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Barbara M. Prescott

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# **Well Met: Common Sense and Humor in the Friendship of G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers**

by Barbara M. Prescott

Barbara Mary Prescott, M.A., M.Ed., is a researcher of writing communities and the writing process. She has advanced degrees from the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin, including post-graduate research in Language and Literacy at Stanford University. She has published numerous articles on the writing process and is currently researching the poetry of Dorothy L. Sayers.

*There was some one thing that was too great for God to show us  
when He walked upon our earth; and I have sometimes fancied that  
it was His mirth.*

—G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

As we consider the myriad facets and profound influence upon twentieth century thought: religious, philosophical, fantastical, of C.S. Lewis and the writers we know as the Inklings, we may also consider the importance of those friendly associations outside of the canonical group which were equally important to this influential society of writers, particularly to C.S. Lewis. I like to refer to those friendly associates and influences as the ‘Linklings’, and there were many Linklings in the lives of Lewis and his friends. Two of those links with whom C.S. Lewis was acquainted and who were influential to the development of Lewis’s own religious thought and profound writing were G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers.

These two writers were Linklings to C.S. Lewis as well as to one another, and they extended those links to us, their readers, through a shared sense of reality, of humanity emanating from the Divine, and a shared gift of humor that allow us, the human, glimpses of insight into the Spirit of God. In our humanity which emanates from the Divine, we have a common sense of one another. As human beings we can understand shared experience and empathize with one another’s experience as we can understand the subtle humor that links our common experience. In this paper, I will briefly explore those links of sense and humor shared by Chesterton and Sayers as their own friendship developed through time, realized by similar insights, shared spirit of faith, sense of the absurd, and common sense of experience in

early twentieth century Oxford and England.

Chesterton once noted that “the secret of life lies in laughter and humility.”<sup>1</sup> Yet he grounded this idea by observing that “the first effect of not believing in God is that you lose your common sense.”<sup>2</sup> Chesterton very well understood the use of humor and common sense in reaching out to his readers and audience. Dorothy Sayers possessed, as well, this intrinsic understanding of the power of humor in communication. In point of fact, both Chesterton and Sayers clearly understood how to draw a reader to their message and to keep the reader interested in reading more.

One reason we resonate with the writings of Chesterton and Sayers is that they make us laugh. Chesterton’s sympathetically self-deprecating, ironic humor invariably strikes a chord of truth within his reader. We like to read him; we find ourselves in his humor without being made vulnerable. By making *himself* vulnerable, Chesterton saves us the embarrassment yet provides us with a protected mirror of our own foibles and weaknesses. That is, I believe, the beauty of G.K. Chesterton’s writings. We like him, we like his words, and we want to read more. We feel safe with him. I believe we feel closest to Sayers, as well, when she leads us to the unexpected irony, to the wit of Wimsey when we are not expecting to find it, to the delightful surprise of her language. Somehow, we instinctively know, along with Chesterton, that, “there is but one step from the ridiculous to the sublime”<sup>3</sup> and, as C.S. Lewis reminds us from the *Screwtape Letters*, “Humour is... the all-consoling and...the all-excusing, grace of life.”<sup>4</sup>

G.K. Chesterton excelled in the paradoxical, even in the parody of the paradox. He noted, “Critics were almost entirely complimentary to what they were pleased to call my brilliant paradoxes; until they discovered that I really meant what I said.”<sup>5</sup> Sayers’ humor often mirrored the paradoxes of Chesterton: “The great advantage about telling the truth is that nobody ever believes it.”<sup>6</sup> C. S. Lewis, as well, was the welcome recipient and generator of the profound insights that can best be realized and communicated through humor. These two Linklings shared with Lewis their thoughts, writings, unsparing argument, and language of wit, thus offering an absolutely delightful

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1 *Heretics*, p. 131.

2 *Penguin Complete Father Brown*, p. 152.

3 *Dickens: A Critical Study*, p. 21.

4 *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 143.

