TOLKIEN AS GOSPEL WRITER

MARGARET RUTH SYME

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Tolkien as Gospel Writer

Abstract

To the extent that Tolkien's fantasy meets his own criteria for faërie as the "eucatastrophic " tale which points toward "Evangelium," the eschaton when God's plan in creation will be fulfilled and the effects of the fall overcome, Tolkien may be described as a gospel writer. That he intended his work to be read as "gospel," "the good news of the Kingdom of God," is suggested by its allusions to biblical and classical mythology, its linear view of history, its presentation as a compilation of received tradition collected and translated by many hands from a wide variety of sources, by the location of Middle Earth in the distant past of our own world and by the author's attempt to create a world which comforms to familiar patterns of evolution. Less successful is his effort to provide his tale with a consistent Christian point of view.

Middle Earth is a world under the guiding hand of beneficent Providence but one in which the free will of individuals is not always clear. Tolkien's explanation of Evil is closely related to the Augustinian principles identified by C.S. Lewis in his Preface to Paradise Lost, however because of the active malevolence with which Tolkien portrays the evil powers, his insistence that Evil is merely privatio boni is unconvincing. Although three of Tolkien's heroes possess characteristics identified with Jewish Messianic expectations, these merely foreshadow the advent of Christ in the fourth age. Tolkien's "good news" is of future hope rather than realized victory.

Tolkien en tant qu'auteur biblique

Abrégé

Dans la mesure où cette oeuvre d'imagination répond aux critères de féerie de Tolkien en tant que conte "eucatastrophic" qui montre le chemin vers "l'Evangelium", cette eschatalogie qui se situe au moment où la volonté de Dieu est accomplie et les effets de la chute sont surmontés, Tolkien peut être considéré comme un auteur biblique. Le fait qu'il est voulu que son oeuvre soit lue en tant qu'"évangile", "la bonne nouvelle du Royaume de Dieu" est suggéré par différentes choses: les allusions faites à la mythologie biblique et classique, la vision linéaire de l'histoire, la présentation du texte en tant que compilation d'une tradition provenant de sources diverses, transmise, recueillie et traduite par différentes personnes, la situation géographique dans "Middle earth"(l'empire du Milieu) dans un passé lointain, le fait que l'auteur ait essayé de créer un monde conforme au processus connu de l'évolution. Néanmoins l'auteur n'a pas réussi dans ce conte à maintenir un point de vue chrétien.

"Middle earth"(l'empire du Milieu) est un monde sous l'emprise de la Providence bienfaisante, mais aussi un monde dans lequel le libre arbitre des individus n'est pas évident. L'explication offerte par Tolkien sur le Mal rappelle les principes augustiniens établis

par C.S. Lewis dans sa "préface au Paradis perdu". Cependant les forces du Mal de Tolkien agissent avec une malveillance sans relâche, et donc il n'arrive pas à nous convaincre que le Mal est seulement "privatio boni". Bien que les héros de Tolkien possédent des éléments caractéristiques aux attentes du messianisme juif, celles-ci ne font que prédire la venue du Christ dans un futur éloigné, la "bonne nouvelle" de Tolkien n'est qu'un futur espéré et non une victoire acquise.

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty years ago Neil Isaacs wrote

> This is surely a bad time for Tolkien criticism. Stories in Holiday, Esquire, Saturday Evening Post, and the Luce (fer) publications, to say nothing of the feverish activity of the fanzines, do not produce a climate for serious criticism. Nor does the fact that The Lord of the Rings and the domain of Middle Earth are eminently suitable for faddism and fannism, cultism and clubbism encourage scholarly activity.[1]

It is still, in 1988, necessary to justify the choice of a popular fairy-tale as a suitable topic for scholarly research, particularly in the light of its creator's declaration that, "As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical."[2] But Lord of the Rings is not an ordinary fairy-tale. In a London Sunday Times article William Cater noted that it had

> ...all the earmarks of a publishing disaster. A book for the adult market, at an adult price, it continued the story of The Hobbit, which was a children's book; it ran to three volumes, longer than War and Peace; it contained stretches of verse, five learned appendices, and samples of imaginary languages in imaginary alphabets; it had only the most slender "romantic interest" ...and was described by its author as "largely an essay in linguistic aesthetics."[3].

1. Neil P. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo, Tolkien and the Critics (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p.1.
2. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), 1.X.
3. "Lord of the Legends," 2 January, 1972.

Allen and Unwin agreed to publish the book in spite of Rayner Unwin's professional judgement that the firm would lose £1000 on it, because he considered it to be a work of genius. That turned out to be a sagacious decision. Nearly twenty years later Tolkien wrote of a visit to his publisher.

> A car was sent for me and I went to the great new (grey and white) offices and book stores of Allen and Unwin. To this I paid a kind of official visitation, like a minor royalty, and was somewhat startled to discover the main business of all this organization of many departments (from Accountancy to Dispatch) was dealing with my works. I was given a great welcome (and very good lunch) and interviewed them all from board-room downwards. "Accountancy" told me that sales of The Hobbit were now rocketing up to hitherto unreached heights. Also a single order for copies of The Lord of the Rings had just come in. When I did not show quite the gratified surprise expected I was gently told that a single order of 100 copies used to be pleasing (and still is for other books), but this one was for 6000.[1]

Among the millions who bought and read The Lord of the Rings were a large number of serious students of literature. Very quickly critical articles began discussing its merit as literature, its meaning and its significance.

Dissertations have examined the narrative structure of The Lord of the Rings, its roots in heroic literature and language, its mythical antecedents, its myth philosophy, its characters and its politics. It has been examined as religious fiction, romantic religion, mystical fantasy for children and as a supernatural novel. In recent years several studies have addressed the theological issues

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, The Letters, Humphrey Carpenter, ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p.421.

raised by Tolkien's work, in particular, Larry Elton Davis, A Christian Philosophic Examination of the Picture of Evil in the Writings of J. R. R. Tolkien,[1.] Gwenyth Hood, The Lidless Eye and The Long Burden: The Struggle between Good and Evil in Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings,[2.] and Ronald Christopher Sarti, Man in a Mortal World.[3.]

That Tolkien uses religious symbol and allusion has been noted by many critics. William Dowie, Paul Kocher, Randel Helms and Gracia Fay Ellwood all have chapters on the most obvious Christian symbolism in The Lord of the Rings; as well, Sandra Miesel, Stephen Miller and Bruce Palmer have privately published work in the field. The mythological roots of Middle Earth have been widely studied, most exhaustively by Ruth Noel and T.A. Shippey, and Jungian Scholars Timothy O'Neill and Helen Luke have attempted to apply the techniques of psychological analysis to the characters of the trilogy.[4.]

Most of these writers approach Tolkien with evident enjoyment. He is, at the least, a good storyteller and his tale stands up to the scrutiny of most literary critics; there is, however, wide and bitter disagreement about its long term significance. Tolkien criticism is unusual in its emotional fervour at both extremes of taste. People who don't enjoy the work seem to find it infuriating.

1. Doctoral Dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983.

2. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1984.

3. Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University, 1984.

4. Many of the early reviews and comments on J. R. R. Tolkien are listed by George Thomson in "Early Articles, Comments, Etcetera about J. R. R. Tolkien," in Mythlore. 1987 Spring, 13(3), pp. 48-63, and in "Early Review of Books by J. R. R. Tolkien," in Mythlore, 1985 Autumn. 12(1), pp. 58-63; 1986 Spring, 12(3), pp. 61-62; 1986 Summer, 12(4), pp. 59-62, and 1986 Autumn, 13(1), pp. 54-59.

Edmund Wilson's opinion of The Lord of the Rings as "long winded volumes of balderdash", is one shared by a number of serious literary critics. Catherine Stimpson, who wrote the monograph on Tolkien for the Columbia Essays in Modern Writers Series, states:

> .....Reading Tolkien is not like reading real books, like Alice in Wonderland or Finnegan's Wake, real myths, like a collection of Norse tales.....For Tolkien is Bogus: bogus, prolix and sentimental. Its popularization of the past is a comic strip for grown-ups. The Lord of the Rings is almost as colourful and easy as Captain Marvel. That easiness is perhaps the source of Tolkien's appeal. His intellectual, emotional and imaginative energies are timid and jejune. Yet to those who have puzzled over the ambiguous texts of twentieth century literature in the classroom, he offers a digest of modern despair: The Wasteland, with notes, without tears.[1].

It is of course the duty of a literary critic to judge the value of a work of literature, but the implication that people who take Tolkien seriously are either stupid or lazy appears to owe more to emotion than to cool literary judgement. As Colin Wilson says of Edmund Wilson's highly critical review,

> ...I cannot help feeling that Tolkien has somehow caught Wilson on the raw in some early page of the book, and that this has produced a mood of bad-tempered, carping incredulity that has genuinely made him loath the whole thing.[2].

1. Catherine R. Stimpson, "J.R.R. Tolkien," Columbia Essays on Modern Writers (New York: University Press, 1969), p.43.

2. Colin Wilson, "Tree by Tolkien" (London: Village Press, 1973), p. 26. E.P. Thompson goes so far as to suggest that the "good guys/bad guys" mentality of current American policy is "derived, I suppose, from too much early rea ding of The Lord of the Rings." "A Hobbit among Gandalfs," (Nation, 24 January, 1981).

The discussion is further muddied by the fact that the characteristics that generate hostile criticism from some readers elicit high praise from others. Stimpson is put off by Tolkien's use of literary allusion, finding this a kind of bogus pedantry, whereas Robley Evans in his Writers for the 1970's[1] series, notes with approval the echoes of classical, Medieval, Renaissance and Romantic traditions.

But even critics who seem more kindly disposed toward Tolkien do not agree on what he is trying to say. Colin Wilson declares,

> If one is to treat The Lord of the Rings as a statement of values, on the same level as the poetry of Eliot or Yeats, or Toynbee's Study of History, or the novels of Mann or Hesse, then one must agree that it fails because it is so soft in the centre, a romantic anachronism; it should have been published in the 1850's, not the 1950's. Judged by the standards of George Mac Donald's Phantastes or Alice in Wonderland, it is a splendid piece of work that will maintain a permanent place.[2]

Wilson goes on to state, "The values embodied in The Lord of the Rings are on the same level as those in Yeats' fairy poems. One feels that if he had been really pressed to commit himself to a practical solution, he might have ended in the Catholic Church." As Tolkien's later works and especially his letters make clear, that is precisely where Tolkien did end up.[3] The "soft center" Wilson so

1. (New York: Crowell, 1976).
2. Wilson, p. 29
3. Hood details Tolkien's personal Commitment to Roman Catholicism in The Lidless Eye and the Long Burden, pp. 29-36.

deeply regrets owes less to "romantic anachronism" than to the certainties of Tolkien's Catholic faith.

But Wilson is not alone in missing this. Catherine Stimpson's characterization of The Lord of the Rings as "a digest of Modern despair" indicates that she has either overlooked or rejected the explicit Christian suppositions of Tolkien's secondary world. Her characterization of Tolkien's theory of history as a series of diminishing cycles[1] fails to recognize a specifically eschatalogical world view.

For the same reason Mark Roberts classifies The Lord of the Rings as escapism because, he says, "it doesn't issue from an understanding of reality which is not to be denied; it is not molded by some controlling vision of things which is at the same time its raison d'être."[2] Charles Moorman complains,

> The views of nature and civilization, like those of history and the individual life, advanced in The Lord of the Rings seem also to be pagan rather than Christian in essence. There is no hearkening back, as there is in the Narnia books, to a golden age when Adam delved and Eve span in the perfect innocence and ease of an uncorrupted nature, and the memory of Treebeard, the ent, cannot extend beyond a time when "The Great Darkness" did not exist somewhere.[3]

Moorman is wrong, of course, about what constitutes the Christian view of nature, but the number of serious critics who understand Tolkien as

1. Stimpson, pp. 11-12.
2. "Adventure in English," in Essays in Criticism, 6(1956), p.458.
3. Charles Moorman, "Now Entertaining a Conjecture of a Time," Shadows of Imagination, ed., Hillegas (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois, University Press, 1979), p.66.

a prophet of despair[1] points to a failure to communicate on the level of his own aspirations. Still The Lord of the Rings does communicate, not just to Christians, but "across the boundaries of formal religiosity"[2] and to readers representing opposite ends of the educational spectrum. Because of this and because it elicits such exaggerated response both from its detractors and from its admirers, it must be taken seriously. "In short, no one seems unmoved by the work; it provokes either awe or anger - and that in itself, it seems to me, makes the work eminently worth further discussion."[3]

Any serious effort to evaluate Tolkien's works of fiction must take into account his own understanding of the task. At this point, two of his life-long interests intersect.

"On Fairy-Stories" was written in 1938, two years after The Hobbit was completed. The Book of Lost Tales, the heart of what eventually became The Silmarillion, had been started some twenty years before and set aside but at this stage Tolkien did not conceive any relationship between Hobbits and the older material.[4] He was, however,

1. For example, Ronald Sarti developes his dissertation around the thesis that the unifying theme of Tolkien's work is "Lif is Laene: life is transitory; all men and their works shall die."

2. William John Dowie, Religious Fiction in a Profane Time: Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien (Doctoral Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1970), p. 285.

3. Bruce Beatie, "Folktale, Fiction and Saga in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings" in Mankato State College Studies: The Tolkien Papers (Minnesota, 1966), p.8.

4. J.R.R. Tolkien, The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, ed., Humphrey Carpenter, (Boston:Houghton Mifflin, 1981), pp. 25-26.

deeply interested in the significance of Mythology as an expression of the cosmic struggle. His lecture, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," delivered to the British Academy on November 25, 1936, is a landmark in the history of criticism of Beowulf because it insists that the moral and spiritual issues of the poem be taken seriously. In response to the criticism that the monsters and dragons in Beowulf shift the focus from more weighty concerns, Tolkien asserted that in as much as monsters and dragons represent the embodiment of radical evil they are the weighty concerns.

> It is the strength of the Northern mythological imagination that it faced this problem (of radical evil), put the monsters and dragons in the centre, gave them victory but no honour, and found a potent but terrible solution in naked will and courage.
>
> There are no heroes (and we do not need them) unless there be dragons as well...Ancient heroic narrative always contains these two primary features: the dragon and the slaying of him is the chief deed of the greatest of heroes [1].

Tolkien attacks the criticism of Anglo Saxon myths that they fail to "keep Scandinavian bogies and the Scriptures separate in their puzzled brains" [2] and insists that far from being a flaw, this very fusion of pagan and Christian elements is the source of much of the poem's power. Beowulf is written

> From a pregnant moment of poise, looking back into the pit, by a man learned in the old tales, who was struggling, as it were, to get a general view of them all, perceiving their common tragedy

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," Proceedings of the British Academy, 22 (1936), p.77.
2. ibid., p. 67.

> of inevitable ruin, and yet feeling this more poetically because he was himself removed from the direct pressure of its despair.[1]

The importance of myth is that it offers a way of examining the problem of evil and the eternal struggle between light and darkness. For just this reason Bruce Beatie classifies The Lord of the Rings with Aeneid, Gilgamesh, Chanson de Roland, and other traditional epics.

> Those tales do not end, though the people in them die. They are, in fact, a single tale, the mythically significant fact of human mortality, and death is the ultimate opponent, the dragon which cannot be conquered, the Quest whose achievement is impossible .... The Lord of the Rings is another incarnation of this archetypal struggle, and herein lies... the shock of recognition, the perception of a Mythic Gestalt which may either be accepted in toto or likewise rejected by the reader.[2]

Because of his understanding of the importance of Myth, Tolkien always regretted the absence of an indigenous English myth by which the culture might define itself. In a paper on the Finnish Kalevala while he was still a student at Oxford, he wrote,

> These mythological ballads are full of that primitive undergrowth that the literature of Europe has, on the whole, been steadily cutting and reducing for many centuries and with different and earlier completeness among different people....I would that we had more of it left - something of the same sort that

1. "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," p. 73.
2. "Folktale, Fiction and Saga," p.7.

1.

belonged to the English.

Defining the nature and function of mythology, Northrop Frye comments,

> First, myths stick together to form a mythology, a large interconnected body of narrative that covers all the religious and historical revelation that its society is concerned with, or concerned about. Second, as part of this sticking together process, myths take root in a specific culture, and it is one of their functions to tell that culture what it is and how it came to be, in their own mythical terms.[2.]

It was just this cultural self definition which Tolkien desired for England. Since the Enlightenment, both ancient mythology and religion have suffered a loss of influence which has left England poorer. Attempting to explain his project to Milton Waldman, Tolkien wrote,

> Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had in mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic to the level of romantic fairy-story - the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths - which I would dedicate simply: to England; to my country....I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to the majestic whole and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama. Absurd.[3.]

1. Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien: A Biography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p.59. The significance of Myth as Tolkien explained it in the Beowulf Essay, and its relation to Tolkien's purpose in The Lord of the Rings is the starting point of J.S. Ryan's essay , "Folktale, Fairy Tale and the Creation of a Story," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, Isaacs and Zimbardo, eds., (University Press of Kentucky, 1981).

2. Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.17.

3. Letters, p. 144-5.

In a letter to an admirer he acknowledged that The Lord of the Rings is related to this grand aspiration.

> Having set myself a task the arrogance of which I fully recognized and trembled at; being precisely to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own; it is a wonderful thing to be told I have succeeded.[1.]

Near the end of his life Tolkien told Clyde Kilby that he had contemplated dedicating The Silmarillion to Queen Elizabeth and saying, "The only thing in which your country is not rich is mythology."[2.]

But Tolkien's myth is much more ambitious than simply a modern imitation of the sort of material with which he worked as a scholar of Anglo Saxon. His "Essay on Fairy-Stories" places myth in the context of imaginative literature and identifies it as Faërie. His own fairy-story is best understood in relation to his comments on the nature and meaning of the genre.[3]

1. Letters, p.230-231. Also note Bill Cater, "More and more people are getting the J.R.R. Tolkien habit," Los Angeles Times (Sunday, April 9, 1972), p.14. Christopher Tolkien makes the same connection in his commentary on "The Cottage of Lost Play," The Book of Lost Tales, Part 1 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), p.22ff.

2. Clyde S. Kilby, Tolkien and the Silmarillion (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1976), p.42-3. See also Paul Kocher, A Reader's Guide to The Silmarillion (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p.1-13, and June Chance Nitzche, Tolkien's Art, "A Mythology for England" (London: McMillan, 1979). This connection is noted also by Verlyn Flieger in "Naming the Unnamable: The Neoplatonic 'One' in Tolkien's Silmarillion," in Diakonia : Studies in Honor of Robert T. Meyer (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), p. 128.

3. Robert Reilly ("Tolkien and the Fairy Story," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives), Larry Elton Davis and Gwenyth Hood all base their critical methodology on Tolkien's essay. Richard Mathews calls it "essential reading for anyone wishing to understand Tolkien's purpose in narrative." Lightning From a Clear Sky: Tolkien and The Silmarillion (California: Borgo Press, 1978, p.45). J.S. Ryan considers Tolkien "The best critic of his own major work." "Folktale, Fairy Tale and the Creation of a Story" in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.19.

"A 'Fairy-Story'," says Tolkien, "is one which touches on or uses Faërie, whatever its main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy."[1] "The magic of Faërie is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations: among these are the satisfaction of certain primordial human desires."[2] These "primordial human desires" are summed up as Recovery, Escape and Consolation.

Recovery, the renewal of health is a "regaining of a clear view," a reorientation of the drab and familiar by experiencing it in a context which renders it new and strange.

> Fantasy is made out of the Primary World, but a good craftsman loves his material and has a knowledge and feeling for clay, stone and wood which only the art of making can give. By the Forging of Gram cold iron was revealed: by the making of Pegasus horses were ennobled; In the trees of the Sun and Moon root and stock, flower and fruit are manifested in glory.[3]

Tolkien objects to the notion that "escape" is necessarily an unworthy or diminishing value in serious literature. The escape of fantasy he likens not to the flight of the deserter but to the escape of the prisoner. One "escapes" out of the moral ambiguity of daily life into a realm in which good and evil are clearly delineated.

> In Faërie one can indeed conceive of an ogre who possesses a castle hideous as a nightmare (for the evil of the orge wills it so), but one cannot conceive of a house built with good purpose - an inn, a hostel for travellers, the hall of a virtuous and noble king - that is

1. The Tolkien Reader (Ballantine Books: New York, 1966), p.10.
2. ibid, p. 13.
3. ibid, p.59.

> yet sickeningly ugly. At the present day it would be rash to hope to see one that was not - unless it was built before our time.[1].

A more profound "escape" provided by Faërie is the satisfaction of the human desire to hold communion with the rest of creation; to be free of the sense of alienation which stands between human beings and the other creatures of our world.

> A vivid sense of that separation is very ancient, but also a sense that it was a severance: a strange fate and a guilt lies on us. Other creatures are like other realms with which Man has broken off relations, and sees now only from the outside at a distance, being at war with them or on the terms of an uneasy armistice.[2].

The greatest escape of all and the oldest and deepest desire of Faërie is to escape from death. Fairy-stories provide a way of exploring a world free of moral ambiguity, alienation and death which from Tolkien's Christian point of view result from the fall of mankind.

According to Tolkien the distinguising characteristic of real fairy stories as opposed to moral fables or children's tales about little people is their "inner consistency of reality", a reality which points, in the subcreated world, to the "happy ending" that he confidently expected in the world of the First Creator. As J.S. Ryan notes, "For Tolkien...Christianity is a matter of historical fact and a philosophical interpretation of the Universe as well as a religion. It is also the archetypal myth of which all others are confused images."[3].

1. Tolkien Reader, p.65.

2. ibid., p.66.

3. "Folktale, Fairy tale and the Creation of a Story," p.28.

"The eucatastrophic tale is the true form of fairy-tale and its highest function." The eucatastrophe, the "good" catastrophe or "sudden joyous turn" of the fairy-story, rather than encouraging "escape" from the real world, hightens its reality.

> In its fairy-tale - or otherworld - setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to enjoy the deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of joy. Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. 1.

Through its eucatastrophe the fairy-story proclaims evangelium, good news. By delineating the operation of grace within the fairytale context it foreshadows escatological joy, "joy beyond the walls of the world." In the epilogue to the same essay, Tolkien goes on to explain the quality of joy in the successful fantasy as "the underlying reality of truth." The tale must be, at the least, logically consistent within its own terms of reference, however, the eucatastrophic tale hints at "a far-off gleam or echo of evangelium in the real world."

> ..The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels - particularly artistic (The Art is here in the story itself rather than in the telling; for the Author of the story was not the evangelists.) beautiful and moving: "mythical" in their perfect, self-contained significance; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe. But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and the aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfillment of creation.

1. Tolkien Reader, p.68.

> The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the "inner consistency of reality".[1].

The joy which the "turn" in a fairy-story gives is, for Tolkien, the same joy one might feel if a particularly beautiful fairy-story were found to be true, as, in fact, the Gospel has been found to be true. It has "the very taste of primary truth." It looks forward to the "Great Eucatastrophe." "Art has been verified. God is Lord of angels, and of men - and of elves. Legend and History have met and fused."[2].

Tolkien's basic assumptions about his genre, then, were that Faërie is a serious literary form which has the power to inspire and encourage because it holds up to view an idealized version of the primary world, and that this power is of the same order as power of ancient myths and the biblical narrative. The Bible is "primarily" true while Myth and Faërie are the work of a sub-creator, yet both point beyond themselves to "a far-off gleam of evangelium in the real world."[3].

In making the comparison between primary and secondary creation, Tolkien is asserting that The Bible is myth in its truest form, but the mythmaker whose tale points toward evangelium is reflecting Gospel, Good News. As J. S. Ryan has noted,

> It was Tolkien's artistic purpose in his sub-creating to provide an analysis for his own generation and those to follow of that point of fusion (the eucatastrophe of Man's History, the birth of Christ) of all creation

1. Tolkien Reader, p.71.
2. idem.
3. idem.

> and of its implications for the duty and destiny of humanity.[1].

In his Theological Word Book of the Bible Alan Richardson notes that the word "Gospel" (from the Anglo-Saxon god-spell, "God-story") is used to translate the Greek evangelion, "good tidings," the testimony that the Kingdom of God is at hand.[2]. Tolkien's definition of evangelium in the fairy-story refers to precisely this kind of "good tidings," the "sudden miraculous grace" which "denies the ultimacy of universal defeat" and points to escatological joy. For this reason, he understands The Bible as the highest expression of Faërie. "The Gospel" by this definition is not merely the four books which describe the life and work of Jesus Christ, but the entire canon of scripture in so far as it testifies to the primacy of God's purpose and the ultimacy of his Kingdom.

Frank Scafella, urging Biblical scholars to read The Bible as fusion of the legendary and the historical, makes use of Tolkien's comparison.

> When Tolkien speaks of invention, a sub-creation as the origin of the fairy-story, he is speaking about the mental operations necessary through language to depict Faerie and not about the invention of the realm of Faerie itself. Faerie is not an invention of man, nor is Heaven. We only think of them as inventions because our intellectual lives are so sparse, narrow and vapid. 4.

In so far as the Gospel attempts to provide a glimpse of Heaven through conceptualizing Jesus Christ in the legend and History of Israel and interpreting his life and work in that context, Scafella

1. J.S. Ryan, p.29.

2. (New York: MacMillan, 1978), p.100.
3. Tolkien Reader, p.68.
4. "Tolkien, the Gospel and the Fairy Story" (Soundings, 64.3, 1981, pp. 301-325), p. 316.

argues that it is a work of imaginative fiction which can best be apprehended by the criteria which Tolkien establishes for the fairy-story. Gospel, according to Scafella, is the Good News of Heaven which comes to us in narrative form through the cauldron of story; the blend of history, myth, legend and song which provide "Recovery, Escape and Consolation."

If, as Scafella argues, Tolkien's criteria for fairy-stories apply equally to the Gospel, and if his primary model is the Christian story, the success of his enterprise may legitimately be judged by the extent to which Tolkien's "gospel" is found to be consistent with the Christian Gospel. However, in the Christian tradition there are two possible interpretations for the word "gospel." Edward Schillebeeckx underlines the ambiguity by pointing to a grammatical problem in Mark's title, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." "Is the genitive there subjective or objective: glad tidings about Jesus of Nazareth acknowledged as the Christ, or a gospel, evangel, of Jesus Christ himself?"[1]. In the synoptic gospels the later definition seems to apply. Schillebeeckx concludes that

> Apart from those places in the synoptics that rely on Mark, the term Gospel never appears, whereas Mark even employs it as a title for his work. In other words, every use of the expression in the Gospels derives from the Marcan Tradition (or redaction).[2].

Although Luke doesn't use the noun form, the verb euaggelidzesthai "to spread the glad tidings,""to evangelize" is used frequently. This verbal use points to the word's original setting in "an initially purely Jewish context linking together the two notions 'eschatological

1. Jesus, An Experiment in Christology, (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), p.108.
2. idem.

prophet' and 'preaching the good news to the poor'." It relates to the messenger - servant tradition in Deutero and Trito-Isaiah, the glad tidings which the annointed one of God proclaims to the poor. "Gospel here suggests the prophetic messenger who calls upon the people to be converted to God."[1]. In Mark's Gospel the word relates specifically to the teachings of Jesus Christ and is consistently used by Jesus himself. "The Gospel", for the writer of Mark, is the good news that Christ brings from God. It includes but is not exclusively confined to the Easter Kerygma.

The Pauline writings, on the other hand, use the term in a narrower sense.

> Paul, for his part, makes independent and constant use of it (forty-eight times in the authentically Pauline writings; and in twenty-two of those instances standing quite by itself with no further qualification).[2].

That is to say that in Paul's letters the noun "gospel" is equated strictly with the person and work of Jesus Christ. For example in the introduction to Romans the designation "gospel of God" is applied to Jesus and the teaching concerning him rather than to good news of a broader character.

Because of Tolkien's concern with the theological and philosophic consistency of his world and his use of The Bible as model, I believe that a case can be made for Tolkien as a "Gospel Writer" in the Lucan sense that his tale concerns the glad tidings that the "anointed one" preaches to the poor, just as much of the Old Testament can be called "gospel" for the same reason. However, his fairy-story is not gospel in Paul's sense that its focus is a messiah who overcomes death and breaks the power of

1. Jesus, an Experiment in Christology (New York:Vintage Books, 1981), P. 108.
2. idem.

the fall. Three of Tolkien's heros have been identified in critical literature as Christ-figures, but it is my contention in chapters nine to eleven following that none of these fulfills the messianic role. Instead, each exemplifies a different aspect of Old Testament messianic expectation. In this sense, they may be said to pre-figure Jesus of Nazareth. Tolkien's fairy-story is the good news of hope rather than the gospel of victory.

In Tolkien's chronology, the third age, which is brought to its close by the events described in The Lord of the Rings, occurs prior to the emergence of human beings as the dominant race on earth. Since the age of humankind has not yet dawned, Christ's victory remains a still future event. Yet the Eucatastrophe that results from the destruction of the ring points towards that ultimate victory, and the God whose providence guides Frodo to the lip of Mount Doom is, in Tolkien's intention, the same God whose Son will some day emerge victorious from the grave.

Study of the literature suggests that Tolkien intended the body of Middle Earth writing to form the written testimony of God's mighty works in the sub-created world in the same way that The Bible functions in the primary world. In shape and style as well as in content Tolkien's work was heavily influenced by The Bible.

This is not to suggest that The Lord of the Rings should be treated as an allegory of The Bible. Tolkien has warned against just this sort of reductionism (although in a different context and in response to critics who tried to read The Lord of the Rings in

relation to the Second World War or to equate the Ring with the atomic bomb).[1] Nevertheless, the standard of truth which Tolkien imposes on his created world is the degree to which its god or gods act within the created world as the God of The Bible acts in history.

In order to identify and assess the consistency of the theological assumptions underlying the Middle Earth writings it will be necessary to begin with the themes which stand out in The Lord of the Rings. These have been pinpointed and examined to some extent in previous critical studies; the tension between freedom and providence, messianic echoes and the nature and function of evil in the world with its related symbolism of darkness and light, the rings of power and so on. In some instances Tolkien's intention is quite clear in The Lord of the Rings. The workings of Providence and the freedom of God's creatures are carefully worked out and the other writings simply provide additional examples. In other cases the meaning is more ambiguous. Middle Earth is clearly a fallen world. The influence of Sauron and Morgoth is felt in every part of it. Even Rivendell and Lothlórien must be guarded constantly against the encroachment of darkness. Yet how and why evil became so powerful are not part of the story.

What is implicit in The Lord of the Rings often becomes explicit in The Silmarillion. Here Tolkien provides a creation myth,

1. Examples of this sort of interpretation are Edmund Fuller, "The Lord of the Hobbits," in Neil Isaacs and Rose Zimbardo, eds., Tolkien and the Critics, p.32, and Bruce Beatie, "Folktale, Fiction and Saga in J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings," in The Tolkien Papers, p.13.

a Fall legend, accounts of the origin of Elves, Dwarves and Men and many of the ancient legends. All this makes more clear his understanding of the way God functions in the world.

The Unfinished Tales are fragments, often expansions of published material. In many cases they contain data which was not used or which seems to have been deleted because it was too clearly allegorical. This, too, is useful in defining the writer's intention in the material prepared for publication during his life. Tolkien was deliberately a little vague about the nature and role of the Istari. The Unfinished Tales add a great deal of information.

Although I have treated the corpus of Middle Earth literature as a unit, no precise chronology has been attempted. The mythology took shape over Tolkien's entire adult life and was still being revised when he died. Christopher Tolkien tells us that the Lost Tales were begun in 1916-17 [1]. and that the final revision of some of the oldest stories was not undertaken until after the publication of The Lord of the Rings.[2] The notes accompanying the recently published volumes of unfinished and fragmentary material will provide some future scholar with material for a more complete study of the evolution of the myth in the Author's conception, but that is for the most part beyond my scope.

As soon as The Lord of the Rings had been published an enormous volume of letters began to flow between Tolkien and his readers.

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, The Book of Lost Tales, Part 1, Christopher Tolkien, ed., (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), p.8.
2. The Book of Lost Tales, Part 1, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983).
The Book of Lost Tales, Part 2 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984).
The Lays of Beleriand (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985).
The Lost Road and Other Writings (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987).
The Shaping of Middle Earth (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

Many of these are questions and answers about the meaning of various details in the story. The letters help both to explain ambiguities and to document the development of his thinking in response to questions.

Larry Elton Davis identifies several explicitly Augustinian aspects of Tolkien's myth, however, because philosophic and theological consistency do not appear to have been primary concerns at the inception of the work, it seems more probable that Tolkien wrote from a position of popular Catholicism rather than from a set of defined Augustinian principles. The exception to this general rule is Tolkien's explanation of the Origin and nature of evil. This is most clearly laid out in some of the most recently revised sections of The Silmarillion, and reflects Tolkien 's response to his readers' criticism of the treatment of essential evil as it relates to the creation of Orcs. In this section a striking resemblance may be noted between Tolkien's myth and the principles which C. S. Lewis extracted from Augustine's City of God, in his Preface to Paradise Lost. The Silmarillion, the Letters and the various emendations of the older tales all suggest a conscious effort on Tolkien's part to shape his myth in accordance with the specific principles delineated by C. S. Lewis.

In general, Tolkien's world proves consistent and logical within his subcreated order and true to his Christian understanding of reality. Where difficulties arise they are almost always the result of too faithful adherence to principles which do not quite describe Tolkien's experience of reality.[1].

This should not be understood as a decision taken by the writer before he sat down, pen in hand, to produce the model fairy

1. Chapter VIII following.

story for the modern era. The evidence suggests that his intention evolved gradually over a lengthy time span. Tolkien insisted that Middle Earth began as a few fragments of elvish legend written to provide a context for the languages which were his boyhood hobby. When he wrote The Hobbit he saw no connection between it and the older material. The Hobbit hardly qualifies as a serious fairy-story. Not until well into the writing of The Lord of the Rings were the links established. Even The Lord of the Rings is not overtly Christian. It seems probable that although Tolkien wrote from his Christian pre-suppositions, he was not concerned with explicitly theological issues until sometime after the book had been published, but his later writings give evidence of a growing interest in theological and philosophic consistency and at the end of his life he was still revising in his effort to bring his subcreated world into harmony with his Catholic world view.

In a study of the emmendations made in the text of the second edition of The Lord of the Rings, J. R. Ryan concludes that the changes indicate both Tolkien's increasing concern for accurate topography and landscape and a much more explicit Christ imagery in Frodo's journey, particularly "the addition of phrases suggestive of Christ's sacrifice, of his bloodstained garments, and so on." [1].

But in spite of Tolkien's Christian world view, he was not an apologist. The Lord of the Rings is not an allegory and it does not attempt to teach Christian truth nor impart Christian values, it simply conforms to the truth as Tolkien understood it. There is no stated

1. Amon Hen, 81, September, 1986, p. 19.

religion in the tale and God is never mentioned, but the world, though fallen, is under the control of a transcendent beneficent power whose ultimate victory is an article of faith to the wise.

Tolkien's friend and colleague C. S. Lewis called himself a "translator - one turning Christian doctrine, or what he believed to be such, into the vernacular, into language that unscholarly people would attend and could understand."[1] Lewis' concern, like Tolkien's, was the decline of institutions and vehicles by which the English might define themselves and their value systems. Speaking of his apologetic writing Lewis explained,

> When I began, Christianity came before the great mass of my unbelieving fellow-countrymen either in the highly emotional form offered by revivalists or in the unintelligible language of highly cultured clergymen. Most men were reached by neither. 2.

He set out, both in his prose works and in his stories, to "provide a bridge by which unbelievers might pass into the Kingdom." Although Tolkien is commonly linked with Lewis and Charles Williams as "recreators of romantic religion,"[3] there is a fundamental difference in their approach. As Bruce Beatie has noted,

> For Lewis and Williams, the "Myth" involved is essentially an orthodox Christianity outside the narrative proper. The narrative is an icon... a reminder of a truth already believed in. But in Tolkien, the narrative and the myth are inseparable! We aren't reminded of anything external, believed in or not, but we are asked to "believe" the narrative itself, the universal myth given unique and personal expression by a poet who... feels rather than makes explicit what his theme portends, who presents the myth incarnate in a world of history and geography. 4.

1. Christian Century, Nov. 26, 1958.
2. idem.
3. For example, Robert Reilly, Romantic Religion in the Works of Owen Barfield, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams and J. R. R. Tolkien (Doctoral Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1960).
4. "Folktale, Fiction and Saga in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings," in The Tolkien Papers, p. 5.

As Gwenyth Hood explains,

> Tolkien was not trying to interpret Christian theology or to convince anyone that it was true; he was interpreting life, but with a vision influenced by Christian theology. He was not, like Lewis, an adult convert, and his literary territory did not cover the region between unbelief and conversion but rather between faith and the temptation to despair." 1.

In a letter to Robert Murray Tolkien remarked,

> The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first but consciously so in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like "religion", to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. 2.

Tolkien was concerned that his work should be "true" in the sense that it should provide a eucatastrophe which would point to evangelium, an eschatology believable within the terms of the created world. Yet he believed that "history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of the readers" was a more eloquent expression of his beliefs than allegory could ever be. "I think that many confuse 'applicability' with allegory, but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author." 3. As Jeffrey comments,

> To a medieval Christian, following St. Augustine, language provides a paradigm for all human understanding, seeming, as it does, to express timeless truth through an utterance in time. Verbum caro factum est, in the Word, the relationship of God to the world.
>
> ... In medieval Christian reality, God's word is eternal, external, from the beginning. History is a kind of continuous

1. The Lidless Eye and the Long Burden, p. 37.
2. Reprinted in "A Tribute to Tolkien," The Tablet 227 (15 Sept. 1983), pp. 879-880.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 1.xi.

> writing of the unfolding of God's word in time, until, as in the words of Isaiah's vision "the heavens shall be folded together as a book." (34:4) 1.

God is the primary creator, the "author" of "The Word." Literature, then, is a commentary on the Word of God, or in Dante's phrase, "shadowy manifestations of the visions of God's Book." In his essay on Fairy-Stories Tolkien draws this parallel between the act of God the primary creator and secondary creation in art and literature. "Fantasy remains a human right," he says. "We make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made; and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker."[2] As Ryan explains, for Tolkien,

> secondary imagination is to be seen as an "echo" of the primary imagination, which he has regarded as "the living power and prime agent of all human perception and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal art of creation in the infinite I AM." The fairy story, the making of a secondary world, is a construct of the imagination for Tolkien, just as the world is the creation of God the Creator. 3.

The image of God, then, is linked in human beings to creativity. "Every sub-creator," he suggested, "wishes in some measure to be a real maker... to deal with the serious and difficult matter... the Christian story."[4] We experience this desire because, he speculated, "it has been my feeling (a joyous feeling) that God redeemed the corrupt-making creatures by the great Eucatastrophe, the Christian Joy." Since, as Jeffrey notes,

1. Jeffrey, "Name in The Lord of the Rings," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p. 110.
2. Tolkien Reader, p. 55.
3. J. S. Ryan, "The Creation of a Story," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p. 28.
4. Tolkien Reader, pp. 70-72.

"a fundamentally true creation is Tolkien's working premise," 1. sub-creation must address the realities of life as we find them. Faérie, by Tolkien's definition, provides for the reader "escape" from the limitations of the fallen world as we experience them, "consolation", the fleeting glimpse of God's purpose beyond fallenness, and "Recovery" of some sense of God's original plan in creation.

> The term "Recovery" presupposes that something has been lost. The idea, Tolkien tells us, "includes the return and renewal of health," and here his chthonic vocabulary reminds us that his doctrines of creation and subcreation consistently interpret the matrix of art as "the fantasy of fallen man." 2.

But though Man is fallen, he has been redeemed by "the Great Eucatastrophe." Therefore, true subcreation reflects not merely the darkness and discouragement of fallenness, but the consolation and hope of "Eucatastrophe", the glimpse of "Evangelium". As Randel Helms notes, it is this interpretation of his task as sub-creator which accounts for "the audacity he shows in rewriting and supplementing Scripture." 3.

1. "Name in The Lord of the Rings," p.108.
2. ibid., p.104.
3. Tolkien and the Silmarils (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p.35.

II

TOLKIEN'S USE OF ARCHETYPE

If "the peculiar'joy' in successful Fantasy can be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth of evangelium,"[1] then the subcreative task is serious and important. One of the techniques by which Tolkien conveys his sense of high moral purpose is the frequent use of archetypal allusion to ancient myth and legend and to the Bible story. By establishing unstated links between his own myth and those of more ancient tradition, Tolkien is able to capture the power of the heroes and dragons which embody the struggle between good and evil in heroic narrative. As David Harvey comments, "Because the Middle Earth saga was conceived as a mythology, the reader, perhaps only subconciously, recognizes myth as the sound of a far-distant trumpet echoing through the mind."[2]

The psychologist Carl Jung helped to define the power of archetypes to communicate at the level of unconscious association. "Archetypes," he said, "are forms or images of a collective nature which can occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myth and at the same time as autochthonous individual products of unconscious origin."[3] The same images appear in fairy-stories,

1. Tolkien Reader, pp.70-71.
2. The Song of Middle Earth (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), p.xiv.
3. C.G. Jung, "Concerning Archetypes" paragraph 140, The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, trans. Hull, 18 vols. (Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, 1969), Vol. 9.

and folktales as well as in the mythology and legend of cultures unrelated by time or geography. Recognizable motifs occur in innumerable forms in the most primitive expressions of human civilization, in religious ideas everywhere, and even in the dreams and visions of people who live in the modern world.[1.] In these images or "mythologems," universally human modes of behavior are concentrated in perceptible patterns which Jung calls Archetypes.

> Archetypes are not disseminated only by tradition, language and migration, but...can rearise spontaneously at any time, at any place, and without any outside influence. ...(This) means that there are present in every psyche forms which are unconscious but none the less active- living dispositions, ideas in the Platonic sense, that preform and influence our thoughts, feelings and actions. 2.

It is this universality of archetypes which makes them uniquely effective as means of communication. Jung theorizes that the power of the archetypes to communicate across the barriers of language and culture grows out of the existence of "archetypes-as-such" in the unconscious psyche of all human beings.

