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## Light from an Invisible Lamp: Natural Religion in *The Lord of the Rings*

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### Light from an Invisible Lamp: Natural Religion in *The Lord of the Rings*

#### Abstract

Argues that the tendency of many critics of *The Lord of the Rings* to “[mine] it for Christian content” does the work a disservice, since Tolkien explicitly states that a Secondary World should not contain Primary World elements. Examines the “natural religion” present in *The Lord of the Rings*, without obvious ritual, dogma, or god.

#### Additional Keywords

Christianity in The Lord of the Rings; Tolkien, J.R.R. The Lord of the Rings—Religious aspects

# Light from an Invisible Lamp

## Natural Religion in The Lord of the Rings

### Catherine Madsen

It was in 1971 that a reader wrote to Tolkien, calling himself "an unbeliever, or at best a man of belatedly and dimly dawning religious feeling" and saying how profoundly he had been moved by *The Lord of the Rings*. "You," he said, "create a world in which some sort of faith seems to be everywhere without a visible source, like light from an invisible lamp." (*Letters*, 413)

Some eight years earlier, though I was too young to put it so clearly, I had had a similar response upon first reading the book. There seemed both a brightness and a severity in it, an intensity of focus, that was plainly religious in character, the plainer for not being specifically Christian. In those days I was very impatient with evangelism, and fairly good at detecting it; but what Tolkien seemed to be doing was something quite different. He seemed to present religious feeling, and even religious behavior, without ritual, revelation, doctrine, indeed without God except for two fairly cryptic and untheological references in the appendices. The book seemed to have far less to do with the New Testament than with the mountains I could see out my windows, but it moved me to religion. Indeed, having once goaded my parents in an argument asking me, "Well, what do you believe?" I ran to my room, brought out the three volumes, and presented them saying, "I believe this." It was youthful extravagance; but I have never since been sure that it was false.

Subsequently for several years, on the advice of the critics, I tried faithfully to discover in Christianity what I had found in *The Lord of the Rings*, and on the whole did not find it there. It was not for lack of expectation; I thought, as certain of the critics seem to have thought before publication of Tolkien's biography and letters, that all the Inklings thought the same about Christianity, and that when Lewis spoke Tolkien could not be far behind. But neither Lewis nor Williams, nor indeed Dante or Augustine or Paul or the evangelists, struck the same note. I had a bad dream during that time in which the Elves came sailing back to Middle-earth from the West, and disembarking prostrated themselves before a cross upon an altar, repenting of their love for Elvenhome and confessing Christ. I believe this is the situation in which much of the Christian critical opinion has placed *The Lord of the Rings*; it has tried to take the enchantment out of it. It has tried to make an independent imagination a means to a religious end. Finding myself strongly drawn to faith by the book, and yet not particularly to the Christian faith, I think this effort to see if as Christian is essentially mistaken.

The critics who have undertaken to "prove" the book's Christianity have used some interesting methods; they have mined it for Christian content with the same ingenuity their spiritual forebears used to find foreshadowings of Jesus among the law and the prophets. The late Professor Kilby, in his *Tolkien and the Silmarillion*, lays much stress upon motifs which appear both in Tolkien's work and in the Hebrew scriptures (such as the long lives of the patriarchs and the unions between earthly and angelic beings) as

though such borrowings were necessarily done for devotional reasons -- as though any writer might not borrow powerful images from what is, after all, the Ur-text of Western civilization. Jared Lobdell, in his otherwise insightful *England and Always*, employs the curious expedient of searching through *The Lord of the Rings* for examples of the gifts of the Spirit from St. Paul's list in First Corinthians, an exegetical effort which has nothing to do with how a storyteller thinks; he also identifies several characters as "unfallen", an impression which the subsequent publication of Tolkien's letters has shown to be inaccurate. (See especially *Letters*, 203-4 and 286-7.) These methods strike me as a kind of pious occultism, which takes to uncovering resemblances and correspondences and hidden meanings simply because the overt meanings they look for are not there. One might as well try to prove that Tolkien was interested in ceremonial magic because Gandalf, Aragorn and Bombadil chant spells. But Tolkien insisted, over and over again, that he was writing a story, not a homily. He was not trying to encode Christian ideas in his work any more than he was trying to deny them. "Nobody believes me," he complained (*Letters*, 264) "when I say that my long book is an attempt to create a world in which a form of language agreeable to my personal aesthetic might seem real. But it is true."

