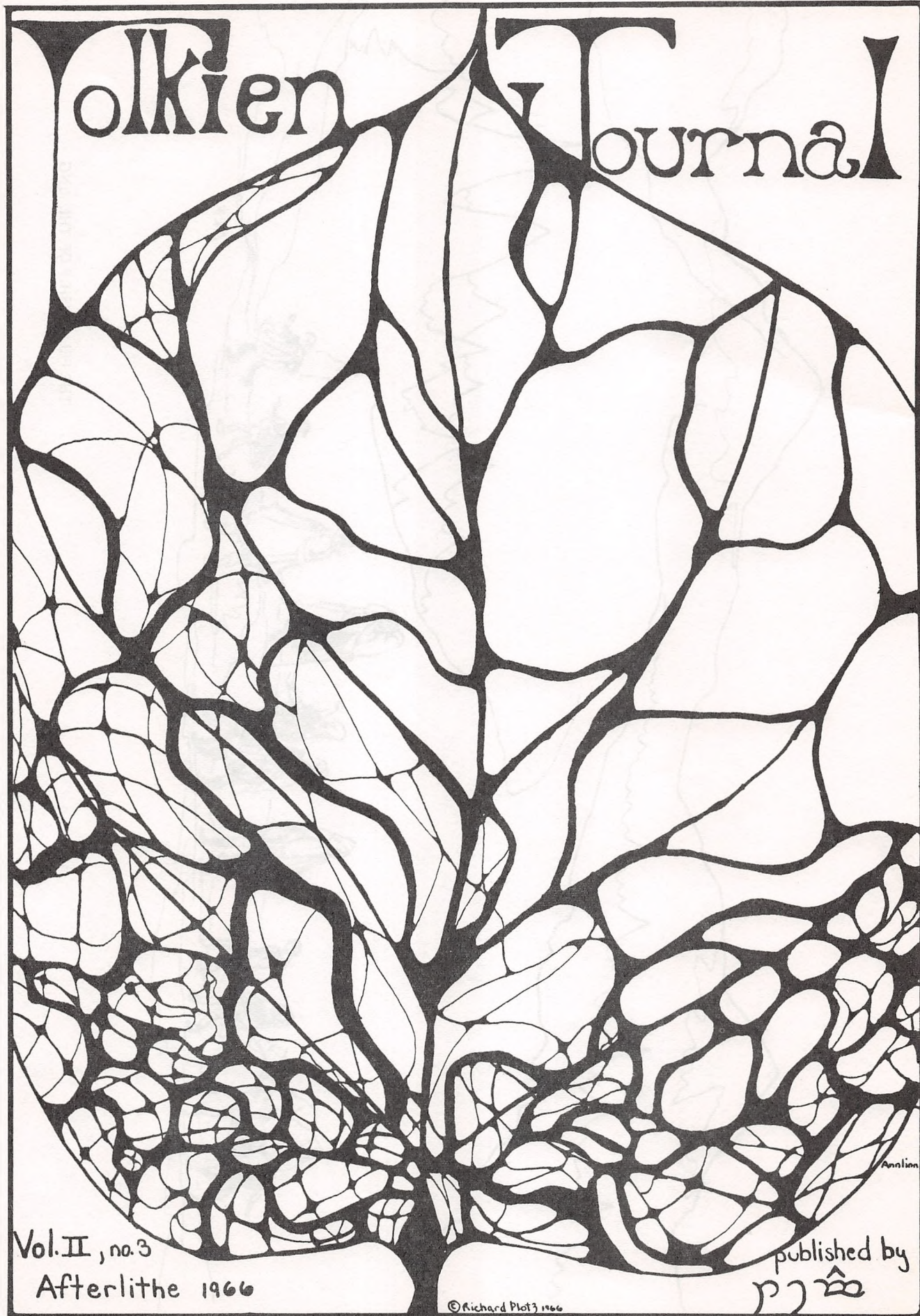


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Afterlithe 1966

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THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

C O N T E N T S

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This issue of the
Tolkien Journal
has been prepared in
Fangorn Forest,
transported with the greatest
danger over the Hithaiglin,
and taken to the printer, only
to find him on vacation.
He has returned, and
present plans call for mailing
from the post-office at Bree as
soon as possible.
I hear the postmaster there is
quite a respectable fellow,
name of Butterbur or something
like that.
May the Silmaril guide his hand.

