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Fantasy and Apologetics

Richard L. Sturch

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'Stone walls do not a prison make
Half as secure as rigmarole.'
'What we need... is not so much a body
of belief as a body of people familiarised
with certain ideas.'

(C. S. Lewis)

If one were suddenly called upon to write a work of science fiction or fantasy which was at the same time to be a work of Christian apologetics, how would one set about it? The instinctive answer of those unversed in either kind of writing would probably be something like this: 'Let's put the hero in a time-machine or a spaceship and send him to a wise planet or age where everybody knows that Christianity is true.' And such writings have been produced. I have seen one book published by an American evangelistic organization which tried this on quite a large scale; not only did the hero find wise Martian Christians, but he was enabled by them to see the Devil on Mercury listening to reports from his subordinates, and, in other solar systems, a planet about to undergo Judgement Day, another which had reached perfection, and a third wholly beyond redemption, where even in this life the inhabitants experienced the torments of hell. The book was crude, and I should be surprised if it proved very effective.

But much more effective 'apologetic fantasies' have been written. The best known writer of such is of course C. S. Lewis, a major apologist in the non-fiction world as well. But the Christian drive behind his friend Charles Williams and his mentor (by the printed word) George MacDonald was no less strong, and has affected many of their readers, even where they were not intending apologetics; and I have known of others who were converted in part by the reading of another of Lewis's friends, J. R. R. Tolkien. It is the way in which the writings of these four work that I should like to look at in the present article. One thing is clear: none of them set about their task in the crude and unsophisticated way suggested in the last paragraph.

Now there is one book among those we are considering which, at first glance, does seem to belong to this class—Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*.¹ (Its sequels are rather a different matter.) But it clearly does not fall into the crudity of our first example and it is better apologetics. It is, I think, worth looking more closely at the reasons for this. Obviously the

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fact that it is indeed neither crude nor ill-written is one reason; but there is more to it than that.

We may begin by noticing two features of the story. Firstly, 'Ransom' is already a Christian before it begins; there is no question of his being converted by his experiences (as there is with Mark and Jane Studdock in *That Hideous Strength*).² Consequently he does not 'discover' Christianity to be true. Nor, which is more important, does the reader; the notion of

¹ (London 1938).

² (London 1945).

its truth is already there. And this connects with the second feature: the fact that the description Lewis gives of Mars and its inhabitants (material and immaterial) is one that he did not believe to be true. It stands to his religious beliefs as ordinary science fiction does to its authors' scientific beliefs; that is, it is more or less consistent with the general principles of those beliefs, but has introduced into it elements that are purely imaginative.³

These features enable Lewis to use *Out of the Silent Planet* in the service of the Christian faith in three ways. These ways, I should add, can be illustrated from many of the other writings we are considering; the point of beginning with *Out of the Silent Planet* is merely that this particular book *appears* to be trying to do its work in the simple-minded way with which we began, but in reality is not.

The first way we might call that of 're-mythologizing'. Students of theology have long been familiar with the contention that much of the Bible, and traditional theology in general, is expressed in the language of 'myth'⁴ and that since this language is no longer comprehensible to most people, a process of 'demythologizing' is needed in order to get at, and communicate to others, the truths of Christian faith at present obscured by unnecessary mythology. Rudolf Bultmann, the German scholar whose name is particularly associated with this contention, thought that these truths could best be expressed in existentialist terms; but others have suggested that, since existentialist terms are very hard for most people to understand, some process of 're-mythologizing' would be desirable, so that the gospel would be as comprehensible to modern man as, in its first mythological form, it was to men of the first century AD.

Now Lewis certainly had no sympathy with this view (except in the case of a few very crude 'myths' such as that of the 'three-decker universe' of a literally spatial heaven, earth and hell).⁵ He did not believe that 'demythologizing' was intellectually necessary at all, and would probably have regarded the introduction of the word 'myth' as tendentious and misleading. But something fairly similar might be necessary for evangelistic reasons. A modern man may have no good intellectual grounds for rejecting some stories in the gospels (such as those of miracles) which were not equally available to his ancestors. But this does not mean that there are not strong social or psychological causes which may incline him to reject them. And if 're-mythologizing' will help to counteract these causes, then 're-mythologize' we must. 'Supposing', Lewis wrote,⁶ 'that by casting all

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these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency?'

To convince an ordinary twentieth-century man or woman, not already a Christian, that (say) angels are a serious possibility—this would be an extremely difficult task if ordinary means of argument were the only ones available. He might listen to your arguments and acknowledge their logical validity without being in the least bit 'converted' in his or her habits of thought.

³ In fairness, one should say that the American book described above has both these features too; unfortunately, it fails to use them in the way Lewis does.

⁴ This word is here used in something close to its normal sense, and not in any of the special senses in which it is used by theologians. But even here there are complications!

⁵ see e.g. *Screwtop Proposes a Toast* (London 1965) 51ff.; *Christian Reflections* (London 1967) 164ff.

⁶ *Of Other Worlds* (London 1966).

Once the conversation was over, his reaction would probably be something on the lines of 'Oh yes, it was all very plausible—but they don't *really* exist.' But there is no attempt at this sort of persuasion in *Out of the Silent Planet*. The 'eldila' are given a background, not of stained glass, but of science, or rather apparent science; they are physical beings whose bodies are made of light rather than matter. And it is only well after they are introduced that their relationship to Christian angels begins to appear. The result is a 'remythologizing' of angels. The picture the reader is given of them is 'myth' in the sense that there is no reason to believe it true, and good reason to believe it false; but it may help him to realize the genuine possibility that there are beings of kinds other than those with which we are familiar on this planet. (I do not, of course, want to imply that Lewis wrote the book or even wrote it as it is, purely in order to make the idea of angels plausible! That is merely one of the side-effects.)

Much of the same applies in several of the 'Narnia' books (to which, in fact, Lewis was referring in the passage from *Of Other Worlds* just quoted). *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*⁷ remythologizes the Passion and Resurrection; *The Magician's Nephew*⁸ the Creation; and *The Last Battle*⁹ the Day of Judgement. Here, of course, there is no science fiction element, except in the idea of Narnia as a 'parallel universe', or rather one of many such; the machinery is that of magic and fairy-tale, not that of science. But the general scheme is much the same. We are invited to forget the normal presentation of a doctrine which for some reason (over-familiarity, perhaps, or 'stained-glass' and Sunday school associations, or plain non-modernity) we find it hard to take. Instead, we are given something unfamiliar, without associations (except those the author chooses to allow us), and without any pretensions to being either modern or unmodern; another universe altogether. And in this other universe things happen which seem credible enough in their context. We have been brought to swallow these things—and they turn out to be the doctrines of Christ's church militant here on earth. It is still open to us, of course, to close the book and say 'I still do not believe it'; but it is less likely that we shall say 'I *can't* believe it'.

