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Tolkien's Unnamed Deity Orchestrating the Lord of the Rings

Lisa Hillis

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Tolkien's Unnamed Deity Orchestrating

the Lord of the Rings
(TITLE)

BY

Lisa Hillis

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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ABSTRACT

The epic world created by J.R.R. Tolkien in the Lord of the Rings trilogy is one in which secular and religious elements are intertwined and the relationship between the two is intentionally kept vague. Within this created world, known as Middle Earth, good and evil are apparent, but the standard by which they are determined remains undefined. The free creatures living in Tolkien's world appear to have an intuitive ability to discern between good and evil, and each being generally exercises its free will in pursuit of one or the other though some personalities do combine the qualities. This innate understanding implies a moral order at the instinctive level, characteristic of all living things. Aragorn, heir of Isildur, affirms this idea in his reply to Eomer, Third Marshall of the Riddermark, "Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is man's part to discern them, as much in the Golden Wood as in his own house" (TT 50).

This moral standard common to all living creatures of Middle Earth necessarily implies a motivating force or creator capable of instilling such an instinct into that which is created. Tolkien remains vague throughout the trilogy in defining this powerful force, never committing himself to any traditional concept of deity and avoiding any reference to a "being" of any kind, but the undeniable force exists and exerts its power on behalf of good

characters struggling against those which do evil. The author chooses to define this unnamed force through its modes of action, rather than by a description of its essence. The force does not appear to wield a visible and independent power, but works through the story's characters, using their moral decisions to achieve the desired outcome for good. Aid and guidance are given to good characters in subtle and covert ways which seek to control the story's overall action, while avoiding interference with any creature's freedom of choice.

I propose that by a study of the ways in which this unnamed moral force controls the story's action, the reader will more clearly understand that the ultimate victory over Sauron has been carefully contrived by a will more powerful than that of any of the story's characters. This powerful will or force subtly intervenes in the affairs of Middle Earth through events which appear to be chance occurrences or coincidence, instinctive impulses placed within all creatures which may influence judgment, and beneficial effects which result from evil deeds. By one of these three modes of guidance, the story's action is carefully directed toward the defeat of the evil embodied by Sauron. Using these methods of aid or direction, the reigning moral power seeks to direct Middle Earth's creatures in how they may salvage their world from an evil influence beyond their ability to overcome unaided. Success in this battle between the forces of good and evil rests in great part on

each individual's responsibility to make right choices, but Tolkien's unnamed force is in control of all things and working toward a goal fully known only to itself.

DEDICATION

This work is respectfully dedicated to all those whose religious faith gives them special insight and motivation in the study of literature and, therefore, life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Eastern Illinois University English faculty and the Graduate School administrators who have so graciously and patiently facilitated the completion of this project. A special thanks goes to Dr. John Simpson who has served so capably as mediator and advisor.

Throughout the last several years of work on this project, I have quite lost count of numerous family members and friends who have encouraged me to see it through to completion. They never gave up inquiring about my progress and reminding me that it was too important to my future to just drop. Foremost in my mind are two friends, Jean Chandler and Susanna Cornett, whose examples inspired me and proved that it could be done. I owe a special thanks to two Tampa, FL friends, Crystal Hunter and Michael Ward, who offered what help they could in addition to their concern and support. Crystal's sacrifice made child care possible and gave me enough freedom to get the ball rolling on a rough draft. But even that would not have been enough if it were not for all the groundwork I had laid in the tranquility of the "room of my own" so thoughtfully loaned to me by Michael.

In the "eleventh hour" of my labors, several individuals stepped in to help, and if not for them, this project might yet remain unfinished. Roger and Lesley developed a new found sense of independence which freed up

considerable time for my work. They even went so far as to take a mini-vacation together, which was a source of inestimable good for all three of us. Nannie (my mother) was also quite willing to come to my aid, especially since it meant getting to spend some extended time being a full-time grandma.

And finally throughout those final weeks and days, I am infinitely grateful to all those who cheered me on and never doubted I would finish, though I was never completely convinced until the very end.

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I

INTRODUCTION

Many critics, who have read and commented on J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings¹ trilogy², seem certain that though the work is moral and mythic in composition and tone, it contains no God or ruling force. W. R. Irwin in The Game of the Impossible states, "The trilogy abounds in the supernatural, but there is no hint in it of a deity or divine powers and no experience that may be understood as religious" (164). This idea is most likely based on the fact that no deity is called by name or ascribed any of the traditional forms of organized worship, such as prayer or sacrifice. It seems incredible that any author could compose a work using Christian themes, symbols, and character types and not even mention the divine being who makes such things possible. It also seems even less likely that a deeply religious scholar such as J. R. R. Tolkien could do so.³

Richard Purtill contributes this seeming inconsistency to Tolkien's personal history as a "cradle Catholic" who was more inclined to live his religion than to talk about it (120-21). Tolkien acknowledges the impact of his faith on the LOTR in a letter stating,

The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have

cut out, practically all references to anything like 'religion', or to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. (Letters 172)

Tolkien here explains how his personal faith unconsciously influenced the creation of his work, and yet he became aware of it in the revising process. He applied painstaking care to multiple revisions of all his works and says of the LOTR, "Hardly a word in its 600,000 or more has been unconsidered," and that all had "been laboriously pondered" (Letters 160).⁴ Such care created a tightly-knit story, imbuing it with meaning and significance. An awareness of the author's meticulous attitude toward composition should make the critic/reader searching for answers all the more responsive to the minute details of the text.

But his faith was not the only source influencing the LOTR, and again the author is surely the best spokesman for the content and purpose behind his work. Tolkien's most enlightening statement about religious elements in the trilogy is found in a 1955 letter to the Mifflin Publishing Company and reprinted in the Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien,

The only criticism that annoyed me was one that it 'contained no religion' (and 'no Women', but that does not matter, and is not true anyway). It is a monotheistic world of 'natural theology'.

The odd fact that there are no churches, temples, or religious rites and ceremonies, is simply part of the historical climate depicted. It will be sufficiently explained, if (as now seems likely) the Silmarillion and other legends of the First and Second Ages are published. I am in any case myself a Christian; but the 'Third Age' was not a Christian world. (220)

Tolkien makes clear that a natural "theology" does exist in the Middle Earth⁵ of the LOTR, but it is not the structured, ritualistic rites of the Christian age. This particular time setting for the work also seems to have a direct bearing on the way in which the author portrays the powers at work in his story. Some critics have indeed comprehended this natural religion and sought to define a guiding force in the story with terms like Fate, Providence and Doom. But these fall short of the richness and dynamics inherent in an intelligent power (guiding force, unseen force, providential power etc.⁶) which it appears Tolkien created to determine the destiny of M.E. as the LOTR story is composed.

Tolkien implies that the Silmarillion is linked to the LOTR, and he comments explicitly about this in a letter to publisher Sir Stanley Unwin,

...the Silmarillion and all that has refused to be suppressed. It has bubbled up, infiltrated, and probably spoiled everything....which I have

tried to write since....Its shadow was deep on the later parts of The Hobbit. It has captured The Lord of the Rings, so that that has become simply its continuation and completion, requiring the Silmarillion to be fully intelligible -- without a lot of references and explanations that clutter it in one or two places. (Letters 136-37)

The author makes clear that the LOTR was a continuation of the Silmarillion's story and history. Analysis of the LOTR text for the presence of a deity figure must then include both works in order to receive a complete view of Tolkien's theory on the subject.

The most important link between the two works which directly touches this study originates in the Silmarillion and becomes the governing metaphor for the LOTR. In the Silmarillion, Tolkien portrays Eru, the creator, in the beginning as the composer of the "Great Music" through the Ainur who were the offspring of his thoughts. Into this harmonious and divine melody, the renegade Ainur Melkor propounds his discordant theme. But to Melkor's wonder and shame, Iluvatar makes clear to him that all that is originates with and is controlled by Him saying, "...see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath

not imagined" (17).

These principles of divine direction carry over into the LOTR, but their presence is so subtle and veiled as to be almost indiscernible. Tolkien expresses his tendency toward concealment of religious elements and particularly a deity figure in a 1954 letter to Father Robert Murray,

I have purposely kept all allusions to the highest matters down to mere hints, perceptible only by the most attentive, or kept them unexplained symbolic forms. So God and the 'angelic' gods, the Lords or Powers of the West, only peep through in such places as Gandalf's conversation with Frodo" (Letters 201).

The author essentially settles the question about the presence of a deity figure with this specific mention of the passage from the LOTR. There is a God or unnamed power active in the three volumes of the LOTR. The questions which remains are how does this deity operate within the framework of the narrative and what is its role? Tolkien says he only "peeps" in (201) but also describes him as having a "Divine Plan" (194).

It seems most likely that Tolkien would pattern the deity of his created universe after the one responsible for his faith in the real world. The pattern would most likely be Biblical and of the time period before the coming of the Mediator who revealed God clearly.⁷ Tolkien appears to have selected some of the most traditional means of God's

intervention into the lives of men to ascribe to his own deity figure.⁸ As a sub-creator, Tolkien weaves these Biblical methods into his narrative constructing a world which for the reader is different from his own, and yet familiar.⁹

With great care, Tolkien has his God-like figure use the method of providential ordering or arrangement to externally direct the story's events toward an outcome known only to the controlling deity itself. These orchestrations appear to the characters, and perhaps the imperceptive reader, of the story to be only chance or coincidental events. But their purpose within the complete composition of the LOTR becomes clearer as the story unfolds.¹⁰ These seeming chance occurrences precipitate many important meetings between characters and aid those key characters in making critical decisions.

Tolkien also has his deity figure operate internally through characters by means of dreams or visions.¹¹ These forms of guidance are given by the deity to the characters to aid them in making choices for good. The unseen power of the story is also responsible for intuitive feelings from within which warn or direct the characters.¹² Their internal guidance system often prompts the characters to make prophetic utterances, also meant by the deity to warn and direct others in the story.

And finally the last Biblical method of intervention Tolkien attributes to his M.E. God is His ability to bring

good out of any evil which can be devised by the characters of the LOTR.¹³ Like Eru the composer, Tolkien's deity in the LOTR takes any error, whether great or small, and works its theme into the great Music of His Grand Plan, ultimately achieving the desired and foreordained end, the downfall of Sauron.

II

CHANCE EVENTS

Though this study proposes to trace the intervention of a divine being throughout the LOTR, no study of this nature would be complete without dipping back into the Hobbit for Bilbo's account of how he discovered the Ring of Power. The study of seemingly chance or accidental occurrences must begin here. Perhaps as a way of tying the two very different books together, Tolkien recounts the story of the hobbit's adventure in the prologue of the Fellowship of the Ring.¹⁴ But the tone of the story differs from the original. The narrator appears to have retrospective insight about the events and reveals it in editorial comments sprinkled throughout. He says of Bilbo's acquisition of the Ring, "It seemed then like mere luck" (FR 32). Just prior to this, he remarks that the entire adventure would be historically insignificant, except for the 'accident' (accent marks included) of the Ring's discovery. These statements are clearly designed to plant doubt in the reader's mind. A curious remark is made about Gandalf's reaction to Bilbo's altered story about the ring, "Gandalf, however, disbelieved Bilbo's first story, as soon as he heard it, and he continued to be very curious about the ring" (FR 35). He also found the hobbit's lie to be "important and disturbing" (FR 35). These statements and others leave the reader with the impression that something, or someone, unusual is at work, and much of the

story has remained untold.

Many of these vague allusions are clarified in the book's opening chapters. After the extravagant birthday party and mysterious disappearance of Bilbo, his nephew, Frodo, becomes his heir. Even the marvelous Ring is to pass to Frodo before Bilbo goes away. Gandalf's misgivings about the Ring had slumbered until he witnesses Bilbo's uncharacteristic behavior when compelled to surrender the ring. Gandalf says, "'I have merely begun to wonder about the ring,'" but leaves Frodo with the warning, "'keep it safe, and keep it secret!'" (FR 68) Years pass, and when Gandalf returns, he has grave news concerning the Ring. As he unfolds the age old tale of its making and dark history, he concludes his story by calling Bilbo's discovery of it "'this dreadful chance'" (FR 82). At this point there is already strong evidence to conclude that more than mere chance is at work.

This suspicion is confirmed by other statements appropriately made using the passive voice.¹⁵ In perhaps the author's clearest statement of this idea of a powerful being at work, he says through Gandalf, "'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'" (FR 86). The author makes clear that evil power is not responsible for the event but leaves the reader to conclude for himself about just who is.¹⁶ As Gandalf reveals to Frodo his role

in this affair, he again expresses his thoughts in the passive voice, "'You may be sure that it was not for any merit 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'" (FR 95).¹⁷ Frodo bewails his "fate" but seems convinced of his responsibility. Gandalf, again in the passive voice, expresses this idea of submission to a higher power in his response to Frodo's regret, "'So do I and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us'" (FR 82). All these phrases culminate in effect to convince the reader that chance appearances are deceiving and that a grand scale plan is being unfolded by something, or someone.

But even with all this, the theory of seeming chance or accidental occurrences actually being the work of a divine power has only begun in the LOTR. Gandalf clearly states, "'There is more than one power at work'" (FR 87). The reader is never in much doubt about which events are attributed to Sauron, wielder of the evil power, but a careful reading and consideration must be given to discern how and in what ways a deity figure makes its presence felt. This divine power uses what appear to be chance events to accomplish two major objectives: to orchestrate the meeting of important characters and to give aid to them in times of need. Intervening in the story using these two

modes allows the God-like power to arrange or orchestrate its events.

The LOTR abounds with incidents which appear initially to be accidental or coincidental but which are actually designed to bring together important characters. The timing of these encounters is often a precision feat and lends additional support to the feeling that these events are all part of a carefully laid plan. Immediately after Frodo's awareness of his danger as possessor of the Ring, he concludes he must leave the Shire. Gandalf agrees but cautions him not to do so in a way that would arouse suspicion or cause undue talk. Gandalf leaves him with the understanding that Frodo will set out soon. What follows is a series of events which brings Frodo and company into contact with other essential characters and makes their journey possible against insurmountable odds.

Frodo and his trusted servant, Sam, are resolved to set out alone, and this plan has Gandalf's approval. But in fact, Frodo's relatives Merry and Pippin perceive his plan and out of love and concern are determined to go along too. The importance of their inclusion in the adventure can hardly be expressed. Many of the most important events of the story result from their involvement. The departure of the friends from the Shire takes place on Frodo's fiftieth birthday as planned.

As the lazy summer turns into a beautiful autumn in the Shire, evil has been brewing outside it. Gandalf tries

to send word of the immediacy of the danger to Frodo by letter, but in another apparently "accidental" event, it is never delivered. So peril is upon him without Frodo's awareness, but chance, fate or whatever comes to his aid again and again, keeping him one step ahead of the danger.

On the very evening of Frodo's departure, one of the dark riders or Ringwraiths of Sauron comes disguised and looking for Mr. Baggins at Bag End. Before he reaches the home, he is encountered by Sam's father, the Gaffer, and told that Mr. Baggins has already moved away that very morning. Without such a chance encounter, the author gives the reader the impression that the adventure might be over before it begins. In a curiously instinctive way which will be discussed in detail later, Frodo "wondered vaguely why the fact that they did not come on up the Hill seemed a great relief" (FR 105). As they journey along the road that evening, the travelers again encounter a dark rider, and again prompted by a "feeling" and a "sudden desire to hide" they escape detection. This chance encounter compels them to leave the main road, and by cutting across land, they meet a group of elves heading to the western shores. The hobbits are safe with the elves for the night and learn valuable information about the dark riders pursuing them, both of which are important. Reference to some purposeful plan behind this meeting is revealed in the elf Gildor's statement, "'Our paths cross theirs [hobbits] seldom, by chance or purpose. In this meeting there may be more than

chance; but the purpose is not clear to me, and I fear to say too much'" (FR 124). Kocher attributes Gildor's reluctance to give advice to his desire not to influence Frodo's choices unduly and thereby inhibit his free will (38).

Because he has "by chance" come upon, or actually avoided, Sauron's riders, Frodo decides to shun travel on the open road and take the most unlikely route out of the Shire, through the Old Forest. This decision takes him on an adventure through the enchanted wood where he meets Tom Bombadil, and greatly benefits from this "chance" encounter. Once the hobbits are safely in Tom's house, Frodo questions him, "'Did you hear me calling, Master, or was it just chance that brought you at that moment?'" FR 175). Bombadil's reply is, "'Nay, I did not hear: I was busy singing. Just chance brought me then, if chance you call it. It was no plan of mine, though I was waiting for you. We heard news of you, and learned that you were wandering'" (FR 175). Within the same comment, this interesting character uses both the words chance and plan. He says that he at least had no plan, but there is more importance in his implication than in the literal meaning of his words. He may not have his own plan, but he can certainly be acting within and vaguely cognizant of the design of another's. He also makes a curious comment about having heard news of the hobbits' wanderings, but leaves the reader wondering about just what or who could be his

source of news. Statements such as these raise questions which remain in the back of the reader's mind and cause doubt about future events which may also appear to be chance or coincidence (Kocher 38). More than once, Tom saves the hobbits and eventually guides them through the malicious woods, an undertaking they could never have managed without his aid.