TOLKIEN JOURNAL
Published quarterly by the
Tolkien Society of America
(four times a year, anyway).
Volume II, no.3 Afterlithe 1966

Thain.....Dick Plotz
Editor..... "
Secretary.....Rebecca Wenger
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Diana Paxson
Tamar Laks

TOLKIEN NOTES FROM ALL OVER

A number of people have wondered how I got the date 7146 for this year in Shire Reckoning. Actually, it was a roundabout and inaccurate process, for which I apologize. I used the analogy Fourth Age: age of recorded history: since the year 1 in the Hebrew calendar. I then added 1420 + 5726 to get 7146. Simple? Arbitrary? Of course. Try this instead. John Alcock suggests that since Númenor is Atlantis the date of the fall of Númenor is the same for Atlantis. Working back through a reference in Plato's Timaeus, he comes up with A.D. 1966=S.R. 9834. In other words, the War of the Ring ended in 6449 B.C. Heresy? Perhaps, but draw your own conclusions.

Mrs. Gracia Ellwood, at 207 Takaishi, Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa-ken, Japan, is writing an essay on Christ-imagery in LotR ("as well as belonging to the fun school"). Suggestions?

Amy Richardson, 196 Washington Street, Wellesley, Mass., and some of her friends are writing a musical farce on LotR. Poison-pen letters and helpful hints to Amy, please.

The Ballantine LotR "won easily" the Chicago Tribune Paperback of the Year Poll for 1965, according to the Tribune's July 31 books section.

Joseph Hearst, who has connections with these things, caused the Ash Nazg (in the original) to be placed inside a nuclear "device". "I can make no statement of cause and effect, but the device yielded one and a half kilotons more than expected. Perhaps the power of Barad-dur is not completely dissipated."

The rumors of a Tolkien Festival that have been floating about are true. It will be at Mankato State College, Mankato, Minn., on Friday evening, 28 October, and Saturday, 29 October. Worthy manuscripts requiring less than forty minutes' presentation time will be read at the conference. Send contributions by 15 September to "Tolkien Festival", Mankato State College.

John Moses suggests that Tolkien readers might be interested in the Michael Youth Group. I don't know what it is, but the address is Threefold Farm, Hungry Hollow Road, Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977.

Fred Lerner reports:

There is a "philological autobiography" of Tolkien in his essay "English and Welsh", pp. 35, 36-37, 41. The book is Angles and Britons: O'Donnell Lectures. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963).

The Epic of Gilgamesh in Egyptian mythology touches on the idea of the Uttermost West as a place of rebirth and eternal peace.

There is (or was) a town called Long Cleve in Rockland County, N.Y. When Fred returns from the Army, he plans to run for Mayor of East Paterson, N.J., and he expects to win. As Mayor, his duties will be much the same as those of the Mayor of Michel Delving. His first official acts will be to change 54th Street to The Greenway and to change East Paterson to Bywater, N.J. 07407. Good luck, Fred.

Don Sosin, en route to Munich to form a TSA smial there, called a Tolkien meeting on the Nieuw Amsterdam. It was the talk of the ship (and quite successful, too).

Edward S. Lauterbach, Associate Professor of English at Purdue, suggests some reading: In C.S. Lewis: Poems there are several poems on Narnia. In Letters of C.S. Lewis he refers to Tolkien frequently; this is something to look into, though there is no index. Try also George MacDonald's The Lost Princess: A Double Story for mythic symbolism. Lauterbach also recommends the children's books of Lloyd Alexander for Welsh mythology, and The Weirdbone of Brisengamen by Alan Garner (the last is so similar to Tolkien's books that I found myself saying "Gandalf" instead of "Cadellin", the wizard in Weirdbone). I would add to this list Islandia, by Austin Tappan Wright, a book which held me with almost as much power as LotR. Wright has even sampled Islandia's interesting language for us. Islandia was finished before The Hobbit was started, as Wright died in 1931! No possibility of plagiarism here.

The Tolkien Reader has arrived! The proven glory of Tree and Leaf, Farmer Giles of Ham, and The Adventures of Tom Bombadil is joined to The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhtelm's Son, an original play by Tolkien based on the Anglo-Saxon poem The Battle of Maldon. The book is prefaced by "Tolkien's Magic Ring", an essay by Peter Beagle that originally appeared in Holiday magazine. The Tolkien Reader is available to members of the Tolkien Society at the special price of 75¢.

After September 16, I will be handling the Tolkien Journal at Harvard. The address is: Pennypacker 38, Cambridge, Mass. 02138. Orders for buttons, books, and back issues should go to 159 Marlborough Road, as before. My faithful servant Banazir Galpsi will take care of them.