> The "archetype-as-such" is an irrepresentable factor, a disposition which begins to operate at a given moment of the development of the human mind, arranging the material of consciousness into definite figures...Its fundamental pattern is immutable, but its mode of manifestation is ever changing. No archetype can be reduced to a simple formula... It has potential existence only, and when it takes shape in matter it is no longer what it was. It persists throughout the ages and requires interpreting ever anew.[3.]

1. Joland Jacobi, Complex, Archetype and Symbol in the Psychology of C.G. Jung, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon, 1959), p.83.
2. "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," Paragraph 153ff., Collected Works, Vol. 9.
3. "The Child Archetype," par. 201, Collected Works, vol. 9.

Although archetypes can be identified, they can never be fully explained. "Even the best attempts at explanation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphorical language."[1.]

"What we mean by 'archetype' is in itself irrepresentable, but it has effects which enable us to visualize it, namely the archetypal images."[2.] These archetypal images which are the expressions of "archetypes -as-such" are both universal and particular. Because the "archetypes-as-such" are universal, the images which arise from them have universal power to communicate; yet because any given image arises in a specific context, it is conditioned by the time and place in which it appears. As Northrop Frye notes, "No God is ever new, only a new emphasis may be given to a conception potentially present in the beginning." [3.]

This is related to the Platonic doctrine of the Eternal idea, but it is worked out on the Neo-Platonic understanding that the "archetypes-as-such" function as patterns in the divine mind, rather than as eternal essences upon which the creative activity is modelled.[4.] Jung believed that there is no important idea which is not grounded in primordial archetypal forms. This is particularly evident in religious ideas.

Jung is here working out of a theory of knowledge that goes

1. "The Child Archetype," par. 271.
2. "On the Nature of the Psyche," par. 417, Collected Works, vol.8.
3. The Great Code, p. 70.
4. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology: Three Volumes in One (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1.254.

back to the Platonic doctrine of forms and which was articulated in Christian thought by Augustine. For Augustine the source of all knowledge is the presence of God in the soul. "You yourself will find the answer from that greatest teacher of all, the truth within your own heart." [1] The only certainty from which we may begin is the immediate self consciousness.

> For we both are, and know that we are, and take delight in our being and knowing. Moreover, in these three things no true-seeming illusion disturbs us; for we do not come into contact with these by some bodily sense, as we perceive the things outside us-colours, e.g., by seeing, sounds by hearing, smells by smelling, tastes by tasting, hard and soft objects by touching-of all which sensible objects it is the images resembling them, but not themselves that we perceive in the mind and hold in the memory, and which excite us to desire the objects. However, without any delusive representation of images or phantasms, I am most certain that I am, that I know and that I delight in this. 2.

Augustine argues that there is an immutable truth which contains all things, which proffers itself to all in common and by which both physical and intellectual awareness is apprehended.

> We judge these things according to those inner rules of truth that we discern in common, but no one judges in any way the rules themselves.
>
> If, again, the truth were equal to our minds it would be also mutable. For our minds perceive it sometimes more and sometimes less, and thereby acknowledge themselves mutable, while it continuing in itself, is neither enhanced when we see it more nor diminished when we see it less, but whole and uncorrupted it makes glad those who turn to it and punishes those who turn away. 3.

1. On Free Choice, 11.4, Trans., C. M. Sparrow, St. Augustine on Free Will (Charlottesville:University of Virginia Studies, 1947),p. 35.
2. The City of God, XI.26, trans. Dods, The Works of Aurelius Augustine, 15 vols.(Edinburg:T. and T. Clark Co., 1876).
3. On Free Choice,II.12, 33-34, C.M. Sparrow, p. 64-5.

The basis of knowledge is ontological. Reality is understood through the "universals", the "essences" which determine the nature of every object and which are received by the mind as ideas.

> Ideas are the primary forms, or the permanent and immutable reasons of real things, and they are not themselves formed; so they are, as a consequence, eternal and ever the same in themselves, and they are contained in the divine intelligence. 1.

A tree is a tree rather than a cornstalk because it possesses, even as a seed, the essence of "treeness" which determines how it will develop. I, in turn, recognize it as a tree because my mind grasps the concept of "treeness" of which each particular tree is an example.

That Tolkien's theory of knowledge is Augustinian is eloquently demonstrated by a response he wrote to a query by a young friend who asked him, as part of a school project, to comment on the purpose of life.

> If you do not believe in a personal God the question: "What is the purpose of life?" is unaskable and unanswerable. To whom or what would you address the question? But since in an odd corner (or odd corners) of the Universe things have developed with minds that ask questions and try to answer them, you might address one of these peculiar things. As one of them I should venture to say (speaking with absurd arrogance on behalf of the universe): "I am as I am. There is nothing you can do about it. You may go on trying to find out what I am, but you will never succeed. And why you want to know I do not know. Perhaps the desire to know for the mere sake of knowledge is related to the prayers that some of you address to what you call God. At their highest these seem simply to praise Him for being, as he is, and for making what he has made, as He has made it." 2.

1. Eighty-Three Different Questions, q. 46,2, trans. V. J. Bourke, The Essential Augustine (Toronto:Mentor-Omega Books, 1964), p. 62.
2. Letters, p. 400.

Jung's theory of archetypes is particularly useful when speaking about God.

> Although our whole world of religious ideas consists of anthropomorphic images that could never stand up to rational criticism, we should never forget that they are based on numinous archetypes, i.e., on an emotional foundation which is unassailable by reason. We are dealing with psychic facts which logic can overlook but not eliminate. 1.

He goes on to explain that the statements made in the Scriptures are also "utterances of the soul."[2.] By this definition he is making a distinction between constructs of the conscious mind, which may be deceptive either because they are errors or because they are lies or arbitrary opinions, and statements which arise uninvited, from the depths of the unconscious mind. These "always go over our heads because they point to realities which transcend consciousness. These entia are the archetypes of the collective unconscious and they precipitate complexes of ideas in the form of mythological motifs." Statements of this kind are not "invented," they spring up in the mind as finished products, for example, in dreams and visions, and as such they are spontaneous phenomena over which the will has no direct control. Because they are inspired by something other than the conscious intention of their author, they are in some sense autononous.

> It is, in fact, impossible to demonstrate God's reality to oneself except by using images which have arisen spontaneously or are sanctified by tradition, and whose psychic nature and effect the naive-minded person has never separated from their unknowable metaphysical background. He instantly equates the effective image with the transcendental to which it points.[3.]

1. "Answer to Job," par. 501, Collected Works Vol. 11.
2. ibid., par. 557.
3. ibid., par. 558.

It is important to note in this context that Jung's scientific work was concerned only with human statements about God and the divine. "God Himself remained inviolate. Yet the limitation he imposed on himself did nothing to deny the 'unspeakable'. 'I do not by any means dispute the existence of a metaphysical God. but I allow myself to put human statements under a microscope.' "[1].

This is the problem to which Tillich refers when he speaks of "the God beyond the god of religious expression."

> Everything we encounter appears to us as real, as true being. But we soon notice that its reality is only transitory....Or we notice that it is different from what it seemed to be, and we distinguish between its surface and its deeper, more real levels. But soon these levels also prove to be surface, and we try to penetrate into still deeper levels, towards the ultimate reality of a thing....In our search for the "really real" we are driven from one level to another to a point where we cannot speak of level any more, where we must ask for that which is the ground of all levels, giving them their structure and their power of being. 2.

Human language is able to express only as much as the mind can comprehend. Since God cannot be grasped, any words used to name him function as a metaphor for the speaker's experience or for the conceptualization of a cultural and religious tradition. But although the images which arise out of our search for "being itself" are limited because human language and intellect are limited, yet if they function

1. A. Jaffé, From the Life and Work of C.G. Jung, trans. Hull (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp.48-9
2. Biblical Religion, p.12-13. Verlyn Flieger suggests this dimension in Tolkien's thought when she connects the name "Eru" with the "hypothetical Indo-European root 'Er,' 'to set in motion.' Eru is not a name, but is glossed by the name Illuvatar, a name for that which is unnamable." "Naming the Unnamable : The Neoplatonic 'One' in Tolkien's Silmarillion," Diakonia,Studies in Honor of Robert T. Meyer,(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1986) p. 127.

as effective symbols, they have a numinous quality because they point to a meaning deeper and more significant than the words themselves. It is this numinous quality that gives myth its feeling of seriousness and makes it a highly effective means of communication.

> Archetypes resemble the beds of rivers: dried up because the water has deserted them, though it may return at any time. An archetype is something like an old watercourse along which the water has flowed for a time, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it flowed the deeper the channel, and the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return. [1.]

Applying the same image to literary criticism, Northrop Frye notes, "the stream of literature, like any other stream, seeks the easiest channels first: the poet who uses the expected associations will communicate more readily." [2.]

The fact that Tolkien makes use of these "expected associations" along with some which are quite unexpected is part of the explanation for the extraordinary communicative power of his story. His use of archetypes not only gives his subcreation a sense of depth and importance, it also works, as all literary allusion works, to provide familiar echoes which make the tale feel more "real". As Humphrey Carpenter explains,

> Story - or at least a great story of the mythical type - gives us an experience of something not as an abstraction but as a concrete reality. We don't understand the "meaning" when we read a myth, we actually encounter the thing itself. [3.]

Ruth Noel's introduction begins:

1. C.G. Jung, "Wotan," par.12, Collected Works, vol. 10.
2. Anatomy of Criticism, p.103.
3. The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their Friends (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), p.143.

> There is something in Professor John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's works that lies deeper than fantasy or escape, this quality is the same as that found in authentic myths and folk tales, a sense generated by the nearly forgotten but potent beliefs and traditions that form the skeleton of old lore. 1.

She goes on to explain that the "mythological themes are vastly ancient and are a basic part of the subconcious working of the mind." [2.] This is what Tolkien means by asserting that fairy-stories (and all myths) come out od the "pot of soup." "...The pot of soup, the Cauldron of Story, has always been boiling and to it have been continually added new bits, dainty and undainty." [3.]

> It seems fairly plain that Arthur, (for example) once historical but perhaps not of great importance, was also put into the pot. There he was boiled for a long time, together with many older figures and devices, of mythology and faërie, and even some other stray bones of history (such as Alfred's defense against the Danes), until he emerged as a King of Faërie.
> ... The relation of the "fairy-tale element" to gods and kings and nameless men...does not rise or fall, but is there, in the Cauldron of Story of Story, waiting for the great figures of Myth and History, and for the yet nameless He or She, waiting for the moment when they are cast into the simmering stew. 4.

1. The Mythology of Middle Earth (Boston:Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p.1.

2. ibid., p. 5.

3. Patrick Grant considers this image explicitly Jungian, but cautions that "Tolkien at all times evaluates Archetypes, however implicitly, in the light of the literary conventions of Christian Epic." Tolkien New Critical Perspectives, p.88.

4. Tolkien Reader, p.26-30. As Frank Scafella observes, "If it is objected that we cannot be certain that Arthur was an actual King in sixth century England and that he might well have been a Faerie King all along, that only makes him a more apt example of what apparently happened to the historical Jesus when (whether by his own actions or those of the Church does not matter) he became one more ingredient, as it were, in the great Cauldron of legends, epics, psalms, songs, romances, poems and histories that constitute the Hebrew literary tradition. "Tolkien, The Gospel and the Fairy Story," in Soundings, 4.3, p.315.

An enormous amount of study has been devoted to tracking the literary footprints of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, the most comprehensive work being T.A. Shippey's The Road to Middle Earth. The archetypes Tolkien draws on come largely from the Myths and Sagas of Northern Europe, but in Middle Earth, as in The Bible, sacred history coincides with secular history, and the heroic adventures of every age become the myths of the ages that follow. As Aragorn observes, "Not we, but those who come after will make the legends of our own time."[1]. "Myths are a constant reminder that grandiose events took place on earth and that this 'glorious past' is partly recoverable. The imitation of paradigmatic acts...forces man to transcend his limitations, obliges him to take his place with the Gods and the mythical heroes so that he can perform their deeds."2. "The presence of archetypes assures man that what he has to do has already been done , and therefore can be done."3. But the psychic content and communicative power of myth, whether religious or cultural, transcends the deeds of heroes. Tolkien, by using the language and motifs of mythology and The Bible, was able to tap a source of power older and more universal than either.

The archetypal motifs and their echoes in myth and literature

1. The Lord of the Rings, p.11.45. As David Harvey comments, "myth becomes part of the history of a culture and becomes recorded with it and in doing so, becomes part of the literature of the culture. The Song of Middle Earth, (Allen and Unwin, 1985) p. 10.
2. Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality (Princeton University Press: Bollingen Series, 1965), p.145.
3. Harvey, p. 13.

are well documented and need little further discussion here. In this, as in other branches of Tolkien criticism, the quest for meaning has been pursued to some conclusions for which there is little evidence in Tolkien's writing,[1] yet for many readers, familiar archetypes are part of the richness of Middle Earth.

Peter Kreeft, Lin Carter, Timothy O'Neill and Gunnar Urang explore the significance of Trees in Tolkien;[2] Richard Mathews discusses the symbolism of the Axis Mundi[3]. Miesel and Gracia Fay Ellwood study the mountain at the centre of the world and the city set on a hill,[4] Timothy O'Neill suggests the archetypal significance of crystal, the palantíri and jewels such as the silmarillion, the Arkenstone and the elfstone Elessar.[5] Gloria St. Clair equates

1. For example, the two towers of Minas Tirith and Barad-dur are identified by Jane Chance Nitzche, with the Tower of Babel (Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England, New York: St. Martins, 1979), a conclusion which appears to weaken their power as parallel opposites. The same image is compared by Richard Mathews to "traditions stemming from both Egyptian and Medieval sources and preserved, for example, in the tarot. The tower is the primary structural form stressing verticality, with windows at the topmost level; it corresponds to man, with eyes and mind at the top." Lightning From a Clear Sky (San Bernardino, California: Borgo Press, 1978), p.31.

2. Kreeft, "The Wonder of The Silmarillion" in Shadows of Imagination (ed. Mark Hillegas Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp.161-178; Lin Carter, Tolkien:A Look Behind Lord of the Rings (New York: Ballantine, 1968), pp.152-7; O'Neill, The Individuated Hobbit (Boston:Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p.50; Urang, Shadows of Heaven (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971), p.150.

3. Lightning From a Clear Sky, p. 135.

4. Miesel, Myth, Symbol and Religion in The Lord of the Rings (Baltimore: T.K. Graphics, 1973), Chapter 3; Gracia Fay Ellwood, Good News from Tolkien's Middle Earth (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1970), p.87ff

5. O'Neill, p.75ff

the eyes of Tolkien's villains to the Norse myth of the evil eye,[1] and Ruth Noel provides a careful study of the Elvish and Shire Calendars with their feast days and the special meaning of the dates of significant events in the story.[2] William Dowie discusses the feast days as "reminders that we are part of a continuum of history." For Dowie, the archetypal motifs, "special places, stones, rings, narrow passes, underground temples, moon and sun, night and day, trees and foliage, ship and sea, the changing seasons," are "things that looked upon from afar might be called 'natural hierophanies'. 'Natural hierophany' is a major mode of Tolkien's approach toward the transcendent."[3]

Subterranean descent is discussed by Noel and O'Neill as a journey into the unconscious, and Noel connects this to the descent of Beowulf into the lake of monsters to kill Grendel's mother, and to the Christian imagery of death and resurrection expressed in Baptism as death to sin and rebirth to righteousness. Miesel ties the same theme to Hercules, Odyseus, Orpheus, Theseus, Aeneas, King Arthur, Odin and Hermod. In The Lord of the Rings, subterranean descent is always related to death and rebirth, although only Gandalf actually dies under the ground. The Hobbits are captured by the Barrowwight,

1. Studies in the Sources of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Oklahoma, 1969, p.100, 105, 108. Also Gwenyth Hood, The Lidless Eye and the Long Journey, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1984, Chapter 4.

2. Noel, p.100

3. "Gospel of Middle Earth," in Salu and Farrell, ed., J.R.R. Tolkien Scholar and Storyteller, (London's Cornell University Press, 1979) pp.268 and 274. See also Urang, p. 101

Gandalf falls to his death under Mount Moria, Frodo is presumed dead after his adventure in Shelob's lair, and Aragorn actually draws the shades of the dead out of their graves to fight for him against the Corsairs.[1.]

Some of the archetypes become much clearer in The Silmarillion than in The Lord of the Rings, for example, the pattern of younger sons who replace or displace their elder brothers. Jung postulates that when this archetype appears it refers to the splitting off of evil.[2.] Satan was the first born and greatest of the Angels just as Melkor was the greatest of the Valar and Sauruman the White, the greatest of the Wizards. In The Lord of the Rings, the death of Boromir and Faramir's appearance as heir of the Stewards of Gondor fits into this pattern. An interesting variation on displacement occurs in the biblical account of David, the youngest brother in his family, who displaced the King who had practically adopted him, Saul the first King of Israel. David became the forefather of Christ. In Tolkien's tale, the Royal line of Númenor was carried to Gondor through Elendil the tall who escaped the sinking of Númenor and established the Kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor in Middle Earth. Elendil was a descendant of Elros, the first King, through Silmarien, the daughter of the fourth King. Silmarien never became ruler because she lived before the law of primogeniture was established to permit the first born, whether male or female, to inherit the throne. Through her, however, the royal line descends to Aragorn, the King,

1. page 215 following, also p. 209 following.

2. Collected Works, Vol. 11, p.391ff.

who restores the throne.

Northrop Frye suggests that

> The theme of the passed over first born seems to have something to do with the insufficiency of the human desire for continuity which underlies the custom of passing the inheritance on to the eldest son. All human societies are anxious for a clear and settled line of succession: The intensity of this anxiety is written all over Shakespeare's history plays, and if Shakespeare's particular form of it is no longer with us, the anxiety itself is. In such things as the doctrine of apostolic succession, we see how strong the need for a sense of unbroken continuity is in the Church as well. Hence the deliberate choice of a younger son represents a divine intervention in human affairs, a vertical descent into the continuity that breaks its pattern, but gives human life a new dimension by doing so.[1.]

The covenantal nature of the relationship between God and Israel echoes in the promises of Ilúvatar to his children the Eldar and Edain and just as Paul tells us that in Christ the covenant was bestowed anew on a new people, at the end of the third age the elves must give way to the second born people.

The eternal ring, swords, especially swords that dissolve (like the sword that killed Grendel, and Sigmund's sword which burst when it struck Odin's bill), and the figures of Northern European myth are all to be found reflected in the myth and legend of Middle Earth.[2.] Some of the types are clearly biblical, such as the drowning of Pharaoh's army:

> At that moment there came a roar and a rushing: a noise of loud waters rolling many stones. Dimly Frodo saw the river below him rise, and down along its course there came a plumed cavalry of waves.

1. The Great Code, p.182.

2. Sword motifs in myth and literature are examined by Fleiger in "Frodo, Aragorn and the Concept of the Hero," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, pp. 47-8.

> White flames seemed to Frodo to flicker in their crests and he half fancied he saw amid the water white riders upon white horses with frothing manes. The Three Riders that were still in the midst of the Ford were overwhelmed: They disappeared, buried suddenly under angry foam.[1.]

Others are much older and broader than The Bible, for example, the myth of the Great Flood as it finds expression in the sinking of Atlantis and the destruction of Númenor. Tolkien also draws on historical events which possess a kind of resonance which gives them universal significance, not as events in themselves but because they become the center of archetypes.[2.]

The healing touch of the King is an archetype that goes back in Christian tradition to the first Isaiah writer, who prophesies that in the reign of the Davidic Prince the blind will see, the lame will walk and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. It finds historical expression in the legends surrounding James I, the seventeenth century King who was believed to be able to cure Scrofula by touching the victim.

Denethor's remark that the stewards of Gondor do not become Kings after the lapse of a few centuries as "in other places of less royalty" is likewise based on an archetypal pattern which has historical confirmation. The archetype of Kingship by inheritance is discussed on pages 203-6following, but the specific reference here is probably to the Stewart Kings of Scotland, descendants of Robert, high Stewart of Scotland, who took the throne after the death of David II in 1371.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.286.

2. The Great Code, 217-218.

The types for other events in The Lord of the Rings are found in literature. Tolkien once wrote to W.H. Auden,

> (The Ent's) part in the story is due, I think, to my bitter disappointment and disgust from school days with the shabby use made in Shakespeare of the coming of Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill. I longed to devise a setting in which the trees might really march to war.[1]

Because Tolkien has located his tale in sacred history somewhere between the creation and the proclamation of God's covenant with Israel, he is free to mix biblical archetypal patterns with archetypes which are much older than The Bible, and because history has a way of repeating itself, any historical allusion can be interpreted as the archetype of the still future event. But the very universality of archetypes tends to contribute to a fundamental misinterpretation of Tolkien's intention. The archetypes which have been identified by critical analysis of the Middle Earth literature occur with relative frequency in the myth and legend of civilizations separated by distance and time. These repeating motifs give the impression that history repeats itself eternally, which has encouraged critics to understand Tolkien's view of history, and therefore, the structure of his narrative, as broadly cyclical. This misconception, however, gives a misleading picture of Tolkien's intention.

1. Letters, p.212.

III

THE SHAPE OF THE NARRATIVE

Linear vs. Cyclical Time

The shape of Tolkien's narrative provides an important clue to the theological assumptions underlying his subcreation. Its structure has provided the subject of a considerable volume of scholarly debate, in part because of the range of opinion about what Tolkien is saying about the nature of reality. In general, the critics fall into two camps depending on the interpretive principle from which they approach the work.

On the one hand are those who see The Lord of the Rings as a heroic quest myth of the Nordic style and who apply to it the values identified in the Beowulf Essay. This presupposes a cyclical view of history in which there is no ultimate hope and in which heroism is defined in relation to courage in the face of despair. Janet Menzies complains

> Middle Earth is a place of fading and passing away, every victory there is pyrrhic. This sense of loss stems from Tolkien's belief in the Fall and his expression of the external state of being fallen. It is the fall which makes change inevitable, and which predetermines mortality.[1]

The cyclical organizing principle of The Lord of the Rings is quite obvious. As Stimpson notes, Tolkien

1. "Middle Earth and the Adolescent," in Giddings, ed., J.R.R. Tolkien This Far Land (London: Vision Press Limited, 1983), p.56.

> ,.. seems to visualize human time as a series of cycles. Swords are forged, then broken, then reforged. Seasonal time is also a cycle. Spring gives way to Summer, Summer to Autumn, Autumn to Winter, Winter to Spring. The struggle between good and evil controls each cycle. Indeed the temporary triumph of good ends one revolution and initiates the next.[1].

A variation of this analysis is suggested by Richard Mathews, who understands time in Tolkien's world as "essentially cyclic; mistakes repeated, seasons turning, until the symbolic circle which encloses the entire book - the Ring - can be destroyed; if it can, then time can resume a progressive forward motion."[2]

The cyclic pattern is examined in the context of a Heroic Quest Myth, with its classic stages of separation, initiation and return, by Anne Petty who uses as her analytic tool the seven elemental units outlined in Vladimir Propp's morphology.[3].

1. Stimpson, p.12.
2. This symbolic concept fails, however, to address the complexity of Tolkien's world. The battle of the ring is 'eucatastrophic" but not the final battle of history. The world remains fallen. "Always after a defeat the shadow takes another shape and grows again." (1.83)
3. 1. The Initial Situation, including temporal-spatial designations, family composition or situation, prophecies and warnings, well-being before complication, introduction of the future hero and possible false hero.
   2. The Preparatory Section, containing interdictions, absentations, first appearance of the villain or his agents, interrogation and reconnaissance on the part of the villain, delivery of information to the villain and his deceptions, reaction of the hero.
   3. The Complication, consisting of the first overt act of villainy, the conjunctive moment or form of mediation, the hero's entrance into the tale, the form of his acceptance of the call, the form of his dispatch, the accompanying phenomena, departure from home, the goal of the hero (both immediate and long-range).

Footnotes cont.....

Footnotes (Cont. from p.45.)

3. 4. Entrance of the Donors, including the journey to the home of the donor(s), attributes and appearance of the donors, preparation for transmission of a magical agent in the form of tasks, and so on, reaction of the hero, the nature of the provision.
5. From the Entry of the Helper to the End of the First Move or Phase, which consists of the helper or magical agent, details of same, marking of the hero, victory over the villain, pursuit and rescue from pursuit.
6. Beginning of the Second Move, commencing with a new villainy and following the same sequence of functions noted in 3 through 5; this sequence may be doubled or trebled as needed for the development of the tale.
7. Continuation of the Second (or Final) Move, comprised of the hero's arrival (often unrecognized), the claims of the false hero, the difficult task or object of the quest, its resolution, recognition of the true hero, transfiguration, and wedding or return to society.
Quoted in One Ring to Bind Them All: Tolkien's Morphology (University of Alabama Press, 1979), pp.13-17. Note also Gloria Anne St. Clair, in "The Lord of the Rings as Saga," Mythlore 6(2), 1979, pp.11-16. St. Clair considers The Lord of the Rings as "Pre-Christian" and interprets it as Saga Literature. Also Larry Elton Davis, A Christian Philosophical Examination of the Picture of Evil in the Writings of J.R.R. Tolkien, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Doctoral Dissertation, 1983. Davis contends that although Tolkien's theological framework is Augustinian, his world is ultimately dualist, without a convincing hope of redemption.

The transitions between units are often accomplished through the conflict of opposing forces. "The key to mythic structure ... in the words of Claude Lévi Strauss, is 'binary opposition' and the dynamic relationship between the poles of opposition that achieves mediation or unity."[1.] This is effected through the frequent use of opposite pairs; light and dark, elf and orc, Frodo and Gollum, Gandalf and Saruman, Faramir and Boromir, Theoden and Denethor.[2]

> What we have charted here is the paradigm as familiar to mythologists as a password - the cycle of death and rebirth. Out of the death of the Third Age with its elfish magic is born the Age of Men. The bitter winter of battle gives way to victorious spring for the men of Westerness who have "passed through darkness and fire into a new day."[3.]

1. Petty, p.78.

2. However, Petty does not seem too clear on the functional operation of this dynamic opposition. She asserts, for example, that Gandalf and the balrog are "...two opposing forces that through the mediation of the power struggle, emerge as a new being, Gandalf the White, the White Rider, whose 'head is sacred'." (p.80) The balrog is a representation of absolute evil, a maia so corrupted by Morgoth's influence that no trace of Ilúvatar's intention may be seen in him. Far from emerging as a product of mediation between Gandalf the Gray and this representative of fallenness, Gandalf, by engaging in the conflict and emerging victorious is purged, not only of the balrog but also of the limitations imposed on his own powers by his incarnation in the fallen world.

3. Petty, p.80.

This pattern of oppositions has been widely noted. Rose Zimbardo, for example, describes the work in terms of the Renaissance principle of "permanence in mutability, the idea that the harmony of the whole of creation depends on the variety within and the balance among each of its parts." Every age, every creature, every race is subject to the law of mutability. All must pass, but in passing they assure the birth of the new age. The metaphor of cosmic harmony is used to explain the balance between the parts of Tolkien's world. "Each note is separate, each unique, and the differences among them as well as the distances between them, are essential to the harmony they produce."[1.]

Another attempt to relate Tolkien's narrative structure to the musical metaphor is that of Diana Wynne Jones, who states that it is "arranged in movements, just like a symphony but with this difference, each movement has an extension or coda which reflects partly back on the movement just completed and partly forward to what is to come."[2.]

Yet another analysis of Tolkien's myth in terms of the Beowulf Essay is Ronald Sarti's. Although Sarti recognizes both Nordic and Christian values, he concludes that its central underlying theme is lif is Laene; Life is transitory. Tolkien, in describing Beowulf, called it a "balance, an opposition of ends and beginnings." Sarti applies the same description to The Lord of the Rings defining its

1. "The Medieval-Renaissance Vision of The Lord of the Rings,"in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p.66. As Davis notes, (p.97) Tolkien's musical metaphor is actually borrowed from Augustine.
2. "The Shape of the Narrative in The Lord of the Rings," in Giddings p.88.

structure as "opposition rather than advance," worked out in a cyclical quest pattern using interlace techniques.[1.]

T.A. Shippey, working from the same point of departure, reaches similar conclusions. While holding up to ridicule many simplistic "religious" interpretations Shippey overlooks the specifically Christian elements in The Lord of the Rings because he insists that it is "patterned on the 'Heroic Temper' of the Beowulf poet."[2.]

A second interpretive principle from which one may approach Tolkien's myth is that expressed in his Faërie essay. This provides a linear structure. As J.S. Ryan notes, "All stories of Faërie look forward or backward...to the Great Eucatastrophy."[3.] This does not deny the reality of the cyclic pattern of time and season. As to the influence of George MacDonald on Tolkien Ryan states,

> All Romantics are vividly aware of Mutability but most of them are content to bewail it. For Donald (and we might add, for Tolkien) this nostalgia is merely the starting point. He goes in and discovers what it was made for.[4.]

1. Ronald Christopher Sarti, Man in a Mortal World, J.R.R. Tolkien and "The Lord of the Rings," Indiana University Doctoral Dissertation, 1984. See also Richard West, "The Interlace Structure of The Lord of the Rings," in A Tolkien Compass, pp. 77-94.
2. "Creation from Philology," in Salu and Farell, eds., J.R.R. Tolkien: Scholar and Storyteller (London: Cornell University Press), p.311. Another similar interpretation is found in Charles Moorman "The Shire, Mordor and Minas Tirith," Tolkien and the Critics, pp. 201-217.
3. J.S. Ryan, "Folktale, Fairy Tale and the Creation of a Story," p.28.
4. ibid., pp.29-30

Although it is clear that Tolkien's work is structured around a Heroic Quest Myth, the cycles of time and mutability are not absolute because history moves always towards its culmination in eschatology. Several critics have attempted to define Tolkien's narrative structure in linear terms, one of the more interesting efforts being Lionel Basney's. Basney, like Petty, employs the concept of "dynamic relationship between poles of opposition."[1]. The most comprehensive of Tolkien's oppositions he identifies as "myth and history...the growth of one into the other," a movement which is developed through a series of parallel contrasts. The first such contrast opposes the world of the story, "ordered, hierarchical, historical, all but static," to the specific events of Frodo's quest, "a journey full of chance, disconnected experience, frequent shifts in rhythm, the gradual maturation, under stress, of given qualities good and bad. This second structure is essentially dynamic, motive."[2].

By providing geneologies, philology, history and legends Tolkien has established a tension between the static and the dynamic. An additional dualism is "the distinction between action and lore, between the existential and the literal." [3]. The tension here is worked out through the gradual progression of legend into history and by the merging of myth and experience as "lore" and "tradition" turns out to be literally true. Basney identifies fifteen examples of this form of recognition.[4].

1. "Myth, History and Time," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p.9.
2. ibid., p.10.
3. ibid., p.11.
4. ibid., pp.12-14.

The movement from legend to experience extends also to the conception of time. The opposition between the two conceptions arises out of opposing ethoi,

> On the one hand is the pagan view, its paradigm, Beowulf, its corresponding time pattern cyclical and deterministic, seeing human civilization as an effort to buy time from the forces of evil which always arise after defeat to be met again. To this pagan pattern, the unfolding, evolving movement which realizes legend is clearly opposed. The ethos here is Judeo-Christian; its corresponding notion is "the fullness of time."[1]

Time is progressing always towards its fulfillment, thus the characters in The Lord of the Rings experience themselves living in a Kairos, a "time when it has come to pass which was spoken of."

Once more, a useful lens through which to look for Tolkien's intention is TheBible. Since Tolkien considered The Bible the highest example of myth and the one in which "eucatastrophe" is given its purest expression, it is to be expected that he might make use of a biblical narrative structure in developing his own myth. Northrop Frye's analysis of the narrative structure of The Bible provides an illuminating pattern.

Frye points out that the stories of Old Testament tribal heroes are placed in a repeating mythos of the apostasy and restoration of Israel.

> This gives us a narrative structure which is roughly U-shaped, the apostasy being followed by a descent into disaster and bondage, which in turn is followed by repentance, then a rise through deliverance to a point more or less on a level from which the descent began. This U-shaped pattern, approximate as it is, recurs in

1. "Myth, History and Time," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p.14.

> literature as the standard shape of comedy, where a series of misfortunes and misunderstandings brings the action to a threateningly low point, after which some fortunate twist in the plot sends the conclusion up to a happy ending. The entire Bible, viewed as a "divine comedy," is contained within a U-shaped story of this sort, one in which man as explained, loses the tree and water of life at the beginning, and gets them back at the end of Revelation.[1].

In between are a series of declines each followed by a restoration to grace and a period of peace and wellbeing, always, however, leading quickly to the next rebellion and fall from grace. From Eden, Adam rebelled and was cast out into the wilderness until God called Abram out of Ur and established the first Covenant. The next downturn took Israel into slavery in Egypt under the evil Pharaoh. Again God reversed History by selecting Moses to lead his people through the wilderness to the promised land, where, after a period of peace and prosperity, the cycle is repeated in the defeat of Israel by the Philistines and restoration under King David. Then Israel was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, the people were sent into exile, and the exile endured until the return and reestablishment of the temple under Cyrus. But the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes provoked the Maccabean Rebellion which resulted in the independence of Judea until the defeat by the Roman empire under Pompey in 63 B.C.

This rough sketch of the rising and falling fortunes of Israel omits innumerable smaller historic cycles, however it is

1. Northrop Frye, The Great Code (Toronto: Academic Press Canada, 1983), p.169.

sufficient to document the consistency of the narrative pattern. Frye carefully points out, however, that the Bible is Sacred history, and its pattern represents a sequence of mythoi, rather than primary historical events.

> All the high points and all the low points are metaphorically related to one another. That is the Garden of Eden, the Promised Land, Jerusalem and Mount Zion are all interchangeable synonyms for the home of the soul, and in Christian imagery they are all identical in their "spiritual" form (which we remember means metaphorically, whatever else it may also mean), with the Kingdom of God spoken of by Jesus. Similarly Egypt, Babylon and Rome are all spiritually the same place, and Pharaoh of the Exodus, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, and Nero are spiritually the same person. And the deliverers of Israel - Abraham, Moses and Joshua, the judges David and Solomon - are all prototypes of the Messiah or final deliverer.[1].

On the same principle the life, death and resurrection of Christ is from the New Testament point of view the antitype of the Exodus cycle.

The history of Middle Earth, like that of the Old Testament, begins in an act of creation by "the one" and shows the same "historical" pattern around repeated acts of rebellion, exile and return. As in The Bible, Tolkien's cycles are located within a linear concept of time. The myth begins "at the beginning" and points towards an eschatological ending.

In The Bible the story of Satan's rebellion is omitted from the Canon of Scripture but Tolkien pictures it in terms of music in which the harmony is destroyed by Melkor's rebellious singing

1. The Great Code, p. 171

against the melody of the other Ainur. The perfection of new creation was marred even before it had been fully realized. Again, when Ilúvatar made the Earth,

> Melkor too was there from the first and he meddled in all that was done, turning it if he might to his own desires and purposes; and he kindled great fires. When therefore Earth was yet young and full of flame Melkor coveted it, and he said to the other Valar: "This shall be my own Kingdom; and I name it unto myself!"[1].

Within created time, the first battle took place before Arda was full shaped and before anything grew or walked on earth. But in the midst of the struggle "a spirit of great strength and hardihood came to the aid of the Valar ...and Arda was filled with the sound of his laughter." So Tulkas the Strong cast his lot with Earth and became one of the Valar of Arda, and Melkor was defeated. The defeat of Melkor brought long ages of peace, "but Melkor brooded in outer darkness, and his hate was given to Tulkas for ever after." [2].

The next downturn in the cycle occurs with the destruction of the lamps of Aulë. "And when the lamps were spilled, destroying flame was poured out over the Earth. And the shape of Arda and the symmetry of its waters and its lands was marred in that time, so that the first design of the Valar was never after restored."[3]. After this defeat the Valar were forced to retreat behind the mountains of Aman where they established Valinor.

1. The Silmarillion, p. 21
2. ibid., p. 35.
3. ibid., p.37

With the arrival of the Elves, the Valar again took control of Arda in order to make the world safe for the children of Ilúvatar. Melkor was brought back in chains to Valinor and the Earth had peace for many ages. The appearance of the Elves begins a cycle within the larger pattern. Because of the destruction caused by Melkor, the Valar summoned the Quendi (the Elf people) to live in the protection of Valinor. In a journey reminiscent of the exodus from Egypt, three hosts of elves were led back towards the undying lands by the brothers Elwë and Olwë. After many years of travel the company reached a great river, on the bank of which they camped for a long time. It was Elwë's fate to relinquish his leadership and never to cross over.[1]. While Olwë led the people to Valinor, Elwë Greymantle fell under the spell of Melian the Maia, and remained to establish the Kingdom of the Grey elves of Beleriand. In Beleriand, as in Valinor, the elves prospered for a long time.

The next cycle begins in Valinor, with the creation of the Silmarils. Fëanor, like Melkor, was first born and most gifted. "Curufinwë was his name, but by his mother he was called Fëanor, Spirit of Fire." He became of all the Noldor then or after the most subtle in mind and the most skilled in hand, but because of his great skill he came to worship the things he had made. Chief among these were the Silmarils, three great jewels which filled all who saw them with wonder and delight. "The Heart of Fëanor was bound to these things that he himself had made."[2]. His love for the Silmarils made him

1. The Silmarillion, p.54.

2. ibid., p.67. The Biblical Parallels of this rebellion are examined in some depth by Randal Helms, Tolkien and the Silmarils (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), pp. 19-46.

jealous and possessive, and he easily fell under Melkor's evil suggestions. In the course of time Fëanor led the Noldor to rebel against the Valar, and in their flight, to attack and murder their kinfolk the Teleri, who would not freely give their ships to carry the Noldor back across to Middle Earth.

At the same time as the Elves were being led back into the wilderness by the rebellion of Fëanor, Ungoliant, at the urging of Melkor, plunged all of Valinor into darkness once again by sucking up the light of the two trees Teleperion and Laurelin, and destroying their roots.

Eventually the Valar restored light by creating out of the last blossom of Telperion the Moon, and out of the last fruit of Laurelin, the Sun. On Middle Earth the returning Noldor settled down and lived peacefully with the grey elves of the Kingdom of Elwë (Thingol) and Melian. After Fëanor's death, an alliance was formed with human beings who had begun to appear and a seige was mounted against Angband where Melkor had his stronghold.

In the sixth generation after People had come over the mountains into Beleriand, the cycle of events reversed again. Melkor (now called Morgoth) broke out of the seige and killed Fingolfin in single combat. A respite of several centuries was won by Turgon, who took his people into the mountain stronghold of Gondolin, and by Finrod who established the fortress of Nargothrond, but in the end all defenses fell before the onslaught of the forces of Morgoth. This cycle ends with the journey of Eärendil to seek the aid of the

Valar. The Valar quickly forgave the rebellion of the Noldor, and so great was the battle they waged against Morgoth that the shape of the earth was changed and Beleriand was sunk under the sea. Most of the Noldor and many of the Sindar went back to live in Eressëa, within sight of Valinor.

The rise of Númenor under the rule of the heirs of Eärendil, then its fall 3287 years later because of the rebellion of its king Ar-Pharazôn, overrides the events of the second age. At the end of the second age Elendil and Gilgalad formed an alliance which overthrew Sauron and banished him into the shadows.

However, out of the destruction of Númenor Elendil and his sons fled to Middle Earth and there formed the Kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor which flourished for over a thousand years.

> Yet at last, in the wearing of the swift years of Middle Earth, Gondor waned, and the line of Meneldil son of Anárion failed. For the blood of the Númenóreans became much mingled with that of other men, and their power and wisdom was diminished, and their life-span was shortened, and the watch upon Mordor slumbered. And in the days of Telemnar, the third and twentieth of the line of Meneldil, a plague came upon dark winds out of the east, and it smote the King and his children and many of the people of Gondor perished.[1]

Sauron once again grew in power in Morgoth. Then the Lords of the West sent the Istari to strengthen and support the Elves and human beings. Of these the eldest and first to come was Curunír, called Saruman. He established his home at Orthanc and there he studied the lore of Sauron and became wise in the history

1. The Silmarillion, p.296.

of ancient magic. For a long time he protected the border of Gondor against Mordor's spies, but eventually, like Melkor and Fëanor before him, Saruman was deceived by his pride in his own knowledge, and fell under the domination of Sauron.

The Third Age came to an end when Frodo destroyed the great ring and with it most of Sauron's power. Sauron was cast into the outer darkness, a disembodied malevolent spirit waiting through the long ages for the next agent who would be corrupted to his purpose.

The guardianship of the Fourth Age Gandalf passed over to Aragorn.

> "The Third Age was my age. I was the enemy of Sauron, and my work is finished. I shall go soon. The burden must lie now upon you and your kindred."[1].

Even in this very sketchy outline it is obvious that the sacred history of Middle Earth is structured around the cosmic struggle between good and evil and that both battles and heroes are more significant as Mythoi than as historical events. The struggle is worked out in two time scales. Three times the fury of the battle between the Valar and first Melkor, then his servant Sauron, reshaped the surface of the Earth. The fourth great struggle marked the end of the Third Age, but this time the powers of heaven did not directly intervene and as a result, the damage was less spectacular.

Within these great cycles is worked out the recurring theme of exodus and return. The Valar entered into Ëa to build what was in effect a Garden of Eden in preparation for the children of

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.308.

Ilúvatar. After the first great battle they retreated to Valinor where they built the Blessed Realm. The Elves were invited to the Blessed Realm where they lived in harmony and peace until the rebellion of Fëanor took them back into exile. In the land of exile, Elwë in Beleriand, Turgon in Gondolin and Finrod in Nargothrond all established miniature Blessed Realms, until all were cast down as the Age drew to its end and the Elves were invited to return to Eressëa, within sight of Valinor. Eärendil and his heirs, meanwhile, were given the land of Númenor as the reward for their faithfulness. After the fall of Númenor the heirs of Elendil fled into Exile, but built there the realm of Gondor. Within the third age, Gondor under its Kings was for human beings as Rivendell and Lórien were for Elves, the type of the Home of the Soul.

