Christian Perspectives in *The Lord of the Rings*

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> *The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like "religion", to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism.

This is a quotation from a letter written by Tolkien on 2 December 1953 to Robert Murray, S. J.[1] Tolkien had sought Murray's comments on galley-proofs and typescript of some parts of the text before its first appearance in print in 1954 and 1955. Murray had replied that he discerned "a positive compatibility with the order of Grace", and compared the image of Galadriel to that of the Virgin Mary.[2] In other words, if we follow Murray's lead, we may decode the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* to find an overall representation of the central Christian discourse of salvation through divine grace, or we may find suggestive similarities to individual figures, or perhaps moments, in the Christian story on which that discourse is based. On the same occasion, however, Murray had also expressed his doubts about what critics would be able to make of the book, because he thought it defied classification.[3]

Murray's comments and Tolkien's statement bring to the reader's attention important questions about the meaning of *The Lord of the Rings* and the ways in which the author has proceeded to construct that meaning. How is it possible to discern Christian reference in a book that deliberately denies explicit Christian reference? And what kind of Christian reference is it that may be found there? These are the focal matters to be addressed here.[4]

The possibility of making discoveries such as those of Murray is related both to the inclinations of the reader and to the potential in the text itself. Just how that potential should be understood has become something of an

issue in Tolkien scholarship. In his Author's Foreword to the 1966 edition of
The Lord of the Rings, Tolkien declared:

> I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations … I much
> prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the
> thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse
> "applicability" with "allegory"; but the one resides in the
> freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination
> of the author.[5]

In terms of immediate context, Tolkien was refuting the idea, proposed
by numerous readers since the first publication of the book, that it was really
speaking about the horrors of World War II. At the same time, however, he
may well have been expressing a particular dislike of a body of medieval
literature in which his friend and colleague C. S. Lewis had taken a great
interest.[6] A typical example in respect of subject matter and allegorical technique
is *Le Roman de la rose* ("The Romance of the Rose"), a long thirteenth-
century poem in which a lover's quest for the love of his lady is presented
allegorically as the efforts of a dreamer-lover to pluck a rose in a dream-garden
peopled with classical gods and personifications.[7] With such texts it is
expected that every element will participate in conveying the overall
message: there should be no inorganic items to provide merely passing
interest for the reader. It is also expected that the allegorical correspondences
should be consistent. The text controls the range of its possible readings.
What Tolkien was saying about *The Lord of the Rings* was that he did not
intend it to be read as *that kind of* allegory, that his narrative would be open
to interpretations that depended on their applicability to the reader's cir-
cumstantial context, not compelled by factors inherent and unavoidable in
the text itself.[8]

Murray, for instance, did not mean that Galadriel represents the Virgin
Mary in every respect or at every moment. Galadriel may indeed remind
many readers of the Virgin Mary as she is figured particularly in the popular
imagination: for example, in her regal bearing and the profound look in her
eyes (2.7.373), when she is described by other characters as "the Lady"

(2.7.373, 381), one who is "above all the jewels that lie beneath the earth" (2.7.375), and one in whom "there is no evil" (2.7.377). Yet at the same time those familiar with Boethius's sixth-century *Consolation of Philosophy*, a key treatise in the development of Christian philosophy, may well find the Lady Galadriel reminiscent of the Lady Philosophy in her strangely varying height (2.7.385, cp. *Consolation, Book* 1, Prose 1).[9] Both meanings could, in fact, underlie Tolkien's own construction of Galadriel and the understanding of his readers insofar as he and they have the awareness of Roman Catholics or medievalists; but these recognitions are not the only ways in which Galadriel may hold narrative meaning for different readers.[10]

At the opposite end of the spectrum from full and consistent allegory lie almost endless possibilities of reader response. The reading offered here is, however, relatively conservative, in that it addresses issues that have, to some extent, been raised in previous Tolkien scholarship,[11] and in that it takes as its premise what the author himself has said of his intentions and his process. The Christian intertext is found, first, in the Bible itself as the foundational document in and narrative basis of Christian thought and, second, in the larger intertext of accumulated Christian tradition.[12] It may be identified within *The Lord of the Rings* in the ubiquitous contest between good and evil that patently structures the plot, and in particular narrative elements. To use Tolkien's own expression, his text is generically "history"; the Christian intertext it refers to is "salvation history".[13]

