



Seventh Annual Quiet Day: "Shaping a Spiritual Life"

"The final test of holiness is not seeming very different from other people, but being used to make other people very different; becoming the parent of new life."

—Evelyn Underhill

Underhill's life was dedicated to helping each person shape a life of holiness, of adoration of God for the sake of the world.

This year, our annual Quiet Day, held on the grounds of the Washington National Cathedral, took up this theme, "Shaping a Faithful Life." Through discussion, presentations, reflection, and prayer, participants explored how Underhill helped others craft a disciplined and attentive life, and the sources of her inspiration for this work.

Presenters examined the influence of Benedict, Ignatius, and De Caussade on her thinking. A workshop on the life of Underhill was offered for beginners, and an experience of prayer-walking was available.

The new Center for Prayer and Pilgrimage in the cathedral was open to participants for contemplative prayer, and the Eucharist was offered in the center's beautiful Resurrection Chapel.

The Annual Quiet Day is sponsored jointly by the Evelyn Underhill Association and the Washington National Cathedral and is held on the Saturday nearest the death-day of Underhill. **The next Quiet Day will be held June 13, 1998 in the College of Preachers at**

the cathedral. More information will be available in May 1998 from the Special Events Office, Washington National Cathedral, Mount Saint Albans, Washington, DC 20016.

Announcing...

June 13, 1998

Our 8th Annual Quiet Day

To be held at
the National Cathedral
Washington, DC



Mark your calendar now and
plan to be with us on June 13.

Our Purpose

The Evelyn Underhill Association, promotes the study of the works of Evelyn Underhill and supports research and writing about her ideas. Days of Quiet and Reflection are held, and the association is a resource through a newsletter and correspondence.

Association officers are: Dana Greene, president; Grace Brame, vice president; Kathleen Staudt, second vice president; Carole Crumley, secretary; Milo Coerper, treasurer; and Lois Sibley, newsletter editor.

Membership is open to all and is free, although donations to help defray costs are appreciated and may be sent to: The Evelyn Underhill Association, c/o Milo Coerper, 7315 Brookville Rd., Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

Study Trip to Italy and London Set for June 18-July 3, 1998

"Italy, the holy land of Europe, the only place left, I suppose, that is really medicinal to the soul....There is a type of mind which must go there to find itself," Evelyn Underhill wrote after one of her many trips to Italy. The Diocesan House of Retreat at Pleshey, which she loved and where she gave many retreats, still houses Underhill's Madonna and Child by Donatello, and a print from Assisi of Giotto's St. Francis.

John Howden, the current warden of Pleshey, says that Underhill, with her increasing sense of the Divine presence in ordinary life, brought the soul's medicine of Italy to Pleshey.

In the summer of 1998, a study group will travel to the Italy that Underhill loved and wrote about in her reflections, *Shrines and Cities of Italy and France*. Using Florence as a base, and traveling to Siena, Arezzo, Borgo, San Sepulcro, Cortona, and Assisi as well, the group will visit the churches, monasteries, and events (the medieval celebration of the feast day of John the Baptist) that brought Underhill to what she called a "gradual unconscious growing into an understanding of things."

Traveling on to London, the group will stay in a small Victorian hotel a few minutes' walk from Underhill's Campden Hill Square home. Here in Kensington, Underhill attended university classes at King's College, established her married life, cared for her parents, worshiped in the convent of Maria

Assumpta in Kensington Square, visited the poor on Notting Hill Road, and wrote her many articles, retreat addresses, and books.

Finally, the group will travel to the Diocesan House of Retreat at Pleshey, near Chelmsford, for a three-day stay, including a quiet day and a walking tour of the countryside surrounding this medieval moated village.

Dana Greene, president of the Evelyn Underhill Association (U.S.), and author of *Evelyn Underhill: Artist of the Infinite Life* (Crossroad); and *Fragments from an Inner Life* (Morehouse), will accompany the group, providing readings and times of reflection.

The dates are June 18-July 3, 1998. The \$2,595 fee includes lodging, many meals, all transportation in Italy and England; or, \$3,295 with air transportation from Washington, Dulles Airport. A deposit of \$200 is due with registration (refundable until March 1, 1998).

For a full description, contact: The Pilgrim's Guide, Donna Osthaus, 7481 Huntsman Blvd., Suite #105, Springfield, VA 22153, Ph: 703/644-1896, FAX: 703/644-0739.