Quite likely the most fortuitous meeting arranged for the hobbit company is with Strider or Aragorn at the Prancing Pony in Bree. He is a Ranger who roams the wilderness as a sort of patrolman but, "by chance," happens to be in town at the same time that the hobbits arrive. Frodo and his friends are without a plan or guidance in their flight from the enemy. Gandalf had always intended to be their traveling companion, but he has mysteriously disappeared. No one but Strider could have filled their need at the time. His knowledge of the territory and the wiles of the enemy will enable them to arrive in Rivendell alive, though not without harm. But Strider's initial impression on the hobbits does not induce them to trust in him. Can it be only chance which causes Mr. Butterbur, the innkeeper, to remember Gandalf's letter and bring it to Frodo, at exactly the same time he is speaking with the Ranger? Is it also by chance alone that Gandalf's letter includes a sort of fool proof password in Strider's real name, Aragorn, and the verses that accompanied the name? Gunnar Urang suggests that such providential evidences work

to strengthen what is analogous to faith in the characters. They may not be given the particulars, but such coincidental happenings give them assurance that there is a plan in motion (Shadows 115). A force seems to be actively working to ensure that the hobbits and Aragorn meet and join forces. The outcome of the quest depends upon it.

With Strider as their guide, the hobbits weather the many perils of the journey to the house of Elrond, but only by a "chance" encounter with the elf Glorfindel does the Ring again escape the grasp of the dark riders. When he finds the weary travelers, Glorfindel places the wounded hobbit on his great horse, and Frodo is thus mounted when the company is assailed by the Ringwraiths. Mounted on the swift horse, Frodo is barely able to outpace the riders and make the ford. In another fortuitous stroke, the dark rider's mounts are washed away as they try to pursue Frodo through the River Greyflood. Their threat is diminished, at least for a time. Such an episode is typical of the way in which the independent actions of separate individuals coordinate to give evidence of a larger design. "Such repeated coincidences eventually give the reader a sense of a larger hand discretely guiding events along, a beneficent hand working at a good purpose in the trilogy" (Drury 8).

In Rivendell the hobbits find gathered a host of races seeking Elrond's advice for different reasons. The individuals believe that each one has come on his own mission, but Elrond perceives a larger design behind this

curious assembly. In his wisdom, he says,

This is the purpose for which you were called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we, who sit here, and none others, must now find counsel for the peril of the world. (FR 318)

Elrond acknowledges that this gathering has been called as part of a plan, unknown to him, but whose purpose must be to determine the future of M.E. Kocher points out that while the assembly of these various characters of M.E. has been directed by some outside force, the conclusion of the Council does not appear to be predetermined. The leaders summoned to this meeting are left to freely debate the issues (41). However, Roger Drury points out that in the process of the meeting's events, many fragments of information are brought together and complex relationships between them become clear. The culminating effect of all this information is a discernable pattern of apparent providential design which prepares the Council to make the needed decisions, while at the same time not violating the free will of any individual (Drury 8).

The history of the Ring is relayed to inform all gathered, and Frodo is surprised to find that it is the inheritance of Aragorn and his family. He gladly offers it

to him, but acknowledging some higher power at work, Aragorn replies saying, "'It does not belong to either of us, but it has been ordained that you should hold it for a while'" (FR 324). From the collective wisdom of those assembled, it is eventually determined to send Sauron's Ring back to the fire of its origin, a mighty undertaking. But the question of who will actually take the Ring into Mordor still remains. As the council meeting draws to a close, Frodo begins to feel uncomfortable, for he knows the direction in which the conversation is heading. As tension mounts during a long silence, Frodo with some effort and "as if some other will was using his small voice" says, "'I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way'" (FR 354). To this heroic offer Elrond replies,

If I understand all that I have heard, I think that this task has been appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will... Who of all the wise could have foreseen it? Or, if they are wise, why should they expect to know it, until the hour has struck? (FR 354)

His use of the passive voice acknowledges the will of a power beyond his own or any of the other wise.¹⁸

As Frodo's companions are chosen representatives of each of the Free Peoples of the World - nine walkers set against the nine fell riders. From what at first appeared to be a chance meeting of people is chosen a fellowship of companions which will dominate the entire LOTR. Each

member of the fellowship appears to be chosen to play a key role. But though they are chosen, they have the freedom to go "'as far as they will or fortune allows'" (FR 360). Elrond emphasizes that no oath is laid on them to go farther than they will, "'for you do not yet know the strength of your hearts'" (FR 367). This theme of free will and its relation to fate or determinism is delicately balanced by Tolkien as it runs throughout the narrative of the LOTR (Mack 141). Could such a collection of companions have been the result of random chance or the culmination of the author's skillful sub-creation? It becomes apparent that each was summoned by an unseen power to play his appointed part in the drama unfolding in Tolkien's M.E. The future of their world rests on the response of each to the call.

As the fellowship of the Ring sets out from Rivendell, a force outside the company continues to orchestrate meetings between characters while aiding and developing the action of the story. Thwarted by the powers of nature, and more, the company is forced to seek passage through the famed but perilous Mines of Moria. Their unseen guide aids the company by making the pool before the gates low enough to cross without difficulty. Frodo senses a lurking malevolence in the water, but its attack is "luckily" forestalled until the magical gates can be opened. Once again chance has worked in their favor, and the company finds itself on a path from which there is no turning back.

As has seemed inevitable from the story's beginning, the fellowship of nine unwittingly is joined by Gollum who picks up their trail inside the mine. Though they do not yet meet, Frodo "felt oppressed," and his keen senses detected a faint echoing footstep (FR 410).

While seemingly a disastrous turn of events, this is actually one of the most auspicious encounters of the novel. The success of the entire quest rests upon the relationship which will develop between Frodo and this loathsome former Ring-bearer. The uniting of two such unlikely characters for a single purpose seems another indicator that a force beyond the inhabitants of M.E. is at work. In Shadows of Heaven, Urang sees him as an unwitting instrument of Providence, destined to play his part in the ordering of elements toward a certain end (113). During the council at Rivendell, Gandalf speculates about the role of Gollum in this adventure saying, "'Well, well, he is gone. 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'" (FR 336). His words take on prophetic proportions in light of the tale's conclusion. David Callaway attributes Gandalf's insight to his role as a spiritual messenger of Eru and points out that as a creature in M.E., Gollum is created by Eru and can be directed by him (16).

After the disastrous event inside Moria which removes Gandalf from the company, those who remain make for the

Wood of Lothlorien where again they meet and interact with characters essential to the development of the tale. The most prominent of these is certainly Galadriel, ruler of the elves who inhabit this land. With her wisdom and magical gifts, she aids the nine companions in the long, harsh journey ahead. The gifts given to Frodo and Sam are of particular significance to the outcome of the quest. More than once the phial of light rescues the two hobbits, and Sam's seemingly inconsequential gift eventually quite miraculously transforms the war torn Shire. With perhaps even greater depth and significance, the contact between the Ring-bearer and the elven queen tempts and tests her devotion to the greater good of all M.E. At some point in the narrative, the Ring is a temptation to nearly all the major characters when it is offered to them or is within easy grasp. This testing is further evidence of a providential force at work which can use even the evil allure of the Ring for a higher purpose (Kocher 50). But like one who passes through fiery trials, Galadriel resists and is perhaps made stronger by her rejection of the Ring.

After the nine companions leave Lothlorien, they travel down the river Anduin as far as Amon Hen. Due to Gandalf's death, Aragorn has assumed the lead but is unsure of the best plan or course for the company. In the overall scheme of the story, the force of the company needs to be divided, but none of the members relishes the idea. Again by seemingly chance encounters with other characters, the

appropriate action is orchestrated. Frodo leaves his companions for a while, in order to meditate on what he should do. As he sits pondering the situation, he is accosted by Boromir, who reveals the lust inspired in him by the Ring. As perhaps nothing else could, this exchange between the two characters forces Frodo into a decision to enter Mordor alone. After the excruciating battle of wills he endures on Amon Hen, Frodo says, "'I will do what I must... This at least is plain: the evil of the Ring is already at work even in the Company, and the Ring must leave them before it does more harm'" (FR 519). By use of the Ring, he escapes Boromir and executes his plan (with some unintended help from Sam). But Frodo's departure might not have been accomplished without the seemingly chance attack of orcs which occurs, interestingly enough, when Frodo is safely removed from the rest of the company. This attack serves several useful purposes: it causes the company to disperse and leave the camp site clear for Frodo's departure, offers Boromir an opportunity to redeem himself before death, and takes key characters to a far distant region where they will play essential roles in Tolkien's unfolding drama. A very substantial amount of the story's latter structure rests on this event, quite a lot to be entrusted to mere chance.

During the orc attack, Merry and Pippin are kidnapped and carried toward Isengard, fortress of Saruman. Their capture makes certain Aragorn's difficult decision to

pursue the orcs rather than follow the Ring-bearer. Gimli the dwarf and Legolas the elf accompany him in this seemingly hopeless cross-country rescue. This action is imperative, since it will bring together Aragorn and Eomer, of the Riders of Rohan, and directly involve the horsemen in the ensuing events of M.E. history. Speaking appropriately in the passive voice, Eomer says to Aragorn, "'Do I hope in vain that you have been sent to me for a help in doubt and need?'" (TT 48). Eomer encounters Aragorn and his companions only because he has fearfully defied a direct order from his king by pursuing the orcs. But his disobedience has been orchestrated for the higher good in different ways: the hobbits and news of the Ring never fall into Saruman's hands, these two great leaders of men meet, and the two young hobbits journey into Fanghorn Forest.

After their escape from the orcs, Merry and Pippin wander for cover into the ancient forest Fanghorn. Here they meet one of Tolkien's most original and interesting characters, Treebeard the Ent. He is a fascinating combination of tranquility and forcefulness in time of need. Only because the young hobbits come in contact with them, do the Ents learn of the real threat of Saruman and ultimately Sauron. Because of the resulting danger to their forest, the Ents are roused to a frenzy unparalleled. In this agitated state, they completely decimate Isengard and its inhabitants, except for the tower of Orthanc, the

refuge of Saruman and the servile Wormtongue. This fortuitous meeting between the hobbits and Ents, greatly aids the cause of good by eliminating Saruman's threat to Rohan and ultimately Minas Tirith.

As they search for the two hobbits in the forest, Aragorn and his companions have also had another fortuitous encounter -- with Gandalf, restored and renewed to the quest. He seeks news and gives it, telling them what he knows of the two hobbits. With an interesting reference to the importance of timing he says, "'So between them our enemies have contrived only to bring Merry and Pippin with marvellous speed, and in the nick of time, to Fanghorn, where otherwise they would never have come at all!'" (TT 128). In a similar way, Gandalf refers to his encounter with Aragorn and company saying, "'You chose amid doubts the path that seemed right: the choice was just, and it has been rewarded. For so we have met in time, who otherwise might have met too late'" (TT 132). Such regular references to timing insinuate to the reader an overall plan, and planner, guiding and arranging the action of the story.

These companions go on to battle Saruman's army, sent to destroy Rohan's strength. Once this threat has been eliminated, Aragorn and the others determine to go to Minas Tirith, but before setting out, he is unexpectedly joined by Halbarad and other Rangers from the North. They are answering a mysterious summons to aid Aragorn, and he is overjoyed. Though their numbers are relatively small, the

arrival of these kinsmen also brings with it an important message. The sons of Elrond make up the party, and their father sends word to Aragorn, "'If thou art in haste, remember the Paths of the Dead'" (RK 56). This bitter reminder to him orchestrates another essential and fortuitous meeting of characters, some living and some not.

Aragorn and his brave friends are forced to pass the gate in Dunharrow and seek the fellowship of the spirit world. The Rohirrim seek to dissuade him to no avail. Theoden with resignation says, "'You will do as you will, my lord Aragorn...It is your doom, maybe, to tread strange paths that others dare not'" (RK 61). Aragorn confirms this statement and further supports the idea of a supreme planner by his response to the Lady Eowyn, "'It is not madness, lady...for I go on a path appointed'" (RK 66). By taking this much dreaded path, he musters the full strength of the dead and manages soundly to defeat the enemy's forces coming from the south by water. This wholly unnatural military strategy prevents Minas Tirith from being crushed between foes from both sides and liberates many who can then come to the aid of Gondor's chief city.

While some of the original company of Nine Walkers have been encountering evil in Rohan, Frodo and Sam are headed toward Mordor and struggling to play their difficult roles in this cosmic drama. Though he has been their companion of a sort for quite some time, it is actually several days into their journey before Frodo and Sam

actually meet Gollum. As the two hobbits are searching for a means of descending a sheer cliff, Frodo expresses his frustration over this delay of their mission. In an amazingly portentous statement, he muses, "'I wonder...It's my doom, I think, to go to that Shadow yonder, so that a way will be found. But will good or evil show it to me? All my choices have proven ill...But now it isn't possible for you and me alone to find a way back...'" (TT 266). Into this brief statement Frodo, or actually Tolkien, compacts several ponderous ideas. By this point in the narrative, the author has given enough evidence to clearly indicate a divine planner at work to bring Frodo to his goal. Frodo first expresses resignation to a path already set out for him and the expectation that somehow he will be shown the right way. He then admits that he lacks the ability to choose for himself and asks a question, the answer to which is ironically, both good and evil. Good, in the form of a benevolent directive being, will show him the way, but it will be in the form of evil, personified by Gollum. It is true, the hobbits cannot find their way back, and only the hideous and pathetic creature Gollum can guide them safely into Mordor. Tolkien's religious belief in the paradox of good and evil is seen in his narrative as his sub-created deity arranges this most unlikely alliance between the hobbits and Gollum, which is the only hope for the success of their quest.

Within the same setting, chance or rather providence

again comes to the aid of Frodo and Sam. As they search for a secure means of descending a sheer cliff, Frodo slips and is nearly lost in the storm and darkness. His dire need causes Sam to recall the elvish rope stored away in his pack. He uses it to rescue his master and lower both of them to safety. Frodo says, "'What a piece of luck you had that rope!'" (TT 273). By this point in the tale, it seems apparent that far more than luck is at work, and this is confirmed again and again by the events of the story. Sam is particularly sad over the prospect of leaving his precious rope behind, securely tied to a large stump far over their heads. "He looked up and gave one last pull to the rope as if in farewell. To the complete surprise of both the hobbits it came loose" (TT 275-6). The same providential care which rescued the two from their peril, also appears to have restored to them their valuable and useful gift from the Lady Galadriel.

Immediately after their descent to safety, the two hobbits discover Gollum stalking their trail. Because they pity the creature and spare his life upon capturing him, Gollum is forced to repay them by guiding them through the treacherous lands surrounding Sauron's kingdom. It is this act of mercy and kindness that demonstrates Frodo's moral nature which in turn allows him to persevere against the evil effects of the Ring. This a priori virtue will greatly work toward his advantage and guide his fate with the Ring as it did with Bilbo before him (Mack 140). By

beginning ownership of the Ring with kindness and mercy, rather than treachery, each is able to escape complete domination by its evil.

While passing through the land of Ithilien, the wanderers providentially encounter Faramir, brother to Boromir of Gondor. Gollum has given the party the slip, and in speaking of him to Faramir, Frodo calls him "'a chance companion met upon the road'" (TT 336). In a statement full of warning, Faramir responds, "'Wise man trusts not to chance-meeting on the road in this land'" (TT 337). But this meeting is not by mere chance; an unseen power has brought these characters together for a purpose.

Faramir is thus described by one of his men, "'his life is charmed, or fate spares him for some other end'" (TT 339). He has an important role to play in the fate of Gondor and M.E. His encounter with Frodo enables him to carry news of the quest back to Gandalf and the others and serves as a test of his character. He more than half suspects the nature of Frodo's sojourn, but in a moment of excitement, Sam gives away their secret. Faramir calls it "'A pretty stroke of Fortune!'" (TT 367) to have the hobbits, the Ring and a whole army at his command. In spite of these advantages, he reassures them of a truth he had spoken before, quite prophetically, "'Not if I found it on the highway would I take it'" (TT 367). He pledges to aid the hobbits and gives them adequate provisions and walking sticks for their journey. Speaking of the parting

they must make at dawn, Faramir says, "'...we must each go swiftly on the ways appointed to us'" (TT 368). As Elrond had predicted, Frodo does indeed find unexpected friendship along the way, providentially making his seemingly impossible quest possible.

