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ABSTRACT

Human beings have no language with which to speak about God and their experiences of God except that language which they also use of themselves and of their experiences of each other. The doctrine of the Trinity points to the presence and action of God in the world through Jesus Christ. The search for human analogies with the doctrine of the Trinity has occupied the minds and hearts of theologians and philosophers since earliest Christian times. Many of the attempts made to provide a paradigm by which the Holy Trinity might best be articulated in human thinking have fallen short of the ideals at which they aimed. As a result, there is a paucity of material from which the teacher of theology may draw in explicating this apparently most complicated of doctrines. While the search was confined to the field of pure theology, it seemed fruitless. Dorothy L Sayers, a writer of detective novels, engaged in that search almost by accident as she moved from detective fiction to religious drama in the second phase of her writing career. By using her own experience of creative activity, she saw a striking resemblance between the creative activity of God and that of God's creatures. That this activity possessed a threefold structure allowed Sayers to discern a human analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity which would serve where others had failed. Her thinking was set out in her book *The Mind of the Maker* in 1941. However, her achievement in this volume has largely been ignored. It is time for a re-appraisal of that achievement in order both to re-present it to those engaged in theological deliberations now and to investigate how it was received in its own day and why it may have been overlooked hitherto.

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PREFACE

Dorothy L Sayers was an artist and a craftsman who articulated her skill in the context of creative writing. In her presentation of both Lord Peter Wimsey and the Lord Jesus Christ, a theological appreciation of her vocation as a writer gradually occurred to her. She expressed her understanding of this vocation and its theological basis in *The Mind of the Maker*[1] in 1941, which is as much a reflection of her own Christian enthusiasm for work well done as it is a precise and coherent presentation of the meaning of the Christian creeds. The dual basis for the discussion contained within this book provides Sayers with an opportunity to enlarge an analogy which she had drawn between the Holy Trinity and the creative process in which the artist engages in her first religious drama *The Zeal of Thy House*[2] written in 1937. In that play, during the final speech of the Archangel Michael, each Person of the Trinity accords with one part of the creative process of the artist:

> For every work of creation is threefold, an earthly triunity to match the heavenly.
>
> First, there is the Creative Idea, passionless, timeless, beholding the whole work complete at once, the end in the beginning: and this is the image of the Father.
>
> Second, there is the Creative Energy begotten of that idea, and working in time from the beginning to the end, with sweat and passion, being incarnate in the bonds of matter: and this is the image of the Word.
>
> Third, there is the Creative Power, the meaning of the work and its response in the lively soul: and this is the image of the indwelling Spirit.
>
> And these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without other: and this is the image of the Trinity.[3]

Sayers herself admitted that *Mind* was an enlargement of this speech, through which she draws an analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity based entirely upon her experience as a creative writer.[4] Of comparable importance in understanding how she

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[1] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, Methuen and Co, London, 1941
[2] Dorothy L Sayers, "The Zeal of Thy House" in *Four Sacred Plays*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1948, pages 7-103.
[3] ibid., page 103
[4] *Mind*, page 28

draws this analogy is to note her interpretation of Genesis Chapter 1, verse 27[5]: that human beings are most God-like when they are making things.[6]

From St Augustine onwards, theologians have required a human paradigm to speak of the Persons of the Trinity though most have failed to use convincing or consistent analogies. Even Karl Barth, despite insisting on the biblical primacy of the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity, is content to use human analogy albeit as an inferior paradigm and concerned only in the effects of the doctrine.[7] There is a case to be argued that Sayers has been overlooked as providing the most convincing and consistent paradigm for the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

That this case must be argued is an indication of the scant merit that has been attached to *Mind* by theologians and literary theorists alike. There are practical and political reasons why this is so and these will be addressed. That her theory is still relevant may be judged by the lack of any comparable alternative and by the continued engagement by the Christian Church in the patronage and articulation of the creative arts as a worshipful expression of the divine being.

[5] "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (NRSV.)
[6] *Mind*, pages 16-17
[7] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* in *Church Dogmatics, Volume I*, G W Bromiley (ed), T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1956, page 340

INTRODUCTION

The Doctrine of the Trinity

The principal purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity is to point to the presence and action of God in this world in Jesus the Christ.[1] This is the "economic" model of the doctrine, whose origins lie in the controversial needs of the fourth century as a counter to heresy in addition to providing an explication of the Persons of the Trinity as revealed in Scripture and understood from experience. The "economic" order of salvation and revelation in which Father, Son and Spirit come "after one another" may lay some claim to revelation in Scripture and sits together with an "essential" Trinity in which the persons are placed "along side one another" in a transcendent relationship expressed in the preaching and worship of the Christian Church from the fifth century onwards.

The creeds and confessions of the Christian Church express the earliest concrete efforts to explain the Christian understanding, knowledge and doctrine of God. The Apostles' Creed may be regarded as a prototype for more expansive versions of the creed, particularly that of the Council of Nicaea of 325. In these two cases, God is defined as "Father" and "creator/maker of heaven and earth". This is the God who chooses to make his dwelling place amongst his people "tabernacled" along side them, dwelling in the Temple and, in the understanding of the Christian religion, revealed in Jesus the Christ. This second Person of the Trinity was born into this world as a human being, died and was buried, and rose from the dead, to take his place within the Godhead "seated at the right hand of the Father". The doctrine of the Spirit as a distinct person of the Trinity developed subsequently and may owe its earliest articulation in St Paul's language about believers' participation in the Spirit (2 Corinthians 13: 14[2]). The Holy Spirit is understood by Christians to perfect the Father's creative and the Son's re-creative mission in history.

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[1] J P Mackey in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Alan Richardson and John Bowden (eds), SCM Press, London, 1983.

[2] "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." (NRSV.)

Historical Context

The Nicene Creed of 325 was a response to heresy and the principal heresy to which it was a response was that of the presbyter Arius of Alexandria. He and his supporters rejected the substance-language of the relationship between Father and Son as unbiblical. They thus appeared to support a subordinate relationship between the Father and Son, with the Son a creature of the Father, and threatened the Christian conviction that the Son who was reconciling the world to himself was the one, true God and not a lesser deity. The debate at the Council of Nicaea resolved this tension by insisting that the Son was "of one substance" with the Father (*homoousios*). The Athanasian Creed, of the mid-fifth century, owes its name to Athanasius who extended the concept of *homoousios* to that of the Son being "begotten" of the Father, not "created". However, once the term was extended also to the Holy Spirit, the connection with the image of the "eternally begotten" was broken since the Spirit could not be said to have been generated. Nevertheless, all suggestion of subordination within the "economic" order of the Trinity had been rejected.

Dorothy L Sayers revelled in the history of these controversies and it should be noted that *Mind* is an attempt on her part in the middle of the twentieth century to provide a commentary "on a particular set of statements made in the Christian creeds and their claim to be statements of fact."[3]

> The selected statements are those which aim at defining the nature of God, conceived in His capacity as Creator. They were originally drawn up as defences against heresy — that is, specifically to safeguard the facts against opinions which were felt to be distortions of fact. It will not do to regard them as the product of irresponsible speculation, spinning fancies for itself in a vacuum. That is the reverse of the historical fact about them. They would never have been drawn up at all but for the urgent practical necessity of finding a formula to define experienced truth under pressure of misapprehension and criticism.[4]

When Sayers completes the theological phase of her work ten years after *Mind,* she leaves us with her final religious play *The Emperor Constantine*[5] a drama of epic

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[3] *Mind*, page vii.
[4] *Mind,* page ix.
[5] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Emperor Constantine,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1951.

dimensions which records the history of the Council of Nicaea and its defence of the Christian creed against the Arian heresy.

Dorothy L Sayers

Sayers was born in 1893, the only daughter of the Reverend Henry Sayers and Helen Mary Leigh. Her father was headmaster of the Choir School of Christ Church, Oxford, and her mother an intelligent woman, who displayed a lively literary style in her letters. When Sayers was four, the family moved to Bluntisham-cum-Earith, Huntingdonshire, where her father was to be Rector. Her education, for most of her childhood, took place at home until she was 15 when she was sent to the Godolphin School, in Salisbury. She appears to have had mixed feelings about her time there. A suggestion of unpopularity amongst the other girls may have been an expression of resentment at this most able of pupils. She was a fluent French speaker and demonstrated a mental agility which belied her years in literature and drama.

At the age of 16, she was confirmed in Salisbury Cathedral, an occasion for which she told her parents she could not express her feelings.[6] Later, in 1934, in her semi-autobiographical work *Cat o' Mary* (in which the principal character is a girl called Katherine) she gives the impression that she resented the Evangelical pietism of the Godolphin School. Reynolds senses a discernment by Sayers of two kinds of Christianity: the sentimental which made her feel uncomfortable and the intelligent which she saw embodied in the language of Scripture and in the architecture of the Church. "A strict course of exact and dogmatic theology might well provide the intellect with a good, strong bone to cut its teeth on; but ... to worship with the understanding had already, in Katherine's school-days, become unfashionable."[7]

In March 1912, Sayers sat successfully for the Gilchrist Scholarship to Somerville College, Oxford, where she went, in October of that year, to read modern languages. Amongst the preliminary examinations she was required to pass to be admitted to an Honours degree course was Divinity Moderations. She was required to translate New

[6] Barbara Reynolds, *Dorothy L Sayers: Her Life and Soul,* Hodder and Stoughton, 1994, page 56.
[7] Unpublished, in the collection of the Marion E Wade Center, Wheaton College, Illinois, and quoted in Reynolds , *Sayers,* op. cit., pages 57-8.

Testament Greek and demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter of the Acts of the Apostles. She wrote to her parents:

> Having read two gospels with more attention than I had ever before given to the subject, I came to the conclusion that such a set of stupid, literal, pig-headed people never existed as Christ had to do with, including the disciples.[8]

Ultimately, Sayers' mission was to contend with such people and convert them.

She achieved a first-class honours degree in 1915 although she was unable to graduate owing to the restrictions imposed on women graduands of that period. (She finally graduated when the rules were changed in 1920.) She remained in Oxford working for Basil Blackwell, bookseller and publisher, and published a small set of poems in Blackwell's *Adventurers All* series entitled *OP 1*[9] in December 1916. She undertook a teaching engagement in Hull which was followed by a role as an exchange assistant in a boarding school in northern France. In the middle of all of this, she received a proposal of marriage from Leonard Hodgson, a doctor of divinity and subsequently residentiary canon of Winchester Cathedral and Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. Although she turned his proposal down, he was gracious enough in his 1943 volume, *The Doctrine of the Trinity,* to describe *Mind* as "a fascinating little book" and "a very illuminating aid to the understanding of the faith."[10]

Upon her return from France, she settled in London but it was some time before she secured decent employment for herself. In the mean time, she made tentative forays into writing alongside further temporary teaching work. Most importantly, she began work on her first detective novel, *Whose Body?,*[11] eventually published in 1923. Her first truly creative and sustained work came with her employment at S H Benson's advertising agency, at which her most enduring legacy was the copy she wrote for Guinness and its "toucan" emblem.

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[8] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 64.
[9] Dorothy L Sayers, *OP 1,* B H Blackwell, Oxford, 1916.
[10] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 97.
[11] Dorothy L Sayers, *Whose Body?*, T Fisher Unwin, London, 1923.

Once *Whose Body?* had been published, her career as a novelist was established and her detective creation Lord Peter Wimsey, together with the fictional crime writer Harriet Vane, took an unassailable place in the league of fictional detectives. Her work progressed to that of full-time novelist and writer until 1937 when her career followed a new route. She was asked by Margaret Babington of the Canterbury Festival to write a play for the Festival. She had written to Sayers at the suggestion of Charles Williams, who had written the previous year's drama, *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*. He had read and admired a morality play, *The Mocking of Christ*, which she had written and published with Blackwell's in 1918 in a volume entitled *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs.*[12] Apart from this work, she had produced no other writing of a religious nature. She had dramatised, in collaboration with Muriel St Clare Byrne, her last Wimsey novel, *Busman's Honeymoon*[13] although this had not yet been presented or published when Canterbury approached her. She accepted the challenge and *The Zeal of Thy House* was the first of five religious plays which, along with *Mind,* her broadcast series of plays *The Man Born to be King*[14] and numerous essays and addresses, constituted the second stage of her writing career.

In April 1926, she had married Oswold Arthur ('Mac') Fleming in a register office (owing to his divorced status). The marriage was not a particularly fulsome relationship but it did bring her some degree of stability in the aftermath of an unplanned pregnancy and the birth of her son (to another man), John Anthony Fleming, in 1924. The anxieties surrounding her personal life perhaps sat uneasily against the background of her new and unwanted role as a Christian apologist (a role she not only had not sought for herself but which she also denied[15]). This may, in part, explain her rejection of an honorary Lambeth Doctorate offered by William Temple in 1943 as a mark of what he saw as the evangelistic success of her series of radio plays *The Man Born to be King.* Her reply to his invitation to accept the conferment of this degree is illuminating on several fronts:

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[12] Dorothy L Sayers, *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs,* B H Blackwell, Oxford, 1918.
[13] Dorothy L Sayers and Muriel St Clare Byrne, *Busman's Honeymoon,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1937.
[14] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Man Born to be King,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1943.
[15] Of *Mind,* she had written, "This book is not an apology for Christianity, nor is it an expression of personal religious belief." (*Mind,* page vii).

> Thank you very much indeed for the great honour you do me. I find it very difficult to reply as I ought, because I am extremely conscious that I don't deserve it. A Doctorate of Letters — yes; I have served Letters as faithfully as I knew how. But I have only served Divinity, as it were, accidentally, coming to it as a writer rather than as a Christian person. A Degree in Divinity is not, I suppose, intended as a certificate in sanctity, exactly; but I should feel better about it if I were a more convincing kind of Christian. I am never quite sure whether I really am one, or whether I have only fallen in love with an intellectual pattern.[16]

Her humility combines with a fear of the sanctity to which she believes she has no claim and the same self-interrogation is expressed which she had reflected upon at the time of her confirmation and subsequently in *Cat o' Mary.* It was ultimately only the University of Durham which made her an offer she could not refuse when it conferred upon her the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in 1950.

Her career took its final turn in a new direction in the 1940's when she began to read Dante's *Divine Comedy* both as a result of acquiring Charles Williams' appraisal of the work in his volume *The Figure of Beatrice*[17] and as a means of passing time in the all too familiar surroundings of the air-raid shelter of the Second World War. This change of direction was more gradual than that from detective novelist to theologian allowing, as it did, a transference of skills developed over a much longer period. She began a translation of Dante for Penguin Classics and completed both *Inferno*[18] and *Purgatorio*[19] but died, in 1957, before finishing her work on *Paradiso.* This latter was completed by her friend and biographer, the Italian scholar Barbara Reynolds.[20]

The intellectual rigour with which she invested all her works is her epitaph. It is with a rigorous intellect that she wished to endow the Christian Church in the matter of its doctrine and signs of faith. Her belief that human beings are most God-like when they are being creative encouraged her to the sweat and toil of creative activity with brain and sinew in perfect synchronism. The work which best articulates both her belief in

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[16] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 373.
[17] Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice,* Boydell and Brewer, 1943.
[18] Dorothy L Sayers (trans), *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine, Cantica I: Hell,* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1949.
[19] Dorothy L Sayers (trans), *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine, Cantica II: Purgatory,* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1955.
[20] Dorothy L Sayers and Barbara Reynolds (trans), *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine, Cantica III: Paradise,* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1962.

the primacy of creative achievement and its application in the teaching of the Christian Church is *The Mind of the Maker* which may thus also serve, in its turn, as her epitaph.

The Mind of the Maker

Mind was published in 1941 and, although it is primarily an enlargement of her theory of an analogy between the creative activity of the artist and the doctrine of the Trinity, it owes something to the backdrop of war before which it was written. Sayers had evolved a plan for a series of volumes on social, moral and theological subjects intended to encourage members of the public to consider the future in a creative and constructive manner in the same way that the exigencies of war were forcing them to do with limited resources.

In a letter to Maurice Reckitt, the founder of the Christendom Group, she wrote of *The Mind of the Maker*:

> It is the first volume of a series called *Bridgeheads*, edited by M St Clare Byrne and myself, of which the general idea is to deal with this business of 'Creativeness' — both in theory and in practice. The object of this particular book is to start us off on the right lines by trying to examine, in the light of theology interpreted by the writer's experience, what Creativeness is and how it works, because the word is rapidly becoming one of those catch-phrases which people use without always understanding them very well.[21]

Here is her oft-repeated criticism of people who fail completely to understand something: what does "Creativeness" actually mean? Her answer acknowledges the context of the Second World War and the Protestant work ethic re-emphasised by the "Biblical Theology Movement" of the 1940's.

Bridgeheads was to be a series of books on social reconstruction preparing people for the aftermath of war. The editors stated: "We shall try to quicken the creative spirit which enables man to build ... systems in the light of his spiritual, intellectual and

[21] Barbara Reynolds (ed), *The Letters of Dorothy L Sayers, Volume Two, 1937-1943: From Novelist to Playwright,* pages 263-4.

social needs. We aim at the Resurrection of Faith, the Revival of Learning and the Re-integration of Society".[22]

Methuen's advertising material stated that the aim of the forthcoming volumes was to help readers to discover for themselves that creative power which constituted their real claim to humanity. "No social structure can be satisfactory that is not based upon a satisfactory philosophy of man's true nature and needs". The hope of the editors was that the books would prove useful to "the re-makers of civilisation" in their efforts to "throw forward their pioneering works".[23]

Sayers herself stated in an address given at Eastbourne on 23 April 1942:

> We have had to learn the bitter lesson that in all the world there are only two sources of real wealth: the fruit of the earth and the labour of men; and to estimate work — not by the money it brings to the producer, but by the worth of the thing that is made.[24]

Sayers expressed her opinions about the ethic of work vigorously and saw the exigencies of the Second World War as an opportunity to rediscover an attitude to work which was based on creativity rather than consumption:

> I see no reason why we should not sacrifice our convenience and our individual standard of living just as readily for the building of great public works as for the building of ships and tanks.[25]

Like the proponents of the Protestant work ethic, Sayers makes a connection between the Genesis story of Creation and human creativity and describes the Trinity as the channel through which the two are connected. It was her belief that creativeness is an essential part of people's true nature. Since God is eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it follows that all three Persons of the Trinity are essentially concerned in creation. Since her experience is that of a writer, she demonstrates the threefold structure of the writing process in order to explain how human creativeness works and correlates it to the threefold structure of the doctrine of the Trinity.

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[22] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 348.
[23] ibid., page 348.
[24] Dorothy L Sayers, *Why Work?,* Methuen and Co, London, 1942, page 6.
[25] ibid., page 7.

In order to facilitate the analogy, Sayers uses a corresponding language which made its first appearance in the Archangel Michael speech at the end of *The Zeal of Thy House.* The Creative Idea corresponds with the Mind of the Divine Maker and, in the case of a creative writer, with the artist's mental vision of the work to be achieved; the Creative Energy or Activity is the incarnation of the Divine Mind in the Person of Jesus Christ and it is the realisation of the artist's mental vision through the physical construction in time of the work of art; the Creative Power is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit communicating between God and Creation and it is the impact which the work of art makes both on the artist and his or her audience eliciting a necessary response.

This analogy and theory will be tested against the creative activity of Dorothy L Sayers herself and that of her contemporaries, T S Eliot, C S Lewis and Charles Williams, as well as being compared and contrasted with similar such analogies and theories in the writings of other theologians and philosophers.

T S Eliot, C S Lewis and Charles Williams

In her Introduction to the Mowbray edition of *Mind,* which appeared as part of the *Library of Anglican Spirituality* series in 1994, Susan Howatch describes Eliot, Lewis and Williams as Sayers' "great lay contemporaries in the Church of England" but believes that "none of them wrote a book like *The Mind of the Maker.*" [26]

T S Eliot, the American-born Harvard and Oxford scholar who became a British poet, dramatist and critic, corresponded with Sayers although it is thought they never met. He appears never to have made explicit reference to *Mind* nor is it known whether he read it but many of his works of criticism reveal thought processes which are strikingly similar to those in which Sayers engages in her own literary theory.

Anne Ridler, who worked for Eliot at Faber and Faber, recognises a similarity in their working style. Sayers' claim that an artist has completed a work in his mind before

[26] Susan Howatch (ed), *The Mind of the Maker: Dorothy L Sayers*, in *The Library of Anglican Spirituality,* Mowbray, London, 1994, page ix.

realising the mental vision in effect accorded with Eliot's belief that a work, once started, must be completed even if it must be laid aside for a space before the work is continued. Equally, he refused to revise work once it had been completed believing that this dented the integrity of the original concept.[27]

Barbara Reynolds believes that Sayers was inspired by Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society*[28] in which he calls for a re-appraisal of the way in which people think and the nature of their attitude towards society.[29] Sayers' response was *Begin Here.*[30]

C S Lewis, the Irish-born academic, writer and Christian apologist, corresponded with Sayers numerous times and they met on several occasions. At any rate, not only did Lewis review *Mind* for Theology in 1941,[31] he also commended it to the readers of his book *Miracles*[32] as her "indispensable book". Perhaps most telling about his regard for Sayers is the fact that he wrote a panegyric for her memorial service at St Margaret's Church, Westminster in 1958 (in his absence, the address was read by George Bell, Bishop of Chichester).[33] In it, Lewis wrote:

> Much of her most valuable work about writing was embodied in *The Mind of the Maker*: a book which is still too little read. It has faults. But books about writing by those who have themselves written viable books are too rare and too useful to be neglected.[34]

Charles Williams is, unjustifiably, the least noted of this Anglican quadripartite literary group. A member of Lewis' "Inklings" group of Christian writers who met to share fellowship and ideas, Williams worked as a proof reader and later editor at the Oxford University Press. He was a novelist and developed a profound interest in Dante. It was his work *The Figure of Beatrice*[35] which inspired Sayers to read Dante

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[27] Anne Ridler, private interview, Oxford, February 2001.
[28] T S Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society,* Faber and Faber, London, 1939.
[29] Barbara Reynolds, private interview, Cambridge, March 2001.
[30] Dorothy L Sayers, *Begin Here: A War-Time Essay,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1940.
[31] C S Lewis, "The Mind of the Maker by Dorothy L Sayers" in *Theology*, Vol XLIII, No 256, October 1941, pages 248-9.
[32] C S Lewis, *Miracles,* Collins Fontana Books, London and Glasgow, 1960, page 102.
[33] C S Lewis, "A Panegyric for Dorothy L Sayers", in *Of This and Other Worlds,* Collins, London, 1982, page 122.
[34] ibid., page 123.
[35] Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice,* op. cit.

for herself. He, in turn, had been deeply impressed by her detective fiction. After reading *The Nine Tailors,*[36] he wrote to her publisher, Victor Gollancz:

> Your Dorothy Sayers ...! Present her some time with my profoundest compliments. It's a marvellous book; it is high imagination — and the incomprehensible splendours of the preludes to each part make a pattern round and through it like the visible laws and the silver waters themselves.[37]

In a letter to Maurice Reckitt, she wrote of Williams:

> Williams is really an original interpreter of theology, I think; it is true that people who don't find him illuminating, find him wholly unintelligible, but it is good for men like Gloag[38] to tackle the unintelligible.[39]

It is not clear whether Williams commented in print upon *Mind* but Anne Ridler feels certain that he had read the work and noticed similarities between the threefold structure of her theory and Williams' theory of the City in his novels corresponding with the creative notion which Sayers was keen to impress although Williams' use of terms differed from that of Sayers. His idea of the City of God was of a mirror of the Trinity with human beings taking the role of the creating party. Ridler describes Williams as living "so very much in his imagination."[40]

The works of all three writers reveal a sympathy with Sayers' theory and a selection of their writing along corresponding lines will be analysed in Chapter Five.

The following chapter analyses the Preface to *The Mind of the Maker* as providing the context in which Sayers presents her theory. It sets out her belief in the need for the book and her rejection of the idea that her work is an apologia for her own religious commitment.

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[36] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Nine Tailors,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1934.
[37] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 275.
[38] Sayers had written to John Gloag, Editor of *World Review,* in July 1941 in response to his request for the names of some leaders of Christian thought who "interpret world events with depth and insight" listing, amongst others, Charles Williams and T S Eliot [see Barbara Reynolds (ed), *The Letters of Dorothy L Sayers, Volume Two, 1937-1943: From Novelist to Playwright,* The Dorothy L Sayers Society, Carole Green Publishing, Cambridge, 1997, page 257].
[39] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two,* op. cit., page 259
[40] Anne Ridler, private interview, Oxford, February 2001.

CHAPTER ONE: THE MIND OF THE MAKER

The Preface to *The Mind of the Maker*

In her characteristically robust style, Sayers sets out in her Preface to *Mind* a defence of her right to anonymity in the matter of her personal religious beliefs. She is not writing "as a Christian" and rejects the "theory that what writes is not the self but some aspect of the self."[1]

> This book is not an apology for Christianity, nor is it an expression of personal religious belief. It is a commentary, in the light of specialised knowledge, on a particular set of statements made in the Christian creeds and their claim to be statements of fact.[2]

Sayers draws a distinction between those statements of fact which are historical and those which are theological. She is not concerned with the historical statements and defines the theological statements as claiming to be statements of fact about the nature of God and the universe. She will deal with a limited number of these statements, namely those which conceive God in his capacity as Creator.

Sayers will examine these statements in the light of experience and will argue that, regardless of their truth in the matter of God, they accord with her understanding of the processes and activity of the creative mind. Applying her own empirical evidence as a writer, she perceives "an exact description of the human mind while engaged in an act of creative imagination."[3]

She will not go as far as to decide whether this analogy answers the question about humankind being made in the image of God or God in the image of humankind. The statements in the creeds which are statements of historical fact must be called to witness for that debate to be settled and those statements lie outside her terms of reference.

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[1] *Mind*, page x, note 1.
[2] ibid., page vii.
[3] ibid., page x.

She will pursue her claim that the Trinitarian structure accords with the nature of the human creative mind against and alongside the Christian affirmation that the same structure is integral to the structure of the universe and corresponds "by a necessary uniformity of substance"[4] with the nature of God. This is not proved by the use of pictorial imagery although the power of the imagination is a vital part of the creative process. It is a claim of fact made in the light of experience. An appeal to experience is different from an expression of opinion.

Her intention will be to draw an analogy between the statements made in the creeds about the Mind of the Divine Maker and the experience of the mind of the human maker.

This is one part of the task she sets herself in this book. At the same time, she sets out to challenge the social and educational system of her day which she believes betrays a dangerously similar lack of intellectual rigour which gave rise to the heresies and controversies which necessitated the exposition of the Christian creeds.

She is deeply disturbed by the confusion in the popular mind between fact and opinion. She had herself suffered as a result of this confusion when an article in which she had set out the essentials of Christian doctrine was received as a personal profession of faith.[5] "Now, what the writer believes or does not believe is of little importance one way or the other. What is of disastrous importance is the proved inability of supposedly educated persons to read."[6]

This arises from a formal literacy which allows letters to be put together to form words but without any developed mental sense of the images and concepts which the words evince. This intellectual laziness results in an inability to interpret questions accurately, to formulate appropriate questions, or to listen to the answers given. The journalism of the popular press is one result of this but it has a profound consequence too for the interpretation of Christian doctrine and for the creative process of the imagination and its effects.

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[4] *Mind,* page x.
[5] Dorothy L Sayers, "The Greatest Drama Ever Staged" in *The Greatest Drama Ever Staged,* Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1938, pages 5-24.

In the case of Christian doctrine, Sayers writes:

> Words are understood in a wholly mistaken sense, statements of fact and opinion are misread and distorted in repetition, arguments founded in misapprehension are accepted without examination, expressions of individual preference are construed as oecumenical doctrine, disciplinary regulations founded on consent are confused with claims to interpret universal law, and vice versa; with the result that the logical and historical structure of Christian philosophy is transformed in the popular mind to a confused jumble of mythological and pathological absurdity.[7]

This provides a context in which she sets out to comment on "a particular set of statements made in the Christian creeds and their claims to be statements of fact" but it also provides the first correlation between "the urgent practical necessity of finding a formula to define experienced truth under pressure of misapprehension and criticism"[8] and the intellectual rigour which Sayers believed underpinned the creative process.

If she is right in suggesting that the statements made in the creeds about the Mind of the Divine Maker represent true statements about the mind of the human maker, then a popular inability to answer questions, ask questions, and listen to answers may indicate that the social and educational system which has produced this state of affairs has failed to provide the tools of learning with which the creative mind may be most effective.

