

Inklings Forever

Volume 9 A Collection of Essays Presented at the Ninth
Frances White Ewbank Colloquium on C.S. Lewis &
Friends

Article 4

5-29-2014

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Recommended Citation

Eckel, Mark (2014) "King Maker in The Mind of The Maker," *Inklings Forever*: Vol. 9 , Article 4.
Available at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/inklings_forever/vol9/iss1/4

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INKLINGS FOREVER, Volume IX

A Collection of Essays Presented at the Ninth
FRANCES WHITE EWBANK COLLOQUIUM
on
C.S. LEWIS & FRIENDS

Taylor University 2014
Upland, Indiana

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“The mind of the maker and the Mind of the Maker are formed on the same pattern, and all their works are made in their own image.”¹

Dorothy Sayers would both revel in and revile television shows like *CSI*. Sayers, as a detective novelist, would marvel at the modern whodunit. But Dorothy would also berate the impact of detective dramas on culture. Sayers enumerates four problems with detective dramas: they are (1) always soluble, (2) completely soluble, (3) determined ahead of time to be soluble, and (4) soluble by definition—something solved is something finite.² The concern Sayers offers in her chapter “Problem Picture” remains today. We fallen, finite, fragile creatures have yet to submit to the inevitable truth: we don’t know it all. The novels we read, the movies we watch, suggest immediate solutions to problems.

“Houston, we have a problem” is not simply a catch phrase from *Apollo 13* seeking a pragmatic solution. Ingenuity is fueled by imagination. Imagination comes from imaging. Imaging comes from the image of God in His image-bearers. Sayers states, “The artist does not see life as a problem to be solved, but as a medium for creation . . . *mak[ing] a new thing.*”³ Beauty can be created out of ugliness. Making humans in His image,

The Creator created creatures who creatively create from creation.

Creativity is not limited to painting, poetry, or prose but includes farming, tool and dye casting, as well as answers for astronauts. There is a reason we still refer to someone’s work as their “craft.” Dorothy Sayers goes to great lengths to expose a Trinitarian Christian view of creativity.

Seen from a First Testament perspective, Sayers’ ideas conform closely to human kingship⁴ originally intended by God. The vestiges of our robes remain. Sayers’ views intersect with The Creator, the creature, creation, and creativity born from the biblical-cultural connections in Genesis 1. What does it mean to be made in God’s image in the ancient Near Eastern world? How does the answer to the question of image-bearing establish Sayers’ essential work *The Mind of the Maker*? Why must The Church return to the Hebraic viewpoint of creativity as surmised by Sayers and found in Genesis?

The historical act of Genesis 1 becomes poetry in Psalm 8 asking “What is man, What is the son of man?” The Psalmist identifies human weakness and frailty through the first word *enosh*. The second, *ben-adam*, indicates the limitation of one created by The Creator. The context is awe; the finite, fragile, fallen human contrasted with the presence of God and His creation. “That you are mindful of,

care for” actively brings to mind another person. Psalm 8 shows us The Creator of Genesis 1 driven by longing, caring, and seeking after humans. The Creator created creatures who creatively create from creation. Image-bearers image *The Mind of the Maker*. We are God’s representation, His representatives; royalty responsible for God’s realm.

We are God’s Representation Kings, in the ancient Near Eastern world, bore the image of the god they served. The king’s image was the god’s image. Only the king was made in the god’s image. The king represented or contained the deity’s essence. The biblical view, thrice stated in Genesis 1, proclaims all humanity was made in the image of God. Hebraic views challenged pagan views of authority. Not only did the Hebraic view upend dictators, but Genesis gave authority to all people. The work of Yahweh would be accomplished through people, all bearing the image of God.

We are God’s Representative Ancient Near Eastern statues showed the king as a small figurine next to the larger figure of a god. Wherever the image of the god appeared, the deity was present. The image of the god was manifest through the image of the king. Wherever people saw the image of the king, the god was present. The Hebraic view of God’s image is clear: wherever we see a person, God is present. Whereas the work of a pagan god was symbolically seen in an idol’s image, Yahweh’s work would actually be accomplished through the image of God in every human being.

We are Given Royalty Rulers in the ancient Near Eastern world wore crowns signifying their consecration to the gods. Psalm 8, poetry mirroring the history of Genesis 1, says all image-bearers of God, all people were crowned with glory. The crown was a wreath, woven with flowers, worn at banquets as a sign of royal authority. The person wearing the crown was honored and elevated. The exaltation of humans by Yahweh begins as an

inward essence; humans bear the weight (“glory”) of God, a show of uniqueness. Human significance begins with the character of Yahweh; a person’s worth, value, and dignity has intrinsic beginnings. Being crowned with honor is the extrinsic, public display of God. Every person displays God.

