the most accomplished poets [from the Lake District] [...] since the time of Wordsworth'. He particularly admired how she depicted the speech of the 'farmers and dalesmen and cottagers' of rural Cumbria. As he wrote, 'Margaret Cropper seems to me to belong to the same tradition as such poets as Hardy, Edward Thomas, and Wilfred Owen, who, in their quiet unspectacular way, helped to bring about a revolution in the language of poetry.'⁴

She was born in 1886 in Burneside, near Kendal, in the Lake District, where she would live for most of her life. Her father, Charles James Cropper, was a wealthy businessman from a Quaker family, while her mother, the Honourable Edith Holland, was raised as an Anglican in Hertfordshire where the family seat, Munden House, was located. Margaret's maternal grandfather, Henry Holland, 1st Viscount Knutsford, served as Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1887 to 1892, during which period he was primarily concerned with South African affairs. Margaret inherited her grandfather's interest in South African missions, and she visited South Africa twice, 'helping friends there who were working for the Church'.⁵ Her grandfather also nurtured her love of poetry, frequently reading poems aloud during their family visits.⁶

One of five siblings, she remained especially close to her sister Mary, who would author several books of religious instruction for children.⁷

⁴ Norman Nicholson, 'Forward', in *Something and Everything* by Margaret Cropper (Kendal: Titus, Wilson & Son, 1978).

⁵ Anne Hopkinson, 'Acknowledgements', in *Poems: Margaret Cropper*, ed. by Hopkinson.

⁶ Michael Finch, *Portrait of Kendal and the Kent Valley*, (London: Robert Hale, 1983), pp. 29–32.

⁷ Her works include Mary Fletcher, *Under Christ's Banner: A Year's Course in Religious Teaching for Little Children* (London: National Society, [n.d.]); *A Time for Decision* (London: Blandford Press, 1959); *My Very First Prayerbook* (London: Blandford Press, [n.d.]).

Although Margaret felt a deep connection to Quakerism, she remained a practicing Anglican throughout her life. In 1909, when she was twenty-three, she became active in the newly formed Girls Diocesan Association (GDA), which sponsored talks, study groups, plays, and other activities to deepen young women's experience of Christianity.⁸ It was during this period that she came under the guidance of Reginald Somerset Ward, who worked closely with the GDA from 1909 to 1914 training Sunday School teachers.⁹

Elkin Matthews, the London bookseller who published W. B. Yeats, John Masefield, James Joyce, and other leading poets, produced Cropper's first book of poetry in 1914 when she was twenty-eight years old. Simply titled *Poems*, its verses expressed the varied moods of the Lake District, from delicate rhymes about thistledowns and sparrow hawks to the grittier 'Ballad of Two Tramping Men'.¹⁰ She then turned her attention to writing a series of plays, including the exquisite *The Water Woman* (1926), before coming out with her next book of poetry, *The Broken Hearthstone*, in 1927, followed by *The Springing Well* in 1929.¹¹ These two volumes include more meditations on the Cumbrian wilderness, while touching upon the sacrifice of Christ, pacifism, and other topics. She also composed Christian prayers and hymns that appeared in multiple editions.

Cropper alternated between poetry and drama for the next fifteen years. During this period, she published three book-length narrative poems set in rural Cumbria: *Little Mary Crosbie* (1932); *The End of the Road* (1935); and *Anthony Broom* (1937).¹² These works display an ethnographic sensitivity to the region's cultural traditions, while emphasising how the local communities were connected to an animate landscape of mountains, forests, and streams. In *The Literary Guide to the Lake District*, Grevel Lindop expressed his admiration for how these first two poems captured the living voice of the rural Cumbrians:

Two magnificent longer works, *Little Mary Crosbie* and *The End of the Road*, published in the 1930s, give a vivid picture of the life

⁸ 'Girls' referred to unmarried women between the ages of 18 and 35.

⁹ Margaret Cropper, *The Girls Diocesan Association, 1901–1961 and 1961–1964*. (London: The Girls Diocesan Association Trustees, 1976), pp. 1–6.

¹⁰ Margaret Cropper, *Poems* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1914).

¹¹ Margaret Cropper, *The Water Woman, A Play* (London: Gowans and Grey, 1926); *The Broken Hearthstone* (London: Philip Allan, 1927); *The Springing Well* (London: Philip Allan, 1929).

¹² Margaret Cropper, *Little Mary Crosbie* (London: Constable, 1932); *The End of the Road* (London: Thomas, Nelson & Sons, 1935); *Anthony Broom* (Kendal: Titus, Wilson & Son, 1937).

of the Westmorland poor in that period and, though written in standard English, make entirely natural use of local dialect forms and rhythms, something no other poet has achieved.¹³

Her one act comedies *A Dose of Physic* (1931), and *Country Cottage* (1939)¹⁴, which likewise are set in Cumbria, were published by the Village Drama Society. The latter work 'was awarded a Prize in the Playwriting Competition organised by the Village Drama section of the British Drama League in 1938'.¹⁵ Most of Cropper's theatrical works from this time, however, dealt with religious themes, and were intended to be performed by church youth groups. For example, the dedication of *A Great and Mighty Wonder: A Nativity Play*, states: 'This play is written for the students at Bishop's Hostel, London. It is dedicated to all who played in it there, in happy remembrance [...] of the beauty of the production.'¹⁶ Cropper apparently had drafts of her plays performed by Anglican youth groups, allowing her to work out any difficulties with the script or production, before publication in their final form. Her last play, a missionary drama called *I Send You Forth*, was published in 1945.¹⁷

At this point she decided to devote her energy to history, publishing *Flame Touches Flame*, a book about the spirituality of six Anglican saints from the seventeenth century, in 1949.¹⁸ She had almost finished *Sparks Among the Stubble*,¹⁹ a study of seven eighteenth century Anglican saints, when her friend Lucy Menzies died in 1954 and she found herself taking on the sad task of completing Evelyn Underhill's biography. Cropper was seventy-two years old by the time her classic work on Underhill was published in 1958. Two more prose books followed — *Shining Lights: Six*

¹³ Grevel Lindop, *Literary Guide to the Lake District* (Sigma Press, 2005), pp. 19–20.

¹⁴ Margaret Cropper, *A Dose of Physic: A Comedy in One Act* (London: Village Drama Society, 1931); *Country Cottage: A Comedy in One Act* (London: Village Drama Society, 1939).

¹⁵ 'Introductory Note' in Cropper, *Country Cottage: A Comedy in One Act*.

¹⁶ Margaret Cropper, *A Great and Mighty Wonder: A Nativity Play*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1938).

¹⁷ Margaret Cropper, *I Send You Forth* (London: Anglican Young People's Association, 1945).

¹⁸ Margaret Cropper, *Flame Touches Flame* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949).

¹⁹ Margaret Cropper, *Sparks Among the Stubble: Seven Anglican Saints* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1955).

*Anglican Saints of the 19th Century*²⁰ and a history of the Girls Diocesan Association, the latter published in 1976 when Cropper was ninety. Although her regionalist style of poetry had fallen out of fashion in her later years, she carried on writing verse until her death in 1980. Margaret never married and so her niece, Anne Hopkinson, served as her literary executor. In 1983 Anne posthumously published a selection of her aunt's poems with the intention that, as Sir John Betjeman wrote, 'The more people read [Margaret Cropper], the more people will enjoy her.'²¹

While the bulk of Cropper's prose works chronicled Anglican history, references to Quakerism can be found throughout her poetry. 'Verses at Sunbreak', which Margaret read aloud during the celebration of George Fox's Tercentenary in 1924, commemorated the seaside graves of Fox and other early Quakers. The main address of the tercentenary event, *Memories of Swarthmore*, was given by one of Margaret's neighbours, Lucy Holdsworth, the author of numerous books on Quaker spirituality and a friend and correspondent of the eminent Quaker scholar Rufus Jones. Cropper's poem mourned George Fox in the burial grounds with other Quaker heroes: 'Windswept — there is scant shelter from the sea/ But here will be God's spacious silences,/ His Liberty.'²²

A somewhat more critical view of the Quakers appears in *Little Mary Crosbie* (1932). In this poem, about a girl from a Quaker orphanage who is adopted by a childless country widow, the Quaker establishment is shown to be so constrained by the institutionalisation of good works that the members have lost their sense of the 'inward light'. The committee to decide whether the widow would get an orphan was described as, 'So dull they seemed, the drab hued Committee women,/ Earnest and tired, the serious dutiful men.'²³ The Committee finally agreed to send 'Little Mary Crosbie, whom nobody could tame' to the widow, Susannah Winter, for 'a month on trial'.²⁴ During this month, Mary blossomed as she discovered the wonders of the countryside, gathering wildflowers and playing imaginary games in an abandoned cottage in the woods. Despite the healthfulness of her new life

²⁰ Margaret Cropper, *Shining Lights: Six Anglican Saints of the 19th Century* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963).

²¹ Ffinch, 'Forward', in *Portrait of Kendal*.

²² Margaret Cropper, 'Verses at Sunbreak', in *Memories of Swarthmore*, by L. V. Holdsworth (London: Leominster, 1924), p. 25.

²³ Cropper, *Little Mary Crosbie*, p. 10. A revised version of the poem was published in Cropper, *The End of the Road*. In our personal collection of Cropper's works, my husband and I own the original manuscript of the poem in Margaret's hand, marked with the revisions.

²⁴ Cropper, *Little Mary Crosbie*, p. 11.

under Susannah's care, the Quaker inspector found that 'it looked as if [Mary] were running wild' and determined that the girl should return to the orphanage. Fortunately, the Secretary, an elderly man who often disrupted the committee with his unorthodox opinions, had visited Mary himself, and had seen how she was flourishing. He persuaded the committee that the child should stay with the widow, explaining to them that Mary was 'not naughty, but a good girl now'; as he spoke, the committee's 'painstaking and apathetic faces' were transformed by the Spirit, and a 'laugh spread wide/ over the members, like a rippling tide/ of geniality'. Because of the Secretary's insight and words, 'Love's wisdom had discerned the Spirit's Laws', and the Divine will flowed through the assembly.²⁵

Cropper's view of the contemporary Quakers as being almost afraid of their earlier, powerful mysticism was expressed in 'Quaker Wedding Gown'. This poem describes a grey, 'glimmering silken cover' that had once served as a wedding gown. With Quaker thrift, it had been converted into a quilted bed cover for honoured guests. Quilts are a quintessential expression of Quaker spirituality and Cropper used them repeatedly as an important symbol.²⁶ In 'Quaker Wedding Gown', she wrote:

[...] Rich, heavy silk it was; and oh, the easing
 To tear-worn eyes of its stiff graciousness,
 And spiritual colours! All the story
 Of generations back of Friends might take
 That silk for symbol — hint of the Dove's Wings,
 Of the spare ways of the spirit, the worth of truth,
 Of hearts a little afraid of their own rapture,
 Dawn on the narrow way [...].²⁷

Eventually the quilt was repurposed as a cover for a Quaker who was dying, and then as their burial shroud:

[...] It seemed of all things gentle and rare enough
 For the silence of those days, seemed spirit enough

²⁵ Cropper, *Little Mary Crosbie*, p. 37–39.

²⁶ For example, in *The Water-woman* (1926), the elderly mother says, 'And see the quilt I've laid upon the bed. It was my mother's and her mother's too [...] I reckon out/ It's lain on bridal beds, that very quilt/ Five times and then at funeral times [...] We've lost the craft and cunning we used to have in fashioning those things.'

²⁷ Margaret Cropper, 'Quaker Wedding Gown', in *Poems: Margaret Cropper*, ed. by Hopkinson, pp. 51–52.

To cover the body turned so frail and fading,
Though lacking its spirit yet most possessed by it;
Seemed peaceful enough to still fear's questionings.
It had experience of venturing Love,
And beauty enough to clasp the hands of Death [...]

Although Cropper believed that the contemporary Quakers possessed 'hearts a little afraid of their own rapture', she clearly felt deep ties to manifold aspects of the Quaker charism — to their simplicity, their economy, and to the joyous mysticism that lay at the heart of George Fox's vision.

Underhill and Cropper's friendship (1931–1941)

The friendship between the two writers began in the spring of 1931 when Evelyn came to dine at the London home of Margaret's sister, Mary. Mary, known as Maisie, had married Sir Walter Morley Fletcher, a leading biomedical researcher and a relative of former Prime Minister H. H. Asquith. She was also the Secretary of the Wives' Fellowship, 'a company of educated young married women'.²⁸ The Fellowship wished for Underhill to give a retreat for them, and so Maisie arranged a dinner party in Evelyn's honour to which Margaret was invited. Cropper recalled:

I first met Evelyn and Hubert at my sister Maisie Fletcher's house in the spring of 1931. They came to dine there, and we had a very friendly little evening, and a few days after Evelyn came to see a little play of mine which Martin Browne was playing in at a School of Religious Drama somewhere in Kensington. I suppose it was a few weeks later that I had my first letter from her.²⁹

A lively correspondence ensued, and by November, Evelyn paid a visit to Margaret in the latter's new home, called Far Park, in Westmorland:

[...] which Evelyn loved and where she paid me four most heart-warming visits, twice with Hubert, once with Lucy [Menzies], and once alone. We began very early to exchange works, I sending her religious plays, poems and sometimes prayers and she repaying me with much more important volumes, and pamphlets and bits of MSS to read [...]. Evelyn came to stay at Far Park for two days

²⁸ Margaret Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), p. 160.

²⁹ Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill*, p. 165.

in the middle of April just before her retreat at Water Millock, which we went on to together.

It was my first spring at Far Park and great fun to share with her the quantities of white violets on the little terrace, and the daffodils in the steep orchard. Up behind was the fell, and going slowly she would walk up and see the lovely Kentmere Hills to which we paid a nearer visit one day.

One evening I read to her what I had done of the Passion play, and found what depth of sympathy and understanding she had for anyone who was trying to write. She was quite critical and I altered a good many things because they grated on her. I think it was her first acquaintance with religious drama.

We exchanged a good many lovely things that we had collected, including prayers that she had thought worthy of a place in her copy of Bishop Andrewes, which was interlarded with things she loved.³⁰

Cropper would attend many of Underhill's subsequent retreats. Spurred, no doubt, by Evelyn's influence, Margaret wrote a five act play about a Catholic saint, *The Legend of St Christopher* (1932).³¹ As explained above, Evelyn heavily revised the Passion Play, *Christ Crucified*, that she would later praise so highly. Cropper dedicated *The Nativity with Angels* (1934) published by Oxford University Press, to Evelyn 'who has given so much to me, with my love'. Both plays feature many set speeches by angels, a new feature in her work. In *The Nativity with Angels*, for example, Gabriel speaks to Mary as she cradles the infant Christ:

Mary, this is the ending, and beginning
Of your obedience. This that you have done,
This deep abandonment to God in you,
Hath given Jesus to the expectant earth;
Such wonder dwells in your astonishment.
Let other souls marvel, and make surrender,
And, following in your way, bear Christ for men.³²

³⁰ Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill*, pp. 170–71.

³¹ Margaret Cropper, *The Legend of St Christopher. A Play in Five Scenes* (London: St Christopher Press, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932).

³² Margaret Cropper, *The Nativity with Angels* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 19.

It is likely that Margaret's turn to composing biographies of Anglican saints was inspired in part by how Evelyn and Lucy Menzies wrote so eloquently about medieval and Catholic mystics. Margaret wished to demonstrate how the Anglican tradition could give rise to spiritual men and women as well, from Nicholas Ferrar and Henry Vaughan in the seventeenth century, to William Law and Robert Nelson in the eighteenth century, and to Edward King and Christina Rossetti in the nineteenth century, and to many others.

After Evelyn sent to Margaret a draft of the chapter on Sacrifice for the book *Worship*, the two women corresponded about the meaning of sacrifice. 'Why', Evelyn wrote, 'does man think that God requires the death of the victim?'³³ Unfortunately we do not possess Margaret's letters to Evelyn; however, considering the degree to which Divine sacrifice formed a theme in her poetry, one expects that she would have provided an interesting response to Evelyn's query. In another letter Evelyn seems to allude to Margaret's Quaker background. Underhill mentioned that she 'got a new edition of the Sayings of St John of the Cross [...] how terse and deep and splendidly unpius his real voice was and how amazingly daring his spiritual declarations — a wonderful example of how to be a Quaker without being a Quaker, if you know what I mean'.³⁴

One of the most significant ways in which Cropper's friendship impacted Underhill was by the introduction of Reginald Somerset Ward, who would become Evelyn's spiritual director for the last nine years of her life. Late in 1932, Margaret urged Evelyn to see Ward and helped to arrange the meeting. Ward and Underhill got along immediately, as Evelyn wrote to Margaret:

I have had the most wonderful day with Mr Somerset Ward. I think he is the most remarkable soul specialist I've met since the Baron, and the thrilling thing is that though apparently so utterly unlike, their method of direction and point of view is very close. He certainly cleared my mind a lot, and concluded by delivering a rousing and fatherly lecture on the well known subject of over-strain. I felt it to have been a most profitable day, and am very grateful to him and to you.³⁵

³³ Letter from Underhill to Cropper, 3 October 1934. Evelyn Underhill, *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, ed. by Charles Williams (London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1944). p. 236.

³⁴ Letter from Underhill to Cropper, 16 October 1933. Underhill, *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 218.

³⁵ Underhill, *Letters*, ed. by Williams, p. 174.

