

February 2003

Among the many life issues in the news we have selected a few for special attention. This edition of *The Interim Plus* presents three different topics for consideration: the ongoing controversy regarding human cloning; reform of election finances; and the theme of life-affirming good defeating evil in the hit movie *The Lord of the Rings*. Discussion questions accompany the treatment of these topics.

Update on Human Cloning and Stem Cell Research

Not a day passes but that there are reports of cloning attempts and even claims of successful outcomes. In the midst of Christmas celebration we had the sensational announcement from a spokeswoman from the bizarre Raelian sect claiming that their Clonaid Company had achieved the first cloning of a human being. They have made two additional announcements since then and have yet to provide any scientific evidence to support their claim. The worst nightmares associated with the concept of human cloning begin to take real shape even if the claim is not verified.



'Bishop' Brigitte Boiselier who has served as the spokesperson for the Raelian cult's company Clonaid, has yet to produce evidence that the claims of producing human clones is true.

The Canadian government currently is presenting legislation that purports to outlaw such activity. The federal authorities claim that their law would ban human cloning for reproductive purposes, but would permit and regulate cloning for therapeutic purposes.

The editorial on page 4 of *The Interim* argues

for a total ban on all human cloning. Please read the complete articles to be found on the front page story of *The Interim* and on page 15, plus the editorial that appears on page 4.

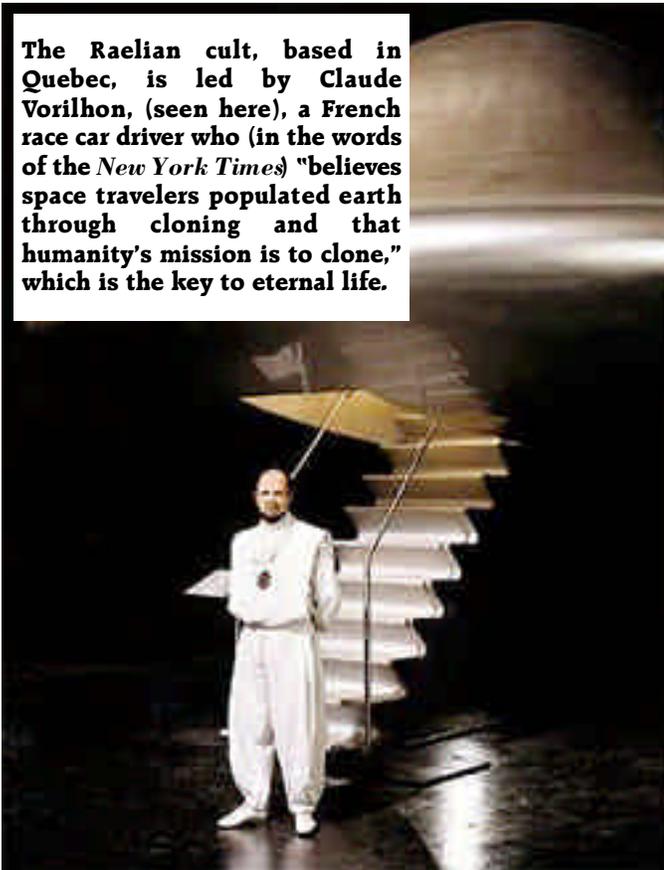
The United States Situation

In Washington, bipartisan legislation, the Human Cloning Prohibition Act, sponsored by Congressman Dave Weldon (R-Florida) and Bart Stupak (D-Michigan) reintroduced legislation to ban all cloning of human life, which is expected to be voted on this month or next. Their bill passed the House of Representatives 265-162 in the previous Congress,President George W. Bush has promised to sign into law a comprehensive cloning ban.

But some politicians and scientists would prefer to see a ban on so-called reproductive cloning while allowing therapeutic or research cloning. The latter means creating and destroying human embryos for experimentation...

Evangelical leader Charles Colson said in his Breakpoint commentary, "The distinction between 'therapeutic' cloning and 'reproductive' cloning is a smoke screen. All cloning is reproductive. Who is going to enforce whether an embryo goes to a lab for experimentation or is implanted in a womb to be born? The Justice Department has testified that it cannot. In order

The Raelian cult, based in Quebec, is led by Claude Vorilhon, (seen here), a French race car driver who (in the words of the *New York Times*) "believes space travelers populated earth through cloning and that humanity's mission is to clone," which is the key to eternal life.



to ban live-birth cloning, we must ban all human cloning. Politically, this is the time to do it.” The American Bioethics Advisory Commission, a project of the American Life League, said, “Cloning is not only an immoral act that sacrifices innocent human life for a so-called scientific gain, it is Frankensteinish science at its worst and should be outlawed immediately.”