Chapter Three of *The Mind of the Maker:* Idea, Energy, Power and *The Zeal of Thy House.*

The Zeal of Thy House, written for the Canterbury Festival of 1937, and particularly its final speech by the Archangel Michael provide a neat summary of the doctrine of the Trinity in the light of Sayers' experience as a creative writer and her understanding of the nature of God and the nature of the universe. This is theology interpreted by the writer's experience. The reiteration in that speech of the word "Creative" indicates the key to the particular statement of Trinitarian theology expressed here and in *Mind.*

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[6] *Mind,* page vii.
[7] ibid., page ix.
[8] ibid., page ix.

Sayers develops this speech in Chapter Three of *Mind* and expounds in the "economic" sense of Trinitarian theology an analogy between the creative process in which the artist engages and the persons of the Divine Trinity.

The Creative Idea is the first person of the creative writer's trinity:

> The ordinary man is apt to say: 'I thought you first began by collecting material and working out the plot.' The confusion here is not merely over the words 'first' and 'begin'. In fact the 'Idea' — or rather the writer's realisation of his own idea — does precede any mental or physical work upon the materials or on the course of the story within a time-series. But apart from this, the very formulation of the Idea in the writer's mind is not the Idea itself, but its self-awareness in the Energy. Everything that is conscious, everything that has to do with form and time, and everything that has to do with process, belongs to the working of the Energy or Activity or 'Word'. The Idea, that is, cannot be said to precede the Energy in time, because (so far as the act of creation is concerned) it is the Energy that creates the time-process. This is the analogy of the theological expressions that 'the Word was in the beginning with God' and 'was eternally begotten of the Father'. If, that is, the act has a beginning in time at all, it is because of the presence of the Energy or Activity. The writer cannot even be conscious of his Idea except by the working of the Energy which formulates it to himself.[9]

The real existence of the Idea apart from the Energy can be proved by the consciousness that the Energy must refer all of its acts to the existing and complete whole, by which a writer can verify that a choice of episode, phrase, or word conforms to the pattern of the entire book.

The Creative Energy is the second person of the creative writer's trinity.

> The Energy ... is the thing of which the writer is conscious and which the reader can see when it is manifest in material form. It is dynamic — the sum and process of all the activity which brings the book into temporal and spatial existence. ... To it belongs everything that can be included under the word 'passion' — feeling, thought, toil, trouble, difficulty, choice, triumph — all the accidents which attend a manifestation in time. It is the Energy that is the creator in the sense in which the common man understands the word, because it brings about an expression in temporal form of the eternal and immutable Idea. It is, for the writer, what he means by 'the writing of the book', and it includes, though it is not confined to, the manifestation of the book in material form.[10]

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[9] *Mind,* pages 28-29.
[10] ibid., page 30.

Sayers distinguishes the Energy from the Idea while at the same time emphasising that it is the only thing that can make the Idea known to itself or to others. In the context of the creative act, it is nevertheless identical with the Idea — "consubstantial with the Father".

The Creative Power is the third person of the creative writer's trinity:

> It is not the same thing as the Energy (which for greater clearness I ought perhaps to have called 'The Activity'), though it proceeds from the Idea and the Energy together. It is the thing which flows back to the writer from his own activity and makes him, as it were, the reader of his own book. It is also, of course, the means by which the Activity is communicated to other readers and which produces a corresponding response in them. In fact, from the reader's point of view, it is the book. By it, they perceive the book, both as a process in time and as an eternal whole, and react to it dynamically.[11]

The theological tri-unity of this structure mirrored in the human creative act and underlying the structure of the universe and the nature of God is characterised by Sayers as an intellectual process which allows the artist to extrapolate each part of the creative act despite the creative act being incapable of expression without the sum of its parts.

> If you were to ask a writer which is 'the real book' – his Idea of it, his Activity in writing it or its return to himself in Power, he would be at a loss to tell you, because these things are essentially inseparable. Each of them is the complete book separately; yet in the complete book all of them exist together. He can, by an act of the intellect, 'distinguish the persons' but he cannot by any means divide the substance. How could he? He cannot know the Idea, except by the Power interpreting his own Activity to him; he knows the Activity only as it reveals the Idea in Power; he knows the Activity only as a revelation of the Idea in the Activity.[12]

What is created by the artist is an individual and complete work achieved by a "trinity in unity". Each part of the trinity can be intellectualised separately and corporately and, either way, is not confined to the material manifestation: "They exist in — they are — the creative mind itself." Even before embarking on the physical process of articulating the Idea in material form, the writer can say with perfect accuracy, "My book is finished — I have only to write it."

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[11] *Mind*, pages 30-31.
[12] ibid., page 31.

This was the expansion of the speech of the Archangel Michael which provided the climax to *Zeal.* The reaction to that play provided Sayers with another example of misapprehension, inappropriate interrogation and distortion of facts. In her essay, "The Dogma is the Drama,"[13] she listed reactions to her play which included a disbelief on the part of some "that the Eternal Word was supposed to be associated in any way with the work of Creation" and "that the doctrine of the Trinity could be considered to have any relation to fact or any bearing on psychological truth."

Her response indicates the direction in which she was beginning to move towards *Mind* and, although it is not a first indication, it is perhaps a particularly plain statement of intention when she writes, "— all these things were looked upon as astonishing and revolutionary novelties, imported into the Faith by the feverish imagination of a playwright. I protested in vain against this flattering tribute to my powers of invention, referring my inquirers to the Creeds, to the Gospels and to the offices of the Church."

Why did she begin this process of explication in the context of religious drama? She continues, "I insisted that if my play was dramatic it was so, not in spite of the dogma but because of it — that, in short, the dogma *was* the drama."

Before examining *Zeal* in detail, it is necessary to note the transition by Sayers from detective fiction to religious drama and to identify in her later fiction echoes of the theme of *Zeal,* which theme is itself translated to *Mind.*

The Transition from Detective Fiction to Religious Drama

In *Mind,* Sayers uses her own experience as a writer to illustrate her analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity. Her experience is that of a writer of detective novels and she uses that genre to make two particular cases for her theory: one is that the logical and conclusive nature of a detective novel's plot is a good example of a creative idea which must exist complete and finished in the writer's mind; the other, on the contrary, is that it is only in the energy devoted to writing the novel through and the

[13] Dorothy L Sayers, "The Dogma is the Drama" in *Strong Meat,* Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1939, pages 31-33.

power released when the book is read that the totality of the writer's idea becomes apparent not only to his or her readership but also indeed to the writer.

A detective novel presents its reader with a problem which has a solution. Sayers sees the terminology of "problem" and "solution" as that of an analytic approach to those facts or occurrences of which the cause may be in question. It is not the creative approach.[14] The artist does not see life as a problem to be solved but as a medium for creation. The creative artist cannot settle things for the average person. Only that which is dead is settled and the artist engages with that which is alive. The artist can create forms of expression which may assist in the fulfilment of the nature of men and women and thus provide signposts for the average person's journey to a final solution but he or she knows that that final solution lies outside the arena of material form. Often, the signs are misinterpreted because the average person asks the wrong questions.[15]

It is in the desire of men and women to believe that all human experience may be presented in terms of a problem having a complete and final solution that Sayers sees an explanation for the popularity of detective fiction. This literary form encourages the belief that the distortions of human society are problems capable of being solved "in the same manner as the Death in the Library."[16] All that has been solved, however, at the termination of a detective novel is that part of the "problem" which has been presented in problematic terms. Indeed, too intricate a knowledge of the culprit's murderous soul and its need for healing may cause an anticipation of the solution and sympathy from the reader, who may resent the murderer's exposure and condemnation. Conan Doyle, wishing to present the reader with an analysis of the criminal's psyche, does so after the final solution of the crime in a component of the novel which is quite separate from the account of Holmes' detection[17].

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[14] *Mind,* pages 150-1.
[15] In her Preface to *Mind,* Sayers cites teachers who complain that they have to spend much time and energy in teaching university students what questions to ask. "This indicates," she argues, "that the young mind experiences great difficulty in disentangling the essence of a subject from its accidents."
[16] Sayers, *Mind,* page 152.
[17] See Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet,* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1982 and *The Sign of Four,* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1982.

Sayers illustrates her point with reference to *Gaudy Night*[18]. This novel contains three parallel problems, one solved, one partially solved, and one insoluble. The theme of the novel connects the three problems and this theme is located in the creative idea of the work in question.

The first problem is the central crime of the novel which requires detection: the strange disturbances at Shrewsbury College which are solved finally and completely by the discovery that the culprit is a maid called Annie. Her motive was revenge for an act of justice dealt against her husband by a female academic who is now a Fellow of Shrewsbury College.

The second problem is better interpreted as a consequence of complex human relationship in which Wimsey and Vane subsume a relationship, broken emotionally by a series of faults on both sides, in a new relationship constructed as a result of the exercise of strict intellectual integrity. This is not a final solution because the construction of a new relationship provides inevitable opportunity for further errors and misunderstandings. This temporary resolve is required by the law of the book's nature although it is neither predictable nor necessary as far as the general law of nature is concerned. Note again the collaboration of predestination and free will which results from the consonant vision of plot and character in the mind of the creative writer.

The third problem is a confrontation of values. The female academic whose action led to the fall from grace of Annie's husband is forced to ask, along with the reader, whether professional integrity is so important that its preservation must over-ride every consideration of the emotional and material consequences. No solution is offered — only situation and character. The only judgment which is proffered is the book itself.

Thus, the creative idea of the book is the theme of integrity and its both enriching and catastrophic qualities. This creative idea provides the vehicle by which the detective problem is articulated, causes the instability of the emotional situation, and unites the

[18] Dorothy L Sayers, *Gaudy Night,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1935.

epitome of the book's narrative to the continuing story of the universe. The least soluble problem of the three is that which gives the book its own greatest integrity. It is the confrontation of values which exemplifies that not all human situations are problems capable of solution like detective problems. As Sayers states, "Human situations are subject to the law of human nature, whose evil is at all times rooted in its good, and whose good can only redeem, but not abolish, its evil."[19] It is the same theme as that of *Zeal* and perhaps the best illustration of the theory that work well done inspires work to be done lies in the juxtaposition of *Gaudy Night* and *The Zeal of Thy House* in the canon of Sayers' work. She wrote,

> I know it is no accident that *Gaudy Night,* coming towards the end of a long development in detective fiction, should be a manifestation of precisely the same theme as the play *The Zeal of Thy House,* which followed it and was the first of a series of creatures embodying Christian theology. They are variations upon a hymn to the Master Maker: and now, after nearly twenty years, I can hear in *Whose Body?* the notes of that tune sounding unmistakably under the tripping melody of a very different descant.[20]

This is perhaps a clear refutation that detective fiction cannot be theological.

The Zeal of Thy House

In *Zeal*, not only does Sayers propose an association between the Eternal Word and the work of creation, but she also examines the psychological state of the human maker. In the case of this play, that human maker is an architect, William of Sens, who has been employed by the Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral to rebuild the Quire devastated by fire in 1174. She will develop her theory about the worth of work and work well done and her belief that human beings should live to work and not work to live in several war-time essays but her near obsession with the value of work which betrays an association with the Protestant work ethic of the time is reiterated throughout this play.

The quadripartite stage audience of four angels, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Cassiel, are dubious about the sincerity of the value which workers place on their work. They question the motive of the worker and their comments, which border on

[19] *Mind,* page 155.
[20] ibid., page 168.

the sarcastic, prefigure the conflict between achievement and pride which will cause William's downfall. Cassiel says, "Happily, being an angel and not a man, I like work. The hatred of work must be one of the most depressing consequences of the Fall."[21]

There is a tension throughout the play between recognition of the hand of God in the work of the artist and the pride of the artist who vies with God and, in the artist himself, between the pursuit of excellence and the distraction of materialism. A member of the Chapter, Gervase, describes William's designs as "a poem in stone"[22] but this poem has been written by one who claims:

> We are the master-craftsmen, God and I —
> We understand one another. None, as I can,
> Can creep under the ribs of God, and feel
> His heart beat through those Six Days of Creation;
> .....
> And lastly, since all Heaven was not enough
> To share that triumph, He made His masterpiece,
> Man, that like God can call beauty from dust,
> Order from chaos, and create new worlds
> To praise their maker. Oh, but in making man
> God over-reached Himself and gave away
> His Godhead. He must now depend on man
> For what man's brain, creative and divine
> Can give Him.[23]

Here an analogy between creator, human and divine, is distorted by a desire to emulate the power of God. Ursula, the lady who has attracted and distracted William's attention, denounces his speech as blasphemy in an indication that she is not necessarily the harlot some members of the Chapter (who, it should be noted, have accepted finance from her) have assumed. They themselves are both pragmatic and naïve in their estimate of the motive and behaviour of their architect. In a conversation between the Prior and Theodatus, the Sacristan, the latter claims a preference for a worse built church and a virtuous builder while the former calls to witness the example of the Church built on Peter, the liar and coward, but also the rock and common man, rather than on John who was all gold. The Prior leaves the

[21] *Zeal*, page 18.
[22] ibid., page 27.
[23] ibid., pages 67-8.

judgement to God: "Do your own work, while yet the daylight lasts. Look that it be well done; look not beyond it."[24]

Sayers' sense of a "complete picture" under which the artist exercises his or her skill meant that something did lie beyond the work of the individual. And, if that were not merely the audience which was to respond creatively to the work of art, it might be fellow artists and craftsmen who were contributing their disparate skills to a single uniform idea. Sayers herself had witnessed this in effect in the arena of the theatre where actors, musicians and producers were ineffectual without costume designers, lighting technicians, and stagehands. The same was true of the rebuilding of the Canterbury Quire as William suggests:

> All these [i.e., carpenter, workmaster, smith, potter] trust to their hands and every one is wise in his work.
> Without these cannot a city be inhabited, and they shall not dwell where they will nor go up and down;
> They shall not be sought for in public council, nor sit high in the congregation;
> But they will maintain the state of the world, and all their desire is in the work of their craft.[25]

Sayers will develop this theory in her wartime writing where she makes a general call for workers to understand the value of the work they are called to do and to understand their contribution to the greater picture. Indeed, *Mind* as part of the Bridgeheads series was one contribution to a series whose editors said, "We shall try to quicken the creative spirit which enables man to build ... systems in the light of his spiritual, intellectual and social needs. We aim at the Resurrection of Faith, the Revival of Learning and the Re-integration of Society".[26]

This theme of a person's one skill or expertise contributing to the whole is developed in a conversation between Gervase and William in which the former admits, "I must be content to be the man with only one talent, and make it go as far as I can." William responds, "If everyone would make good use of his own talent and let others do the

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[24] *Zeal,* page 61.
[25] ibid., pages 34-5.
[26] *quoted in* Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 348.

same, the world would move faster."[27] There is further tension here between an acknowledgement of one's part to play and a desire to manipulate. In *The Just Vengeance*, Sayers' play for the Lichfield Festival of 1946, which was inspired by her reading of Dante, Adam resumes Cassiel's theme of one consequence of the Fall being to make work a drudge. The desire to complete work quickly and to provide greater opportunities for leisure is a hunger for power. By ameliorating the drudge of work, the consequences of the Fall may be reversed as humankind plays the part of God.

> You see, the curse laid on the human race
> Is labour — without hard, back-breaking labour,
> And sweat and toil that leave no time for pleasure
> We make no progress. Progress, as you know,
> When one gets down to it, is just the task
> Of shifting things about from place to place
> Quicker and quicker, so as to get more
> Of everything at once.[28]

This distorts the role of the second person of the human maker's trinity where the energy with which the idea is expressed in reality corresponds to the Word of God revealed in the Son. It is the connection between progress and leisure, espoused by some, which lies behind Sayers' criticism of an inadequate social and educational system. It is a system which appears to affirm that work is a drudge and which thus almost confirms what Cassiel describes as one of the most depressing consequences of the Fall. Plato believed that culture in the form of idle leisure had no place in his utopia. Sayers is surely critical of *idle* leisure and not the provision of time away from paid employment which provides opportunities for engaging in cultural activity.

The state of William's mind is revealed in the further tension between the craftsman and the lover. He has separated his emotions for Ursula and his passion for his work to the detriment of his relationship and his duty. In a flirtatious compliment to the architect, Ursula comments, "Without the heart, how can the limbs do their office? You are the heart of the undertaking." In a playing out of the saga of Adam and Eve, William suggests to Ursula, "It is death to come between the man and his work." He

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[27] *Zeal,* page 39.
[28] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Just Vengeance,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1946, page 34.

emphasises "the passion of making, beside which love's little passion shows brittle as a bubble." Ursula claims his passion for skill and artistry as a gift from her:

> Knowledge and work — knowledge is given to man
> And not to woman; and the glory of work
> To man and not to woman. But by whom
> Came either work or knowledge into the world?
> Not by man. God said, 'Ye shall now know;
> Knowledge is death.' And Adam was afraid.
> But Eve, careless of peril, careless of death,
> Hearing the promise, 'Ye shall be as gods,'
> Seized knowledge for herself, and for the man,
> And all the sons of men; knowledge, like God;
> Power to create, like God; and, unlike God,
> Courage to die. And the reward for her
> Was sorrow; but for Adam the reward
> Was work — of which he now contrives to boast
> As his peculiar glory, and in one breath
> Denies it to the woman and blames her for it,
> Winning the toss both ways.[29]

The argument that man's passion for creativity is almost a challenge to God is the bite of the apple, which nurtures pride. Its false-witness is revealed in the pre-emptive strike against William whose pride causes him to trust his safety to a scandalised monk and a neglectful worker and whose near-fatal accident prevents him from completing his work of art. His idea is not fully realised in effect (at least, not by him) because he sees nothing divine in the energy, which would ultimately reveal power through the response, which his achievement might provoke. Sayers aims to rescue work from drudgery by identifying divinity at work at every stage of the task.

There is an irony in the Prior's reprimand for Theodatus whose negligence in testing the rope which supported William caused the architect to fall from a great height. The Prior points to the Sacristan's betrayal of his duty, "This is thy sin: thou hast betrayed the work; thou hast betrayed the Church; thou hast betrayed Christ in the person of his fellow man."[30] The sin of pride is tempered by the sympathetic response of William's associates. It is as if the suppression of his skills as an artist is a penalty in excess of his sin. Gervase exclaims, "Part from his work? Oh no! It would be more

[29] *Zeal,* pages 51-2.
[30] ibid., page 75.

bitter to him than death."[31] And then, in a fascinating vignette, William himself describes in microcosm the effect of what he has now done to himself:

A year ago
An idle mason let the chisel slip
Spoiling the saint he carved. I chid him for it,
Then took the tool and in that careless stroke
Saw a new vision, and so wrought it out
Into a hippogriff. But yet the mason
Was not the less to blame. So works with us
The cunning craftsman, God.[32]

Here, the error is redeemed by the vision of a second artist (a second Adam?) but, unlike the activity of God, the finished work is not consistent with the original idea.

In the end, William understands the distinction:

Thou that didst make the world
And wilt not let one thing that Thou hast made,
No, not one sparrow, perish without Thy Will
(Since what we make, we love) — for that love's sake
Smite only me and spare my handiwork.

And then, in an echo of the Prior's earlier judgement on the value of the work and the virtue of the worker,

Let me lie deep in hell,
Death gnaw upon me, purge my bones with fire,
But let my work, all that was good in me,
All that was God, stand up and live and grow.[33]

The play culminates in the speech of the Archangel Michael which articulates in embryo the theory of Sayers which provides the basis for her analogy between the doctrine of the Trinity and the creative writer's trinity of idea, energy, and power. That this theory germinates particularly in a play about the integrity of work is no coincidence since creative work as a human paradigm of the Holy Trinity is the ultimate integrity with which to inspire the artist to create.

[31] *Zeal*, page 79.
[32] ibid., page 91.
[33] ibid., page 99.

The speech was cut from the first performance of this play at Canterbury in 1937. Barbara Reynolds explains that the producer, Harcourt Williams, who also played the part of William, thought that the speech was an anti-climax after the dramatic exit of William. The play was published with the speech intact. Sayers admired Williams and, if he thought that the dramatic structure of the piece was better served without the speech, Sayers accepted his opinion. She would have accepted that the speech's value was not mainly dramatic. It had other values which led elsewhere.[34] It is perhaps ironic that a speech which articulated the concept of the unity of an artist's vision from idea through to effect was cut on the advice of a different artist.

Correspondence with Herbert Kelly

Father Herbert Kelly founded the Society of the Sacred Mission, which originated at Kelham Hall in Nottinghamshire. He read the published version of *The Zeal of Thy House* and was particularly impressed by the final speech of the Archangel Michael. He wrote to Sayers and indicated to her the correlation between the themes of the play and the twofold insistence in the Athanasian Creed on faith in the Trinity of God and the Incarnation. He was generally impressed by a writer "of your influence who actually realises and can state the vital force of a Christian faith in God and His Christ, not in the abstract fashion which is all we theologians can teach, but in a living, pictorial fashion which common people can follow."[35]

Although he almost falls into the trap of reading into Sayers' work a revelation of her personal beliefs, the fact remains that he was the first theologian to recognise the significance of the play beyond historical re-enactment and to discern a pattern of Trinitarian theology in the Archangel Michael speech.

Sayers replied to Kelly on 4 October 1937[36], four years before the publication of *Mind,* in a letter part of which constitutes, in the words of Barbara Reynolds, "the essential thesis of *The Mind of the Maker.*"[37] That Kelly may have contributed to the birth of *Mind* is perhaps indicated by the fact that, as Reynolds goes on to say, Sayers

[34] Barbara Reynolds, private interview, Cambridge, March 2001.
[35] quoted in Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two,* op. cit., page 42.
[36] ibid., pages 43-50.
[37] ibid., page 45 note.

"had then no intention of writing this book, which only came into existence after the project 'Bridgeheads' was formed in September 1939."

Sayers refers Kelly to the context in which *Zeal* was written: the Festival of Arts and Crafts at Canterbury, which is why the play takes craftsmen as its dramatis personae. She tells Kelly that the speech about the Trinity is not meant to be a restatement of St Augustine ("whose illustration, if I ever knew it, I had forgotten").

> St Augustine says that God, in making Man, made an image of the Triune. I am trying to say that Man (made a craftsman in the image of the Master-Craftsman) in making a work of art presents also an image of the Triune, because '*every work of creation*' is three-fold.

She then proposes as a fact that, in the case of a writer (her own craft), the making of a book requires the making of three books, which are simultaneously the same book. This argument reappears in Chapter 8 of *Mind,* "Pentecost", in which Sayers indicates that it is only once the book has been released upon its audience (which includes the author too) that the power of the book ("the response in the lively soul") reveals the threefold nature of the book. She provides in the Kelly letter the first concrete expression of the way in which the theory which lies behind the Archangel Michael speech may be applied to a particular creative work.

(a) *The Book as You Think It,* which I have called the Idea (in the ordinary, not the philosophic sense). This presents itself all at once, in a dispassionate kind of way, with the end and the beginning all there together, a timeless sort of thing with no distinguishable parts, just existing (here, I suppose one links up with St Augustine) as if it had always been there and always would be.

(b) *The Book as You Write It.* You can't have the Idea without, *at the same time* seeing it as a sequence in time and a struggle with the material. This I have called the Energy, and it is, quite literally, 'begotten of that Idea' *from the beginning,* because the one without the other is unthinkable. The Energy produces, of course, a visible 'incarnation' of the book in material form, but it exists before that and goes on after, so that it and the Idea co-exist inevitably and are still the same book.

(c) *The Book as You and They Read It.* This is the most difficult to explain. I have called it the Power. It isn't the same thing as the Energy, though it proceeds (in the most orthodox manner[38]) from the Idea and the Energy together. It is the thing that you give out to your

[38] Western orthodoxy perhaps but clearly not Eastern. The Power could not proceed directly from the Idea without the Energy to realise the Idea in effect.

> readers and your readers give back to you; and it, too, exists from the beginning, because every book is written for somebody, so that there is a perpetual exchange of Power going on. I mean, you can't write a book *in vacuo*; even if every other person in the world were annihilated, the writer would always be his own reader, so to speak. So that your book comes back to you, as it were, from the minds to which it is addressed — still the same book, but with a different personality, 'neither compounding the persons nor dividing the substance'.

Each book is the same book although this truth is only revealed by recognition of all three in total since, as Sayers herself states in *Mind,* "It is through the Power that we get a reflection in the mind of the world of the original Trinity in the mind of the writer. For the reader, that is, the book itself is presented as a threefold being."[39]

At the point of correspondence with Kelly, she remains self-deprecating about the extent of her intention to draw the Trinitarian analogy. She admits that he theory perhaps only works in a perfect book. Another echo of *Mind* (in this case, of Chapter 10 "Scalene Trinities") then follows where Sayers acknowledges that one part or other of the creative writer's trinity may be lacking in quality and the argument is lost: "...and often the Idea is feeble, the Energy ill-directed and the Power conspicuously lacking." Her theory is merely an illustration of that which the writer knows from experience to be, as she puts it, a fact.

In explaining the Archangel Michael speech to Herbert Kelly, she has already expanded the speech in several important respects into a prototype of *Mind.*

> Perhaps this explanation sounds even feebler than the original statement, but I did want to make it clear that I wasn't just jumbling up St Augustine but trying to work out a little picture of my own — very limited, naturally — of an earthly three-in-oneness which I know by experience to exist and which may therefore serve as an inadequate analogy of the Divine Three-in-Oneness. There may be several illustrations for the same thing, mayn't there? — though I absolutely refuse to accept St Patrick's shamrock! Each leaflet of the shamrock isn't equally by itself the whole leaf, and you can't reasonably say that any one of them is begotten of, or proceeds from, another, because they all proceed alike from something quite different!

[39] *Mind,* page 89.

Further correspondence followed in which Kelly questioned some of her use of terms. Her response, on 19 October 1937, exemplifies her remarkable ability to "walk with kings nor lose the common touch." She maintains her use of terms on behalf of the lay person and gently reveals to Kelly the inadequacy of the theologian's lack of inter-disciplinary appreciation. His vocabulary works only within his own discipline. She will state, in four years' time, her intention to explain what the creeds mean "in words," as she puts it on another point, "that a child could understand".[40]

> I admit that my use of the word 'Idea' is a little confusing — but only, I think, to theologians, not to the ordinary person, for whom it has no special metaphysical connotation. The artist uses it as I use it — you will notice that William is made to use it twice: 'I've had an idea about this.' — thus 'planting' it (as we say) for later use in the Trinity speech. The word you use, 'expression', would do admirably for the Second Person, but that, of late years, it has become horribly contaminated by 'expressionism' and 'self-expression', used to convey the pouring-out of one's feelings higgledy-piggledy, without regard either to form or to 'good form' — a meaning as far removed as possible from the blood and sweat and discipline of the genuine craftsman's 'energy'.

What Do We Believe?[41]

The correspondence with Herbert Kelly was, of course, private correspondence. In an article entitled "What Do We Believe?" published in *The Sunday Times* a week after the declaration of war in 1939, Sayers set out an argument which provides a stepping stone to *Mind* and which contains a neat précis of the argument of that book half way between it and *Zeal.* Although is still almost two years before *Mind* will be published, it is only two months before she will write to B C Boulter of the Guild of Catholic Writers, "I am engaged ... in getting together a group of people, mostly writers, to do books, articles, lectures, etc about national reconstruction and a creative spirit, not precisely under the Christian banner, but certainly on a basis of Christian feeling."[42]

In this essay, Sayers draws a distinction between faith as "comfort" and faith as "truth." In the dark days of war and the grim surroundings of the bomb shelter, the question about whether one's faith is a comfort or not is one of those ill-framed

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[40] *Mind,* page vii.
[41] Dorothy L Sayers, "What Do We Believe" in *Unpopular Opinions, Twenty-One Essays,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1946, pages 17-20 [first published in *The Sunday Times,* No 6074, 10 September 1939, page 8].
[42] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., pages 347-8.

questions to which Sayers was so allergic. The question "What do you believe?" is answered by Sayers, "What we in fact believe is not necessarily the theory we most desire or admire." She proceeds to argue the case for a thorough understanding of the palatable or unpalatable theological and historical statements of the Christian creeds. She will return to a selection of the theological statements in *Mind* but here she takes the primary statement about each Person of the Trinity and explains them individually with echoes of the analogy of creative mind which will provide the principal argument of her later volume.

Her interpretation of the first statement of the creeds is immediately characteristic of her analogy.

> *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things.* That is the thundering assertion with which we start: that the great fundamental quality that makes God, and us with Him, what we are is creative activity. After this, we can scarcely pretend that there is anything negative, static, or sedative about the Christian religion. 'In the beginning God created'; from everlasting to everlasting, He is God the Father and Maker. And, by implication, man is most godlike and most himself when he is occupied in creation. And by this statement we assert further that the will and power to make is an absolute value, the ultimate good-in-itself, self-justified, and self-explanatory.[43]

She challenges the theory that artistic creation (she remembers to avoid the use of the word "expression") is merely a "compensation" for the frustration of sexual creativeness and suggests that, on the contrary, the making of life is merely "one manifestation of the universal urge to create." As war proceeds, she will return to this issue, seeing in the exigencies of war-time necessity a potential rediscovery of our ability to make with our hands and to set a high premium on that ability. Here, she bemoans "our feeble hold on creation." "To sit down and let ourselves be spoon-fed with the ready-made is to lose grip on our only true life and our only real selves."