A full analysis of Ward's influence on Underhill's thought remains to be written, but there is no doubt that he gave steady guidance during very trying periods in her life. Robyn Wrigley-Carr's study of Underhill's 'Flowered Notebook' provides invaluable insights into the importance of Ward's spiritual direction to Evelyn.³⁶ Evelyn recounted the details of Ward's assistance in these notebooks, and the advice that he gave to her on a variety of concerns. His suggestions for her were tempered by the gentleness toward ill health and excessive busyness that were hallmarks of his spiritual teachings. He emphasised that she needed to be wary of the 'sin of overwork' and had to indulge in enjoyable hobbies and fun on a regular basis.³⁷ Ward convinced Evelyn to take an entire year off from giving retreats in 1935, which allowed her to finish her book, *Worship*, and kept her from a physical breakdown.³⁸

Ward had been educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and served for a year at a Mission in the slum district of Walworth before he was ordained a deacon in 1904.³⁹ After discovering the works of St Teresa of Avila and Mother Julian of Norwich, he decided to dedicate himself to spiritual pursuits, and in 1909 he left the curacy of Barnsbury to take up the position of Secretary of the Sunday School Institute. It was at this time that he and Margaret first met, beginning a friendship that would last until his death in 1962. In 1915 he felt the call to devote himself completely to serving as a spiritual director and thus, with the support of Bishop Edward Talbot, moved to a house in Farncombe that he named 'Ravenscroft', after the ravens who fed Elijah. From there he 'exercised an itinerant and largely hidden ministry of spiritual guidance which had a deep significance for many Anglicans'.⁴⁰ Three times a year he travelled throughout the country, speaking in person with his directees, dispensing spiritual advice, and hearing confessions. The rest of his time was spent in Ravenscroft, where he carried on the work of spiritual direction through correspondence, and wrote two books on 'mystical religion', all the while adhering to a regular schedule of prayer and fulfilling his duties as a husband and father. His chapel in Ravenscroft was panelled with relief carvings of his favourite authors — Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, St Teresa of Avila, and St John of

³⁶ Robyn Wrigley-Carr, *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill* (London, SPCK, 2020), pp. 38–41.

³⁷ Wrigley-Carr, *Spiritual Formation*, pp. 38–41.

³⁸ Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill*, pp. 184–86.

³⁹ Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson and Rowan Williams, *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 585.

⁴⁰ Rowell, Stevenson and Williams, *Love's Redeeming Work*, p. 585.

the Cross.⁴¹ One imagines that Evelyn would have felt very much at home there during her visits.

Conclusion

For many years after her death, Cropper's biography of Evelyn was one of the few books available about this remarkable woman. In many ways, Underhill's full-length biography is similar to the shorter biographies that Cropper composed in her three books about Anglican saints. Writing with an ethnographic spirit, Margaret prioritised placing each saintly figure within the context of their particular culture and historical period. With the success of *Flame Touches Flame* and *Sparks Among the Stubble*, both of which were popular among the reading public and went through many re-printings, their London publisher, Longman, Green, and Co., was eager to publish *Evelyn Underhill*. The biography was well received; Gerard Meath, for example, praised it for having been 'written with great affection and frankness by one who knew her personally [... it helps] to solve the puzzle that [Underhill] will always be'.⁴²

The significance of Cropper's biography of Underhill was re-affirmed when it was republished as *The Life of Evelyn Underhill: An Intimate Portrait of the Groundbreaking Author of Mysticism* in 2003 with a new Forward by Dana Greene. Susie Sheldrake wrote that it 'offers a vital introduction to Underhill's writing and is a 'must-read''. This, despite the fact that Sheldrake castigated Cropper's analysis of Underhill as 'largely uncritical, hagiographical, and ignor[ing of] her personal struggles with scrupulosity, doubt, and with what today we would call depression'. Nonetheless, she continued, 'for the reader interested in the social and religious background to Underhill in the first part of the twentieth century, Cropper is a treasure trove [...] the book [...] provides a highly detailed and personal account of this remarkable woman and her idiosyncratic circle of friends and brings her world alive'.⁴³

Underhill possessed a great gift for friendships, and it is fortunate for us, her readers, that her fellowship with Cropper resulted in this invaluable biography. Gossipy at times, and replete with colourful details about Evelyn's friends, vacations, and cats, it nonetheless provides a balanced and full account of one of the most extraordinary spiritual writers of the

⁴¹ Reginald Somerset Ward, *His Life and Letters*, ed. by E. R. Morgan (Oxford, A. R. Mowbray, 1963), p. 27.

⁴² Gerard Meath, 'Review of Evelyn Underhill', *Life of the Spirit*, 13. 154 (April 1959), 476–78.

⁴³ Susie Sheldrake, 'Review of *The Life of Evelyn Underhill*', *Anglican Theological Review*, 86.2 (2004), 360–61.

twentieth century. Margaret's epithet for Christina Rossetti can be applied equally well to Evelyn: '[t]he lives of the saints are so various. There are some flung overseas [...] there are some whose lives are lived out in quite constricted circumstances. But we never get from them constricted powers or vision. The door at the end of the narrow passage opens on to Eternity.'⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Margaret Cropper, *Shining Lights* (London: Dartman, Longman, and Todd, 1963), p. 69.

Real Presence? Theological Reflection on Online Eucharists

What do we mean by ‘presence’ — ‘real’ or otherwise — in an online Eucharist? During the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on gathering together in person, the Scottish Episcopal Church produced many resources for its members, including an ongoing series of online Eucharists and a reflection on worship during lockdown by its College of Bishops. After more than a year of experience and engagement with online Eucharists, four Scottish Episcopal clergy, all in pastoral ministry, offer their theological reflections on online Eucharists: Revd Eleanor Charman, Revd Dr Alasdair Coles, Very Revd Kelvin Holdsworth and Revd Dr Stephen Mark Holmes.

ELEANOR CHARMAN

Priest-with-Charge, St John the Evangelist Church, Inverness

The reality of being confined to one’s home as part of the government-wide initiative to reduce transmission of COVID-19 through successive ‘lockdowns’ led many clergy to try to create some form of worship online. There was the dawning realisation that the age-old activity of ‘going to church’ on Sundays was not going to be the norm for some time, and perhaps would never be the same again.

Creating worship online could be compared to the proverbial rolling stone that gathers no moss. As church after church began to step out into this new virtual world of worship, the move to online worship gathered pace. New communication methods were rolled out, as corporations, charities, the public sector and churches tried out the various ways of keeping in touch. Social media became more important to reach out to others. Suddenly, churches were no longer confined to the four walls of their buildings in spreading the Good News of the Gospel.

Creating a service online required not only a steep learning curve to gain the knowledge required, but also the right hardware that would allow for the worship to take place, in a way that was meaningful to all the participants. Ultimately, online worship was dependent on the software used (Zoom) and the speed at which the service would reach all the participants (over Wi-Fi). However, putting the technological challenges to one side, although they have a bearing on the participation of those joining a service online, the question remains as to whether Christ is present in online Eucharists. However, if there is a query over the Real Presence of

Christ in online Eucharists, is there therefore a similar query as to Christ's presence in any online service? One does not want to appear fraudulent in producing worship online if Christ is not present. One does not want to lead people along a (virtual) path that does not have a true sense of worship. So, therefore, is the question about whether Christ is present in the bread and the wine of the Eucharist online, or is the question about the people's perception of Christ's presence in the service online? Anecdotally, my impression is that many faithful laypeople (who are in practice theologians, although they are not trained and might not accept the label) intuit the presence of Christ in online Eucharists, while many clergy are more hesitant to affirm it.

To reflect on the two questions above, one must first think about the participation required of the people through the Eucharist. The Anglican Benedictine scholar, Gregory Dix, argued that the entire Church should participate in the Eucharist.¹ He argued that particular phrases were used by the clergy and of the laity. For example, clergy '*doing*' or '*performing*' the Eucharist in comparison the laity who '*heard*' or '*attended*.' In other words, there is active participation from clergy while the laity are passive. Simon Jones writes 'in the Roman Catholic Church, encouragement of the laity to active participation in the Eucharist can be traced back to Prosper Guéranger (1805 to 1875) and Pius X (1835 to 1914)'.² Dix wrote that 'the ancients used all their active language about '*doing*' the liturgy quite indifferently of laity and clergy alike.'³ He then made the comparison that the deacon and the laity have different functions from the celebrant, but it is all in active worship. Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson likewise write of active participation but with an important addition — that of the reception of Communion.⁴ This is in reference to writings by Pope Pius X in which he refers to 'active participation in the most holy mysteries' and 'frequent communion'.

This then is where my reflection begins. Where the celebrant is the main worship leader and does all aspects of the service, one would expect a relatively passive congregation more used to *attending* and *hearing*, rather than participating. This applies not just to a church in a physical location with geographic coordinates but even more so to many of the services that were proffered over the internet in the first few months of lockdown. Some

¹ Gregory Dix, 'Shaping the Liturgy' in *The Sacramental Life: Gregory Dix and his Writings*, ed. by Simon Jones (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), p. 4.

² Simon Jones, in *Sacramental Life*, ed. by Jones, p. 4.

³ Dix, 'Shaping the Liturgy' in *Sacramental Life*, ed. by Jones, p. 5.

⁴ Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), p. 301.

of the questions asked of these services were whether they were truly participatory and whether what was being offered was a form of benediction, with spiritual communion, rather than the actual Eucharist.

Participation requires active involvement by members of the congregation.⁵ Where the celebrant involves the congregation as fully as he or she is able in the worship, then surely there is greater participation than otherwise. The people are actively involved, using their gifts in their worship of God. Of course, this is easier in a physical building than online. However, there is a danger here that one is blurring participation with togetherness. As lay people read or lead the intercessions or sing or play the organ, they are involved in bringing all the different parts of the worship together into a unified whole. Active involvement is required in order that a sense of group identity can develop, and with it, togetherness.⁶ The questions that follow then are: How should lay people be included in worship online that requires their active participation? Does the activity of gathering folk online create that sense of group identity that unites them in friendship and understanding (togetherness)?

In one church, Zoom provided the medium through which active participation in the services could take place. From the sustainability of these services, it is obvious that the sense of friendship and fellowship has deepened by being online and having had online fellowship. This is particularly important for those that are house bound. Services broadcast through social media such as Vimeo, Facebook and YouTube do not allow for the same type of participation, yet it is obvious from some of the comments left through those broadcasts there is some semblance of togetherness.

The question then posed is whether Christ is present when two or three are gathered online, in their homes, rather than in a physical space. We are reminded of Matthew 18.20: 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.' Why should gathering online be any different to gathering in the same physical space?

John 17.21–23 shows the trinitarian nature of God:

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

⁵ Cambridge Dictionary, '[Participation](#)' [accessed 06 September 2021].

⁶ Cambridge Dictionary, '[Togetherness](#)' [accessed 06 September 2021].

God is not limited by physical space or time and has the ability to share his trinitarian nature with all who wish to receive it. Simon Podmore writes, 'incarnational theology encompasses the notion that God is revealed in the material, the mundane, the everyday as well as in the sublime and transcendent which seems to point beyond what is immediate.'⁷ Thus, the essence of transcendence cannot be limited by human ignorance. We cannot assume that by being in different geographical localities and online that somehow, we are any less in God than we would be in the same physical space.

However, might the activity of coming together to worship online be different from selecting a time to watch the service broadcast online when it is convenient to oneself? Should there be a difference? Note, too, that 'attendance' has been replaced by 'watching.' Is it fair for anyone to make the assumption that one cannot 'attend' a service broadcast on social media but is in fact only 'watching'? Would one make a similar judgement on those sitting on pews, for instance?

If, Christ is present in every place and at all times regardless of where people are located in time and space and how they come together, then perhaps the question of the Real Presence of Christ in online Eucharists is more nuanced than many think. Therefore, are the questions that surround the Real Presence actually about the consecration in totality, or the epiclesis, or the distribution and reception thereof? If our worship is with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, regardless of our location in time and space, the totality of what may be happening can never be confined to our limited understanding.

Every time I celebrated the Eucharist online, my main prayer was that people attending would receive what they needed of God through the act of spiritual communion without hindrance by the technologies that we were using to participate together. On one hand, there is the uncomfortable sense that one individual celebrating does not a Eucharist make, yet on the other is the uncertainty that the consecration of the bread and wine is as meaningful over Wi-Fi as it is in a physical location. Therefore, have the Eucharists online been nothing more than adoration of the Blessed Sacrament?

Speaking with a Roman Catholic friend, the answer was straightforward with no 'ifs', or 'buts.' Without consecration, there is no Eucharist, and therefore no Real Presence. This is echoed by Bradbury and

⁷ Simon D. Podmore, 'Introduction', in *Christian Mysticism and Incarnational Theology: Between Transcendence and Immanence*, ed. by Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), p. 3.

Johnson in their evaluation of the eucharistic liturgies.⁸ Herman Sasse in his critique of Luther's eucharistic theology states that Luther did not veer from the Roman Catholic stance of Real Presence. However, neither did he nor the early Lutheran Church make a statement about the point in time when Real Presence begins and when it might cease.⁹ Sasse writes:

The rule that Luther, like Melanchthon and the Lutheran Confessions, followed was that there is no sacrament, and consequently no presence of the body and blood of Christ, 'apart from the use instituted by Christ' or 'apart from the action divinely instituted.'¹⁰

Sasse then discusses the distinction between eating and drinking (the reception of the sacrament) and the use or action of the sacrament. Does this inform how we see Eucharists online, and whether laypeople at home should or should not be consuming bread and wine as part of the service?

I mentioned earlier that many laypeople felt a Real Presence in online services. However, this was limited to Zoom services rather than those that could be accessed at their convenience. A couple of people noted in relation to services on Facebook that all they wished for was to be able listen to the hymns. One query that came back to haunt me as I provided services online was 'who is it for?' When I asked the online congregation whether they wished Service of the Word or the Eucharist, it was always the latter. Are we therefore missing the point? Gerald Sittser suggests that to zone in on one aspect of sacramentality is to miss the greater picture. Trying to understand the theology behind such an operation is to minimise the effect it has on our lives. He writes, 'the sacraments are a source of genuine spiritual life, and an objective means of grace.'¹¹

My reflection on the matter of Real Presence in online Eucharists has, as ever, raised more questions than I have answers. To my mind, it is not just a matter of Real Presence in the sacramental action of the consecration that matters, but also whether Christ is present throughout the service. If Christ is present throughout the service, regardless of its location in time and space, then surely there is Real Presence during the act of the eucharistic prayers.

⁸ Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, p. 242.

⁹ Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, p. 241.

¹⁰ Herman Sasse, 'This Is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament' (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), pp. 173–74, in Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, p. 242.

¹¹ Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), p. 144.

Otherwise, one is in danger of saying that Christ's presence stops at the point these prayers begin or indeed that Christ is not present at all in online worship. Both of which seem utterly absurd.

To my mind, the Church is now all the richer for being forced to adopt a means of reaching out to those who cannot or are unwilling to attend a physical service, in a manner that did not exist prior to the advent of COVID-19. The technological aspects in producing a service online are important as they would either frustrate or encourage a greater participation in the service. However, while a deep reflection of the theology of Real Presence is required, if people are not engaging with the online worship, then that would, in my opinion, inhibit the encounter of Christ's presence. The liturgical mystery through which we offer the Eucharist online is not something that can be solved. Rather, it is a grace filled encounter with the unseen God.

ALASDAIR COLES

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Somewhere in his unfinished novel *The Salmon of Doubt*, Douglas Adams reflects thus:

I've come up with a set of rules that describes our reactions to technologies:

1. Anything that is in the world when you're born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works.
2. Anything that's invented between when you're fifteen and thirty-five is new and exciting and revolutionary and you can probably get a career in it.
3. Anything invented after you're thirty-five is against the natural order of things.

A fuller exploration of the reality and validity of internet-mediated theological experiences was published in 2012 by A. K. M. Adam upon which my assumptions are based.¹² That technology is implicit to human activity and history seems certain, from woven fabrics to data-projectors, while being morally neutral itself. Every technology affords both profitable and

¹² A. K. M. Adam, '[The Question Concerning Technology and Religion](#)', *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* [accessed 2 September 2021].

pernicious use, and inevitably creates both unforeseen possibilities and consequences including, it would seem, global ecological disaster. Nevertheless, new communication technologies offer the Church many opportunities to explore creative avenues of ministry with courage and rigour, but also with caution.

Churches that embrace modern technology in all its splendour must give an account of, among other things, the less obvious ecological costs of consumer electronics, their dependence on fossil fuels and coerced labour, and what their mission might be to those outside the charmed circle of high-speed internet access. Likewise, congregations who reject certain technologies should have a cogent reason for doing so. Moral critiques might proceed concerning collusion with consumerist assumptions — like the myth of infinite economic growth — or uncritical acquiescence with the careerist ambitions of Douglas Adams's suggested second group above. Just because something is possible, it does not follow that it is beneficial, as an ancient teacher once observed.

Considerations like these and coherent Christian responses to them are directly relevant to what we think we are doing when we worship, particularly in the Eucharist, when we offer the fruits of the earth and work of human hands as the consummation of creation,¹³ as free as possible from the taint of fallen human nature with its repertoire of indulgence, selfishness, violence and injustice. To be authentic members of the Body of Christ is to be passionately concerned with both liturgical and ethical considerations; to suppose that Christ's presence sacralises communities or individuals who close their hearts and minds to them to suit their own ambitions is incoherent.

Theology or compliance?

The Scottish Episcopal Church's (SEC's) Doctrine Committee was invited to begin theological reflection on the Church's response to COVID-19 early this year. Predictably, they have raised some significant insights and questions in their resulting paper presented to the Faith and Order Board of General Synod in May 2021.¹⁴ Hopefully, that document will find wider circulation before long. It merits it. Some consideration of the viability of online sacramental activity was included in that paper, but I prefer to begin with a narrative approach to what happened after the onset of the lockdown conditions, from March 2020 onwards.

¹³ St Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus Haereses* III.18.5; IV.33.9.

¹⁴ Oliver O'Donovan, Trevor Hart and David Jasper, 'Theological Reflections on the Church and the Pandemic', for SEC's Faith and Order Board on behalf of the Doctrine Committee, 2021 (unpublished).

Local charges were quick to use the internet, many making use of access to church buildings, strangely denied for a time to clergy in the Church of England, in order to stream or record worship including the Eucharist. Other clergy joined our southern colleagues in streaming from various domestic locations, kitchens and studies being particularly favoured. The College of Bishops has also provided a weekly streamed Eucharist, as part of a Provincial resource, to increase the number of options for those wishing to participate.