We are Given a Realm In ancient Near Eastern polytheism, the gods were always based on something people could see: from heaven, on earth, under the earth, or in the water. In a solely material universe, gods come from the creation. In a material universe, earthly things are worshipped. The earth is worshipped in a pagan view of the universe; so-called “environmentalism.” The Hebraic view reversed the view of the surrounding culture. The image-bearers are given authority for and over the earth. The earth was created by Yahweh for all people who bore His image.

We are Given Responsibilities Humans bear derivative authority from their Creator. There is a difference between *autocracy* and *authority*. The first indicates what was spawned in the ancient pagan world: despotism, totalitarianism, and dictatorship. The second limits control since humans still must answer to Another. Because *authority* was given by Yahweh to all His image-bearers, they bore responsibility for creation from The Creator. Genesis 1 words “subdue” and “rule” are the basis for every Department of Natural Resources demand: management and conservation. We are concerned for creation not based on governmental edict but internal duty.

All people are image-bearers. We are God’s representation, His representatives; royalty responsible for God’s realm. Genesis image-bearers image Sayers’ work *The Mind of the Maker*.

The image of the Maker now makes images. The only difference “between the mind of the maker and the Mind of his Maker [is], a difference, not of category, but only of quality

and degree.”⁵ If, as Genesis dictates, humans are representatives of God, we should not find it odd that God’s image bearers are all creators in their own right. Creatively creating from creation is founded on universal principles; Sayers’ “major premise.”⁶

For all people, places, times, and cultures: “the religious experience of Christianity is no isolated phenomenon; it has, to say the least of it, parallels elsewhere within the universe.”⁷ What Sayers refers to as a “spiritual structure” is resident within “every man and woman.” Creativity is not limited to those who “work in stone, or paint, or music, or letters” but is displayed in “every man and woman.”⁸ Sayers bears witness to the Hebraic mindset: we all bear the representation of God on earth.

Sayers takes issue with “mastering one’s material” and suggests the creative mind “co-operate with” not “dominate” over the material world.⁹ Hebraic concerns for image bearers are the same. Humans bear responsibility for the world. One cannot truly be concerned for the creation if people or the earth are the chief benefactors. If we care for creation only for ourselves or our progeny, our motives are selfish. If we care for creation only for creation’s sake, humans should take a purely hands-off approach. But if image bearers are charged with responsibility, universal standards and conduct are possible. Every Department of Natural Resources depends on the last premise. Naturalistic-materialism can only create creation-care by *fiat*. The Hebraic-Christian view of creation alone gives genuine reason to care.

Our realm given by God to us focuses not on we who live here but on He who made it. Our worship is reserved for God, not His world. Sayers’ concern for a “problem-solution” mentality removes us from the focus. We tend to think that we can come up with answers for every question. Something is still missing. As Dorothy suggests, “The

murderer’s motive has been detected, but nothing at all has been said about the healing of his murderous soul.”¹⁰ Our tendency toward worshipping the creation over The Creator includes our methods. If we think all things can be understood through quantitative analysis we become consumed by pragmatism. If, however, we creatively apply Sayers’ “way of grace” we begin to see problems in this realm not as soluble but an opportunity to “make something of them.”¹¹

As royalty in this realm, we serve as benevolent shepherds. We provide for and protect the creation. We who have been “crowned with glory” now give God glory by “throwing God’s weight around.”¹² Creative creators know, Sayers says, “that the passion of making will seize him again the following day and drive him to construct a fresh world.”¹³ “The vocation of the creative mind in man”¹⁴, Sayers continues, is the discovery of what is in God’s world. According to Solomon, this is the “glory of kings,”¹⁵ hence, the glory of all people as vice-regents.