A Taste of Heaven

by Don Rodgers

We had just completed packing the car in preparation for an early morning departure for a two-week vacation. When morning came and I awoke, I found myself reliving a dream that surpassed in clarity, meaning, and emotional impact anything I had ever experienced. As I slept, I was transported into the company of all the saints, and although I experienced no direct contact with any specific individual, I had the distinct feeling that I was in the company of the great "Cloud of Witnesses" who provide the feel of truth and reality to the Christian story--among them Evelyn Underhill. To be in such company was sheer ecstasy. I remember feeling that I wanted nothing but to enjoy my association with these greats and to bask in the unbelievable joy of this association. All too soon, it was over and I was awake with a memory that I hope will never fade.

As I relived my experience, I thought of Paul's experience of being caught up into the third heaven and his description of death as dropping the tent of clay, to be clothed in a garment of eternal life. I wondered about the nature of existence without a physical body, about the nature of development or growth in a nonphysical, nonmaterial setting; and I recognized that over time I had allowed the great thoughts and words of the saints to obscure what Evelyn Underhill refers to as "suggestion," which creates sensitivity to the things of the Spirit that prompt contemplation, belief, faith, and Christian practice. I realized that such "suggestion" was planted in my thought by my mother, grandmother, and early church school teachers. Surely, I had received a glimpse of life unencumbered by a physical body, and, I must use that experience to help me understand more completely the life I now live, and the nature of the next phase of my journey.

It was as if I had been presented with a dual screen on which my total existence was depicted; on

one screen I saw my life as it is lived in time and space on planet earth; on the other, I saw life in the company of all those who have passed beyond the physical existence that I experience as the life of today. With this picture before me, I saw my earthly existence as a two-dimensional life, what Evelyn Underhill has described as an amphibious existence. On one level I was moving and acting, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling; on another, I was feeling, desiring, hoping, wanting, aspiring, liking, disliking, loving, hating. And it seemed clear that as long as my body continued to perform the functions I expected of it, this two-dimensional life would continue. But, when the body no longer responds to my mind and will, and finally ceases to respond all together, all of those bodily functions will cease, and the body will decay and be absorbed into the earth. At this point, I could envision seeing myself as I really am: feelings, desires, hopes, wants, aspiration, likes, dislikes, loves, hates—and these affections transcend the limitations of my physical existence! What, then, is the nature of the beings I encountered in my vision and will someday myself share? Each person I encountered is, I concluded, the constellation of affections unique to that individual. And the love of God integrates and focuses these affections to mold each individual into the eternal beings that were created to be. God offers himself as the source from which our affections spring and in this offering joins himself intimately with each human soul. How rapidly we progress toward God's intention for us, and how nearly we approach that perfection depends upon the intensity of our desire and commitment to fulfill God's will and plan for us.

I feel blessed by this experience, which has opened for me new vistas of thought and provided new ground for understanding.

Don Rodgers invites readers to send their reactions to him at 7501 Democracy Blvd, B 413, Bethesda, MD 20817, Ph: 301/469-8973.



The Three Faces of Evelyn Underhill

by Todd E. Johnson

Evelyn Underhill's life often has been described as having two distinct halves: the years before her tutelage under Baron von Hügel and the years following his influence. Underhill describes herself as a "white-hot neoplatonist" in these early years. She claimed her penchants for monism and platonic dualism were overcome by a good dose of orthodoxy dispensed by the baron, as well as her acceptance of his philosophical framework known as Critical Realism, which argued for a limited duality between nature and supemature. For von Hügel, the bridge between humanity and God was the incarnate Christ.

There have been those who have challenged this interpretation of Underhill's life and thought, most notably Susan Smalley and Terry Tastard. From their perspective, von Hügel's influence was short-lived and Underhill quickly retreated to her earlier dualistic perspectives, never fully accepting the centrality of Christ in her thought. However, a closer look at Underhill's life and thought reveals a steady progression in her theological understanding that continued beyond the influence of von Hügel and underscores the relevance of her thought for today. Underhill's early works were influenced by an optimistic and evolutionary perspective known as Vitalism. Underhill used this perspective to describe the spiritual life as the mystical ascent to God through the development of one's spiritual consciousness. This positive view of the world was unable to accommodate for her the reality of human

sinfulness evident in World War I, and the pain of the loss of her best friend, Ethel Ross Baker. Her theology in shambles, she turned to von Hügel for help.

Underhill's time spent under von Hügel's direction exposed her to a more Christocentric theology, as well as a more sacramental piety. Still, the main shift in Underhill's thought at this time was the understanding that one's relationship with God was not primarily a human ascent to the divine but God's gracious condescension to humanity. After the baron's death in 1925, Underhill set out to distill his thought into a philosophy of religion. The result was her book *Man and the Supernatural*.