"Salvation history" is a narrative way of talking about Murray's more sacramentally focussed "order of Grace". It signifies the history of the world as presented in the Bible narrative – the full extent of the history of the created world – viewed in terms of God's relationship with his creation, especially humankind. It is the essentially Christocentric account of the world which interprets the Bible text as sacred Scripture for Christians. History begins with the creation of the heavens and the earth and the initial phase when that relationship is good. Then comes the fall, when human sin unleashes death and decay into the world for both humankind and the rest of creation, and the relationship between God and humankind is soured. The incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ is the pivotal period, providing correction of this bad state of affairs and the potential

for the individual's return to a good relationship with God, resulting in eternal life for the faithful. All subsequent time, however long that may be, constitutes the "last days", that is, sequentially the last stage of time before it ends; Christ has defeated the devil for eternity in the spiritual realms and the people of God are assured of their salvation, but in the world of time Christ's victory is still being worked out, and to the human eye life may well appear to involve an ongoing struggle between good and evil. History ends with the second coming of Christ and the day of judgment, when the old creation gives way to the new creation.

Any account of the origins and processes of world that involves divine interaction with humankind may be considered a "mythical" text (regardless of any understood historical reality). Tolkien is well known to have had a great interest in mythical texts in general and to have made creative use of, for example, early English, Norse, and Finnish mythical texts as he worked on the construction of his own "mythology for England".[14] Reference to Tolkienian "myth", however, raises a fundamental problem for the critic: can we, in fact, discuss the meaning of *The Lord of the Rings* in isolation from *The Silmarillion*, published posthumously in 1977, in which the basis of the myth is set out?[15] (The story background of The Hobbit is plainly retrievable within *The Lord of the Rings* itself, and *The Hobbit* is therefore not considered here.) The answer probably depends on whether individual readers are concerned with the myth as such or with the book.

Before he had completed *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien wrote concerning this book, probably in June, 1948, that it "would, of course, be easier to write, if the *Silmarillion* were published first".[16] The reference is not to Tolkien's working out of his mythology, but to the way he would need to present it in *The Lord of the Rings* to make its appearance there intelligible to the reader who did not have access to the yet unpublished *Silmarillion*. When *The Lord of the Rings* was published, however, it was read and enjoyed by vast numbers of general readers and critics alike, and that was over twenty years before *The Silmarillion* was published. Indeed, many present-day admirers of *The Lord of the Rings* have still not read this prequel. Either the periodic allusions to *Silmarillion* material in *The Lord of the Rings* seem sufficient to explain particular passages, or the mere fact that

such allusions predicate the availability of more detailed information, should one want to seek it out, forestalls reader discomfort.[17] The present paper is directed to readers of *The Lord of the Rings* as such; occasional reference is made to *The Silmarillion* as relevant.

Salvation history, as indicated above, takes place in time and for the full extent of time. To speak of these parameters presupposes a perspective beyond them, a framing concept which provides definition for the space within, delimited in the Bible narrative by Genesis 1 and Revelation 22, a view *sub specie aeternitatis*. The absence from *The Lord of the Rings* of the Creator-God, the foundational fact of Christianity, is perhaps more problematic for the reader trying to grasp the mythology than the absence of explicit reference to biblical incidents or other Christian traditions precisely because the absence of the Creator-God denies the book eternity as a defining frame of reference. Consulting *The Silmarillion* would alert us to the original and originating figure of Eru, "the One", otherwise Ilúvatar, "the father of all",[18] an approximation to God, but Eru does not feature in *The Lord of the Rings*. Again, in *The Silmarillion* evil is envisaged as persisting "unto the latest days,[19] which seems to refer to the end of the world and time. In *The Lord of the Rings* Gandalf refers briefly to an imminent expectation on the part of the Bree folk of the end of the world (2.2.281) to describe their fear of the Black Riders, but the import of these words is left open. *The Silmarillion* constructs a framing eternity not clearly available to readers of *The Lord of the Rings* by itself.