5 *Autobiography*, p. 178.

6 *Gaudy Night*, Ch. 17.

friendship of the mind, a friendship of kindred spirits. Of Dorothy Sayers, Lewis wrote, “I liked her, originally, because she liked me; later, for the extraordinary zest and edge of her conversation—as I like a high wind. She was a friend, not an ally.”<sup>7</sup> Of G.K. Chesterton, Lewis noted that Chesterton’s *The Everlasting Man* “baptised” his intellect, which, from Lewis, was praise indeed.

As intriguing as it is to consider the effect of two Inklings upon an Inkling, I would like to focus attention now upon the friendship that developed between Sayers and Chesterton until his death in 1936, when Dorothy Sayers acknowledged her debt to G.K. Chesterton with the words, “I think, in some ways, G.K.’s books have become more a part of my mental make-up than those of any writer you could name.”<sup>8</sup> In point of fact, Dorothy L. Sayers was influenced by the writing of Chesterton from her adolescent years. Thus, the story of their relationship began far earlier in time than is often thought.

The friendship of G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers was a process in the making, spanning nearly three decades from 1909 through 1936. We can identify at least three stages of the journey from an author-reader relationship, through person-to-person recognition and acquaintance, and finally to a mutually acknowledged collegial friendship. To appreciate the roots of their relation, we must move back to the beginnings, to 1908 and the publication of *Orthodoxy*. The importance of this book upon the minds of young British Christians in the early years of the 1900s should certainly be acknowledged and is, in its own right, a fascinating study yet to be done. Chesterton appealed to young minds, having a relentlessly young mind of his own. One of those young, impressionable, minds was that of Dorothy Sayers at the age of fifteen.

### MEETING A FRIEND OF THE MIND AND SPIRIT: AN AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP

At this point in her life (1909-1911), Dorothy Sayers attended the Godolphin School, an independent boarding school for girls on Milford Hill in Salisbury and was experiencing the mixed experience of late adolescence. In her own words to Barbara Reynolds, Sayers referred to herself as a “sulky” teenager.<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Sayers appears

7 C.S. Lewis, Letter to the Editor, *Encounter Magazine*. January 1963. Also Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomeroy Key. *Women and C. S. Lewis*, p. 73.

8 Letter DLS to Chesterton’s widow, 1936. Also Downing, *Christian History*, 2015.

9 *Dorothy L. Sayers: Child and Woman of Her Time*, p 19. Also Reynolds

to have had a rough time adjusting to the school, difficulty making friends there, and experienced serious health issues. She was also going through the angst of a moral dilemma, distancing herself from her father's religious influence and flirting with the idea of atheism.<sup>10</sup>

Sayers had already become acquainted with Chesterton's fiction through *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* published in 1904<sup>11</sup> So, she was very aware of G.K. Chesterton and quite liked his writing even before the publication of *Orthodoxy*. In a February 1909 letter, her parents mentioned that they had received a copy of the book. Before reading the book, their daughter responded: "I'm so glad you've got *Orthodoxy*. I'm not surprised to hear Chesterton is a Christian. I expect, though, that he is a very cheerful one, and rather original in his views, eh?"<sup>12</sup>

Quite soon after this letter, she read *Orthodoxy*. It was this book that changed the direction, in her teenage years, of Sayers' personal philosophy and of her spiritual convictions. That change lasted throughout her Oxford experience, in fact throughout her life, and determined the style and content of many of her apologetic works<sup>40</sup> such as *Strong Meat* (1939), *Creed or Chaos* (1940), *Mind of the Maker* (1941), and *Why Work?* (1942). Recalling this pivotal point in her life in 1936, while writing the preface to Chesterton's play, *The Surprise*, Dorothy clearly asserted:

To the young people of my generation, G.K.C. was a kind of Christian liberator. Like a beneficent bomb, he blew out of the Church a quantity of stained glass of a very poor period, and let in the gusts of fresh air in which the dead leaves of doctrine danced with all the energy and indecorum of Our Lady's Tumbler.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, Chesterton was a sort of jester,<sup>14</sup> a reverently irreverent wise child, firmly committed to the adventure of faith and to the amusing paradoxes of life. "I am the fool in this story, and no rebel shall hurl me from my throne."<sup>15</sup>

Sayers further recalled in 1949 that, upon first reading the book, she had devoured *Orthodoxy*, classing it with St. Augustine's

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personal interview with DLS. Also Reynolds, Barbara. *Dorothy L. Sayers, Her Life and Soul*, pp.40-43.

10 *Dorothy L. Sayers: Child and Woman of Her Time*, p 19.

11 *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*. London: The Bodley Head, 1904.

12 DLS Letter to Parents. February 1909. DLS Folder 22, Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

13 Dorothy L. Sayers. Preface to *The Surprise*. London, 1952.

14 Gary Willis, *Chesterton*, p. 186.

15 *Orthodoxy*, 1908.

*Confessions* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*<sup>16</sup>. Even at the age of fifteen, she considered *Orthodoxy* to be thrilling. Dorothy Sayers had found a Christianity that was “beautiful and adventurous and queerly full of humour.”<sup>16</sup> This combination was irresistible, struck exactly the right chord with teenage Sayers, presenting her with a fresh perspective to her traditional, somewhat dryly experienced, religious beliefs. Dorothy Sayers explained her unexpectedly joyful reaction to *Orthodoxy*:

It was stimulating to be told that Christianity was not a dull thing, but a gay thing, an adventurous thing . . . not an unintelligent thing, but a wise thing. . . . Above all, it was refreshing to see Christian polemic conducted with offensive rather than defensive weapons.<sup>17</sup>

Reflecting upon his conversion to Christianity, Chesterton strongly asserted in the chapter of his autobiography titled, “How to be a Lunatic”:

I have grieved my well-wishers, and many of the wise and prudent, by my reckless course in becoming a Christian, an Orthodox Christian, and finally a Catholic in the sense of a Roman Catholic. Now in most of the matters of which they chiefly disapprove, I am not in the least ashamed of myself. As an apologist I am the reverse of apologetic. So far as man may be proud of a religion rooted in humility, I am very proud of my religion. . . . I am very proud of what people call priestcraft; since even that accidental term of abuse preserves the mediaeval truth that a priest, like every other man, ought to be a craftsman.<sup>18</sup>

This remarkable attitude toward Christianity: adventure rooted in faith, common sense rooted in humor, inspiration rooted in work and craftsmanship, gave Dorothy her own direction, and later was the foundation of *The Mind of the Maker* (1941) in which she explored the craftsman-like mind of God reflected in man.

Chesterton's sensible, yet profoundly adventurous, approach to Christianity was highly attractive to this young girl who was captivated by the heroic, the mythic, the splendid adventure of medieval battle. Furthermore, she entirely appreciated the intelligence of wit, wisdom, and sound theology under the amusing adventure. She had opened a door to her own writing future. At this point in her early life, Dorothy Sayers experienced that which she had been seeking through the

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16 Sayers, Preface to *The Surprise*.

17 Ibid.

18 *Autobiography*, pp.75-76.

anxiety of late adolescence: a meeting of the minds with a kindred soul who possessed an almost recklessly commonsensical intelligence of faith. "There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad."<sup>19</sup>

This brings up the question of whether there were the beginnings, in 1909, of a friendship in the new reader-author relationship. Certainly there was influence from Chesterton to Sayers. Certainly there was a meeting of the minds from his writing to her thought. But, as yet, of course, Chesterton was entirely unaware of the existence of Dorothy Sayers, much less of the effect he had made upon a young Sayers. However, to her, Chesterton had opened a door to a new perspective, a new attitude rooted firmly in faith. He was slowly becoming a mentor and friend by virtue of his writings (and her reading).