Paul Tuns, *The Interim*, February, 2003

The Canadian Situation

In Canada, the home of the Raelian cult, the cloning announcement has given no new impetus for a comprehensive cloning ban. The *Ottawa Citizen* reported that Vancouver-based genetics specialist Dr. Patricia Baird complained it is time to act on human cloning. “We’ve been debating and discussing and policy-making for 15 years now in Canada about these kinds of issues.” In 1995, the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, which Baird chaired, called for a ban on human cloning. However, legislation based on the commission’s report, the *Assisted Human Reproduction Act*, died on the floor of the House of Commons when Prime Minister Jean Chretien called an election in 1997. Last year, Health Minister Anne McLellan introduced legislation that claims to ban human cloning. It was approved by the parliamentary health committee in December.

Jim Hughes, national president of Campaign Life Coalition, told *The Interim* that nothing in the legislation effectively bans cloning. He pointed to expert analysis by Dianne Irving, biochemist and professor of philosophy and ethics at Catholic University of America, who submitted her concerns to the parliamentary health committee last year. Irving said the bill is flawed because of vague or otherwise insufficient definitions. Most notable is the failure to name seven specific methods of cloning and incorrectly defining another. Hughes said this is a loophole that scientists will use to clone human beings.

Paul Tuns, *The Interim*, February, 2003.

Questions for discussion

1. What is Clonaid?
2. What have their spokespersons claimed?
3. Why has no scientific proof been offered to support the claims?
4. Compare and contrast the respective legislative efforts of Canada and the United States to enact a cloning ban.

Bill C-13 doesn’t effectively ban cloning

Although there is a widespread perception that *Bill C-13*, An Act Respecting Assisted Human Reproduction, bans human cloning, the fact is, it doesn’t. Pro-life activists say this comes as no surprise because banning human cloning or restricting embryo research would undermine the abortion status quo in Canada.

Hilary White, director of research for Campaign Life Coalition, told *The Interim* that, on one hand, the federal government is feeling pressure from pharmaceutical companies and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to permit cloning and embryonic research. On the other, it sees other governments regulating or prohibiting such activities and, realizing the need to address the issue, does not want to be the odd country out .

The problem, White said, is that “the Liberal government has a political commitment to maintaining the abortion status quo. In Canada, according to the Criminal Code, a human being doesn’t come into existence until the moment of birth.” So, White explained, the government cannot restrict cloning or embryo research without undermining abortion “rights.”

The Criminal Code defines a human being beginning when a child’s umbilical cord is no longer attached to the mother. Because the Liberal government enjoys the support of feminists, “it has a huge stake in maintaining that definition (of the human being enunciated in the Criminal Code) to defend abortion, so they can’t protect human life before birth.”

She also noted the problem of mere regulation. “There is a huge difference between regulating and preventing something. Regulating it does nothing about prohibiting these things.” The emphasis on regulation leads many well-intentioned, but ultimately mistaken, people to believe activities such as cloning and embryo research are restricted when in reality it is nothing more than laying down the rules by which scientists play.

“This bill is all about allowing, regulating, and thereby encouraging, embryonic research taken from embryos created by in-vitro fertilization.”

White added that the use of human beings at the embryonic stage is morally wrong because “it is never right to use human beings as a means to an end. Especially when you must destroy them to do so.”

Paul Tuns, *The Interim*, February, 2003

Questions for discussion

1. What political reality does White believe prevents the federal government from banning human cloning outright?

2. What distinction does White make between ‘regulating’ and ‘preventing’?

Stop Cloning Now

Clearly, the need to prohibit all human cloning activities is at hand; no longer can politicians hide behind the excuse that they would be legislating technology that does not yet exist. The future is now.

It is often said that human cloning is inevitable. Perhaps. But all too often that is an excuse to tolerate the unacceptable. This represents the failure of modern society to distinguish between the possible and the permissible. Too many scientists, politicians, journalists and members of the public believe that if something can be done, it should be allowed...

