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EDITORIAL

Guest Editorial for Mascall Issue

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This special issue of the Journal of Anglican Studies discusses the theology of Eric Lionel Mascall (1905–1993) with particular attention to his contributions to philosophical and dogmatic theology. Rowan Williams, in his recent foreword to a new printing of Mascall's *Existence and Analogy,* explains the importance of Mascall in his own life: 'Beginning the study of theology at Cambridge in 1968, I found Mascall's writing on a range of subjects to be immensely nourishing, even in a climate where the options were often presented as some sort of Barthianism or some sort of liberalism'.[1] And Williams was not alone in looking to Mascall as a guide for those searching to escape the modern wilderness of anti-metaphysical and progressive theological assumptions ascendant in post-war Anglophone theological circles – 'Mascall, for at least some students of my generation, kept alive the belief that the great mediaeval and pre-mediaeval thinkers of the tradition had something crucial to say in modernity, and helped to keep us reading in this tradition until the wheel of fashion turned'.[2] Williams notes that Mascall's theology, associated with the Neo-Scholasticism of Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson, fell out of fashion in the latter part of the twentieth century. But with a turn to Thomism among Anglicans such as Andrew Davison and James Orr in the Anglican Communion, and Thomas Joseph White and Simon Gaine in the Catholic Church, Thomism is once again part of contemporary theological conversations. Mascall's commitment to received Christian doctrines, moreover, has sparked interest in his work among Anglicans seeking to return to the sources of Christian orthodoxy. Gerald McDermott, in his foreword to a new edition of Mascall's *Christ, the Christian, and the Church*, insists that 'Mascall was one of the best—perhaps the sharpest and most lucid—of orthodox Anglican theologians in the twentieth century'.[3] Because of Mascall's theological acumen and compelling style, McDermott calls for a retrieval of Mascall's systematic theology to renew Anglicanism – '[I]n *Christ, the Christian, and the Church*, and his other work over four decades, Mascall illustrates a theological method that would do today's Anglicans well: listening keenly to the

[1]Rowan Williams, foreword to *Existence and Analogy*, Angelico Press, 2023, xiv.
[2]Williams, foreword to *Existence and Analogy*, p. xiv.
[3]Gerald R. McDermott, foreword to *Christ, the Christian, and the Church*, Hendrickson, 2017, p. xiii.

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Scriptures with the assistance of insights from the Reformers but with equal attentiveness to the Fathers'.[4]

The issue, moreover, arose out of a conference on the life and thought of Mascall held at Pusey House at the University of Oxford in November of 2023 that featured lectures by scholars such as Rowan Williams, Roberta Bayer, Philip Moller, Michael Lloyd and Euan Grant. Academic discussion of Mascall's ideas was common in his own lifetime when he served as a lecturer at Lincoln Theological College, the University of Oxford and Professor of Historical Theology at King's College London. This kind of engagement has become less common in recent years. And this is surprising given that many consider Mascall to be the foremost Anglo-Catholic theologian in the twentieth century, an academic theologian who also addressed the greatest challenges to the Christian faith confronting the Church in his day. In his contributions to the philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, Christology, theological anthropology and eschatology, Mascall demonstrates the intellectual and spiritual resources available when Christians engage in developments in the natural sciences and philosophy with their roots in the faith of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. Aware of the philosophical and scientific objections to belief in the analogy of being, the authority of Scripture, the reality of the Catholic Church and the Godhood of Jesus Christ, Mascall returned to Anglican, scholastic, patristic and scriptural sources to answer these objections. As Williams and McDermott contend, Mascall's theological legacy is overdue for a positive revaluation.

