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Saraband: The Memoirs of E L Mascall

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of African religious values and Christianity to both survive and revolt in the midst of gruelling oppression. Against their owners the slaves learned to read so that they could use the Bible in radical ways. Their preachers held services illegally in the quiet of the night where the slaves prayed and sang and called for freedom now and not just in the "sweet by and by". The Exodus and Moses were central, and many of their own liberators, such as Harriet Tubman, were called Moses. It was the slaves' faith, in sharp contrast to the faith of the elite, which encouraged hope for freedom and action as well.

Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue is a pioneering work. It is part of the continuing resurrection of black theology which serves as a challenge to the mainline approach of comfortable intellectualized and safe theology. I have no doubt that it will serve its community of choice very well. Also I hope that white middle class Christians will read it and take up the challenge to leave "the fleshpots of Egypt" and join the oppressed on their rocky road to liberation.

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Saraband: The Memoirs of E.L. Mascall

Leominster, Herfordshire: Gracewing, 1992 (Reprinted, 1995)
x + 392 pp. \$53.95

When E.L. Mascall died at 87 on February 14, 1993, the *Times*' grudging obituary, in all likelihood, accurately reflected his status in the Church of England, the philosophical establishment, and Great Britain generally: the obituary filled two full columns and included a photograph, but found little to say of him other than that he was a "leading Anglo-Catholic... [an] Anglican to the fingertips [who] had an abiding loyalty to the Church in which he was brought up". He "had resolved", the *Times* insisted, not to go over to Rome, women priests or no women priests. "An academic rather than an administrator", the *Times* continued, Mascall never achieved the "distinction his early academic attainments had seemed to promise".

Newspapers, of course, seldom provide useful reading for anyone other than those desperate to gain insights into whatever discourse is fashionable at the moment, and certainly the *Times*' obituary continued the best of this Fleet Street tradition. But the need for a reprint of a 400-page rambling memoir of an octogenarian semi-eccentric Thomist only three years after its first printing demonstrates that not everyone is so certain that the dominant view of Mascall is the only one possible.

Anglo-Catholic and Thomist, Mascall certainly was, but one must take care not to read these adjectives as marks of inevitable desiccation. Concern for the maintenance of the Christian tradition carries with it a firm

commitment to faith as continuously seeking understanding, and Mascall's Thomism moved through his lifetime from the thoughtful Neo-Thomistic positions of his *He Who Is* (London: Longmans, 1945) into positive reflections on the work of Rahner and Lonergan in his Gifford lectures, *The Openness of Being* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), as well as on *Christian Theology and Natural Science: Some Questions in their Relations* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1965); Mascall, we must always remember, was trained as a mathematician. Among his other works which still bear careful scrutiny, although occasional pieces from the late 1970s, are his *Theology and the Gospel of Christ: An Essay in Reorientation* (London: SPCK, 1977) and the companion piece, *Whatever happened to the Human Mind? Essays in Christian Orthodoxy* (London: SPCK, 1980).

One does not go to Mascall's *Memoirs* to find in them the same depth one finds in the works already noted; one goes to them rather after having read the earlier works for dinner conversation with a friend. They are not well-integrated and although autobiographical are not an autobiography. They are memoirs, no more and no less. One might have wished that Mascall had said more about some issues, and although his obsession with British eccentrics is often humorous, the book might have done well with fewer such tales. One is not always certain that the length of a biography in the piece is necessarily a mark of a character's value or that all comments are worth the stating, until one recognizes that every word guides the reader to become better acquainted with the character of the *Memoirs* himself—his laughter, his catholic tastes, and his final deep concern for the unity of Christendom. [Note on this topic his *The Triune God: an Ecumenical Study* (Worthing: Churchman, 1986) and the earlier *The Recovery of Unity: A Theological Approach* (London: Longmans, 1958).]

Not every press would have risked a book of this size and most would have administered a much heavier editorial hand—I among others am pleased that Gracewing (Fowler Wright Books, distributed in Canada by Meakin and Associates, Nepean, Ont.) chose to allow the last words, whether they always be necessary or not, to this author.

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The Genesis of God: A Theological Genealogy

Thomas J.J. Altizer

Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993

200 pp.

In this highly original work, the chief exponent of "death of God" theology reconstructs the Deity's origin. Perhaps best known for *The Gospel*