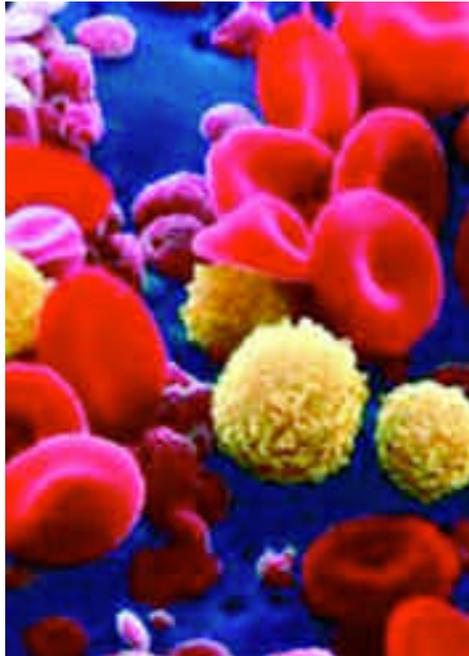
And evil, cloning is.... First, a pragmatic problem. Cloning is unsafe. As Vyacheslav Tarantul, head of Russia’s Molecular Genetics Institute, said in December that most attempts to clone animals fail, many clonal embryos die, and those that survive display genetic anomalies including increased risk of many cancers.... Efforts to clone human beings, Dr. Tarantul said, would result in a “monster 99 per cent of the time,” First, a pragmatic problem. Cloning is unsafe. As Vyacheslav Tacal deformations.” It is unethical to knowingly submit cloned children to these genetic flaws and diseases. As the British magazine *The Spectator* has noted, euthanasia would become a routine medical treatment for clones that are severely handicapped. We would correct one immoral act with another and replace the destroyed clone with a new one.

But beyond the pragmatic reasons... cloning is plain and simply wrong. Taking the procreation of children through God’s beautiful gift of sex within marriage to the creation of children in the laboratory is an affront to both God and human dignity. It commodifies human life, leading (inevitably) to the idea that adults have the right not only to a child, but the child of their choice... Cloning oneself is the height of narcissism; cloning a dead child as a replacement Johnny or Jane is sick and perverted.

... (re) the issue of reproductive versus therapeutic

cloning. The term therapeutic is terribly misleading. The creation of cloning for research purposes – to find cures or treatments or the mere discovery of how the human body functions – is not therapeutic for the clone who must be destroyed as part of the research.

While polling indicates strong opposition to reproductive cloning (usually 80 per cent or more, in every country in which the question is asked), the public seems more divided over research cloning. Pulling on the



Human Stem Cells

Stem cells may offer hope to those with disease, but is current research ethical?

heart-strings of the public by suggesting that a loved one’s illness or handicap might be treated has been brilliant public relations, but there is little indication that any treatment is at hand... under the guise of treatment, scientists will look into the mysteries of how the body functions without any greater understanding of how to help cure the severely ill.

... scientists will not be content with one or two clonal subjects. Their desire to learn more will inexorably lead to the mass manufacture of cloned human embryos, resulting in the commercialization of human beings. As Diana Schaub noted in the Winter 2003 issue of *The Public Interest*, research cloning combines “abortion plus slavery”. Cloning is an evil, and “cloning for the purpose of research actually exacerbates the evil by countenancing the willful

destruction of nascent human life. Moreover, it proposes doing this on a mass scale, as an institutionalized and routinized undertaking to extract medical benefits for those who have greater power. It is slavery plus abortion.”

Our politicians have dithered long enough. Call your MP today and tell him or her to demand the government move to enact a comprehensive ban on all human cloning. Cloning is a moral frontier we dare not cross.

Editorial, *The Interim*, February, 2003.

Questions for discussion

1. “Clearly, the need to prohibit all human cloning activities is at hand; no longer can politicians hide behind the excuse that they would be legislating technology that does not yet exist. The future is now”. Is it?
2. Does the drive to attempt the cloning of human beings represent “the failure of modern society to distinguish between the possible and the permissible”?.?

3. Why is human cloning considered evil? What are some of the practical problems associated with it?
4. How is human cloning “plainly and simply wrong”?
5. What distinction is made between “reproductive” and “therapeutic” cloning? Is there any real basis to this distinction?
6. How does research cloning combine “abortion plus slavery”?

