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Cut loose your stammering tongue: Black theology in the slave narratives

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western socialist parties including the two to which I have belonged (the D.S.O.C. and the New Democratic Party).

In conclusion, I welcome your book. I see it as a positive contribution to a Christian vision that I espouse personally and that needs to be heard in the middle class mainline churches to which we belong. Solidarity!

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Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narratives

Dwight N. Hopkins and George Cummings, editors
Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991
165 pp.

The reputation of Orbis Books as a publisher of texts actively committed to the liberation of people from oppression is enhanced by the printing of this excellent work. Initially the firm was dedicated chiefly to the publication of translations of Latin American liberation theology. Increasingly its presses are turning out books geared primarily to the North American scene. In the case of *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue* we see a powerful attempt by radical black theology to link up with its roots in the black slave culture of the United States. As a white middle class male Christian I recognize my inability to deal with this work in all its profundity. Nonetheless, I can still offer it praise and laud its pioneering contribution to an area of historical recovery critical to a church history determined to resurrect the radical and grass-roots character of the Christian gospel.

There is a movement afoot which examines popular religion in all its variegated facets both in the United States and Canada. It is often sociological and descriptive, but its agenda remains vague and uncommitted. Once again we are witnessing history done from a distance and for its own sake. Such is not the case with this book. The editors make their points with clarity. Their work is a process of "learning from the liberating faith that comes out of the actual mouths of the poor", a faith that compels black theologians to honour "the struggle for black liberation and full humanity" and "to mediate and privilege poor people's silenced voices" (p. xv).

They fulfill this task admirably. Not only do they uphold rigorous and scholarly methods, but they also provide a forum and structure whereby the ex-slaves are able to articulate the faith held while they were in chains. The old notion that white Christianity enchained the slave culture with remarkable success is challenged by this work. There seems to be no doubt that the white slave-owning elites sought to use the faith in this way, but their efforts were mostly in vain. In fact, the slaves used a powerful blend

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