Just as the prospering of the kingdoms of the West is "metaphorically related" to the rule of heaven and the cities themselves are "spiritually" the undying lands, both heroes and villains are metaphorically related. Melkor, Sauron, Fëanor, Ar-Pharâzon, Saruman and all their creatures were simply the embodiment of evil and had no individual identity apart from their malevolent power. Speaking of malevolent forces far older than Sauron, Gandalf observed, "Always after a defeat and a respite the shadow takes another shape and grows again."[1] An interesting symbol of this is the death of an evil creature, which leaves no body behind. Melkor and Sauron could assume whatever shape was pleasing to them, but vanquished, they lost the power to embody themselves in flesh. Sauron's departure

1. The Lord of the Rings, I.60.

to the void is described,

> ...black against the pall of cloud, there rose a huge shape of shadow, impenetrable, lightning-crowned, filling all the sky. Enormous it reared above the world, and stretched out towards them a vast threatening hand, terrible but impotent: for even as it leaned over them a great wind took it, and it was all blown away and passed; and then a hush fell.[1].

When Saruman was murdered,

> About the body a grey mist gathered, and rising slowly to a great height like smoke from a fire, as a pale shrouded figure it loomed over the Hill. For a moment it wavered, looking to the West; but out of the West came a cold wind, and it beat away, and with a sigh, dissolved into nothing.[2].

Even Fëanor, who was a much more ambiguous figure and one who died defending the West against Morgoth's Balrogs "had no burial or tomb, for so fiery was his spirit that as it sped, his body fell to ash and was born away like smoke." [3].

The heroes are likewise types of the Chosen One of God, an identification which will be made more clear in chapters nine to eleven following.

As Frye notes, the cyclical pattern is conventional for the Heroic Quest form, of which both The Bible and The Lord of the Rings are examples.

> Nature suggests no beginning or end in itself, because we see it within the mental categories of time and space, and beginnings and ends in time and space are not really thinkable, easy as it may be to talk about them. We do perceive, however, a repeating

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.279.
2. ibid, III.370. Note also page 148 following on evil as the negation of good.
3. The Silmarillion, p. 107.

> pattern in nature, and we can expand this to visions of the most Colossal Cycles, like the days and nights of Brahma in Hinduism and the successive cycles ended by fire in Stoicism.
>
> The Biblical myth, in contrast, stresses a total beginning and end of time and space. The Creation was an absolute beginning... and the reason for postulating an absolute beginning in The Bible is to make it clear that time does not represent an ultimate reality. Similarly, the Old Testament prophesies an end, not precisely to time, but to history as we have known it, a "day of Yahweh."[1].

In the same way Tolkien insists that Ilúvatar exists "beyond the circles of the world." Before time began, he was, and at the end of time his purposes will be fulfilled. At the beginning,

> The music and the echo of the music went out into the Void and it was not void. Never since have the Ainur made any music like to this music, though it has been said that a greater still shall be made before Ilúvatar after the end of days. Then the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, and take being in the moment of their utterance, for all shall then understand fully his intent in their part, and each shall know the comprehension of each, and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire, being well pleased.[2].

The counting of time did not begin until the creation of the two trees whose light waxed and waned to mark the passage of night and day.

The linear nature of history is linked, in Tolkien as in The Bible, with God's intention for mankind.

> It is one with the gift of freedom that the children of Men dwell only a short space in the world alive, and are not bound to it, and depart soon whither the Elves know not.

1. The Great Code, p. 71. A related view is that of Augustine ("On Psalm 92") who surmised that history is divided into six ages after the six days of creation. The proclamation of John the Baptist marked the beginning of the sixth age, which will continue until the eschaton.
2. The Silmarillion, P. 15-16.

> Whereas the Elves remain until the end of days.
>
> ...The Elves die not till the world dies, unless they are slain or waste in grief... and dying they are gathered to the halls of Mandos in Valinor, whence they may in time return. But the sons of Men die indeed, and leave the world.
> Yet of old the Valar declared to the Elves in Valinor that Men should join in the Second Music of the Ainur; whereas Iluvatar has not revealed what he purposes for the Elves after the world's end.[1.]

The "ages" of Middle Earth are not cycles. As Urang reminds us,

> There is no mythological pattern of eternal recurrence; at the most there are typological patterns. For each age constitutes a kairos, a time of opportunity and fulfillment. It is a time-with-a-content, sent for a purpose and demanding an appropriate response. Thus history as a whole is not an impersonal process but a matter involving personal will and freedom; and it consists of a continuum of "times," each with its own specific character and significance.[2.]

Time is linear. Tolkien's world had a beginning and in the fullness of time it will end, but creation is fallen and the struggle against evil must be waged as long as the world endures. "The third age does end magnificently. However its political and moral fireworks, its meals of strawberry and cream are less prophecies of future glory than the preparation of glorious memories."[3.] Within historical time, evil will not be finally overcome.

Tolkien wrote to a reader,

> Actually I am a Christian, and indeed a Roman Catholic, so I do not expect "history" to be anything but a "long defeat" - though it contains (and in legend may contain more

1. The Silmarillion, p.42
2. Gunnar Urang, Shadows of Heaven (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971), p.116.
3. Stimpson, p.12

clearly and movingly) some samples or glimpses of final victory.[1]

1. Letters, p.255. For discussion of Tolkien's view of salvation in History, see p.204-5 following.

IV

TOLKIEN AND THE BIBLE

Tolkien used The Bible as a standard against which Faërie is to be judged. He was,among other things, a Bible scholar. He is listed as one of the editors of the Jerusalem Bible and he prepared the original English translation of the Book of Jonah. His treatment of Bible scholarship, therefore, may give some indication of the way he alludes to The Bible in his fiction.

The Bible as a whole is the salvation history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the testimony of the mighty works of God on behalf of His people. It contains stories from several traditions, woven together to form a harmony but bearing the distinguishing marks, still, of the contexts from which they arose. The Canon of Scripture comes to us through the hands of nameless compilers, redactors and scribes who pulled together the oral and written tradition as it came to them, and so arranged and highlighted the material as to convey the Faith as they knew it.

This is precisely the texture Tolkien has attempted to give the writings about Middle Earth, particularly The Silmarillion.[1.]

1. Sarti, p.10, comments that "The Bible deserves special mention as a unique and highly important resource for Tolkien, both as sacred testament and enduring literary masterpiece." Neil Isaacs (Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.7) notes that in its "solemnly sacred" style The Silmarillion is "persistently biblical. The Book of Numbers comes most often to mind." Richard Mathews calls The Silmarillion "a modern Scripture" which "provides limitless scope for interpretation and commentary." (Lightning from a Clear Sky, p.57.)

The "Canon of Scripture" of Middle Earth is handed down in two sections, as The Bible is.[1] The "old" section, called The Silmarillion, is a collection of several books of varying lengths, originally written in High Elvish and passed down through the hands of a variety of Elvish sources over many years. Three of the long legends, which are the oldest parts of The Silmarillion and out of which the remaining material is drawn, "The Fall of Gondolin", "The Lay of Beren and Lúthien", and "The Children of Húrin" were told by the Sage Pengolod in Tol Eressëa to the Mariner Aelfwine, who wrote them down.[2] The events it records are believed to have occurred over tens of thousands of years, from creation until the beginning of the third age. The Silmarillion contains two brief creation fragments, a long and elaborate history of the Elvish races, a much shorter account of the sinking of Númenor, called the "Akallabêth" and credited to Elendil,[3]

1. Although The Silmarillion remained unpublished at Tolkien's death, in the author's mind The Lord of the Rings and The Silmarillion were indivisible parts of a single work. So strongly did he feel about this that in 1950 he offered the books to Milton Waldman of Collins Publishing house, since his old friend Sir Stanley Unwin declined to publish them together. This resulted in a delay which cost him two years. (Letters 121-131 relate to this issue.)

2. Letters, p. 130. The conceit originally employed by Tolkien in "The Cottage of Lost Play," was of a "traveller from far countries" named Eriol ("one who dreams alone"), who lands on Tol Eressëa and there discovers some very small people, apparently Tolkien's original conception of elves. These people tell Eriol the story of how the Eldar first came to this island. In a later version of the tale, Eriol's name is changed to Aelfwine the Mariner, apparently an Anglo Saxon who sailed from England, westward on the Atlantic Ocean.
Christopher Tolkien's notes on the earlier versions indicate that Tol Eressëa was the land which would become the England of the fourth age, an indication that at this early stage Tolkien's world was still evolving.

3. Unfinished Tales, p.224.

and a record of the settlement of Middle Earth at the beginning of the third age. The arrangement is roughly chronological, although there is some overlap. The same events often appear in several books from slightly different historical perspectives, beginning before creation and following the sequence of history through the appearance of elves, the discovery of human beings and the generations of the First and Second born into the third age. The "Ainulindale" begins "There was Eru, the One..." "Valaquenta" begins "In the beginning Eru, the One, who in Elvish thought is named Ilúvatar, made the Ainur of his thought." In addition to the narrative The Silmarillion contains genealogies of the heroes.

Christopher Tolkien, in the foreword notes

> My father came to conceive The Silmarillion as a compilation, a compendiousnarrative made long afterwards from sources of great diversity (poems and annals, and oral tales) that had survived in age-long tradition. [1.]

At frequent intervals in The Lord of the Rings, ancient heroes and legends are brought into the narrative, either by analogy or, as in the case of Sam, by growing awareness of identity within the historical continuum. The myth and legend of Middle Earth is recorded in The Silmarillion, and although the text is never referred to by the elves of Middle Earth, The Silmarillion contains the body of knowledge upon

1. The Silmarillion, p.7.
Tolkien's intention of distancing himself from his story by assuming the persona of a translator/redactor is made clear in his "note on the Shire Records", The Lord of the Rings, 1.37-39 and from the Preface to "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil," (Reader, pp.3-9) but the effect is deliberately enhanced by the editorial treatment of the volumes published by Christopher Tolkien since his father's death; note, for example, the foreword to The Book of Lost Tales, Part 1, p.6ff.

which they base their view of God and the world.

The second section of the "Canon" is the material from which the ring narrative was compiled. Tolkien, in his "persona" as translator, informs us that this body of literature was written in the common tongue, mainly by Hobbits at the end of the third age. The main events on which the narrative focusses occurred in a period of less than a year, from summer until the following spring. We are informed that within a century after the fall of Sauron, accounts had been compiled and collected in a variety of locations, but that the most important text was the Red Book of Westmarch, in origin Bilbo's diary, together with the three volumes of Frodo's story, written during S.R. 1420-1421. To these "first person" accounts were added commentaries, genealogies and other interpretive material.

The original Red Book has been lost; however, many copies were made over the years, and several still exist, some older and more authoritative than others. The best of these is Findegil's Copy. From this we are able to reconstruct the Thain's Book, made in IV 64, which is believed to have been the earliest copy of the Red Book. The Thain's Book contained much that was later omitted or lost, but it was much annotated and corrected, and the tale of Aragorn and Arwen was added to it. Additional texts were compiled and collected by Merriadoc and Peregrin and their descendants. We are told that much of this secondary material is in the form of manuscripts written by the scribes of Gondor.

In addition to these two collections of writings there exists a large body of incidental material which is treated as less authoritative than the "Canonical" literature, but which bears more or less

relationship with it. These "apocryphal" writings take the form of marginalia or additions to copies of the Red Book and related texts. Some of them are traditionally believed to have been written by Bilbo or Sam Gamgee, others are popular poems or stories. The poems addressed to Varda in The Road Goes Ever On fall into this category, as do The Adventures of Tom Bombadil. The data they contain is interesting, but should be treated as authoritative only when confirmed in other stories. For example, #7, a version of the poem which Sam recites at the Council of Elrond[1]. describes Tom's conversation with a troll, during which Tom identifies a bone which once belonged to his Uncle Tim. This must be considered as just an amusing bit of nonsense. The notion that Tom had an Uncle Tim contradicts everything we know of his origins. #2, however, describes a visit Tom had with Farmer Maggot. This may well be "historical", since it is consistent with Tom's remarks to the four hobbits.[2].

"The Cat," #12, is traditionally ascribed to Sam Gamgee but the textual notes suggest that it was probably based on "an older piece of the comic bestiary lore of which Hobbits appear to have been fond." The only cat lore in The Lord of the Rings is the assertion by Aragorn in the mines of Moria that Gandalf is surer of finding his way in the dark than the cats of Queen Berúthiel.[3]. Among the notes recently published as Unfinished Tales is the tale of Queen Berúthiel, which ends, "...her name was erased from the Book of Kings (but the memory of men is not wholly shut in books, and the cats of Queen Berúthiel never passed wholly out of men's speech.)"[4].

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.276-8.
2. ibid., 1.184.
3. ibid., 1.405.
4. Unfinished Tales, p.401-2.

The Lost Tales contain a reference to "Tevildo, Prince of Cats" who was the mightiest of all cats and served Melko as a chaser of meat for Melko's table.[1.] The Vanquishing of Tevildo by Huan the hound "removed from all cats the evil powers of Melko and since that time cats have had neither master nor friend."[2.]

All this is clearly the diversion of a scholar playing games. Randel Helms has provided some amusing speculation on a few scholarly balloons Tolkien was attempting to prick in the Bombadil poems.[3.] Yet the fact that he has modelled his "history" of Middle Earth on The Bible suggests that it should be taken as in some sense, analogous to revelation. As Richard Mathews notes regarding The Silmarillion, "The main point...is that it is a Bible, an encyclopedic epic of return which shows us ways of living with loss and the pain of recovery." [4.]

Tolkien has said of The Bible, "The author was not the evangelists." He frequently suggests that the same is true of his own works. In one letter he alludes to "The Writer of the Story (by which I do not mean myself...)" Here the context indicates that he is referring to Eru, The One. His use of capital letters, however suggests that he is referring to the Writer of The Bible. Asked about whether

1. The Book of Lost Tales, 11,p.16.
2. ibid., p.28.
3. Randel Helms, Tolkien's World (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), p.126ff. However Helms' hypothesis is called into question by Alan Bold who contends that with the exception of the title poem and "The Cat", all the Bombadil poems were written during the 1920's and 1930's. ("Hobbit Verse versus Tolkien's Poem ," in Giddings, J.R.R. Tolkien: This Far Land, London: Vision Press Limited, 1983.)
4. Lightning From a Clear Sky, p.59.

some pictures had influenced his creation, Tolkien said, "no".

> Suddenly he said, "Of course you don't suppose, do you, that you wrote all that book yourself?"
>
> ...I think I said, "No, I don't suppose so any longer." I have never since been able to suppose so. An alarming conclusion for an old philologist to draw concerning his private amusement. But not one that should puff anyone up who considers the imperfections of "chosen instruments", and indeed what sometimes seems their lamentable unfitness for the purpose."[1].

He described the experience of writing the narratives of Middle Earth, "They arose in my mind as given things, and as they came, separately, so too the links grew...I always had the sense of recording what was already 'there', somewhere: not of 'inventing'."[2]. "I have long since ceased to invent...I wait till I seem to know what really happened, or till it writes itself."[3]. "In order of time, growth and composition," he wrote, "this stuff began with me...I do not remember a time when I was not building it."[4].

Although his letters make quite clear that Tolkien suffered as much or more in the act of creation than any other writer, he had a sense of somehow trying to express in words something which already existed. He wrote to his son Christopher,

> ...A new character has come on the scene (I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him, but there he came walking into the Woods of Ithilien): Faramir, the brother of Boromir - and he is holding up the "catastrophe" by a lot of stuff about the history of Gondor and Rohan...[5].

1. Letters, p. 413.
2. Carpenter, p. 92.
3. Letters, p. 230.
4. ibid., p. 143.
5. ibid., p.79.

Of Ents he says,

> I did not consciously invent them at all. The Chapter called "Treebeard" from Treebeard's first remark on page 66 was written off more or less as it stands, with an effect on myself (except for labour pains) almost like reading someone else's work.[1].

A great deal of the "Gospel of Middle Earth", Tolkien implies, came to him as "revelation" which was delivered to him. The conceit that the Middle Earth writings refer to a time in the dim history of the planet Earth allows him to "locate" his Canon of Scripture in time and space, in relation to The Bible. Mankind appears in The Silmarillion already severed in speech from the older races, presumably migrating from the east and south, i.e. the Valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates where Adam and Eve were first created and fell from grace. The first three ages fit in time sandwiched between creation and the calling of Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees. Because the Bible records the oral tradition of the human race, written well after the beginning of the fourth age, it should not surprise us that its account of creation makes no mention of the older races, already almost disappeared from the earth, any more than modern scholars are surprised to find no references to the giant reptiles which once ruled the earth. Because the creation stories in The Silmarillion are of Elvish origin,it is quite natural that they do not mention Adam and Eve, although presumably the Garden of Eden was formed in Eä toward the end of the First Age.[2].

1. Letters, p.211-212, also 334.
2. It is clear that Tolkien is conscious of the need for a consistent point of view. He notes, for example, that Elves refer to death as the Gift of Ilúvatar which reflects the point of view of immortals but says nothing of the Christian understanding of Death as the wages of sin, a point of view which relates to the human desire to escape mortality. (Letters,p. 285)

The Middle Earth writings, then are to be regarded as analogous and complementary to the Bible. As Gunnar Urang remarked, "The reader is to receive Tolkien's work, imaginatively, as a kind of analogy-to-history," in this case, salvation history.[1.]

1. "Tolkien's Fantasy, The Phenomenology of Hope," in Shadows of Imagination, p.103.

V.

LONG AGO, NOT FAR AWAY

In his faërie essay Tolkien noted that it is an easy task to propose a world in which the sun is green, but a much more difficult and dangerous labour to imagine the circumstances in which the green sun might be believable. The mythology of the first two ages of Middle Earth began as a vehicle for the imaginary languages which had been Tolkien's youthful diversion. But it is easier to invent a language than to create the world in which that language lives. His attempt to do so grew to be a lifelong passion which in time spread out to include not only poetic and mythological realism but philosophic and theological consistency as well.

An attractive aspect of Middle Earth and one which sets it apart from the rash of imitations which followed it is the illusion of reality created by Tolkien's world. It does, in fact, range "from the large and cosmogonic to the level of romantic fairy-story," giving in the process, the impression of tremendous depth and breadth in time and space. It is a world painstakingly built, layer upon layer, upon historical, geological, anthropological and linguistic evolution.[1.]

One of the most profound revolutions in the historical consciousness of modern man is represented by the Annales School of

1. Note, for example, Lionel Basney, "Myth, History and Time in The Lord of the Rings," in New Critical Perspectives, pp.8-9, and Helmut Papajewski," J.R.R. Tolkien . Hobbit und The Lord of the Rings: Fairytale und Mythos," Literatur in Wissanshaft und Unterricht 5, no.1, 1977, (p.52).

French historians, of which Fernand Braudel is a key figure. Braudel reinterprets the great events of history, the battles, treaties and assassinations as the culmination of the slow evolution of civilizations effected by climate, geography, agriculture, trade patterns and cultural development. He studies history at three levels reflecting different time scales. Structures are the almost static conditions of human life; landscape, weather, population patterns and agriculture, which shape cultures in ways so obvious as to be rarely noticed. Changes in Structures take place very gradually over centuries. A much more fluid set of historical influences are Conjunctures, social or economic fluctuations which may change over a decade or a generation; expansion of trade, depression, the decline of cities or cultural revolution are Conjunctures which evolve out of the slowly changing Structures of history, and give rise to the events which are studied as "conventional" history, l'histoire événementielle, the events in history, assassinations, treaties, battles, which occur over a matter of days or weeks or years.[1.]

There is no evidence that Tolkien ever heard of Fernand Braudel, yet his lifelong interest in the evolution of language led him to the same conclusions. The events of the present can be properly understood only against the backdrop of multiple layers of influences on the historical, geological and social levels. He once compared an individual to a spider running along a single thread in a giant tapestry, convinced that the random colour variations of the strand were without meaning or significance.

1. Fernand Braudel, The Structures of Everyday Life (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

Although the events which provide the plot structure for The Lord of the Rings occur in a period of less than a year and the tale is full of l'histoire événementielle (indeed, the writer insists that the hobbits are "making history"), yet Tolkien provides the reader with a profound sense of the scope of his created world, so that the events themselves are placed in a context that begins with creation and stretches forward beyond the end of time. "The legendary background, the distant and mythic past of Middle Earth is still a functionning part of the present tale, and the actions of the characters in The Lord of the Rings are part of the continuing fabric that is being woven."[1].

In The Lord of the Rings the introduction and appendices are used to establish the context of Middle Earth, and fill out some of the allusions in the text itself to older and wider worlds.

> Tolkien's stories take place against a background of measureless depth. Frodo moves in a landscape where others have moved before him through long, busy millennia he comes at the end of a process that began before the sun and moon were set aloft; he is a part, small but essential, in a timeless war between the forces of order and disorder, and whether he understands it or not - that background is ever-present in the creator's mind and it gives Frodo and company a three-dimensional reality which is seldom found in this kind of writing. 2.

A sense of the enormity of the time spans with which Tolkien is working is conveyed by the hints of geological shift in the shapes of coastlands, mountain ranges and waterways, of islands having disappeared

1. David Harvey, The Song of Middle Earth, p. 48.
2. Joseph McLellan, "Frodo and the Cosmos," in New Critic Perspectives, p. 166.

and continental shelves having been submerged.[1]

The prologue notes that since the third age of Middle Earth "The shape of all lands has been changed,"[2] and the songs and lore at the heart of the tale allude to lands and kingdoms long gone from the face of the earth: The hidden kingdom of Thingol in the Forest of Neldoreth,[3] Númenor that is Westernesse,[4] a place of quasi-religious significance in that the Men of Gondor face in the direction where Númenor once lay for a moment of silence before sitting down to table,[5] Thangorodrim which was thrown down in the great battle that ended the first age, and Gondolin where Elrond's father Eärendil was born.[6] Tom Bombadil tells the Hobbits that

> He remembers the first raindrop, the first acorn. He made the paths for the Big People and saw the little People arriving. He was here before the Kings and the graves and the Barrow-wights. When the elves passed westward, Tom was here already, before the seas were bent."[7]

Gimli the dwarf sings of the time when "the world was young, the mountains green, no stain yet on the moon was seen," in contrast to the present age in which "The world is grey, the mountains old."[8] Treebeard sings of wandering in Tasarinan, Ossiriand, Neldoreth, Dothorion and Orod-na-Thôn, "and now all those lands lie under the

1. Paul Kocher, Master of Middle Earth, pp.3-5. Also Lionel Basney, "Myth, History and Time," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.11ff.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.21.
3. ibid., 1.260.
4. ibid., 1.261.
5. ibid., 11.361.
6. ibid., 1.318ff.
7. ibid., 1.182.
8. ibid., 1.412.

wave." He remembers when "The woods were like the woods of Lothlórien, only thicker, stronger, younger," when primeval forests covered the land.

The earth is still in flux. Elrond warns the council against casting the ring into the sea because "seas and lands may change." The appendices to The Lord of the Rings allow the reader to piece together a geological history which includes at least two major cataclysms which have reshaped the land masses of Middle Earth. The Eldar Kingdoms of the First Age were flooded in the destruction of Thangorodrim, the stronghold of Morgoth. The Silmarillion records that when the Valar intervened to destroy the power of Morgoth

> So great was the fury of those adversaries that the northern regions of the western world were rent asunder and the sea reared in through many chasms; and there was confusion and great noise; and rivers perished or found new paths, and the valleys were upheaved and the hills trod down; and Sirion was no more. 2.

The map included with The Silmarillion shows Ered Luin, The Blue Mountains, as the western boundary of the land inhabited by the Eldar. The same mountain range marks the East coast of Middle Earth on the map which accompanies The Lord of the Rings. Evidently, the edge of the continent dropped into the sea.

A cataclysm of equal moment (and from a mythic standpoint, of even greater interest) occurred with the sinking of Númenor which ended the second age. The appendices give a fairly comprehensive outline history of the rise and fall of Númenor, the genealogy of its kings and the breaking of the Ban of the Valar,[3.] as a result of which

1. The Lord of the Rings, p. 11.90.
2. The Silmarillion, p. 252.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 111.392.

> The Valar laid down their Guardianship and called upon the One, and the world was changed. Númenor was thrown down and swallowed in the sea, and the undying lands were removed forever from the circles of the world."

This hint that there was a time when the undying lands inhabited by the immortals were within the circles of the world refers back to Bombadil's remark that there was a time "before the seas were bent." This suggests a shift in cosmogony. The original created order was envisioned as a flat plane on which it would have been possible for the Númenóreans to sail to the lands where the gods dwelt. As a result of their attempt to do that, earth was separated from heaven and "bent" into a sphere,

> And those that sailed far came only to new lands and found them like the old lands, and subject to death. And those that sailed farthest set but a girdle about the earth and returned weary at last to the place of their beginning; and they said "all roads are now bent."[1].

1. The Silmarillion, p.281.
   An earlier version of this change is given in the footnote to Lost Tales 1 p.27. The paths to Valinor were changed at the bidding of Manwë to Oloreë Mallë, the Path of Dreams. "By this road, when Men were yet but new-wakened on the earth the children of the fathers of Men came to Valinor in their sleep." A 1915 poem called "You and Me and The Cottage of Lost Play" relates loss of access to The Path of Dreams to growing up. (ibid.pp28-9).
   The tale of the Hiding of Valinor describes the sealing off of Valinor from the Great World by the reinforcement of the encircling mountains, the sundering of the ice bridge of Helkarakse and the weaving of spells over the eastward plains and the shadowy seas so that no path is left by land or sea by which man or elf may cross. However, Oromë forged a bridge out of a tress of Vána's golden hair by which the Gods may freely cross to the wide world on the rainbow.
   In this account, the sealing of Valinor is the response to the rebellion of the Noldoli and amounts to a concession of the World to the power of Melko. (pp.211ff.)
   Paul Kocher relates the legends of the Undying Lands to Imrama in a cycle of Medieval Celtic poems which formed the basis for Tolkien's own poem "Imram," narrating the voyage of St. Brendan to The Land of Promise. (Master of Middle Earth, Chapter seven, and "Middle Earth, an Imaginary World," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p. 126.)

Besides creating the illusion of a world slowly evolving over vast expanses of space and time, the legends of landmasses submerged and new mountains thrown up echo ancient archetypal myths of floods; of the story of Noah and of the sinking of Atlantis.

Timothy O'Neill points out the fact that Númenor is one of the very few words which Tolkien takes from a Latin rather than a Welsh, Finnish or Anglo Saxon root, and notes Carl Jung's use of the same root "Numen" or "numenosity" to describe that which has been lost in the unconscious.[1.] Although Tolkien specifically denies this derivation[2.]("'Númenor' means, in Elvish, Westernesse and is not related to numen or νούμενον") he makes a very similar connection.

> This legend (of Atlantis) or myth or dim memory of some ancient history has always troubled me. In sleep I had the dreadful dream of the ineluctable wave, either coming out of the quiet sea, or coming in towering over the green islands.[3.]

Plato's The Timaeus described Atlantis as a mighty civilization which had existed 9000 years before Solon's birth and ruled most of the Mediterannean region, excepting Athens. Atlantis was an island of great size, located to the west of the Pillars of Hercules. Its power was brought to an end when it "insolently advanced against Europe and all Asia," its kings being discontented that any power should stand against them.

> Afterwards there was a time of inordinate earthquakes and floods; there came one terrible day and night, in which all your men of war were swallowed bodily by the earth, and the island Atlantis also sank beneath the sea and vanished. Hence to this day that outer ocean cannot be

1. Timothy R. O'Neill, The Individuated Hobbit, p. 159.
2. Letters, p. 151.
3. ibid, p. 347.

> crossed or explored, the way being blocked by mud, just below the surface, left by the the settling down of the island.[1].

In several of his letters Tolkien makes the connection between Númenor and Atlantis (i.e. p. 151, p.303), but if, in fact, Númenor is meant to represent Atlantis, then it seems likely that Middle Earth is meant to represent our own earth in its forgotten past. The shifting geology of the planet, in addition to giving the illusion of the passage of eons, provides the "literary cover" which allows Tolkien to write about a palpably "real" world without being trapped by the geography which exists today. Several Tolkien critics have come to this conclusion, Paul Kocher and Sandra Meisel in particular,[2]. but the publication of Tolkien's letters leaves

1. Francis MacDonald Cornford (Trans.), Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato, The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: Bobbs-Merril, n.d.), p.18.

2. Paul Kocher contends that Middle Earth is intended to represent Northern Europe in some indefinable period of its historical evolution. ("Middle Earth, an Imaginary World," pp.117-132). Henry B. Parks objects to Kocher's approach on the grounds that it establishes "a search for the lost continent of Mu, which splits Tolkien's world into half-fictional, half-factual and destroys its integrity." ("Critical Approach to Story," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p. 13.)
Parks' impatience is justified in that speculation concerning the date and geography of Middle Earth has led to some conclusions which could only be described as silly. For example, Robert Giddings and Elizabeth Holland extrapolate from the ring inscription, "Ash nazy dur batulûk that Mordor is Babylon since the reference is to "Ashpenaz, the Babylonian master of Eunuchs in the Book of Daniel, a fine comment on the Ringwraiths who appear to have lost their virility along with their will power." (The Shores of Middle Earth, London: Junction Books, 1981, p.159.)
On the other hand, it is my contention that the relationship between Tolkien's subcreated world and the world of the First Creator is an important consideration in identifying Tolkien's theological presuppositions.

no doubt.

> Middle Earth is just archaic English for οἰκουμένη the inhabited world of men. It lay then as it does now. In fact just as it does, round and inescapable. That is partly the point. The new situation established at the beginning of the Third Age, leads on eventually and inevitably to ordinary history.[1]

Middle Earth is, in fact, somewhere "Northwest of the Old World, east of the Sea," that is in the general area which is now Northwestern Europe.[2] The dating of the events, while absolutely precise within the story (Appendix B gives an exact chronology from the beginning of the Second Age, and Appendix D explains that although there were differences between the Shire Calendar and the Gregorian Calendar now in use, "The year no doubt was of the same length as now," specifically 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds) yet Tolkien deliberately avoids any allusion which would permit a dating more exact than "once upon a time."

We are told that the witch King of Angmar lived during the first age in the winter-bound fastness of the far Norwest.[3] The Silmarillion tells that the seas of the North were once "filled with grinding ice because of the violence of the Frosts of Melkor[4] and that the ice bay of Forochel is all that remains of the realm of Angband where once Morgoth ruled. Forochel is inhabited by a people called Lossoth, Snowmen, who live in snow houses and "run on the ice with bones on their feet, and have carts without wheels." [5]The fact that "Those

1. Letters, p.186.
2. In a prose introduction to a poem called "Kortirion among the Trees," Tolkien identified Kortirion at the centre of the Lonely Isle as the site of the present-day Warwick. (Lost Tales, p.25).
3. The Lord of the Rings, III.399ff.
4. The Silmarillion, p.57.
5. The Lord of the Rings, III.399

colds linger still in that region though they lie hardly more than a hundred leagues north of the Shire" suggests an inter-glacial period[1]. as does the Mûmak of Harad, "big as a house, much bigger than a house... a grey-clad moving hill." Tolkien stepping out of his persona explains to us that this "was indeed a beast of vast bulk, and the like of him does not walk now in Middle Earth: his kin that live still in latter days are but memories of his girth and majesty."[2]. With his "great legs like trees, enormous sail-like ears spread out, long snout upraised like a huge serpent about to strike, his small red eyes raging and hornlike tusks dripping with blood," the Mûmak must have been an impressive sight, though he sounds more like an elephant than a wooly Mammoth, an identification reinforced by Sam's poem "Oliphaunt."

The reptilian steeds of the Nazgûl are equally suggestive. Tolkien describes one:

> Naked, and neither quill nor feather did it bear, and its vast pinions were webs of hide between horned fingers; and it stank. A creature of an older world maybe it was, whose kind, lingering in forgotten mountains cold beneath the Moon, outstayed their day and in hideous eyrie bred the last untimely brood.[3].

The notion that somewhere in equatorial jungles or mountain fastness exist still the giant reptiles of earth's distant past is a common literary conceit. This pterodactyl-like creature helps to date

1. Paul H. Kocher, Master of Middle Earth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p.5. See also Margaret Howes, "The Eldar Ages and the Later Glaciations of the Pleistocene Epoche," Tolkien Journal, 4 (2), 1967.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 11.341.
3. ibid., 111.140.

the third age to a period so far in the past that its author is free to invent whatever life forms might further his story.

Of the same order are the Woses, evidently an aboriginal human race who built the strange, squat stone Pukelmen which stood at every turn in the road through Dunharrow. These Pukelmen seem to have been ancestors of the Wild Men who aided the Rohirrim in the war of the Ring and who still hunt with poisoned arrows and speak with drums.[1] "Wildmen live here before stone houses; before tall men came up out of water." The war council of Ghân-buri-Ghân, their headman, sounds like the Lone Ranger and his faithful friend Tonto, but there can be little doubt that the Woses are intended to represent Man at some earlier stage of his evolution. The Silmarillion explains that the Pukelmen occupied the White Mountains in the first age and were driven back by the arrival of the Númenoreans during the second age.[2]

That the setting is not too far back in prehistory is established by the reassuring familiarity of the flora and fauna: the trees are deciduous and coniferous; oak, elm and beech, rather than sporiforous as one might have expected to find when dinosaurs roamed the earth. The flowers in Sam's garden are snapdragons and sunflowers and nasturtiums. Lark sounds are heard, and the travellers are watched by crows and rescued by eagles, no matter how ancient their lineage might be. The horses and cows, too, are recognizably the breeds known to the

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.128-9.
2. The Silmarillion, p.146.

modern world, though both were gifts to middle earth from Oromë the Vala. The horses are descendants of Felarof, an animal which had the ability to understand human speech. Cows take no active role in the tale, but we are told that the horn carried by Boromir and broken when he was slain[1] was part of his patrimony, borne by each eldest son of the house of Stewards since it was brought back by Vorondil who obtained it while hunting the wild Kine of Araw in the far fields of Rhûn.

As the geology and ecology of the Earth evolve gradually over thousands of years, populations shift and flow at a more rapid pace. In The Lord of the Rings as in history, the conflict between East and West is almost archetypal. Just as in the fourth century Germanic tribes came out of the East to topple the Roman Empire and to settle in their place, the Rohirrim originally came from the North East and over the centuries, became part of "the West."[2] We are told that Hobbits had lived in Middle Earth for many generations, unnoticed by other folk. Although nothing is known of their origins, oral tradition suggests a migration westward across the Mountains. There were three separate Hobbit "tribes", apparently of the same genus but conditioned to some extent by their traditional environment. The Harfoots, the most numerous tribe, were a dark skinned, small, nimble folk who lived in hill country and related most easily with dwarves. The Stoors, who lived in plains and river basins, were broader and heavier than other Hobbits. Stoors were less shy of humans than most

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.29.
2. Kocher, Master of Middle Earth, p.16.

Hobbits. The Fallowhides were tall, blond and slim, a northern branch of the Hobbit genus, who loved woodlands, were friendly with elves and had more skill in language and song than in crafts. The Fallowhides were great hunters, and fallowhide blood often turned up in the leaders of other tribes. The greatest families in the Shire, the Tooks and the Masters of Buckland, had fallowhide blood.

The inexorable passage of time is revealed also by the slow evolution of language. Northrop Frye, speaking of the language of The Bible, uses Vico's analysis:

> According to Vico there are three ages in a cycle of history; a mythical age or age of the Gods; a heroic age, or age of an aristocracy; and an age of the people.... Each age produces its own kind of language, giving us three types of verbal expression.[1.]

The three phases of Vico's historical development, each with its characteristic language pattern, all find their parallels in Middle Earth, and the phase of language of a given race gives a great deal of information about the way individual members of that race view the world.[2.]

The elves are an ancient race for whom time seems endless because elves do not die of natural causes. During the time the company rests in Lórien, time stands still; the Moon does not change in its phase.[3.] The Elvish calendar is based on ritual, since time has no practical meaning. The "long year" of 144 solar years is divided into solar years of 365 days; the solar year in turn is divided into six seasons. Elves have nothing that corresponds with months, but

1. The Great Code, p.5.
2. Note Stimpson's objection to the "classism" of this technique, p.5; see also W.H. Auden, "The Quest Hero," Tolkien and the Critics, p.51.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 1.502-3.

they do have six-day weeks. Ruth Noel has provided an excellent account of the seasonal feasts and holidays of the Elvish calendar.[1.]

Because of their longevity the high Elves are only a few generations removed from the heroes of the past. The Maiar, particularly Varda, the Lady of the Stars, are real and immediate to them. The elven tongue is high and stately and has the tone in translation of the King James Version of The Bible.

Frye says of the "hieroglyphic" or metaphorical phase of language that it shows relatively little emphasis on the separation of subject and object. "The emphasis falls rather on the feeling that the subject and object are linked by a common power or energy."[2.] This is the phase in which natural objects and powers are embued with a numenosity and people understand themselves to be related to the powers of nature.

The Elves of Middle Earth understand themselves as "Children of Ilúvatar" under the special protection of Varda who made the stars in preparation for their coming. The elvish legends are full of talking animals; Huan, the great hound who was granted the power to speak three times before he died, eagles which act as messengers of the Maiar, and the ancestors of the horse Shadowfax, brought to earth by Oromë and capable of human speech. Ents are trees that can walk and talk, and trolls are stones with speech and movement.

A characteristic of the lack of separation between subject and

1. The Mythology of Middle Earth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

2. The Great Code, p.6.

object Frye notes is the ability of words to bring "powers" into play. "Spells" and "charms" are based on verbal elements, and speaking the name of God may invoke his power.[1] The name of the Old Testament Yahweh is never spoken. Among the older races of Middle Earth a similar prohibition is observed. We are told that the full name of dwarves is never given, even on their graves. Treebeard cautions the Hobbits, "you call yourselves Hobbits? But you should not go telling just anyone. You'll be letting out your own right names if you're not careful." "...I'm not going to tell you my name, not yet, at any rate."[2]

In the ancient tale of Túrin Turambar, Túrin tells Gwindor, "You have done ill to me, friend, to betray my right name and call my doom upon me, from which I would lie hid." Sure enough, Túrin ends his own life after slaying the dragon Glaurung when he learns that his wife has discovered his name and that she is his sister.[3]

On Weathertop, threatened by the power of the Nazgûl, Frodo calls on the name of Elbereth and is rescued by her power. Names also have the power to invoke evil presence. The names of the dark powers are rarely spoken, and in fact we are told that creatures more terrible than trolls and orcs have no name. When Pippin speaks of Mordor on Weathertop he is immediately cautioned, and when Gandalf reads the Ring

1. "The use of power in naming is an example of what Claude Lévi Strauss terms 'the rites of control' or the positive and negative acts aimed at increasing or restricting the phenomena of the numenous " (Petty, One Ring to Bind Them All, p.99).
2. The Lord of the Rings, 11.85.
3. J.R.R. Tolkien, Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle Earth, p.141-5. In the earliest version of the same tale, after marrying Níniel and beginning a new life, "Turambar was in joy and said in his heart, 'Tis well that I did name myself Turambar, for lo! I have overcome the doom of evil that was woven about my feet!' " (Lost TalesII, p.102)

inscription at Elrond's Council "a shadow seemed to pass over the high sun and the porch for a moment grew dark. All trembled and the Elves stopped their ears." "Never before has any voice dared to utter that tongue in Imladris," Elrond warned Gandalf the Grey.[1] The power of the spoken word, Frye notes, often finds expression in vows and covenants.

> The vow that cannot be broken, including the rash vows that begin so many folk tales, as in Jephthah's "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord and I cannot go back" (Judges 11:35), again expresses the sense of quasi-physical power released by the utterance of words.[2]

In this, too, the ancient races of Middle Earth conform to pattern. At the beginning of the realm of Gondor, the King of the Mountains swore allegiance to Isildure but refused to support him in the battle against Sauron. The cost of the broken promise was that the men of the mountains would never be able to rest in their graves until they had been called back to fulfill the vow and fight against Sauron. This was the army of the Dead that Aragorn led in the Battle of Pelennor Fields.[3] It was the rash vow of Fëanor and his sons

> ...to pursue with vengeance and hatred to the ends of the world Vala, Demon, Elf, or Man as yet unborn or any creature, great or small, good or evil, that time should bring forth unto the end of days, whoso should hold or take or keep a silmaril from their possession.[4]

that precipitated the doom of the Noldor and the estrangement of Elves from Valinor. The oath was not lifted until the silmarils had gone

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.333.
2. The Great Code, p.6.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 111.65ff.
4. The Silmarillon, p. 85.

from the earth, "one in the airs of heaven, and one in the fires of the heart of the world, and one in the deep water."[1].

Vico's second stage of language development, the "metonymic" or allegorical phase, arises when thought begins to take a deductive shape. "Some form of analogy (is) essential, otherwise there would be no reality that human language is put for."[2]. This type of reasoning is particularly valuable to philosophy but has no direct parallels in Tolkien's story. Yet it is clear that human language shows a transition toward a more literal and less ritualistic view of the world.

The calendar of Gondor is based on the King's Reckoning, which is an adaptation of the elvish solar year with its 365 days. The six Eldarin seasons have been reduced to four, which are based on the growth cycle rather than on specific dates.

Humans have a proud heritage and reverence for their own history, but they have little interest in the myth and legends of older races. The white tree is equated with the return of the King, but very little is known about the origin of Nimloth the Fair. The only religious observance in the tale, the act of facing West before eating, is a ritual by which History is focused. "We look towards Númenor that was, and beyond to Elvenhome that ever will be."[3]. Talking trees and the like are not treated as "real". "Songs we have tell of these things, but we are forgetting them, teaching them only to children as a careless custom."[4].

1. The Silmarillion, p. 254.
2. The Great Code, p. 12.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 11.361.
4. ibid., 11.197.

The third phase, "demotic" or descriptive language, is much more "scientific."