Bob Foster's Index, or Glossary, or whatever he wants to call it, is finally taking form. The first section--on astronomy--was published in Niekas 16, and future sections will follow in Niekas. The general idea is that readers of Niekas will make comments on the index, and Bob will use these comments for a revised index, to be published eventually in book form. The finished book will be about 250 pages long, and will be an indispensable guide for all students of Middle-earth. TSA members are urged to help by subscribing to Niekas and sending in their comments on each section of the index to Niekas or the TSA. Send 35¢ to Niekas, c/o Felice Rolfe, 1360 Emerson, Palo Alto, California.

The fire-lighting charm on the Gandalf button reads, "Naur an edraith ammen! Naur dan i ngaurhoth!" It is used by Gandalf to ward off the wolves in Caradhras Pass.

Does anybody have any ideas or information on a Braille transcription or recording of LotR? If so, write to: John Covici, 635 W. Warren Apt. 4, Detroit, Michigan 48201.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS
A CHRISTIAN REFOUNDING OF THE POLITICAL ORDER
by Donald L. Reinken

Responsible Christians are not alone today in their concern for a defense of decency. Quite humanistic thinkers look at secular society founded on the philosophy that justice is a luxury bought with the fruits of injustice and see it as very problematic that men should do right gladly and humbly. If Machiavellianism has dimmed the moral vision, we can do worse than to imitate Plato and Aristotle in founding moral edification on the right exposition of the poets. If we are not yet strong enough to fight the sophists on the ground of their choosing, we may yet gain right understanding by reflecting critically on those works of art whose virtue we immediately sense.

Among modern works I submit as candidate for the most serious, even Christian consideration The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien. That the author was the good friend and acknowledged spiritual mentor of the late C.S. Lewis may allay much skepticism toward so strong a claim. The power of the work, of course, may only be known in the reading of it. It rouses intense enthusiasm. Of the beauty and excitement of the prose; of the rich, compact, various and complete story I may not justly speak. I note only one aesthetic virtue which happens to be significant of the seriousness and profundity of the author's vision: the descending action is exceedingly fine. Only the greatest authors know how to get down to earth again.

The story begins in the Shire of the "Hobbits", an isolated region of comfortable self-preservation and decency. "Growing food and eating it occupied most of their time". The hobbits enjoy their idyllic life with a singular lack of government and religion. Yet it is no impossible "innocence of the noble savage", a sanctity without God, that preserves their modest happiness. With gentle satire, the first chapter reveals them as fully endowed with all the human failings and meannesses of decent comfortable society. We serious readers cannot take the Shire for granted as most of its complacent inhabitants do. Our first need is to know how this world is possible. A novel might do this by the detailed unfolding of life in the Shire, but this work is an epic and performs its task in a more exciting fashion.

The tale moves into a symbolic and magical level with the revelation in the Shire of the One Ring of Power. The Dark Lord made this Ring of Dominion and put into it much of his former power. Were he to recover it, his disastrous victory would be complete. Since to hide it safely is impossible and to use it the most dangerous temptation ("absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely"), the Ring must be destroyed. It may be unmade only in the fires of its forging, in the heart of the Enemy's land of Mordor. This perilous errand is undertaken not by a mighty warrior or great wizard, but by Frodo, a simple hobbit of the quiet Shire.

The quest to destroy the Enemy's Ring interweaves with the great war against him and much else besides, for this is a complex work moving on many levels. Beside the natural dangers of their journey, the hobbits are beset by the servants both of the Dark Lord and of Saruman, the White Wizard who, though ordained to contest the power of the Dark Lord, has after long study of the arts of the Enemy turned to evil on his own account. The hobbits are helped by and rejoice in many good and fair things: the simple pleasures, their own discovered strength, and many folk, from a flustered innkeeper to the beautiful Elves who "...have their own labours and sorrows, and they are little concerned with the ways of the hobbits or of any other creatures upon

earth." Especially important are two of the hobbits' companions: Gandalf, the Grey Wizard, who has made hobbits his especial study and care; also Aragorn the Ranger, "greatest traveller and huntsman of this age of the world."

Aragorn's errand is to the defense of the city of Minas Tirith, principal bulwark of the West against the open war made by the Enemy. This city, capital of the great kingdom of Gondor, ruled for long ages by Stewards "till the King should come again", provides the other principal focus of the work. The symbolic Quest and personal trial of the hobbits is matched by the public epic of the City. Even as in Frodo's quest we see the limit of moral endeavor, so we see in Gondor the finite political good. After the Quest and War are finished, the messianic King comes to Gondor and the hobbits return to their prosaic Shire, setting it to rights without any superhuman help, "for that is what they were trained for".

Thus the defense of decency proves to be political education in the ruling art, and that education is not in injustice and cruelty but in heroism and sacrifice. The education and development proceed not merely in the careers of many of the characters, successes and failures alike, but also in the movement of the work from the categorical renunciation of power to the "Return of the King".

