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"The Days Have Come Down in the West"

Part II



At the Gates

Continued from: Part I

It is, I think, difficult to take issue with Mr. Muggeridge's assessment. Let us look briefly at the army at our gates. You will remember that in Tolkien's, "The Return of the King", it is not at all monolithic, apart from purpose: it is composed not simply of immediately recognizable evil in the demonic forms of Orcs, Uruk Hai and the like, but also of "men" and Haradrim, indistinguishable from the citizens of Minas Tirith nevertheless, all have been summoned by Sauron, the Dark Lord, to bring the world under the dominion of darkness.

It strikes us as odd that men should war against men to bring about that state in which the the leader of the Orc legions declares that "The age of men has ended. The time of the Orcs has come."

But let us remember that the Orcs were not always Orcs, but Elves, who through the Dark Force were "brought to a horrible and mutilated form of life". In other words, seized by evil they were deprived of good and not just subsequently, but consequently, became evil. It turns out that even the clearly discernible enemy was once among us, was counted among us. We are in a better position, through Tolkien's metaphor, to understand Mr. Muggerridge the more clearly – and through Mr. Muggeridge to see the preseience of Mr. Tolkien:

"It is, indeed, among Christians themselves that the final decisive assault on Christianity has been mounted; led by the Protestant churches, but with Roman Catholics eagerly, if belatedly, joining in the fray. All they had to show was that when Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world, He meant that it was. Then, moving on from there, to stand the other basic Christian propositions similarly on their heads. ... A whole series of new interpretative 'translations' of the Bible have appeared supporting the new view ... I see the great liberal death wish driving through the years ahead in triple harness with the gospel of progress and the pursuit of happiness. These are our three Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Progress, Happiness, Death. Under their auspices, the quest for total affluence leads to total deprivation; for total peace, to total war; for total education, to total illiteracy; for total sex, to total sterility; for total freedom, to total servitude.

(from 'The Great Liberal Death Wish')

We are bent upon our own destruction through a dissolution of the very means by which the destruction itself had become possible. Through a freedom become license, we have legislated our own end. In the end we find that absolute freedom is not only absolute tyranny, but the dissolution of freedom itself as it collapses under the weight of insupportable license.

We wish to be free of all things ... all encumbrances ... all mores and constraints ... from reason itself – all things, except sin. And the wages of sin – we have on unimpeachable authority (God Himself) – is death.

Is this not what we find at the gates? And do we not know their faces, even those

contorted in hatred, and cloven of foot?

Are not those who throw up ladders against the towering walls of the Church, who would pull down her parapets, those whom she had nurtured? Having fled the gates of the City whose laws they found ultimately intolerable, they have returned as though to claim a patrimony they had spurned, but no longer as her children but as "a horrible and mutilated form of life" bent upon matricide, upon ravaging the womb that bore them, that the breath of the dragon who transformed *them* may cauterize it and make it barren of children, and a desert of death.

Osgiliath stands on the brink of the River, it's soldiers are menaced and few and even now the smoke rises from her turrets, but Minas Tirith yet stands ... and awaits the Return of the King – and her derelict stewards, even of their own evil purpose, cannot prevent the Return of the King. For He is yet among us. And by His word the gates of the great city will prevail against the hell let loose upon her.

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