C.S. Lewis, “A Panegyric for Dorothy L. Sayers

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The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**panegyric**” - A public speech or published text in praise of a person or thing; a laudatory discourse; a eulogy, an encomium. Frequently with †*of*, *on*, *to*, *upon*.

A Panegyric for Dorothy L. Sayers

The variety of Dorothy Sayers’s work makes it almost impossible to find anyone who can deal properly with it all. Charles Williams might have done so; I certainly can’t. It is embarrassing to admit that I am no great reader of detective stories: embarrassing because, in our present state of festering intellectual class consciousness, the admission might be taken as a boast. It is nothing of the sort: I respect, though I do not much enjoy, that severe and civilized form, which demands much fundamental brain work of those who write in it and assumes as its background uncorrupted and unbrutalised methods of criminal investigation. Prigs have put it about that Dorothy in later life was ashamed of her ‘tekkies’ and hated to hear them mentioned. A couple of years ago my wife asked her if this was true and was relieved to hear her deny it. She had stopped working in that genre because she felt she had done all she could with it. And indeed, I gather, a full process of development had taken place. I have heard it said that Lord Peter is the only imaginary detective who ever grew up—grew from the Duke’s son, the fabulous amorist, the scholar swashbuckler, and connoisseur of wine, into the increasingly human character, not without quirks and flaws, who loves and marries, and is nursed by, Harriet Vane. Reviewers complained that Miss Sayers was falling in love with her hero. On which a better critic remarked to me, ‘It would be truer to say she was falling out of love with him; and ceased fondling a girl’s dream—if she had ever done so—and began inventing a man.’

There is in reality no cleavage between the detective stories and her other works. In them, as in it, she is first and foremost the craftsman, the professional. She always saw herself as one who has

learned a trade, and respects it, and demands respect for it from others. We who loved her may (among ourselves) lovingly admit that this attitude was sometimes almost comically emphatic. One soon learned that 'We authors, Ma'am',* was the most acceptable key. Gas about 'inspiration', whimperings about critics or public, all the paraphernalia of dandyisme and 'outsidership' were, I think, simply disgusting to her. She aspired to be, and was, at once a popular entertainer and a conscientious craftsman: like (in her degree) Chaucer, Cervantes, Shakespeare, or Molière. I have an idea that, with a very few exceptions, it is only such writers who matter much in the long run. 'One shows one's greatness', says Pascal, 'not by being at an extremity but by being simultaneously at two extremities.' **Much of her most valuable thought 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.**

For a Christian, of course, this pride in one's craft, which so easily withers into pride in oneself, raises a fiercely practical problem. It is delightfully characteristic of her extremely robust and forthright nature that she soon lifted this problem to the fully conscious level and made it the theme of one of her major works. **The architect in *The Zeal of Thy House* is at the outset the incarnation of—and therefore doubtless the Catharsis from—a possible Dorothy whom the actual Dorothy Sayers was offering for mortification. His disinterested zeal for the work itself has her full sympathy. But she knows that, without grace, it is a dangerous virtue: little better than the 'artistic conscience' which every Bohemian bungler pleads as a justification for neglecting his parents, deserting his wife, and cheating his creditors.** From the beginning, personal pride is entering into the architect's character: the play records his costly salvation.

As the detective stories do not stand quite apart, so neither do the explicitly religious works. She never sank the artist and entertainer in the evangelist. The very astringent (and admirable) preface to *The Man Born to Be King*, written when she had lately been assailed with a great deal of ignorant and spiteful obloquy, makes the point of view defiantly clear. 'It was assumed', she writes, 'that my object in writing was "to do good". But that was in fact not my object at all,

though it was quite properly the object of those who commissioned the plays in the first place. My object was to tell that story to the best of my ability, within the medium at my disposal—in short, to make as good a work of art as I could. For a work of art that is not good and true in art is not true and good in any other respect.'* Of course, while art and evangelism were distinct, they turned out to demand one another. Bad art on this theme went hand in hand with bad theology. 'Let me tell you, good Christian people, an honest writer would be ashamed to treat a nursery tale as you have treated the greatest drama in history: and this in virtue, not of his faith, but of his calling.'† And equally, of course, her disclaimer of an intention to 'do good' was ironically rewarded by the immense amount of good she evidently did.

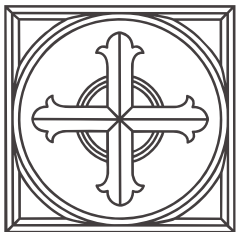
The architectonic qualities of this dramatic sequence will hardly be questioned. Some tell me they find it vulgar. Perhaps they do not quite know what they mean; perhaps they have not fully digested the answers to this charge given in the preface. Or perhaps it is simply not 'addressed to their condition'. Different souls take their nourishment in different vessels. For my own part, I have re-read it in every Holy Week since it first appeared, and never re-read it without being deeply moved.

Her later years were devoted to translation. The last letter I ever wrote to her was in acknowledgement of her *Song of Roland*, and I was lucky enough to say that the end-stopped lines and utterly unadorned style of the original must have made it a far harder job than Dante. Her delight at this (surely not very profound) remark suggested that she was rather starved for rational criticism. I do not think this one of her most successful works. It is too violently colloquial for my palate; but, then, she knew far more Old French than I. **In her Dante* the problem is not quite the same. It should always be read in conjunction with the paper on Dante which she contributed to the *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*.† There you get the first impact of Dante on a mature, a scholarly, and an extremely independent mind. That impact determined the whole character of her translation. She had been startled and delighted by something in Dante for which no critic, and no earlier translator, had prepared her: his sheer narrative impetus, his frequent homeliness, his high comedy, his grotesque buffoonery. These qualifies she was determined to**

preserve at all costs. If, in order to do so, she had to sacrifice sweetness or sublimity, then sacrificed they should be. Hence her audacities in both language and rhythm.

We must distinguish this from something rather discreditable that has been going on of recent years—I mean the attempt of some translators from Greek and Latin to make their readers believe that the *Aeneid* is written in service slang and that Attic Tragedy uses the language of the streets. What such versions implicitly assert is simply false; but what Dorothy was trying to represent by her audacities is quite certainly there in Dante. The question is how far you can do it justice without damage to other qualities which are also there and thus misrepresenting the Comedy as much in one direction as fussy, Miltonic old Cary had done in the other.‡ **In the end, I suppose, one comes to a choice of evils. No version can give the whole of Dante. So at least I said when I read her *Inferno*. But, then, when I came to the *Purgatorio*, a little miracle seemed to be happening. She had risen, just as Dante himself rose in his second part: growing richer, more liquid, more elevated. Then first I began to have great hopes of her *Paradiso*.** Would she go on rising? Was it possible? Dared we hope?

Well. She died instead; went, as one may in all humility hope, to learn more of Heaven than even the *Paradiso* could tell her. For all she did and was, for delight and instruction, for her militant loyalty as a friend, for courage and honesty, for the richly feminine qualities which showed through a port and manner superficially masculine and even gleefully ogreish—let us thank the Author who invented her.



THE LOST TOOLS OF LEARNING

Paper read at a Vacation Course in Education
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by
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THE LOST TOOLS OF LEARNING

That I, whose experience of teaching is extremely limited, and whose life of recent years has been almost wholly out of touch with educational circles, should presume to discuss education is a matter, surely, that calls for no apology. It is a kind of behaviour to which the present climate of opinion is wholly favourable. Bishops air their opinions about economics; biologists, about metaphysics; celibates, about matrimony; inorganic chemists about theology; the most irrelevant people are appointed to highly-technical ministries; and plain, blunt men write to the papers to say that Epstein and Picasso do not know how to draw. Up to a certain point, and provided that the criticisms are made with a reasonable modesty, these activities are commendable. Too much specialisation is not a good thing. There is also one excellent reason why the veriest amateur may feel entitled to have an opinion about education. For if we are not all professional teachers, we have all, at some time or other, been taught. Even if we learnt nothing—perhaps in particular if we learnt nothing—our contribution to the discussion may have a potential value.

Without apology, then, I will begin. But since much that I have to say is highly controversial, it will be pleasant to start with a proposition with which, I feel confident, all teachers will cordially agree; and that is, that they all work much too hard and have far too many things to do. One has only to look at any school or examination syllabus to see that it is cluttered up with a great variety of exhausting subjects which they are called upon to teach, and the teaching of which sadly interferes with what every thoughtful mind will allow to be their proper duties, such as distributing milk, supervising meals, taking cloak-room duty, weighing and measuring pupils, keeping their eyes open for incipient mumps, measles and chicken-pox, making out lists, escorting parties round the Victoria and Albert Museum, filling up forms, interviewing parents, and devising end-of-term reports which shall combine a deep veneration for truth with a tender respect for the feelings of all concerned.

Upon these really important duties I will not enlarge. I propose only to deal with the subject of teaching, properly so-called. I want to inquire whether, amid all the multitudinous subjects which figure in the syllabuses, we are really teaching the right things in the right way; and whether, by teaching fewer things, differently, we might not succeed in "shedding the load" (as the fashionable phrase goes) and, at the same time, producing a better result.

This prospect need arouse neither hope nor alarm. It is in the highest degree improbable that the reforms I propose will ever be carried into effect. Neither the parents, nor the training colleges, nor the examination boards, nor the boards of governors, nor the Ministry of Education would countenance them for a moment. For they amount to this: that if we are to produce a society of educated people, fitted to preserve their intellectual freedom amid the complex pressures of our modern society, we must turn back the wheel of progress some four or five hundred years, to the point at which education began to lose sight of its true object, towards the end of the Middle Ages.

Before you dismiss me with the appropriate phrase—reactionary, romantic, mediaevalist, *laudator temporis acti*, or whatever tag comes first to hand—I will ask you to consider one or two miscellaneous questions that hang about at the back, perhaps, of all our minds, and occasionally pop out to worry us.

When we think about the remarkably early age at which the young men went up to the University in, let us say, Tudor times, and thereafter were held fit to assume responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs, are we altogether comfortable about that artificial prolongation of intellectual childhood and adolescence into the years of physical maturity which is so marked in our own day? To postpone the acceptance of responsibility to a late date brings with it a number of psychological complications which, while they may interest the psychiatrist, are scarcely beneficial either to the individual or to society. The stock argument in favour of postponing the school leaving-age and prolonging the period of education generally is that there is now so much more to learn than there was in the Middle Ages. This is partly true, but not wholly. The modern boy and girl are certainly taught more subjects—but does that always mean that they are actually more learned and know more? That is the very point which we are going to consider.

Has it ever struck you as odd, or unfortunate, that to-day, when the proportion of literacy throughout Western Europe is higher than it has ever been, people should have become susceptible to the influence of advertisement and mass-propaganda to an extent hitherto unheard-of and unimagined? Do you put this down to the mere mechanical fact that the press and the radio and so on have made propaganda much easier to distribute over a wide area? Or do you sometimes have an uneasy suspicion that the product of modern educational methods is less good than he or she might be at disentangling fact from opinion and the proven from the plausible?

Have you ever, in listening to a debate among adult and presumably

responsible people, been fretted by the extraordinary inability of the average debater to speak to the question, or to meet and refute the arguments of speakers on the other side? Or have you ever pondered upon the extremely high incidence of irrelevant matter which crops up at committee-meetings, and upon the very great rarity of persons capable of acting as chairmen of committees? And when you think of this, and think that most of our public affairs are settled by debates and committees, have you ever felt a certain sinking of the heart?

Have you ever followed a discussion in the newspapers or elsewhere and noticed how frequently writers fail to define the terms they use? Or how often, if one man does define his terms, another will assume in his reply that he was using the terms in precisely the opposite sense to that in which he has already defined them?

Have you ever been faintly troubled by the amount of slipshod syntax going about? And if so, are you troubled because it is inelegant or because it may lead to dangerous misunderstanding?

Do you ever find that young people, when they have left school, not only forget most of what they have learnt (that is only to be expected) but forget also, or betray that they have never really known, how to tackle a new subject for themselves? Are you often bothered by coming across grown-up men and women who seem unable to distinguish between a book that is sound, scholarly and properly documented, and one that is to any trained eye, very conspicuously none of these things? Or who cannot handle a library catalogue? Or who, when faced with a book of reference, betray a curious inability to extract from it the passages relevant to the particular question which interests them?

Do you often come across people for whom, all their lives, a “subject” remains a “subject,” divided by water-tight bulkheads from all other “subjects,” so that they experience very great difficulty in making an immediate mental connection between, let us say, algebra and detective fiction, sewage disposal and the price of salmon, cellulose and the distribution of rainfall—or, more generally, between such spheres of knowledge as philosophy and economics, or chemistry and art?

Are you occasionally perturbed by the things written by adult men and women for adult men and women to read? Here, for instance, is a quotation from an evening paper. It refers to the visit of an Indian girl to this country:—

> Miss Bhosle has a perfect command of English ("Oh, gosh," she said once), and a marked enthusiasm for London.

Well, we may all talk nonsense in a moment of inattention. It is more alarming when we find a well-known biologist writing in a weekly paper to the effect that: "It is an argument against the existence of a Creator" (I think he put it more strongly; but since I have, most unfortunately, mislaid the reference, I will put his claim at its lowest)—an "an argument against the existence of a Creator that the same kind of variations which are produced by natural selection can be produced at will by stock-breeders." One might feel tempted to say that it is rather an argument *for* the existence of a Creator. Actually, of course, it is neither: all it proves is that the same material causes (re-combination of the chromosomes by cross-breeding and so forth) are sufficient to account for all observed variations—just as the various combinations of the same 13 semitones are materially sufficient to account for Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* and the noise the cat makes by walking on the keys. But the cat's performance neither proves nor disproves the existence of Beethoven; and all that is proved by the biologist's argument is that he was unable to distinguish between a material and a final cause.