The relation of this education to the world is expressed in a conversation between two of the hobbits at a point where one, Merry, has performed his great exploit in the War and is newly healed. His friend Pippin speaks first:

"Fill up while I run and see about some food.
And then let's be easy for a bit. Dear me!
We Took and Brandybucks, we can't live
long on the heights."

"No," said Merry. "I can't. Not yet,
at any rate. But at least, Pippin, we can
now see them, and honour them. It is best
to love first what you are fitted to love,
I suppose: you must start somewhere and
have some roots, and the soil of the Shire
is deep. Still there are things deeper
and higher; not a gaffer could tend his
garden in what he calls peace but for them,
whether he knew about them or not. I
am glad that I know about them, a little."
(Volume III, page 146)

There is a definite parallel with the Republic's myth of the cave. From a love of the things at home, there is an ascent to the heights where one sees that on which the loved things depend and so preserves them. (The hobbits, being "erotic" rather than philosophic, make their return from the heights voluntarily.)

The political function of the education of the hobbits is brought out in an exchange between Merry and Gandalf the Wizard near the end of the homeward journey:

"Well, we've got you with us,"
said Merry, "so things will soon be
cleared up."

"I am with you at present", said
Gandalf, "but soon I shall not be. I
am not coming to the Shire. You must
settle its affairs yourselves; that
is what you have been trained for."

Do you not yet understand? My time is over: it is no longer my task to set things to rights, nor to help folk to do so. And as for you, my dear friends, you will need no help. You are grown up now. Grown indeed very high; among the great you are, and I have no longer any fear at all for any of you." (Volume III, page 275)

So far as we have gone, we would have only the modesty of the hobbits to save us from these texts being seized on by humanists to preach self-adulatory sermons on "Man's coming of age." The true coming of age is not a loosing of restraints but a putting away of childish things. This work teaches a severely classical moral doctrine about what a man may and must do. Moreover, that teaching is accomplished in a poetic framework which is Christian, albeit elusively so, yet ineluctably so.

We may begin our explication of Tolkien's moral doctrine by repeating from another aspect the distinction between eros and understanding already raised when we mention the myth of the cave. To use terms more proper to Tolkien, let us then speak of "Power" and "Care". "Care" which belongs to the concrete and particular, we may reasonably associate with Charity or "Love", as we now translate St. Paul. Love serves all things; "Power", by contrast, masters and uses all things. Power, as modern man knows and worships it, is rooted in universal and abstract "scientific" knowledge, unrestrained by any loyalty to the concrete and particular. This power based on science, which we have embraced as "the conquest of nature for the relief of men's estate", we may recognize in the modern world as the principle of the steam engine and of the thermonuclear missile; the principle of mass communication and of the professionally manipulated election campaign. If anything at all is to be learned from Tolkien, and much may be learned, it is that Power, liberated as it now is from Care, is wholly evil for man.

The proper subordination of Power to Care, the teaching that kingship is stewardship, is neatly expressed in a jesting line which, significantly enough, follows hard upon the overthrow of Saruman, the wizard who had understanding but not Love: "All wizards should have a hobbit or two in their care--to teach them the meaning of the word, and to correct them".

We may see the constructive nature of Tolkien's political philosophy on the obvious symbolic level. Rather than restricting ourself to the One Ring alone and the simplistic renunciation of power this suggests, we must consider all the Great Rings of Power. These are, as the epigraph tells us:

"Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the shadows lie."

Not all the Rings are evil. On the contrary, concerning the Three Rings we are told:

"Those who made them did not desire strength or domination or hoarded wealth, but understanding, making, and healing, to preserve all things unstained." (Volume I, page 282)

One must give full weight to the final clause of purpose. It is the caring for and preserving the world which is the basis of legitimate power. What is evil is power perverted from means to end, namely the Nine Rings of strength given to sorcerer-kings, the Seven Rings of the

Dwarves, whose besetting sin is avarice, and, finally, the Enemy's own One Ring of domination.

What we have said concerning the evil of Power as an end rather than means is only a first step in explicating Tolkien's doctrine. It would be perilous to assert that the legitimation of power follows simply from its use "to preserve all things unstained". Even as a court, before attempting to decide or do justice, must first know that a case is within its jurisdiction, so we are to do only that to which we are called. Gandalf has the last word on this:

"Yet 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 the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule."

(Volume III, page 155)

The exercise of power is legitimate, then, only in our appointed task, that is, action is proper to our own circumstances.