The third phase of Underhill's thought began in 1930 with her essay "God and Spirit" and the volume that followed, *The Golden Sequence*. In her dissertation, Grace Brame raised the question of why Underhill would essentially rewrite *Man and the Supernatural* from the perspective of the Holy Spirit? The reason becomes evident through a careful read of Underhill's life in the latter half of the 1920s. In these years Underhill was taken by the work of Alfred North Whitehead and his "Process Theology." Underhill likewise was becoming more familiar with the Eastern Orthodox tradition and its emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Like the wise steward who brings out both the old and the new, Underhill combined the ancient Orthodox emphasis on the Spirit with Critical Realism and Process Theology to establish a theology based on the continuing incarnation of the Spirit, instead of the one time incarnation of Christ. The Spirit—not Christ—became the bridge between God and humanity—the missing piece in *Man and the Supernatural*.

For the rest of her life Underhill would write from a Spirit-centered perspective. Instead of the Spirit being the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit was the Spirit of God, and Christ was the fullest incarnation of that Spirit. This interpretation precedes the first "serious" Spirit Christology in Anglican theology by twenty years. The sacraments were now encounters with the dynamic energy of the Spirit, not the static presence of Christ, heightening the awareness of participation in the liturgy—a theme not fully accentuated until Vatican II. It is the Spirit that allowed Underhill to weave prayer, worship, and ministry so tightly into the fabric of the spiritual life. In fact, in Underhill's most lucid distillation of her thought in her later years, *The Spiritual Life*, there is hardly a mention of Christ; it is the Spirit that dominates the work.

Evelyn Underhill moved through three distinct phases in her life and thought. The result was that her work at the end of her life reflected the mind of a woman years ahead of her time. As a self-educated lay woman, she created a theological synthesis using the Spirit that is more at home in our age than her own. Underhill's work continues to speak to new generations of those seeking God because she gives voice to a perspective that has been silent for so many years in the Western traditions, and I would add, because the voice with which she spoke was an echo of the voice of the Spirit she so courageously followed.



Todd E. Johnson is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University, Chicago.

News and Notes:

Ann Loades has published *Evelyn Underhill* as part of the Fount Christian Thinkers Series. London: Fount, 1997.

Annice Callahan, RSCJ, has published *Evelyn Underhill: Spirituality for Daily Living* with University Press of America. EUA associates may buy copies at a 30 percent discount from the author (\$47.50 U.S.) at Regis College, 15 St. Mary Street, Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M4Y 2R5.

In 1998 the University of Notre Dame Press will issue Dana Greene's *Evelyn Underhill: Artist of the Infinite Life* in paperback.

John C. Kimball will use Underhill's *The Golden Sequence* as

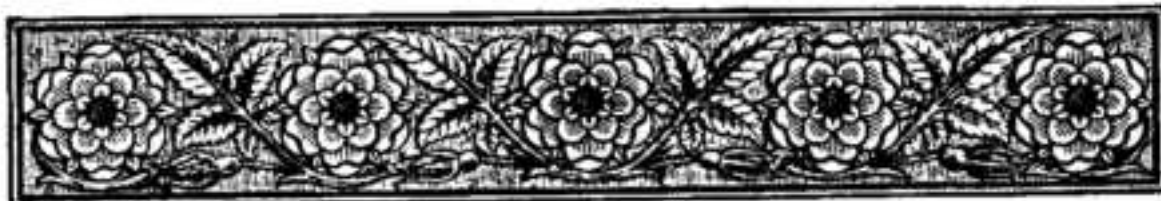
he leads a Quiet Day for the Daughters of the King on All Saints' Day, November 1, at St. John's Episcopal Church, Norristown, Pennsylvania.

The Evelyn Underhill Association was present at the Episcopal General Convention in Philadelphia in July when a special convention issue of *The Evelyn Underhill Newsletter* was given out at the convention. About thirty-five people signed up as interested in receiving future issues.

Grace Adolphsen Brame recently published "The Extraordinary Within the Ordinary: The Life and Message of Evelyn Underhill" in *Feminist Voices in Spirituality: Studies in Women and Religion*, Vol. 38, edited by Pierre Hegy, Lewiston, NY, Edwin Mellen Press, 1996, pp. 101-124.

The year 2000 is not only the beginning of millennium celebrations, it is also the 125th anniversary of Evelyn Underhill's birth. Those who have ideas of how we might honor Underhill during that special year should send their ideas to the editor.

About fifteen people have indicated a commitment to join the **Spiritual Entente**, a confraternity formed by Sorella Maria, a Franciscan nun, and participated in by Evelyn Underhill. The group has no meetings, but a common loyalty and intention to pray for union within Christianity and peace in the world. Others who want to make that commitment should write: Spiritual Entente, 1209 Tulane Dr., Alexandria, VA 22307.



The Evelyn Underhill Newsletter
November 1997

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