The most sustained piece of 'remythologizing' in Lewis's works, however, is *Perelandra (Voyage to Venus)*.¹⁰ The figures of Adam and Eve appear often in the writers we are looking at: in MacDonald's *Lilith*;¹¹ in Williams's play *Seed of Adam*,¹² his novel *The Place of the Lion*,¹³ and in

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several of the poems;¹⁴ in Lewis's *Preface to 'Paradise Lost'*¹⁵ (naturally enough), in several of his poems,¹⁶ in allusions in at least two of the 'Narnia' books¹⁷ and above all here in *Perelandra*. Many Christians have concentrated (with sorrow) on what man is like; others, on what by God's grace he may become; but here we find retained the old stress on what he

⁷ (London 1950).

⁸ (London 1955).

⁹ (London 1956).

¹⁰ (London 1943, under latter title, London 1953).

¹¹ (London 1895).

¹² (London 1948).

¹³ (London 1931).

¹⁴ 'Lilith' in *Heroes and Kings* (London 1930); *Taliessin through Logres* (London 1938); and cf. *Many Dimensions* (London repr. 1947) 44, and *He Came Down from Heaven* (London repr. 1950) chap. 2.

¹⁵ (London 1942).

¹⁶ e.g. *Poems* (London 1964) 43-7.

¹⁷ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian* (London 1951).

might have been. 'I do not doubt', Lewis wrote elsewhere,¹⁸ 'that if the Paradisal man could now appear among us, we should regard him as an utter savage... Only one or two, and those the holiest among us, would glance a second time at the naked, shaggy-bearded, slow-spoken creature; but they, after a few minutes, would fall at his feet.' This is not meant as fantasy; it is what Lewis thought really was the case; but even thus partially 'demythologized', and removed from the myth of Eden, it is alien to our normal habits of thought.

In *Perelandra*, therefore, we are not given the outward appearance of a 'discovery that Christianity is true'. All that, and the whole story of *Out of the Silent Planet*, is presupposed. Instead, we are given the story of Paradisal woman and man, and their temptation, in a context where 'normal habits of thought' hardly apply. We have virtually no habits of thought about the planet Venus, unless we are astronomers with a particular interest in this field. One day, it may be, the geography and geology of Venus may be familiar to everyone,¹⁹ and *Perelandra* will become ineffective; but in the meanwhile we can approach Venus with open minds. We are not even allowed to ask what sort of evolutionary background the Lady of *Perelandra* came from; we are simply given a picture of her which is quite credible, and the points are driven home, through long chapters of debate, that she is not fallen—that she is indeed in an important sense Ransom's superior—but that she is capable of falling, and that such a fall would indeed be the disaster Christianity has always held our own race's to have been. The reader will not believe the story to be true—it comes in a novel, not in a factual account of interplanetary travel—but he may come to accept it as a possible *sort* of thing to happen. And our own planet's fall may seem a little more plausible. (This, perhaps, is the place to comment on a criticism of Lewis in the Roses' *The Shattered Ring* where it is suggested that he desires 'a return of man to the state of instinctive docility which (Lewis) imagines Eden to be'.²⁰ This, they point out quite rightly, cannot be correct; 'redemption can never be the same thing as unfallen innocence'.²¹ But Lewis would entirely agree. Whatever man's destiny may be, it cannot be that of the Malacandrians, who have remained unfallen and untempted, or of the Perelandrians, who have survived temptation.²² One of the main points of *Perelandra* is surely to indicate a way in which man could have passed beyond 'instinctive docility' *without* falling in the process. The Roses seem to assume without reflection that the fall is necessary; they completely fail to notice the change that comes over the Perelandrian Adam and Eve during the course of the book.)

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The second way of using fantasy for apologetic purposes may be called 'Stretching the Imagination' or 'Introduction to Mystery'. It is less characteristic of Lewis and Tolkien²³ than it is of MacDonald and Williams; but only in the sense that it is effected less by the former pair's writings, not in the sense that they were less aware of its value: for it is closely bound up with what is sometimes dismissively called 'escapism', and this was something both Lewis and Tolkien thought important.

¹⁸ *The Problem of Pain* (London 1940) 67.

¹⁹ It is known to be quite different from Lewis's picture; but that is not really important.

²⁰ L. & S. Rose, *The Shattered Ring* (London 1971) 80.

²¹ *ibid.* 67.

²² Theologians may like to see Lewis's Malacandrians as Irenaean man, good but needing maturity and far from perfect, and his Perelandrians as Augustinian man, superhuman until the Fall (if it comes).

²³ who in any case is not, as a rule, writing as an apologist!

Obviously any good work of fiction is likely to stretch the reader's imagination to a certain extent; this is inevitable if he is going to feel with the characters at all, or enter into their world. Some science fiction will stretch it even further. Not all science fiction, for many stories in that genre depend on some single idea or twist, and subordinate the characters and their world to this; but there are others where the 'idea' is the characters' world, or, much more rarely, someone within it. In such a case the reader has not only to enter, by means of his imagination, into a world that is not the real one, but to stretch that imagination enough for him to enter a world *very unlike* the real one; a world where the United States has been immeasurably improved by being taken over by gangsters, where the duty of firemen is not to prevent fires but to cause them (for the better burning of books), or where walking plants dominate a planet most of whose people have suddenly been struck blind.²⁴

To this, however, some writers can add a new element: they can suggest, not just a new arrangement of quite familiar material, but the addition of new material altogether. This is what Lewis is referring to when he ascribes to 'poetic language' the power to convey 'the quality of experience which we have not had, or perhaps can never have, to use factors within our experience so that they become pointers to something outside our experience'.²⁵ But this applies not only to poetry, or even poetic language (which, Lewis rightly points out, are not the same thing). It applies also to a range of ideas and techniques which, though they may well (as we shall see) involve heightened language, do not depend wholly on this, and may not use it at all. It is likely that a great deal of the effect produced by some writings of MacDonald and Williams, in particular, springs from their ability to evoke in the reader a certain sense of 'the numinous'; and it is interesting to look at them in the light of what is said of 'the expression of the numinous' by Rudolf Otto in his famous book, *The Idea of the Holy*.²⁶

According to Otto, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* is usually expressed at first by use of fearful, even horrible, images for the *tremendum* side and by that of the magical or miraculous for the *mysterium*. From the merely horrible (Otto cites statues of Durga and parts of the theophany of Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*) we can progress to the sublime (as in Isaiah, chapter 6); and the merely miraculous similarly tends to fade out, though Otto is not specific about what replaces it. Other instruments are the *uncomprehended* (as in the Latin Mass) or the visual effect of darkness enhanced by some vestige of light; silence; and, in

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Chinese art especially, the use of emptiness and empty distances. These are, as Otto points, out *negative*: negations that 'do away with every "this" and "here", in order that the "wholly other" may become actual'.