Once Frodo, Sam and Gollum are reunited, they again set out to enter Mordor by a secret way. They must pass Minas Morgul, city of the wraiths before making the stairs of Cirith Ungol. While attempting to skirt the city, they are nearly discovered, for the wraiths with their army issue from it, in answer to Sauron's signal. Frodo is almost paralyzed with fear, and the struggle to resist the Ring's desire for exposure nearly overpowers him. As his unwilling hand gropes for the Ring on its chain, with some divine guidance, it finds instead the phial of Galadriel, and he is spared. But Frodo's escape is short lived, for soon they come to Shelob's lair where again the phial aids the two unsuspecting hobbits. From this battle, however, they do not emerge unscathed.

As the two small heroes face the monstrous spider, Frodo brandishes the phial, and "it seemed that another voice spoke through his, clear, untroubled by the foul air of the pit" and shouts "'Aiya Earendil Elenion Ancalima'" (TT 418). Shelob initially seems daunted by this light, and the hobbits make a run for it. But they underestimate her cunning, and she leaps upon Frodo from another opening, while Gollum tackles Sam. The hobbit with great effort

dispenses with Gollum but then must deal with Shelob, bent on devouring his master. Sam wounds her severely with Sting, but again it is the potency of the phial that finishes her off. In this confrontation is a clear example of the way Tolkien contrasts the power of light with darkness. This triumph of Light foreshadows the very end of the story where the sweetness of victory is tempered by a sense of great loss (Mack 126). As he does battle, Sam is aided supernaturally by the elvish verses and speaks a language he does not know. Kocher refers to this as a prayer to Elbereth whose power routs Shelob, though Sam does not fully understand how (47-8). But even this victory does not change the condition of Frodo who appears to have given his life for the quest.

Torn between his love for his master and his duty to the quest as one of the nine companions, Sam decides to carry on alone. He relieves Frodo of his phial, sword and, of course most significantly, the Ring. In this way, the Ring does not fall to the enemies who discover Frodo's body. These seemingly accidental events also allow the two hobbits to get beyond the orc outpost, which would otherwise have been an impasse. In a quarrel over what to do with Frodo, the two orc forces decimate each other leaving no guard for the prisoner. Frodo and Sam then help themselves to orc clothing which aids them as disguise. The Silent Watchers are their only remaining adversaries, and they are overthrown, again providentially with the aid

of Galadriel's fortuitous gift.

As they pick their way across the Black Land, their greatest danger becomes their own hunger and thirst. Almost as if in answer to Sam's petition to the Lady for water, he and Frodo stumble across a tiny "ill-fated" stream. Elated, yet still fearful, Sam proposes to test the water first. But Frodo responds, "'...I think we'll trust our luck together, Sam; or our blessing'" (RK 242). The same power responsible for these little blessings along the way, continues to work to bring the Ring-bearer and his burden to the goal. But a short while later, thirst once again drives the hobbits to seek water along the orc highway. What seems at first like accidental discovery and capture by a band of orcs turns into a lively march of several miles as truant orc soldiers. This brisk march brings the two hobbits far along on their journey to Mt. Doom in relative safety. After escaping their troop, the hobbits pick their way across the pock marked terrain toward Orodruin, but Frodo's fatigue forces them back onto the main road. "'Trust to luck again!'" says Sam, "'It nearly failed us last time, but it didn't quite'" (RK 260). Their good fortune and meager supplies barely sustain them to the mountain's foot. Here it seems they may yet be beaten for Frodo can go no further. True to his earlier words, Sam proposes to carry his master and "...because some final gift of strength was given to him," he manages (RK 268). Sam's hope is renewed when he realizes there is

a path up the mountain side. "'Why it might have been put there a-purpose!'" he said to himself. "'If it wasn't there, I'd have to say I was beaten in the end'" (RK 269). Of course the path has been there many long ages before this, but the reader now clearly sees that there is a purpose for it and for so much else that happens in the LQTR. As the drama swiftly comes to its climax, the deft orchestration builds to its crescendo.

For a purpose known only to a powerful designer, providence also continues to guard and guide Gollum toward his goal in the quest. His life is saved because he retrieves the orc mail shirt cast off by Frodo, and his trailing of the hobbits messes up their tracks for the pursuing orcs, perhaps sparing their lives as well. The wretched creature has guessed Frodo's purpose in coming into Mordor and attacks, trying to prevent him from scaling the mountain. Out of pity and an unknown feeling in the heart, Sam spares Gollum's miserable life once again. His reward is the salvation of his master as Gollum fulfills his fated role by destroying the Ring, and himself, as he "accidentally" falls into the flames of Mt. Doom. Robert Hall calls Gollum's death "fortuitous" and "due to a benevolent Fate, acting through chance, and based upon Frodo's merciful actions on previous occasions" (5). The ultimate success of the quest is then a sort of gift or blessing to Frodo for all the past times when he did resist temptation. With their quest completed, the two hobbits

are content to die together, but providential direction does not abandon such devoted players. In a quite literal *deus ex machina*, the mighty eagles who have joined the battle against Sauron are enlisted to rescue the seemingly doomed hobbits ("Silent Commands" 7).²⁰ The quest of the Ring has been completed, through what would almost seem to be a series of accidents and coincidental happenings, if not for the many covert reminders of a force frequently intervening into the narrative and skillfully working toward an end known only to itself.

III

INTUITIVE RESPONSES

While an examination of chance or seemingly accidental events in the drama of M.E. may tell about how an unseen deity works externally to orchestrate the events of the story, this might still be interpreted by the skeptical reader as misconstrued coincidence. Therefore, it is also beneficial to examine the way in which a supernatural power orchestrates the events of the story from within the characters. It reveals its will and nudges them into action with internal impulses or feelings which seem instinctual or intuitive. At times, the characters may also be given dreams or visions which internally motivate or instruct them. As will be seen, each player in the drama of M.E. has the ability to say yes or no to his role. Though this unseen power is working toward an end known only to itself, it does not tamper with the free will of any character. Those who are dutiful and morally upright will follow the path set for them, while others defiantly reject theirs. Tolkien may in this respect also be patterning his epic after Biblical principles he knew and held dear. The God of the Bible often used dreams, visions and other internal means for revealing his will and guiding the righteous, and Tolkien as sub-creator has his guiding power use the same devices in his secondary world.²¹

Perhaps as good a place to begin as any is with one of the LOTR's most interesting characters and one quite appar-

ently influenced by a force from within. With the exception of the Ring-bearer, Gandalf the wizard appears to be most led by his heart²² or some intuitive feeling. His very existence as a character lends support to the idea of a deity enigmatically at work in the narrative. In his heated response to Denethor, Gandalf calls himself a steward (RK 33). This role necessarily implies one who oversees the affairs or goods of another.²³ This is supported by Gandalf's description of his job, "...the rule of no realm is mine, neither Gondor nor any other, great or small. But all worthy things that are in peril as the world now stands, those are my care'" (RK 33). Who could have entrusted such a mighty errand into his care? The answer may in part lie in the appendices of the trilogy, but for the perceptive reader, it also shows itself very subtly throughout the story. In his 1954 letter to Mrs. Naomi Mitchison, Tolkien describes Gandalf as an Emissary from the West beyond the Sea, whose proper function "was to encourage and bring out all the native powers of the Enemies of Sauron" (Letters 180). In correspondence to Father Robert Murray in November of the same year, Tolkien calls Gandalf an "incarnate 'angel'" and explains how his aged appearance is patterned after the sage figures of mythology (Letters 202). This description would certainly explain why his actions and statements appear to be so consistently directed from within by a guiding force.²⁴

If it is assumed that Gandalf is the steward for the being whom Tolkien has orchestrating the narrative of the LOTR, then a look at how he is internally instructed should lend substantial support to the theory. In the opening pages of the story, he returns to visit Frodo after several years' absence. As they sit by the fireplace one afternoon, the wizard recalls for Frodo how his uneasiness about the Ring began. Bilbo discovered his Ring in the same year that the Battle of Five Armies occurred, and the dark power was driven from Mirkwood. Gandalf said, "'A shadow fell on my heart then, though I did not know yet what I feared'" (FR 77). He said he considered consulting Saruman about the mystery of the Ring, "'but something always held me back'" (FR 78). He describes his fear as slumbering until "'the shadow fell on me again'" (FR 78). His concern was aroused anew because his friend Bilbo showed no signs of age with the passing of many years. This and the hobbit's uncharacteristic behavior prompted concerns that would not rest. He was finally motivated to research the Ring's history himself.

With his worst fears confirmed, Gandalf has returned to Frodo with the dread news. As they speak of Gollum and his role in the affair, Gandalf says, "'...he 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, before the end; and when that comes, the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many--yours not least'" (FR 93). This statement takes on

prophetic dimensions in light of the drama's conclusion and seems to come unwittingly from the speaker's emotions. Much later, Gandalf is surprised, and yet not, to hear that Gollum has become the guide for the hobbits as they grope their way into Mordor. A higher guide has in its subtle way informed him that this ironic turn of events is to be expected. Kocher concurs with this idea that the wizard had no rational way of knowing what part, if any, Gollum might play. In Gandalf's prophetic statement, as well as others throughout the LOTR, the reference is vague. Clear knowledge of the future is "the property of the One who plans it" (36).

Having warned Frodo of his danger, Gandalf sets off once again. He encounters another wizard, Radagast the Brown, who tells him the nine fell riders are abroad. Gandalf speaks intuitively, "'I knew then what I had dreaded without knowing it'" (FR 337). He is also given a message to come to Saruman at once. He reports the events which transpired later at the council of Elrond in Rivendell. Upon entering the courtyard of Isengard, Gandalf was prompted by a warning within. He says, "'...and suddenly I was afraid, though I knew no reason for it'" (FR 338). Having ignored his warning, Gandalf becomes a prisoner for a time, leaving the hobbits to make their initial escape unassisted.

But at other times, Gandalf gives greater heed to his internal coaching and serves as an excellent guide for the

nine companions in their quest. As they journey through treacherous territory, he is able to sense the winged Nazgul as they pass far overhead and out of sight. He is also able to discern between natural and supernatural threats to the company, such as the wolves which attack them near Moria. In anticipation of their entering the mine, Gandalf again speaks quite prophetically, "'...one must tread the path that need chooses!'" (FR 387). And he faithfully follows the one appointed for him and serves as an unfaltering guide through the underground maze, "...but even in the gloom and despite all windings of the road he knew whither he wished to go, and he did not falter, as long as there was a path that led towards his goal" (FR 404). The text makes clear that the wizard's "far-off memories of a journey long before were now of little help," so the implication is that he is guided by some unexplainable feeling or knowledge inside himself. At one particularly tricky point where three passages converged, he makes his critical decision based on his intuitive feeling, "'...I have made up my mind...I do not like the feel of the middle way: and I do not like the smell of the left-hand way: there is foul air down there, or I am no guide'" (FR 409). So he chooses the right-hand passage and follows it to his fated rendezvous, the purchase price of freedom for his companions.

Gandalf senses the presence of the dreaded demon through the stone passages and doors before they actually

confront each another. Some dark fate such as this has been hinted at much earlier by Aragorn who warns Gandalf to beware of passing the doors of Moria (FR 388). There could also be a prophetic hint of his doom in Elrond's description of his part in the company as "'his great task, and maybe the end of his labours'" (FR 361). Though Gandalf struggles with the balrog and falls, his willing surrender of his present life makes possible his renewal and enhancement. He later returns to the quest as an even more powerful and capable leader. Kocher sees Gandalf's brave response to the prophetic warning as another example of Tolkien's balancing of determinism and free will. The implication of the situation is that he foreknew the danger but accepted the result. Even as part of a providential plan, a foreseen event can only occur if the character affected submits himself to it freely (42). As a part of the same letter to Murray previously mentioned, Tolkien confirms the idea of Gandalf's submission to a higher plan. The author describes the fall as "a humbling and abnegation of himself in conformity to 'the Rules'...He was handing over to the Authority that ordained the Rules, and giving up personal hope of success" (Letters 202). This strongly echoes the Christian theme of walking by faith, not by sight.²⁵

But apart from Gandalf, and of course in his absence, others are called upon to lead and play the parts appointed for them in the drama of M.E. These characters are also,

though perhaps to a more limited extent, motivated and directed inwardly by a power outside the story. The elves have been foremost in the battle to defeat Sauron for many ages, a struggle Galadriel aptly refers to as "the long defeat" (FR 462). Many of this race seem to have intuitive perceptions or feelings which aid them in their efforts to subdue evil.

This ability is revealed in numerous single incidents with minor characters. In the hobbits' brief encounter with Gildor in the woods of Buckland, he perceives "'that there is some shadow of fear'" upon them and that the enemy is pursuing them strange as it seems (FR 118). As Aragorn and his party near Rivendell, they are met by the elf Glorfindel. He cautions them, "'...my heart warns me that the pursuit is now swift behind us, and other danger may be waiting by the Ford'" (FR 283). He is right, of course, and the company barely escapes the threat to make it to safety. In Rivendell, as the council of Elrond debates the fate of the Ring, the wise counselor Galadriel says, "'My heart tells me that Sauron will expect us to take the western way, when he learns what has befallen'" (FR 349). Each of these elves appears to speak, not from a rational understanding, but from a feeling or intuitive insight given to them.

As the hobbits flee from the enemy, their first place of refuge is in Rivendell, home of Elrond Half-elven. As one of the major characters of his race in the LOTR,

Elrond and his internal promptings are of particular interest. He is a great leader and decision maker, though a somewhat passive one after the manner of the Elves, and seems to be guided in his decisions by some intuitive source of knowledge. This understanding enables him to recognize the unusual assembly of representatives of the free races as something other than a coincidental meeting. His wisdom is legendary, but when he speaks, his response is often one based on a feeling rather than on lore or history. After an extensive debate among the wise over how best to keep the Ring from falling into Sauron's hands, Elrond seems to experience a sort of revelation and makes the pronouncement,

At least none can foretell what will come to pass, if we take this road or that. But it seems to me now clear which is the road that we must take. The westward road seems easiest. Therefore it must be shunned. It will be watched. Too often the Elves have fled that way. Now at this last we must take the hard road, a road unforeseen. There lies our hope, if hope it be. To walk into peril--to Mordor. We must send the Ring to the Fire. (FR 350)

He calls this plan of action "a road unforeseen," at least by human or elvish wisdom, for it has been revealed to him by a being wiser than himself. It appears to be a fool's errand, but then the wisdom of God is often foolishness to

men, and elves.²⁶ Erestor later calls it a "path of despair," but it is the only plan which offers any real solution to the desperate situation and a faint hope for a future free from fear. In a curious statement to Boromir which may be fraught with double meaning, Elrond says, "'For there are other powers and realms that you know not, and they are hidden from you'" (FR 351). He goes on to speak of other peoples who resist evil, but the statement resounds with reassurance that an unseen power is also working to bring about Sauron's ruin.²⁷

As the council meeting is drawing to a close, Elrond describes the task ahead of them,

The road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere. (FR 353)

His words clearly indicate that human abilities, such as might or wisdom, will avail little on this journey which appears to be folly. A greater power beyond any character named in the LOTR can use even the smallest and unlikeliest hands to "move the wheels of the world" and confound the wise.²⁸ In the emotional climax of the meeting, Frodo states his willingness to bear the Ring, and Elrond again

appears to respond intuitively as he says to the hobbit,

If I understand aright all that I have heard...I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will... Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it? Or, if they are wise, why should they expect to know it, until the hour has struck?" (FR 354)

In another appropriate use of the passive voice, Elrond states that someone has previously determined this position for Frodo. The indication is also that the wise cannot foresee these things by their own might or wisdom but are shown them in due season, most likely by the same being who chose the Ring-bearer. By a most circuitous method of revelation, Elrond enlightens the reader about the way in which a deity covertly works to aid and support those creatures who desire the end of Sauron's evil dominion.

Another prominent character in the LOTR and a mighty leader of the race of elves must be Galadriel of Lothlorien. She demonstrates an uncanny ability to discern the hearts and intents of other creatures and seems to be guided in wisdom and prophetic utterances by some force from within. In her initial meeting with the companions of the Ring, she speaks of her long efforts to thwart Sauron and says, "'not in doing or contriving, nor in choosing between this course and that, can I avail; but only in knowing what was and is, and in part also what shall be'" (FR 462). Her words seem to imply that victory over evil

will not lie in her own deeds or well laid plans but seems to be part of a continuing saga or plan, in which someone has "in part" already determined "what shall be." Her role appears to be to know all that she can and thereby "avail" by playing what part she understands to be meant for her and which will best aid in this grand design.²⁹ With this ability she also perceives the magnitude of the present situation and reveals to the eight companions, "'Your Quest stands on the edge of a knife. Stray but a little and it will fail, to the ruin of all. Yet hope remains while all the Company is true'" (FR 462).