### MEETING THE PERSON: MOVING FROM READING TO RECOGNIZING

In 1912, Dorothy L. Sayers enrolled as an undergraduate student at Somerville College in Oxford. During this time, Sayers usually refers to Chesterton through letters to her parents or to Muriel Jaeger, especially noting her attendance at Chesterton's evening talks in Oxford. In 1913, she read, *What's Wrong with the World?* (1910). In 1914, Sayers began to attend his lectures in Oxford.

During this period, Sayers most frequently referred to Chesterton as G.K.C.,<sup>20</sup> an unusually familiar referent from one who mentioned her male acquaintances only by their surnames or full names. She seemed to know him as well as to know of him. From 1914 through 1915, she quoted him, worried about his health as one would worry about an acquaintance or friend, heard his lectures in Oxford, met him personally at student attended activities, and possibly invited him to speak at a Mutual Admiration Society meeting.

G.K. Chesterton was seen often in Oxford and became known to Dorothy Sayers as a personality in addition to his reputation as an author. We are given a glimpse of this development of Chesterton into a friendly acquaintance by looking at the letters of Dorothy Sayers at Oxford during the years of 1914-1915. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, 1914, Sayers began to quote Chesterton to her parents:

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<sup>19</sup> *Orthodoxy*, 1908.

<sup>20</sup> Letters, DLS to Parents 1912-1914. DLS Folder 22. Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

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Gloom has come upon me. I went to tea with the aunts . . . & Aunt Annie walked back with me & thought it her duty to enquire after my soul's welfare. She will probably send you an account of my spiritual state, so I may as well prepare you. . . . I let her down as gently as possible, but it's difficult to make people see that . . . the only things worth having are the things you find out for yourself. Also, that when so many brands of what Chesterton calls "fancy souls" & theories of life are offered you, there is no scuse in not looking pretty carefully to see what you are going in for. . . .<sup>21</sup>

On April 26, 1914, Dorothy wrote of looking forward to seeing Chesterton speak for the first time:

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, G.K. Chesterton is coming to lecture on Romance. I hope he'll be good—at any rate I want to see him, so shall take care to get tickets. We shall have an exciting half term—three Bach Practices a week till the week of the Festival... & G.K.C. on Saturday. Spicy, isn't it?<sup>22</sup>

On Sunday, May 17, 1914, we get a clear account from Dorothy of her first experience hearing Chesterton deliver that lecture about Romance:

I was very agreeably surprised in him. I had been afraid he would be untidy in his person & aggressive in his manner. He was very huge & ugly, of course, but it is a nice ugliness, & he was well dressed, with plenty of nice white linen, & he looked well-brushed & put together. He had a terrible cold, poor dear, but all the same one liked his voice—it was the voice of a gentleman, & suggested not only culture but breeding. . . . His delivery, perhaps on account of the cold, was not very good—rather hesitating & slow, but he spoke very clearly. We were some distance away, & heard every syllable. His lecture was very Chestertonian, but much sounder than I had expected, & not so fire-worky. He said some really excellent things. I have noted for future use, that his books ought to be read as he speaks—rather slowly, & delivering the paradoxical statements tentatively. His speaking has none of that aggressive & dogmatic quality which his writings are apt to assume when read aloud. Altogether a most pleasant lecture.<sup>23</sup>

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21 Letter, DLS to Parents, March 8, 1914. Folder 22. Courtesy Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

22 Letter, DLS to Parents, April 26, 1914. Folder 22. Courtesy Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

23 Letter, DLS to Parents, May 17, 1914. Folder 22. Courtesy Marion E.

## Proceedings from the Francis White Ewbank Colloquium

Sayers was now an observer of Chesterton as a person and personality. She was moving toward a state of interaction rather than being solely a reader of his writing. In the following snippets we may see the “stranger” gap closing, as Dorothy began to accept the person of G.K. Chesterton as part of her Oxford world.