Now it is possible to see a good deal of this in actual instances in the works we are looking at—notably, as I have said, in some of those of MacDonald and Williams. The merely horrible we shall not find; the fearful, however, we may. When Curdie, looking for the old princess's room, finds himself apparently confronted with empty space, we are no doubt being given an image of the demands of faith; but we are also being given an instance of the terrifying, and this in such a way as to suggest overtones of 'the numinous'. For (and here

²⁴ cf. C. M. Kornbluth, *The Syndic* (London 1978); Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (London 1954); John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids* (London 1951).

²⁵ 'The Language of Religion' (*Christian Reflections* 133).

²⁶ E.T. (London 1923) 62-73.

Otto's second element of the magical or miraculous comes in) it is not just *any* abyss that confronts Curdie, but one associated with the mysterious and magical figure of the old princess. Similarly, the great lion that Anthony and Quentin see in *The Place of the Lion* is fearsome enough; and it is in fact one of the 'Angelicals' appearing on earth, so that there is also the element of the 'wholly other'. The effect here is admittedly somewhat weakened by the fact that we do not learn the lion's true nature until much further on in the book; but this is not the case with the other Angelicals described. (And even in the case of the lion we are given a hint of what is to come by the total disappearance of the escaped 'real' lioness.)

In both these instances, of course, their *tremendum* aspect does not consist *entirely* of fearsomeness; in abyss and lion alike there is an element also of grandeur or sublimity—the next stage beyond mere terror. Obviously grandeur is a better evoker of the numinous than terror alone, but it is a lot harder to achieve; and both MacDonald and Williams were better thinkers, and better symbolists, than they were achievers of grandeur. However, they did at times achieve it: and there are other ways of conveying the numinous, as we shall see.

If the miraculous or magical is the way to express the *mysterium* aspect, then obviously *all* the writings we are considering do indeed express it. But by itself, of course, magic will not do for very long (as Otto noted). It is possible to see a whole series of gradations in magic side by side in Tolkien—possible and, I think, instructive. At the simplest level we find Gandalf producing fire or trying to hold doors closed by means of spells, and (in the latter case) the Balrog countering. Here magic is part of everyday life, to its exponents at least; there is nothing numinous or even mysterious about it, it is only what Gandalf's companions expect of him. Much grander is the magic of the Mirror of Galadriel; for this is more unusual, it seems, even in Galadriel's life, and she herself is a remoter and less homely figure than Gandalf is. But even here the Mirror is small and quiet—the *tremendum* element is missing from it (even if not from what is shown in it).

At the next stage a danger confronts Tolkien. It is the danger that the Dark Lord himself may seem numinous, than which little could be more inappropriate. He is even remoter and less homely than Galadriel, and his

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powers are greater; he really is both mysterious and fearsome, and indeed at one time, when he was one of the Maiar of Aulë, he had been sublime as well. Still more does this hold of his former master Morgoth, mightiest among the Ainur, coëval with Manwë, whose dark majesty cowed even the bravest. Accordingly, Tolkien is careful to diminish them as far as he can. Morgoth alone among the Valar knew fear, and proved unvaliant at the last; and his works of evil drew on his native power and weakened him. There is something contemptible about him which partly offsets the air of evil splendour that otherwise surrounds him.

Something of the same applies to Sauron, who by the time of the War of the Ring has become 'black and hideous', unable to assume the appearance of beauty and wisdom that formerly had been his. But there is more. It is implied, for instance, that his magic is in some way inferior to that of Galadriel, who says of her Mirror; 'This is what your folk would call magic, I believe, though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem also to use the same word of the deceits of the Enemy.'²⁷ In some sense, then, what Sauron does is mere

²⁷ *The Lord of the Rings* book 2, chap. 2, 381 (1-vol. edn. London 1969).

'deceit', or at least much of it is. Moreover, though some of it is not—the power of the Ring itself is real enough!—it is *destroyed*. Sauron himself becomes only a spirit of malice gnawing itself in the shadows; his creatures are reduced to mindless panic and despair. Similarly, his chief servant, the Lord of the Nazgûl, has a moment of apparent triumph, one might even say of grandeur, as he rides in through the ruined gates of Minas Tirith; but the moment is snatched from him, and in a short time he has fallen, fighting not with sorcery but with a woman and a hobbit. It is interesting to note that Williams, in *All Hallows' Eve*, was confronted with a rather similar problem, and solved it in much the same way: Simon's power is destroyed, and before it is destroyed has gone the way of all the 'lordly sorcerers', becoming trivial and grotesque, something that could not conceivably inspire us with awe.

The last gradation is represented by Gandalf after his death and return. Very little in the way of actual magic appears in his later career—there is the light that stabs upward from his hand in the fields before Minas Tirith, and almost nothing else. But Gandalf himself has altered in the direction of becoming a kind of embodied *mysterious tremendum et fascinans*. 'He has grown, or something.', says Merry, 'He can be both kinder and more alarming, merrier and more solemn... He has changed, but we have not had a chance to see how much, yet.'²⁸

Magic is present, of course, in Lewis's children's books, and also in *That Hideous Strength*, but not as a means of expressing the numinous. In fairy-tales, I suppose, it is too much of a common-place to carry such weight, and in *That Hideous Strength* the way in which it is introduced—as a practice once fairly legitimate, but now obsolete—makes it thoroughly unnuminous. There are a few 'magical' passages where we might have expected more—such as those where Aslan is at work in the 'Narnia' books—but in fact we do not find it. The experience Lewis

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usually wants to convey is a different one, that of 'Joy' or 'Sweet Desire', which is perhaps allied in the workings of God to the experience of the numinous, but is certainly not the same.