Classical philosophy would have spoken of the nearest approximation to eternity in the world and time – its imitation or mimesis – as infinity.[20] I would suggest that *The Lord of the Rings*, in its silence about the beginning and end of the world, occupies a space that might similarly be thought of as infinity, or at least indefiniteness. And in this scheme, I would further suggest, *The Lord of the Rings* makes particular use of two pale imitations of eternity, recurrence and longevity.

Recurrence is a key element in the narrative fabric of *The Lord of the Rings*. It is a way of describing exile and return, the familiar epic idea to which Frodo's quest conforms. It is found in replays of relatively small-

scale incidents, such as the respective birthday parties of Bilbo and Frodo; in waves of relatively larger-scale episodes, for example, the visits to first one, then the other, of the two great Elf communities of Rivendell and Lothlórien; and in the overarching scheme of the succeeding ages of Middle-earth, with the action of *The Lord of the Rings* occurring as the third age draws to a conclusion and a new age begins (6.5.1007, 6.6.1016, 6.9.1067).

Although neither the beginning nor the end of time is a feature of *The Lord of the Rings*, readers are implicitly urged to turn their gaze in both directions and wonder what lies beyond: on the one hand, there are figures like the Wizards, the Elves, the Ents, and Tom Bombadil, whose lives seem to stretch back indefinitely into the past; on the other hand, even as the third age ends with the end of the book, the Elves sail on to another, untextualized life, accompanied by Gandalf, Bilbo, and Frodo, and Middle-earth is left to enter into its next phase of existence. The pattern is clear: one age comes along, has its crises, ends; and another age begins.

In keeping with its lack of specific Christian reference, *The Lord of the Rings* refers, not so much to personal sin and personal salvation through grace and repentance, as to the universal forces of evil and good and, it is often observed, to loss and recovery as the effects of evil and good.[21]

Particular losses are followed by particular recoveries only to be followed by other losses and other recoveries, in an apparently endless cycle; but a recovery is often not a complete thing. Gandalf comments in general terms: the evil of Sauron cannot be wholly cured, nor made as if it had not been (3.8.573). One concrete example of this is Frodo's wound, which cannot be wholly cured (6.7.1026; also 6.9.1063, 6.9.1067). This state of affairs corresponds to the biblical picture of a groaning fallen world, dragged down to decay by sin on the part of its supposedly rational overseers until the fulfilment of salvation at the end of time (Romans 8.18–25).

Moreover, more evil lies ahead, Gandalf warns, even with Sauron defeated, for he is only an emissary of evil itself (5.9.913). Without a Christological moment, the timeline of *The Lord of the Rings* staggers through a period

corresponding to that between the fall and this fulfilment of salvation at the second coming of Christ. From within, without a vision of a real end, it is inevitable that the struggle between good and evil should seem ongoing. In this sense time in *The Lord of the Rings* may be termed cyclical rather than linear or progressive.[22]

Because of this depiction of evil as endlessly recurrent, it has been suggested that Tolkien's view of the nature of evil comes close to the heresy of dualism.[23] Evil is a presence in the world that must be resisted by all virtuous means. Such resistance is, of course, the essence of the quest that shapes the plot in *The Lord of the Rings*. From the perspective of salvation history, resistance to evil will eventually become unnecessary with the final annihilation of evil; from the perspective of endlessly succeeding ages, without a framing eternity, resistance will remain necessary. A view of the world as engaged in a perpetual struggle between good and evil, in which evil is not ultimately limited by eternal good, is dualism (associated particularly with the ancient heresy of Manichaeism). I would suggest that the dualism of *The Lord of the Rings*, one of the main manifestations of the narrative principle of recurrence, comes into being when the book is detached from the greater narrative of *The Silmarillion*.

Two specific sets of recurrent allusions to the Christian intertext concern fall and redemption.

From *Ainulindalë* in *The Silmarillion* we learn that evil came into being when Melkor, one of the Ainur, corresponding to the angels, strove with the Valar, the Ainur who entered the world to look after it; he was subsequently better known as Morgoth. This is reminiscent of the story of Lucifer, the fallen angel who was identified with Satan and the devil. This story is alluded to rather than fully set out in the Bible,[24] but is firmly entrenched in Christian tradition. From *Valaquenta* in *The Silmarillion* we learn that Sauron falls to become the greatest of Morgoth's minions, and within *The Lord of the Rings* Saruman falls to become the greatest of Sauron's minions – the fall motif is repeated from figure one to another. A lesser fall which nevertheless reverberates through the book is that of Sméagol, later known as Gollum, whose murder of his fellow Déagol recalls Cain's murder

of Abel, itself a further manifestation of the fall of humankind related particu-
larly to familial and social failure (Genesis 4).