In order to encourage a unified approach, an episcopal reflection with guidance for worship was posted early during lockdown, in which the College of Bishops steered participants towards 'spiritual communion', a 'spiritual sharing in the eucharist'.¹⁵ Participants were therefore requested not to use bread and wine at home when sharing in virtual worship. Similar guidance achieved little traction in some Anglican contexts.

Dana Delap candidly explained her initiative in *The Church Times* last year. Referring to her facilitation of a virtual Eucharist on Easter Day, she felt justified in promoting her own pastoral judgment, over that of her bishop, and encouraged her congregation to provide and consume their own elements at home.

I know that, in presiding, I have broken my promise of obedience to my bishop. I am sorry that I could not find a way to reconcile obedience with what seemed to me a deep need among my congregation.¹⁶

The probability that no sympathy for this situation existed within the SEC seems remote, which may explain why the College of Bishops' guidance on the issue was couched as a brief request without theological explanation. However, the episcopal responsibility of maintaining coherence in the celebration of the sacraments has clearly exercised some English bishops to the point of exasperation. The Bishop of Ely referred not only to his own see but to the actions of other dioceses, whose approach at times exhibited not so much a light touch as a significant distancing from canon law.

My observation would be that teaching on the sacraments is generally woeful across the Church in whatever tradition [...] During these last months, only canon law has protected us from

¹⁵ 'College of Bishops reflection on worship during lockdown', 27 March 2020 [accessed 14 July 2021].

¹⁶ Dana Delap, 'How we shared the bread and wine on Zoom', *Church Times*, 17 April 2020 [accessed 14 July 2021].

ordinations outside the Eucharist and still protects us from allowing our doctrine to be changed by the introduction of individual communion cups. Poor teaching about concomitance has done us real harm. Thankfully, it is canon law which has helped us to re-assert that the Person of Christ cannot be divided.¹⁷

Denominational variations

The significant doctrinal controversies for some churches on the issue of virtual communion inspired Sarah Johnson to choose an anthropological approach when surveying activities of a range of Canadian denominations during Holy Week last year.¹⁸ She found various strengths and weaknesses in the initiatives of those churches that practised online communion, and those that did not. As might be expected, there was a clear difference in the quality and ingenuity of worship offered by churches with prior experience of the necessary technology. Churches lacking that, yet possessing greater resources, utilised professional help to good effect. These factors were often significant in securing the sense of connection that participants experienced, with great relief, as evidenced in online feedback.

Johnson also touches on the themes discussed by Merete Thomassen: the differences between ‘online church’ and ‘church online’ were already becoming fluid in 2020, as many churches explored multiple ways to connect with their isolated members and, as it were, increase their ‘bandwidth’.¹⁹ However, underneath these movements, a range of theological understandings of Holy Communion remains clearly discernible.

The majority of the churches attended by Johnson practised the form of virtual communion discouraged by our College of Bishops, where the worship leader was remote from participants, who chose their own elements and ate and drank in (mostly) their own homes, utilising the internet’s audiovisual connectivity. Interestingly, one such leader, holding only a Bible, showed no sign of using physical elements for Communion while encouraging others to eat and drink. The spiritual understanding evidenced by those leading these acts of worship focused tightly on two things: the commemorative aspect of the Eucharist, of ‘what Christ has done

¹⁷ Stephen Conway, ‘Only Connect’, *All Things Lawful and Honest*, 2020 [accessed 7 July 2021].

¹⁸ Sarah Kathleen Johnson, ‘Online Communion, Christian Community, and Receptive Ecumenism: A Holy Week Ethnography during COVID-19’, *Studia Liturgica*, 50.2 (2020), 180–210.

¹⁹ Merete Thomassen, ‘@Coronaworship: Material and Digital Liturgies’, *Scottish Episcopal Institute Journal*, 4.2 (2020), 85–97.

for us',²⁰ and the connection or sense of togetherness shared by participants with one another. Only two denominations encountered by Johnson did not encourage and facilitate this form of Communion: the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. The latter had declared a eucharistic fast until such time as 'everyone' could gather once more in church,²¹ while the Vatican ruled out the possibility of sacramental participation through the internet in 2002.²² Both these denominations had encouraged similar forms of spiritual communion, exemplified by the prayer attributed to St Alphonsus Liguori, which was also encouraged within the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. In their guidance, the SEC's College of Bishops suggested a number of prayers reflecting a similar, intentional approach to spiritual communion consistent with that of St Alphonsus.²³ Most other Anglican provinces, including the Church of England, determined to steer a similar course through the pandemic. But not all.

In March 2020, an early stage of the pandemic, the then Archbishop of Sydney, Glenn Davies, wrote to his clergy inviting them to practise virtual communion. He admitted that it was a sensitive matter of doctrine and ecclesiology, over which he had consulted the other bishops of the Province of New South Wales; he had been met with some pastoral understanding for his intentions but less than unanimous agreement.²⁴ Davies justified his stance with some theological reflection rooted in the strongly reformed hegemony of his diocese; this indicates something of the breadth of approaches to sacramental theology evident within our own Communion. More locally, similar variations to these are present in the local churches of St Andrews, with most church authorities sanctioning 'virtual' communion, apart from the Roman Catholic, United Free Church and Scottish Episcopal Church.

A simple analysis would therefore be that some find virtual communion viable, while others do not, just as some find the use of modern

²⁰ Johnson, 'Online Communion', p 197.

²¹ What this argument says concerning the membership of housebound people used to receiving Communion by extension at home is not explained.

²² Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 'The Church and Internet', 22 February 2002 [accessed 26 August 2021].

²³ 'College of Bishops reflection on worship during lockdown', 27 March 2020 [accessed 14 July 2021].

²⁴ Glenn Davies, 'Letter to Clergy', 31 March 2020, pp. 1–2, cited in Brian Douglas, "'Virtual" Eucharists in a Time of COVID-19 Pandemic: Biblical, Theological and Constitutional Perspectives', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 18 (2020), 130.

technology in worship distasteful, and others stimulating. I suspect there will be a correlation between the form of sacramental theology held by a community or denomination and its discernment of the viability of virtual communion, but Johnson's survey helps little in this regard because of the exclusion of any doctrinal considerations beyond that implied by denominational labels.

Sharing more than bread and wine

Apart from appealing to those harbouring a distaste for Christian doctrine, there are advantages to Johnson's deliberate restraint on the inclusion of theological considerations: it fostered a generous respect of the integrity of differently disciplined and constituted Christian bodies, and helped her identify the degree of pastoral, liturgical and technological inventiveness that had been deployed. This, in turn, she claims, provides a foundation for different churches to learn from each other about issues of best practice. That would seem to be the case. Nevertheless, the avoidance of theological content smacks of artificiality and renders the basis of generosity less than secure: the underlying understandings of the entities 'Eucharist', 'Communion', 'Real' and 'Presence' were disparate and allusive.

Perhaps the article could even be read as a form of wine-tasting exercise (albeit mostly with fruit juice) where the actual elements celebrated are the resourcing and ingenuity of particular church leaders and their consequent emotional impact on remote participants. While this approach — the analysis of Christian worship as a sociological and anthropological phenomenon — is certainly a valid one, it does not assist us much in understanding the realities, or unrealities, of virtual Eucharists. Some might even wonder if, without an integral treatment of theological content, the locus of the Eucharist as the nexus of immanent and transcendent experiences of the divine would seem to have withered to the joining of the immanent and the virtual.

Substrata and doctrine

Stephen Conway's pessimism regarding the Anglican grasp of sacramental theology has been noted. However, years prior to his consecration, Christopher Cocksworth suggested that, empirically at least, there can be no Anglican theology for the Eucharist because of the different inspirations held by church parties with their particular interests, frequently charged with historical baggage, and cadences of mutual exclusivity, if not contempt.²⁵ Perhaps surprisingly, the House of Bishops of the Church of England

²⁵ Christopher Cocksworth, 'Eucharistic Theology', in *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, ed. by Kenneth Stevenson and Bryan Spinks, 1991, p. 49.

presented a far more unified voice in the occasional paper, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity*, in 2001, but this was itself a response to the Roman Catholic Bishops Conferences of England & Wales, Ireland and Scotland's paper, *One Bread One Body*, published in 1998, and therefore presents matters in a favourable light for that dialogue: somewhat economically. Privately dissenting voices within the House of Bishops are not hard to find in the years since then, as with the unnamed bishop, who jovially impressed upon me his view that 'It's just bread. Get over it!'

Interestingly, a huge survey of Anglican thought concerning the Eucharist has been attempted by the Australian priest and academic, Brian Douglas.²⁶ Rather than steering for the vast oceans of polemics, fluid terminology and complex historical contexts, Douglas uses insights from the modern philosopher David Armstrong to analyse the underlying assumptions about the nature of reality, particularly Armstrong's re-articulation of the relationship between universals and particulars. Without attention to historical context, this approach inevitably ends up working as a blunt instrument, yet it does permit a clearer view of the integrity of different perspectives, begins to explain them more objectively, and assigns privilege to neither.

Douglas's copious case studies suggest that the vast majority of Anglican sacramental theologians have been 'moderate realists' or 'moderate nominalists'. He asserts that realists discern a real identity between the eucharistic elements and the actual person of Jesus Christ in his sacrificial works. Realists therefore experience eucharistic symbols as vehicles, or instances, of what is signified. An 'immoderate realist' would contend that an *exact* identity existed between the signified and signifier: that the eucharistic bread was the actual flesh of Christ. Douglas identifies none of these among Anglican writers whereas 'moderate realists' abound from as wide a range of sources as Richard Hooker, the *Aberdeen Doctors*, and Rowan Williams.

By contrast, a nominalist would not recognise the potential of a symbol to instantiate that which is signified, since their underlying basis for perception assumes that no real connection between similar but essentially different things actually exists. The link is merely a nominal one, a convenient linguistic and textual device for organising human thought. An

²⁶ Brian Douglas, *A Companion to Anglican Eucharistic Theology*, I: *The Reformation to the 19th Century*; and II: *The 20th Century to the Present*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011 and 2012).

‘immoderate’ nominalist — and these are very rare within Anglicanism²⁷ — would deny even this, arguing that no presence of Christ occurs in the particulars of the Eucharist at all. This stance seeks to empty sacramentality of any meaning and instead asserts that Christ can be known solely through the words of Scripture. However, the majority of nominalists do hold a sacramental basis of the Eucharist in which the symbolic elements remain significant and necessary material aids to an act of commemoration. Nevertheless, for a firm nominalist, it is incoherent to assert that Christ is in any real way present in the eucharistic elements since he is elsewhere: in heaven or the heart of the believer. Dynamic, anamnestic, remembrance in the Eucharist is also rejected, which can therefore have no sacrificial sense apart from being an occasion for the offering of thanks and praise.

Patterns and coherence

The most ardent of Anglican sacramental realists would, of course, include the memorialist basis as a part of his or her account. Others, while emphasising the commemorative approach, also admit the realist aspect of sacramental instrumentality, albeit with lesser weight. However, a correlation between these different underlying assumptions and the sanction of virtual communion does seem to exist. Those denominations holding a more nominalist view of the Eucharist are far more likely to have sanctioned virtual communion than those holding realist assumptions, since a bare memorialist approach of sharing ‘a meal in memory of a certain man’ tends to see the eucharistic elements as merely symbolic reminders and, furthermore, of far less significance within the life of faith than the reading of Scripture.²⁸ With nominalist assumptions, producing and consuming such symbols in one’s own home while commemorating the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, as part of an act of worship with others via the internet, is a less significant matter — and presents far fewer difficulties, if any — than the corresponding proposal with realist assumptions.

We might question, however, to what extent this virtual activity can be claimed to be a corporate act, since the participants are not actually located in the same place. Has an important line already been crossed? Even before noting some of the difficulties inherent in the notion of a virtual Eucharist

²⁷ Douglas cites Robert Doyle and Broughton Knox. There may be many others who hold this view but do not write about sacramental theology; apart from polemics, why would they?

²⁸ Peter Jensen, ‘Come to the Supper of the Lord’s table to share a meal’, A sermon preached at the Sydney Law Service in St James Anglican Church, Sydney, 29 January 2002, cited in Douglas, *Companion to Anglican Eucharistic Theology*, II.409–11.

from a realist perspective, Douglas raises the question of the scriptural basis for the Eucharist and its understanding in the Anglican tradition.²⁹ That Jesus took the bread and the cup, gave thanks over them, and distributed them to his disciples is agreed by all four biblical accounts.³⁰ Eucharistic worship has always set out to imitate those actions but, as well as the question of whether a virtual gathering constitutes a corporate act of the body of Christ, the enterprise runs into further difficulties with virtual celebrations.

Precisely what bread is being taken, and by whom, and how is it being distributed among the assembled faithful? Elements in people's homes are clearly not the same elements as those being used by the presiding minister whose words, recited in a remote place, now take on an imbalanced significance. Against such qualms Glenn Davies argues that:

We must not fall into the erroneous mindset of thinking that consecration of the elements is only valid for us if we are physically present to consume them, as if there were magic in the hands of the minister.³¹

Yet this assertion, aimed at preventing a 'magical' misinterpretation, surely merely displaces that suspicion from the manual acts, vital aspects of the consecration from the earliest Books of Common Prayer, and places it firmly on the minister's words. Others might wonder, with Douglas, if consecration through the internet smacks of magic more fundamentally than Davies is able to admit, as he permits solely holy words and firmly rejects holy things and holy people.³²

Similar objections are raised in David Jasper's powerful contribution to 'Theological Reflections on the Church and the Pandemic'. He focuses on the implicitly bodily and gathered character of the Eucharist, and of sacramental instrumentality in general. In what sense, he asks, can a meal really be 'shared' virtually? Watching another eating different food on a screen is, because of the absence of common awareness of ambience and aroma, not in reality sharing a meal at all. While recognising the positive potential for technology to relieve loneliness and isolation, he wonders whether proposing the extension of this affordance into the sacramental realm is inherently reductionist, bearing overtones of Docetism: presenting

²⁹ Douglas, "'Virtual' Eucharists in a Time of COVID-19 Pandemic', p. 135.

³⁰ Matthew 26.20–29; Mark 14.17–25; Luke 22.14–20; 1 Corinthians 11.23–26.

³¹ Davies, 'Holy Communion in a Coronavirus World', pp. 1–2.

³² Douglas, "'Virtual' Eucharists in a Time of COVID-19 Pandemic', p. 132.

‘a Christ who is only seemingly one with us in our humanity’ to a “virtual” simulacrum of the material community’. He suggests that, from the sacramental perspective, this activity degrades the sacrament, rendering it a simulation in the ‘desert of the real itself’.³³

If we imagine that there is sacramental presence somehow realised in the surreality of the internet, we are in grave danger of denying the reality and necessary substance of the very being that the Saviour took upon himself and in doing so, came to us for our salvation.³⁴

Conclusion

With such diverse understandings of the Eucharist and, I fear, a great deal of ignorance on sacramental theology within our own Communion, it is hard to answer the prior parts of the question suggested for discussion: those words ‘presence’ and ‘real’ tend to trigger party responses that are not always accurate descriptors of actual belief. However, the nominalist–memorialist approach to the eucharistic elements, assigning them the status of mere symbols, would seem to allow a more liberal approach to online Eucharists since the whole enterprise would seem to be of less significance than logocentric worship. Whether that act is properly consistent with foundation of Scripture itself, and whether rubrical authority of authorised forms of worship are really being followed, seem far less clear. This, I would suggest, raises serious impediments to the claim that these acts are eucharistic in essence.

Related though it is, David Jasper’s argument is different from this, relying on assumptions of sacramentality that would not be shared by some Anglicans even though they are well rooted within our tradition, not least in the SEC. However, working from the embodied nature of human personhood rooted in the incarnation, he asserts that a virtual ‘gathering’ is, in fundamental ways, incompatible with the nature of communal worship, particularly in relation to the sacraments. This initially struck me as an unnecessarily bleak argument, but I now find it more persuasive in the light of my own congregation’s fairly pessimistic response to online worship, including Eucharists, in some far better resourced churches than our own. They were grateful for the provision as it was better than nothing, but not by much.

³³ Jean Baudrillard, ‘Simulacra and Simulations,’ in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 166–84 (p. 166).

³⁴ Jasper, ‘Theological Reflections’, pp. 10–11.

The good news is that, with approaches like those of Douglas, there is a way of beginning to understand the integrity of different approaches to sacramentality without quite so much risk of polemics. However, for that in turn to be possible, Christians — lay, ordained and consecrated — would need to recognise the poor levels of awareness and mutual discernment that currently exist, and to view Christian theology as something other than a divisive inconvenience to the pragmatism of the passing moment.

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Christianity is an endlessly mutating theological virus. It is passed on from person to person, from group to group, from age to age. The symptoms of the Christianity Virus can be perceived either positively or negatively by the host organism which it may inhabit at any one time. On the one hand, the Virus may be recognised by the conspicuous presence of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. Conversely, symptoms of dogmatism, hatred, anger, self-righteous indignation, and certainty may present themselves. Confusingly, both positive and negative symptoms may be found to be present within the same individual or group.

No vaccine has ever been found that completely suppresses the Christianity Virus. The consequence of its ability to mutate has ensured a lasting presence within the host population. Many mutations of the Christianity Virus have developed without the host population being aware of the nature of the changes in the Virus. However, at times of great change, more significant mutations emerge which are often accompanied by years of frenzied debate which sometimes spills into violence.

One of the most intriguing characteristics of the Christianity Virus is that although the host population seems to group itself in ways which seem to reflect different mutations of the Virus, these groups (whether churches or theological movements in more general terms) do not map completely, exclusively, or neatly onto groups or individuals who are infected by individual mutations.