In Williams and MacDonald we do find the miraculous breaking through, or rather present, all the time; and we also find a strong impression of *numen*. Not, however, entirely as a result of the presence of miracle. Otto, it will be remembered, went on to suggest that the 'mysterious' 'finds its most unqualified expression in the spell exercised by the only half-intelligible, or wholly *unintelligible*, language of devotion, and in the unquestionably real enhancement of the awe of the worshipper which this produces'.²⁹ And we can see something like this at work in the writings of Williams and MacDonald, only at a deeper level. It is not that they use unintelligible language; rather that it is, quite simply, hard to understand exactly what is going on. If one reads *Phantastes*, it is clear that there is more to it than an adult fairy-story with moralistic leanings. There is something behind that; the story has (as MacDonald acknowledged) more than one meaning; but it is not direct allegory, and it is hard to see just what the second meaning is. Lewis could only say that 'the whole book had about it a sort of cool, morning innocence, and also, quite unmistakably, a certain quality of Death, *good Death*'.³⁰ *Lilith* has this quality of Death far more intensely, and has much less of the 'cool morning innocence', but the same sense of a very great mystery embodied in the story yet not wholly revealed—though there is enough explicitness to reveal a large part of it. Something of

²⁸ *ibid.* book 4, chap. 11, 613.

²⁹ *op. cit.* 67; cf. Lewis's remarks on 'grandeur' in Milton (*Preface to 'Paradise Lost'*, 40ff.).

³⁰ *George MacDonald, an Anthology* (London 1946) preface 21.

the same effect is to be found in *The Golden Key*,³¹ where symbols that are readily understood and 'translated' are accompanied by others of which this is not true at all: the Old Man of the Sea is Death, but what are his brothers of the Earth and the Fire? I do not mean to imply that mystification is of itself desirable. But if there is a non-rational, or super-rational, element in religion, and if it is possible to awake one's readers to the reality and nature of this element by means that involve mystification, then surely those means are justified.

Similar effects can be found in some of Williams's novels. Not in all; I do not think there are any in *Shadows of Ecstasy* or *Many Dimensions*, and there is not much in *War in Heaven*. But in the other four there certainly are. *Descent into Hell* is the extreme instance; it is very hard indeed to make out what is going on in a good deal of it, and I for one still remain baffled by the pervasive image of the Hill. (It was the first of Williams's novels to be turned down by Gollancz; one wonders if this was the reason?) 'It is the life', comments Mrs. Hadfield, 'of a consciousness below the level of reasoning and thought, a journey through the roots of a forest which are deep under water, like the forest of Broceliande. Above are patterns and definitions and formulas, below are facts, huge, unproportioned, the bottom of the monstrous world.'³² To a lesser extent this is true of the three remaining novels. The Fool in *The Greater Trumps*, the Angelicals in *The Place of the Lion*—these do not belong to any well

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known mythology, and this means that they cannot be filed neatly away in the mind's card-index; they are both powerful and puzzling, as are the rather vaguer images—the City, the rain, the rose of *All Hallows' Eve*.

It seems to me that a number of contemporary science fiction writers are attempting a rather similar effect—notably the American Samuel R. Delany (in *The Einstein Intersection*³³) and the British J. G. Ballard (in a number of stories, such as *The Drowned World*³⁴ and *The Crystal World*³⁵). These books are certainly difficult to understand, and it also seems clear that this is deliberate policy on the part of their authors. *The Einstein Intersection* is a curious mosaic of elements drawn from various sources, including the New Testament and Greek mythology (besides, of course, Mr. Delany's own contributions!). It is a peculiarly *unfinished* book; we are deliberately left at the end without a conclusion on several points. The narrator can, we are told, bring back to life the Jesus-figure, 'Greeneye', and Greeneye could in his turn bring back to life the hero's love, a kind of Eurydice-figure; but whether either of these will in fact be done, this we are *not* told. Delany, one feels, is composing a myth, or rather composing *with* already existing myths, and this without having any certain philosophy of his own that can be detected (unless the lack of such is itself a philosophy); and this deprives the myths of much of their power. We notice with interest the appearance of, say, the Theseus-motif; but our reaction is 'How ingenious!', not 'How moving!'

On Ballard's writings one could make the same comment as Mrs. Hadfield made on *Descent into Hell*; his first novel in this style, *The Drowned World*, was in fact described as an exploration of 'inner space'. In it the Earth is largely tropical swamp, reverting to the Age of Reptiles, which a band of explorers from one of the remaining (and diminishing) dry areas are

³¹ originally part of *Adela Cathcart* (London 1864); often reprinted separately.

³² A. M. Hadfield, *An Introduction to Charles Williams* (London 1959) 135.

³³ (London 1970).

³⁴ (London 1963).

³⁵ (London 1970).

trying to investigate. There are strong Freudian overtones, and a definite approval of the irrational fecundity of the swamps as opposed to the remaining human governments or the 'lone wolf' Steelman, who represent a bleak, sterile and violent rationality. In *The Crystal World* matter begins to duplicate itself, so that everything, in a steadily increasing area, becomes crystalline, radiant, a thing of eternally immobile beauty; and life as we know it must become crystalline itself, and cease into a curious kind of immortality. It cannot be said of these stories that there is no philosophy behind them, but it is, literally, a hopeless one. Man's best policy, in these worlds of Ballard's, is to accept something that he is going to get anyway. 'Meaning', as Mr. and Mrs. Rose rightly say, 'is found in the frozen moment, but a somewhat empty meaning with death hovering in the wings.'³⁶ It is not a meaning that I believe in, but it is, unarguably, conveyed, and the methods Ballard is using to convey it are very like those of the Christian apologists. What we are given is a kind of counter-numinous; a mystery that neither fascinates nor causes us to tremble, but is certainly 'wholly other'.