ADULT BONE MARROW CELLS CAN BECOME BRAIN TISSUE

Adult bone marrow cells can become new brain cells, according to research at the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke in Bethesda, Md. “This study shows that some kind of cell in bone marrow, most likely a stem cell, has the capacity to enter the brain and form neurons,” says the head researcher, Dr. Eva Mezey of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), a branch of the National Institutes of Health. The results appear in the January 20, 2003 online early edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Previous research has shown that donor bone marrow stem cells can migrate throughout the body in the bloodstream, differentiating into various cell types – but this work was carried out on animals. The current findings were the result of autopsy studies of brain cells from deceased patients who had received bone marrow transplants earlier in life.

Dr. Mezey told BBC News Online: “We have had trouble convincing some members of the scientific community that this could happen, and as I see it, accepting this idea is the first step towards accepting the suggestion that adult stem cells could some day be used to replace neural elements lost to neurodegenerative diseases, stroke, or trauma.” She noted that current scientific enthusiasm remains focused on embryonic stem cells – despite results such as these.

For the press release from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke see:

http://www.ninds.nih.gov/news_and_events/pressrelease_bone_marrow_neurons.htm

STUDY SHOWS UMBILICAL CORD MATRIX NEW RICH SOURCE OF STEM CELLS

The cushioning material or matrix within the umbilical cord known as Wharton’s jelly is a rich and readily available source of primitive stem cells, according to

findings by a research team at Kansas State University. The cells – called cord matrix stem cells to distinguish them from cord blood cells – can be obtained in a non-invasive manner from an abundant source of tissue that is typically discarded.

According to researchers Mark Weiss and Deryl Troyer, “Umbilical cord matrix cells could provide the scientific and medical research community with a non-controversial and easily attainable source of stem cells for developing treatments for Parkinson’s disease, stroke, spinal cord injuries, cancers and other conditions.”

Among the findings: Wharton’s jelly cells from pigs were propagated in the lab for more than a year without losing potency; they can be stored cryogenically and engineered to express foreign proteins.

The cells exhibit telomerase activity, a key indicator of stem cells, and they can be induced to form nerve cells, both neurons and glia, that produce a range of nerve-cell specific traits. Neurons are the nervous system cells that transmit signals; glial cells support the neurons.

On the basis of the encouraging results with animal tissue, the team broadened its investigations to human umbilical cord matrix cells with similar exciting findings – human umbilical cord matrix cells differentiate into neurons, too. The findings are published in the current edition of the journal *Stem Cells*.

<http://stemcells.alphaamedpress.org/cgi/content/abstract/21/1/50>

(with files from Ascribe Newswire)

Questions for discussion

1. How do these news reports offer great hope for adult stem cells research?
2. Why don’t governments support exclusively these types of ethical research?

ELECTION FINANCE REFORMS

Canada may need real parliamentary reforms in order to give MPs a prominent and meaningful role as representatives of the Canadian people. Here are a number of excerpts from several sources, articles which recently appeared in *The Toronto Star*, *The National Post*, *The Toronto Sun*, and *The Interim*.

Forcing politics back to the basics Bob Hepburn, editorial page, *Toronto Star*, January 25, 2003.

Chretien vows to push ahead with curb on political donations, Les Whittington, *National Post*, January 24, 2003.

Martin opposes Chretien's plans on donations, Anne Dawson and Diane Francis, *National Post*, January 25, 2003.

Growing irrelevance of Parliament, review by Chris Champion, *The Interim*, February 2003.

A growing need for House reform, Douglas Fisher, *Toronto Sun*, January 26, 2003



Paul Martin sits with students prior to speaking in Toronto on Oct. 21, where he unveiled his proposals to reform Parliament.

Sheila Copps suggested that corporate political donations have to be banned to keep business from telling governments what to do... ..As an example, she said lobbying by corporations had greatly slowed Ottawa's efforts to prepare the way for signing the Kyoto treaty on climate change.(Whittington, *National Post*)

The bill had to be brought forward because the public believes that those who donate to political parties have undue influence – whether that's true or not. (Don Boudria, quoted by Whittington, *National Post*)

Chretien wants to ban all donations to political parties by corporations and trade unions. National political parties would rely on individual donations as well as on subsidies from federal taxpayers to fund their campaigns and headquarters' operations.... In addition, Chretien wants to require total disclosure of all contributions of \$200 or more to a political party, including donations made to leadership candidates and nominations of wannabe MPs....Stunningly, Chretien is run-

ning into severe criticism, not from opposition parties, but from his own caucus. (Bob Hepburn, *Toronto Star*)