It is clear enough from his own statements elsewhere that Tolkien was a Roman Catholic, and took his religion with profound seriousness all his life. But he was not a simple person, and how his Christianity worked on his storytelling is not a simple matter. He disliked preaching, not only in stories but in most sermons (*Letters*, 75), and his religious feeling was founded not on a sense of the logic of Christianity but on a love for the sacramental Body of Christ (*Letters*, 53-54 and 338-340). Also, his sense of the purpose of fairy-stories prevented him from making any literal reference to the world's history in his own stories. "If a waking writer tells you that his tale is only a thing imagined in his sleep," he said in his essay "On Fairy-Stories", "he cheats deliberately the primal desire at the heart of Faerie: the realisation, independent of the conceiving mind, of imagined wonder." The effect of any open reference to Christianity in his stories would have been equally fatal. He felt that the Arthurian legend failed as a fairy-story partly because "it is involved in, and explicitly contains the Christian religion.... Myth and fairy-story," he said, "as all art, reflect and contain in solution elements of moral and religious truth (or error), but not explicit, not in the known form of the primary 'real' world." (*Letters*, 144)

Why a man who was clearly committed to his religion should have had an even deeper allegiance to the laws of the fairy-story, I hope to suggest. But it is clear that he did not intend his work to argue or illustrate or promulgate Christianity. Any Christian-seeming images in it are precisely not witnesses to the Gospel: they are echoes. If Elbereth owes something to the Virgin Mary -- if one can never again hear the phrase *stella maris* without thinking of *menel aglar elenath* -- it is her starriness that crosses over

into Faerie, not her miraculous motherhood or her perpetual virginity. If *Iembas*, the Elves' waybread, clearly recalls the sacramental wafer as Frodo and Sam subsist on it in Mordor, it is the idea of spiritual food that comes through, shorn of all suggestion or argument of Christ's presence in it. He borrows Christian magic, not Christian doctrine; and Christianity without doctrine is a shadow of itself.

No one, I think, should imagine that by avoiding mention of Christianity Tolkien was in the least attempting to supplant it or subvert it. Nonetheless, his story is not that story. The subcreator makes something different from the creation. By recombining the elements of which the world is made -- by translating *Eala earendel engla beorhtast into Aiyá Earendil elenion ancálma* -- he makes something unknown and new. What he imagines he makes imaginable. If, for whatever purpose of his own, he imagines a world without Christianity, he makes that world imaginable to his readers; he may even make it worth longing for.

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Tolkien's own statement on the religion of Middle-earth is that "it is a monotheistic world of 'natural theology'... the Third Age was not a Christian world." (*Letters*, 220) Elbereth and the other Valar are not worshipped, though they are praised and invoked (and in the *Silmarillion* they are called "the gods"). To explain the relationships of God, the Valar, the Elves and Men, Tolkien wrote (*Letters*, 203-204): "Elves and Men were called the Children of God; and hence the gods either loved (or hated) them specially; as having a relation to the Creator equal to their own, if of different stature." The Elves have "no religion (or religious practices, rather) for those had been in the hands of the gods" before their exile from the Blessed Realm. The Men of Numenor "escaped form 'religion' in a pagan sense, into a pure monotheistic world, in which all things and beings and powers that might seem worshipful were not to be worshipped, not even the gods... being only creatures of the One. And He was immensely remote."

Indeed, the word "worship" is only used in *The Lord of the Rings* to denote *illegitimate* worship. The Men of the Mountains would not fulfill their oath to Isildur because "they had worshipped Sauron in the Dark Years" (III, 55); when Gollum encountered Shelob he had "bowed and worshipped her" and promised to bring her food (II, 332-333); Galadriel, enacting what she would become if she took the Ring, appears "terrible and worshipful" (I, 381). There is no example of permissible worship to set against these; only the Elves' praise of Elbereth and the moment of silence Faramir's men observe before supper (II, 284). No one ever names the One, except Arwen at Aragorn's deathbed, and then not to worship but to protest the bitterness of the gift of death.