The second principal statement of the creeds allows Sayers to introduce the expression "creative energy" which she has used in the Archangel Michael speech and in her correspondence with Herbert Kelly. She has not used the notion of

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[43] Sayers, "What Do We Believe?, op cit., page 18.

"creative idea" in this essay in the matter of the Father Creator. Indeed, above she has placed "activity" within her description of that Person of the Trinity. This is a term she will ultimately use as an alternative to "energy" in *Mind.* Creative energy, she says, is "begotten of the creative will" and "presses on to Its end, regardless of what It may suffer by the way."

Her description here is less particular of her own experience than it was in her correspondence with Kelly. In this essay, she appears to be drawing a more general analogy with the activity of the Persons of the Trinity and, although her key word is "creative", the human point of reference is more oblique.

The creative energy is prepared to endure sweat and toil but Sayers is cautious of a misinterpretation of the concept of sacrifice.

> We say that It is Love, and 'sacrifices' Itself for what It loves; and this is true, provided we understand what we mean by sacrifice. Sacrifice is what it looks like to other people, but to That-which-Loves I think it does not appear so. When one really cares, the self is forgotten, and the sacrifice becomes only a part of the activity. Ask yourself: If there is something you supremely want to do, do you count as 'self-sacrifice' the difficulties encountered or the other possible activities cast aside? You do not. The time when you deliberately say, 'I must sacrifice this, that, or the other' is when you do not *supremely* desire the end in view. At such times you are doing your duty, and that is admirable, but it is not love. But as soon as your duty becomes your love the 'self-sacrifice' is taken for granted, and, whatever the world calls it, you call it so no longer.[44]

This is not propitiatory sacrifice but a means of worshipping and accords with St Augustine: "Thus the true sacrifice is every act which is designed to unite us to God in a holy fellowship..."[45]

Sayers argues that the "hosannas" of the crowds lining the route into Jerusalem were an act of creative co-operation with the creative will and, if it is in our nature to create, we do harm to our own nature if we fail to co-operate in love. The creative will presses on energetically regardless of our response but, "If we betray It or do

[44] Sayers, op. cit., page 19.
[45] Augustine, *City of God, Book X.*6, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, page 379.

nothing to assist It, we may earn the unenviable distinction of going down to history with Judas and Pontius Pilate."

In the matter of the third Person of the Trinity, "the life-giver", Sayers argues that the Christian affirms by it that the life in him or her proceeds from the eternal creativeness. It is only in a positive response to that creativeness that the Christian can claim to be fully alive. "And indeed, when we are asked, 'What do you value more than life?' the answer can only be, 'Life — the right kind of life, the creative and godlike life.' "

Sayers ends by moving beyond the three sections of the creeds, which relate to the Persons of the Trinity and locates the creativity activity of men and women within the context of the body of Christians, which is the Church. She argues for a more practical application of an understanding of "resurrection" as an indication not only that those who believe in the creative life will expect to be saved not *from* danger and suffering but *in* danger and suffering but also that, whatever happens, there can be no end to the manifestation of creative life. "Whether the life makes its old body again, or an improved body, or a totally new body, it will and must create, since that is its true nature...it is our task to rebuild the world along creative lines; but we must be sure that we desire it enough."

In this final echo of the editors of the *Bridgeheads* series, Sayers indicates that she was ready to write *The Mind of the Maker.* From *Gaudy Night* and *The Zeal of Thy House,* along with the correspondence with Herbert Kelly and this *Times* essay, a rigorous preparation had been both consciously and unconsciously undertaken perhaps in a paradigm of the very argument she will expound. She had seen the whole work complete at once but her creative idea required years of energy and the power of response from herself and her audience to build the work analysed here.

The next chapter turns to the theological "paradigm" of her argument and to an evaluation of similar efforts by her earlier predecessors and near contemporaries in the field of theology.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGY

The search for a human analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity.

John Thurmer's significant argument that Dorothy L Sayers is a "time bomb which has not yet exploded"[1] arises from his belief that Dorothy L Sayers, possibly alone, has provided a full and complete analogy of the doctrine of the Trinity where the giants of mediaeval and contemporary theology have failed. The fact that the time bomb has not yet exploded lies in the fact that her work *The Mind of the Maker* appears to have had relatively little impact and that it is now largely forgotten.

Thurmer offers two trains of thought as to why this should be the case.

One is a simple tripartite argument. Firstly, he notes that commentators object to her style. It is a crisp and racy style intended to articulate what the Creeds of the Christian Church actually mean. Secondly, it cannot be argued that Sayers is, at one level, anything other than an amateur theologian. In fact, she denies that her work is a piece of Christian apologetic or intended to articulate her own Christian faith. She almost stumbled upon her analogy of the doctrine of the Trinity by accident when investigating the importance of a proper valuing of human endeavour at a time of great destructiveness during the Second World War. And, thirdly, Sayers entered the debate about the doctrine of the Trinity as a monist rather than a pluralist. She described an analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity which was a single work or being with a threefold structure. A pluralist or social Trinity had a wider affinity as much traditional iconography of the Trinity indicates.[2]

Thurmer's other argument as to the lack of impact of *The Mind of the Maker* is fourfold. Firstly, he notes that the Christian Church is traditionally wary of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is either difficult to understand or irrational or both. As a result, there is tendency to avoid the issue or make light of it. Secondly, certain theologians, such as Karl Barth and John Macquarrie, have rejected the possibility of a human analogy with the doctrine despite ultimately capitulating in their need to describe the effect of the doctrine in the human response to God. Thirdly, Thurmer

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[1] John Thurmer, "Conspiracy of Silence?" in *Reluctant Evangelist: Papers on the Christian Thought of Dorothy L Sayers,* The Dorothy L Sayers Society, 1996, published privately, page 51.
[2] ibid., pages 47-50.

repeats the tension between the unity and the trinity in God. And, fourthly, the juxtaposition of theology and literary criticism is not to all theologians' taste and, when that juxtaposition is created by a detective novelist, the innovation is the more difficult to stomach.[3]

The accidental discovery of a possible analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity arose out of her articulation of the dignity and significance of human work. George Herbert's vision of the value of human endeavour in one's ordinary doing and being was shared not only by Sayers but also by her contemporaries G K Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. These writers were conscious both of the Protestant work ethic and of the tradition in the mediaeval Church to encourage creativity. Collectively, these processes might redress the destructiveness of industrial capitalism. Like Sayers, Chesterton identified the analogy between God's nature being to make something creatively and the human desire to do likewise.

This was the proper interpretation of Genesis 1:27 where God makes men and women in his own image. A human analogy is found at the end of Proverbs where the poetic writing focuses on the extraordinary and ceaseless activity of a woman who is either the counterpart to the exalted, didactic and public figure of Wisdom presented towards the beginning of the book or represents Wisdom itself at home and serving those who have responded to her invitation.[4]

But this human analogy is not exhibited elsewhere in the pages of scripture nor did it strike the Christian Church for its first thousand years (a handicap for St Augustine to which we return below). This narrow view was challenged by Western Christianity in the second Christian millennium when, for example, the Cistercians placed a value on the work of their illiterate lay brothers in their motto "laborare est orare" ("to work is to pray") and the Dominicans developed a similar philosophy in the craft guilds of the burgeoning middle class in the market towns of mediaeval Europe. What the Protestants called the work ethic might also be described at an earlier stage in history as the craft guild ethic: that work is good and that idleness is shameful. Sayers'

[3] John Thurmer, "Dorothy L Sayers and 'The Mind of the Maker'" in *Reluctant Evangelist*, op. cit., page 3.
[4] Proverbs 31.

application of Genesis and the divine and human collaboration in creation is not unique. Her application of the creative process to the Trinity of God is strikingly original.

Sayers' own contribution to the encouragement of Chesterton and Belloc and their contemporaries to a greater sense of creativity was, in part, found in *The Mind of the Maker*. That it also effectively completed an analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity which St Augustine had begun in the fourth century and with which Karl Barth and Karl Rahner had grappled in the twentieth century is the reason why its lack of impact, despite rational explanation, is so hard to understand.

St Augustine

Dorothy L Sayers herself called St Augustine to witness in her quest for a human analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity rather than one which lies outside human experience:

> Holy Scripture, which suits itself to babes, has not avoided words drawn from any class of things really existing, through which, as by nourishment, our understanding might rise gradually to things divine and transcendent..... But it has drawn no words whatever, whereby to frame either figures of speech or enigmatic sayings, from those who [in disputing about God strive to transcend the whole creation] are more mischievously and emptily vain than their fellows; in that they surmise concerning God, what can neither be found in Himself nor in any creature.[5]

Augustine's search in *De Trinitate* for an analogy was a search for something more than a vague resemblance. He sought a precise and mathematical explication of the triadic structure of the doctrine of the Trinity. He confounded the pagan intellectuals who laughed at the apparent ambivalence of the doctrine to both three distinctive manifestations of God and three descriptive means of referring to God's activity such that it defied rational understanding. Augustine neatly presented them with several triadic analogies of "three in one": principally, the intimate unity of thinking, speaking and willing.

[5] Augustine, *On the Trinity,* Book One, Chapter One, quoted in *Mind,* page 26.

However, he attempted to avoid analogical talk about God, which was too precise and tended to result in something anthropomorphic. He was dissatisfied with physical metaphors regarding them as crude and unhelpful. But how was this to be achieved when he strove also to discern the activity of the Trinity reflected in the soul of the human being? His language appears at least to hint at an independent triadic structure within the psyche. This is what Henry Chadwick describes as his "theological difficulty."[6] He sought terms which defined clearly the distinction between Father, Son and Holy Spirit but was troubled by "Persona" used by Tertullian at the end of the second century and expressed in the matter of the Trinity in the phrase "Three Persons". However, this phrase possessed a dignified liturgical precedent and Augustine was respectful of it. "Substance" was acceptable but not if it implied that in God there was both substance and accidents. It might itself be analogous to transcendent metaphysical "Being" but should not be regarded more concretely.

However, it was the Aristotelian language of "relation", which allowed Augustine to develop his concept of the Trinity as one of relations and not substances. The Father was the "fount" of the Godhead, the Son "begotten" of that "fount" and the Holy Spirit "proceeds". The relation of the Holy Spirit was scriptural (St John's Gospel) but there was to be no implied analogy between the Son's genesis and the dependence of the created order despite its contingent creation with the Father and the Son (who, "in the beginning", was "with God and was God").

Augustine's analogy aimed to define the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but stopped short of a direct analogy between the Trinity and the threefold activity of humankind when engaged in acts of creativity save in proving to the scoffing pagans that the concept of being one and three is not as funny as it sounds.

St Bonaventure

Bonaventure's account of the spiritual life, which draws on diverse elements of existing tradition and resolves them within a coherent and unique account of

[6] Henry Chadwick, "Augustine" in R M Hare, Jonathan Barnes and Henry Chadwick, *Founders of Thought,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, page 274.

Bonaventure's Christology, is his *Journey of the Mind into God*[7]. It configures the journey towards God in six stages, each stage encountering one of the six powers of the soul: namely, senses, imagination, reason, understanding, intelligence, and conscience. Bonaventure is influenced by Augustine's *On the Trinity* and the journey beginning with our perception of the external world, reflection within the mind itself, and assimilation of the Trinitarian structure within us.

Bonaventure described humankind's appreciation of the many facets of the created order (its "origin, magnitude, multitude, beauty, fullness, activity and order") as a revelation of God as the Trinitarian creator of the world. The triune God's footprints are seen in the created things of the universe. Through a proper sensual perception of these things, the created objects are generated in the mind. In similar language, the Son is forever generated ("eternally begotten") within the Trinity. Thirdly, humankind's discernment of the properties of created things involves an engagement or participation in the truth of God.

Bonaventure follows the lead of Augustine who turned inward on himself, having failed to find what he was seeking in the external world. Bonaventure has examined the world of sensible things and the human experience of these things and then also turns inward on himself.

> The first two stages, by leading us to God by means of the vestiges through which God shines forth in all creatures, have brought us to the point of entering into ourselves, that is, into our mind, where the divine image shines forth. It is here that ... we re-enter into our very selves; and as it were, leaving the outer court, we should strive to see God through a mirror in the holy place, that is, in the space in front of the tabernacle. Here, as from a candelabrum, the light of truth glows upon the face of our mind, in which the image of the most blessed Trinity shines in splendour.[8]

By following Augustine's tendency to explore human consciousness as an alternative to the crude and unhelpful physical analogies which he aimed to avoid, Bonaventure perceived a correlation between God as supreme Spirit and human consciousness as created spirit. The mystery of the divine might be illuminated by an examination of

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[7] Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind into God,* The Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press, New York, 1978.

[8] Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind into God, 3.1,* quoted in Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings,* The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 1999, page 82.

this human realm and thus, as with Augustine, better analogies might be discovered in human reality than the older physical ones.

As a result, Bonaventure sets the place for the true manifestation of the divine image in the *mens* which may be taken to mean the "mind" or the "soul" or indeed also (anachronistically) "consciousness" and "self". Like Augustine, Bonaventure is able to provide a three-in-one description of activity within the province of the mind: will, knowledge and memory or love, understanding and memory. But these three powers show the proximity of the soul to God only when freed from the perceptions of the external world. The triadic mental activity engages with the Trinity because when "the soul considers itself, it rises through itself as through a mirror to behold the blessed Trinity of the Father, the Word and Love: three persons, coeternal, coequal and consubstantial."[9]

Bonaventure would deny then that the soul is able to consider itself thus when it is dispersed through the senses into the material world. The creation of this barrier between a mental appreciation of the Trinity and an active engagement with the Trinity successfully avoids the anthropomorphism of which Augustine was afraid but makes Bonaventure's analogy more reflective than creative.

However, Bonaventure perceives also a triadic structure in his unusual understanding of the concept of "memory". For him, "memory" was not merely the means by which one recalls past events or experiences but involves also the present and the future too.

> In the soul, which is the image of God, there is the memory of past things, the understanding of present things, and the anticipation of future things. These things, which succeed each other in diverse moments of time, are gathered and bound together simultaneously in the soul which is a spiritual substance. And yet, because the soul is limited and receives things into itself from outside, it does not enjoy total simultaneity. God, on the other hand, receives nothing and is limited in no way. Therefore God is to be understood necessarily as having all things simultaneously present, without beginning or end. And this is how we are to understand eternity.[10]

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[9] Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind into God,* op. cit., page 84.
[10] Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity, 5.1,* quoted in Hayes, op. cit., page 84.

It is this definition of "memory" which allows Bonaventure to formulate his triadic structure of love, knowledge and memory.

St Thomas Aquinas

While Bonaventure speaks of the way in which eternal principles of logic and of the sciences seem to be built within us in an almost innate manner[11], Aquinas states that there are no concepts naturally given to us, *ab initio,* in the human mind.[12] We are given instead an understanding, an intellectual "light" whereby we can understand these principles as soon as we have the relevant experience of the world and of our sentient (emotional) appetite. It is this rational "light" which is innate[13] and, by transference, Aquinas on occasions states that the principles are innate and/or the ends to which the principles direct us are innate.[14] For Aquinas, all our knowledge begins with the senses.

Aquinas questioned whether the qualities attributed to the persons of the Trinity by the doctors of the Church were accurate. St Hilary had posited: eternity, species ("comeliness"), and enjoyment[15]. Aquinas developed Hilary's use of "species" as "image" and said that the Son was an "image" which equated with the traditional explanation of how the Second and Third Persons proceed from the Father[16]. He added that an image is something that represents something else, and represents it because of a likeness to it.

This argument is related to Aquinas' statements about art imitating nature. Art imitates nature "insofar as it is able to."[17] Art's potential for imitation and therefore also for analogous reflection is limited because it is dependent upon something, which

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[11] Hayes gives the following instance: "... if we know the meaning of the words *whole* and *part*, the truth of the proposition that says 'The whole is greater than the part' is self-evident'." See Hayes, op. cit., page 85.
[12] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Anima, q.8.c,* cited in John Finnis, *Aquinas, Moral, Political and Legal Theory,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, page 101 note.
[13] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boethium de Trinitate, q.3.a.1 ad 4,* cited in Finnis, op. cit., page 101 note.
[14] Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum Peter Lombardiensis, III.d.33.q.2.a.4 sol 4c,* cited in Finnis, op.cit., page 101 note.
[15] Hilary, *De Trinitate, II.1,* cited in Umberto Eco (trans Hugh Bredin), *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas,* Radius, 1988, page 123.
[16] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, I.35.2c,* quoted in Eco, op. cit., page 123.
[17] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentarium in Libros Posteriorum Analyticorum I.1.5,* quoted in Eco, op. cit., page 173.

has preceded it: i.e., the materials from which a work of art is fabricated. Bonaventure himself stated, "The soul can make new compositions, but it cannot make new things."[18]

Aquinas maintains a distinction between composition and creation: to compose is not to create. The analogy in not then so much between the Trinity and creative activity as lying in the relationship of God's knowledge to his creatures and the artist to his products.

Karl Barth

Sayers had perhaps a particular affinity with Karl Barth simply by virtue of her being indirectly acquainted with him. She had described him as "that dynamic, if less strictly intellectual, personality"[19] when writing to the Editor of *The World Review* positing the names of certain leaders of Christian thought who, in her opinion, interpreted world events with depth and insight. He himself had corresponded with her and had translated her two articles, "The Greatest Drama Ever Staged" and "The Triumph of Easter" and wrote elsewhere, "I have read her detective stories with quite special interest and amazement."[20] She was less complimentary. She told Maurice Reckitt, "I find his style unendurable, but his influence is undoubted. He is a Calvinist and accuses me of being a Pelagian — but what is a little total depravity between friends?"[21]

Karl Barth's use of the psychological analogy is tempered by his insistence on the biblical primacy of the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Any human analogy for him must be inferior and must only be concerned with the effect of the doctrine.

In a similar way, John Macquarrie denies any possibility of taking an individual human being as in any way satisfactorily analogous with God the Holy Trinity.[22] He prefers a description of God as Being rather than as *a* being. Nevertheless, he assumes a threefold structure for this Being in the same way as monist Trinitarians (like Sayers

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[18] Bonaventure, *Commentarium in III Sententiarum, 37, 1, dub 1,* quoted in Eco, op. cit., page 173.
[19] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two*, op. cit., page 257.
[20] quoted in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth,* SCM Press, London, 1975.
[21] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two*, op. cit., page 259.
[22] John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology,* SCM Press, London, 1977, page 195.

herself) do when he describes the Father as primordial being; the Son as expressive being; and the Spirit as unitive being.[23]

This threefold structure relies, as all analogies do, on expression in terms which are understandable by human beings. As soon as Macquarrie describes the primordial being flowing out to find expression in the world of beings, he encourages us to consider a human being's self-expression in word, deed and creation. The Spirit is to maintain and restore the unity of the Being with the beings although there is no reason why the Spirit should perform this function to the exclusion of its shared role in the Godhead in all divine activity. As with St Augustine himself, this analogy fails to resolve itself satisfactorily. Macquarrie's thinking inevitably relies on an analogy with *a* being.

Barth's threefold structure is articulated by the terms: Revealer, Revelation and Revealedness. "God the Revealer is identical with his act in Revelation, identical also with its effect."[24] Barth draws the distinction between the mediaeval term "person" in application to God and "personality" in the contemporary psychological analogy and sees the distinction lying in the addition of the attribute of self-consciousness: that which Augustine lacked and to which only Sayers gave form. It is interesting to note that Augustine himself had seen a deficiency in the term "person" but had been unable to identify what might make that deficiency good.

The need to analyse and understand any ascription made to God in terms which may be understood and relative, the term self-conscious personality, used of God, leads Barth to accept a pattern which moves from God to an image of God to the effect of that image on humankind. Genesis 1:27 allows a link between biblical revelation and the psychological analogy when it is interpreted as God's nature and man's and woman's nature corresponding in creative activity.

Thus, it is possible to accept that God actively uses analogy because, for the doctrine to be received at all, it must relate to something we know on earth. For Barth,

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[23] John Macquarrie, *The Debate about Christ,* SCM Press, London, 1979, page 26.
[24] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* in *Church Dogmatics, Volume I,* op. cit., page 340.

however, this must only be the effect of the doctrine as he shies clear of condoning the pretensions of human wisdom.

Sayers was dissatisfied with the ability of the great theologians to communicate in a style which might evince a "response in the lively soul" to quote the Archangel Michael speech. The conclusion she draws is that such theologians are afraid of secular paradigms — which is precisely why Barth avoids a human analogy in his interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity regarding such as being necessarily inferior to the biblical revelation of the doctrine. In a separate discussion about the lack of a Christian critical standard in the arts, she attacks "the Puritan, Barthian, not to say Manichee, fear of the secular — a natural revolt from humanism but surely quite unsacramental."[25]

Karl Rahner

When Karl Rahner states that "the doctrine of God is not complete until the end of the last dogmatic treatise,"[26] he is emphasising the centrality of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to all the elements of the experience of God in salvation history. It is also the common thread, which unifies all the various elements in Rahner's theology.[27]

He rejects a move to separate the mystery of the Trinity in salvation history from the mystery of God as he is in himself or the mystery of the immanent Trinity:

> God has given himself so fully in his absolute self-communication to the creature, that the 'immanent' Trinity becomes the Trinity of the 'economy of salvation', and hence in turn the Trinity of salvation which we experience *is* the immanent Trinity. This means that the Trinity of God's relationship to us *is* the reality of God as he is *in* himself: a trinity of persons.[28]

God is with us just as he is in himself and that is what God wills. This is a vital move in the debate: that the identity of the immanent Trinity is entirely analogous with the Trinity in salvation history. The Incarnation, in which the Logos became a human being in Jesus, provides the evidence which proves Rahner's axiomatic interpretation

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[25] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two*, op. cit., page 308.
[26] Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Doctrine of God in Catholic Dogmatics" in *Theological Investigations Volume 9: Writings of 1965-7,* Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1972, page 137.
[27] William Dych, *Karl Rahner,* Continuum, London, 1992, page 148.
[28] Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology", in *Theological Investigations Volume 4: Most Recent Writings,* Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1966, page 69.

of the connection between these two expressions of Trinitarian theology. Only the Logos could have become incarnate. The role of the Logos in salvation history as the Word and expression of God follows from and reveals his eternal reality as the inner-trinitarian expression of the Father. Human nature is precisely that which comes to be when the Logos is expressed in what is not divine. The relationship with the Logos is more essential and intrinsic when that human nature is assumed in Christ:

> Human nature in general is a possible object of the creative knowledge and power of God, because and in so far as the Word is essentially the expressible, he who can be expressed even in the non-divine, being the Word of the Father, in whom the Father can express himself and — freely — exteriorise himself, and because, when this takes place, that which we call human nature comes into being.[29]

Grace as a self-communication by God of himself who is giver and gift also indicates the analogous relationship between the Trinity as God is in himself and the Trinity in salvation history. We are only able to discern the three divine persons as the Trinity because the Trinity has a relationship in itself. Without that primary relationship, there would be no Trinity for us to perceive and experience. The only alternative would be for God to create some external reality with which to mediate himself to us which is the Arian heresy.[30]

Rahner, with an eye to the pronouncements of the Roman Catholic Church, is scathing of text-book theology where the Trinity has nothing to do with humankind and nothing to do with the rest of theology. He calls specifically for analogies which demonstrate the unique possibility of the Word alone becoming incarnate such that the essential bond between the Trinity and the Incarnation may be restored.[31] The psychological and unitive analogy may do this along the lines first investigated by Augustine and subsequently by Barth.

However, neither Rahner, nor his predecessors and contemporaries, does this himself but contents himself with ending his argument with a plea for a human analogy of the

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[29] Karl Rahner, *Remarks on the dogmatic treatise 'De Trinitate'*, in *Investigations,* op. cit., Volume 4, page 93.
[30] Arius claimed that the Logos was created out of nothing by God and was subordinate to God as one of his creatures.
[31] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity,* Burns and Oates, London, 1970, pages 119-20.

Trinity "not so much from an abstract consideration of the human spirit" but from the "structures of human existence".

Rahner believes that the Trinity is not just our most comprehensive doctrine about God but also our most comprehensive doctrine about God and the world. It is therefore inadequate to our understanding of our relationship with God and God with us that the doctrine of the Trinity should be so much avoided by those who have allowed it to be a forgotten truth. His warning and advice on this matter is strangely reminiscent of Sayers' chapter in *Mind* on scalene trinities where she argues that artistic expression is severely limited and indeed inferior when the trinity of Idea, Energy and Power are not brought into play in the creation of a work in equal measure. William Dych summarises Rahner on this matter:

> Focusing on God only as purely transcendent and forgetting the sending of the Son and the Spirit, a mere 'monotheism' in this sense, would result in the form of deism, a notion of God who is sequestered in heaven and separated from us who dwell on earth. Focusing only on the immanence of God and forgetting his transcendence leads to the opposite of deism, a pantheism that simply identifies God with the world and the world with God. Focusing only on the Son and history leads to 'pure humanism', a 'secular interpretation of the Gospel' that pretends to be its exhaustive interpretation. A religion exclusively of the 'Spirit', on the other hand, is a religion of pure interiority, a form of pietism or quietism or disembodied religiosity that is indifferent to history. Each element is a partial truth which becomes false when it is made the whole truth. The doctrine of the Trinity is meant to include all of these elements in their dialectical relationships, and to speak of God and the world as never identical, but also never separate.[32]

Forgetting any one of these three elements — the Father as utterly transcendent to the world, the Son as incarnate and present in history, and the Spirit as immanent within the world as its inner-most dynamism — is to fail to see the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity in shaping religious life and the religious imagination.

Jűrgen Moltmann

Jűrgen Moltmann also fails to grasp a paradigm which matches or betters that of Sayers. Nevertheless, what is fascinating is that, despite his approach to the interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity starting from a quite separate theological

[32] Dych, *Karl Rahner,* op. cit., page 158.

emphasis, the similarities between this pluralist[33] and the monism of Sayers[34] is such that these stereotypes are probably unhelpful both in our application of the Sayers theory and in our own search for other interpretive paradigms.

Moltmann describes God the Father as always the "Abba" of Jesus Christ. God is the Father of the Son and never the Father of all things nor the Father of the Gods. Inasmuch as "whoever sees me sees the Father", no one sees the Father except through Christ. By using the name of "Father", the Son's presence is acknowledged. The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is that of begetting and birth. The Father communicates self through relationship. The love of the Father for the Son is communicated through an act of creation and thus also through an act of emptying or surrendering in the Son and to the Son.

In a similar way, Sayers' analogy of the Father with the Creative Idea and the Son with the Creative Energy or Activity relies upon the creative act in time revealing the nature of the Idea — what she calls the Idea's "self-awareness in the Energy." Although the Idea may indeed precede any mental or physical work upon the materials, the artist may not be conscious of the Idea except by the working of the Energy which formulates it to the artist. (The Father is present through the Son.) That is not to say that the Idea precedes the Activity in time. The Energy creates the time process and thus exists in tandem with the Idea. Sayers points to the analogy with theological expressions such as "the Word was in the beginning with God" and was "eternally begotten of the Father".

The mutuality between the Sayers analogy and the Moltmann argument is greatest in the matter of the Father's love of the Son and the Son's loving response. The love of the Father for the Son is a creative love which produces the gift of creation for the Son thus preventing the love between Father and Son from existing in balanced mutuality but rather with the potential for similar responses from other created beings which correspond to that of the Son and which fulfil the joy of the Father. The Son, in

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[33] Richard Bauckham, "Jürgen Moltmann's 'The Trinity and the Kingdom of God' and the Question of Pluralism" in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion,* Kevin J Vanhoozer (ed), William B Eerdman's Publishing Company, Michigan, 1997, pages 155-64.
[34] John Thurmer, "Conspiracy of Silence?" in *Reluctant Evangelist,* op. cit., page 49.

turn, responds to the love of the Father and reciprocates the gift of creation with the gift of its redemption. Nevertheless, despite this distinct relationship of Father and Son, Moltmann states, "Just as the Father is totally in the Son, so the Son is totally in the Father and not in himself."[35]

Sayers' chapter on "The Love of the Creature" articulates this reciprocal love. For her analogy, the love of the artist for his or her creation is vital so long as it is right love. She rejects greedy possessiveness and sentimentality and revises the common concept of sacrifice in which the more painful the act by the doer, the more sacrificial the aspect of the deed. When Sayers champions sacrifice, it is as a labour of love where the merit lies in the enjoyment of the doing. Far from subduing the work to the creator, the artist must subdue himself or herself to the work. Sayers will allow the work to develop according to its own nature and to stand independent of its creator. Her analogy does not, of course, equate human creativity with divine creativity but the word "independent" is nevertheless important. This freedom might propel the creature to its doom were it not for the passion of the artist to rescue it by sheer sweat and toil: not by merging the creature's identity in the artist's own nor by invoking miraculous powers to wrest the creature from its proper nature. The artist is rewarded by a work of creativity, which is at once an expression of the creator's mind and a creature with an identity of its own.