Much of her power might be explained by her magic mirror, but there is also the implication that in her, and in all the land, there is what Sam refers to as a magic "'right down deep, where I can't lay my hands on it'" (FR 467). The magic of the mirror responds to her requests but seems to act primarily on its own initiative. Galadriel says of sight and the mirror that it is both "good and perilous," and she uses her intuitive sight to determine that Frodo has the wisdom and courage to watch the mirror at work.

She is also able to discern the crucial turning point of the fate of M.E. as she refuses the Ring which Frodo so graciously offers to her. With an insight beyond his own natural understanding, the Ring-bearer seeks to give her what she has desired for long ages. But she resists this evil temptation cloaked in innocence and expresses the

result of her decision, "...for now we have chosen, and the tides of fate are flowing'" (FR 474). Her statement combines some interesting ideas about an unfolding plan which is already in motion and their ability to make free choices within the design of that plan. These same thoughts are echoed in her parting words to the company on the night before they are to leave Lothlorien,

Good night, my friends!...Sleep in peace! Do not trouble your hearts overmuch with thought of the road tonight. Maybe the paths that you each shall tread are already laid before your feet, though you do not see them. Good night! (FR 477)

Galadriel speaks of paths already appointed for the nine companions, though they may be unaware of the destiny. This seems a clear acknowledgment of a power, far greater than herself, which is working out a plan not fully revealed to anyone. But with her intuitive knowledge, she also speaks of the sorrow wrought into this plan and prophecies of the diminishing of her home and race, "'For our spring and summer are gone by, and they will never be seen on earth again save in memory'" (FR 486). But having made her choice freely, Galadriel like others in the drama of M.E. will play her appointed part by accepting the guidance and direction of the divine orchestrator.

The internal guidance of this divine being is not limited only to those creatures with super powers such as

elves or wizards. Aid by this means appears also to be given to men and hobbits. Again even in less prominent characters, these promptings can be seen motivating and directing their actions. This intuitive guidance plays a part in the lives of the brothers Boromir and Faramir of Gondor. A dream is sent to each of them, disturbing them with its message and causing them to seek answers to the riddle (FR 323). Karl Schorr in "The Nature of Dreams in the LOTR" calls this the most important dream of the many throughout the story. He denies any possibility of coincidence because of the very specific nature of the dream and sees it as firm evidence of some supernatural power at work (46). Aragorn interprets the dream as a summons to himself to go to Minas Tirith and declare open war with Sauron (FR 477). The words of the dream predict the council of Elrond and foretell that Doom is near at hand when Isildur's Bane reappears and the Halfling comes forth. These words of prophecy warn and give signs for all who will give heed. Frodo's knowledge of the dream serves as verification of his truthfulness when he encounters Faramir in Ithilien. To Faramir is also given another dream/vision, or perhaps a literal encounter, with the watery bier of Boromir. This revelation makes him clearly the military leader of Gondor and Steward after his father's death. The internal sight given to Faramir enables him to judge character, and he determines Frodo's to be truthful (TT 350). He also perceives Gollum to be

withholding the full truth about Cirith Ungol and warns Frodo that he has been a murderer in the past (TT 382-83).

His men say of Faramir that "'his life is charmed, or fate spares him for some other end'" (TT 339), and some providence does seem to aid him in playing his role in the drama of M.E. When Pippin meets him, he loves him at once and describes him thus,

...suddenly for Faramir his heart was strangely moved with a feeling that he had not known before. Here was one with an air of nobility such as Aragorn at times revealed, less high perhaps, yet also less incalculable and remote: one of the Kings of Men born into a later time, but touched with the wisdom and sadness of the Elder Race. (RK 101)

In Faramir appears to run the true blood of the Men of the West. With his wisdom and power of insight, he alone of the leaders of Gondor can see the need to comply with the plan unfolding in M. E. and can work together with Aragorn to rebuild a mighty kingdom.

In the proud exercise of their power and free will, his father and in part his brother reject the roles appointed for them in the divine plan. Boromir is false to his entrusted role as companion to the Ring-bearer and ignores the instruction and warning given him in the dream. His pride and desire to be a great ruler make him easy prey to the lust of the Ring. His error ultimately serves a

higher purpose as will be discussed much later, but he obviously strays from the morally upright path or plan in trying to take the Ring by force for his own selfish ends. David Harvey sees the Ring and its temptations as symbolic of "the forked road that we all so often face and at which we must choose a path" (68). But Boromir's redemption lies in his willingness to make what amends he can for the trouble he has caused. He dies striving to protect the two young hobbits from orcs. In Tolkien's M.E. system of justice, such an act is rewarded by restoration of former greatness and immortalization in epic song (Harvey 59).³⁰ Faramir's last vision of him confirms Boromir's ultimate end as one of resting in peace.

But Denethor and his response to the role he is to play in M.E.'s drama is quite another matter. He has the gift of keen sight partially due to the palantir, but also due to the gift of internal perception or insight.³¹ Upon meeting Pippin, he says, "'I see that strange tales are woven about you'" (RK 30). This may also be evident in his conviction about Boromir's death with only the evidence of the severed horn as proof. But with all his ability to see, Denethor's great hamartia is his shortsightedness in selfishly caring only for the future of Gondor.³² In a heated response to Gandalf, he says,

Pride would be folly that disdained help and
counsel at need;...Yet the Lord of Gondor is not
to be made the tool of other men's purposes,

however worthy. And to him there is no purpose higher in the world as it now stands than the good of Gondor; and the rule of Gondor, my lord, is mine and no other man's, unless the king should come again. (RK 33)

Denethor's own words prophesy of his foolish actions, but he ignores his warning to himself. In his pride and folly, he does reject counsel in time of need, from Gandalf and from his own internal prompting. And a part of his rejection is his refusal to be a tool used by the power of one mightier than he. There is a force at work for a purpose higher than the good of Gondor alone, but Denethor denies it in word and deed. Though he may desire Sauron's downfall, he will not relinquish personal power, and his pride in his wisdom and strength warp his vision (Mack 129). Sinking deeper and deeper into self-pity and despair, Denethor is berated by Gandalf, "...your part is to go out to the battle of your City, where maybe death awaits you. This you know in your heart'" (RK 156). But he does not listen to the guidance of his heart. He flatly refuses to rise to the present need stating clearly, "'I would have things as they were in all the days of my life...But if doom denies this to me, then I will have naught: neither life diminished, nor love halved, nor honour abated'" (RK 158). He finally commits the ultimate act of divine defiance saying to Gandalf, "'But in this at least thou shalt not defy my will; to rule my own end'" (RK

158). In his suicide he clearly has renounced his appointed part in the plan in spite of Gandalf's warning, "'Authority is not given to you, Steward of Gondor, to order the hour of your death'" (RK 157). "The flavor of this prohibition is distinctly religious condemning the practice as 'heathen' and ascribing it to pride and despair, mortal offenses in the lexicon of Christianity and other religions" (Kocher 51-2).

In sharp contrast to Denethor and his refusal to play his designated role, is Aragorn. Of all the human characters in the LOTR, he is most responsive to the inward feelings and guidance given to him. His role is an important one. He has long been aware of his destiny due to a prophecy. Galadriel says to him, "'In this hour take the name that was foretold for you, Elessar, the Elfstone of the house of Elendil!'" (FR 486).³³ Like all other men, he has the right and free will to accept or reject what has been planned for him, but he consents to his fate graciously and unflinchingly. His first role in the story is as guide to the hobbits fleeing from the enemy. He uses his intuitive abilities to aid them in their quest. Speaking of the dark riders he says, "'We can feel their presence--it troubles our hearts'" (FR 256). In the land of Hollin, he says, "'But I have a sense of watchfulness, and of fear, that I have never had here before'" (FR 372). He later senses the dark riders airborne. At other times when he does not feel their presence, he is sure of relative

safety.

As leader of the fellowship, Aragorn with his internal promptings aids the group repeatedly. He urges them to journey at a rapid pace "for he felt in his heart that time was pressing," and the Dark Lord was hard at work (FR 492). As they travel down the river, a "feeling of insecurity grew on all the Company" (FR 494). In his sleep, Aragorn senses the danger of Gollum and confirms his presence to Frodo who has long suspected him (FR 496). Again in his sleep at Parth Galen, Aragorn is given an omen of the impending danger, "...as the night wore on Aragorn grew uneasy, tossing often in his sleep and waking" (FR 511). In response to Frodo's question about waking he says, "'I do not know...but a shadow and a threat has been growing in my sleep. It would be well to draw your sword'" (FR 511).³⁴ Later, just before the company is waylaid by orcs, Aragorn has a forewarning and says, "'There is mischief about. I feel it'" (FR 524). By trusting and responding to his internal guidance, Aragorn is able to best play his appointed role as a guard for the Ring-bearer until their paths in the divine plan separate.

There are also times when Aragorn's intuitive understanding causes him to make prophetic utterances, and with these he both warns and guides. He chooses to run the risk of Mt. Caradhras before he resigns himself to Moria and the doom he fears awaits Gandalf there. Aragorn's "strong presentiment" moves him to warn his mentor (Kocher 144),

"'It is not of the Ring, nor of us others that I am thinking now, but of you, Gandalf. And I say to you: if you pass the doors of Moria, beware!'" (FR 388). His fear is confirmed, of course, as Gandalf falls and seems lost forever. As the Company is later recuperating in the land of Lothlorien, Aragorn again makes a statement which takes on prophetic proportions. In response to Boromir's remonstrations about Galadriel, Aragorn forewarns him, "'You know not what you say. There is in her and in this land no evil, unless a man bring it hither himself. Then let him beware!'" (FR 464). But Boromir does not heed this premonition, and in doing so chooses his own doom.

After the attack on the company and the abduction of the young hobbits, Aragorn is faced with a great decision and allows his intuitive direction to make the vital choice. He says, "'My heart speaks clearly at last: the fate of the Bearer is in my hands no longer. The Company has played its part. Yet we that remain cannot forsake our companions while we have strength left'" (TT 26). He chooses to pursue the orcs rather than follow Frodo into Mordor, though he acknowledges it as "'a vain pursuit from its beginning, maybe, which no choice of mine can mar or mend. Well, I have chosen. So let us use the time as best we may!'" (TT 34). The same insight which revealed to him his choice continues to aid him in the pursuit. In a dream he is forewarned of the battle between the orcs and Riders of Rohan saying, "'It comes to my mind that I heard them,

even as I lay on the ground in sleep, and they troubled my dreams: horses galloping, passing in the West'" (TT 34). About the whole land of Rohan under the threat of Saruman, Aragorn perceives, "'There is something strange at work in this land. I distrust the silence. I distrust even the pale Moon...There is some will that lends speed to our foes and sets an unseen barrier before us'" (TT 36).

The same portentous feeling which puts him on guard in this hostile territory also enables him to perceive the true nature of the hooded and cloaked old man encountered near Fanghorn. Upon hearing the old man's voice, "Aragorn felt a shudder run through him at the sound, a strange cold thrill; and yet it was like the sudden bite of a keen air, or the slap of a cold rain that wakes an uneasy sleeper" (TT 123). His intuitive feelings tell him this is not Saruman, though Gandalf does not reveal his identity immediately. By heeding his feelings or internal warnings in these situations as well as others, Aragorn fulfills his divinely appointed role, wins a great victory over Sauron and eventually acquires the fondest desire of his heart, the Lady Arwen Evenstar.

In much the same way as Aragorn but to a far greater extent, Frodo the Ring-bearer is guided and directed in his task by feelings or promptings from within. His is the most momentous labor in all the scheme of M.E., and his response to his internal guidance the most convincing case for the theory of a deity covertly at work in the LOTR.

From the very outset of the story, he and his faithful companion Sam are directed in their escape from the enemy by intuitive feelings and often dreams and songs which seem designed to prepare them for upcoming events. When Frodo is still a carefree resident of the Shire, his dreams are filled with "strange visions of mountains that he had never seen" (FR 71). These visions are seen by Schorr as images which forewarn and prepare him for the travel and great task he must undertake (21). Before the journey even begins, whether because of Gandalf's words or the initial promptings of the divine planner, the home loving hobbit is transformed into an adventurer. About Frodo, the author tells us, "...as he [Gandalf] was speaking a great desire to follow Bilbo flamed up in his heart--to follow Bilbo, and even perhaps to find him again. It was so strong it overcame his fear" (FR 96). But even with his new found determination, Frodo and company appear to escape from the Shire only through a mixture of seemingly chance incidents and instinctive impulses.

As the hobbits set out, Frodo suddenly sings or speaks a rhyme which he says "'just came to me then, as if I was making it up'" (FR 110), and it tells almost prophetically of their errand and the joining of their task with the paths of others serving the same end, the rescue of M.E. They are, of course, only one step ahead of the dark riders, and again and again Tolkien has their intuitive impulses properly direct their actions. When they hear

horses hooves on the road, Frodo wonders if it might be Gandalf seeking to catch up with them, but then "even as he said it, he had a feeling that it was not so, and a sudden desire to hide from the view of the rider came over him" (FR 111). He and his companions hide off on the side of the road, and Frodo is overwhelmed with a "sudden unreasoning fear of discovery" (FR 112). He relays his feeling afterward to his companions saying, "'I felt certain I did not want him to discover me'" (FR 112). These conclusions are not based upon any rational analysis, for at this point the hobbits are not even aware of the identity of the riders or their mission. Their fear and the resulting actions which save them are based on the impulses given to them by a power active and yet unnamed and unknown to the characters in the narrative of the LOTR.

This same power continues to guide them in their escape and brings them together with the elf Gildor and his company, passing through the Shire. Of this meeting Frodo speaks both politely and prophetically, "'a star shines on the hour of our meeting'" (FR 119). With advice from the elves, Frodo and his company make it with relative safety to Crickhollow, where his sleep is troubled by strange dreams. He spends only one night there, and though he has never seen the sea, he dreams of its sounds, a tall white tower, and a salt smell in the air. He also dreams of being high above a tangle of trees and the sound of creatures below snuffling and looking for him. The reader

is told that dreams such as these often trouble him, so they would seem to have some significance.³⁵ Their contents would seem at times to serve as warnings of future events, as in the episode above the trees, or at other times as a form of comfort or consolation, such as the vision of the sea which lies at the far end of his task in M.E.

He soon experiences another dream in the home of Tom Bombadil master of the Old Forest. This interesting character rescues the hobbits from a bad hearted willow tree in response to Frodo's cries for help. Prompted intuitively, Frodo, "without any clear idea of why he did so, or what he hoped for, ran along the path crying help! help! help!" (FR 167). Though he is unaware of help nearby, his internal guide moves him to action, and as a result, the hobbits are saved by Bombadil. Once within the safety of Tom's home, Frodo receives another dream, where he sees a white headed man on a high pinnacle of stone and surrounded by wolves and fell voices. A winged shadow crosses the moon and carries away the man who also holds a staff that flashes like lightning. Could this be other than the rescue of Gandalf from Orthanc? The dream would appear to be happening at about the same time that the event occurs and could be a prophetic vision meant to give encouragement to the hobbits in this time of uncertainty. Often when Frodo is safe within a sanctuary such as Bombadil's house or Lothlorien, he experiences dreams which encourage him to continue his task and resist the temp-

tation to turn aside (Schorr 21). On his second night in Tom's house, his sleep is disturbed again, this time with a dream of a "far green country" revealed behind a rain-curtain or veil of glass and silver (FR 187). The description is strongly suggestive of Lothlorien and could be another consoling sort of dream meant to sustain him through the terrors ahead.

With no small assistance from Bombadil, the hobbits eventually make it safely to Bree, where again Frodo must rely on his intuitive power to make the right choices. One of his most critical decisions is whether or not to trust Strider, and his decision to do so is ultimately based on his feelings. Frodo says,

I believed that you were a friend before the letter came...You have frightened me several times tonight, but never in the way that the servants of the Enemy would, or so I imagine. I think one of his spies would--well, seem fairer and feel fouler, if you understand me. (FR 233)

In the same way that Frodo can intuitively sense evil in the dark riders, he can sense the goodness of the Ranger, and this ability does not appear to be based on any rational understanding. His trust in Strider is repaid many times, beginning with that same night. After the attack on Merry, all the hobbits move to different sleeping quarters and set a snare for the enemy in the old ones. Again Frodo's sleep is full of dreams, this time of

frightening dark shapes lurking about and finally attacking a house and of a horn blowing in the background. This is clearly a revelation of the events taking place at Crickhollow in the Shire, while an attack also takes place the same night in the Inn at Bree.