Here is a sentence from no less academic a source than a front-page article in the *Times Literary Supplement*:—

> The Frenchman, Alfred Epinas, pointed out that certain species (*e.g.*, ants and wasps) can only face the horrors of life and death in association.

I do not know what the Frenchman actually did say: what the Englishman says he said is patently meaningless. We cannot know whether life holds any horror for the ant, nor in what sense the isolated wasp which you kill upon the window-pane can be said to "face" or not to "face" the horrors of death. The subject of the article is mass-behaviour in *man*; and the human motives have been unobtrusively transferred from the main proposition to the supporting instance. Thus the argument, in effect, assumes what it sets out to prove—a fact which would become immediately apparent if it were presented in a formal syllogism. This is only a small and haphazard example of a vice which pervades whole books—particularly books written by men of science on metaphysical subjects.

Another quotation from the same issue of the T.L.S. comes in fittingly here

to wind up this random collection of disquieting thoughts—this time from a review of Sir Richard Livingstone's *Some Tasks for Education*:—

> More than once the reader is reminded of the value of an intensive study of at least one subject, so as to learn "the meaning of knowledge" and what precision and persistence is needed to attain it. Yet there is else where full recognition of the distressing fact that a man may be master in one field and show no better judgment than his neighbour anywhere else; he remembers what he has learnt, but forgets altogether how he learned it.

I would draw your attention particularly to that last sentence, which offers an explanation of what the writer rightly calls the "distressing fact" that the intellectual skills bestowed upon us by our education are not readily transferable to subjects other than those in which we acquired them: "he remembers what he has learnt, but forgets altogether how he learned it."

Is it not the great defect of our education to-day (—a defect traceable through all the disquieting symptoms of trouble that I have mentioned—) that although we often succeed in teaching our pupils "subjects," we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think? They learn everything, except the art of learning. It is as though we had taught a child mechanically and by rule of thumb, to play *The Harmonious Blacksmith* upon the piano, but had never taught him the scale or how to read music; so that, having memorised *The Harmonious Blacksmith*, he still had not the faintest notion how to proceed from that to tackle *The Last Rose of Summer*. Why do I say, "As though"? In certain of the arts and crafts we sometimes do precisely this—requiring a child to "express himself " in paint before we teach him how to handle the colours and the brush. There is a school of thought which believes this to be the right way to set about the job. But observe—it is not the way in which a trained craftsman will go about to teach himself a new medium. *He*, having learned by experience the best way to economise labour and take the thing by the right end, will start off by doodling about on an odd piece of material, in order to "give himself the feel of the tool."

Let us now look at the mediæval scheme of education—the syllabus of the schools. It does not matter, for the moment, whether it was devised for small children or for older students; or how long people were supposed to take over it. What matters is the light it throws upon what the men of the Middle Ages supposed to be the object and the right order of the educative process.
The syllabus was divided into two parts: the Trivium and Quadrivium. The

second part—the Quadrivium—consisted of "subjects," and need not for the moment concern us. The interesting thing for us is the composition of the Trivium, which preceded the Quadrivium and was the preliminary discipline for it. It consisted of three parts: Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric, in that order.

Now the first thing we notice is that two at any rate of these "subjects" are not what we should call "subjects" at all: they are only methods of dealing with subjects. Grammar indeed is a "subject" in the sense that it does mean definitely learning a language—at that period it meant learning Latin. But language itself is simply the medium in which thought is expressed. The whole of the Trivium was in fact intended to teach the pupil the proper use of the tools of learning, before he began to apply them to "subjects" at all. First, he learned a language: not just how to order a meal in a foreign language, but the structure of language—*a* language–and hence of language itself—what it was, how it was put together and how it worked. Secondly, he learned how to use language: how to define his terms and make accurate statements; how to construct an argument and how to detect fallacies in argument (his own arguments and other people's). Dialectic, that is to say, embraced Logic and Disputation. Thirdly, he learned to express himself in language: how to say what he had to say elegantly and persuasively. At this point, any tendency to express himself windily or to use his eloquence so as to make the worse appear the better reason would, no doubt, be restrained by his previous teaching in Dialectic. If not, his teacher and his fellow-pupils, trained along the same lines, would be quick to point out where he was wrong; for it was they whom he had to seek to persuade. At the end of his course, he was required to compose a thesis upon some theme set by his masters or chosen by himself, and afterwards to defend his thesis against the criticism of the faculty. By this time he would have learned—or woe betide him—not merely to write an essay on paper, but to speak audibly and intelligibly from a platform, and to use his wits quickly when heckled. The heckling, moreover, would not consist solely of offensive personalities or of irrelevant queries about what Julius Cæsar said in 55 B.C.—though no doubt mediæval dialectic was enlivened in practice by plenty of such primitive repartee. But there would also be questions, cogent and shrewd, from those who had already run the gauntlet of debate, or were making ready to run it.

It is, of course, quite true that bits and pieces of the mediæval tradition still linger, or have been revived, in the ordinary school syllabus of to-day. Some knowledge of grammar is still required when learning a foreign language—perhaps I should say, "is again required"; for during my own lifetime we

passed through a phase when the teaching of declensions and conjugations was considered rather reprehensible, and it was considered better to pick these things up as we went along. School debating societies flourish; essays are written; the necessity for "self-expression" is stressed, and perhaps even over-stressed. But these activities are cultivated more or less in detachment, as belonging to the special subjects in which they are pigeon-holed rather than as forming one coherent scheme of mental training to which all "subjects" stand in a subordinate relation. "Grammar" belongs especially to the "subject" of foreign languages, and essay-writing to the "subject" called "English"; while Dialectic has become almost entirely divorced from the rest of the curriculum, and is frequently practiced unsystematically and out of school-hours as a separate exercise, only very loosely related to the main business of learning. Taken by and large, the great difference of emphasis between the two conceptions holds good: modern education concentrates on *teaching subjects*, leaving the method of thinking, arguing, and expressing one's conclusions to be picked up by the scholar as he goes along; mediæval education concentrated on first *forging and learning to handle the tools of learning*, using whatever subject came handy as a piece of material on which to doodle until the use of the tool became second nature.

"Subjects" of some kind there must be, of course. One cannot learn the use of a tool by merely waving it in the air; neither can one learn the theory of grammar without learning an actual language, or learn to argue and orate without speaking about something in particular. The debating subjects of the Middle Ages were drawn largely from Theology, or from the Ethics and History of Antiquity. Often, indeed, they became stereotyped, especially towards the end of the period; and the far-fetched and wire-drawn absurdities of scholastic argument fretted Milton and provide food for merriment even to this day. Whether they were in themselves any more hackneyed and trivial than the usual subjects set nowadays for "essay-writing" I should not like to say: we may ourselves grow a little weary of "A Day in My Holidays," "What I should Like to Do when I Leave School," and all the rest of it. But most of the merriment is misplaced, because the aim and object of the debating thesis has by now been lost sight of. A glib speaker in the Brains Trust once entertained his audience (and reduced the late Charles Williams to helpless rage) by asserting that in the Middle Ages it was a matter of faith to know how many archangels could dance on the point of a needle. I need not say, I hope, that it never was a "matter of faith"; it was simply a debating exercise, whose set subject was the nature of angelic substance: were angels material, and if so, did they occupy space? The answer usually adjudged correct is, I believe, that angels are pure intelligences; not material, but limited, so that

they may have location in space but not extension. An analogy might be drawn from human thought, which is similarly non-material and similarly limited. Thus, if your thought is concentrated upon one thing—say, the point of a needle—it is located there in the sense that it is not elsewhere; but although it is "there," it occupies no space there, and there is nothing to prevent an infinite number of different people's thoughts being concentrated upon the same needle-point at the same time. The proper subject of the argument is thus seen to be the distinction between location and extension in space; the matter on which the argument is exercised happens to be the nature of angels (although, as we have seen, it might equally well have been something else); the practical lesson to be drawn from the argument is not to use words like "there" in a loose and unscientific way, without specifying whether you mean "located there" or "occupying space there." Scorn in plenty has been poured out upon the mediæval passion for hair-splitting: but when we look at the shameless abuse made, in print and on the platform, of controversial expressions with shifting and ambiguous connotations, we may feel it in our hearts to wish that every reader and hearer had been so defensively armored by his education as to be able to cry: *Distinguo*.

For we let our young men and women go out unarmed, in a day when armour was never so necessary. By teaching them all to read, we have left them at the mercy of the printed word. By the invention of the film and the radio, we have made certain that no aversion to reading shall secure them from the incessant battery of words, words, words. They do not know what the words mean; they do not know how to ward them off or blunt their edge or fling them back; they are a prey to words in their emotions instead of being the masters of them in their intellects. We who were scandalized in 1940 when men were sent to fight armoured tanks with rifles, are not scandalised when young men and women are sent into the world to fight massed propaganda with a smattering of "subjects"; and when whole classes and whole nations become hypnotised by the arts of the spellbinder, we have the impudence to be astonished. We dole out lip-service to the importance of education—lip-service and, just occasionally, a little grant of money; we postpone the school leaving-age, and plan to build bigger and better schools; the teachers slave conscientiously in and out of school-hours, till responsibility becomes a burden and a nightmare; and yet, as I believe, all this devoted effort is largely frustrated, because we have lost the tools of learning, and in their absence can only make a botched and piecemeal job of it.

What, then, are we to do? We cannot go back to the Middle Ages. That is a cry to which we have become accustomed. We cannot go back—or can we?

Distinguo. I should like every term in that proposition defined. Does "Go back" mean a retrogression in time, or the revision of an error? The first is clearly impossible *per se*; the second is a thing which wise men do every day. "Cannot"—does this mean that our behaviour is determined by some irreversible cosmic mechanism, or merely that such an action would be very difficult in view of the opposition it would provoke? "The Middle Ages"—obviously the twentieth century is not and cannot be the fourteenth; but if "the Middle Ages" is, in this context, simply a picturesque phrase denoting a particular educational theory, there seems to be no *a priori* reason why we should not "go back" to it—with modifications—as we have already "gone back" with modifications, to, let us say, the idea of playing Shakespeare's plays as he wrote them, and not in the "modernised" versions of Cibber and Garrick, which once seemed to be the latest thing in theatrical progress.

Let us amuse ourselves by imagining that such progressive retrogression is possible. Let us make a clean sweep of all educational authorities, and furnish ourselves with a nice little school of boys and girls whom we may experimentally equip for the intellectual conflict along lines chosen by ourselves. We will endow them with exceptionally docile parents; we will staff our school with teachers who are themselves perfectly familiar with the aims and methods of the Trivium; we will have our buildings and staff large enough to allow our classes to be small enough for adequate handling; and we will postulate a Board of Examiners willing and qualified to test the products we turn out. Thus prepared, we will attempt to sketch out a syllabus—a modern Trivium "with modifications"; and we will see where we get to.

But first: what age shall the children be? Well, if one is to educate them on novel lines, it will be better that they should have nothing to unlearn; besides, one cannot begin a good thing too early, and the Trivium is by its nature not learning, but a preparation for learning. We will therefore "catch 'em young," requiring only of our pupils that they shall be able to read, write and cipher.

My views about child-psychology are, I admit, neither orthodox nor enlightened. Looking back upon myself (since I am the child I know best and the only child I can pretend to know from inside) I recognise in myself three states of development. These, in a rough-and-ready fashion, I will call the Poll-parrot, the Pert, and the Poetic—the latter coinciding, approximately, with the onset of puberty. The Poll-parrot stage is the one in which learning by heart is easy and, on the whole, pleasurable; whereas reasoning is difficult and, on the whole, little relished. At this age one readily memorises the

shapes and appearances of things; one likes to recite the number-plates of cars; one rejoices in the chanting of rhymes and the rumble and thunder of unintelligible polysyllables; one enjoys the mere accumulation of things. The Pert Age, which follows upon this (and, naturally, overlaps it to some extent) is only too familiar to all who have to do with children: it is characterised by contradicting, answering-back, liking to "catch people out" (especially one's elders), and the propounding of conundrums (especially the kind with a nasty verbal catch in them). Its nuisance-value is extremely high. It usually sets in about the Lower Fourth. The Poetic Age is popularly known as the "difficult" age. It is self-centered; it yearns to express itself; it rather specializes in being misunderstood; it is restless and tries to achieve independence; and, with good luck and good guidance, it should show the beginnings of creativeness, a reaching-out towards a synthesis of what it already knows, and a deliberate eagerness to know and do some one thing in preference to all others. Now it seems to me that the lay-out of the Trivium adapts itself with a singular appropriateness to these three ages: Grammar to the Poll-parrot, Dialectic to the Pert, and Rhetoric to the Poetic Age.