Inasmuch as the Spirit arises out of the Father according to the Nicene Creed, so the Spirit must arise out of the Father inasmuch as he is the Father of the Son and thereby the Spirit has its origin in the Father's relationship with the Son. The Father is seen by those who see the Son and the Son is invoked through the naming of the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Spirit emphasises the fellowship of the Father and the Son and its reciprocal nature. Moltmann argues that the personality of the Spirit must be described differently from that of the Father and that of the Son because our experience of the Spirit is that of fellowship in the Spirit. And, just as we cannot see the eye with which we see or recognise the standpoint on which we stand, so we cannot perceive the Spirit as we can the partner in a dance. It is an encompassing presence. It is not indivisible but nor is it a separate entity. It is known

[35] Jűrgen Moltmann, *How I have Changed: Reflections on Thirty Years of Theology*, SCM Press, London, 1997, pages 107-8.

to us through the power of communication. It does not point to a rational nature but encompasses the divine life.

Sayers has a slightly different slant on this. What she calls the Creative Power of the creative artist's Trinity does indeed proceed from the Idea and the Energy together though, as with Moltmann's discrete definition of the Spirit, she does emphasise that it is not the same thing as the Energy/Activity. She articulates its relational/fellowship role as operating such that the created work "flows back to the writer from his own activity and makes him, as it were, the reader of his own book."[36] Of equal importance from the perspective of the encompassing nature of the Spirit is that the Creative Power is the means by which the Activity is communicated to other readers and which produces a corresponding response in them. At the same time, however, Sayers conflates her argument by suggesting that, from the readers' point of view, the Power *is* the book.

Moltmann states, "Here [in the perichoretic relations among the three] the three Persons are equal; they live and are manifested in one another and through one another."[37] And the Archangel Michael concludes his speech, "And these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without other."[38]

It is in the tenth chapter of *Mind,* "Scalene Trinities", that Sayers most ably articulates the danger of an inequality between the three persons of her analogy and the need to avoid a hierarchy within the Godhead. Her, at times amusing, description of the writer who is "father-ridden", "son-ridden" or "ghost-ridden" accounts for the poor quality of some works of literature whose authors have fallen prey to these afflictions. For Moltmann, the relationship between the persons of the Trinity must not be one of inequality or domination and, while Sayers applies this axiom to the creative activity of humankind, Moltmann applies it to the social cultivation of society. In so doing, he comes close to a human analogy but one which is political and thus compromised or qualified by the political climate in which it is articulated.

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[36] *Mind,* page 30-1.
[37] Jürgen Moltmann, *The King and the Kingdom,* SCM Press, London, 1981, page 176.
[38] *Mind,* page 28.

Does *Mind* provide the paradigm of which these others fall short?

In Chapter Two of *Mind,* Sayers begins her argument for an analogy with God and of the Trinity in particular by establishing certain facts about language in relation to God. She acknowledges that, while language about God may in her experience and that of her contemporaries be masculine language, there is no suggestion that the "image" of God is wholly masculine but that it must share the attributes of male and female. It is pictorial metaphor which gives rise to an aggressively masculine figure and, while the Jews may have been conscious of the volatility of pictorial imagery by forbidding it, they were not able to prevent anything more than physical imagery when human nature naturally outstripped their attempts at censorship:

> No legislation could prevent the making of verbal pictures: God walks in the garden, He stretches out His arm, His voice shakes the cedars, His eyelids try the children of men. To forbid the making of pictures about God would be to forbid thinking about God at all, for man is so made that he has no way to think except in pictures.[39]

On those occasions when the Judaeo-Christian tradition has attempted to limit the freedom of the imagination, it has been thwarted by an almost natural impulse to create analogies be they crude or refined. Why are human beings apparently so obstructive to the commands of religious instruction? If God is a Spirit, without body, parts or passions, "I am that I am," what is the structure of the human mind that it devises pictures of God in spite of theological reflection on God's "unknowableness"?

Sayers concentrates her consideration of this natural striving after analogy on the first few verses of Genesis:

> It is observable that in the passage leading up to the statement about man, he [the author of Genesis] has given no detailed information about God. Looking at man, he sees in him something essentially divine, but when we turn back to see what he says about the original upon which the 'image' of God was modelled, we find only the single assertion, 'God created'. The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and the ability to make things.[40]

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[39] *Mind,* page 16.
[40] ibid., page 17.

Perhaps, then, the first and great analogy is made by God who created human beings in God's own image: not a physical pictorial image but physical nonetheless because of the analogy with activity which provides the clue to the interpretation of this misinterpreted verse of scripture.[41] In creating humankind, God provides men and women with the very analogy with which they are to refer their being to him.

If all language about everything is analogical, then, however inadequate it is to interpret God with analogy to human beings, those human beings are compelled to do so. If, therefore, creative activity is the currency of the language about God and about men and women and the correct interpretation of the crucial verse from Genesis, language about anything may occasion the charge of anthropomorphism since the human mind must use its own human structure and human characteristics to contemplate all things. Creative activity, as the channel which runs between God and humankind, not only permits such contemplation but causes it.

> To complain that man measures God by his own experience is a waste of time; man measures everything by his own experience; he has no other yardstick.[42]

Nevertheless, Sayers is cautious to limit the use of such supposedly broad analogy. The metaphorical language must be limited in its scope and application. The language of fatherhood, for example, must not be taken to assume that all characteristics of a human father may be attributed to God[43] nor that a selective use of such human characteristics may be applied to all aspects of God's divinity.

Metaphorical language is an expression of experience although not everyone who employs it may have suffered the experience but uses the language rather as a convenient suggestion of a potential experience. Subsequently, the experience becomes truly known and an individual gains knowledge of the reality behind the picture. The frequent repetition of the Christian creeds engenders hope and possibility until a relationship is formed by experience between the one reciting and the people who formed the texts in history.

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[41] Genesis 1: 27.
[42] *Mind,* page 19.
[43] Sayers suggests "such as earning money for the support of the family, or demanding the first use of the bathroom in the morning." (*Mind,* page 20).

Sayers proceeds with her consideration of the language of God as Creator. She acknowledges that this metaphorical language has been neglected in favour of the language of fatherhood — partly because Christ himself so hallowed that choice of metaphor by frequent use. She acknowledges also that this language, like the characteristics of fatherhood, is limited. Unlike God, men and women cannot create things out of nothing. But, as with the father language, the term "create" is amplified and extended to relate to the concept of an ideal creator but limited by the exclusion in that application of the use of tools and materials.

However, Sayers argues that there is an extension and amplification of this creation metaphor which draws the analogy a degree closer to the divine experience in the creative activity of the artist. "A whole artistic work is immeasurably more than the sum of its parts."[44] And here she begins to move towards her particular analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity: that the work of art has real existence apart from its translation into material form.

> The 'creation' is not a product of the matter, and is not simply a rearrangement of the matter. The amount of matter in the universe is limited, and its possible rearrangements, though the sum of them would amount to astronomical figures, is also limited. But no such limitation of numbers applies to the creation of works of art. The poet is not obliged, as it were, to destroy the material of a Hamlet in order to create a Falstaff, as a carpenter must destroy a tree-form to create a table-form. The components of the material world are fixed; those of the world of imagination increase by a continuous and irreversible process, without any destruction or rearrangement of what went before. This represents the nearest approach we experience to 'creation out of nothing', and we conceive of the act of absolute creation as being an act analogous to that of the creative artist.[45]

Sayers attempts to re-set the balance between the much-used "Father" analogy and the lesser-used "Creator" analogy and calls attention to the "Creator" metaphor for a better understanding of those parts of the creeds which treat the nature of the creative mind of God. This allows her to champion creative artists as the best channel for a proper exposition of such credal statements. In doing so, she draws attention to the failure of the Church to appreciate creative activity amongst its artists as a paradigmatic interpretation of God's continuing involvement with creation.

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[44] *Mind*, page 22.
[45] ibid., page 23.

> Actually, we seldom seem to consult them in the matter. Poets have, indeed, often communicated in their own mode of expression truths identical with the theologians' truths; but just because of the difference in the modes of expression, we often fail to see the identity of the statements. The artist does not recognise that the phrases of the creeds purport to be observations of fact about the creative mind *as such,* including his own; while the theologian, limiting the application of the phrases to the divine Maker, neglects to inquire of the artist what light he can throw upon them from his own immediate apprehension of truth.[46] *

Her criticism of theologians was not a criticism of the truth of their interpretation of theology but of their ability to communicate that truth in a language based on human experience — the only yardstick by which people may measure anything, let alone God.

Of the theologians examined above, each made significant attempts to articulate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in terms which fall within human experience — both deliberately and despite best efforts to the contrary but each also failed to complete the task to the same degree as Sayers' coherent and finished theory. Augustine attempted to avoid analogical talk about God which tended towards anthropomorphism. Finding physical metaphors unhelpful, he defined a relationship within the Trinity but drew no specific analogy. Bonaventure did indeed emphasise the creative analogy but then followed Augustine's lead in "turning in on himself" and forming a barrier between the trinity of the mind and its reflection in the material

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[46] *Mind,* pages 23-4.

* The zeal with which Sayers applied the doctrine of the Trinity and the creative work of God to the process of the artist conceiving and the artist creating led her to draw conclusions about the vocation of Christian artists or other "makers". She was sharply critical of the Church's attitude to the arts and sciences. In a letter to Count Michael de la Bedoyere of *The Catholic Herald,* she drew comparisons between the vocation of an artist and that of a priest: "Neither in my own Church nor in yours can I find any general understanding of the facts that the Christian artist (or other "maker") must serve God *in his vocation,* which is just as truly his vocation as though he were called to be a priest; that if his work is not true to itself it cannot be true to God or anything else; and that bad art is bad Christianity, however much it may be directed to edification, or adorned with emasculated Christs, spineless virgins and cotton-wool angels uttering pious sentimentalities; and further, that to take novelists and playwrights away from doing good work in their own line (whether secular or devotional in content) and collar them for the purpose of preaching sermons or opening Church bazaars is a spoiling of God's instrument and defeats its own aims in the end." [Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two,* op. cit., page 308.] What is more important than this comparison and which enlarges the comparison between God's Trinity and the artist's Trinity is her argument that God is interested in secular work and does not merely sit up and take notice when hearing the name of God mentioned. This attitude resulted in a lack of any Christian critical standard in the arts "whereby the Church is made to look an ignoramus, and a philistine, and a fool". The Church had a teaching role, she allowed, and a rigorous one at that but, once the artist has been taught an intellectual Catholic dogma, he or she should be left to achieve the work independently ("when he's properly saturated").

world. Aquinas noted a limited imitation of art imitating nature and described the creative activity of the artist as that of composition, emphasising the human being's ability to create only "out of something". Barth gives important consideration to the psychological analogy between the Persons of the Trinity and personality and self-consciousness as understood by human beings but his use of language is tempered by his insistence on the biblical primacy of the Trinity. Any human analogy must be inferior and only concerned with the effect of the doctrine. Rahner is perhaps the strongest advocate of a human analogy which improves upon text-book theology and restores the connection between the Trinity and the Incarnation but actually fails to provide the very analogy for which he calls. Moltmann applies a human analogy to the social cultivation of society and thus limits his analogy to a particular political climate.

Sayers, on the other hand, discovers a means whereby the doctrine of the Trinity may be effectively interpreted entirely within the realm of human experience. Principally, this is her experience as a creative writer but she allows the analogy to be extended to cover all human creative activity. She allows that the analogy is not one of equality of mind or being but is the sole means whereby our language about God may be interpretive both of God's being and of God's activity rather than of one or the other in narrow isolation.

> Our minds are not infinite; and as the volume of the world's knowledge increases, we tend more and more to confine ourselves, each to his special sphere of interest and to the specialised metaphor belonging to it. The analytic bias of the last three centuries has immensely encouraged this tendency, and it is now very difficult for the artist to speak the language of the theologian, or the scientist the language of either. But the attempt must be made; and there are signs everywhere that the human mind is once more beginning to move towards a synthesis of experience.[47]

The next chapter continues to provide contexts in which Sayers' work was produced by examining more direct influences on her amongst her contemporaries and through her own reading and writing. It also provides similar threefold structures within similar theories of contemporary or near-contemporary philosophers and sets out some of the reactions to her particular efforts.

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[47] *Mind,* page 24.

CHAPTER THREE: INFLUENCE AND RESPONSE

Contemporary reviews of *The Mind of the Maker*

If Sayers was concerned that the theologian so rarely consulted the poet in order to shed light on his or her own apprehension of the truth of the statements of the Christian creeds, C S Lewis, in his review of *Mind* for *Theology,*[1] expressed surprise that the image of author and book for the relation between God and the world had been so little used by Christians.

Lewis, perhaps with a similar caution about analogical reference to that of Augustine and Barth and their caution against a human analogy which tends towards anthropomorphism, articulates one serious dissatisfaction with the work. His dissatisfaction lies not with the theoretical side of the book but with the practical/pastoral side:

> I think that in an age when idolatry of human genius is one of our most insidious dangers Miss Sayers would have been prudent to stress more continuously than she does the fact that the analogy *is* merely an analogy. I am afraid that some vainglorious writers may be encouraged to forget that they are called 'creative' only by a metaphor — that an unbridgeable gulf yawns between the human activity of recombining elements from a pre-existing world and the Divine activity of first inventing, and then endowing with substantial existence, the elements themselves.

Lewis does not respond to Sayers' own treatment of the contrast between "creation out of nothing" and "creation out of something" in Chapter Two of *Mind.*[2] Lewis' caution is similar to that of Aquinas who argued that composition is not the same as creation.[3] Sayers appeals to the imagination as providing the realm in which the artist comes closest to "creation out of nothing" where the imagination is not required to reconfigure existing thoughts into a new idea or indeed to discard such thoughts in order to make room for a new idea.

Lewis pursues his anxiety in the matter of the artist's invention and the impossibility of that invention assuming substantial existence:

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[1] C S Lewis, *Theology,* op. cit., pages 248-9.
[2] See above, Chapter Two, page 52.
[3] See above, Chapter Two, page 42.

> Nor do artists give their so-called creatures any substantial existence. Miss Sayers quotes from N Berdyaev that 'the image of an artist and poet is imprinted more clearly on his works than on his children.' More clearly, perhaps, but less substantially. For his son, like himself, has biological life, thought, freedom, and the hope of everlasting glory, while his work has only a *mimesis* of all these and is, in that deeper sense, wholly *unlike* a man. I must therefore disagree with Miss Sayers very profoundly when she says that 'between the mind of the maker and the Mind of his Maker' there is 'a difference, not of category, but only of quality and degree' (p 147). On my view there is a greater, far greater, difference between the two than between playing with a doll or suckling a child. But with this, serious disagreement ends.

It is interesting to note that, in Lewis' review, he suggests that Sayers' "ghost" is the "least easily classified of the three persons, but the same is true of his Divine Archetype in the real Trinity." Sayers is clear and concise in her description of the role of the Holy Spirit in her creative writer's trinity.[4] It is this third person in its manifestation of power/impact/recognition which is often missing from similar analogies in Lewis and Eliot.[5]

A less enthusiastic review comes from the pen of H M Waddams writing in T*he Church Quarterly Review.*[6] Waddams is also concerned about the use of analogical and allegorical language. There is a suggestion in this review of a commentator who is wary of straying too far from the biblical primacy of the revelation of God in the Trinity. Waddams quotes from Chapter Nine of *Mind*:

> 'The whole of existence is held to be the work of the Divine Creator — everything that there is, including not only the human maker and his human public but all other entities "visible and invisible" that may exist outside this universe. Consequently, whereas the human writer obtains his response from other minds, outside and independent of his own, God's response comes only from his own creatures.'[7] This statement is perfectly true if it is taken to mean that so far as God has any response from outside himself, it is only from his own creatures. But it could also be taken to mean that God was not complete in himself, and that there was no response within the Blessed Trinity. This does reveal a point of the first importance which the reader must remember when reading this book; that the analogy breaks down in a vital particular, in that there is no real correspondence in the human mind to the separation of the Persons in the structure of the Blessed Trinity.

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[4] See above, Chapter One, page 18.
[5] See below, Chapter Five.
[6] H M Waddams, "The Mind of the Maker by Dorothy L Sayers" in *The Church Quarterly Review,* Volume CXXXIII, No CCLXVI, January to March 1942, pages 240-3.
[7] *Mind,* page 103

Waddams has failed to notice Sayers' debt to Augustine and the related nature of the three Persons of the Trinity and her description of the Spirit-filled response of the audience returning to writers so that they become, in effect, the readers of their own books. It is perhaps also the reaction of a pluralist to the philosophy of a monist. Waddams continues:

> This is not an indictment of the method, for *every* analogy breaks down somewhere. But the reader must appreciate just where it occurs.

Waddams also rejects Sayers' definition of sacrifice as being that which is undertaken willingly and with enthusiasm and wishes to preserve the concept of sacrifice as a penitential chore.

> [Sayers] says that the best kind of sacrifice is always a glad sacrifice, which is not only accepted but willingly embraced. In one sense this is true ... but we do well to bear in mind the words of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane: 'Take away this cup from me.' There is another side of the question. The truth lies, I think, in the difference often experienced between the attitude of the will and that of the natural feelings which are always in a man. I do not agree with the implication of Miss Sayers that sacrifice which is painful and difficult is necessarily inferior to sacrifice that is 'enjoyed.'

Sayers, however, is arguing not against one particular expression of sacrifice but against the pride or self-consciousness which may lie behind a claim for attention by the doer when describing the effects of sacrifice on him or her.[8]

Waddams displays a slight tendency towards the sanctimony which Sayers often found particularly irksome.

Influences on Sayers cited in *Mind*

Each chapter of *The Mind of the Maker* is preceded by quotations from the works of largely contemporary writers which provide potential evidence for the theories of Sayers contained within her volume but which also suggest the inspiration which she received from her own reading and which assisted the development of her argument.

[8] *Mind,* pages 107-8.

John Henry Newman[9] in his *Sermon on the Trinity* encourages true faith in the doctrine of the Trinity rather than merely an ability to recite it. However, he seems anxious to avoid the charge that he is "explaining" the doctrine rather than simply articulating the claims of the Roman Catholic Church:

> ... if I shall be led on to mention one or two points of detail, it must not be supposed, as some persons strangely mistake, as if such additional statements were intended for *explanation,* whereas they leave the Great Mystery just as it was before, and are only useful as impressing on our mind *what* it is which the Catholic Church means to assert, and to make it a matter of real faith and apprehension, and not a mere assemblage of words.[10]

Sayers too was offering "a flat recapitulation of official doctrine"[11] although she was keen also to explain what that official doctrine meant in the light of certain phrases from the creeds.

Nicholas Berdyaev[12] in *The Destiny of Man* makes his claim, criticised by Lewis[13] that what is created is more expressive of the creator than what he or she begets. Further, he contrasts the creature's free response in the matter of creativity with the erroneous claim that he or she is obliged to obey that creator:

> God created man in his own image and likeness, i.e. made him a creator too, calling him to free spontaneous activity and not a formal obedience to His power. Free creativeness is the creature's answer to the great call of its creator. Man's creative work is the fulfilment of the Creator's secret will.[14]

The Destiny of Man was written in 1931. Previously, in 1927, Berdyaev had written *Freedom and the Spirit.* In her own copy of the latter work,[15] Sayers has marked

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[9] English prelate and theologian (1801-90); ordained into the Church of England, the *Tracts for the Times* in which he was instrumental signalled the beginning of the Tractarian Movement. His own Tract 90 contended that the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion in the Book of Common Prayer were aimed at the supremacy of the Pope and the various abuses of Catholic practice and not at Catholic doctrine itself. When this movement ended, significant individuals, like Newman, became Roman Catholics, Newman himself doing so in 1845.

[10] quoted in *Mind,* page vi.

[11] *Mind,* page vii.

[12] Russian religious philosopher (1874-1948); his strong revolutionary sympathies led him to support the 1917 Revolution. His professorship at Moscow was withdrawn owing to his unorthodox views and he established his own Academy of the Philosophy of Religion which eventually convened at Clamart, near Paris. He described himself as a "believing freethinker".

[13] See above, page 56.

[14] quoted in *Mind,* page 49.

[15] Nicholas Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit,* Geoffrey Bles, London, 1935 — sold by Bromlea and Jonkers from the library of Dorothy L Sayers in 2001 and loaned by the purchaser for the purpose of this thesis.

passages and made marginal comments throughout. One significant passage which Sayers has marked contrasts the conservatism of the Church which preserves conventions and customs democratically for the sake of "the average man and the masses" and the aristocratic quality of creative mind in the religious life which enjoys a revelation reserved for "a minority of the very elect":

> The former element is *par excellence* sacramental, the latter essentially prophetic; while one is manifested in collectivity, the other is individual. Creative development in the Church is always effected by upsetting the balance between the minority and the majority, and by the action of creative personalities who break free from the mass of average Christians. Priesthood is the conservative principle of religious life while prophecy is the creative element. The prophetic mission is always realised by means of individual inspirations. The prophetic spirit is hostile to every theology and metaphysic of the finite, and to every attempt to materialise the spirit and to transform the relative into the absolute. To deny creative development in the life of the Church and its dogmatic system is to deny the prophetic spirit, and to reserve to the priesthood exclusively all initiative in the religious life.[16]

Berdyaev argues that the prophet discerns the infinite perspective of the spiritual world and thus causes the limits of the finite world to recede: an argument which Sayers interprets with an appeal to the power of the imagination when qualifying the distinction between "creation out of nothing" and "creation out of something". Berdyaev states that the dogmas of the Christian Church — the Trinitarian character of God and the dual nature of the divine and human Christ — are given new symbolic expression through the creative achievements of human endeavour both now and in the past: "a continuous movement which marches irresistibly forward."[17]

This connection between divine and human and past and present is articulated by the activity of the Holy Trinity itself. Sayers, with a particularly firm pencil marking, augmented by an asterisk, highlights this comment:

> Even the Holy Trinity Itself is to be found in every part of the world.[18]

The fear of confusing the divinity of the Mind of God with the mind of the human maker had led other commentators to emphasise the distinction to the exclusion of

[16] Berdyaev, op. cit., page 80-1.
[17] ibid., page 81.
[18] ibid., page 83.

any possibility that the Trinity may be active within the mind of the human maker. In another doubly marked passage, Sayers draws attention to Berdyaev on this subject:

> Catholic theologians assert that man is only a spiritual being resembling God by grace and not by virtue of his proper nature, but such language is a mere convention and makes a distinction which only exists on the natural and outward plane. Man has been created in the image and likeness of God.[19]

Sayers takes up a similar argument in interpreting what the relevant verse from scripture means if it is not to be taken literally.[20] Berdyaev develops this theme in another marked passage in a discussion about human freedom, a passage which introduces a key word — "idea" — for Sayers' later analogy:

> Man bears upon him the mark of the divine image, he is the divine idea, the divine plan, without, however, being divine by nature, for had he been so he would not have been free. The freedom of man presupposes the possibility of his divinisation as well as the possibility of the destruction of the divine idea and image. Man deprived of the freedom to do wrong would be merely a good automaton.[21]

The argument here is not concerned with the freedom of *laissez-faire* but with the obligations placed upon the creative man or woman as a result of his or her freedom, obligations which are mentally and physically draining. Sayers will develop this argument in her description of the artist's Energy which brings about the expression in temporal form of the Idea and requires "feeling, thought, toil, trouble, difficulty, choice, triumph."[22] Berdyaev (in a passage this time doubly marked and underlined by Sayers) writes:

> The free life is the most complex while the easy life is that which is subject to restraint and necessity.[23]

Sayers wears her pencil down to the stub in Chapter Six of Berdyaev, "God, Man, and the God-Man", in which Berdyaev argues that God expects and requires creative activity from "His other self" and suggests that the mediaeval oppression of human freedom was heresy. This heresy is matched in Berdyaev's contemporary world by

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[19] Berdyaev, op. cit., page 95.
[20] See above, Chapter Two, page 36.
[21] Berdyaev, op. cit., page 131.
[22] *Mind,* page 30.
[23] Berdyaev, op. cit., page 148.

humanism to which the Church has made no challenge. He places his own challenge in the pages of his book when he writes:

> A positive Christian answer will have to be given sooner or later to man's longing to create for the fate of Christianity in the world depends upon it.[24]

When Sayers underlines this sentence, she effectively takes up the challenge and meets it in *The Mind of the Maker.*

Arthur Eddington[25] in *The Philosophy of Natural Science* emphasised the importance of experience in a proper understanding of the arbitrary laws of society. This work provides a neat preface to Sayers' explanation of the distinction between natural law and human law and the need for the latter to accord with the former lest a human being attempts to do violence to his or her own nature. She offers this description as part of her argument that the Christian creeds arise out of a particular experience of the truths contained within them ("necessary conditions based on the facts of human nature"[26]).

Sayers cites another work by Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World,* with a passage which is more directly relevant to her appeal to the imagination as the sphere within which infinite creativeness out of nothing is possible:

> We have torn away the mental fancies to get at the reality beneath, only to find that the reality of that which is beneath is bound up with its potentiality of awakening these fancies. It is because the mind, the weaver of illusion, is also the only guarantor of reality that reality is always to be sought at the base of illusion.[27]

In other words, reality is to be found and recognised behind illusion because the very mind which guarantees the reality is also the weaver of the illusion.*

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[24] Berdyaev, op. cit., page 235.
[25] English astronomer (1882-1944) whose work in between the two wars did much to establish the theories of Albert Einstein.
[26] *Mind,* page 12.
[27] quoted in *Mind,* page 15.
* Eddington's influence on Sayers may have been wider than the citations recorded here. In his book, *The Origin of the Universe,* John D Barrow describes Eddington's espousal of the "heat death of the universe" theory and its popularisation during the 1930s: "One can find the pessimism this notion inspired permeating many theological and philosophical writings of those times, emerging even in the works of such contemporary novelists as Dorothy Sayers." [Phoenix, London, 1995, page 25.]

J D Beresford[28] in his *Writing Aloud* speaks from his own experience as a writer when he describes mental activity in which all sense may exist at once (cf. "Idea" in Sayers' analogy) and the act of writing in which some sequence is required (cf. "Energy" in Sayers' analogy):

> In thought, the sense of the setting and one's knowledge of the characters are all present simultaneously. In writing, something of these elements has to be conveyed in sequence.[29]

Something similar is found in W Somerset Maugham[30] and the preface to his novel *Cakes and Ale* in which he describes a writer's imagined characters existing in the mind all at once both obedient to the whim of the writer but also strangely independent of him:

> A character in a writer's head, unwritten, remains a possession; his thoughts recur to it constantly, and while his imagination gradually enriches it he enjoys the singular pleasure of feeling that there, in his mind, someone is living a varied and tremulous life, obedient to his fancy and yet in a queer wilful way independent of him.[31]

Sayers herself rejects the autocratic control of an author over his or her characters when she rejects calls by her correspondents to manipulate a character's personality according to the author's whim or indeed that of the correspondent. At the same time, she rejects any attempt by commentators to read aspects of her own personality from that of her characters. Where free will has been denied a character in a piece of writing in order to benefit the plot, the integrity of the work fails. The character must be true to his or her own nature for the plot to succeed and be received appropriately by the reader.

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[28] Novelist, playwright and poet (1873-1947); father of Elizabeth Beresford (creator of the Wombles), he is best remembered for his science fiction novels reminiscent of the style of H G Wells.
[29] quoted in *Mind,* page 25.
[30] British writer (1874-1965): master of the short story. He settled in the south of France in 1928 he he wrote his astringent, satirical masterpiece *Cakes and Ale* in 1930. His sparse and careful style has been criticised for superficiality but he refused to do more than tell a story claiming that all else was propaganda which seriously impaired a work of art.
[31] quoted in *Mind,* page 49.