The figure of the self-sacrificing redeemer modelled on Christ is found
most obviously in Gandalf and Frodo. Gandalf apparently gives his life to
save the others from the Balrog at the Bridge of Khazad-dûm (2.5.349), only
to reappear later, when, as the White Rider leading the company against the
forces of evil (3.5.516), he bears some resemblance to Christ as Christ
appears to John to reveal the end of the world (Revelation 1.12–16) and to
Christ as the rider called Faithful and True (Revelation 19.11–1). Frodo like-
wise all but dies as he defies the Black Riders at the ford outside Rivendell
(1.12.230–31), though he too lives to fight another day, and his quest
throughout is one that places the good of the world ahead of his own comforts.

Longevity is a feature associated with many races and figures in *The
Lord of the Rings*, but notably with the Wizards, the Elves, the Ents, and
Tom Bombadil.

The race of Wizards consists of Gandalf, Saruman, and others. From *The
Silmarillion*, we learn that they appeared in Middle-earth as messengers sent
to contest the power of Sauron and to unite the Elves and others to resist him
and age only slowly; they are in fact Maiar, spiritual beings who assist the
Valar.[25] Like the Valar, they are created by Eru but exist before the world.
Although originally a spiritual being, Saruman actually dies in *The Lord of
the Rings* at the hand of his human companion Wormtongue (6.8.1058).
Gandalf, however, goes on to an indefinite future when he departs Middle-
earth with the Elves. Although he may function in a Christ-like way on
occasion, he is essentially angelic – as Tolkien once wrote of him to Robert
Murray, "an *incarnate* 'angel'".[26]

The origins of the Elves as the children of Eru are set out in *The Silmarillion*,
where they are the first speaking beings,[27] but these matters are mentioned
also in *The Lord of the Rings* (2.2.260–61, 3.4.486). Like the Wizards, they
are immortal but vulnerable to death from external causes. Being able to
generate children, their race as a whole has immortality because it can
perpetuate itself. They are close enough in nature to human beings that one

of their number, Arwen, can marry a Man, Aragorn. As well as longevity, the Elves are possessed of something approaching agelessness, as exemplified in the fact that the lovely Galadriel is actually Arwen's grandmother despite having lived through the ages (2.7.376). The Man Aragorn, in contrast, appears to age slowly, but will eventually grow old and die.

Whereas the Wizards have no fixed abode, the Elves are settled peoples, and the two main elfin territories that feature in *The Lord of the Rings*, Rivendell and Lothlórien, have something of Paradise about them, in their general peace and comfort and in their ambiguous allusions to both the Eden of Genesis 2 and the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21–22. Rivendell is a deep valley where many of the fair folk dwelt in peace (1.3.79), a place where Frodo may be healed, where Bilbo may retire, where folk of good will may come together – and a place where time does not seem to pass (2.1.247). Lothlórien features a grassy mound as green as Spring-time in the Elder days; it is filled with light and fresh colours, and is without blemish or deformity (2.6.368–69).

The Ents are oldest of all races, predating the awakening of the Elves in Middle-Earth, though they learnt to speak from the Elves (3.4.489–99). They were created to be the shepherds of the trees, to protect them. Along the way they have lost their Entwives, so that there are no Entings to carry on – for the Ents, there will be no perpetuation of the race, and no Ent leaves Middle-earth with the Elves.

Treebeard, also known as Fangorn, is the most functional of the remaining three Ents and master of the ancient forest of Fangorn. He is the oldest of the Ents, the oldest living thing that still walks beneath the Sun upon this Middle-Earth (3.5.520, 3.8.582). His forest is as old as the forest by the Barrow-downs, where the hobbits have encountered Tom Bombadil, and much bigger. These two areas are the last strongholds of the mighty woods of the Elder Days (3.2.463); they share the one ancient origin, but Treebeard and Tom themselves stand in a more problematic relationship to each other.