Let us begin, then, with Grammar. This, in practice, means the grammar of some language in particular; and it must be an inflected language. The grammatical structure of an uninflected language is far too analytical to be tackled by any one without previous practice in Dialectic. Moreover, the inflected languages interpret the uninflected, whereas the uninflected are of little use in interpreting the inflected. I will say at once, quite firmly, that the best grounding for education is the Latin grammar. I say this, not because Latin is traditional and mediæval, but simply because even a rudimentary knowledge of Latin cuts down the labor and pains of learning almost any other subject by at least 50 percent. It is the key to the vocabulary and structure of all the Romance languages and to the structure of all the Teutonic languages, as well as to the technical vocabulary of all the sciences and to the literature of the entire Mediterranean civilisation, together with all its historical documents. Those whose pedantic preference for a living language persuades them to deprive their pupils of all these advantages might substitute Russian, whose grammar is still more primitive. (The verb is complicated by a number of "aspects"—and I rather fancy that it enjoys three complete voices and a couple of extra aorists—but I may be thinking of Basque or Sanskrit.) Russian is, of course, helpful with the other Slav dialects. There is something also to be said for classical Greek. But my own choice is Latin. Having thus pleased the Classicists I will proceed to horrify them by adding that I do not think it either wise or necessary to cramp the ordinary pupil upon the Procrustean bed of the Augustan Age, with its

highly elaborate and artificial verse-forms and oratory. The post-classical and mediæval Latin, which was a living language down to the end of the Renaissance, is easier and in some ways livelier, both in syntax and rhythm; and a study of it helps to dispel the widespread notion that learning and literature came to a full-stop when Christ was born and only woke up again at the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

However, I am running ahead too fast. We are still in the grammatical stage. Latin should be begun as early as possible—at a time when inflected speech seems no more astonishing than any other phenomenon in an astonishing world; and when the chanting of "amo, amas, amat" is as ritually agreeable to the feelings as the chanting of "eeny, meeny, miney, mo."

During this age we must, of course, exercise the mind on other things besides Latin grammar. Observation and memory are the faculties most lively at this period; and if we are to learn a contemporary foreign language we should begin now, before the facial and mental muscles become rebellious to strange intonations. Spoken French or German can be practised alongside the grammatical discipline of the Latin.

In *English*, verse and prose can be learned by heart, and the pupil's memory should be stored with stories of every kind—classical myth, European legend, and so forth. I do not think that the Classical stories and masterpieces of ancient literature should be made the vile bodies on which to practise the technics of Grammar—that was a fault of mediæval education which we need not perpetuate. The stories can be enjoyed and remembered in English, and related to their origin at a subsequent stage. Recitation aloud should be practiced—individually or in chorus; for we must not forget that we are laying the groundwork for Disputation and Rhetoric.

The grammar of *History* should consist, I think, of dates, events, anecdotes, and personalities. A set of dates to which one can peg all later historical knowledge is of enormous help later on in establishing the perspective of history. It does not greatly matter *which* dates: those of the Kings of England will do very nicely, provided they are accompanied by pictures of costume, architecture, and all "every-day things," so that the mere mention of a date calls up a strong visual presentment of the whole period.

Geography will similarly be presented in its factual aspect, with maps, natural features and visual presentment of customs, costumes, flora, fauna, and so on; and I believe myself that the discredited and old-fashioned

memorising of a few capital cities, rivers, mountain ranges, etc., does no harm. Stamp-collecting may be encouraged.

Science, in the Poll-parrot period, arranges itself naturally and easily round collections—the identifying and naming of specimens and, in general, the kind of thing that used to be called "natural history," or, still more charmingly, "natural philosophy." To know the names and properties of things is, at this age, a satisfaction in itself: to recognise a devil's coach-horse at sight, and assure one's foolish elders that, in spite of its appearance, it does not sting; to be able to pick out Cassiopeia and the Pleiades, and possibly even to know who Cassiopeia and the Pleiades were; to be aware that a whale is not a fish, and a bat not a bird—all these things give a pleasant sensation of superiority; while to know a ring-snake from an adder or a poisonous from an edible toadstool is a kind of knowledge that has also a practical value.

The grammar of *Mathematics* begins, of course, with the multiplication table, which, if not learnt now, will never be learnt with pleasure; and with the recognition of geometrical shapes and the grouping of numbers. These exercises lead naturally to the doing of simple sums in arithmetic; and if the pupil shows a bent that way, a facility acquired at this stage is all to the good. More complicated mathematical processes may, and perhaps should, be postponed, for reasons which will presently appear.

So far (except, of course, for the Latin), our curriculum contains nothing that departs very far from common practice. The difference will be felt rather in the attitude of the teachers, who must look upon all these activities less as "subjects" in themselves than as a gathering together of *material* for use in the next part of the Trivium. What that material actually is, is only of secondary importance; but it is as well that anything and everything which can usefully be committed to memory should be memorised at this period, whether it is immediately intelligible or not. The modern tendency is to try and force rational explanations on a child's mind at too early an age. Intelligent questions, spontaneously asked, should, of course, receive an immediate and rational answer; but it is a great mistake to suppose that a child cannot readily enjoy and remember things that are beyond its power to analyse—particularly if those things have a strong imaginative appeal (as, for example, *Kubla Khan*), an attractive jingle (like some of the memory rhymes for Latin genders), or an abundance of rich, resounding polysyllables (like the *Quicunque Vult*).

This reminds me of the Grammar of *Theology*. I shall add it to the

curriculum, because Theology is the Mistress-science, without which the whole educational structure will necessarily lack its final synthesis. Those who disagree about this will remain content to leave their pupils' education still full of loose ends. This will matter rather less than it might, since by the time that the tools of learning have been forged the student will be able to tackle Theology for himself, and will probably insist upon doing so and making sense of it. Still, it is as well to have this matter also handy and ready for the reason to work upon. At the grammatical age, therefore, we should become acquainted with the story of God and Man in outline—*i.e.*, the Old and New Testament presented as parts of a single narrative of Creation, Rebellion, and Redemption—and also with "the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments." At this stage, it does not matter nearly so much that these things should be fully understood as that they should be known and remembered. Remember, it is material that we are collecting.

It is difficult to say at what age, precisely, we should pass from the first to the second part of the Trivium. Generally speaking, the answer is: so soon as the pupil shows himself disposed to Pertness and interminable argument (or, as a school-master correspondent of mine more elegantly puts it: "When the capacity for abstract thought begins to manifest itself"). For as, in the first part, the master-faculties are Observation and Memory, so in the second, the master-faculty is the Discursive Reason. In the first, the exercise to which the rest of the material was, as it were, keyed, was the Latin Grammar; in the second the key-exercise will be Formal Logic. It is here that our curriculum shows its first sharp divergence from modern standards. The disrepute into which Formal Logic has fallen is entirely unjustified; and its neglect is the root cause of nearly all those disquieting symptoms which we may note in the modern intellectual constitution. Logic has been discredited, partly because we have fallen into a habit of supposing that we are conditioned almost entirely by the intuitive and the unconscious. There is no time now to argue whether this is true; I will content myself with observing that to neglect the proper training of the reason is the best possible way to make it true, and to ensure the supremacy of the intuitive, irrational and unconscious elements in our make-up. A secondary cause for the disfavour into which Formal Logic has fallen is the belief that it is entirely based upon universal assumptions that are either unprovable or tautological. This is not true. Not all universal propositions are of this kind. But even if they were, it would make no difference, since every syllogism whose major premise is in the form "All A is B" can be recast in hypothetical form. Logic is the art of arguing correctly: "If A, then B"; the method is not invalidated by the hypothetical character of A. Indeed, the practical utility of Formal Logic to-day lies not so much in the

establishment of positive conclusions as in the prompt detection and exposure of invalid inference.

Let us now quickly review our material and see how it is to be related to Dialectic. On the *Language* side, we shall now have our Vocabulary and Morphology at our finger-tips; henceforward we can concentrate more particularly on Syntax and Analysis (*i.e.*, the logical construction of speech) and the history of Language (*i.e.*, how we come to arrange our speech as we do in order to convey our thoughts).

Our Reading will proceed from narrative and lyric to essays, argument and criticism, and the pupil will learn to try his own hand at writing this kind of thing. Many lessons—on whatever subject—will take the form of debates; and the place of individual or choral recitation will be taken by dramatic performances, with special attention to plays in which an argument is stated in dramatic form.

Mathematics—Algebra, Geometry, and the more advanced kind of Arithmetic—will now enter into the syllabus and take its place as what it really is: not a separate "subject" but a sub-department of Logic. It is neither more nor less than the rule of the syllogism in its particular application to number and measurement, and should be taught as such, instead of being, for some, a dark mystery, and for others, a special revelation, neither illuminating nor illuminated by any other part of knowledge.

History, aided by a simple system of ethics derived from the Grammar of Theology, will provide much suitable material for discussion; was the behaviour of this statesman justified? What was the effect of such an enactment? What are the arguments for and against this or that form of government? We shall thus get an introduction to constitutional History—a subject meaningless to the young child, but of absorbing interest to those who are prepared to argue and debate. *Theology* itself will furnish material for argument about conduct and morals; and should have its scope extended by a simplified course of dogmatic theology (*i.e.*, the rational structure of Christian thought), clarifying the relations between the dogma and the ethics, and lending itself to that application of ethical principles in particular instances which is properly called casuistry. *Geography* and the *Sciences* will all likewise provide material for Dialectic.

But above all, we must not neglect the material which is so abundant in the pupils' own daily life. There is a delightful passage in Leslie Paul's *The*

Living Hedge which tells how a number of small boys enjoyed themselves for days arguing about an extraordinary shower of rain which had fallen in their town—a shower so localised that it left one half of the main street wet and the other dry. Could one, they argued, properly say that it had rained that day *on* or *over* the town or only *in* the town? How many drops of water were required to constitute rain? and so on. Argument about this led on to a host of similar problems about rest and motion, sleep and waking, *est* and *non est*, and the infinitesimal division of time. The whole passage is an admirable example of the spontaneous development of the ratiocinative faculty and the natural and proper thirst of the awakening reason for definition of terms and exactness of statement. All events are food for such an appetite. An umpire's decision; the degree to which one may transgress the spirit of a regulation without being trapped by the letter; on such questions as these, children are born casuists, and their natural propensity only needs to be developed and trained—and, especially, brought into an intelligible relationship with events in the grown-up world. The newspapers are full of good material for such exercises: legal decisions, on the one hand, in cases where the cause at issue is not too abstruse; on the other, fallacious reasoning and muddle-headed argument, with which the correspondence columns of certain papers one could name are abundantly stocked.

Wherever the matter for Dialectic is found, it is, of course, highly important that attention should be focused upon the beauty and economy of a fine demonstration or a well-turned argument, lest veneration should wholly die. Criticism must not be merely destructive; though at the same time both teacher and pupils must be ready to detect fallacy, slipshod reasoning, ambiguity, irrelevance, and redundancy, and to pounce upon them like rats.

This is the moment when précis-writing may be usefully undertaken; together with such exercises as the writing of an essay, and the reduction of it, when written, by 25 or 50 percent.

It will doubtless be objected that to encourage young persons at the Pert Age to browbeat, correct, and argue with their elders will render them perfectly intolerable. My answer is that children of that age are intolerable anyhow; and that their natural argumentativeness may just as well be canalised to good purpose as allowed to run away into the sands. It may, indeed, be rather less obtrusive at home if it is disciplined in school; and, anyhow, elders who have abandoned the wholesome principle that children should be seen and not heard have no one to blame but themselves. The teachers, to be sure, will have to mind their step, or they may get more than they bargained for. All

children sit in judgment on their masters; and if the Chaplain's sermon or the Headmistress's annual Speech-day address should by any chance afford an opening for the point of the critical wedge, that wedge will go home the more forcibly under the weight of the Dialectical hammer, wielded by a practised hand. That is why I said that the teachers themselves would have to have undergone the discipline of the Trivium before they set out to impose it on their charges.

Once again: the contents of the syllabus at this stage may be anything you like. The "subjects" supply material; but they are all to be regarded as mere grist for the mental mill to work upon. The pupils should be encouraged to go and forage for their own information, and so guided towards the proper use of libraries and books of reference, and shown how to tell which sources are authoritative and which are not.

Towards the close of this stage, the pupils will probably be beginning to discover for themselves that their knowledge and experience are insufficient, and that their trained intelligences need a great deal more material to chew upon. The imagination—usually dormant during the Pert Age—will reawaken, and prompt them to suspect the limitations of logic and reason. This means that they are passing into the Poetic Age and are ready to embark on the study of Rhetoric. The doors of the storehouse of knowledge should now be thrown open for them to browse about as they will. The things once learned by rote will now be seen in new contexts; the things once coldly analyzed can now be brought together to form a new synthesis; here and there a sudden insight will bring about that most exciting of all discoveries: the realisation that a truism is true.

It is difficult to map out any general syllabus for the study of Rhetoric: a certain freedom is demanded. In literature, appreciation should be again allowed to take the lead over destructive criticism; and self-expression in writing can go forward, with its tools now sharpened to cut clean and observe proportion. Any child that already shows a disposition to specialise should be given his head: for, when the use of the tools has been well and truly learned it is available for any study whatever. It would be well, I think, that each pupil should learn to do one, or two, subjects really well, while taking a few classes in subsidiary subjects so as to keep his mind open to the inter-relations of all knowledge. Indeed, at this stage, our difficulty will be to keep "subjects" apart; for as Dialectic will have shown all branches of learning to be inter-related, so Rhetoric will tend to show that all knowledge is one. To show this, and show why it is so, is pre-eminently the task of the

Mistress-science. But whether Theology is studied or not, we should at least insist that children who seem inclined to specialise on the mathematical and scientific side should be obliged to attend some lessons in the Humanities and *vice versâ*. At this stage also, the Latin Grammar, having done its work, may be dropped for those who prefer to carry on their language studies on the modern side; while those who are likely never to have any great use or aptitude for mathematics might also be allowed to rest, more or less, upon their oars. Generally speaking: whatsoever is *mere* apparatus may now be allowed to fall into the background, while the trained mind is gradually prepared for specialisation in the "subjects" which, when the Trivium is completed, it should be perfectly well equipped to tackle on its own. The final synthesis of the Trivium—the presentation and public defence of the thesis—should be restored in some form; perhaps as a kind of "leaving examination" during the last term at school.