This paper will consider several issues arising out of the March-2020-Online-Worship Mutation of the Christianity Virus which appeared suddenly and unexpectedly all over the world around 16 March 2020. Within weeks, this variation of the Christianity Virus was widespread and pervasive.

The particular question which presents itself at this time is whether the Real Presence Spike Characteristic that has been observed in previous

mutations of the Virus is present in the current mutation and whether that presence, if it exists, should be welcomed as life-enhancing or be suppressed.

The emergence of online worship within the worldwide Church was surprising and extraordinary. Clergy and lay leaders of the Church were suddenly unable to gather in physical spaces. Simultaneously many were also experiencing personal lockdown situations for the first time. Christians found their usual activities restricted in ways which might have been unimaginable only days previously.

Clergy and lay leaders demonstrated a frantic, urgent determination not only to preach the Gospel in the circumstances in which they found themselves but also began experimenting with what the whole concept of church meant in a situation where the Church could not physically gather. However, the question soon arose — what was actually happening in online services, particularly in services of Holy Communion?

Online worship developed in a time of chaos. It is not surprising therefore that many different forms of online worship emerged. Several distinctive forms of online worship appeared which might have a bearing on whether the doctrine of the Real Presence can be said to have any connection with the actions of the Church online. Two distinctions in particular are worth considering in the context of a discussion of the theology of the Real Presence. Firstly, the question of asynchronous forms of online worship (typically pre-recorded communion services) in which those participating watch at different times, as opposed to synchronous forms of worship (typically a livestreamed/Zoom service) in which those participating all watch at the time as the action is taking place. Secondly, the question of whether those participating in online worship should make a 'spiritual communion' by praying a prayer at the point in the service where bread and wine would normally be consumed as opposed to services in which people are encouraged to have their own bread and wine and consume it at that point at home. These categories are, of course, porous. It is possible for a livestreamed communion to be posted online and become a pre-recorded service, and it is possible for a service to have participation both from those who find a prayer of spiritual communion satisfying and complete and those who would wish to eat the bread and drink the wine for themselves. Some people might even receive bread and wine at home when they had been explicitly told not to do so.

Interesting questions relating to the Real Presence arise from each of these variations of online worship.

There are undoubtedly some Christians who struggle with the idea of a pre-recorded Eucharist which is being watched by participants at different times. This reservation seems curious in a church in which receiving Communion from the reserved sacrament was so common prior to the pandemic. Notwithstanding this, an objection is commonly put that it cannot really be Communion as the Church has previously understood it, if the congregation are not joined together in either space or time.

However, the Church has always sat rather lightly to the space-time continuum. Before the pandemic how many Eucharists were being celebrated on a Sunday? Was it one Eucharist per church, or was each celebration merely part of one cosmic celebration presided over by Christ the great high priest? And where were the participants for those services? Were they really scattered and separated across Scotland or were they conceptually gathered together somewhere else — an upper room in Jerusalem or perhaps the banqueting table of heaven where all are welcomed, and none are denied? A great many Maundy Thursday sermons have been devoted to convincing congregations that when they gather at the table, they are not in fact gathered in St Agatha's, Auchtertochy, as may seem to them to be the case, but are in fact meeting with Christ and his disciples in a borrowed room.

Livestreaming a Eucharist does not necessarily resolve matters either. Are online participants who are watching online at home actually part of the congregation, or are they observers of the congregation? Most such celebrations seem to involve simply placing a camera at the back of a church to observe a celebrant who consistently addresses only those in the room.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of online worship to develop was the practice of some Christians of preparing bread and wine to be consumed at home whilst participating in an online offering of worship. This development happened quickly and did not pass without notice.

The College of Bishops made an attempt to suppress this practice within days of online worship beginning at the start of the pandemic. Their statement of 27 March 2020 very clearly indicates disapproval of bread and wine being consumed at home, offering prayers of spiritual communion instead.

It is perhaps worth noting that no purer example of 'virtual communion' could be found than the practice of praying a prayer of spiritual communion. For some people this seems to have been a satisfactory thing to do whilst for others it has offered nothing.

The 27 March 2020 statement was an unusually heavy-handed attempt by the College of Bishops to regulate the spirituality of lay Christians worshipping at home. Although some individual bishops attempted to

present the advice subsequently as merely guidance, it was received by some as a 'Thou Shalt Not...' form of commandment, from on high.

How much more fruitful it might have been if the College had instead provided rubrics for those sharing bread and wine at home. For example, prepare the bread and the wine before the service; ensure you have time to participate in the service fully and without distractions; light a candle or do something else that will help you to remember you are in a sacred space; if it is your practice to make the sign of the cross when you are at worship at the absolution, epiclesis etc., then continue to do so whilst participating in an online service; pray aloud with those who are praying in the service; and consume any bread and wine that has not been eaten during the service immediately after the service is finished.

The different beliefs of Christians in connection with the doctrine of the Real Presence can sometimes be seen more clearly in what they say needs to happen to bread and wine that has not been consumed during the service than in the words said over the elements during worship at the table. Is such bread and wine to be discarded, put back in the packet or bottle, 'reverently disposed of', returned to the elements, or consumed? Each answer to this question gives indications of the theological presumptions behind it.

Some in our church, including this author, believe that it can be appropriate for bread and wine to be consumed at home as part of an online service of worship. Furthermore, there are those of us, including this author, who believe that if God is capable of transfiguring/transubstantiating/transforming the bread and wine that end up in people's hands in church, then God is more than clever enough to manage to do this with the bread and wine that end up in people's hands at home.

Words have never been capable of capturing what the doctrine of the Real Presence actually means. They skirt about it. They are, by their very nature, inadequate to the task.

It is God who makes the Real Presence real.

With regards to all our worship, whether online or in person, it is surely God who provides the sacrament. The Church is the provider of the rubrics.

There may also be theological positions which lean towards recognising the Real Presence in this way but do not fully articulate it. What would it have meant if the College of Bishops had asked those people who were consuming bread and wine during an online service to remember the Eucharists that they formerly experienced in their churches whilst they were doing so? We have *anamnesis* as a central concept in the Scottish Liturgy 1982. Might that idea of present remembrance have been more dignified than simply forbidding a practice that was, at the very least,

bringing grace to some who were, in the first days of lockdown, isolated, lonely and distressed?

Online worship, of course, is not only related to lockdown. It has opened the life of the Church to some who find buildings difficult. The voices of able-bodied bishops have been promoted loudly by the Scottish Episcopal Church in relation to this question; the voices of those who are disabled by physical buildings, much less so.

If it is possible for the Church to gather online, then a catholic sensibility would suggest that the sacraments must necessarily be present. Without the sacraments, it is not the Church at all. As ever, we may be physically able to see outward signs, but we are physically unable to see inward grace.

The Eucharist has famously been celebrated in an abundance of settings — for prince and pauper, in times of war and in times of peace etc. Is it not inconceivable that God would withhold a blessing from those participating in the supper of the Lamb as devoutly, faithfully, and as reverently as they are able to manage, in any circumstance, including the first days of lockdown?

There is only One Table, One Celebrant, One Lord, One Church and One Sacrament, after all.

It remains too early to tell how the mutations of the Christianity Virus of 2020 will affect its host organisms in the long term.

Pandemics result in changes in human behaviour. Whilst seen as almost exclusively negative at a pandemic's peak, a pandemic may also lead to extraordinary developments, previously unseen and unimagined. Without the scientific understanding of cholera, human beings would not have developed modern sewerage systems. Without the black death, serfdom might never have been overcome in parts of the world where it has ceased. Human misery has so often been the crucible for great art.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that positive and novel theological developments might occur within the Christian faith as a result of the current pandemic. It is not unreasonable for religious people to presume that even in the midst of a pandemic, God is still at work and will continue to make all things new. Indeed, for those who are infected by any mutation of the Christianity Virus, that conception of the divine work is not merely an option or opinion. All that Christians have ever taught would indicate that God is fully present in the world during a pandemic and that the sacramental life of the Church will never be extinguished by circumstance.

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The coronavirus pandemic caused the government and devolved administrations to impose lockdowns which resulted in the closing of churches in the UK, effectively outlawing attendance at the Eucharist and reception of the sacrament. Done for good public health reasons, this was a situation previously only imposed by repressive regimes, but the presence of the internet meant that clergy and congregations were able to respond in creative ways to maintain their worshipping life. A key factor for the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) was that the Eucharist is central to our worship, in some congregations it may be the only act of worship.³⁵ After briefly outlining my own experience, I will consider some of the theological questions it raised from an Episcopalian perspective but in an ecumenical context. The central question concerns the difference between the Eucharist celebrated by a group gathered in one place, and one where the congregation are separated (or united) by the internet.

Experience of Eucharist in lockdown

At my church, Holy Cross, Davidson's Mains, Edinburgh, I was instituted as Rector on 18 February 2020 and public worship was suspended by the College of Bishops on 17 March just before the national lockdown on 23 March. I continued to celebrate the Eucharist alone and with my family, first at an altar in the Rectory and then in the church. The main challenge was how to hold the congregation together and help them to continue to worship in isolation. The first act was to collect email addresses and send out a weekly email newsletter with helps to prayer at home and the assurance that the Eucharist was being celebrated at the usual times for the intentions of the congregation. To help us pray together I started making a video of the Sunday Eucharist, recorded in the church on the previous Thursday, which was published on a new YouTube channel and a new Facebook page each Sunday morning. We also started celebrating Evening Prayer together on Zoom on Thursday evenings. Use of the technology involved a steep learning curve but by the time I ceased making the videos, just before Holy Week 2021, they had become quite sophisticated, including music and readings by members of the congregation.

³⁵ Canon 22.6 of the Code of Canons of the Scottish Episcopal Church requires that, 'in every congregation the Holy Communion shall be celebrated, when in the opinion of the Bishop it is reasonably practicable, at least on every Lord's Day, on the Great Festivals, and on Ash Wednesday'.

These actions were reactions to a crisis and were clearly ‘second best’: all of us would have preferred to worship together in church on a Sunday. They raise a number of theological questions, some of which I discussed on my blog [Amalarius](#), and also reveal things about the congregation as all of this was done in conversation with them and the Vestry. While a few watched the national SEC Eucharist video or videos, Zoom celebrations and live-feeds from other churches, the vast majority wanted to see the sacrament celebrated in the sacred space of their church. The one online service that has continued is Evening Prayer on Zoom, where we are visibly present to each other on screen, pray together and share prayer intentions in real time. In my mind we are really present to each other and sharing prayer in the same way as if we were in church. It has the advantage that a group of six or seven from all over the city can pray together without travelling — without Zoom the service wouldn’t happen. On the other hand one can be physically present at a service in a church with others but not present at all in mind. For me, Zoom Evening Prayer allows a way of being present for prayer as a group but it raises the question, is the Eucharist different?

I mention my experience as it was the basis for the theological reflection below, but I am aware that SEC congregations varied in their response to the lockdown and encountered the Eucharist online in different ways enabling different forms of personal ‘presence’ at the celebration. A pre-recorded video is distant in time but present in image. At Holy Cross we recommended that people watch it at the time the same Eucharist (at least in terms of texts) was being celebrated in church. A live stream is better at getting beyond this temporal disconnect (which messes with the priest’s sense of time) and enables presence in time and image but not in space or direct participation. Using a platform like Zoom adds to the presence in time and image an expression of presence in participation, for example by speaking or singing. What is missing from all these modes of engagement is physical presence in space, but the visual presence is also electronically mediated via a screen, and in some modes the participants are present to each other in time. What is the theological value of these different types of celebration of the Eucharist, particularly if people consume bread and wine at their screens?

Ecumenical theology and the online Eucharist

Theology is ‘faith seeking understanding’. The theological task of understanding, for an Episcopalian, involves both our personal faith, our adherence to Christ, and the Catholic faith as received by the SEC. There is, however, some confusion about the latter. An encouraging message from the College of Bishops at the start of the first lockdown noted that ‘a wide range

of views can be found in our churches' and spoke of 'a wonderful diversity in what this pattern of [eucharistic] worship means in our lives as Christians'.³⁶ This is true, but it is not the whole truth. In our Liturgy and Canons we are clear that the SEC is a part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and our doctrine must thus be that of the Catholic Church.³⁷ While the reformations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had a profound historical influence on the SEC, it does not, unlike the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland, reference them in its self-definition and the College of Bishops repudiated the term 'Protestant' as part of the name of our church in 1838.³⁸ It is thus important to ensure that this discussion relates to the Episcopalian context, and comparison with other denominations can help here.

The doctrine of the SEC is not, however, static because Catholic doctrine develops over time. We can see this, for example, in teaching on the Holy Trinity, the Eucharist and Marriage. Usually, reflection on Scripture and experience leads to debate and argument which is followed by the acceptance or rejection of the development by an authoritative assembly of the Church such as a Synod or Council. Online Eucharists are certainly a new phenomenon, which includes celebration of the Eucharist in virtual worlds such as Second Life and the practice, brought to the fore during the lockdowns, of a minister in one place consecrating the bread and wine in another place through electronic mediation. Are these practices indicative of a development in doctrine or can they be fully understood, and either accepted or rejected, in traditional theological and sacramental categories?

Before considering this question, we need to ask: what is the Eucharist? It is following the command of Jesus to 'do this in memory of me' when he took bread and wine, blessed them while saying words over them, and gave them to his disciples. We can immediately see the problem. It is not just a matter of words; physical things are handed over. One could imagine Jesus and the Apostles praying together on Zoom, but one cannot imagine this physical handing over online without a Star Trek-type transporter where the bread and cup are converted to an energy pattern and transported to another location. Stories of bilocation in the lives of the saints suggest this is not impossible in the Christian thought-world, but we are left with the question of whether the spatial and physical presence has any value in itself.

³⁶ 'College of Bishops reflection on worship during lockdown', 27 March 2020.

³⁷ This is found in the Nicene Creed and Canon 1.

³⁸ Church of Scotland, Articles Declaratory, Article 1. Frederick Goldie, *A Short History of the Episcopal Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh: St Andrew's Press, 1976), p. 85.

Some people did indeed put bread and wine by their screen and consumed it at the moment of Communion online, although this was discouraged by the College of Bishops.³⁹ One way of understanding the theological issues raised by this practice is by asking what happens to the bread and wine during the Eucharistic Prayer. This is easy for a Scottish Episcopalian to answer at one level as we pray to the Father that by the power of the Holy Spirit ‘they may be the Body and Blood of your Son’.⁴⁰ This follows on from the clear words of Jesus in the institution narrative, ‘this is my Body/Blood’, and it is more explicit than the equivalent formulas in the Roman Catholic and Church of England Eucharistic rites which say ‘may be *for us*’, which can be understood in a receptionist way detaching the presence of the body and blood of Christ somewhat from the elements. Obviously, Christ is present ‘for us’, not just for his own pleasure, and equally obviously Roman Catholic teaching excludes receptionism, but the SEC formula makes it very clear that the bread and wine actually become in some mysterious way the body and blood of Christ. The SEC has a very ‘strong’ belief in the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. This is the grounds for the ancient Episcopalian custom of reserving the Blessed Sacrament for Communion of those who are unable to be present at the Eucharist and it is also accompanied by a long-standing Anglican reticence about trying to explain the way that Christ is present, hence a traditional Anglican hostility to transubstantiation.⁴¹ It is important to note here that this is the clear teaching of the SEC as found in our Liturgy. In the context of the present day, there may be a ‘wonderful diversity’ of views among individual Episcopalians but if one of these views does not accord with this strong belief in the Real Presence it is not Episcopalian. Our teaching is clearly put by Bishop Forbes of Brechin:

The Holy Church throughout the world and in every age, has with one voice declared in the words of S. Justin Martyr, that the bread of the Eucharist is the flesh of the Incarnate Jesus. With S. Cyril it

³⁹ ‘College of Bishops reflection on worship during lockdown’, 27 March 2020.

⁴⁰ 1982 Liturgy, epiclesis.

⁴¹ Stephen Mark Holmes, “‘Out of their Reasonless Rationalls’”: Liturgical Interpretation in the Scottish Reformations’ in *Scotland's Long Reformation — New Perspectives on Scottish Religion, c. 1500–1660*, ed. by John McCallum (*St Andrews Studies in Reformation History*; Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), pp. 112–48 (p. 141).

challenges the world, when Christ has said, 'This is my Body', to dare to say, 'This is not his Body!'⁴²

Having established that Episcopalians are committed to sacramental realism, it is important not to caricature the Reformed or Calvinist view of the Eucharist as being just consuming bread and wine (or substitutes) while thinking of Jesus. This is because not only has ecumenical eucharistic theology developed in recent years, but the Reformed tradition is clear that the bread and wine are 'not naked signs' but really convey the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ.⁴³ The Reformed view of the sacrament, however, detaches the reality of the sacrament from the physical elements in a distinctive way. This 'spiritualisation' can be seen as involving a devaluing of matter, Calvin even suggests that the physical things in the sacraments are just a concession to fallen human weakness.⁴⁴ One could go further and argue that it is an implicit rejection of the Incarnation, in the words of the poet Edwin Muir, 'the Word made flesh here is made word again'.⁴⁵ In this intellectualist theology it is easy to say, as the Church of Scotland and United Reformed Church have done, that we can authentically share Communion by consuming bread and wine in front of our computer screen detached in matter and place from other Christians.⁴⁶ The Church of Scotland even suggests that Baptism may be administered remotely with a minister on screen blessing the water and saying the baptismal formula (the 'form' of the sacrament in traditional theology) while someone else pours the water (the

⁴² A. P. Forbes, *A Primary Charge delivered to the Clergy of his Diocese at the Annual Synod of 1857*, 3rd edn, with some further additions (London: Joseph Master, 1858), p. 2.

⁴³ *Scots Confession 1560 and Negative Confession, 1581*, ed. by G. D. Henderson (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 1937), pp. 84–85, Article 21; *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994), 118, Chapter 29.7.