However, even with the imagination stretched—or liberated—

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Christian ideas have to contend with other ones, and, what is worse, with prejudices in the mind of the reader; and the apologist has to deal with them. Lewis, for one, tried at times to use satire for this purpose. We find this, for example, in the scene at Meldilorn in *Out of the Silent Planet*. There Weston makes a long and impressive speech on the destiny of man; on man's achievements and his hopes of leaving his one planet to expand and dominate the universe. It really is impressive—as Weston speaks it, in English. But Ransom has to translate it into his rather halting Malacandrian, and in so doing is unable to preserve its rhetoric or the emotional overtones of its language; on the contrary, he has to express its literal meaning, which turns out to be drivelling nonsense. When Weston declares that he does not come as a vulgar robber, Ransom has laboriously to explain that we Earthmen have these people who take other people's property, and that Weston is saying he is not an ordinary one of that kind. 'What lies in the future, beyond our present ken, passes imagination to conceive:', says Weston, 'it is enough for me that there is a Beyond.' 'He says', translates Ransom, 'that though he doesn't know what will happen to the creatures sprung from us, he wants it to happen very much.' And so on. There is no need to *criticize* Weston's notions; they criticize themselves, they expose their own folly.

Similarly satirical effects occur in several of the 'Narnia' books. For instance, since the time of Xenophanes men have been suggesting that our ideas of God are only projections of what we find in ourselves or in the world around us: well, in *The Silver Chair*³⁷ Lewis lets the Witch use exactly the same pattern of argument to convince her victims that there is no world outside her underground realm ('Up among the stones and mortar of the roof?'), no sun to lighten it ('Your *sun* is a dream, and there is nothing in that dream that was not copied from the lamp. '), and quite certainly no Aslan ('You've seen cats, and now you want a bigger and better cat, and it's to be called a *lion*.'). But the Witch needs magic to get such ideas over! We find the same sort of technique here and there in the other books, as in Bree's superior confidence (in *The Horse and His Boy*) that Aslan can only be called a lion metaphorically, not literally—at a moment when Aslan is almost breathing down his neck.

³⁶ *The Shattered Ring* 104-105.

³⁷ (London 1953).

Unfortunately, satire has one serious weakness. It is a great consolation to those who agree with the satirist. ('The satire of liberal and radical theology that keeps recurring in Narnia is something that many have quietly relished and nourished themselves upon in dark days', remarked one admirer.) But, as Williams put it, 'Satire is rarely accepted by its victims.'³⁸ The Christian apologist needs to get past the guard of his reader, which satire is all too likely to *raise*. Indeed, he may well need to get past a whole way of thinking.

There is a famous aphorism of Rudolf Bultmann to the effect that 'it is impossible to use electric light and the wireless... and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and demons. We may think

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we can manage it in our own lives, but to expect others to do so is to make the Christian faith unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world.'³⁹ Now our writers were as well aware of the difficulty as Bultmann was. But their reaction was different. They could in fact 'manage it in their own lives' without (it seemed to them) any illogicality. The difficulties which others experience were surely, then, only psychological ones; there were undoubtedly causes at work making it hard for the users of electric lights and wirelesses to believe in the New Testament world, but these causes were not *rational* causes. If they had been, obviously the New Testament world would have to be jettisoned, for the sake of intellectual integrity as much as for that of effective proclamation. But if rational reasons did not enter into it, *two* possible courses of action lie open to the Christian. He may concede as much as possible to his hearers and their difficulties, passing over a great deal that he himself believes in and concentrating on the absolutely essential 'kerygma'. He will, in this case, continue personally to believe in the 'mythical' apparatus of Christian tradition; but he will not let it become a stumbling-block in the way of his weaker brethren. It can be taught, if at all, later on.

But there is another alternative: to begin by trying to change the psychological factors that have produced this unfortunate state of mind in so many people. Undoubtedly the most vocal of our writers, on this subject, was Lewis. It appears in the earliest of his fantastic books (indeed, his first book of all after becoming a Christian), *The Pilgrim's Regress*,⁴⁰ where the hero finds himself imprisoned by a giant called The Spirit of the Age, who (we learn later on) holds his power directly from the Enemy. In the *Regress*, this giant is eventually killed by Reason; and the truth that Reason is, and must be, independent of the 'Spirit of the Age', or any other non-rational factor, is a theme that occurs over and over again in Lewis's writings—so much so that one can almost spot it coming and skip the passage in question! Principally it is used as a refutation of determinism.⁴¹ Our reasonings must be more than mere effects of physical events in our brains; otherwise we should never have any grounds for supposing that there were such events at all. It must be possible for a chain of reasoning to be determined by our apprehension of the logical links that form it, or there is an end of *all* reasoning. Christian or anti-Christian, theological, scientific, historical, anything.

From this, from the basic principle of the autonomy of reason, certain conclusions follow. Firstly, it is possible to turn a good many anti-Christian arguments back against their users. If a Christian's belief in God is the result of wish-fulfilment, why may not an atheist's disbelief

³⁸ *Rochester* (London 1935) 236.

³⁹ *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. H. -W. Bartsch (London 1953) 1:5.

⁴⁰ (London 1933).

⁴¹ e.g. *Christian Reflections* 89; *Miracles* (London² 1960) Whether it is a valid reputation is still argued about.

in him be the same?⁴² More importantly, it is possible to accept what validity there is in these arguments and use them merely as warnings to make our reasonings better. Obviously our reasoning is likely to be affected by its social or psychological background; let us then listen to what the psychoanalyst or the sociologist has to say about this, and take particular care

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when we come to what he has shown to be danger-points. The ideal car, no doubt, has perfectly functioning brakes; but the next best thing is to know that your brakes are defective, for then you will (a) drive more cautiously and (b) get them repaired.

But ideally, if you stick to reasoning and do it properly, you will have a weapon against which the 'Spirit of the Age'—*any* age—is powerless. A valid argument is a valid argument, whether it is advanced by Plato or Bertrand Russell. Hence, by encouraging rationality, the apologist may hope to overcome the bias the modern mind has acquired, whatever period 'modern' may refer to. And to encourage Reason is not a hopeless task: almost everyone pays some sort of lip-service to her, at the least.

Unfortunately, this is not enough. Reasoning needs premises to work from; and these may be affected by the Spirit of the Age. Moreover, it is possible for a man to reason accurately and acutely in the field of (say) mathematics, and yet fail to do so in that of religion and irreligion. And finally, as we have already seen, even if a man has followed out a train of reasoning correctly to its conclusion, he may slide back into his prejudices a few hours or days later. It is not easy to keep oneself up to the rational mark. 'Your business', writes Screwtape to Wormwood, 'is to fix his attention on the stream of immediate sense experiences. Teach him to call it "real life" and don't let him ask what he means by "real"'.⁴³

Is there, then, any way of inducing the reader to abandon his prejudice? In this context, a prejudice is presumably a habit of dismissing something without thought. But the fantastic story is, right from the start, one where such a habit has got to be laid aside (for the moment at least), or no-one would ever read it. You may disbelieve in ghosts, and brush aside any alleged instance of one, almost automatically; but if you are going to read a ghost-story (a fictional one, that is) you will have to refrain from 'brushing aside' its whole theme every time it is referred to, or your enjoyment will certainly be sadly diminished.