The scope of Rhetoric depends also on whether the pupil is to be turned out into the world at the age of sixteen or whether he is to proceed to public school and/or university. Since, really, Rhetoric should be taken at about fourteen, the first category of pupil should study Grammar from about nine to eleven, and Dialectic from twelve to fourteen; his last two school years would then be devoted to Rhetoric, which, in his case, would be of a fairly specialized and vocational kind, suiting him to enter immediately upon some practical career. A pupil of the second category would finish his Dialectical course in his Preparatory School, and take Rhetoric during his first two years at his Public School. At sixteen, he would be ready to start upon those "subjects" which are proposed for his later study at the university; and this part of his education will correspond to the mediæval Quadrivium. What this amounts to is that the ordinary pupil, whose formal education ends at sixteen, will take the Trivium only; whereas scholars will take both Trivium and Quadrivium.

Is the Trivium, then, a sufficient education for life? Properly taught, I believe that it should be. At the end of the Dialectic, the children will probably seem to be far behind their coevals brought up on old-fashioned "modern" methods, so far as detailed knowledge of specific subjects is concerned. But after the age of fourteen they should be able to overhaul the others hand over fist. Indeed, I am not at all sure that a pupil thoroughly proficient in the Trivium would not be fit to proceed immediately to the university at the age of sixteen, thus proving himself the equal of his mediæval counterpart, whose precocity often appears to us so astonishing and unaccountable. This, to be sure, would make hay of the public-school system, and disconcert the universities very

much—it would, for example, make quite a different thing of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat-race. But I am not now considering the feelings of academic bodies: I am concerned only with the proper training of the mind to encounter and deal with the formidable mass of undigested problems presented to it by the modern world. For the tools of learning are the same, in any and every subject; and the person who knows how to use them will, at any age, get the mastery of a new subject in half the time and with a quarter of the effort expended by the person who has not the tools at his command. To learn six subjects without remembering how they were learnt does nothing to ease the approach to a seventh; to have learnt and remembered the art of learning makes the approach to every subject an open door.

It is clear that the successful teaching of this neo-mediæval curriculum will depend even more than usual upon the working together of the whole teaching staff towards a common purpose. Since no subject is considered as an end in itself, any kind of rivalry in the staff-room will be sadly out of place. The fact that a pupil is unfortunately obliged, for some reason, to miss the History period on Fridays, or the Shakespeare class on Tuesdays, or even to omit a whole subject in favour of some other subject, must not be allowed to cause any heart-burnings—the essential is that he should acquire the method of learning in whatever medium suits him best. If human nature suffers under this blow to one's professional pride in one's own subject, there is comfort in the thought that the end-of-term examination results will not be affected; for the papers will be so arranged as to be an examination in method, by whatever means.

I will add that it is highly important that every teacher should, for his or her own sake, be qualified and required to teach in all three parts of the Trivium; otherwise the Masters of Dialectic, especially, might find their minds hardening into a permanent adolescence. For this reason, teachers in Preparatory Schools should also take Rhetoric classes in the Public Schools to which they are attached; or if they are not so attached, then by arrangement in other schools in the same neighbourhood. Alternatively, a few preliminary classes in Rhetoric might be taken in Preparatory Schools from the age of thirteen onwards.

Before concluding these necessarily very sketchy suggestions, I ought to say why I think it necessary, in these days, to go back to a discipline which we had discarded. The truth is that for the last 300 years or so we have been living upon our educational capital. The post-Renaissance world, bewildered and excited by the profusion of new "subjects" offered to it, broke away from

the old discipline (which had, indeed, become sadly dull and stereotyped in its practical application) and imagined that henceforward it could, as it were, disport itself happily in its new and extended Quadrivium without passing through the Trivium. But the scholastic tradition, though broken and maimed, still lingered in the public schools and universities: Milton, however much he protested against it, was formed by it—the debate of the Fallen Angels, and the disputation of Abdiel with Satan have the tool-marks of the Schools upon them, and might, incidentally, profitably figure as a set passage for our Dialectical studies. Right down to the nineteenth century, our public affairs were mostly managed, and our books and journals were for the most part written, by people brought up in homes, and trained in places, where that tradition was still alive in the memory and almost in the blood. Just so, many people to-day who are atheist or agnostic in religion, are governed in their conduct by a code of Christian ethics which is so rooted in their unconscious assumptions that it never occurs to them to question it.

But one cannot live on capital forever. A tradition, however firmly rooted, if it is never watered, though it dies hard, yet in the end it dies. And to-day a great number—perhaps the majority—of the men and women who handle our affairs, write our books and our newspapers, carry out research, present our plays and our films, speak from our platforms and pulpits—yes, and who educate our young people, have never, even in a lingering traditional memory, undergone the scholastic discipline. Less and less do the children who come to be educated bring any of that tradition with them. We have lost the tools of learning—the axe and the wedge, the hammer and the saw, the chisel and the plane—that were so adaptable to all tasks. Instead of them, we have merely a set of complicated jigs, each of which will do but one task and no more, and in using which eye and hand receive no training, so that no man ever sees the work as a whole or "looks to the end of the work." What use is it to pile task on task and prolong the days of labour, if at the close the chief object is left unattained? It is not the fault of the teachers—they work only too hard already. The combined folly of a civilisation that has forgotten its own roots is forcing them to shore up the tottering weight of an educational structure that is built upon sand. They are doing for their pupils the work which the pupils themselves ought to do. For the sole true end of education is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS
Witham, Essex

Dorothy Sayers - “Preface” of Colin Duriez in his Dorothy L. Sayers: A Biography (2021), pages 10-11.

Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957), best known for her detective stories about Lord Peter Wimsey, was in a circle of friends mainly destined to become lifelong friends. They first met together while wartime students at Oxford’s Somerville College. In fun, she called the group the “Mutual Admiration Society” (MAS), and the name stuck. Outside of the circle she also was to become a friend of C.S. Lewis and other contemporary writers such as T.S. Eliot and Charles Williams. She contributed to *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, edited by Lewis as a posthumous tribute from friends. Her series of BBC Radio plays, *The Man Born to Be King*, on the life of Christ, was immensely popular in Britain during the Second World War. In this period, thanks to Charles Williams, she discovered Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, and translated it from medieval Italian into fresh, contemporary English (a task completed after her death by a close friend, Barbara Reynolds).

Though a brilliant scholar, Sayers immediately turned from an academic life after college to a brief period in teaching and publishing, followed by over eight years as an advertising copywriter and "ideas man" (which included the creation of the famous Guinness ads). This provided an income to support her writing. Her success as a crime novelist eventually allowed her to leave advertising and to provide, as an unmarried mother, for her young son. Later, she also supported her journalist husband whose war wounds increasingly affected his quality of life.

As well as a star of the Golden Age of detective fiction, her robust popular theological writings such as *The Mind of the Maker* (1941) revealed a sharp and brilliant mind which, like those of Lewis and G.K. Chesterton, delighted in Christian dogma and orthodoxy. As well as her BBC Radio dramas, she became author of plays for the stage, books on popular theology, on the place of work in understanding our humanity, on female emancipation, as well as on the healing of society and culture after the destruction of war.

Her creative imagination and experience of writing was always in some way part and parcel of her attractive understanding of Christian creeds such as God as Trinity, and the incarnation of Christ, which she presented for modern readers. Relatedly she explored divine and human creativity. Her exuberant faith was captured in both her fiction and nonfiction, written during a life that was far from the quiet confines of academia as it existed at that time.

She was one of several important lay theologians who commanded enthusiastic audiences (such as C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, T.S. Eliot and Charles Williams). She revealed the enormous contribution that lay theology could make to people's lives. She had an emphasis, like Lewis, on "mere Christianity", which is why she stuck to the creeds and Scripture rather than promoting any particular denomination.

C.S. Lewis wrote a heartfelt panegyric to Dorothy L. Sayers, which was read out at the memorial service shortly after her death, concluding, "Let us thank the Author who invented her."

Duriez, Colin. *Dorothy L Sayers: A Biography* (pp. 10-11). Lion Hudson. Kindle Edition.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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The following article is located at: https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/musiciansartistsandwriters/dorothy-sayers.html

***Christian History*, August 2008**

Dorothy Sayers

Mystery writer and apologist

POSTEDAUGUST 8, 2008

"*Man is never truly himself except when he is actively creating something*."

She was summarizing a story others had criticized as dull: "So that is the outline of the official story—the talk of the time when God was the underdog and got beaten, when he submitted to the conditions he had laid down and became a man like the men he had made, and the men he had made broke him and killed him."

As if she hadn't already made the point, Dorothy Sayers continued: "This is the dogma we find so dull—this terrifying drama of which God is the victim and hero."

Timeline

1848	William & Catherine Booth found Salvation Army
1860	Frances Willard becomes president of WCTU
1878	Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis
1893	Dorothy Sayers born
1957	Dorothy Sayers dies
1962	Vatican II opens

You can almost hear the pause after the period; then she concludes, "If this is dull, then what, in Heaven's name, is worthy to be called exciting?"

Sayers never found Christianity, nor life itself, dull. This type of passionate argument, usually accompanied by pointed humor, was typical for Sayers, as was passionate living. It seemed no matter what she put her hand to, it became a success; we can be thankful that Christian apologetics was one of her many passions.

Author of mysteries

She was born at Oxford, the only child of the Rev. Henry Sayers. She won a scholarship to Somerville College, Oxford, and in 1915 graduated with first class honors in modern languages.

The routine and isolation of academia hardly appealed to her, so she joined Blackwell's, the Oxford publishers, and then became a copywriter at Bensons, a London advertising firm. She struck gold right way, being largely responsible for a successful national campaign for Colman's mustard; she held the public's interest in the product by telling stories about the members of the imaginary Mustard Club (like Lord Bacon and Cookham, and Lady Hearty).

While at Bensons, *Whose Body?*, the first of her world-famous "Lord Peter Wimsey" detective novels, was

published. Wimsey, with his signature monocle and "foppish" air, worked with his friend Inspector Parker of Scotland Yard to solve cases usually involving relatives or close friends. Sayers became known for using the techniques of fine novels in the popular genre of detective writing (at least one scholar has compared her fiction writing to that of Jane Austen). All told, Sayers published 12 detective novels between 1923 and 1937, several of which have become international classics.

And this all happened in an era before the writing of mysteries was considered a woman's domain. Sayers, however, did it because, frankly, she was broke and she found the genre fascinating—not because she was trying to prove anything: "It is ridiculous to take on a man's job in order to be able to say that 'a woman had done it—yah!'" she once wrote. "The only decent reason for tackling a job is that it is your job, and you want to do it."

The religious writer

Unfortunately, her private life was not always as successful as her public one. She fell in love with a young intellectual, who rejected her when she refused to sleep with him. On the rebound, she became sexually involved with a car salesman and got pregnant. The birth and upbringing of the boy (by a relative at first) remained a secret until 1975. Two years after her son's birth, she married the divorced Oswald Antony Fleming, who eventually adopted the boy.

Ironically, it was after a moral failure that her life as a religious writer blossomed. In 1937 she was asked to write a play for the Canterbury Festival. This play, *The Zeal of Thy House*, was followed by a series of BBC radio plays titled *The Man Born to Be King*. Then followed a series of essays and books on specifically Christian themes, including *Begin Here*, *The Mind of the Maker*, and *Creed or Chaos?*, which quickly established her as one of the foremost Christian apologists of her generation.

She wrote in terms that were at once uncompromising, learned, and humorous. Concerning the problem of evil, one of the thorniest theological dilemmas, for example, she refused to get swallowed up in vague abstractions:

"'Why doesn't God smite this dictator dead?' is a question a little remote from us," says one of the characters in *The Man Born to Be King*. "Why, madam, did he not strike you dumb and imbecile before you uttered that baseless and unkind slander the day before yesterday? Or me, before I behaved with such cruel lack of consideration to that well-meaning friend? And why, sir, did he not cause your hand to rot off at the wrist before you signed your name to that dirty little bit of financial trickery?"

Though she ardently defended the church, she was not blind to its shortcomings nor afraid to poke fun at it when it became merely moralistic or institutional: "The Church's approach to an intelligent carpenter," she wrote in *Creed or Chaos?*, "is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables."

Mesmerized with Dante

"Man is never truly himself except when he is actively creating something," she once wrote, and all her life she was driven to create. At age 51, she picked up Dante's *Divine Comedy* for the first time, and she became mesmerized: "I bolted my meals, neglected my sleep, work, and correspondence, drove my friends crazy ...," she wrote "until I had panted my way through the Three Realms of the Dead from top to bottom and from bottom to top."

What she discovered, she said, was that Dante "was not grim and austere, but sweet and companionable ... an affable archangel ... [and] that he was a very great comic writer—which is quite the last thing one would ever have inferred from the things people say in their books."

She decided that one of her last efforts would be a fresh translation of Dante to help more readers delight in his great work. Her translation was immediately criticized by scholars who felt Sayers was dabbling in areas beyond her expertise, but the translation remains in print and is, according to one 1992 biography, "the most influential and popular translation on the market."

In her lifetime, she counted among her friends T.S. Eliot, Charles Williams, and C.S. Lewis, and after her death, she still holds the devotion of millions of mystery fans, as well as Christians who want the faith explained with energy, reason, and a twinkle in the eye.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS, "PREFACE", THE MIND OF THE MAKER: THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH THROUGH CREATIVITY AND ART (1941)

From **Rick Ganz, 12-15 February 2022** - This, below, is my "conversation" with Sayer's text, expressing how her thoughts have challenged my own. I share this, so that you yourself will similarly enter into conversation with Sayers as you read what she has written.