⁴⁴ Calvinist suspicion of matter is discussed, in a Scottish context, in Stephen Mark Holmes, *Sacred Signs in Reformation Scotland: Interpreting Worship, 1488–1590* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 167–69.

⁴⁵ In his poem, 'The Incarnate One'.

⁴⁶ The positions of these two Churches are found here: Church of Scotland Theological Forum, '[Reflections on Online Communion](#)'; and '[Virtual Communion in the URC?](#)' Given the Anglican origins of Methodism, it is significant that UK Methodists have been more reticent, prohibiting the practice in the 2018 Conference and opening a three-year discernment period in 2021.

‘matter’ of the sacrament).⁴⁷ From a Catholic position this is not possible as, while anyone can baptise someone and the water does not need to be blessed, this separation of the ‘matter’ and ‘form’ of the sacrament drives a wedge into the heart of the sacrament such as to suggest that it is not a true Baptism. The URC position paper makes this ‘spiritualisation’ clear:

What about the theology? A positive point comes from Calvin, that communion brings earthly people into the presence of the heavenly Christ[...] if the Spirit can do this for us with Jesus, the Spirit can surely unite us with one another in a virtual sharing of this sacrament.⁴⁸

It is worth setting this discussion in an ecumenical perspective, but in the Catholic tradition to which the SEC belongs such views are more difficult to conceive. One should, however, note that many of those who successfully challenged the Scottish Government on its prohibition of public worship were from the Reformed tradition. Presbyterian emphasis on celebrating the Lord’s Supper only in the gathered congregation, as shown in their historic opposition to private Masses and to bringing Holy Communion to the sick, together with the emphasis on the gathered congregation in the Westminster Confession may explain this emphasis on physical gathering among traditional Presbyterians.⁴⁹ In his opinion, Lord Braid said that:

The essence of the petitioners’ case is that an integral part of Christianity is the physical gathering together of Christians for prayer, proclamation of the gospel, the celebration of communion and the administration of the sacrament of baptism. The essential physical element of these aspects of their faith is absent from virtual, internet events.⁵⁰

This raises the question of how the concept of ‘place’ (the localisation of physical presence) fits into sacramental theology.

⁴⁷ See ‘Reflections on Online Communion’.

⁴⁸ ‘Virtual Communion in the URC’, paragraph 7.

⁴⁹ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 117, Chapter 29.3, the bread and wine set apart are to be given to ‘none who are not then present in the congregation’. For the petition and list of petitioners, look [here](#).

⁵⁰ [Opinion of Lord Braid in the cause Reverend Dr William J U Philip and others, Petitioners, for Judicial Review of the closure of places of worship in Scotland](#), paragraph 5.

To those formed in the Catholic tradition there is often an instinctive feeling that it is not right to consume bread and wine by your laptop which has not been consecrated in the place of the eucharistic celebration. This is connected to the knowledge that a validly ordained priest is required for a celebration of the Eucharist.⁵¹ Lord Braid's opinion, responding to the Roman Catholic petitioner's argument, adds an argument from sacred space, although it is strange that this omits the main reason Catholics wish to pray in church which is the Real Presence of Jesus in the sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle:

Church buildings have a particular significance within Catholicism (which is why praying at home is not equivalent to praying in a church). A consecrated church building is considered to be a sacred space. The sacramental grace cannot be received from a video-recorded or video-streamed service.⁵²

In Catholic theology grace may be received by the human person in many ways but sacramental grace only from a sacrament and the sacraments are bounded by the will of Christ revealed in their institution. The rest of this article will consider some reasons for and against the feeling that 'remote consecration' is not right based on three comments by friends on this topic.

'Every Mass is virtual'

The Lutheran theologian Deanna A. Thompson, reflecting on her experience of illness and quoting Jason Byassee, has argued that 'the Body of Christ has always been a virtual body'.⁵³ Is this true? A Eucharist is not just a group of Christians gathering to share bread and wine, pray and read the Scriptures because it participates in the worship of heaven 'with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven'. The Scottish Episcopalian tradition is also very clear that the Eucharist is a sacrifice and a participation in the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross which is offered in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8–10). This is affirmed by authors with diverse views

⁵¹ For this teaching in an Anglican context see Nicholas H. Taylor, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist? An Anglican Approach* (London: Mowbray, 2009).

⁵² 'Opinion of Lord Braid', paragraph 60.

⁵³ Deanna A. Thompson, 'Christ is Really Present Virtually: A Proposal for Virtual Communion', St. Olaf College, 26 March 2020. Cf. Kelvin Holdsworth, 'Every Eucharist is a Virtual Eucharist', *What's in Kelvin's Head*, 5 August 2020.

on eucharistic theology such as Alexander Jolly and A. P. Forbes.⁵⁴ A Eucharist is thus not confined by place, but is it virtual. 'Virtual', however, means 'made to appear to exist by the use of computer software, for example on the internet'.⁵⁵ This is not true of the Eucharist whereby the power of the Holy Spirit we, though in this world of change and shadows, are enabled to participate in what is most real, worship in heaven. In the examples given in the definition, though, a 'virtual classroom', a 'virtual tour of the museum', the virtual environments actually do exist as they are places of encounter for those who enter them even if they are not physical spaces.

The Oxford English Dictionary derives 'virtual' from the Latin '*virtualis, virtus*' with the latter meaning 'virtue', but 'virtus' can also mean 'power' and as one enters the heavenly world by the power of the Holy Spirit one might say, stretching definitions somewhat, that the Mass is 'virtual'.⁵⁶ Part of the most ancient eucharistic prayers can help here:

In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: command that these gifts be borne by the hands of your holy angel to your altar on high in the sight of your divine majesty, so that all of us, who through this participation at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of your son may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing.⁵⁷

The significant thing about this prayer is that the angelic mediation links the heavenly altar with the earthly altar. It is not a visionary ascent to the heavenly Temple, as one finds in Scripture and the lives of the saints, but physical offerings in a physical place are a means of accessing the grace and blessing of heaven which is only analogously a 'place'. The outward signs of the Eucharist convey an inward and spiritual grace. As these outward signs are inescapably physical and grace is real, the Mass is thus not in any meaningful sense 'virtual'.

Some have, however, challenged the definition of 'virtual' as not real, as only appearing to exist. The Baptist theologian Paul S. Fiddes argued for the validity of sacraments celebrated in the virtual world 'Second Life', but

⁵⁴ Alexander Jolly, *The Christian Sacrifice in the Eucharist; Considered as It Is the Doctrine of Holy Scripture, Embraced by the Universal Church of the First and Purest Times, by the Church of England, and by the Episcopal Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh: R. Grant, 1847). Forbes, *Primary Charge*, pp. 40–41, 51.

⁵⁵ 'Virtual'.

⁵⁶ '*Virtus*' is used in the sense of 'power' to translate the Greek '*dunamis*' in the Vulgate Latin version of 1 Corinthians 1.24.

⁵⁷ The prayer '*Supplices te rogamus*' in the Roman Canon.

this was refuted by the Anglican liturgist Bosco Peters using arguments that are relevant to online Eucharists in lockdown:

A sacrament requires particular 'matter'. Baptism uses water, Eucharist uses bread and wine. We cannot pour a jar of jelly-beans over someone and say they are baptised. We cannot consecrate a bicycle and say this is the Eucharist. Such sacramental theology is also clear on whom we might confer the sacrament. We cannot baptise a pram. We cannot give communion to a letterbox.⁵⁸

Peters does, however, suggest that this form of virtual communion may be possible in Baptist theology but not in Catholic theology:

There is within Christianity a minority position that regards sacraments as primarily something happening in one's mind, or metaphorical heart. This position holds that the bread and wine are reminders to the faithful person receiving them. Fiddes, an ordained Baptist minister, is faithful to [this view] [...] in his sacramental ideas about an individual receiving grace by being mentally involved in a computer simulation.⁵⁹

It has been nearly seventy-five years since the first televised Mass took place, a Midnight Mass broadcast from Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral at Christmas in 1948.⁶⁰ Peters noted that there had been many discussions about whether bread and wine, placed before a television screen, would be consecrated by a priest presiding at a service being televised and the general conclusion had been negative. The only way that online Eucharists go beyond live TV is that the viewer can take a more active part. Does this more active 'presence' without being 'physically present' change the situation? It all depends on the importance of physical presence.

In an interesting reflection on online Communion in the Baptist tradition, Steve Holmes makes a distinction between 'physical' and 'somatic' (i.e. bodily) presence and argues that online Eucharists do involve physical presence as 'signals in fibre optic cables and electromagnetic waves are physical realities; our shared presence together in an online — virtual —

⁵⁸ Bosco Peters, '[Virtual Eucharist](#)', *Liturgy: Spiritual Places for a Digital World*, 28 June 2009; Paul Fiddes's article is found [here](#).

⁵⁹ Peters, 'Virtual Eucharist'.

⁶⁰ [The Validity of the Virtual Mass is Questioned](#), 6 May 2020.

meeting is therefore a mediated physical presence'.⁶¹ This is, however, unconvincing because the key word here is 'mediated', there is a physical mediation but not a physical presence which is the same as a 'somatic' presence. Holmes goes on to suggest that a Eucharist that required somatic action such as touching all the elements or shaking hands with all at the peace could not be done online. He says he does not know of such a eucharistic practice but Anglicans should immediately recognise that this somatic action is precisely required by the 'manual acts' in the Book of Common Prayer: 'Here the Presbyter is to take the paten in his hands [...] to lay his hands upon all the bread [...] to lay his hands upon every vessel [...] in which there is any wine to be consecrated'.⁶² This is not explicitly required in modern Anglican liturgies and the common Western tradition is that an intention to consecrate while holding some of the bread and one chalice is sufficient, but it does show that Anglican eucharistic theology works on different principles than Reformed eucharistic theology. There can be no consecration through the screen at a Prayer Book Eucharist and, as the Prayer Book is an essential part of our heritage, the presumption is that this is still the case.

'You can't have an online food bank'

The second comment means that if you cannot be fed food online, you cannot be fed sacramentally by Holy Communion online. In the Eucharist, as in a food bank, the essential action is being given food. The Eucharist, like feeding those in need, requires physical presence, cannot be done at a distance and demands touch in one form or another. This has a clear link to Jesus's ministry. In commenting on Jesus healing the leper by touch (Matthew 8.1–4), Thomas Aquinas reflects on the importance of touch for Jesus, human relationships, and the sacrament:

He touched in order to show his humanity [...] he touched him in order to manifest the doctrine concerning the power in the sacraments; because both touch (*tactus*) and words are required, for when the word is joined to the element, the sacrament comes to be.⁶³

⁶¹ Steve R Holmes, 'Can we celebrate an online Eucharist? A Baptist response 2: some possible objections', *Shored Fragments*, 2 April 2020.

⁶² *The Scottish Book of Common Prayer* (Edinburgh: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 'The Scottish Liturgy', 338.

⁶³ Commentary on Matthew 8/1; the final phrase is from Augustine '*accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*', *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 80.3.

The sacraments are tactile things using bread, wine, water and touch, even in the case of marriage which in traditional scholastic theology of the seven sacraments has the vows of the couple as its theological 'matter', the physical consummation is a part of the sacrament even if not required for validity.⁶⁴ Like sharing food, the intimate communion of sexual intercourse may be compared to the bodily sharing of Holy Communion. Sex already has many online manifestations, with varying degrees of viewer participation, and while it may seem irreverent to compare them to online Eucharists there are certain similarities, not least that all are related to an act involving physical personal presence, even if some people may come to prefer a virtual presence. Pornography may thus provide an analogy which helps us to understand online Eucharists.

Thinking of the artificiality of online Eucharists one may also relate them to trends in modern society emphasising the importance of the natural, the local and the authentic, and to a tension between localism and globalism. Against the background of the climate crisis, a simple sacramental act with minimal energy use, drawing people from the local area and sanctifying the fruits of the earth as means of grace seems more authentic than accessing the sacrament by means of an electronic device.

The 'distance' involved in an online Eucharist may not necessarily harm the planet or take on the character of the fantasy involved in pornography, but a recent examination of online Eucharists by Matthew Schmitz has associated them with spiritual consumerism and selfishness.⁶⁵ This is a hard thing to say but serious theology can take us to difficult places. This section is not to be taken as a criticism of those, including the writer, who have been helped by the Eucharist online, but as a warning of the dangers involved and a call to self-examination for those swift to bring bread and wine to the screen. To do so is not as unproblematic as one might think. Schmitz argues that:

No one has a right to the Eucharist [...] our desire for the sacrament does not mean it ought to be available to us [...] grace is not a consumer commodity, like a Big Mac, or something peculiar to the individual, but a gift that is both underserved and only given in and constitutive of real community in a real way [...] the question is not, ought not the Body of Christ be available to

⁶⁴ In traditional Roman Catholic theology consummation is required for indissolubility.

⁶⁵ Mark Schmitz, 'An Argument for the Recovery of Ocular Reception Derailed or Why Digital Phantasms Cannot Confect the Eucharist', [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#), *Earth and Altar*, 8 and 9 May 2021.

me, but ought not I be available to the Body in the way the Body (the Church) has been instructed and constructed to both give and receive it?⁶⁶

In the light of the different theologies outlined above, this critique of a sense of entitlement might have different implications in a Baptist or Reformed context or in a Catholic and Anglican context where a priest is required for the celebration of the Eucharist. When considering various forms of mediation Schmitz concludes that a 'virtual presence will always be a real absence; the chief virtue of that absence may be to create in us a yearning for the Presence, and direct us to seek it where it may really be found'. Thus, an online Eucharist does not give us access to the Eucharist, but it sparks a desire for it which may be met in spiritual communion. Schmitz's argument contrasts what we have received from Christ with the desire for instant gratification that is common in our consumer culture.

It is appropriate here to compare our limited lockdowns which provoked these questions with the plight of the 'hidden Christians' in Japan who, after the final expulsion of priests in the mid-seventeenth century, continued to practise their faith and maintain the orthodox practice of lay baptism for over two centuries without clergy or the Eucharist until they met newly-arrived French priests in 1865. They could have had lay-led celebrations of the Eucharist with local food and drink but, recognising that these would not actually be the Mass, they accepted the deprivation and maintained their desire down the generations until it could be authentically satisfied. Watching a Eucharist online can be an acknowledgement of eucharistic 'famine' or 'deprivation'; but against the example of the Japanese 'hidden Christians', eating one's own bread and wine in front of the screen can appear a manifestation of the desire for instant personal gratification. Perhaps the Scottish Bishops were right, in their March 2020 'reflection on worship during lockdown', to encourage spiritual communion and discourage consuming bread and wine by our screens.

'Second best is sometimes the best'

In Episcopalian tradition John MacLachlan of Appin is said to have celebrated Holy Communion for fellow members of the Jacobite army on the eve of the battle of Culloden using oatcakes and whisky, as he had no bread and wine.⁶⁷ In some Anglican Provinces elements other than bread and wine

⁶⁶ Schmitz, 'An Argument for the Recovery of Ocular Reception Derailed'.

⁶⁷ *Scottish Liturgical Traditions and Jacobite Politics: From Reformers to Jacobites, 1540–1764*, ed. by Allan I. Macinnes, Patricia Barton and Kieran German (Edinburgh: EUP, 2021), p. 14.

are used for Holy Communion as either alcohol is forbidden by the government, individuals are not able to safely consume bread or wine, or bread and wine are too expensive as they have to be imported.⁶⁸ If we take seriously the shape of the sacrament as we have received it (cf. 1 Corinthians 11.23–26) we might be constrained by necessity to modify the matter used (or we might accept the deprivation in faith), but to change the matter to suit our preferences is only possible where the physical and material things and gestures are seen as optional, as in this rubric to a Baptist online communion service: ‘Please find some bread and wine (or whatever you prefer) before you play this video’.⁶⁹ I say this not to criticise a practice that may be in harmony with Baptist eucharistic theology but to point out that Episcopalian theology is different. Even in a denomination that has embraced online communion such as the URC there is a recognition that it is ‘a reasonable interim measure [...] it will both remind us of times when we could share at the Lord’s table and point forward to times when we shall do so again’.⁷⁰

Having argued that remote consecration is neither possible nor desirable in Catholic and Anglican theology, I must also affirm that online Eucharists filled an important role during lockdown in supporting the faithful. It was a ‘second best’ that fulfilled a real need. That most of us didn’t transmit Mattins or Morning Prayer suggests that online Eucharists were what ‘worked’, or it might be that, unlike our Evangelical colleagues, we are so ‘eucharistised’ that we cannot conceive of prioritising another service. It may be that this is only a problem because of Pope Pius X and the Anglican parish communion movement, which put frequent communion at the heart of Christian spirituality. Infrequent Communion was a Roman Catholic as well as an Anglican and a Protestant tradition, and these twentieth-century developments made the Eucharist the main Sunday service for Anglicans. For Episcopalians this was a radical change: in 1900 of the 65 charges of the diocese of Edinburgh only two had the Eucharist as their main Sunday service and by 1995 of the 56 charges in the diocese only four did not have the Eucharist as their main Sunday service.⁷¹ The lockdown may challenge us to develop other services besides the Eucharist.

⁶⁸ Eucharistic Food and Drink: A report of the Inter-Anglican Liturgical Commission to the Anglican Consultative Council (2005).

⁶⁹ Communion video from the South West Baptist Association.

⁷⁰ ‘Virtual Communion in the URC?’, paragraph 8.

⁷¹ Edward Luscombe, *The Scottish Episcopal Church in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: General Synod Office, 1996), p. 100. The two in 1900 were Anglo-Catholic St Michael’s, Hill Square and St Columba-by-the-Castle and the four in 1995 were the Evangelical St Paul’s & St George’s, St Thomas’s, St Mungo’s and Emmanuel.

