As Bilbo Baggins clings to a barrel, increasingly cold and entirely wet, he wonders if he will die. Quite a predicament, but readers will remember that far before Bilbo ever entered Mirkwood, before goblins and Wargs, and Gollum and trolls, there was another predicament. Back, over the Misty Mountains, long ago one morning, Mr. Baggins had:
. . . sat down in his hall and put his head in his hands, and wondered what had happened, and what was going to happen, and whether they would all stay to supper.

Faced with a throng of dwarves, talk of 'things which he did not understand and did not want to, for they sounded much too adventurous,' not to mention the daunting prospect of having all these unwanted guests stay for supper, Bilbo was quite overwhelmed.

Now, clinging to a barrel, Mr. Baggins has changed. It is a long road that has taken him to this point, and throughout chapters 9-11 of The Hobbit there are echoes of the very first chapter which show this transformation.

While Thorin is sitting glumly in his cell, it is Mr. Baggins' voice at the key hole which changes his mood. He is certain that "the Remarkable Mr. Invisible Baggins (of whom he began to have a very high opinion indeed) . . ." will certainly think of some way of escaping. If you remember, the very first thing about Mr. Baggins that hinted he could be more than a prosy middle-aged hobbit, was his lineage. His mother had been "famous" as "one of the three remarkable daughters of the Old Took." In the first chapter, no such words could possibly be applied to Bilbo. The dwarves certainly do not see any potential, and only Gandalf has confidence in Mr. Baggins. While readers will have seen much reason for this already in The Hobbit, it finally comes home to Thorin in Chapter 9.

Of course, Bilbo does think of a way to escape, and isn't it funny to hear him scolding and fussing at the dwarves? Now that Gandalf is gone, someone has to keep them in order, and who should do it but Mr. Baggins? It is Bilbo who frees the dwarves from the barrels and rallies Thorin's bedraggled spirits. It is Bilbo who keeps some of his own spirit when the dwarves become discouraged by the bleakness of the mountain. It is he who often studies the map of the mountain. (Do you remember, far back in Chapter 1, where we first learned that he loved maps?) It is Bilbo who persuades the dwarves to move their camp in search of the door, and Bilbo, along with Fili and Kili, who discovers its location. And, most importantly, it is Bilbo who recognizes the significance of the sunset and the thrush knocking snails on the stone.

Chapter Eleven of The Hobbit ends with an open door that is very different from the round green door we meet in the first chapter of The Hobbit. Yes, it does lead to a tunnel, but it is not the sort of tunnel which has tile or carpeting, or lots of pegs for hats and coats. And it is into this tunnel that we will follow Mr. Baggins, "friend and fellow conspirator" of dwarves and "most excellent and audacious of hobbits."

I suppose Thorin was right in his description of Mr. Baggins after all, and Gandalf was quite right in his choice of a fourteenth member for the dwarves' expedition. In his choosing, do you catch the reflection of a greater choice? How many of us, unsuspecting and unprepossess-

ing, are chosen by an Almighty Father and sent off on our own adventures? In my adventures, I find great comfort in knowing that, unlike Gandalf who in a wise but limited sense was aware of Bilbo Baggin's potential, I have a sovereign Lord who knows me completely and knows every detail of my coming adventures. Isn't there a bit of hobbit in each of us? Ultimately the longing for the good that we know, for our home, is a picture of the home that is to come, one that does not contain unexpected adventures!