The hobbits, who seem to know nothing of the Valar and little enough of the Elves, have no customs even approaching religion. For those who come into contact with the wider world, love of the Elves becomes the way to religious feeling; but even then there is no deliberate ritual acknowledgement of it, but only moments of wonder. Bilbo in Rivendell makes verses on the stories of the Elder Days, but one feels that this is because he has become *cultured*, not devout. At one point he says to Frodo, "I'll take a walk, I think, and look at the stars of Elbereth in the garden" (I, 251), but he says it with the gentle urba-

nity a polite unbeliever might use of the religious observances of his adopted country. It is left to Frodo, whose task leads him into horrors Bilbo cannot imagine, to invoke Elbereth and Earendil as the Elves do -- because they are the highest powers he knows; and to Sam, who in Shelob's lair cries out four lines of Sindarin as though pentecostally inspired (II, 339) and later chooses the name *Elbereth* as a password because it is "what the Elves say" (III, 189). In the end all three hobbits are taken up entirely into the Elvish cosmology -- they cross the sea to Elvenhome; but there is never the faintest hint that this has anything to do with God. It has to do with morality, and with extraordinary beauty, and with loss; but none of these things are founded on worship. Worship is not an act the Free Peoples engage in.

It is rather like the epigram of the contemporary secularist Sherwin T. Wine: "The true refusal of idols is the unwillingness to worship anything." Middle-earth is a monotheistic world -- remotely; it has no theology, no covenant, and no religious instruction; it is full of beauty and wonder and even holiness, but not divinity. Even the reader need not worship anything to comprehend it. It is more important for the reader to love trees.

"Natural theology", in the *OED's* definition, is "theology based upon reasoning from natural facts apart from revelation." Unless one is willing to call God a natural fact it is difficult to see how this can be theology at all. The related term "natural religion" suffers from a similar confusion, but less so: it is defined as "The Things knowable concerning God, and our Duty by the Light of Nature"; that "which men might know... by the mere principles of Reason... without the help of Revelation." Of the two terms, "natural religion" seems to me better suited to *The Lord of the Rings*, in which the essential fact about God is his distance. It is other "natural facts" such as the Elves, the Ents, the longing for the sea, and the very geography of Middle-earth, on which the religious feeling of the book depends. And it is a kind of religious feeling which is curiously compatible with a secular cosmology.

For example, divine authority is never invoked in the making of moral decisions; and yet moral decisions get made, and often made conscientiously, that "which men shoot an old man so, at unawares and unchallenged," says Aragorn to Gimli (II, 96); he quotes no chapter and verse, nor does it seem odd that he does not, for by any civilized standard it is difficult to make sniping seem morally defensible. "We must send the Ring to the Fire," says Elrond (I, 280), again not through any compliance with a divine command but through a kind of high and desperate pragmatism: nothing else will effectively put an end to Sauron's power. Frodo takes on the quest of Mount Doom because no one else is willing to and it must be done. He has no law to guide him; beyond his feelings for Bilbo, and Gandalf, and the Elves, and the Shire; that, and a little knowledge of history; yet these are enough to move him to the most painstaking thought and the severest sense of duty of which he is capable. Though Gandalf and Elrond both believe him fated to go on the quest, the fate that chose him is unnamed and inaccessible; what matters is not to identify the prime mover but to undertake the task.

In this and other respects I think the "natural religion" of Middle-earth is similar to what believers and unbelievers alike experience in daily life. Whether or not we invoke divine authority, essentially all of us



have only our emotional ties and a little knowledge of history; we can build on these, but we cannot outdistance them; in all our heaviest decisions we try to keep faith with the best judgments of those we love and to act on what we know about the past. "Good and ill have not changed since yesterday," says Aragorn to Eomer (II, 40-41), "nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among men. It is a man's part to discern them" -- the crucial word being discern, for even if good and ill are unchanging we are bound by the limits of our discernment.

The relationships of Frodo, Sam and Gollum are one illustration of this pattern. Frodo has no pity for Gollum at the beginning of the book, but he loves and respects Gandalf who tells him he ought to. By the time he actually meets Gollum, he has also met Aragorn and Elrond and Galadriel -- he understands much more about the Ring and its place in the history of Middle-earth -- and he has also suffered terror and hardship, the wound from the Morgul-knife, the loss of Gandalf in Moria, Boromir's assault, and the growing burden of the Ring. He is keeping faith with Gandalf, but also genuinely feels pity, when he tells Sam not to kill Gollum. Gollum, on the other hand, keeps faith with no one but his Precious: he guides Frodo to Mordor simply because he has sworn by the Ring, and he agonizes over a way to circumvent the intent of his promise while keeping the letter of it. His sole emotional bond is to the Ring. It is the possibility of another emotional bond that almost saves him -- on the stairs of Cirith Ungol when he finds Frodo and Sam asleep and loves them. And here it is Sam's untaught emotions, his lack of discernment, that wreck any further hope for Gollum.