Tom Bombadil is one of a kind. He is said to be neither hobbit nor man (1.6.135), perhaps suggesting that he has something of both about him. But

his name is Eldest; he has been in the world before the river and the trees (hence before the Ents); he is older than the first rain (1.7.146). He is older than the old, long forgotten even by Elrond – oldest and fatherless, as his other name, Iarwain Ben-adar, signifies (2.2.282). He has power over other created things, including wood, water and hill (1.7.139), and is under no law but his own (2.2.283). Putting on the Ring of Power does not affect him, and in this he is superior to Gandalf and Galadriel, Wizard and Elf, both of whom fear their own corruption should they agree to take it. Tom will stand against evil, but in the end he is unlikely to have the victory: in the words of the Elf Glorfindel, "in the end, if all else is conquered, Bombadil will fall, Last as he was First, and then Night will come ... power to defy our Enemy is not in him, unless it is in the earth itself" (2.2.283). Tom's wife Goldberry has a voice both young and ancient (1.6.137),[28] and both of them seem ageless as well as having lived long. In their home the passage of time blurs, as it does in the elfin territories (1.7.146).

In an apparent contradiction, both Tom and Treebeard are described as the oldest living beings in Middle-earth; nevertheless, Tom seems to be the older of the two. Tolkien avowedly intended Tom to be an enigma.[29] He claims to have thought of Tom as "an 'allegory', or an exemplar, a particular embodying of pure (real) natural science: the spirit that desires knowledge of other things, their history and nature, *because they are 'other'* and wholly independent of the enquiring mind".[30] Much that is said of the circumstances of Tom and his wife Goldberry, however, invites further consideration.

Their home is in a clearing surrounded by wild forest, with a neatly trimmed lawn (1.6.137) and a kitchen garden (1.7.143). This setting begins to recall the Garden of Eden, separate from the outside world, in which God put Adam so that he might cultivate it (Genesis 2–3). Other features also suggest something of the prelapsarian existence of human beings. Tom gives the ponies the names they have for the rest of their lives (1.8.157); Adam named the animals and birds. Nothing is said of Goldberry's origin; she is simply Tom's companion, operating in perfect harmony with him as a kind of extension of him, like Eve with Adam. Tom's very appearance suggests a harmony of person, as he wears blue, yellow, and green. He and Goldberry are hospitable; their table features cream and honey, which may suggest the

essence of the Promised Land (Exodus 3.8), itself a recapitulation of Eden and type of the ultimate Paradise. The reader may thus see in Tom and Goldberry a reference to the pristine life, the way things were before the fall, an idea also hinted at in respect of the elfin world. Coming alongside the other figures and scenes described, such reminders of the pristine under-line the present plight of Middle-earth, but also extend the imaginary scope of the story overall.

Recognition of Christian perspectives in *The Lord of the Rings* is, arguably, an enriching and clarifying experience for the reader. A referential frame built on principles of recurrence and longevity evokes the idea of eternity, and this idea in turn points to a Christian intertext of salvation history, which places all human history under the gaze of eternal God. In this way, I would suggest, *The Lord of the Rings* positions its own events within the largest of all stories and invites the reader to regard it as a work of very high seriousness.

NOTES

1   *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, selected and edited by Humphrey Carpenter, with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), Letter 142, p. 172. It is well known that Tolkien himself was a devout Roman Catholic: see for example Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1977), *passim*.

2   *Letters*, pp. 171-72.

3   For a recent exploration of generic issues see Kim Selling, "J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: The Book, the Film, and Genre Criticism", *Sydney Studies in English* 29 (2003), 39-56.

4   *The Lord of the Rings* is cited here (by book, chapter, and page) from the single-volume edition (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968). An earlier version of some parts of the following discussion have appeared under the heading "What Might Have Been: Creation and Eternity in Tolkien", in *CASE* 4 (2004), 12-13.

5   Quoted from the 1968 single-volume edition, p. 9.

6   As evidenced by Lewis's seminal study *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936; New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).

7   Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Ernest Langlois, Société des anciens textes français 63 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1914-24). This edition has been translated as *The Romance of the Rose* by Charles Dahlberg (Hanover NH and London: University Press of New England, 1983).