Now the reader of a ghost-story is unlikely to emerge from his reading any less sceptical than he was when he began it (though he may be a little more likely to look nervously behind him in dark passages). For the main object of most ghost-story writers is simply to make the flesh creep, not to convert people to belief in ghosts; indeed, for all I know most of them do not believe in ghosts themselves. The same applies to most fantasy, and even to some science fiction, for, after all, this too is written primarily to entertain.

We must, however, make one reservation here. A writer of science fiction will normally endeavour to be consistent and logical. He may be writing about something very improbable, such as a robot with Cartesian philosophical views and religious mania;⁴⁴ but his art lies largely in making this seem much *less* improbable, than it did before we began to read him.

⁴² *The Pilgrim's Regress* 72-73.

⁴³ *The Screwtape Letters* (London 1955) 12.

⁴⁴ see I. Asimov, *Reason in I, Robot* (London 1967) 52ff.

And, consequently, his reader will in fact emerge more willing to accept the idea of a Cartesian robot with religious mania, should anyone try to

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convince him of its possibility. In fantasy this does not apply so much: firstly, because consistency and logic are less important, and secondly, where they *are* important, because the writer is setting out to portray what life would be like *if* something were true which (we and he alike agree) is in reality false. Paul Anderson's 'Operation' stories, for instance, do strive to be logical and consistent, but this is solely in order to exploit the exciting and amusing possibilities of a world in which magic, as we remember it from our childhood (were-wolves, broomsticks and all), functioned scientifically. He has no reason to wish us to believe it all possible—it is made as unlike 'our' world as it can.

But what about the Christian writer, such as those we are dealing with? In the case of MacDonald, there is certainly no attempt to make us 'believe in' his worlds. (For one thing the 'modern man' of his day was not quite the same as the 'modern man' of ours.) The parts of *Phantastes* and *Lilith* that are set in the 'real' world could be cut out without affecting the books; the children's stories (save for *At the Back of the North Wind*⁴⁵ and the semi-allegorical *Golden Key*) are set in traditional fairyland, or at least fairy-tale-land, and their point lies in the reappearance of Christian principles even there. Tolkien is not aiming to be an apologist. But Williams and Lewis wrote stories that begin in the 'real' world and never altogether lose touch with it; they simply portray it as containing items or aspects which the ordinary 'modern man' does not believe exist. So does the ghost-story; but its writer does not believe in his material, or at least does not think it very important. Williams and Lewis did. They did not indeed believe in the actual 'machinery' they used, but they did believe in the principles lying behind it.

Indeed, the fact that the 'machinery' is not itself really believed in gives these books an additional advantage. Advertising agents have long worked on the basis that it is usually better to head your advertisement (to put it crudely) 'How to get the best use out of your What-not' than simply 'Get a What-not today'. The latter suggests that a What-not is better than no What-not, or than a Thingamajig, but still leaves open the possibility that its victim will resist and refuse to get anything—or even go and get a Thingamajig after all. The former, however, implies—take it for granted—that there is no real question of doing anything but get a What-not; the only question you are allowed to consider is how to use it when you've got it. Now *Out of the Silent Planet*, for example, presupposes the general truth of Christianity; its speculation is only on how this truth might work out on Mars. The possibility that Christianity might not be true at all is not supposed ever to enter our minds.

It has been remarked that 'the best hope of reaching many modern unbelievers is not in the obvious knock of a Christian salesman at the front door, but in the subtle, covert knock at the rear'.⁴⁶ If this is meant as a comment on Lewis (or, for that matter, Williams or MacDonald) it is wide of the mark (as well as involving a very peculiar metaphor!). None of these

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⁴⁵ (London 1871).

⁴⁶ R. B. Cunningham, *C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith* 204, quoted by W. L. White, *The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis* (London 1970) 79.

men concealed for a moment that he was a Christian, or that his books were written with Christianity in mind. It is only the effect that they can have on the reader that is subtle: the sense of, not just the possibility of, the Christian faith, but of the possibilities *within* it.

What exactly is it, then, that happens (ideally) to the reader? He begins reading the novel, one presumes, for entertainment. He may not realize the sort of entertainment he is going to get. *War in Heaven*⁴⁷ begins like a detective story; *Out of the Silent Planet* like ordinary science fiction; *Shadows of Ecstasy*⁴⁸ like a political thriller; while *Till We Have Faces*⁴⁹ could have been an historical novel on the lines of Mary Renault's 'reconstructions' of the life of Theseus.⁵⁰ In most cases, however, the reader will realize (if he does not already know from the dust-jacket) that what he is getting will be, strictly speaking, fantastic. But, as the book progresses, it will become clear that it is not just entertainment, fantastic or otherwise; that the author not only is a Christian but is making serious points from a point of view that is explicitly a Christian one. The reader has been persuaded, in effect, to take Christianity seriously for a time, if only in order to entertain himself, and more especially to take seriously its way of looking at things. It may, of course, make no difference to his prejudices. But if the reader of Asimov's *Reason* may emerge more willing to accept the idea of a robot with religious mania, why, the reader of Williams or Lewis may emerge more willing to accept that of Christianity. The only difference is that no-one is ever likely to challenge him to accept the robot idea, whereas it is, even today, quite possible that he will be challenged by Christianity.

Best of all, perhaps, this reading should take place when the intellect is already interested in the faith. Mr. Chad Walsh says of his own conversion that when he first read *Perelandra* he was more than half convinced that Christianity was true. 'This conviction, however, was a thing more of the mind than of the imagination and heart. In *Perelandra* I got the taste and the smell of Christian truth. My senses as well as my soul were baptised.'⁵¹ And this evidently was typical of those who were affected by Lewis. Ingrained habits of thought might have pulled them back from where the intellect was taking them; but to read *Perelandra* they had to set those habits aside.

Mr. Walsh adds that some have found Lewis 'over-rationalistic or overmoralistic... stronger on the fact of law than the mystery of grace'⁵² and that these frequently turned to Williams instead, for a greater 'depth'. They may, perhaps, have found in him something that expressed the numinous, as I have suggested above, for it seems to me that while Williams is certainly more 'mysterious' than Lewis is, he keeps a similar balance, or imbalance, as far as Law and Grace are concerned. They would certainly find in him the same taking for granted of the presence of the 'supernatural' amid the things of the 'real world'.