William Wordsworth[32] read *The Prelude,* his record of the poet's mind, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1805. He uses the word "Power" as the agent of the one great Mind and this agent engages with both what Wordsworth calls "creator" and "receiver". This is an important admission of the movement between author and audience of the Power and, in Sayers' theory, the Holy Spirit. Much of the consonant use of analogy which Sayers has cited in other writers has regarded the role of Father and Son in creativity but has often stopped short of the role of the Holy Spirit. Wordsworth makes good this deficiency — appropriately enough, at the beginning of Sayers' chapter "Pentecost."

> Power
> That through the growing faculties of sense
> Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
> Create, creator and receiver both.[33]

Thomas Lovell Beddoes,[34] in one of his many fragments describes in a neat phrase two parts of the creative writer's trinity. For this purpose, he uses the words "thought" and "word" and, although he does not ascribe them to Father and Son, the implication is strikingly similar to the import of Sayers' theory particularly in relation to her argument that the Idea in the creative writer's mind must find its expression in form. Beddoes writes:

> There is some secret stirring in the world,
> A thought that seeks impatiently its word.[35]

L(awrance) P(earsall) Jacks[36] delivered the Stevenson Lectures on Citizenship at the University of Glasgow in the academic year of 1926-7. Entitled "Constructive Citizenship," he argues that the subjects of social concern do not necessarily provide problems with solutions that lead to happiness but occasion problems which often should be ameliorated with "good workmanship and well-doing in general."

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[32] English poet (1770-1850): at an earlier period in his life, he entertained agnostic and revolutionary ideas. His true vocation was that of a poet engaging with the lives of ordinary people and living in contact with divine nature.
[33] quoted in *Mind,* page 87.
[34] British Romantic poet and dramatist (1803-49): a preoccupation with the macabre sits well with troubled poet's strange and short life. The son of a noted physician, Beddoes was brought up within sight of the grisly aspects of anatomical research. His obsession with death was articulated in metaphysical poetry much of which has been lost. He is a poet of fragments who led a fragmented life.
[35] quoted in *Mind,* page 101.

Sayers quotes Jacks at the beginning of her chapter "Problem Picture" in which she returns to her premise that a human being's nature must be allowed to run true to itself and not be distorted such that it is forced to do violence to its own nature. When a detective problem is solved, it is only solved within the boundaries in which the problem was presented. She suggests that the population's regard for detective fiction is precisely that it presents a problem which can indeed be solved and gives respite from the general view that men and women are at odds with the universe and thus depressed by their apparent inability to solve their own problems.

Just as Sayers has stumbled upon her theory of creative mind as it were by accident when considering the worth of work in the context of the exigencies of the Second World War,[37] so L P Jacks argues that the ordinary citizen may not have a solution to the "social problem" but he or she is nevertheless able to offer his creative ability.

> Let the valiant citizen never be ashamed to confess that he has no 'solution of the social problem' to offer to his fellow-men. Let him offer them rather the service of his skill, his vigilance, his fortitude and his probity.[38]

Sayers herself, describing the man or woman who conforms to the pattern of human society being at odds with the universe but at odds with human nature when conforming to the pattern of his or her true nature, writes:

> If you ask me what is this pattern which I recognise as the true law of my nature, I can only suggest that it is the pattern of the creative mind — an eternal Idea, manifested in material form by an unresting Energy, with an outpouring of Power that at once inspires, judges, and communicates the work.[39]

Herbert Read[40] in his *Annals of Innocence and Experience,* describes his belief that the natural senses provide an aesthetic and felicitous view of life for more people than merely those who create or appreciate works of art. By emphasising the natural activity of artistic expression and reaction, the passage cited from Read appears to

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[36] Unitarian minister and philosopher (1860-1955): Principal of Harris Manchester College, Oxford (1915-31), he founded *The Hibbert Journal* which specialised in speculative philosophy and theology. In 1948, he wrote a biography of Arthur Eddington whom Sayers also cites.
[37] See below, Chapter Four, page 94ff.
[38] quoted in *Mind,* page 145.
[39] *Mind,* page 172.
[40] English art historian, critic and poet (1893-1968): he revived interest in the nineteenth century Romantic movement and championed modern art movements in Britain.

concur with Sayers' argument that her creative analogy with the Trinity is a natural analogy because, just as the triunity of creative activity is reflected in the mind and in the work, so the mind of the maker and the Mind of the Maker are formed on the same pattern, "the pattern laid down by the theologians as the pattern of the being of God."[41] Read writes:

> The aesthetic view of life is not, however, confined to those who can create or appreciate works of art. It exists wherever natural senses play freely on the manifold phenomena of our world, and when life as a consequence is found to be full of felicity.[42]

The degree to which Sayers has been influenced particularly by her contemporaries is matched also by the extent of her reading and the broad inclusion of artists, writers, philosophers, scientists and theologians. The pages of her text contain other citations and allusions but those described here sit well with the principal tenets of her argument. They also give the lie to any possibility that Sayers' theory arose out of nothing and adds to the sense of bewilderment that so little attention has been given to *The Mind of the Maker* when, although her presentation of the analogy is complete and inimitable, those of her contemporaries who engaged with similar themes, appeared to be travelling in a very similar direction to her.

The development of the analogy continued in Sayers' correspondence: her own reflections and the reactions of her contemporaries.

Both during and after the composition of *The Mind of the Maker,* Sayers was engaged in correspondence with friends and associates which reflected the themes which were intrinsic to the theory contained in her book. As with the correspondence with Father Herbert Kelly after *The Zeal of thy House,*[43] others letters written by Sayers reflect the absorbing interest which her Trinitarian analogy held for her and the potential for its application to the responses which she now gave to her enquirers.

Her son, John Anthony Fleming, himself asked for her opinion about personality in the matter of people in authority. In her reply of 2 January 1941, she interprets his question in relation to personality and the work in which a person is engaged and

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[41] *Mind,* page 173.
[42] quoted in *Mind,* page 145.
[43] See above, Chapter One, page 28ff.

quickly turns the discussion away from statesmen, about whose vocation she feels inadequate to speak, and towards personality and artists. She admits that she has been engaged in writing a book which partly treats the matters which her son's letter raises. The book in question is *Mind* and she will soon send him a manuscript of that work to read for himself before its publication.

She is cautious of using an interpretation of personality to reach a true understanding of a person's ability in his or her vocation. She prefers a close study of the person's work. She will discuss this very theme in Chapter Nine of *Mind,* "The Love of the Creature." She explains to her son that the lives of statesmen were part of their public work but, for artists, "all the self which they are able to communicate to the world is in their work, and is manifest in its best form in the work."[44]

Sayers believed the biographer would be disappointed if expecting to gain more out of direct contact with the person than one gains from the person's work. The work is the person's means of expression and is the person's genuine self. "What we make is more important than what we are — particularly if 'making' is our profession."

She takes up this insistence on the limits of the terms of reference of *Mind* again in a letter to Mrs Robert Darby (identity unknown) on 7 April 1948:

> The Book-as-Thought, Written and Read, is not the trinity of the creator, but of the thing created, i.e. of the *Book* itself. That three-in-one makes up the Book, and apart from its tri-unity there is no Book conceivable — I mean that there is no aspect of the *Book's* being that is not included within these three taken together.[45]

Although the tri-unity of the *Mind* of the book's *Maker* was similar, it was nevertheless separate. This was a tri-unity of Idea, Energy and Power and, to emphasise the independence of the mind from the "thing itself," could be applied to all Mind (whether engaged in actively creating or not) as Thought, Act and Communication. The three-in-oneness is complete in itself. There is not another unity outside of the mind contemplating it. "The mind contemplating itself is the 'father'

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[44] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two,* op. cit., page 221.
[45] Barbara Reynolds (ed), *The Letters of Dorothy L Sayers, Volume Three, 1944-1950: A Noble Daring,* The Dorothy L Sayers Society, Carole Green Publishing, Cambridge, 1998, page 362.

knowing himself in the 'son' in the power of the 'spirit', so that the ultimate unity is triune."

Sayers' theory that the Trinitarian structure runs throughout the creation and the creative process provides the place where imaginative belief and factual belief meet. In a letter to Maurice Browne, actor-manager and dramatist, on 27 January 1947, she challenges his misreading of her identification of Personality with God when he suggests that she has identified it with the "Unimaged." The word "God," used absolutely, means the whole Trinity. This is crucial to Sayers' theory. She returns to her often-repeated argument that the Son should not be separated from the Father or the Image from the Godhead. She quotes her play *The Just Vengeance* where Persona says:

> I the Image of the Unimaginable
> In the place where the Image and the Unimaged are one.[46]

> Do remember, by the way, to distinguish between the doctrine of the Church and my opinion. The doctrine of the Trinity, as stated in my letter and in *The Mind of the Maker*, is (E. and O.E. [errors and omissions excepted]) the Church's; the theory that the Trinitarian structure runs right through creation is largely my opinion.[47]

After Fleming had read the typescript or proof copy of *Mind*, which Sayers had sent him, he corresponded with her again. His own concern about the personality of the artist had caused him to extend the analogy of the book too far. Sayers was concerned to restrict her terms of reference precisely in order to maintain a more definite and satisfactory image of the Creator. She believed that the ordinary individual's personality was a rather feeble such image.

In her reply of 7 May 1941, she described the will of God in creation.

> It is not quite enough, theologically, to say that God '*has* will' — He *is* will, just as He *is* beauty, goodness, justice and so forth. The theologian's phrase is that 'God *is* all that He *has*'. It is true that God's will always issues in creation — He *is* creativeness. That is what is meant when people say that 'God's creation is necessary to Him' — so it is: though not

[46] Sayers, *The Just Vengeance,* op. cit., page 47.
[47] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Three,* op. cit., page 292.

> necessarily this or any particular creation. Thus one may take 'the Resurrection of the Body' in the widest possible sense — not applying it merely to the power of the creature to remake its own form, but to the continual power and will of the Son to create, and manifest Himself in Form.[48]

She adds a caution here about limiting God's Trinity to this one creation. Just as the human creator is not limited to a single work (not even to a single work at a time), so God has infinite freedom in this respect. "Since, however, we have no knowledge or experience of any creation but this one, we cannot very usefully argue about others."

As has been noted, for Sayers the triadic structure of the Trinity was to be found within each creative act. Indeed, each creative act was a tri-unity in itself. She was concerned to find the notion of a Divine Trinity in the universal religious instinct of humankind both as a natural revelation of God and as an argument for a triadic structure in creation.

In correspondence with Irene Amesbury (identity unknown) on 1 June 1945, she explained her own instinct on this matter.

> It would be surprising if the notion of a Divine Trinity were not to be found in some of the pagan religions — is it likely that the mind of man, however darkened, would not have some apprehension of the eternal fact, or that God would not fulfil all the prophecies?[49]

This comparison, however, causes her to state again that the doctrine of the Trinity is not a doctrine of conjoined deities or of one deity in three aspects but a doctrine of the nature of substantial being. She goes further when she says that, in a special sense, this is also a doctrine of substantial intellect. The intelligence which encourages people to believe that God is, somehow or other, "like that" is not an argument to prove that he is not so. She argues, on the contrary, that human imagination or human reason provide valid arguments in favour of the truth of Christian doctrine. "Indeed, it would be a very strong argument against Christianity if it could be shown to have no foundation in the universal religious instinct of mankind."

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[48] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two,* op. cit., page 253.
[49] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Three,* op. cit., page 150.

Shortly after the publication of *Mind,* Sayers responded to a review of the book by Dom R Russell of Downside Abbey who, noting some disagreement as well as approval, questioned her emphasis on the role of the Son in creation. In her letter to Russell of 28 October 1941, Sayers noted people's ignorance of the role of the Son in creation. The Spirit is acknowledged through the Genesis reference to the Spirit "moving over the face of the waters" in the beginning [Genesis 1: 2]. It seemed to her, however, that people failed to recognise the essential part which the Son, the Logos, the Energy played in the same creation.

> The majority of Protestants are, in their hearts, Adoptionists, or Arians at the best, and the common-or-garden heathen has no more idea than the man in the moon that the Son is supposed to have had any existence prior to the appearance of Jesus on earth.[50]

Some indication of the contribution which Sayers made to popular Christianity lies in the success she achieved in encouraging people to look more closely at the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity in creation at the beginning and in its redemption. The separation of the three in people's minds resulted in bad Christianity.

> Consequently, the very idea that *the same God* who made the world also suffered in the world is to the ordinary man an entirely alien notion, and if you try to tell him that this is what is meant, he thinks you are making it up. No language, however strong, violent, or emphatic will expunge from the mind of the average anti-Christian the picture he has formed of Christian Soteriology, viz: that Jehovah (the old man with the beard) made the world and made it so badly that it all went wrong and he wanted to burn it up in a rage; whereat the Son (who was younger and nicer, and not implicated in his Father's irresponsible experiment) said: 'Oh, don't do that! If you must torment somebody, take it out [on] me.' So Jehovah vented his sadistic appetite on a victim who had nothing to do with it at all, and thereafter grudgingly allowed people to go to heaven if they provided themselves with a ticket of admission signed by the Son.[51]

Sayers was convinced that this was what people thought the Christian Church meant and, as a result, the Church presided over a complete negation of the doctrine of the Incarnation, which she wanted to rescue.

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[50] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two,* op. cit., page 315.
[51] ibid., pages 315-6.

The essence of all three persons of the Trinity being engaged in the act of creation had led Sayers to her claim that the artist could behold his or her work complete in the mind before it was produced in substantial form. In a letter to C. S. Lewis on 24 December 1945, she added to her "Scalene Trinities" the example of John Milton whom Lewis admired and a preface to whose *Paradise Lost* by Lewis Sayers had read.

> One thing I've been meaning for ages to say to you about Milton, à propos your *Preface to P.L.* I'm pretty sure I know the reason — or one reason — why Books XI and XII are so badly done. Milton did what one so often does — he started the thing off on much too big a scale. And after a time, he said to himself: 'Oh, gosh! I've done about 400 lines and only got to Noah, and there's Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Josephus, Judges, Kings, Chronicles and everything still to come — I must hurry.' [52]

She then called to witness, by contrast, Dante, who conceived a vision of the whole work before producing the work itself. She believed that the only thing to do, upon the realisation that the scale of the work was imbalanced, was to start again with a clean sheet. Milton failed to do this, so "he got fussed and desperate, and began cramming along as best he could, making dull synopses...."

Sayers was concerned that her hypothesis in the matter of a writer should hold good for other artistic media. Her concern was ameliorated by a letter from the composer Armstrong Gibbs, a student of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Adrian Boult at the Royal College of Music.[53]

She replied to him on 12 January 1942:

> It is most interesting that you have had the same sensation of things being 'right' in a particular place, and have only afterwards discovered why. Another helpful and kind correspondent unearthed for me a letter of Mozart's, in which he said that while writing a composition he was able to 'survey it at a glance, like a beautiful picture, ... and I do not hear it in my imagination successively, as it must afterwards appear, but as it were all at once.' Being myself only musical, and not a musician, I had no idea whether a musician could have such an experience, and was enchanted to discover that he actually could and sometimes did.[54]

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[52] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Three,* op. cit., page 185.
[53] See R G Collingwood using a similar analogy below, page 75.
[54] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Two,* op. cit., page 341.

Sayers was still anxious to deprecate the name of "Christian apologist" and claimed not to be conveying spiritual experience by way of what might be termed "her faith". C. S. Lewis had misinterpreted her letter about the will assenting to the undertaking as a desire to do apologetic work and protested that this was, in his own experience, often dangerous to his faith. She responded on 5 August 1946:

> I do not possess anything which I should care to dignify by the name of 'my faith'. All spiritual experience is a closed book to me; in that respect I have been tone-deaf from birth.[55]

She preferred to receive truth by way of her intellect and imagination ("or rather, since apart they can do nothing, the imaginative intellect"). Her perception of that truth was complete in her mind, in its three-fold articulation, but, because it was divine truth, was compromised by its expression in print.

> If or when, from time to time, God is pleased to make any truth clear to me by that means [her imaginative intellect], I produce work that not only is spurious in itself but also falsifies the only instruments I have by which to perceive anything.[56]

As if to root out utterly all suggestion that she was a Christian apologist, she told Lewis:

> When you call this realisation that one must say nothing but what one wants to say an 'itch' you are wide of the mark. With the exception of *The Mind of the Maker*, everything, almost, I have written has been simply a commissioned job.[57]

This argument was not merely deprecation of her ability but a clear acknowledgement of the distinction between the mind of God and the creative product of the human artist despite her central analogy. C. S. Lewis had suggested that a doctrine never seemed dimmer to him than when he had just successfully defended it. Sayers responded on 8 August 1946:

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[55] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Three*, op. cit., page 255.
[56] ibid., page 255.
[57] ibid., page 256.

> Well, naturally — but I doubt if that has anything much to do with, or against, your faith. It is the nemesis that attends *all* art, and *all* argument.[58]

The argument contained in *The Mind of the Maker* would now never be far from Sayers' intellectual response to all creativity and human endeavour, her own in particular. In her subsequent work and in her correspondence, she returned to the natural triadic structure which she believed lay behind all work and which caused her to emphasise the worth of the work as a godlike response to the divine creation.

Similar triadic structures in the writings of R C Moberly, R G Collingwood and Iris Murdoch

It is outside the field of specialist theology in which the closest parallels to Sayers' triadic structure of human creativity are found. They are discovered, not unusually, in the field of philosophy. Three such examples are particularly striking: those of R C Moberly, R G Collingwood and Iris Murdoch. Sayers is well acquainted with the work of the philosopher of art, R G Collingwood, but it is not thought likely that she knew R C Moberly.[59] Iris Murdoch, of course, post-dates Sayers.

R C Moberly

Robert Campbell Moberly,[60] in his book *Atonement and Personality*[61] wrote the following:

> First, then, there is the man as he really is in himself, invisible, indeed, and inaccessible, — and yet, directly, the fountain, origin, and cause of everything that can be called in any sense himself. Secondly, there is himself as projected into conditions of visibleness, — the overt expression or utterance of himself. This, under the conditions of our actual experience, will mean for the most part his expression or image as body, — the touch of his hand, the tone of his voice, the shining of his eye, the utterance of his words: all, in a word, that makes up, to us, that outward expression of himself, which we call himself, and which he himself ordinarily recognises as the very mirror and image and reality of himself. And thirdly, there is the reply of what we call external nature to him — his operation or effect.[62]

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[58] Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Three*, op. cit., page 259.
[59] See John Thurmer, "Sayers and the Philosophers" in *Reluctant Evangelist*, op. cit., page 61.
[60] Anglican priest and writer (1845-1903): founder of St Stephen's House, Oxford.
[61] R C Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, John Murray, London, 1901.
[62] Moberly, op. cit., page 174, quoted in Thurmer, op. cit., page xii.

Just as Augustine had given considerable thought to the reflection of a triadic structure in the realm of the human self or soul, so Moberly traces a threefold structure in the human personality which appears to correspond neatly to the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. His expression of this analogy strikes similar chords to that of Sayers: there is the inner, mental awareness of the self, the form and expression of the self as a real person and the effect of that person on the world around him or her. As has been noted above, other analogies often failed before they reached the person of the Holy Spirit and were incomplete. Here is an analogy which, like that of Sayers, gives a particular and distinctive form of impact to that part of the analogy which relates to the Holy Spirit and thus completes the triadic structure on equal terms.

However, this analogy is restricted to the expression of the self. It is Sayers who, as Thurmer points out, develops the analogy and relates it to the self as creator:

> It has sometimes seemed that by shifting the analogy from the person to the created work she weakened it. But Ramsey's[63] point that analogies for God need to span the personal and the non-personal may mean that her form of the analogy is better in principle than Moberly's, as well as being, as it undoubtedly is, much more developed; and so, by that very *activity,* accessible for praise or blame.[64]

R G Collingwood

R G Collingwood[65] is cited by Sayers in a letter to the Reverend Aubrey Moody of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, with a reference to his work *The Principles of Art*[66] and, again, in her *The Poetry of Search and the Poetry of Statement.*[67]

Collingwood does not appear to search for an analogy with the Trinity as his primary task. The triadic structure which is essential to any Trinitarian analogy simply

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[63] Ian Ramsey, bishop and philosopher (1915-72): in the third of his Riddell Memorial Lectures, "Talking about God", Ramsey uses the same three words as Sayers in her analogy uses (power, activity and energy) when he attempts to bridge the gap between personal and non-personal descriptions of God. Thurmer believes that the use of these words suggests some contact with her work although Ramsey appears to show no recollection of it (Thurmer, op. cit., page 60).
[64] Thurmer, op. cit., page 62.
[65] English philosopher, historian and archaeologist (1889-1943).
[66] R G Collingwood, *The Principles of Art,* Oxford University Press, London, 1938.
[67] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Poetry of Search and the Poetry of Statement,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1963, page 15.

emerges from the text of his artistic philosophy. Like Moberly, it is complete in the sense that an equal balance is discernible in the threefold nature of his philosophy. He provides a model response to the question about the distinction between "making" which is characteristic of the artist and mere fabrication:

> This non-technical making is plainly not an accidental making, for works of art could not be produced by accident. Something must be in control. But if this is not the artist's skill, it cannot be his reason or will or consciousness. It must therefore be something else; either some controlling force outside the artist, in which case we may call it inspiration, or something inside him but other than his will and so forth. This must be either his body, in which case the production of a work of art is at bottom a physiological activity, or else it is something mental but unconscious, in which case the productive force is the artist's unconscious mind.[68]

Collingwood, just as with so many theologians, is anxious that his description of the creative activity of the artist should not be taken to imply any equality between the activity of the human artist and that of the divine artist. He emphasises the ability of the mind to behold the whole work complete at once before articulation in reality:

> A work of art need not be what we should call a real thing. It may be what we call an imaginary thing. A disturbance, or a nuisance, or a navy, or the like, is not created at all until it is created as a thing having its place in the real world. But a work of art may be completely created when it has been created as a thing whose only place is in the artist's mind.[69]

It may well be that the ability to behold a vision of the whole at once is a real mark of creativity. Collingwood describes the articulation in reality of the artist's idea although he admits that the activity which so realises the form is not necessarily responding to a preconceived plan.[70] He also appears to contradict the claim [cf. Plato] that human creation is merely imitation and the rearrangement of existing material into a new form and allows some unique integrity to the human creator:

> ..... it should be clear that when we speak of an artist as making a poem, or a play, or a painting, or a piece of music, the kind of making to which we refer is the kind we call creating. For, as we already know, these things, in so far as they are works of art proper, are not made as means to an end; they

[68] Collingwood, op. cit., page 126.
[69] ibid., page 130.
[70] Sayers always insisted that an artist could not operate effectively in a straitjacket imposed from outside but must be true to his or her own mind as well as allow the creation some degree of free will itself for it to be true to itself (see the letter to Aubrey Moody cited above and Chapter Nine of *Mind* "The Love of the Creature").

> are not made according to any preconceived plan; and they are not made by imposing a new form upon a given matter. Yet they are made deliberately and responsibly, by people who know what they are doing, even though they do not know in advance what is going to come of it.[71]

This allows for the possibility of genuine novelty in a human act of creativity. The ignorance of the effect of an artist's creativity does not end Collingwood's analogy there. He completes it by emphasising the vital role of the audience in the appreciation of art and moves on to a musical analogy:

> His business [that of the artist proper] is not to produce an emotional effect in an audience, but, for example, to make a tune. This tune is already complete and perfect when it exists merely as tune in his head, that is, an imaginary tune. Next, he may arrange for the tune to be played before an audience. Now there comes into existence a real tune, a collection of noises. But which of these two things is the work of art? Which of them is the music?

The clue to the answer lies with the completion of the Trinitarian analogy through the response [Power] of the audience. This emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit:

> The answer is implied in what we have already said: the music, the work of art, is not the collection of noises, it is the tune in the composer's head. The noises made by the performers, and heard by the audience, are not the music at all; they are only the means by which the audience, if they listen intelligently (not otherwise), can reconstruct for themselves the imaginary tune that existed in the composer's head.[72]

Iris Murdoch

Iris Murdoch[73] in her book *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists*[74] (based upon the Romanes Lecture 1976) provides an analysis of Plato's *Republic* and his philosophical response to artistic expression. In doing so, she herself discerns a threefold structure in the platonic philosophy of art. Although artistic expression is a form of imitation, its relegation to mere mimesis is pre-empted by the power of the imagination:

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[71] Collingwood, op. cit., page 129.
[72] ibid., page 139.
[73] Irish novelist and philosopher (1919-99).
[74] Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977.

> God creates the original Form or Idea of a bed; the carpenter makes the bed we sleep upon; the artist copies the bed from one point of view. He is thus at three removes from reality. He does not understand the bed, he does not measure it, he could not make it.... Art naively or wilfully accepts appearances instead of questioning them. Similarly, a writer who portrays a doctor does not possess a doctor's skill but simply 'imitates doctors' talk'.... Art or imitation may be dismissed as 'play', but when artists imitate what is bad they are adding to the sum of badness in the world.[75]

Sayers too deplores the execution of bad art.[76] Murdoch cites Plato in *Phaedrus* (286d) where he speaks of the way in which inspired imagination goes beyond technique in art to produce a kind of completeness.[77]

Murdoch describes Plato's Trinity of the Demiurge which creates the cosmos and endows it with a discerning soul. It cannot create perfectly because it must use pre-existent materials which contain irrational elements. It is not omnipotent but "persuades" the "wandering causes" so as to create the best possible world. It also creates junior gods and human souls and allots to the gods the task of creating men and women. It creates the world because, being good and without envy, it wishes all things to be as like itself as possible. The Demiurge looks towards the Forms with rational passion and with a yearning to create. The Forms are the perfect model which remain entirely separate and untouched. The World Soul is an incarnation of spirit which pervades the whole sensible cosmos and is created for this purpose by the Demiurge.[78]

Murdoch writes:

> In the Christian Trinity love passes continually between the three persons all of whom are in motion. In Plato's Trinity two partners are busy while one is still. The Demiurge is intelligently busy (and as independent causes proliferate his work must go on), while the World Soul is not quite sure what it is at, but does the best it can. Incarnate spirit, even in saints and geniuses, is muddled and puny. The Forms remain changeless and eternal. I am sure that one should resist the Christianising view that the Forms yearn for realisation or tend towards it. Such 'yearning' belongs entirely to the mythical Demiurge.[79]

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[75] Murdoch, op. cit., page 6.
[76] See note on page 53 of Chapter Two.
[77] Murdoch, op. cit., page 18.
[78] ibid., pages 49-51.
[79] ibid., page 53.

Finally, Murdoch concurs with Sayers most appositely in the matter of the educational value of art. The triadic structure in Plato is a useful suggestion of the discovery throughout the history of philosophy and theology of the triadic structure in nature itself. On the matter of the impact of art, Murdoch and Sayers are — unconsciously — at one:

> [The artist] sets the world in order and gives us hypothetical hierarchies and intermediate images: like the dialectician he mediates between the one and the many; and though he may artfully confuse us, on the whole he instructs us. Art is far and away the most educational thing we have, far more so than its rivals, philosophy and theology and science..... Of course art has no formal 'social role' and artists ought not to feel that they must 'serve their society.' They will automatically serve it if they attend to truth and try to produce the best art (make the most beautiful things) of which they are capable. The connection of truth with beauty means that art which succeeds in being for itself also succeeds in being for everybody.[80]

Plato is wrong to banish the artists from his republic and his rejection of them lies in the fact that he does not allow for genuine creative novelty. Such novelty depends upon a fundamental review of the power of the imagination which Sayers has identified as one of the most important ways in which we are related to the divine. Plato's Demiurge is exciting because it is the creator's power of the imagination. It is almost a parable of men and women. Endowed with the power of imagination, the Demiurge may do novel things. By contrast, the Christian Trinity does allow imagination and thus also the novelty which results. Sayers sees this distinction while Murdoch does not.

Lascelles Abercrombie: a later discovery

By August 1941, Sayers had read *The Theory of Poetry* by Lascelles Abercrombie,[81] poet and university lecturer. On 8 August, she wrote to Muriel St Clare Byrne concerning the book:

> [He] is right on to lots of the *Mind of the Maker* stuff — but I'm glad I didn't read the book earlier; I should have suspected myself of being influenced by what he said — especially about the return of the idea through the Son to the God — almost identical with mine in other words.[82]

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[80] Murdoch, op. cit., page 86.
[81] Lascelles Abercrombie, *The Theory of Poetry,* Martin Secker, London, 1924.
[82] Unpublished letter quoted by Barbara Reynolds in a letter to the author dated 8 December 2001.