> Here we start with a clear separation of subject and object, in which the subject exposes itself, in sense experience, to the impact of an objective world. The objective world is the order of nature; thinking or reflection follows the suggestions of sense experience, and words are the servomechanisms of reflection....Deductive procedures are increasingly subordinated to a primary inductive and fact-gathering process.
>
> This approach treats language as primarily descriptive of an objective natural order....A verbal structure is set up beside what it describes, and is called "true" if it seems to provide a satisfactory correspondence of it.[1]

This is the way language is used in the Shire. Hobbits have no interest in anything that can't be apprehended through the senses. They have no God nor do they want any. They are suspicious of Elves, who are "queer", they are hostile to the very idea that there might be dragons, and contemptuous of the Bagginses who have doings with strangers like Gandalf. Tolkien goes to some trouble to underline this Hobbit characteristic. He records, verbatim, a conversation in the Green Dragon one April evening.

> "Queer things you do hear these days, to be sure," said Sam.
>
> "Ah," said Ted, "you do, if you listen. But I can hear fireside tales and children's stories at home, if I want to."
>
> "No doubt you can," retorted Sam, "and I daresay there's more truth in some of them than you reckon. Who invented the stories anyway? Take dragons, now."
>
> "No thank'ee," said Ted, "I won't. I heard tell of them when I was a youngster, but

1. The Great Code, p.14. Lionel Basney discovers an intermediate stage of linguistic development and therefore of historic consciousness in the Rohirrim. (Myth, History and Time," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.12).

> there's no call to believe in them now. There's only one dragon in Bywater, and that's green."
>
> ..."But what about these Tree men, these giants, as you might call them? They do say that one bigger than a tree was seen up beyond the North Moors, not long back... this one was as big as an elm tree, and walking seven yards to a stride, if it was an inch."
>
> "Then I bet it wasn't an inch. What he saw was an elm tree, like as not."
>
> "But this one was walking, I tell you; and there ain't no elm tree on the North Moors."
>
> "Then he can't have seen one." [1]

Hobbits' pleasures are simple; eating and drinking, and the only "art" they claim as their own is the growing of pipeweed. They live with very little ritual, and feast days and holidays are simply occasions for a festive meal.

Hobbits see no reason why their names should not be spoken aloud, and both Bilbo and Frodo give the Dark Powers considerable assistance by allowing themselves to be identified and therefore the ring to be traced through them.

The Hobbits have adopted the calendar developed by human beings, but because they have no interest in the world beyond the borders of the Shire, they number the years from the settlement of the Shire rather than from the beginning of the age. They do not care about the past, and the only history they keep track of is their own genealogies, of which they are inordinately fond. There is no record of how Hobbits came to be.

The language of Hobbits is very plain and concrete with a relatively limited vocabulary and almost no abstract nouns.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.73

Frye insists that the progression from phase one to phase two to phase three of linguistic development cannot be understood as progress, since each phase has its own special strengths and weaknesses. Tolkien makes the same point about the people who speak the languages. For both, the danger in moving from metaphorical to descriptive verbal categories is the loss of the Gods. The world is a poorer and more mundane place after all the elves have abandoned it. Tolkien warns in the voice of Celeborn the Wise,

> "Do not despise the lore that has come down
> from distant years, for oft it may chance
> that old wives keep in memory word of things
> that were once needful for the wise to know.[1]

The Tale of the Rings catches Middle Earth at a transitional moment in its evolution, before the old has completely died and before the new has fully matured. Yet the future will be more prosaic than the past.

But as Tolkien makes quite clear, the text is a translation, and the differences in the tongues of the peoples of Middle Earth can only be hinted at in translation. Tolkien has said that his work was "primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary 'history' for the Elvish tongues."[2] That being the case it is inevitable not only that those tongues for which it provides the setting should be very much in evidence but that their evolution should unfold according to the philological principles that Tolkien as a scholar of ancient tongues espoused.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.484.

2. ibid., 1.viii.

The two dialects of Elvish, Quenya and Sindarin, are central to the Tolkien myth both because in all probability they antedated the tale and therefore dictated its structure in a basic way and because their development reveals Tolkien's intention to give Middle Earth a history that would unfurl at a structural and conjunctural level as well as in its important events.[1] It is clear that Tolkien invested heavily in the linguistic aspect of his stories. Responding to the comments of an early reviewer of The Silmarillion he said, "I am sorry that the Celtic names split his eyes - personally I believe (and here I believe I am a good judge) they are good and a large part of the effect. They are coherent and consistent and made upon two related linguistic formulae...Needless to say they are not Celtic. Neither are the tales!"[2]

> Out of these languages (Quenya and Sindarin) are made nearly all the names that appear in my legends. This gives a certain character (a cohesion, a consistency of linguistic style, and an illusion of historicity) to the Nomenclature, or so I believe, that is markedly lacking in comparable things. Not all will feel this as important as I do, since I am cursed by acute sensibility in such matters[3].

That Tolkien's "illusion of historicity" has been experienced

1. As Ruth Noel has observed, the invented languages "lend Tolkien's work a unique dimension of realism." The Language of Middle Earth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 6.
2. Letters, p. 26. This seems, however, to be a matter of taste. As Robert Adams remarked, " Tolkien has a fascination with names for their own sake that will probably seem excessive to anyone whose favorite light reading is not The First Book of Chronicles." "The Hobbit Habit," in Tolkien:New Critical Perspectives, p. 169.
3. Letters, p. 143, also pp.172-181.

by readers is evidenced in the interest his elvish languages have elicited. His letters show that readers frequently wrote to ask him questions of language. The information given in the appendices has prompted enthusiasts to "reconstruct" the two Elvish scripts,[1.] to "translate" the poem to Elbereth and even to attempt original poetry in Elvish.

Appendices E and F outline the pronunciation and spelling of the Elvish tongues and how they have evolved over time. In Sindarin we are told that the consonant combinations "ng", "nd","mb", etc. have been reduced to single consonants; Rohan from Rochann (archaic Rochand).[2.] "Words which end in 'nd' are inevitably ancient names, since that consonant combination no longer exists in the Third Age; so Beleriand and Nargothrond."

We are informed that in Middle Earth Quenya was no longer a birth tongue, but had become, as it were, an "Elven-latin".

> The Grey Elven (Sindarin) was in origin akin to Quenya; for it was the language of those Eldar who, coming to the shores of Middle Earth, had not passed over the sea but had lingered on the coasts of the country of Beleriand. There Thingol Grey-cloak of Doriath was their King, and in the long twilight their tongue had changed with the Changefulness of mortal lands and become far estranged from the speech of the Eldar from beyond the sea.[3.]

In his letters Tolkien notes that Finnish was the original germ of The Silmarillion.[4.] Jim Allen, in his introduction to Elvish,

1. See Kathryn Blackmun, The Tolkien Papers, pp.76-83.
2. The Lord of the Rings, III.506.
3. ibid., III.506. An alternate and earlier account of the sundering of the elven tongues is given in The Book of Lost Tales, p.51.
4. Letters, p.87, also p.346.

compares Quenya to Finnish. The names in Quenya, he notes, recall the Kevala. Tolkien himself says "Actually it might be said to be composed on a Latin basis with two other (main) ingredients that happen to give me 'phonaesthetic' pleasure: Finnish and Greek. It is however more consonantal than any of the three."[1]. As Sandra Miesel notes, linguistic relationships have cultural parallels.

> Philological and cultural relationships among the races of Middle Earth are based on those which have existed in the British Isles. We can equate: The elves with the Romans, the Dunedain with the Romanized Celts, the Northerners such as the Beornings with the nonromanized Celts, the Wildmen and the Dunlendings with the pre-Celtic aborigines, the Rohirrim with Anglo Saxons and other Teutonic elements, and the Hobbits with late Medieval English Yoemen (the last correlation is reinforced by the dating of the Shire calendar. Frodo's journey takes place 1418-19, Shire reckoning.) [2].

The common speech, which Tolkien translates as standard English, rose out of the language of the Edain of the first age. The Dunedain of Númenor learned Sindarin during their years of trading with the Grey Elves, and used it as a language of lore. This influence enriched their version of the Edain language, Westron, which became, as their influence spread over Middle Earth, the common tongue. The men of the Northern regions, the Beornings, the Woodmen from Mirkwood and the men of Long Lake and Dale, never having left Middle Earth nor having come into contact with the Elves, spoke a more primitive though related language which had no Sindarin influences. Still other tongues were spoken by the Rohirrim, the Wildmen of Druadan and the Dunlendings, who migrated from other lands.

1. Letters, p.176.
2. Sandra L. Miesel, Myth, Symbol and Religion in "The Lord of the Rings", p.1.

Tolkien gives an elaborate explanation of the translation of all these languages for English speaking readers, but many of his critics have noted that the sources of the names of people and places often provide a shorthand clue to Tolkien's intention. It has been noted, for example, that the language and culture of the Rohirrim are Anglo Saxon,[1] apart from the names of the men of Rohan, which are, as Christopher Tolkien points out, not Anglo Saxon but its precursor, Gothic.

The one untranslated phrase in the speech of Rohan[2] is a standard greeting in Beowulf. Eomer greets Theoden, "Westu Theoden hal:" Beowulf salutes Hrothgar, "Waesthu Hrothgar hal:" literally, "May you be sound; unhurt." The Mark may be paralleled to an Anglo Saxon settlement called "Mercia".[3] The Chapter called "The King of the Golden Hall" is a straightforward calque on Beowulf. When Legolas says of Meduseld "The light of it shines far over the land," he is translating line 311 of Beowulf, "Lixte se leoma ofer landa Fela." The Rohirrim differ from Anglo Saxons only in that their culture is based on horses.

The Dwarf names listed in Appendix A are from the Norse Prose Edda.[4] Gandalf is also a name from the Dwarf list, which means "sorcerer Elf." The dragon's name is the past tense of the primitive Germanic verb Smugan, "to squeeze through a hole".[5]

1. John Tinkler, "Old English in Rohan," Tolkien and the Critics, pp.164-169.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 11.155.
3. T.A. Shippey, The Road to Middle Earth (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), p.94.
4. Letters, p.31.
5. idem.

An amusing bit of linguistic anachronism noted by Shippey[1]. reveals how far Tolkien's purposes changed between The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings. Shippey devotes a chapter to picking out saga language in the speech of the Elves and Dwarves, and noting its historical evolution in the Oxford English Dictionary of which Tolkien was an editor. Bilbo's concern for "profits" and "deductions" and trying to get the dwarves to commit themselves to a "contract"[2] is startlingly anachronistic and represents a relatively much more modern use of language and concepts than is found elsewhere in the story. Not only is Tolkien establishing the difference in world view between the Hobbit and members of more ancient races, he is depicting Bilbo, a product of "modern reality" as smaller and more mean spirited than his companions, and a little ridiculous in the circumstances. By The Lord of the Rings, Hobbits are taken more seriously. In his Letters, Tolkien comments:

> Mr. Baggins began as a comic tale among conventional and inconsistent Grimm's Fairy Tale Dwarves, and got drawn into the edge of it so that even Sauron the Terrible peeped over the edge. [3].

1. The Road to Middle Earth, p.65-6.
2. J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit (New York: Ballantine Books, revised 1966), p.282.
3. Letters, p.26.
   Verlyn Flieger points out that in Tolkien's first draft of the scene at the Prancing Pony, the mysterious stranger was not Strider but "a queer-looking, brown faced hobbit" by the name of Trotter.
   "The change in name seems to signal the development of a more serious tone to the story. 'Trotter' is simply not a name that can be taken seriously. The animal associations are too strong; it smacks too much of the beast fable. One thinks at best of horses, and at worst of pigs." "Frodo and Aragorn", in New Critical Perspectives, p.46. Also Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien, p.188.

Frodo's rendition of Bilbo's nonsense rhyme at the Prancing Pony[1] provides another bit of "evidence" that Tolkien is writing about our own distant history. If, as seems evident from the similarity of wording and theme, the "authentic" origin of the two nursery rhymes "Hey Diddle Diddle the Cat and the Fiddle", and "The Man in the Moon" is in fact a poem written by Bilbo Baggins late in the third age of Middle Earth, then the mangled state in which the rhymes have come down to us is simply evidence of the changes wrought by oral tradition over thousands of years, much as the old wives tales of Ents and Hobbits have become garbled in Middle Earth.

History, geography and the development of language are brought together to help identify Middle Earth as Northeastern Europe of the far distant past. This has two important consequences. To the extent that the identification succeeds, Middle Earth is real and believable, but even more important, if the events of the story are set on Earth, then the same rules of God and nature apply to Middle Earth as to its modern evolution. What is ultimately true on Earth must in fact be the ultimate reality in the story and any theological expression stated or implied must coincide with Tolkien's understanding of the mighty acts of God in human history. But because The Bible is the record of those mighty acts of God, a myth which seeks to achieve the "inner consistency of reality" must purport to record the acts of God in a history that includes elves, dwarves, hobbits and dragons. God must act, in that history, in a manner that is consistent with his actions in human history.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.216-218.

VI

THE GUIDING HAND

PROVIDENCE OR DETERMINISM?

Tolkien's interpretive framework is the Christian view of a world created and sustained by God, moving progressively through time towards the eschaton. In such a world "all things work together for good" towards the ultimate fulfillment of the divine purpose. The subcreator's problem, in such a framework, is how to render the moral choices and historical decisions real and significant. If the outcome of our actions is already decided, neither heroism nor villainy has any meaning.

The development of Tolkien's thinking on determinism and freedom can be seen in the successive drafts of his creation and fall myths. The earliest version of "The Music of the Ainur" was written between 1918 and 1920. In it, Ilúvatar responds to Melkor's rebellion, "Yet is this through him and not by him."[1] The fall of Melkor, then, was first conceived to result not from the free will of Melkor but from the predestined plan of Ilúvatar. A later draft of the same passage asks, "who shall say but that all these deeds even the seeming needless evil of Melko, were but a portion of the destiny of old?"[2] As it finally appears in The Silmarillion, Ilúvatar's statement shows a shift in orientation.

1. The Book of Lost Tales, 1, p.55.
2. idem.

> "And then, Melkor, thou shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite."[1].

The predestined will of Iluvatar remains ultimately decisive, yet in this version, Melkor's immediate actions are not directly controlled by Iluvatar.

Although The Lord of the Rings does not contain any specific references to a creator, numerous teleological hints convey a world which is acted on from outside itself. A radical discontinuity exists between the transcendent God and the created cosmos, yet the transcendent purpose is experienced within the created cosmos. As Roger Drury observes, Providence provides hope for those who serve the cause of overcoming evil.[2]. The "Free Peoples" of the West agree in acknowledging a certain moral quality which is both authoritative and regulative, and at crucial points in the narrative, experience a sense of being "called" or supported in a particular direction. In Appendix A Tolkien details the events leading up to the march of the Dwarves. Thorin's sense that he was "bidden" to seek Gandalf suggests the hand of providence gathering together the forces which must contend against the power of Mondor. As a result of that meeting the Dwarves set out to slay the dragon and Bilbo Baggins got

1. The Silmarillion, p.17
2. "Providence at Elrond's Council," Mythlore, 7, 1980, p.8 ; also Urang, Shadows of Heaven, p.119; Randel Helms, Tolkien's World (Boston; Houghton Mifflin, 1974), pp.79-80; Larry Elton Davis, p.188; Kocher, Master of Middle Earth, pp.34-57; A Reader's Guide to Middle Earth, pp.14-30; Barber, "The Meaning of The Lord of the Rings," in The Tolkien Papers, pp.48-9; Sarti, Man in a Mortal World, pp.36-45.

drawn into their adventure. The tale of the ring began when Bilbo stumbled blindly upon it in the dark. Gandalf explained to Frodo that the ring had left Gollum at the call of Sauron, but

> "There was something else at work beyond any design of the Ringmaker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the ring, and not by its maker. In which case you were also meant to have it."[1.]

Gandalf always sensed that the ring had dire powers. As soon as Bilbo found it, he said, "A shadow fell on my heart, though I did not know yet what I feared."[2.] Yet he always felt guided in some way. "I might have consulted Saruman the while," he said, "but something always held me back."

Bilbo also sensed that he was caught up in some destiny. "The time has come," he said. "I am being swept off my feet at last." Elrond's council was convened by a power which was not earthly. In underlining the importance of the decisions the council must make Elrond warned the assembly, "That is the purpose for which you are called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me."[3.] Frodo sensed the call, too, even though he wasn't really happy about it.

> "I wish I had never seen the ring: Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?"
>
> "Such questions cannot be answered. You may be sure that it was not for any merit

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.88
2. ibid., 1.71.
3. ibid., 1.318.

> that others do not possess: not for power or wisdom, at any rate. But you have been chosen, and you must therefore use such strength and heart and wits as you have."[1].

At every point in the journey there was help when help was needed, and always with the same hint that Providence had guided events to that pass. Before the Hobbits had even left the Shire the company "happened" on a company of Elves who scared away the black riders.[2]. In Mirkwood forest with nobody for miles around as far as he knew, "Frodo without any clear idea of why he did so or what he hoped for, ran along the path crying help! help! help!"[3]. After Merry and Pippin had been rescued from the grasp of the malevolent Old Man Willow, Frodo raised the question of whether Tom Bombadil's arrival was purely happenstance.

"Did you hear me calling, Master, or was it just chance that brought you at that moment?"

Tom's answer, "Just chance that brought me, then, if chance you call it. It was no plan of mine, though I was waiting for you."[4]. suggests that chance was not really involved.

On Weathertop, threatened by the Nazgûl, Frodo suddenly

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.95. Dowie notes that Providence often expresses itself as a sense of chosenness in Tolkien's tale. "The Gospel of Middle Earth," in Salu and Farrell, p.275 .
2. ibid., 1. 117-18.
3. ibid., 1.167.
4. ibid., 1.167.

heard himself crying, "O Elbereth! Gilthomiel:"[1]. Recovering from the wound of the Morgul blade he commented on his good fortune in surviving the attack. Gandalf responded, "Yes, fortune or fate have helped you, not to mention courage."[2].

Galadriel hinted at the guiding hand of providence when she told the company of the ring, "Maybe the paths that each of you shall tread are already laid before your feet, though you do not see them."[3].

Almost from his first appearance Gollum's destiny was sensed at some level. Commenting on his escape from the elves, Gandalf noted, "We have no time to seek for him again. He must do what he will. But he may play a part yet that neither he nor Sauron has foreseen."[4]. As Frodo hesitated on the brink of choice between diverting the quest to support Boromir and perhaps gaining the support of Gondor's armies and dividing the company to continue into Mordor, his friends speculated on how they might help him. Gandalf told them,

> "He is the bearer, and the fate of the Burden is on him. I do not think that it is our part to drive him one way or the other. Nor do I think that we would succeed if we tried. There are other powers at work far stronger." [5].

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.263.
2. ibid., 1.293.
3. ibid., 1.477.
4. ibid., 1.336.
5. ibid., 1.522.

When Sam foiled Frodo's attempt to slip off toward Mordor alone, "Frodo actually laughed. A sudden warmth and gladness touched his heart."

> "....So my plan is spoilt!" said Frodo. "It was no good trying to escape you. But I'm glad, Sam. I cannot tell you how glad. Come along! It is plain that we were meant to go together. We will go, and may the others find a safe road."[1].

In the last stages of the journey into Mordor Sam and Frodo seemed to be in the particular care of "The One" under whose commission they travelled. In Shelob's lair, just before beginning the journey through the tunnel Frodo was threatened by one of the Nazgûl and sorely tempted to put on his ring. Then his hand touched the phial of Galadriel, almost forgotten till that moment, and he was safe for a little while.[2]. When Frodo had been struck down by Shelob as he and Sam attempted the passage through Cirith Ungol, the words of a prayer to Elbereth suddenly sprang to Sam's tongue, though he did not know the language of the Elves.[3]. Later when the two Hobbits were trapped in the tower a similar prayer "broke the will of the watchers."[4]. On the slopes of Mount Doom, at the darkest hour, Frodo woke up and looked up to see a single white star twinkling.

> The beauty of it smote his heart and hope returned to him. For like a shaft clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the shadow was only a small and passing thing; there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach.[5].

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.526.
2. ibid., 11.401.
3. ibid., 11.418.
4. ibid., 111.234-5.
5. ibid., 111.199.

This was Eärendil the Mariner, who sailed to the undying lands in the first age to seek the aid of the Valar in the fight against Mordor. Because he had broken the ban of the Valar, Eärendil was doomed to sail across the night skies forever wearing on his brow the last of the Silmarils, gems made from the light of the two trees before the earth fell under Morgoth's evil.[1] Beyond the circles of the world is pure, uncorrupted light.

Sam, like Frodo, was aware of being called to a task, especially when he thought that Frodo had been killed, but his conviction that he must fulfill Frodo's quest grew out of his own nature as much as from anything outside himself. "What am I to do then?...now he seemed plainly to know the hard answer."

> "What? Me, alone, go to the crack of Doom and all?" He quailed still, but the resolve grew. "What? Me take the ring from him? The council gave it to him."
>
> But the answer came at once "and the council gave him companions, so that the errand should not fail. And you are the last of all the company. The errand must not fail".[2]

Like the prophets of old, Sam demurred," I'm sure to go wrong. And it's not for me to go taking the ring, putting myself forward." But in his heart he already knew the answer.

> "But you haven't put yourself forward: You've been put forward. And as for not being the right and proper person, why, Mr. Frodo wasn't, as you might say, nor Mr. Bilbo. They didn't choose themselves."[3]

Sam's conversation with himself tells us something about

1. Ruth Noel notes the importance of Eärendil as an underlying symbol for Tolkien's myth. She identifies the Old English poem Crist by Cynewulf as the source both of the name and of the image of "light sent purposefully to men." The Language of Tolkien's Middle Earth, p.9. Susan Dorman,"The Morning and the Evening Star," Minas Tirith Evening Star, 1984 Winter, 15(1), p.7, also connects Eärendil with this star.
2. The Lord the Rings, 11.434.
3. ibid., 11.433.

the working of Providence. The same dimension is implied by Frodo's attack on the orc in the mines of Moria. "Suddenly, and to his own surprise, Frodo felt a hot wrath blaze up in his heart. 'The Shire,' he cried, and springing beside Boromir he stooped and stabbed with sting at the hideous foot."[1] Frodo was suddenly given strength and courage he didn't know he had, but the strength and courage were part of his Hobbit nature, rather than a gift imposed from outside himself. Tolkien is demonstrating a Christian understanding of the effect of Divine Providence in human activity. The theologian Paul Tillich explains,

> Providence is a permanent activity of God. He is never a spectator; he always directs everything towards its fulfillment. Yet God's directing creativity always creates through the freedom of man and through the spontaneity and structural wholeness of all creatures. Providence works through the polar elements of being. It works through the conditions of individual, social and universal existence, through finitude, nonbeing and anxiety, through the interdependence of all finite things, through their resistance against the divine activity and through the destructive consequences of this resistance.[2]

Again and again Tolkien comments on the directing activity of Providence in apparent coincidences which are not coincidental at all. One such incident occurred after the fall of Orthanc. Wormtongue, in his fury, chose as a final missile to hurl at Gandalf the object which would result in the most good for the Fellowship, and the loss of which would cause Sauron the most harm. As a result of possessing the palantír Aragorn was able to force Sauron's hand. Sauron attacked too quickly, before he was prepared, and while his attention was distracted from his real danger the Hobbits crept into his very gates.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.421.
2. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1.266.

When Pippin stole a look at the palantír but was saved from revealing all he knew by Sauron's sadism, Gandalf remarked, "You have been saved, and all your friends, too, by good fortune, as it is called." The phrase recalls Bombadil's remark, "if chance you call it". Gandalf was very conscious of the nature of his world, and it was a world in which blind chance did not operate.[1] Tolkien uses him to make constant reference to the operation of an unseen design. When Aragorn told him that the Ents had begun to march Aragorn responded with a reflection on the fortunate consequences of Elrond's apparently chance decision to allow Merry and Pippin to accompany the Ring-bearer. Not only did their presence allow Boromir to redeem himself in dying to save them from the Orcs, but also their arrival in Fangorn Forest stirred the Ents to attack Parth Galen in defence of the enemies of Mordor. As Gandalf noted,

> "It is not in vain that the young hobbits came with us, if only for Boromir's sake. But that is not the only part they have to play. They were brought to Fangorn, and their coming was like the falling of small stones that starts an avalanche in the mountains."[2]

Gandalf's consciousness of unseen design is also demonstrated in a segment of the Unfinished Tales which Tolkien evidently wrote in his attempt to tie together The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, but which he apparently thought better of using. Here he is describing the

1. Gunnar Urang, "The Phenomenology of Hope," in Shadows of Imagination, (ed) Mark Hillegas (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp.103-4.
2. The Lord of the Rings 11.127.

unseen design that put Thorin's map in his hands; At the same time he accounts for the difference of tone and seriousness in the two books by the fact that The Hobbit was limited by Bilbo's point of view.

> He (Bilbo) was altogether bewildered (when the Dwarves descended on his hole) and made a complete fool of himself. Thorin would have left in a rage, but for another strange chance which I shall mention in a moment. You know how things went, at any rate as Bilbo saw them. The story would sound rather different if I had written it. For one thing he did not realize how fatuous the Dwarves thought him, nor how angry with me.

Thorin was contemptuous of Bilbo and furious with Gandalf for insisting that Bilbo go along on their raid of the dragon's lair. "He is soft," he snorted. "Soft as the mud of his Shire, and silly..." The "strange chance" turns out to have been Gandalf's possession of a map and a key obtained years before from a dying Dwarf in Dol Guldur.

> "By some warning of my heart I kept them always with me, safe, but soon almost forgotten." I had the plan and the key of the secret entrance to Erebor, by which Thror and Thrain had escaped, according to Thorin's tale. And I had kept them, though without any design of my own, until the moment when they would prove most useful.[1]

In Elvish lore the workings of divine providence are quite explicit and closely linked to the purpose of the creator. The Ainulindale, an account of creation said to have been composed by Rumil of Tirion in the Elder days,[2] portrays Ilúvatar, "The One" at the moment of creation, warning Melkor that his rebellion is already woven into the divine intention.

1. Unfinished Tales, p.323, 324-6.

2. The Silmarillion, p.17, and The Lord of the Rings, III.506.

The Akallabêth, the record of the downfall of Númenor, quotes the Valar attempting to warn the Dunedain of the folly of attempting to sail to the deathless lands to escape their mortality. "The doom of the world, they said, one alone can change who made it."[1].

The oath of Cirion by which the Rohirrim and the people of Gondor became allies seemed to Cirion to have the same character. "I believe that the words of my oath" he said, "which I had not forethought ere I spoke them, were not put in my mouth in vain. We will part then in hope."[2]. In his oath he had invoked "those who sit upon the thrones of the West" and "the one who is above all thrones forever."[3].

One indicator of a guiding principle in Middle Earth is the number of dreams and visions experienced by the participants in the Quest. Boromir came to the council of Elrond because he had been told in a dream to "seek for the sword that was broken." Frodo dreamt before setting out from Cricket Hollow of a tall white tower which he wanted to climb to see the sea (the white tower at the Grey Havens, where he would one day take ship for the uttermost West with the Elves). The first night out, he dreamt of a black wall of rock pierced by a dark arch like a great gate; Isengard, it seems. Then he dreamt he was lifted up over the wall onto a plateau on which stood a tower not made by hands, with a man's figure at the top. Wolves howled at the bottom. An eagle came and bore him away.

The Hobbits had expected when they set out from the Shire to

1. The Silmarillion, p.264.
2. Unfinished Tales, p.307.
3. ibid., p.305.

have Gandalf as guide and protector. He did not come, because he was detained by Saruman on the tower of Orthanc until Gwaihir the Eagle rescued him.[1] Frodo's dream, if he had understood it, would have given him important information about events in other places. So too of his dream at Bree, of horses galloping and the wild sound of a horn blown on the wind. That same night the horn of Buckland had sounded to warn of the three riders who had broken into Frodo's house there. At Tom Bombadil's house Frodo had a dream of sweet singing and a veil that was rolled back to show a green country under a swift sunrise, a sign of hope that the shadow might some day lift. That same night Pippin dreamt he heard sounds like willow branches scraping. He was frightened, perhaps remembering the malevolent Old Man Willow, until he heard Bombadil's assurance, "Fear nothing; have peace until the morning!"

In the Barrow under the spell of the Barrowwight Merry dreamed that the men of Carn Dûm had overcome them at night. He had no idea who the men of Carn Dûm were, but as they later learned, the swords that Tom had provided for them were forged by men of Westerness who died at the hand of the evil Lord of Carn Dûm. While Tom was speaking they all had a vision of men with swords, the last of whom had a star on his brow; Eärendil, it seems, wearing his Silmaril.

But Dreams and Visions don't always tell the truth. Denethor died in despair because he was deceived by what he saw in his palantír. The Mirror of Galadriel functions the same way. Sam saw in it future events; Frodo unconscious in Shelob's lair, then the Shire suffering

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.341-2.
2. ibid., 1.308.

under the destroying hand of Saruman, but he wasn't allowed to rush to save his homeland. Galadriel warned him,

> "Remember that the mirror shows many things, and not all yet have come to pass. Some never come to be unless those that behold the visions turn aside from their path to prevent them. The Mirror is a dangerous guide of deeds."[1].

The future is in some sense guided, but the participants are always at liberty to depart from the path before them, and dreams and visions are as likely to mislead as to guide.

The only inconsistency in any of the Middle Earth literature to the sense that all creation comes under the overriding beneficent purpose of "The One" is the account of the creation of the Dwarves.[2]. The Silmarillion explains that Aulë made the dwarves in secret because he was impatient for the arrival of the Children of Ilúvatar. If "no theme can be played which hath not its uttermost source in (Eru)" then the dwarves must have had a place in his intention. Yet, this is not the case. However, Ilúvatar brought them into his plan. This incident illustrates both the problem of free will versus determinism and the nature of the subcreative power. Illúvatar explained,

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.470. Frank Scafella interprets this symbol in relation to Tolkien's struggle with the scope of his sub-creative enterprise. "Tolkien, the Gospel and the Fairy Story," pp.321-324.
2. It must be remembered, however, that Elves and Dwarves are traditional enemies. This account is of Elvish origin and clearly reflects the bias of the Elvish point of view. In several instances Tolkien makes use of point of view to explain inconsistencies: See Unfinished Tales, p. 323; Letters, p.285. Ruth Noel notes Tolkien's interest in a consistent point of view, in particular his restraint in The Lord of the Rings in providing only as much specific information as Hobbits might be expected to know. The Language of Tolkien's Middle Earth, (Boston:Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 7.

> "Why dost thou attempt a thing which thou knowest is beyond thy power and thy authority? For thou hast from me as a gift thine own being only, and no more; and therefore the creatures of thy hand, moving when thou thinkest to move them, and if thy thought be elsewhere, standing idle." [1.]

But he ackowledged that "the making of things was in (Aulë's) heart from his own making" by Eru, and because the attempt at creation arose from Aulë's love of the world, the subcreator was forgiven and the creatures taken into the divine plan and given life and will of their own.

Like the Old Testament God who "repented the evil he had said he would do," [2] Eru can be induced to change his mind by the prayers of his creatures. The intervention of the Valar in response to Eärendil's plea at the end of the First Age points to the same understanding of God, as does the admission of Nienóri and Turin into the Halls of Fui as a result of the prayers of their parents.[3.] However both of the later examples make use of Valar, angels, to protect the immutability of "The One" who stands, for the most part, outside mutable creation.

Illúvatar's response to Aulë is more consistent with the God of The Bible who is both Prime mover and an active participant in the human world.[4.] Yet it calls into question the assertion that

1. The Silmarillion, p. 44.
2. Jonah 3:10.
3. Lost Tales II, p. 159
4. The intervention of divine agents in other parts of the tale undermines Tolkien's assertion that his world is monotheistic and essentially Christian. For example, pp 180-181 following.

nothing can occur which is not a part of Eru's original intention.[1.]

Christian Apologists of the second century A.D. evolved a Logos Christology which provided an explanation for how God, unoriginate, eternal and nameless, could be involved in the changeable world, and which formed the basis of the Trinitarian formulation . God actively intervenes in creation through the incarnation of Jesus Christ and continually supports his creatures through the activity of the Holy Spirit while remaining, as the Father, inviolate.

Tolkien's view is closer to that of the Old Testament and of modern theologians who insist that God is moved by human suffering.[2.] However, by establishing a lower order of divinity between God and the world he seems to be suggesting that God himself, "The One," remains absolute. On the other hand, he insists that Eru's love for creation is expressed in his providential care of the world. His participation in history is demonstrated also by the agents he provides to assist those who seek to carry out his intention; the Istari, the Onodrim or Ents, and the Eagles of Crissaegrim and their descendants.

Yavanna, concerned about the evils to come, told Manwe,

> "...The Kelvar can flee or defend themselves, whereas the Olvar that grow cannot. And among these I hold trees dear. Long in growing, swift shall they be in the felling, and unless they pay toll with fruit upon bough, little mourned in their passage..." 3.

1. The Silmarillion, p. 17.
2. Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers, p. 122, p. 164; Sölle, Christ the Representative, p.150-152. This understanding is consistent with his insistence that evil must be defeated without resort to power (pp 164-166 following) and with his choice of a hobbit as the agent by whom Middle Earth is rescued from the power of Morgoth.
3. The Silmarillion, p. 45.

As they talked, the song Ilúvatar unfolded to Manwë "and he heeded many many things that though he had heard them he had not heeded before." Ilúvatar told him that when the children awoke then the thought of Yavanna would awake also "and it will summon spirits from afar, and they will go among the Kelvar and the Olvar and some will dwell therein and be held in reverence, and their just anger shall be feared. For a time: While the first born are in their power and while second born are young."[1.]

There is very little speculation about the Ents in Middle Earth. Hobbits didn't know or care that they existed. Sam's attempt, at the Green Dragon, to discuss a rumour that he had heard from his cousin about a Tree Man seen on the North Moors met with general derision.[2.] Both Legolas and Aragorn had heard songs that told of Ents in the distant past[3.] but it wasn't until the legends had been confirmed by Gandalf that Aragorn actually gave credence to the stories.[4.] Gandalf called Treebeard "The oldest living thing that still walks upon this Middle Earth."[5.]

1. The Silmarillion, p.45.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.73.
3. ibid, 11.55.
4. ibid., 11.130.
5. This would contradict the speculation about Bombadil's origin (pages 136 ff), but there is no reason to believe that Gandalf would know when Bombadil arrived. At any rate Gandalf is probably mistaken, if the Ents lived on Middle Earth "While the firstborn are in their power and while second born are young." Galadriel was born in Valinor during the first age and followed Fëanor to Middle Earth in defiance of the Valar. The Noldor Kingdoms arose out of this migration. Treebeard calls the Elves "the oldest". (11.84) Also, Kirk L. Thompson, "Who is Eldest," Tolkien Journal 15, Summer, 1972, pp.16-17.

Theoden obviously knew nothing of Ents, but Gandalf told him,

> "There are children in your land who, out of the twisted threads of story, could pick the answer to your question. [You have seen] Ents, O King. Ents out of Fangorn Forest, which in your tongue you call the Entwood. Did you think the name was given only in idle Fancy?"
>
> ...The King was silent. "Ents!" he said at length. "Out of the shadows of legend I begin to understand the marvel of the trees, I think. I have lived to see strange days."[1].

Tolkien's letters about the arrival of the Ents in the tale give an interesting insight into the creative process. He wrote to W.H. Auden in 1955, "I did not consciously invent them [Ents] at all."[2]. In 1963 he explained to a reader

> There were no Ents in the older stories because Ents in fact only presented themselves to my sight, without premeditation or any previous conscious knowledge, when I came to Chapter IV of Book Three.

Further down in the same letter he surmises "...it seems clear that Beren, who had no army, received the aid of the Ents..." and then a note in pencil which shows he was already "writing back" the solution.

> Some were of the opinion that when Yavanna discovered the mercy of Eru to Aulë in the matter of the Dwarves, she besought Eru (through Manwë) asking him to give life to things made of living things not stone, and that the Ents were either souls sent to inhabit trees, or else that slowly took the likeness of trees owing to their inborn love of trees.[3].

The Ents fulfilled their destiny in defense of the Earth against Mordor, but with the dawning of the fourth age their end was

1. The Lord of the Rings, 11.197.
2. Letters, p.211.
3. ibid., p.334. See also The Silmarillion, p.235, 45-6.

in sight. The Ent wives were estranged and the Ents were growing old and sleepy; "Treeish, you might say."[1].

While the Ents seem to have arisen because of the needs of the narrative, The Eagles of Crissaegrim were Manwë's messengers from the beginning of time. In the familiar world of the Shire, Gwaihir appears as a Deus Ex Machina, but the lore of the Elves is full of the Giant Eagles, and it seems clear that Tolkien understood them as part of the struggle against evil. In the earliest versions of the Lost Tales Manwë was served by the eagle Sorontur who was recruited to keep a watchful eye on the activities of Melkor from the time his rebellion first disrupted the work of creation. In The Silmarillion as it appeared in print nearly sixty years later, Sorontur had become Thorondor. The birds were part of the music of the Ainur. Yavanna said,

> "Did not thy thought and mine meet also, so that we took wing together like great birds that soar above the clouds? That shall also come to be by the heed of Ilúvatar and before the children awake there shall go forth with wings like the wind, the Eagles of the Lord of the West."
>
> " In the mountains the Eagles shall house and hear the voices of those who call upon us."[2].

In the first age, after the treachery of Fëanor against his half-brothers had divided the Noldor in their struggle against Morgoth, Fëanor's son Maedhros was rescued by his cousin Fingon, who invoked the aid of Manwë:

1. The Lord of the Rings, 11.89
2. The Silmarillion, p.46.

> His prayer was answered swiftly. For Manwë to whom all birds are dear, and to whom they bring news upon Taniquetil from Middle Earth, had sent forth the race of Eagles, commanding them to dwell in the crags of the North, and to keep watch upon Morgoth; ...Now even as Fingon drew his bow, there flew down from the high airs Thorondor, King of Eagles, mightiest of all birds that have ever been, whose outstretched wings spanned thirty fathoms: And staying Fingon's hand he took him up and bore him to the face of the rock where Maedhros hung. But Fingon could not release the hell wrought bond...Fingon cut off his hand above the wrist and Thorondor bore them back to Mithrim.[1].

Tolkien is drawing on Promethean imagery here but the point within the secondary world he has created is that this is the first of several prototypes of which Gwaihir in the third age provides the anti-type. Giant Eagles (and shepherds of the trees) belong to this world and are part of the divine plan.

In a description of Númenor in Unfinished Tales we are told of the Holy Mountain and the Eagles which guard it.[2].

> (The Eagles) are held sacred to Manwë...For two thousand years, from the days of Elros Tar-Minyatur until the time of Tar Ancalimon, there was an eyrie in the summit of the tower in the King's palace in Armenelos; and there one pair ever dwelt and lived on the bounty of the King.[3].

In the account of the fall of Beleriand The Silmarillion tells us that the eagles of Crissaegrim bore Hurin and Huor over the encircling

1. The Silmarillion, p.110.
2. This particular passage is so full of New Jerusalem imagery that Tolkien probably decided to omit it as too allegorical.
3. Unfinished Tales, p. 169.

mountains to the hidden city of Gondolin,[1]. The Great Eagle Thorondor and his vassals rescued Berin and Lúthien from the wolf of Angband[2]. and just before the sinking of Númenor the Eagles came as a warning to Ar-Pharazôn.

> Out of the West there would come, at times, a great cloud in the evening, shaped as it were an eagle, with pinions spread to the North and South, and slowly it would loom up, blotting out the sunset, and their uttermost might would fall upon Númenor. And some of the Eagles bore lightening beneath their wings, and thunder echoed between the sea and the cloud.
>
> Then men grew afraid. "Behold the Eagles of the Lords of the West!" they cried, "The Eagles of Manwë are come upon Númenor!" And they fell upon their faces.
>
> Then some few would repent for a season.[3].

The apocalyptic imagery here suggests Matthew 23:25-30, but it is also the type for the eruption of Mount Doom:

> Then the Eagles of the Lords of the West came out of the dayfall and they were arrayed as for battle, advancing in a line the end of which diminished beyond sight. And as they came their wings spread even wider, grasping the sky. But the West burned red behind them, and they glowed beneath as though they were lit with a flame of great anger, so that all Númenor was illumined as with a smouldering fire.[4].

Gwaihir, Gandalf's friend and messenger in Middle Earth, influenced the course of history even though his comings and goings remained largely unnoticed. He was, the narrative explains, The

1. The Silmarillion, p. 158.
2. ibid., p. 182.
3. ibid., p.277.
4. The Silmarillion, p.277-8; compare The Lord of the Rings 111.278ff.

Windlord, "greatest of all the eagles of the North, mightiest of the descendants of old Thorondor who built his eyries in the inaccessible peaks of the Encircling Mountains when Middle Earth was young."[1] He rescued Gandalf from Saruman's tower at Orthanc.[2] He found him and bore him away from the pinnacle of the Silvertine after his battle with the Balrog.[3] In the great battle Gwaihir brought his minions against the Nazgûl. The unique weapon of the Nazgûl was their ability to paralyze with despair all those who stood in their way; yet the eagles seemed to turn this very gift against them. "Now, looking into the eyes of their enemies (the Nazgûl) saw a deadly light and were afraid."[4] In The Silmarillion the eyes of the Eagles of Manwë are compared to the crystals crafted by Fëanor "in which things far away might be seen."[5] These are the Palantíri. Perhaps the Ringwraiths could see in the eyes of Gwaihir and his minions the defeat of Mordor and the end of Sauron's reign. Gwaihir performed one more rescue, that of Sam and Frodo from the eruption of Mount Doom, then a great eagle was the herald of the victory in the field of Cormallen.[6]

The characters and events of Tolkien's tale seem constantly to be guided in the direction of a hidden purpose beyond their understanding. Frequently, there is a hint of unseen help behind apparent coincidence. In these ways as well as by providing for the direct intervention of agents created for the purpose of caring for creation, Tolkien has clearly indicated the providential care of God over his world.

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.278.
2. ibid., II.126.
3. ibid., II.135.
4. idid., III.279.
5. The Silmarillion, p.64.
6. The Lord of the Rings, III.297-8.

VII

FREEDOM?