As kings, benevolent shepherds with God-given giftings, The Church glorifies God by providing solutions through the artistry of life. Established in Genesis, reflected through Dorothy Sayers, The Church retains its responsibility for artistry, beauty, and creativity. Sayers says there is a “disastrous and widening cleavage between the Church and the Arts.”¹⁶ If The Creator created creatures who creatively create from creation such a chasm needs a bridge. Hear Dorothy Sayers again; her words 75 years ago are just as true today:

“We cannot deal with industrialism or unemployment unless we lift work out of the economic, political and social spheres and consider it also in terms of the work’s worth and the love of the work, as being in itself a sacrament and manifestation of man’s creative energy.”¹⁷

I offer five ideas for creative praxis, ideals on which The Church can stand; in the repository of Hebraic thought, promoted by Dorothy Sayers. Hebraic-Christian distinctions include:

1. Discovering biblical grids for Hebraic-Christian thinking. God is Truth; all truth is His, united in Himself.¹⁸ God is Good; He sets the standard for both expression and evaluation.¹⁹ God is Beauty; balance, harmony, symmetry, order, design, and proportion have their source in Him.²⁰

2. Discerning biblical responses for counter-cultural responses. There are no brute facts; every color, musical note, or word has its source in God; there is nothing amoral in life.²¹ “Beauty” strikes at the very heart of Gnostic dualism. The separation between utility and aesthetics is owed to the dismal failure of so-called “enlightened thinking” spawned during the Renaissance. There are no innate abilities; God’s likeness in humanity imbues creativity, intelligence, willfulness, design, purpose, planning, imagination, appreciation.²² There is no “artistic voice”; creative knowledge, intelligence, craftsmanship, and skill originates from God, not solely the inner experience of the artist.²³

3. Delighting in the multifaceted Truth-dimensions of God’s world. The first creative acts of God include the connection of artistry with utility, “He made the trees good for food and also pleasing to the eye.”²⁴ The first creative act by humans recorded in Scripture was the creation of musical instruments by the unbelieving line of Cain, instruments later commanded by God through the Psalmist to be used for community worship.²⁵ The first people indwelt by The Holy Spirit in the First Testament were artists. Bezalel was specifically anointed to create tabernacle accoutrements.²⁶

4. Demonstrating creational vice-regency for immediate God-given roles. Unbelievers contribute excellence in their artwork, pleasing God.²⁷ All humans explore, refashion,

rework, or re-create using the abilities, skills, tools, materials, and languages they have been given by God.²⁸

5. Designing plans with linkage of biblical theology with vocational ministry. We celebrate image-bearing creativity as a gift from God wherever it is found. We enjoy, appreciate, and delight in the beauty created by image-bearers. We value image-bearers and their works since they reflect God’s image.

CSI, Law & Order, Bones, Psych, Criminal Minds, NCIS, all detective dramas and movies have one thing in common: if there is a problem, there must be a solution. Dorothy Sayers believes image-bearers bring much more to life than materialistic pragmatism. Sayers ends her book where Genesis begins. *The Mind of the Maker* shows God as human king maker.

“That the eyes of all workers should behold the integrity of the work is the sole means to make that work good in itself and so good for mankind. This is only another way of saying that the work must be measured by the standard of eternity . . . done for God first and foremost.”²⁹

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¹ Dorothy L. Sayers, *Mind of the Maker*, introduction by Madeleine L’Engle, reprint. San Francisco: HarperCollins (1987), from the chapter “Problem Picture,” pp. 179-216.

² Sayers references her four problem-solutions on pages 194-207.

³ *Ibid* 188, 192, emphasis hers.

⁴ Theologians refer to human kingship as “vice-regency.”

⁵ *Ibid.* 182.

⁶ *Ibid.* 212.

⁷ *Ibid.* 183.

⁸ *Ibid.* 185.

⁹ *Ibid.* 186.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 189.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 192-93.

¹² The definition comes from Larry Renoe, teaching pastor of Waterstone Community Church.

¹³ *Ibid.* 207.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 211.

¹⁵ Proverbs 25:2.

¹⁶ Sayers, *Mind*, 214.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 218.

¹⁸ 1 Kings 17:24; Psalm 25:5; Isaiah 45:18, 19.

¹⁹ Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:17-18.

²⁰ Genesis 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18, “He separated”; Psalm 27:4; 90:16, 17; 96:6-9.

²¹ 1 Chronicles 29:14, 15; James 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:17.

²² Psalm 111:2 and Psalm 145:3-13.

²³ Exodus 28:3; 31:1-11; 35:30, 31; 36:2; Isaiah 28:23-28.

²⁴ Genesis 2:9.

²⁵ Genesis 4:19-21; Psalm 148, 149.

²⁶ Exodus 26:2, 35:32, 35:31, 35:34; 36:2.

²⁷ 1 Kings 5:6; 2 Chronicles 2:17-18, 2 Chronicles 7:12-16.

²⁸ Genesis 4:21-22; 1 Kings 4:29-34; Psalm 148, 150.

²⁹ Sayers, *Maker*, 225.