It is possible that Lewis and Williams are no longer quite such effective

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apologists in this way as they were. Both tended to appeal to the fairly intelligent, even the intellectual; and fashions have changed among such. To quote Mr. Walsh again, to many

⁴⁷ (London 1930).

⁴⁸ (London 1933).

⁴⁹ (London 1956).

⁵⁰ see her *The King must Die* and *The Bull from the Sea* (London 1970 and 1973 respectively).

⁵¹ *Light on C. S. Lewis* ed. Gibb (London 1965) 107; cf. 111.

⁵² *ibid.* 114.

young Americans (of the 1960s!) 'Lewis seems much too theoretical and abstract' ('irrelevant' would be the vogue word now?)... too rationalist and Thomist for their tastes. The intellectual climate is increasingly dominated by a kind of diffused existentialism. It is not that most people... have read the works of the existentialists, but rather that an existentialist stance has somehow come into being (with which) Lewis's schematic works do not fit well.⁵³ It is still a matter of the Spirit of the Age; only that Spirit has taken on a rather different guise, at least in some places. Lewis's writings were fitted to cope with the practical, level-headed 'Bultmannian' type of modern man: much less so with the protestor or the hippie. Williams was in some ways closer to existentialism—he admired Kierkegaard long before this became fashionable, and was one of those responsible for getting his works published in England—but his style seems to make him a permanent minority taste.

It is not, therefore, remarkable that the fantastic writings of both have been eclipsed in popularity by those of Tolkien. *The Lord of the Rings*, which began to appear in England in 1954, appeared in the United States two years later, but did not 'catch on' for another nine years, until the arrival of the paperback editions. Then it did. 'The psychedelic-poster-and-button set', writes Lin Carter, 'adopted *The Lord of the Rings* with little goat-cries of bliss.'⁵⁴ Reports come across the Atlantic of eyesore buildings labelled 'Another Victory for Mordor'; a number of fan-clubs and societies exist;⁵⁵ an 'underground' magazine called itself *Gandalf's Garden*. Graffiti alluding to the cycle have also appeared in Oxford, but with no very obvious purpose.

For the fact is that *The Lord of the Rings* could almost have been deliberately designed to take over when *Perelandra* and *War in Heaven* were no longer as potent as before. It is not in the least 'theoretical and abstract', nor rationalistic (though reasonable); it is about action. There is an evil power threatening the world in *That Hideous Strength* and *All Hallows' Eve*, agreed. But in the first we see it through the eyes of the Sturrocks, rather weak characters slowly turning away from the evil, and not themselves instruments of its overthrow; in the second the evil power falls partly through its own mistakes, partly through the actions of characters who serve the City almost without knowing it, so that what might seem casual or unconnected deeds—the baptising of a child, the helpfulness of a dead girl—come together as part of the redemptive scheme. In *The Lord of the Rings*, however, we see the events through the eyes of active and conscious participants in them, above all through those of the hobbits; not very high-ranking figures in the war against evil, but absolutely crucial ones for all that. Obviously, the cause of some of Tolkien's popularity is related to that of, say, Conan Doyle's Sherlock

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Holmes—the sheer fascination of an elaborate sub-creation; but he has also an appeal to those who see themselves, or would like to see themselves, as on the side of Good against evil powers and principalities dominating the world. Who exactly those powers and principalities may be is another matter. Some have seen them in political terms: but Tolkien admirers can be found on both Right and Left, and in extreme positions as moderate ones on both sides.

⁵³ *ibid.* 115.

⁵⁴ Tolkien (New York 1979) 2.

⁵⁵ of one of which I am proud to be a member.

An investigation in *New Society*,⁵⁶ not long before Tolkien's death, of the influence of fiction on its readers, made him out to be the most influential of all (ten out of 217 answers named him; George Orwell was next, with eight). Numbers, in so small a sample, mean little. But the effects of reading him are of interest. Two of the ten said that *The Lord of the Rings* had made them aware of 'the forces of good and evil' and gave them models to imitate; four, rather surprisingly, said it gave them a better understanding of the society in which they lived. (This answer was one of those suggested as possibilities by the questionnaire used, which may explain its popularity.) One, significantly, said that it told of 'a way of life more real than we live today... of which I am somewhat envious'. I imagine that Tolkien would be particularly pleased with this tribute to the value of Escape.⁵⁷

Some have felt that awareness of the 'forces of good and evil' can be a positive danger. It invites a blindness to the complexity of moral issues and a tendency to see one's opponents as orcs, not fellow men and women. The latter point is not perhaps fair; not all Sauron's servants *are* orcs, after all, and one of Aragorn's first acts after the fall of Sauron is to make peace with the Men of Rhun and Harad. But the first is true. Moral issues frequently are complex; things are seldom as black-and-white as in *The Lord of the Rings*. The trouble is that when things *are* black-and-white one can be tempted to take no part (as the Ents did for a long time) or be concerned only with one's own particular part of the 'white' (like Denethor), or work for 'white' only for one's own sake (like Saruman before his final treason). And at the end of all complexities comes the need to choose—choice is of course a constant theme in all four of our writers—and side with what seems to be the right, or fail to do so, and so (whether by evil deeds or by inaction) aid that which seems to be wrong. Adherence to Christ is the most crucial of all such choices offered to us, but it is not the only one; and a realization of the importance of choice in other areas may help one choose aright in that most important one of all. I have known Tolkien help here.

Tolkien takes goodness and wickedness seriously, in a way many people do not, and if he influences his readers to do the same, he will also remove one obstacle to conversion. But I think there is something else about *The Lord of the Rings* which is relevant to our present concerns, and this is, once again, a matter of attitudes to the 'Spirit of the Age'.

Mr. Roger Sale has invented⁵⁸ a mythical grouping which he calls

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'Anglo-Oxford', to which Lewis, Williams and Tolkien belong (although Williams only lived in Oxford for the last few years of his life, during war time evacuation, and Tolkien, like several of the 'Inklings', was not an Anglican); it is dedicated above all to the cult of the Old, and possibly also the Cosy. As far as Lewis is concerned, there is some element of justice in this: Lewis did dislike, not only the worship of the Spirit of the Age in general, but a good many of the ways in which that Spirit manifests itself in this age, and he delighted in depicting himself as an antediluvian. Such poems as 'The Last of the Wine' and 'The Country of the Blind' show him in this mood; so, of course, did his Cambridge inaugural lecture 'De Descriptione Temporum',⁵⁹ and in a letter to a Californian society 'for the Prevention of

⁵⁶ vol. 21, no. 510 (6 July 1972) 6-8.