Another propriety is central to the work, namely, that power exercised be proper to the nature of the actor. The Rings of Power are, qua magical rings, means of power extraneous to the user. Consider how Sam, Frodo's servant, resists the Ring when it tempts him with fantasies of conquering and redeeming the ruined land of Mordor:

"In that hour of trial it was the love of his master that helped most to hold him firm; but also deep down in him lived still unconquered his plain hobbit-sense; he knew in the core of his heart that he was not large enough to bear such a burden, even if such visions were not a mere cheat to betray him. The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command."

(Volume III, page 177)

In this connection it is also important to note that Sam does, by the humble use of his own hands, become in a sense a king and a saviour-- of his own land.

On the symbolic level, we note the danger of the Rings of Power in their primary aspect as rings of invisibility. Invisibility enhances power precisely insofar as it takes away responsibility for action. One may compare in this context Plato's discussion of the Ring of Invisibility in Book II of the Republic where he uses the myth to argue that the possessor of such a ring would work the greatest injustice. Tolkien presses the myth a level beyond Plato's passing use. One who uses the ring for the appearance of invisibility, that is, for the enhancement of power by the denial of one's proper nature, in the end becomes truly invisible; he ceases to be and becomes a mere actor and not a person. A suitable text for these ideas is Gandalf's first warning about the Rings:

"...But the Great Rings, the Rings of Power, they were perilous. 'A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the

Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life, he merely continues, until at last every minute is a weariness. And if he often uses the Ring to make himself invisible, he fades; he becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the dark power that rules the Rings. Yes, sooner or later--later, if he is strong or well-meaning to begin with, but neither strength nor good purpose will last--sooner or later the dark power will devour him."

(Volume I, page 56)

The mistrust of unnatural "Power" implies a depreciation of the "scientific" calculation by which modern man, having arrogated to himself sovereignty over all things, conducts his use of "Power". Hear on the contrary Tolkien's warning against man's arrogation:

"Deserves death! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some die that deserve life. Can you give that to them? Then be not too eager to deal out death in the name of justice, fearing for your own safety. Even the wise cannot see all ends."

(Volume II, page 221)

Rather it is the occasion which teaches us. As is said upon Frodo's claiming the Quest, "Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it? Or if they are wise, why should they expect to know it, until the hour is struck?"

The modern supremacy of detached calculation is replaced with a concrete insight into the inwardness and fitness of the things which the ancients denoted as Prudence or Practical Wisdom. Tolkien often uses the Jewish and Christian term 'heart' in a cognitive sense to express this divination for the guidance of conduct. Thus Gandalf, arguing against the slaying of the evil Gollum, goes on from "the wise can not see all ends" to say:

"And he (Gollum) is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has some part to play yet, for good or ill..."

(Volume I, page 69)

In marked contrast to the modernists' arrogance is Gandalf's acceptance "for good or ill". This surrender of human arrogance and reliance upon what is not of our own ordering and comprehending is not and cannot be a surrender of man to an evil or meaningless universe. Man's primal sing is not self-defense against happenstance chaos, but rebellion against the natural order. To speak of the natural order raises the question of the Orderer, and here we are come to Providence, the deepest theme of The Lord of the Rings. Throughout the treatment of Providence there is a veiling of the secretum as, for example, in Gandalf's explanation of the finding of the Ring:

"Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. 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 also were meant to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought."
(Volume I, page 65)

To have the plot turn upon the more or less recognized workings of Providence is superficially the easiest thing for the author of fiction to do. Inasmuch it is the hardest thing for the reader to appreciate. The critic can barely do more than commend these turns to the reader's reverent attention, that he may see therein not contrivance but a true telling. In such spirit one must consider the meaning of the climactic event where the Quest is fulfilled, not by Frodo's virtue (he fails of perfection at the last test), but mediately, by his prophetically spoken curse. The faithful will assent to and the unbiased may recognize a supreme poetic telling that Providence accepts the loyal, but insufficient, finite good of its creatures; weaves it with the vainly rebellious evil of others its creatures; and achieves good beyond human power or foretelling.

The veiling of the Divine governing and ordering the world leads to the assertion that this epic, wherein there is virtually no overt religious practise of reference to God, is nevertheless a powerful testimony to Him. There are two reasons why this teaching should not be blatant. Firstly, the nature of a mystery itself requires that we allow ourselves to be led by it into concrete understanding, rather than that we approach it upon our own preconceived terms. Consequently, the path will not declare its direction to one who has not yet travelled it. Theological formulae can convey truth only to those who have already believed. The second reason for so great an apparent silence about God in a book which is about Him is that it is addressed to a "secular" age and audience. Even as the medieval language led from a vulgar superstition to God, Tolkien's modern language must lead from a vulgar irreligion to God. This epic is written for us and as such must begin from the "godless" surface where twentieth-century man thinks to live and move and have his being.

