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The Soul Lives On

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The final four chapters are devoted to a mixture of topical and historical themes that assist the reader in appreciating the larger theme of salvific grace in the works of these three authors. An extensive treatment of the role of angels and divine intervention in the life of man is particularly interesting. Also, from the historical perspective, the discussion on the trials and sufferings of the Second World War, which affected all three writers, is especially noteworthy, not least because of the opportunity to appreciate the context out of which the authors were formed in their understanding of human suffering and its redemptive quality. The last two chapters address the pilgrimic quality of the Christian life, as well as the desire for the permanent things. With regard to the first aspect, Brown notes how much of the literary work of Lewis, Sayers, and Eliot was influenced by Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but especially the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. This chapter contains some of the most beautiful and poignant selections from the works of each author, as they highlight the pressing forward and the pining and yearning for heaven and the cessation of struggle that is so characteristically a part of the Christian experience here on earth. The final chapter, being a testament to the everlasting pursuit, so intimate to the Christian life, of the things that last, offers a wonderful challenge to the modern obsession with "progress". Lewis, Sayers, and Eliot were no fools when it came to the sober realization of the demands and challenges of everyday life in the modern world, and in particular, the realization of Christian perfection within such a

framework, especially after the ravages of the wars, revolutions, and bloodshed of the twentieth century.

In the end, the book, in certain instances, exceeds its stated academic objective, and even enters into the realm of spiritual literature. It is not to suggest, although I would certainly not wish to deny, that the likes of Lewis, Sayers, and Eliot were necessarily mystics, but only the naïve would dare to challenge the fact that their work and insights into the mystery of the Christian life reaches quite the profound depth. In fact—and this point is all to Professor Brown's credit for drawing it to the reader's attention—the literary and imaginative genre, employed by these authors, achieves and even exceeds the goal of non-fictional spiritual writing, often packing a bigger punch, so to speak, as the impact on the reader is greater and longer-lasting. It is the unique privilege of imaginative literature, and one that regularly gives it an advantage over simple didactic prose, that eternal truths can be clothed in such fashion as to utterly overwhelm the imagination and sentiments, often resulting in profound conversions or even renewed intimacy and commitment to the Christian life. For those seeking a beautifully written and yet entertaining as well as informative narrative of the Christian notion of grace in the works of Lewis, Sayers, and Eliot, one would be hard-pressed to consult a better book!

Stephen Tomlinson is a doctoral student in church history and historical theology at the Catholic University of America.

New Voices

New Poetry in English

By N. S. Boone



The Soul Lives On

"The soul lives on," old Plato says,
still speaking from beyond the grave,
"for though it takes on form, or shape,
it lacks a substance that decays."

It takes its shape through thoughts and deeds
and gains dimension as we live.
Matching angles, rounded symmetries
unique, yet geometrically intact,
are built from righteous lives as in
modern paintings, beautifully abstract.

The deeds of selfishness, however,
like Dante's sinners trapped in ice,
make contorted shapes that cower
and twist in aimless scribbles, patterns
incomplete, spires broken on towers

half-built with staircases leading nowhere,
twisting into empty space
where there is no light, no grace.

The body dies. Oh, how we know.
Lying dried and palsied on a bed
it shrinks and withers like a weed
uprooted. Yet within something still grows.

The life of faith, as breath grows faint,
still builds a soul—immaterial form—
that's straighter, stronger, more in shape,
more beautiful, which can endure
the final flood, the gasping quake,
its spires unbroken, straight and firm,
reaching to the All-in-One
which says of the design, "Well done."