NOTE: I have when I thought it helpful for emphasis when reading broken up Sayers' paragraphing into small paragraphs. And I have placed my conversation with the text in block quotes and in footnotes.

> Dorothy L. Sayers and Madeleine L'Engle, *The Mind of the Maker: The Expression of Faith through Creativity and Art* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2015).

> I propose to state the doctrine of the Trinity of God … in doing which, 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. - (Saint) JOHN HENRY NEWMAN[1]: "Sermon on the Trinity"

[1] The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. - **Newman, Saint John Henry** (1801–90), *Tractarian leader and later Cardinal. He was brought up in the C of E under Evangelical influence. He entered Trinity College, Oxford, in June 1817, became Fellow of Oriel in 1822, and was ordained deacon in 1824. In 1825 he was appointed vice-principal of Alban Hall by R. *Whately, and in 1828 vicar of St Mary's, Oxford. In 1832–3 he toured S. Europe and on returning became intimately associated with the *Oxford Movement, in which he was the leading spirit. His sermons in St Mary's, published as *Parochial*

> In the case of man, that which he *creates* is more expressive of him than that which he *begets*. The image of the artist and the poet is imprinted more clearly on his works than on his children. - NICHOLAS BERDYAEV[2]: *The Destiny of Man* (1931)

PREFACE

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 specialized knowledge, on a particular set of statements made in the Christian creeds and their claim to be statements of fact.

> The term "dogma" refers to the church's belief that in scripture and tradition God's intention for humankind has been revealed to the ecclesial community and that the community's leadership can authoritatively interpret and promulgate this truth. To be adequately understood, therefore, dogma, should be situated within the context of revelation. Dogma, of course, is not coincident with revelation, but it is one manner in which revelation is explicated. **Functionally then, dogma fulfills the same purpose as revelation: the engagement of one's entire person, mind, feelings, and body, in an existential encounter with truth**. This understanding of dogma's sacramentality is an aspect of dogma which has

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and Plain Sermons (1834–42), had a profound influence on the religious life not only of Oxford but of the whole country. Their spirituality was based on a systematic study of the Fathers which bore fruit in *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833), whereas the **Tracts for the Times* (1833–41), 27 of which came from his pen, were popular statements of his religious position…. Newman's thought was nourished by the Fathers rather than by the Schoolmen, and his main contribution to the thought of his age lay much more in the fields of psychological analysis and acute moral perception than in matters strictly theological. His fruitful use of the idea of development, in its application to the growth of Christian doctrine, and his profound insight into the nature and motives of religious faith, place him in the first rank of modern Christian thinkers."

[2] The *New World Encyclopedia* – "**Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev (Николай Александрович Бердяев) (March 18, 1874 – March 24, 1948)** was a Russian religious and political philosopher. He was often referred to as a Christian existentialist, though his thought differs in significant ways from the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre as well as other existential thinkers. Nevertheless, Berdyaev embraced key existential ideas, particularly that of freedom. For him freedom was the fundamental metaphysical reality upon which all else is based. From the primary notion of freedom, he developed his own existential interpretation of ultimate truth in terms of subjectivity rather than objectivity. In doing this, he offered a critique of modern rationalism and instead vigorously defended the intrinsic value of the human person and the creative life of the spirit."

been lost in modern times and which needs to be recovered lest the church fall into dogmatic positivism, merely repeating formulae.[3]

Nearly all Christian *dogma* can fit on one sheet of paper – the Creeds. Dogma expresses **truths** (not possible truths) about reality – as Sayers puts it "they are statements of fact". Doctrine is what happens when believing Christians go to work trying to plumb of the depths of these truths and then to communicate expansive and helpful understanding of what these truths **mean** (within the particular space-time and social setting and according to the sanctity of the theologian who works doctrinally).

It is necessary to issue this caution, for the popular mind has grown so confused that it is no longer able to receive any statement of fact except as an expression of personal feeling.

It is a commonplace among competent Teachers that they regularly teach – fairly, judiciously, and objectively – all sorts of things that he or she does not personally believe to be the case! What is interesting is that Sayers is acknowledging that because she "comments" on the Creed so fairly, judiciously, and objectively – unlike so many other insufficient Teachers – that this *must* mean that she believes, makes an essential part of her own person, all that she explains in *The Mind of the Maker*. Obviously, this kind of sloppy inference irritates Sayers.

Some time ago, the present writer, pardonably irritated by a very prevalent ignorance concerning the essentials of Christian doctrine, published a brief article in which those essentials were plainly set down in words that a child could understand. Every clause was preceded by some such phrase as: "the Church maintains," "the Church teaches," "if the Church is right," and so forth. The only personal opinion expressed was that, though the doctrine might be false, it could not very well be called dull.

"a very prevalent ignorance" – In my experience, such culpable ignorance among the majority of Christians has become more and more obvious, and the damage to what God means by what God has done in history, and continues to do, is incalculable.

"it could not very well be called dull" – This will come up often in Sayers' Christian writings. It clearly irritates her that even Christians (!) fail to make a robust and sustained effort to know God – the Divine Persons, to experience the reality of God. And because they fail in this way, the "teachings" of the Church

[3] Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane, *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 293–294.

> strike such people as being so "dull". One can sense the professional fury in Sayers at such impertinence and ignorance.

Every newspaper that reviewed this article accepted it without question as a profession of faith—some (Heaven knows why) called it "a courageous profession of faith," as though professing Christians in this country were liable to instant persecution. One review, syndicated throughout the Empire, called it "a personal confession of faith by a woman who feels sure she is right."

> Because the work of Faith has become so profoundly associated with one's "personal faith", Christians have lost the capacity to distinguish between skillful teaching of the Faith – a fair, judicious, expansive, profound teaching – and the personal position of the Teacher in relation to what he or she has taught.

Now, what the writer believes or does not believe is of little importance one way or the other. **What is of great and disastrous importance is the proved inability of supposedly educated persons to read**. So far from expressing any *personal* belief or any claim to *personal* infallibility, the writer had simply offered a flat recapitulation of official doctrine, adding that nobody was obliged to believe it. There was not a single word or sentence from which a *personal* opinion could legitimately be deduced, and for all the article contained it might perfectly well have been written by a well-informed Zoroastrian.

> Sayers' tartness of expression here, her exasperation, and probably the offense she takes at those who ignorantly presume to know her personal stance before God, stands out here. This is the vigorous, bold, clarifying voice of Sayers that caught C.S. Lewis' attention, and which he so respected. Sayers was an habitual participant at the Oxford Union, probably the most famous debating society in the world, over which C.S. Lewis presided for 22 years.

It is common knowledge among schoolteachers that a high percentage of examination failures results from "not reading the question." The candidate presumably applies his eyes to the paper, but his answer shows that he is incapable of discovering by that process what the question is. This means that he is not only slovenly minded but, in all except the most superficial sense, illiterate.

> As I have learned over decades of diligence learning to read and write, and taking care with words, is that my readers cannot be counted on to recognize the arguments I open for them to see, to understand what particular words mean, etc. It is a frightening circumstance when people are growingly unable to read and understand English, their native tongue (if it is). What is the communicative value of taking care with one's writing, when one knows that most will never pick up its more subtle, but no less important, points?

Teachers further complain that they have to spend a great deal of time and energy in teaching University students what questions to ask. This indicates that the young mind experiences great difficulty in disentangling the essence of a subject from its accidents; and it is disconcertingly evident, in discussions on the platform and in the press, that the majority of people never learn to overcome this difficulty.

> Sayers, who earned First Class Honors in her university studies, highlights the failure of public education not primarily with respect to *content*, but with respect for the awakening of students to their powers – "what questions to ask" – and their responsibility to develop these powers. See Sayers' famous Talk given to educators in the summer of 1947 – "The Lost Tools of Learning."

A third distressing phenomenon is the extreme unwillingness of the average questioner to listen to the answer—a phenomenon exhibited in exaggerated form by professional interviewers on the staffs of popular journals.

> I recall the quote from Stephen R. Covey - "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

It is a plain fact that ninety-nine interviews out of a hundred contain more or less subtle distortions of the answers given to questions, the questions being, moreover, in many cases, wrongly conceived for the purpose of eliciting the truth.

> The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the verb "**to distort**" – "*figurative*. To give a twist or erroneous turn to (the mind, thoughts, views); to pervert or misrepresent (statements, facts)." To "distort" what someone else has offered you does not mean to *substitute* a new thought in place of his or her. It means to take what he or she offers and to "bend" or "twist" it just enough, for it to be the "same" thought but different, enough different to make a real difference in how it is now understood.

The distortions are not confined to distortions of opinion but are frequently also distortions of fact, and not merely stupid misunderstandings at that, but deliberate falsifications.

> Sayers has a head of steam going here. She clearly has personal experience of having her thoughts "distorted", as well as watching the convictions of respected others be distorted in the public forum.

The journalist is, indeed, not interested in the facts. For this he is to some extent excusable, seeing that, even if he published the facts, his public would inevitably distort them in the reading.

> A work of communication relies on sufficient *communion* between speaker and hearer, between writer and reader. What quickly destroys communion is the offered trust between speaker and hearer. We think of Jesus and those among the religious professionals of his time and place, "They watched him to see if they could catch him at something." Recall the famous "Presupposition" in the *Spiritual Exercises* [22] of St. Ignatius, in which Ignatius is stating the most basic condition for effective communication between the one making the Retreat and his or her Spiritual Director: "To assure better cooperation between the one who is giving the Exercises and the exercitant, and more beneficial results for both, it is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false. If an orthodox construction cannot be put on a proposition, the one who made it should be asked how he understands it. If he is in error, he should be corrected with all kindness. If this does not suffice, all appropriate means should be used to bring him to a correct interpretation, and so defend the proposition from error."

What is quite inexcusable is that when the victim of misrepresentation writes to protest and correct the statements attributed to him, his protest is often ignored, and his correction suppressed. Nor has he any redress, since to misrepresent a man's statements is no offense, unless the misrepresentation happens to fall within the narrow limits of the law of libel. The Press and the Law are in this condition because the public do not care whether they are being told truth or not.

> "because the public do not care whether they are being told truth or not" – A startling and combative statement. But I can testify to exactly this in so much of what I am hearing currently being bellowed in the public square. As Simon and Garfunkel sang: "People talking without speaking / people hearing without listening." In the pervasive sloppiness of public discourse, what gains a hearing is not the truth (truth never favors one side or the other; truth puts everyone to the test) but what people want to hear, or what "thrills" the hearer because what he or she hears is so outrageous. Sayers knew that this kind of sloppiness, or downright, nastiness has little to do with conversation, not to mention communion, but much more to do with wrath. We are becoming "the children of wrath."

The education that we have so far succeeded in giving to the bulk of our citizens has produced a generation of mental slatterns. They are literate in the merely formal sense—that is, they are capable of putting the symbols C, A, T together to produce the word CAT. But they are not literate in the sense of deriving from those letters any clear mental concept of the animal.

> "a generation of mental slatterns" – The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the noun "**slattern**" – "Of a person, esp. a woman: untidy, slovenly; habitually careless, lazy, or negligent with regard to appearance, household cleanliness, etc. Also, in extended use." Sayers describes her experience of being able to perceive the nature of a person's mind (as any good Teacher becomes expert at doing with his or her students) as an experience of "seeing" a room that is in complete disrepair, a "hoarder's" house, a mess, no discernible order.

Literacy in the formal sense is dangerous, since it lays the mind open to receive any mischievous nonsense about cats that an irresponsible writer may choose to print—nonsense which could never have entered the heads of plain illiterates who were familiar with an actual cat, even if unable to spell its name.

> "Literacy in the formal sense is dangerous" – What she means is that too many people have the formal credentials – "Yes, I graduated from high school and went through university." Yet, they *performed*, their education – fulfilled the requirements - but they were never changed *as persons*, in their souls, in any significant way. Such people become corrosive and even dangerous, because they have "knowledge" (a bunch of content about this and that), but they never became worthy of that knowledge. True education is never sufficient when a student's "command of content" is tested and found sufficient to "make the grade." Why? Because the true subject of education, according to Sayers, is not the mastery of "subjects" (of specific content) – "Hey, I got an "A"." – but the transformation of a student into full awakeness, into a competent and responsible "owner" of his or her intellectual powers. Sayers in her "The Lost Tools of Learning" references the medieval Trivium; Bernard Lonergan, SJ speaks of the "self-appropriation" of the knower.

And particularly in the matter of Christian doctrine, a great part of the nation subsists in an ignorance more barbarous than that of the dark ages, owing to this slatternly habit of illiterate reading.

> "in an ignorance more barbarous" – She is speaking so tartly. But I myself am deeply concerned, have been since my youth, at how apparently OK teachers in the formal Church are, allowing themselves to accept the pervasive ignorance of their people, just not caring to make sure that their people are given excellent and demanding teaching (without failing, ever) that really helps them in their lives and helps the Church in a complex world not to fail in its mission. I care not to *blame* here, just to *describe* what was obvious to me for my whole life in the Church.

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 ecumenical 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.

> Sayers' point here is that when what the Great Tradition has articulated with such care and regularly through much suffering is so sloppily read, it eventually happens that sloppy readers and thinkers conclude that the Tradition is stupid, irrelevant, and an imposition on their freedom, etc. They overlook that it is their own illiteracy and sloppiness with language that is the problem.

It is for this reason that I have prefixed to this brief study of the creative mind an introductory chapter in which I have tried to make clear the difference between fact and opinion, and between the so-called "laws" based on fact and opinion respectively.