As the hobbits travel through the wild with Aragorn, they are repeatedly glad to have his skill and knowledge to aid them. Speaking in an ironically prophetic way, Frodo jokes about his weight loss on the journey and speculates that he too might waste away and become a wraith. Aragorn cautions him that such topics are not a joking matter! These comments perhaps foreshadow the attack on Frodo and the party, and the wound which threatens his life and allegiance. At Weathertop though the weather makes visibility poor, Frodo and Aragorn sense the dark riders on the road below the hill. As they seek shelter from them in a dell, Sam says, "'I don't like this hole: it makes my heart sink somehow'" (FR 255).

As the company is gathered around the fire, "Frodo felt a cold dread creeping over his heart" (FR 261). Sam echos his intuitive feelings saying, "'I don't know what it is... but I suddenly felt afraid'" (FR 261). As the attack of the dark riders ensues, Frodo is moved to cry out "'O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!'" (FR 263). Richard Purtill calls this cry an invocation like one would make to a saint or divine being with the power to help (120).³⁶ Aragorn later says that this invocation was of more threat to the

evil king than Frodo's small blade and implies that this has probably spared his life. When they arrive in the house of Elrond, Gandalf says of this encounter with the dark king, "'Yes, fortune or fate have helped you...not to mention courage'" (FR 293). Frodo's experience with and understanding of elves has been limited, and his use of the guardian elf's name could not have sprung from any rational source of knowledge. It appears to be yet another manifestation of the ways a divine power mysteriously working within the story aids those moral characters who are struggling to defeat Sauron.

While the wraith's evil wound works its harm on the hobbit's body and spirit, Frodo's sleep is again troubled by dreams. The source of these dreams may be questionable, for they are all about dark shadows which watch him and wait. In one dream, however, the dark shadows are winged, and this could be a forewarning of the new transportation used by the wraiths but yet unknown to those who oppose Sauron. But Frodo finds bodily healing in the house of Elrond, and he is soon recovered enough to attend the important council meeting which brings together those who will decide the fate of M.E.

During this great meeting, many of those who attend relay the events which have brought them there. Gandalf tells of his imprisonment by Saruman and of his rescue by the eagles. To his amazement, Frodo describes his dream in which he saw these very events take place. It would seem

that in the matter of intuitive knowledge, even the steward Gandalf does not always know where power has been bestowed. The overlapping of experiences and the added dimension of Frodo's dream give depth and enchantment to the tale, as well as heighten the reader's fascination with the overall story (Schorr 46). The reader must also have the heightened awareness of the underlying pattern which loosely ties together the isolated events and indicates a power at work (West 90).

As the meeting progresses and the tale of the Ring unfolds, the magnitude and gravity of the situation become increasingly apparent to Frodo. The situation comes to a climax when Bilbo poses the question about who will take the Ring on this great errand. In a statement which Tolkien permeates with the feel of a force at work, the text says, "A great dread fell on him, as if he was waiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken" (FR 354). Frodo's intuitive understanding has gradually been preparing him for this rigorous test of his will. "As if some other will was using his small voice," he agrees to bear the Ring (FR 354). This last statement might imply that Frodo's decision has been made for him by someone else, but this idea seems to be negated by Elrond's response to him. He says, "'...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'"

(FR 355). It would seem that these words are meant as clarification of the earlier intervention by the power in control. This being prompts and motivates from within, but Tolkien wants the reader to know this stops where the line is drawn between that and control or manipulation. Elrond's statements also indicate his faith that a higher power must be at work arranging the events of the story. If this were not so, it would be advantageous to select a Ring-bearer with more obvious strength and wisdom for the task (Kocher 93). But Frodo is chosen and freely accepts his role, though with heavy heart. To aid him in his crucial task, eight other companions are also chosen by Elrond or more likely, as the narrative makes clear, by a force working through him.

As the companions travel together, Frodo uses his keen intuitive understanding to detect danger and aid the company. He is again able to sense the wraiths, though now they are airborne and felt high up over their heads (FR 374). When they reach the magical gates of the Mines of Moria, an ominous pool of water lies between them and the doors. Gandalf said it had an "unwholesome look" (FR 393). As the wizard deliberates before the doors, Frodo has a growing sense of fear and says, "'I hate this place, too, and I am afraid. I don't know of what: not of wolves, or the dark behind the doors, but of something else. I am afraid of the pool. Don't disturb it!'" (FR 401). When the tentacled creature in the pool attacks, it inter-

estingly enough chooses Frodo for its first victim, but his faithful Sam intervenes. Once safely inside Moria, Frodo says, "'I felt that something horrible was near from the moment that my foot first touched the water'" (FR 403). Because of his intuitive warning system, he has been on his guard and avoided disaster.

While the company carefully makes its way through the mine, the Ring-bearer is again warned by a "deep uneasiness, growing to dread" which crept over him (FR 406). The text says, "He felt the certainty of evil ahead and of evil following" (FR 406). These feelings caused him to be on the alert and to keep his hand on the hilt of his sword. Once the company strikes a smooth and wide passage, they are able to pick up the pace. This lightens Frodo's spirits a bit, but "he still felt oppressed," and his acute hearing detects the sound of footsteps behind them on the path. At one point where they stop to rest, Frodo takes the first watch, and is filled with a feeling described, "As if it were a breath that came in through unseen doors out of deep places, dread came over him" (FR 414). He listens with intensity for two hours but hears nothing and sees, or only fancies he does, two small pinpoints of light. When he is relieved by Legolas, his dreams are filled with whispers and two pinpoints of light that come closer slowly. Even in sleep, the Ring-bearer is cautioned and forewarned of Gollum's presence by his intuitive guide.

At the tomb of Balin, Frodo again receives an intu-

itive warning by a "curious sense of foreboding" (FR 416). When the runes of the tablet confirm it to be Balin's grave, Frodo says, "'I feared it was so'" (FR 416). The company is here attacked by orcs, just as the dwarves once were, but they escape with help from Gandalf's magic. Only the wizard's unselfish sacrifice enables the others to survive this encounter and ultimately reach the freedom outside the mine.

Those of the company who survive Moria are aided on the fringe of Lothlorien by the elven guards of that land. But even as he begins to feel safer from peril perched up in the tree, Frodo is again reminded intuitively of impending danger. He draws out Sting whose blade at first flashed blue, signaling orcs nearby. But as they are lured away by the elves, the blade becomes dull, though "the feeling of immediate danger did not leave Frodo, rather it grew stronger" (FR 447). His feelings have again alerted him to the presence of Gollum who is sniffing and pawing at the foot of their hiding place.

Once inside the land of Lothlorien, Frodo again has intuitive impulses which aid and instruct him. On the slope of Cerin Amroth, he has a sort of vision or mystic experience in which he hears, "far off great seas upon beaches that had long ago been washed away, and sea-birds crying whose race had perished from the earth" (FR 455). His time in this exquisite land is spent pleasantly, and he even composes a song to honor the fallen wizard Gandalf,

though "he was seldom moved to make song or rhyme" (FR 465). As their stay draws to an end, Frodo intuitively knows it for on him "suddenly the shadow of parting had fallen: he knew somehow that the time was very near when he must leave Lothlorien" (FR 466). On the eve before the company is to depart, Frodo is warned intuitively by "something new and strange in Boromir's glance" as he speaks of the Ring (FR 478). This preliminary insight will serve him well in his later encounter with the man, as Frodo struggles to make his critical decision.

After leaving Lorien, the company travels down the great river by boat, and the trail is picked up by Gollum. Sam spots him, and Frodo confirms that he has followed them for quite a while. The spirits of each member of the company are low, and all are concerned about what the future holds. As they travel along stream, it is Pippin who "caught a queer gleam in his [Boromir's] eye, as he peered forward gazing at Frodo" (FR 494). This appears to be more foreshadowing of later events. On the lawn before Amon Hen, Aragorn says to Frodo, "'Your own way you alone can choose'" (FR 512). The Ring-bearer is faced with another great decision, and Aragorn's statement seems to emphasize that again, he alone must decide, though he may have some intuitive aid to help determine the right choice. Referring to Frodo and his burden, Aragorn says, "'Such is your fate'" (FR 512).

The Ring-bearer begs for a bit of time and wanders off

to think. While Frodo is meditating, he has an encounter with Boromir which in large part determines his important choice. Warned by "a strange feeling" that unfriendly eyes are watching him, Frodo turns to see the "smiling and kind" face of Boromir (FR 514). Due to his forewarning, Frodo is on guard, despite the man's pleasant demeanor. To Boromir's advice on going to Minas Tirith, Frodo says, "'it would seem like wisdom but for the warning of my heart'" (FR 514). He goes on to say that he is also internally warned against delay, refusal of his burden and against trust in the strength and truth of men. Frodo's rebuff incites the man to violence, and hoping to take the Ring by force, he attacks the hobbit.

With help from the Ring, Frodo escapes and finds his way to the Seat of Seeing on Amon Hen. After the mental battle which takes place there, "A great weariness was on him, but his will was firm and his heart lighter" (FR 519). He determines to go into Mordor alone, but the guide directing the story intends otherwise. Knowing his master better than anyone else, Sam "guessed" Frodo's plan and barely catches him departing in the boat. When Frodo cannot dissuade Sam from joining him, "a sudden warmth and gladness touched his heart" (FR 526). Speaking with intuitive understanding, Frodo says, "'It is plain that we were meant to go together'" (FR 526). His use of the passive voice to explain the event is quite appropriate, for they certainly were destined to be together on this

last leg of the quest. The positive feeling in Frodo's heart serves as confirmation for his correct decision.

As the two friends journey into Mordor, they continue to be aided internally by a force which is drawing them nearer to the conclusion of their fated roles. When Frodo finally confronts Gollum, his heart is moved to pity. He is reminded of Gandalf's prophetic words about the wretched creature by "voices out of the past" which speak "quite plainly but far off" (FR 281). Gollum swears to serve the Master of the Precious, and Frodo intuitively knows that he can be trusted, at least for a time, though Sam never trusts him.

As they journey toward Sauron's domain, the weight of the Ring becomes an intolerable burden to Frodo. He also feels the growing pressure of the Eye which strains to see him. When only a few hours from the Black Gate, he has a dream, "a fair vision had visited him in this land of disease" (TT 304). None of the details are given, for even Frodo does not remember them, but because of the dream "he felt glad and lighter of heart. His burden was less heavy on him" (TT 306). His intuitive guide seems to be encouraging and renewing him for the task in the only way possible in such a barren land.

The hobbits soon discover that the main gate is not the best way to go undiscovered into Sauron's kingdom. It seems only Gollum can show them another way into the dark kingdom, and Frodo says to him, "'I will trust you once

more. Indeed it seems that I must do so, and that it is my fate to receive help from you, where I least looked for it, and your fate to help me whom you long pursued with evil purpose'" (TT 313). His words acknowledge a will or plan outside themselves which yet binds them together for an all important purpose. In the same speech, Frodo prophetically warns Gollum of his bitter end unless he resists the temptation of the Ring, "'the desire of it [Ring] may betray you to a bitter end. You will never get it back...If I wearing it, were to command you, you would obey, even if it wereto cast yourself into the fire'" (TT 314). Even though warned by the guide which directs Frodo's understanding, Gollum will eventually betray the trust placed in him and perish for it. Though he is given a prophetic warning, this statement does not condemn him to act accordingly. Predestination and free will remain an indefinite mixture, and only the individual and his choice will ultimately govern his destiny (Drury 9).

But before he proves false, Gollum leads the hobbits through Ithilien on their way to the dark pass of Cirith Ungol. In this land not yet completely spoiled, they fortuitously encounter Faramir of Gondor. Frodo is very hesitant to reveal his purpose for being in the land, even to one as obviously noble as this valiant man. He guards his words, and Faramir says of him, "'You spoke with skill in a hard place, and wisely, it seemed to me'" (TT 351). Probing Frodo for news of Isildur's Bane and of Boromir,

Faramir says, "'It is a crooked fate that seals your lips who saw him last'" (TT 352). But the LOTR's guiding fate does not intend to reveal too much too soon. Reminded of the Ring's effect on Boromir and most likely guided intuitively, Frodo is described by the author, "Almost he yielded to the desire for help and counsel, to tell this grave young man, whose words seemed so wise and fair, all that was in his mind. But something held him back" (TT 355). It is Sam who later errs and lets it slip about the Ring. He and Frodo are immediately on the defensive, but Faramir reassures them, "'think that it was fated to be so. Your heart is shrewd as well as faithful, and saw clearer than your eyes'" (TT 367). Faramir's statement appears to be a summation of the way the intuitive guide has been working to orchestrate the events of the story. Not on their rational abilities or "eyes" must the hobbits rely, but on their hearts which receive instruction from a force far greater than themselves.

As the hobbits and Gollum journey deeper into the dark lands, instinct continues to serve and guide them. As he looks down on the main road to the evil city of Minas Morgul, Frodo senses "an evil feeling in the air, as if things might indeed be passing up and down to empty ruins in the mist" (TT 388). They skirt the valley by a path up into the hills but are nearly discovered by the great host which issues from that city. Caught in the open on a bare rock, Frodo is almost incapacitated by the will of the

Ring. As the Lord of the Nine Riders marches past him, he halts, and Frodo is nearly overcome by the Ring's urgent command to put it on. But the valiant Ring-bearer is given the internal fortitude and will to resist and a reminder of his hidden treasure,

Then his own will stirred; slowly it forced the hand back and set it to find another thing, a thing lying hidden near his breast. Cold and hard it seemed as his grip closed on it: the phial of Galadriel, so long treasured, and almost forgotten till that hour. (TT 401)

This prompted recollection of the phial, prevents his discovery by the enemy. Frodo falls into a sleep of exhaustion after this struggle and has a brief but refreshing recollection of the Shire and Sam waking him to breakfast. This snippet of a dream encourages him and enables him to tackle the steep climb ahead.

Approaching the top of the great stairs of Cirith Ungol, Sam comments, "'There's a wicked feeling about this place'" (TT 407). Frodo's intuitive feelings tell him it is "the last lap" (TT 406). Both hobbits seem instinctively to be aware of drawing to a finale of some sort, though they have a long journey yet ahead of them once they enter the vale of Mordor.

As the two weary hobbits rest on the steep stairs, Sam philosophizes about their present situation within one of the great tales. He says, "'Folks seem to have been just

landed in them, usually -- their paths were laid that way, as you put it'" (TT 407). He acknowledges another will which designates roles for the characters within a drama already laid out. Frodo responds with similar thoughts saying, "'No, they never end as tales...But the people in them come, and go when their part's ended. Our part will end later -- or sooner'" (TT 408). They also recognize that the players within the story don't know whether the ending will be happy or sad. Only those outside, whether as a supernatural force or others reading the tale much later, can know that for sure. Within this idea of characters in a tale, Urang sees hidden the theme of free will, for the implication is that those within the story are inventing or composing it as they experience it (161).³⁷ Sam speaks wistfully of their adventure being made into a song or story, and the notion causes Frodo to laugh, "a long clear laugh from his heart" (TT 408). Perhaps Sam's attempt to define their lot aids the Ring-bearer by lightening his burden with the reminder of their ability and freedom to choose.

As the hobbits make their way through the long tunnel, they instinctively feel "a sense of lurking malice so intense, that Frodo reeled" (TT 416). Both hobbits seem to be in the grip of "some hostile will," (TT 417) and Sam is warned of their peril saying, "'I can feel something looking at us'" (TT 417). As they turn to face the evil in the dark, Sam receives an internal reminder. "It seemed to

him that he saw a light: a light in his mind, almost unbearably bright at first...Far off,...he saw the Lady Galadriel...and gifts were in her hands. And you, Ring-bearer, he heard her say, remote but clear, for you I have prepared this" (TT 418).³⁸ At Sam's urging, Frodo holds the phial aloft, never having exposed it before for fear its light would betray them. The text says that "it seemed that another voice spoke through his, clear, untroubled by the foul air of the pit" (TT 418). Without any knowledge of what he is saying but moved by some force from within, Frodo shouts, "'Aiya Earendil Elenion Ancalima!'" (TT 418). The text describes this as the same cry which elves used "back in the deeps of time," but Frodo could hardly have had any rational understanding of this (TT 418). His action is clearly prompted by some force beyond himself which is seeking to aid him. But alas "powers of the night...are old and strong," (TT 418) and the hobbit's doom is only forestalled a bit. As the hobbits run, thinking they have escaped, Sam is aware that a "fear was growing on him, a menace which he could not see" (TT 424). His intuitive warning is confirmed by the attack of Shelob from another passage. Except for the intervention of the ruling and guiding deity Tolkien has created to control this drama, all would have seemed lost at this point.