It is with this in mind that we have commissioned articles building on the conference at Pusey House to interact with the theology of Mascall. We open this issue with a discussion of Mascall's philosophical theology. Rowan Williams looks to Mascall to answer how philosophy relates to theology, nature to supernature and the insights of Thomism to those of *nouvelle théologie*. Michael Michielin follows this discussion with a contrast of Karl Barth and Mascall's respective accounts of natural theology and the analogy of being, attending to how Mascall's theory of analogy informs his sacramental theology. Jarek Jankowski shares Moller and Williams's conviction that Mascall's account of analogy does more than re-present that of Thomas or the Neo-Scholastics, and he sees Mascall's existential Thomism developing a theory of analogy based on the human contuition of being in the acts of God in relation to creation. Roberta Bayer explores the relationship between Mascall's philosophy of religion and the doctrine of God, and in describing Mascall's critique of process theology, she presents Mascall's defence of the timelessness and changelessness of God. Christopher Smith also describes Mascall's doctrine of God. In his article, he surveys Mascall's dogmatic theology and argues that the incarnation, the Godhood of Christ and the eternal presence of the manhood of Christ in heaven appear at the centre of Mascall's account of salvation and the sacraments. Michael Lloyd follows this description of the revelation of God in the incarnation of Christ, turning to Mascall to understand how the God revealed in Christ the healer, who always seeks to end suffering, can allow the suffering intrinsic to the evolutionary process. Lloyd argues that Mascall's retrieval of an angelology in which the free will of the angels, and their fall predating that of the

[4]McDermott, foreword to *Christ, the Christian, and the Church*, xvi.

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primal humans, may account for suffering and evil in the pre-lapsarian cosmos. Finally, I summarize my own introduction to Mascall's eschatology, focusing on his defence of the doctrine of hell on the basis of a definition of love grounded on moral agency.

In our first article, Rowan Williams pays tribute to Mascall, the external examiner for his doctorate and a counsellor in his theological and vocational discernment, and he reflects on Mascall's constructive engagement with French Catholic *nouvelle théologie*. Williams, in doing so, responds to a popular characterization of Mascall's writing, present in Peter Webster's conference paper, as an Anglican Thomist in the line of Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain whose early promise as a theologian falls off into polemical and devotional writing in his later career.[5] Williams celebrates Mascall's theological fusion integrating philosophical rigor, engagement with advancements in the natural sciences and commitment to continuity in doctrine, the sacramental life and contemplative practice. In a survey of Mascall's philosophical theology, Williams argues that Henri de Lubac and Maurice Blondel, beginning in *Existence and Analogy*, appear as decisive influences on Mascall's metaphysics, particularly his belief in the convergence of nature and supernature, as well as his conviction that philosophy should inform theology, and theology should inform philosophy. Williams contends, moreover, that Mascall synthesizes Thomism and *nouvelle théologie* in his works of dogmatic and systematic theology – preeminent among which is *Christ, the Christian and the Church*. In what Williams considers one of the foremost works of systematic theology written in English in the past century, Mascall develops this Anglican *nouvelle theology* to demonstrate that it is the action of God that shapes creation and human persons. And it is this account of the openness of being to the grace of God that explains his Christocentric explanation of the doctrines of creation and the sacraments. And in *Theology and the Gospel of Christ*, Mascall relies on the French ressourcement theology of Claude Tresmontant, Louis Bouyer and Jean Galot to integrate Chalcedonian Christology with modern insights about human consciousness.[6] Thus, Williams sees Mascall as a constructive theologian of the first-rank offering a hospitable and critical engagement with French Neo-Scholasticism and ressourcement theology throughout his career.

The next article picks up on the importance of Mascall's account of the relationship between nature and grace for a Christology and sacramental theology that can answer the problems presented by modern naturalism. In this comparative study of Karl Barth and Mascall's accounts of natural theology, Michael Michielin contends that the two theologians responded to comparable forms of liberal theology in their respective churches, and yet their divergent responses mark out a different trajectory for Christian theology and the life of the Church. In describing Barth's critique of natural theology, Michielin discovers a sharp distinction between human reason and divine revelation that unwittingly recapitulates the ontological divide between nature and supernature intrinsic to the modern project of liberal

[5]See Peter Webster, 'Eric Mascall and the making of an Anglican Thomist, 1937–1945.' *Journal for the History of Modern Theology/Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 30, no. 2 (2023): pp. 216–238 for a similar example of his reading of Mascall's theology.

[6]Eric L. Mascall, *Theology and the Gospel of Christ: An Essay in Reorientation*, SPCK, 1977.

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Protestantism. In doing so, Barth empties the sacraments of their divine grace. In contrast, Michielin sees Mascall developing a realistic ontology that criticizes the idealist assumptions of modern Protestantism and provides an alternative realist account of God's grace in word and sacrament. Michielin concludes that the Church needs to recover its belief in a realistic ontology and the transforming grace of word and sacrament that incorporates Christians into the Body of Christ.