June 1914, To Parents:

We went to hear G.K.C. at the Newman Society’s meeting the other night. His subject was “Capitalism & Culture.” I thought he was quite good, but not nearly so good as he was on Romance. Where he was really splendid was when people asked him questions at the end. He was tremendously quick at answering—I don’t think I ever heard anyone better & he was very witty. Some people hated him & thought him vulgar... but he certainly had his wits about him on Friday.<sup>24</sup>

By January 1915, Dorothy Sayers was comfortable referring to Chesterton as “poor dear old GK Chesterton.”<sup>25</sup> He had moved from author to friendly acquaintance, or at least one to whom Dorothy referred as a known individual. There was affection in her reference to him as she worried about his health.

January 3, 1915, To Muriel Jaeger:

Dear Jim - have you seen that poor dear old G.K. Chesterton is seriously ill? I saw it in the “Times” on Friday. I’m afraid he’s the build of person to take whatever he has pretty badly. It would be dreadful to lose him—<sup>26</sup>

April 15, 1915: To Muriel Jaeger:

I’ve just had a note from Miss Walter to say that G.K. Chesterton can find no room for himself at Oriel, so he is to be sent home. It is quite melancholy to think that he will never preside over our revels again.<sup>27</sup>

This last letter was written when the female students of Somerville were asked to transfer from Somerville to Oriel (male college) since Somerville was to be used as a hospital for wounded soldiers.

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Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

24 Letter, DLS to Parents, June 1914. Folder 22. Courtesy Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

25 Letter, DLS to Muriel Jaeger, January 3, 1915. Folder 79. Courtesy Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

26 Letter, DLS to Muriel Jaeger, April 15, 1915. Folder 79. Courtesy Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

27 Ibid.

Apparently, Chesterton had rooms in Oriel and had to leave those due to the transfer. The ‘revels’ to which Sayers referred may very well have been student activities which Chesterton was asked to chaperone or during which he spoke. It is also possible that Dorothy Sayers had asked Chesterton to speak at a Mutual Admiration Society Meeting.<sup>28</sup>

### TOWARD A MUTUAL FRIENDSHIP (1917-1923)

We do not hear about G.K. Chesterton again in Dorothy’s correspondence until 1917, when there was rather a dramatic shift in both life situations. Chesterton had become the editor of the *New Witness*. Dorothy Sayers had just written the second of her two books of poetry, *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs*. She again encountered Chesterton, but this time as an author in search of a publisher.

The progression of the road to friendship had entered a new phase. Sayers, as a published author, approached Chesterton within the professional world of publication. She had matured, stepping closer to the beginning stages of professional collegiality. Her language reflected the change. She spoke of “wrangling” with G.K. Chesterton as though she were quite familiar with him at this point and not intimidated by him in the least. To Jim (Muriel Jaeger), she wrote on December 18, 1917:

I am struggling & wrangling to get G.K.C. to take my “Catholic Tales” for “The New Witness.” If he won’t, I shall try the “Challenge” & if that fails, Basil shall publish them. They are really rather fun!<sup>29</sup>

The *New Witness* did not, finally, publish *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs*, but a review of the book by Mr. Maynard was published in the *New Witness*, a review which rather offended Sayers. She responded by launching a campaign of response with Muriel Jaeger to “The Editor of the New Witness,” who was, of course, G.K. Chesterton.<sup>30</sup>

### A FRIENDSHIP OF COLLEAGUES (1924-1936)

The third stage of their friendship, that of full collegiality with all

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28 Ibid.

29 Letter, DLS to Muriel Jaeger, December 18, 1917. Folder 80. Courtesy Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

30 Letters to Muriel Jaeger, Folder 80. Courtesy Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

## Proceedings from the Francis White Ewbank Colloquium

its attendant humor, argument, critique, and support, occurred during the period of 1923-1936. By this time, Dorothy Sayers had published her detective fiction, achieving a certain fame and credibility in the literary world. Chesterton was now well aware of her as a colleague. He finally remembered her. In this stage, their friendship blossomed into mutual admiration, respect, and equal status. In fact, there existed not only mutual recognition of one another, but Chesterton, in turn, became influenced by Sayers' writings. The humor and communication between them was at its best during this period. They had entered into a relationship of equals, a friendship between authors, and thus a balance of mutual admiration was finally struck within this long standing acquaintance.