⁵⁷ see the passage on Escape in his lecture 'On Fairy-Stories' (*Tree and Leaf*) (London 1964) 53ff.

⁵⁸ in Isaacs and Zimbaro, *Tolkien and the Critics* (Notre Dame 1968) 247; cf. also 'England's Parnassus' in the *Hudson Review* (1964) 203ff.

⁵⁹ reprinted in *They Asked for a Paper* (London 1962).

Progress' he said that he felt he had been born a member of it.⁶⁰ But the description is wildly unsuitable for Williams; and it applies to Tolkien only with strict qualifications. That he has an affection for the old is obvious enough. But he combines this with a very strong sense that old things do in fact pass, and must do so. It is a defect in the elves that they want to 'embalm' things. 'They wanted to have their cake and eat it: to live in the mortal historical Middle-earth.... and so tried to stop its change and history, stop its growth, keep it as a pleasance, even largely a desert, where they could be "artists"—and they were overburdened with sadness and nostalgic regret. In their way the Men of Gondor were similar: a withering people whose only "hallows" were their tombs.'⁶¹ And the Elves are leaving, the dominion of Men is coming, victory is never permanent. This is not bad; it is the way God has made the world.

An affection for that which is old may, of course, be no more than an affection for certain things that happen as a matter of fact to be old. (Lewis seems at times to claim that this is his own position—see the poem 'On a Vulgar Error'. Yet one has one's doubts, not only because of his reply to the American Society, but because of passages like one quoted by Walter Hooper from a piece of *juvenilia*, 'In every man's heart of hearts there is a deep-rooted objection to change.')

And if it is more than this, it may simply be a matter of taste, and recognized as such. This may equally be true of the opposite passion, love of the new. The one can be justified as a love of that which has stood the test of time, the other as a love of improvement. But worship of either (and certainly worship of that which is new is the greater danger in our present society) is idolatry, a sin which is *not* typical of Tolkien in the way it is of servants of the Spirit of the Age—or of any other Age. And anyone whose reading of Tolkien enables him to see the world through Tolkinian eyes will be the less likely to sin in this particular way. For one thing alone, it is possible to worship a thing, or conceive an irrational liking for it, simply because it is new, or simply because it is old, but not simply because it dated back to the Third Age of Middle-earth! More seriously, awareness of both the goodness of much that is old and of its transitoriness is genuinely valuable. Obviously, it is not enough to make a man a Christian, but it may help. The Ancient of

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Days, after all, is also he who makes all things new, Maledil the Young.

The weakness of *The Lord of the Rings* to the mind of the apologist (doubtless a rather narrow one) lies in this: that the reader is at least as likely to see the Tolkinian world with our eyes as our world with Tolkinian. The sheer fascination of his sub-creation may get in the way and send us off on sidetracks, whether these consist of naming night-clubs 'Middle-earth' or puzzling over the missing name among the Kings of Numenor.⁶² Whether Professor Tolkien would mind all that much I do not know. After all, he began his stories simply in order to provide a world for his languages: they were not 'about' anything but themselves.⁶³ Nevertheless, while there are people who read *The Lord of the Rings* seriously, there will be

⁶⁰ *Letters* ed. W. H. Lewis (London 1966).

⁶¹ *Letters* ed. C. Tolkien (London 1981) 197; a passage also instructive on the matter of excessive 'black-and-white'.

⁶² The present writer had deduced from the evidence in *The Lord of the Rings* that one name was missing either before or after Tar-Calmacil. Editorial work on *The Silmarillion* implied that no name was missing; but it is gratifying to learn from *Unfinished Tales* that one was, and in the place suspected.

⁶³ *Tolkien and the Critics* 136.

people who give a proper value to the changes brought by time, and strive for good in any world that comes, without succumbing too easily to its immediate temptations.

What future lies ahead for this sort of writing is not easy to say. One is tempted to feel that imaginative Christian writing flourishes best when its particular genre is not too widespread. G. K. Chesterton's detective stories came at a time when such stories were (on the whole, and with famous exceptions) a lowbrow taste; the heyday of the whodunit was only beginning. The same applies to Lewis's science fiction: the science fiction magazines were already in existence when *Out of the Silent Planet* appeared, but few books in the genre would have been reviewed in the respectable newspapers as they are today. (Again, of course, there were exceptions, and H. G. Wells here would correspond to Conan Doyle in the field of detection. So, indeed, on a smaller scale, would Doyle himself.) The sort of heroic fantasy to which *The Lord of the Rings* belongs has existed for some time: William Morris and Lord Dunsany provide examples (though most of Dunsany's best work lay in the realm of the short story). But it was not to the taste of the majority, and even now it is largely confined to what Mr. Fritz Leiber has called 'sword-and-sorcery' (as opposed to the more 'naturalistic' world of blood-and-thunder), with no claim to be called literature. It may be that it is easier to write a classic in the earlier days of your genre than later, when your work will only be one of many and is practically certain to be in some sense an imitation.

If so, there is little point in the Christian writer's trying science fiction as his medium; there is too much of it about. And even in heroic fantasy Tolkien is bound to overshadow him (and his non-Christian colleagues too, for that matter!). Some other field will have to be sought.

It is of some interest to note a link between our group and one 'other field' that has been, and is being, used a good deal by Christian evangelists today—that of song. The link is provided by Mr. Sydney Carter, not a novelist (fantastic or otherwise) but a writer of ballads and songs in the folk-song idiom. Whether there is any direct connection between Mr. Carter and the people we have been discussing I do not know (an indirect one is certainly there in the person of Donald Swann), but in expressing his

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'faith and doubt' he has unquestionably used similar background to it; 'Friday Morning' could really be a versification of William's essay on the Cross; his best-known song of all, 'Lord of the Dance', takes up a theme that can be found also in Williams (*The Greater Trumps*), Lewis (*Perelandra*) and even perhaps Tolkien (*The 'Ainulindale'*). It is the medium that is different.

It is possible that the next great writer in this kind of tradition, if there is one, will be in a field that no-one has yet thought of; this may indeed prove to be part of his greatness. But no doubt God will raise up his servants as seems best to him.