These two reasons--the not merely discursive communicability of theology and the unfortunate mental language now prevailing--imply that we cannot hope to discuss the theological basis even so briefly as we have sketched the moral doctrine itself; the matter and the time forbid. Any convincing information on such matters can come only from the serious reading of the work itself. I can here only point to such guideposts in the work as have seemed to me to lead inevitably away from any merely "secular" interpretation.

I begin with what seems the unique example of a religious practise in the work: a moment's silent grace before meat, facing west, which is explained by the host thus:

"So we always do, we look to Númenor that was, and beyond to Elvenhome that is, and to that which is beyond Elvenhome and will ever be." (Volume II, pages 284-285)

This formula, though it begins with a reference not to the Eternal Beginning, but to an Atlantis-like legend of human pride and fall, ends like the Gloria Patri on the "ever shall be, world without end". The comparison of the traditional formula and Tolkien's captures the essence of the difference between the Biblical view and any modern restoration. The Bible begins and ends with God. A contemporary understanding of necessity begins with the human things and only at best ends with God.

This same passage may be taken as a clue to one of the most prominent aspects of Tolkien's imagery--his geographic polarization. The East-West dichotomy, with evil in the East of Middle-earth and freedom in the West, is writ large all over the work. We are here invited to lift up our eyes and look further West beyond the mortal arena, for it is only by looking in the direction (and not "East") that we may understand what

divides the world. A lively sensitivity to Tolkien's poetic use of the East-West symbolism will awaken us to his sense of God's intervention in and governance of this Middle-earth.

Nor is this intervention expressed by a merely static geographical polarity. There are Elves, exiles from West oversea, wandering for a while in Middle-earth, teaching and caring, belonging to both the seen and unseen worlds. A careful reflection upon the Elves amounts to a recovery of doctrine concerning the Angels, the mighty messengers of God. It is in the poetry, yea the hymns, of the Elves that one can find many of the clues to Tolkien's poetic cosmology. The passage of the Elves west at the end of the Third Age and the ostensible ending of the tutelage of Middle-earth means that the work does not end in a theophany, but in a drawing of the veil. The Messiah does come into his kingdom, but is not here proclaimed son of God. A veiling, however, is not a denial of the truth but rather an affirmation so fashioned that our blinded eyes can, strangely, see. Whosoever truly journeys with Frodo to the mystery in Mordor and West oversea cannot say in his heart, "There is no God."

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Winter 1966

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Send orders to: Tolkien Society of America, 159 Marlborough Road, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11226. Items will be mailed upon receipt of payment.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Summer School of Arts and Sciences
June 16, 1966

Dear Mr. Plotz,

We are writing to you, knowing of your interest in Tolkien, to tell you that we have received an application for admission to the Summer School from a Mr. Bilbo Baggins, who gives his present mailing address c/o J.R.R. Tolkien, even though his permanent address is Bag-End, Underhill, Hobbiton, The Shire.

His application in some respects is like many others that we receive. His remarks, for example, under our question #17 (please state your reasons for wishing to attend the Harvard Summer School and your reasons for taking the courses you have indicated on your Tentative Study List) are almost familiar: "My friends at Harvard have invited me to visit in Cambridge for the summer and I would like to use this opportunity to sample the literary and social culture of the area. Since Harvard is the foremost burrow of The Western Lands, I think that taking a couple of courses at the Harvard Summer School would be a practical means of reaching my goal."

His previous education is somewhat different from that of many of our applicants. He has, for example, only a certificate from Gandalf Academy in the major of Adventure and Poetry (Saga). He gives as his present occupation simply gentleman, and his two references seem somewhat strange to us: Gandalf the White (formerly "The Grey"), whose address is c/o The White Council, Middle-earth, and whose occupation seems to read "wizzard", and Meriadoc Brandybuck, of Over the Water.

We were pleased to discover that in spite of these evidences of eccentricity the applicant--unlike some others--properly completed his Tentative Study List. He registered to take Celtic S-131, Irish Literature and Civilization (1200 to the present) in European Context, as a noncredit student. In addition he selected two courses to audit: a conference course, History S-270, the Gilded Age in American History, and Natural Sciences 9, The Astronomical Perspective.

The Housing Office is currently assigning a room to Mr. Baggins. The staff in that office were concerned that he should have a ground floor, since his birth date (May 4, 2890--of the Third Age) left them in some doubt about his physical condition. Their concerns were reinforced by his question about the possibility of having additional meals served daily in his room. Whether permission for this will be granted we cannot yet report. It is a somewhat extraordinary request and will require approval in the central Summer School kitchen.