Some have argued that modern technology creates a wholly new situation that justifies a development of doctrine or practice. Diana Butler-Bass has said that, while the one-way medium of television does not assist sharing in the Eucharist, the internet with the possibility of real-time communication has ‘extraordinary capacity to create community, to connect people’ and thus allows consecration through the screen while accepting priests are still necessary for the Eucharist.⁷² This does not, however, answer the argument that this electronic mediation overthrows the nature of a sacrament, because the priest and the elements, and thus the congregation are not physically present to each other. There are traditional responses to the inability to be present at the Eucharist. One is bringing Communion to those who cannot be present, where the physical link remains through the elements themselves, but this was not possible in deepest lockdown. Another is spiritual communion, mentioned above, which is rooted in Augustine’s distinction between the inner reality (*res*) of the sacrament and its sacramental signs (*sacramentum*) and was developed by Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas and others in an age of infrequent Communion.⁷³ It is presented as a normal practice for Episcopalians in a mid-twentieth century booklet:

If you are unable to get to a church for the Holy Eucharist and for your Communion, go apart with your Prayer Book and think of yourself as still a member of the congregation in which you usually worship, even though separated by distance. Follow the service, as though you were actually there, until you come to the Communion. Then say prayers of preparation, as if you were going to receive the Holy Sacrament. After that, ask our Lord in your own words to come into your soul in a Spiritual Communion. Make your customary thanksgiving afterwards.⁷⁴

Together with the inescapably physical and communal-somatic nature of the Eucharist, the fact that this practice already gives access to the reality of the sacrament is given by the Anglican theologian Christopher Brittan as one of

⁷² Religion News Service interview, 15 May 2020, ‘[Online Communion should be celebrated, not shunned, says Diana Butler Bass](#)’.

⁷³ Jonathan Jong, ‘[On Receiving Spiritual Communion](#)’.

⁷⁴ Douglas Lockhart, *St Columba’s Companion to the Scottish Liturgy* ([n. p.: n. pub.], 2nd edn 1953), p. 39.

the reasons online communion is not acceptable at the end of a review of the various reasons justifying virtual communion.⁷⁵

This reflection on coping with what is second best can also validly ask, 'for whom?' In some ways an online Eucharist is not inclusive, you need the time, space, and equipment to access it and access to the technology will determine who has access to the sacraments. It can, however, also be seen as inclusive. I recently heard of a physically disabled person who can't get to church saying she had never felt so much part of the community as when all joined together online for the Eucharist, and she lost that when most members of her church returned to the building.⁷⁶ Something has been gained through lockdown but far more has been lost.

Conclusions

Diana Butler Bass claimed of online Eucharists that 'what is happening right now is really challenging our understanding of the nature of time and space'.⁷⁷ The arguments above suggest that this is not true. The resources of our traditional theology are adequate to cope with the restrictions of lockdown, Holy Communion may not authentically be administered through the internet, and there has been a yearning to get back to natural modes of presence, place, and human contact in real time. We all did our best in difficult circumstances, as Japanese Christians did in the seventeenth century during a far greater crisis for the Church, but responses in our crisis do reveal some possible spiritual and theological weaknesses. The analogies with pornography warn against allowing online Eucharists to foster an individualised, commodified religion of private consumption, the 'auto-erotisme' of created religious experience without commitment which Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger famously used in 1997 to describe some Western appropriations of Buddhist meditation.⁷⁸ The charge of spiritual consumerism and selfishness certainly deserves to be taken seriously: by what right do we demand the sacrament even at the cost of distorting its essential nature?

Online Eucharists clearly did fulfil a need, ours reached many more people than are usually present in church, and they confirmed the importance of online presence for mission, but if they were second best,

⁷⁵ Christopher Craig Brittain, 'On virtual communion: A tract for these COVID-19 Times (Part II)' *Anglican Journal*, 25 May 2020.

⁷⁶ See also Deanna A. Thompson, 'Christ is Really Present Virtually: A Proposal for Virtual Communion'.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Brittain 'On virtual communion'.

⁷⁸ Fabrice Blée, 'Le Dialogue Chretien-Bouddhiste: Dimension prophétique du dialogue interreligieux monastique', note 35.

what was their value? The key question here is, what is the Eucharist? Reformed theology seems much more hospitable than Catholic theology to sharing the bread and wine through the screen, probably because material things like these elements are less important or at least held at a greater distance from the spiritual realities they signify. Catholic theology, to which the liturgy of the SEC commits us, is more local and physical, allowing a genuine participation in spiritual realities by mediation through place and matter. This mediation also requires the presence of an ordained priest who provides a link in time and space with the Body of Christ into which we are incorporated by Baptism. The Anglican or Catholic Eucharist and the Presbyterian or Baptist Eucharist are in some respects different things, even though they are both genuine responses to the command of Christ.

What then is the value of an online Eucharist? At a Eucharist broadcast from St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, the Vice Provost gave a blessing to camera with the consecrated host, a sign of inclusion to viewers which recalled the devotional practice of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. 'Ocular communion' was a way of receiving the benefits of the sacrament by looking at it, which is associated with the development of the practices of elevation and benediction of the sacrament in the Middle Ages at a time of infrequent reception. Mark Schmitz and Jonathan Jong both looked at the theology of this practice as a way of understanding the value of online Eucharists and both found it inadequate except as a prompt to spiritual communion, as Schmitz concluded:

While a digital image of a consecrated host is impossible to receive in any real way, it may prompt us to make an act of spiritual communion, which is lovely and edifying and, best of all: real. But the image can only ever be a prompt to seek the Presence elsewhere than in itself, because in itself there is no 'there' there.⁷⁹

This is perhaps the best argument for online Eucharists. Like an icon they direct desire towards the prototype but unlike an icon the fleeting nature of the material manifestation of the image does not itself function as a locus of sanctity. As we emerge from the pandemic there will probably be more online access to worship, to the benefit of the inclusion of those unable to be physically present, but this will combine with the ancient practice of bringing the sacrament to the housebound. Online eucharists do not enable remote consecration or cause a development of doctrine, they are simply an

⁷⁹ Schmitz, 'An Argument for the Recovery of Ocular Reception Derailed', 2; Jong, 'On Receiving Spiritual Communion'.

encouragement to spiritual communion and a help as we wait in hope for Jesus in the sacrament.

To *Filioque* or Not to *Filioque*: The Warrant of Holy Scripture¹

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The ‘*filioque* controversy’ is about 1500 years old. Despite herculean attempts over the same span of years, it remains unresolved. The roots of the controversy lie in interpretations and translations of the ‘Nicene Creed’ from its original Greek into Latin. No one has ever sought to change the Greek text of the Creed. That text was adopted by the First Council of Constantinople in 381 and later affirmed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.² But by the fifth century, the Latin version of a part of the Creed, specifically τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, which we would expect to see translated as ‘who proceeds from the Father’, appeared in parts of Spain as *qui ex Patre Filioque procedit*, ‘who proceeds from the Father and the Son’. This translation — perhaps it is better to say ‘interpretation’ or ‘rendition’ — spread somewhat unassumingly,³ most likely to buttress belief in the divinity of Christ against strains of Arianism and to echo a widely held Augustinian trinitarianism, with roots in at least the fourth century.⁴

By the sixth century, the Creed in the Greek of the East and in the Latin of the West, including the *filioque*, bedded into their respective Eucharistic liturgies. By the late eighth century, the East became increasingly aware of the *filioque* and took umbrage at it.⁵ The issue of the *filioque*, though overshadowed by the larger issue of iconoclasm, arose at the Synod of

¹ This article is, with emendations, the text of the Sixth Annual Scottish Episcopal Institute Lecture at the [The Memorial Chapel of the University of Glasgow](#) on Thursday 28 October 2021. The Lecture is recorded [here](#). Since 2015, the Scottish Episcopal Institute has offered an Annual Lecture at one of the four ancient Scottish universities (St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh).

² The Creed takes its name from a shorter version from the First Council of Nicaea in 325. For more, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd edn (Hoboken: Routledge, 1972).

³ The *filioque* was affirmed at the Third Council of Toledo (589) and again at the Fourth Council of Toledo (633).

⁴ See A. Edward Sicienski, *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 51–58.

⁵ Sicienski, *Filioque*, pp. 68–70.

Gentilly (767), and ‘the first spark of a fire was kindled’,⁶ a fire that still burns today. Yet the *filioque* controversy was and is today *not* about the f-word per se, but about a fundamentally different understanding of the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit between East and West.

I shall make no attempt to recount the history of the controversy, as tempting as that is with its theological subtleties, political intrigues and vicious invectives. I shall also make no attempt to define the surfeit of terms (Greek, Latin etc.) used and abused in the *filioque* controversy, other than to say that the choppy waters of diverse definitions of words such as ὑπόστασις and οὐσία, or *essentia* and *persona*, among the early theologians of East and West, not to mention contemporary theologians, are almost unnavigable. It is recorded that a Byzantine theologian at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438 to 1439), as he listened to Latins using philosophical categories to make a point about the *filioque*, stood up and exclaimed: ‘Why Aristotle, Aristotle is no good [...]. What is good? St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Basil, Gregory the Theologian, Chrysostom — not Aristotle, Aristotle!’⁷ Imagine that: Greeks telling Latins not to defer to Aristotle!

In his *Melody of Theology*, the late Orthodox historian of theology, Jaroslav Pelikan, opens the section under ‘*filioque*’ thus:

If there is a special circle of the inferno described by Dante reserved for historians of theology, the principal homework assigned to that subdivision of hell for at least the first several eons of eternity may well be the thorough study of all the treatises — in Latin, Greek, Church Slavonic, and various modern languages — devoted to the inquiry: Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father only, as Eastern Christendom contends, or from both the Father and the Son (*ex Patre Filioque*), as the Latin Church teaches?⁸

I shall take care to maintain a distinction between the term *filioque* and the doctrine it denotes because the doctrinal divide between East and West on the procession of the Spirit remains with us. As the late Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky, said fifty years ago, ‘whether we like it or not, the question

⁶ Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians: The Trinitarian Controversy* (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1975), p. 43.

⁷ As quoted in Siecienski, *Filioque*, p. 279, n. 20.

⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary* (1988; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), p. 90.

of the procession of the Holy Spirit has been the sole dogmatic grounds for the separation of East and West'.⁹

By the ninth century, indeed, a formal separation, a schism, was in the air as the East and West considered their positions, for by then the Frankish custom of chanting the Creed in Latin with the *filioque* had reached Jerusalem and the flames of controversy were fanned. Pope Leo III, who had crowned Charlemagne emperor on Christmas Day 800, without approval from Constantinople, was, it may be said, diplomatic in his solution. Leo held, on the one hand, that the *filioque*, theologically speaking, was entirely orthodox, and by *filioque* he meant the doctrine, to the point that he would say, 'it is forbidden not to believe such a great mystery of faith'.¹⁰ Yet, on the other hand, he opposed the use of the term *filioque* in Latin versions of the Creed; in fact, he forbade it. Leo had two silver shields engraved with the Creed in Greek and Latin, without the *filioque*, hung at (Old) St Peter's Basilica.¹¹ I say 'diplomatic' insofar as Leo tried to forestall a schism by conceding something to one side and something to the other side, and that, *mutatis mutandis*, the same solution has been proffered by several Western Christians, particularly Anglicans and the World Council of Churches in twentieth and twenty-first century ecumenical discussions around the *filioque* controversy.

Alas, Leo's diplomacy did not work in the ninth century. Still, his solution extends to his acknowledgment that there was dissonance in the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit in the, up to then, undivided Church of God that need not be emphasised in any way, lest it cause division, especially with the already contentious term *filioque*. Now, in the East, Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, took a position, in a sort of reverse interpolation to the one the West had been accused of making with the *filioque* to the effect that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father *alone*. That may seem at first blush a sound conclusion from the Creed, but it was by no means the consensus of Eastern theologians then, never mind Eastern and Western theologians today. In order to emphasise the doctrine of procession solely from the Father, Photius suggested that it would be good to think of τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς as τὸ ἐκ μόνου τοῦ Πατρὸς, putting his own spin — namely 'the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone' rather than 'the Spirit proceeds from the Father' — on the same few words in Greek. It must be highlighted, however, that Photius never suggested changing the wording of the Creed itself. Interestingly, Photius's understanding of the doctrine

⁹ Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, trans. by T. E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), p. 71.

¹⁰ See Siecienski, *Filioque*, p. 252, n. 79.

¹¹ See Siecienski, *Filioque*, pp. 96–98.

gained ground in the East just as the so-called Athanasian Creed, the *Quicumque vult* — better called the Pseudo-Athanasian Creed, as Athanasius was already a few centuries dead — was coming into its own. To wit, ‘The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding’.¹²

By the eleventh century, political intrigues around the imperial government particularly after the Crusaders’ barbarous behaviour in the East and other religious issues (like leavened bread at the Eucharist) notwithstanding, we find the East (in the person of Patriarch Michael Cerularius of Constantinople) and the West (in the person of Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida) hurling insults and anathemas at one another until Humbert laid a bull of excommunication on the altar of Hagia Sophia against Michael just as the Divine Liturgy was to begin, and then fled the jurisdiction. On 16 July 1054 the fire burned brightly. But the kindling for that fire was not the term *filioque*. The kindling was what East and West believed after centuries of theological speculation about the Holy Trinity and the procession of the Holy Spirit therein. Furthermore, it was about the *warrants* for their beliefs, that is on what bases do we agree a doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit? In other words, you can take the term *filioque* out of the Latin translation of the Creed (and for that matter from the English), but you cannot take the doctrine of the *filioque* out of the (Western) deposit of faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 11.2; Colossians 2.8).

There are two noteworthy points from the fifth century that mark the importance of the *filioque* controversy.¹³ First, it is simply not so that the East and West believe the same thing about the procession of the Holy Spirit, but express it in different ways, as is oft said of late. The so-called Vincentian Canon is noteworthy insofar as the undivided Church of God has never settled the issue of the relations between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Vincent of Lerins reminds us that a test of a truth is whether it has been believed everywhere, always and by all. Although the Greek text of the Creed is settled, its interpretation and its translation have been diverse since at least the fifth

¹² *Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio: non factus, nec creatus, nec genitus, sed procedens*. For more, see Martin Davie, *The Athanasian Creed* (London: The Latimer Trust, 2019).

¹³ Note that not all think it important. For example, it is ‘hair-splitting theology’ according to C. F. D. Moule, *The Holy Spirit* (1978; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), p. 47. Or, ‘distinctions which are tautologous and lacking in content’ according to G. W. H. Lampe, ‘The Essence of Christianity — IV: A Personal View’, *The Expository Times*, 87.5 (1976), 132–37 (p. 135) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/001452467608700502>>.

century,¹⁴ which makes any claim to ‘always, everywhere and by all’ dubious. Actually, largely following St Augustine, ‘by the late sixth century the *filioque* achieved a level of acceptance in the West bordering on unanimity’,¹⁵ but it was not so in the East. Second, we ought to pray as we believe and believe as we pray. The rule or law of prayer and belief, associated with Prosper of Aquitaine, is that the Church prays as the Church believes, and the Church believes as the Church prays.¹⁶ So, if the Creeds in Greek and in Latin (*filioque* included) became constitutive elements of the Eucharistic liturgies in both East and West, and if those Creeds continued to be used for a millennium and a half in their respective Churches, whilst their theologians debated fiercely over the doctrine of the *filioque*, as in the Councils of Lyon (1274) and Ferrara-Florence (in 1438 to 1439), and debated without agreement,¹⁷ it is fair enough to say that there is a difference of belief, no matter how major or minor it may be, that cannot be glossed over by rubbing out the term *filioque* and thereby thinking the doctrine is rubbed out too.

I say that because a perusal of service books in the West, especially in Anglican and Reformed churches, shows that the term *filioque* has fallen on hard times. In my own tradition, the Scottish Episcopal Church, largely because of events in the wider world of the Anglican Communion and Reformed Christianity, which I shall discuss shortly, dropped the *filioque* from its most recent Eucharistic liturgy, that is in 1982, but retains the *filioque* in its other two authorised Communion Services (1970 and 1929).¹⁸ Again, one may see the *filioque* in square brackets in the Kirk’s more recent

¹⁴ For example, Eucherius of Lyons (d. 450) speaks of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. See Siecienski, *Filioque*, p. 65.

¹⁵ Siecienski, *Filioque*, p. 65.

¹⁶ Prosper of Aquitaine actually wrote, ‘legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi’ (*Epistle* 8).

¹⁷ After the fall of Constantinople in May 1453, the reconstituted Eastern Church formally rejected the ‘Union of Florence’ in January 1454.

¹⁸ The Episcopal Church in the United States, which owes its episcopacy to the SEC, retains the *filioque* in its current Book of Common Prayer (1979), but plans to drop it when next the BCP is updated. See the Acts of Convention [accessed 18 October 2021]. The Anglican Church in North America’s Book of Common Prayer (2019) retains the *filioque*, but puts square brackets around ‘and the Son’ with a note to read a resolution by its College of Bishops (on p. 768). The resolution calls for ‘the best and most accurate translation achievable’ and ‘acknowledges that the form of the Nicene Creed customary in the West is that of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, including the words “and the Son” (*filioque*), which form may be used in worship and for elucidation of doctrine’.

Book of Common Order and elsewhere. In my own ministry, I am called upon to preside at 1929 Scottish Book of Common Prayer Eucharists, where I am seemingly a *filioquist*. But I am also called upon to preside at the 1982 Eucharists, where I am seemingly a *monopatrism*. I confess to *filioqueing* and to not *filioqueing*, but I must confess further that, at least to me, that practice has settled or resolved no questions about the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit. Instead, it has left me with questions: Which is better? Does it matter?

What's the question?

Well, as I get down to what is at question, I want to make sure that I do not beg the question, as I fear many do. That is, if to *filioque* or not to *filioque* concerns what we believe about God, what we often call a 'profession of faith' in our Eucharists, I want to get it right, and as part and parcel thereof, it seems to me that we need also to ask what warrants our doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit. We have already noted that the warrant of antiquity, if we should subscribe to it, is of little help. The Caroline divine Lancelot Andrewes spoke about the boundary of (our) Anglican, Christian faith — in addition to Holy Scripture, of course — as being 'three creeds, four general councils, five centuries, and the series of Fathers in that period'.¹⁹ However, Andrewes's boundaries are of little help when the Creeds and the Councils (and the theologians' understandings thereof) are themselves the question.

