**The Seeing of Sayers: A Christian Aesthetic**

In *The Mind of the Maker* (1941), Dorothy L. Sayers argues that artists understand the Trinity better than many theologians do. This presentation explains how and why, outlining the origins of what Sayers called a “Christian Aesthetic.” From participating in photography contests and musical performances during her youth, through her success as a bestselling detective fiction novelist who vacationed with painters, and into her groundbreaking theatrical works (one of which caused the biggest religious scandal in 20th century Britain), we shall explore how Sayers celebrated the cliché-shattering truth of both Christ and artistic creativity.  
  
**Crystal Downing** is Co-Director of the Marion E. Wade Center (Wheaton, IL), the foremost archive in the world for published and unpublished materials by and about C. S. Lewis and six of his most creative influencers, including Sayers. Crystal’s first book, *Writing Performances: The Stages of Dorothy L. Sayers*, received an international award from the Dorothy L. Sayers Society, and her recently released *Subversive: Christ, Culture, and the Shocking Dorothy L. Sayers* was selected as a “Pick of the Week” by *Publishers Weekly*. Committed to exploring the relationship between Christianity and culture, Crystal has also authored three books that appear on university and seminary syllabi around the world: *How Postmodernism Serves (my) Faith; Changing Signs of Truth;* and *Salvation from Cinema: The Medium is the Message.*

1. **In the Beginning is Seeing: Biblical Foundations**
   1. Genesis One
      1. The Goodness of Creation
      2. The Otherness of Creation
      3. Human Creation
   2. John One: Seeing the Light
2. **Seeing Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957): A Brief Background**
   1. Lord Peter Wimsey detective fiction (1923 – 1937)
   2. The Detection Club with G. K. Chesterton, est. 1930
   3. *The Zeal of Thy House* (1937): A Trinitarian Aesthetic
3. **Sayers’s *The Mind of the Maker* (1941)**
   1. Creative Idea
   2. Creative Energy
   3. Creative Power
4. **Creative Examples: Painting as Trinitarian**
   1. Catherine Prescott ([www.prescottpaintings.com](http://www.prescottpaintings.com))
   2. Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel
5. **Protestant Resistance to the Arts**
   1. Henry VII and the Puritans
   2. Charles Dickens and The Christmas Carol (1843): Scrooge
      1. “The Man Who Invented Christmas” (!)
      2. The man who denounced “Christ in the House of His Parents” (John Millais, 1850)
6. **Sayers’s “Scalene Trinities” versus a Christian Aesthetic**
   1. Arian Art: All Energy, no Idea (“all technique, no vision”)
      1. Arian Heresy overturned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD
      2. *The Emperor Constantine* (1951): Jesus as both/and
   2. Manichaean Art: All Idea, little Energy (“propaganda”)
   3. Both/and Art: Idea and Energy Turn Things Upside Down
7. **The Christian Aesthetic of *The Man Born to Be King***
   1. BBC Radio Broadcasts, 1941-42
   2. Protestant Protesters
   3. Christian Docetism VS SEEING both/and
8. **“Why Work?” (1942): A Conclusion**

***Further Reading***

Downing, Crystal. *Subversive: Christ, Culture, and the Shocking Dorothy L. Sayers*. Broadleaf, 2020.

Sayers, Dorothy L. *Creed or Chaos?* 1949. Sophia Institute, 1974.