Frodo's capacity for pity is what makes the destruction of the Ring possible even when he himself is overthrown; because he let Gollum live, Gollum can challenge his ownership of the Ring. At the same time, the scene at the Crack of Doom is one of immense moral ambiguity: good does not triumph over evil, but depends on evil to deliver it. Good and evil change places for a moment when Frodo claims the Ring and Gollum attacks him. As a child I felt that one of the crowning delights of the book -- it would not be speaking too strongly to call it a eucatastrophe -- was that Gollum got his Precious back: that his wickedness, his horrid speech, his murderous craving and his pitiful existence were taken up into the center and solution of the story, and not by being redeemed but by being allowed to play themselves out. His very nastiness and spite become the necessary tools, shadow and foil to Frodo's decency and courage; the fate that chose Frodo chose Gollum too. Even sin is not wasted but woven into the pattern. In natural religion as in the Gospels, pity is a mystery at the heart of the world; but here it encompasses evil without either punishing or converting it. Gollum is the sacrificial goat that takes away the sins of the world. His life was its own punishment; his death is also his reward.

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This is surely a necessary quality of religion without revelation; for without the possibility of direct supernatural intervention, it is the natural beings, incapable of being entirely good, who must bring everything about. Therefore all triumphs are mixed; every victory over evil is also a depletion of the good. They diminish together. Indeed all of Middle-earth is in a state of devolution, a long decline from Elder Days to after-days. The Elves are fading; the

Men of Numenor are becoming like "lesser" men. Even the landscape is broken: Beleriand is gone, and Arnor is uninhabited, and Hollin is deserted. The drowning of Numenor has changed the shape of the world.

It is clear that both the light and the darkness in Middle-earth are less than they once were. Morgoth was a greater enemy than Sauron, and the Elves were stronger in resisting him; Morgoth took away the light by stealing the Silmarils, whereas Sauron only blocks the light with a vast cloud of smoke; Elbereth scattered the stars and sent Earendil among them in his ship, but Galadriel only seals a little of that light in a glass. Aragorn is a hero and a descendant of heroes, but he is brought up in hiding and given the name of "Hope"; Arwen possesses the beauty of Luthien, but she is born in the twilight of her people and her title is "Evensong"; these two restore the original glories only for a little while, before the world is altered and "fades into the light of common day." Indeed *The Lord of the Rings* may be read as the story of how the Elves vanished from Middle-earth, fully as much as the story of the unmaking of the Ring. The tragedy of the Ring's destruction is that it cannot do anything positive, only prevent the great evil of Sauron's domination; in fact it guarantees the lesser evil, the departure of the Elves and the beginning of the Dominion of Men. The story has a eucatastrophe, but it has no happy ending.

Whether or not the sense of "fading" is compatible with Christianity may be debated. Certainly Tolkien did not feel it to be contrary. Verlyn Flieger (1983) sees it as evidence of the "precariousness" of his faith: "however he may qualify the pagan point of view, his heart is with the tragedy." But Tolkien himself, in a letter to a reader, takes it entirely into the Christian framework: "I am a Christian and indeed a Roman Catholic, so that I do not expect 'history' to be anything but a 'long defeat'" (*Letters*, 255, my italics). On the other hand one may legitimately wonder how good he felt the news of the Gospel to be, given the strength of the other feeling. For he himself did not live out of history; he suffered loss without reparation as everyone suffers it, Christian or not. The sense of "fading" is rooted in the central fact of the human condition, prior to all creeds and covenants. We are mortal: we do not see our own works come to fruition, but look back to those who went before us and are gone. Those we most admire we will never meet; we can only try to be worthy of them in our own work. Those we love die, and we lose not only their presence but even a sufficient memory of what they were. Our life is not even a there-and-back-again journey that leaves us in good health and good condition; inasmuch as we take on the responsibilities it lays on us ("I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way"), it brings us to the limit of our endurance -- our real limit, not the one we thought we had -- and then, if we are still alive, it sends us home to discover that we are not even whole enough to live there. Frodo's woundedness after his journey is not only the inexorable outcome of his ordeal with the Ring, but the thing that happens to all of us. The Christian hope of resurrection is one way of enduring this devastation, but it is one faint possibility in a world of crushing actualities. In the whole long story of the War of the Ring, the one challenge to the mortality of Men is Aragorn's last assertion, "Behold! we are not bound for ever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory" (III, 344). But what he says just before that has far more conviction, and its language is direct and not speculative: "there is no comfort for such pain within the circles of the

world" (III, 343). His final hope does not cancel this: in fact it seems only to try to soften what cannot be softened. Certainly it does not seem to comfort Arwen.