As Sam leans over the fallen body of his beloved master, he is not deserted by his guiding intuition though the situation seems without hope. "He knelt, holding his

master's hand, and in his heart keeping a debate" (TT 433). Within this faithful companion, a dialogue takes place whose purpose seems to be to direct his actions. Sam wonders what he is to do, and in response to his question, the intuitive answer comes "see it through" (TT 433). The voice within also reminds him that Frodo was given companions in the quest to aid him in seeing it through, but Sam says it isn't right for him to assume such a great responsibility. The voice promptly replies, "'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'" (TT 433). To this reasoning Sam responds, "'Ah well, I must make up my own mind'" (TT 434). But the implication is clearly that Sam has been chosen for a task by someone orchestrating the drama, just as Bilbo and Frodo before him, and he must simply decide whether or not he will accept the path appointed for him.

Sam chooses to go on, relieving Frodo of his sword, the phial and the Ring, but he cannot quite take that last and final step down into Mordor. With the aid of the Ring, Sam learns from a passing band of orcs that Frodo is stunned and not dead! Nearly overcome with joy, Sam hears a comment deep down inside himself, "'You fool, he isn't dead, and your heart knew it'" (TT 444). But it also recognized the need to relieve Frodo of the valuable Ring, and because he obeyed his internal prompting, the quest has

been saved.

Determined to save his master, Sam dons the Ring once again and heads toward the guard tower and into Mordor. He discerns fighting within the tower, and this spurs on his efforts. But at the same time he is internally warned, "He took off the Ring, moved it may be by some deep premonition of danger" (RK 214). Though Sam could not know it, Sauron's power "to see" within the borders of his own land is greatly increased, and to wear the Ring there would be to clearly expose oneself. Once again, his trusting response to his internal guide saves the quest.

Displaying extraordinary hobbit courage, Sam breaks through the main gate of the watchtower and enters the stronghold, only to find nearly all the orcs dead. He follows the stairs up to the very top of the tower, but still does not find Frodo. As he sits feeling defeated and lost in the dark, to his surprised a sort of wonder occurs. "Moved by what thought in his heart he could not tell, Sam began to sing" (RK 226). He softly sings songs he has known well from the Shire, and with a sudden burst of strength "words of his own came unbidden to fit the simple tune" (RK 226). These intuitive promptings to sing have beneficial results, for they arouse both Frodo, who is in a stupor, and cause his captor to reveal the way up to the topmost chamber.

As the two hobbits prepare to escape, Sam intuitively warns Frodo, "'I'm not easy. I think this place is being

watched...it feels to me as if one of those foul flying Riders was about, up in the blackness where he can't be seen'" (RK 231-2). Their internal guide also aids them in escaping the terrible Watchers at the gate. Prompted by a will other than his own, Sam cries out "'Gilthonial, A Elbereth!'" and "For, why he did not know, his thought sprang back suddenly to the elves in the Shire, and the song that drove away the Black Rider in the trees" (RK 234). Right behind him comes Frodo who shouts "'Aiya elenion ancalima!'" also apparently prompted by the same guiding power, since neither hobbit can possibly understand the full impact of his words.³⁹

As the two weary hobbits pick their way across the wasteland of Mordor, their instinctual knowledge continues to aid them. More than once, they halt because Frodo can feel the presence of a Nazgul above them. Sam is given a special blessing during their journey with sight of a single white star. "The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him" (RK 244). He is reminded of his insignificance in the grand design of all things and ceases to be troubled and fearful about his fate. This renewed vision and perspective enables him to endure and support Frodo to the end. But he is also given a grim understanding of the finality of their mission when he realizes that, at best, their provisions will only last them to the mountain. There can be no hope of return. "Never for long had hope died in his staunch

heart," but for Sam this is a bitter truth (RK 259). But this intuitive understanding transforms him into the hobbit he must be to meet the challenge,

But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned to a new strength. Sam's plain hobbit-face grew stern, almost grim, as the will hardened in him, and he felt through all his limbs a thrill, as if he was turning into some creature of stone and steel that neither despair nor weariness nor endless barren miles could subdue. (RK 259)

The guiding deity at work in the LOTR appears to orchestrate events which will best enable the hobbits to accomplish this last lap of their quest.

At the foot of Mt. Doom, Sam is intuitively forewarned of the need for haste by a "sense of urgency which he did not understand" (RK 270). "It was almost as if he had been called," and this summons causes him to resume his burden [Frodo] and hurry on (RK 270). The use of the passive voice in these and other statements, of course, is another indicator of the unseen force who is unknown to the characters but intervening to direct these essential events. As Galadriel has predicted the outcome of the quest stands on the edge of a knife.

The most compelling piece of orchestration by this unseen force must surely be the climax of action involving Gollum, Frodo and the Ring at the Crack of Doom. As the

hobbits near the mountain's summit, Frodo is attacked by Gollum who attempts to take the Ring for himself. This attack "roused the dying embers of Frodo's heart and will," and he delivers a prophetic sentence to Gollum, "'If you touch me ever again, you shall be cast yourself into the Fire of Doom'" (RK 271-2). His statement resounds with the Biblical significance of Christ's most severe warnings to his disciples in Matthew 18:8-9 and Mark 9:43-48. But Hall also points out that unknown to the Ring-bearer, the words have significance for himself as well (Silent Commands 7). Frodo turns from them and goes on up the path to fulfill his fated task, leaving Sam to deal with Gollum. Sam longs to appease his hatred of this creature by killing it, but "deep in his heart there was something that restrained him" as Gollum grovels in the dust at his feet (RK 272). Again the quest might have come to a bitter end, except for the intervention of a force which moves Sam to pity and causes him to spare the wretch.

In the greatest trial of the entire quest, Frodo stands at the Crack of Doom, and his will fails. He cannot complete his task. From the outset of the quest, Frodo has repeatedly and freely chosen good over evil and in doing so sealed his fate (Mack 145). Though his hobbit character may fail this crucial test, a benevolent Fate can step in and with its "grace" and mercy make up for Frodo's shortcomings ("Hobbit Tetraology" 358).⁴⁰ Gollum with his insatiable lust for the Ring exercises his free but evil

will by stepping unwittingly into the role of Ring destroyer which is momentarily vacated by Frodo. With blinding fury, he grapples with Frodo and acquires the Ring only by biting off the hobbit's finger. But overconfident in his victory and doomed to walk the path which his former acts of treachery had placed him in, Gollum loses his footing and falls into the fire. Because Frodo has gone as far as his moral strength can take him, the fate of the Ring is literally taken out of his hands by both Gollum and the unseen force working through them all (Harvey 78-9). Urang sees Gollum's evil act of will as vindication of his freedom to choose his fate, but the last word in the matter goes to the overruling Providence who has preserved and guided the wretch toward this last, all-important choice (Shadows 129). Such a turn of events cannot possibly be anything but the result of carefully constructed, divine strategy.⁴¹ By guiding, warning and prompting the numerous players within the drama, the unseen force directing M.E.'s affairs has achieved a great victory. With the destruction of the Ring comes the downfall of Sauron and the dawning of a new age for mankind and all other creatures who choose to remain in the realm of M.E.

IV

GOOD COMES FROM EVIL

The final, and perhaps most intricate, method by which a providential power reveals itself within the LOTR narrative is by its use of evil to further the cause of good. Utilizing, failures or intentionally wicked deeds of various characters, this deity figure continually brings good out of evil and weaves all actions into the tapestry of the story with divine skill (Kocher 48). This unseen force causes victory to spring from defeat, although destruction and loss of hope often precede renewal (Miesel 67). Its power is demonstrated by the ability to use both moral characters who through their flaws fall short or err in their duty, and wholly evil characters who have no intention of assisting right.

This same theory plays an integral part in Tolkien's Silmarillion, which has already been pointed out to be a permeating influence on the LOTR. Composition of the divine music ultimately rested with Iluvatar, the One, though other lesser beings, the Ainur, appeared to create individual melodies. But it is eventually revealed that all themes, even the discordant one of Melkor, are woven by Iluvatar into the design of His Song.⁴² Iluvatar says to him, "'And thou, Melkor, wilt discover all the secret thoughts of thy mind, and wilt perceive that they are but a part of the whole and tributary to its glory'" (Silmarillion 17). This same pattern of divine orches-

tration which organizes all themes into a single structure directed toward a positive end runs throughout the LOTR. In Tolkien and the Silmarils, Randel Helms points out that this is another traditional Christian theme borrowed by Tolkien and woven into the fabric of his sub-creation, M.E. (46).

The power of such a being to accommodate and use the free will actions of others is perhaps best seen when an evil character, or traitor to right, "'may betray himself and do good that he does not intend'" (RK 108). Sauron in his complete corruption must stand for the personification of evil, but even he is an instrument used for ultimate good. His physical being has long been completely conquered by his lust for power, so that he is depicted as a dreadful Shadow with a burning Eye (Mack 132). But his eventual downfall results from the inability of the Eye to see any outlook other than its own, or that which it expects to see. "'He cannot fathom goodness or any action which does not stem from evil.⁴³ It is this outlook which provides the only hope of those who wish to destroy the Ring'" (Mack 133). Sauron's Eye continually searches for the Ring-bearer who will come forth to challenge him for power, never conceiving of one whose self-denying desire would lead him to destroy the talisman of power (Ellwood 96). In his deception, Sauron bends all his will toward the heroes on the battle front, seeking to discern which one might be his rival, while all along Frodo secretly

draws nearer to his goal. Gandalf says of Sauron, "'Wise fool. For if he had used all his power to guard Mordor, so that none could enter, and bent all his guile to the hunting of the Ring, then indeed hope would have faded: neither the Ring nor the bearer could long have eluded him'" (TT 128). These statements resound with the Biblical principle of pride going before a fall; the resonance adds to the scriptural tone of the overall work (Ellwood 96).⁴⁴ Theoden remarks that "'oft evil will shall evil mar'" (TT 255), and this certainly holds true for Sauron, as well as the many evil creatures who serve him.

In a similar way to that in which Sauron is used, his wicked servants play unintended roles resulting in good. The loose coalition of vile creatures is necessarily unstable, for evil by its definition loves only itself, and its alliances are based on fear, rather than a virtue such as affection (Auden 141). So evil works against itself because its very foundation is corrupt, and the deity moving the story's action will use this to full advantage. "The fruits of evil are strife, fear and despair" which result in the many quarrels, betrayals and misdirected actions from evil creatures (Miesel 63).

The orcs serve as good examples of the way evil actions recoil on the doer, resulting in unintended good (West 83). This is exemplified by the disagreement between those servants of Saruman and of Sauron in the capture of Merry and Pippin. Numerous fights break out between the

armies of Ugluk and Grishnakh. The orders from their separate commanders conflict and cause tension. Lugburz's commander, Grishnakh, has a vague knowledge of the Ring and desires it for himself. Merry and Pippin sense this and capitalize on his treachery to aid in their escape. In the dark, the orc carrying his captives secretly slips out between the horsemen surrounding his army. But when suddenly startled by a rider, Grishnakh draws his sword to kill the hobbits rather than let them be taken. As his knife is poised to slay them "an arrow came whistling out of the gloom: it was aimed with skill, or guided by fate, and it pierced his right hand" (TT 75). The murder is prevented, and a spear ends the orc's dreams of glory. But due to the dark night and due to their elvish cloaks, the young hobbits are overlooked and not massacred with the orc band.

Merry and Pippin manage to crawl away from the scene of fighting and escape into the forest of Fanghorn. Their adventure there is another facet of the unintended good done by evil creatures. Saruman's intent in having them captured was to obtain the Ring and enslave all creatures of M.E. What he intended, however, is quite the opposite of the actual results, for the hobbits become responsible for the end of the wizard's strength and hopes of power. Saruman unwittingly aids the cause of good by snatching the hobbits from the strength of Sauron's troop. Without the wizard's intervention, Merry and Pippin might have been

carried directly to Mordor and all hope ended. But instead, they encounter Treebeard and the other Ents whose unleashed power and determination have never before been seen in that age of time. Gandalf calls the involvement of the Ents and their trees in battle "'a thing beyond the counsel of the wise. Better than my design, and better even than my hope the event has proved'" (TT 189). His words imply a grand scale plan, far beyond the concept of any of those involved in the struggle against Sauron in M.E. He sums up the unwitting help given by the enemy, "'So between them our enemies have contrived only to bring Merry and Pippin with marvelous speed, and in the nick of time, to Fanghorn, where otherwise they would never have come at all!'" (TT 128).

In a similar way, the orc battle in the guard tower of Cirith Ungol unintentionally aids the quest. After Frodo's capture, the natural contempt the different breeds of orcs have for one another is agitated by greed and the disagreement which results over who will get the hobbit's valuable mithril shirt. In the resulting melee, only three orcs are left alive, though wounded. Neither Sam nor Frodo would have been any match for the entire orc patrol, regardless of their enchanted weapons. With divine intervention and the natural way in which evil turns on itself, the job is done for them, and their entrance into Mordor made possible.

Though he is only indirectly a servant of Sauron, the

evil Grima Wormtongue greatly aids those who are working to destroy the Ring, though quite unintentionally.⁴⁵ He and his master Saruman eventually take refuge in the tower of Orthanc to escape the destruction of Isengard by the Ents in their rage. They are trapped there amid the destruction when Gandalf and others come to converse with them. Saruman's attempts to sway the assembled leaders with his cunning fail, and he turns away from them impenitent. But as a parting gesture full of spite, Grima hurls a heavy object out from a high window, hoping to do someone harm. The crystal globe thrown down turns out to be a palantir or seeing stone of ancient Numenor. To this blessing, Gandalf responds, "'Strange are the turns of fortune! Often does hatred hurt itself!'" (TT 243). "Saruman would never have willingly surrendered his prize, nor could any force have won it from the impregnable tower of Orthanc" (Kocher 46). The unseen force orchestrating M.E.'s drama uses Wormtongue's evil deed for good, by bestowing a treasure where it is most needed. Possession of this stone by the forces of good sets off a chain reaction of events which moves the story toward its fated conclusion.

Certainly no discussion of providential use of evil characters would be complete without some reference to Gollum and his place in this cosmic drama. He stands next to Sauron as the character most nearly evil incarnate, though Tolkien makes clear that even after years of the Ring's domination, Gollum still retains that "chink of

light" in his dark soul (Callaway 14). As the story unfolds, it becomes obvious that Gollum's miserable life is being preserved as part of some providential plan fully known only to the planner (Ellwood 101-2). He pursues Frodo with evil intent from very early in the story, ever hoping to retrieve his Precious. But once captured, Gollum does in his way faithfully lead the hobbits through territory they could never have survived alone. The motive for his good, however, is ambiguous and seems most likely to be a divinely prompted "biding of time" until just the right opportunity for recovering the Ring. This seems evident in his plot with Shelob. But even in this scheming partnership, Gollum does good unintentionally by showing the hobbits the only accessible way into the Black Land (West 84). He is ultimately the crucial instrument in the Ring's destruction but quite unwittingly and in no way which seems heroic.⁴⁶ His desire is evil, selfish and free, and the good which he does do is providentially rendered from his actions. His fate as he perishes with the Ring is a clear illustration of the Biblical principle of reaping what one has sown.⁴⁷ The same divine justice is applied to Frodo whose many deeds of mercy and sacrifice earn him physical salvation, in spite of his one grand error.

At times in the story, even those moral characters who intend to do right err or do foolish things which would appear to hurt their cause rather than aid it. The divine

will at work in M.E. takes even these human, or hobbit, shortcomings and turns them about to accomplish good which seems impossible. The very presence of Merry and Pippin in the nine companions appears to be an act of folly. Elrond says of Pippin in particular, "'My heart is against his going'" (FR 362). Gandalf encourages Elrond to see that friendship on this quest may account for more than wisdom and strength. In the end, Pippin and Merry are allowed to go, and the important roles they play justify the trust placed in them,

But their inclusion in the company is not without its consequences. It is Pippin who foolishly drops a small stone into the depths of Moria and is perhaps responsible for arousing their enemies. This folly may then be indirectly the cause for Gandalf's fall. But from the terrible defeat in the loss of the wizard, a providential power works and restores him, enhanced and an even more valiant opponent of evil.

It is also Pippin who is drawn to the mysterious palantir and foolishly sneaks a look into its depths. He has a brief but horrifying glimpse of "the Eye" which questions him. Gandalf fears that all has been revealed to Sauron, but Pippin tells him what bit of information he revealed. To Pippin the wizard says,

A fool, but an honest fool, you remain, Peregrin Took. Wiser ones might have done worse in such a pass. But mark this! You have been saved, and

all your friends too, mainly by good fortune, as it is called....If he had questioned you, then and there, almost certainly you would have told all that you know, to the ruin of us all. But he was too eager. (TT 254)

Gandalf acknowledges that providential power has saved the recalcitrant young hobbit from bungling the quest. To do so, this force has used the enemy's own faults against him: his over eagerness to seize the prize and his sadistic urge to torture Merry and read his mind in Mordor (Kocher 46).