The problem with a world in which Giant Eagles rescue the "good guys" is that evil can be less than real if everything is safely in God's hands. This is the frustration to which Robert Giddings is reacting when he complains,

> Evil is Evil pure and simple. It has nothing to do with social or economic causes. Consequently there is no need for change of socio-economic conditions, the environmental conditions of life, relations between the classes etc., etc. - all the things which make up the very fabric of a society, of any society are perceived by Tolkien as totally beyond any need or possibility of change.[1]

Giddings objects to the vision he sees in Tolkien's myth, of pastoral harmony with everybody happily occupying the place decreed by Providence and nobody striving to acquire more power or influence than allotted to him. Nick Otty attributes Tolkien's relatively inflexible attitudes to race and class to " the sort of determinism presupposed by Augustine's Great Chain of Being." [2].

1. This Far Land, (London: Vision Press, 1983) p.13.

2. "The Structuralist's Guide to Middle Earth", in Giddings, pp.165 and 172. Other critics who accuse Tolkien of class snobbery are Fred Inglis in Giddings, p.38; Derek Robinson, in Giddings p.110, and Roger Sale in "Tolkien and Frodo Baggins" in Tolkien and the Critics p.278. Rose Zimbardo responds that those who interpret his work in this way are reading into it the spirit of nineteenth century naturalism. ("The Medieval-Renaissance Vision of The Lord of the Rings in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.67.)

Paul Tillich points out the tension in any theology of providence.

> Providence means a fore-seeing (pro-videre) which is a fore-ordering ("seeing to it"). This ambiguity of meaning expresses an ambiguous feeling toward providence, and it corresponds to different interpretations of the concept. If the element of foreseeing is emphasized, God becomes the omniscient spectator who knows what will happen but does not interfere with the freedom of his creatures. If the element of foreordering is emphasized, God becomes a planner who has ordered everything that will happen "before the foundations of the world;" All natural and historical processes are nothing more than the execution of this supratemporal divine plan. In the first interpretation, the creatures make this world and God remains a spectator; In the second interpretation the creatures are cogs in a universal mechanism, and God is the only active agent.[1.]

Both these interpretations of Providence must be emphatically rejected. Tillich goes on to explain that God does, in fact, direct everything towards fulfillment, but that His direction is through human freedom. "The man who believes in providence does not believe that a special divine activity will alter the conditions of finitude and estrangement. He believes and asserts with the courage of faith that no situation whatsoever can frustrate the fulfillment of his ultimate destiny, that nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."[2.]

Tolkien works very hard, if not completely successfully, at maintaining this balance.[3.] A recurring theme of the story is the

1. Systematic Theology, 1.266.
2. ibid., 1.267.
3. See Deborah Rogers and Ivor Rogers, J.R.R. Tolkien (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) p.84; Hood, The Lidless Eye and the Long Journey, pp.186-7; Spacks, "Power and Meaning in The Lord of the Rings," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, pp.86-89; Jane Nitzche, Tolkien's Art, A Mythology for England, p.111. for discussion of this tension.

role of human decision in evolving history. As William Glover comments,

> Despite the overtones of transcendent purpose, Tolkien is successful in portraying the agony of decision in which the outcome of various courses of action cannot be known... With great skill Tolkien preserves the tension between the hazards of decision by limited creatures and the sense that "there are other powers at work far stronger."[1].

The sovereignty of God is not a fate which deprives his creatures of freedom or which renders their decisions inconsequential. Instead we are given a dialectical, historical world in which "the future is being hammered out between the mutual responses of the sovereign purpose behind events and creatures who are making real decisions and acting with significant effect."[2].

Middle Earth was peopled by at least eight species of intelligent life, six of which called themselves "free peoples." Treebeard, in listing his catalogue of living creatures began

> First name the four, the free peoples:
> Eldest of all, the elf children;
> Dwarf the delver, dark are his houses;
> Ent the earth born, old as mountains;
> Man the Mortal, master of horses.[3].

The list is an ancient one which treebeard had learned in his youth, evidently before the arrival of Hobbits and wizards. After his meeting with Merry and Pippin he amended the catalogue to include Hobbits. Wizards were not included, perhaps because only five were known. Treebeard observed, "I do not know the history of wizards."

1. Willis B. Glover, "The Christian Character of Tolkien's Invented World," Criticism 13 (1971), p.50.
2. Glover, p.45. Also Mathews, who considers free will "potentially the most powerful force in the Tale," (Lightning from a Clear Sky, p.25).
3. The Lord of the Rings, p.11.84.

If he had ever heard of Tom Bombadil and Goldberry he might still have omitted them since each appears to be the only example of the species.[1.]

The Hobbit has several races which do not appear in the later book, among which Beorn the skinchanger was clearly an ally of the West, but like the Pûkelmen of Druedain Forest, Beorn seems to have been a member of the human family.

A second list of free peoples is Elrond's company which was commissioned with responsibility for accompanying the Ringbearer. In that fellowship were Wizard, Dwarf, Man, Elf and Hobbit. Ents were not included. The other two species which shared the capacity to use language and therefore to communicate, the Orcs and the Trolls, are never referred to as free. Presumably they had so fallen under the domination of Sauron that they had lost the capacity to exercise free will.

To designate a people as "free" clearly means more than to make the distinction between Aulë's dwarves which could live and move

1. This list as it finally appears in The Lord of the Rings is considerably shortened, but Tom and Goldberry may be carryover from earlier conceptions. The world of The Lost Tales is peopled with a multiplicity of spirits and sprites.

"These are the Nermir and the Tavari, Nandine and Urossi, brownies, fays, pixies, leprechauns, and what else are they not called, for their number is very great: Yet must they not be confused with the Eldar, for they were born before the world and are older than its oldest, and are not of it, but laugh at it much, for had they not somewhat to do with its making, so that it is for the most part a play for them." (p.66)

These life forms disappear in later drafts, some to be replaced by the Maiar, represented in Middle Earth by the Istari, the Balrog and Shelob's foremother, Ungoliant.

only by his will and the same dwarves given life and will by Eru's adoption; Orcs and Trolls do not seem to move always under the control of their creator like mechanical puppets. Freedom seems to have some relation to responsibility. In an attempt to make this a little clearer, Tolkien grants the second born an exemption from the fate of all other creatures. "To the Atani," he said, "I will give a new gift."

> Therefore he willed that the hearts of men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the music of the Ainur which is as fate to all things else,...It is one with this gift of freedom that the Children of Men dwell only for a short space in the world alive, and are not bound to it and depart soon, whither the Elves know not.[1]

This doesn't really work. Freedom seems to be related to mortality, and to be the Gift of Iluvatar to Humans and Hobbits, but the freedom to make genuine moral choices is equally real for Elves, Dwarves and Wizards. In all three species (and Ents as well, if Treebeard's word is to be trusted) we have examples of individuals who made wrong choices as well as those who made right choices. If Freedom is understood to imply responsibility and therefore judgement, the implication might be that only the mortal races must face judgement at the end of history; certainly only humans have been promised that they shall join in the Second Music of the Ainur. Yet without exception, the Free peoples believe that there is a role as yet unrevealed for them beyond the circles of the world. Ents look to a time "in the West" after "darkness falls at last" when both Ent and Entwife can live

1. The Silmarillion, p.42.

together and be content.[1] Even the Dwarves who were not part of the song of the Ainur and so were created "within history", believe that beyond death is more than memory. Thorin, dying, bid farewell to Bilbo in The Hobbit saying "Farewell, good thief...I go now to the halls of waiting to sit beside my fathers until the world is renewed."[2] Here Tolkien may be playing with other concepts of history, however, than the Christian view.

The oldest of the fathers of the Dwarves was named Durin. Durin lived so long that he was called "The Deathless", and even after his eventual passing, "five times an heir was born to his House so like to his Forefather that he received the name of Durin."[3] There is an intriguing suggestion here of reincarnation, perhaps related in some way to the fact that the Dwarves are creatures within history rather than part of the thought of Eru before creation. Reincarnation, however implies a cyclical view of history, a view which, because it is contrary to the Christian reality that Tolkien has worked so hard to convey, is rather distracting.[4]

1. The Lord of the Rings, 11.102.
2. The Hobbit, p.272.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 111.438-439.
4. That the concept of reincarnation is one to which Tolkien was attracted is evident in a description of Ilúvatar's ultimate intention for Elves, written between 1918 and 1920. "...The Eldar dwell for ever unless they be slain or waste in grief (for to both these deaths are they subject), nor doth eld subdue their strength, except it be in ten thousand centuries; and dying they are reborn in their children, so that their number minishes not, nor grows." The Book of Lost Tales, 1, p55.

All this is no more than a hint and much of the confusion about Tolkien's intention arises from materials which were published after Tolkien's death. The letters, for example, indicate that a number of readers had raised the problem of whether creatures can be "bred" evil to the extent that its members are not capable of moral choice.[1] In the forward to The Silmarillion Christopher Tolkien notes that one of his difficulties in editing the work for publication was that...

> As the years passed the changes and variants, both in detail and in larger perspective, became so complex, so pervasive, and so many layered that a final and definitive version seemed unattainable. Moreover the old legends ("old" now not only in their derivation from the remote first age, but also in terms of my father's life) became the vehicle and depository of his profoundest reflections. In his later writing mythology and poetry sank down behind his theological and philosophical preoccupations.[2]

But the inconsistencies which have been introduced by Tolkien's attempts to fine tune the theological and philosophical foundation of a many-layered work are relatively insignificant. What is absolutely clear in all the writings is Tolkien's assertion of the radical nature of the free will of the Peoples of the West.

Paul H. Kocher has coupled every incident which suggests foreordination with some notable exercise of free will by one of the characters.[3] Bilbo's choice of whether or not to kill Gollum was genuinely free but once the choice was made it was woven into the

1. Letters, p. 191, 195, etc.
2. The Silmarillion, p.7.
3. Kocher, Master of Middle Earth, pp.39-40. Daniel Hughes ties "the true optimism of the work" to the freedom of its characters. "Pieties and Giant Forms" in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.76.

master plan. When Elrond's council had come to the conclusion that the Ring must be returned to the Cracks of Doom they were very careful to allow Frodo complete freedom to decide whether or not he could make the nearly hopeless journey.[1] Once Frodo had made his choice, however, Elrond told him,

> "If I understand aright all that I have heard.. I think this task is appointed to you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will. This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields and shake the towers and counsels of the great...
>
> But it is a heavy burden. So heavy that none could lay it on another. I do not lay it on you. But if you take it freely, I will say that your choice is right."[2]

The company of the Ringbearer is similarly left free to make their own choices. Elrond tells them

> "This is my last word. The Ringbearer is setting out on the quest for Mount Doom. On him alone is any charge laid...The others go with him as free companions, to help him on his way. You may tarry, or come back, or turn aside into other paths as chance allows. The farther you go the less easy it will be for you to withdraw; yet no oath or bond is laid on you to go further than you will."[3]

In marked contrast to the power of Mordor, the strong in the West never compel. This is part of the mandate of the Wizards who were "forbidden to match [Sauron's] power with power or to seek to dominate Elves or Men by force or fear."[4] The same pattern is always evident in the relationships between the mighty and the weak. Galadriel tells the company

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.354.
2. ibid., 1.355.
3. ibid., 1.367.
4. ibid., 111.455.

> "I will not give you counsel, saying do this or do that, for not in doing or contriving nor in choosing between this course and another can I avail; but by only in knowing what was and is, and in part also what shall be."[1].

Aragorn likewise refuses to push Frodo one direction or another.

> "I fear the burden is laid on you. You are the bearer appointed by the council. Your own way you alone can choose. In this matter I cannot advise you. I am not Gandalf, and though I have tried to bear his part I do not know what design or hope he had for this hour, if indeed he had any. Most likely it seems that if he were here now the choice would still wait on you. Such is your fate."[2].

The tension between free will and destiny is demonstrated by the description of Frodo's ordeal at Cirith Ungol.

> "It took his hand, and as Frodo watched with his mind, not willing it but in suspense (as if he looked on some old story far away), it moved the hand inch by inch towards the chain upon his neck. Then his own will stirred. Slowly it forced the hand back and set it to find another thing, a thing lying hidden in his breast."

Here Frodo is almost a non-participant caught between two competing wills, rescued at last by the Phial of Galadriel which he seems to have grasped without really knowing what he was doing. It is easy to understand why some critics accuse Tolkien of plot manipulation which prevents adequate character development.[3]. Tolkien's difficulty

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.462.
2. ibid., 1.512.
3. Urang, "Phenomenology of Hope," p.104. Shadows of Heaven, p.119; Janet Menzies, "Middle Earth and the Adolescent" in Giddings, p.66, Ryan, "Folktale, Fairy Tale and the Creation of a Story" in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p.31; Otty, "The Structuralist's Guide to Middle Earth." in Giddings, p.168.

here is exacerbated by his understanding of radical evil as a power against which one must contend. Providence, then, becomes a competing force, and human freedom risks being squeezed between the two.

Another instance of the power struggle occurred after Frodo had escaped Boromir and was sitting, wearing the ring on the ancient stone throne of Amon Hen.

> Suddenly he felt the Eye...He knew that it had become aware of his gaze. A fierce eager will was there. It leaped towards him; almost like a finger crying out: Never, Never! or was it Verily I come, I come to you? He could not tell. Then as a flash from some other point of power there came to his mind another thought. Take it off! Take it off! Fool, take it off! Take off the Ring!
>
> The two powers strove in him. For a moment, perfectly balanced between their piercing points, he writhed, tormented.

Here Frodo seems almost to be possessed by two demons, one Good, the other Evil. The effect is to render him a helpless victim in a Manichean world, a suspicion which is reinforced by the apparent ability of the forces of Evil to create Orcs which are irredeemable and by some aspects of Tolkien's creation myth (pages 180 and 181 following). Nevertheless, Tolkien insists that Frodo remained free.

> Suddenly he was aware of himself again. Frodo. Neither the Voice nor the Eye. Free to chooses, and with one remaining instant in which to do so. [1].

At every turn in the road, the element of choice is articulated. Aragorn, when he had made the decision that he must follow the Paths of the Dead, invited Legolas and Gimli to join him. But "only of your own free will would I have you come, for you will find both toil and great fear, and maybe worse."[2].

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.512.
2. ibid., 111.64.

The Elvish tradition warns of the consequences of the arbitrary exercise of power. "If ever in their dealings with Elves and Men the Ainur have endeavoured to force them when they would not be guided, seldom has this turned to good, howsoever good the intent."[1.]

Part of the working out of free will in the quest concerns the possession of the Ring. Each of the main characters was given, at some point, the choice of grasping the Ring and wielding its power or of freely giving up that potential. We are warned by Bilbo's difficulty in following his own plan to pass the Ring on to his nephew that this test is not to be taken lightly.

Bilbo was a Hobbit, and in conformity with his Hobbit nature he had no particular motivation to hold anybody in his power. Hobbits lived in a sort of idyllic democracy in which there was little authority and even less use for it. The Sheriffs, for example, had no uniforms, never having heard of such a thing, "only a feather in their caps. And they were in practice rather haywards than policemen, more concerned with the strayings of beasts than of people."[2.] Bilbo rarely made use of even the one gift he knew the Ring could confer, the power to disappear at will, and he was even less possessive of material things than the average Hobbit. Yet even Bilbo gave up the Ring with great difficulty at Gandalf's urging. Frodo immediately tried to pass it on to Gandalf who violently rejected it. Only Gandalf was fully aware of the terrible consequences of using the Ring's power, but by the same token only he was fully aware of that power. With the Ring Gandalf would have been powerful enough to overcome Sauron by force by turning the strength that Sauron had forged into the Ring against its creator.

1. The Silmarillion, p.41.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.31.

Without it, the chances for the Free Peoples looked very poor. Not even Gandalf himself, in his incarnate state, could stand before the power of Morgoth. After his refusal of the Ring, Gandalf never again seemed to suffer its temptation.

From the time the Hobbits met Aragorn at Bree, they were in his power. The Ring was his by inheritance from Isildur and it would have been a simple matter for him to seize it. Aragorn would never be able to claim his throne at Minas Tirith until Sauron had been defeated. Of even greater consequence, Elrod had forbidden the courtship of Aragorn of his daughter Arwen Evenstar until Aragorn had established himself a worthy suitor for a Princess of Elvendom. Although the power of the Ring might ensure his early victory, it was a proof of his nobility that he never seriously considered taking it and trying to make use of it.

The most dramatic of the trials was Galadriel's. Lórien was a land enchanted by the power of the Elf-ring she wore. It was a place as near the perfection of the Undying Lands as the mortal world is able to support, and it was the spiritual home of Elves everywhere in Middle Earth. Yet when the one Ring was destroyed, Galadriel knew that her ring would lose its efficacy. Lórien would fade and the Elves would be forced to diminish or depart from Middle Earth. When Frodo offered her the Ring Galadriel responded:

> "For many long years I had pondered what I might do, should the Great Ring come into my grasp. The evil that was devised long ago works on in many ways whether Sauron himself stands or falls....
>
> You will give me the Ring freely. In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen, and I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the morning and the night! Fair as the sun and the sea and the snow upon the mountains!

> Dreadful as the storm and the lightning!
> Stronger than the Foundations of the earth.
> All shall love me and despair!"
>
> She lifted up her hand and from the ring that she wore there issued a great light that illuminated her alone and left all else dark. She stood above Frodo seeming now tall beyond measure and beautiful beyond enduring, terrible and worshipful. Then she let her hand drop, and the light faded, and suddenly she laughed again, and lo! she was shrunken: a slender elf-woman, clad in simple white, whose gentle voice was soft and sad.
>
> "I pass the test," she said, "I will diminish and go into the West, and remain Galadriel."[1]

Of all the company, only Boromir made the wrong choice concerning the use of the Ring's power. Boromir was a man of Gondor, and we are warned of his people that they habitually put the welfare of Gondor before any other loyalty. Boromir was a proud man and a soldier who respected deeds of strength and power. All his life he had chaffed under the custom which named his father "Steward" instead of "King". When he was first informed of the Ring his response was that it should be used in the struggle against Sauron. His consent to its destruction was always reluctant and as the moment approached when Frodo and the Ring would take another path and slip out of his grasp forever, Boromir was unable to resist the Ring's call. His fall was the result of a choice freely made in the same sense that Gandalf's refusal to fall was the expression of his freedom, yet even this evil is woven into the transcendent purpose of The One.

Because of Boromir's fall the fellowship of the Ring was separated. Frodo and Sam set out alone to Mordor; Merry and Pippin

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.473-4.

were snatched and taken to Fangorn by the Orcs; Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli began the journey which would marshall Rohan against Mordor.

Through the entire adventure there was a pervading sense that "in all things God works good," and that his purposes were being worked out even as Man exercised his free will. The Elvish legends describe Manwë's grief when his messengers informed him that Fëanor remained determined to disobey the will of the valar, but would "do deeds to live in song forever."

> "So shall it be. Dear bought those songs shall be accounted, and yet shall be well bought, for the price could be no other. Thus, even as Eru spoke to us, shall beauty not before conceived be brought into Eä, and evil yet be good to have been."[1].

Because mortals enjoy radical freedom, history is transcendent over nature. Ultimately historical decision will be the determining factor in the future course of events. It marked a significant step in Sam's growth when he realized that the events in which he was participating were part of the same story as the adventures of the heroes of the past. Past, present and future are linked together in historical continuity.[2]. By its very nature the cosmic order tends toward goodness and in the long run the forces of evil must be overcome, but no creature is able to know when that will be. In the short run evil is permitted to triumph. Morgoth could be defeated by neither

1. The Silmarillion, p.98.
2. Lionel Basney calls this process the "realization of myth," "Myth, History and Time," in New Critical Perspectives, p.12.

Elves nor Humans for the thousands of years of the first age until the Valar intervened. Again in the Second Age evil appeared to be the stronger power. Sauron won again and again, and even his defeat by Númenor was turned into victory when his nine Rings of Power caused the Númenóreans to revolt against the Valar. Then in the Third Age the West appeared to be on the brink of being swept under the power of Mordor. Even Gandalf had no assurance that the war of the Ring would restore the moral order; however for Gandalf the vision of an eventual triumph was powerful enough to sustain him. "For my part I shall not wholly fail in my task, though Gondor should perish, if anything passes through this night that can still grow fair or bear fruit and flower again in days to come."[1].

But history occurs within historical time, and God's purpose transcends time and space. Jung states the problem in psychological terms.

> Man is included in the divine process and this means that the principle of separateness and autonomy over against God... is included in it too. But for this there would have been no creation and no work of salvation either. The shadow and the opposing will are necessary conditions for all actualization. An object that has no will of its own, capable if need be of opposing its creator, and with no qualities other than its creator's, such an object has no independent existence and is incapable of ethical decision. At best it is just a piece of clockwork which the creator has to wind up to make it function.[2].

Tillich makes the same point in theological language;

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.189.
2. "A Psychological Approach to Trinity", Collected Works, Vol. II, par. 290.

> Every theologian who is courageous enough to face the twofold truth that nothing can happen to God accidentally and that the state of existence is a fallen state must accept the point of coincidence between the end of creation and the beginning of the fall.[1.]

The beginning of historical time is the beginning of the fall. Within history the free choice of humankind takes precedence over even the song of the Ainur. Yet "these, too, in their time shall find that all they do redounds at the end only to the glory of (Ilúvatar's) work."[2.]

An interesting symbol of the transcendence of history over nature is Tom Bombadil. Tom is the most enigmatic character in the book. His name is not mentioned in the lists of Free People and he never associated himself with either side in the War of the Rings. We are aware because of his rescue of the Hobbits from Old Man Willow and his remark that some of the trees had "bad hearts" that Tom was in sympathy with the Western Powers, but in a real sense the battle was not his battle. The Ring had no power over him. He had little interest in it and Frodo did not become invisible to him by wearing it. "Tom was here before the rivers and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn. He made paths before the big people and saw the little people arriving."[3.] The implication of Tom's statement is that he was present at creation yet there is no hint that he was in any sense a creator.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.256.
2. The Silmarillion, p.42.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 1.182.

Asked who he was, Goldberry responded, "He is. He is as you have seen him."[1] Tom answered Frodo's question, "Don't you know my name yet? That is the only answer...Eldest. That's what I am."[2] Elrond said of Bombadil, "Iarwain Ben-Adar we called him, Oldest and Fatherless."[3] Tom was called "The master of wood, water and hill,"[4] but a careful distinction was maintained between mastery and ownership. "The trees and the grasses and all things growing belong each to themselves," said Goldberry. "Tom is the master."[5]

In his letters Tolkien states that Bombadil is intentionally enigmatic,[6] but notes that "I put him in because I had already invented him."[7] Tolkien had submitted the Bombadil poems to Stanley Unwin in 1937, well before he thought of connecting The Hobbit and The Silmarillion. He had described Bombadil as "The Spirit of the (Vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside."[8] As he appeared in The Lord of the Rings he was still the same character somewhat expanded and refined by the demands of the tale. He conversed with birds and beasts, with barrow-wights and trolls. He won his bride, the song says, by capturing her

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.182.
2. ibid., 1.182.
3. ibid., 1.347.
4. ibid., 1.174.
5. ibid., 1.174.
6. Letters, p.174.
7. ibid., p.192.
8. ibid., p.26.

from her mother the river sprite, who lived in the Withywindle. By the power of his singing he forced Old Man Willow to release Pippin and Merry. Obviously Tom was not estranged from the rest of nature as fallen mortals are. However, because he doesn't fit into the inner consistencies of Tolkien's created world, Tom is not an entirely successful character. Thomas Gasque finds him, like the Balrog and Shelob, difficult to believe in because they have no mythological roots and aren't part of the framework of the story.[1] Roger Sale calls Tom "an invention rather than a creation," for the same reason.[2]

An intriguing theory of his significance is advanced by Timothy O'Neill.[3] In her Mythology of Middle Earth Ruth Noel traced the derivation of the word "Bombadil" from the Middle English words for "hidden and humming." O'Neill ties this to the song of the Valar and postulates that Tom was part of the unrevealed intention of Ilúvatar in creation.[4] This would place Bombadil's appearance prior to the rebellion of Melkor and the beginning of evil. He would therefore enjoy immunity to the Ring. O'Neill suggests that he is a sort of "primordial man", undifferentiated because he was in the song rather than the act of creation within time.

1. "Tolkien, the Monsters and the Critters," in Tolkien and the Critics, p.158.
2. "England's Parnassus," in Tolkien and the Critics, p.221.
3. The Individuated Hobbit, p.121ff.
4. "To none but himself has Ilúvatar revealed all that he has in store, and in every age there come forth things that are new and have no foretelling, for they do not proceed from the past." The Silmarillion, p.18.

The special aspect of the creation of human beings, the freedom to shape their lives beyond the music of the Ainur, makes O'Neill's theory interesting. The distinction between Bombadil and all other creatures would be the difference between essence and existence; Tom would represent Man as God originally conceived him, the people of Middle Earth, Man as he takes his place in History. Tom does not enjoy Free will, but neither is he subject to estrangement and death.[1.] If Tom is a sort of pre-lapsarian Adam, the rather enigmatic bit of information that Tom named each of the ponies and they answered to their new names as long as they lived might be explained by comparison with Genesis 2:19

> "Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name."[2.]

It is clear that whether Tom is a nature principle, an undifferentiated Adam or something else again, he stands outside normal historical events such as the making of the Ring. If he were entrusted with hiding it from Sauron, Bombadil would soon forget about it

1. "It is one with this gift of freedom that the Children of Men dwell only a short space in this world alive, and are not bound to it, and depart soon, whither the Elves know not." The Silmarillion, p.42.
2. Yet another interpretation is advanced by Deborah and Ivor Rogers, who suggest that Tom represents Wisdom.
"The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways...I was playing before him at all times, playing in his world."
"This Biblical connection puts Tom's unparalleled levity in a new light. In having him the consort of the nymph, Goldberry, singer of the rain, Tolkien shows his ideal as a union of consciousness with nature; hence the shining forth of cosmic harmony in their household." (J.R.R. Tolkien, p.101.) Also note Kirk L. Thompson "Who is the Oldest," Tolkien Journal 15, summer 1972, pp.16-17.

or lose it. "Such things have no hold in his mind." Yet in spite of his immunity to the Ring's effects, Tom is not invulnerable. "Power to defy our enemy is not in him unless such power is in the earth itself. And yet we see that Sauron can torture the very hills." History transcends nature. "In the end, if all else is conquered, Bombadil will fall last as he was first, and then night will come."[1] As Glover comments, the end remains a mystery. "Despite the overtones of transcendent purpose there remains the sometimes overwhelming threat of proximate evil in the immediate context of one's existence."[2] Not knowing the outcome is what makes decisons real and gives them moral seriousness. The actions of each character become meaningful by their relation to the gigantic struggle which is being waged between Good and Evil.

It is against this backdrop of cosmic proportions that the quest of a small, foolish creature that grows hair in its feet becomes heroic. Frodo "accepted the burden voluntarily and then [did] all that was within his utmost physical and mental strength to do."[3] There was no assurance that he would be successful, in fact Tolkien states categorically, "it was quite impossible for him to surrender the Ring in act or will, especially at its point of maximum power."

> I think...of the mysterious last petitions of the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. A petition against something that cannot happen is unmeaning. There exists the possibility of being placed in positions beyond one's power.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.348.
2. Glover, "The Christian Character of Tolkien's Invented World," Criticism, 13, p.51.
3. Letters, p.251.

> In which case (as I believe) salvation from ruin will depend on something apparently unconnected; the general sanctity (and humility and mercy)of the sacrificial person.[1.]

As Gwenyth Hood has pointed out, Frodo's failure is not a result of sin, but rather of his self-sacrificing concern for Middle Earth. "I suppose," he said, "I must keep the ring and guard it, at least for the present, whatever it may do to me."[2.] Frodo had no illusions of moral superiority which would render him capable of resisting the ring's power, he simply carried it because he believed that he had been chosen to do so. Hood notes,

> The choice he made, involving the risk of his own apostacy and permanent enslavement to Sauron, was, in itself, right and laudable, and that it led (as far as Frodo's natural powers were concerned) to his overthrow rather than his triumph was a factor beyond his control.
>
> No other choice would have brought Frodo to Mount Doom;...Providence, therefore, in intervening as it does, is merely affirming the real, long range choice underlying Frodo's momentary and artifically stimulated choice. By no means is it superimposing an extraneous morality upon Frodo.[3.]

Frodo's quest was saved by Gollum's intervention at the last moment, made possible because Frodo had been merciful to him. Tolkien

1. Letters, p.252.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.71.
3. The Lidless Eye and the Long Burden, p.192. In contrast numerous critics find Tolkien's plot at this point fundamentally unsatisfactory. Janet Menzies complains that theological purpose takes precedence over character development ("Middle Earth and the Adolescent," in Giddings, p.66), and Gunnar Urang considers Frodo's failure a manipulation to "give the last word to overriding grace." (Shadows of Heaven, p.128).

explained this,

> We are assured that we must be ourselves extravagantly generous, if we are to hope for the extravagant generosity which the slightest easing of, or escape from, the consequences of our own follies and errors represents. And that mercy does sometimes occur in this life.
>
> Frodo deserved all honour because he spent every drop of his power of will and body, and that was just sufficient to bring him to the destined point and no further. Few others, possibly no others of his time would have got so far. The other Power then took over: The Writer of the Story (by which I do not mean myself), that one every-present Person who is never absent and never named.[1.]

The suggestion that Frodo was rescued as a result of "deserving" raises the problem of works versus grace. Tolkien's letter seems to imply that the "extravagant generosity" of God is related in some way to our behavior; that is, salvation depends on human response rather than solely on God's Grace through Christ's atoning sacrifice.[2.] The same issue comes up in reference to Galadriel.

> Actually Galadriel was a penitent: In her youth a leader of the rebellion against the Valar. At the end of the first age she proudly refused forgiveness or permission to return. She was pardoned because of her resistance to the final and overwhelming temptation to take the Ring for herself.[3.]

1. Letters, p. 253.
2. See pp.232ff. following.
3. Letters, p.407. Tolkien, however, had not finally made up his mind about Galadriel. In a letter written two years later he asserted,
   > Galadriel was "unstained": She had committed no evil deeds. She was an enemy of Fëanor. She did not reach Middle Earth with the other Noldor but independently. Her reasons for desiring to go to Middle Earth were legitimate and she would have been permitted to depart but for the misfortune that before she set out the revolt of Fëanor had broken out. Letters, p.431.

   Tolkien presumably intended to make the necessary alterations to bring the still unpublished Silmarillion into consistency with this view, which would have the effect of reinforcing the Virgin Mary imagery around Galadriel.

Randal Helms, in a chapter outlining the "internal laws of Middle Earth" suggests that intention structures results. "A good action with a good intent will have a good result."[1] The apparent coincidences that bring events to a fortunate conclusion are always, Helms believes, the result of a previous act of justice or kindness. Gollum rescued the quest at the last moment because Frodo was merciful to him. This is not, however, true of Gollum. As Frodo realized as soon as he had heard Gollum's story, "He deserves death." But Gandalf's reply is instructive.

> Deserves it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement.[2]

Obviously the correlation between virtue and reward is not simple.

Christian theology following Augustine has understood that the Grace of God does not depend on human action, since, because he is fallen, man can behave in a manner deserving of God's reward only as a result of God's prior Grace. Augustine argued,

> The will is, indeed, that whereby we sin and that whereby we live justly....So, unless the will itself be freed by the Grace of God from the servitude whereby it became the slave of sin, and unless it be helped so that it may overcome defects, it is impossible for mortal man to live righteously and piously. And if this divine assistance whereby the will is freed were granted for its merits, it would not be a "grace"-a gratuitous gift-for it would not have preceded the willing.3.

1. Tolkien's World, (London:Thames and Hudson, 1974), p.74.
2. The Lord of the Rings,1.92-93.
3. "Augustine wasNever a Pelagian," from Retractions, 1, 9.2-4 (trans.) Vernon J. Bourke in The Essential Augustine,p. 177.

Although his position is not clearly worked out, one of his letters suggests Tolkien's awareness of the dangers in assuming a causal relationship between merit and reward.

> Of course (Gandalf) did not mean to say that one must be merciful for it may prove useful later - it would not then be mercy or pity which are only truly present when contrary to prudence.[1].

In spite of Gollum's deserving, Tolkien insists that his will remained free until the last act of his life. As Gandalf noted, "I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it."[2]. The struggle for his soul is dramatized by the Gollum/Smeagol schizophrenia which developed as Frodo treated him with kindness and consideration. 3. As the Hobbits searched for a way over the mountains they became aware that Gollum was dogging their every step. Captured and questioned about his previous travels in Mordor, Gollum confessed,

> "Yess. Yess. No! Once by accident it was, wasn't it precious? Yes, by accident. But we won't go back no, no!" Then suddenly his voice and language changed and he sobbed in his throat and spoke but not to them. "Leave me alone, Gollum! You hurt me. O my poor hands. Gollum! I don't want to come back. I can't find it. I am tired. I, we can't find it."[4].

Told that he must lead them back to Sauron, he responded, "don't ask Smeagol. Poor poor Smeagol, he went away long ago. They took his precious and he's lost now."[5]. Two personalities inhabited the same body. Gollum was a creature wholly under the power of the

1. Letters, p.253.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.93.
3. This characteristic is noted by Agnes Perkins and Helen Hill, "The Corruption Power," in Tolkien Compass, p.60 , and by Gwenyth Hood, p.128.
4. The Lord of the Rings, 11.282.
5. ibid.,1.93.

Ring, symbolized by his use of the plural when he referred to himself. He was obsessed with his "precious"; his speech hissed in a manner which suggests something reptilian,[1] a suggestion heightened by the fact that when the Gollum personality was in control a green, malicious light shone in his eyes. Watching him come down the face of the precipice, his thin limbs splayed out, the Hobbits had the impression that

> its soft clinging hands and toes were finding crevices and holds that no Hobbit could ever have seen or used, but it looked as if it was just creeping down on sticky pads, like some large prowling thing of insect-kind. And it was coming down head first, as if it was smelling its way. Now and again it lifted its head slowly, turning it right back on its long skinny neck, and the Hobbits caught a glimpse of two small pale gleaming lights, its eyes that blinked at the moon for a moment and then were quickly lidded again.[2]

On the other hand Smeagol still lived in Gollum's body and Frodo's kindness gave his Hobbit nature a chance to express itself. When Frodo realized that the elf rope was causing Gollum pain, he ordered Sam to untie it. From that moment a change came over Gollum. "He spoke with less hissing and whining and he spoke to his companions direct, not to his precious self."[3] The change was not for long, but clearly Gollum was still sufficiently free to have a legitimate choice over his actions.

1. Lois R. Kuznets interprets Gollum's speech as "narcissistic babytalk." "Tolkien and the Rhetoric of Childhood," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives p.150f.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 11.278.
3. ibid., 11.280.

Passing through the marshes Frodo fell asleep during his turn on guard. Sam woke up and discovered Gollum leaning over Frodo and talking to himself.

> Smeagol was holding a debate with some other thought that used the same voice but made it squeak and hiss. A pale light and a green light alternated in his eyes as he spoke. "Smeagol promised," said the first thought. "Yes, Yes, my precious," came the answer, "we promised to save our Precious, not to let Him have it - never...."
> "But Smeagol said he would be very very good. Nice Hobbit! He took cruel rope off Smeagol's leg. He speaks nice to me." 1.

One of the most poignant moments in the tale was when Smeagol returned from foraging and found both Hobbits sleeping on the stairs of Cirith Ungol.

> A strange expression passed over his lean hungry face. The gleam faded from his eyes, and they went dim and grey, old and tired. A spasm of pain seemed to twist him, and he turned away, peering back up towards the pass, shaking his head, as if engaged in some interior debate. Then he came back, and slowly putting out a trembling hand very cautiously he touched Frodo's knee - but almost the touch was a caress. For a fleeting moment, could one of the sleepers have seen him, they would have thought that they beheld an old weary Hobbit, shrunken by the years that had carried him far beyond his time, beyond friends and kin, and the fields and streams of youth, an old starved pitiable thing. 2.

But Sam, startled from sleep, snapped at Gollum and drove out of his mind the desire to repent. Smeagol banished, Gollum led the Hobbits into Shelob's lair. Providence leads ultimately towards the eschatalogical purpose, but always by way of the free choices made by people.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 11.411.
2. ibid., 11.304.

VIII

THE NATURE OF EVIL

Although Tolkien insists that Gollum might yet be saved, the same rules do not appear to apply to orcs and trolls. These creatures of Mordor are never referred to as free, nor does any incident suggest that they are motivated by anything but compulsion, malice or fear of punishment. The appropriate response on meeting either an orc or a troll is to kill, and even Gandalf never counsels mercy for one of these. As W.H. Auden commented,

> I must confess I am not quite happy about these beings, for their existence seems to imply that it is possible for a species that can speak, and therefore, make moral choices, to be evil by nature. I can readily believe that Sauron, by cross-breeding and training creatures already in existence, can produce pterodactyl-like creatures ridden by the Nazgûl, for these are "dumb animals" who can be used for evil purposes but cannot be called evil in themselves. I am not so ready to believe that the Orcs were bred by Morgoth, and the Mordor Trolls by Sauron, for neither are simply animals. If Evil cannot only seduce the Good but also create beings who are evil from the beginning, then one cannot, as Tolkien does, call God "The One"; There must, in that case be two, a Good One and Evil One.[1]

Auden's objection is well taken and never completely answered, even in The Silmarillion which develops Tolkien conceptual structure

1. "Good and Evil in The Lord of the Rings," Critical Quarterly, Tenth Anniversary Number (1964), p.139.

in a systematic way.[1] T.A. Shippey has noted the resemblance between The Silmarillion's concept of the nature and effects of evil and that of Augustine as outlined by C.S. Lewis in A Preface to Paradise Lost.[2] That such a parallel exists should not be surprising, since Tolkien was writing out of a Catholic Christian world view, but it is also quite likely that Tolkien's thinking was directly influenced by C.S. Lewis' work. In the early 1930's a literary club called "The Inklings" formed around C.S. Lewis.[3] Lewis, Tolkien and an ever changing group which eventually included Charles Williams continued to meet regularly over the next twenty years and to read aloud to each other their current works in progress. The Inklings were among the first auditors of both The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings and it is probable that Tolkien first became acquainted with Preface to Paradise Lost, published

1. The same objection is raised by Lin Carter, who asserts that Tolkien avoids the problem of the strength of evil. Imaginary Worlds: The Art of Fantasy, New York: Ballantyne, 1973, pp.117, 122-3; Also Katharyn Crabb, J.R.R. Tolkien, (New York: Ungar, 1983) 28,33. However, Spacks "Power and Meaning in The Lord of the Rings,"in Tolkien and the Critics,pp.85-6; Lewis, "The Dethronement of Power", same anthology, pp.12 and 15; Sale, Modern Heroism: Essays on D.H. Lawrence, William Empson and J.R. Tolkien, University of California Press, 1973, pp.222-3, and Marjorie Wright, The Cosmic Kingdom of Myth, PhD. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1960, all argue that Tolkien treats evil with utmost seriousness.
2. Larry Elton Davis bases his dissertation on the hypothesis that Tolkien's world view reflects the teachings of Augustine, in particular p.82ff. The effort to prove that Tolkien's understanding of Evil is "Christian" has, however, led to some odd hypotheses. Nitzche, for example, attempts to classify the evil characteristics of Tolkien's monsters as the seven deadly sins. Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England , pp.112-116.
3. This is described by Humphrey Carpenter, The Inklings, but also referred to in Tolkien's Letters, particularly 132 and 388.

in 1944, through meetings of The Inklings.[1]

In A Preface to Paradise Lost Lewis attempts to provide modern readers with the critical tools needed to understand what Milton intended Parasise Lost to mean in the context of his own beliefs. One of the chapters is devoted to a summary of Augustine's position on the origin and nature of evil, which Lewis labels "the teachings of the Church as a whole." Although Tolkien, particularly in the most recently revised sections of The Silmarillion and many of the letters, shows concern with "the inner consistency of reality," by which he means that the world of his invention should operate according to the principles he recognized as "true" in the world of God's creation and that it should move toward the fulfillment of God's promised eucatastrophe, there is little evidence to suggest interest in Augustinian theology for its own sake. Although, for example, Tolkien is clearly aware of the difficulties with the Church's teaching on Grace as a free gift from God (p. 141 preceding) he does not respond to the Pelagian heresy against which Augustine's thinking on Grace was refined. It seems likely that Tolkien simply accepted Lewis's analysis of "the teachings of the Church as a whole" and attempted to shape his tale in conformity with them.

Augustine's doctrine of evil, based on the Genesis account of the Creation and Fall, is developed in The City of God, particularly in

1. Randell Helms asserts, in fact, that Tolkien's view of evil and the fall are borrowed from Milton. Tolkien and the Silmarils, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), pp.35-6. It is more likely, however, that Tolkien simply built his world on the same Augustinian doctrinal assumptions out of which Milton wrote. This connection is also noted by Patrick Grant, who observes, "the principles of Christian Epic are experienced in Tolkien not explicitly but as embodied themes, a map of values as in Paradise Lost, and without the traditional dogmatic theology that Milton's great poem was already in process of casting off." "Archetype and Word," in Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives, p.89.

section XIV. It may be summed up as follows:

God created everything that exists. In its beginning creation was uniformly good. No bad thing was created. Therefore, bad is merely the privation of good. Living creatures which we call bad are good creatures which have become perverted when their pride and self absorption has resulted in rebellion and disobedience. Because all things were created by God and nothing was created apart from God, good can exist without evil but without good, evil has no existence. Those things which have been perverted retain the essential nature with which they were created, even though their wills have been corrupted. This is because evil has no essential nature of its own, therefore if it were to lose its God-given nature it would simply disappear.

Although God did not predestine the fall, he foreknew that his creatures would rebel and he also knew to what good purpose he would employ their rebellion, in order that even their evil would be made to serve his divine plan.

Augustine believed that sin and death entered the world as a result of the fall, in the absence of which mankind would not have suffered mortality. The temptation was perpetrated through Eve because Satan knew the female to be less intelligent than the male. Adam's fall was not caused by his ignorance. He never actually believed Eve's story, but he was drawn into sin because of his affection for her. The apple was not a temptation in itself but merely represented a prohibition intended to instill obedience. Adam's fall consisted in disobedience resulting from pride just as Satan's had before him, but the consequence of his disobedience was the loss of authority over his members, in particular, his sexual passions, which are

now expressed not according to God's original intention but according to the fallenness of human nature.