Where next do we turn? Two warrants are usually invoked. First, a canonical warrant, to the effect that the Nicene Creed is sacrosanct and therefore must be translated literally, perhaps transliterated, to preserve its integrity and to signal its authority. The second warrant is that of unity, usually invoked under the aegis of ecumenism. Roughly, this warrant has it that despite differences (some taken to be large and some taken to be small in our understanding the doctrine), our common belief is best served by a translation acceptable to both East and West.

In the canonical warrant, much is made of the authority of general councils. In Roman Catholic and Orthodox circles — disagreement about which councils are in fact ecumenical councils aside, and therefore which councils' teachings and canons are binding — there is a common mind about their authority and the councils in question regarding the *filioque*. The East is quick to say that the Council of Ephesus (431) had forbidden the production of any new creeds in its Canon 7; therefore, says the East, the

¹⁹ Lancelot Andrewes, *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes* (11 vols; Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology; Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1841 to 1854), 8:90.

filioque is an interpolation: an uncanonical, an illegal, an unwarranted addition — even in translation. The West is quick to respond that nothing has been added to the Creed because the West has never added anything to the Creed in terms of the Greek text. Many Western bishops, including popes, joyfully profess the Creed in the original Greek and advocate dropping the *filioque* in translation. But there is no consensus, for many Western bishops, including popes, believe that a profession of the Creed in Latin (or other Western languages) without the *filioque* is inadequate to the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit.

There is an interesting interpretation as regards Roman Catholicism, which is Christianity's largest denomination. Since the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438 to 1439), the Roman Catholic Church has had Eastern churches, usually called Eastern rites, sometimes Uniate Catholics, who retain just about everything from the East, except the rejection of papal authority, and they do not use the *filioque*. They are free to *filioque* or not to *filioque* during the Eucharistic liturgy, but there is a catch: they must hold to a theology that accepts the double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. The Leonine solution holds to this day in Rome, where the term is not the point, but the doctrine,²⁰ and that, as Lossky avers, is why unity is illusive between Rome and Constantinople, between West and East. Anglican and Reformed Christians, to be sure, do not recognise papal authority and are not well disposed to the authority of councils. From an Anglican point of view, I quote Article XXI of the Articles of Religion, which, whilst not to be taken as authoritative because of its pedigree of a Convocation in London (1562) — not so different from a Council or General Synod or General Assembly, though — is representative of Reformed thinking, namely:

Councils [...] may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.²¹

²⁰ See Thomas G. Weinandy, Paul McPartlan, and Stratford Caldecott, 'Clarifying the Filioque: The Catholic-Orthodox Diaglogue', *Communio*, 23 (1996), 354-73.

²¹ See also Articles XIX, XX. Note that Article V, reads 'The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.' Article VIII confirms the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.

For Anglicans and the Reformed, it begs the question of the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit to claim the question is answered by, or dependent upon, the Creeds or the Councils. As to the second warrant of unity or ecumenism, much has been and is made and is well made of Christians professing the same faith at the Eucharist throughout the whole Church of God. From 1874 to 1875, when Old Catholic–Orthodox consultations were held in Bonn, where the Old Catholics agreed to drop the *filioque*, until the present day, an enormous amount of effort by both the East and the West has been put into dousing the fire of the Great Schism. A segment of that effort resulted in the Old Catholics not only dropping the term *filioque* in the nineteenth century, but a century later rejecting the doctrine of the *filioque* and formally accepting an Orthodox understanding of relations in the Holy Trinity at Chembésy in 1975.²² Thus, for the Old Catholics, the *filioque* controversy is settled and resolved. But, for Anglican and Reformed folk, things *filioquesque* have not gone so smoothly. Anglican and Reformed theologians and church leaders had been just as actively engaged with the East as the Old Catholics in the nineteenth century, Anglicans in particular, from 1875 at Bonn as observers,²³ until the so-called Moscow Agreed Statement of 1976. The Statement called for dropping the *filioque* from the Creed

(a) because the original form of the Creed referred to the origin of the Holy Spirit from the Father,

(b) because the *Filioque* clause was introduced into this Creed without the authority of an Ecumenical Council and without due regard for Catholic consent,

and (c) because this Creed constitutes the public confession of faith by the People of God in the Eucharist, the *Filioque* clause should not be included in this Creed.²⁴

What is sadly missing is any warrant from Holy Scripture to drop the *filioque*. In any case, this led to Resolution 35 of the Lambeth Conference 1978, which

²² David Guretzki, *Karl Barth on the Filioque*, Barth Studies Series (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 11.

²³ The observers, it seems, saw no problem with the Bonn Resolutions and recommended dropping the *filioque* and the Athanasian Creed to the Lambeth Conference 1888; on this, see Gerald Bray, 'The Filioque Clause in History and Theology', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 34 (1983), 91–144 (pp. 100–101).

²⁴ 'Moscow Agreed Statement', 1976, para. 21.

called upon Provinces of the Anglican Communion to drop the *filioque*.²⁵ The call was repeated by Lambeth 1988, but it soon fell off the radar. The issue was not raised at 1998 and 2008. The Anglican theologian Gerald Bray notes:

Subsequent reflection has confirmed that Anglicans are divided about the proper interpretation of the relevant passages of Scripture and would not be prepared to condemn the Western tradition, even if the *filioque* were dropped.²⁶

As of today, in the Church of England, for instance, neither the Book of Common Prayer (1662) nor the Alternative Service Book (1980) nor Common Worship (2000) have dropped the *filioque*, and there are no data to suggest that any will do so in future despite renewed calls from within the Anglican Communion in various and sundry meetings and statements with the Orthodox on the matter and one-offs where the Creed omits the *filioque*.²⁷ The Anglican trajectory vis-à-vis the *filioque* is basically that of the Western, Reformed Churches.

The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches convened a working party to study the *filioque* controversy in 1979. The resulting document, *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, usually referred to as the 'Klingenthal Memorandum',²⁸ made two assertions, regarding the doctrine and the term *filioque*. As to the doctrine, 'it should not be said that the Spirit proceeds "from the Father and the Son", for this would efface the difference in his relationship to the Father and to the Son'.²⁹ And as for the term, 'the original form of the Creed, without the *filioque*, should everywhere be recognised as

²⁵ This had also been suggested by Dublin Agreed Statement (1984); and The Church of the Triune God: The Cyprus Agreed Statement, by the International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue, (2006).

²⁶ Bray, 'Filioque Clause in History and Theology', p. 101.

²⁷ It seems the *filioque* was dropped, or in brackets, at the enthronements of Archbishops of Canterbury from Robert Runcie's time out of respect for the Orthodox. For ongoing efforts, see Anglican–Oriental Orthodox Commission and 'The Procession of the Holy Spirit: Agreed Statement 2017'.

²⁸ See *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, ed. by Lukas Vischer, Faith and Order Paper No. 103 (London: SPCK, 1981). Klingenthal being the town in Saxony where the working party met.

²⁹ *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, ed. by Vischer, p. 15.

the normative one and restored, so that the whole Christian people may be able [...] to confess their common faith in the Holy Spirit'.³⁰

The problem, of course, is that the question has been begged, has it not? Was it then, or is it now, the case that the doctrine of the *filioque* effaces the difference in the Spirit's relationship to the Father and the Son? Time precludes an inventory of theologians who think the opposite. I shall mention but two — Augustine of Hippo³¹ and Karl Barth³² — and stop there to make the point that there neither was nor is there now such a consensus, at least in the West. Furthermore, would simply dropping the term *filioque* from translations of the Creed lead the whole Christian people to a common faith in the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis procession? No, I am sorry to say, it would not. It comes as little surprise that less than ten years later Hans-Georg Link, writing on behalf of the WCC in 1988, would lament that the Klingenthal Memorandum had 'so far found no echo worth speaking of in the churches' and that there was need 'to differentiate much more clearly between the Christological legitimacy (I do *not* say necessity) and canonical illegitimacy of the addition "and from the Son" to the procession of the Spirit from the Father'.³³

Like a canonical warrant, a warrant of unity or ecumenical concord fails insofar as we find ourselves left with the *filioque* putatively rubbed out and a papering over of the doctrine too thin to hold up or to hold together even for a short amount of time. To *filioque* or not to *filioque* is not a question of one or another voice of ecclesiastical authority: papal, conciliar or otherwise. To say so begs the question of our belief. To *filioque* or not to *filioque* is not a question of ecumenism or unity in terms of dropping the term and ignoring the doctrine for the sake of false sense of communion. That too begs the question of our belief.

What, then, is the question? The question, at least as I understand it, is working on and working out what we believe about the procession of the Holy Spirit. It is a question of doctrine, not of terminology. So fraught is the *filioque* controversy that we often and unproductively think we must take sides vis-à-vis the term, rather than see the mess we have gotten ourselves

³⁰ *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, ed. by Vischer, pp. 18–19.

³¹ Chungman Lee, *Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, and the Filioque*, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements, 169 (Leiden: Brill, 2021) helpfully compares Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa.

³² See David Guretzki, *Karl Barth on the Filioque*, *Barth Studies Series* (London: Routledge, 2009).

³³ *One God, One Lord, One Spirit. On the Explication of the Apostolic Faith Today*, ed. by Hans-Georg Link, Faith and Order Paper No. 139 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), pp. 9–19 (emphasis original).

into as an invitation, perhaps by the Holy Spirit himself, to renew our theological speculation and to return to God's inspired Word to do so. That is, in the language of the Articles of Religion, to recall that anything to be received and believed must be proved by the warrant of Holy Scripture and that we need not take anything as an article of faith without Scripture's warrant; and to recall that, at least in this branch of the Catholic church and for many Reformed churches, we have received and believed three Creeds — the Apostles', the Athanasian and the Nicene — for one reason: 'for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture'.³⁴

The warrant of Holy Scripture

I do not want to fall into the trap of begging the question myself by blithely saying we must attend to Holy Scripture as if God's revelation of his oneness in three or his threeness in one is so obvious that a new glance at the Bible will settle such a weighty controversy as the *filioque*. Instead, I would like to address the warrant of Holy Scripture in four interrelated points.

First, as already mentioned, the only warrant for doctrine is Holy Scripture. We have seen that the tradition of the Church of God is unsettled, unresolved and yields no clear answer. We have also seen that even if we had an unbroken, univocal and uniform witness in the East or the West or both, it would not matter, unless that substance of that witness could be proved by Holy Scripture. We have also touched upon the fact that doctrine is not a matter of terminology or of unaided reason per se. Doctrine is not, as the Byzantine fellow at Ferrara-Florence emphasised, the solving of a philosophical puzzle in Aristotelian or other philosophical systems. What we know of the Triune God, as opposed to his works, comes from supernatural revelation alone.

Second, there is no warrant in Holy Scripture for us to choose sides on the *filioque* controversy that we have created; there is no warrant as if there were two houses to please, or two churches, East and West, to compromise, if you will; there is no warrant for a political or diplomatic solution to whether or not we use the word *filioque* in a Creed that we have composed, even if it borrows language from the Bible. Churches may agree their liturgical texts³⁵ — or other texts for that matter — the only warrant is whether or not the faith, the belief, the doctrine of those texts be true to Scripture. For example, in my own Scottish Episcopal Church, we have *interpreted* our own texts differently in order to ordain women some decades ago; we have *changed* our texts in order to witness the marriage of persons of the same sex quite recently; and we continue to *grapple* with our

³⁴ Article VII. See also Articles VI and XXI.

³⁵ See Articles XX and XXXIV.

texts — the Creed aside for now — like our Eucharist prayers in order to understand what we mean by ‘Real Presence’. But all the while, Holy Scripture is not just the bottom line, not the least common denominator, but the bar we must reach to be true to God’s revelation and to our developing understanding thereof.³⁶

Third, in terms of the *filioque* controversy, then, following on from antiquity, it is clear that a specific doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit has not been believed everywhere, always and by all. Full stop. As diverse understandings developed in the East and West, chiefly as the Creed made its way into the Eucharistic liturgies, diverse understandings were developed, and remain to this day. And I find no warrant to see that as a problem.

Fourth, and final, we ought to pray as we believe and believe as we pray. The stakes rose when the Creed began to be recited Sunday after Sunday in Eucharistic liturgies all over the world, with and without the *filioque*. The issue of *filioqueing* or not *filioqueing* in recitations of the Creed is a question of belief. If we do pray as we believe and believe as we pray — and if we find ourselves in a quandary, as we certainly do about what we believe about the procession of the Holy Spirit — then we are obliged to enhance our understanding, not to retreat to lines drawn in the sand, but to pray for God’s light and to study God’s Word.

Conclusion

I noted at the beginning that the *filioque* controversy remains unresolved. A. Edward Siecienski, who in 2010 published the most thorough history of the *filioque* controversy to date, says in the epilogue of his book:

A complete history of the *filioque* [...] debate cannot yet be written [...] it remains unresolved [...] I do not know where the debate goes from here [...] the optimist in me believes a resolution is possible [...] [but] a sober analysis of the history also demonstrates that optimism, as it concerns the *filioque*, is often unwarranted.³⁷

Back to warrants, then. I can answer the question implied in the title of my talk — ‘to *filioque* or not to *filioque*: the warrant of Holy Scripture?’ — by saying, surely, that our hearts need not be troubled at this lack of resolution. On the one hand, there is no warrant in Holy Scripture to settle this human-made controversy, and there is no warrant in Holy Scripture to recite creeds, even the Nicene Creed. On the other hand, there are two warrants from Holy

³⁶ Article VI.

³⁷ Siecienski, *Filioque*, p. 215.

Scripture to bear in mind as we Anglican and Reformed Christians find ourselves the inheritors of this seemingly unending controversy in the twenty-first century, that continues to smoulder like a theological Gehenna, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (Mark 9.44).

Yet, there are two warrants from Scripture, and both fall from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. First, Jesus prays to the Father in John 17.20–21, 'I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' These verses, as I read them, are not about Christians being in lockstep about terminology or even doctrine, but about believing in the One who was sent. Second, Jesus says to the Jewish people who had believed in him in John 8.31–32, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

Should we *filioque* or not *filioque*? By my lights, we are free to do one or both — or none. We are free to *filioque* or not to *filioque* as we profess our faith, but we are not free to profess what we do not believe. The warrant of Holy Scripture, about the *filioque* controversy or any matter of doctrine, is to abide in God's Word and to ask nothing more of our sisters and brothers in Christ other than to join us in prayer and study as we seek to develop our understanding of the mysteries of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

REVIEWS

Jonathan Chaplin, *Faith in Democracy: Framing a Politics of Deep Diversity*
(London: SCM Press, 2021). ISBN 9780334060239. Pp. 272; £19.99
(paperback); £16.99 (Kindle).

In the *Harold Wilson Annual Lecture 2017* on the role of religion in modern day democracy, Rowan Williams argued that the term ‘liberal democracy’ should be replaced by that of ‘argumentative democracy’; a polity in which multiple communities of conviction engage in vigorous public debate for the common good. ‘Argumentative democracy’ is what Jonathan Chaplin, political theologian, Associate Fellow of Theos, and Member of the Cambridge Divinity Faculty, likewise proposes in this detailed consideration of the place of faith in British public life today. The tightly argued monograph argues for the creation of a capacious conversational space that values and attends to constructive contributions from multiple faith-based perspectives.

Chaplin’s aims are two-fold: clarificatory and programmatic. With regard to the former, he aims to achieve a more informed conversation between religion and democracy, constructing a principled interaction between the two constituencies which nurtures a shared vision for the common good. As for the latter, he seeks to defend a model of constructive faith-based engagement in democratic politics in the UK today, a vision of ‘Christian democratic pluralism’ which does justice to all faiths.

That he succeeds in both is largely due to the clarity with which he sets out the terms of engagement from the outset. In Part 1 Chaplin lays cogent foundations for a theologically informed account of constitutional democracy, defining the terms used and helping readers discern the nature, importance, and moral purpose of such a political tradition: namely the facilitation of a participatory search by state and citizenry alike for public justice. Here, as throughout the book, he draws deeply — and openly — on insights from Christian political thought, seeking to demonstrate their relevance for contemporary democracy. His hope in so doing is to encourage other faiths to ‘make explicit the deeper groundings of their own accounts of democracy’, thus generating a richer dialogue and shared understanding about the place of faith in British democracy.

Part 2 offers an account of the rights and wrongs of secularism, with Chaplin once again guiding his readers skilfully through the forest of terms used in faith and democracy debates: ‘secular’, ‘post-secular’, ‘secularism’ and ‘secularization’. He argues for, and offers a theological defence of, ‘jurisdictional secularism’, the commitment of the state to treat the diverse faiths in its ambit with impartiality and create equal space for their self-

expression and democratic activity in the public square. Importantly ‘secularism’ is seen by him as one such ‘faith’ given that it too, like religion, is predicated upon pre-rational commitments. Chaplin argues that the corollary to jurisdictional secularism’s exclusion of religious discrimination is a denial of the granting of public privilege by the state to any faith, this being but one example of the thought-provoking nature of the author’s approach.

The final four chapters which comprise Part 3 examine the constituent parts of a system of Christian democratic pluralism: political reasoning that is grounded in faith-based convictions which are geared to the telos of public justice; latitude for the public manifestation of ‘faithful conscience’ on the part of individuals and ‘faithful association’ on that of faith-based bodies in the provision of public services; and the democratic deployment of the resources of faith towards projects that build public justice. The book ends with a coda on how Christian democratic pluralism, working in partnership with other visions, could help restore trust in democracy itself.