The following article in our series delves more deeply into Mascall's sources for, and contributions to, natural theology and the concept of the analogy of being. Jarek Jankowski argues that Mascall's explanation of analogy appears in nascent Thomistic form in *He Who Is*, receives further explication in *Existence and Analogy* and reaches its mature articulation in *Words and Images*.[7] Mascall's existential Thomist metaphysic leads him to distinguish between the uses of natural theology, which allows us to ask if God is, and analogy, which allows us to ask how God is. Mascall maintains that both natural theology and analogy can be understood through apprehension rather than argument. And it is Mascall's existentialist metaphysic that explains his characterization of analogy as judgement of apprehension. Josef Pieper offers the primary Thomistic influence on Mascall's mature doctrine of analogy. Mascall follows Pieper in arguing that the intellect reasons and apprehends with both thoughts and things as objects. Humans, therefore, experience a contuition of the cosmological relationship between God and the creation, not of God in himself. Mascall's unorthodox doctrine of analogy, thus, provides an alternative to Austin Farrer's refusal of all demonstration and the grammatical Thomists' comparable scepticism about contuition and our ability to know God. Jankowski concludes that Mascall's existential Thomism allows him to develop a theory of analogy that challenges us to more deeply consider God and creatures with their origin and end in God, through the categories of analogy and image.

In Mascall's philosophy of religion, Roberta Bayer finds an integration of knowledge of mathematics, the natural sciences, philosophy and theology. She argues that this integrated vision of faith and reason allows Mascall to defend God's timelessness in the face of objections from various scientists, philosophers and modern theologians. Bayer attends to Mascall's criticisms of the process theology of Alfred North Whitehead, and in doing so, she explicates Mascall's argument for the timelessness of God and his consciousness in an eternal present. Mascall contends that the process theology of Whitehead and others undermines the revealed and rational doctrine of God, and he seeks to vindicate this doctrine against modern objections. Whitehead considers creativity to be the first principle of existence, and this priority of creativity provides the most comprehensive account of God's personality and activity. This shift to explain God in the order of action rather than the order of being goes some way to account for Whitehead disregarding the analogy of being and seeking to understand God in terms of finite reality. Whitehead, along with process theologians in his school, believed that God's immanence is only intelligible if he is subject to the constraints of time and change evident in the creation. Bayer argues that Mascall attends to, and criticizes, process

[7]Eric L. Mascall, *He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism*, Angelico Press, 2023 and *Words and Images: A Study in Theological Discourse*, Longmans, Green & Co, 1957.

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theology because it represents a broader assumption of temporality omnipresent in the modern imagination. This belief in omnipresent temporality appears in a historicism that assumes humans cannot see eternal truths, and their beliefs are all shaped by temporal experience. When such a conviction is applied to God, Mascall insists that it contradicts the Christian doctrine of God and replaces it with a pantheistic or immanentist deity. Bayer contrasts this process theism with Mascall's explanation of how God's timelessness is compatible with his involvement in the temporal. Because God is the perpetual creator and sustainer of all things, he is in intimate relationship with creatures at the deepest roots of their being. Bayer finds this ontological claim in both Mascall and Maritain's philosophy of religion and sees it as part and parcel of a perennial philosophy of monotheism. Mascall, in *The Christian Universe*, insists that humans are made to know and love the transcendent and unchanging God.[8] The book focuses on the intellectual capacity of humans to know God in contemplation of his glory. God makes rational humans with the intellectual potential to see God face to face in the beatific vision.

Christopher Smith situates Mascall as a Catholic Anglican in a biographical reading of Mascall's Christology. Smith contends that Mascall's theology has been unjustly neglected and marginalized. And as a member of the great tradition, Mascall believes that the theologian's task is to defend the truth and vitality of Christianity and demonstrate its relevance to personal, social and ecclesial life. The theologian must, therefore, maintain the faith once delivered and teach it in such a way as to make all things new. After setting up this context, Smith explains that Mascall sets out the central place of the incarnation in his theology in his early books, *Death or Dogma* and *The God-Man*, and in these books, Mascall argues that God can only set right the problems raised by human pride and sin through the incarnation – God chose to save the world by acting, not talking.[9] In *Christ, the Christian and the Church*, furthermore, Mascall argues that the incarnation recreates human nature by elevating it and uniting it with Christ the eternal Logos and second person of the triune God. This incarnation exalts manhood and does not compromise God's infinitude or immutability. Fully God and fully man, the incarnate Christ accrues a human life without ceasing to hold all of his divine attributes. The divine nature belongs to the Word throughout all of eternity, but he only accrues his human nature in time. Mascall's commitment to Chalcedonian Christology leads him to criticize the Kenotic Christology of Charles Gore, H.M. Relton and 'even' Frank Weston. And Mascall's critical engagement with English-speaking theologians on issues relating to the incarnation is not an exercise of negative theology. Instead, it constructs a positive definition of Chalcedonian Christology that responds to contemporary problems and misunderstandings.