Abercrombie's book was published in 1924 and repeats throughout the theory that a poem is an expression of an idea in the poet's mind articulated in such a way that it attracts the imagination of the reader to enter the poet's mind and share a particular experience in the light of that reader's own experience. He describes a use of language which is "simply and purely creative: it makes our minds become the imagination of the poet."[83]

Far from entertaining the inspired idea for himself alone, the poet feels encouraged to express his idea in form through the "urgency which called the art into existence and compelled it to be just this art and no other."[84] Abercrombie shares Sayers' insistence on the "whole idea complete at once" in the mind of the artist. Of the completed poem, he writes:

> For as soon as there flashed into complete single existence in his mind this many-coloured experience with all its complex passion, the poem which we know was *conceived,* as an inspiration.[85]

Already, one senses echoes of Sayers' Idea and Energy but what of her Power and the reference in her letter to the "return of the idea through the Son to the God"? Abercrombie treats the writing of a poem not merely as a means of expressing to others the event which has inspired the poet but, through both the writing of that poem and its reception by others, as a means by which the poet himself continues to experience the event:

> And this very necessity of turning his sense of the event into an imaginative act, enabled the poet's mind to know and feel the event to the utmost, to distinguish all the nicety of its peculiar character, and to enrich it with the fullest comment of association; and thence to make it an occasion of that beauty and significance which we require in poetry, and into which we are now inquiring.[86]

Here is one who writes poems describing a threefold structure to his art which accords with Sayers' analogy and which is clearly born of experience.

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[83] Abercrombie, op. cit., page 49.
[84] ibid., pages 57-8.
[85] ibid., page 58.
[86] ibid., pages 194-5.

Sayers' gradual discovery of a threefold structure in the mind of the human artist influenced much of what she then wrote in this second, theological, phase of her work. The next chapter discovers this paradigm of the creative mind, as it is discernible in all human achievement, in her theological essays and drama which both preceded and followed the writing of *The Mind of the Maker.*

CHAPTER FOUR: THE THEMES OF AESTHETICS AND CREATIVITY

The themes of aesthetics and creativity in Sayers' theological essays

The presentation of *The Zeal of Thy House* in 1937 marked the first significant public engagement by Sayers with religion. That is not to say that she had previously expressed no opinions on the subject but this play marked a new phase in her literary achievement and initiated a journey in Christian apologetics the next significant stage of which was the publication of *The Mind of the Maker.* The reaction to *Zeal* and her response to that reaction resulted in a series of essays and addresses which earned her the title of Christian apologist, a title which she herself rejected but a role for which she was soon in great demand.

The Dogma is the Drama

Only a few months after *Zeal* had been presented at the Canterbury Festival, her writing appeared in the St Martin's Review in April 1938 in the form of an essay entitled "The Dogma is the Drama."[1] Its title emphasised that this recently inspired religious playwright had quickly discerned a pattern in the new world of the theatre in which she now moved which corresponded in a remarkable manner to the biblical accounts of God and the world which lay at the root of much Christian dogma. Sayers was sharply critical of the fact that this Christian dogma was articulated to the world in anything but dramatic terms and, as she sought to assist the Church in its presentation and teaching, she encouraged the Church in a direction of attitude and expression where she believed men and women could be most god-like — that of the creative arts.

First of all, however, she felt it necessary to enliven people's attitude to "dull" dogma by persuading them that they too might discover an excitement about Church teaching which she herself had experienced. In "The Dogma is the Drama," before she has developed her analogy of the doctrine of the Trinity, she parodies the low view of the doctrine which the Church gives an impression of maintaining in a mock examination paper on the Christian religion:

> *Q.:* What is the doctrine of the Trinity?

[1] Dorothy L Sayers, "The Dogma is the Drama" in *Strong Meat,* op. cit. [first published in *The St Martin's Review,* April, 1938].

> *A.*: 'The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible and the whole thing incomprehensible.' Something put in by theologians to make it more difficult — nothing to do with daily life or ethics.[2]

How different is her own personal answer to this question in *Mind.* Earlier in the essay, Sayers listed reactions to *Zeal* which included a disbelief on the part of some "that the Eternal Word was supposed to be associated in any way with the work of Creation" and "that the doctrine of the Trinity could be considered to have any relation to fact or any bearing on psychological truth."[3]

Her response indicates the direction in which she was beginning to move towards *Mind* and, although it is not a first indication, it is perhaps a particularly plain statement of intention when she writes, "— all these things were looked upon as astonishing and revolutionary novelties, imported into the Faith by the feverish imagination of a playwright. I protested in vain against this flattering tribute to my powers of invention, referring my inquirers to the Creeds, to the Gospels and to the offices of the Church."[4]

Why did she begin this process of explication in the context of religious drama? She continues, "I insisted that if my play was dramatic it was so, not in spite of the dogma but because of it — that, in short, the dogma *was* the drama."[5]

The Triumph of Easter

In the same month of April 1938, Sayers wrote an essay in *The Sunday Times* entitled "The Triumph of Easter"[6] in which she continues her criticism of the Church for failing to invigorate its defence of the Christian creeds by asking the wrong questions and by invariably discarding all the available evidence when providing answers. She cites, as an example of what she means by this, the problem of sin and evil where the question of why God "allows" suffering and the debate about predestination seem less

[2] Sayers, op. cit., page 36.
[3] ibid., pages 31-2.
[4] ibid., page 32.
[5] ibid., pages 32-3.
[6] Dorothy L Sayers, "The Triumph of Easter" in *The Greatest Drama Ever Staged,* op. cit. [first published in *The Sunday Times,* 17 April, 1938], pages 25-48.

relevant to Sayers than "the ultimate question which no theology, no philosophy, no theory of the universe has ever so much as attempted to answer completely."[7]

The question is, "Why should God, if there is a God, create anything, at any time, of any kind at all?"[8] The answer, Sayers suggests (three years before *Mind*), might be given by the creative artist. The obstacle to this search for an answer is the fact that the artist is less likely to wish to provide such an answer when he or she may regard creative activity as its own sufficient justification. Nevertheless, Sayers pursues the possibility and begins to use the language which lies at the root of her argument in *Mind.*

> But we may all, perhaps, allow that it is easier to believe the universe to have come into existence for some reason than for no reason at all. The Church asserts that there is a Mind which made the universe, that He made it because He is the sort of Mind that takes pleasure in creation, and that if we want to know what the Mind of the Creator is, we must look at Christ. In Him, we shall discover a Mind that loved His own creation so completely that He became part of it, suffered with and for it, and made it a sharer in His own glory and a fellow-worker with Himself in the working out of His own design for it.[9]

The words, "Mind", "Creator", "fellow-worker" and "design" are words for which this writer had great affinity. That they took the Church in the right direction for an answer to the ultimate question was meat and drink to the creative artist who provided a unique and empirical analogy to the Church's most distracting of dogmas: the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Strong Meat

A year later, again in *The Sunday Times*, Sayers wrote an essay entitled *Strong Meat*[10] in which she criticises a negative descent into age and a false romanticism about one's youth. She argues that Christianity is a religion for adult minds and interprets Jesus' call to his followers to enter the kingdom of heaven as little children as an encouragement to start each day with a keen enthusiasm and zest for life as one might

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[7] Sayers, op. cit., pages 34-5.
[8] ibid., page 35.
[9] ibid., pages 35-7.
[10] Dorothy L Sayers, "Strong Meat" in *Strong Meat,* op. cit. [first published in *The Sunday Times,* 9 April, 1939 as "The Food of the Full Grown"], pages 9-27.

have known at the age of five. She dismisses the assumption that time is evil in itself and that it brings nothing but deterioration. Again, she summons the artist to the aid of her argument.

> His opinion would have been of great interest, since he might have spoken with authority of the soul's development in Time, of the vigorous grappling with evil that transforms it into good, of the dark night of the soul that precedes crucifixion and issues in resurrection.[11]

The artist will be able to do this because he or she may be assumed to have achieved some measure of "triumphant fulfilment". Much of her description of the artist's authority is reminiscent of the second person of the creative writer's trinity — the energy, to which belongs everything that can be included under the word "passion".

Creed or Chaos

A year later, Sayers found herself addressing the Biennial Festival of the Church Tutorial Classes Association in Derby on 4 May 1940. Her address, "Creed or Chaos", subsequently appeared in a collection of essays in popular theology of the same name in 1947.[12] This particular address is a strong statement of the doctrine of the incarnation and underlines the speaker's conviction of God's intrinsic interest in ordinary people.

Sayers articulates a complete identification of God with Christ and cautions against a separate identification of each. The Christ who suffered was the same God as the God who made the world and not the victim of a disinterested divine being. In a throw-away line, she acknowledges that the creative artist is able to perceive a distinction between the persons within the unity of the substance without explaining quite what she means but this address is given within only twelve months of the appearance in print of *The Mind of the Maker*. She is thinking aloud and implying that the creative artist understands the connection between suffering and creativity — between Christ and God. She admits that most people are not creative artists and that this, in part, accounts for the mistaken belief that God the Father and God the Son are entirely different persons. However, people are not required to become creative artists

[11] Sayers, op cit., page 22.
[12] Dorothy L Sayers, "Creed or Chaos" in *Creed or Chaos,* Methuen and Company, London, 1947, pages 25-46.

themselves in order to understand the full implications of the doctrine of the incarnation but creative artists may inform interested parties of their experience of suffering and creativity as an analogy with God and his self revelation in Christ.

> It is only with the confident assertion of the creative divinity of the Son that the doctrine of the Incarnation becomes a real revelation of the structure of the world.[13]

A mistaken understanding of the distinction between Father and Son also produces the interpretation of the Christian religion as a means merely of salving the bitterness of the suffering and death of this world objectively with a selection of virtues and consolations. Instead, Sayers reminds her listeners:

> God is alive and at work *within* the evil and the suffering, perpetually transforming them by the positive energy which He had with the Father before the world was made.[14]

The Word in the beginning with God is described as possessing "energy" — the word which Sayers will subsequently use of the Word itself in her Trinitarian analogy.

Once an empirical understanding of the relationship between suffering and creativity is acknowledged and the energy expended between the Creator and the Creator's self-expression articulated, Christianity may be the more realistic about its mission to the world. If it does not speak in these terms, it will remain other-worldly and unreal with an idealistic belief that Christians have a vocation to be nice to each other in order to attain ever-lasting life. But Christianity should not be regarded like this.

> On the contrary, it is fiercely and even harshly realistic, insisting that the Kingdom of Heaven can never be attained in this world except by unceasing toil and struggle and vigilance.[15]

Here is a hint of the "toil and struggle" which the creative artist must expend through the "energy" of the creative trinity. The transience of goodness and happiness is eclipsed by the quest for eternal achievement. In a passage most reminiscent of *Mind,* Sayers makes her first interpretation of the Genesis statement of men and women being made in the image of God when she says:

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[13] Sayers, op. cit., page 38.
[14] ibid., page 39.
[15] ibid., page 40-41.

> It has been said, I think by Berdyaev, that nothing can prevent the human soul from preferring creativeness to happiness. In this lies man's substantial likeness to the Divine Christ who in this world suffers and creates continually, being incarnate in the bonds of matter.[16]

Another evil which arises from this mistaken dissociation between God the Father and Jesus Christ is the Church's distrust and almost its fear of matter and the body. St Paul, St Augustine and John Calvin may share much of the blame but the result is an inconsistency between the doctrine of the incarnation and the sacramental interpretation of the Eucharist and marriage on the one hand and the delusion that matter and body are evil. The Church's teaching should be consistent rather with a belief that matter and body are in fact sacred to her.

> She must insist strongly that the whole material universe is an expression and incarnation of the creative energy of God, as a book or a picture is the material expression of the creative soul of the artist.[17]

Much of this address consists of a simple reiteration of a basic doctrine of the Church but a doctrine which Sayers believes has been distorted almost out of recognition so that men's and women's common ground with God in Christ — their work and activity — has been treated as the last place in which people may discern the hand of God in actuality and communicate with God. Sayers not only discerns the hand of God in some nebulous sense of shared activity but sees clearly the same structure within God's mind as she believes to be present in her own mind.

Creative Mind

In February 1942, Sayers gave an address to the Humanities Club at Reading entitled "Creative Mind."[18] It is less than a year since *The Mind of the Maker* was published and here Sayers discusses the exploration of reality by both the sciences and the humanities. Sayers reminds her listeners that the word "reality" in its derivation means "the thing thought" which makes "reality" a concept and thus distinguishable from actuality. This has important implications for her appeal to the imagination as the place wherein experience first finds expression. She appeals to Arthur Eddington

[16] Sayers, op. cit., page 41.
[17] ibid., page 43.
[18] Dorothy L Sayers, "Creative Mind" in *Unpopular Opinions*, op. cit., pages 43-58.

whom she has cited in *Mind*[19] and who in his *Philosophy of Physical Science* rejects the word "existence" as having no use unless it is taken to mean "that which is present in the thought of God."[20] As Sayers points out, this is the precise and only meaning given to the word by theologians.

By the use of a "consistent imagination,"[21]

> [The poet] creates, we may say, by building up new images, new intellectual concepts new worlds, if you like, to form new consistent wholes, new unities out of diversity. And I should like to submit to you that this is in fact the way in which all creative mind works — in the sciences as everywhere else — in divine as well as in human creation, so far as we can observe and understand divine methods of creation. That is, that within our experience, creation proceeds by the discovery of new conceptual relations between things, so as to form them into systems having a consistent wholeness corresponding to an image in the mind, and, consequently, possessing real existence.[22]

Sayers cites the inter-related nature of everything through atomic structure to support the concept of unity in diversity and trinity in unity. There is no clear-cut dividing line between one thing and another but the atom and the human being are created by an act of consistent imagination. Likewise, the poet will use his or her imagination to perceive likenesses not otherwise perceived and to relate such likenesses together to form a new unity as if it possessed independent existence. In the artist, then, the consistent imagination is capable of creating something which previously possessed no reality. Far from treating the humanities as a discipline quite apart from the sciences (a common misconception now), Sayers embraces each discipline to promote her theory of creative mind. The clue which the scientists provide about the inter-related nature of everything is vitally important to Sayers' theory about Trinitarian structure. She herself would have applauded the theoretical scientists.

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[19] See above, Chapter Three, page 61.
[20] quoted in Sayers, *Unpopular Opinions,* op. cit., page 48.
[21] Sayers quotes Richard Hard, eighteenth century divine: "... the poet has a world of his own, where experience has less to do than consistent imagination." in *Unpopular Opinions,* op. cit., page 48.
[22] Sayers, op. cit., pages 48-9.

Towards a Christian Aesthetic

"Towards a Christian Aesthetic" was delivered as one of the Edward Alleyn Lectures of 1944 and published in *Unpopular Opinions* in 1946.[23] It is an appraisal, three years after *The Mind of the Maker,* of the condition of the arts in Britain and their roots in Christianity. At its start, she records her debt to R G Collingwood and *The Principles of Art.*[24] Having established her Trinitarian analogy in *Mind,* she seems able now to take it as read and refer to "a method of establishing the principles of 'Art Proper' upon that Trinitarian doctrine of the nature of Creative Mind which does, I think, really underlie them."[25]

Sayers continues her critique of the Church for divorcing spirit and matter so successfully despite the doctrine of the incarnation and the unity of God and Christ. Sayers believes that, in the matter of an aesthetic of the arts, the Church has presided over a dislocation between its patronage of the arts and its theology of the arts. She suggests that a European aesthetic of the arts might have developed upon precisely similar lines had there been no incarnation to reveal the nature of God. If the revelation of the nature of God revealed also the nature of *all* truth, why should it have nothing to reveal about art? A fear of paganism resulted in, at worst, the subjugation of art and, at best, a refusal to reconcile a possible pagan or Unitarian aesthetic with Christian and Trinitarian theology.

In her discussion about Plato and Aristotle and their philosophy of art, Sayers rejects the notion of art as being merely representational.[26] Any work of art which represents a thing or person or event is greater than that which it represents and thus contains something which never existed before except in the mind of the artist who seeks to convey something of the cosmic significance which lies behind the subject of the work and not merely to produce a two-dimensional copy of it. She claims that Christianity has not only revealed this third dimension which provides true expression for the ideas of the creative mind but has also articulated the very language of creativity when Greek philosophy had to be content with the language of manufacture

[23] Sayers, *Unpopular Opinions,* op. cit., pages 29-43.
[24] See above, Chapter Three, page 73ff.
[25] Sayers, *Unpopular Opinions,* op. cit., page 29.
[26] Plato banishes representational or mimetic art from his republic and Aristotle only suffers that representational art which may be channelled to good ends.

(τέχυη). Christian theology acknowledges the concept of history as the continual act of God fulfilling himself in creation. The Greeks did not know this concept hence an aesthetic of manufactured imitation rather than creative expression.

As Sayers continues to encourage the Church towards a Christian aesthetic (which she would argue is merely an acknowledgement of the relationship between an existing doctrine and an existing patronage), she emphasises the word "image" as a better paradigm than "copy" or " imitation" or "representation" for the form of expression which an artist articulates. By doing so, she assists in the process of developing a relationship between art and theology and cites existing theology (not least Pauline theology) in the matter of God being known to himself only by beholding the image of his Son. She returns to her belief that the artist comes closest to creation "out of nothing" through his or her imagination and the link between the words "imagination" and "image" underline her argument.

> There is something which is, in the deepest sense of the words, *unimaginable,* known to Itself (and still more, to us) only by the image in which it expresses Itself through creation; and, says Christian theology very emphatically, the Son, who is the express image, is not the copy, or imitation, or representation of the Father, nor yet inferior or subsequent to the Father in any way – in the last resort, in the depths of their mysterious being, the Unimaginable and the Image are *one and the same.*[27]

In a similar way, a play is the expression of something happening in the mind of the writer. It is the expression of an experience which could not be explained in any other way. The play says everything which the writer can say about the experience but, unless the writer has tried to express the experience to himself, he or she can have no experience of it. Then, once expressed, others have the potential to recognise it as their own experience too. Thus Sayers articulates a variation on the triadic structure of her creative writer's trinity in terms of experience, expression and recognition (idea, energy and power).

Prior to an understanding of the threefold unity in which image and unimaginable are one, the concept of an image was dangerous because it could so easily be mistaken for an idol. If the true image is the very mirror in which reality knows itself and

[27] Sayers, *Unpopular Opinions,* op. cit., pages 37-8.

communicates itself in power, all images are set free. A Christian aesthetic of the arts thus also militates against idolatry.

There is a sense in which, three years after *Mind,* Sayers is making a more direct appeal to the Church than she has done previously to express an aesthetic of the arts in theological terms not simply as a useful adjunct to its store of theological wisdom but as a principal statement of what it means to be Christian, a statement which carries with it what she sees as vital implications for doctrine and mission.

Similar themes in Sayers' religious drama

Sayers had established her credentials as a playwright in the presentation of *The Zeal of Thy House* at the Canterbury Festival in 1937.[28] This play had marked the start of the next phase of Sayers' career during which she wrote several plays, the most significant of which was *The Man Born to be King,*[29] a series of twelve radio plays for the BBC broadcast between December 1941 and October 1942. The transition from novelist to playwright began with some overlap between the two genres when *Busman's Honeymoon*[30] was presented at the Comedy Theatre on 16 December 1936. She produced this work both as a novel and as a play (the latter in collaboration with her friend Muriel St Clare Byrne). Although the approach of Margaret Babington of the Canterbury Festival to Sayers to write for that Festival was made before *Busman's Honeymoon* had even gone into rehearsal (so that she was unaware she was approaching an incipient playwright), Sayers had always maintained an enthusiasm for the theatre.[31]

He That Should Come

After *Zeal,* the first approach by the BBC was made to Sayers to write for that medium and she produced *He That Should Come*[32] for broadcast on Christmas Day 1938. The play lies within the setting of the nativity story in a busy and overcrowded

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[28] See above, Chapter One, page 22ff.
[29] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Man Born to be King,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1943.
[30] Dorothy L Sayers, *Busman's Honeymoon* (the play), Victor Gollancz, London, 1937, and (the novel), Victor Gollancz, London, 1937.
[31] For an account of the commission to write for the Canterbury Festival, see Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., pages 309-11.
[32] Dorothy L Sayers, *He That Should Come,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1945.

typical oriental inn and against the backdrop of the political and historical context within which Christ was born.

That this new phase in her career should give rise to the Trinitarian analogy of *The Mind of the Maker* is no coincidence given the unique nature of collaboration and response which writer, actors, musicians, technicians, audience and critics bring to the field. As a result, the plays themselves provide a further opportunity for the presentation of her theory about creative mind. In this first broadcast play (written for Children's Hour), Melchior appeals for a pattern by which to live one's life like a pattern one might make for a curtain or a cornice — themselves insignificant artefacts and yet reliant upon form and method. He talks of putting one's trust in a personality with "calm hands ordering everything."[33] He suggests that people naturally strive for self-expression as with Sayers' Idea which must find self-expression in the Energy. Later in the play, Sayers places her criticism of the Church's lack of a proper policy on the arts into the mouth of the Jewish gentleman when he tells the Pharisee, "Our national attitude to the Arts is deplorable." The Pharisee thanks God for it: "Nothing is so demoralising as art and culture."[34]

More generally, this play may be seen as a first attempt by Sayers, developed and expanded in *The Man Born to be King,* to articulate the dual nature of Christ in body and spirit in a manner which underlines the complete identification of this human man with the divine Father.

The Devil to Pay

After the success of the Canterbury Festival and *The Zeal of Thy House* in 1937, Sayers was invited to write again for that Festival two years later in 1939. Her play *The Devil to Pay*[35] is the story of John Faustus and how he sold his soul to the devil and the judgment he received in consequence. It is one of Faustus' servants, Lisa, who grasps the idea of the worth of her work and that of Wagner as a means of bringing salvation to Faustus:

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[33] Sayers, op. cit., page 18.
[34] ibid., page 45.
[35] Dorothy L Sayers, "The Devil to Pay" in *Four Sacred Plays,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1948, pages 213-74.

> And we will try and do his work — help the poor and heal the sick with the remedies he taught us. And when God sees what we are doing, He will say: That is the real Faustus; that's what he really meant to do. Faustus is still doing good by his servants' hands.[36]

Although there is something slightly naïve about this hope, there is also an appeal to creative work as a sacramental medium for absolution:

> So you see, our work will plead for our master's soul.[37]

Only a few months after these words are first spoken on stage, war will break out and Sayers will respond to the exigencies of a wartime society to develop this sense of the sacramental nature of work.[38]

The Man Born to be King

The Man Born to be King is the most enduring of Sayers' dramatic work. Her presentation of the life of Christ in a series of twelve radio plays (again intended for Children's Hour but ultimately listened to by all ages) was made in contemporary language and in a robust and rigorous style which demanded attention and response. In her preface to the published edition of these plays, Sayers herself set the condition that the intellectual coherence of theology was only advantageous to the dramatic structure if it was a complete theology: "A loose and sentimental theology begets loose and sentimental art-forms."[39] So enthused was Sayers by this new milieu of dramatic art that she was encouraged to suggest that, "there is no more searching test of a theology than to put it upon the stage and allow it speak for itself."[40]

Sayers rejected the notion that her intention in writing the plays had been to do good. That was the intention of those who commissioned the plays but her object was to tell the story to the best of her ability. She was constructing a work of art and, as such, that work of art must be true to itself. As with her criticism in her essay "Towards a Christian Aesthetic,"[41] she insisted that art — in this case religious drama — must be

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[36] Sayers, op. cit., page 168.
[37] ibid., page 168.
[38] See below, page 94ff.
[39] Sayers, *The Man Born to be King,* op. cit., page 19.
[40] ibid.
[41] See above, page 87ff.

judged by the same standard by which all truth is judged for not to do so "persists in excluding the Lord of Truth from His own dominions."[42]

As a result, the religious dramatist must use theology and dogma as his or her material and not as an external end to which the drama is directed. They are the sculptor's clay and the artist's paint. In a line reminiscent of *Mind,* Sayers challenges contemporary society to consider itself as actors in the drama today who, unlike the audience, do not know the outcome yet — unless, that is, they re-enact the original story with themselves playing the original parts.[43]

Towards the conclusion of her preface, Sayers returns to her insistence that the materials required for the writer of such plays as those she is presenting are given in the theology and dogma of the Christian Church. As she indicates in her essay "The Dogma is the Drama," it is only through an insipid and pedestrian use of these materials that the "shattering personality" of Christ is presented as dull:

> To make an *adequate* dramatic presentation of the life of God Incarnate would require literally superhuman genius, in playwright and actors alike. We are none of us, I think, under any illusions about our ability to do what the greatest artists who ever lived would admit to be beyond their powers. Nevertheless, when a story is great enough, any honest craftsman may succeed in producing something not altogether unworthy, because the greatness is in the story, and does not need to borrow anything from the craftsman; it is enough that he should faithfully serve the work.[44]

The Just Vengeance

It was some years before Sayers' next commission for the stage. In 1944, she had begun work on her translation of Dante for Penguin Classics.[45] When she was commissioned by the Lichfield Festival to write a play for that Festival in 1946, she took as her inspiration a passage from Dante's *Paradise* on the theme of the

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[42] Sayers, *The Man Born to be King,* op. cit., page 20.

[43] In Chapter Nine of *Mind,* Sayers describes God's work of art, his creation, as a book which must be read by the characters within it. In order to assist them to understand the outcome to which they are moving, God provides a summary or epitome of the plot at a particular point in the narrative when he himself appears as a character in the drama. (See *Mind,* page 104.)

[44] Sayers, *The Man Born to be King,* op. cit., pages 36-7.

[45] For a brief account of Sayers' work on Dante, see Reynolds, *Sayers,* pages 401-4; for a full treatment of the subject, see Barbara Reynolds, *The Passionate Intellect,* Kent State University Press, Ohio, 1989.

atonement to produce *The Just Vengeance.*[46] The play describes the death of an airman shot down over Lichfield during the Second World War whose spirit engages with the fellowship of his native city in the seventeenth century and shares George Fox's curious vision in the streets of Lichfield which he records in his Journal for 1651. The airman sees an image of the meaning of the atonement. He accepts the cross and, as Sayers puts it in her introduction, "passes, in that act of choice, from the image to the reality."[47]

The prologue of the play, spoken by the Recorder, appeals to the audience to understand the distinction between image and reality and indicates the very arena of the stage as an example of that distinction. When the Recorder suggests that the actors are "no more like that they bid you think upon than this small yellow disc is like the sun,"[48] there is an echo of the Platonic caution against mimesis and a foretaste of C S Lewis' description of the use of art and the reception of art in his book *An Experiment in Criticism*[49] which Barbara Reynolds has suggested itself owes something to *The Mind of the Maker.*[50]

The Recorder describes "the place of the images"[51] where men and women finally come face to face with the image of the unimaginable.[52] Some do so by a direct acceptance of Christ. Others do so indirectly "— this in a woman's eyes,/That in a friend's hand or a poet's voice/Knowing the eternal moment —". The image of the artist conveys the beholder to its place in reality where the "thing thought" has real existence.[53]

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[46] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Just Vengeance,* op. cit.
[47] Sayers, op. cit., page 10
[48] ibid., page 11
[49] C S Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961 (Canto edition, 1992). Lewis describes the "many" who "use" art to evince an emotion or sentiment with which they then endow the representation while the "few" who "receive" art surrender themselves to the pictorial invention of the artist.
[50] Barbara Reynolds, "Dorothy L Sayers and Creative Mind", *Proceedings of the 1994 Seminar of the Dorothy L Sayers Society,* 1995, pages 62-6.
[51] Sayers, *The Just Vengeance,* op. cit., page 23.
[52] Sayers has treated this theme already in her essay "Towards a Christian Aesthetic". See above, page 88.
[53] See above, pages 85-6.

Later, the Choir describes "man, exalted in the image of man" who "makes and mars."[54] The same hands that sculpt monuments which outlast the bones that built them and write songs which outlast the stones are the same hands that wreak havoc like the first instance of Cain murdering his brother Abel. The craftsman is none the less a prey to the sin of pride as Sayers has shown in *The Zeal of Thy House.*

A little over halfway through the play, Sayers creates a scene similar to that of the four angels in *Zeal* above the stage when the Persona Dei together with Gabriel and another angel appears. In the speech which follows, Sayers pursues this theme of the image and unimaginable finding their consonance in the Godhead:

> I the image of the Unimaginable
> In the place where the Image and Unimaged are one,
> The Act of the Will, the Word of the Thought, the Son
> In whom the Father's selfhood is known to Himself,
> I being God and with God from the beginning
> Speak to Man in the place of the Images.[55]

The speech continues with an expression of the atonement in which God accepts that, as men and women have chosen to know good as evil, they have chosen as such also for God and that God thus submits to them and chooses freely to do so such that "man shall see the Image of God/In the image of man." The importance of response both by God and by humankind allows an experience of God to become an expression of God:

> But all this
> Still at your choice, and only as you choose,
> Save as you choose to let Me choose in you.[56]

Again, Sayers presses the threefold structure of experience, expression and choice as in image, reality and response.

