



The Making of a Mystic

Ed. Carol Poston

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Substantial correspondence from an exceptional writer, poet, pacifist, and mystic.

Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) achieved international fame with the publication of her book *Mysticism* in 1911. Continuously in print since its original publication, *Mysticism* remains Underhill's most famous work, but in the course of her long career she published nearly forty books, including three novels and three volumes of poetry, as well as numerous poems in periodicals. She was the religion editor for *Spectator*, a friend of T. S. Eliot (her influence is visible in his last masterpiece, *Four Quartets*), and the first woman invited to lecture on theology at Oxford University. Her interest in religion extended beyond her Anglican upbringing to embrace the world's religions and their common spirituality.

In time for the centennial celebration of her classic *Mysticism*, this volume of Underhill's letters will enable readers and researchers to follow her as she reconciled her beliefs with her daily life. The letters reveal her personal and theological development and clarify the relationships that influenced her life and work. Hardly aloof, she enjoyed the interests, mirth, and compassion of close friendships.

Drawing from collections previously unknown to scholars, *The Making of a Mystic* shows the range of Evelyn Underhill's mind and interests as well as the immense network of her correspondents, including Nobel Prize laureate Rabindrinath Tagore and Sir James Frazier. This substantial selection of Underhill's correspondence demonstrates an exceptional scope, beginning with her earliest letters from boarding school to her mother and extending to a letter written to T. S. Eliot from what was to be her deathbed in London in 1941 as the London Blitz raged around her.

"This correspondence reveals the intimate Evelyn Underhill--friend, spiritual guide, wife, pacifist--whose life spanned the age of Victoria through the horrors of two global wars. These letters serve as a companion piece to Underhill's pioneering books on mysticism and the spiritual life and explore the making of this foremother of contemporary spirituality. Carol Poston has retrieved a treasure for all of us."

- Dana Greene, author of *Evelyn Underhill: Artist of the Infinite Life*

"Evelyn Underhill's public voice was strong and confident, often choosing language from the middle of the road, while her private writings often reveal tremendous insecurities and perspectives from the margins. These letters are a rich resource for those of us who study Underhill's life and writings."

— Todd E. Johnson, coauthor of *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue*