> It is helpful, and a sign of a real Teacher, that she is willing to teach to the level of her readers, most of whom (if we accept her judgment about them) still have not learned to distinguish **truth/fact/reality** from **opinion** (what might be true; what seems to be true; what "feels right", it has to be true because that loud person is saying it, loudly, etc.). This is a humble and good place for anyone to start his or her journey to competent intellect: a commitment to practice distinguishing between what is real and what might be real, what would be nice if it were real, etc.

In the creeds of Christendom, we are confronted with a set of documents which purport to be, not expressions of opinion *but statements of fact*. Some of these statements are historical, and with these the present book is not concerned. Others are theological—which means that they claim to be statements of fact about the nature of God and the universe; and with a limited number of these I propose to deal.

> "but statement of fact" – This is the point of dogma, that it is *not* a statement of what might be true, what we wish were true, what the in-group insists is true, but of what is true. Period. **In other words, a dogmatic conviction is an acceptance of reality**. But *how* it is real, or *what* it means, is the work of **doctrine** – the effort to understand reality, and then to be able to articulate that meaning to others in a compelling and responsible and eloquent way.

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 defenses 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***.

> So beautifully and perfectly said: the meaning of dogma and the battle for it in doctrinal thinking.

The point I shall endeavor to establish is that these statements about God the Creator are not, as is usually supposed, a set of arbitrary mystifications irrelevant to human life and thought. On the contrary, whether or not they are true about God, they are, when examined in the light of direct experience, seen to be plain witness of truth about the nature of the creative mind as such and as we know it.

So far as they are applicable to man, **they embody a very exact description of the human mind while engaged in an act of creative imagination**. Whether this goes to prove that man is made in the image of God, or merely that God has been made in the image of man, is an argument that I shall not pursue, since the answer to that question depends upon those historical statements which lie outside my terms of reference. **The Christian affirmation is, however, that the Trinitarian structure which can be shown to exist in the mind of man and in all his works is, in fact, the integral structure of the universe, and corresponds, not by pictorial imagery but by a necessary uniformity of substance, with the nature of God, in Whom all that is exists**.

> As St. Augustine did in his "psychological analogy" of the Trinity, so Sayers in *The Mind of the Maker* will similarly attempt to prove how *the image of God* is "baked in" to human beings as "creators" – "an act of creative imagination". The image of God in human beings is not a "mark" (even an "indelible mark") but an integrated set of dynamic operations – the work of the human powers of soul: memory/imagination, understanding/intellect, affect/will. But we will never know God through the *image*, if you will, unless we have been awakened to these powers and have learned how they work in an integrated and dynamic way in the works of creativity.

This, I repeat, is the Christian affirmation. It is not my invention, and its truth or falsehood cannot be affected by any opinions of mine. **I shall try only to demonstrate that the statements made in the Creeds about the Mind of the Divine Maker represent, so far as I am able to check them by my experience, true statements about the mind of the human maker.** If the statements are theologically true, then the inference to be drawn about the present social and educational system is important, and perhaps alarming; but I have expressed no personal opinion about their theological

truth or otherwise; I am not writing "as a Christian," but as a professional writer.[1] Nobody, I hope, will be so illiterate as to assert that, in pointing out this plain fact, I am disclaiming belief in Christianity. This book proves nothing either way about my religious opinions, for the very sufficient reason that they are not so much as mentioned.

2 Sabellius was a theologian of the third century, who maintained that God was not at one and the same time, Father, Son, and Spirit, but assumed these manifestations consecutively. His heresy died out in the fourth century. – Editor's note.[4]

[1] If one must use this curious expression. The theory that what writes is not the self but some aspect of the self is popular in these days. It assists pigeon-holing. It is, of course, heretical—a form of Sabellianism,[2] no doubt. Even so, it is very loosely used. "Mr. Jones writes as a coal-miner" usually means that the critic knows Mr. Jones to be a miner and takes it for granted that he understands mining. But "Mr. Smith writes as a Christian" may mean only that the critic perceives Mr. Smith to have some understanding of Christianity and takes it for granted that he is a Christian. "This fact [*that I had many Christian friends*]," says Mr. Herbert Read, plaintively, "together with my intellectual interest in religion, and at one time my frequent reference to scholasticism, has often led to the assumption that I was at least in sympathy with the Catholic Church, and perhaps a neo-Thomist" (*Annals of Innocence and Experience*). Naturally, what else could he expect?

[4] Dorothy L. Sayers and Madeleine L'Engle, *The Mind of the Maker: The Expression of Faith through Creativity and Art* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2015).

DOROTHY SAYERS, THE MIND OF THE MAKER (1941) CHAPTER ONE

Dorothy L. Sayers and Madeleine L'Engle, *The Mind of the Maker: The Expression of Faith through Creativity and Art* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2015), chapter 1.

From **Rick Ganz, 12-15 February 2022** - This, below, is my "conversation" with Sayer's text, expressing how her thoughts have challenged my own. I share this, so that you yourself will similarly enter into conversation with Sayers as you read what she has written.

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MY PRE-NOTES

"Much confusion is caused in human affairs by the use of the same word "law" to describe these two very different things: an arbitrary code of behavior based on a consensus of human opinion and a statement of unalterable fact about the nature of the universe." (Taken from the text below.)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**rule**" – "A principle regulating practice or procedure; a dominant custom or habit. Also, as a mass noun: custom, convention."

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**code**" – "A system or collection of rules or regulations on any subject. In extended use: any (unwritten) set of principles,

conventions, or expectations governing a person's behaviour, etc., generally accepted by a society or group."

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**law**" – "The body of rules, whether proceeding from formal enactment or from custom, which a particular state or community recognizes as binding on its members or subjects. (In this sense usually *the law*.) †Also, in early use, a code or system of rules of this kind."

I find it helpful to distinguish between Ethics and Morality, between what we mean when we describe a person as **ethical** as distinguished from a person we describe as **moral**. ***Ethics*** has to do with "**right and wrong**" behaviors; that is, what a group or society has put into place (current opinion), and then reinforced "our" commitment to these behaviors with both encouragement and censure, to ensure that we all understand what "acceptable behaviors" are for any who are part of this group or society. Ethics, therefore, is "arbitrary" in relation to other groups or societies. ***Morality*** has to do with "**good and bad**", referring to the nature of a person, his or her character, his or her "quality" as a person. Thus, it is possible for a bad person to hide himself or herself behind a cloak of perfect compliance to the Ethical Code of a particular group or society. It is very possible for someone to be an ethical person … but not a good person.

SAYERS' TEXT

CHAPTER I - THE "LAWS" OF NATURE AND OPINION

A stranger to our University, observing that undergraduates were inside their colleges before midnight, might believe that he had discovered a law of human nature – that there is something in the nature of the undergraduate which impels him to seek the protection of the college walls before the stroke of twelve. We must undeceive him and point out that the law has a quite different source – the College authorities. Should he conclude then that the law is altogether independent of undergraduate nature? Not necessarily. Careful research would reveal that the law depends on considerable antecedent experience of undergraduate nature. We cannot say that the twelve o'clock rule is not based on undergraduate nature; but it is not based on it in in the way the stranger assumed. - SIR ARTHUR EDDINGTON: *The Philosophy of Physical Science*

THE word "law" is currently used in two quite distinct meanings.

> In her *Lost Tools of Learning* speech, Sayers says: ""**The whole passage is an admirable example of the spontaneous development of the ratiocinative faculty and the natural and proper thirst of the awakening reason for definition of terms and exactness of statement**." Sayers here practices what she preaches: she looks closely at the word "Law" and defines the ways in which she will be using it.

LAW #1 – ARBITRARY LAWS; CODE - *It may describe an arbitrary regulation made by human consent in particular circumstances for a particular purpose, and capable of being promulgated, enforced, suspended, altered, or rescinded without interference with the general scheme of the universe.* In this sense we may talk of Roman "Law," the "laws" of civilized warfare, or the "laws" of cricket.

> The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**arbitrary**" – "*Law*. Relating to, or dependent on, the discretion of an arbiter, arbitrator, or other legally-recognized authority; discretionary, not fixed." But further, "Derived from mere opinion or preference; not based on the nature of things; *hence*, capricious, uncertain, varying."

Such laws frequently prescribe that certain events shall follow upon certain others; but the second event is not a *necessary* consequence of the first: the connection between the two is purely formal. Thus, if the ball (correctly bowled) hits the wicket, the batsman is "out." There is, however, no inevitable connection between the impact of the ball upon three wooden stumps and the progress of a human body from a patch of mown grass to a pavilion. The two events are readily separable in theory. If the M.C.C.[1] chose to alter the "law," they could do so immediately, by merely saying so, and no cataclysm of nature would be involved. The LBW ["Leg before the Wicket"].[2] rule has, in fact, been altered within living memory, and not merely the universe, but even the game, has survived the alteration. Similarly, if a twentieth-century Englishman marries two wives at once, he goes to prison—but only if he is found out; there is no necessary causal connection between over-indulgence in matrimony and curtailment of personal liberty (in the formal sense, that is; in another, one may say that to marry even one wife is to renounce one's freedom); in Mohammedan countries any number of wives up to four is, or was, held to be both lawful and morally right. And in warfare, the restrictions forbidding the use of poison-gas and the indiscriminate sowing of mines must, unfortunately, be regarded rather as pious aspirations than as "laws" entailing consequences even of a conventional kind.

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[1] Marylebone Cricket Club (the world's leading club devoted to the game). – Editor's Note

[2] L. B. W. means "leg before the wicket," and indicates one of the nine ways in which the "striker" or batsman can be put out. – Editor's Note

LAW #2 – LAWS OF NATURE - *In its other use, the word "law" is employed to designate a generalized statement of observed fact of one sort or another*. Most of the so-called "laws of nature" are of this kind: "If you hold your finger in the fire it will be burnt"; "if you vary the distance between an object and a source of light, the intensity of the light at the surface of the object will vary inversely as the square of the distance." **Such "laws" as these cannot be promulgated, altered, suspended, or broken at will; they are not "laws" at all, in the sense that the laws of cricket or the laws of the realm are "laws"; they are statements of observed facts inherent in the nature of the universe.** Anybody can enact that murder shall not be punishable by death; nobody can enact that the swallowing of a tumblerful of prussic acid shall not be punishable by death. **In the former case, the connection between the two events is legal—that is, arbitrary; in the latter, it is a true causal connection, and the second event is a necessary consequence of the first**.[3]

LAW #3 – STATISTICAL LAWS - The word "law" is applied also to statements of observed fact of a rather different kind. It is used, for example, as a handy expression to sum up *a general tendency*, in cases where a given effect usually, though not necessarily, follows a given cause. Thus, the Mendelian "law" of inheritance expresses the observed fact that the mating of, for example, black with white will—taking it by and large—produce black, white and mulatto offspring in a certain numerical proportion,[4] though not necessarily with arithmetical exactitude in any one case. The same word is also used to express a *tendency* which has been observed to occur, as a historic fact, over specified periods. For instance, the philologist Jakob Grimm observed that certain phonetic

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[3] The conclusions reached by the physicists seem to show that the "laws" governing the behavior of inanimate matter can be reduced to one "law," namely: that there is no "law" or code in the arbitrary sense; that matter "shakes down at random," "goes anyhow," "does as it likes," "does whatever is statistically most probable." This is only another way of saying that the "laws" of the physical universe are observations of fact; we say that matter is bound to behave as it does because that is the way we see that matter behaves. Consequently, we cannot use the "laws" of physics to construct a hypothetical universe of a different physical kind; those "laws" are observations of fact about *this* universe, so that, according to them, no other kind of physical universe is possible. Animate nature, on the other hand, while obeying the "law" of randomness, appears to be characterized by an additional set of "laws," including, among other things, the properties of using physical randomness for the construction of purposive order, and of promulgating arbitrary codes to regulate its own behavior. See Reginald O. Kapp: *Science versus Materialism*, Section II, "Double Determinateness."

[4] Handily summed up for mnemonic convenience in the famous Limerick:

> There was a young lady called Starkie,
> Who had an affair with a darkie;
> The result of her sins
> Was quadruplets, not twins,
> One black and one white and two khaki.

changes took place in particular consonants during the development of the Teutonic languages from the primitive roots which they share with Greek and Sanskrit, and the summary of his observations is known as "Grimm's Law." "Thus, Grimm's Law may be defined as the *statement of certain phonetic facts* which happen invariably unless they are interfered with by other facts."[5] A "law" of this kind is, therefore, very like a "law of nature." An apple, we may say, when it leaves the tree, will invariably fall to the ground unless there is some interference with the law—unless, for example, the hand of Isaac Newton arrests it in mid-fall. There is, however, this difference: that we can readily conceive of a universe in which Grimm's Law did not function; the world would remain substantially the same world if Sanskrit *t*, instead of being represented by *d* in Old High German, had been represented by something different; whereas a world in which apples did not fall would be very unlike the world in which we live. **Grimm's "law" is, in short, a statement of historical fact, whereas the "laws" of nature are statements of physical fact: the one expresses what *has* in fact happened; the others, what *does* in fact happen. But both are statements of observed fact about the nature of the universe. Certain things are observed to occur, and their occurrence does not depend upon human consent or opinion.** The village that voted the earth was flat doubtless modified its own behavior and its system of physics accordingly, but its vote did not in any way modify the shape of the earth. That remains what it is, whether human beings agree or disagree about it, or even if they never discuss it or take notice of it at all. And if the earth's shape entails consequences for humanity, those consequences will continue to occur, whether humanity likes it or not, in conformity with the laws of nature.