I agree that the system should be open and transparent...the questions that have to be answered are how does a new party start up{if you can't raise money from private sources? ...How do Canadians feel about their taxes being used to fund the Bloc Quebecois? (Paul Martin, quoted by Anne Dawson & Diane Francis, *National Post*)

Taxpayers will pick up 80% of the cost for the operation of political parties under the legislation. "I have a concern with the public having to carry the bill. It's incumbent upon political parties to go out and be aggressive in raising money either individually or through other means. Organizations as well as individuals, have a role to play in a democracy and therefore they should be able to play that role." (Mike Hillman, B.C. wing of federal Liberal Party, as quoted by Dawson and Francis, *National Post*)

Paul Martin (said) that federal politics must end the "democratic deficit" created by centering so much power and influence in the PM and his office while reducing the power

and influence of cabinet, caucuses and ordinary MPs. (Douglas Fisher, *Toronto Sun*)

(Roy)Rempel has suggestions for change... we must begin with the "culture of Parliament itself"...the daily question period must be reformed, even abolished... Rempel lists five options which would reduce or close out " the present fake melodrama of the process"... Another change must be altering the expectation which all party leaders have that all their MPs sing from the same song sheet... .adoption by the parties of a primary system, as in the U.S. to open party candidacies to direct voter input... .once an MP is on a committee it should be for the life of a given Parliament...and party whips should not be able to remove them.....MPs should be able to scrutinize government appointments in the diplomatic and military fields... to make MPs more responsible to both constituents and all of Canada Rempel suggests these moves..1) regularizing free voting in the House on most issues...2)trying the option of MP recall...3) shortening the time between elections...4)

using citizen-initiated referenda and/or plebiscites... . Rempel says that “if Canadians are to recover some measure of control over their country’s destiny and if the present decline of Canada internationally is to be reversed then the reform of Parliament is the essential prerequisite”. (Douglas Fisher, *Toronto Sun*).



11. Given the analysis of Rempel, would election finance reform help in democratizing Parliament?

12. Would his other suggestions for the reform of Parliament have any validity? Would they work? Would they make MPs more responsible as he claims?

Questions for discussion

1. Does Canada’s election finance rules need major rehauling? Why or why not?
2. Describe P. M. Chretien’s proposed legislation regarding political donations.
3. Should corporations and unions be banned from contributing to political parties?
4. Should tax-payer money be made available to fund political parties? Why or why not?
5. What perceived problems would Chretien’s proposed laws reduce or eliminate?
6. Is the nickname (*The Chatter Box*) offered by Roy Rempel for the Canadian House of Commons insightful or off the mark?
7. In his book Rempel claims that individual MPs’ positions are irrelevant. What factors lead him to this conclusion?
8. What is the consequence on democracy of the concentration of parliamentary power in the PMO (Prime Minister’s Office)?
9. Who or what are to blame for this sad state of affairs according to Rempel?
10. What evidence does he cite for his low opinion of many members of Parliament? According to him what accounts for the parliamentarians’ failure to adequately reflect Canadians’ interests?

CURRENT EVENTS/ACTION

Questions for discussion

1. If you had the opportunity to enact reforms /changes to Canada’s political system what would be your priorities and explain why. (e.g. federal – provincial powers, methods of House of Commons elections, proportional representation, election finance reforms, length of election campaigns, powers of the Prime Minister’s Office, curtailing or expanding the powers of the judiciary, abolition of the Senate, etc)
2. Looking at Canada in the world today, imagine you have been asked to give advice regarding Canada’s foreign policy, what would you change? What new directions would you want it to take?
3. Canada seems to occupy a special place in the world, but Canada with all its blessings has challenges. List and then debate some of the pressing issues that need addressing in Canada?
4. Choose the issue that resonates most with you and write a letter to the editor of a daily expressing your concerns.
5. Take the same topic /issue and write a letter to your local M.P./M.L.A.
6. Often people complain that they are powerless to effect changes. What evidence does Tony Gosgnach cite that demonstrates the power of ordinary people? (read his *Interim* article “Good and moral people can make a

difference” found on page 13 of the February edition of that paper.

LORD OF THE RINGS

A great movie based on a great novel. The theme of good and evil is central to the story. The commentaries and review offered in the pages of *The Interim* (Movie is essentially about the battle between good and evil, page 1 and Tolkien’s epic rich with Christian symbols, ideals, page 21) can help one to understand and to admire both the cinematography of Peter Jackson and the creative writing of R.R. Tolkien. We offer these further questions to help analyze the themes, characters and symbolism found in the film version and in the original literary work.