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To answer mortals' suffering on earth with the hope of a compensation from beyond the earth is in fact unconvincing. Any answer to the pain inflicted by nature must come from within nature. A supernatural answer cheats deliberately the primal desire of all rational beings, to have their lives make sense in the terms on which they are lived. But there is another kind of hope in the book, one which has nothing to do with overcoming death, and even has little to do with the future. It is attached to the present, sometimes even to the past, and its effect is not to override despair, but to give people small measures of strength to keep acting in spite of it. It is what the hobbits feel when they see Elves, or the stars; it is what the reader feels about the languages and the half-told histories and the sense of a separate world. It is what Tolkien, in his essay "On Fairy-Stories", calls *recovery*: awakened senses, immediate attention, or as he says, "seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them" -- as things apart from ourselves." It is the sense Frodo has in Lorien the moment his blindfold is removed and he first sees the land:

A light was upon it for which his language had no name.... He saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful. (I, 365)

This is a gratitude to other beings for their otherness: a gratitude the hobbits feel most of all toward the Elves and their landscapes, and in a smaller degree toward the Ents, and which extends for the reader over the whole book, into Moria, and the fields of Rohan, and Dunharrow, and even into the Dead Marshes and the barren plains of Mordor, because they are all seen with awakened senses. To my mind, it is the most compelling thing about the book -- and also the least Christian: for this kind of attention is unmediated, available to anyone of any persuasion, and not contingent upon belief. (And it is not taught as a part of Christian learning, except to aspiring mystics as an "advanced" technique of prayer.) Nothing in the awakening of the senses points one inevitably towards Christ; if anything, it points one to the world, since it is so often the landscape or the heavens or the beauty of other people that startles the mind into attention. It is true that, in the cosmology of *The Lord of the Rings*, the Valar shaped the landscape, Elbereth sowed the stars; but Tolkien never forces cosmology into these moments of attention. Most often, the means by which hope comes is indistinct, but the fact of it is clear, as when Sam looks up from the darkness of Mordor by night:

There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark top high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, 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 for ever beyond its reach. (III, 199)

There is nothing in this to suggest hope in the sense of personal immortality; even the star may not be immortal, though it will outlast Sam and all his people. For that moment, the unexpected presence of beauty in the midst of desolation is enough to assure that beauty will endure for ever -- because of the otherness of the other, because of its very distance; perhaps (could one see it as beauty) because of the very distance of God.

There is another writer whose work is concerned with this kind of direct attention, and who says in philosophical form what Tolkien's story says implicitly; there is no evidence that either had read the other, but the similarities in image and temperament are striking:

It is from the wastes of waters that (pity) reaches our heart. It is from the solemn march of the high stars that it melts the soul. Can pity come from the rocks and forgiveness from the wet sea-sands? Why not? Everything comes from the encounter of the Self with the Not-Self. (Powys, 1933)

This is John Cowper Powys, like Tolkien a rather unplaceable figure on the margins of twentieth-century English literature. His great project as a writer was to delineate a religious outlook which in his book *A Philosophy of Solitude* he called *Elementalism*. In his view, power and solace derive directly from nature, and the capacity for kindness grows out of a knowledge of one's own loneliness, one's direct connection to the elements. It is very much like the phenomenon Tolkien calls "recovery"; and he uses another word to which Tolkien attached importance:

The clue-word, and it is tragically significant that it has become what it has, to all our modern pleasures, is the word "escape". Escape from what, and into what? Alas! Escape from ourselves and into the whirlpool of the crowd! There is only one true escape... and this is a sinking down into the mystery of the inanimate. (ibid.)