The vote of the M.C.C. about cricket, on the other hand, does not merely alter a set of theories about cricket; it alters the game. **That is because cricket is a human invention, whose laws depend for their existence and validity upon human consent and human opinion.** There would be no laws and no cricket unless the M.C.C. were in substantial agreement about what sort of thing cricket ought to be—if, for example, one party thought of it as a species of steeplechase, while another considered it to be something in the nature of a ritual dance. Its laws, being based upon a consensus of opinion, can be enforced by the same means; a player who deliberately disregards them will not be invited to play again, since opinion—which made the laws—will unite to punish the law-breaker.

Arbitrary law is, therefore, possessed of valid authority provided it observes two conditions:

[5] *Chambers' Encyclopaedia:* Art. Grimm (Jakob).

The first condition is that public opinion shall strongly endorse the law. This is understandable, since opinion *is* the authority. An arbitrary law unsupported by a consensus of opinion will not be properly enforced and will in the end fall into disrepute and have to be rescinded or altered. This happened to the Prohibition Laws in America. It is happening today to the laws of civilized warfare, because German opinion refuses to acknowledge them, and the consensus of world opinion is not sufficiently powerful to enforce them against German consent. We express the situation very accurately when we say that Germany is "not playing the game"—admitting by that phrase that the "laws" of combat are arbitrary, like the "laws" of a game, and have no validity except in a general consensus of opinion.

The second condition is, of course, that the arbitrary law shall not run counter to the law of nature. If it does, it not only will not but it cannot be enforced. Thus, if the M.C.C. were to agree, in a thoughtless moment, that the ball must be so hit by the batsman that it should never come down to earth again, cricket would become an impossibility. A vivid sense of reality usually restrains sports committees from promulgating laws of this kind; other legislators occasionally lack this salutary realism. **When the laws regulating human society are so formed as to come into collision with the nature of things, and in particular with the fundamental realities of human nature, they will end by producing an impossible situation which, unless the laws are altered, will issue in such catastrophes as war, pestilence and famine**. Catastrophes thus caused are the execution of universal law upon arbitrary enactments which contravene the facts; they are thus properly called by theologians, judgments of God.

Much confusion is caused in human affairs by the use of the same word "law" to describe these two very different things: an arbitrary code of behavior based on a consensus of human opinion and a statement of unalterable fact about the nature of the universe.[6] The confusion is at its worst when we come to talk about the "moral law." Professor Macmurray,[7] for example, contrasting the moral law with the law of nature, says, "The essence of … a mechanical morality will be the idea that goodness consists in obedience to a moral law. Such a morality is false, because it destroys human spontaneity … by subjecting it to an external authority.… It is only matter that can be free in obeying laws." What he is doing here is to use the words "law" and "laws" in two different senses. When he speaks of the "laws" governing the behavior of matter, he means statements of observed fact about the nature of the material universe; when

[6] cf. E. H. Carr: *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, Chap. X.

[7] *Freedom in the Modern World*.

he speaks of a moral "law," he means the arbitrary code of behavior established by human opinion.

There *is* a universal moral law, as distinct from a moral code, which consists of certain statements of fact about the nature of man; and by behaving in conformity with which, man enjoys his true freedom. This is what the Christian Church calls "the natural law."[8] The more closely the moral code agrees with the natural law, the more it makes for freedom in human behavior; the more widely it departs from the natural law, the more it tends to enslave mankind and to produce the catastrophes called "judgments of God."

The universal moral *law* (or natural law of humanity) is discoverable, like any other law of nature, by experience. It cannot be promulgated, it can only be ascertained, because it is a question not of opinion but of fact. When it has been ascertained, a moral *code* can be drawn up to direct human behavior and prevent men, as far as possible, from doing violence to their own nature. No code is necessary to control the behavior of matter, since matter is apparently not tempted to contradict its own nature but obeys the law of its being in perfect freedom. Man, however, does continually suffer this temptation and frequently yields to it. ***This contradiction within his own nature is peculiar to man*** and is called by the Church "sinfulness"; other psychologists have other names for it.

The moral *code* depends for its validity upon a consensus of human opinion about what man's nature really is, and what it ought to be, when freed from this mysterious self-contradiction and enabled to run true to itself. If there is no agreement about these things, then it is useless to talk of enforcing the moral code. It is idle to complain that a society is infringing a moral code intended to make people behave like St. Francis of Assisi if the society retorts that it does not wish to behave like St. Francis and considers it more natural and right to behave like the Emperor Caligula. **When there is a genuine conflict of opinion, it is necessary to go behind the moral code and appeal to the natural law**—to prove, that is, at the bar of experience, that St. Francis does in fact enjoy a freer truth to essential human nature than Caligula, and that a society of Caligulas is more likely to end in catastrophe than a society of Franciscans.

> The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**casuistry**" – "The science, art, or reasoning of the casuist; that part of Ethics which resolves cases of conscience, applying the general rules of religion and morality to particular instances in which 'circumstances alter cases', or in which there appears to be a conflict of duties.

[8] "The natural law may be described briefly as a force working in history which tends to keep human beings human."—J. V. Langmead Casserley: *The Fate of Modern Culture*.

> Often (and perhaps originally) applied to a quibbling or evasive way of dealing with difficult cases of duty; sophistry."

Christian morality comprises both a moral *code* and a moral *law*.

The Christian code is familiar to us; but we are apt to forget that it is valid or not valid according as Christian opinion is right or wrong about the moral law—that is to say, about the essential facts of human nature.

Regulations about doing no murder and refraining from theft and adultery belong to the moral code and are based on certain opinions held by Christians in common about the value of human personality. Such "laws" as these are not statements of fact, but rules of behavior. **Societies which do not share Christian opinion about human values are logically quite justified in repudiating the code based upon that opinion**. If, however, Christian opinion turns out to be right about the facts of human nature, then the dissenting societies are exposing themselves to that judgment of catastrophe which awaits those who defy the natural law.

At the back of the Christian moral *code*, we find a number of pronouncements about the moral *law*, which are not regulations at all, but which purport to be statements of fact about man and the universe, and upon which the whole moral code depends for its authority and its validity in practice.

These statements do not rest on human consent; they are either true or false. If they are true, man runs counter to them at his own peril.[9]

He may, of course, defy them, as he may defy the law of gravitation by jumping off the Eiffel Tower, but he cannot abolish them by edict. **Nor yet can God abolish them, except by breaking up the structure of the universe, so that in this sense they are not arbitrary laws**. We may of course argue that the making of this kind of universe, or indeed of any kind of universe, is an arbitrary act; but, given the universe as it stands, the rules that govern it are not freaks of momentary caprice. There is a difference between saying: "If you hold your finger in the fire you will get burned" and saying, "if you whistle at your work I shall beat you, because the noise gets on my nerves." The God of the Christians is too often looked upon as an old gentleman of irritable nerves who beats people for whistling. **This is the result of a confusion between arbitrary**

[9] cf. the Virgilian concept of Destiny: "cosmic logic, which men are at liberty to flout if they choose, although, by so doing, they expose themselves to an inevitable penalty."—C. N. Cochrane: *Christianity and Classical Culture*.

"law" and the "laws" which are statements of fact. Breach of the first is "punished" by edict; but breach of the second, by judgment.

"For He visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him and shows mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments."

Here is a statement of fact, observed by the Jews and noted as such. From its phrasing it might appear an arbitrary expression of personal feeling. But today, we understand more about the mechanism of the universe and are able to reinterpret the pronouncement by the "laws" of heredity and environment. **Defy the commandments of the natural law, and the race will perish in a few generations; co-operate with them, and the race will flourish for ages to come.** That is the fact; whether we like it or not, the universe is made that way. This commandment is interesting because it specifically puts forward the moral *law* as the basis of the moral *code: because* God has made the world like this and will not alter it, *therefore* you must not worship your own fantasies, but pay allegiance to the truth.

Scattered about the New Testament are other statements concerning the moral law, many of which bear a similar air of being arbitrary, harsh or paradoxical: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it"; "to him that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath"; "it must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh"; "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance"; "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God"; "it is better for thee to enter halt into life than having two feet to be cast into hell"; "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven … neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

We may hear a saying such as these a thousand times and find in it nothing but mystification and unreason; the thousand-and-first time, it falls into our recollection pat upon some vital experience, and we suddenly know it to be a statement of inexorable fact. The parable of the Unjust Steward presents an insoluble enigma when approached by way of *a priori* reasoning; it is only when we have personally wrestled with the oddly dishonest inefficiency of some of the children of light that we recognize its ironical truth to human nature. The cursing of the barren fig-tree looks like an outburst of irrational bad temper, "for it was not yet the time of figs"; till some desperate crisis confronts us with the challenge of that acted parable and we know that we must perform impossibilities or perish.

Of some laws such as these, psychology has already begun to expose the mechanism; on others, the only commentary yet available is that of life and history.

It is essential to our understanding of all doctrine that we shall be able to distinguish between what is presented as personal opinion and what is presented as a judgment of fact.

Twenty centuries ago, Aristotle, in his university lectures on poetry, offered certain observations on dramatic structure, which were subsequently codified as the "Rule of the Three Unities." These observations underwent the vicissitudes that attend all formal creeds. There was a period when they were held to be sacrosanct, not because they were a judgment of truth, but because they were the "say-so" of authority; and they were applied as tests automatically, regardless of whether the actual plays in question were informed with the vital truth that was the reason behind the rule. Later, there was a reaction against them as against an arbitrary code, and critics of our own time have gone so far as to assert that Aristotle's unities are obsolete. But this is a folly worse than the other. Audiences who have never heard of Aristotle criticize plays every day for their failure to observe the unities. "The story," they say, "didn't seem to hang together; I didn't know whom to be interested in; it began as a drama and ended as a farce.… Too many scenes—the curtain was up one minute and down the next; I couldn't keep my attention fixed—all those intervals were so distracting.… The story is spread out over the whole Thirty Years' War; it would have been all right for a novel, but it wasn't concentrated enough for the theater; it just seemed to go on and on." What is the use of saying that twentieth-century playwrights should refuse to be bound by the dictum of an ancient Greek professor? They are bound, whether they like it or not, by the fundamental realities of human nature, which have not altered between classical Athens and modern London. Aristotle never offered his "unities" as an *a priori* personal opinion about the abstract ideal of a play: he offered them as observations of fact about the land of plays which were, in practice, successful. Judging by results, he put forward the observation that the action of a play should be coherent and as concentrated as possible, otherwise—human nature being what it is—the audience would become distracted and bored. That is presented as a statement of fact—and that it is a true statement of fact a melancholy succession of theatrical failures bears witness to this day. **It is open to any playwright to reject Aristotle's opinion, but his independence will not profit him if that opinion was based on fact; it is open to any playwright to accept Aristotle's opinion, but he ought to do so, not because it is Aristotle's, but because the facts confirm it**.

In a similar way, volumes of angry controversy have been poured out about the Christian creeds, under the impression that they represent, not statements of fact, but arbitrary edicts.

The conditions of salvation, for instance, are discussed as though they were conditions for membership in some fantastic club like the Red-Headed League. They do not purport to be anything of the kind. Rightly or wrongly, they purport to be necessary

conditions based on the facts of human nature. We are accustomed to find conditions attached to human undertakings, some of which are arbitrary and some not. A regulation that allowed a cook to make omelets only on condition of first putting on a top hat might conceivably be given the force of law, and penalties might be inflicted for disobedience; but the condition would remain arbitrary and irrational. The law that omelets can be made only on condition that there shall be a preliminary breaking of eggs is one with which we are sadly familiar. The efforts of idealists to make omelets without observing that condition are foredoomed to failure by the nature of things. The Christian creeds are too frequently assumed to be in the top-hat category; this is an error; they belong to the category of egg-breaking. Even that most notorious of damnatory clauses which provokes sensitive ecclesiastics to defy the rubric and banish the Athanasian Creed from public recitation does not say that God will refuse to save unbelievers; it is at once less arbitrary and more alarming: "which except a man believe faithfully, he *cannot* be saved." It purports to be a statement of fact. The proper question to be asked about any creed is not, "Is it pleasant?" but, "is it true?" "Christianity has compelled the mind of man not because it is the most cheering view of man's existence but because it is truest to the facts."[10] **It is unpleasant to be called sinners, and much nicer to think that we all have hearts of gold—but have we? It is agreeable to suppose that the more scientific knowledge we acquire the happier we shall be—but does it look like it? It is encouraging to feel that progress is making us automatically every day and in every way better, and better, and better—but does history support that view? "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men were created equal"[11]—but does the external evidence support this *a priori* assertion? Or does experience rather suggest that man is "very far gone from original righteousness and is of his own nature inclined to evil"?**[12]

A creed put forward by authority deserves respect in the measure that we respect the authority's claim to be a judge of truth. If the creed and the authority alike are conceived as being arbitrary, capricious and irrational, we shall continue in a state of terror and bewilderment, since we shall never know from one minute to the next what we are supposed to be doing, or why, or what we have to expect. But a creed that can be shown to have its basis in fact inclines us to trust the judgment of the authority; if in this case and in that it turns out to be correct, we may be disposed to think that it is, on the whole, probable that it is correct about everything. **The necessary condition for assessing the value of creeds is that we should fully understand that they claim to be, not idealistic fancies, not arbitrary codes, not abstractions irrelevant to human life**

[10] Lord David Cecil: "True and False Values": *The Fortnightly*, March 1940.

[11] Jefferson: Declaration of Independence.

[12] Church of England: *Articles of Religion*, IX.

and thought, but statements of fact about the universe as we know it. Any witness—however small—to the rationality of a creed assists us to an intelligent apprehension of what it is intended to mean, and enables us to decide whether it is, or is not, as it sets out to be, a witness of universal truth.