The following are excellent web pages pertinent to *The Lord of the Rings*

www.nytimes.com/1955/05/01/books/tolkien-towers.html Has a good review of the movie.

<http://www.lehre.informatik.uni-osnabrueck.de/~skremer/martyn/html-text/patrick-contents.html>. contains an excellent, insightful and articulate critique An analy-

sis of the presence of evil in *Beowulf* and *The Lord of the Rings* by Patrick Degallier

<http://www.ipl.org.ar/cgi-bin/ref/litcrit/litcrit.out.pl?ti=lor-22> is the site of IPL (Internet Public Library) Rings Online Literary Criticism which contains many essays on The Lord of the Rings.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/ngbeyond/rings/myth.html>

<http://adrianmco.batcave.net/tlor.htm>

http://www.essays.cc/free_essays/b1/vdj169.shtml

<http://www.cinemainfocus.com/twotowers.htm>

<http://www.cinemainfocus.com/twotowers.htm>

<http://www.family.org/pplace/pi/lotr/A0018586.cfm>

<http://www.facingthechallenge.org/rings.htm>

<http://www.tolkienonline.com/docs/5258.html>

Questions for discussion

1. How does Tolkien define evil? What qualities are associated with it in his trilogy? How does the movie convey the same sense of evil?
2. In the battle between good and evil, the latter is invariably associated with ugliness. Is this true to life? Are the superficially ugly also evil?
3. Does beauty (and therefore good) lie in the eyes of the beholder? Would this suggest that good and evil are subjective realities?
4. Is violence intrinsically bad? Is violence the heart of evil?
5. Has Tolkien made a case for the existence of a cosmic moral law? Where does free will fit in the moral landscape?
6. A symbol is defined by Paul Degallier as “a thing that stands for something else, especially a material object which represents something abstract.” List ten examples of Christian symbolism found in Lord of the Rings and explain their meaning.
7. Why does Tolkien never present the most powerful enemy (Sauron) directly?
8. What weapons does Sauron use to cower his enemies?
9. Sauron’s realm appears as a wild and barren country. Why is this geographic reality fitting for his kingdom?



10. The Ring is rich with symbolism. Why does the Ruling Ring exert fascination on the beings which inhabit the world of Middle-Earth?
11. What powers does the Ring hold out to the wearer?
12. How is the Ring like the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden?
13. Does the Ring represent the power and evil of science and technology?
14. How does the Ring consume the personality of the wearer? What examples are there of the overwhelming evil of the Ring?



15. Why does wearing the Ring lead to isolation and distrust rather than to friendship and community?



16. Is the greatest threat to the Fellowship and its mission from without or from within?

17. Discuss the statement: "Gollum is a character in whom the divided self is clearly recognizable".



18. In what sense is Gollum a total prisoner of the Ring?

19. Is Gollum a creature to be pitied? Why or why not?

20. How do Frodo and Sam change as a result of the mission to destroy the Ring?

21. How does Tolkien portray nature? Is it celebrated as benign or is it presented as intimidating and hostile?

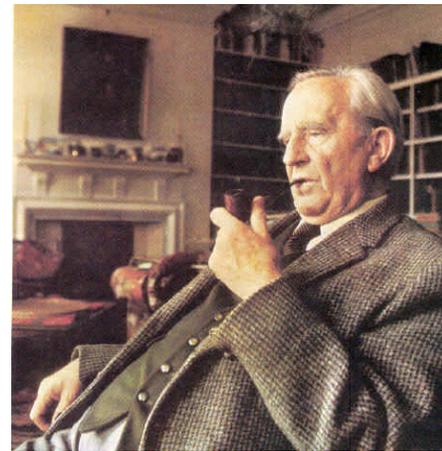
22. How and why does Gandalf have the ability to save? Whom or what does he save?

23. Is Tolkien an environmentalist? How is this shown in his trilogy? How does nature wreak revenge on those who seek to destroy it?

24. "Far from being a 'fantasy,' The Lord of the Rings is a theological thriller". What is meant by this statement?

25. What are the values/virtues that emerge in The Lord of the Rings? Are they gospel values?

26. Why is it important for the reader or viewer to know/understand the worldview of the author of a book or a film?



J. R. R. Tolkien, seen above, has created memorable characters in a story that embodies many morals and ideas that pertain to Christianity even though The Ring cycle is complete fantasy.