We hope that the summer will prove satisfactory for Mr. Baggins. We have, by committee vote, admitted him to the Summer School, and his code number is 00-5598-05-71-1-000.

Yours truly,
Carlton Maley
Director of Admissions

Dear Sir:

Last night I attended a farewell party for two of my friends who are leaving for the service. As I entered the bar where the party was held I was handed a sealed envelope by a hooded figure with a patch over his left eye. He then turned and vanished into the night.

This being rather bizarre even for my neighborhood I immediately opened the letter. Inside the envelope I found these cryptic words

TOLKIEN SEP

After the party (and I admit a sizable number of drinks) I was even more puzzled and returning home decided to pursue the matter further.

I first telephoned the Post Office, and being put through to the Post Master enquired as to whether or not one of his employees was in the habit of wearing a hood and eyepatch. After first reassuring me that it was no bother to him to be called at three in the morning he continued, "None of our employees wear patches or hoods while delivering mail though I certainly cannot speak authoritatively as to their off duty garments. Have you considered the possibility of a disguise?"

"No," I answered, "I never felt the need for one."

"Not for you, sir," (Post Masters are always civil, especially early in the morning), "the messenger."

Bearing this in mind I decided the search for the missing messenger might well be left off until I had examined the message itself.

A qualitative analysis of the envelope revealed that it was a standard one cent (1¢) envelope which had been purchased at E.J. Korvettes on the night of Sept. 4, 1965 by a left handed man between the ages of 50 and 55 years, with flat feet, prematurely gray hair, a hitlerian moustache, twice broken nose and a weak left eye!

Assured at least that this was the same envelope I had been given earlier (one can never be too careful) I felt justified in not subjecting the message to such scrutiny until after I had attempted to ascertain its meaning.

TOLKIEN.....

who was there so ignorant of the deeper realities of the Cosmic Sphere as to not have a knowledge of J.R.R. TOLKIEN?? Even more, who would dare admit it and thenceforth be barred from meaningful communication with his fellow man, doomed to be frowned upon by king and subject both??

but SEP?

a different matter. Many know of the new work to come from this great author but this could certainly not be its name.

Then came one of those strokes of genius for which I am noted. SEP S.E.P. SAT. EVE. POST THE SATURDAY EVENING POST!!! There was something to do with TOLKIEN in the Saturday Evening Post. I immediately rushed out and procured a copy of this magazine (difficult indeed at four in the morning, even more so in Yonkers) and found

"The Hobbit Forming World of J.R.R. Tolkien"

and in it The TOLKIEN SOCIETY

SO PLEASE SEND ME SOONEST INFORMATION ABOUT SOCIETY

Yours compulsively,
Michael P. Higgins
17 Summit St.
Yonkers, N.Y. 10701

PS do you have hooded members with a patch over the left eye? mph

Honourable Thain,

Mr. Tolkien, his publisher, and his followers should not be overly distressed at the cover of the Ballantine Hobbit.

The artist is clearly a successor to E.A. Poe, in his own field. Being loyal to both the publisher and to the Poe tradition, he was labouring under the influence of Ballantine Beer. Such genius can not be stifled.

He seems to have read the trilogy too quickly, and in confusing Ents and Eagles (natural history not being his strong point), arrived at Emus. Visions of Narnia and C.S. Lewis must visit him frequently, although I am intrigued as to why Aslan looks as if he has just eaten a particularly hot Red Hot.

Aslan is approaching the Emu-ents to warn them about the Pink Light Bulbs, which so distressed Mr. Tolkien. The artist has interpreted them as inventions of Weston and Saruman (Inc.), as well as confusing them with the Palantir of Sauron. (They are probably only Middle-earth apples.) However, this interpretation makes them very clearly worth being distressed at.

Alas, I may judge too hastily. This truly wonderful cover may very well be Symbolic, meaningful only to those who know.

Sincerely,
Helen Fox
4528 Middleton Lane
Bethesda, Md. 20014

Dear Mr. Plotz:

The letter from John Plotz and your reply establish opposite (at least lexically) attitudes towards The Lord of the Rings; I think there is room for a third attitude. The primary quality of the work is, I think, its tone of reality. If it is escape literature, from what does one escape? Not from any human problems of good or evil, surely. Théoden is a good example of the human realism that is basic to all the Tolkien's characters. An old man, he is rather easily persuaded that he has lost all his strength. When Gandalf shows him that the world is not, in fact, all dark, and when the wizard tells him there is a small but real hope of defeating Sauron, Théoden regains his courage. He is still an old man, not as well able to conduct battles as Éomer and Strider are. And Théoden recognizes his own folly in having believed Wormtongue. He seems ideal, however, because he does not spend any time lamenting his folly or giving useless explanations. Having decided he has been wrong, he immediately and forever leaves his error and turns avidly to useful action. None of his actions are those of an "escape" character; they are those of a human being who has the courage to accept reality, even the realities of his own errors.