The context of the Second World War

In October 1939, T S Eliot published his essay *The Idea of a Christian Society*[57] in which he developed the theme of a broadcast talk, subsequently published in *The*

[54] Sayers, *The Just Vengeance,* op. cit., page 29.
[55] ibid., page 47.
[56] ibid., page 48.
[57] T S Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society,* Faber and Faber, London, 1939.

Listener, entitled "Church, Community and State"[58] in which he criticised the increasingly commercial and economic organisation of society where "the acquisitive, rather than the creative and spiritual instincts, are encouraged."[59] When Victor Gollancz asked Sayers to respond to the exigencies of the new conflict in time for Christmas, she chose to respond to Eliot with her extensive essay *Begin Here.*[60] Barbara Reynolds describes the evolution of the work's title: "She took his ideas early on from *The Idea of a Christian Society*, just before the war, that something was going to happen. He said, 'Something's got to be done about the way people think, what their attitude is towards society and these great issues. We must do it now.' And that, I think, made her say, 'Begin here.' She took fire from that."[61]

Begin Here

In *Begin Here,* Sayers presented an argument which she would resume in the Bridegheads series (of which *The Mind of the Maker* was one volume) that a creative line of action should be seized upon along which men and women, as individuals, could think and work towards the restoration of Europe. Barbara Reynolds summarises the trends of Sayers' thinking as revealed in this work which would receive more significant treatment subsequently:

> The first is a continuing emphasis on time: the future is here and now; the past is irrevocable; what has gone wrong cannot be undone, it can only be redeemed. The second is her concept of Creativity: God, as Creator, created Man in His own image; it follows that we are never so truly ourselves as when we are actively creating something. The third is her conviction that a mechanised society has diminished the essential nature of human beings with the imposition of repetitive work. The fourth is her belief that the prevalently economic structure of society has degraded education by directing it to commercial ends. Underlying all these themes is a concern for individual freedom and responsibility.[62]

It is perhaps in the matter of this last theme, that of education directed to commercial ends, that Sayers expresses her theory of creative mind most enduringly. She argues that technical education intended to fit people for gainful employment is set at odds with education in the Humanities which ignores completely the economics of society.

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[58] Published as an appendix to *The Idea of a Christian Society,* op. cit., pages 91-9.
[59] ibid., page 97.
[60] Dorothy L Sayers, *Begin Here,* Victor Gollancz, London, 1940.
[61] Barbara Reynolds, private interview, Cambridge, March 2001.
[62] Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 335.

Neither educates the "Whole Man."[63] She evokes the mediaeval days of ecclesiastical authority when the construction of a cathedral church was undertaken without a distinction between the artist and the craftsman:

> Feeling, thought and deed; soul, mind and body, were all held to be integral parts of the same person. In the interval, our knowledge of the world and of ourselves has grown vastly more complex; it was probably necessary to take the whole structure to pieces for detailed examination. But I repeat that the time has come when we must put the Whole Man together again and so restore his full creative power.[64]

Sayers' own profession means that she argues from a position of experience and not merely amateur opinion when she emphasises the vital importance of the individual and of groups of individuals in the matter of the creative arts. Like social services and other forms of entertainment, the creative arts are well-organised and provided for in the totalitarian state where the potential for them to be themselves through the liberty which gives them universal value is rendered impotent by government dogma and a uniformity of opinion amongst the people.

> Unfortunately, neither art nor learning takes kindly to impotency, since power is their essential nature and the condition of their existence.[65]

It is thus sinful in a democratic state not to place good entertainment and educational facilities within reach of the people. Perhaps the fact that most people stayed in their seats in the theatres during air-raids is an indication that such artistic appreciation was much more than a means of filling leisure time but a powerful statement of relationship between humanity and eternity at a time when human frailty came closest to eternity.

Why Work?

Sayers returns to this theme and offers more practical application in an address delivered at Eastbourne on 23 April 1942 and subsequently published as the essay *Why Work?*[66] This address is given almost one year after the publication of *The Mind of the Maker* and its themes are strongly reminiscent of that volume and provide

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[63] Sayers, *Begin Here,* op. cit., page 150.
[64] Sayers, op. cit., page 151.
[65] ibid., page 87.
[66] Dorothy L Sayers, *Why Work?,* Methuen and Co, London, 1942.

practical instances of her interpretation there of the Genesis description of humankind being made in God's image. These practical instances will contribute to her call for a reconstruction of society along creative lines. Such reconstruction, however, relies on work being thought of as "creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself, and that man, made in God's image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing."[67]

Sayers insists that this belief, if taken to heart and effected honestly and positively, makes work not a thing one does to live but a thing one lives to do. She accepts that this is revolutionary such that all political revolutions, by comparison, look like conformity.[68] She is not naïve about the obstacles to an honest and positive effecting of this premise in terms of the mechanised and repetitive tasks which most workers must undertake. As a result, one consequence of this belief is that "we should fight tooth and nail, not for mere employment, but for the quality of the work we have to do."[69] She has already called for the clearance of the slums to take place before the bombs do the work for the Government.[70] So here, she calls for a proactive vision of how the conditions might be right for her theory about work to operate in effect. "There would be protests and strikes — not only about pay and conditions, but about the quality of the work demanded and the honesty, beauty and usefulness of the goods produced."[71]

In an extremely important call to the Church to reconsider its theology of vocation, she argues for the secular vocation to be treated as sacred. If a man or woman is most god-like when engaged in an act of creation, there must be a sense in which the artist has a vocation to creative work and, if so, then the same must be true for all calls to work in any avenue or medium. If the Lord of Truth should not be excluded from any part of his creation, nor should his call only be heard by those who seek holy orders.[72]

> A man must be able to serve God *in* his work and the work itself must be accepted and respected as the medium of divine creation.[73]

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[67] Sayers, op. cit., page 3.
[68] ibid., page 12.
[69] ibid., page 14.
[70] Sayers, *Begin Here,* op. cit., page 149.
[71] Sayers, *Why Work?,* op. cit., page 14.
[72] See above, page 89.
[73] Sayers, *Why Work?,* op. cit., page 15.

This challenge to the Church to reconsider its attitude to all work as a vocation complements Sayers' analogy of the Trinity inasmuch as it argues that the artist, whose work comes closest to a human paradigm of the Trinity, is not the mere entertainer whom Plato banished from his republic but the bearer of the very hands without which God can do no work:

> [The Church] has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world's intelligent workers have become irreligious, or at least, uninterested in religion. But is it astonishing? How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?[74]

Sayers argues that the Church should encourage the worker to serve the work as one might encourage a carpenter to make good tables before exhorting him not to get drunk and to go to church on Sundays.

> No crooked table-legs or ill-fitting drawers ever, I dare swear, came out of the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. Nor, if they did, could any one believe that they were made by the same hand that made heaven and earth.[75]

The following chapter contains an analysis of the similarities and contradictions between Sayers' theory of creative mind and the reflections on divine and human creativity of T S Eliot, C S Lewis and Charles Williams as part of an attempt to discover how unique was Sayers' theory and where it lay within the thinking and writing of her time. It is, of necessity, somewhat diverse. Their writings are analysed in chronological order within the opus of each writer.

[74] Sayers, op. cit., page 15.
[75] ibid., page 16.

CHAPTER FIVE: T S ELIOT, C S LEWIS AND CHARLES WILLIAMS

Sayers counted amongst her contemporaries some of the great writers of the mid-twentieth century. She met and/or corresponded with many of them but perhaps the three who are most closely associated with her are T S Eliot, C S Lewis and Charles Williams, the former two of enduring fame and repute, the latter now largely forgotten in the public mind.

T S Eliot

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism

In Eliot's *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,*[1] Chapter 7 is entitled "The Modern Mind." Here, Eliot articulates a threefold structure for poetic creativity and, although he draws no conclusions from the triune nature of this structure — indeed, he makes no reference to it, some of the language is similar to Sayers' expression of her theory of the creative mind:

> ...what we experience as readers is never exactly what the poet experienced, nor would there be any point in its being, though certainly it has some relation to the poet's experience. What the poet experienced is not poetry but poetic material; the writing of the poetry is a fresh 'experience' for him, and the reading of it, by the author or anyone else, is another thing still.[2]

The trinity of the poet's experience, which gives him his poetic material, the writing of the poetry and the reading of the poetry and the distinction between what the poet has experienced, what he experiences in writing and what the reader's experience is sits moderately well against Sayers analogy of the Trinity. Are we to draw any conclusions from the fact that Eliot himself draws none from the structure appearing to be threefold? Perhaps the simple conclusion is to note that Eliot's principal concern is the identification of the material with which the poet works and not an analogy with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Later in this chapter, Eliot approves of Trotsky's suggestion that "the material of the artist is not his beliefs as held, but his beliefs as felt (so far as his beliefs are part of his material at all)."[3] Sayers would argue that

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[1] T S Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* Faber and Faber, London, 1964.
[2] ibid., page 126.
[3] ibid., page 136 (Eliot has quoted from Leon Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*).

these beliefs are only felt when expressed or the poet would have no experience of them.[4]

However, Eliot appears to distance himself from a conscientious search for a structure to the creativity of the artist when he criticises Abbé Brémond's *Prayer and Poetry.*[5] Brémond appears to concur with Sayers that the poet naturally strives to communicate his experience. Eliot asks, "And what is the experience that the poet is so bursting to communicate?"[6] He repeats his assertion that the process of articulating an experience in written form initiates an evolutionary journey for that experience which transforms it possibly unrecognisably. Far from recognising the experience through an expression of it, the poet may be unaware of what he is communicating. Thus, "what is there to be communicated was not in existence before the poem was completed"[7] — unlike Sayers' Idea whereby the artist beholds the whole work complete at once before committing pen to paper.

Eliot then indicates an implied criticism of what Sayers will attempt to do eight years later when he says, in summarising his objections to Brémond's theory:

> Any theory which relates poetry very closely to a religious or a social scheme of things aims, probably, to *explain* poetry by discovering its natural laws; but it is in danger of *binding* poetry by legislation to be observed — and poetry can recognise no such laws.[8]

Certainly, Sayers appeals to natural law as a basis for the articulation of her theory, but she does not try to "explain" creative art (indeed, she denies that she has that competence except in the matter of her own artistry). She sets out rather to commend creativity of any kind as a naturally godlike expression of humanity. Nevertheless, her appeal to a very precise pattern and her criticism of those artists who fail to observe its definition may be taken by some artists to limit their ability to defy the conventions of common practice at any one time.

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[4] See above, Chapter Four, page 88.
[5] quoted in Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* op. cit., page 137ff.
[6] ibid., page 138.
[7] ibid., page 138.
[8] ibid., page 139.

The Idea of a Christian Society

In October 1939, Eliot developed his previously broadcast talk, "Church, Community and State" as *The Idea of a Christian Society.*[9] He calls Coleridge to witness in his definition of the word "Idea" when, in an end note,[10] he quotes that writer's *Church and State* where Coleridge defines the word as that conception of a thing "which is given by the knowledge of its ultimate aim." Indeed, Eliot suggests that a Christian society would not deserve the name if it had no understanding of the end to which it was directing itself. As a result, he demands a more intellectual respect for Christianity and proceeds to argue for a central role in the educational system for philosophy and the arts and for a proper acknowledgement of their centrality by Church, community and state.

His contention with the current state of affairs as he experiences it is very similar to that which Sayers condemns when she argues that the Church should develop a proper policy on the arts. Eliot criticises a "sluggishness of imagination"[11] through which people "sink into an apathetic decline."[12] He places art firmly alongside faith and a philosophy of life when he enumerates what society will lack as a result of this decline. Eliot has suggested that poetry should not be related very closely to a religious scheme of things[13] but here he suggests that "the only hopeful course for a society which would thrive and continue its creative activity in the arts of civilisation is to become Christian."[14] His previous implied criticism of what Sayers will subsequently do in *The Mind of the Maker* has become now a call for a very particular religious scheme of things to lie at the heart of his idea for society. This is beyond what Sayers bids when she posits a Christian aesthetic of the arts and when she makes her own contribution to the debate about education in *The Lost Tools of Learning.*[15]

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[9] T S Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society,* op. cit.
[10] ibid., page 67.
[11] ibid., page 14.
[12] ibid., page 23.
[13] See above, page 100.
[14] Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society,* op. cit., page 24.
[15] Dorothy L Sayers, *The Lost Tools of Learning,* Methuen and Co, London, 1948 (originally published in the Hibbert Journal 1947), in which Sayers argues for a return to the mediaeval structure of the education syllabus in relation to the Trivium and Quadrivium.

Eliot ascribes the failure to give art and literature a central place in the expression of society to the prescriptive boundaries which are placed around each intellectual and academic discipline such that no connections are made between them and no account taken of them by the functionaries of Church and State:

> ...just as those who should be the intellectuals regard theology as a special study, like numismatics or heraldry, with which they need not concern themselves and theologians observe the same indifference to literature and art, as special studies which do not concern *them,* so our political classes regard both fields as territories of which they have no reason to be ashamed of remaining in complete ignorance.[16]

Although there are similarities between Eliot and Sayers in the matter of a Christian aesthetic of the arts, Eliot's principal concern is to settle a common culture on the identity of the nation which would possess an underlying political philosophy. He envisages a community of Christians which will form "the conscious mind and the conscience of the nation."[17] Sayers prefers that the conscious mind express itself in creative activity which, without demanding proselytes, will lead to "...the Resurrection of Faith, the Revival of Learning and the Reintegration of Society."[18]

The Music of Poetry

In the third W P Ker Memorial Lectures, "The Music of Poetry,"[19] delivered at the University of Glasgow in 1942, Eliot echoes Sayers directly when he agrees that the reader of a poem, while recognising the expression of a general situation articulated by the poet (however personal that situation may have been to the poet himself), may also discern the sign of some private experience of his own.[20]

Similarly, the concept of a work of art containing more than that of which the artist was consciously aware was something which Sayers herself discovered when her correspondents revealed natural progressions of plot and character in her detective

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[16] Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society,* op. cit., page 40.
[17] ibid., page 42.
[18] The introduction to the Bridgeheads series, quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers*, op. cit., page 348.
[19] T S Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", in *On Poetry and Poets,* Faber and Faber, London, 1957, pages 26-38.
[20] Compare Sayers in "Towards a Christian Aesthetic", see above Chapter Four, page 88.

novels which she herself had not consciously pursued but which occurred because of what she called the law of the book's nature.[21] Eliot suggests:

> There may be much more in a poem than the author was aware of. The different interpretations may all be partial formulations of one thing; the ambiguities may be due to the fact that the poem means more, not less, than ordinary speech can communicate.[22]

Sayers perceived yet another sense in which a work of art contained more than is initially clear. She describes the reaction of the audience to a play which, when reflected upon after the drama's conclusion, is understood to contain more than the sum total of the emotions experienced during the passage of the drama. It enters the audience's recollection in a timeless and complete form:

> ... the Energy is now related to the Idea more or less as it was in the mind of the playwright: the Word has returned to the Father.[23]

Eliot seems content with the conventional belief that, unlike the Divine Maker, the human artist creates out of existing materials. Sayers had suggested that the realm of the imagination allowed the artist to come closest to creation out of nothing. However, Eliot agrees with Sayers in her insistence that the artist, once the requisite material has been acquired, must be faithful to that material in the pursuance of his or her artistic objective:

> We do not want the poet merely to reproduce exactly the conversational idiom of himself, his family, his friends and his particular district: but what he finds there is the material out of which he must make his poetry. He must, like the sculptor, be faithful to the material in which he works; it is out of sounds that he has heard that he must make his melody and harmony.[24]

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[21] See Chapter Five of *Mind,* 'Free Will and Miracle', pages 61-2 where Sayers describes a reader of *Gaudy Night* who had seen the inevitable destruction of the coveted set of chessman at the first reference to them when Sayers had not been aware of their doom when she introduced them to the plot and a reader of *Murder Must Advertise* who had grasped Sayers' intention of placing Wimsey in two cardboard worlds in contrast to each other but, unlike Sayers, had further noticed that her detective who represented reality never appeared in either world except in disguise.

[22] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", op. cit., page 31.

[23] *Mind,* page 92.

[24] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", op. cit., page 32.

Sayers argues that the artist must adapt his or her work to the material in hand so that the matter may, as it were, cooperate with the artist. Thus the artist allows the matter to act in accordance with its own nature and to respond to the artist's idea for it.[25]

If the artist is not faithful to his or her material, the result according to Eliot appears to be identical to the result as Sayers sees it. For Eliot proceeds to describe what Sayers calls a "scalene trinity" in the matter of verse plays of the nineteenth century. Having dismissed their "insipidity," Eliot criticises those people who admire the poetry of these plays while acknowledging that the poets themselves were amateurs in the theatre:

> It is not primarily their lack of plot, or lack of action and suspense, or imperfect realisation of character, or lack of anything of what is called 'theatre,' that makes these plays so lifeless: it is primarily that their rhythm of speech is something that we cannot associate with any human being except a poetry reciter.[26]

Sayers makes precisely the same point in *Mind* in Chapter Five, "Free Will and Miracle," when she criticises "literary" drama whose speeches "are quite simply not constructed in such a way as to be readily spoken by an actor."[27] She refers back to this instance in Chapter Ten, "Scalene Trinities", when she attributes the playwright's failure "to a general failure in love for the human and material medium in which he works."[28] When Eliot gave his W P Ker Memorial Lecture within a year of the publication of *The Mind of the Maker,* it would seem reasonable to assume that he had read that work before writing his paper.

The Social Function of Poetry

In an address first delivered in 1943 to the British-Norwegian Institute and later redrafted for delivery in Paris in 1945, Eliot continues his description of the way in which the poet communicates an experience through the expression of his poetry. In "The Social Function of Poetry,"[29] Eliot discerns a vitally important need for a conscious and sensible communication and response. He seems to accept more readily

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[25] See Chapter Nine of *Mind,* 'The Love of the Creature', page 111.
[26] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", op cit., page 34.
[27] *Mind,* page 52.
[28] ibid., page 133.
[29] T S Eliot, "The Social Function of Poetry" in *On Poetry and Poets,* op. cit., pages 15-25.

here the possibility of that communication resulting from something new or indeed something which first entered the artist's mind inexplicably or unconsciously. Like Sayers, Eliot sees that, through artistic expression, the poet becomes as it were the reader of his or her own work as the initial Idea returns to the poet through the Power which his or her Energy has unleashed:

> There is always the communication of some new experience, or some fresh understanding of the familiar, or the expression of something we have experienced but have no words for, which enlarges our consciousness or refines our sensibility.[30]

Sayers had set out in *Mind* to explain what certain phrases in the creeds actually meant. She had done this because of what she saw as slovenliness in the matter of good understanding. Eliot uses this same address to indicate a more profound problem at which Sayers only hints. He makes a distinction between belief and sensibility in the matter of religion. What is communicated by the poet must be more than merely a description of an experience but must in fact be the experience or the words used to communicate have no enduring meaning. Sayers intends this theory in her description of the passion of the artist although her reluctance to express her own personal religious conviction prevents her perhaps from underlining the emotional context of religious writing. Indeed, she had written to William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury declining the award of an honorary Lambeth doctorate of divinity that she would have felt better about accepting the honour if she were a more convincing kind of Christian. "I am never quite sure whether I really am one, or whether I have only fallen in love with an intellectual pattern."[31]

Eliot would have understood this response not because he necessarily shared it but because of his distinction between belief and sensibility: a belief can be understood without being felt:

> Much has been said everywhere about the decline of religious belief; not so much notice has been taken of the decline of religious sensibility. The trouble of the modern age is not merely the inability to believe certain things about God and man which our forefathers believed, but the inability to *feel* towards God and man as they did. A belief in which you no longer believe is

[30] Eliot, "The Social Function of Poetry", op cit., page 18.
[31] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 373.

> something which to some extent you can still understand; but when religious feeling disappears, the words in which men have struggled to express it become meaningless.[32]

Sayers came closest to this suggestion in her criticism of the dullness with which the teaching of much Christian doctrine was infested. "Now we may call that doctrine exhilarating, or we may call it devastating; we may call it revelation, or we may call it rubbish; but if we call it dull, then words have no meaning at all."[33]

Poetry and Drama

In 1951, Eliot gave the first Theodore Spencer Memorial Lecture at Harvard University. Entitled "Poetry and Drama,"[34] the lecture allows Eliot to reflect on his own experience as a dramatic critic and as a playwright himself. His reflections are similar to Sayers' own evaluation of her work after her movement into religious drama. He appears to suggest that the creative writer comes closest to Sayers' theory about creative mind in the field of dramatic verse writing which accords with her own experience in writing *The Zeal of Thy House.* He believes, however, that the response of the audience is *not* of primary importance in other verse writing which may suggest that, if he knew Sayers' analogy with the Trinity at all, he may not have agreed with the parity which she affords between the impact upon the reader and the writer's intention and activity.

> The poet cannot afford to write his play merely for his admirers, those who know his non-dramatic work and are prepared to receive favourably anything he puts his name to. He must write with an audience in view which knows nothing and cares nothing about any previous success he may have had before he ventured into the theatre. Hence one finds out that many of the things one likes to do and knows how to do are out of place; and that every line must be judged by a new law, that of dramatic relevance.[35]

Certainly, Eliot has placed Sayers' third part of the equation, the audience's response, firmly within the mental image with which the writer must start. He then describes a "new law" by which he surely means new to his method as applied to playwriting rather than newly discovered. As Sayers points out in Chapter One of *Mind,* "The

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[32] Eliot, "The Social Function of Poetry", op. cit., page 25.
[33] Sayers, "The Greatest Drama Ever Staged", op. cit., page 22.
[34] T S Eliot, "Poetry and Drama" in *On Poetry and Poets,* op. cit., pages 72-88.
[35] ibid., page 79.

'Laws' of Nature and Opinion," there is nothing new about the unities of dramatic structure which were offered by Aristotle centuries previously. These unities were not, she suggests, the personal opinions of the man himself but rather observations of fact about the art of successful playwriting.[36]

In this address, Eliot concurs with Sayers' analogy but only in a particular context. Although Sayers suggests a wider relevance for her theory than merely the theatre, it is true that the theatre was the principal avenue along which her theory travelled towards its fruition.

The Three Voices of Poetry

The Eleventh Annual Lecture of the National Book League was given by Eliot on 19 November 1953 at the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, entitled "The Three Voices of Poetry."[37] Here, Eliot continues to diverge from the third part of Sayers' analogy as he recalls his words in "Poetry and Drama" that the test for non-dramatic verse writing is how the verse sounds to the writer when reading it to himself. The response of other readers is not paramount.

But once more, Eliot and Sayers coincide in the matter of dramatic art. Compare the following two passages:

> (Eliot) Even if a burst of magnificent poetry is suitable enough for the character to which it is assigned, it must also convince us that it is necessary to the action; that it is helping to extract the utmost emotional intensity out of the situation. The poet writing for the theatre may, as I have found, make two mistakes: that of assigning to a personage lines of poetry not suitable to be spoken by that personage, and that of assigning lines which, however suitable to the personage, yet fail to forward the action of the play.[38]
>
> (Sayers) There may, I think, be two answers. The first concerns a failure of the ghost — the playwright has not been able to 'sit in the stalls' as he writes and watch the effect of his work as a completed 'response in Power.' .... But the second concerns a failure of the son — the playwright has not

[36] *Mind,* pages 11-12.
[37] T S Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry,* Cambridge University Press for the National Book League, London, 1953.
[38] ibid., page 10.

> moved with his characters on the stage, and has, perhaps, actually forgotten the stage and the actors when working out his idea.[39]

Eliot is thus swayed by a pragmatic acceptance of Aristotle's unities of dramatic structure while Sayers discerns a failure to observe the unity of the trinity equilaterally.

Towards the end of this address, however Eliot and Sayers diverge once more when Eliot suggests that the writer will be found in the characters he or she has created. This is not Sayers' belief. She, troubled by the attempts of certain correspondents to read her autobiography from her detective fiction, responded:

> Well-meaning readers who try to identify the writer with his characters or to excavate the author's personality and opinions from his books are frequently astonished by the ferocious rudeness with which the author himself salutes these efforts at reabsorbing his work into himself.[40]

Sayers argues that her characters, endowed with free will but subject to the predestination of their creator's idea, allow her to observe the unities of dramatic structure. Eliot, on the other hand, suggests:

> If you seek for Shakespeare, you will find him only in the characters he created; for the one thing in common between the characters is that no one but Shakespeare could have created any of them.[41]

Sayers would agree with the latter part of this sentence but not the former. Ironically, what Eliot says next accords even more with Sayers' argument despite growing, as it does, out of a disagreement with it:

> The world of a great poetic dramatist is a world in which the creator is everywhere present, and everywhere hidden.[42]

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[39] *Mind,* page 133.
[40] ibid., page 104.
[41] Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry,* op. cit., page 24.
[42] ibid.

C S Lewis

Christianity and Literature

In 1939, an address given by Lewis to a religious society in Oxford entitled "Christianity and Literature"[43] was published in *Rehabilitations and Other Essays.* In this address, Lewis draws attention to Chapter Five of St John's Gospel in which Jesus describes the Son doing only what he sees the Father doing. Lewis notes the concept of copying or imitating and stores it up for subsequent reference. In turn, the Father expresses his love for the Son by showing him all that he does. Lewis is intrigued by the extent to which Jesus perceives the relationship of the Trinity as he explains this particular relationship of Father and Son. What Lewis is clear about is the description of a timeless relationship articulated by use of a more recent contemporary experience: that of the young boy in the carpenter's shop watching his surrogate father at work and learning from him.

Lewis responds negatively to the concept of the New Testament as "literature" or indeed as having anything to say about "literature." He does this by questioning the possibility that literature may be original or spontaneous. It is not creative in either of these senses but merely imitative. Here, we return once more to the debate about creation out of nothing and creation out of something as well as to the Platonic and Aristotelian discourses about "mimesis."[44] Lewis would not agree with Sayers and her more direct connection between the activity of the divine mind and the activity of the human mind:

> In the New Testament, the art of life itself is an art of imitation: can we, believing this, believe that literature, which must derive from real life, is to aim at being 'creative', 'original' and 'spontaneous'? 'Originality' in the New Testament is quite plainly the prerogative of God alone; even with the triune being of God it seems to be confined to the Father.[45]

This may explain the reference in his panegyric for Sayers' memorial service to the "faults" of *The Mind of the Maker*[46] in which he implies that the work is good as a

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[43] C S Lewis, "Christianity and Literature" in *C S Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces,* Lesley Walmsley (ed), Harper Collins, London, 2000, pages 411-20.
[44] For the former, see Chapter Three, page 55 and Lewis' review of *Mind,* and for the latter, see Chapter 3, page 75 and Iris Murdoch as well as Chapter Four, page 93.
[45] Lewis, "Christianity and Literature", op. cit., page 416.
[46] See above, Introduction, page 12.

contribution to literary criticism while disagreeing with or at least largely ignoring the Trinitarian analogy contained therein. Here, in this Oxford address, he continues:

> If I have read the New Testament aright, it leaves no room for 'creativeness' even in a modified or metaphorical sense. Our whole destiny seems to lie in the opposite direction, in being as little as possible ourselves, in acquiring a fragrance not our own but borrowed....[47]

For Lewis, self-expression through the power of the imagination is dangerously close to pride and the fall of the creature's attention from God to itself. He then specifically denies that the creature may come closest to creation out of nothing through his or her imagination:

> Applying this principle to literature, in its greatest generality, we should get as the basis of all critical theory the maxim that an author should never conceive himself bringing into existence beauty or wisdom which did not exist before but simply and solely as trying to embody in terms of his own art some reflection of eternal Beauty and Wisdom.[48]

Sayers has emphasised the use of the term "image" rather than "copy" or "imitation" of the artist's expression of something which exists otherwise only in his or her mind. She cites the identical nature of the Father and the image of the Father in the Son as a basis for obviating the fear of imitation and its consequences for idolatry which may lie behind Lewis' anxiety about the activity of the artist in creating.

Christianity and Culture[49]

This is the heading for a series of three articles which Lewis contributed to *Theology* (Volumes XL and XLI: March – December 1940). The series consisted of five papers in total of which the other writers were S L Bethell and E F Carritt ("Replies to Mr Lewis") and George Every ("In Defence of Criticism").