Gandalf consoles Pippin saying, "'Be comforted! Things have not turned out as evilly as they might'" (TT 254). He even points out the positive results of the hobbit's error. "'But at this time we have been strangely fortunate. Maybe, I have been saved by this hobbit from a grave blunder. I had considered whether or not to probe this stone myself to find it uses'" (TT 255) Had he done so, Gandalf would have been revealed to Sauron. He also goes on to say that Sauron will be busy for some time with his expectation for the hobbit, and this preoccupation may afford valuable time to the cause of right.

Merry is not nearly so impetuous as his kinsman Pippin, but even he makes what seem to be errors in judgment whose consequences work out for good. Moved by affection for the kindly King Theoden of Rohan, Merry offers him his service and is made a swordthain. But Merry's pony and his small stature make it impractical for

him to go to war, and he is told to remain in Edoras. Distressed by this, he longs to ride with the warriors. He gets the opportunity with an offer from the warrior Dernhelm, who conceals him under his cloak. In reality, the soldier is the lady Eowyn who is also defying orders by riding with the company to Minas Tirith. She too errs in judgment not only in her defiant ride, but more so in her despair and longing for death as an escape. But immeasurable good which stems the tide of the war and fulfills important prophecy comes from the disobedience of these two.

As the riders of Rohan enter the battle on the Pelennor Fields, they sing as they slay, in a manner both fair and terrible. The warrior Dernhelm/Eowyn stays close to King Theoden in battle and is near when he is attacked by the Lord of the Nazgul. His other men are slain or carried away by the madness of their steeds, yet Dernhelm stands firm while weeping for the fallen king. Merry lies on the field where he was thrown by the horse, almost blind and sick with horror but unnoticed. In the overconfidence of supreme evil, the mighty wraith says to Eowyn, "'Thou fool. No living man may hinder me!'" (RK 141). The prophecy concerning this has bred in him a rash fearlessness, which will be his undoing. She laughs and reveals to him, "'But no living man am I! You look upon a woman. Eowyn I am, Eomund's daughter....Begone if you be not deathless! For living or dark undead, I will smite

you, if you touch him'" (RK 141). Eowyn's desperation and hopelessness fill Merry's heart with pity and awaken his courage to action. Though she kills his foul steed, the Dark Lord bears down on Eowyn crushing her arm and shield with his mace. But he is struck from behind by Merry's small sword and then quickly finished off by a thrust between the crown and mantle from Eowyn. These two creatures in their disobedience and seeming folly have accomplished what even the mightiest living man could not. The divine being orchestrating the story has transformed what appeared to be bitter defeat into a monumental victory for the cause of good. The role that the young hobbits play in the drama is summed up in Gandalf's statement, "'...their coming was like the falling of small stones that starts an avalanche in the mountains'" (RK 143).

In a curious way, even Aragorn makes what appears to human consideration an error in judgment. But his actions are not so much faults as pursuit of a path for which only he can see the need. His choices are confirmed by the guiding deity who uses the very forces of darkness and evil against itself to aid the cause of right. After the battle of Helm's Deep, Aragorn is joined by his northern kinsman and the sons of Elrond. They bring to him a message from their father saying, "'The days are short. If thou art in haste, remember the Paths of the Dead'" (RK 56). This refers to an ancient prophecy concerning a time of darkness when help will come to the king from the disloyal dead who

have no rest until their oath is fulfilled. Though it is a dire need which urges Aragorn to take this route, he calls it "a path appointed" (RK 66).

But those around him quake at the thought and consider his to be a fool's errand. Eowyn calls Aragorn's plan madness and a deadly road and begs him to ride with Eomer "'for then our hearts will be gladdened, and our hope be the brighter'" (RK 66). Theoden cannot comprehend what appears to be such folly and says, "'This parting grieves me, and my strength is lessened by it'" (RK 61). The Rohirrim people who have taken refuge in Dunharrow considered Aragorn and his companions "reckless strangers" and "elvish wights" that were returning to their darkness in evil times (RK 69). Even among his faithful companions, "there was not a heart among them that did not quail" (RK 70). Even Gimli the dwarf, accustomed to underground darkness, is beset with a steady fear which grows on him as he realizes that retreat has been cut off by the throngs of spirits which follow them in the darkness. "Dread was so heavy on him that he could hardly walk" (RK 71). Only Aragorn and the elves are undaunted by the following shadows, for they best understand the need.

At the Stone of Erech, Aragorn promises the specters that when the Pelargir upon Anduin is cleared of Sauron's servants, their oath will be fulfilled and peace granted to them. With the Shadow Host, Aragorn defeats the entire wing of Sauron's army meant to come up the river against

Minas Tirith from the west. With his own tools of fear and evil, Sauron's hosts are defeated and his strength and military strategy greatly diminished. Gimli says of the battle, "'Strange and wonderful I thought it that the designs of Mordor should be overthrown by such wraiths of fear and darkness. With its own weapons was it worsted!'" (RK 186). The fleet of ships which ultimately arrives at the city is initially taken for the Corsairs of Umbar and called the "'last stroke of doom!'" (RK 149). But despair is turned to wonder as the almost forgotten standard of Gondor is unfurled on the foremost ship. The hosts of Mordor are bewildered over this turn of events and with dread recognize the tide of fate turning against them. From a situation which could only be viewed by humans as absurd and foolish, a providential power has again brought forth victory. Even the age old wrongs of the oathbreakers have been woven into the pattern of the narrative and converted into good which they certainly never intended.

Even a moral individual as wise as Gandalf makes what other characters in the story see as a foolish mistake or error in judgment. The wizard enters the Mines of Moria as a last desperate effort to bring the Company toward its goal in destroying the Ring. He does so in spite of grim warnings from Aragorn which vaguely refer to a prophecy of Gandalf's death. When the wise ruler Celeborn hears of the wizard's death, even he sees the actions as erroneous and says, "'if it were possible, one would say that at the last

Gandalf fell from wisdom into folly, going needlessly into the net of Moria'" (FR 461). But he is reminded by the wisdom of Galadriel that "'he would be rash in deed that said such a thing...Needless were none of the deeds of Gandalf in life'" (FR 461). Her words acknowledge a higher need for his sacrifice though "his full purpose" is unknown to her. By his willingness to surrender his life for the good of all, Gandalf enables the providential power to resurrect him triumphantly from what initially appears to be unparalleled defeat (Crabbe 83).

The shortcomings of Sam Gamgee, companion to Frodo, are perhaps the most poignant of the many erroneous actions of characters found in the LOTR. His first blunder finds him eavesdropping outside the window as Gandalf relays the fearful story of the Ring to Frodo in the peaceful Shire. Sam's curiosity and fascination for elves and tales of adventure land him right into one of the greatest magnitude. In a tone of mock severity, Gandalf says to him, "'I have thought of something better than that. Something to shut your mouth, and punish you properly for listening. You shall go away with Mr. Frodo!'" (FR 98). In this small circumstance good comes from an error; its proportions become evident only in the full scope of the quest and Sam's vital part in it.

Later in Rivendell, his attachment to Frodo again causes Sam to transgress, and again his error results in a victory rather than a true punishment. All the great and

important characters are summoned to the council meeting of Elrond. The tale of the Ring is told and all that which pertains to it revealed. The vital question becomes who will execute this desperate plan agreed upon by all? With divinely inspired courage, Frodo volunteers to play his appointed role. Sam has finally become cognizant of the gravity and danger involved in the adventure and in his anxiety blurts out, "'But you won't send him off alone surely, Master?'" (FR 355). Elrond turns to Sam and with a smile replies, "'No indeed!... You at least shall go with him. It is hardly possible to separate you from him, even when he is summoned to a secret council and you are not'" (FR 355). The other young hobbits are indignant when they hear. Pippin says, "'It's most unfair...Instead of throwing him out, and clapping him in chains, Elrond goes and rewards him for his cheek!'" (FR 356). But in reality, Elrond is the instrument through which a divine being is acting and orchestrating the outcome of deeds both heroic, such as Frodo's acceptance, and foolish, such as Sam's meddling. Only such a being with great power can take errors both great and small and transform them into supreme success.

As Frodo and Sam journey through Ithilien, guided by Gollum, Sam's behavior gets them into seeming trouble more than once. This land has not yet been completely ruined by the Dark Lord. The vegetation is still fair and inhabited by wildlife. Gollum graciously brings back some young

rabbits for the two hungry hobbits, and Sam decides to cook them. Despite Gollum's vehement protestations, Sam builds a fire. The cooking proceeds without incident, but he forgets to put out the fire when he is through. A tiny spiral of smoke rises and attracts the attention of men in the service of Gondor. Sam's folly and forgetfulness work for good by bringing him and Frodo into the company of Faramir and his men. Without their aid, it seems unlikely that the hobbits would have made it through Ithilien or lasted to the end of their quest.

For their safety, Faramir takes them to a secret stronghold, and here Sam makes another great error in judgment. Faramir is anxious for news of his brother Boromir and presses Frodo relentlessly for more information. His questions frequently hit very near the mark about the true purpose of their journey, and the agitation causes Sam to butt in and defend his master. In spite of his good intentions in shielding Frodo, Sam lets it slip about the enemy's Ring. Both hobbits are aghast at the error and fearful of its consequences. But as Sam reminds Faramir, "'handsome is as handsome does,'" and the man reassures them that their secret is safe. He tries to console them, saying to Sam, "'If you seem to have stumbled, think it was fated to be so...It may even help the master that you love. It shall turn to his good, if it is in my power'" (TT 367).

Faramir is faced with many decisions, and Sam's

blunder aids him in determining what he must do. His duty would demand that he take them back to Minas Tirith, and Denethor later insinuates to him that paternal love would demand that he bring back to his father such a coveted prize. But Faramir's is a noble spirit; Sam calls his quality "the very highest," and he serves a good higher than his own or even that of his city. He aids the hobbits with food, advice and the return of their recreant guide, unharmed. Even these actions are considered to be faulty judgment by others, such as Denethor and even Gandalf, who quails when he hears that the hobbits are headed for Cirith Ungol. But a providential power uses all these seeming mistakes and weaves them into the fabric of the narrative, orchestrating a positive outcome from even the greatest of errors.

In one of the most moving passages of the LOTR story, Sam unwittingly commits a blunder of huge proportion. He both dislikes and distrusts the vile creature Gollum and makes no effort to conceal his loathing. As a result, there is an antagonism between the two which is not present in Gollum's relationship with Frodo. W. H. Auden sees Gollum's feelings for his master as those of genuine gratitude and affection (140). Frodo is one of the few creatures who has shown him mercy, kindness and trust for long ages. Gollum's tender feelings may in part explain his willingness to help the hobbits, but greater even than his new found virtues is his lust for the Ring, a result of

long years of its domination. Sam has heard Gollum in dialogue with the warring factions of himself and feels confident that Stinker will dominate Slinker eventually.

Just prior to his betrayal of the hobbits, Gollum appears to be on the verge of penitence, or is perhaps just feeling remorse for the upcoming foul play. When he comes back from a secret meeting with Shelob, he finds Sam and Frodo nestled together and asleep. When Gollum looks on Frodo,

A strange expression passed over his lean hungry face. A 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. (TT 411)

But Sam is aroused, and the first thing he sees is Gollum "'pawing at master,'" and he roughly accuses the wretch of sneaking off and calls him "'you old villain'" (TT 411). The tenderness in Gollum dies, and the sinister green light returns to his eyes. During the crucial moment at which Gollum stood at his fork in the road, Sam appears to err with his misunderstanding and indictments. Professor Tolkien has commented that this part of the LOTR story grieved him the most, since Gollum comes so near to

repentance but is interrupted by Sam's suspicious alarm (Glover 51). Though Sam's deed is an unknowing act of folly, it is incorporated into the overruling design of the narrative and plays a vital part in the whole. It is imperative that the hobbits penetrate into Mordor in their quest to destroy the Ring, and their betrayal to Shelob is an essential part of the chain of events. Frodo's capture and seeming death precipitate the fighting and destruction of the orc troops and make possible their eventual escape and the continuation of their journey. When viewed in retrospect, the Biblical theme of "all things work together for good to them that love God" is clearly seen.⁴⁸

Sam's final error, which also plays an important part in the narrative, is his belief that Frodo is truly dead. So he departs, leaving his body to be discovered by the enemy. A debate rages within the faithful hobbit, who is torn between his love for his master and his sense of duty to all M.E. by fulfillment of the quest. Though he decides to go and relieves Frodo of the Ring, some part of Sam is still unconvinced. "'I've made up my mind' he kept saying to himself. But he had not'" (TT 435). Sam's heart seems to be divided between his natural impulse to stay and perish with his master and his divine prompting from within to go on. When he learns the news that Frodo lives, Sam berates himself for his foolishness, "'I got it all wrong!' he cried. 'I knew I would'" (TT 445). But in the long range plan of the narrative's governing deity, he has

gotten it exactly right. Though these events may entail pain and suffering for them, they are essential to the working out of the divine scheme able to bring infinite good out of such woe. Without his conscious intent Sam has played his role just as he should, including his errors in judgment.

In ways similar to Sam's shortcomings, Frodo does some foolish things which unwittingly work toward the good of the quest. His first substantial blunder occurs early on his journey and, except for the intervention of an unseen power who uses it positively, might have ended the quest almost before it had begun. When the hobbits finally make it to Bree, they seek accommodations at the Prancing Pony Inn. Their intent is to keep a low profile, not drawing any unnecessary attention to themselves, or of course their mission. But the festive atmosphere in the common-room and the effect perhaps of Mr. Butterbur's most excellent beer cause the hobbits to join in the merriment. Pippin in particular is caught up in the social atmosphere and talks entirely too much. When he launches into a story about Bilbo's farewell birthday party, Frodo decides he must do something. Even the strange looking Ranger ominously warns him, "'Drink, fire, and chance meeting are pleasant enough, but, well--this isn't the Shire'" (FR 215).

Frodo jumps up on a table to divert attention and sings a silly song of Bilbo's. From the moment he becomes the focus of attention, he "unaccountably" felt a strong

desire to put on the Ring and disappear from the embarrassing situation.⁴⁹ But the warm reception to his song and another drink or two make Frodo quite pleased with himself, and his resulting boldness gets him into trouble. By request, he repeats the song and adds some prancing and dance to enliven it. But as he jumps a little too vigorously, he falls and disappears! He had been fingering the Ring in his pocket, and "somehow it had slipped on when he stuck out his hand with a jerk to save his fall" (FR 219). But Frodo seemed to have help in his blunder, "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 was felt in the room" (FR 219).

Frodo's foolishness, however unintended, serves more than one useful purpose. His folly clearly identifies him to Strider who has been awaiting them. Immediately after the "most unfortunate accident," Strider even quietly calls Frodo, "Mr. Baggins." The incident also jogs the memory of Mr. Butterbur who recalls an important task he has left undone. The undelivered letter proves to be invaluable. It holds proof of Aragorn's identity and contains instructions about what road to take. Frodo's indiscretion also causes the hobbits to be far more cautious than they might otherwise have been. They trust too much to the safety of the indoors, and even that will not be enough to stand between them and the dark riders. The extra precautions taken save their lives from the late night attack on their

original quarters.

As the hobbits journey through Ariador with Aragorn as their guide, Frodo faces a grave peril in which his decision appears to be a foolish one indeed. In a dell just below Weathertop, the Company is attacked by a part of the wraith forces. They are warned just prior to the strike by the intuitive fear which awakens in them in the presence of these undead beings. The combined strength of their wills is too much for Frodo, and he succumbs to the temptation to put on the Ring. His folly gives them the advantage over him. The Lord of the Nazgul attacks Frodo, giving him a seemingly minor wound in the shoulder. But the smallest of wounds from such a foe is deadly. His injury is not any worse because a power outside himself prompts Frodo to evoke the aid of the elvish patroness Elbereth.

Though Frodo's small wound heals over soon, a deadly poison is at work in his body. His weakness appears like it may well be his undoing. But the deity at work in the LOTR is able to turn this catastrophe to the advantage of good. In their evil complacency, the wraiths retreat, thinking their task nearly accomplished. But Strider consoles Sam saying, "'Don't despair!...Your Frodo is made of sterner stuff than I had guessed, though Gandalf hinted that it might prove so'" (FR 265). The Company is not molested again, though Strider anticipates more trouble before they reach safety. Against such deadly forces, they

could never have lasted for long in the wilderness, and Frodo's mistake works for good in that it calls off the concerted power of the dark riders until the very last leg of their journey to Rivendell.