C. S. Lewis extracted from this a set of principles which he uses to explain Milton's epic poem. Tolkien appears to have used these principles in his effort to refine the theological presuppositions of his world. The doctrine of evil is implicit in The Lord of the Rings but is made much more explicit in The Silmarillion, particularly in the Ainulindale and Quenta Silmarillion which are among the most recently revised sections of the book. C.S. Lewis begins:

> God created all things without exception good, and because they are good, "No Nature (i.e. positive reality) is bad and the word bad denotes merely a privation of good." De. Civ. Dei, XI 21, 22). 1.

The Biblical account of creation specifies that "God made the light and saw that the light was good," that "He separated the seas and the dry land and saw that it was good", that "He created the vegetation on the land and saw that it was good," that "He made the sun and the moon and saw that it was good," that "He made the fish of the sea and the creatures that walk on the land, and saw that they were good," "And God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good." 2. On each of the six days of creation, the goodness of creation is reiterated.

The Ainulindale account of creation describes "Eru, the One, who made first the Ainur, The Holy Ones that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made."3. Creation proceeded from the thought of Eru by means of music, which he propounded

1. C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 66.
2. Genesis 1;4-31.
3. The Silmarillion, p. 15.

to the Ainur who sang his themes, at first alone and then together. Out of the singing of the Ainur the void was filled and the world and all that is in it came into being. "For a great while it seemed good to him for in the music there were no flaws".[1]. The beauty of new creation is underlined also in The Valaquenta.

> Many of the Ainur became enamoured of its beauty, and of its history which they saw beginning and unfolding as in a vision. Therefore Iluvatar gave their vision Being and set it amid the Void, and the secret Fire was sent to burn at the heart of the world: and it was called Eä. [2].

The beauty of the Music and of Creation was quickly destroyed by Melkor's rebellious pride, which is depicted as darkness which quenches the light. If goodness is symbolized by light, then darkness, the absence of light, symbolizes evil as the privation of Good. The Void before the beginning of creation was a place of darkness. The Silmarillion, too, pictures the Void as dark and it was this outer darkness to which Melkor was banished.

In the beginning of time the Valar made two mighty lamps for the lighting of Arda and by the light of those lamps the flora and fauna of the earth grew up and thrived. Yet a shadow was growing in the North, cast by Melkor who had by now "grown dark as the Night of the Void." Melkor had begun to build a great fortress there and before the Valar were prepared he issued forth and struck down the two lights, throwing the world into darkness. 3. The Valar retreated behind the walls of the Pelori and there established the Blessed Realm, lighted

1. The Silmarillion, p. 15.
2. ibid., p. 25.
3. ibid., p. 35-7.

by the two trees, Telpérion and Laurelin, but the earth remained in shadow and "in the Darkness Melkor dwelt."[1] In this interval of shadow "The oldest living things (arose): In the seas the great weeds, and on the earth the shadow of the great trees; and in the Valleys of the night-clad hills there were dark creatures old and strong,"[2] the Balrogs and the spider-shaped beasts like Ungoliant and her daughter Shelob. These creatures "were cloaked in darkness and terror went before them."[3] Evil breeds in the darkness and is characterized by the absence of light.[4] The corruption of Fëanor by Melkor's lies is described as a shadow cast over Valinor, and once his evil devices had been discovered Melkor's movements were hidden by a dark cloud in which he passed "like a shadow".[5]

Ungoliant, too, is portrayed as radically evil. "She made her abode where the shadows were deepest and thickest in the world" but she "hungered for light and hated it." The evil act of Ungoliant was to "suck up light and spin it forth again in dark nets of strangled gloom." Ungoliant provided the cloak of darkness by which Melkor was able to perform the most dastardly of his evil acts. Together, hidden by "an Unlight...which eyes could not pierce," Melkor and Ungoliant approached the light-giving trees, Melkor smote each to its core with his black spear and Ungoliant sucked away its life to the last drop. Then darkness fell.[6]

1. The Silmarillion, P. 39.
2. ibid., p. 47.
3. idem.
4. ibid., p. 73.
5. ibid., p. 71-2
6. ibid., p. 174.

Evil is the absence of light.1. Darkness brooded over the fortress of Melkor, the abode of Ungoliant or wherever evil creatures bred or travelled. Melkor's name was changed to Morgoth, "The dark foe," 2. and the power of evil was symbolized by its ability to blot out light. Waters from Ered Gorgoth where Ungoliant lived "were defiled and perilous to drink, for the hearts of those that tasted them were filled with shadows of madness and despair."3.It was dangerous to travel in that region because one might become enmeshed in shadows and lose the way, as Finwë's daughter Aredhel did with disastrous results for Finwë's people.4.

In the dissension among the Elves and the Edain the Shadow of Morgoth might be discerned and by dividing them and causing them to battle among themselves Melkor was able to consolidate his power over Middle Earth. As the first age neared its end, Morgoth's spies went out among the peoples,

> ...accusing their Kings and Chieftains of greed, and of treachery one to another. And because of the curse of the Kinslaying at Alqualonde these lies were often believed; and indeed as time darkened they had a measure of truth, for the hearts and minds of the Elves of Beleriand became clouded with despair and fear.5.

The curse of Fëanor is also described as a shadow which cast darkness on those it bound. Even when the Elf Kindreds of Beleriand were threatened by Morgoth's power they were divided among themselves by the claim of Fëanor's sons to the last of the Silmarils.

1. The physical and metaphysical aspects of this are explored by Dorothy Barber in her dissertation, The Structure of "The Lord of the Rings", (University of Michigan, 1966) p.12ff.
2. The Simarillion, p.121.
3. ibid., p.132.
4. ibid., p.144.
5. ibid., p. 156.

> ...Never after until the time of Turin would any Elf of that realm go into open battle; but with stealth and ambush, with wizardry and venomed dart, they pursued all strangers, forgetting the bonds of kinship. Thus they fell from the valour and freedom of Elves of old, and their land was darkened. ...And the curse of Mandos came upon the brothers and dark thoughts arose in their hearts. 1.

Sauron corrupted Númenor and sought to turn it to evil purposes by teaching the King to worship the Lord of Darkness, for, he said, "out of [the Ancient Darkness] the world was made. For Darkness alone is worshipful, and the Lord thereof might yet make other worlds to be gifts to those that serve him, so that the increase of their power should find no end." 2. Ar-Pharazôn turned to the worship of the Dark, and the sign of his blasphemy was the destruction of the white tree Nimloth the Fair which grew in his courtyard as a memorial to the light of Valinor.

Morgoth hated and distrusted light and saw it as a threat to his supremacy. When Eärendil's ship Vingilot was set to sail in the heavens bearing the last Silmaril it rose glittering and bright, and the people of Middle Earth took hope in it. Morgoth was filled with doubt, for this star heralded the alliance of Noldor and humankind and the March of the Valar by which the power of Morgoth was overthrown. 3.

In The Lord of the Rings good and evil are similarly delineated. Goodness is designated by brightness or the colour white, evil by darkness or the colour black. 4. The tower of Ecthelion

1. The Silmarillion, p. 170.
2. ibid., p. 271.
3. idem.
4. This has been widely noted. See particularly Walter Scheps, "The Fairytale Morality of The Lord of the Rings," in Lobdell (ed), A Tolkien Compass (La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1975), p.45ff. and Clyde Kilby, "Meaning in The Lord of the Rings," in Myth, Allegory and Gospel, John Warwick Montgomery (ed) (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship Inc), 1973, pp.129-131.

which stood above Minas Tirith

> shone out against the sky, glimmering like a spike of pearl and silver, tall and fair and shapely, and its pinnacle glittered, as if it were wrought of crystals; and white banners broke and fluttered from the battlements. [1]

The Tower at Cirith Ungol, on the other hand, was "black, blacker and darker than the vast shades amid which it stood." [2] Glorfindel, one of the mighty of the firstborn who once dwelt in the Blessed land, was associated with transcendent whiteness and rode a white horse against the Ringwraiths whose horses were black.

One of the indications of the perfidity of Saruman was his abandonment of the robe of white in favour of an iridescent cloak of many colours. When Gandalf returned after his duel with the Balrog he had been transformed into Gandalf the white. In contrast the Nazgûl are clothed and hooded in black. The orc chieftain in Moria wore black mail and his army used black feathered arrows.

The light and dark opponents are carefully matched. Aragorn, heir of the Kings of Númenor, marched into battle against a mortal:

> A tall and evil shape, mounted upon a black horse, if horse it was; for it was huge and hideous, and its face was a frightful mask, more like a skull than a living head, and in sockets of its eyes and in its nostrils there burned a flame. The rider was robed all in black, and black was his lofty helm; yet this was no Ringwraith but a living man. The Lieutenant of the Tower of Barad-dûr he was, and his name is remembered in no tale; for he himself had forgotten it, and he said: "I am the Mouth of Sauron." But it is told that he was a renegade, who came of the race of those that are named the Black Númenoreans; for they established their dwellings in Middle-earth during the years of Sauron's dominat-

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.23.
2. ibid., 111.219.

> ion, and they worshipped him, being enamoured of evil knowledge.[1].

Gandalf the White met the Nazgûl King, "a great black shape... grown to a vast menace of despair.[2]. He was "black mantled, huge and threatening...A great black mace he wielded," he rode on a huge black winged reptile, and wherever his shadow passed

> ...hope seemed to wither...the sun for a second faltered and was obscured as though a dark wing had passed across it. Almost beyond hearing [was heard] a cry, faint, but heart quelling, cruel and cold. [Pippin] blanched and cowered against the wall.
>
> "... It is the sign of our fall, and the shadow of doom, a Fell Rider of the Air.[3].

The cry of the Nazgûl had the power of "piercing the heart with poisonous despair."[4]. Men fled in terror before Nazgûl and horses ran mad and threw their riders.

Although there is no parallel term for the common tongue used by Hobbits, Dwarves, Elves and Humans, it is of interest to note that the language of Orcs is known as "The Black Speech."

> The Orcs were first bred by the Dark Power of the North in the Elder Days. It is said they had no language of their own, but took what they could of other languages and perverted it to their own liking; yet they made only brutal jargon, scarcely sufficient for their own needs, unless it were for curses and abuse. And these creatures, being filled with malice, hating even their own kind, quickly developed as many barbarous dialects as there were groups or settlements of their race, so that their Orcish speech was of little use to them in intercourse between different tribes.[5].

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.202.
2. ibid., III.125.
3. ibid., III.43.
4. ibid., III.99.
5. ibid., III.511.

The Orcs do not borrow words from other languages into their own, rather they have no language except for what they are able to steal from others. The Black Speech is black as to its use by evil beings, but it is black also because of the formulation of the language in the first place.

Darkness is one of the principal weapons of Sauron. Even in Rivendell at Elrond's council, when Gandalf uttered the inscription on the Ring in the Black Speech "a shadow seemed to pass over the high sun and the porch for a moment grew dark."[1] Mordor was a place where dark clouds hovered and where the full light of the sun was never allowed to shine. The final act of preparation for the defeat of the West was to cast the world into darkness so that the hearts of the Free People would despair.

> "What is good food and drink under this creeping shadow? What does it mean? The very air seems thick and brown!"
>
> "This is no weather of the world. This is some device of his malice; some broil of fume from the mountain of fire that he sends to darken hearts and counsel. And so it doth indeed."[2]

Even Merry found that "the everdeepening gloom had slowly weighed down his heart."[3] The Woses, a primitive people who had every reason to hate the Rohirrim who hunted them as beasts in the forest, were so troubled by the darkness and the coming of the orcs that they lent their aid to Rohan because they feared that the Dark Years were returning.[4]

The light of the sun, moon and stars is loved by free peoples and hated by orcs and evil creatures. Gollum would not travel in sun-

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.333.
2. ibid., 111.98.
3. ibid., 111.127.
4. ibid., 111.128.

light and ever regarded the full moon as "Nassty, Nassty Shiver Light" that watched him; Trolls could move about only under cover of darkness, and Mordor's troop movements were hidden by fog or shadow.

There are four descriptions in which Tolkien clearly intends to suggest Hell, and all of them are utterly dark. The Barrows in which the Hobbits were imprisoned early in their quest were graves whose spirits thirsted for lives. Moria, where Gandalf fell into a bottomless pit from whence he was resurrected as Gandalf the White, was in the heart of the mountain where daylight could not penetrate. The Haunted Mountain through which Aragorn led his rangers to muster the army of the dead opened to a vast cavern, where they found by the light of their torches, the bones of a mighty man face downward on the floor, his finger-bones clawing at the cracks of a stony door. "A notched and broken sword lay by him, as if he had hewn at the rock in his last despair."[1] The tunnel through which the Hobbits must pass to enter Mordor is described as "utter and impenetrable dark..."

> "They walked as if it were in a black vapour wrought of veritable darkness itself that, as it was breathed, brought blindness not only to the eyes but to the mind, so that even the memory of colours and of forms and of any light faded out of thought. Night always had been, and always would be, and night was all."[2]

When Shelob crawled out of her black hole the only thing that could save the Hobbits from her stinking grasp was the phial of Galadriel. It created before her multifaceted eyes "the dreadful infection of light," a light to light them "in dark places when all other lights go out." As darkness is a weapon against freedom, light is a defence

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.71.
2. ibid., 11.415.

against evil.

As Lord Faramir raced for the walls of Minas Tirith the Nazgûl caught up with him. "Like shadows of untimely night, he saw in the middle airs...five bird-like forms, horrible as carrion fowl yet greater than eagles, cruel as death."[1]. As the Nazgûl Lord bore down on Faramir "he caught a flash of white and silver coming from the North." It seemed "that a pale light was spread about it and heavy shadows gave way before it." In the nick of time the white riders appeared. "He raised his hand and from it a shaft of white light stabbed upwards. The Nazgûl gave a long wailing cry and swerved away."[2]. Wherever there is light, darkness is banished.

In the same way that this symbol is employed in Tolkien's myth, the connection between light and goodness is widely found in The Bible. 1 John 1.5 asserts that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Darkness causes people to stumble [3]. and manifests itself as bad luck.[4]. Sheol is understood as a place without light,[5]. and in the New Jerusalem there will be no night. The sun and the moon will be unnecessary because illumination will flow directly from God.[6]. Yet although light is associated with God and is his gift, the Old Testament makes clear that there is no separate source of darkness, and in that sense darkness cannot be seen to represent an Evil principle.

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.99.
2. ibid., III.100.
3. Job 12.24-25; Isa. 59.10; Jer.13.16; 23.12.
4. Job 17.12; 21.17; 29.3; Ps.18.28.
5. Job. 10.21-22; 38.17; Ps. 49.18; 49.20; 88.11-13; Isa. 45.19.
6. Rev. 22.5. In Tolkien the sun and moon are necessary only because Melkor, in his rebellion, destroyed the light of the trees.

I am the Lord, and there is none other.
I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe,
I am the Lord who do all these things.[1].

God has made his covenant with both day and night[2]. and it is by his will that both exist in the world. It is not, then, biblical to equate darkness with the power of Evil or even to assign darkness a negative value, since it is God's gift. However the symbolism grows naturally out of a doctrine of evil as the privation of good and therefore of darkness as the absence of light.[3].

The equation of evil and darkness can, however, be found in ancient religions and influenced First Century Christianity in particular through the writing of Plato and Zoroaster.[4]. Its most obvious antecedent in Tolkien is the Manichean influence on Augustine's theology. Augustine's insistence that evil has no essential reality can be understood in part as a polemic against Manichean dualism. Yet he retained the image of light in speaking of God,[5]. thus the absence

1. Isa.45.6-7; also Ps. 104.20.
2. Jer. 33.25.
3. Tolkien's awareness of the ambiguity surrounding light and darkness as symbolic representations of good and evil may account for Frodo's remark at the wedding of Arwen and Aragorn, "Now...night too shall be beautiful and beloved and all its Fear pass away. "The Lord of the Rings, 111.310.
4. Alan Richardson, A Theological Word Book of the Bible (London: S.C.M. Press, 1950), p.129.
5. "God is the light by which the soul is illuminated." Literal Commentary on Genesis, XII, 31.59, trans. J.H. Taylor, S.J. (St. Louis University, 1948), p.139.

of God equals the absence of light. Tolkien expanded the symbol to its logical conclusion. If light equals God therefore unlight equals ungod and darkness equals evil. The problem with the symbol is illustrated by Tolkien's inability to maintain the darkness as a passive state.[1].

The second Augustinian doctrine cited by C.S. Lewis follows from the first and like it is explicit in Tolkien.

> What we call bad things are good things perverted. (De Civ. Dei., XIV 11), This perversion arises when a conscious creature becomes more interested in itself than in God (ibid.XIV,11) and wishes to exist"on its own". (esse in semet ipso, XIV,13). This is the sin of Pride. The first creature whoever committed it was Satan 'the proud angel who turned from God to himself, not wishing to be a subject, but to rejoice like a tyrant in having subjects of his own. (XIV,11).[2].

As Elrond asserted, "nothing is Evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so."[3]. The balance between light and dark, of figures representing the West and their evil counterparts, has been pointed out, but it is important to note that in every case Tolkien specifies that the evil power was created good, usually the best of his race. 4.

1. p.174-5 following.
2. C.S. Lewis, p.66. Although she does not make the connection with Augustine, Jane Chance Nitzche defines Tolkien's concept of evil from a Jungian perspective using similar terms. "The Ring... symbolizes...wedding of self to self...in lieu of self to Other." p.102. Note also Rose Zimbardo, "Moral Vision in The Lord of the Rings," in Tolkien and the Critics, p.101; and Gwyneth Hood, p.104.
3. For example, Miesel, p.61, "Evil is a perversion of goodness, not a positive entity."
4. Footnote 4 continued, following page.

"Manwë and Melkor were brethren in the thought of Ilúvatar. The mightiest of those Ainur who came into the world was in the beginning Melkor."[2] Likewise, Fëanor was "of all the Noldor, then or after, the most subtle in mind and the most skilled in hand,"[3] and Saruman the White was of the Istari the first to come and the head of that order.[4] Boromir was the bravest and fiercest in battle of the Men of Gondor, the first born son and heir of the high Steward, and even Gollum had once been the most inquisitive and curious-minded member of a large and wealthy family of high repute.[5] Sauron, the Balrogs

4. from previous page.
See, for example, Dorothy Barber, The Structure of the Lord of the Rings, p.45; Clyde Kilby, "Myth and Christian Elements in Tolkien", in J.W. Montgomery (ed), Myth, Allegory and Gospel; An Interpretation of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton and Charles Williams, (Minneapolis : Bethany Fellowship Inc. 1974), p.137; Gunnar Urang Shadows of Imagination, p.109.
A failure to recognize the extent of the fall has led Gwenyth Hood to base her thesis on a concept of "enhanced" unfallen nature, as opposed to "degraded" nature which has fallen completely under the power of the Evil Lord. The numinous qualities of the undying lands she relates to their "sinlessness" and angelic nature and power are related to the unfallen state. "Elvish errors" she classes as "minor mistakes and waverings which do not permanently impair the angelic nature." fn.[13]p.93. Thus Valinor is understood as a kind of pre-lapsarian Garden of Eden. (p.59).
This hypothesis ignores Tolkien's insistence on the real power of evil. Every race is vulnerable to corruption, and except in the case of orcs, we have good and bad examples of each. Moreover, fallen Valar or Maiar retain their nature and powers regardless of their moral state, unless they are vanquished in cosmic struggle. The greater the power a creature is given, the more terrible is its fallenness. Melkor the Vala destroyed the harmony of creation, whereas a fallen Hobbit, while nasty and dangerous, becomes merely a pawn in a game beyond his comprehension. Sam Naur argues that even Gandalf "is not a study of perfection within an imperfect world." "Gandalf was 'human' in his failings and 'divine' perhaps in his forgiveness." "The Errors of Gandalf the Grey," Amon Hen' November, 1986, p. 15.

2. The Silmarillion, p.26, also p.16.
3. ibid., p.64.
4. Unfinished Tales, p. 389.
5. The Lord of the Rings, 1.84.

and creatures of Ungoliant's kind had been created Maiar,[1] the Ring-wraiths had been mighty men, and even the orcs were Elves captured and corrupted by Sauron's evil will.

In each case the agent of corruption was Pride. Melkor fell from grace because "he sought to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself...for desire grew hot within him to bring into being things of his own."[2] Fëanor's corruption came out of his desire to master the light of the two trees of Valinor, which bound his heart fast to the Silmarils he had made. His greedy love of these artifacts opened his heart to Melkor's lies.

> Thus ere the Valar were aware, the peace of Valinor was poisoned. The Noldor began to murmur against them and many became filled with pride, forgetting how much of what they had and knew came to them in gift from the Valar. Fiercest burned the new flame of desire for freedom and wider realms in the eager heart of Fëanor, and Melkor laughed in his secrecy, for to that mark his lies had been addressed, hating Fëanor above all, and lusting ever for the Silmarils.[3]

The use of coercion to bend others to one's will is a constant indication of evil.[4] The Silmarillion tells how when Fëanor led the Noldor out of Valinor to pursue Morgoth, a messenger came from Manwë warning them, "Go not forth! For the hour is evil, and your road leads

1. This is a problem of consistency, however. Valar and Maiar neither die nor reproduce. Their number remains the same as Ilúvatar created before the song of the Ainur. When a Vala or Maia is "killed" as Melkor and Sauron were killed in the battles which ended the first and third ages, he is simply banished to outer darkness. Yet Ungoliant and Shelob breed, apparently in the same manner as spiders.
2. The Silmarillion, p.16.
3. ibid., p.64.
4. Noted by Dowie, in Salu and Farrell, p. 105; Spacks, in Tolkien and the Critics, p.72; Crabb, J.R.R. Tolkien, p.86-87, Hood, Chapter 3.

to sorrow that ye do not foresee. No aid will the Valar lend you in this quest; but neither will they hinder you; for this ye shall know: as came ye hither freely, freely shall ye depart."[1] Likewise, the wizards were "sent to contest the power of Sauron and to unite all those who had the will to resist him; but they were forbidden to match his power with power, or to seek to dominate Elves or Men by force or fear."[2] Gandalf explained, "It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they have is not ours to rule."[3]

The one unfallen being in the tale is Tom Bombadil, the master of wood, water and hill, but although Bombadil is Master, nothing belongs to him.[4]

> He is then an "allegory" or an exemplar, a particular embodying of pure (real) natural science: The spirit that desires knowledge of other things, their history and nature because they are "other" and wholly indepentent of the inquiring mind, a spirit coeval with the rational mind, and entirely unconcerned with "doing" anything with the knowledge.[5]

Tolkien conceived of the Elves as having a similar nature in their unfallen state. Elves represent, he says,

1. The Silmarillion, p.85.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 111.455.
3. ibid., 111.190.
4. ibid., 1.174.
5. Letters, p. 192.

> ...the artistic, aesthetic and purely scientific aspects of the Humane nature raised to a higher level than is actually seen in Men. That is: they have a devoted love of the physical world and a desire to observe and understand it for its own sake and as 'other' - sc. as a reality derived from God in the same degree as themselves - not as material for use or as a power platform.[1].

The leaders of the West are careful not to put pressure on one another's decisions to the point, sometimes, of refusing to give advice. As "The One" leaves his creatures free to make choices, those who obey him allow others, especially those weaker than they, to live in freedom. Sauron is in total contrast to this in that the purpose behind the creation of the Rings was to bend the wills of all who touched them. The Ruling Ring was at once a powerful instrument of coercion on all who came within its influence and a carrier of temptation to them to coerce the wills of others. Anyone who uses force or fear even in the best cause is using an evil means for a good end, and thereby corrupting the end. "The very desire of it corrupts the heart."

The most primitive form of this Evil desire is seen in Shelob, who consumed her victims, body and mind. She "served none but herself, drinking in the blood of Elves and Men bloated and grown fat with endless brooding on her feasts weaving webs of shadow; for all living things were her food, and her vomit darkness."[2]. The desire of Morgoth to extend his malevolence quickly spread to human beings. Sauron persuaded the Númenóreans that if they ignored

1. Letters, p.233.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 11.422.

the ban of the Valar and made their way over forbidden waters, if once they set foot on the undying Lands, they would be like the Valar and possess everlasting life. The crime of the Númenóreans was the attempt to turn themselves into Gods. As a punishment for revolt the island of Númenor was caused to sink into the sea. A few were able to make their way by ship to Middle Earth but even these had not learned the lesson that they must submit to the transcendent purpose. The Ring of Power had been forged by Sauron to "bring under his sway all those that desired secret power beyond the measure of their kind."[1]. Nine men of Númenor were seduced into Sauron's camp by the promise of knowledge, to be punished until the end of the age by becoming Ringwraiths.

> They had, as it seemed, unending life, yet life became unendurable to them. They could walk if they would, unseen by all eyes in this world beneath the sun, and they could see things invisible to mortal Men. But too often they beheld only the phantoms and delusions of Sauron. And one by one, sooner or later according to their native strength and the good or evil of their wills in the beginning, they fell under the thraldom of the Ring they bore and under the domination of the one which was Sauron's. And they became invisible save to him that wore the Ruling Ring, and they entered into the realm of shadows.[2].

Tolkien, like the writer of Genesis, presents a world in which it appears that certain types of knowledge are not to be pursued by mankind. The Pursuit of such knowledge is not only a manifestation of evil in and of itself, but it provides the means by which such evil

1. The Silmarillion, p.288.
2. ibid., p. 289.

ensnares others. Sauron was able to entrap the Elven-smiths of Eregion through their eagerness for knowledge; Saruman sought to enlist Gandalf's services by promising him "Knowledge, Rule, Order." It is perilous to study too deeply the arts of the Enemy. The fall of Denethor was the result of his quest for Knowledge. He attempted to subdue a palantír to his service, but what he saw in the stone drove Denethor to his despairing death. Gollum discovered that "all the great secrets under the mountains had turned out to be just empty night: There was nothing more to find out, nothing worth doing, only nasty furtive eating and resentful remembering." As Jared Lobdell has observed,

> The uses of power in the trilogy, are, for the most part, strictly defined according to a rigid hierarchy and one of the most significant generic distinctions between good and evil is that the forces of Good abide by the limitations imposed upon them by the "natural" hierarchy while the representatives of evil constantly seek to go beyond hierarchical restraints and, by so doing, seriously disrupt the natural order.[1]

Desire to seize power beyond that which was allotted was the cause of the estrangement of the Entwives, who wished

> [The sloe and the wild apple and the cherry, the green herbs and the seedling grasses] to hear and obey what was said to them. The Entwives ordered them to grow according to their wishes, and to bear leaf and fruit to their liking; for the Entwives desired order and plenty and peace (by which they meant that things should remain where they had set them.)[2]

1. Jared Lobdell, A Tolkien Compass (Illinois: Open Court 1975), p.49.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 11.99.

For Tolkien the modern obsession with machines is one with the desire to subdue and master nature, and is therefore a mark of fallenness.[1] Hobbits, we are told, practiced no magic but lived in "close friendship with the earth." They did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge bellows, a watermill or a hand loom."[2]

The perfidity of Saruman is revealed by the rape of Isengard. The sheltered valley of the Isen had once been fair and green, watered by springs and streams, but in the later days of Saruman the Valley had become a wilderness of weeds and thorns. The trees had been destroyed,

> ...but among the rank grasses could still be seen the burned and axe-hewn stumps of ancient groves. It was a sad country, silent now but for the stoney noise of quick waters. Smokes and steams drifted in sullen clouds and lurked in the hollows.[3]

Under the Ring of Isengard Saruman had tunneled caverns and passages in which "iron wheels revolved endlessly, and hammers thudded. At night plumes of vapour steamed from the vents, lit from beneath with red light, or blue or venomous green."[4]

Strangely enough, all this activity produced nothing. The Orcs of the White Hand used no weapons more sophisticated than sword or spear, and the riches of Saruman's storehouses were pillaged from the surrounding countryside rather than produced in the factories and

1. Note, for example, Larry Elton Davis, p.10; Nigel Walmsley, "Tolkien and the 60's," in Giddings, p.73; and Hood p.142-3.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.19.
3. ibid., 11.202.
4. ibid., 11.204.

forges under Isengard. With the destruction of Saruman's fortress "the fogs slowly gathered together and steamed up into a huge umbrella of cloud: it must have been a mile high."[1] The image of the mushroom cloud evokes the most diabolic machine man has ever produced.

Saruman's wanton industrialization of the Shire is, likewise, evidence of his malicious desire to corrupt all that he touched. Tolkien's letters are full of suspicion of the inventions by which Man attempts to control nature. He wrote,

> There is the tragedy and despair of all machinery laid bare. Unlike that which is content to create a new secondary world in the mind, it attempts to actualize desire, and so create power in this world.[2]

"The Enemy and those who have become like him go in for 'machinery' - with destructive and evil effects."[3] Writing to Christopher about his wartime experiences he commented, "only in one way was I better off; wireless was not invented. I daresay it had some potential for good, but it has in fact in the main become a weapon for the fool, the savage and the villain to afflict the minority with and to destroy thought."[4] In another letter he announced,

> It is the aeroplane of war that is the real villain. And nothing can really amend my grief that you, my best beloved, have any connexion with it. My sentiments are those that Frodo would have had if he discovered some Hobbits learning to ride Nazgûl-birds "for the liberation of the Shire."[5]

1. The Lord of the Rings, 11.225.
2. Letters, p.87-8.
3. ibid., p.198.
4. ibid., p.71. If this is true of radio, how much more is it the case with television.
5. ibid., p.115.

Inasmuch as machines exemplify the human desire for mastery over creation, they are symbols not of progress but of fallenness. Tolkien's is a rather romantic world view which suggests nostalgia for the perfect innocence of the Garden of Eden in which "The Man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."[1.]

This is not a consistent position, however. Although Tolkien didn't enjoy smog and pollution and objected to machines of war, he lived comfortably within the modern world, enjoyed the technologies related to his own craft as a scholar and a writer, and spoke with evident approval of the simple machines used by Hobbits. Gwyneth Hood notes, for example, the distinction between "evil minds producing evil technology" and the "harmonious making" of the elves, of which Tolkien clearly approves.[2.] The complaint should probably be understood as reflecting the dissatisfaction of a man who, born in 1892, lived to see "progress" bring man the power to destroy the earth and who longed to return to the simpler world of his childhood before the arrival of automobiles had rendered the streets dangerous to pedestrians.[3.]

1. Gen. 2.25.
2. pp. 142-4.
3. As Thomas Gray ironically remarks, Tolkien's dislike of modern beaucratic structure for the exercise of social control is somewhat shortsighted since precisely this lack of organization and control contributed to Sauron's downfall. " Bureaucratization in 'The Lord of the Rings,'" Mythlore 7(2) 1980, pp.3-5. Tolkien's distaste for technology is noted also by Brown, "Pastoralism and Industrialism in The Lord of the Rings," Walker, "The 'War of the Rings' Treeology: an Elgy for Lost Innocence and Wonder," Burger, "The Shire: A Tolkien Version of Pastoral" and by many other critics.

The third doctrine which Lewis extracted from Augustine's concept of Evil is a corollary of the first two. "Good can exist without Evil but not Evil without Good." (De Civ. Dei, XIV, 11)[1]. Tolkien struggled valiantly to incorporate into his narrative the Augustinian view that evil is non-being, the absence of good.

Augustine rejected Manichean Dualism as a result of his study of astronomy.

> ...Astronomy showed him the perfect motion of the stars, that is, the fundamental elements in the structure of the universe. This made any dualistic principle impossible. If the universe has a structure of regular mathematical forms which can be calculated and which are harmonious, where can you find the effect of demonic creation in the world? The world as created in its basic structure is good.[2].

This follows in the tradition of Neoplatonic hierarchy established by Plotinus. The soul, for Plotinus, was the principle of movement. Therefore, there are a multitude of souls in the cosmos; the souls of plants, animals and humans, as well as the souls of the divine beings of ancient mythology. These mythological figures function in Plotinus' system of hierarchies as powers of being, each of which has a definite place in the order. However,

> ...the planetary forces, the demonic powers are an illusion. They have no independent power but are subject to providence, just as Paul affirms in Romans 8.[3]. The difference, however, is that Plotinus derived his theory from the cosmic harmony whereas

1. C.S. Lewis, p.67.
2. A History of Christian Thought, p.107.
3. Rom. 8. 38-9. "Neither angels nor principalities nor powers shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

> Paul derived it from the triumph of Christ over the Demons.[1.]

Tolkien responded to W.H. Auden's criticism that Orcs appear to have been created evil, "in my story I do not deal in Absolute Evil. I do not think there is such a thing, since that is Zero."[2.] The idea that good things have reality but evil equals nothingness underlines the notion that when a "villain" dies his remains are consumed in a puff of smoke;[3.] but the closest Tolkien comes to personifying this principle is in the description of the Nazgûl King, challenged by Gandalf;

> "Go back to the Abyss prepared for you! Go back! Fall into nothingness that awaits you and your master. Go!"
>
> The Black Rider flung back his head and behold! he had a Kingly crown; and yet upon no head visible was it set. The red fires shone between it and the mantled shoulders vast and dark. From a mouth unseen there came a deadly laughter.[4.]

Because of his conviction that evil has no independent existence Tolkien insists that the Dark Lord could not have created the Orcs, but only ruined and corrupted them.

1. A History of Christian Thought, p.53. Timothy O'Neill points out the connection between Tolkien's view of evil and that of Augustine, and comments that Tolkien's fall myth "is scarcely distinguishable from the image shared by Plotinus and Milton." The Individuated Hobbit, p.43. See also Larry Elton Davis, p.96ff. This connection is also noted by Verlyn Flieger, "Naming the Unnamable: The Neoplatonic 'One' in Tolkien's Silmarillion," in Diakonia: Studies in Honor of Robert T. Meyer, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986) p.128. David Harvey asserts that nothing in Tolkien's world is created evil. "The Middle Earth Tales are not simply tales of good vs evil, they constitute an examination of the nature of evil and the way it works on a number of levels. They are tales of the origin of evil as we know it." The Song of Middle Earth, (London:Allen and Unwin, 1985), p.67.
2. Letters, p. 243.
3. p. 59-60 preceding.
4. The Lord of the Rings, III.125.

> In the legends of the elder days it is suggested that the Diabolus subjugated and corrupted some of the Earliest Elves, before they had ever heard of "The Gods", let alone of God. I'm not sure about Trolls. I think they are mere "counterfeits", and hence (though here I am of course only using elements of old barbarous myth making that had no "aware" metaphysic) they return to mere stone images when not in the dark.[1.]

Yet even though Tolkien asserts that "naught that had life of its own, nor the semblance of life, could ever Melkor make,"[2.] the Orcs remain a problem. The Silmarillion tells us that they breed after the manner of the Children of Ilúvatar, that is sexually.[3.] If Orcs were first created Elves, they should breed Elves. Genetic manipulation cannot produce innately evil wills, only wills which can become evil as they are employed.[4.]

The debate between a Manichean and a Boethian view of nature is one which Tolkien would have encountered in his study of Anglo Saxon texts. Boethius was translated into Anglo Saxon by King Alfred the Great, and undoubtedly Tolkien would have studied this translation. T. A. Shippey comments,

1. Letters, p.191. This concept, however, seems to have become more clear as the tale developed. In the earliest version of the fall of Gondolin (1916-17) we find the editorial comment "How it came ever that among Men, the Noldoli have been confused with the Orcs who are Melko's goblins, I know not, unless it be that certain of the Noldoli were twisted to the evil of Melko and mingled among the Orcs, for all that race were bred by Melko of the subterranean heats and slime,"(Lost Tales, 11.159.)
2. The Silmarillion, p.50
3. ibid., p.50.
4. A related problem is that there do not appear to be any female Orcs.

> This is a remarkable book because while King Alfred showed a decent regard for the philosopher he was translating, he was not too modest to add bits of his own. He had, moreover, unlike Boethius, had the experience of seeing what Viking pirates did to his defenseless subjects; and again unlike Boethius, had taken such drastic measures against evil as hanging Viking prisoners and rebellious monks, and in all probability cutting the throats of any wounded pirate so unlucky as to be left on the battlefield. All this did not stop Alfred from being a Christian king; indeed some of his recorded behavior seems almost Quixotically forgiving. Nevertheless his career reveals the strong point of a "heroic" view of evil, the weak point of a Boethian one: If you regard evil as something internal, to be pitied, more harmful to malefactor than the victim, you may be philosophically consistent but you may also be exposing others to sacrifices to which they have not consented.[1]

Although Tolkien's work clearly reflects his desire to adhere faithfully to an Augustinian view of reality, he seems powerfully attracted by a more active understanding of the nature of Evil.

> Our real world does not appear to be wholly coherent either; and I am actually not convinced that though in every world in every plane all must ultimately be under the will of God, even in ours there are not some "tolerated" subcreative counterfeits...[2]

He goes on to speculate,

> In order that [Free will] may exist, it is necessary that the Author should guarantee it, whatever betides: sc. when it is "against his will," as we say, at any rate as it appears on a finite view. He does not stop or make "unreal" sinful acts and their consequences. So in this myth it is

1. Shippey, The Road to Middle Earth, p.108.
2. Letters, p. 191.

> "feigned" (legitimately whether that is a feature of the real world or not) that he gave special "sub-creative" powers to certain of his highest created beings: that is a guarantee that what they had devised and made should have the reality of Creation...But if they "fell" as the Diabolus Morgoth did, and started making things, "for himself to be their Lord," these would "be" even if Morgoth broke the supreme ban against making other rational creatures like Elves or Men.[1]

This letter is dated 1954, however, and probably does not represent Tolkien's final word on the subject. The Silmarillion specifies that the Maiar, the "highest created beings" to whom he granted subcreative powers, were not endowed with the ability to bestow the "secret fire" of life on their creations. Thus Aulë was able to make Dwarves in imitation of the Children of Ilúvatar but his thoughts possessed no "Secret Fire" and he was unable to give them life apart from his own will. Only after adoption into Ilúvatar's plan were the Dwarves endowed with independent being. At the end of time when the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, the Ainur will be given the power of bestowing the Secret Fire on their creations. Until then only such beings as were part of the first music of the Ainur are allowed to have independent life.[2]

Yet Tolkien remained very much aware of the ambiguity of the real world. Theologians may define Evil as Privatio Boni but ordinary people experience it as an active malevolent force of compelling power. After Ungoliant and Melkor destroyed the two trees and the light in

1. Letters, p. 195.
2. The Silmarillion, pp.45 and 15. This symbol is noted by Paul Kocher, "Illúvatar and the Secret Fire," Mythlore, Autumn, 1985, 12(1), p.36.

Valinor was extinguished, "In that hour was made a darkness that seemed not lack but a thing with Being of its own: for it was indeed made by malice out of light, and had power to pierce the eye and to enter heart and mind, and to strangle the very will."[1] Darkness seemed to have a malevolent sentience of its own. The shadow cast by Evil beings brought terror; the passage of the Nazgûl forced strong men to tremble and quail.

Similarly, evil things in nature seemed to possess power that had nothing to do with the will of a higher agent. By describing Eru setting the Secret Fire to burn at the center of the world Tolkien seems to suggest that the Earth itself has Being and that the things that grow on the earth can be evil, as in fact Old Man Willow was evil.[2] Nature is at least potentially fallen from before its actualization, because of Melkor's rebellion during the singing of the Ainur. As Gunnar Urang comments, "Everything in this fantasy world is capable of being more 'alive' more 'personal' so to speak, than its counterpart in our everyday world."[3]

1. The Silmarillion, p.76. Tolkien's tendency to dualism is noted by Davis (p.187). Urang also notes his struggle against Manichean vision of evil (108).
2. The Silmarillion, p. 20.
3. Urang, p. 108.

In Mirkwood the Hobbits found themselves forced down to the river basin in spite of their desire to move in the opposite direction. The undergrowth

> ...Somehow would not yield to the left, but only gave way when they veered to the right; and they had to go some distance along the bottom before they could find a way up the further bank. Each time they clamered out, the trees seemed deeper and darker, and always to the left and upwards it was most difficult to find a way, and they were forced to the right and downwards...They were being headed off and were simply following a course chosen for them [1].

in precisely the direction they did not wish to take! But nature has a mind of her own and the forest had chosen their direction.

The company had the same experience of Malevolent nature as they attempted to cross over a mountain pass and were stopped by a snowstorm on Mount Caradhras. "Stones began to fall from the mountain side, whistling over their heads or crashing on the path beside them." Snow piled up cutting off their retreat, and the wind was bitter, even though it was early in the season and not high enough up the mountain to expect a storm on that scale. As Gandalf surmised,

> "It was no ordinary storm. It is the ill-will of Caradhras. He does not love Elves and Dwarves, and that drift was laid to cut off our escape."[2].

As Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas attempted to track the kidnapped Merry

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.382.
2. ibid., 1.382. Anne Petty interprets this in relation to Alan Watts' "organic image of the world" (p.92), however Tolkien seems to be using the malevolence of nature as a comment on the difficulty of rising above the power of fallenness in the world.

and Pippin they had a similar experience. "There is some will that lends speed to our foes and sets an unseen barrier before us: a weariness that is in the heart more than in the limb."[1]. This time, however, the source of their oppression seemed to be Saruman, who had the power to cast a spell over the very landscape.

It is never clear exactly what kind of agents guarded the South Gate, but the Watchers there seemed to exert a similar unreasoning control over human wills. As Frodo came near them, "Suddenly, as if some force were at work other than his own will, he began to hurry tottering forward, his groping hands held out, his head lolling from side to side."[2]. This seems a little more threatening than simply the absence of goodness.