A letter sent from Chesterton to Sayers, Christmas 1931, acknowledging the gift of a personal cookbook written by Atherton Fleming, Dorothy's husband, to G.K. Chesterton, illustrated a topic of interest to both as detective fiction colleagues:

Dear Miss Dorothy Sayers

[I]f you will forgive my still starting with the form of address which I have so often hailed on bookstalls with a shout of joy, long before I enjoyed your acquaintance. I do hope you were duly informed before this that I could not acknowledge your very delightful Xmas present as early as I received it: as I was laid flat on my back & not allowed to write a few days before Xmas Day. On that day I had recovered all my normal appetite: but even if I had lost it, I feel sure that the magic book of charms & spells which you sent would have restored it instantly. Will you please thank your husband a thousand times for thinking of trusting so rich and impressive a monograph to me—who who alas cannot cook or do anything useful: but only eat—and drink—and give thanks not only to God but my more creative fellow & creatures: the great Craftsmen of the Guild and Mystery of the Kitchen. I hope he will forgive me if I do not thank him directly—or rather thank you both collectively—but I suppose I must wait a little while before you publish a companion volume, containing all the best ways of poisoning the foods he is so expert in preparing.

Yours very sincerely,  
G.K. Chesterton<sup>31</sup>

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31 Letter. G.K. Chesterton to DLS. DLS Letters, Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.

The Detection Club, a society of British mystery authors, including Agatha Christie and Anthony Berkeley, was formed in 1930 with G.K. Chesterton elected as its first president. He served until 1936. Dorothy L. Sayers became the third president from 1949-1957. Along with several others in the club, Chesterton and Sayers collaborated on a mystery entitled, *The Floating Admiral*.<sup>32</sup> She wrote the eighth chapter; he wrote the Prologue. They had become co-authors.

In 1932 Chesterton asked Sayers to write the preface to his play, *The Surprise*. Her preface included the powerful words, "To the young people of my generation, G.K.C. was a kind of Christian liberator," clearly acknowledging the effect of his book, *Orthodoxy*, on her young mind and spirit. The friendship, at this point, was mutually recognized. Even more paradoxically coincidental, according to Dale Ahlquist:

[T]he plot for *The Surprise* was first suggested in 1908 by Chesterton himself in his book *Orthodoxy*, where he states that when God created the world, he did not write a poem, but a play, "a play he had planned as perfect, but which had necessarily been left to human actors and stage-managers, who had since made a great mess of it."<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, from 1909 when Dorothy first read *Orthodoxy* to 1932 when she wrote the prologue to Chesterton's play, the theme of which had been first suggested in *Orthodoxy*, Sayers' relationship with Chesterton ran the full circle from impressionable reader of his work to active contributor to a work whose roots had been planted in the book that was the first major influence upon her faith. How amusingly subtle were the links in the progression of friendship between these two individuals. Dante would have entirely understood the subtleties of the comedy.

Further, it was not entirely coincidental that Sayers chose the field of mystery fiction as a professional genre choice, starting with *Whose Body?*<sup>34</sup> in 1923 and ending with *Busman's Honeymoon*, 1937.<sup>35</sup> There were many influences pointing her to this route, including that of practicality, the common sense of earning a good living. However, it was providential that Sayers chose a genre that would earn her a

32 Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and G.K. Chesterton. *The Floating Admiral*. New York: Doubleday, 1931.

33 Ahlquist, Dale. The American Chesterton Society, Lecture 78. Also *Common Sense 101*, 2006.

34 *Whose Body?*

35 *Busman's Honeymoon*.

living in which Chesterton had already become quite adept and known through his *Father Brown* mysteries.<sup>36</sup> He had, so to speak, blazed the trail again for her. In this, as in so many other of her life choices, although not all, G.K. Chesterton was a continuing influence upon Sayers' professional choices, and certainly had a part, however subtle, in the choice of her writing genres.