Smith concludes by looking at two aspects of the Body of Christ – the Body in the Eucharist and the Body in the Church – and there are not three bodies of Christ, but Christ is present in three forms, the natural, mystical and the Eucharistic forms of the Body. In *Corpus Christi* Mascall argues that the Church and the Eucharist are

[8]Eric L. Mascall, *The Christian Universe*, Angelico Press: 2023.

[9]Eric L. Mascall, *Death or Dogma?: Christian Faith and Social Theory*, MacMillan, 1937 and *The God-Man*, SCM, 1940.

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part of one sacramental order, the mystical Body nourished by the Eucharistic body and blood.[10] In the same way that the incarnation of Christ enacts the descent of the timeless God into union with a temporal body, the Catholic Church is the historical organism that sacramentally incorporates men into Christ. It is this incorporation that brings temporal human bodies into union with the timeless triune God.

Michael Lloyd recounts how Eric Mascall influenced his doctoral thesis on theodicy, and he describes what the Church and theologians can learn from Mascall's contributions to theodicy. Darwinian evolutionary theory, according to Lloyd, challenges traditional Christian accounts of creation and the fall that see human persons introducing evil into the creation through their free-will. If evolutionary theory is correct to recount centuries of animal suffering in the lead up to the Edenic relationship between God and Adam and Eve, then evil plagues the creation made very good by God. While searching for an answer to this objection to the goodness of God and his creation, Lloyd stumbled on Mascall's *Christian Theology and Natural Science and its response to the evolutionary objection to the goodness of God.*[11] Mascall argues that a retrieval of a historic Angelology will remind Christians that the angelic fall predated the human fall, and it allowed evil and sin to disorder God's very good creation, enthralling to the sinful rule of powers and principalities acting against the just will of God. Mascall, therefore, applies the free will argument defending the goodness of God in the face of suffering to angelic free will as well as human. Lloyd insists that this introduces a plausible answer to the chronological problem with the human free will theodicy introduced by evolutionary history. He insists, moreover, that all suffering is antithetical to the will of God, and this contrasts with the common argument that suffering is instrumental in enacting the will of God. Mascall, according to Lloyd, overcomes objections that stand in the way of a theodicy that maintains all suffering is contrary to the will of God.

In the issue's final article, I explore the eschatology of Mascall. I argue that Mascall develops C.S. Lewis's freedom of choice definition of eschatological particularism. And in order to test Lewis and Mascall's defence of the consensual doctrine of hell against universalist objections, I contrast Mascall's account of freedom, love and the eschaton with David Bentley Hart's case for universalism in *That All Shall Be Saved*.[12] Mascall's accounts of personhood in *The Importance of Being Human* and the last things in *Grace and Glory* provide the framework for my account of Mascall's theological anthropology and vision of eternity.[13]

It is our hope that the articles in this volume of the JAS send you back to Mascall's books on the analogy of being, the doctrine of God, Jesus Christ, the natural sciences and the last things. And as you study Mascall's theology, we trust that you will be nourished and challenged by his retrieval of Scripture, patristics and scholastics for his own time. And whether or not his arguments persuade you to

[10]Eric L. Mascall, *Corpus Christi: Essays on the Church and the Eucharist*, Nashotah House Press, 2020.

[11]Eric L. Mascall, Christian Theology and Natural Science*: Some Questions in Their* Relations, Longmans, Green and Co., 1957.

[12]David Bentley Hart, *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation*, Yale University Press, 2019.

[13]Eric L. Mascall, *The Importance of Being Human: Some aspects of the Christian Doctrine of Man*, Greenwood Press, 1974 and *Grace and Glory*, Morehouse-Barlow CO, 1961.

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adopt his existential Thomism or Anglican *nouvelle théologie*, we long to see his contributions to the great tradition, and his example as a theologian, contribute to the study of Anglican theology and the life of the contemporary Church.

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