Just as nature appeared on some occasions to possess power over the wills of free people the Ring seemed to have some inherent power of its own. From the moment it came into Bilbo's hands he began contriving to secure his ownership over it. He deceived Gollum and invented a tale about having been given the ring as a "present" in much the same way as Gollum had lied about the Ring's being a birthday gift. This behaviour was most peculiar. As Frodo noted,

"I thought the true story much more likely, and I couldn't see the point of altering it at all. It was very unlike Bilbo to do so, anyway; and I thought it rather odd."[3]. The Ring exerted such an influence over Bilbo that he had difficulty giving it up even after he

1. The Lord of the Rings, 11.36.
2. ibid., 111.397.
3. ibid., 1.68.

had decided to bequeath it to his nephew Frodo. He became angry and threatened to draw a sword on his old friend Gandalf when he was questioned. "My Precious", he called it.[1].

> "It has been growing on my mind lately. Sometimes I have felt it was like an eye looking at me. And I am always wanting to put it on and disappear, don't you know...I tried locking it up but I found I couldn't rest without it in my pocket."[2].

Explaining to Frodo the means by which The Ring came into Bilbo's hands Gandalf speculated, "There was more than one power at work, Frodo. The Ring was trying to get back to its master."[3]. Reading back into its history one learns that this is characteristic behaviour. After Isildur had taken the ring as wergild for his father's death,"it escaped his finger and fell into the Great River to await discovery, centuries later, by Deagol."[4]. Gollum lost it in order that Bilbo could pick it up, and Bilbo noted that it had a tendency to change size and weight and could only be kept safe on a chain.

The Ring began to influence Frodo's behaviour immediately. Even before the Hobbits got out of the Shire a Dark Horseman was on their tails. "A sudden unreasoning fear of discovery laid hold of Frodo, and he thought of his Ring. He hardly dared to breathe, and yet the desire to get it out of his pocket became so strong that he

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.59.
2. ibid., 1.61.
3. ibid., 1.87-8.
4. The Silmarillion, p.245.

slowly began to move his hand."[1] This time the arrival of a company of wood elves frightened off the horsemen and saved Frodo from revealing himself by putting on the Ring. At the Prancing Pony Inn at Bree, Frodo was not so fortunate. Capering around on a table in full view of the assembled guests Frodo suddenly slipped the ring on his finger and vanished into thin air.

> How it came to be on his finger he could not tell. He could only suppose that he had been handling it in his pocket while he sang, and that somehow it had slipped on when he stuck out his hand to save his fall. For a moment he wondered if the Ring itself had not played him a trick; perhaps it had tried to reveal itself in response to some wish or command that it felt in the room.[2]

Again on Weathertop, threatened by the five riders,

> He was quaking as if he were bitter cold, but his terror was swallowed up in a sudden temptation to put on the Ring. The desire to do this laid hold on him and he could think of nothing else... He simply felt he must take the Ring and put it on his finger...He shut his eyes and struggled for a while; but resistance became unbearable and at last he slowly drew out the chain and slipped the Ring on the forefinger of his left hand.[3]

The Ring was evil from its forging, containing, as it did, much of Sauron's power, but the Evil that it represents is a powerful corrupting force, working against Good rather than merely denying or refusing to accept Good.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.112.
2. ibid., 1.219.
3. ibid., 1.262-3.

The malevolence to be found in nature suggests a Gnostic world view in which God is absolute and does not participate directly in creation. The act of creation is carried out by a demiurge, and a dualism exists between matter, which is Evil, and knowledge, which is Good. This removes direct responsibility for evil from God who is, by definition, Goodness, and explains the active malevolence often experienced in the created world and in nature itself.

An even closer correspondence can be demonstrated between the creation myth of Zoroaster and that of The Silmarillion. The Zoroastrian myth begins with one God, supreme above all others, who will, in the final apocalyptic event, crush evil and establish the reign of right and truth. This God, Ahura Mazda, brought all creation into being by his will. Mazda expresses his will within creation through the Amesha Spentas, "Immortal Holy Ones" which represent modes of action (Power, Good thought, Right, Prosperity, Piety, and so on). These "Holy Ones" are both gifts from Mazda to man and powers in their own right.

The Amesha Spentas can be compared to Tolkien's Maiar in that they are created but immortal agents of an absolute God but also in that they represent the negative as well as the positive forces active in the world. Right is opposed by the Lie, Truth by Falsehood, Life by Death. The conflict between good and evil began when Ahura Mazda created the Earth and granted freedom of choice to all creatures.

> Now the two primal Spirits, who reveal
> themselves in vision as Twins, are the
> Better and the Bad in thought and word

> and action...And between these two the wise once choose aright, and foolish not so. And when these twain spirits came together in the beginning, they established Life and Not-Life, and that at the last the worst Existence (Hell) shall be to the followers of the Lie, but the Best Thought (Paradise) to him that follows Right. At these twain Spirits he that followed the Lie chose doing the worst things; the holiest spirit chose Right. [1.]

The Evil Spirit, Shaitin, appeared in post exilic Judaism as Satan.[2.] Zoroastrian influence is also evident in the Jewish conception of Angels, and influenced the development of ideas of the Day of Judgement and Resurrection.[3.]

Before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine studied Manichean philosophy, a mixture of Zoroastrian, Gnostic and Christian concepts, for nine years. Although he emphatically rejected some elements of Manichean thought and in particular its ethical dualism, some strands of Zoroastrian influence which had already become part of the Judeo-Christian world view are quite evident in his thinking. Satan and the powers and principalities of heaven are assumed by Augustine in spite of his insistence that Evil has no existential reality. His distinctive understanding of Will as the mediating factor in salvation is consistent with Manichean thought as is his belief that because the soul is immortal, both Heaven and Hell must be eternal.[4.]

1. James Hope Morton, Early Zoroastrianism (London: Constable and Company, 1913), p.349, quoted in John B. Noss, Man's Religion (London: Collier and Macmillan, 1974), p.342.
2. I Ch. 21.1; Job 1-2; Zech. 3.1-3.
3. Noss, pp.394-6.
4. p.235 ff. following.

Since Augustine never resolved the inconsistencies in a belief that Satan and the Powers and Principalities are active in the world on the one hand, and that evil is simply the deprivation of good, on the other, it is not surprising that the same philosophic problem appears in Tolkien's attempt to give the theology a narrative form.[1.]

The fourth Augustinian doctrine quoted by Lewis is also explicit in Tolkien's myth.

> Though God has made all creatures good he fore-knows that some will voluntarily make themselves bad (De Civ. Dei, XIV, 11) and also fore-knows the good use which he will then make of their badness. (ibid.) For as He shows His benevolence in creating good Natures, He shows His Justice in exploiting evil wills. (Sicut naturarum bonarum optimus creator, ita voluntarum malarum justissimus ordinator, XI,17).[2.]

The relationship between the free choice to do evil and the ultimate triumph of God's Good purposes is examined in ChapterVII, however the ability of the forces of the West to exploit the devices of evil is heavily underlined.[3.] Melkor's rebellious attempt to destroy the earth with bitter frosts and cruel heat merely created beauty.

> "Behold the snow, and the cunning work of frost!...Behold the height and glory of the clouds, and the everchanging mists; and listen to the fall of rain upon the Earth."
> "Then Ulmo answered: 'Truly, water is now fairer than my heart imagined, neither had

1. Tolkien was very conscious of the danger here, as is demonstrated by his comments on C.S. Lewis' Of Other Worlds. "I noticed, for the first time consciously, how dualistic Lewis' mind, and imagination [were] though as a philosopher his reason entirely rejected this. So the pun Hierarchy/Lowerarchy. And of course the 'Miserific Vision' is rationally nonsense, not to say theologically blasphemous." Letters, p.371
2. C.S. Lewis, p.67.
3. See Edmund Fuller, "The Lord of the Hobbits in Tolkien and the Critics, p.29; and Spacks, "Power and Meaning in The Lord of the Rings" in Tolkien and the Critics, p.90-91.

> my secret thought conceived the snowflake,
> nor in all my music was contained the falling
> of the rain',"[1].

But the fatal flaw in evil will is its inability to act out of or even to understand honourable motives. Traitors are by nature treacherous, and their treachery is as likely to be turned against other traitors as against their enemies. Melkor recruited Ungoliant to destroy the light of the two trees, promising to reward her with all the jewels of Fëanor's hoard. By refusing to give up the Silmarils he lost her allegiance. It was the treachery of Saruman in his attempt to grasp the Ring for himself and keep it out of Sauron's hands that caused the infighting between his Orcs and those of Morgoth. This allowed Merry and Pippin to escape, and later, permitted Sam to rescue Frodo from the Black Tower. Speaking of Gollum's intention in bringing Frodo and Sam to Cirith Ungol, Gandalf acknowledged that he feared treachery, "but so it must be. Let us remember that a traitor may betray himself and do good he does not intend."[2] As the Rohirrim rushed to the aid of besieged Gondor, Éomer cried,

> "Our enemy's devices oft serve us in his
> despite. The accursed darkness itself
> has been a cloak to us. And now, lusting
> to destroy Gondor and throw it down stone
> from stone, his orcs have taken away my

1. The Silmarillion, p.27.
2. The Lord of the Rings, III.108.

> greatest fear. The Out-wall could have been held for long against us. Now we can sweep through."[1].

The blindness of evil is in its inability to recognize goodness in others. As soon as Sauron knew that the heir of Elendil lived and was returning to claim his birthright he sought the Ring no further. It was inconceivable to him that anyone having the Ring in his power would ever volunteer to give it up. He therefore acted before he was ready in hopes of taking Aragorn by surprise before he learned to wield the full power of the Ring. In doing so he ignored his own interests. He disregarded the warnings of his watchers that a threat was approaching his gate, and even when he knew that Frodo and Sam were within Mordor, he made no serious attempt to apprehend them. Although he knew that the original Ringbearer was a Hobbit it was unimaginable to him that Hobbits might have been permitted to keep the Ring or that they might be actively trying to destroy it. For his blindness Sauron was destroyed.

On the nature of fallenness Tolkien again conforms to the Augustinian view as quoted by Lewis.

> The Fall consisted in disobedience. The apple was not bad or harmful except in so far as it was forbidden, and the only point of forbidding it was to instil obedience, which virtue in a rational creature is, as it were, the mother and guardian of all virtues." (De Civ. Dei. XIV,12)[3].

Tolkien's fall myth is explicitly in agreement. All races have fallen through disobedience, beginning with Melkor who refused to submit to the will of Ilúvatar in the Music of the Ainur. The fall of Fëanor grew out of his jealous love for the Silmarils, which led

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.133.
2. Lewis. pp. 68-89.

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The blindness of evil is in its inability to recognize goodness in others. As soon as Sauron knew that the heir of Elendil lived and was returning to claim his birthright he sought the Ring no further. It was inconceivable to him that anyone having the Ring in his power would ever volunteer to give it up. He therefore acted before he was ready in hopes of taking Aragorn by surprise before he learned to wield the full power of the Ring. In doing so he ignored his own interests. He disregarded the warnings of his watchers that a threat was approaching his gate, and even when he knew that Frodo and Sam were within Mordor, he made no serious attempt to apprehend them. Although he knew that the original Ringbearer was a Hobbit it was unimaginable to him that Hobbits might have been permitted to keep the Ring or that they might be actively trying to destroy it. For his blindness Sauron was destroyed.

On the nature of fallenness Tolkien again conforms to the Augustinian view as quoted by Lewis.

> The Fall consisted in disobedience. The apple was not bad or harmful except in so far as it was forbidden, and the only point of forbidding it was to instil obedience, which virtue in a rational creature is, as it were, the mother and guardian of all virtues." (De Civ. Dei. XIV,12)[3].

Tolkien's fall myth is explicitly in agreement. All races have fallen through disobedience, beginning with Melkor who refused to submit to the will of Ilúvatar in the Music of the Ainur. The fall of Fëanor grew out of his jealous love for the Silmarils, which led

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.133.
2. Lewis. pp. 68-89.

him to refuse to give them up to save the two trees. The fall of the elves took place in two steps. After the first defeat of the Valar, the first born were summoned to live in the protection of Valinor. The grey elves disobeyed the summons and remained in Eä. Those who returned to Valinor were caught up in Fëanor's rebellion and defied the Valar by returning to Middle Earth.

The fall of Númenor was likewise because of disobedience. The only restriction on human freedom was the ban on sailing to the undying lands, in other words, on attempting to avoid death;[1] eating of the fruit of the tree of life. In the same way the ringwraiths were destroyed by the rings by which they had hoped to defy their mortality.

When the wizards were sent to earth only one restriction was placed on them; that they must not attempt to overcome Sauron with power nor to dominate less powerful creatures by force. Saruman fell because he disobeyed that limitation. In his pride he became convinced that he could wield the Ring of Power and so obtain his will. The parallel between the Ring of Power and the Apple is not exact, however. Augustine conceived of the apple as an entirely neutral object. In a real sense the ring is not neutral. It was created by evil for evil purposes and it possesses inherently evil power.[2] The sin does not arise from possession of the ring; Neither Frodo nor Bilbo was permanently corrupted by acquiring it, but it becomes evil when its power is used to disobey the limitations placed

1. The first and second versions of this myth are given with notes on further developments in The Lost Road, p. 11. Tolkien's Theological intention remains very consistent in all drafts.
2. pp. 179-181 preceding.

on the created order. The seat of evil is the will which refuses obedience.[1.]

The Augustinian doctrines which relate specifically to the fall of Adam and Eve, Tolkien has avoided by omitting that part of creation. Beor was questioned, but...

> Beor would say little; and indeed he knew little for the fathers of his people had told few tales of their past and a silence had fallen upon their memory. "A darkness lies behind us," Beor said, "and we have turned our backs upon it, and we do not desire to return thither even in thought."[2.]

The Elves speculated that "a darkness lay upon the hearts of Men" that could be compared to the shadow of the kinslaying that hung over the Noldor. The fratricide of Cain, perhaps? The kindreds of Men were already sundered in speech when Beor's people appeared in Ossiriand, so it seems likely that this part of the story belongs after the attempt to build the Tower of Babel in Genesis II.[3.]

1. Rose Zimbardo calls this understanding a "Romantic View," "Moral Vision in the Lord of the Rings," in Tolkien and the Critics, p.100, but in fact, here as elsewhere Tolkien is using Augustinian categories. See Frank Bergman, "The Roots of Tolkien's Tree," in Mosaic 10(2), 1977, pp.5-14, and Larry Elton Davis, pp.134-157. As David Harvey notes, "to follow evil is a choice conciously made." The Song of Middle Earth, p. 67.

2. The Silmarillion, p.141.

3. The Lost Tales contain a fragment which describes the accidental discovery by the magician, Nain, of the Vale of Sleep where the second born await their wakening in the world. (p.233) The work is incomplete, however the outline in Tolkien's notes indicates that "the corruption of certain men at the beginning of their days by the agency of Melko was a feature in the earlier phase of the mythology." (p.236)

Yet some aspects of Tolkien's work suggest that his thinking about the nature of humanity was not strictly Augustinian. Augustine declared that "if there had been no Fall, the human race, after multiplying to its full numbers, would have been promoted to Angelic Status." (De Civ. Dei XIV, 10)[1]. Death is the result of the fall, without which mankind would have enjoyed immortality.

For Tolkien, death is a gift rather than a punishment and immortality has no relationship with fallenness. He experimented with deathlessness, but perhaps because of the demands of the narrative, centered his tale around fallen rather than unfallen races. The two brief creation fragments feature unfallen Ainur but thirty-two pages is about all the interest such Beings are able to sustain. Elves are deathless, but Tolkien is careful to implicate all of them in one of the two rebellions against the Valar; The Elves in Middle Earth are either Moriquendi who refused the first summons to the Blessed Realm or part of the Company who returned when Fëanor rebelled. The exceptions are Elves who were born after the return to Middle Earth, but of these only Elrond is a significant character and Elrond, son of Eärendil and Elwing, carried the blood of Maia and Man as well as Elf. Elves are deathless within the circles of the world. "When killed by injury or the destruction of their incarnate form they do not escape from time, but remain in the world, either disincarnate or being reborn."[2]. Elves may not die. Míriel, mother of Fëanor, who decided that life was too weary to endure and so decided to die, precipitated the remarriage of Finwë and the distrust between his sons, with disastrous results.[3].

1. C. S. Lewis, p. 68.
2. Letters, p.236.
3. The Silmarillion, p.64 ff.

Eru's intention for the Elves at the end of History is not revealed, but it is clearly of a different order than the fate of humanity. The parting of Arwen and Elrond was bitter indeed because by relinquishing her immortality Arwen had chosen to separate herself from her family not just in this world but for all eternity. Human beings,on the other hand, are promised a place in the final music of the Ainur, but live only briefly within the circles of the world.

The Quenta Silmarillion explains that even before he had created mankind Ilúvatar announced the second-born would have two gifts which would distinguish them from his other Children; the gift of the freedom to shape their lives beyond the music of the Ainur and the gift to dwell only a short time within the circles of the world and then to die. Death in and of itself was not a punishment but a gift and had nothing to do with fallenness unless Tolkien understood the exercise of Freedom to lead inexhorably to a Fall, in which case the Fall would have to be understood as also part of the intention of the Creator. One with the gift of Death was the promise of a place in the purpose of Eru beyond time and history.

Death is "The gift of Ilúvatar which as time wears even the Powers shall envy...But Melkor has cast his shadow upon it."[1]. Not death but the fear of Death is the wages of sin. When human beings first appeared and during the early years of Númenor, death was neither feared nor avoided. When they had passed their prime, people accepted death willingly and cleared the way for the next generation. The model of Eru's intention is demonstrated in Aragorn's death.

1. The Silmarillion, p.42.

> Going to the House of Kings in the Silent Street Aragorn laid him down on the long bed that had been prepared for him. There he said farewell to Eldarion, and gave into his hands the winged Crown of Gondor and the sceptre of Arnor.

Begged by Arwen to remain with her a little longer he responded,

> "Take counsel with yourself, beloved, and ask whether you would indeed have me wait until I wither and fall from my high seat unmanned and witless. Nay Lady...to me has been given not only a span thrice that of Men of Middle Earth, but also the grace to go at my will, and give back the gift. Now, therefore, I will sleep."[1].

The sinful attitude to Death is exemplified in the later Kings of Númenor who, as their power increased, began to fear Death and to desire the life of the Valar. Eventually Sauron convinced them that "The Ban was imposed only to prevent Men from surpassing the Valar."[2]. They were tempted even as Adam and Eve were tempted in the Garden of Eden, to look with envy on the Undying lands which they were forbidden to approach, and some of them were convinced that if once they set foot in the Blessed Realm they, too, would live forever. Manwë warned the King:

> "The Doom of the World...one alone can change who made it. And were you so to voyage that escaping all deceits and snares you come indeed to Aman, the Blessed Realm, little would it profit you. For it is not the land of Manwë that makes its people deathless but the Deathless that dwell therein have hallowed the land; and there you would but wither and grow weary the sooner, as moths in a light too strong and steadfast."[3].

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.427. Another example of a "good death" is the passing of Sheaf; The Lost Road , p. 186.
2. The Silmarillion, p.271
3. ibid., p.264.

But the warning was to no effect. The fear of Death grew in people

> ...and they delayed it by all means that they could; and they began to build great houses for their dead, while their wise men laboured unceasingly to discover if they might the secret of recalling life, or at the least of prolonging Men's days. Yet they achieved only the art of preserving incorrupt the dead flesh of Men, and they filled all the land with silent tombs in which the thought of death was enshrined in the darkness.[1.]

"Atanamir [the King] lived to a great age, clinging to his life beyond the end of all joy...refusing to depart until he was witless and unmanned and denying to his son the King-ship at the height of his days." [2.]

As the Kings refused the gift of Ilúvatar the corruption of Númenor increased accordingly until they lost all respect for the Ban of the Valar, turned to the worship of idols and human sacrifice. Eventually their fear of death and their desire to retain and increase the power and riches acquired in their long lives caused them to mount an assault on the Blessed Realm.

The only mortals who defied Death were the nine who had been given the Rings of Sauron. These did not grow or obtain more life but merely continued living "until at last every minute was weariness." In the end they became invisible "and walked in the twilight under the eye of the dark power that rules the Rings."[3.]

At death, the Nazgûl King dissolved into nothing. Only the evil will of his Lord had sustained him, and deprived of a mortal body, that will dissipated leaving nothing.

For mortals of Middle Earth death is a necessary transitional phase. Tolkien seems to suggest, like the writer of Thessalonians,[4.]

1. The Silmarillion, p.266.
2. ibid., p.266.
3. The Lord of the Rings, 1.76.
4. Thessalonians 4:13-18.

that those who die await the intention of Eru at the end of History when the music of the Ainur shall be played aright. Death is related to the freedom with which mankind was first endowed, and by implication, to responsibility for the use of that freedom and to some form of judgement.

In the Book of Lost Tales, 1, Tolkien visualizes this judgement as taking place in the Halls of Fui under the most northerly mountains of Valinor. "Thither come the sons of Men to hear their doom... and Fui reads their hearts." From thence there are four possible temporary destinations until the Great End when all will join in the music of the Ainur.[1] Christopher Tolkien speculates, based on the etymology of the Elvish place names, that his father intended the fates of men to represent Hell, Purgatory, Limbo and Heaven, but both the judgement and its results disappear in later versions of the myth.

To be logically consistent with his insistence that evil has no autonomous existence, both judgement and punishment become problematic since, as Davis notes, if evil is "nothing" it therefore returns to nothingness when it is defeated, which renders judgement irrelevant.[2]

The sixth doctrine of Augustine, that "Satan attacked Eve rather than Adam because he knew she was less intelligent and more credulous," (De Civ. Dei., XIV,11)[3] is also avoided in The Lord of the Rings. It is just as well that Tolkien elected not to develop this particular strand of orthodox Christian doctrine since, as Edmund Wilson has noted, he had difficulty creating convincing female characters and

1. pp. 76-77.
2. "Christian Philosophical Examination of the Picture of Evil", p.170.
3. C.S. Lewis, p.68.

seems to have regarded women as foreign and incomprehensible.[1] The one romantic twist in the plot, the love between Faramir and Éowyn, is among the most stilted and wooden passages in his work.[2]

Only six female characters grace The Lord of the Rings; of these Galadriel and Arwen are wise and distant goddesses, Goldberry, daughter of the Riversprite, is a mythical figure, Éowyn is a head-strong child who must grow up to accept the womanly place fate has determined for her, Rosie Cotton is a caricature of a cheerful little wife and Shelob (She lobbe, Anglo Saxon for spider) is the female counterpart of the Balrog. The Entwives are introduced only to exemplify the evil consequences of their desire to control nature and cause plants and gardens to obey their idea of order and convenience.[3]

The male-centred view of the world gets Tolkien into trouble with some of his critics, among whom the most outraged feminist is Stimpson:

1. Lois Kuznets speaks of "the clear misogyny of The Lord of the Rings," "The Rhetoric of Childhood," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, a point of view shared by Doris Myers, "Brave New World: The Status of Women According to Tolkien, Lewis and Williams," in Cimarron Review 17, pp.95-103.

2. The Lord of the Rings, III.292-297.

3. It is, however, important to note that even the male figures in Tolkien are unidimensional. Frodo grows, over the course of his adventures, into a credible hero. The other characters are, and remain, flat. As Janet Menzies points out, Tolkien has created a world of marvellous depth and variety but his heroes and villains, male or female, are flat. "Middle Earth and the Adolescent," p.64.

> ...Suggestive of Tolkien's subtle contempt and hostility towards women is the atavistic tale of Shelob, the terrible, poisonous spider...A jubilant, exhultant Tolkien tells how Sam forces Shelob, who has wounded Frodo, to impale herself somewhere in the region of the womb, on his little knife. The scene, which has a narrative energy far greater than its function, oozes a distasteful, vengeful quality as the small, but brave male figure really gets the enormous, stinking bitch-castrator.[1].

Overstated though this is, Stimpson has accurately pinpointed a discomfort with women which would make Tolkien sympathetic to Augustine's position on Eve's role in the Fall. In his Biography Humphrey Carpenter asserts that Tolkien's wife Edith was largely excluded from his

1. Stimpson, p.19. Note also Brenda Partridge, "No sex Please, We're Hobbits," in Giddings, 187-192. Partridge finds in the description of Shelob's lair language which is suggestive of the female vagina, which is penetrated by the brave hero. Also, Nick Otty, "The Structuralists Guide to Middle Earth," in Giddings, p.177, and Peter Damien Goselin, "Two Faces of Eve: Galadriel and Shelob as Anima Figures," Mythlore 6(3), 1979, pp.3-4.

   Partridge speculates, on the basis of his letters to Arthur Greeves, that Tolkien's discomfort with women might be caused by latent homosexual tendencies, a conclusion which is disputed by Derek Brewer. "Those who have not lived in warrior societies...may easily underestimate the deep attachment that may exist between comrades in arms. Love does not need sex. The attachment between Frodo and his company...must have been paralleled many times in the two world wars." "The Lord of the Rings as Romance," in Salu and Farrell, p.252.

intellectual and social life[1], and in a letter full of fatherly advice to Christopher, Tolkien wrote,

> The sexual impulse makes women (naturally when unspoiled more unselfish) very sympathetic and understanding, or specially desirous of being so (or seeming so), and ready to enter into all the interests, as far as they can, from ties to religion, of the young man they are attracted to. No intent necessarily to deceive: sheer instinct: the subservient help-meet instinct, generously warmed by desire and young blood. Under this impulse they can in fact often achieve very remarkable insight and understanding, even of things otherwise outside their natural range: for it is their gift to be receptive, stimulated, fertilized (in many other matters than physical) by the male. Every teacher knows that. How quickly an intelligent woman can be taught, grasp his ideas, see his point - and how (with rare exceptions) they can go no further, when they leave his hand, or when they cease to take a <u>personal</u> interest in <u>him</u>.[2]

This is hardly the sort of strident anti-feminism that Stimpson claims to detect in the Shelob passage, but it is clear that Tolkien was socialized in a different age and society, and must have found the modern move toward equal recognition of the talents and intelligence of women rather bewildering.

Following from his conviction that the Fall of mankind was affected through the agency of the woman (and perhaps as a reflection of his own unruly sexuality), Augustine goes on to postulate that "since the Fall consisted in man's Disobedience to his superior it

1. <u>Biography</u>, pp. 153-157.
2. <u>Letters</u>, p.49.

was punished by man's loss of authority over his inferiors; that is, chiefly, over his passions and his physical organism" (De Civ. Dei, XIV, 15). This "disobedience of the body to the will is specially evident as sexuality now is but would not have been but for the Fall. (XIV, 16-19)"[1].

Tolkien's private convictions on this matter, clearly delineated in a letter to Christopher, are completely in agreement.

> This is a fallen world. The dislocation of the sex instinct is one of the chief symptoms of the Fall...The hard spirit of concupiscence has walked down every street and sat leering at every house since Adam fell.[2].

Given this attitude it is easy to understand why Tolkien had difficulty writing convincingly about love between men and women. By sidestepping the issue in his myth he followed by far the wisest course.

In the foregoing discussion I have attempted to demonstrate that Tolkien's understanding of the action of Good and Evil in the world is closely patterned on the principles picked out by C. S. Lewis as "those of the Church as a whole."[2]. Although it is clear that he was not slavishly bound to Augustine's doctrine, and in fact, struggled with the Manichean Heresy and never really settled on a consistent working out of the Privatio Boni position, yet Tolkien's understanding of "the inner consistency of reality" demanded that Middle Earth exist within the

1. Lewis. pp. 69-70.
2. Letters, p. 48.
3. ibid., p. 66

possibilities of the real world as he perceived it. Since he was not a systematic theologian in his own right, he accepted the teaching of his Church with both its strengths and its weaknesses, and worked very hard to build his subcreation around its theological principles.

IX

ARAGORN AS DAVIDIC MESSIAH FIGURE

Although Tolkien's subcreated world is clearly patterned on the Christian world as he understood it, Tolkien cannot be considered a Gospel writer in the Pauline sense unless his work is centered on the redemption of creation through the sacrifice of Christ the Messiah.

Three of Tolkien's heroes show characteristics associated with Old Testament Messianic expectations and each of them plays a pivotal role in breaking the power of Sauron and defeating the reign of darkness and death. The Lord of the Rings is a Heroic Quest Myth [1.] and its most conventional hero is Aragorn.

Lord Raglan in his Study of Heroes outlined 22 characteristics found in most myth heroes.

1. The hero's mother is a royal virgin.
2. His father is king and
3. Often a near relative of his mother, but
4. The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
5. He is also reputed to be the son of a god.
6. At birth, an attempt is made, usually by his father or maternal grandfather, to kill him, but
7. He is spirited away, and
8. Reared by foster parents in a far country.
9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but
10. On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.

1. Note, for example, Verlyn Flieger, "Frodo and Aragorn: The Concept of the Hero," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.41ff.

11. After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon or wild beast
12. He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
13. Becomes king.
14. For a time he rules uneventfully, and
15. Prescribes laws, but
16. Later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects,
17. Is driven from the throne and city, after which
18. He meets with a mysterious death
19. Often on top of a hill.
20. His children, if any, do not succeed him.
21. His body is not buried, but nevertheless,
22. He has one or more holy sepulchres.1.

Although the correlation is not exact, the data on Aragorn in Appendix A(V) makes it quite clear that Aragorn is, by his creator's intention, an archetypal hero. (Tolkien would undoubtedly say, "So was Jesus of Nazareth.")[2]. Aragorn's mother was Gilraen the Fair, daughter of Dírhael who was descended from Aranarth, the first Chieftain of the Dúnedain and the son of the last King of Arnor. His father was Arathorn, the last Chieftain of the Dúnedain, and thus a distant cousin. The marriage of Aragorn's parents took place over Dírhael's objections. The mother of the bride foresaw Arathorn's early death and predicted that an immediate marriage might give birth to hope for the Dúnedain people. Aragorn's father died as predicted, and at an early age Aragorn was spirited

1. Fitzroy Richard Somerset Raglan, The Hero (London: Watts, 1949), pp.174-75.
2. Flieger, "Frodo and Aragorn," p.44.

away to live in the house of Elrond because his life was threatened by those who wished to destroy the royal line of Isildur. Although Aragorn was not son of a god, both his parents were in direct line, through Elros, from Thingol and Melian. Thingol, also called Elwë, was the King of the Grey Elves in the first age, and his wife Melian, a Maiar who chose to remain with him in Middle Earth. It is through this bloodline that the Dúnedain inherited their exceptional longevity. Elrond came to regard Aragon almost as his own son and the boy grew up quietly in Rivendell. He learned nothing of his true name or lineage until he reached maturity. On becoming a man, Aragorn went into the wilderness and laboured as a Guardian for thirty years in the cause against Sauron. He rode with the host of Rohirrim and fought for the Lord of Gondor, but always anonymously. In the battle of the fields of Pelennor Aragorn first revealed himself as the heir of Isildur. After winning the battle, he ascended the throne and took Arwen Evenstar as his queen. Arwen, daughter of Elrond, was Aragorn's first cousin many times removed. Her maternal grandparents were Galadriel and Celeborn. Aragorn and Arwen dwelt in glory and bliss for six score years, during which he ruled wisely and peacefully to the great satisfaction of all his subjects.

Aragorn was not a tragic hero, however, and his character did not contain the flaws which would lead to his fall from grace. When he was ready to die Aragorn went to the House of Kings, lay down, and after bidding farewell to his wife and son, fell quietly to sleep.

> Then a great beauty was revealed in him, so that all who after came there looked on him in wonder, for they saw that the grace of his youth, and the valour of his manhood and the wisdom and majesty of his age were blended together. And long there he lay, an image of the Kings of men in glory undimmed before the breaking of the world.[1].

But Aragorn is much more than simply a conventional figure. In Jungian Psychological categories, the image of the King symbolizes the leading principle of our being. Helen Luke, a Jungian scholar, analyzes this archetype with respect to Aragorn in "The King."[2]. The death of the old King and the immediate succession of the new, she points out, almost always indicates the dawn of a new ruling attitude to life, whether it is found in myth or dream.

The essential characteristic of the King, as opposed to other leaders, is his inherited right to rule. Other aristocracies which are based on inherited rights derive from a concept of royal blood, and so lose their meaning when monarchy as an institution ceases to be upheld. The "mana" which is conferred by inheritance never becomes attached to any other kind of leader, no matter how powerful. A Hitler or a Napoloen can inspire fanatical devotion by the sheer force of his personality but the devotion given to a King, although it can be increased or diminished by his personality, derives not from the King as a man but from the reverence which is part of our instinctive roots for the archetype of kingship.

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.428.
2. Apple Farm Paper, pp.1-16.

> The mana lies precisely in the fact that a King is not a King because of personal merit or demerit but because he is the "blood royal", that is, he carries symbolically in his body the essence of the ancestors.

The Story of Aragorn, Helen Luke regards as a beautiful study of the royal power in man. Because Kings of Gondor had been in exile for generations, the kingdom was gradually sinking into decay. Even under the able stewardship of the line of Denethor, the "mana" of the King was lacking.

> When the Kingly function is repressed, the leadership of the psyche either falls into the hands of self-seeking factions at war with each other, or a man may be ruled by the "second-best" - by motives, ideas, feelings fine and good in themselves, but second best.

Nothing can resist the gradual decay of identity and integration which follows from the suppression of the guiding principle. This is what happened in Gondor, and the decline could only be halted by the return of the King, "that indefinable power whose sanction lies beyond rational thought and good government." Luke suggests that this is symbolized by the dead white tree in the court, whose seed must be dormant as long as the exile endures. A Steward, no matter how aristocratic, cannot restore the line that reaches back to the origin of the race nor can it bring back to life the shoot of the seed of Telperion,[1] oldest of trees.

Aragorn was not only bred, but also educated in the manner

1. In fact the white tree was not of Telperion's seed, but a seedling of Nimloth the Fair, which was descended from the white tree of Tirion, an <u>image</u> of Telperion but without her fruit.

which would best suit him to be the true King; In the house of Elrond the half-elven he learned the truths of the world of Men, of "reality" and those of the elves, the eternal life of the imagination, "so he learned to accept the validity of both conscious and unconscious, of both spirit and blood."

Growing up in Rivendell he learned who he was and what his destiny, and he was given a broken sword.

> Always in myth the potential King finds or is given his sword at the moment of his passing from unconscious boyhood to conscious manhood - he awakens to the realization of his fate, of his inheritance. The sword may be found, or if broken, reforged, only by its rightful owner. Arthur alone could draw excalibur from the stone, Siegfried alone could reforge Nothuny, and Aragorn alone must carry the broken Anduril until the time of its forging.

Soon after he reached manhood, Aragorn met and fell in love with Arwen. This, in Jungian psychology, represents completeness. There can be no king without a queen, because without her the line is sterile. The leading principle is cut off from the earth, symbolized by the feminine principle. But the union of the king and queen must await his full maturation in royalty. Aragorn must prove that he was, indeed, the mettle of a true King before he would be allowed to take his queen.

> In those who come at the last to high maturity, the great King who will finally take up his rule in them may remain for a long time in obscurity because the queen who will render him fertile and connect him to the earth is still an ideal, alive only in the elven world of the imagination. There is great danger for such a man, who has vividly

> experienced the anima of her elf nature, that she will remain always remote from the earth that she will, as it were, choose immortality, in which case his life on earth will remain crippled and sterile, his greatest potential unrealized. It is equally fatal, of course, if in choosing mortality, she forgets or denies her elf blood. Arwen did neither. The "hierosgamos", the marriage of king and queen which is the symbol of the final unity of heaven and earth can never be experienced if the queen remains a numinous image, refusing full incarnation.

Luke considers Aragorn a fitting symbol of the royalty of nature which is the guiding principle in a man who has achieved his full selfhood; dignity, unafraid acceptance of responsibility in great things as in small, an assured authority which never seeks to dominate but is rather an attribute of character. His years of service guarding and protecting a land and people who didn't know of his existence were his training in the selfless responsibility which is the special quality of the King. "So it is with every man in whom the royal nature comes finally to light, as he grows in the realization that in everything he is and in everything he does he carries responsibility for all Men."

> "He speaks as one having authority and not as the scribes." The scribes were the authorities, but the carpenter's son was a King.

Tolkien's identification of Aragorn as an archetype hero seems quite clear. Less obvious but equally important is Aragorn's role as the expected messiah.

A large number of critics have commented on the mood of

loss and diminution in Tolkien's world.[1] This perception is incomplete insofar as it fails to recognize the eschatological thrust of Tolkien's writing, yet there is, in The Lord of the Rings an apocalypticism which overshadows the day to day events of the story.

As Edward Schillebeeckx notes,

> The basic substance of apocalypticism bears the stamp of a long experience of human life, an experience which has ceased to look to man's history for any improvement. Suffering and every kind of misfortune whether individual or national, are so persistent that one has to postulate at the source of mankind's history a Fall of the first man which then rolls through history like a snowball...Thus Satan with his entourage obtains power over this world. These evil powers do battle with the pious, those faithful to the Law. The whole purpose of their struggle is eventually to get Jerusalem the Holy in their power. It is no longer possible, therefore, to hope for any final good from our human history. All hope is founded in the 'turn of the ages', that is, a sudden intervention on God's part, which just does away altogether with "this course of events" or "this aeon."[2].

Middle Earth is a world fallen under the influence of Morgoth and his servants. Evil can be defeated in particular and specific circumstances, but within historical time it cannot be eradicated. This is the context which gives rise to messianic expectations in Middle Earth as in the world of the Primary Creator.

> ...Radical messianic movements exhibit a more or less invariable basic pattern. Schematically simplified the basic messianic pattern looks rather like the following. Socio-political situations of economic and especially of cultural

1. See pp. 44-47 preceding.

2. Jesus: An Experiment in Christology, (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 114-20. Compare this to Tolkien's letter quoted on p. 62-63 preceding.

> and spiritual debility and loss of identity are always periods in which radical movements presenting a messianic aspect emerge, movements that dream of an imminent radically new world, because the "old world" has become utterly intolerable. An ardent longing then ensues: a life liberated and redeemed is about to begin. In such situations of malaise fantasy intensifies, Utopian pictures of a totally new world loom ahead: visions of a realm of peace, righteousness, happiness and love such as never was seen. A movement of this sort often crystallizes around a single mediatorial figure whose role is that of a savior who is expected to make everything come out right.[1]

Aragorn bears a strong resemblance to the expected messiah of Israel.

Predictions of the deliverance of Israel by a King of Royal David's line are prominent in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah.[2] These prophets wrote during the years immediately prior to the defeat of the Kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had fallen in 722 B.C. and the complete extinction of the Jewish nation appeared probable.

The great period of apocalyptic writing was between the Maccabean Rebellion in 166 B.C. and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. During that interval Jerusalem suffered repeated rebellions and invasions. Though the Davidic monarchy had ceased to exist as a political entity, the religious hopes with which the prophets had endowed the royal line of David remained a living and vital power centred around the expectation that a messiah, an anointed prince, would arise and

1. Jesus: An Experiment in Christology, pp.124-5.
2. Isaiah 7.14f; 9.1-7; 11.1-4; Ezekiel 34.22-24,27; 37.24, 26, Jeremiah 23.5; 8.

restore Israel to the glory and importance she had enjoyed during David's reign.

The messiah would be, like Aragorn, born to the task of restoring his people.[1] He would free them from oppression[2] and defeat those who had abused and exploited them.[3] His reign would be characterized by a return to justice and righteousness,[4] he would judge the poor fairly and defend the rights of the helpless.[5] His power was to be acknowledged by the Kings and Princes of the world.[6]

Just as the Davidic Messiah was to come into the world to restore God's covenant with the faithful remnant of Israel,[7] Aragorn's people were the heirs of the few who survived the judgement of Númenor when the Kings became greedy for wealth and power and led the people to rebel against the ban of the Valar. "The realm became divided. On

1. Isaiah 49.4; 49.6; Jeremiah 23.8.
2. Isaiah 52.7; Ezekiel 34.27.
3. Isaiah 9.4.
4. Isaiah 7.9; 11.2.
5. Isaiah 11.4.
6. Isaiah 49.7; Psalm 72.10f.; 89.27.
7. Isaiah 46.2; Ezekiel 34.23f.

the one hand were the Kings and those who followed them and were estranged from the Eldar and the Valar; on the other were the few who called themselves the Faithful."[1] Aragorn was the expected King who would restore this faithful remnant.

The Messianic expectation is highlighted by tantalizing hints that the return of the King is predicted even though no one knows that an heir of Isildur still lives.

> The Hobbits still said of wild folk and wicked things (such as trolls) that they had not heard of the King. For they attributed to the King of old all their essential laws; and usually they kept the laws of free will, because they were the Rules, both ancient and just.[2]

The King is still expected. Tom says to the swan in the poem,

> "Long neck and dumb throat, but still a haughty sneerer. If one day the King returns, in upping he will take you, Brand your yellow bill and less lordly make you."[3]

In a letter to an illustrator working on the Bombadil poems, Tolkien explained the significance of the swan's feather in Tom's hat:

> I found that the bird's name did not mean as I had supposed "a King that fishes." It was originally The King's Fisher. That links the swan (traditionally the property of the King) with the fisher bird; explains both their rivalry and their special friendship with Tom. They were creatures who looked for the return of their Lord, the true King.[4]

1. The Silmarillion, p.266.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.31.
3. J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil," The Tolkien Reader, p. 8.
4. Letters, p. 319.

Appendix A notes that Hobbits used the expression "When the King comes back" for some good that could not be achieved. The dream of Boromir in which he heard the words

> Seek for the sword that was broken:
> In Imladris it dwells;
> There shall be counsels taken
> stronger than morgul-spells.
> There shall be shown a token
> That Doom is near at hand,
> For Isildur's Bane shall waken,
> And the Halfling forth shall stand.[1.]

is a portent of the King's return. It was legend that Narsil, the sword of Elendil, would be reforged when the true King returned to bear it. Frodo's vision of the vandalized statue of the King of Agornath, its severed head crowned with yellow stonecrop[2.] is likewise a sign that the return of the King is near at hand.

When we first see Aragorn he looks totally unlike an expected King; a dark figure slipping surreptitiously over the gate at Bree, someone the Hobbits are at first inclined to distrust. Like the Jesus of the New Testament, he must keep his identity a secret until time is appropriate for its revelation.[3.] Specific messianic parallels assert themselves when Aragorn raises the dead.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.323.
2. ibid., 11.395.
3. Flieger discusses this as a convention in heroic literature in "Frodo and Aragorn," pp.45-5.