ENDNOTES

[1] Marylebone Cricket Club (the world's leading club devoted to the game).—EDITOR'S NOTE.

[2] L. B. W. means "leg before the wicket," and indicates one of the nine ways in which the "striker" or batsman can be put out.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

[3] The conclusions reached by the physicists seem to show that the "laws" governing the behavior of inanimate matter can be reduced to one "law," namely: that there is no "law" or code in the arbitrary sense; that matter "shakes down at random," "goes anyhow," "does as it likes," "does whatever is statistically most probable." This is only another way of saying that the "laws" of the physical universe are observations of fact; we say that matter is bound to behave as it does because that is the way we see that matter behaves. Consequently, we cannot use the "laws" of physics to construct a hypothetical universe of a different physical kind; those "laws" are observations of fact about *this* universe, so that, according to them, no other kind of physical universe is possible. Animate nature, on the other hand, while obeying the "law" of randomness, appears to be characterized by an additional set of "laws," including, among other things, the properties of using physical randomness for the construction of purposive order, and of promulgating arbitrary codes to regulate its own behavior. See Reginald O. Kapp: *Science versus Materialism*, Section II, "Double Determinateness."

[4] Handily summed up for mnemonic convenience in the famous Limerick:

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[5] *Chambers' Encyclopaedia:* Art. Grimm (Jakob).

[6] cf. E. H. Carr: *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, Chap. X.

[7] *Freedom in the Modern World*.

[8] "The natural law may be described briefly as a force working in history which tends to keep human beings human." —J. V. Langmead Casserley: *The Fate of Modern Culture*.

[9] cf. the Virgilian concept of Destiny: "cosmic logic, which men are at liberty to flout if they choose, although, by so doing, they expose themselves to an inevitable penalty." —C. N. Cochrane: *Christianity and Classical Culture*.

[10] Lord David Cecil: "True and False Values": *The Fortnightly*, March 1940.

[11] Jefferson: Declaration of Independence.

[12] Church of England: *Articles of Religion*, IX.[1]

[1] Dorothy L. Sayers and Madeleine L'Engle, *The Mind of the Maker: The Expression of Faith through Creativity and Art* (New York, NY: Open Road Media, 2015).

The Circle of Friends of C.S. Lewis - Christian History magazine (1985)

"The Gallery—Family and Friends of C.S. Lewis," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 7: C.S. Lewis: His Life, Thought & Theology* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1985).

The Gallery—Family and Friends of C.S. Lewis

A Gallery of thumbnail sketches of close and influential family and friends of C.S. Lewis

Albert Lewis (1863–1929)

C.S. Lewis's father, Albert Lewis, was the son of a Welsh immigrant who found success as a partner in a firm that manufactured boilers and ships. Albert attended college and began a practice as a solicitor in Belfast in 1885.

Lewis believed his father's quick mind, eloquence and love of oratory would have suited him for a career in politics if he had had the means. Albert's favorite pastime was spending an afternoon swapping anecdotes with his brothers, acting them out with great florish.

C.S. Lewis described his father's side of the family as "true Welshmen, sentimental, passionate, and rhetorical, easily moved both to anger and to tenderness." Albert never fully recovered from grief following his wife's death, and his erratic and sometimes cruel subsequent behavior alienated his sons.

Albert filled the Lewis home with books, but his son's interest in fantasy literature was not shared by his parents. "If I am a romantic," he wrote, "my parents bear no responsibility for it."

Florence Hamilton Lewis (1862–1908)

Flora Lewis, C.S. Lewis's mother, was the daughter of the Rev. Thomas Hamilton, rector of the church attended by the Lewises. Flora's talent for mathematics won her a first in the subject at Queen's College, Belfast, where she earned a B.A.

Flora's cool temperament was the antithesis of her husband's emotionality. When she agreed to marry Albert after an eight-year courtship, she wrote to him, "I wonder do I love you? I am not quite sure. I'l know that at least I am very fond of you, and that I should never think of loving anyone else."

C.S. Lewis wrote of her family, “their minds were critical and ironic and they had the talent for happiness to a high degree.” Flora was a voracious reader and wrote magazine articles. She died of cancer when C.S. Lewis was only nine. “With my mother’s death,” he wrote, “all that was tranquil and reliable disappeared from my life.”

Major Warren Hamilton Lewis (1895–1973)

C.S. Lewis referred to his older brother, Warren (“Warnie”), as “my dearest and closest friend.” The lifelong bond formed as the boys played together, writing and illustrating stories, in their country home. When their mother’s death devastated their father, they were left with only each other for comfort and support.

Although their careers took widely different turns, the two lived together much of their lives. Warren was a career army officer in the Royal Army Service Corps and served in such posts as Sierra Leone and China. After retiring from 18 years of active service in 1932, he took up residence at the Kilns, where he lived until after his brother’s death.

Upon retirement, Warren took on the task of editing the Lewis family papers. He was recalled to active service in World War II. During his final retirement he wrote seven books on the history of 17th Century France. Warren Lewis returned to belief in Christianity five months before his brother’s conversion. He was a frequent participant in weekly meetings of the Inklings. The Lewis brothers undertook many annual walking tours of up to 50 miles. His 40-year battle with alcoholism was a source of great concern to his brother.

Arthur Greeves (1895–1966)

C.S. Lewis described Arthur Greeves as, “after my brother, my oldest and most intimate friend.” Lewis met Greeves when the neighbor boy, bedridden with the bad heart that kept him an invalid most of his life, requested a visit. The two boys discovered a common love for books, and Lewis found in Greeves an “alter ego, the man who first reveals to you that you are not alone in the world by turning out (beyond hope) to share all your most secret delights.”

Although Lewis did not consider Greeves his intellectual equal, he learned much from Greeves’ insight into the realm of feelings. The two began a correspondence that lasted for the rest of Lewis’s life, and he wrote his friend nearly 300 letters. Greeves was also a consistent influence for Christ in his friend’s life, and it was to Greeves that Lewis first revealed his own conversion.

Greeves’ heart ailment prevented him from holding steady employment.

Independently wealthy, he never needed it. He earned a certificate of art at a London school, and was considered a good painter. Although he also wrote, Greeves was never published. Lewis sent Greeves some of his manuscripts for critique.

Owen Barfield (1898–)

C.S. Lewis and Owen Barfield were drawn together during their undergraduate days at Oxford by a common interest in poetry. As they read and critiqued each other's work, Lewis found in Barfield a second great friend. The two men shared interests, but not points of view; Lewis described Barfield as his "anti-self," "the man who disagrees with you about everything."

After Oxford, Barfield worked as a free-lance writer until financial demands forced him to enter his father's legal firm as a solicitor. He maintained his friendship with Lewis for the rest of their lives, and was influential in shaping Lewis's views about the importance of myth in language, literature, and the history of thinking. Barfield resumed his writing career after retiring from law.

Raised an agnostic, Barfield became a Christian in his late twenties; nevertheless, he was never comfortable with Lewis's apologetics or his evangelism. He later embraced and wrote about anthroposophy, a form of religious philosophy which he believed complemented rather than detracted from Christianity.

J.R.R. Tolkien (1892–1973)

Although they initially took opposite sides in a faculty dispute over English literature curriculum, Tolkien and Lewis were eventually united by an interest in myth and legend. Tolkien introduced Lewis to the Coalbiters, a club he had formed which read and translated Icelandic myths. Their mutual interest led to many late-night discussions and long walks. Lewis wrote to Greeves that Tolkien was "the one man absolutely fitted, if fate had allowed, to be a third in our friendship in the old days." Their shared belief in the importance of myth led to a discussion about Christianity that Lewis regarded an important factor leading to his conversion. Lewis encouraged Tolkien in his work on *The Silmarillion*, a cycle of myth and legend, and read *The Lord of the Rings* as Tolkien wrote it. Tolkien was extremely critical of Lewis's Narnian chronicles, charging that they were hastily written, inconsistent, and that they failed to create a "real" setting. Tolkien was also critical of Lewis's marriage to Joy, partly because of his views on divorce and remarriage.

Tolkien was professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford from 1925 to 1945,

when he became professor of English language and literature until retirement in 1959.

Charles Williams (1886–1945)

The son of a clerk who instilled in him his love of literature and belief in understanding all sides of an argument, Charles Williams was largely self-educated. Williams began his career as a proofreader in the London office of Oxford University Press, where he worked his way up to the position of editor. Williams wrote poetry from his early days, and became a prolific writer of novels, drama, theology, and criticism as well. Williams met Lewis when the latter wrote him a letter praising his novel, *The Place of the Lion*. At the same time, Williams was admiring Lewis's *Allegory of Love*. The two met occasionally until Williams moved to Oxford in 1939, where he became a regular member of the Inklings. Although Lewis described Williams as "ugly as a chimpanzee," Williams' personal magnetism won him a wide following. He developed the idea of romantic theology, which considers the theological implications of romantic experiences, and The Way of Affirmation, in which earthly pleasures are seen as a door to Christian vision rather than a barrier. Lewis was impressed by Williams' selfless character, and described him as offering himself wholly to others without expecting anything in return. Although Lewis said he was never consciously influenced by Williams' work, many students of the two see Williams' influence in Lewis's writing, especially in using ordinary people as the characters in the Space Trilogy.

R.E. Havard (1901–)

The son of an Anglican clergyman, R.E. Havard studied chemistry at Oxford before becoming a medical doctor. Havard took his practice to Oxford in 1934, where he became the physician for Lewis and the Tolkien family. Lewis enjoyed Havard, who was as willing to discuss philosophical problems as medical ones. After Lewis invited him to read a paper on the effects of pain at a Thursday evening meeting of the Inklings, Havard became a regular member of the group.

Tolkien said Havard, unlike most doctors, "thinks of people as people, not as collections of 'works.' " Lewis named the doctor in *Perelandra* "Humphrey," Havard's nickname, in tribute to his friend.

Dorothy Sayers (1893–1957)

Dorothy Sayers, one of the first woman graduates of Oxford, studied the classics and won honors in modern language studies. She worked as an advertising copywriter for 11 years. Sayers first won recognition as the

writer of detective thrillers featuring Lord Peter Wimsey. She later wrote religious plays for radio, as well as numerous books and essays on Christian apologetics and theology. Sayers kept up correspondence, primarily concerning literature, with Lewis and his contemporaries. Lewis considered her "the first person of importance who ever wrote me a fan letter," and he called her "one of the great English letter writers." It may have been Sayers who spurred Lewis to write *Miracles*—he began work on the book just weeks after receiving her letter lamenting no good modern works on the subject.

Sayers was a member of Oxford's Socratic Club, a forum for discussing intellectual challenges in religion and Christianity, of which Lewis was president for 22 years. Lewis appreciated Sayers in person as well as by post; he praised "the extraordinary zest and edge of her conversation."

Joy Davidman (1915–1960)

Helen Joy Davidman, of Jewish descent, was raised in the Bronx, New York, where she readily adopted her father's materialistic philosophy. Extraordinarily bright, she entered college at 14. By the age of 25 she had earned a master's degree and published a novel and two books of poetry. After a failed try at screenwriting in Hollywood, she settled in New York to continue her work with the Communist Party. There she met and married William Gresham, a fellow writer.

Joy found faith in God in her early thirties, and became a Christian a year later, partly through the influence of Lewis's books. She began correspondence with him that led to a visit and a growing friendship. When her husband left her for another woman, she moved to Oxford with her two sons.

Lewis described Joy's mind as "lithe and quick and muscular as a leopard." Many of his friends disapproved of the match; some found Joy too harsh and outspoken; others objected to her status as a divorcee. Nevertheless, their brief marriage, which ended in her death from cancer, brought some of the greatest joy to his life. Joy encouraged Lewis to write *Reflections on the Psalms* and her influence can be seen in *Till We Have Faces* and *The Four Loves*. Her own book, *Smoke on the Mountain*, is still in print.

G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936)

One of Lewis's primary mentors in apologetics, and an influence even in his conversion, was G.K. Chesterton. Novelist, poet, essayist, and journalist, Chesterton was perhaps best known for his Father Brown detective stories. He produced more than 100 volumes in his lifetime,

including biographies of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thomas Aquinas. His *The Everlasting Man*, which set out a Christian outline of history, was one of the factors that wore down Lewis's resistance to Christianity. Chesterton was one of the first defenders of orthodoxy to use humor as a weapon. Perhaps more important was his use of reason to defend faith. Chesterton wrote that the universe can only be understood as a creation; that man's sense of right and wrong and his conflict when he becomes aware that he is not what he was made to be points to a Creator. Though they never met, Lewis called Chesterton "the most sensible man alive."

George MacDonald (1824–1905)

The man C.S. Lewis regarded as his master barely made a living as a poet, novelist, lecturer, and writer of children's books. Yet Lewis said of the retired minister, "I know hardly any other writer who seems to be closer, or more continually close, to the Spirit of Christ Himself." In his teens, Lewis was profoundly changed by reading MacDonald's *Phantastes, a Faerie Romance*, an experience Lewis considered the "baptism" of his imagination. Lewis considered MacDonald the best writer of fantasy alive, and he found a sense of holiness in all MacDonald's writings. Lewis was touched by MacDonald's devotional writings as well. He wrote, "My own debt to (*Unspoken Sermons*) is almost as great as one man can owe to another," and he recommended the book with success to many seekers.

"The Gallery—Family and Friends of C.S. Lewis," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 7: C.S. Lewis: His Life, Thought & Theology* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1985).