The formal theological views of the two men are almost opposite: Powys was an unabashed pagan, and intentionally used the word "worship" toward the elements, meaning that very attitude of mind which Tolkien describes as "seeing things... as things apart from ourselves". Powys also refused to contemplate worshipping God: he was implacably at odds with a creator whose designs could permit cruelty to exist. Yet between the orthodox teller of fairy-stories and the unorthodox maker of philosophies there is a curious common ground. Both of them cared profoundly about pity; both attached great importance to the otherness of the other; and both showed the spirit's sustenance coming from solitary moments of attention to the natural world. I will give one more example:

Under our feet the earth, above our heads the sky; while the murmur of the generations... mingles with that deeper sound, audible only to ears purged by solitude, whereby the mystery of the Inanimate whispers to itself below the noises of the world. (ibid.)

Thus John Cowper Powys. And Tolkien:

I was alone, forgotten, without escape upon the hard horn of the world. There I lay



staring upward, while the stars wheeled over, and each day was a long as a life-age of the earth. Faint to my ears came the gathered rumour of all lands: the springing and the dying, the song and the weeping, and the slow everlasting groan of overburdened stone. (II, 106)

Whoever sent Gandalf back from the dead in this scene is never (except sketchily, in the *Letters*, 201-203) identified, and in the end it does not matter to the story. What the rocks said mattered too much to be left out. Their "slow everlasting groan" is the theological statement at the heart of the book. The world itself and its wearing -- time, and the body, and the elements -- is the only revelation we have. Not through our beliefs, but through loneliness, pity, and unmediated attention to these present and imperfect things, do we attain what strength and solace we can have. Tragedy and hope are simultaneous and not sequential. One does not cancel the other. It is a religion more truly catholic than the one Tolkien professed.

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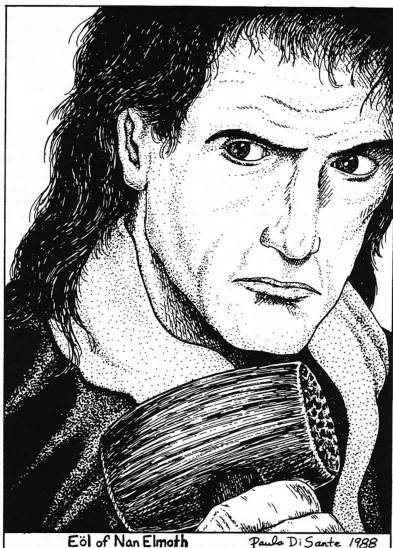
This may be the reason for his allegiance to the laws and form of the fairy-story above those of his own religion. He wished to show a world on its own terms, in which both catastrophe and eucatastrophe developed from natural facts, because these carry a weight which the supernatural cannot. In the essay "On Fairy-Stories" Tolkien suggests that while the stories of mortals are often occupied with the escape from death, those of the elves must be concerned with the escape from deathlessness. But might not a Christian imagine the escape from Christianity? I do not mean the abandonment of it, which at present is relatively easy for those who incline that way; I mean the escape from its history, its accretions of theology which have put such a strain on both reason and kindness, its exclusiveness of doctrine which has caused such suffering to pagans and heretics, and to Jews; the ugliness and want of intellect in most of its daily celebrations, and the burden of evangelism which sets the individual Christian in a position of superiority which is always impossible to defend. The escape from all this into some state where the heart's reasons for believing can be remembered, some landscape illumined with a light for which our language has no name -- perhaps not even the name of Jesus, so weighted down and so abused.

Yet having imagined such a place, how different must be the possible responses among those who read the story. For the writer remains a Christian; he has simply made a new approach to the heart of his faith, more bearable to his mind and character. But not all his readers will be led to Christianity by his work. Or if led there, some may conclude that the fire they sought has in fact struck a different altar: that for them Tolkien has simultaneously made holiness imaginable and made it imaginable apart from Christianity. For Christianity is above all concerned with *showing forth*, making God visible: either in the Incarnation, in which he is said to have become a man, or in the Eucharist, in which he is said to enter bread and wine. In *The Lord of the Rings* God is not shown forth, nor does he even speak, but acts in history with the greatest subtlety. He does not violate the laws of flesh or of food, but remains the last Other behind all otherness that may be loved. Those who are struck by this will not turn to the formula *et incarnatus est* but to a more obscure and paradoxical

Hebrew saying: *lo sh'mo bo sh'mo*, "Where the Name is not uttered, there the Name is present." For some thousand pages Tolkien refrained from taking the Lord's name in vain; invisible, it illuminates the whole.

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Eöl of Nan Elmoth

Paula Di Sante 1988