Both Sayers and Chesterton possessed an eminently realistic view of the uneven paths of their respective lives. They were very well aware of, and comfortable within, the commonly shared experiences of life. Reflecting upon her reasons for writing popular fiction, Dorothy noted: "I like the common people and I heartily share their love of a lord because I am myself as common as mud in my likes and dislikes."<sup>37</sup>

In the chapter of his autobiography titled "Hearsay Evidence," Chesterton writes:

The story of my birth might be untrue. I might be the long-lost heir of the Holy Roman Empire or . . . some earnest enquirer [might] come to the conclusion I was never born at all. But I prefer to believe that common sense is something that my readers and I have in common. . . . I was born of respectable but honest parents.<sup>38</sup>

From 1909, when Sayers first read and was profoundly affected by the language and message of *Orthodoxy*, she was very aware of Chesterton as a major social force, revolutionary writer, philosopher, and Christian apologist. To a certain extent, he was always part of her worldview and of her world. Her path of interests and the route of her professional life (i.e., poet, playwright, editor, detective fiction novelist, essayist, critic, among others) often intersected, if not mirrored, that of Chesterton. He was always slightly ahead, somewhat of a guide, in her life path. On the other hand, although G.K. Chesterton was part of Sayers' Oxford world and may have been acquainted with her at that point in time, Chesterton did not formally recognize Sayers until she became part of his published world, that of detective fiction author, essayist, and literary apologist.

At this point, we may come round again to the connection of C.S Lewis to both G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers. As Louis Markos has so elegantly explained, like Chesterton and Sayers, the

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36 *Penguin Complete Father Brown Mysteries*.

37 Lecture given on February 12, 1936 to the Red Cross. See Brabazon, p. 127.

38 *Autobiography*, p. 178.

## INKLINGS FOREVER X

key to Lewis was his ability to fuse reason and imagination, logic and intuition, the rational and the emotional:

Lewis's two-pronged head/heart approach was in great part patterned on the writings of G. K. Chesterton . . . and was seconded in the apologetic works of Dorothy Sayers.... In Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* (1908), *The Everlasting Man* (1925), and Sayers's *The Mind of the Maker* (1941), reason embraces imagination, [at times through humor], in such a way that the latter not only illustrates the former, but provides the primary vehicle for reaching and understanding some of the deepest truths of Christianity.<sup>39</sup>

In summary, we may trace the long process of friendship between Chesterton and Sayers, two writers of very similar character, humor, sense, and insight, which, maturing from influence through acquaintance to a mutual and collegial friendship, led to links with similar forces of intellect such as that of C.S. Lewis. The developing storyline through time of the relationship between G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers may not have been apparent, even to them, during the process of its development. Although, having an historical perspective, we are allowed to recognize the progression, allowed to make the connections, allowed to see the values of common sense and humor repeatedly emerging in each character and writer, then finally coalescing into a full collegial friendship of like mind and spirit. Their links to one another were further extended to form a connected web of authors in the twentieth century who influenced one another and were by virtue of their mutually inspired work, a web of Linklings. By recognition of this linked web, we are also given a glimpse of that which is an infinite web of intellectual threads, links in progression, in movement, in creation, and in common experience, as well as being a manifestation of the divine comedy so profoundly realized by Chesterton:

That though the jest be old as night  
Still shaketh sun and sphere  
An everlasting laughter  
Too loud for us to hear.<sup>40</sup>

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39 Louis A. Markos. "Literary Apologetics: The Legacy of G. K. Chesterton and Dorothy Sayers." In *Christian Research Journal*. Article 22, 2011.

40 "A Portrait." *The Wild Knight and Other Poems*. G.K. Chesterton, 1900.

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