In a more abstract way, Frodo's mistake works for his own good by teaching him a valuable lesson about suffering and the fatal use of the Ring. Until this point, he has not clearly understood the gravity of his situation or truly comprehended the danger of this "trifle" of Sauron. He had seen his Uncle Bilbo use it to disappear, thereby avoiding uncomfortable situations, and even Frodo's fiasco at Bree is more of an embarrassment than an immediate danger. But the suffering and the terror of pursuit he experiences here are just a foretaste of those to come. This ordeal serves as a sort of forewarning to him of the trials ahead, and this knowledge is essential to his ability to make a free choice to bear the Ring into Mordor. Richard Purtill says that Frodo is not Christ, and the Ring is not the cross, but Frodo's selfless sacrifice in order that others might benefit echoes this Biblical theme of salvation made possible through suffering (105). Only because his mistake has given him a taste of suffering, can Frodo benefit and make a conscious and transcending choice for good. He chooses to destroy a personal treasure and thereby gain an invaluable treasure for all those who will come after him (Hall 7). Frodo best sums up his own role when he says to Sam, "'It must often be so, Sam, when

things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that other may keep them'" (RK 382).

Another act of folly on Frodo's part which works toward his ultimate good occurs while the company is camped at Amon Hen. He has reached a point at which he must make a fateful decision about the future of the Ring. Frodo begs for one more hour in which to think and wanders away into the woods. He is followed, of course, by Boromir who initially pleads with him to bring the Ring to Minas Tirith. Soon his importunities turn to threats, and Boromir assaults Frodo, hoping to wrest the Ring from him. Frodo flees from the outraged man, using the Ring's power of invisibility to escape. His desperate situation forces him to rely on the Ring, but he keeps it on as he stumbles up to the Seat of Seeing on the hill.⁵⁰ This vantage point enables him to see for hundreds of miles around in all directions.

His natural sight is of course enhanced by the Ring's power, and it permits him to see "many visions" of the war preparing all around them. As he gazes at Minas Tirith, hope leaps momentarily in his heart, but it is soon defeated as his eyes are drawn to Barad-dur, the Fortress of Sauron. But he is sensed by the Great Eye, and it searches, striving to pin down Frodo's location. A terrible battle of wills ensues between Sauron and a power for good, with Frodo's mind as the sparring ground.⁵¹ Tormented by this duel, Frodo exerts his last remaining bit

of willpower and takes off the Ring. "A great weariness was on him, but his will was firm and his heart lighter" (FR 519). His folly in wearing the Ring has actually aided him in making a momentous decision. He knows he must leave the company and take the Ring into danger and darkness. Frodo goes "widdershins, against the light for the light's sake" (Flieger 137).⁵² In making his decision, Frodo chooses a future good for others rather than for himself. He has little hope for his own life or anything he holds dear, but his unselfish sacrifice takes him further along a moral path whose ultimate end will be determined by these and other exemplary actions.

Perhaps Frodo's greatest error, and one he commits repeatedly, is the pity he manifests toward the miserable creature Gollum. In a 1956 letter to Michael Straight, editor of the New Republic, Tolkien himself says of Frodo, "At any point any prudent person would have told Frodo that Gollum would certainly betray him, and would rob him in the end. To 'pity' him, to forbear to kill him, was a piece of folly..." (Letters 234). But this merciful attitude, exercised in spite of all the facts about the many crimes of Gollum, works toward the ultimate redemption of Frodo, both physically and spiritually. His foolishness in allowing such a villain to live is inverted for good, for himself and all of M.E. Tolkien calls Gollum's treachery "grace" and says, "the final evil deed was the most beneficial thing any one could have done for Frodo! By a situation

created by his 'forgiveness,' he was saved himself, and relieved of his burden" (Letters 234). With the echo of another Biblical theme, it appears that Frodo has in essence worked out his own salvation with much fear and trembling before the end.⁵³ His dedication, life and losses are among the most compelling evidences for an unseen providential power at work and able to orchestrate a positive future for the world of M.E., composed in part by creatures of evil and folly.

v

CONCLUSION

In the LOTR, Tolkien has created a world much like a composer combines themes to create a symphony and has set it all against the vast backdrop of the Silmarillion (Jones 88). The result is what Lin Carter calls "the most convincingly detailed and overwhelmingly realistic...imaginary world" ever created in fantasy literature (Imaginary Worlds 120). The success of this sub-created world is due to its unique mixture of elements both fascinating and familiar. The author in the story's telling uses a "tone of voice partly scriptural and partly that of a chronicler" to create a rich historical climate that feels "God-willed" (Giddings 9). He peoples that world with amicable hobbits, so much like ourselves, as well as creatures of enchantment, like wizards and elves, who are reminiscent of wonderworking figures of human legend (Purtill 128).

And over all this wondrous creation reigns, from a distance, an unnamed power for good which orders the universe according to a grand plan known only to itself. This powerful being orchestrates the story's action, but indirectly, working through the characters to move them toward a goal. This deity figure is not embodied in the story, nevertheless its presence is demonstrated continually. Tolkien described it and its intervention as "the One retains all ultimate authority, and (or so it seems as viewed in serial time) reserves the right to

intrude the finger of God into the story" (Letters 235). With this almost imperceptible touch, it is able to influence characters and events both internally and externally. It maintains a delicate balance between free-will and determinism, creating an environment with which the characters interact, in part determining its shape and in turn being influenced by it (Hayes, Renshaw 65). All beings are faced with a choice between good and evil, and this supreme being employs various means to aid those who freely will to do good.

Although most of these characters do not know this God-like being, they do appear to believe in a sort of cosmic ordering of life which works for good and against evil. The key characters of the story recognize a responsibility to something, or someone, outside themselves and demonstrate many qualities reminiscent of Biblical Christian virtues. In fact, an undertoned gospel appears to pervade the LOTR and is supported by the ways in which this unseen deity interacts with its creation (Ellwood 90). Much like the God of the Old Testament, Tolkien's deity uses "divers manners" to communicate its plan.

The serial of seeming chance events which occurs, coordinating meetings and giving aid to characters in times of need, demonstrates the power of a deity working from outside a character. Though it may appear at times to be coincidental, this providential ordering sustains the feeble hope for a positive outcome to the quest. Urang

points out that its regular intervention to help and instruct nourishes the intuitive convictions of the characters that some powerful force is working in their favor (159).

In a world where even the inanimate things are charged with life, instinctual or intuitive reactions are also crucially important (Scheps 48). The unnamed deity of the LOTR uses these internalized abilities to teach, warn and console various characters as they seek to play their part in the cosmic drama unfolding. The very seat of these responses appears to be "the heart," for from it the characters speak and reveal the insight given them, often prophetically. Those who are morally upright generally heed their internal guidance system and profit by continuing on the path "appointed," toward good. Those who refuse to be an instrument of this powerful deity, resist their warnings and fall into a snare of evil and suffer the consequences.

But even though all the creatures of M.E. do not choose to pursue right, the plan of this unnamed deity is not thwarted. Like the pattern established by Eru of the Silmarillion, this deity composes the LOTR story as it goes along, encompassing both good and evil in the scheme. Urang notes that after each character's free-will action, the deity takes its bearings afresh and makes its decision, sometimes switching course in order to make the ultimate best of everything (Shadows 114). In this way, all error,

whether conscious evil or unwitting folly, becomes part of a long range plan for the right, turning evil against itself to do good unintended.

The combined weight of the deity's means of intervention and the numerous examples of each method, force upon the reader an inescapable conclusion: that there is an unseen force working stealthily throughout the novel to achieve an end, impossible except for its divine assistance. Without such a conclusion, the LOTR appears to be reduced to a novel of flat proportions with a rather predictable plot of good verses evil, concluding in a very contrived victory of right over wrong. This could perhaps account for the lack of understanding and appreciation on the part of critics who at best perceive only a very vague providence acting at random in an otherwise bleak Norse saga-like tale. Such a concept cannot begin to accommodate the depth of a tale where winning is also losing and its "eucatastrophe" and success is a testimony of the extent to which the Creator is mirrored in the art of Tolkien, its sub-creator (Hartt 21-22).

NOTES

¹ The Lord of the Rings will be abbreviated to LOTR throughout.

² Tolkien makes it clear in a 1954 letter to the Houghton Mifflin Co. that the LOTR is not a trilogy and was simply published in that format due to cost (Letters 221). But the term trilogy is still useful in describing the work and will be used sparingly throughout. Because the three volumes are actually one work, references will be cited throughout.

³ Tolkien makes an interesting comment on making too much connection between personal facts about an author and his primary works in Letters (288).

⁴ Tolkien also said that "every part had been written many times," and that great attention was given to "the placing, size, style and contribution to the whole of all the features, incidents and chapters..." (Letters 160).

⁵ This name Tolkien gives to his sub-created world will be shortened to the generally accepted M.E. throughout the text.

⁶ Several terms may be used interchangeably throughout to denote an all-powerful deity figure. Different critics also coin their own terms for this being or force.

⁷ Sandra Miesel points out that the Biblical feel reproduced in the LOTR is that of the Old Testament period. She notes parallels between elements such as the vague way in which life after death is handled (49).

⁸ Hebrews 1:1 tells of how God used different methods in different eras to reveal his will to men.

⁹ Tolkien's world should not be confused with the actual history of Earth. It is a purely sub-created world, but one in which Old Testament overtones (Miesel 49), an elegiac feeling (Shadows 158), and the starkness of the Northern sagas (Moorman 62) combine to form a setting quite removed from the reader and yet familiar.

¹⁰ God's providential ordering of events can be clearly seen in the life of Joseph. In Genesis 45:7 he says to his brothers "God sent me before you to preserve you," and in verse 8, "so it was not you that sent me hither, but God..."

¹¹ The Bible abounds with instances where God used dreams to reveal his will: Gen. 20:3, Gen. 28:11-16, Gen. 40, Gen. 41:1-32, I Sam. 28:6, Jer. 23:25-28 and Dan. 4.

¹² Psalms 25:9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

¹³ This Biblical principle is revealed in Rom. 8:28 and Gen. 50:20.

¹⁴ The Fellowship of the Ring will be hereafter cited as FR, with similar abbreviations for the other volumes of the trilogy. The Two Towers will be cited as TT, and The Return of the King as RK. All quotations are taken from Ballantine paperback edition of 1965, fifty-sixth printing, March 1976.

¹⁵ It might be wise to remind the reader that verbs in

the passive voice always indicate that the subject of the sentence is being acted upon by someone or thing generally outside the statement.

¹⁶ In numerous places, feelings provoked by evil are clearly distinguished as the work of Sauron or one of his servants. David Callaway sees Gandalf in these statements as making reference to Eru, thereby showing his knowledge and awareness of him. Callaway calls the wizard a "missionary of the creator" and Eru the "providential choreographer" (15).

¹⁷ William Dowie sees the religious theme of vocation in Frodo's being chosen or called to a special task. Surrender to such a summons is the heart of the Christian life (275).

¹⁸ With this turn of events, Tolkien is perhaps drawing on the Biblical principle of I Cor. 1:27 "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

¹⁹ The thought found in I Cor. 1 seems to be continued with verses 28-29 and applied to Gollum, "And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."

²⁰ Clyde S. Kilby sees the eagle's rescue as rich in Biblical symbolism as found in Exod. 19:4 "Have you seen

what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself? ("Christian Elements" 140).

²¹ Dan. 2:21-22 "...He giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." Ruth S. Noel acknowledges the similarity between Bible examples and the dreams which occur in the LOTR (19).

²² Noel is also one of the few to recognize "the heart" as the source of prompting and motivation for Gandalf and others (18-19). With his many references to this seat of emotion, Tolkien might have had in mind passages such as Prov. 3:5 "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

²³ See Luke 12:42, I Cor. 4:1-2 and I Pet. 4:10.

²⁴ Kenneth McLeish sees Gandalf as symbolic of the Prophetic aspect sent as a guide to Sauron's enemies (56).

²⁵ See II Cor. 5:7.

²⁶ Tolkien may have been recalling I Cor. 1:18-21 as he wrote, for its principle "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" echos from this debate.

²⁷ In Shadows of Heaven, Gunnar Urang notes that power has been granted to the characters for the purpose of serving the unseen power for good. Their responsibility is to resist evil and preserve the good already bestowed (159).

²⁸ Gracia Fay Ellwood supports the observation that I Cor. 1:27-28 echos in these statements.

²⁹ In their book J. R. R. Tolkien, the Rogers point out that beings as ancient as Galadriel (and Gandalf) have a limited knowledge of the remote Creator. Creatures younger than the Valar and Maiar have had no direct dealings with Him, and those newly come into the third age, such as the hobbits, seem to have no awareness of him at all (98).

³⁰ The same application is made to Theoden who has "sinned" by heeding the evil counsel from Wormtongue.

³¹ H. C. Mack feels that those who use "seeing" for self-honor or material success are myopic or with religious implication, "see through a glass darkly" (I Cor. 13:12). "The person who can see most clearly the possibilities for winning the war is the one who will finally conquer" (134).

³² To Sandra Miesel, Denethor's strength is his undoing (61). But this seems more likely to be the hamartia of Boromir who finds it hard to believe Frodo's assurance that no trust should be placed in the strength and truth of men (Montgomery 132).

³³ Noel points out that even within this prophecy there is room for free will, for two choices and their consequences are given to Arvedui and the Dunedain (20). See Appendix A (RK 410). Aragorn as "hope" or Estel was the result of Arvedui's choice.

³⁴ Karl Schorr calls these dreams "subconscious visions" (21).

³⁵ Karl Schorr feels that all dreams in the epic have

significance and each has one of three general forms: it deals with past events even those as yet unknown, mirrors events in the present even far away, and reveals mysterious signs of the future (21).

³⁶ As his source, Purtilt refers to "The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle" which was a cooperative effort of Tolkien and Donald Swann and printed by Ballantine.

³⁷ This idea of the players choosing their own roles in the drama is more fully developed in Nick Otty's article. He describes the narrative using the metaphor of Russian dolls, calling the Narrator/Iluvatar the biggest doll of all.

³⁸ In his essay "Mythic and Christian Elements in Tolkien," Clyde S. Kilby notes the paradisaical elements in the light and colors of Lothlorien. The perfect comforting tool for the Ring-bearer going into darkness is the timeless sacred light of Earendil's star contained in the phial (127-28).

³⁹ In England and Always, Jared Lobdell points out that prayer in M.E. is only to intermediaries, since the "God" working within the narrative is as yet unknown. Though Elbereth appears to give the aid in situations where she is invoked, a force other than the benefactress is at work intuitively guiding their speech in calling to her (63).

⁴⁰ A God-like being who steps in to right a situation by applying grace to make up for human/hobbit deficiencies

is a powerful Christian theme which echos from passages like II Cor 12:9 "And he said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

See also Titus 3:5.

⁴¹ In his speculative article "Silent Commands...", Robert A. Hall proposes that Frodo is actually responsible for Gollum's fall due to silent commands he gives the wretch, based on his earlier prophetic warning. While an interesting proposition, Hall's argument is ultimately based on negative evidence and insupportable. His idea is not necessarily exclusive of the concept of an unseen force ruling over all the actions and ultimately responsible for everything within the drama.

⁴² Harvey points out that Aule also errs in departing from the theme of Iluvatar by creating the dwarves, but his stray melody is the result of a desire to offer a gift to the Creator. His work is also incorporated into the compositions of the Great Music by the One (33). The characters of Aule and Melkor are primary examples of the two types of errors accommodated by Iluvatar's composition, unwitting and willful.

⁴³ See John 1:5.

⁴⁴ See Prov. 16:18.

⁴⁵ Both he and Saruman have unwittingly become the servants of Sauron, who controls the palantir and allows them to see only what he wills; he deals in the same way with Denethor.

⁴⁶ Callaway constructs a fairly convincing case for Gollum as a heroic figure. But his ideas directly conflict with Tolkien's statement that "Gollum was pitiable, but he ended in persistent wickedness and the fact that this worked good was no credit to him" (Letters 234).

⁴⁷ See Gal. 6:7.

⁴⁸ See Rom. 8:28.

⁴⁹ This is one of those passages where it is clear that a sinister force is at work, prompting a character to action.

⁵⁰ David Harvey makes the distinction between holding the Ring and remaining untainted and choosing to use it as a moral choice for evil (67). But in this circumstance, Frodo uses the Ring for the simple purpose of escape and not for the power and domination of it. Only at Mt. Doom does his choice appear to be a morally tainted one.

⁵¹ Verlyn Flieger sees the will battling to influence Frodo as not just within him but as part of him, the light and dark aspects of his own nature (139).

⁵² Flieger contrasts the choice of Frodo with Gollum's who turns from the light because he wants to. Even natural light of sun and moon are hateful to him (137).

⁵³ See Phil. 2:12.

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