For a book whose stated aim is to be read not primarily by scholars but ‘by reflective practitioners who hold democracy in their hands’ the author pays scant attention — a mere page and a half — to one of the most vibrant examples in the UK today of the very kind of democratic pluralism being advocated, namely ‘broad-based community organising’, described by Luke Bretherton in *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) as ‘normatively better than many other forms of democratic citizenship [in] that it entails a commitment to building a common life with others’ (142). Expanding upon the praxis of this ‘practical enactment’ in the way that Angus Ritchie does in *Inclusive Populism: Creating Citizens in the Global Age* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2019) would have directed the intended readership to current manifestations of the ability of faith-based citizens to speak powerfully into the public sphere and so create a deeper and more respectful negotiated pluralism. Public dialogues of the sort which Chaplin desires so ardently and whose contours he describes so helpfully are indeed occurring regularly in the UK; would that such encouraging ‘stories of alternative possibility’, to quote Williams again, had been interrogated more closely so that flesh was put on this particular abstraction.

One target audience who will be very well served by the book, however, is that of students: not only students of politics but more especially those training for ministerial leadership. Chaplin brings together the considerable fruits of his research in several disciplines — political philosophy, political theology and public theology — distilling then into a comprehensive and comprehensible whole, and thereby providing an accessible handbook for those whose work necessitates an understanding of

all these modalities. His widespread use of case studies — controversial legal and political decisions taken recently in the UK — has already provided this reader with invaluable material for seminar discussions amongst just such a student body, while the conclusions offered at the close of every chapter summarise the preceding subtle argumentation most helpfully for those who are new to the subject matter. The book offers clarity and creative controversy in equal measure for the intellectual development of such an audience, offering these future congregational leaders (and others) a masterclass in how to navigate wisely between exclusivist secularism on the one hand and ‘Christian nation’ assertiveness on the other. As such, the book serves as a necessary corrective to the more polarised (and less well-informed) manner in which debates about the place of faith in British democracy are usually conducted.

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Philip Rousseau & Janet A. Timbie (eds), *The Christian Moses: From Philo to the Qur’an*, CUA Studies in Early Christianity (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019). Pp. xvi, 316. Hardback, ISBN 9780813231914.

This collection of essays originated in a conference which took place in 2012 and has therefore seen a somewhat lengthy gestation period. The contributions are nonetheless well worth having waited for, and address important questions not only about early Christianity, but also about Judaism during the early Christian centuries and the earliest period of Islam. Moses is a significant figure in all three traditions, and how he is interpreted in the different strands of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam reflects not only the development of those traditions themselves, but how they relate to each other.

The opening essay is by Daniel Boyarin, both a highly respected and a creatively radical scholar known for questioning established consensus and for offering fresh insights on issues of contention. He deals with the image of Moses in the Pauline letters and in the gospel of Mark. This is followed by contributions on the portrayal of Moses in Luke-Acts, the letter to the Hebrews, and the first letter of Clement (of Rome). The remaining contributions deal principally with patristic writings, in particular Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, and Pope Gregory I. Robin Jensen contributes a treatment on the depiction of Moses in art, and Naomi Koltun-Fromm includes both art,

illuminated manuscripts, and poetry in her study of the image of Moses in the eastern Christian, especially Syriac, tradition. The final contribution, by John Reeves, embraces Jewish, Christian, and Islamic interpretations of Moses at the dawn of the Middle Ages.

Specialists would undoubtedly wish to debate many of the chapters, and to explore further specific points they argue. Nevertheless, this collection provides valuable insights into neglected aspects of early Christian history, and there is much to be learned within its pages.

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Brian Brock, *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body*, Pastoring for Life Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021). ISBN 9781540962973. 192 pp. £15.92 (paperback); £7.98 (Kindle).

This latest book from Brian Brock is part of a series headlined 'Pastoring for Life'. Rather than being works of academic scholarship, these short volumes — this one is less than 200 pages even with the introductions, endnotes, and indices — have the more practical aim of providing 'theological wisdom for ministering well'.

That tagline sums up neatly what Brock is about here. Any readers who come to the book looking for a shovel-ready ministry programme will need to reorient themselves. Brock's mission is to provide the tools for thinking theologically about the issues at stake so as to enable church leaders to minister well in relation to disability. Note that I said 'in relation to disability' rather than 'to disabled people'. This is because — as implied by its subtitle, 'Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body' — the book rejects any notion of a non-disabled 'us' ministering to a disabled 'them' and instead argues forcefully for full integration of people with all kinds of disabilities into the worship and service of the Church.

It is high time for a book like this. Brock's qualifications for writing it are strong. On the academic side, he is one of the scholars who have carved out a leading place for Aberdeen University in the growing field of disability theology. On the personal side, as the parent of a young person with Down syndrome and autism, he has lived experience of how churches treat families with disabled members. Perhaps surprisingly, this experience is almost absent from the text, only being mentioned in the brief afterword. This

seeming omission allows Brock the space to draw on a broad range of other writers' experiences. Given the breadth of the field that he is covering in such a small space, it is crucial that he have this space.

There is, however, one personal experience to which Brock does dedicate considerable space in the opening chapter: the impact of an injury to his finger. He uses this to reflect on the nature of disablement and the assumptions that might lie behind non-disabled readers' attitudes towards disability. There is a danger that this approach could be interpreted as saying that everyone is disabled, much as some well-meaning individuals are given to stating, 'everyone is a little bit autistic'. That is, however, emphatically not Brock's line. He is attempting to use this experience to draw his readers into thinking differently about disability. It is a risky strategy. For all that it treads close to the line at times, it is likely to pay off because it enables him to dismantle the assumption that the non-disabled are 'normal' and to do so in a way that even readers with scant understanding of disability experiences can relate to. Thus, it gives him a way into important groundwork for the book, as this 'normate assumption' leads to a simplistic and damaging division of humanity into the classes of 'disabled' and 'normal'.

If that makes it sound like Brock is pandering to the non-disabled, readers can rest assured that they will in fact be challenged. He does not pull his punches. For instance, he is unafraid to point out that the notions that disabled people are challenges and create burdens 'are deformations of the Christian gospel'. These deformations, Brock argues, are a modern phenomenon arising from our acceptance of the biomedical model of disability, which leads us to narrow our understanding of what Christ's healing is. In light of this and the ways that it hurts our disabled siblings, 'our churches need the very cleansing that Jesus extended to lepers'.

To this end, the book is thoroughly grounded in Scripture. The three central chapters — 'Jesus Heals Everyone He Meets', 'God Chose You Because He Knew You Could Handle It' and 'Disability Is a Tragic Effect of the Fall' — argue cogently against attitudes that are common among Christians but deeply upsetting and damaging to disabled people and their families. Moreover, these chapters reveal how reading the Bible through a disability lens enriches our understanding of familiar texts, helping us to see details and subtleties that the non-disabled, biomedical mindset too easily overlooks. Brock draws not only on the healing narratives in the Gospels, but on the Hebrew Scriptures, Acts and Paul's epistles. I imagine that the Scripture index will become a well-thumbed section of the book as pastors and preachers turn to it to search out what Brock has brought to particular passages.

Paul's plea for the Corinthians to 'wait for one another' becomes a guiding principle for how Brock wants the Church to relate to its disabled

members — indeed, for how we should all relate to one another as Christians. The final chapter, ‘We Don’t Know Where to Start’, offers a series of stirring reflections on what this means in practice. Numerous stories of individuals’ experiences illustrate the power of this approach. I was most struck by the story of Alice Teisan, whose life was overturned by chronic pain. Her church’s recognition of her gifts and their willingness to adapt to her fluctuating health ultimately bore fruit in the founding of a charity that helped to restore mobility to disabled people in Africa. This is a powerful reminder that Christ’s healing comes in many forms and that we never know what God might create out of our obedience to live the unity in diversity to which Christ’s Church is called.

Aside from misgivings about the focus on Brock’s finger, the only real criticism I can make of the book is that, on occasion, the language falls into the trap of dividing the world into ‘disabled people’ and ‘Christians’ against which it argues, particularly the case in the first chapter. It would have been useful to have a bibliography to ease the task of following up the range of publications from which Brock quotes, but they are all referenced in the end notes.

Disability is, ultimately, a vital book in every sense of the term: essential, lively and life giving. The Church needs to grasp the challenge that Brock lays down, reflect deeply on his wisdom and put it into action.

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Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England, *God’s Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian–Jewish Relations* (London: Church House Publishing, 2019). Pp. xxii, 121. ISBN 978-0-7151-1161-1.

Relations between Jews and Christians, and particularly between the institutions which represent them, have always been complex. Neither movement is monolithic, and neither can be easily defined. While the biologically discredited but nonetheless powerful notion of the Jewish people as a definable ethnic group is without parallel in Christianity as a whole, there are ethnic and cultural groups, such as the Armenians and the Copts, who regard their distinctive tradition of Christianity as integral to their identity. While most secularised people in contemporary western society would not regard Christianity as part of their identity, with the exception of some fascist groups who appropriate Christian symbols for their Islamophobic rampages, Judaism remains integral to the identity of

many secularised, and radically anti-religious, Jews — to the point of believing that a non-existent god promised a particular piece of land to them in perpetuity, as is evidenced by ancient texts which their forebears had received as revealing that non-existent god's law. While in these respects not analogous movements, Judaism and Christianity nonetheless claim a common heritage, or perhaps more accurately, the same heritage in the history and religion of ancient Israel.

Contrary to what is widely assumed, and seems at times implicit in this document, Judaism and Christianity are not, and never have been, mutually exclusive categories. Jesus of Nazareth and the first Christians were Jews, as all but “Aryan” theorists and some more recent North American revisionists have always acknowledged. There remained Christian communities in western Asia which retained their Jewish identity and culture, at least until the Islamic conquests. While conversion of Iberian Jews under coercion, and their continued harassment by the Inquisition, are another example of anti-Semitism in Christian Europe, it cannot be assumed that all conversions to Christianity throughout European history have been involuntary, irrespective of the extent to which Jewish identity and culture have been retained. The concerted efforts of some evangelical Christians in recent centuries to convert Jews continue to strain inter-faith relations, and the issue remains a vexed one in missiology. Nevertheless, that people who continue to value their Jewish heritage find faith in Christ and a home in Christian churches, whether Catholic, Anglican, or Protestant, or in the messianic Jewish communities which have formed outside the structures of “gentile” Christianity, cannot be discounted. Nor can growing appreciation of Jesus within some Jewish traditions be dismissed.

Of the several hundred synagogues in Britain today (454 in 2016, according to statistics published by the Board of Deputies of British Jews), only about 60 are affiliated with the United Synagogue, headed by the “Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth”, and only about half those who identify themselves as Jewish are members of any synagogue. While these statistics probably compare very favourably with the number of people who identify as Christian and are members of any church, the fact remains that a sound appreciation of the diversity of Judaism is essential to any Christian theological response thereto.

While there have been long periods of peaceful coexistence, particularly in contexts where neither church nor synagogue has wielded political influence, the relationship between Jews and Christians in Europe has been overshadowed by a history of hostility and violence. It is easily forgotten that, during the first three Christian centuries, Jewish institutions were the more powerful, and it was Christians who were subject to intermittent persecution. Nevertheless, since the time of Constantine,

Christians have been the perpetrators, at times with a pathological hatred and violence which defies rationality, justice, and all humane values. Nazism was but the most virulent form of post-Christian nationalism, and neither Hitler's atheism nor the attempted revival of pre-Christian Germanic myths diminished the continuity of the 'Holocaust' with centuries of European Christian anti-Semitism.

Against this background, any attempt to make theological sense of the Jewish-Christian relationship is to be welcomed. As the established church of the first Christian country in Europe to expel its entire Jewish population, the Church of England perhaps has a particular responsibility. In recent centuries, this church has been less noted for anti-Semitism than for its virulent anti-Catholicism. It is therefore particularly ironic that this document is so dependent on *Nostra Aetate*, the defining statement of the second Vatican Council on inter-faith relations. This testifies to the potential for human attitudes to change, even within the Christian Church.

The Introduction states that the 'Christian-Jewish relationship is a gift of God to the Church, which is to be received with care, respect and gratitude, so that we may learn more fully about God's purposes for us and all the world.' While a worthy statement, what it means in practice is less clear. The Introduction further sets out to remain faithful to Christian doctrine, while eschewing promotion of the faith in ways which denigrate Judaism, and remaining committed to inter-faith dialogue.

The first chapter begins with an account of Christian origins and the separation of Christianity from Judaism. Given the nature of this document, it is inevitably simplistic, and the incomplete and uncertain nature of the evidence is such that scholars can and do disagree on virtually every point. While the uncertainty should have been more openly acknowledged, that such an account should be provided is also recognised.

The chapter proceeds to follow the United Kingdom government and the Church of England College of Bishops in adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism. This is deeply problematic. The IHRA definition was drafted by a US attorney (who self-identifies as Jewish and Zionist) as an aid to research and data-gathering, and was never intended as a legal definition – and its author has publicly testified against its use as such. Furthermore, the definition has been amplified by "examples", many of which are extremely vague, and at least some are intended to obfuscate the distinction between Judaism and Zionism, so that any questioning of the latter, and the methods by which its agenda is furthered, can be labelled anti-Semitism. Any definition which requires examples to explain its meaning is self-evidently not fit for purpose, and the willing adoption thereof by governments and other bodies testifies to the power of the Zionist lobby. Abuse of this incoherent 'definition' has

enabled Jews supportive of the Palestinian cause to be expelled from the Labour Party for supposed anti-Semitism.

James Parkes' pioneering work, on the fringes of the Church of England, on Jewish-Christian relations is quite rightly acknowledged. As a sequel to this, it is claimed that the establishment of the state of Israel was a challenge to Christian supersessionism, as though this were the only issue. While it may well be true that the massacres and expulsions of some 750000 Palestinians was of little concern to western governments and many Christians, it is nonetheless a valid concern to those who care about such inconvenient principles as justice. The changes in Christian attitudes to Judaism since 1945 were, in any event, forced upon the European churches by evidence of the 'Holocaust'. Many Jews, and many Christians, recognise no connection between the formation of a secular and increasingly militarised state and the enduring validity of Jewish convictions, values, and hopes.

The second chapter deals with texts in the New Testament which reflect the tensions between Jesus and other Jewish figures, and between the early Church and fellow Jews of other persuasions, which have influenced later Christian attitudes to Judaism. Given the volume of scholarship on these texts, any summary treatment, however sound as far as it goes, will inevitably be superficial, and it is easy to identify aspects of the critical issues which have neither been acknowledged nor addressed.

The third chapter deals with the vexed questions of mission and evangelism, and the compatibility of these with dialogue on the basis of mutual respect, and a willingness to learn from the other. Some attention to ways in which the Christian understanding of mission has mutated, even among evangelicals, would have been both relevant and useful. This would not have addressed all the concerns raised by the Orthodox Chief Rabbi, the favourite Jewish dialogue partner of the Church of England, in the Afterword. Nor would it have altered the fact that some Christian movements adhere to approaches to mission which others have discarded, but at least it could have helped identify ways in which fidelity to the mission of the Christian Church can be reconciled with mutual respect and learning in relations with people of other faiths.

The fourth chapter addresses ways in which Jews and Judaism are reflected in Christian teaching, preaching, and liturgy. Important issues are raised, not least in ways in which some expressions have found their way into vernacular usage, where they are all the more difficult to eliminate. Many of the issues identified cannot easily be resolved, and will need to be lived with — in considerable discomfort — for the foreseeable future. Ecumenical consensus to alter the canon of Scripture may be inconceivable, but lectionaries and modes of interpretation may be amended with

perseverance in teaching over an extended period. This is an area in which this document could potentially have contributed rather more, particularly given the enduring influence of the Church of England in education, and not least in the training of its clergy.

The fifth chapter deals with Zionism, and is intellectually and morally the low point of this volume. There is no connection between the spiritual and liturgical yearning for messianic restoration in many strands of observant Judaism and the secular nationalism, at times racist and tending towards fascism, which realised the state of Israel and the continuing dispossession of millions of Palestinians. The connection has always been rather stronger between the support of successive British governments for the Zionist agenda over the last century and more, and their aversion to Jewish immigration to the United Kingdom. The profoundly anti-Semitic aspect of Christian Zionism and its political influence in all the major British political parties is completely ignored. Whether or not the acquiescence of Christian theologians and church leaders in the state of Israel as a *fait accompli* can be considered Zionist, their failure to deal impartially and forthrightly with issues of justice and racism has been deplorable. This document reflects the problem without making any contribution to addressing it. Dismissing the “apocalyptic speculation” of classical Christian Zionism, while attaching theological significance to its secular and equally bloodthirsty military and political implementation, does nothing for the cause of righteousness. Platitudes about ethics and justice, without considering what these mean in practical terms for people who have been brutally driven from their homes and land, is simply not good enough in what professes to be a statement of Christian theology.

The final chapter seeks to draw together the threads, such as they are, and to identify ways in which Jewish-Christian relations can be furthered. If this is going to happen in practice, it will need to be recognised that the presumed predominance of Zionism and Orthodoxy in British Judaism does not do justice to the diversity of Jewish families, communities, and cultures who have found their home, willingly or in desperation, in Britain. There will need to be far greater respect for Orthodox and observant Jews who regard the state of Israel as a blasphemous presumption upon God’s grace, and for the plethora of individuals and communities whose home is in this country, and who dissociate themselves from the expansionist militarised state which Israel has become. Those, observant or secular, who recognise the prophetic imperative for justice and the global embrace of God’s love for humanity, are the Jews with whom there is the greatest potential for Christians to engage in mutual affirmation and mutual sharing and learning.

This volume may prove a necessary step, but it cannot be the final word in addressing the legacy of anti-Semitism in British society and culture,

and in the forms which Christianity and secular politics have taken in the United Kingdom. Nor has the pernicious legacy of British imperialism, especially in Mandate Palestine, even been recognised. The depths of self-examination required have not been plumbed, and until they are, and justice for the Palestinians becomes integral to developing sound and mutually affirming relations with Britain's Jewish communities, the task will not be accomplished.

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