Indexes and inquiries into names may not interest everyone, but they are helpful aids if one is working with The Lord of the Rings. Having recently completed a dissertation on the trilogy, I applaud the index; it would have saved me--and there will be others--weeks of time. The Lord of the Rings is a very important literary event; according to all the principles of literary action, it could not have occurred in the 1950's, but it did. It is a difficult work to study critically, simply because it is so large and so concisely written. Indexes and other such aids are, of course, secondary to the major critical questions The Lord of the Rings evolves. Nevertheless, these factual inquiries should be done and made public.

Very truly yours,
Mrs. Laird H. Barber
310 West Fifth St.
Morris, Minn. 56267

POLICE DEPARTMENT
City of New York

Dear Mr. Baggins:

It has come to our attention that much of the recent civil strife has been the work of some recent immigrants called "Yrchs" or "Orcs", directed by several mysterious leaders known only as "Nazgul". These people, according to independent evidence, seem to be in the service of a central figure identified as Sauron, alias "The Eye of Mordor", formerly a henchman of one "Morgoth, the Enemy".

It is our belief that one man, working in an undercover capacity through an organization familiar with the tactics and capabilities of these Yrchs, namely your organization of Hobbits, could move against these characters, particularly against their goon squad, the Uruk-Hai.

Therefore, please accept into your organization

Alan Joyce
308 W. 109 St., Apt. 7
New York 25, N.Y.

He is skilled in the techniques and problems of Ring-use, and in the Quenya language and alphabet. Please enter Mr. Joyce in your organization as soon as possible so that he may officially begin his campaign of subway scribbling.

Sincerely yours,
Barliman Butterbur

Dear Frodo,

I have recently come across your address from a friend and rejoice in the news that YOU ARE STILL ALIVE. At one time in my varied past I was in grave danger of passing away with the elves. At that time I found the concrete world of neurosurgery crowding into all my being so that only objective reality was considered valid. Two years ago while in the midst of a most de-personalizing period of training my wife introduced me to you, and Sam, and all your friends. The impact was to immediately and permanently liberate me from the cold confines of neurosurgery. Although an imposter, utilizing my name and form, is still learning this craft, thanks to you I am free to constantly search for evidence of Middle-earth artifacts in the hospitals of New England. So far I have succeeded in finding at least one, and possibly two neurosurgeons who definitely have hobbit blood in them. This is truly unusual!! As you must know, most neurosurgeons are descendents of orcs who have been elevated to the role of aide de camp to Sauron. There are many nurses, aides, and various technicians who also have great sympathy for hobbits if not actual blood kinship. All in all, the world of a hospital definitely is a place where the struggles of Middle-earth still are going on.

Thus, it is with great pleasure that the news of your survival reached me! This letter is written in hopes that you might send me a button with "Frodo is Alive", written in elven of course, so that I could give my wife a token of your continued good health. Thus, I am enclosing a self-addressed envelope along with a dollar to handle whatever inconvenience the sending would cause you. I have used the name of my former self on the envelope to avoid confusing the bureaucrats who run the hospital mail room, but I remain, with great warmth of heart,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

A lover of Ents.
(Peter Carney, M.D.
Hartford Hospital
Hartford, Conn. 06115)

IN SAMARANG

by Jerome Z. Litt, M.D.

In Samarang beneath a Frond,
 Where bobs the pink adelphic Glebe,
 Amid the asteroidal Sonde
 There dwells a lone Ephebe.

In frenzied firth disports he with
 The selted Gleeper and his chyme,
 While Argyles in their acrolith
 Join in the ballinyme.

One furbish day in Amaranth
 As Pilor mal-immured a Grebe,
 A timbrillated Perianth
 Reviled this lone Ephebe.

Then thru the coriander gates,
 Beyond the ragged Umba-tree,
 A limpid Amphimixis prates
 In hebdomadal glee.



THE LAST SONG SUNG IN LÓRIEN
 by Robert Foster

Gone is Tirith's mithril door;
 Gwaihir's flight is far from here;
 And on Cerin Amroth now no more
 Blooms the yellow elanor.

And yet I stay and yet I sing,
 In this little forest all alone,
 Of Frodo Nine-finger and the mighty Doom-Ring
 And the return of Elessar, the last noble King.