An ancient prophecy describes this event:

> Over the land there lies a long shadow, westward reaching wings of darkness. The Tower trembles; to the tombs of kings doom approaches. The Dead awaken; At the Stone of Erech they shall stand again and hear there a horn in the hills ringing. Whose shall the horn be? Who shall call them from the grey twilight, the forgotten people? The heir of him to whom the oath they swore. From the North shall he come, need shall drive him: He shall pass the door to the Paths of the Dead.[1].

This is full of apocalyptic echoes. Daniel's prophecy of the overthrow of Antiochus IV ends with the description of the Guardian Angel Michael who will rise up and deliver Israel at the appointed time, "And many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake."[2]. Isaiah 26:19 predicts that "in that time the dead shall live," and throughout Isaiah the sounding of the trumpet will mark the Day of the Lord.[3]. Of course the raising of the dead in Tolkien's fantasy is only the temporary calling forth of the shades, but it is indicative of Aragorn's Messianic importance that, as Legolas remarks, "Even the shades of Men are obedient to his will."[4].

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.63-4.
2. It is interesting to note that Daniel 8:25 specifies that Antiochus will be overthrown, but "by no human hand, he shall be broken." The same archetype appears in the defeat of Macbeth by Macduff who was "From his mother's womb untimely ripped," and of the Nazgûl King by a Hobbit and a woman dressed up as a man.
3. Isaiah 11.3; 27.13; 58.1 etc.
4. The Lord of the Rings, 111.184.

As Aragorn sets out to take the Paths of the Dead, his response to Lady Éowyn, as she begs him not to risk his life, is reminiscent of Christ's response to his disciples in similar circumstances. Aragorn said, "I go on a path appointed."[1] Jesus' words were, "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him."[2] The title, "Son of Man," in Daniel and in the apocryphal similitudes of Enoch and IV Ezra xii, is a designation of the eschatological Messiah whose coming will herald the end of the age.

After defeating the Corsairs, Aragorn sailed their ships to the defense of Minas Ithil, but instead of marching into the city at the head of his army, he slipped quietly through the gates and made his way to the Houses of Healing. There, as "one cloaked in gray," he once more fulfilled the ancient prophecy.

> When the black breath blows
> and a death's shadow grows
> and all lights pass
> come Athelas! come Athelas!
> In the King's hand lying:

The power of healing is a mark of the legitimacy of a King's claim to rule. As the old woman Loreth announces, "The hands of the King are the hands of a healer." Apart from its association with the Davidic Messiah, this motif is found in Celtic myth, most explicitly in the grail legend. But Aragorn's power goes beyond the ability to heal physical wounds.

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.66.
2. Mark 14.21.

Although Faramir, Éowyn and Merry have all sustained physical injuries, their mortal wounds are spiritual. The healing arts of ordinary people are of no use against the Black Breath.

> Now Aragorn knelt beside Faramir and held a hand upon his brow. And those that watched felt that some great struggle was going on. For Aragorn's face grew grey with weariness; and ever and anon he called the name of Faramir, but each time more faintly to their hearing, as if Aragorn himself was removed from them, and walked afar in some dark vale, calling for one that was lost.

Aragorn struggled with the evil spirit that had stolen Faramir and when he had cast it out woke Faramir from his sleep.

> "My Lord, you called me. I come. What does the King command?"
> "Walk no more in the shadows, but awake!" said Aragorn.
> "You are weary. Rest awhile, and take food, and be ready when I return."

The fame of Aragorn went before him.

> At the doors of the Houses many were already gathered to see Aragorn, and they followed after him; and when at last he had supped, men came and prayed that he would heal their kinsmen or their friends whose lives were in peril through hurt or wound, or who lay under the Black Shadow. And Aragorn arose and went out and he sent for the sons of Elrond, and together they laboured far into the night. And the word went through the city: "The King is come indeed."[1].

The announcement by the Eagle of the victory over Mordor on the fields of Cormallen is in the form of a hymn of praise.

> Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor
> for theRealm of Sauron is ended forever,
> And the Dark Tower is thrown down.

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.180.

Sing and rejoice, ye people of the
  Tower of Guard,
for your watch hath not been in vain,
And the Black gate is broken,
And your King hath passed through
  And he is victorious.

Sing and be glad, all ye children
  of the West
for your King shall come again
And he shall dwell among you
  all the days of your life.

And the tree that was withered
  shall be renewed
And he shall plant it in the high places
  And the city shall be blessed.
  Sing all ye people.[1.]

This echoes several of the Psalms, especially 33, 47 and 145 to 150, but its most familiar model is Zechariah 9.9,

Lo, your King comes to you;
Triumphant and victorious is he.

It seems very likely that the Eagle's hymn is an intended allusion to the familiar words of Handel's Messiah. "And so the name which was foretold at his birth that he should bear was chosen for him by his own people," in this case, "elfstone" rather than "The Son of God."[3.]

The crowning of Aragorn is also suggestive of Christ's coming in power. When Frodo and Sam were brought before him he gently reminded them of how they had at the beginning doubted him. Then he took them by the hand and seated Frodo on his right hand and Sam on his left, so that among the company of the great the two that were humblest received

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.297-8.
2. ibid., 111.180.
3. Luke 1.34.

the first praise of the King. The joy of that meeting was beyond the power of words to describe.

> And all the host laughed and wept, and in the midst of their merriment and tears the clear voice of the minstrel rose like silver and gold, and all men were hushed. And he said to them now in Elven-tongue, now in the speech of the West, until their hearts, wounded with sweet words, overflowed and their joy was like swords, and they passed in thought out to regions where pain and delight flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness.[1].

One sign remains. Before he could come into his kingdom in its fullness, Aragorn must wait for the restoration of the white tree in the court of the fountain. Only when a new sapling was discovered would the prophecy be fulfilled so that he could take Arwen Evenstar as his bride. It is significant that the final sign of the redemption of the Kingdom (the new Zion) was a tree, both a symbol of growth and a type of the Cross, the final sign of the Messiahship of Christ.[2].

But Aragorn is not the Messiah. He is wholly human and his Kingdom is temporal, not spiritual. Still, he points the way to a future Messiah. Even his parting words suggest those of Jesus. Aragorn said "in sorrow we must go, but not in despair. Behold! we are not bound forever to the circles of the world and beyond them is more than memory."[3]. Jesus was saying something very similar when he said "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid...in my father's house are many mansions."[4].

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.232.
2. See also the Tree of Life in the City of God, Revelations 22.2
3. The Lord of the Rings, 111.428.
4. John 14.1-2.

X

GANDALF AS PRE-EXISTENT HEAVENLY MAN

Aragorn does not exhaust all that Tolkien has to say about Messiahs, but the other figures are much more subtle. Gandalf, at first glance, seems to be cast in the archetype of the wise old man, sort of a Merlin to Aragorn's Arthur, yet he too has precedents in the Messianic expectation of the Old Testament. William Manson describes one strand of Jewish thinking.

> In the Jewish apocalyptic writing the old national expectation of a Messianic King from the house of David has sunk beneath the horizon. In some of these books, e.g. in parts of I Enoch and in the Assumption of Moses [which date from after the fall of Jerusalem] the Messiah does not appear at all, the judgement of the world and the final deliverance of Israel being wholly reserved to God. But in other parts of the literature there emerges a transcendent figure with wholly celestial attributes, for whose appearance we are not prepared by anything in the older religion of Israel. He comes into view first in the famous vision in Daniel viii, where under the form of "one like 'a son of man'...he arrives with the clouds of heaven before the Ancient of Days."[1.]

This figure appears more fully expressed in I Enoch 37-71 and in parts of IV Ezra where he is a pre-existent heavenly being, who as the Elect or Righteous One of God, has been hidden with God since before the creation of the world.[2.] As he appears in Daniel, this

1. William Manson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943) p.176.
2. I Enoch, 48.7.

celestial figure has none of the attributes of the Jewish Messiah, but the Enoch writer represents him as destined to sit on a throne of glory and to have the sum of judgement committed to his hands.[1.]

Gandalf is a pre-existent Heavenly Man with some of the characteristics of this Messianic figure.[2.] Specific Christian parallels do not suggest themselves until he suddenly appears, resurrected from death.

> His hair was white as snow in the sunshine; and gleaming white was his robe; the eyes under his deep brows were bright and piercing as the rays of the sun; power was in his hand. Between wonder, joy and fear they stood and found no words to say.[3.]

This is strongly reminiscent of the apocalyptic vision of the resurrected Christ as described in Revelation;

> I saw...one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle around his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool and his eyes were like a flame of fire.[4.]

Like Jesus as he appeared on the Road to Emmaus, Gandalf had the power to keep his identity hidden until he was prepared to reveal himself.

1. I Enoch, 61.8; 69.27-29.
2. Gunnar Urang asserts that Gandalf "parallels the Christus Victor of 'classical' Christology, a conception rooted in the apocalyptic image of the Son of Man, coming in power and glory and winning the victory over the devil and his powers." Shadows of Heaven, p.119 .
3. The Lord of the Rings, 11.125.
4. Revelation 2. 13-14.

Even after he came close to them, his three companions were convinced that he was Saruman. Although they knew him when he spoke to them, they wondered at his transformation. Paul's words describing the resurrection might have been written about Gandalf.

> What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.[1].

With his resurrection Gandalf became in appearance and power a God-like figure. He seems to have been immortal, powerful enough to stay with a mere look Gimli's Axe and Aragorn's Sword, but even if they had struck him, he said, "none of you has any weapon that could hurt me." He was not omniscient, but his assertion that the tide had turned seems to indicate some new source of knowledge. He barely remembered the name by which the Hobbits addressed him, and he said, "I can see many things far off but many things that are close at hand I cannot see."[2].

Once Tolkien has established Gandalf as a type of the Risen Christ, it is necessary to read back and try to discover what his appearance means. Gandalf is not a conventional quest hero. There is no account in the story itself of who he was or where he came from, no royal forefathers or destiny told by the prophets. We know only that he belonged to the same order as Saruman, apparently a magician, and Radagast the Brown, who had a special power of speaking with birds and animals. The Appendix helps fill in his story.

1. I Corinthians 15.42-3.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.125.

> In the Third Age, when about a thousand years had passed...the wizards appeared in Middle Earth. It was afterwards said that they came out of the far West and were messengers sent to contest the power of Sauron, and to unite all those who had the will to resist him; but they were forbidden to match his power with power or to seek to dominate Elves or Men with force or fear.[1].

This is greatly expanded in Tolkien's other writings. The Silmarillion records of the Istari,

> ...In the likeness of Men they appeared, old but vigorous, and they changed little with the years and aged but slowly, though great cares lay on them; great wisdom they had, and many powers of mind and hand.[2].

In the Unfinished Tales we learn that Istari were sent by the Valar, "summoned, it seems by Manwë (and maybe he called upon Eru for counsel?) It was resolved to send out three emissaries to Middle Earth." When only two offered themselves Manwë commanded Olórin [Gandalf] to go as the third, "but he declared that he was too weak for such a task and that he feared Sauron. Then Manwë said that was all the more reason why he should go..."[3]. In a letter, Tolkien explained,

> I venture to say he was an incarnate "angel"...By "incarnate" I mean they were embodied in physical bodies capable to pain and weariness and of afflicting the spirit with physical fear, and of being "killed", though supported by an angelic spirit they might endure long and show slowly the wearing and care of labour.[4].

Gandalf, then, was a Maia, an immortal of the Ainur; one of"the Holy ones...[who] were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made."[5]. Like the Heavenly Man

1. The Lord of the Rings, 111.455.
2. The Silmarillion, pp.299,300.
3. Unfinished Tales, p.393.
4. The Lord of the Rings, 1.202.
5. The Silmarillion, p.15

Gandalf was present with God at the act of creation, but Gandalf was not God himself, but merely an angelic creation of God's devising.

Unfinished Tales gives a rather clear account of the Istari and their mission, but since this was omitted from the work which Tolkien himself prepared for publication, we can only guess that its inclusion would have made the allegory too heavy-handed. As he noted elsewhere[1]. history, whether actual or invented, frees the reader to apply his own thought and experience to the material, whereas allegory purposes to dominate the interpretation. Tolkien preferred not to tell us how we must understand Gandalf.

The Unfinished Tales explain that "the Istari were bidden to advise and persuade Men and Elves to do good, and to seek to unite in love and understanding all those whom Sauron, should he come again, would endeavour to dominate and corrupt." Tolkien lists the members of the order (in this instance, five; elsewhere, three) naming Saruman first. "Last came one who seemed the least, less tall than the others, and in looks more aged, grey-haired and grey-clad and leaning on a staff."2.

Although they were wise and powerful, the Istari, at least in their human incarnation, were limited. Gandalf was mortal, and in fact he was killed by the Balrog. He was obviously limited in knowledge to the things he learned through ordinary if not entirely usual means. Gandalf lost precious time trying to confirm the identity of Bilbo's ring, and although his intuition was excellent

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.xi.
2. Unfinished Tales, pp.388-402.

as for example in his vague sense that Gollum might be useful, he did not know what consequences possession of the ring might have on the lives of Bilbo and Frodo. Asked why he didn't warn them of their danger he replied, "...you must remember that nine years ago when I first saw you, I still knew little for certain."[1]. Saruman deceived Gandalf for a long time and even managed to remove his protection from the Hobbits at a crucial moment by emprisoning him in the tower of Orthanc.[2]. Gandalf couldn't foresee the outcome of the coming struggle, and like all the others he had to go on fighting in faith.

It is quite clear that wizards can be tempted by evil. "The Istari, being clad in bodies of Middle Earth, might, even as Men and Elves, fall away from their purposes and do evil, forgetting the good in the search for power to effect it."[3].

Saruman did, in fact, fall, and Tolkien in his letters suggests that Radagast and the other two wizards may have met the same fate by allowing themselves to become so enamoured with the creatures of Middle Earth that they forgot the struggle for which they were sent. But Gandalf resisted the temptation. We are told that Galadriel would have liked to make him Chief of the Istari, "but Mithrandir refused the office, since he would have no ties and no allegiance, save to those who sent him.[4]. Tempted to take the ring and the power that belonged to it, he violently rejected the offer.[5].

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.93. This point is made by Sam Naur, "The Errors of Gandalf the Gray," Amon Hen, 1986, November, 82, p. 16.
2. ibid., 1.338.
3. Unfinished Tales, p.390.
4. The Silmarillion, p.300.
5. The Lord of the Rings, 1.95.

One can almost hear him respond, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."[1].

The Unfinished Tales sums up his life: "The Grey Pilgrim... dwelt in no place, and gathered to himself neither wealth nor followers, but ever went to and fro ...befriending all folk in times of need."[2]. In the back of Tolkien's mind must have been the words of the Evangelist, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."[3]. Gandalf's remarks to the Hobbits as he sent them back to mend the damage in the Shire could as easily have been made by Jesus to his disciples, "I am with you at present... but soon I shall not be...Do you not yet understand? My time is over. It is no longer my task to set things right."[4].

But Gandalf is a messenger, not a Saviour. He represents a radical intervention by God in History, and so may be a type for a future messiah, but his task is to defeat Sauron, not finally to overcome sin and death.

1. Matthew 4:10.
2. Unfinished Tales, p.390. William Dowie quotes Mircea Eliade on the possession of a home, "a house marks the assumption of a stable position in the world, therefore the mark of the pilgrim is the abandonment of a home in the world as he quests towards the center in the highly evolved religions, The Hidden God," Salu and Farrell, p.270.
3. Luke 9:58.
4. The Lord of the Rings, 111,340.

XI

FRODO AS SUFFERING SERVANT

In myth and literature there are numerous examples of archetypal kings and pre-existent heavenly beings, but the truly surprising messianic figure in The Lord of the Rings is a hobbit. Here again, Tolkien is exploring an Old Testament messianic concept, the messiah who redeems through suffering. The Suffering servant passages in Deutero-Isaiah were written in the context of the Babylonian Exile. Some of the poems seem to refer to Israel as the servant of the Lord, but others clearly invest the servant with characteristics and functions previously attributed to the Davidic Prince. [1.] The suffering servant was chosen, apparently by breeding, for the task of defeating the enemies of the people of God.[2.] He was not naturally a heroic figure, in fact "he had no form or comeliness that we should look on him and no beauty that we should desire him."[3.]

Tolkien's hero seems equally unlikely. Hobbits are child-sized characters, perhaps half the height of a full grown Dunedain.

1. Manson, p.171-4.
2. Isaiah 49.1.
3. Isaiah 53.2.

They are called Halflings and everything about their lives is small; their homeland, their interests, their aspirations, even their villains. Ortho Sackville-Baggins is about as nasty as Hobbits get. His response to Bilbo's will leaving everything to Frodo is straight out of an animated cartoon. "Foiled again'" he said as he snapped his fingers and stamped off.[1] Frodo is, at first glance, anything but heroic.

> (He) must try to survive and to win by surviving, and in that case not only valour and physical prowess but the very idea of battles against enemies is not particularly germane.[2]

His heroism is the heroism of the suffering servant. Tolkien upholds as heroic Frodo's willingness to carry out his quest at the cost of life, happiness and security rather than by wielding sword or vanquishing foe.

> Frodo is a sort of scaled-down version of the Quest hero.[3]

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.66.
2. Roger Sale, "Tolkien and Frodo Baggins," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.284.
3. Verlyn Fleiger notes that Frodo is a "fairy tale hero," "... the unlikely hero who stumbles into heroic adventure and does the best he can." "Frodo and Aragorn" in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, p.41ff. Flieger identifies Frodo with Scyld Scefing in Beowulf who arrived from the sea as an unknown child, and with his burial, was taken by ship back over the water. "Scyld is one Avatar of a fertility figure ubiquitous in northern mythology, who appears under various names - Scyld, Sceaf, Ing, Freyr, Frodi... The name Frodo, a varient of Frodi, is surely...chosen to state a connection Tolkien wished to make." (p.52)
   T.A. Shippey points out the same antecedents when he links Frodo's name to "Froda", a hero from northern legend whose historical type may have been Frothi, a Danish king remembered as a peacemaker who ruled at the time of Christ's incarnation. "Creation from Philology," in Salu and Farrell, p.311.

The family trees in Appendix C show that Frodo was descended on both sides of his family from the Took of Great Smails, the tenth Thain of this line. His parents died when he was still a baby, so he was sent over the water to live with his Brandybuck relatives. We are told nothing of his childhood but as a young Hobbit Frodo came to live with Bilbo Baggins, his uncle,[1] was adopted and became heir to his considerable fortune, to the great envy and hatred of the erstwhile heirs, Ortho and Lobelia Sackville-Baggins. On the day Frodo came of age and received his inheritance Bilbo disappeared in very unusual circumstances. Unlike a typical quest hero, however, Frodo did not marry, nor did he enjoy his wealth. Instead, the quest consumed him. He made a deliberate decision, although reluctantly, to give up his own secure comfortable life in order to pursue the task that was given to him.

> "why was I chosen?" he asked.
> "You may be sure it was not for any merit that others do not possess; not for power or wisdom, at any rate."[2]

One is immediately reminded of Paul's words, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."[3]

Fay Ellwood makes a point of the sacrifice Frodo made in accepting his Quest. Frodo loved his Shire, he liked good company,

1. Uncle/nephew pairs as a literary motif in medieval romance is examined by Jessie Weston, From Ritual to Romance, (New York: Garden City Press, 1957) p.191. Also Verlyn Flieger, "Frodo and Aragorn," p.53.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 1.95. Compare Isaiah 42.1.
3. I Corinthians 1.27.

took six meals a day when he could get them and was neither particularly brave nor particularly adventurous. He didn't want to be chosen, and all along he had to struggle with the implications of chosenness.

He is a very ordinary Hobbit, but a sort of transfiguration took place in the Barrow, when he was endangered by the Barrow-wight.

> As he lay there, thinking and getting a hold on himself, he noticed all at once that the darkness was slowly giving way. A pale greenish light was growing round him...It seemed to be coming out of himself.[1.]

Frodo was aware he was in danger, and he was strongly tempted to use his ring to escape: "But the courage was now too strong: He could not leave his friends so easily. He wavered, groping in his pocket, then fought with himself again; and as he did so the arm crept nearer."[2.] He attacked the wight, rescued his friends and invoked Bombadil. This was the first time Frodo was required to overcome the temptation of the ring without external assistance and the point at which he really made the decision to risk his life for his friends. He passed the test.

The Christ imagery becomes more explicit with the attempt to betray him by one of his intimate companions, sworn to uphold his mission. At the fork in the river when the choice could be delayed no longer, Frodo slipped away up the mountain to think about what he must do. Boromir, pretending concern and love, came after him and when Frodo would not surrender the ring, turned on him. Boromir's motivation was

1. The Lord of the Rings, 1.194.
2. ibid., 1.195.

much the same as the motivation some biblical scholars attribute to Judas Iscariot; he couldn't understand why the power already at hand could not be seized and set in opposition to the evil which oppressed them. The kiss of Judas echoes again when Gollum, sworn to serve the Ring Bearer, led him into Shelob's lair in the hope that he might be murdered.

The Christian Church has always interpreted the images of propitiary suffering in the Isaiah servant songs as predictions of Christ's suffering and death in atonement for the sin of Mankind. In Tolkien's tale, Frodo serves through suffering, yet even though by his sacrifice he is able to defeat the power of Mordor, Frodo is not a scapegoat whose death expiates the fallen condition of creation. Still, for people of the third age of Middle Earth, Frodo literally

> bore our griefs and carried our sorrows;
> Upon him was the chastisement that made
> us whole, and with his stripes we are
> healed.[1]

During the passage through Mordor, Frodo was stripped and beaten by the orc soldiers,[2] driven stumbling and exhausted under the weight of his burden,[3] thrown into thorns[4] and suffered a burning thirst. Through all this, darkness covered the earth though it was day.[5] This whole section of the tale is heavily suggestive of the kind of self-sacrificing love that is Frodo's chief mark as a Messiah-figure.

1. Isaiah 53.4
2. The Lord of the Rings, 111.227-8.
3. ibid., 111.255-6.
4. ibid., 111.237.
5. ibid., 111.241, 243, 262-3.

As Frodo and Sam came nearer Mount Doom, hope faded and only Frodo's awareness of the consequences of failure pushed him ever nearer the brink of doom. Yet he knew that even in the slight chance that he might still destroy the ring, he and Sam would surely die.[1] And every step he took toward doom increased the weight of the burden hanging around his neck, until at last he told Sam, "No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to me. I am naked in the dark, Sam, and there is no veil between me and the wheel of fire."[2] At the foot of the mountain Frodo was reduced to crawling forward on his hands and knees. Even the final cataclysm is described in words which suggest the death of Christ. Frodo, convinced that the world was coming to an end, announced, "Well, this is the end."[3] Jesus said, "It is finished."[4] Matthew's gospel describes the scene, "The earth shook and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened..."[5] Tolkien says, "Towers fell and mountains slid; walls crumbled and melted, crashing down ... the earth shook, the plain heaved and cracked...."[6] Both are descriptions of the defeat of the Evil One, and the effect is clearly meant to be similar. But Frodo didn't die.

At this point, Tolkien is closer to the Isaiah source than to its Christian interpretation. His generation believed the suffering

1. The Lord of the Rings, III.259.
2. ibid., III.264.
3. ibid., III.276.
4. John 19.30.
5. Matthew 27.45; 50-52.
6. The Lord of the Rings, III.276.

servant to have been "cut off from the land of the living".[1] and even made him a dishonourable grave, yet though "God willed to bruise him" the servant survived.[2]

Strangely, the very act by which Frodo betrayed his mission leads to the strongest Christ image of all, the wounded hand. Frodo's ring finger, bitten off by Gollum, fell into the roaring fires of Hell. Isaiah prophecies that "The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hands,"[3] a rather literal interpretation of the effect of Gollum's intervention. Frodo carried out his mission on behalf of the Free peoples when he was thirty-three, the age at which Jesus is believed to have died.

Sauron fell on March 25. His defeat instituted a new dispensation and the calendar began to measure time from the new beginning. This date, Shippey reminds us, represents the Anglo Saxon dating of both Easter and the Annunciation, nine months before Christmas. In Christian tradition, the Annunciation represents the date of God's miraculous intervention in human history with the coming of the promised saviour. The banquet on the field of Cormallen two weeks later was a bittersweet experience for Frodo. He was brought back from the edge of doom to receive the thanksgiving of all people. As Isaiah says of the Servant,

1. Isaiah 53.8.
2. Isaiah 53.10. Frodo's survival has created difficulties for critics who would like to understand him as a Christ Figure. Katharyn Crabb attempts to explain this by theorizing, "...the subconscious will to live and assert power breaks through the conscious desire to sacrifice himself to destroy power. The result is symbolically the sacrifical death required, though the body sacrificed is that of Frodo's alter-ego, Gollum." J.R.R. Tolkien, (New York: Ungar, 1981), p.78
3. Isaiah 53.10.

> I will divide him a portion with the great because he poured out his soul unto death.[1].

But the world is no longer Frodo's home.

> "I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger. Someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them."[2].

As Frodo departed to return to the Shire, Arwen took from her breast "a white gem like a star" which seems to have been the token of her right to sail to the Havens. She presented it to him;

> "In my stead you shall go, Ring-bearer, when the time comes, and if you desire it."[3].

Frodo need never grow old and die as other mortals do. Like Isaiah's suffering servant,

> When he makes himself an offering for sin...he shall prolong his days.[4].

This white gem suggests the apocalyptic prophecy,

> "To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna [Lembas?] and I will give him a white stone..."[5].

Frodo was the victor, but he was not the Messiah. In the course of his quest he grew but he did not pass the ultimate test.

As Tolkien wrote,

1. Isaiah 53.10.
2. The Lord of the Rings, 111.312.
3. ibid., 111.312.
4. Isaiah 53.10.
5. Revelation 2.17. Hood interprets this white stone as a placebo to ease Frodo's pain at the loss of the ring which he had worn around his neck for so long. The Lidless Eye, p.203.

> Frodo "Failed"...one must face the fact: the power of Evil in the world is not finally resistible by incarnate creatures, however "good." And the writer of the Story is not one of us.[1].

The age came to an end. Through the agency of not one, but three messianic figures, the forces of Evil suffered a temporary defeat.

In an attempt to explain the Christ figure as a literary convention, Gracia Fay Ellwood describes Jesus,

> ...The long promised heir of the Jewish royal line and a healer and a teacher, whose life climaxed in his crucifixion and resurrection (descent into the abyss and rebirth. By this achievement he has become the lord of all reality, which lordship will be revealed to the world at some future date when he returns.[2].

She goes on to explain that Christ is variously depicted as "Universal Man , a miracle worker, a blood spattered warrior on a white horse, the spirit of forgiveness, a thunderous denouncer of the status quo, the King of Glory." A Christ image must, however, possess "human limitation" represented in the incarnation.[3].

The popular Christianity represented by this summary of messianic attributes has contributed to the impression that Tolkien intended one or all of his three Christ figures to represent, individually or collectively, the Messiah of God to the third age. Certainly Aragorn was long promised, of royal blood, a healer, teacher and blood-

1. Letters, 252.
2. Ellwood, Good News From Tolkien's Middle Earth,(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), p.102.
3. ibid., p.103.

spattered warrior on a white horse; Gandalf died and was resurrected, after which he was a miracle worker and appeared to possess mastery over the world; and who could more satisfactorily represent human limitation than Frodo?

Almost certainly this is a distortion of Tolkien's intention. They are all types for the future Messiah but his linear view of history implies that the incarnation is an event which occurs once for all time. Christ is the unique gift of God to humanity and the Kairos of Christ is the fourth age. Creation still labours under the consequences of its fallenness and the new age which is dawning will be more prosaic and less heroic than the former ages.

Yet Ellwood's analysis raises a serious question. What place is left for a messiah in Tolkien's world? Jesus is Saviour not for any of Ellwood's reasons nor even because he shows an example of perfect submission to God's will and self-sacrificing love, but because by his death and resurrection he overcame the power of sin and death.

Although the Christian Church has never dogmatized an absolute theory of atonement, the assertion that Christ died for our sins, already a credal formulation by Paul's time, has been understood to mean that in some way Christ's death and resurrection have destroyed the power of Satan.[1] Origen postulated that Jesus gave himself to Satan as a ransom in exchange for mankind; however, since Jesus was without sin, Hell could not hold him, so Satan was betrayed into forfeiting

1. I Corinthians 15.3.

his power over humanity in exchange for a hostage he could not hold. The most elaborate theory was Anselm's idea of judicial satisfaction. God responds to human sin by requiring satisfaction. Man, because he is guilty cannot make restitution, but since he is the offender, only Man can give satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary that Christ, who is the only innocent man, being also God, give satisfaction through his voluntary suffering. But because he is innocent, and because the justice of God requires that Christ receive reward for his suffering, the reward for Christ's suffering is given to Man in the form of salvation from the effects of his guilt.[1.] A third doctrine of atonement is that of Abelard, who held that it is the love of God made visible on the Cross of Christ which elicits our love. Salvation is Man's personal response to the forgiving act of divine love.

All these positions revolve on the understanding that the wages of sin is death and that Christ's resurrection prefigures the eternal salvation of those who believe in Him. Frodo's sacrifice produces no such effect. Although Frodo gave up his home and the life he cherished there, and in willing obedience undertook a journey from which he did not expect to return, Frodo survived. Although he was faithful to the utmost limit of mortal ability, in the end he failed, and by failing forfeited his total victory over the power of the ring. His wounded hand and the shoulder pierced by the Nazgûl sword would go on afflicting him until he could endure no longer to live in Middle Earth. Although Frodo's effort resulted in the destruction of Sauron's

1. Anselm of Canterbury, ed. and translator, Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, (Lewiston: N.Y., Edwin Mellen Press, 1976) Vol. III pp.129-136.

Ring of Power, the victory over evil was temporary. Morgoth retained the power to corrupt and destroy.

Salvation does not depend on the destruction of the ring because ultimately salvation is not possible within history. Although Frodo was granted passage to the undying lands, his deathlessness had no effect on the mortality of anyone else. Death has nothing to do with the fallen state of creation in Tolkien's world. The Eldar are immortal, "yet that to them is neither reward or punishment, but the fulfillment of their being".[1.] Human beings are mortal within the circles of the world but are promised a place in the final music of the Ainur. Life in eternity is, for Mortals, the fulfillment of their being. This places Tolkien in the same dilemma as Augustine, who asserted that "Those who are excluded from eternity because they are separated from God are still immortal. Because separation from God is an act of will,their damnation is a just punishment." However, as Tillich points out, this is a logical impossibility because

> ...the very concept of the eternal excludes continuation in time, and the ontological concept of love... excludes being which is not in unity with love.
>
> The educational view exercises a continual threat over everyone. Therefore, the Church has always maintained it, accepting the logical contradiction in order to produce the threat of the eternal (i.e. endless) condemnation.[2.]

In Roman Catholicism the problem is mitigated to some extent by postulating various "levels" of separation from God; Limbo for pagans and

1. The Silmarillion, p.264.
2. A History of Christian Thought, p.119.

for unbaptized children, and Purgatory for those who need purification before coming into the presence of God.

A rather beautiful description of Purgatory is to be found in Tolkien's "Leaf by Niggle", in which Niggle spent "the first century or so" of his afterlife in a workhouse in which he learned to manage his time and complete the tasks he started. After a spell of heavy digging and a period of bedrest in complete darkness, Niggle heard an accuser and "a second voice" (evidently Jesus) discussing his case. In spite of a rather poor record of useful achievement, "the second voice" sees reason to treat Niggle gently.

> "He did answer a good many calls."
> "...and he always called those interr-uptions. The Records are full of the word."
> "True; but they looked like interr-uptions to him, of course, poor little man. And there is this: He never expected any return."

The decisive argument in Niggle's favour turns out to be his bicycle ride in the rain to find a doctor for Parish's wife. "I rather lay stress on that," declares the second voice. "It seems plain that this was a genuine sacrifice. Niggle guessed that he was throwing away his last chance with his picture, and he guessed too, that Parish was worrying unnecessarily."[1].

Niggle goes on to the next level of preparation, where he is able to complete his picture, then to the distant mountains which are presumably a step nearer his eternal reward.[2].

1. Reader, p.101.
2. "Leaf by Niggle" is analysed by Colin Wilson in Tree by Tolkien (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1974) and by J.S. Ryan, "Folktale, Fairy Tale and the Creation of a Story," in Tolkien, New Critical Perspectives, pp.31-38.

In spite of the graciousness of "the second voice," the underlying assumption is that Heaven is a reward which must be earned. If not strictly deserved, there must be, at least, some mitigating factor.

"There is no note in the Records of his pretending even to himself, that his painting excused his neglect of things ordered by the law."[1].

One of the Lost Tales suggests that in the earliest conceptualization Tolkien envisioned the judgement of mortals at death in the Halls of Fui under the mountains of Valinor, where they would be consigned to heaven, hell or purgatory. The fate of souls in Purgatory could, it appears, be influenced by the prayers of the faithful. For example, when Nienóri and Turin arrived at the doors of Fui they were not admitted, "but the prayers of their parents Arin and Mauvin moved the heart of Manwë and they were cleansed in the flame and afterwards dwelt among the Vala forever." [2].

If Heaven must be earned, then in what sense can Christ be said to have overcome sin? Tolkien's comment that as a Christian he expects history to be "one long defeat"[3]. makes it clear that the promised evangelium is outside historical time, but on an individual level sin does not seem to be overcome until the price is paid, not by Christ's sacrifice but by punishment in purgatory.

This, of course, is one of the issues that brought about the Reformation. Luther taught,

1. Reader, p.100.
2. Lost Tales II, p.159.
3. Page 63 preceding.

> The divine demand is absolute. It is not a relative demand which brings a more-or-less kind of blessedness. The absolute demand is: Joyfully accept the will of God. And there is only one punishment not different degrees of ecclesiastical satisfaction and degrees of punishments in purgatory and finally Hell. The one and only punishment is the despair of being separated from God. Consequently there is only one grace, reunion with God. That is all![1].

The theological debate goes back to Augustine who, while he insisted on Grace as the means of Salvation, accepted the concept of purgatory as a place of preparation for eternal joy.

Tolkien's world, like that of the Old Testament, is a world under the law. There is no hint in the Lord of the Rings of what the end of history might bring. The Silmarillion suggests that the eschaton will result in the perfect realization of God's intention in the first music of the Ainur; however, when or how this will come about is not part of Tolkien's story. There is no Messiah in the third age, but the Divine intention is already made manifest in the archetypes of the future Messiah.

1. Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1967), p.230.

XII

CONCLUSION

Tolkien, it seems clear, intended The Lord of the Rings as a demonstration both of Fairy-Story in its "true" form and of the myth that he felt England lacked. Because he understood myth as always and inevitably an account of the cosmic struggle against radical evil, and Faerie as the Eucatastrophic tale which offers the consolation of a glimpse of Evangelium "beyond the walls of the world," his own story is intended to point to eschatological hope. The Kingdom of God is coming, when the powers of evil will be defeated and God's intention in Creation will be realized. Because for Tolkien both myth and fairy-story find their highest expression in The Bible and particularly in the gospel account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life, The Bible is both the model and the standard of truth for the Middle Earth writings.

Some of the similarities between Tolkien's work and The Bible are fairly obvious and widely noted; the language of The Silmarillion and to a lesser extent of the "old" races of Middle Earth is elevated and somewhat archaic in structure and tone, and Tolkien's use of archetypal allusions identifies it with myth and the literature of The Bible. The work is presented as a translation from a diverse collection of manuscripts assembled in a variety of centres by compilers and redactors over a time span of years and generations, and like The

Bible, the principal works form two collections, the ancient tales, legends, poems and history and the more immediate account of the defeat of Morgoth. The two were intended by their author as an indivisible unit, and appear to be intended as analogous to the Old and New Testaments of The Bible.

Tolkien's tale is a Romantic Quest myth in which events are worked out in a roughly "U" shaped pattern very similar to the narrative structure Northrop Frye has identified in The Bible, with its recurring theme of exodus, redemption and rebellion, and with the antagonists, protagonists and places of sanctuary functioning as Mythoi of Antichrist, Redeemer and Zion respectively. Because it is the account of the mighty works by which God makes his children ready for the ultimate victory, the story begins before creation and ends after history has reached its culmination. Tolkien offers no speculation on how history will end, but insists that time moves toward the fulfillment of God's plan for creation. Therefore the events of history occur once for all time, and each repetition of the cycle of seasons or each turning of the age moves not back to the point of beginning but forward toward the realization of the will of God. Time is Linear within History.

Middle Earth, although imaginary, is firmly rooted in the world of our daily experience, and the laws of nature unfold just as we would expect them to. The ancient tales speak of a mythological time "before the seas were bent," when the land inhabited by the gods was accessible to Middle Earth, but the world Frodo knew is spherical

and subject to the geological forces that have shaped the Earth. Over the eons, mountains are thrown up by volcanic eruptions and worn away by erosion, continents drift and split and earthquakes open new rifts and valleys on the earth's face. Creatures are still found in Middle Earth which became extinct before the recording of human history, but the flora and fauna are for the most part reassuringly familiar. The migrations of peoples and the evolution of languages likewise follow expected patterns.

By creating a world in which the laws of God and nature function as they do in the real world Tolkien has effectively made God the prime mover of his fairy story and the Middle Earth writings a kind of "lost segment" of The Bible story. The "Good News" to which he points is the same good news toward which the Old Testament moves. His message is that God is the ultimate power over heaven and earth, and that in the end, God's purpose will prevail. Within history that purpose is worked out through the free will of all rational creatures who are supported by the providence of God.

Tolkien is not entirely successful in striking a balance between Free will and providence, however, because of some basic incongruities in his interpretive principle. The theological structure of his subcreated world is built on the Augustinian doctrine of evil as it is outlined in C.S. Lewis' Preface to Paradise Lost. Like Augustine, Tolkien insists that evil has no essential being but is merely the privation of good. He symbolizes this by using the analogy of darkness, the absence of light, however both darkness and the evil

powers possess a malevolence which is almost Manichean in its effect.

Just as for Augustine the powers and principalities of Satan were manifest in the world, gods both good and evil still move through Tolkien's subcreation and their messengers still influence the fate of mortals. His is a world in which the free will of people is threatened by the competing wills of powers beyond their knowledge or comprehension; where forests conspire and mountains produce storms to block the passage of those who seek to carry the ring to its destruction, and where the protagonists are rescued by giant eagles and trees are recruited to do battle against the agents of evil.

The most serious question arises in regard to the orcs. If, as both Tolkien and The Bible insist, God and the world that He created are good, how is it possible that an entire species of intelligent life could be by nature irredeemably evil? If, as Tolkien hypothesizes following Augustine, evil has no independent existence but is merely the privation of good, Morgoth could not have created a new species but merely corrupted elves or humans. If this were the case, the second and third generation, no matter how completely conditioned, would remain elves or humans and thus capable of redemption. Tolkien clearly imagines no such possibility. Unlike Gollum, orcs do not appear to enjoy free will, yet they are not automatons controlled by the evil of Sauron. Orcs have no higher loyalty than their own interests. They are motivated by fear and coercion, arguments among them frequently result in their killing each other and their individual greed and jealousy work at cross purposes to Sauron's interests.

The impression of ethical dualism is a consistent difficulty in the Middle Earth writings in spite of Tolkien's insistence that his world is monotheistic. His creation account bears more resemblance to the Zoroastrian myth than to the Genesis story, and because the powers of heaven, both good and evil, continue to exert influence on the world of mortals, Tolkien's assertion of the radical nature of human freedom is sometimes less than convincing.

Much less problematic is the Augustinian doctrine that Evil beings are merely good beings corrupted by Pride. In every free race there are examples of members whose inflated pride caused them to seek power that did not belong to them. The use of force to coerce others or to alter one's place in the natural order is always a mark of fallenness, to the extent that some of Tolkien's critics accuse him of a bland, complacent classism which blesses the established social order and brands as evil any effort to overturn it. It is this same suspicion of the use of power that makes Tolkien so negative toward machines and technology.

A symbol of the desire to wield power and therefore of fallen nature is the fear of death. Death is not, in Tolkien's world, the wages of sin but a gift from God and the natural destiny of mortals. Whenever people have rejected death and sought to prolong life unnaturally they have fallen under the power of evil, and like the ringwraiths, have forfeited their essential being. The will which refuses to obey its natural destiny is the seat of fallenness.

Over against the fallenness of the world Tolkien has set

the nine walkers, a balance to the nine ringwraiths, upon whose obedience depends the fate of middle earth. Since the wielding of power to coerce, even for good ends, is forbidden, these nine must overcome the strong and achieve their victory through weakness. They are not perfect specimens , though they represent the races of free peoples. The dwarf and the elf are jealous and distrustful of each other, one of the hobbits nearly gives up the game by stealing a peek at the palantir, and the man openly rebels and attempts to steal the ring of power. Yet with the support of beneficent providence and in spite of the ring-bearer's last minute failure, Grace prevails and the battle is won.

The Christian Good News is that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus is the preexistent heavenly being, the expected Messiah of David's royal line and the suffering servant of God. His appearance heralds a new order and with his return, the power of Satan will be broken and there will be no more death. The Evangelium to which Tolkien points is the eschatological Kingdom of God, where mankind will share eternal life with God and the angels. In the meantime the world remains fallen but still under the providence that will ultimately prevail. Middle Earth has not yet seen its saviour. Gandalf is one of several preexistent heavenly beings, Aragorn is the King who fulfills prophecy and Frodo is the suffering servant. Each of these develops a strand of the Old Testament Messianic hope, but although they are victorious over Sauron his defeat is merely a temporary setback. The evil will of Morgoth retains its power to corrupt.

Yet just as the testimony of the Hebrew scriptures affirms the ascendant purpose of God and points to the redemption of God's people by the agency of a saviour, the Middle Earth testimony is profoundly hopeful.

The role of the expected messiah is made somewhat ambiguous by Tolkien's treatment of death and by his apparent acceptance of the popular Roman Catholic teaching that souls are prepared for Heaven by working off their sins in Purgatory, yet Tolkien's world is safely in God's hands. The Eucatastrophe of man's history, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, is simply a future chapter, already prefigured in the world of Middle Earth.

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