In this series, Lewis is cautious about the championing of culture as a means of salvation in itself lest the assumption be made that cultured people were more likely

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[47] Lewis, "Christianity and Literature", op. cit., page 416.
[48] ibid.
[49] C S Lewis, "Christianity and Culture" in *C S Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces,* op. cit., pages 71-92.

to be saved than "coarse, unimaginative people."[50] He traces a pattern in this direction beginning with Matthew Arnold and Benedetto Croce and refined in psychological terms by the atheist critic I A Richards and, at that point, being assumed by a journal called *Scrutiny* whose editors believed in "a necessary relationship between the quality of the individual's response to art and his general fitness for humane living."[51] Finally, a Christian writer took up the argument. George Every of the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham, with whom Sayers corresponded from the 1940s onwards, had written previously in *Theology* (March 1939) an article entitled "The Necessity of Scrutiny." In this article, Every asked what Mr Eliot's admirers were to think of a Church "where those who seemed to be theologically equipped preferred Housman, Mr Charles Morgan, and Miss Sayers to Lawrence, Joyce and Mr E M Forster."[52] He spoke of the "sensitive questioning individual" "who is puzzled at finding the same judgements made by Christians as by 'other conventional people'" Every talked also of "testing" theological students as regards their power to evaluate a new piece of writing on a secular subject.

Given Lewis' caution about culture as a means of salvation, he asks: "What, then, is the value of culture?"[53] He concludes that there could be "no question of restoring to culture the kind of status I had given it before my conversion." He does see culture, however, as means of earning a living; claims that not all culture is good but the presence of Christian artists may act as an antidote; believes that culture provides pleasure which is in itself good; and states that, although the principal values in literature are seldom those of Christianity, they can largely be defended as being "the highest level of merely natural value lying immediately below the lowest level of spiritual value."[54] At this early stage, one senses a gulf between Lewis and Sayers which is bridged later on but not until after their correspondence with each other is ended by Sayers' death in 1957. One senses in what Lewis is saying the intention to maintain a separation between God and material creation which encourages a distrust by the Church of body and matter. This distrust Sayers will condemn in her

[50] C S Lewis, "Christianity and Culture", op. cit., page 72.
[51] quoted in Lewis, ibid. page 72.
[52] quoted in Lewis, ibid., page 72.
[53] ibid., page 73.
[54] ibid., pages 78-80.

theological essays where she calls for a Church teaching which is consistent with the belief that, on the contrary, body and matter are sacred to her.[55]

For Lewis, human creativity is a pathway towards something greater rather than a consonant engagement *with* what is greater:

> ... culture is a storehouse of the best (sub-Christian) values. These values are in themselves of the soul, not the spirit. But God created the soul. Its values may be expected, therefore, to contain some reflection or antepast of the spiritual values. They will save no man. They resemble the regenerate life only as affection resembles charity, or honour resembles virtue, or the moon the sun. But though 'like is not the same', it is better than unlike. Imitation may pass into initiation.[56]

There is almost an implication here that, once the artist has been so initiated, he or she will leave off the sub-Christian work of artistic creativity to concentrate on higher things. Sayers, on the contrary, sees initiation as the *precursor* to good art which is then good Christianity. The artist, once "properly saturated," must be left to work in what she describes as the "vocation" of the artist.[57]

Is Theology Poetry?

This address was given to the Oxford Socratic Club in reply to one by Professor H H Price.[58] Both papers were subsequently published in *The Socratic Digest,* No 3 (1945) and No 5 (1952).

Lewis is still deeply cautious of a confusion between creative expression and theological expression. He defines the question posed in terms of poetry being "writing which arouses and in part satisfies the imagination" and expands the question thus: "Does Christian Theology owe its attraction to its power of arousing and satisfying our imagination? Are those who believe it mistaking aesthetic enjoyment for intellectual assent, or assenting because they enjoy?"[59]

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[55] See above, Chapter Four, page 85.
[56] Lewis, "Christianity and Culture", op. cit., page 81.
[57] See note on page 53 of Chapter Two.
[58] C S Lewis, "Is Theology Poetry?", in *C S Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces,* op. cit., pages 10-21.
[59] ibid., pages 10-11.

His definition of poetry may have satisfied Sayers inasmuch as it sits wells with her belief that the imagination must find expression through creative activity. At the same time, his expansion of the question posed was certainly an anxiety which she herself shared when she questioned her Christian conviction and her love of an intellectual pattern.[60]

Nevertheless, she would have stoutly condemned the conclusion which Lewis reaches along these lines in the matter of the doctrine of the Trinity:

> Considered as poetry, the doctrine of the Trinity seems to me to fall between two stools. It has neither the monolithic grandeur of strictly Unitarian conceptions, nor the richness of Polytheism.[61]

Sayers would argue that it has both and that that is its poetry. And she would argue as such for reasons precisely opposed to the development of Lewis' argument here when he says that there are two things the imagination loves to do:

> It loves to embrace its object completely, to take it in at a single glance and see it as something harmonious, symmetrical and self-explanatory. That is the classical imagination: the Parthenon was built for it.[62]

That is also the starting point for Sayers analogy with the Trinity: that the artist's mental Idea is capable of beholding the whole work complete at once.

> It also loves to lose itself in a labyrinth, to surrender to the inextricable. That is the romantic imagination: the *Orlando Furioso* was written for it.[63]

That is also the intellectual pattern of the Trinity with which Sayers was in love.

Lewis suggested that Christian Theology does not cater very well for either type of imagination. He therefore concludes that, if theology is indeed poetry, then it is not very good poetry. Sayers, however, concluded independently that, since every work of creation was threefold, an earthly trinity to match the heavenly, nothing could be more poetic than the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

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[60] See above, page 105.
[61] Lewis, "Is Theology Poetry?", op. cit., page 11.
[62] ibid., page 11.
[63] ibid.

Sayers and Lewis corresponded in the interval between this address of Lewis' and Professor Price's address to which Lewis was responding. They crossed swords over the question of the writer's duty (or otherwise) to write for the purpose of edifying readers. Sayers had always avoided the label of Christian apologist and Lewis admitted that a doctrine never seemed dimmer to him than when he had just successfully defended it. The difference between them seems to lie in Lewis' conversion *obliging* him to write on behalf of the Christian Church in an apologetic sense and Sayers discovering that this was what she was doing as it were by accident.[64]

Good Work and Good Works

This essay first appeared in *The Catholic Art Quarterly* and then in *Good Work* XXIII (Christmas 1959).[65] His subject matter here allows for greater agreement between Lewis and Sayers. He argues, along similar lines to Sayers in her wartime writing such as *Begin Here* and *Why Work?*,[66] that work must be good in itself and worth doing if it is to be good work. The sense of working merely for a living reduces this possibility. He suggests that the mass now exists for the sake of the work rather than that the work is done for the sake of the people.

Similarly, in the matter of art, Lewis speaks of the artist's duty to the work but also his or her duty to the audience. Sayers has spoken of the artist being faithful to the materials with which the artist works but Lewis includes the audience as part of those materials in terms of the people's tastes, interests and capacities. Sayers might agree that the artist should communicate coherently and intelligibly with the audience but she might suggest that a pandering to the tastes and interests of the people results in the sort of "puddles of spilled sensibility and reflection" which Lewis bemoans.[67] The audience is part of the creative artist's trinity in terms of response and impact. If the work of art is created with that response in mind, the artist cannot use the response to become the "reader of his own book." However, Lewis concludes his essay with a paragraph which could have been written by Sayers herself:

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[64] See Reynolds (ed), *Letters Volume Three*, op. cit., pages 252-60.
[65] C S Lewis, "Good Work and Good Works" in *C S Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces*, op. cit., pages 378-83.
[66] See above, Chapter Four, page 94ff.
[67] Lewis, "Good Work and Good Works", op. cit., page 383.

> 'Great works' (of art) and 'good works' (of charity) had better also be Good Work. Let choirs sing well or not at all. Otherwise we merely confirm the majority in their conviction that the world of Business, which does with such efficiency so much that never really needed doing is the real, the adult, and the practical world; and that all this 'culture' and all this 'religion' (horrid words both) are essentially marginal, amateurish and rather effeminate activities.[68]

An Experiment in Criticism

Lewis' essay, *An Experiment in Criticism*[69] which was published in 1961, is perhaps a significant treatment of the third part of Sayers' analogy with the Trinity: the Holy Spirit as the Power or Impact of the work of art on those who receive it. He alters the conventional method of literary criticism which judges books and draws conclusions about the reading of books from that criticism by trying an experiment in judging readers and types of reading and drawing conclusions about the books read from this type of judgement. As a result, the impact which the finished work of art — the book — has upon the reader is a principal part of the criticism. Lewis makes a distinction between the many who "use" art and the few who "receive" it. The many, he argues, enjoy a picture because it portrays something which they would enjoy in reality; the few, on the other hand, surrender themselves to the art of the painter:

> We sit down before the picture in order to have something done to us, not that we may do things with it. The first demand any work of any art makes upon us is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way.[70]

This concern for the skill or energy of the artist leads Lewis to conclude that the "making" of the work of art is to be taken seriously as part of the process of reception. He thus develops the sort of relationship which Sayers articulates between the activity of the artist and the impact of the work of art. Of literary creativity, he reminds his audience that a poem is not merely *logos* (something said) but *poiema* (something made):

> Attention to the very objects they are is our first step. To value them chiefly for reflections which they may suggest to us or morals we may draw from them, is a flagrant instance of 'using' instead of 'receiving'.[71]

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[68] Lewis, "Good Work and Good Works", op. cit., page 383.
[69] C S Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1961.
[70] ibid., page 19.
[71] ibid., pages 82-3.

There may be some similarity here to Sayers' own caution against drawing conclusions about the artist from his or creature rather than receiving that creature as possessing its own integrity.

In his ninth chapter, "Survey," Lewis attempts to sum up his argument. In a neat précis of the debate hitherto, he appears to come closer than he has done in his previous writing to Sayers' analogical description of the creativity of the artist when he says:

> A work of (whatever) art can be either 'received' or 'used'. When we 'receive' it we exert our senses and imagination and various other powers [Power] according to a pattern [Idea] invented [Energy] by the artist.[72]

It appears that a reading of Sayers' *Mind* has impressed itself upon Lewis own mind and one sees the point which Barbara Reynolds makes about this book owing something to Sayers' prototype.[73]

The Seeing Eye

"The Seeing Eye" was first published in the American periodical *Show,* Volume III (February 1963).[74] Lewis, unlike Eliot, would have agreed with Sayers' belief that the artist and his or her beliefs and opinions cannot be discovered within his or her creatures:

> Looking for God — or heaven — by exploring space is like reading or seeing all Shakespeare's plays in the hope that you will find Shakespeare as one of the characters or Stratford as one of the places. Shakespeare is in one sense present at every moment in every play. But he is never present in the same way as Falstaff or Lady Macbeth. Nor is he diffused through the play like a gas.[75]

Lewis appeals to the concept of relationship to explain what he means by the quest for God in his creation. Even then, however, the nature of relationship must be qualified:

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[72] Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism,* op. cit., page 88.
[73] See above, Chapter Four, page 93 and note.
[74] C S Lewis, "The Seeing Eye" in *C S Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces,* op. cit., pages 58-65.
[75] ibid., page 59.

> My point is that, if God does exist, He is related to the universe more as an author is related to a play than as one object in the universe is related to another.[76]

This sounds remarkably similar to Aquinas who suggested that "God's knowledge stands to all created things as the artist's to his products."[77] Given Lewis' train of thought, one understands his surprise, in reviewing *Mind* in 1941, that the image of author and book for the relationship between God and the world had been so little used previously.[78]

Lewis acknowledges, however, a possible objection to his theory: that some would argue that God did indeed at a particular point in history choose to become one item in his creation when he became a man and walked about among other people in Palestine. In order to acknowledge this point but nevertheless to maintain his argument, Lewis cites Dante who is both "(1) the muse outside the poem who is inventing the whole thing, and (2) a character inside the poem, whom the other characters meet and with whom they hold conversations."[79] The analogy, he admits, is crude because the characters have no free will and can say to Dante only what Dante (the poet) has decided to put into their mouths (although Sayers would argue that the author must endow his or her characters with a certain degree of free will at least in relation to the personalities which they represent[80]). Nevertheless, his analogy provides a model of the incarnation in two respects:

> (1) Dante the poet and Dante the character are in a sense one, but in another sense two. This is a faint and far off suggestion of what theologians mean by the 'union of the two natures' (divine and human) in Christ. (2) The other people in the poem meet and see and hear Dante; but they have not even the faintest suspicion that he is making the whole world in which they exist and has a life of his own, outside it, independent of it.[81]

Sayers pursues a similar line when she suggests, in Chapter Six of *Mind* "The Energy Incarnate in Self-Expression", that inasmuch as the Mind of the Maker was incarnate personally and uniquely within its creation "we may say that God wrote his own

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[76] C S Lewis, "The Seeing Eye", op. cit., page 59.
[77] quoted in Reynolds, *Sayers,* op. cit., page 351.
[78] See above, Chapter Three, page 55.
[79] Lewis, "The Seeing Eye", op. cit., page 62.
[80] See above, Chapter Three, page 62.
[81] Lewis, "The Seeing Eye", op. cit., page 62.

autobiography."[82] She admits that this analogy should not be pressed too far but describes the threefold nature of God creating for itself an intellectual form and material body which:

> ...appears with a double nature, 'divine and human'; the whole story is contained within the mind of its maker, but the mind of the maker is also imprisoned within the story and cannot escape from it. It is 'altogether God', in that it is sole arbiter of the form the story is to take, and yet 'altogether man', in that, having created the form, it is bound to display itself in conformity with the nature of that form.[83]

Sayers has previously condemned attempts to read the biography of an author from the characters of his or her works. This autobiography, however, will reveal a relationship between the creator's other works and his Idea of himself either in likeness or unlikeness.

Charles Williams

Dorothy L Sayers on Dante and Charles Williams

Sayers had read Charles Williams' work on Dante, *The Figure of Beatrice,* in 1943 and, a year later, snatched up a copy of Dante's *Inferno* on her way down to the air raid shelter. What she found in Dante occupied her creative imagination for the rest of her life and her lectures on Dante which she delivered during her translation of the Divine Comedy for Penguin are highly regarded by Dante scholars. She maintained a lengthy and profound correspondence with Williams on the subject until his sudden and early death in 1945. She dedicated the first two volumes of her translation to "The Dead Master of the Affirmations Charles Williams" the first with a quotation from *Inferno,* "I am so grateful, that while I breathe air/My tongue shall speak the thanks which are your due."[84]

The title which she assigns to Williams is a reference to the school of poets which is associated with the philosophical and mystical tradition that affirms that all images of reality are valid for the apprehension of reality. This is akin to the theological doctrine which affirms that the ultimate reality of God may be discerned within creation. This

[82] *Mind,* page 70.
[83] ibid., page 71.
[84] Dante, *Inferno,* op. cit., Canto XV, 86-7.

is so only in part, however, and the partial nature of the affirmations confirms Sayers' caution against reading biography entirely from an author's creatures.

One of her lectures on Dante was "The Poetry of the Image in Dante and Charles Williams."[85] This provides evidence both of her debt to Charles Williams and the continuation of her literary theory as a result both of that debt and of her work on Dante himself. She describes a work of art as a "unique universe." There is no relationship between one such work of art and another except by analogy. One must be wary of interpretation which seeks to explain a work of art by substituting the explanation for the work of art itself. Sayers' belief that the artist must "serve" the work provides a paradigm also for the interpreter who must "contemplate the image with an open and a humble mind." As a translator of Dante, Sayers is now an interpreter of Dante and must affirm his image and not substitute it.

> ... the poet and his work are not the same; they are separate images, separate unique events, and they cannot be substituted one for the other. You can never fully understand the poet by analysing his work, neither can you fully understand the work by analysing the poet. It is the great corrupting heresy of contemporary literary criticism to believe that you can. The image made by the poet includes an image of himself, though he himself transcends that image. It also includes an image of exterior reality, though not of the whole of reality.[86]

Williams himself does not comment on Sayers' theory in *Mind* although there is evidence in his own work that several at least of the components of her theory would have appealed to him. Anne Ridler saw a parallel with both Sayers and Eliot in the matter of finished work being complete in itself and not susceptible to improvement by subsequent revision:

> He certainly didn't alter. I think he was very much somebody who moved onto the next project and didn't want to look back over earlier work. He once said, 'I repeat myself? Very well, I repeat myself.' He felt that the work had gone out into the world and you shouldn't be fussing over it later. That was his attitude.[87]

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[85] Dorothy L Sayers, "The Poetry of the Image in Dante and Charles Williams" in *Further Papers on Dante,* Methuen and Co, London, 1957.
[86] ibid., page 185.
[87] Anne Ridler, private interview, Oxford, February 2001.

In his novel, *Descent into Hell,* the young Adela intercedes over plans to cut speeches from Peter Stanhope's play:

> 'Oh, we oughtn't to omit anything, ought we?' she protested. 'A work of art can't spare anything that's a part of it'
> 'My dear,' Mrs Parry said, 'you must consider your audience. What will the audience make of the Chorus?'
> 'It's for them to make what they can of it,' Adela answered. 'We can only give them a symbol. Art's always symbolic, isn't it?'[88]

In the same novel, Peter Stanhope invents a story about himself which accords with Sayers' criticism of interpretation which attempts to substitute the work of art for the explanation:

> There was a story, invented by himself, that *The Times* had once sent a representative to ask for explanations about a new play, and that Stanhope, in his efforts to explain it, had found after four hours that he had only succeeded in reading it completely through aloud. 'Which,' he maintained, '*was* the only way of explaining it.'[89]

It is the masques which Williams wrote for private performance at Amen House, the home of the Oxford University Press, which hint most powerfully at Williams' empathy with Sayers' threefold theory. Just as Sayers was to be attracted to the corporate nature of staging a play and the one body with many members which is the theatre, so, as early as 1928, Williams had been attracted by the efforts which combined to produce a book in a publishing house. Structure and order appealed to him just as it did to Sayers.[90] His "Masque of the Manuscript" includes the character of the Book which subsequently becomes the Thought: almost, Sayers' theory in reverse. In this masque, the Book as Thought says, "I cannot back; being read, my thoughts must go into his nature. ... Ghost of my self, the innermost thought of me; within his mind and of his mind made free."[91]

Sayers' debt to Williams and the "Affirmative Way" continues to reveal evidence of itself in her lecture on Dante and Williams. This is so particularly in the matter of her

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[88] Charles Williams, *Descent into Hell,* William B Eerdman's Publishing Company, Michigan, 1999 (1937), pages 13-14.
[89] ibid., page 15.
[90] The bustle and activity of Amen House which Williams found attractive corresponds to the similar atmosphere of Bensons, the advertising agency for which Sayers worked in the 1920's, perhaps best described on her novel *Murder Must Advertise,* Victor Gollancz, 1933.

emphasis on the godlike nature of men and women as a result of their creative instinct and capacity. She discerns a sanction for the Affirmative Way in Christian doctrine, for example in the doctrine of a true creation:

> Every creature in it [i.e., the visible universe] possesses a true self which, however much perfected or (in Dante's words) 'in-godded', is never swallowed up or lost in God. Therefore, all God's creatures are images of Him in the same way, and to the same limited extent, as a work of art is an image of its maker — his, yet in a manner distinct from him.[92]

Here, speaking in the third and final stage of her literary career, is an echo which repeats back so many times in her writings. In Charles Williams and, through him in Dante, she had found a kindred spirit — much more so than she had done in Eliot or Lewis.

> It is the mark of the Way of Affirmation that it asserts the ingrained reasonableness of the universe. It proclaims that what our senses show to us is not wholly delusion; that what our reason tells us is truth so far as it goes; that all Art is valid, so long as it is true to its own standards; that the whole man, flesh and mind and spirit, is by his nature *capax Dei* — capable of God.[93]

The Conclusion which follows teases out the connection and divergence between Sayers and these fellow Anglican lay writers. These points of connection and divergence provide the ultimate articulation of the context within which Sayers was writing and of the survival or otherwise of her theory in the current appreciation by the critics of these writers.

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[91] Charles Williams, *The Masque of the Manuscript,* Oxford University Press, London, 1928.
[92] Sayers, "The Poetry of the Image in Dante and Charles Williams", op. cit., page 187.
[93] ibid., page 203.

CONCLUSION

The Mind of the Maker is out of print and a recent republication of the work was not widely recognised nor did it manage to reawaken interest in the argument which the book contains. Dorothy L Sayers is nevertheless still renowned for her work as a detective novelist and therein may lie one reason why her theological work is now largely forgotten. People, including theologians and scholars of literature, express surprise to learn that Sayers translated the first Penguin translation of Dante. Even the faithful members of the Dorothy L Sayers Society concentrate a majority of their efforts upon her legacy as a detective novelist.

Perhaps then the analogy of the doctrine of the Trinity with the creative mind of the artist is a brilliant failure but, if that is true, whose failure is it?

Her paradigm of Father, Son and Holy Spirit matched in equal proportion by the creative process of Idea, Energy and Power is brilliant for its consistency and for its heritage. Sayers never allows the argument to slide in her judicious apportionment of the threefold nature of conception, articulation and response as well to the persons of the Godhead as to the creation of art and the performance of work. Nor has she chanced upon some eccentric model for an eccentric doctrine. Her Platonic and Augustinian roots are manifest not only in her own references but also in the influences which mark her work and in her own erudition.

She returns constantly to what is perhaps the starting point of an appreciation of her argument in Genesis Chapter 1, verse 27, for which she provides the interpretation that human beings are most God-like when they are being creative and that this is what it means to say that we are made in the image of God. Such simple definitions and such economical use of prose are hallmarks of her theory — perhaps too simple and too economic. They mark her out as one who is not an exponent of the academy.

John Thurmer[1] has provided perhaps the best exposition of her failure but his exposition makes it clear that her failure is not her fault. He points to her racy and pithy style as a writer, a style perhaps repugnant to her contemporaries in the faculties

[1] See above, Chapter Two, pages 35-6.

of the universities. He accepts that she was not a professional theologian and that she attempts a theology of the Trinity at a time when, more so even than now, amateur theologians were not held in any particular regard. And he reminds us that the theology which she articulates is that associated with the position of a monist Trinitarian rather than the more widely accepted pluralist approach indicated in much customary Trinitarian iconography. Thurmer continues his critique of her style by noting a conventional distaste for the doctrine of the Trinity, shared to this day by many a preacher despite the fact that it lies at the heart of what it means to be Christian.[2] At the same time, there remains an anxiety about human analogies with God amongst some theologians but particularly amongst evangelical Christians mindful of the heresies which attempted to anthropomorphise God to the detriment of God's divinity. The fear of body and matter which the Church has maintained has made it often thoughtless about its own doctrine of the incarnation. But then, perhaps most cogently of all, Thurmer states the irony of this theory of creative mind being stated through the pen of a ready writer — a detective novelist at that and, worst of all, a *woman* detective novelist.

Subtly, John Thurmer has indicated where the fault for the failure of *The Mind of the Maker* lies: not in the mind of Dorothy L Sayers but in those of her contemporaries. His fine criticism of those worthy gentleman comes at the end of his chapter on the search for an analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity in his book on the subject, *A Detection of the Trinity.* There, in reference to the irony of this paradigm of an analogy proceeding from the creator of Lord Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane, he writes that it "may perhaps be taken as a latter-day example of God choosing what is foolish in the world to shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27)."[3]

The test for the importance of a human paradigm perhaps lies in the natural inclination of men and women to describe God and their relationship with God in language that paints word pictures. Sayers herself points to the loophole in the Mosaic ban on images by recalling the pictorial word painting of scripture itself describing God walking in the garden, speaking from a bush of fire, wrestling with Jacob and so

[2] When the Calendar of Holy Days was last revised by the Church of England, that body returned to the naming of the Sundays of Ordinary Time as the Sundays "after Trinity" to emphasise the Trinitarian nature of the Christian faith.

on. The artist continues this tradition not only with words but also with music and fine art and the many other media of the creative arts. Fear of body and matter, however, have made this natural urge to articulate images of God in artistic expression at best, enjoyable adjuncts to the more serious business of theological enquiry or, at worst, downright sinful.

Of course, Sayers' analogy does not appear to have been unique and she herself acknowledged her debt to a remarkably diverse selection of writers in an equally diverse range of academic disciplines such as R G Collingwood and *The Principles of Art*. There are other influences too which she may or may not have received directly such as R C Moberley and *Atonement and Personality* and others which have been discovered subsequently such as Lascelles Abercrombie and *The Theory of Poetry.* Similarly, the pursuit of a theology of the arts has been actively encouraged by institutions, societies and their respective journals and other publications throughout particularly the twentieth and now the twenty-first centuries. Nevertheless, there remains a sense that the creative arts are an optional extra to the ministry of the Christian Church rather than a potential means of engaging directly and effectively with God. Fear again of body and matter and perhaps now fear of financial imprudence militate against a Christian aesthetic of the arts lying at the centre not only of Christian theology but also of Christian pastoralia such that opportunities are frequently missed for popularising theology and providing people with a practical language about God and their relationship with God.

It was perhaps because Sayers was not an expert in this field, however, that she provided the most challenging example of such a Christian aesthetic but, at the same time, her amateur status ensured that she was ignored.

The famous speech of the Archangel Michael at the conclusion of *The Zeal of Thy House* was cut by its director Harcourt Williams as being unwieldy in the position in which it was placed and as detracting from the dramatic vehicle of the principal character's exit from the stage. Sayers' bowed to Williams' authority in the matter but

[3] John Thurmer, *A Detection of the Trinity,* Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1984, page 53.

this might have been a bad omen for the success of the resulting work on creative activity which *Mind* represents.

Nevertheless, in the first instance, the book is received well. C S Lewis applauds its contribution to literary criticism but, even so, is cautious in his praise of its theology and largely ignores the analogy with the Trinity. He appears to grow in admiration for it perhaps as a result of re-reading Sayers' *The Man Born to be King* as his annual Lenten devotions. But T S Eliot, for whom Sayers had great admiration, and Charles Williams, her inspiration and admirer, appear to make no reference to the work themselves although one feels that they must have read it.

The work's failure lies in part with her own isolation even from these, her three fellow Anglican "divines" of the twentieth century. Like Sayers, they have all written drama or fiction; like Sayers, they have all contributed to Christian apologetics; like Sayers, they have all written on Dante; unlike Sayers, however, none of these three writers produces the same style of systematic work which characterises her own precise and consistent style.

Unlike Lewis and Eliot, Sayers is not at all cautious about championing culture as a means to salvation. Again, this might have contributed to the failure of the book. Certainly, H M Waddams was not impressed with this possibility.[4] George Every might have agreed with her but, despite his correspondence with her in the 1940s, the fact remained that he did not particularly regard her style with much reverence.[5]

And then, unlike all three of her colleagues — Lewis, Eliot and Williams — Sayers is the only one to place Christ on the stage: both a challenge to the puritans as well as being consistent with her own claim that the great test of her theory was to place Christianity on the stage and hold it up to scrutiny. This is an example of one who takes her Christology so seriously that she actually performs it and, in doing so, tests both it and the Trinity for their truth. The reaction to *The Man Born to be King* and perhaps her own dismissal of the reactionaries (admirably robust though it was) were

[4] See above, Chapter Three, pages 56-7.
[5] See above, Chapter Five, page 109.

further examples of how "unsafe" Sayers was in this particular field and how unsteady her foundation for enduring recognition within it.

Perhaps she pressed the independence of her own beliefs from her explications of a selection of the credal statements too much. Likewise, her championing of the independence of her creatures may have struck some as naïve. The object of her own passion, Dante, was both author and player in his creation. Shakespeare was both writer and, in a sense, present in his works. And Sayers herself, despite trying to defend the independence of her characters must decide how God relates to his creatures through an absolute transcendence but not one so acute as to make her analogy un-discernable.

Sayers was a great pioneer who died too soon — not only before completing her work on Dante but also before a decade dawned in which the mechanism for conveying her popularisation of the doctrines and dogma of the Christian Church would have been provided for a more enduring legacy. Had she lived beyond the domination of male professionals in her chosen fields, the footing of her theological work may well have provided a paradigm greater even than her analogy of the Trinity in popular theology and mass media.

Did she lack an associate more palatable to her colleagues in the homes of literature and theology to promote her work and her standing? Charles Williams might have done this for her if he himself had lived longer. Perhaps it is still not too late.

Nevertheless, it remains true to say that the human analogy with the doctrine of the Trinity in the creative mind of the artist and her neat interpretation of the relationship between men and women and their God has been provided by a writer who maintains a stature of world renown in at least one of her fields such that all is not lost in the attempt to reawaken interest in her seminal theological work, *The Mind of the Maker.*

When Nicholas Berdyaev challenges the Church by claiming that "a positive Christian answer will have to be given sooner or later to man's longing to create for

the fate of Christianity in the world depends upon it" in 1935,[6] the same challenge might just as well be made today in 2002. Sayers takes up his challenge six years later when she writes *Mind.* Sixty-one years after *Mind,* no one else has provided a better answer but, at the same time, few other answers of any quality have been so ignored.

[6] See above, Chapter Three, page 61.

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