8   For Tolkien's ideas about allegory and his use of it see T. A. Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), pp. 16-68. For a suggestion that the races in *The Lord of the Rings* are allegories of the seven deadly sins of Christian tradition see Charles W. Nelson, "The Sins of Middle-earth: Tolkien's Use of Medieval Allegory", in *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*, ed. George Clark and Daniel Timmons (Westport CT and London: Greenwood, 2000), pp. 83-94.

9   For *The Consolation of Philosophy* see the edition of H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester, with an English translation by S. J. Tester, in their *Boethius: The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, London: Heinemann, 1973).

10   Nor is Galadriel the only figure to have been read as the Virgin Mary – Debbie Sly suggests a correspondence between Mary and Varda (e.g. re 1.3.92-93): "Weaving Nets of Gloom: 'Darkness Profound' in Tolkien and Milton", in *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances*, pp. 9-19.

11   Amongst the critics who have indicated an essentially Christian meaning for the book are Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, especially chs 3 and 4, and Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of the Imagination* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), ch. 3.

12   The English Bible I have used is *The Cambridge Annotated Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, notes and references by Howard Clark Kee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Whatever use Tolkien may have made of any English Bible, the Bible that would have underlain his Christianity would have been the Latin Vulgate. The nature of the biblical references here, however, does not depend on specifying a particular version.

13   This term was popularized in the twentieth-century work of Oscar Cullmann, especially his *Salvation in History*, trans. Sidney G. Showers et al. (London: SCM, 1967); for an overview see "Salvation History (*Heilsgeschichte*)", in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. William J. McDonald et al., 15 vols.

(New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967). The idea is implicit, however, in much patristic literature, going back at least to a second-century treatise by Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. J. Armitage Robinson, Translations of Christian Literature 4 (London: SPCK, 1920); a key biblical text for Irenaeus is Ephesians 1:10.

14   For this expression and its connotations see Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*, pp. 89-90. For Tolkien's own view of his literary creation as myth see, for example, Letters 211 and 212, *Letters*, pp. 277-87.

15   J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Allen and Unwin, 1977).

16   Letter 115, *Letters*, p. 130.

17   It has, on the other hand, been proposed that the lack of availability of *The Silmarillion* has indeed been a "torment" to many readers of *The Lord of the Rings*: W. A. Senior, "Loss Eternal in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth", in *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances*, pp. 173-82 (p. 178).

18   *Ainulindalë, passim*, in *The Silmarillion*, pp. 15-22.

19   *Quenta Silmarillion*, in *The Silmarillion*, pp. 33-255 (ch. 24, p. 255).

20   See, for example, Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book 5, Prose 6, discussing Plato and Aristotle.

21   See, for example, Senior, "Loss Eternal in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth", *passim*. The portrayal of Sméagol-Gollum as momentarily contemplating recovery from the moral depths to which he has sunk (4.2.658–59) is perhaps the closest the book comes to an exploration of personal sin and the repentance that precedes salvation.

22   For these terms see Mathews, *Fantasy*, p. 81, where the cyclical nature of Tolkien's view of time is related to the fact that it begins and ends with moral order.

23   For Tolkien's concept of evil and the argument that his approach comes close to dualism see Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien*, pp. 128-35.

24   Plain reference to the fall of the rebellious angels may be found in Luke 10:18, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6, and Revelation 12; figurative reference is understood in Isaiah 14:12-15 (where the name "Lucifer" is given in the immediate context to the king of Babylon) and Ezekiel 28:12-19.

25   *Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age*, in *The Silmarillion*, pp. 283-304, esp. pp. 299-300.

26   Letter 156, *Letters*, pp. 200-70.

27   *Quenta Silmarillion* 3.49.

28   In this effect of varying age Goldberry resembles Boethius's Lady Philosophy (*Consolation*, Book 1, Prose 1), just as Galadriel resembles her in respect of her varying height.

29   Letter 144, *Letters*, pp. 173-81 (p. 174).

30   Letter 153, *Letters*, pp. 187-96 (p. 192). Tom Bombadil appears also as a supposedly folktale figure in two (or perhaps three) poems in the collection that goes under the name *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. This collection was first published in 1961, after *The Lord of the Rings*, but the first poem, featuring Tom and Goldberry, first appeared in print in 1934: Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*, p. 162. *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* may now be found in J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tales from the Perilous Realm* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 59–118.

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